



Scottish Gut Project



Modernity and the Gut Symposium

27-28 April, 2023

Kelvinhall, University of Glasgow

Keynote Speaker:
Professor Jean Walton,
University of Rhode Island



Modernity and the Gut Symposium

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Modernity and the Gut

Concerns about gastric disorders have been around for centuries, but anxiety surrounding the gut intensified with the development of modernity. The rise of sedentary living and industrialised food processes deepened the chasm between what was perceived as a healthy gut and the status of people's digestive systems. Often viewed as out of time with the frantic pace of urban working life, the gut has been characterised as a victim of modernity and yet the processes associated with it—consumption, absorption, disassembly, and waste—were closely allied to the project of modernism. Today's scientists also note that the lifestyle changes caused by the agricultural and industrial revolutions have profoundly altered the ecological relationships and disease patterns of populations, notably the diversity of our gut bacteria.

The Sottish Gut Project

The Scottish Gut Project is the first research project to examine the links between gut disorders and patient wellbeing from an arts and humanities perspective. Gut disorders are much more common in Scotland than previously thought, and these disorders are often mis-communicated or misunderstood. The project has been investigating problems of communication and language in explaining digestive diseases and their impact on wellbeing. We have also been investigating the cultural dimension of gut disorders in Scotland. Is there a specifically Scottish way of talking about these concerns and how can this help improve understanding? The project has delivered a series of workshops utilising arts approaches, including theatre, film, and sound to discover new ways of communicating these conditions and raise awareness amongst the public. The Project has brought together people with practical expertise in gut disorders (patients dealing with conditions such as Colitis); historians and cultural scholars; and researchers from medicine and nutrition. The Scottish Gut Project is run by Dr Manon Mathias (University of Glasgow) and Dr Elsa Richardson (University of Strathclyde), and administered by Dr Kevin Leomo (University of Glasgow). Manon and Elsa are researchers who work on the cultural history of health and wellbeing. The Scottish Gut Project is funded by the Royal Society of Edinburgh.

Keynote: Professor Jean Walton

We are delighted to welcome Professor Jean Walton for the symposium's keynote presentation. Walton has enjoyed a life-long career in the University of Rhode Island's (URI) English Department, where she has developed courses on Modernism, Film, and Gender Studies, often with an emphasis on psychoanalysis, queer theory, or social activism. Walton was the recipient of a Fulbright Lectureship to Moscow in 2001; received an American Council of Learned Societies Fellowship (ACLS) in 1997-98; and a URI Council for Research Grant to attend the Dartmouth School of Criticism and Theory, Summer 1995. Before joining the faculty at URI, she taught at Fordham University in the Bronx (1988-93). Her books include *Fair Sex, Savage Dreams: Race, Psychoanalysis, Sexual Difference* (in which she probes the unacknowledged whiteness at the intersections of psychoanalysis, feminism, and queer theory), *Buffalo Trace: A Threelfold Vibration* (in which she and co-authors Mary Cappello and James Morrison reflect on their queer intellectual coming-of-age while grad students at SUNY/Buffalo in the eighties), and *Mudflat Dreaming* (a literary non-fiction book about 1970s squatters on the shorefront of her hometown of Vancouver). This last book shares some of her decades-long interest in matters of waste, human and urban metabolism, and bodily or performative forms of social and political dissidence. She will be talking today about some of these concerns as explored in her latest book, *Dissident Gut: Technologies of Regularity, Politics of Revolt*.

Symposium Schedule

Day One: Thursday 27th

- 10.00-10.15am Coffee and introduction from the Scottish Gut Project
- 10.15am-12.15pm Panel One** – Maya Hey, Megan MacGregor, Sofia Sandalli, Sylvain Lallier
Respondent: Adam Bencard
- 12.15-1.15pm Lunch
- 1.15-3.00pm Panel Two** – Genevieve Smart, Marita Vyrgiotti, Naomi Wynter-Vincent
Respondent: Hannah Proctor
- 3.00-3.15pm Coffee
- 3.15-5.00pm Keynote Presentation – Professor Jean Walton**
- 5.00-7.00pm Drinks Reception

Day Two: Friday 28th

- 10.00-10.15am Coffee
- 10.15am-12.15pm Panel Three** – Vanessa Höving, Deren Pulley, Laura González, Adam Bencard
Respondent: Ian Miller
- 12.15-1.15pm Lunch
- 1.15-3.00pm Panel Four** – Derek Ryan, Christina Walter, Bee Sachsse
Respondent: Peter Adkins
- 3.00-3.15pm Coffee
- 3.15-5.00pm Panel Five** – Kelly Adamson, Matthew Wolf-Meyer, Louise Morgan
Respondent: Rhodri Hayward
- 5.00-6.00pm Drinks reception
- 6.00-8.00pm 'Living Together Film Screening + Q&A:** Maria Fernandez Pello, Lucy Beech, Roz Mortimer, Jenna Sutela, Kirsty Hendry, A+E Collective

Venue Information

The symposium will be held in the Lecture Theatre in Kelvin Hall, 1445 Argyle Street Glasgow G3 8AW. If you are coming from the city centre, take the subway and disembark at Kelvinhall station, which is a five minute walk from the venue.

Catering: Catering will be entirely vegetarian, with gluten free and vegan options available.

Social Media

Scottish Gut Project is on Twitter: @ScottishGut

Please use the Symposium hashtags #ScottishGutProject #ModernityandtheGut!

Delegate List

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Acknowledgements

The Scottish Gut Project would like to thank our funders, The Royal Society of Edinburgh as well as the symposium venue, Kelvin Hall. Thank you also to the Centre for Social History of Health and Healthcare (CSHHH) for funding our wine reception and to Creative Scotland for contributing toward the film screening costs. We would also like to thank our respondents, Peter Adkins, Adam Bencard, Rhodri Hayward, Ian Miller, and Hannah Proctor. Thank you to Professor Jean Walton, our keynote speaker.

