



TALKING BODIES 2023



ABSTRACTS

Arranged in alphabetical order by family name

Carla Abella Rodríguez (Universidad de Salamanca, Spain), 'Racialized Bodies in Courtney Faye Taylor's *Concentrate*'

This paper scrutinises the poetics of *Concentrate* (2022), Courtney Faye Taylor's debut poetry collection. Taylor puts forward experimental poems that blend image, verse and prose with a view to examining anti-Black hostility towards women and girls through the exploration of the much-overlooked killing of Black teenager Latasha Harlins in 1991. The main aim of this investigation is to unveil the relationship between anti-Black violence and gender. A corporeal analysis reveals Black women and girls as criminalised and disposable in American society. The poems expose the silenced experience of Black women and girls who are erased of subjectivity through the hypervisibility of their bodies. The role of the poet is of paramount importance, as Taylor embarks on a journey to the past to trace back memories, spaces and experiences where hostility and girlhood come together. Memorialising thus appears as an act of resistance that helps retain the vanishing body, which is slipping through the cracks of the collective memory. This way, the poetry collection becomes an archive where the muted bodies can talk and voice their neglected stories.

Kholoud Saeed AlKhamies (Al-Baha University, Saudi Arabia), 'The Western Man between "Hegemonic Masculinity" and "New-Man-ism"'

The context of this paper develops a discussion of the representation of men and how it changes through the British edition of *Men's Health* magazine from 'Hegemonic Masculinity' to 'New-Man-ism'. Beginning with a brief definition of both terms, the paper provides an overview of the possibility of such a change occurring through a cultural construction, borrowing a theoretical perspective from Judith Butler, of how all forms of identity are not 'fixed', but are rather discursively 'produced' from the materials available to people in popular culture. By counterbalancing the relevant history, the paper will then discuss the atmosphere in which the representation of men has changed towards fetishism in modern Britain. By exploiting men's body-shapes on magazine covers, men became the 'object' rather than 'owning' the gaze.

Rengin Alpdogan (Bamberg University, Germany), 'Invisible Bodies: A Comparison of the Media Representations of Murdered Cisgender Women and Trans Women'

The highest murder rates of trans people in Europe are in Turkey. The mass media generally ignores these murders or represents the victims through discriminatory discourse. In this regard, comparing the murders of trans women to those of cisgender women, which are more usually presented in terms of sympathy and respect, the former receives either collective silence or, in effect, a dehumanizing discourse, except for a small number of newspapers that take similar approaches to both types of victims. My presentation will explore the duality of the news-media representations of victims based on gender. To this end, I will provide an overview of how trans women have been represented in news media in the period between 2011 and 2016 in Turkey and Europe, followed by a detailed analysis of the news coverage provided on two distinct murders. These murders occurred in Turkey in 2015 and 2016 and were the object of similar attacks. In 2015, a cisgender woman was stabbed multiple times, beaten to death, and her corpse was burnt. The murder was covered with great journalistic sympathy. However, in 2016 a trans woman's murder by rape, body mutilation, and subsequent burning of her body was either ignored or represented distinctly by the same newspapers. In short, the discourse on evidence between 2011 and 2016 and the distinct coverage given to the two murders point to the invisibility of trans women's murders in Turkey.

Wadha Alsudairy (University of Essex, UK), 'Untangling the Misconceptions: Decolonizing Henna Body Art in Arab Muslim Culture'

Henna body art is a topic often neglected in African and Asian literature due to its association with women's bodies and rituals. Early 20th-century Western scholars portrayed women who practised henna as uncivilized and superstitious, serving colonial purposes. However, the practice evolved from a cosmetic tool documented by early travellers to a religious protection from evil spirits and the evil eye in anthropological studies. Throughout literature, women who used henna were often demonized or belittled by male scholars, a trend that persists today. This led to my research which showed that early Western female scholars documented the practice fairly and in detail, until late 20th-century women scholars adopted the views of male scholars regarding Eastern women and culture. As an Arab Muslim woman, I aim to challenge Western perspectives and misconceptions about henna body art. My research involves a comparative analysis of early literary references and contemporary accounts, and an examination of its religious significance. I also aim to distinguish between popular cultural practices and religious beliefs, and to show how politics and economy have influenced the documentation of

henna body art, creating a distorted image of Eastern culture to appeal to Western audiences. My research seeks to correct the history and dispel stigmas perpetuated by the West, and to provide a more nuanced and accurate understanding of henna body art beyond just one culture and religion. The goal is to broaden the scope of the literature on henna beyond its limited representation in Western academic spheres.

Aurélie Aromatario (Université Libre de Bruxelles, Belgium), 'Fake Moustache and Roller Skates: the Epistemological Value of Embodied Experience in Drag King Performance and Roller Derby'

If the topic of embodiment is not recent in academic research, feminist and queer activism have more recently operated a return towards issues of body and intimacy. Yet, with constructivist approaches of gender on the one hand, and a lack of empirical methodology on the other hand, sociological research on gender and embodiment is too often confronted with uneasy silences on method or with bodies that lack concrete thickness. Anchoring the research process in empirical fieldwork with a participative methodology is a first aspect to circumvent those obstacles. Mapping the material, embodied experience through a series of markers of gender and subjectivity is another. In this paper, I study the empowering sport of roller derby on one side and the gender confusion of drag king performances on the other side. Both qualify as leisure activities and share an activist background, rooted in feminist and queer values. Involving techniques of the self and of the body, they put on display the entangled relation between self, gender and body, but also the power of bodily transformation as a political tool. Roller derby and drag king performances contribute in improving bodily abilities and self-esteem. Developing such agency for gender minorities also enhances political subjectivity, demonstrating the collective transformative ability of acting upon body and gender. The use of an autoethnographic method with a phenomenological perspective has allowed me to share and investigate those embodied experiences. Through this research, I have thus developed embodied knowledge hand-in-hand with scientific knowledge, illustrating the epistemological necessity of experience both in terms of scientific research and activist objectives.

Graham Atkin (University of Chester), "Eating people is wrong, but it makes a great story": Cannibalism and Narratology'

Taking William Shakespeare's *Titus Andronicus* as a starting point this paper will explore how the idea of cannibalism is utilised for engaging narrative effects. Other texts considered will include *The Tempest*, Herman Melville's *Typee*, *Moby Dick* and *Benito Cereno*, and Safiya Sinclair's debut poetry collection *Cannibal*.

Marie Audemard (University of Chester), 'Breaking the Mould: Investigating Decency Norms, Bras and Women's Autonomy'

In the era of #MeToo or #BalanceTonPorc in France, women claim the right to say that they will not stay silent and to say no if they want to. So why are they still pressured to dress in a certain way? Why are they still required to be socially 'decent' and wear a bra? In this project, I investigate the relationship between the notion of decency and bras in the current French society. In this study, I introduce the concept of 'internalised decency' developed based on my own interviews, reading and autoethnography and show how intertwined with economy, politics, or religion decency norms are. Furthermore, this concept demonstrates how these decency norms can impact French women as they are perceived as a solution to women's bodies being objectified.

Robyn Autry (Wesleyan University, CT, USA), 'Is Everyone on a Journey? Self-Help Narratives and the Desire for "Normal" Bodies'

Is everyone on a journey? This paper looks at the way people use the word 'journey' to structure narratives about personal well-being. The imagery of a journey parallels traditional storytelling, which includes familiar messaging about perseverance and happy endings, specifically in relation to stigmatized bodies. I compare personal accounts of weight loss with those of the 'Black Natural Hair Movement' as represented online and through television series like the popular shows *Biggest Loser* and *Hair Tales* in the United States. In both cases of weight loss and natural hair transitioning, I consider how the journey motif operates, assumes mobility and transformation, and imposes a familiar arc to these accounts that makes transforms the stigmatized body in to a more socially acceptable one. The journey then is less about personal growth and transformation then, and more of a plea for crossing into what is deemed normal. The comparison is leveraged to say as much about weight loss as about

hair, tying both to fantasies of bodily loss and transition at a path toward acceptance, invoking language about damage, care, and healing.

Gill Badrock (University of Chester), 'The Same ... Only Different: Feminism's Alternative Expression'

It's time to recognise that there is more than one kind of feminist. Through the lens of gender studies I consider how 'normative' feminist expression marginalises emancipatory women, and consequently hinders efforts to gain the right to equality. For example, women who acted in the spirit of feminism such as the 19th-century writer and educator Jane Marcet (1769-1858), are not recognised in feminist historiography. Marcet is analogous to 21st-century counterparts who are similarly overlooked: perhaps full-time mothers; those navigating a work-life balance; or those eschewing categorisations as 'feminist'. Significantly, all of these groups have effected change through contained and often, private behaviours that redefine 'political' action: Marcet empowered contemporary mothers to seek changes in education while Rossi's study identifies that less conspicuous feminist action has advanced equality in education and employment. Yet, Fiske et al's findings suggest that even today, mothers are not perceived as 'competent' change agents. Presciently, the 20th-century feminists Carol Hanisch and Betty Friedan warned the Feminist Movement against prescribing the nature of feminist expression: in 2020 Moore and Stathi confirmed that negative stereotyping of traits associated with feminists, such as 'angry' and 'aggressive', continues to cause disillusionment and disengagement among women who, nevertheless, support emancipatory goals. My conceptualisation of feminist 'counter-stereotypes', exemplified historically by Marcet, offers the potential to capitalise on shared values. I envisage a partnership in which public, visible behaviours combine with restrained, assertive actions that together, empowers collective efforts because, the personal, most definitely, *is* political.

Amy Bancroft (University of Chester), 'Moles, Mushrooms, and Mary: How Eco-poetics, Fungi, and Moles can Teach us to Rethink our Gender Bias on Nature'

In nature, gender knows no bounds – in fact – the mere concept of gender is reductive. Is it truly possible to contain the mass expanse of the earth's biodiversity into a neat, binary box? The connotation of nature is traditionally paired with gendered tropes infused with fertility: Mother nature – she who births, she who bleeds. Trans Exclusionary Feminists (TERFS) involved in some goddess and women's circles have intertwined the notion of the womb, menstruation, and childbirth as a *woman's only* sacred connection with the earth, resulting in the exclusion and othering of trans-women, and non-binary people. Within the literary realm, American poet Mary Oliver changed the gendered narrative within eco-poetics, placing no emphasis of gender being intertwined with nature – a progressive step towards inclusivity. Her poetical methodology surrounded the notion of attentiveness to the unnoticeable, to the small creatures, the riverbends, the grass. A person's connection with nature therefore is irrelevant of their gender, but of their willingness to *pay attention*. Oliver's poetry slams against the TERF ideology of female erasure. Fungi Fruit bodies, animal bodies, particularly the female mole with both male gonads and no apparent vagina, teach us daily that our human concept of gender is destructive, and staggeringly outdated. We must adopt a symbiotic view of life – one which embraces not only the biodiversity of our earth, but also, of ourselves.

Fra Beecher (United Models Life Drawing CIC), 'Drawn Together: Virtual Life Drawing and Cultivating Community'

The pandemic, and subsequent lockdowns, forced many of us to turn our homes into offices. Fra Beecher works as life model; posing nude for art schools, universities and community groups, and facilitating life drawing session in Bristol, though the life model collective United Models Life Drawing. In March 2020, Life drawing sessions moved from the physical life room, onto digital screens. Fra was initially concerned about posing nude online for artists, who might take screenshots without her consent. However, being part of a collective of life models meant that she could pose virtually for other models before inviting paying attendees. When artists joined the sessions they were grateful to be drawing again and to see familiar faces, even if it was over the Internet. She had built a strong community through running weekly life drawing sessions and despite her fears, this virtual life drawing environment immediately felt safe. Fra has since modelled for further virtual sessions. Whoever she poses for, she works in the same physical space, yet her experience can be vastly different. This paper will discuss these experiences and how she found her creative voice, as a model posing online.

Peter Blair (University of Chester), 'Migrant Bodies in Recent South African Flash Fiction'

This paper will discuss Stacy Hardy's *Because the Night* (2015), a collection of 21 stories, eight of which are under two pages in length, including five that each fit on one page. It will place these very short stories in the context of the collection's broad preoccupation with somatic and libidinal states of being, focusing in particular on Hardy's depictions of cross-racial heterosexual relationships between white South African women and black male immigrants from elsewhere in Africa. The shorter pieces will be considered as exemplary flashes (stories of up to 750 words) that compress and develop complex themes with a long literary history and a wide contemporary currency, which will be demonstrated by close reading (or de-compression) of a one-page flash. On its simplest level, this is a love-story about a jaded woman who walks away from a stale relationship and rebounds towards a potential new lover, with whom she watches an international football match on television. But she is also a white woman rejecting a Black Consciousness activist for a Congolese refugee, and as such her story maps the psycho-geography of cross-racial sex and improvisational identity-formations in the Africanized and globalizing post-apartheid city. This reading will show how Hardy's flash resonates with longer works by other South African authors, briefly embodying and reconfiguring some established tropes of miscegenation and migrant narratives.

Ana Bessa Carvalho (University of Minho, Portugal), 'How to Raise an Owl: Motherhood,

Non-Conforming Bodies, and the Failure of Language in Claire Oshetsky's *Chouette*'

In *Chouette* (2021), a woman gives birth to an owl. This unexpected event seems unlikely to everyone except for the novel's narrator, a person to whom communication with others often fails due to the lack of words with which to narrate her own experience. *Chouette* deals directly with the failure of language to address everyday life, and how hard it can be for someone who falls outside the norm, be it regarding gender or ability, to engage with the surrounding world, questioning social expectations of gender for men and women or looking at the life of someone living with semantic dementia. Moreover, through the metaphor of giving birth to an owl, *Chouette* provides a complex look at motherhood, and how hard it is for women to narrate such a queer experience, the demands of a newborn baby, the unspeakability of taboos (such as abortion or lesbian relationships), and the dream of finding a common language with which to communicate with others, which in the novel takes shape in the music that mother and child play together. This paper intends to gloss over matters of gender roles and expectations, the trouble of motherhood, how metaphor can be used to describe bodies that fall outside the normative, queer family making, and the promise of an alternative language with which to narrate female and non-binary embodied experiences.

Brooke Boulton (Winona State University, USA), 'Her Body Talks: *Kalevala*'s Under-Sung Hero & National Embodiment in Finland'

Finland's national epic *Kalevala* features many heroes: sky-builders, immortal singers, and womanizers. Yet none have embodied nationalism, consciousness, and nation on symbolic and geographic scales. Aino, the epic's unsung hero, drowns to save herself from marriage. Her suicide and transmutation embody Finland's plight for freedom and national identity in the 19th and early 20th centuries. Aino's death represents preservation and Finland's final separation from Sweden and Russia. Her rebirth, returning as a fish, marks Finland's emergence as an independent nation. Just as Finns refused to "be Swedes or Russians", so did Aino refuse to become someone she did not intend to be. From Finland's indigenous roots, Aino is heralded as a powerful shaman—her unusual refusal to marry Väinämöinen, the greatest singer, signifies her elevated consciousness, awareness, and identity as a hero. Geographically, Aino embodies "the maiden of Finland"—a country shaped like a woman, complete with outstretched arm(s) and the hem of a dress. On two accounts, the national body subjects to modification—first (symbolically) when Aino becomes a fish, and second (literally) when Finland loses an arm and hem to Russia, as a site of war. Despite these modifications, the body's essence persevered. This presentation celebrates Aino's voice while analyzing her embodiment of the waking Finnish nation. In body, spirit, and purity, Aino symbolizes the ideal Finnish woman while embodying the ideals of a developing nation seeking to preserve its culture and identity.

Giles Briscoe (Edge Hill University, UK), "'Jesus, Glitter and Rhinestones": A Critical

Discourse Analysis of Drag Theology and Camp Spiritual Healing in *RuPaul's Drag Race*'

This research proposes that RuPaul has created a unique and innovative spiritually healing ministry and a drag theology in the popular television series, *RuPaul's Drag Race*. Since premiering in 2009 the programme has positioned RuPaul as a figure who uses drag to offer comfort, guidance and affirmation for the queer contestants who compete to become 'America's Next Drag Superstar'. While healing drag

ministries and families might typically be found in physical gay communities (Wilcox, 2018; Sullivan-Blum, 2004), this research proposes that the commercial success of the televised medium of RuPaul's ministry offers unprecedented possibilities for helping queer contestants and viewers to navigate identity conflicts. In locating and establishing this form of 'drag theology', as emerging from queer theologies (Greenough, 2020), this work analyses how contestants with intersectional identity conflicts use drag to unify their identities and find a place to be themselves. By analysing the intentional drag presentation of bodies through a critical discourse analysis, this research uncovers how a popular drag queen programme offers a ministry and radical theology to heal those who struggle to find guidance or mentorship in heteronormative societies and religious institutions.

Lawrence Buttigieg (Freelance Artist & Architect, Malta), 'Trust, Creativity, the Studio Space' Together with a regular female model, I produce mixed-media box-assemblages whose iconography mostly hinges around her body's 'prurient' parts. One process we engage in is the use of spatulas to gently spread uncured silicone across her skin. Sometimes it is her shaved vulva; other times it might be her breasts. This is the first step toward the manufacture of high-precision moulds that are used to produce true-to-life simulacra of her body fragments to be housed inside the box-assemblage. As the moulds are taken directly off the subject's skin, she becomes the unequivocal author of her own representations. Our relationship is nurtured through routine appointments; while each rendezvous is defined by the creative processes involved, more importantly, it is underpinned by the trust we share, tinged with the awareness that such closeness, a confluence of the male self and female other, is of a fleeting nature. My paper discusses the essence of this trust, and looks into its subtle, yet powerful, and transformative nature. When Cesca is present, this shared emotion not only permeates my studio, but emanates a sense of wellbeing and safety. Notwithstanding the states of vulnerability and caution through which we expose ourselves to each other, it transforms the physical closeness into an arcane kind of intimacy. The aforementioned affection enables us to communicate in silence, or with the merest of words and gestures; it imbues our encounters with eloquence and complicity. Trust allows us to collaborate, or rather to immerse ourselves, into a mutually beneficial exchange of ideas and actions that favour our reciprocal confirmation of self-worth—feelings that, as a matter of course, are then transposed into the box-assemblage.

Chelsea Carter (Independent Early Years Practitioner, Oxford, UK), "Mama told me not to waste my life" - but she Never said Anything about the Objectification and Hypersexualisation of Women in the Music Industry!

It is no new phenomenon that the Western world especially has come to live in a commercially consumerist society saturated in sex, embedding popular media firmly within its culture. It is also perhaps less surprising that such a society has become a hotbed for the hypersexualisation and objectification of women, particularly within the music media industry. Many female artists appear on the pop music scene donned in skimpy outfits, while the camera direction portrays them as vulnerable new recruits of striptease culture. But what about those that emerge as their authentic selves propelled to worldwide fame on the Fremantle's Thames and Syco Entertainment produced musical talent show *The X Factor*? This paper focuses on manufactured pop girl group Little Mix, and their subtle yet significant transition from colourfully fun, inspiring quartet, to dominatrix-esque, subjects of the male gaze. With an abundant following of young girls, the significant component here is the extent to which the production of a talent competition has reformed these women using the 'sex sells' ideology that plagues the media world. Thus, while considering the feminist theories of Betty Friedan and Judith Butler specifically, this paper introduces the notion that not only does such explicit sexual presentation exert influence on a young consumer market, seen primarily through Little Mix's success, but also that the group themselves have been exploited as a vehicle in which women's objectification and hypersexualisation have prevailed in their once innocent campaign.

Joanne Cassar and Mario Cassar (University of Malta), 'Stories of Domestic Violence and Coercion from a Maltese Village during the 16th Century: Implications for the Present'

This paper traces two historical narratives that took place within the space of two years in the village of Ħal Luqa in sixteenth-century Malta. The first presents an account of fourteen-year-old Imperia Mallia, who sought refuge in a nunnery in 1533 because of a man who chased her incessantly, in order to marry her. The second story is about Agata Briffa, who in 1535 took legal action because of domestic violence and was eventually punished for breaching court rules. Both stories, based on court proceedings, are documented by Joseph Micallef (1975) in his pioneering social history book *Ħal Luqa: Niesha u Grajjietha* ('Ħal Luqa: Its People and Its History'). The study of the two narratives recognizes

these two accounts as remnants of 'talking bodies' that reveal the association of gender with the legal procedure of court trials. It locates the causes of gender at the very core of the narratives, which reflect the wider social world the two women inhabited. The study draws attention to intricate social and legal networks that castigated women who attempted to protect themselves. It also examines women's representations that demonstrate acts of defiance towards the social limits imposed on womanhood. The study discusses the relevance of the two stories in the context of a wider dialogue on gender-based coercion and domestic violence by providing insights into gender relations that resonate with contemporary situations.