Day One: Thursday 27th

10.00–10.15am: Coffee and introduction from Scottish Gut Project

10.15am–12.15pm: Panel One – Respondent: Adam Bencard

Maya Hey, ‘Thread Through: reframing (gut) health as ongoing, collective negotiation’

The gut microbiome holds us captive to the promise of mind–body balance: take care of your gut/microbes, and your gut/microbes will take care of you. Baked into this axiomatic language are modern logics of choice and control. Julie Guthman (2008) critiques this insidiousness as a problem of “if only they knew,” where assumptions about food reveal assumptions about race and class. Metzl and Kirkland (2010) coin the term healthism to critique how “appealing to health allows for a set of moral assumptions to fly stealthily under the radar.” Eating ideologies of today have thus responsabilized the individual, and, in the context of ferments and gut health, have mobilized individual microbial genera as remedial to one’s diet. Yet microbes are neither singular nor static in enacting health. They literally and figuratively thread through us as consortia, animating and animated by our practices with them. The hyper-mobility and dynamicity of microbes disrupts their good/bad representations in media and mindset, and we would do well to shift our understanding of microbes as multiple, in flux, and on the move. This paper draws on communication studies, feminist theory, and rhetorics of science to make the argument that gut/microbial health cannot be reduced to an eat-this-not-that formula. Instead, it makes the case for reframing (gut) health as a perpetual re-negotiation around who needs feeding when bodies are always more-than-one.

Maya Hey is a postdoctoral researcher with the Centre for the Social Study of Microbes, located at the University of Helsinki. She studies human–microbe relations in food settings and holds degrees in dietetics, food studies, and communications/media studies. Her research focuses on how fermentation is (or could be) a tool for studies about microbiomes, and she is particularly interested in investigating the assumptions about what microbes are, how we work with them, and how they get slotted into narratives for technosolutionism and healthism. Outside of the academy, her work experience spans preschools, chemistry labs, culinary kitchens, organic farms, food banks, and retail markets, where she has cumulatively garnered over 15 years of experience facilitating discussions around contemporary food and health issues. She leads the group [fff|food feminism fermentation](#) and is passionate about open education and pedagogy.

Megan MacGregor, ‘Modernity and the Microbiome: Dysbiosis and Biodiversity in Microbial ‘Omics’

In the past two decades, scientific, scholarly, and public discourse on the human gut microbiome has increasingly referenced “gut dysbiosis,” referring to imbalances in the microbial ecology of the gut. These conversations often associate life in industrialized regions with decreased microbial biodiversity and with so-called “modern” or “Western” illnesses. However, the historical origins of the concept of the microbiome—a term barely twenty years old—has not been considered in these conversations. Drawing on ethnographic fieldwork, interviews with U.S. microbiome researchers, and analysis of relevant scientific literature, this paper examines how the concept of ‘microbiome’ arose at the turn of the 21st century. By tracing this history through the use of modern genomic technologies, it draws new connections between the histories of genomics, anthropology, and microbial ecology. It argues that discourse about vanishing gut biodiversity does not just reflect contemporary environmental conversations, but also recalls “salvage” scripts about vanishing peoples and ways of life to the ongoing march of modern progress. By reframing the idea of collecting and preserving so-called hunter-gatherer gut microbiomes, this paper reevaluates how we might think about healthy microbiomes without repeating some of the mistakes of anthropology and genomics.

Megan MacGregor (she/her) is a Ph.D. Student at the University of Chicago, where she is completing a joint degree in Anthropology and the Conceptual and Historical Studies of Science (CHSS). Her Master's thesis research examined how scientists navigated hope, hype, and responsibility in discussing the microbiome, while her current project examines the transnational production of the microbiome as a scientific object in the U.S. and Mexico. Prior to graduate school, she worked in science communication at the Denver Museum of Nature & Science.

Sofia Sandalli, ‘Helpful or harmful? Understanding and harnessing microbial species of the human gut’

The gut microbiome is defined as the composition of microorganisms that live in the digestive tracts of animals. In recent years, research on the gut microbiome has gained widespread attention, with studies showing correlations between an individual’s whole-organismal health and microbiome profile. This has led to an increased interest in the development of treatments based on altering the intestinal microbiota of patients; and to new considerations with which microbial species can be classified as harmful or beneficial. This talk will provide a brief overview of the distinctions between pathogenic and commensal microorganisms of the gut, the complexities behind their classification, and their potential to be employed in contemporary medicine. It will furthermore approach how modern understandings of the intestinal microbiome have come about, and how they translate into current and emerging therapeutics.

Sofia Sandalli is originally from Italy, but moved to Scotland for her undergraduate degree. In summer 2020, she graduated with a BSc. Biology from the University of Aberdeen and in October 2020 she joined the Wellcome Trust Integrative Infection Biology PhD Programme at the University of Glasgow. Her research investigates the interplay between diet, the gut microbiome, and colorectal cancer. She is interested in exploring how humans have coevolved with intestinal bacteria, and the overall consequences this has on human health and bacterial biology. Outside the lab, she is interested in the History of Science and Medical Humanities. She is the founder of Bio-Lit Talks, an interdisciplinary collaboration between doctoral researchers, who brings together scientists, academics in the humanities, and artists to exchange perspectives on a common theme.

Sylvain Lallier, ‘The Human Gut and Its Microbiomes: Investigate the Development of Research Infrastructures on Human, Animal and Plant Microbial Worlds in France’

Through the emergence of research on gut microbiota since the 2000s, modernity has been described by a loss of gut microbial diversity associated with an increase in chronic diseases. However, while many works in social studies of science and technology have focused on the issues raised by this loss, few have noticed the importance of research infrastructures on ecological communities of microorganisms. In France, two epistemic shifts have emerged in agronomy and biomedicine, from study of pathogenic microbes to gut microbial communities, and from study of nutrient-gut flora interactions to gut microbiota- human cell interactions. Based on a socio-ethnography of laboratories and sequencing platforms, this presentation shifts the focus from human health issues to the analysis of the development and the maintenance of infrastructures of modern science applied to the control of microbial worlds. Thus, the relationship between modernity and the gut also depends on these infrastructures that inform current health and sustainable food policies, i.e.: i) a production of meta-omics data and living collections creating microbial avatars that specify as much as they provide the understanding of gut microbiota; ii) a holistic structure of knowledge that involve soil, plant, and animal microbiomes which have an impact on human gut; iii) issues related to the experimentation on organoids and culturomic approaches.