Emma Catan (Northumbria University, UK), "Transgressive Bodies": Neo-Victorian Representations of Gender and Bodily Non-Conformity in *The Night Brother* and *Pantomime*'
Neo-Victorian literature utilises nineteenth-century settings and events, whilst reflecting twenty-first century issues and anxieties. Such works often celebrate marginalised identities, such as LGBTQ+ characters, and those with 'non-normative' bodies. This paper discusses two case studies which unpack and critique nineteenth- and twenty-first century discourses surrounding gender (and bodily) 'norms'. Rosie Garland's *The Night Brother* (2017) and Laura Lam's *Pantomime* (2013) actively centre protagonists who 'transgress' gender and bodily ideologies; both against societal institutions which dictate what *is* considered 'normal', and how 'non-normative' bodies are controlled by societal institutions such as the medical profession. Additionally, scholars such as Helen Davies have argued that previous neo-Victorian 'freak' narratives have diminished the protagonists' perspective by using an omniscient narrator. Garland and Lam's approaches avoid this through the use of first-person narrative; providing 'othered' identities with their own voice, rather than being spoken *for*. While Garland sets her novel against the growing suffrage movement in late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century Manchester, Lam's fantasy setting utilises recognisable elements from trans-Atlantic nineteenth-century culture, creating a recognisable literary space in which the protagonists engage with concerns surrounding gender, sexuality, and bodily autonomy. Consequently, neo-Victorian texts such as *The Night Brother* and *Pantomime* can be read not only against nineteenth-century discourses of sexuality, gender and 'freakery', but also how authors reflect and challenge twenty-first century discourses and assumptions concerning 'non-normative' bodies and gender identities.

Arpita Chakraborty (Dublin City University, Ireland), "Lives Made": Diasporic South Asian Women, Domestic Abuse, and Systemic Challenges'

Ireland is a comparatively newer destination for South Asian emigrants, and the state system is still honing itself to understand the particularities around new migrant communities and how to meet their needs. Post-Brexit, Ireland has one of the fastest growing South Asian diasporic population, and in 2021 Indians constituted the second biggest group of migrants in Ireland. This paper will look at the socio-cultural challenges that make accessing support services difficult for migrant women of South Asian descent. Through a review of the consecutive strategies adopted by the government in relation to migrants, undocumented workers and asylum seekers, this paper will examine how bodies of migrant survivors become the location where the politics of the state, citizenship, and violence comes to fore. The bodies of migrant survivors of domestic violence becomes not only the political site but also the intersection of linguistic, cultural and ideological representations and mis-representations. The paper will conclude with some suggestions about concrete immediate changes which can make a difference in their lives.

Tom Coles (Freelance Music Writer and Editor, UK), 'Gender is about the Roles you don't Play: the Future of Transgender and Non-Binary Spaces in Extreme Metal'

The 2021 England and Wales census showed 262,000 people indicated that their current gender identity is different to that of their birth. Growing awareness and understanding of transgender issues, including recent moves towards self-identification in Scotland, mean these numbers are likely to increase further. Whilst there is no data on the number of transgender and non-binary people who are involved in extreme metal circles, over the past few years more trans people have been openly taking part in the scene. Bands like Thou and Vile Creature feature non-binary members, and Liturgy's frontwoman Ravenna Hunt-Hendrix came out as transgender in 2020. Leading metal media such as Metal Hammer has spoken positively about this, publishing non-binary writer Rosie Solomon's 2021 article *Out of the closet and into the pit: the queer artists revolutionising extreme metal*. In bringing their lived experience, transgender and non-binary people present new ways of thinking to extreme metal, already a scene where masculine figures present differently to traditional gender norms, wearing long hair and makeup. My research suggests that bands in the underground who have transgender or non-

binary members are challenging fashion and music norms, making these spaces their own whilst contributing positively to extreme metal. This talk draws on my research for *Death Metal* and my personal experience as a non-binary person participating in metal scenes. It explores how we can continue the work towards positive and open spaces, and how the influences brought by these experiences positively influence extreme metal's music and fashion.

Sandy Comber (University of Chichester, UK), 'Maternal Ambivalence: Making Monsters out of Mothers'

Motherhood as an institution is *performed*. The 'good' mother is a product of patriarchal, heteronormative power/knowledge that is attributed to women, internalised, passed from generation to generation and thus sedimented into a common discourse of maternity. This paper considers maternal panopticism, of self, by professionals and in wider socio-cultural *being* that orientates mothering practice as 'correct' or 'right', and conversely 'wrong', 'deviant' or 'failed' and exposes the ways that women continue to adhere to an *intensive*, heteronormative maternal performance whilst denying their embodied breadth of feeling and experience. Expressions of maternal ambivalence and regret are conversely paternalized, pathologized, disciplined and medicalised; responses that *assume* deviance and further embed notions of 'right' or 'wrong' maternity. I use the work of Orna Donath and the #regrettingmotherhood hashtag to argue that *problematizing* a prescribed heteronormative maternity has, to date, failed to produce a more nuanced version of motherhood experience primarily because the 'good mother' trope is so insidious. Mothers therefore conform to a prescribed mothering *performance* through fear that sharing their real and embodied experiences of ambivalence and regret, will result in their labelling as *monsters*. This paper hopes to begin an important conversation by exposing the dichotomy that exists between a practice of motherhood that is prescribed, verses one that is embodied. It investigates the possibility of a nuanced and inclusive dialectic of motherhood that better represents the breadth of embodied experience.

Kate Cornforth (University of Chester), "Feminism is praxis. We enact the world we are aiming for; nothing less will do": Embodying the Feminist Pregnancy Script'

This paper is a creative reading of what the world might look like if people perceived pregnancy through a feminist lens. My research encapsulates how, in the global North, there is a dominant pregnancy script (DPS) where the pregnant body, and people's parenting styles, should fit a universal category, meaning that Black, transgender, non-conforming pregnancies (for example, surrogate pregnancy), and other marginalised bodies are missing from narratives in fiction, film and on social media platforms. To challenge this, I conceptualise a new, *feminist* pregnancy script (FPS) that advocates for pregnant people, mothers, or parents to have agency, autonomy, authenticity, and authority in their choices. Crucially, it is inclusive and supportive of pregnancy, mothering, or parenting that does *not* adhere to the 'rules' of the DPS. In a poetic style, I explain the dangers of dominant and restrictive pregnancy and parenting narratives and propose feminist change.

Kate Cornforth (University of Chester), "Activists taking down the establishment, one Insta-post at a time": Using Social Media for Academic Success'

In this workshop we will look at the 'Woos' and 'Boos' of using social media for academic purposes. The online world can be a dark place of trolling, fake news, comparison, and judgement that feeds your imposter syndrome. However, online platforms can act as a community of support where you can engage with PhD advice and tips, connect with others, and experience interdisciplinary, global networking. In an open, casual, and safe space we will have a conversation about the unexpected benefits of having an academic social media profile. *Remember*: don't feed the troll!

Emily Cousens (London School of Economics, UK), 'Trans Embodiment as Second-Wave Feminist Epistemology'

"As with men theorising about women from the beginning of time, theorists of gender have seen transsexuals as possessing something less than agency" writes Sandy Stone ([1987] 1992, 163). Yet, as this paper will argue, transsexuals were the original theorists of gender. Drawing on original archive research, this paper explores what contributions to second-wave feminist knowledge production come to the fore when the trans body speaks. Throughout the 1950s-1970s in the US, early trans communities were forming and consolidating themselves through correspondence networks and community-produced journals. Taking these sources as philosophical texts, this paper makes two arguments. First, departing from Gayle Salamon's contention that "how we embody gender *is* how we theorise gender" (2010, 71-2), there is a rich archive of embodied theory that was circulating alongside and occasionally

in dialogue with second-wave feminism - and this deserves to be consulted today. And second, not only were trans individuals *engaging* with second-wave feminist philosophy, but through educating leading sexologists, it was the embodied knowledge of trans individuals that *shaped* the development of the concept of “gender” in the clinical setting in America, which feminists later appropriated for their own purposes. In other words, it was trans individuals’ lived embodiments that created the epistemologies that allowed second-wave feminism to get off the ground. The 20 minute paper will be accompanied by a slideshow which includes archival images and recreates the “scrapbook” medium that trans individuals used to shape and share their own understandings of gender in the 1950-1970s.

Anne-Bénédicte Damon (Psychologist, Paris, France), “I am not made like any other I have seen; I dare believe myself to be different from any others who exist”: how Anne Lister Sought to Understand her “Oddity”

At the beginning of the 19th century in Northern England, Anne Lister (1791-1840) describes herself as an “oddity”. Her upper-class background and her family situation allowed her to seek and receive an education far more masculine than feminine, which helped her build her identity, transcend gender norms and affirm what she felt instinctively – that she wasn’t “like anyone else in the whole world.” From an early age, she understands that she is attracted to the female gender, and seeks to understand why, with a thorough exploration of her own body which she describes in her diaries, as well as an interest in medicine and especially dissections. Via a meticulous, near-obsessive report in her diaries of her days, she also chronicles how her body has to adapt to the constraints of her time – with the clothing, for instance and her ‘gaucherie’ – and how it reacts to her environment and travels. From her bathroom habits to her venereal disease, her diaries are a wealth of information about how she lived in her body. Often mistaken for a man, we also see how she deals with being female and the need to appear feminine in a world where men rule. We will discuss how Anne Lister broke through the gender conventions of her time, her sexual and gender identity and how her relation to her own body and others’ bodies influenced her daily life.

Pradnya Doiphode (Jawaharlal Nehru University, India), ‘Taboo, Sexuality, and Selfhood’
Sexuality and taboo have been linked throughout history. This paper examines through a case study interview how taboo has been used as a tool to control and censor sexuality, and its role in the formation of one’s selfhood. The subject of the case study is a married woman who belongs to an ethnic minority community in India. In societies where sexuality is perceived as negative or dangerous and any public discourse on sexuality is a taboo, this has often resulted in challenges in addressing issues such as sexually transmitted diseases, and in birth control advocacy. This paper investigates the likely factors that addresses taboo on sexuality and its impact on the formation of selfhood. The findings from the cases study demonstrate that language and vocabulary play a crucial role in one’s ability to articulate and engage in making sense of selfhood. But a crucial barrier in learning about sexuality is shame in society.

Helen Eadon-Sinkinson (University of Chester), ‘Queering Blackpool’

I am currently working on a short film project with Bright Moon Media to explore the history and culture of drag in the seaside town of Blackpool in the Northwest of England. In this ‘taster’ film I am aiming to capture voices from Blackpool’s drag and entertainment scene that are at risk of being lost. The film attempts to explore not only the cultural manipulation of gendered tropes, in terms of behaviours, dress, and attitudes; but how identity is also composed from the socio-cultural place of Blackpool; and from specific genres of entertainment as they manifest in this sea-side town, which suffers from a high level of deprivation. Blackpool’s identity has been shaped by its raucous history. Early examples of dancing, drunken behaviour and prostitution at the Raikes Garden in the 1870s are documented by Walton (1998) as well as fairground style attractions and a rising number of cheap drinking establishments to cater for the influx of holidaymakers; all of which were difficult to police. Advertising the resort’s entertainment attracted more working-class visitors creating a more down-market holiday resort which continues to this day. The working-class history of the town gives the resort a particular kind of focus. It also means that the town is vulnerable; it is vulnerable to economic market change, problems of poverty, and unemployment. Therefore, this taster film seeks to reflect how Blackpool’s social history might be reflected in both the town and drag performance space through a collection of voices from those who have lived experience of the town.

Mathilda Ernberg (Lund University, Sweden), 'The Matter of Presence: on School Absenteeism in Denmark'

School absenteeism has been studied as a complex phenomenon negotiating with the existence of bodies being present, or not present, with a focus on organizing actors, such as technology. This has highlighted school absenteeism as an ongoing production that organizes relations. However, critical studies on actions for school absenteeism related to what different kinds of bodies do, for narratives on national inclusion and belonging (with an interest in national borders and belonging) are rare. With this project I focus on how places and spaces for belonging negotiate with bodies as present or not present. Thus, the project provides perspectives on how certain bodies and the social categories these are shaped and understood through (such as gender, race and sexuality), function as borders in discourses of belonging. This implicates an analysis that rejects understandings of "makers" of belongings and the bodies these hold, to instead examine how certain bodies, practices and symbols *become* manifestations of borders for belonging. Further, the study is interested in how bodies that become manifestations of borders are living as borders, and are therefore hyper visible and in constant production of a structure that reproduces and make belongings visible and understandable for a majority. Living in a stigmatized body can thus be examined and theorized as a constant labour for a majority.

Harriet Fletcher (Anglia Ruskin University, UK), '(Re)framing Britney Spears: the Celebrity Bimbo, Rape Culture and #MeToo'

The bimbo has always had a pervasive and complex presence in various avenues of popular culture: the performative 'dumb blondes' (e.g. Marilyn Monroe, Dolly Parton); the noughties party girls (e.g. Paris Hilton); and more recently the #NewAgeBimbo content creators on TikTok. The bimbo is never far from popular discourse on gender and celebrity but has been given little scholarly attention. This paper explores the shifting discourses surrounding the celebrity bimbo through media texts in the wake of #MeToo, using Britney Spears and *Framing Britney Spears* (2021) as case studies. Spears was denigrated with the term 'bimbo' in the American media; the documentary makes this overt in the narrative it presents about her fame and weaves the bimbo into a wider critique of exploitative tabloid practices. This paper argues that the bimbo in the early noughties period is a tabloid constructed image of unruly femininity, and in turn, a label used to justify sexual violence against such women – therefore revealing an intersection between rape culture and celebrity culture. This paper contextualises the bimbo by setting up the characteristics of female celebrity and tabloid culture in the early 2000s and how this now sits in the #MeToo feminist landscape. My analysis of the documentary begins by establishing a connection between the bimbo, sex and media intrusion, then explores various journalistic artefacts featuring Spears. On a broader level, this paper reveals a cultural shift in the #MeToo era in which maligned female celebrities from the early 2000s are being re-examined and reclaimed.

Isabel Fontbona (University of Girona, Spain), 'Muscles and Sweat Under the Light of Art. Punished Bodies. Bodybuilding: Freedom or Slavery?'

We understand bodybuilding as the practice of body modification which is governed by the execution of exercises with weights organized by sets and repetitions, the control and domestication of the body through nutrition and supplementation (in some cases also using chemistry). The transformation that results from those guidelines is a flesh sculpture, which is exhibited on stage reproducing poses to be compared with others. Modern bodybuilding was a transgressive way of life especially at its origins and considered empowering, especially in the case of the women who practiced it. In our current society, where the cult of the body has a powerful weight, there has been a significant boom in this type of practice, going from being a subculture to becoming a mainstream. In our society going to the gym is a "MUST." Through art, some athletes-artists have explored the potential of these bodies, which outside the sphere of everyday life and competitions, free of rules, allow us to offer more powerful messages and move us to question our identity and our corporeality. This performance aims to focus on the works of several artists while placing the muscular bodies on the table, to analyze what they tell us outside the gym environment, outside the serial reproduction of exercises. Are they free and powerful bodies, or are they a new reproduction of stereotypes? I take as a starting point my "Corporeal Turbulences. Between Absurdity and Resistance" (2020).

Nicola Forshaw & Morag Galloway (*both* York St. John University, UK), “Talking to Ourselves”: Sharing our Embodied “Mus(e)Dance” Performance Practice”

Nicola Forshaw (dancer and cellist) and Morag Galloway (dancer and violist) will demonstrate how moving and musicking quietens the talking mind, allowing it to hear the body think. We propose that language falls short when talking about bodies, and they are best served *speaking* for themselves. Music, and non-language-based sound, helps them do this. Maxine Sheets-Johnstone (1999, p.260)—in quoting Roger Sperry, that ‘the brain is an organ of and for movement (Sperry, 1952)’—articulates the interwoven relationship we have between our own bodies and minds, and each other’s. Through our collaborative dance and music creative practice we propose a lecture performance where we *show* bodies and instruments, and their narratives. In doing this we will transcend what language could *tell* you about us. Furthermore, our practice demonstrates the body’s desire to be in motion alongside music, as temporal phenomena. Continuing work from Dr Galloway’s PhD (*The Dynamics of Mutuality in the Composer and Performer Relationship*), our braided improvisation-led practice explores Susanne Ravn and Simon Høffding’s assertion ‘that artistic improvisation centres upon a process of oscillating agency’ (2022, p.516) and how each ‘I’—with our separate histories, techniques, knowledges and experiences—becomes an embodied ‘we’ ‘closely connected to the oscillatory process of assuming and relinquishing agency.’ (2022, p.534) We will discuss the research and creation of our performance-piece-in-progress, perform it, and take questions at the end. An introductory film showing how our practice began can be found [here](#).

Kaitlyn Fortune (Memorial University of Newfoundland, Canada), ‘Weighing the Risks: Fat Experiences of Weight Stigma During COVID-19’

The bodily control of women is a core part of patriarchal systems, which can be seen today through diet culture and its dissemination via social media. This project examines the experiences of those assigned female at birth (AFAB) and female TikTok users through experiences of weight stigma during the COVID-19 pandemic. This project seeks to answer the following: How does COVID-19 complicate an existing discussion around the effects of weight stigma on the social and physical well-being of women and AFAB individuals who are likely to experience misogyny? How does social media use affect experiences of weight stigma for fat individuals who may be subjected to misogyny and their ability to cope with the impact of such stigma? In other words, what does it mean to have a body deemed part of an epidemic, amidst a pandemic? This project utilizes qualitative methods in two forms, in-depth interviews and a TikTok content analysis, and included 13 interview participants and 5 TikTok content creators. My findings demonstrate that an increase in body neutrality/acceptance content on TikTok during COVID-19 was matched with an increase in engagement with and adoption of these principles. Weight stigma is a systemic issue, and a prominent form of presentation is fatphobic sentiment underlying medical decisions and diagnoses. By exploring how participants were able to find and cultivate online communities that support protection and aids against stigma, researchers can apply these principles to other systematic social issues to see if the same kind of digital community is helpful in other instances. The implications of this study are a) understanding of TikTok as an educational platform and b) increased knowledge of algorithmic or short video social media as potentially positive to body image and self-worth.

Hannah Frith (University of Surrey, UK), “‘Cos not everyone wants to talk, they prefer to do, to move”: Changing the Narrative on Gender Dysphoria, Gender Euphoria and Body Reflexivity for Trans and Non-Binary People in Physical Education’

Participation in PE for many trans people is frequently not straightforward. This is because trans people and their bodies are often positioned as troubling for PE. Articulations on how the gendered nature of sport increases gender dysphoria are amplified over narratives which highlight the physical joy of doing sport for trans people and increased gender euphoria. This paper draws on empirical qualitative data from interviews with 18 trans adults from a larger study, which asked what their lived experiences were of participating in everyday sport and physical exercise in the UK. Participants frequently reflected on their relationship to their own sporting body, and this paper homes in on these relationships and the coalescence of sporting pleasure/joy and gender euphoria. Focusing on the joys of PE is important because it motivates participation, values gender euphoria, and helps engage young trans people in sport at an early age. This is important because early engagement in PE sets a precedent for continuing into adulthood.

Mohammad Nurussadat Fuad (Al-Azhar University, Egypt), 'The Female Inferiority Complex from the Principle of Dowry in the Social Context of Bangladesh: An Imminent Feature of Marriage'

Co-author: A.H.M. Ershad Uddin (Faculty of Theology, Kocaeli University, Turkey). Marriage is an institution regarded as a stabilizing factor in the family structure in society. However, it is believed as a lifetime contract between husband and wife, especially by women with their in-laws. Many families accept and tag the cost of either their sons or daughters. Regular dowry payment is similar to purchasing a product from a market. The magnitude of dowry payments is never at a rational level, even for people living below the poverty line. Despite their harsh living conditions, they are bound to such payments. However, the limit of one's wage is never a factor of consideration when one has a daughter, as the magnitude of costs only increases rather than decreases. Time has modernized, and minds revolutionized, yet this principle has not altered in any sector of the people, such as in Bangladesh. All of the aforementioned problems are rooted in societal discrimination which forbids the notion of any rights for women; even acknowledging such a concept becomes a source of shame for the community, which fuels rising suicide, murder, and rape rates. An awakening is required for such minds. However educated they might be, in the humane sense, they are ignorant. In the sub-continental regions, the peak of dowry demand as the primary function of marriage in the society of Bangladesh affects the family involved in giving the proportion and the women who are to enter into this sacred institution yet face ultimate violence for this vague factor that is inconsistent with the suicide counts. This paper shows that the dowry system is a continuous ritual among the residents of Bangladesh, regardless of their status, but to what extent Islamic law allows such an act in Islam will explain the views of jurists on this subject in detail.

Jo Gardner (University of Chester), 'How Lena Dunham made the Intimate Incidental using "Un-curated" Nakedness in HBO's *Girls*'

When a woman is naked and (re)presented on-screen, the traditional 'male gaze' of the camera filters her through the prism of objectification and eroticism. For those women who cannot or will not curtail their bodies to meet the global north's neoliberal, post-feminist notion of embodied femininity and ideological beauty, the consequences are marginalisation, and often complete erasure from the mainstream media narrative. Yet, in recent years, a number of women auteurs have begun to take ownership of the gaze and offer television audiences some alternative (perhaps more feminist) ways of looking. For this paper, I will use examples from early episodes of the HBO television series *Girls* to discuss the way auteur Lena Dunham 'un-curated' her own, non-conforming body. I will discuss how Dunham destigmatised her nakedness, and the traditionally intimate spaces of the bedroom and the bathroom, to offer a gaze that felt incidental rather than eroticised; a gaze that speaks to an intentional feminist narrative.

Antara Ghatak (Saint Xavier's University, Kolkata, India), 'Memorializing the Body: Thinking back through the "Mothers of the Plazo de Mayo" of the Dirty War

The term 'Dirty War', originally associated with the military dictatorship in Argentina from 1976 to 1983, has since been applied to neighbouring dictatorships in Latin America. Operation Condor, a nexus of military regimes, abducted, tortured, and inflicted terror by making their political adversaries 'disappear' (*desaparecido*). Argentinian women were kidnapped and suffered sexual abuse. Pregnant women in detention were kept alive only up to their giving birth; their babies were then given up for adoption to the regime. It was in order to resist the state inflicted terror and to demand information about the 'disappeared' that the mothers began to protest in Plazo de Mayo in 1977. The association that came to be known as the Mothers of Plazo de Mayo brings out the gendered notion of oppression. In the Dirty War the mothers became symbolic of the woman's body which was used as the political site where power relations were meted out. A study of the state sponsored official reports, the *Nunca Más* and a collection of testimonies of the mothers, *The Circle of Love Over Death: The Story of the Mothers of the Plaza de Mayo*, form the two empirical and literary components respectively of my paper. The personal memories enabled the mothers to represent themselves as fully individuated subjects and their memory narratives become a strategy of immense epistemic empowerment of the female-self turning her into an agent of knowledge/power. Moreover, these testimonies of the surviving mothers provided important information that was crucial to criminal justice trials of the perpetrators in the wake of transitional justice. The paper attempts to establish how the mothers challenge narration of the nation with their bodies re-emphasizing the signs of women's agency in struggle, resistance, and memorialization.

Georgina Gifford (Western University, Ontario, Canada), 'Listening to, Visualizing, and Mapping the "Talking Body"'

As a result of norms and internalized stigma, the 'talking body' and 'talking mind' can often be found to conflict with one another. So, how can these conflicts and a knowledge thought otherwise to be unintelligible at times be teased out and brought into appearance when conducting research? To answer this question, I turn to queer phenomenology and the visual arts-based research method of body-mapping. In this paper, I will bring queer phenomenology and body mapping together to propose a methodology that accounts for how social structures, norms, and stigma may affect and shape one's embodied experiences and perceptions while not limiting these knowledges to pre-existing and dominant frameworks. Moreover, as I weave the practice of body mapping together with queer phenomenological theory, I will show how the often abstract and at times, elusive, notion of embodiment need not be so. Informed by the theoretical and methodological foundations of my doctoral work on the embodied and subversive intimacies found within in-person sex work, I will draw upon my fieldwork to date as I demonstrate how embodiment can be traced and understood in an accessible and more tangible, concrete way by both researchers and participants alike.

Sofia Gkertzou (Greek Ministry of Education), 'Queer Selves: Michelle Cliff's West Indian Female Re-presentations in *Abeng*'

Jamaican-American author Michelle Cliff features a tripartite relationship among the elements of race, gender, and sexuality in her works. As a biracial, homosexual writer herself, Cliff created *Abeng* – a semi-autobiographical novel – to expand the understanding of mixed-race female identities. Through the coming of age of twelve-year old Clare Savage in the postcolonial Jamaica of the 1950s, Cliff challenges the traditional representation of West Indian women as primarily framed by the discourse of race. Instead, she aims at highlighting other silenced histories of the Caribbean, namely that of sexuality, creating a historical precedence for the existence of homosexual communities in the Caribbean through the incorporation of lesbian folk accounts. I will argue that *Abeng's* homosexual portrayals hold the potential for a revision of the female biracial West Indian identity through the prism of queerness. I will support that queerness turns into a trope for re-educating the protagonist on how to exist as a complex female subject in a historically, culturally and socially complicated community. *Abeng* problematizes queerness. Who is (not) queer? Who doesn't feel queer in a socially segregated and colour-biased Jamaican context? The author insinuates that there is something queer about the way everyone lives in Jamaica and the stories they live with. I intend to argue that queerness turns into a hermeneutic prism through which Clare can distance herself from a family history of miscegenation and rethink herself as a "singularly plural" subject. To support my points theoretically, I will turn to the work of feminist and postcolonial thinkers namely Judith Butler and Homi Bhabha, as well as political philosophers Jean-Luc Nancy and Giorgio Agamben. Overall, in my paper I will stress that *Abeng* is an attempt to rethink conventional frames of West Indian female representation by means of celebrating the elements of sexuality and self-will as individualizing factors for the production of non-uniform West Indian female identities. In short, I will argue that Cliff suggests new strategies of selfhood by emphasizing the desire for "being singular plural".

Ewa Glapka (Szczecin University, Poland), '(How) can Bodies Talk? On Examining the Body and Affect by means of Discourse Analysis'

This paper argues in favour of synthetic research on the body and discourses constructing it. The discussion is based on data from an interview-based, qualitative research on the discursive construction of the female body and beauty in post-apartheid South Africa. The relation between the bodily and the discursive is examined in an analysis of women's talk about their hair, which they construct as 'black' or 'African' hair. Participants' accounts make manifest how their bodies become a site of the intersecting ideologies of race, gender, and class. The accounts also feature numerous references to somatic and affective experiences. Importantly, articulating their bodily experiences in different ways, the participants establish distinct positions in relation to the hegemonic discourses of the body and beauty. In the discussion of these findings, the paper demonstrates the empirical value of treating discourse, body and affect as inherently related, which – the study shows – enables pinpointing how affective and bodily experiences are entangled with the socio-cultural imprints upon the body and with the relations of power of which the body is an object. The data are examined via the analytical frameworks of discursive psychology of affect and critical discursive psychology. Presenting them, the paper addresses one of the key points of the former framework, namely, the capability of language to talk about the body.

Christina Goestl (Independent Artist, Austria), Video Essay: 'Orgasm - On the Flux and Flow of a Term through Times and Spaces'

The ancient term orgasm had multiple meanings — swelling and being excited, intense or violent excitement. Texts before the nineteenth century describe excitement and mention ejaculation, but do not use the term orgasm. In the nineteenth century the term was increasingly used sexually. It was not until the twentieth century that orgasm became an exclusively sexual term. While sciences struggle to understand what constitutes an orgasm to this day — there is lack of agreement about women's orgasms in particular — the term has become an integral part of our language with implications for our understanding of sexuality. In the context of this linguistic development, 'orgasm' became a factor that was assigned a productive function in society. This development has also always been criticized as a normative physiological construct whose fixation on genitalia and function narrows our understanding of pleasure and the joys of sexual bodies. Tracing the term through time, the question arises how pleasure was talked about before the term orgasm came into being with its current meaning and relevance. What perceptions, ideas and descriptions about lust can be found in times when the term was absent? Are there entirely different notions of pleasure to be discovered? And if so, what do they share with contemporary alternative feminist and queer concepts, and what inspirations do they offer when it comes to talking bodies talk?

Sukrity Gogoi (TISS, Mumbai, India), '(Re)constructing Notions of Body and Identity of Female Travelling Performers: Narratives from On and Off Stage'

The body of the performers is at the centre of theatrical performances. This paper will foreground the voices of travelling female performers associated with mobile theatre groups ('bhramyamaan' theatre) in the north-eastern Indian state of Assam. As a popular commercial form of theatre, these theatre groups function within the larger politics of cultural economy that leads to increasing commodification of performers' bodies. Within this performance space, female performers' bodies become "hyper-visible" on one hand, while also rendering them to the margins. This study has been carried out through a feminist ethnographic approach where in-depth interviews were conducted with the women performers (actors and dancers) associated with the mobile theatre industry. Moreover, a performance analysis of selected plays has been done to draw a nuanced understanding of the gender politics at play. It becomes important then to unpack the notions of gender and sexuality as portrayed through the performances. The paper will address three main questions: How does the idea of "womanhood" get constructed and contested through the performances on the mobile theatre stage? Do the identities on stage reinforce stereotypes regarding caste, class, gender, sexuality, ability or do they subvert these notions? What are the lived experiences of the performers themselves regarding their bodies' portrayal on stage and their off-stage position within the theatre groups? Analysing the body as a site of resistance and identity formation, this paper will investigate the processes of inclusions and exclusions that take place through the 'performing self' on stage and the 'real self' off stage.

Kerry Goodall (Edge Hill University, UK), 'Misjudging Books by their Covers: how Queer Identities are Misrepresented on Queer Fiction Book Covers (1928-2002)'

Responding to visual stimuli, readers' book choices are influenced by written and visual information, which publishers display on book covers (Phillips, 2007). Presumed a snapshot of the textual narrative and genre, the assumption is that book cover images represent content and genre of the text (Brown, 2020). In this research I examine the cover images of books, within the queer fiction genre, analysing the meaning of visual representations of gender and sexuality. Scrutinising the book cover images, in comparison with characters within the texts, I examine if Western publishers commodify LGBTQI+ identities for capitalist gain. Texts analysed are: Radclyffe Hall's *The Well of Loneliness* (1928), James Baldwin's *Giovanni's Room* (1956), Alan Hollinghurst's *The Swimming Pool Library* (1988), Sarah Waters' *Tipping the Velvet* (1998), Jackie Kay's *Trumpet* (1998), and Jeffrey Eugenides' *Middlesex* (2002), all featuring characters, identifying under the LGBTQI+ umbrella. These texts are analysed to interrogate themes including, representation, commodification, cultural dominance, and tokenism. The parameters of my research are a chronological span from 1928 to 2002, beginning and ending at the earliest and latest publication dates of the novels in my study. Furthermore, by focusing exclusively on queer fiction, I interrogate the notion that visual representations of queer culture, within Western publishing, has evolved in step with enlightened Western thinking around gender identity and sexuality. Using a visual methodology, anchored by critical discourse analysis, and supported by theorists, I interrogate meaning behind the images to identify discriminatory practices and misrepresentation of queer identities in queer fiction cover images.

Maša Grdešić (University of Zagreb, Croatia), 'The Working-Class Body in Elena Ferrante's *Neapolitan Novels*'

In *Who Killed My Father*, Édouard Louis connects the state of his father's body to his place in society by defining politics as the border that separates protected and privileged bodies from bodies that are exposed to premature death. This concept of the classed body is particularly useful in analysing the intersection of class, gender, age and generation in Elena Ferrante's *Neapolitan Novels*. The novels follow the life-long friendship between Lenù and Lila, two exceptionally bright and talented girls from the poorest part of Naples, starting with their childhood marked by poverty, violence, crime and the Fascist legacy of World War II. Physical labour, poverty and violence have a destructive effect on the bodies of their parents, leading to premature ageing, illness and often death, but also cause mental health issues, such as Lila's "episodes of dissolving margins" or Lenù's "permanent sense of nausea". As the story progresses and Lenù attempts to cross the border between different classes and worlds while Lila stays in the old neighbourhood, the "emotional politics of class" becomes even more visible (Skeggs). The "humiliating difference" between classes, especially concerning body language, is described in great detail and becomes a permanent source of shame for Lenù. On the other hand, the neighbourhood's strong ties with the rest of Italian society are gradually revealed as the narrative meticulously follows the money trail leading from the local loan sharks to the highest levels of government, thus showing how the exploitation of physical labour exceeds class borders.

Cornel Grey (Western University, Ontario, Canada), 'Till the World Ends: Black Queer Desire and the Pursuit of Flesh'

The event of Atlantic enslavement fundamentally transformed the ways human beings engaged in social relations. My work specifically considers how slavery and its afterlives have informed how black queer folks respond to touch and engage in acts of touch with each other. This work also engages public health literature that promotes skin-to-skin contact as important for human wellbeing, but often prescribes prophylactic measures for black communities. In this paper, I examine seemingly mundane social acts to illustrate how black queer folks live and feel differently. More specifically, I argue that black queer intimacies offer generative examples from which we advance alternative forms of relationality with Earth's "life-forms" (Walcott 2021), human and otherwise. Using black feminist and queer theories, this work centers the body as a site of knowledge and honours the cues and signals black queer bodies provide that are not easily measured or valued by traditional scientific methodologies. I attend to the ways the bodies of black queer folks are used to communicate the feelings that language cannot hold, be it during the HIV/AIDS crisis, a night at the club, or a Sunday sermon. I turn to these moments to illustrate how black queer folks mobilize touch as a method to maintain life.

David Griffiths and Katherine Hubbard (University of Surrey, UK), 'Queer Friction: Rubbing LGBTQI Histories up the Right Way'

We propose *Queer Friction* as a metaphor and approach to doing LGBTQI history. Sexual rubbing has been referred to as, for example, frottage or frot, intercrural or interfemoral sex, tribadism or tribbing. Terms for sexual practices shift over time and are sometimes lost. Histories of these terms connect with cultural representations of 'scissoring' and emerging identity terms such as 'side': a preference for sex between men that does not include anal penetration. This raises questions about the interrelationship between language, identities, bodies and practices. Sexual rubbing is discussed in medical diagnostic tools like the *International Statistical Classification of Diseases and Related Health Problems* (ICD) and the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Sexual Disorders* (DSM). Categories related to homosexuality or trans experience have been slowly removed yet rubbing remains a sign of a disorder if practised without consent. Some critics have questioned what makes this a medical diagnosis rather than a crime. In academia, 'tribady' has been used as a metaphor for doing queer history. Similarly, 'frottage' has been suggested as a metaphor and approach for queer diaspora studies. In this paper, we sketch our notes towards a frictive queer history. In the friction between the past and the present we uncover moments of oppression but also moments of pleasure. We ask what friction as a metaphor can do for us, as we seek historical pleasures rubbing up against and in between different histories of sex, gender and sexuality.

Leo Hall (University of Chester), 'Peter Dinklage, *Snow White's* Dwarfs, and Killing Mutants: Social Barriers and Othering Representations of Dwarfism in Popular Film'

In January 2022, the actor Peter Dinklage received a backlash for criticising Disney's live-action remake of *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs*. Dinklage's criticism arises from the misrepresentation of people with dwarfism in media portrayals that are often stereotyping or Othering, adverse or dehumanising.

This paper takes a social approach to representations of dwarfism in popular film and the ways in which embedded practices in visual culture continue to unconsciously reinforce a regurgitated social discourse of discrimination. The positionality of this paper comes from how Laura Mulvey's feminist study on 'Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema' (1999) is also applicable to Disability Studies and the fetishizing of people with dwarfism in media through controlling audience gaze. Mulvey argues that film mirrors socially-established interpretations of difference and controls images and ways of looking. Using Mulvey's theory, it can be shown how film controls the audience gaze and creates a spectacle of the body with a visual disability, thus creating social barriers and reinforcing social oppression. While film is culpable of propounding a damaging image that reinforces negative societal beliefs, it is also capable of changing and imprinting more positive social assumptions about the identities of people with visual disabilities, especially when considering Dinklage's own filmography. The paper considers how Dinklage's character of Bolivar Trask in *X-Men: Days of Future Past* (2014) has a morally ambiguous identity and the ways in which the camera controls audience gaze to normalise his dwarfism and focus on a more complex portrayal of the *Marvel* super-villain.

Vicki S. Hallett (Memorial University of Newfoundland & Labrador, Canada), 'Affective Mapping: The Emotional (Research) Body at Work'

Historian Catherine Hall asks, "What difference might it make to the histories we already have when we interrogate them through questions of intimacy and emotion? What might an emphasis on affect and feeling open up?" (Hall 455). I engage these questions through a multi-media presentation of images and ideas gathered while on a research trip to the Bonavista Peninsula in Newfoundland and Labrador in the summer of 2021. In an affective mapping of the research journey, I think through the embodied navigation of emotion and/in place as a research methodology. In moving the body/mind from archive, to museum, to public art installation, to hiking trail, I was immersed in colonial histories and legacies, and the lives and places of my research subjects, young women who were integral, yet largely forgotten, labourers in the Labrador migratory fishery, which was prosecuted from the late-eighteenth to the mid-twentieth century. Connecting with their lives in the archive, and then walking in the same territory they trod, was a complicated emotional journey. Through plotting its course, I ask whether it might humanize (and/or possibly reproduce) the colonial relations found in the archive, and in this place, and chart the role of intimacy (physical and emotional) in these relations.

Ali Hanbury and Rachael Eastham (Me&Her, UK), 'We Need To Talk About Sex with People undergoing Radiotherapy for Gynaecological Cancers'

Radiotherapy for gynaecological cancer involves manipulating and talking about and over bodies. However, research that has gathered narratives about people's experiences of such treatment exposed problematic silences, especially about sex (Ashmore, et al., 2022). Consequently, in order to address this finding and to improve care, Me&Her were commissioned to work together with therapeutic radiographers to develop skills and resources that would enable and embed conversations about sex and pleasure within radiotherapy treatment. 15 radiographers across the UK participated in three workshops about sexual wellness. The aim was to understand that having conversations about sex prior to, during and following radiotherapy treatment are a practice of care (Puig de la Bellacasa, 2017; Linden and Singleton, 2020). The workshops increased critical awareness about damaging silences when providing radiotherapy for gynaecological cancer and promoted confidence and development of resources. This workshop will share insights from the original research, learning from the sessions with practitioners and will involve practical, hands-on activities using resources to encourage better 'talk' about (sexual) bodies in this context. Since 2008 Me&Her have worked in sexual health clinics, women's and LGBT+ centres, and conducted gender and sexualities research. During this, these two sex critical feminists have constantly talked about sex and pleasure and get to do it sometimes too. Motivated by a desire to challenge typical assumptions about sexual lives and pleasure, for the last decade they have delivered fun and interactive workshops nationally and to explore themes about the sex lives of women and others discriminated against by patriarchy.

Jonathan Hay (University of Chester), 'Endless Heteronarrative: Respawned Bodies in Cinematic Science Fiction'

As Judith Roof demonstrates, the overwhelming majority of Western narratives are heteronarrative. They not only naturalise heterosexual modes of embodiment, but also give birth to derivative works in their own image. In such texts, embodiment necessarily figures solely as a precursor to propagation. The cinematic works of the Science Fiction genre, this paper argues, are overpopulated by such heteronarrative tropes. In popular cinematic texts such as *Groundhog Day* (1993), *Source Code* (2011),

Edge of Tomorrow (2014), *Palm Springs* (2020) and the HBO series *Westworld* (2016-), heterosexual affect is positioned as the prerequisite of narrative eucatastrophe. As members of a common lineage, these works are emblematic of a conspicuous trend in modern Science Fiction which is symptomatic of Steven Shaviro's concept of post-cinematic rupture. Just as the advent of moving pictures revolutionised the narrative strategies of late nineteenth-century novel, this paper argues that the popularisation of video games has significantly altered the scope of bodily representation in filmic media. By asserting the ability of bodies to respawn, such texts dramatise the proprioceptive augmentation of embodied existence in the digital age. Whilst bodies respawn endlessly onscreen, the boundaries between our bodies and technologies are becoming increasingly blurry. Even as the corporeal boundaries of embodiment are shifting, I argue, the normative logic of the heteronarrative is in the process of rapidly being eternalised, as it reproduces and is consumed *en masse*.