Sylvain Lallier (sylvain.lallier@u-paris.fr), PhD candidate in sociology of science and technology, University of Paris, member of the Centre de recherche Médecine, Sciences, Santé, Santé mentale et Sociétés (CERMES3) and the Centre d’Histoire des Sciences et des Techniques Alexandre-Koyré (CAK).

Respondent: Adam Bencard

Adam Bencard is an Associate Professor in medical humanities at Medical Museion, the University of Copenhagen’s museum for the culture and history of medicine. Adam works in between research and curation. His curatorial practice has focused on contemporary biomedicine, in particular microbiome and metabolic research. Examples include the exhibition *Mind the Gut* (winner of the 2015 Vision Award and the 2019 annual UMAC Award) which combined art, science and history to explore connections between brain, gut and microbes; and *The World is in You* (winner of the 2022 Engagement Award from the Danish Association of Museums), a major art/science exhibition at Kunsthall Charlottenborg in Copenhagen. In his research, he explores what it means to be human in a post-genomic age, where new scientific areas are asking radically new and open-ended questions about the relationship between body and world.

12.15–1.15pm: Lunch

1.15–3.00pm: Panel Two – Respondent: Hannah Proctor

Genevieve Smart, ‘F. T. Marinetti and the Gutsy Act of Male Childbirth’

When Futurism burst onto the scene in 1909, it soon established itself as one of the era’s most scatological artistic and literary movements. For its provocative leader, F. T. Marinetti, the guts were a site of gender indeterminacy, and queer reproductive possibility. Marinetti’s debut Futurist novel, *Mafarka the Futurist*, imagined a future in which bisexual men could birth from their anus; and, a decade later, Marinetti would publish letters written from ‘the endless gut of a communication trench’, believing himself feminized by war. In each case, guts blur the line between bodily waste and reproductive surplus, between destruction and creation, and between man and woman. This paper provides the first dedicated analysis of guts and gender indeterminacy in Marinetti’s work. In doing so, it offers a crucial example of the early-twentieth century’s preoccupation with the guts in burgeoning sex-change technologies, medicalised understandings of gender, and literary anticipations of our reproductive futures. My paper asks: In what ways do Marinetti’s guts embody gender’s indeterminacy? What technological, economic, and medical discourses are at play in these embodiments? And what resonance does Marinetti’s work hold for our understandings of guts and gender today?”

Genevieve Smart is a CHASE-funded Literature PhD student at Birkbeck, University of London, researching early-twentieth century depictions of queer and non-female childbirth. Traversing the fields of psychoanalysis, avant-garde literature, and the medical humanities, Genevieve has previously published on topics that include: childbirth in Jacques Lacan and Mina Loy; the cannibalism metaphor in psychoanalytic accounts of weaning and mourning; and Futurist depictions of uterine illness.

Marita Vyrgioti, ‘Digestive processes in the psychoanalytic imagination’

The enigmatic link between deprivation, pain, loss, and physical illness has been the focus of a series of psychoanalytic and feminist studies on psychosomatic disorders (Alexander, 1934; Garma, 1957; McDougall, 1974; Webster, 2020; Wilson, 2004). While attention has been paid to the somatisation of intrapsychic conflicts, little emphasis has been paid to the consequences of the corporeal on the theorisation of psychic mechanisms. This paper addresses this gap by examining the psychological implications of the digestive potency of the gut. To do so, it looks at how psychoanalysts (Karl Abraham, Sandor Ferenczi, Wilfred Bion, Hans Loewald) have borrowed the economy of digestion to suggest the existence of a ‘metabolic processes’ in the psyche, implying a nourishing, intersubjective relation with the external world. This paper genealogically traces the imagery of the digestive system in psychoanalytic thought to reflect on how psychoanalysis has ambivalently, yet capaciously, resisted the disaggregation of the psyche from the soma, often encountered in psychological and biomedical sciences, whilst maintaining a productive dialogue with empiricism.

Marita Vyrgioti is a Lecturer in Psychosocial and Psychoanalytic Studies at the University of Essex, as well as co-director, alongside Dr Jordan Osserman, of the BA in Psychoanalytic and Psychosocial Studies. Marita teaches and writes about psychoanalysis, colonialism, ‘race’ and racism. She has published articles and chapters on Frantz Fanon, Octave Mannoni, Sigmund Freud, Géza Róheim, as well as on colonialism and psychoanalysis. Marita is currently working on a monograph called ‘The Cannibal Trope: Genealogies of a Colonial Concept in Psychoanalysis’. Alongside Professor Stephen Frosh and Dr Julie Walsh, she is co-editor in chief of the first Handbook of Psychosocial Studies, to be published by Palgrave in 2024. She is also a trainee psychodynamic psychotherapist at the Tavistock and Portman NHS Trust.

Naomi Wynter-Vincent, ‘Undigested Facts: The Intestinal Thinking of Wilfred Bion’

‘Suppose I used my alimentary canal as a sort of telescope. I could get down to the arse and look up at the mouth full of teeth and tonsils and tongue. Or rush up to the top end of the alimentary canal and watch what my arse-hole was up to. Rather amusing really. It depends what my digestive tract felt about having me scampering up and down the gut all night’ (*A Memoir of the Future*, 1991: 3). Writing in the closing years of his life, the psychoanalyst Wilfred Bion (1897-1979) evoked a lurid, ‘artificially constructed’ intestinal dream in which he imagined himself an uncanny observer of his own digestive tract from either end and from within. His reverie repeated a characteristic Bionian motif in which the gut served as model for psychical process. In addressing his own traumatic survival of the First World War, Bion developed a digestive model of thinking in which special attention was paid to those ‘undigested facts’ that evaded psychical processing – bits of language, visual flashes, physical sensation; residues of traumatic experience and the clinical phenomena of psychosis – exemplifying Modernist concerns with self-consciousness and fragmentation, but also theorising the ability to think as a metabolic and digestive process.