Hannah Hayes (University of Sydney, Australia), 'Good Lads, Top Blokes: Exploring what it Means to be a "Good Man" in School-Based "Masculinity Programmes"'

In recent years, peer-on-peer sexual violence, abuse and harassment in schools has made headlines in Australia and the United Kingdom. Social media petitions 'Teach Us Consent' by Chanel Contos in Australia, and 'Everyone's Invited' by Soma Sara in the United Kingdom have drawn attention to the concerns of "toxic masculinity" contributing to the values and attitudes of young men in schools. My project looks to explore 'masculinity programmes', designed by organisations and charities for use in schools. Through critical analysis of the programme websites, 'good' has emerged as a reoccurring concept utilised to describe a type of boy, man, lad or bloke which providers discuss with boys and young men. Early analysis suggests that some programmes are marketed to provide an intervention targeting the 'problems' faced by boys and young men, with particular reference to the behaviours that suggest young people are engaging with an "unhealthy" or "toxic" masculinity. This paper looks to expose how these programmes use the term 'good' to frame men and masculinity, and what ways "good" is used to challenge such behaviours. By exploring the interpretations of what a "good" man looks like presents an opportunity to engage with framings that may rearticulate or reproduce hegemonic masculinities, including behaviours, attitudes and values coded as "good" that work against each other.

Hannah Helm (University of Salford, UK), "My dear mute foundling with those telling eyes of yours": Female Agency, Visual Forms, and the Disabled Gaze in Hans Christian Andersen's "The Little Mermaid" (1837)'

This paper undertakes the first combined literary analysis of gender, disability, and the gaze in Hans Christian Andersen's fairy tale 'The Little Mermaid', arguing that the little mermaid's gaze functions as a strategy of empowerment that challenges the able-bodied male gaze. Through an examination of the tale and associated visual forms, this paper contends that Andersen draws on the disabled female gaze as a productively feminist tool. Whilst the little mermaid is at first objectified by other characters, her own disabled female gaze functions as a site of resistance because she uses sight to overcome ableist and patriarchal barriers. This progressive approach moves away from the damaging tropes often assigned to disabled characters in nineteenth-century children's literature, such as pity, villainy, and tragedy. Using the disabled female gaze as a reading strategy ultimately offers a much needed and refreshing counterpoint to the highly theorised concept of the male gaze. Whilst feminist scholars have previously engaged with representations of gender and disability in the tale (Yenika-Agbaw, 2011; Yamato, 2017; Hammond Sebring and Greenhill, 2020), critics are yet to place the tale in dialogue with Literary Disability Studies approaches in order to explore new links between femininity, disability, and the gaze. The fact that the disabled female gaze can be used to investigate literary and artistic expressions of feminist agency and empowerment exemplifies Abbye Meyer's recent argument that 'disabled characters can reclaim themselves and find pride, even in their marginalized positions' by 'find[ing] the power to force radical readings and rereadings' (2022).

Liz Hendy (University of Chester), 'Section 28: A Closeted Legacy'

In 1988, Margaret Thatcher's Conservative government made a major landmark in British LGBTQ history by introducing Section 28 of The Local Government Act, making certain that the "promotion of homosexuality" by schools and other community bodies was, from that moment onwards, illegal. Section 28 attempted to closet a generation, its imagery now a lasting symbol of shame, repugnance, and guilt towards LGBTQ people. Yet, while this momentous passage of anti-gay legislation impacted on millions of British schoolchildren up until its repeal in 2003, the Section 28 era is a mysterious period that eludes recognition by many British people. Like a lot of LGBTQ history, Section 28 exists in the

remote archives of libraries and the hearts and minds of those who lived it. LGBTQ history must be preserved as it often must rely on living memory; therefore, its existence is always under threat as people ignore, forget, or pass on. LGBTQ political activism has built on the memories and lived experiences of protest, lobbying and solidarity, while being acutely aware of the fundamentally conditional nature of LGBTQ rights, reluctantly relying on their political contexts, which have distinctive legacies of their own. As anti-LGBTQ legislations are appearing in the US and across Europe, we must learn from our past. Casting an analytical lens over the cultural sector, I examine the role of British repositories of knowledge, history and culture in the societal closeting of LGBTQ legacies during and following Section 28.

Hadas Hirsch (Oranim Academic College of Education, Haifa, Israel), 'Cross Dressing and Gender Roles in Early Islam: the Case of the Abbasid *ghulāmiyyāt*'

This paper aims at describing the personal performance of the *ghulāmiyyāt*, slave women, as part of the wider context of cross dressing in medieval Islam. The importance of visibility and performance is proved by the detailed descriptions of the *ghulāmiyyāt*'s personal appearance. Their personal performance presented a new model of feminine beauty and fashion that resembled male youth. Instead of pure imitation we find an extension of women's ideals of beauty and fashion by including masculine aspects of performance. This mixture created a new fashionable trend, although it lasted only briefly. The *ghulāmiyyāt* were aimed at enriching al-'Amīn's sexual world with more female options instead of embracing homosexuality, a prohibited sex option producing no offspring as heirs. These females practiced two complementary identities: sexual identity of women and gendered temporary identity of men. The personal performance of the *ghulāmiyyāt* was achieved by transitory changes, a fact that reflected their liminal situation and imagined masculine identity that could easily be changed. This liminal model was activated by adopting unique characteristics of personal performance, which by their removal, these women reverted to their female personal performance. It is a kind of liminal social mobility, a way to break into the public sphere as *ghulāmiyya*, but once they reverted to feminine performance, they were pushed again to the private sphere. This analysis will shed some light on the multiple roles of personal performance as well as on the phenomenon of female slaves' cross dressing in medieval Islam as transitory identity that was legitimized and institutionalized.

Lilian Holland (University of Bristol, UK), 'Queering the Disembodied Voice: The Body of Prince's Camille'

A central way in which humans subconsciously read gender in others is through voice. The pitch, resonance, and timbre of the human voice signifies assumed gender in a similar way to physical attributes. How, then, can we create a queer voice, a voice which refuses essentialist definitions of gender and sex and exists as intentionally Other? This paper looks at the ways in which disembodied voice can create a voice without a sexed body, and then delves in to Prince's characterisation of his vocal alter-ego character Camille, a character he created who existed only as a disembodied voice. Prince created Camille through using varispeed on his voice, a technique which raises the pitch of the voice as well as adding an "unnatural timbre" (Rogers). This pitch raising did not extend Prince's already expansive vocal range, but instead deliberately created confusion around the voice's production and gender. Additionally, disembodied voice is linked inexorably to race; the removal of Black subjects from their voices through the innovation of technologies like the phonograph (Weheliye, Abrovanel). Prince queered this removal of race by deliberately separating Camille from himself, intentionally creating a disembodied character who existed outside of traditional conceptions of gender, race, and sex. The body of Camille, then, exists as extra-human; they are a character who exists as superhuman through their ability to shapeshift through sex, humanity, and corporeality itself.

Mary Horbury (Grassroots Community Co-Operative, Chester, UK), 'Leaving Conversations for the Future: a Poster and Workshop with Participatory Feet-ins'

This workshop focuses on FEET, and will provide an atmosphere of acceptance – a space to reflect, to share and to connect with one another. The subject is stimulated by the experience of standing amongst feet outlines on an Egyptian temple roof in 2000. The feet had been engraved on that roof top almost 1,500 years ago. Yet they still create conversations. Were the markings of feet made in an atmosphere of performative, empowered, gendered behaviour, or were they restrictive boundary markers? Images will stimulate thinking and conversations about ways in which we record our presence, how our bodies interact with landscapes, how control and boundaries are imposed. Together we will explore notions of sociogeography, discussing our own assumptions and seeing where the conversations take us. There

will be opportunities for participatory feet marking as we think about conversations which can be left behind.

Vani Jain (Durham University, UK), 'Performing Gender, Surviving Sexuality: An Intersectional Analysis of Marginalization in India'

The study of gender and sexuality has become increasingly popular in social sciences. Gender roles are based on what is considered appropriate behaviour for men and women according to society's expectations. In a ground-breaking paper, West and Zimmerman (1987) proposed that gender is something we do, and not who we are. This paper delves into the performative aspects of gender and sexuality, particularly in physical and noticeable contexts. Drawing on the results from my doctoral research, this paper explores how gender roles are applied and embodied. The study aims to contextualize the findings within the framework of intersectionality in an Indian background. Interviews were conducted with the LGBTQIA+ community in India. The three common themes that emerged from the participants' interviews are: (a) Physical appearance: how gender expectations are enforced and sexual expression is regulated through various means such as clothing choices and hairstyles; (b) Sexual Abuse: how marginalization, either physical or in terms of social visibility, led to instances of sexual exploitation; and (c) Harm to the Body: how the pressure to conform to cisheteronormative norms affected the participants' mental health and well-being. Through a structural analysis of individual experiences, societal and cultural expectations, and institutional limitations, the findings have been examined to contribute a new position on a topic understudied in the region.

Samyamoy Khutia (Indian Institute of Technology (BHU) Varanasi, India), 'Fear of a Queer Body: Body as a Project in Bengali Films'

The successful iterations of the speculation, dilemma, and trauma of the transitioning of a body are evident in recent Bengali cinema. *Chitrangada: The Crowning Wish* (2012) and *Nagarkirtan (The Eunuch and the Flute Player, 2017)*—both winners of the Special Jury Award in the National Film Awards—are two of the most essential queer films in India which attribute the body as a project to work on. In these films, not only do the transitioning bodies get visible, the narrative arcs revolve around those bodies. The characters embodying the bodies are distinctive, the setting and the socio-economic situation of the characters are disparate, and none of the bodies gets their desired manifestation the films begin with. The films champion in highlighting the performance of the self on the biological body to express its sexual identity. In both narratives, appearance is measured against others, and also, dissatisfaction with the bodies occurs when they become objectified by others (Tazzyman 2017). The characters, with their partners, yearn to express their desired selves through the modification of sartorial choices and their biological bodies. The paper will argue how the body becomes an instrument, which is always in the process of becoming, to manifest and resonate with the self's sexual identity as well as a site of contestation between desire and subjectivity.

Karis King (Northumbria University, UK), 'Neuroqueering OnlyFans: Sex, (Anti)Work and Neurodivergence'

Since its inception in 2016, the social media platform come porn site, OnlyFans, has soared in popularity. In August 2021, OnlyFans announced an upcoming ban on sexually explicit content, retracting their decision in the same week. Despite this, OnlyFans remains a precarious workplace, amidst an online culture which increasingly seeks to deplatform sex. OnlyFans hosts over 1.5 million content creators from diverse backgrounds. At the same time, sex work and neurodivergent communities on Twitter have observed an over-representation of neurodivergent people in sex work. Despite knowledge that neurodivergent people are often excluded and maltreated in the normative workplace, there is a striking lack of research examining the interconnection of sex work and neurodivergence. An emergent concept, 'neuroqueer', rejects the notion that neurodivergent people should assimilate into cis/hetero/neuronormative society, instead embracing creative, subversive practices, and rejecting fixed and limiting notions of identity. Alongside this, the 'anti-work' movement questions the value and necessity of traditional labour structures, and seeks to create a society that prioritises leisure, freedom, and human fulfilment over wage labour. Within this context, this research aims to understand the interconnecting relationships between sex, (anti)work, and neurodivergence on OnlyFans from a neuroqueer perspective. Through Participatory Action Research (PAR) that prioritises the experiences and needs of neurodivergent sexual content creators on OnlyFans, this research explores the platform's potential as a site of neuroqueer and anti-work resistance.

Saesha Kini (MICA, Ahmedabad, India), 'Exploring Boundaries of "Talk" in Fat Body Acceptance'

Fat bodies are historically spoken of as an embodiment of lack, be it one of having a delineable form and bearing (in accordance to ideals of gender, sexuality, class, ability), or markers of 'accomplishment' in having worked on one's external and visible aspects which are conflated with one's mental/spiritual condition. They are likewise termed deficient both in their commitment to endeavours of value in modern societies, and in an individualist vision of self-dependence that claims independence from crutches of external support. Projected retrogressively to defining imaginaries of modernity, these bodies make an undesirable if necessary foil for slender, strong, and agile presenting bodies to be lauded the acme of productivity, self-reliance, self-discipline, and self-restraint. In such a dispossessing backdrop that restricts avenues for fat bodies to 'talk' (and 'act') beyond stigmatizing definitions, articulations of fat body acceptance through self-love, body positivity, and plus-size appear as strings of hope for fat bodies to voice and enact themselves as productive, worthy, contented, and responsible. My research builds upon the above premise and cues from feminist and fat studies scholarship to explore possibilities enabled by the articulations of fat body acceptance and the apparatuses that continue to (re-)determine boundaries of talk (and enactments). I situate the inquiry in India where fat body acceptance has taken root over last decade, interviewing diverse proponents of this domain, which together layers the inquiry with culturally-textured insights on how fat body acceptance comes to talk within this location.

Beniamin Kłaniecki (Adam Mickiewicz University, Poland), 'His-story of New India: Masculinity in Pankaj Mishra's National Narratives'

When in the 1990s the Indian economy underwent rapid liberalisation, India's national mythology responded by inventing the country's identity anew – as a New India. Ever since, Indian writers have grappled with reassessing the new national myth and reimagining its foundational narratives. In this paper, I analyse how Pankaj Mishra retells the story of New India's rise and crisis as a his-story. Mapping the national narratives onto the fate of his male protagonists in *The Romantics* (1999) and *Run and hide* (2022), Mishra interrogates the ideas of hegemonic masculinity that were dominant respectively in the 1990s and 2020s. In *The Romantics*, he illustrates India's shift to New India as a move from Gandhian to post-liberalisation masculinity models, whereas over two decades later, in *Run and hide*, he documents their subsequent plight, gesturing in a way towards an end of the New India myth. Bringing into conversation issues of class, caste and national identity, Mishra distils the essence of what masculinity is supposed to be in the New Indian mythology and shows how unviable such masculinity can be. Therefore, I argue that Mishra tells the nation's story as an embodied metaphor and uses the motif of masculinity crisis to reassess the post-1990s mythology and expose its fallacies. The reading of the novels is contextualised with socio-historical studies of Indian masculinity, which additionally helps position Mishra's literary intervention in the ongoing project of narrating New India.

Katarzyna Kociołek (University of Warsaw, Poland), 'Ageing Bodies and Beauty in Selected Polish Women's Magazines'

In *Gender Trouble* Judith Butler notes that women have long been "the objects of exchange" (1999, 49), for the social functions performed by women in kinship relations have accentuated their role as "a sign and a value", which served the purpose of strengthening collective identity in paternalistic societies (Butler 50). Likewise, contemporary media advertisements of beauty products position female bodies as "the objects of exchange". The beauty industry, which generally endorses fixed and unified concepts of male and female identities and by the same token secures the patriarchal power structure, reduces women to a value through advertising in which youthful female bodies are placed at the centre of economic exchange. This overvaluation of young women is accompanied with the underrepresentation or devaluation of aging women. The aim of the paper is to examine the representation of ageing in selected issues of Polish women's magazines. With reference to Naomi Wolf's concept of the beauty myth, the paper argues that old age and ageing is presented as a major threat to women's sense of psychological integrity. Although the theme of old age is rarely directly addressed in the magazine, its presence is implied in the advertised anti-age beauty products. Based on semiotic theory the paper examines the textual and visual content of these magazines to demonstrate that they treat ageing of female bodies as socially unacceptable.

Brydie Kosmina (University of Adelaide, Australia), *Feminist Afterlives of the Witch*
From the book's blurb: "The book investigates the witch as a key rhetorical symbol in twentieth- and twenty-first-century feminist memory, politics, activism, and popular culture. The witch demonstrates the inheritance of paradoxical pasts, traversing numerous ideological memoryscapes. This book is an

examination of the ways that the witch has been deployed by feminist activists and writers in their political efforts in the twentieth century, and how this has indelibly affected cultural memories of the witch and the witch trials, and how this plays out in popular culture representations of the symbol through the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. Consequently, this book considers the relationship between popular culture and media, activist politics, and cultural memory. Using hauntological theories of memory and temporality, and literary, screen, and cultural studies methodologies, this book considers how popular culture remembers, misremembers, and forgets usable pasts, and the uses (and misuses) of these memories for feminist politics. Given the ubiquity of the witch in popular culture, politics and activism since 2016, this book is a timely examination of the range of meanings inherent to the figure, and is an important study of how cultural symbols like the witch inherit paradoxical memories, histories, and politics”.

Elisabeth Lechner (University of Vienna, Austria), ‘From Dieting Suffragettes to Radical Fat Liberationists and Digital Activists: Feminist Food Politics Through the Ages’

Inspired by the well-known feminist adage “We don’t want a bigger slice of pie, we want the whole bakery!”, in my contribution I will analyse feminist assemblages around food and body politics, asking about power relations and the ways foodstuffs as well as eating/dieting habits influenced and continue to influence feminist activism. In a capitalist, patriarchal world, food is a marker of distinction and violent power structures (cf. sugar and colonial exploitation), related to the performance of gendered, classed and racialized identities, dissected for its health benefits, beauty bonuses and ecological impacts. From the dieting suffragettes (mostly upper-class white women whose politics were permeated with racial and class biases), who strategically dieted “like a man” to demonstrate rationality and control over their bodies, a radical ‘fat-in’ in New York’s Central Park in 1967 that had fat liberation protesters burn diet books and eat cake in rebellious ways, to postfeminist ‘choice’ narratives that framed aesthetic labour and restricted forms of eating as empowerment, we will arrive at contemporary feminisms and digital activists like @thesweetfeminist, who engages in mediated forms of radical baking (sharing photos of motto cakes with slogans like “let’s unlearn white feminism together” on Instagram). By looking at a transmedial corpus of feminist food texts, we will retrace together how biopolitics and ideology intersect on the site of ‘the body’ via food.

Flora Loeffelmann (University of Vienna, Austria), ‘Investigating Rhetoric-Epistemic Oppression by the Example of Trans* Experiences’

This project from trans* philosophy combines epistemology (Fricker 2007, Dotson 2014, Harding 2004) and queer phenomenology (Ahmed 2006, Salamon 2018) with Foucauldian genealogy (Foucault 1978) to investigate the phenomenon ‘rhetoric-epistemic oppression’ (REO). ‘Rhetoric’ signals that this oppression targets a speaker. I argue that paying attention to productive mechanisms of power can shed light on injustices that happen because someone is believed *only if* they present in a certain way. Of interest is the way in which speakers are forced to speak about themselves in ways that are both epistemically oppressive *and* epistemically productive (i.e. producing knowledge about the speaker that further contributes to their oppression). In the case at the centre of my study, the victim of REO is pressured (coerced or manipulated) to fashion statements about their embodied situatedness according to socially prevalent norms and expectations. REO harms subjects in at least two ways. On a *discursive level*, it prevents subjects from articulating important ranges of truths about themselves, thus harming subjects’ *epistemic agency*. On an experiential level, the coerced utterances influence subjects’ *embodied situatedness*, harming them in their ability to explore possibilities of being. REO does not only affect trans* people. But arguably they are a particularly salient target. I will focus on trans* subjects’ engagement with contexts in which cis people and binary gender norms are predominantly operative.

Laura Love (Essex University, UK), ‘An Art Historical Approach to Trans Representation in the UK’

My research is the first methodologically art-historical account of the representation of transgender individuals in Britain during the second half of the 20th century. Using new archival deposits, this paper will take as its core corpus the visual representations of and by transgender people within and concurrent to The Beaumont Society, a controversial British campaigning and support group for self-identified “transvestite” men and (usually closeted) transgender women which grew out of related organisations in the US. In her book *Transgender History*, Susan Stryker briefly describes how central ideas about images are to the political and personal lives of trans people. Her account is that as we have become more culturally comfortable with digitally created images which do not refer to the ‘real’ in

the way that photographs did in the analogue era. From an art-historical perspective, this feels flawed in some obvious ways, not least of which is its reductive account of the relationship between analogue photography and its subject. With the Beaumont archives at the core of my project, my focus will be on visual representations over this transformative period in the legal and social history of transgender individuals. I will draw comparisons between images made within the society and those by other publications of the time, and will look at the purpose of these images and their intended audience.