Naomi Wynter-Vincent is Assistant Professor in English at Northeastern University London. Her teaching specialisms include academic writing, creative writing, and psychoanalysis. Naomi holds a first degree in Social and Political Sciences from the University of Cambridge, two Masters degrees in Creative and Critical Writing (University of Sussex) and Theoretical Psychoanalytic Studies (University College London), and a PhD in English from the University of Sussex. Dr Wynter-Vincent’s research interests are in 20th century literature, creative writing, and the literary medical humanities, with a

particular focus on experimental literatures and creative process; the history and theory of somatic, complementary and esoteric therapies; and the psychoanalytic theory of Wilfred Bion. Naomi presents regularly at academic conferences, including BAMS (British Association for Modernist Studies), AMH (Association for Medical Humanities), and the Northern Network for Medical Humanities Research. Her first book, *Wilfred Bion and Literary Criticism*, was published in 2021.

Respondent: Hannah Proctor

I'm broadly interested in intersections between left-wing politics and the psy' disciplines, Communist and anti-Communist theories of the mind, histories and theories of radical psychiatry, and emotional histories of the left. I write an irregular newsletter called 'Unconsciousness raising' that explores overlaps, contradictions and antagonisms between left-wing political movements and psychoanalysis (and other psy sciences). My monograph *Psychologies in Revolution: Alexander Luria's 'Romantic Science' and Soviet Social History* was published as part of the Palgrave Macmillan series 'Mental Health in Historical Perspective' in 2020. I'm currently finishing on a book project for Verso on political defeat, disillusionment and the psychic toll of political struggle. I'm a researcher at the Centre for the Social History of Health and Healthcare at the University of Strathclyde. I've been working on a project on Cold War era social science projects based in the US that investigated the Soviet mind and am now researching international campaigns against the political abuse of psychiatry in the USSR. I was previously a postdoctoral fellow at the ICI Berlin and completed my PhD at Birkbeck, University of London. Before that I worked in theatre admin and production for five years. I've written for both academic and non-academic publications on topics including rayon stockings, gender and the death drive, utopian pedagogy, Communist motherhood, wrinkles, the aesthetics of fMRI, Soviet babies, revolutionary commemoration, British antipsychiatry, mourning, Carl Jung's influence on Jordan Peterson, depression, perfume and Ulrike Meinhof's brain. I'm on the editorial collective of *Radical Philosophy*. I'm also a contributing editor at *Parapraxis Mag* and web/reviews editor of *History of the Human Sciences*.

3.00–3.15: Coffee

3.15–5.00: Keynote Presentation – Professor Jean Walton

We are delighted to welcome Professor Jean Walton for the symposium's keynote presentation. Walton has enjoyed a life-long career in the University of Rhode Island's (URI) English Department, where she has developed courses on Modernism, Film, and Gender Studies, often with an emphasis on psychoanalysis, queer theory, or social activism. Walton was the recipient of a Fulbright Lectureship to Moscow in 2001; received an American Council of Learned Societies Fellowship (ACLS) in 1997-98; and a URI Council for Research Grant to attend the Dartmouth School of Criticism and Theory, Summer 1995. Before joining the faculty at URI, she taught at Fordham University in the Bronx (1988-93). Her books include *Fair Sex, Savage Dreams: Race, Psychoanalysis, Sexual Difference* (in which she probes the unacknowledged whiteness at the intersections of psychoanalysis, feminism, and queer theory), *Buffalo Trace: A Threefold Vibration* (in which she and co-authors Mary Cappello and James Morrison reflect on their queer intellectual coming-of-age while grad students at SUNY/Buffalo in the eighties), and *Mudflat Dreaming* (a literary non-fiction book about 1970s squatters on the shorefront of her hometown of Vancouver). This last book shares some of her decades-long interest in matters of waste, human and urban metabolism, and bodily or performative forms of social and political dissidence. She will be talking today about some of these concerns as explored in her latest book, *Dissident Gut: Technologies of Regularity, Politics of Revolt*.

5.00–7.00: Drinks Reception

Day Two: Friday 28th

10.00–10.15am: Coffee

10.15am–12.15pm: Panel Three – Respondent: Ian Miller

Vanessa Höving, ‘The Human Gut Condition. Contemporary Self-help Literature and Illness Narratives’

Public attention to the gut and gut health has increased massively in recent years and decades. This is also reflected in the book market, which is experiencing a rise in popular science publications, guidebooks and manuals dealing with the gut, the microbiome and digestion. In addition to organic functioning and gut disorders, these texts also address life-world contexts, habits and conditions that influence gut disorders and diseases. Especially autobiographically coloured publications join the long tradition of Illness Narratives and enrich their autobiographical accounts with advice and practical instructions for the reading public. In doing so, these texts negotiate more than gut health and the course of illness. They raise questions about social, cultural, and medial as well as economic constellations. The paper focuses in particular on German gut literature. It locates selected contemporary publications in the literary tradition of autobiographical Illness Narratives and analyses the aesthetic strategies, motifs and metaphors used to process and narrate intestinal knowledge. Also, the paper explores how social and cultural questions are negotiated through the gut. After all, The Human Gut Condition implies questions of gender, family, and care as well as aesthetics, information circuits, and marketing.

Dr. Vanessa Höving is a post-doc Research Associate at FernUniversität in Hagen, Germany. She earned her PhD in German philology from the University of Cologne in 2017. Her dissertation explores negotiations of mediality in the texts of 19th century writer Annette von Droste-Hülshoff. Her postdoc project “Cultural backsides. Body, Waste, and Exclusion in German Literature from 1800 to the present” deals with narratives of body functions and poetics of metabolism, digestion, and body waste. She also works on a project titled “Writing sober. Literature and sobriety around 1900”. Her research interests include literature from the 19th to 21st century, Literary and Cultural Theory, Poetics of Knowledge, Mediality and Materiality of Literature.