Morgana Loze-Doyle (University of Chester), 'Impure Bodies: an Exploration of the British Evangelical Purity Culture Movement'

The Christian evangelical purity culture movement of the 1990s and 2000s communicated to a subculture of millennial young women that their bodies were inherently sinful; that they were to be covered, minimised, silenced and controlled. Alongside this, sexual exploration outside of heterosexual marriage for life was forbidden, and strict binary gender roles and expectations were communicated (Browning, 2010; Moslener, 2017). Starting in the US, this movement disseminated to evangelical communities across the world, including Britain. The legacy of this movement is carried in the now adult bodies of many who lived under it and yet the British experience of the evangelical purity culture movement is an area of research that has only recently started to be explored (Sharma, 2008, 2011; Gaddini, 2019, 2021; Cross, 2020). As both an insider impacted by the culture and rhetoric of this movement and a feminist qualitative researcher, I draw on my current doctoral project to explore the movement by focusing on millennials who self-identify as having participated in it and who have been subsequently affected by it. This paper discusses some of the key factors of the purity movement in Britain, first how it differs from its American counterpart, second how my experience as an insider and themes from previous research, such as how the movement disproportionately impacted women, helped shaped my research design. Finally, I outline my methodology including why I chose to include all genders rather than focusing only on the female experience.

Yaxin Luo (University of Leeds, UK), 'Body as a binding tool in theatre practice-research'

This performance will illustrate how the body is used as a binding tool in a practice-based PhD project researching the intercultural issues raised for a Chinese artist when composing a feminist adaptation of an episode from a Qing dynasty novel *A Dream of Red Mansions* (《红楼梦》) for contemporary UK theatre audiences. My adaptation *Blossoms of Her Selves* (《她薔》) contextualises contemporary female issues, especially female suicide, independence and relationships under the patriarchal system, which was firstly performed in February 2022 while breaking the on/off stage boundaries, and integrating the immersive effects of theatre, cinema and gallery. The body, precisely my concept of the "feminist corpse", refers to both a living body played by a performer and a concept shaped by feminist theories, which was developed through a recreation of an ancient Chinese female beauty role and has been generated to reflect the East Asian woman being treated as an aesthetic object in wider socio-cultural patriarchy power dynamics while demonstrating women's shared sufferings crossing borders. I will explain how body worked as a bridge linking Chinese and Western feminisms, an intersection exploring the interaction between intercultural, feminism and intermediality in theatre adaptation, a crucial motif informing my script writing and performance praxis, collaborative workshops and large-scale production.

Kimberley Mather (University of Manchester, UK), 'Tomboy Objects'

This paper analyses of the figure of the tomboy through a queer phenomenological framework by taking the tomboys of two autobiographical narratives, Annie in Annie Lanzillotto's *L is for Lion* and Ivan in Ivan Coyote's *Tomboy Survival Guide* and reading them alongside Sara Ahmed's theory of object orientation. Previous research on the tomboy has approached the figure through a gendered relation to bodily movement. The tomboy is understood as displaying either the desire for the freedom of the movements of boys, or a resistance against the restricted movement of girls. These gendered discourses become inscribed onto the tomboy body and naturalised as normal childhood behaviour until the point where it threatens to exceed childhood play and develop into a gender deviant adolescence. Departing from this, this paper reads the tomboy as a queer and disruptive orientation towards objects. In *L is for Lion* tomboy objects are held in proximity to the body, offering a transformative potential. Comparatively, in *Tomboy Survival Guide*, the negative effects of the failure to orient one's desire towards the correct objects make an impression on the tomboy body. This paper seeks out the transformative potential of queer objects while acknowledging queerness as an embodied experience of the attempts to correct one's disorientations.

Clare McKeown (Universities of Stirling & Strathclyde, UK), 'The In/Visibility of Fat Bodies in Campaigns against Gendered Violence'

My 2022 PhD identified five semiotic trade-offs in 16 Scottish feminist campaigns to end men's violence against women. This paper will explore two trade-offs with respect to fat women's bodies. Making some bodies visible involves making others less visible, i.e. *inclusion involves exclusion* (trade-off 1). While there was diversity, none of the corpus materials represented feminine bodies that were categorically and conspicuously "fat" (albeit some might be described as "plump"). No materials foregrounded the specific experiences of fat women. This relative invisibility reinforces Royce's claim that more critical work is needed around the intersections between sizeism and violence against women (2009, p. 151). The second trade-off is around creating *general representations of specific experiences* which do not divert too much attention away from the core issue. If an image is framed as being "about" a specific group, it may appear less relevant to those outwith that group. The exclusion of fat women from sexual violence narratives reinforces myths that some bodies are too undesirable to harass or rape. It ignores the specific ways that fat women may experience male violence, e.g., abusers may use anti-fat insults as part of a pattern of control (Royce, 2009, p. 153). It misses the opportunity to expose the cultural shame assigned to feminine bodies that do not sufficiently adhere to normative standards of beauty, and how that cultural shame can then be weaponised against women. This paper will draw from feminist media theory to interrogate this silencing of fat bodies.

Val Meneau (University of Salzburg, Austria), 'Shifting DanceSport's Abject Domain: Negotiating Queer Agendas within Heteronormative Competitive Ballroom Dancing'

In the course of 2022, the Austrian DanceSport Federation constituted a small task force aiming at including intersex people within heteronormative ballroom dancing competitions. This followed the new national policy adding a third gender option specifically for intersex people. Since I myself took part in competitions within the Austrian DanceSport circuit and am working on my PhD on gender performances in DanceSport, I was invited to join to the sessions. This afforded me insight into the politics that regulate which bodies, sexes and sexual orientations are to remain taboo, and which are becoming socially acceptable through this change. The inclusion of intersex people functioned as a Trojan horse for same-sex couples to break through and finally be allowed to dance next to heteronormative couples on the floor. In fact, it was championed by two gay officials of the Federation. This change was made possible by shifting the abject to a narrower category: non-binary and trans* people, who remain excluded from competitions. Aside from the (although important) questions of discrimination in judging, or the performance of heteronormative binary genders in dancing and choreography, this paper focuses on the regulation of bodies, the discourses and practices delimitating which bodies are to be seen at competitions, and which bodies are excluded entirely – and who enforces these regulations. I address the divisions between the LGBTQI+ communities and the consequences of defending LGB-centred policies, highlighting the tensions and the strangeness my non-binary body brought to these meetings.

Ricardo J. Millhouse (The University of Alabama, USA), 'Political Bodies and a Spatial Method that Transcends Language'

I move through the crowd in the nightclub Langston's. Black queer sweating bodies find each other on the dance floor not based on language alone, but through sensation, atmosphere, and nostalgia. Black queer vernacular transcends language and demands the attention of our senses. I hear and feel the beat of the bass from the 90s hip-hop music that shakes the bodies in the crowd. I taste the sweat swimming to the corner of my mouth. The Black queer bodies move their hips faster from side to side, thrust their hips stronger moving forwards and backwards, and their arms begin caressing each other passionately (Millhouse 2021). My paper addresses the questions, "is language ever sufficient when it comes to talking about bodies?" and "which bodies are political?" My paper centres the 'Do the Right Thing' Block Party and Happiness Lounge (Brooklyn, New York). I discuss the conditions under which Black queer people necessitate Black queer placemaking. Through this practice, Black queer people may heal and feel joy through vernacular intimacy that is almost always sensed. I argue that Black queer bodies are political. To articulate their politics, we could rely on a spatial method, Black queer spatiality—a spatial research method that relies on spatial articulations including atmosphere, nostalgia, and sensation. Ultimately, I suggest that Black queer placemaking is an act that resists the institutionalization and normalization of anti-Blackness, homophobia, and spatial segregation; and therefore, it is a practice that is explored using Black queer spatiality.

Hessam Mirgolbabaei (University of Minnesota, USA), 'Pride in STEM: Aspiration to stay in STEM, Comprehensive Presentation of Sexual Minorities and Women, and Psychological Experiences' (Co-author: Abigail Clarke-Sather)

STEM, particularly engineering, may need to emphasize diversity and inclusion for LGBTQIA+ students and professionals. Despite explicit discrimination, microaggressions threaten LGBTQIA+ well-being, satisfaction, and performance. Psychotic experiences mediated by borderline personality disorder traits, loneliness, and stressful life events are significantly more common among sexual minorities in England than heterosexuals. Psychotic experiences were also mediated by loneliness, anxiety, depression, and marijuana use in the U.S. and were associated with sexual minority status by about 60% when all factors combined were considered. Focusing on national, longitudinal student samples, sexual minority students' retention is about 10% less than their heterosexual peers in STEM. As compared to their heterosexual peers, they are more marginalized, devalued, and are more likely to have health and wellness problems during school years. Different genders and sexual orientations have different lifestyles and viewpoints. Utilizing a spectrum of ideas and perspectives begins with understanding diversity, inclusion, and equity. Diverse educational and working environments present numerous challenges. In this regard, it is crucial to consider practical interventions and approaches. In the first 10 years after hiring, half of female STEM faculty leave their positions. Additionally, women's workplace experiences would resonate with those of LGBTQIA+ whose identities violate masculine gender norms. In the present work, practical interventions and approaches to promote LGBTQIA+ engagement in STEM, either as professionals or aspirants, are discussed, focusing on campus climate, affirming health support, research participation, the first impression for onboarding students, and better women representation, incentives, inclusive hiring and decision-making processes, administrative structures, and recognition of the faculty.

Elsbeth Mitchell (University of Leeds, UK), 'Toxic Bodies, Trans-Corporeality and Fungal Life?'

This performative paper explores questions of toxic bodies, trans-corporeality and fungal life. It does this through analysing the feminist effects of an artwork: *Nothing Nowhere into Something Somewhere* (2015) by Romanian and Slovak artist-duo Lucia Tkáčová and Annetta Mona Chişa working with Polish artist Agnieszka Brzezańska. The name of the work, *Nothing Nowhere into Something Somewhere*, hints at a transformation process for which the content is yet to be determined: nothing becomes something. Following a hallucinogenic experience on the mushroom *Amanita Muscaria*, the artists collected their urine and transformed this waste product into jelly. To activate the artwork, the visitor would consume the jelly thus ingesting the urine laced with the psychoactive compounds of the mushroom, cleansed of the toxicity found in its mushroom form. The artwork activates a multi-species collaboration but also one which also prompts us to question feeling of disgust, the regulation of boundaries and notions of toxicity. This paper takes this example to explore how entanglements with fungi offer opportunities to understand embodied and diverse ways of knowing, contributing to an established yet growing area of scholarship working on the body at the intersection of feminist theory, environmental theory and new materialism/philosophy.

Sancharini Mitra (IIT Madras, India), 'Challenging Menstrual Stigma in India: Re-Imagining the Menstruating Body in Contemporary Times'

In India, the year 2015 saw a series of university-based campaigns (in the cities of Delhi, Kolkata, and Kochi), as well as an online campaign, primarily by young students seeking to destigmatise menstruation, and bring the menstruating body out into the forefront of conversations from the secrecy and invisibility it is usually shrouded in. These campaigns included 'Pads against Sexism', 'Gender Justice' (in universities), and 'Happy to Bleed' (on social-media), which attempted to navigate a host of issues: foregrounding sexual violence through the lens of menstruation – pointing towards the institutional apathy towards sexual violence, yet disgust towards menstrual blood; situating the control of the menstruating body as rooted in the structural hierarchies of religion, class and caste; defying menstrual taboos and etiquettes at home, community and institutional spaces and dispelling the shame, silence and stigma that define menstrual experience. By adopting qualitative research methods like in-depth interviews of the former campaigners, the paper explores the ways in which these campaigns attempted to initiate a dialogue around the much-silenced issue of menstruation, and whether the traditional notions of the menstruating body are being re-configured through these counter discourses. The paper situates these campaigns vis-à-vis other gender justice campaigns that have taken place over the last decade in India, highlighting the intersecting themes as well as the unique dimensions of the campaigns.

Jayaprakash Mruthula (IIT Madras, India), 'From Mechanism to Embodied Self: the Transformative Journey of Madhavi'

The story of Madhavi from the Indian epic *Mahabharata* is upheld as a tale of an "ideal woman" who is blessed with a privileged womb, which is prophesied to give birth to great kings, and a boon of *chirkaumya*, the ability to regain virginity at will. Devoid of any rights over her own body, which she had to forgo in the name of dharma, Madhavi becomes instrumental for Galav, the disciple of Vishwamitra, in fulfilling his promise of eight hundred *aswamedhi* horses as *gurudakshina* to his teacher. Her womb is bartered, allowing men to exchange her indefinitely as a commodity with utilitarian value without compromising her virginity because of her boon. Her voice, desires and feelings are undermined by the structural needs of the masculine tale and she becomes a little more than a bodily function in the grand narrative of *Mahabharata*. Madhavi. S. Mahadevan in her revisionist novel *The Bride of the Forest* recasts Madhavi as a woman with bodily autonomy and not a victim of patriarchy cowed down by the bodily morality imposed upon her. Instead, she uses her body to negotiate with patriarchy to regain her freedom. Through a postfeminist theoretical lens, I propose to interrogate in this paper how the dominant masculine ideology engages with the gender on the site of 'the body' and how the body itself becomes an important site of resistance.

Kimberly Munatsi (Vega School, Pretoria, South Africa), 'An Explorative Study of the Relationship between Consumer Feelings toward Body Positive Advertisements and their Influence on Brand Perception'

This paper explores the nature of body positive advertisements through the perceptions of South African women and if they can influence how they perceive a brand. Body Positive advertisements are rooted in the body positive movement which started in the 60s and have evolved into upbeat, love yourself advertisements portraying models of differing shapes, sizes and ethnicities. Supported by substantial studies that investigated the harmful nature of thin-ideal imagery and photoshopped images, South African brands have been increasingly utilizing diversity in their model selection, particularly including models of larger sizes. Given the intricate nature of perceptions and feelings the researcher utilized qualitative structured in-depth interviews to truly explore and gain in-depth insight. Due to the small sample size, the research findings cannot be generalized to the total population of South African women but rather grant meaningful insight into how they feel toward this rising trend of advertising. From a thematic analysis of the data, it was evident that the South African woman who participated in the study strongly linked their concept of body positive advertisements with the depiction of a diverse range of models. This influenced how they compared themselves to the models in the campaign and if they felt the campaign represented them. Interestingly, the researcher found in the absence of perceived similarity, if the perception of diversity was maintained, participants felt positive toward the advertisement and the brand

Gráinne Ní Nualláin (University College Dublin, Ireland), 'Blood on Our Hands: Stillbirth, Motherhood and Gendered Medical Neglect in Éilís Ní Dhuibhne's "Midwife to the Fairies" and Deirdre Sullivan's "Pearleen"'

Through comparative close readings of two short form fabulist texts by Irish writers, 'Midwife to the Fairies' by Éilís Ní Dhuibhne and 'Pearleen' by Deirdre Sullivan, this paper will investigate the lasting legacy of gendered medical negligence and institutionalised abuse on the quality and availability of appropriate medical care for afab people in Ireland. Both Ní Dhuibhne and Sullivan, in defiance of conservative Irish cultural attitudes towards, and biopolitical control of, afab bodies, expose deeply ingrained gender bias, sexual inequality, gendered healthcare inequality and hypocrisy, through the medium of the magic realist short story. While Ní Dhuibhne's folkloric retelling responds directly to the 'Kerry Babies' case of 1984, using strategies of indirection to both distract and disarm readers from her active criticism of Irish patriarchal culture, Sullivan, writing 30 years later, is more direct. Though their strategies differ, and indeed Ireland has seen significant cultural alterations since Ní Dhuibhne was published in the 90s, (e.g. Marriage Equality, Repeal of the 8th Amendment etc.), it is integral to recognise, as Sullivan reminds us, that much work remains to be done.

Miriam Ocadiz (Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam, The Netherlands), 'Chakalaka Sessions: Practices of (Self)Care among LGBTQI+ Migrants in Johannesburg'

Grammars of differentiation along the lines race, class, nationality, gender and sexuality, have formed a complex mechanism of oppression for LGBTQI+ migrant bodies in South Africa. During the COVID19 pandemic the LGBTQI+ community was disproportionately excluded from basic needs such as healthcare and employment, together with an increase in gendered and sexual violence as well as

xenophobia, which resulted in a higher sense of alienation and isolation during the pandemic. In order to counteract systematic oppression, the Fruit Basket, a refugee-led organization headed by Thomars Shamuyarira, focused on supporting and nourishing LGBTQI+ bodies as a political act of empathy and solidarity. In close collaboration with researchers Miriam Ocadiz and Phoebe Mbasalaki, the Chakalaka Sessions emerged as a series of brunch gatherings where African meals were cooked and served together with members of the LGBTQI+ migrant community in Johannesburg. The initiative was mindful that food is not only part of daily survival, but it also evokes a visceral experience where the recollection, preparation and the sharing of food enhances creativity, (self)care and storytelling. With the aim to nourish the physical, spiritual and emotional tissues we weave in queer bodies, the Chakalaka Sessions became a platform where to (re)address the intersections of gender, sexuality, migration and food practices. More specifically, the gatherings allow to explore the bodily capacities of LGBTQI+ migrants to articulate pathways of connectivity and solidarity, especially during the pandemic, through the heart-warming African recipes.

Nerea Okong'o (University of Manchester, UK), 'Demystifying the Vagina: Blackness and the Complexities of Reproductive Feminism'

In African society, the word 'vagina' does not exist, not because there is no word for it, but because it is too shameful to speak of, its derogative, insulting, profanity etc. I have encountered black African women who hide behind baby clinics to access permanent or long-term reproductive health services so they wouldn't have to comply with pressures of giving birth. It is a shameful place to visit, a space that should only be explored within the confines of the bedroom, yet its power is critical to the continuity and advancement of the same society that limits its existence. In a culture that embodies Motherism-embedded within reproductive dialogues - the vagina remains a contested space with women having to bear the brunt of its use, re(use) and abuse. Through this paper, I seek to advance the stories of black African women as they battle with their sexuality and ownership of their bodies. I draw from my own positionality as a black African woman and relate my experiences to other women who have self-identified as elitist mainly due to their skillset, jobs, leadership, class etc. Through this paper, I seek use the bodies out of place theory to understand the spatiality of the vagina within reproductive feminism. This being part of my upcoming auto-ethnographic monograph on *Teaching Difference: Encounters from a Black African Feminist*, I seek to set the tone and open critical dialogues on difference by focussing on the gagging of the vagina and associated implications for elite black African women.

Sonia Omer (University of the Punjab, Pakistan), 'Fences and Challenges for Girls on the way to Equality: Investigating Factors Excluding Girls from Education in Rural Pakistan'

Gender equality is the priority of any nation who has made progress in social and economic spheres of life. Despite of efforts by the government and non-government organizations, Pakistan has been unable to achieve gender equity and gaps in girls' education is one of the significant reasons. The current study has aimed to investigate the social cultural constraints in the way of female higher education in South of Punjab, Pakistan. The study is qualitative in nature and has deeply investigated parents' perspectives on girls' higher education in Southern Punjab Districts of Rajun Pur and Dera Ghazi Khan. The research reports have already indicated a poor socio-economic condition of Southern Punjab and incidents of gender discrimination in the area. Key informative interviews are used as a tool of data collection to know parent's perspective whose girls are not pursuing higher education. Thematic analysis is used as a tool of data collection to obtain findings of the research. The study findings revealed certain socio and cultural factors as hurdles in way of higher education of girls including early puberty, son preferences, poor economic status of parents, purdah (veil), early marriages of girls, non-acceptance of coeducation, lack of decision making by girls, cultural restriction and particular mind set on employment of women as primary factors behind girls' lower enrolment in higher education. The study recommends state's focus on girls' education through strict legislation and creating awareness through means of communications, particularly with help of non-government organizations. The state may further need to revise its educational policies and involve relevant stakeholders while making any sort of education policy in country.

Treena Orchard (Western University, Ontario, Canada), 'Swiping Bodies: Dating Apps as Technologies of Love & Self-Reclamation'

Walking into the unfamiliar country of a new person is disorienting, exciting, and hard, and it's something millions of dating app users do every day. Researchers and popular media writers have devoted considerable time to understanding how these platforms are impacting our experiences with love, sex, relationships, and digital technology. Less attention has been paid to the ways in which dating apps can

function as a technique of self-discovery and healing. Using insights from an on-going ethnographic study of swipe culture, this paper examines how apps like Tinder and Bumble can offer complex, yet valuable spaces of socio-sexual exploration and experimentation that complement other practices of self-discovery and self-reclamation. Love is the dominant focus of this discussion, which is centred on the following questions: How attuned are we to what love means and how it rotates over time?; Must love careen through our lives like a roller coaster to be considered true?; How do we navigate love that feels like control or darker things from the past?; Can we change the kinds of love we search for and harvest inside ourselves? This paper challenges the current dating app zeitgeist, whereby users approach swiping with more chagrin instead of fun. To get more out of these everyday technologies, we must find new places to dig and as is so often the case, that starts with ourselves. These ideas are considered alongside current findings from relevant scholarly and popular literature.

Efstathia Palyvou (University of Thessaly, Greece), 'The Sadeian Sexual Body and The Kafkaian Suffering Body: a Storytelling of Body Transformation Based on the Literature of Marquis De Sade's *Philosophy in the Bedroom* and Kafka's *In the Penal Colony*'

In de Sade's novel, the female body endures many transformations, capable of evoking passionate desire or strong aversion. The Sadeian bodies wobble between virtue and evil, under the insatiable debauchery of the libertines. The feminine body eradicates its virginity, obeys its sexual predator, and embraces its (pan)sexual nature through unprecedented physical corruption and sexual initiation. Whoever resists the sexual emancipation gets punished and physically or emotionally exterminated. In Kafka's fiction, the male body suffers the penal reformation from 'Apparatus', the Higher Authority. Through the pain and anguish the Kafkaian body complies with Power, reforms, and embodies the punishment corporally. Whoever resists the reformation, dies. In these dystopic environments, the bodies deconstruct their bodily capacity and identity only to reconstruct a 'new' body: libertine/sexual or suffering/reformed in an agony to survive. Through their orgasms and excruciating pain, they narrate their transcendental nature, expose their physical wounds and genital cavities, to become extraordinary artifacts: worshipped for their sexual potential, their anguish and for the representation of the 'feminine'. This power-over game has a genderfluid, erotic hue, developing between the Master and the prey. The 'new' bodies, resulting from Power's imposition, turn themselves into gruesome or wondrous body - artifacts. This paper examines the emergence of the Sadeian female body and the implied Kafkaian femininity; reflects on the aborning construction of bodies as they exceed their bodily limitations (virginity – indolence) and grow into transcendental bodies; discusses how the 'transcendental body' grows through the corporal intervention to emerge as wondrous artifact.

Mark Parsons (Artist, Sheffield, UK), 'Rituals of Empathy'

In recent years, the questioning of the power dynamic in the life drawing room, and the awareness of the male gaze, has led to a gradual shift not only to groups led by women, but also the championing of a range of bodies of all shapes, sizes and genders as models. Life models such as Dominic Blake in his paper 'Are Life Models Artists', have gone on to explore the role of the life model as a performer and creative contributor in their own right. This further overlaps with questions around 'the nude' and 'the naked' as compared by John Berger, with the former describing an idealised object, and the latter a way of being as a human, with all its vulnerabilities. Based on experience as a model himself (and subsequent practice-based research) as well as a series of experimental events co-run by the author, this paper develops these themes. It goes on to explore the development of the life drawing room as a powerful space for an encounter between strangers, and one that is able to create an empathetic connection within what is essentially a ritualised structure.

Declan Penrose (University of Manchester, UK), 'Bodies Against the Bomb: The Role of Bodies and Gender in the Campaign against Nuclear Weapons'

Whether you are disintegrated in the initial blast or exposed to radiation after or even before detonation, the devastating impact of nuclear weapons on the human body is well documented. What is less well-documented, is the roles bodies have played in the campaign to ban nuclear weapons. From marches to, peaceful blockades around nuclear bases, and even trespassing inside the bases, feminist campaigners have gathered and put their bodies on the line against the threat of oncoming vehicles and police violence. Furthermore, these feminist direct-action protests have always remained committed to nonviolence, even in response to intimidation and police violence. In the face of nuclear war and police violence, protestors opted to sit down. When the police came to move them, they went limp, even as they were dragged across the ground and thrown into police vans. This paper will explore how feminists have used their bodies to peacefully oppose nuclear weapons. It will also explore why

these feminists oppose nuclear weapons, as well as the motivations behind their methods of resistance. Why remain peaceful when opposing weapons of mass destruction? How can you ensure all protestors remain nonviolent? For example, partially due to concerns over their ability to remain nonviolent when assaulted by the police, and partially due to concerns over women's safety, men were excluded from Greenham Common Peace Camp. The juxtaposition of putting one's body on the line while also refusing to use their body to inflict harm exemplifies these campaigners' dedication to peace.

Dunja Plazonja (University of Zagreb, Croatia), "'Snap!': the Creative Feminist Potential of Angry Bodies'

Rarely is an emotion seen as dangerous, volatile, or as disruptive when expressed by women as much as rage. It is seen as loud, shrill, ugly and unattractive, everything women are taught not to be. Rage and anger are associated with loss of control; they are emotions which cannot easily be subdued. Women who express rage and anger have traditionally and historically been represented as monstrous figures and are as such othered and marginalized. Like most emotions when expressed by women outside the private space, rage is seen as being too much, a bodily excess. Open and public displays of emotions, such as speaking loudly, being angry, mad, or crying are deemed hysterical, over the top or inappropriate. Emotions are, therefore, regularly pitted as polar opposites to reason and rational thought, making them what Sara Ahmed terms "the unthought". However, this past decade has brought on numerous social upheavals with women loudly and angrily taking up public space and expressing their dissatisfaction with the patriarchal system, particularly their rage and anger over it. Women are no longer afraid to be openly emotional and angry, while the reactions to their public displays of emotion are mostly focused on the emotion itself, rather than its cause, thus further devaluing women and their public work. This paper examines the shift in the representation of rage and anger on the contemporary social and cultural scene, and the way rage has opened a space for the creative rethinking of what it means to "snap," as Ahmed put it. By relying on the work of Sara Ahmed and Audre Lorde I will also try to show how emotions can become the main and angry weapons in fighting gender discrimination and the patriarchal system.

Mairi Power (University of Glasgow, UK) 'The Female Body in Jennifer Egan's Fiction'

In my PhD thesis 'Technology and Embodiment in Jennifer Egan's Fiction: The Digitisation of Bodies, Brains, and Books', I argued that the relationship between technologies and bodies is a central thread which unites all of Egan's work. Further, it is the female body in Egan's books which most dramatically and effectively conveys the dynamics between these forms, as Egan presents women whose use and are used by technology in significant ways. In *Look at Me* (2001), Charlotte Swenson transforms from a famous supermodel whose image is airbrushed and edited, to an unrecognisable nobody when disfigured by a brutal car crash, to a virtual celebrity when her identity is sold to a digital editing team who manage her virtual likeness. This journey provides a concentrated overview in one character's lifetime of the relationship between female bodies and technologies that I see taking place across Egan's entire body of work—Egan's novels are held together by a focus on the tools that can improve, alter, and destroy human bodies. In cosmetic procedures, digital communications, virtual identities, and bodies embedded with surveillance tools, women and technology are aligned in Egan's work in meaningful partnerships. In these partnerships, the technologies are representative of various informatics of domination enforcing power upon the female body and demanding performance from it. This paper will discuss how technology variously enables and limits freedom for the female body in Egan's work, not depicted as an inherently positive or negative force, but a tool utilised by those with power to manipulate those without.

Ipsita Pradhan (SRM University, Andhra Pradesh, India), 'Presentable and Well-Groomed: The Gendered Body on the Shop-Floor'

The paper points out the presence of the gendered body and its appearance in interactive service work. Studying women retail shop floor employees in a shopping mall in Hyderabad, India, the paper argues that employment in this sector requires working on one's body to produce a 'presentable' body by grooming so as to fit the acceptable, ideal, feminine body. The body, thus, of retail shop floor employees, becomes both a process as well as a site. As a process, the body, is never a finished product and needs constant care and grooming so as to attract more customers as well as to exhibit the goodness of the products that the employees have to sell. The body, as a site, is the surface on which manufacturing of the feminine image takes place. By personifying the brand, through clothing, behaviour and demeanour the workers are expected to create and enhance consumption. The paper also points out how this logic of corporate production of aesthetic labour functions and caters to the male gaze through stylized

uniforms and make-up. The presence of the mannequin and its dressing is also analysed to understand how it perpetuates stereotypes of the 'ideal' body. The paper then brings out the various ways of technological surveillance to ensure that there is no transgression from the 'standard' serving body. Understanding these processes in the context of service work, shows how patriarchal capitalist regimes impose norms of conformity and uniformity on the bodies of the shop-floor employees, especially women.

Michelle D. Ravenscroft (Manchester Metropolitan University, UK), 'Head, Heart and Hands: Nineteenth-Century Manchester Men and the Manufacturing Body'

The Industrial Revolution, c. 1760-1840, was driven by nineteenth-century Manchester merchants and manufacturers, known as 'Manchester men'. Linked to the local factories and mills, they were often categorised by socio-economic class and specified by a range of character traits. Significantly, literary representations in 'Manchester novels', such as Isabella Banks's *The Manchester Man* (1876) and Elizabeth Gaskell's *Mary Barton* (1848) and *North and South* (1854), include detailed physical descriptions, indicating the importance of the body in defining their identity as commodities of the manufacturing industry. In his seminal text *Capital* (1867), Karl Marx argues that manufacturing 'creates a hierarchic gradation of the workmen'. This paper will examine representations of Manchester men and the ways parts of their bodies are employed to support stereotypical, class-based identities, and reinforce public perceptions of early nineteenth-century social hierarchies and economic power relations. It will also argue that the status and assignment of the body parts supports a gradation of Manchester men that both connects and segregates.

Michael Rees (Nottingham Trent University, UK), 'Class Unconscious: A Reflexive Account of Social Mobility'

Drawing on the seminal work of Pierre Bourdieu (e.g. 1986, 2000; and especially 1984), many scholars have examined the relationship between the body and social class; determining that 'class is a phenomenon of the flesh' (Charlesworth 2000: 65). For Bourdieu, our class-based habitus is formed early as a result of (class-based) socialisation that, once formed, is enduring. As Vandebroek (2017: 46) claims, the body functions as a 'memory pad' making it 'exceedingly difficult to *un-learn*' these class-based norms. Vandebroek (2017: 52) goes on to claim that when considering class, it would be 'more apt to speak of a 'class *unconscious*', as a communal mode of comportment, carried in the most minute postures and gestures of the body' (my emphasis). If this class habitus, 'unconscious or tacitly at work' (Siedman 2013: 146), is so enduring what does this mean for those who are upwardly socially mobile? Can those of working-class origins shed their working-class habitus in order to adopt a more middle-class habitus that reflects their new position in the social class hierarchy? More importantly, *should* they? Drawing on my own experience of upward social mobility I interrogate these questions to examine the relationship between the body and social class and whether the class-based habitus is as immutable as some have claimed.

Emma Riegel (North Hertfordshire College, UK), 'Is Language ever Sufficient when it comes to Talking about Bodies? A Critical Take on *Star Trek: Discovery's* Representation of Trans and Non-Binary Characters in a Utopian Futuristic World'

Using the case study of the trans and non-binary characters of Adira Tal and Gray Tal from *Star Trek: Discovery* this presentation will explore the topic of language in explain gender identity. This example would be used as a view to a world which portrays itself as equal for all, as such I would argue in such a world that terms such as 'trans' and 'non-binary' would be obsolete. Using a post-queer lens I would critique the language and representation of such characters within the futuristic utopian-style world, not only the need for such in current day society but also the difficulties of balancing the need for current day representation and the realistic understanding from within the fictional show and the fan base. Such researchers which I would be drawing on during this research would include David Ruffolo's 2016 *Post-Queer Politics* and touching on the works of Foucault and Butler among others.

Mickaël Rochat (Hamad Bin Khalifa University, Qatar), 'Co-optation of Transgender Bodies by the Surveillance State in France via Gender Identification Laws'

In 2017, the European Court of Human Rights condemned France for obligating transgender individuals to change their gender on their identification documents. In this context, with Law J21 in 2016, followed by the entering into force of the article 61-6 of the French Civil Code in 2020, changing one's gender in one's identification documents and different civil status records, does not require any evidence of surgical intervention or hormones intake. However, I argue that these changes in the law to facilitate

the gender change on identification documents in France is not progress but a dangerous move to incorporate some transgender bodies into the surveillance and carceral state, hence reinforcing the bodies' gender binaries. Indeed, these reforms have not removed the marginalisation, rejection and prejudices transgender face in their daily life but rather reinforce a certain narrative of the transition as well as gender binaries performed and enacted on the bodies. In the first part of this paper, I examine the different moves French law makes regarding gender change on identification documents its effects on bodies and how the law is not applied equally around the country. The second part of this paper argues that these reforms, despite their apparent positive move, are a co-optation of a selected part of the transgender community; of certain bodies, by the surveillance and carceral state to control and maintain gendered bodies. To meet this objective, I conduct an empirical review of existing literature including books, scholarly journal articles, laws and testimonies shared online.

Roxanne Rogers (University of Chester), "I didn't know ADHD was an option": The Relationship between Gender and Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD)' "ADHD is a boy's disorder"... "You can't have ADHD as an adult". We have all heard (and maybe thought ourselves?) these things about attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD). Prior to my ADHD diagnosis at 32, I did not know ADHD was an option for me, because as an adult woman, I am not represented in the current research. It is now known that ADHD can affect anyone, regardless of your sex and age, and as a result of a rising awareness on social media, ADHD diagnoses in women have soared. But scientific research is still lagging behind, and there is a significant gender bias within the literature. In my presentation I examine ADHD research, and look to amplify previously under-represented voices and experiences of those with ADHD, to start addressing the gender gap. I invite delegates to view ADHD from a new perspective, and consider how qualitative research could offer a richer insight into this disorder, enacting change that is in the interests of and serves the ADHD community. We need to move away from medicalising people, instead thinking about how stereotypes and assumptions influence individual experiences of this disorder and of the pathway to diagnosis.

Alekszandra Rokvity (Karl Franzens University of Graz, Austria), 'Illness Memoirs: Narrating Endometriosis'

An emerging literary genre, illness memoirs are long-form autobiographical stories focusing on one's subjective experience of living in an ill body. In order to discuss the impact of said literary genre, this paper uses endometriosis - a chronic condition associated primarily with the menstrual cycle - as a case study. A debilitating chronic illness which is estimated to affect one in ten (biological) women, endometriosis is an under-researched illness with no cure and limited treatment options. Writing about living with endometriosis reveals the many goals of illness memoirs, as well as the variety in the potential target audience of such literary work. Closely analysing three patient-written narratives about endometriosis, my paper examines the multifaceted nature of illness-focused autobiographies. Alongside being confessional in nature and enabling patients to regain agency over their bodies, endometriosis narratives also have an awareness-raising role and an educational role. The narratives target the wider public, other patients, and/or medical professionals. The stories offer insight into the subjective experience of a chronically ill person on the one hand, and on the other debunk numerous myths surrounding the condition as well as serious social issues such as medical gaslighting and overt gender bias within a clinical setting. The research relies on the following methodology: narrative medicine, comparative literature, feminist literary criticism, and the cultural studies approach.

Holly Frances Royle (University of Chester), 'Engineering Equality: Augmenting the Dominant Voice to Represent Experiences of the Voiceless'

The dominant narrative of heavy metal music as a white, Western, cis-gendered, and heteronormative genre places multiple barriers across the scene and industry sectors for intersectional groups. Attempts to give voices to others in metal include the problematic term 'female-fronted' introduced to highlight the visibility of women musicians in metal bands. The balance between increasing representation and othering groups is often nuanced and precarious. Quotas offer a potential solution, in the short term, to increase the rate of change to make visible the invisible not just on the stage but also in the studio and hidden industry spaces. Discussions about quotas are often met with concerns of tokenism arising from a deep-rooted notion of gate keeping heavy metal's 'authenticity' which is rooted in whiteness and maleness. If social attitudes dictate expectations of gender, race and disability in heavy metal music, then social change can be implemented to provide equality for all across the subculture. Increasing intersectional representation across the layers of the metal scene has the power to uplift, validate and enhance experiences both on an individual and wider community scale. However, the lack of and/ or

suppression of intersectional representation in the industry reinforces the power of discrimination in favour of maintaining the patriarchal narrative. Drawing upon examples of discrimination from musicians in the industry and reaffirming experiences of seeing oneself represented on the stage, I explore the need for active engineering of equality and possible solutions for the present.

Sundus Saeed (Hamad Bin Khalifa University, Qatar), 'Colonized Bodies: the Case of Palestine'

For Palestinians, living under occupation means facing daily violence from baseless military checks of a neighbourhood, detention at checkpoints, imprisonment on suspicions of anti-Israeli agendas, forceful home eviction, and severe state-inflicted violence. The Israeli-state-inflicted violence is both structural and intersectional, as their crimes are embedded in the robust systems of racism, occupation, and colonialism. So, when Palestinian women are discriminated against, restricted, and abused, it is due to the intersections of both being a woman and a Palestinian. Israel's violence is informed by racism and colonial plans, as Palestinian women's identity and reproductive abilities threaten its colonial dream. In this paper, I argue that the Israeli occupation strategically targets female Palestinian bodies to control the nation-state's symbol, eliminate the threat of native multiplication, and a possible increase in their generation. In this manner, the female bodies are used as sites of power mobilized for personal gain by the colonial state. I utilize cases of pregnant Palestinian women (i.e., Anhar al-Deek) to highlight Israel's strategic use of military checkpoints and limited access to health care for Palestinians to restrict movement and gain medical control that allows them control over the female Palestinian body for infiltration of Palestine. This shows how Israel's apartheid regime not only occupies the Palestinian land but also occupies Palestinian lives, minds, bodies, and movements. In this case, they inflict both transnational and structural violence as they occupy the indigenous land and indigenous people for eradication from the root.

Sam Saunders (University of Essex, UK), "'You Look Like a Whore!": Sex Work in the Archives'

My research is concerned with (female-presenting) sex workers' bodies in British visual culture. I have studied 10,000+ 'tart cards' (small, paper advertisements) in the Wellcome Collection and the Bishopsgate Institute archives to gain a sense of sex workers' lived experiences in the 1990s. I observe the visual tropes associated with sex work and apply a feminist lens to answer how these images are produced and continue to represent women in this way. By adopting a visual affective approach, I endeavour to comparatively analyse how the sex worker is archived. This methodology allows me to work directly with sex work ephemera from British Institutions' collections to unravel the threads around the binary 'happy hooker' and 'crack whore' tropes that are often attributed to sex workers' (presumed) identities. The way in which sex workers are 'marked' as hypersexual deviants can be read in a wider context that is situated in a cultural imaginary that attributes visible characteristics to sex-working women. I look at digital and physical media depictions of sex work and question why these bodies are subject to a narrative situated within discourses around cleanliness, femininity and crime. I question who has the power over these types of images and challenge the prevalence of such imagery, asking why these stereotypes are perpetuated through advertising, popular culture and the media. I argue that policymakers, the criminal justice system and the media have divested sex workers of autonomy over their own bodies.