Deren Pulley, ‘Letters to a Phantom Colon: Surgical Life through the Melancholic Gut’

Ulcerative colitis (UC) is an inflammatory bowel disease that often demands losing the colon. It has been linked to the loss of microbiome diversity associated with lifestyle, environmental, immunological, and metabolic processes of modern life. In the U.S., approximately 1 million people live with UC and nearly 45% will require J-pouch surgery to protect the gut from perforation. The surgery involves excising the colon, living with an ileostomy, constructing an internal reservoir, and adjusting to life with the J-pouch. For some, rewiring the bowel is enough to constitute cure. For others, the embodied consequences are too great. Regardless, life in the wake of J-pouch surgery remains melancholically oriented around the lost colon. I will explore how J-pouch surgery enables people to continue living amidst modern gut catastrophe. This paper is based on ethnographic fieldwork among people living with a J-pouch, many of whom are haunted by the presence of a lost object that they refer to as a “phantom colon.” How do they contend with the impossible desire to mourn an object, which must remain lost in order to live? –a phantom colon that cannot be laid to rest through funerals or letters. In modernity’s landscape of loss, forever grieving the phantom colon becomes an ethical possibility for living in the ruins of gut collapse.

My name is **Deren Pulley**, and I am currently a fourth-year doctoral student in the joint UCSF- UC Berkeley medical anthropology program. My research focuses on the historical and contemporary processes that have both shaped the modern American obsession with guts as well as the conditions for gut dysbiosis. I explore the subjective and social possibilities afforded by current gut science as the threshold of the body is made all the more porous not just by seeping excremental pathologies, but also the very science and interventions designed to repair the gut.

Laura González, ‘Prana and the Gut’

Ayurvedic healer and yoga teacher Tirumalai Krishnamacharya famously said that the biggest obstacle to the flow of Prana (life force as made manifest in the breath, also known as Qi in Traditional Chinese Medicine) is a poor digestion. This paper traces conceptions of the gut in traditional Indian medicine, known as ayurveda, the knowledge of life. After introducing the three main constitutions – *vata*, *pitta* and *kapha* – and their relation to the five elements, and *agni*, the deity symbolising digestive fire, I will pay special attention to the work of Swami Kavalayananda, pioneer of research into the science of yoga and ayurveda, and his legacy as transmitted at the Kaivalyadhama Health and Yoga Research Center at Lonavla, in India,

which he founded in 1924. I will explore how how breath and posture in yoga and the gut are related by looking at cleansing practices aimed at removing excesses in the body, clearing energetic obstacles to the circulation of waste and waking up the digestive fire. I will examine these ancient practices in the context of Kuvalayananda's modern scientific approach and how it has been understood in the present day.

Laura González is an artist, writer, yoga teacher and an Athenaeum Research Fellow at the Royal Conservatoire of Scotland. Her work falls between medical humanities, psychoanalysis, performance and Eastern thought. She has written chapters on the seductive qualities of a lemon squeezer, inter-semiotic translation, her maternal line and madness. She is the author of 'Make Me Yours: How Art Seduces' and she has recently published a book on the hysteric (Routledge, 2023). She is currently translating Freud's case histories into performance, exploring the dramaturgical potential of breath and concluding a project on pen pals and wellbeing for 'Take Me Somewhere'.

Adam Bencard, 'The World is in You – engaging and displaying contemporary metabolic research at the intersection of art, science and history'

Contemporary microbiome and metabolic research are asking new and radical questions of the relationships between bodies and their environment; previous biomedical models of a more bounded, singular individual standing at a certain distance from the world around it are being challenged by research pointing to a more complex, environmentally entangled body. While this research is still very much open-ended and filled with considerably more questions than answers, it nevertheless urges us to practice new ways of thinking about, engaging with and telling stories about such entangled bodies. In the extended research and exhibition project *The World is in You*, curated by researchers at the Medical Museion, the university of Copenhagen's museum for the culture and history of medicine, we combined art, science and history in a major exhibition at Kunsthal Charlottenborg, one of the largest venues for contemporary art in Copenhagen, in order to explore those questions. The exhibition, which filled nearly 900 square meters and featured 27 art works, including 7 new commissions, loans from five cultural and scientific institutions, objects from Museion's collections and object from contemporary scientific laboratories, was built around what we called the inverse Anthropocene question: we know that we are changing the world, but how is the world changing us? In other words, how do our, ultimately planetary, surroundings shape and influence our bodies, our health and our daily existence. We explored this question through four entangled themes – Time, Space, Microbes and Generations – that all proceeded from a contemporary scientific research area – circadian biology, space medicine, microbiome research and epigenetics, respectively. *The World is in You* was thus based on new biomedical research, that attempts to understand our bodies, our health and our world. But the conversations about the insights of the research cannot be contained in separate disciplines. They flow into art, history, culture, philosophy, politics and more. Together, they make new understandings possible, of how our bodies are connected to the world.

Adam Bencard is an Associate Professor in medical humanities at Medical Museion, the University of Copenhagen's museum for the culture and history of medicine. Adam works in between research and curation. His curatorial practice has focused on contemporary biomedicine, in particular microbiome and metabolic research. Examples include the exhibition *Mind the Gut* (winner of the 2015 Vision Award and the 2019 annual UMAC Award) which combined art, science and history to explore connections between brain, gut and microbes; and *The World is in You* (winner of the 2022 Engagement Award from the Danish Association of Museums), a major art/science exhibition at Kunsthal Charlottenborg in Copenhagen. In his research, he explores what it means to be human in a post-genomic age, where new scientific areas are asking radically new and open-ended questions about the relationship between body and world.

Respondent: Ian Miller

Ian Miller is a Senior Lecturer in Medical History at Ulster University, and Senior Fellow of HEA. Ian is author of seven medical history books on topics including the force-feeding of hunger strikers, how the Irish diet changed (mostly for the worse) after the Irish Famine and the surprisingly interesting history of the Victorian stomach. Ian is PI on the AHRC/DfE-funded project, Epidemic Belfast, a podcast series and learning resource on Belfast's under-explored medical history epidemic-belfast.com. Ian has held visiting fellowships at the Max Planck Centre for the History of Emotions (Berlin), INSERM (Paris), Institute for General Practice and Community Medicine (Oslo) and, most recently in 2022, at HEX (Academy of Finland Centre of Excellence in the History of Experiences), University of Tampere. Ian's work has featured in Guardian, Independent, London Review of Books, New Yorker, Sunday Times, Sunday Post, Irish Times, Times Literary Supplement among many others. Ian has appeared and consulted on a number of BBC, RTÉ and Disney+ stations. Ian is Book Review Editor for the journal Social History of Medicine, Secretary for Royal Irish Academy (Historical Studies), AHRC Peer Review College member and Irish Research Council Board member (postgraduate and postdoctoral).

12.15–1.15pm: Lunch

1.15–3.00: Panel Four – Respondent: Peter Adkins

Derek Ryan, 'Before the Gut: James Joyce's *Ulysses* and Oesophageal Modernism'

Literature's most famous oesophagus appears as a joke. In Mark Twain's *A Double Barrelled Detective Story* (1902) we read, among an innocuous description of early autumn, that 'far in the empty sky a solitary oesophagus slept upon motionless wing'. Upon its publication, the line prompted many letters from readers baffled by the insertion of this word: what did it mean? Why was it in the sky? Was it supposed to be a kind of bird (a swallow or gull[et] perhaps)? But the alimentary canal connecting the throat to the stomach does have a more significant location in early-twentieth-century literature. In the schema James Joyce provided for *Ulysses* (1922), the novel's eighth episode, 'Lestrygonians', is given the 'organ' of 'oesophagus' and the 'technic' of 'peristalsis'. In this paper, I examine 'Lestrygonians' to ask what role the oesophagus plays in Joyce's imaginative exploration of the digestive tract. While critics read the episode's language of digestion as a signpost for its Homeric parallel, a metaphor for the modern city, a study of meat-eating virility, or a stylistic device for linguistic experimentation, they do so by assuming smooth passage into the gut (often citing, in the process, Frank Budgen's recollection of Joyce remarking that 'the stomach dominates' in 'Lestrygonians'). Focusing instead on images of mastication, obstruction, and regurgitation, I argue that the episode's thematic and aesthetic concerns rest on the disruption of peristaltic processes and a malfunctioning gullet – on what, in other words and in various senses, is hard to swallow.

Derek Ryan is Senior Lecturer in Modernist Literature at the University of Kent. His work to date has focused primarily on modernism, animal studies and critical theory, though he also has interests in the medical humanities and disability studies. His new monograph, *Bloomsbury, Beasts and British Modernist Literature* was published in December with Cambridge University Press.

Christina Walter, 'Gut Modernism: Science, Food, Art'

This presentation uses artist Lee Miller's midcentury transformation of a rapidly developing modern digestive science into a provocative food art in order to sketch the contours of a *gut modernism*. An early-twentieth century push to harness science, food, and art in order to resituate humans within the material world. Beginning at the turn of the century, scientists armed with new imaging and histological tools started to reimagine the digestive system from an industrially influenced model of a human furnace burning food for fuel to a more biologically complex model of an emergent community of organisms (bacteria, fungi, viruses) in whose dynamic processes food was an actant, not just an inert substance. Although scholars have registered modernism's interest in food as one site for rearranging and disrupting social and aesthetic norms, the importance of digestive science to these modernist food practices has remained underrecognized. My research identifies a gut modernism that adapted digestive science and medicine as well as food science and technology to promote an experiential reflection on materiality at multiple scales—not only gut materiality and the emergent nature of human and more-than-human-being, but also the increasingly global and industrial food system and the domestic relations it supported. I take as my case study photographer, journalist, and curator Lee Miller, who turned her own experience of gut disease into a little-known and much-misunderstood food art. Beyond its historical significance, Miller's art has implications for contemporary feminist science studies and activism, which has called for new conceptions of eating that depart from an assimilative conquest model (food is absorbed into us) and instead embrace an ecological model of mutual transformations of eater and eaten—a form of *transcorporeality*, to use Stacy Alaimo's term.

Christina Walter is Associate Professor of English and Women, Gender, and Sexuality Studies at the University of Maryland, College Park. She's the author of *Optical Impersonality: Science, Images, and Literary Modernism* (Johns Hopkins, 2014). She's currently working on a book entitled "From the Gut: Creative Ontologies and the Science of the Second Brain," which traces how gut science has been turned into an ontological story that's an object of popular fascination, spanning from modernist culture to contemporary literary and popular science accounts of the gut microbiome and Grand Unified Theory (GUT) in physics. A piece of that project, and a longer version of this talk, is forthcoming in *Modernism/Modernity* under the title "Lee Miller's Gut Modernism: Science, Materiality, and Food."

Bee Sachsse, 'The Black Box Gut and Modern Resistance to Knowledge in Marie Ndiaye's *Mon coeur à l'étroit*'

This paper examines how Marie Ndiaye's 2007 novel *Mon coeur à l'étroit* figures modern anxieties around the seemingly unknowable nature of 'the gut' or '*le ventre*'. Ndiaye's novel plays with the coexistence of contemporary popular interest in detailed knowledge of digestion and metabolism with the continued colloquial, anatomically imprecise use of words like 'gut' or '*ventre*'. The novel draws much of its horror from the ambiguity in this latter use of 'gut', which can signify the interior and exterior of the body; the stomach in particular and the cavity containing the stomach, the uterus, and other organs; and

the core of the self's essence or emotion. In so doing, the novel illuminates a conception of the gut as a black box in which boundaries blur and mysterious transformations occur. While such a conception of the gut seems anti-scientific and thus anti-modern, Ndiaye's novel uses the unknowable gut to explore very modern anxieties surrounding fatness and aging, the body's transformations in pregnancy, the possibility of self-knowledge, the relationship between body and self, and the relationship between self and society. This paper argues that the persistence of the gut-as-black-box trope, as illustrated in Ndiaye's novel, points to a distinctly modern attitude of fear and willful ignorance towards that which is technically knowable but too psychically dangerous to explore. This paper stands at the intersection of literary studies, disability studies, and gender and queer theory.