Richard Sawdon Smith (Norwich University of the Arts, UK), 'Talking to, Listening to and Rewriting the Self: the AIDS Body as a Site of Contest'

This talk presents various bodies of my own autoethnographic/autobiographical visual work (including photography, films, photogrammetry, virtual reality and the tattooed body) which explores the AIDS body as a site of contest. For nearly three decades through a series of self-portraits I have developed a narrative that tells the story as a Queer man living with HIV, talking to my experience, listening to myself, and responding to the world around me to an extent that I can say I have lived my life through photography. To create this narrative, I draw upon Lippit's concepts of alien-ated bodies, Jones and Richards fractured bodies through body modification and Leder's phenomenological absent body. The relationship between an expanded form of photography and how it has been used as a tool to define notions of the modern body are paramount to this study, which in *The Anatomical Man* project I use the tattooing of the body and its photographic representation as a way of exploring experiences of health, illness, with a shifting subjectivity, identity and embodied self. Going forward, with the success of medication, being undetectable and now a normal life expectancy, I find myself rewriting the self in my most recent project *The Unknowing...X* to think about what the future could hold. This involves a form

of playing myself, and previous personas I have inhabited through the years, to try and remove some of the barriers and stigma still associated with HIV, by delving into a massive dressing up box collected throughout my life.

Eftihia Saxoni (University of Edinburgh, UK), 'Narrating the Transgender Body: A Discussion of *Stone Butch Blues* (1993) by Leslie Feinberg and *Confessions of the Fox* (2018) by Jordy Rosenberg'

As part of my doctoral project provisionally titled "Narrating In/A Transition: Narrative Manifestation of Identity Through Sex and Gender", this paper comprises a discussion on the narrative representation of the non-normative, transgender body in two novels: *Stone Butch Blues* (1993) by Leslie Feinberg and *Confessions of the Fox* (2018) by Jordy Rosenberg. Rendering the intersection of postclassical feminist narratology and transgender studies my preferred axis of reference, my aim is to interrogate and interpret how the experience of the protagonists' embodied identities are highlighted by the narrative structure, as well as how those experiences become objects of narratological manifestation through the rhetoric of self-writing. Furthermore, I particularly intend to explore the ways according to which the textual manifestation of the trans identity creates resistance towards and challenges normative notions, categorizations and limitations of classical narratology. My contribution to the historical literature within the field of queer and transgender studies proposes a narratological (re)framing of certain prevailing thematic notions (passing, desire, language, historicity and temporality) in the two novels, which amplifies the rhetoricity of the body. In pursuing the above, my intention is to give prominence to the interrelatedness between the narrative discourse and the theoretical categories of sex and gender within each novel's realm, as they narrate the story of the transgender body through the contiguity between emotive and narrative transition.

Emma Sheppard (Coventry University, UK), 'Queer Crip Futurity and Killing Joy'

This paper explores queer futurity through a crip lens, exploring queer futures through a productive – and unproductive – conversation. In particular, the paper seeks to make space for crip joy in queer futures, and asks how the crip killjoy makes space for themselves. Crippling seeks to examine and intervene in ableist – and non-disabled – work; to make space for the lives and experiences of disabled people. Crip theory seeks to expose and explode the ways in which compulsory abledness and the ideology of the normal is rooted in social structures and expectations. However, whilst the conversation between crip and queer may be generative, this paper also celebrates the value of being unproductive – of disagreement and untidy conclusions. It celebrates the crip killjoy, the awkward misfit (Garland-Thompson 2011), and the deliberate engagement with discomfiting thought, arguing that crip joy can be found in destruction and rejection.

Hannah Shimwell (*formerly* University of Chester), 'Does History Repeat Itself? What can History Teach us about the Impact of Politics on LGBTQ+ Rights?'

Focusing on the USA's political landscape since the forming of the New Democratic Movement (NDM), my presentation will discuss if within this time, history has repeated itself with regards the rights of and attitudes towards the LGBTQ+ community. Since the forming of the NDM, the US has had both Democratic and Republican presidents, and has had recurring economic events, such as recessions. I am exploring if the recurrence of events within politics and the economy affects attitudes towards the LGBTQ+ community, and if there is a correlation between the two. Sherry Wolf notes "capitalism [...] seeks to impose heterosexual norms on society to secure the maintenance of the economic, social, and sexual order." (Wolf, 2009, pg.19) Therefore, do times of economic depression, or political change further impose these heterosexual norms, which hinders the LGBTQ+ community? My presentation will explore this using research gathered by the Pew Research Centre, as well as using examples of legislation which has been introduced or amended which affects the LGBTQ+ community, such as amendments to the Medical Ethics and Diversity Act in 2022. The academic influences for my research include Kimberle Crenshaw (1991), Sheila Jeffreys (2014), and Christel Manning (1999), and the outcome of this research will influence my wider research area of right-wing politics, religion, and transgender and women's rights in the US.

Sahar Shirali (Freie Universität, Berlin, Germany), 'An Overview of the Sociopolitical Status of Women's Bodies in the Islamic Republic of Iran'

Since the 1979 Revolution in Iran that led to the establishment of the Islamic Republic (IR), the female body has been a means of marginalizing women. IR imposed a mandatory dress code on women with the ideology of portraying a pious Iranian woman in this way. Even the women who were not Muslims

had to wear the compulsory hijab because the IR had constitutionalized this dress code as law. This study investigates the sociopolitical status of women's bodily appearance in the Islamic Republic of Iran. A critical discourse analysis method was undertaken to analyse the data driven from official archives with a thematic focus on the female body in Iran. History has shown that women's bodies have a political function in totalitarian regimes. Legislating the mandatory hijab law for women and criminalizing those who did not comply with this law was one of the first laws enacted by the Islamic Republic after it came to power. Thus, women in Iran became the IR's first targets for repression. The tragic death of 22-year-old Mahsa Amini following being arrested for improper veiling on the 16th of September 2022 by IR's morality police sparked a wave of mass uprisings in Iran that soon after turned into a revolutionary movement against IR. Iranian women, not only those living in Iran but also the women in the diaspora, have played an active, progressive role in this movement as a result of having been subjected to more than four decades of oppression imposed mainly on their bodies.

Adam Smith (University of Chester), "Even weak women are capable of greatness":

Reclaiming the Trance in Marie Corelli's *A Romance of Two Worlds* (1885)

In 1885, Marie Corelli published her debut novel, *A Romance of Two Worlds*, which she used to expound upon her philosophy of the Electric Creed. Although she denied any connection, the Electric Creed bore a strong resemblance to the longstanding practice of mesmerism, a practice with negative connotations of being a malignant, controlling influence wielded by predatory men against vulnerable women. Corelli's Electric Creed, by contrast, is presented as an influence with transformative properties for men and women: the ability to transcend their flawed mortal bodies and achieve enlightenment through a trance state that closely mirrors the stupefying effects of mesmerism. However, Corelli's views on womanhood were complex, and her Electric Creed often mirrors mesmerism in more uncomfortable ways than she might have liked to believe. This paper examines *A Romance of Two Worlds*, Corelli's Electric Creed and how it negotiates issues of female social identity and women's health in the late-nineteenth century. The paper explains how Corelli's Electric Creed mirrors the nineteenth-century study and practice of mesmerism and hypnotism, and where these stood in the context of the work of French neurologist Jean-Martin Charcot and his work on hysteria. Incorporating perspectives from scholars and theorists such as Carol Margaret Davison, Elaine Showalter, and Abraham Maslow, this discussion asks whether Corelli's vision of mesmerism and the trance state represents a bold feminist treatise on self-actualisation and female autonomy, or reinforces the same tropes of patriarchal authority and female passivity that defined contemporary perceptions of mesmerists.

Gillian Sonnad and Noortje van Amsterdam (*both* Utrecht University, The Netherlands),

'Take A Seat: Normative Embodiment and Intersectional Marginalized Bodies'

In this workshop we focus on the intersection of normative embodiment with the materiality of seating. We contend that seats/chairs are part of the aesthetics of a space and often chosen to reflect or at least fit with the identity or atmosphere the host wants to project. Yet seating arrangements also function as a gatekeeping principle that structures who can legitimately belong within a particular context and who cannot. In this workshop, we take a hands-on approach to explore what message seats/chairs carry about normative embodiment through their material presence. Using creative and performance/experiential methods we invite participants to engage with the question by looking at chairs, testing them and articulating how the relationship of bodies to seating affects the creation and maintenance of normative embodiments. The workshop thus aims to:

- Combine experiential learning with theorizing around materiality and embodiment
- Critically question seating arrangements in relation to in- and exclusionary practices
- Invite participants to become uncomfortable and have fun

Lucy Spoliar (Radboud University, The Netherlands), 'Talking Bodies, Talking Back?

Embodiments of Religion and Gender in the (Secular?) Stand-Up Comedy Space'

Stand-up comedy is about bodies performing and talking to one another in space. The comedian occupies a "stage persona", an embodied self-representation which rests on the relationships between different modes of subjectivity (Lindfors, 2019). In recent decades, comedy studies scholars have been concerned with the mechanisms of power, inclusion and exclusion in stand-up comedy. In this paper, I explore how these mechanisms are entangled with embodiment. Not every comedian enters the comedy space with the same codes, norms and assumptions attached to their body. In this paper, I critically examine who is imagined to fit the "norm" of the stand-up comedian, and in which ways secular norms impact the framings of Muslim and Jewish women's bodies within comedy spaces. Subsequently, I reflect on how embodiment also acts as a tool through which performers can play with cultural scripts

on-stage, talking through and about cultural norms in their embodied self-representations. To substantiate my argument, I present a critical discourse analysis of two sets by comedians Fatiha el-Ghorri (wearing a *hijab*) and Rachel Creeger (wearing a *tichel*), focusing on how the two comedians integrate markers of “difference” in their modes of dress into their comedy material. Through this comparison, we gain further insight regarding the ways in which Muslim and Jewish women’s bodies are framed and politicized in “serious” contemporary British discourse. At the same time, we see how, through their performances, el-Ghorri and Creeger are able to play with, discuss and contest such framings in nuanced and multivocal ways.

Georgina Spry (University of Chester), ‘Felt Pockets: Secrecy, Disclosure, Preservation and Distribution, Patriarchy Whispering through the Weave’

The pocket has been seen historically as a women’s only private space for over 300 years and is now understood as both a literal and metaphorical receptacle of private things. A discussion on privacy and interiority through a narrative surrounding the pocket accompanies the felt pocket-making workshop, giving a choice of inclusions within the finished felted pieces. I engage with felt as a healing substance one connected to nature. My body is multifariously present in the dimensions of the textile, the elements of embodiment murmuring through the connected fibres and used as a symbolic narrative to investigate the function of everyday objects such as a pocket. I situate my work in personal, in memory, and in memento, lifting the barriers to emotional content and response. Having a direct intimacy with our own bodies, the agitation of wool fibres to encourage them to entangle together is a physical process which engages directly with the artist’s whole body. The process a performance which gives vitality to the material, the material engaging a direct visceral response.

Georgina Spry (University of Chester), ‘Transferring Embodied Knowing: the Practice and Art of Feltmaking’

Our explicit awareness, the focal core of our understanding, is carried by the tacit acceptance of something not explicit, bound to the core of ourselves. We move from personal participation within our practice to interpersonal throughout the search for knowledge and acceptance of the known. This core of knowledge can be transferred objectively from one person to another, to do this we need to know, to believe and engage in the process. Acceptance of this embodied knowledge is core, the implicit, tacit dimension of knowledge must be in place before knowledge transfer can occur. The personal, subsidiary or tacit root of knowledge is then moved from the core towards the focal centre of attention. In this way, all knowledge is transferred in a from-to relation. All-knowing therefore follows the presumption that your subsidiary knowledge is internalised, whether this is tacit or explicit knowledge, and all-knowing will exhibit this twofold from-to arrangement. You *own* your subsidiary knowledge; it is yours; it is part of your very self, internalised, it is what you rely on to navigate your way to a distal endpoint, relevant to the focal point of your attention. In my feltworks my body is multifariously present in the dimensions of the textiles, the elements of embodiment ever present in the entwined fibres. I locate my work in personal, in memory, and in memento, lifting the barriers to emotional content and response.

Sooraj S S (IIT (Banaras Hindu University), Varanasi, India), ‘Menstruating Bodies and the Hypermasculine Deity: A Study of Masculinities Post the Sabarimala Verdict in Contemporary Kerala’

The Sabarimala Temple in the South Indian state of Kerala gained national and global attention following the violent protests by certain caste organisations and Right-wing groups against the Supreme Court of India verdict allowing women of menstruating age to enter the temple. By examining the marginalization of menstruating women’s bodies in the religious beliefs, this paper traces how Sabarimala protests again have brought attention on the women’s question in Kerala. For such a study, the paper takes into account the arguments of three main groups who came in support of/against menstruating women’s entry into Sabarimala: the Right Wing Groups, the ruling Left Government and the Mala Araya tribal community. Evaluating the issue of women’s entry and hypermasculine beliefs around Sabarimala at the intersections of caste and Brahmanical patriarchy, I argue that the angst over the menstruating women bodies post Sabarimala verdict derives from the tensions of the male positions in contemporary Kerala. By closely analyzing the developments in the genderscapes in Kerala after the millennium, especially against the backdrop of a series of protests that challenged the heteropatriarchal control on women’s sexuality [like Kiss of Love, *Aarpo Aarthavam* (Hurray Mensus) and others], the paper also delineates the paradoxes within it by taking into account the neo-Savarna women’s protests like ‘Ready to Wait’ during the Sabarimala protest.

Lacotea Stansbury (University of Chester), 'A Cabinet of Contraceptive Curiosities'
Under the Counter: A Cabinet of Contraceptive Curiosities is a unique mini-museum, showcasing some of the birth control methods that were available to buy in Edwardian Britain. From Pennyroyal herbs and iron filings, to household brands such as Lysol and Beecham's, apothecaries supplied a wide variety of pills and powders that were utilised for birth control purposes. As abortion was illegal at this time, such products were creatively marketed as purgatives or purifiers; images of worried women accompanied advertisements for 'female pills' in a not-so-subtle hint at their medicinal purpose. Many were useless; many women were injured or killed by their use. *The Cabinet of Contraceptive Curiosities* is a unique offering for attendees of Talking Bodies 2023. Visitors can view a variety of birth control products, alongside many original advertisements promoting their use. Each item is accompanied by an information card explaining its particular history and purpose, as well as a testimony from a working-class woman who turned to these products for help. In addition, attendees can browse a small library of Edwardian birth control literature, including works by pioneer, Dr Marie Stopes. *The Cabinet of Contraceptive Curiosities* invites guests to consider the practicalities of managing their fertility in a period where resources were both illegal and unreliable. It aims to provoke conversations about the fragility of contraceptive access; visitors are encouraged to examine the evidence of an historical struggle and question how the experiences of Edwardian women resonate with the on-going fight for reproductive autonomy in the twenty-first century.

Zuzana Štefková (Charles University, Prague, Czech Republic), 'From Elite Reversal Agents to Red Lightning Bolts: Human Reproduction and Political Activism in Art'

The paper sets to explore the terrain at the intersection of art, human reproduction, and political activism. Based on examples of contemporary art dealing with maternity and the refusal of reproduction, the presentation examines possibilities of symbolic resistance to the oppressive system of government, regulating women's bodies in today's Poland, and the political potential of an imaginary gesture of "The Undoing of Labour" in the cases of political leaders promoting laws that restrict women's rights to their own bodies. The starting point of the first case study is a performance by two Polish artists Filip Kijowski and Barbara Gryka. Inspired by the Red Lightning bolt movement protesting women's rights in Poland, the artists invented a persona named Kinga who under their supervision sought abortion in neighbouring Czechia. In their performance, Kinga embodies the hardships as well as possibilities of resistance that real women in Poland face today. The second example is a political fiction by South African artist Candice Breitz entitled "Labour". Using reversed video footage of real births, the project envisions a matriarchal utopia where Elite Reversal Agents "extract" "post-umbilical subjects" who jeopardize the wellbeing of human kind by eruptions of "testosterism" and violation of Reproductive Justice. The paper discusses activist and ethical implications of these artistic gestures and the regimes of their presentation and interaction with their active participants and their audience.

Garjan Sterk (Radboud University, The Netherlands), 'We Need to Talk about Race'
In *Dutch Racism* (2014) Essed and Hoving state that there is no shared discourse about race in the Netherlands and to study race and racism here requires borrowing from multiple disciplinary vocabularies, each highlighting a different aspect of the concept 'race'. When I started my PhD-project in the early nineties, the Dutch word for race, *ras*, was not commonly used in social sciences because of the very strong negative connotations with the racial politics of Nazi Germany. Scholars studying 'the multicultural society' mainly used *etniciteit* (ethnicity). Over the last 20 years, due to Dutch researchers turning to literature from the US and the UK, and to anti-racist activists taking over a discourse that better expressed their experiences, 'race' became a concept that is – in its untranslated, English form - being used in both academic work as well as in activist circles. However, the work on race relations by US and UK scholars address issues in contexts that do not necessarily resemble the Dutch situation and the Dutch use of 'race' is most of the time uncomfortable and grating. I will analyse a situation in which I found myself blatantly racialized by a group of feminists after a presentation on Black figures in Dutch art. In both that presentation and the situation, different aspects of 'race' can be identified, but are not supposed to be about 'race'. This spiriting away of 'race' erases the experiences of Black people/people of colour and has consequences for the study of Dutch race relations.

Keerthana Swaminathan (IIT Madras, India), 'The Dilemma in Defining Dalit Women's Bodies: A Study of Deviant, Divine and Desired Bodies'

The sex-based gender roles grant men the responsibility of being the custodians of a community's honour while confining women's bodies to being commodities to be protected. Resting a society's value

on women's bodies is one crucial tenet of the patriarchy practised in India. By way of rejecting the insouciant or callous representations of women's bodies created by men, women writers re-write and redefine the limits of knowledge. Besides serving as documents of reterritorialisation, women's writing interrogates, interrupts, and transcends the 'male stream' mechanism. Firstly, I intend to examine the bodies of 'Dalit' women, which are often considered polluted, stigmatized, and deviant. Secondly, how the deviant bodies of Dalit women wield power to navigate the system will be closely read. Finally, by eliding the labels of 'victims' and 'warriors', how Dalit women's bodies are shaped to resist the 'casteist sexism' will be explored in my presentation. The way Dalit men and women writers distinctly portray women's bodies will also be dealt with in my study. The ploy of power in shaping the bodies and the embodied subjectivities will be dismantled via the works of the Tamil Dalit women writer, Bama. In order to juxtapose and analyse how deviant bodies are defined by men, the works of Dalit male writers such as Iyamam and Tamizh Prabha will also be considered. Thus, the politics and nitty-gritty involved in constructing the bodies of Dalit women is one crucial probe in my presentation.

Magdalena Szulc (Adam Mickiewicz University, Poland), 'Helmut Newton's Talking Bodies in 20th-Century Fashion Photography'

In my presentation I'd like to focus on feminist fashion photography in XX century, especially on Helmut Newton's work, who was a precursor of today's fashion photography. The body in his photos is shown in an innovative, feminist way. The process of changes in Newton's photos was strictly connected with social and cultural changes taking place mostly in USA and Western Europe, which he witnessed. It's crucial to talk about changes in approach to body in fashion photography to understand today's fashion photography. Helmut Newton was one of the most influential fashion photographers of the 20th century and his work continues to inspire photographers, editors and designers. He was a groundbreaking image maker of his generation, and while his style is often imitated, he is never unmatched, and his images cannot be confused with those of others. He worked for the best fashion magazines - several editions of "Vogue" from different countries, "Elle", "Harper's Bazaar", "Stern" and many others. He has worked closely with designers and brands from YSL to Chanel, and his work has become an essential part of those brands' heritage as well as fashion history. His pictures were said to be bad for morality, fashion and beauty. And he just wanted to break outdated conventions. Photos make beauty eternal, because it is immortal. There are painters who are said to be painters of women, he was a photographer of women.

Shima Tadrissi (Kadir Has University, Turkey), 'The Turkish Media's Coverage of the "Woman, Life, Freedom" Movement in Iran: Jina Uprising'

The Jina uprising began on September 25, 2022, with the murder of Mahsa/Jina Amini by the police in Iran. The demonstrations against the compulsory hijab started on women's initiative and have continued until now. The protesters' demand is apparent: the fall of the Islamic regime. The world's media have widely discussed the role of women's leadership in these protests. This research seeks to answer how Anadolu Agency (A.A.), as a state media, and Bianet (BIA), as an independent one in Turkey, represented the presence of women in protests. To answer this question, I identified four themes and compared their representation in both media. These themes include burning scarves, chanting the slogan 'Woman, Life, Freedom,' cutting hair, and women's leadership in protests. Using the critical discourse analysis (CDA) method for analysing data, it was concluded that the media's ideology affects their news coverage. So A.A., as a Turkish state media, ignores the presence of women, and BIA, which is based on human rights, covers it.

Alex Tankard (University of Chester), 'Embodying Asexual Eroticism in Historical TV Drama *Black Sails*'

Asexual advocates commonly envision asexual representation as *an asexual character* declaring their asexual identity in terms dictated by the approved mainstream definition. Instead, informed by queer theory, critical disability studies, and my own autistic asexuality, I seek representations of asexuality fulfilling three critical functions: destabilising the neurotypical desiring subject; attacking the myth that sexual desire is *the* universal, definitive human experience ('compulsory sexuality'), and prioritising nonsexual eroticism. This paper uses StarzTV pirate drama *Black Sails* (2014-17) to suggest unexpected possibilities for representing asexuality on screen. Confused fan (and actor) responses to pirate Billy Bones' celibacy expose the pitfalls of embodying *asexuality* in *an asexual character*, and of audiences seeking modern LGBTQIA+ categories in a 1715 setting where they are meaningless. However, in the series' hypersexualised reimagining of piracy, compulsory sexuality may, paradoxically, be critiqued via graphic sex scenes. Amidst the sweaty, aggressive physicality of the overcrowded ship,

the most intense embodiment of asexual eroticism may be conveyed by sensitive restraint of bodily contact. Furthermore, by insisting on the historical-specificity of queer experience, the pirate-ship marriage between Long John Silver and ex-navy sodomite Captain Flint resists any interpretation of their asexual passion as homophobic or naïve evasion of 'real' (modern) homosexuality. Instead, Romantic-Satanic and Maritime-Gothic modes of televisual storytelling revel in Silver's plunge into the sublime 'Darkness' of Flint's psyche, just as Flint has 'burrowed into [Silver's] head'. The series' peculiar screen-language of asexual eroticism represents a remarkable critique of compulsory sexuality.

Irina Terekhova (Universities of Lausanne (Switzerland) & Austria),
Exhibition: 'Affinity Phenomena between Altered bodies in Egon Schiele's self-portraiture
and Body Illusions Inherent in Schizophrenia'

The turn of the century was marked by major changes in art, resulting in its broadcasting a profoundly altered conception of aesthetic mutation and offering new bizarre oneiric language that manifests striking resemblance with a dream and hallucinatory imagery content. Perhaps no artist interpreted this new concept of true pathological beauty more explicitly, than the celebrated «infant terrible» of Viennese modernism, Egon Schiele. Over his lifetime, Schiele obsessively drew and painted around 300 self-portraits. His objectified bodies were profoundly distorted, androgynous, and grotesquely alienated. Current work employs an interdisciplinary approach to investigate the affinities between the modern graphical language of Egon Schiele and Schizophrenia's altered body perception, providing investigation simultaneously from two fields: History of Art and History of Psychiatry. It is important to highlight that both processes of body illusions in schizophrenia, which is a state of maximal involuntarily regress from reality, and Schiele's art which is a maximal deliberate regress from classicism - display an aberration of the body in a strikingly similar way. I hypothesize that the modern aesthetics of Egon Schiele's portraiture relate to psychopathology through exposure to the same mechanisms of alteration in coding body and self. It is important to acknowledge the interest in self-portraits as study material for cognitive neuropsychiatry as well as for the emerging science of neuroaesthetics in the search for understanding mechanisms of these paralleled processes orbiting the same construct of the altered model of the body and self-perception.

Kristen Tollan (York University in Toronto, Canada), 'Crippling Social Media: How Disabled
Creators are Fighting Ableism with Hashtag Campaigns'

The online body-positivity space has grown exponentially since the early 2000s, a time period which encompasses the third wave of the fat acceptance movement and is spurred on by the popularity of social media (Cooper, 2016). People from all backgrounds, with bodies of all kinds, have flocked to social media as consumers and creators, particularly during the lockdowns associated with the 2020 start of the Coronavirus pandemic. TikTok is particularly popular for content about the diversity of the human body, including videos of a person's figure before and after meals, people of various sizes and abilities dancing to popular songs, even trends about body modification like the viral sound "don't be sad, go get a tattoo". Health and wellness content has also infiltrated the space as people with chronic illnesses and disabilities share videos about their daily activities. In fact, disabled people are a major part of the online conversation about bodies, though stereotyping, discrimination and ableism towards them often results in a barrage of negative comments and a perpetual struggle against both their peers and the power of the algorithm. My paper will discuss the various ways disabled people are fighting for visibility and justice through content creation. Divided into three sections, I will focus on the development and reach of hashtag campaigns such as #CripplePunk, #DisabledAndCute and #BabeWithAMobilityAid; the experience of shadow-banning by the algorithm for those with non-normative bodies and minds; and the influence of the pandemic on the disability/body-positive space.

Jimmy Turner (The Binks Hub, University of Edinburgh, UK), 'Manual Thinking: the Crafting
of Identities with the Hands'

In twenty years of working with Gender Theory I learned much about gender identity. I learned how and why (hetero)normative gender identity, and I myself, might be otherwise, but I never located through theory an alternative that felt right for me. Then in 2019 I participated in an artistic/research residency focused on 'Masculinities Otherwise' with a trio of graffiti artists in Rio de Janeiro. I initially planned to research the residency ethnographically, but was encouraged by them to also participate artistically, bringing my woodworking practice into conversation with their graffiti. Over dozens of hours I carved wood and found myself considering masculinity manually, with the cerebral taking a back seat. In so doing I found that I carved more than wood, I also carved the Non-Binary identity I now live through. Theory played a role in this journey, but it was only through manual labour, through the collaborative

work of hands, steel and a discarded piece of scrap wood, that I finally understood myself. In this presentation I will honour this process by minimizing, ideally to zero, references to academic texts, and instead call upon the insights of a diverse cast of woodworkers (such as Jennie Alexander, George Nakashima, James Krenov and Danielle Rose Byrd). With them I hope I might add to our conversations on embodiment through arguing how we scholars would benefit from greater consideration of how identities are crafted manually and with the materials of the world, as well as theoretically and through text and thought.

Lenka Vráblíková (Goldsmiths, University of London, UK), 'Bodies in E-motion: Sarah Kofman and Héléne Cixous Encountering Rembrandt'

In an interview entitled 'Live Body' (2019), feminist theorist Anne Emmanuelle Berger asserts that the lived-in or live body 'is not only in motion but each body in emotion' and as such 'cannot be properly represented, or perhaps it can only be approached figuratively, by means of a complex tropology'. Drawing from Berger's meditations, I explore Sarah Kofman's and Héléne Cixous's encounter with the work of Rembrandt in order to examine how European painting have grappled with the discourse on the body and the phallogocentric libidinal economy instigated by European colonial modernity. In a final and unfinished text 'Conjuring Death: Remarks on *The Anatomy Lesson of Doctor Nicolas Tulp* (1632)' published posthumously (1994/2007), Kofman provides a reading of Rembrandt's display of a 'scientific gaze' of a corporation of doctors who just moved their attention from a corpse of a man laid out before them to a book at his foot. Cixous's text 'Bathsheba or the Interior Bible' (1993/1993), is a reading of Rembrandt's painting *Bathsheba at Her Bath* (1654) that opens by a rather intricate declaration: 'I've taken twenty-four steps in (the direction of) Bathsheba.' Following the display of these moves, the presentation speculates on the bodies and desires they make possible.

Cheuk Yee Wai (University of Oxford, UK), 'Reading Maidservants in the Imperial Chinese Erotic Novel *Langshi*'

This paper aims to reflect on the understanding of the gendered bodies in late imperial China through the reading of the erotic fiction *Langshi* (Chronicles of the Libertine), in particular its portrayal of maidservant characters. This paper utilises *Langshi*, an erotic novel first published around 1572-1620 in imperial China, as the main source of analysis. Through outlining the various portrayed experiences and functions of maidservant characters, which reflect a range of trends that is as gender-specific as they are status-specific despite the inevitable focus on sexual activities, this paper will first outline the portrayal of maidservant characters in the text, followed by the comparison of the findings to the portrayal of other female characters to reveal the different literary imagination and treatment between civilian and servile women. Attention is paid in particular to the aspect of social inferiority, consequent physical (im)mobility, the sexual body, and ways these various characteristics interact with each other, and consequently created a specific group of female characters that both conforms to and defies against the ordinary expectation of "women" in the general sense.

Pushpinder Walia (BBK DAV Women's College, Amritsar, India), 'Breaking the Love Laws: How a Woman's "Needs" Transgress Boundaries in Arundhati Roy's novel *The God of Small Things*'

The paper focuses on the transgression of boundaries defined by the socio-cultural power structures, manifested in the love of the 'Touchable' Ammu for an 'Untouchable' Velutha, in Arundhati Roy's novel *The God of Small Things*. It is the story of Ammu, a woman caught in the conventional, unjust world of the town Ayemenem, where the patriarchal society accepts and comprehends only a 'Man's Needs', while the desire of Ammu (a divorced woman, a mother of two children) to consummate her love, is considered preposterous/unimaginable. Relationships are defined by "Love Laws" that "lay down who should be loved and how. And how much." Ammu's passion for Velutha is a sacrilege. Punishment is severe, annihilating. Society is unable to decide which is worse – Ammu ruining her virtue or Ammu ruining it for a low caste Paravan. The lovers meet, and while 'Biology designed the dance', it is their bodies that talk. Ammu loves "His Particular Paravan smell", and "she danced for him. On that boat-shaped piece of earth, she lived." The bodies of the two lovers forget "the constant high whining mewl of local disapproval"; when Velutha reasons to himself about the worst that could happen, his mind answers "Everything". Yet, even though he shivers with terror, "his body was prepared to take the bait". The paper, thus, explores the role of the 'talking' bodies of the two lovers that make "the unthinkable thinkable" and the impossible really happen, in the larger paradigms of gender and caste in a culture-specific context.

Megan Warr (University of Chester), 'Dating Apps: How Inclusive are they for Those who Diverge from the Gender Binary System?'

Signing up to dating apps is arguably not something many cisgender individuals have to think about in terms of labelling or categorising their gender identities. Going through the signing in options, one can see that dating apps lack inclusion for non-binary individuals. Whilst there are 75 gender options on Bumble under the 'other' section. And over 50 'other' gender options on Tinder, both apps require 'other' gender identities to label themselves as being viewed in searches for either 'men' or 'women'. Individuals cannot choose both, and they cannot continue without choosing one. There is a lack of research on the non-binary experience using online dating apps. Current research often discusses LGBTQ+ dating as a whole. Or it takes a transnormative approach – one which talks about transgender individuals who comfortably sit within the binary genders and non-binary individuals as one (Johnson 2016). Using empirical research, I aim to identify limitations that non-binary users face accessing these apps, as well as identifying what features are currently working on these sites. I hope to use the research to improve the wellbeing and relations of non-binary individuals, by providing a platform to address their concerns about online dating.

Katrina Waters (University of Birmingham, UK), 'Desperately Seeking Ageing Sluts! Language, Age, Sexuality and Transgression in the Research Process'

Women's sexualities, choices and sense of self risk being at their most vulnerable to stereotyping, double standards and the 'doing' of gender in their sexual relationships with men. Since the 1970s, arguably the heyday of the Anglo-American feminist demand for the right to a self-defined sexuality as crucial to the attainment of wider gender equality, women's choices, including those concerning sex, sexuality and sexual conduct, have expanded in places such as the UK. Yet these choices are still policed within the boundaries of idealised (hetero)sexual gender norms, through societal focus on (and weaponization of) the harms of sex with men for women, rather than its pleasures. My research explores factors that support women to choose to resist and transgress gendered stereotypes and double standards in their sexual relationships with men together with those factors' potential to support women's equality in, and beyond, the bedroom. Taking a biographical approach, the research focuses on stories from women who are aged 40 and over and actively pursue sexual pleasure on their own terms. This paper examines the intersection of age, sex/uality choice and the concept/appearance of 'transgression' for both participants and the researcher. Mindful of the argument that limiting 'transgression' to particular practices risks reducing sexual politics to a matter of taste, I reflect on how this intersection has shaped my research design and participant involvement together with the constraints posed by the value-laden, gendered language around women's active sexuality and age.

Stephanie Weber (University of Vienna, Austria), 'Making the Tattooed Body Speak. Motion Tattoos, Soundwave Tattoos and the Tattooed Body as Multimedia Story Space'

If people think about tattoos, they very likely imagine pictures on the skin that have a more or less personal meaning, and tell a more or less personal story. I want to look at three examples of tattoos that showcase a more complex form of storytelling: the soundwave tattoo project SkinMotion, Motion Tattoos created by French Tattoo artist Rémy B., as well as the motion tattoo project "A life of a rose" by Hungarian tattoo Artist Balazs Bercsenyi. In SkinMotion, audio files are converted into tattooable soundwave stencils. A picture of the tattoo has to be activated online, so that a mobile app can scan and play back the tattoo. The tattoo is given a voice and seemingly becomes alive. Motion Tattoos play with the idea of living tattoos as well: the tattoos are inspired by Japanese illusion art, and if paired with a grid in the form of an app or printed on a plastic sheet, the tattoo begins to move and reveals a more complex design. "A life of a rose" on the other hand consists of 70 individual tattoos, realized on 70 people, which were then captured in a single, animated flipbook-style motion story, telling the life cycle of a rose. The ultimate story depends on the body as a bearer of signs and meaning, yet it transcends corporeal boundaries and questions the borders of embodied subjectivity. By analysing these examples, I want to show how visual, textual, and aural narratives are created on the body with tattoos, and how this form of body modification transforms the sense of the embodied self.

Jordan Werner (Boston College, USA), 'Precarity and Possibility'

How does the phenomenon of possibility provide an outlet to live a better life for those who exist within precarious bodies? In society, there is an outside/inside dichotomy; those who fit comfortably within society are included within the inside, while those who do not fit expectations are on the outside, experiencing precarity as a result. These are lives that are considered not to be "grievable" by society; their loss is less important than holding to a rigid structure of who "we" should be. This paper details

how precarity as a phenomenon works within the world, and how possibility provides an outlet for those in precarious bodies. My philosophical argument, supported heavily by Judith Butler's work, describes how, at the intersection of precarity and possibility, there is the opportunity to force society to view these bodies as "grievable", due to the recognition that precarity introduces the grounds for strong communities, ones that strive for *persisting* and *flourishing* of their bodies, providing possibility.

Yen Nee Wong (University of Kent, UK), 'The Liminal Space: Coping with the Mind/Body Gap as a Trans* Equality Dancesport Dancer'

Dance is unique to many art forms in that it is expressed in and through the human body. In competitive ballroom dancing (Dancesport), the dancing body becomes a symbolic embodiment of culturally patterned notions of genders, sexualities and moralities, moving through space and using touch, bodily postures, movements, stillness and other bodies to convey these ideas. Unlike mainstream Dancesport, equality Dancesport offers more latitude for diverse expressions of genders and sexualities through non-heterosexual dance partnerships. Despite its greater inclusivity, this paper problematises the sex-segregated nature of equality Dancesport events as widening the mind/body gap among trans* dancers. Drawing on the narratives of trans* dancers collected through an autoethnographic study of the United Kingdom's equality Dancesport scene, I illustrate varying degrees of disconnect experienced by trans* dancers between their performative (Butler, 1990) and sensory (Husserl, 1989) bodies, as the gender they cognitively choreograph and perform on the dancefloor deviates from their everyday lived identities as sensed by the body. I argue that a structuring of thinking through a movement into Turner's (1967) liminality offers a viable coping strategy for trans* dancers, providing an alternative cognitive space through which creative restructuring of thinking and action can take place. I conclude that Turner's (1967) liminality can be conceptualised as a platform for play and coping with disconnects between sensory experiences and performative displays of genders and sexualities, potentially integrating the works of Butler (1990) and Husserl (1989).

Marija Geiger Zeman and Zdenko Zeman (*both* Institute of Social Sciences Ivo Pilar, Zagreb, Croatia), 'Balancing Body and Soul: Kate Moss, Rejuvenation Narratives, and Postfeminist Ageing'

Embodying the look of a rock and roll party girl and well-known representative of the so-called heroin chic (Denham, 2008; Acevedo, Warren and Wray-Bliss, 2008), Kate Moss already at the beginning of her modelling career figured in the media as a fashion icon as well as a recognizable brand. Her private and modelling life have intertwined over the past three decades in complex and challenging ways. In a culture that glorifies youth, it is difficult to grow old, especially if it is a modelling celebrity who is presented in the media as the embodiment of feminine beauty and youthfulness. In recent years, Kate Moss has modified her personal brand which includes a change of public narrative towards her own body primarily in terms of care for own well-being. From a fashion model whose body measures, appearance and lifestyle simultaneously caused moral panic and admiration, Moss has recently presented herself as a promoter and practitioner of the "cosmic wellness" (Conor, 2021), balance and healthy lifestyles that include consumption of specific products (for example, herbal tea, CBD oil, crystals, skin-care products, etc.) and ritualized beauty practices inspired by New Age spirituality. In the focus of the paper is a critical analysis of video produced by Kate Moss for the Vogue Beauty Secrets series whereby the concept of "cosmic wellness" (Conor, 2021), "postfeminist sensibility" (Gill, 2012), and postfeminist ageing are engaged in the analysis.

Ivo Zender (University of Bielefeld, Berlin, Germany), 'The Autofictional Body of Transgender Literature: Camila Sosa Villada's *Las Malas* (ARG 2019) and Christian Schmach's *Fleisch mit weißer Soße* (GER 2017)'

After decades of the trans autobiography predominating Trans Literature, more and more (auto)fictional narrative texts have been emerging since the 2010s. While trans autobiographies are considered to be 'body narratives' per se (Prosser 1998), the question arises which kinds of trans bodies are designed and made to speak in the (auto)fictional literary space? In this paper, I explore the role of autofiction as a means to navigate the complexities of embodied trans identities. Employing a narratologically informed approach, I ask which potentials the autofictional is able to provide for talking (about) trans bodies on the basis of two exemplary texts. Sosa Villada's protagonist Camila works as a trans female street prostitute in Córdoba, Argentina, while Schmach's main character Chrissy slips into the role of his female alter ego Leonie for his work in a Berlin brothel. The political nature of their bodies is not least revealed in their vulnerabilities: Camila and her sisters' unruly trans bodies are subject to violence by police, customers and neighbours; Chrissy experiences one year of deeply feeling isolated,

depressed and alienated. The depicted trans bodies live under very precarious conditions, but their precariousness also holds potential for connection. It is precisely the ability to speak, talk and write which opens ways to solidarity-based care practices, countering invisibilities and coming to terms with pain and distress. The blurring of lines between the fictional and the factual allows the authors to create a literary space inhabitable for bodies who oscillate between the discernible and the unrecognizable. By focusing on the use and function of techniques of estrangement the paper discusses trans bodies' multi-faceted realities.

Sofia Zettermark (Lund University, Sweden), "Is it just a figment of my imagination?"
Narrating Lived Experiences of Hormonal Contraceptives in Sweden'

Using reproductive justice as a point of departure, I explore how young Swedish women narrate lived experiences of hormonal contraceptives. I ask how they navigate the different dominant discourses on hormonal contraception, what narratives are possible and how they help us understand the contemporary micro- and macro-political reproductive landscapes. Ten in-depth interviews were conducted with women who had experience of using, as well as questioning, discontinuing and evaluating, hormonal contraception. Using political narrative analysis, I trace how these women move chronologically from the teenage initiation of the pill, through challenges in the form of side effects and self-doubt, toward an adult position of content. A positional narrative is also found, where the main textual engine is the movement through social positioning, centring the authentic body and the possibility of a changed self while using hormones, and dis/identification with certain opinionated groups. I show that women using hormonal contraceptives in Sweden are forced to navigate two different, often conflicting, discourses. These can be described as a biomedical interpretative prerogative, promoting hormonal methods as an easy fit for everyone and negating the diverse lived experiences of women, and a simplified critical media and online discourse, painting hormonal methods as an enemy to female health. In conclusion, navigating usage of hormonal contraceptives is part of a complex decision making process for women, involving previous lived experiences, current life- and relational situation, social networks, medical professionals and dominant societal discourses, rather than a simple acceptance or rejection of exogenous hormones.