Bee Sachsse is a first-year PGR in comparative literature at UCL. Her research historically situates examples of anti-fatness in anglophone and francophone prose fiction from the nineteenth century to the twenty-first. This study combines the theory and history of the novel with existing scholarship on medical and social histories of fatness to draw a historical connection between the models of individual personhood implied in modern notions of fatness and literary character-ness. She is interested in how fiction figures the relation between fat corporeality and affect, and how this varies over time. A first-year PGR in comparative literature at University College London. Her research historically situates examples of anti-fat bias in anglophone and francophone prose fiction from the nineteenth century to the twenty-first. This study combines the theory and history of the novel with existing scholarship on medical and social histories of fatness to draw a historical connection between the models of individual personhood implied in modern notions of fatness and literary character-ness. She is interested in how fiction figures the relation between fat corporeality and affect, and how this varies over time.

Respondent: Peter Adkins

Peter Adkins is an Early Career Teaching and Research Fellow at the University of Edinburgh. Peter studied English Literature at the University of Kent (BA; MA; PhD). His first academic job after completing his PhD was as a Lecturer in Comparative Literature in the School of European Culture and Languages at the University of Kent. He joined Edinburgh as an Early Career Teaching and Research Fellow in September 2021. His publications include *The Modernist Anthropocene: Nonhuman Life and Planetary Change in James Joyce, Virginia Woolf and Djuna Barnes* (2022); *Virginia Woolf, Europe and Peace: Theory and Aesthetics* (2020; co-edited with Derek Ryan) and a special issue of *19* on Victorian Ecology (2018; co-edited with Wendy Parkins). As of 2022, Peter has launched the Digestive Modernisms research network with Dr Marie Allitt, which aims to bring together researchers interested in food, eating and digestion within modernist culture.

3.00–3.15pm: Coffee

3.15–5.00pm: Panel Five – Respondent: Rhodri Hayward

Kelly Adamson, 'Are they content to shovel it into its grave and forget about it?' State reactions to infant diarrhoea and enteritis and the 'sick' urban area in wartime Dublin, Ireland (1939-48).

Rather poignantly, more babies died in Ireland during the Second World War (1939-45) than in the period previous. This led to a pre-occupation with the incidence of diarrhoea and enteritis in Dublin which saw epidemic proportions reached during the Emergency. As the name suggests, this was an infection of the stomach and intestines, with first symptoms showing a reluctance of a baby to feed, vomiting and diarrhoea while other symptoms included a temperature and dehydration. Attacking both healthy and weak infants, this was a very serious disease and duration from onset to death was anywhere between a few hours and six to eight weeks. While the bacterial organism that caused it had not been discovered by the end of the war, the disease itself was put down to a decline in breastfeeding and an impure milk supply. Crucially, this was followed by a wave of health measures that were directed at Dublin alone. Official blame was put on what was perceived as 'deteriorating' traditional motherhood practices and naturally, corrective action focused for the most part on educating Irish mothers via advice, pamphlets and official publications and an adequate milk supply. When measuring the level of state intervention and non-intervention, we assume that the more serious health issues among children received the most attention. In the same way, one could assume that the areas where disease was most prevalent would also receive more attention. Because more deaths occurred in Dublin from this disease than elsewhere, it was perceived that a solution to the problem in Dublin would lessen the country's overall death rate. Practical on paper, it did however, place emphasis on infants in Dublin when the overall rural death rate was also on the rise. For example, maternal mortality was higher in rural areas than in urban. Even in the broader category of child mortality, deaths of children under the age of five from congenital debility, pneumonia and tuberculosis far outnumbered those from gastro-enteritis for the same period. Yet, the same attention was amiss. This paper seeks to explore the question of disease visibility and its effects on other populations in relation to urban and rural environments.

Kelly Adamson is a third year PhD student at Dublin City University. She was awarded the Irish Research Council Postgraduate Scholarship in 2021 under the supervision of Dr Juliana Adelman. Her research is focused on the development of public health policy at crisis points, taking World War II as a lens. At present, she is working on developments in nutrition, infant mortality, tuberculosis (TB) and the institutionalisation of the mentally-ill during the Emergency period. She is very much interested in the rationing of public health measures at severe crisis points and discerning the extent to which public health policy reflected ideologies of the newly-independent Irish state.

Matthew Wolf-Meyer, ‘The Origins of Unsympathetic Medicine’

Anthropologists have typified some forms of magic as sympathetic power, where like acts upon or creates like. Allopathic medicine, finding its roots in the 19th century, was distinguished from homeopathic medicine as acting unsympathetically—differences produced effects—leading to the association of homeopathic medicine with premodern ‘magic.’ Sympathy, though, is also an affective register, and working through its affective elements shows how allopathic medicine embraced a form of affective relation that was fundamentally unsympathetic—to patients, their bodies, and microbes. In this paper, I focus on the relationship between Alexis St. Martin and William Beaumont as a site for the development of this allopathic unsympathy. St. Martin and Beaumont’s relationship developed out of St. Martin’s fistula that provided Beaumont access to St. Martin’s stomach, where he experimented with food’s effects on St. Martin’s affect. In part, this was in response to sympathetic ideas about food and health that widely circulated as folk theories in the US at the time, and it participated in the developing conception of the chemical composition of the human body. Here, I argue that it was also an origin point for the development of an allopathic sensibility that helped make American medicine what it is today: an affective practice that produces particular kinds of bodies through unsympathetic relations.

Matthew Wolf-Meyer is currently a Senior Research Fellow at Tampere University’s Institute for Advanced Study and a member of the Faculty of Social Sciences. He also holds an Associate Professorship in Anthropology at Binghamton University in New York. His work focuses on medicine, science, and media in the United States, and draws on history, contemporary experiences, and popular representations of health and illness. Across his research, he focuses on how personhood and subjectivity are produced and transformed over the life course. This includes concerns about how the care of children and the elderly reflect cultural expectations of what it means to be normal, how the structure of families and other institutions reflect social concerns, and how attention to experiences of disability and illness can help build more inclusive societies.

Louise Morgan, ‘Clean Eating, Curative Food and the Gut in Twenty-First Century Britain’

The twenty-first century saw the development of a new approach to healthy diets – clean eating. This style of eating, at its most basic, was a commitment to eating mostly whole foods in as close to their natural state as possible, removing any food which was believed to be ‘processed’. This was often intertwined with a broader emphasis on mental wellbeing or ‘thinking clean’, alleviating chronic symptoms, and using natural cosmetic products, allowing clean eaters to market this way of eating as a lifestyle, not a fad diet. This paper will examine the ways in which British clean eaters such as Ella Mills (Deliciously Ella), the Hemsley sisters, and Madeleine Shaw used food to cure and improve their chronic health conditions, including gut issues. It will discuss the ways in which they understood the impact of modern society on their bodies, particularly connecting ultra-processed foods with the gut. Finally, it will explore the various criticisms levied at these theories, developing a full understanding of this highly contested food philosophy in modern Britain.

Louise Morgan recently completed her PhD at the University of Warwick. Based in the Centre for the History of Medicine, her research focused on the historical and cultural context of orthorexia nervosa, a form of disordered eating obsessed with health. Her thesis examined the rise in the popularity of ‘clean eating’ in Britain through the use of cookbooks, mass media, and the Internet. The thesis questioned the links between this growth and the construction of disordered eating surrounding healthy food and healthy lifestyles in the past thirty years. Louise is currently an Early Career Fellow at the Institute for Advanced Study at the University of Warwick, and a research assistant at the University of Nottingham.

Respondent: Rhodri Hayward

I studied history at Lancaster University before going on to Edinburgh to take an MSc in the Sociology of Scientific Knowledge. I returned to Lancaster for my doctoral research on the relationship between psychology and religion in Edwardian Britain. I am a founder member of the Centre for the History of the Emotions and the Centre for the Studies of the Home. Before coming to QMUL I held posts at Exeter, East Anglia, Lancaster and University College London. My work has largely focused on the way that new sciences, such as psychiatry and neurobiology, have reshaped the popular understanding of selfhood in modern Britain. In addressing this question I've published various books and articles on the history of emotions, neuropsychiatry, primary care, prophecy, dreams, demonology, electrophysiology and cybernetics. I have been fortunate enough to be funded by the Wellcome Trust for my work on relations between psychiatry and primary care and the history of psychiatric epidemiology. I am currently funded by the Wellcome Trust for a broad project looking at the material turn in contemporary self-help and its intersection with the histories of magic and tidying up. I co-edit the

journal, History of the Human Sciences and co-founded the Centre for the History of Emotions and the Centre for the Study of the Home at QM.

5.00–6.00pm: Drinks reception

6:00–8:00pm: ‘Living Together’ Screening + Q&A

Maria Fernandez Pello, ‘Bodies and Places Are Contagious’ (2021)

The film is a visual experiment, an effort to attend to the recurrent cylindrical formations that permeate human bodies, our technology, our parasites, and most of our cities’ infrastructures. Through a focus on form, the project seeks to generate unexpected connections between categories often seen as entirely separate from each other. The connections that emerge from the repeated attention to tubes are also seen as a challenge to the traditional boundaries between the human and the nonhuman, the body and the world, the natural and the artificial. In the film, as inside of any tube, perspective is lost, there is no up nor down, inside or outside, just a dizzying encounter with sameness.

Lucy Beech, ‘Warm Decembers’ (2022)

Warm Decembers by artist filmmaker Lucy Beech, is part of a series of works that explore relationships between waste, creativity and transformation. The film reimagines a poetic verse novel written by Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick (1950–2009), which took nine years to complete, and was described as recording a “crisis in writing”. Borrowing and experimenting with the poem’s discordant flows the film is a constant interplay between language, music and imagery, where representations of boundaries between states of being are constantly collapsing. At the end of the poem Sedgwick originally included her notes, which she was unable to integrate, but unwilling to dispose of. By publishing her discarded fragments Sedgwick preserves her poetical remains as waste; serving up the leftovers of the poem’s construction and advertising the revisions and erasures that have made it. Taking these notes as an invitation for artistic interpretation the film explores the ways in which bodies, identities and creative works survive their own destruction.

Roz Mortimer, ‘Wormcharmer’ (1998)

In this erotic, whitty, and disturbing film, a suburban housewife peels back the veneer of her perfect home to lead us on a surreal journey into the subterranean world of worms. As the adventure unfolds, a woman narrator tells fascinating facts about the worms, contrasting the protagonist’s exploration into her containment, sexuality, and alienation. An intriguing mix of fact and fiction; a film about sex, dirt, and housework.

Jenna Sutela, ‘nimiia cétii’ (2018)

Inspired by experiments in interspecies communication and aspiring to connect with a world beyond our consciousness, *nimiia cétii* documents the interactions between a neural network, audio recordings of early Martian language, and footage of the movements of extremophilic bacteria. Here, the computer is a medium, channeling messages from entities that usually cannot speak. However, it is also an alien of our creation. *nimiia cétii* was created in collaboration with Memo Akten and Damien Henry as part of n-dimensions, Google Arts & Culture’s artist-in-residence program at Somerset House Studios. Thanks to Kieran Bates from the Institute of Zoology at Imperial College London, Adam Laschinger for sound recordings, and Manus Nijhoff and Leith Benkhedda for 3D work. The video includes music with Miako Klein in contrabass recorder and Shin-Joo Morgantini in flute, with sound production by Ville Haimala.

Kirsty Hendry, ‘Navel Gazing’ (2020)

Navel Gazing traces the origins of ‘gut feelings’ to consider how the body is often held in an impossible position – somehow simultaneously thought of as communicating essential truths but also that this communication is inherently suspect and not to be trusted. Developed through archival research into the history of medicine at the Wellcome Collection and the history of ventriloquism at the Harry Price Archives, *Navel Gazing* uses the idea of belly speaking – which was not originally an entertainer’s trick but rather a rumbling sort of prophetic internal speech – to explore the ways the body is used as a storyteller to make political systems seem ‘natural’. Developed and workshopped through live writing and performance exercises with Aby Watson and Joe Howe, *Navel Gazing* explores science’s predilection for fiction - weaving personal narrative, archival materials, and contemporary research into the gut-brain axis which links the gut to mental health. *Navel Gazing* was originally commissioned as part of Collective Gallery’s Satellites 2020 Programme

Kirsty Hendry and A+E Collective: Q&A + discussion