

**AN INTERDISCIPLINARY CONFERENCE ON REST, RESISTANCE AND PLEASURE  
ACTIVISM 17TH OCTOBER 2019**

REGISTRATION OPENS MAL B04

Tea, coffee, water and pastries provided

› Zine station (the Wellcome Library) LIBRARY

Loesja Vigour and Rob Bidder

11:10 **PARALLEL SESSIONS 1: REST**  
REFUSALS  
 Chair: Dr Christine Okoth  
 › Amanda Diserholt, ‘Doing Nothing’ - Fatigue as Resistance to the Ideologies of Late Capitalism’ **PAPER**  
 › Janine Francois, ‘Reparations for Black People Should Include Rest’ **PAPER**  
 › James Rakoczi, ‘The neuro-politics of sleep: narcolepsy activism, work, life, and death’ **PAPER**

PUBLICNESS

Chair: Rita Gayle

- George Townsend, 'Landlocked: an exploration of river bathing, pleasure and sociality in the UK' **PAPER**
- Heather McKnight, 'Forever Strike! Estrangement and Utopian Temporality on Sussex Campus' **PAPER**
- Miloš Kosec, 'Architecture of Passivism' **PAPER**

12:30 LUNCH (not provided, but there is a market outside with many options) MAL B04

▸ Zine station (the Wellcome Library) LIBRARY

Loesja Vigour and Rob Bidder

13:30 **PARALLEL SESSIONS 2: RESISTANCE**  
WORK/LEISURE  
 Chair: Dr Margarita Palacios  
 › Sophie Bullock and Sophie Huckfield, 'Ambience Factory' **PERFORMANCE**  
 › Stephanie Grace Anderson, '(Un)Dead Time: Spatial Confinement and Non-Productive Labor in Contemporary Art' **PAPER**  
 › Valeria Graziano, 'Figures of Unwork' **PAPER**  
 › Dr Shoniqua Roach, 'Theorizing Black Domesticity' **PAPER**

SELF-CARE

› LiLi Kathleen Bright, 'Practical self care and community care: How to recover from burnout & get our energy back' 🖐️👤 **WORKSHOP**

MAL B04

IMPROPER FREEDOMS RUS 101  
 › Dr Holly Pester and Dr Ed Luker, 'Dreaming, Non Sensing and Means'  
**WORKSHOP**

1 of 15

15:20	<b>PARALLEL SESSIONS 3: PLEASURE ACTIVISM</b> <u>PLEASURE</u> Chair: Ama Budge <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>› Louisa Harvey, 'Un-writing' (10 mins) <b>INTERVENTION</b></li> <li>› Niamh Vlahakis, 'Xenogenesis: An Exploration of Skin &amp; Touch' <b>PAPER</b></li> <li>› Victoria Okoye, 'Producing knowledge, in pleasure, together' <b>PAPER</b></li> <li>› Dr. Christine "Xine" Yao, 'I Don't Care: The Practice of Unfeeling as Feminist, Queer of Colour Theory in the Flesh' <b>PAPER</b></li> <li>› Farzana Khan, 'Inside My Darkest and Deepest Everything: The Politics of Pain and Bodies of Counter Creativity' <b>READING</b></li> </ul>	MAL B35
	<u>WORTHY</u> › Xiri Noir, 'Your Worth Is Not Measured By Your Productivity: A Radical Self Care Workshop for Queer Activists And Allies' <b>WORKSHOP</b>	RUS 101
17:00	<b>REST AND DINNER BREAK</b> (dinner not provided)	
17:45	<b>EVENING PROGRAMME: BEAUTIFUL EXPERIMENTS</b> Moderator: Ama Budge <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>› Alberta Whittle, <i>between a whisper and a cry</i> (2019) <b>SHORT FILM</b></li> <li>› KEYNOTE: Prof Saidiya Hartman, 'Beautiful Experiments' <b>KEYNOTE</b></li> <li>› IN CONVERSATION and Q&amp;A: Dr Gail Lewis and Prof Saidiya Hartman</li> <li>› Closing remarks on behalf of the organisers, Ama Budge and Lise Grønvold</li> </ul>	MAL B34

## KEYNOTES

### › Prof Felicity Callard: 'The use – and misuse – of daydreaming and fantasy'

It is common to think of fantasies and daydreams as private, personal – and perhaps unimportant or ephemeral – affairs. But in the twentieth and twenty-first century, numerous domains of expertise have elicited and used fantasies and daydreams to make all sorts of judgements about human experience both individual and collective. These ephemeral phenomena have been used in attempts to spot psychopathology, to enhance creativity, to adjudicate risks of violence, and to illuminate sexuality as well as gender identity. Fantasies and daydreams have, meanwhile, been central to various therapeutic traditions in and beyond psychoanalysis. In the twenty-first century, cognitive neuroscientific and psychological research on mind-wandering and other forms of spontaneous thought has exploded – with the promise both of unlocking processes of thinking itself, and of understanding how and when spontaneous thought is healthy or unhealthy. And all the while, those who daydream and fantasize have offered accounts and engaged in practices which challenge the efforts of daydream collectors and interpreters. In this talk, I open up some of the sites and problems associated with the use – and misuse – of daydreaming and fantasy.

**Felicity Callard** is currently working on a range of research projects. The first addresses the history of experimental investigations of daydreaming, fantasy and mind wandering across the human sciences. The second considers the twentieth-century historical geography of clinical research on anxiety. Her research includes analyses of early clinical pharmacological research in the US (pursued by Max Fink and Donald Klein at The Hillside Hospital) and on behavioral therapeutic interventions for anxiety and phobias. More recently, she has been developing research interests in critical university studies in light of the industrial dispute over university USS pensions that began in February 2018. She is a founding member of USS Briefs (a series of papers on, for, and by university staff and students – many of which address the pensions dispute). Felicity

also has strong interests in practices, epistemologies and histories of interdisciplinarity. These were given added impetus during her time directing Hubbub (in The Hub at Wellcome Collection). She has co-authored (with Des Fitzgerald), the Open Access volume [Rethinking Interdisciplinarity across the Social Sciences and Neurosciences](#). She has also worked independently as a researcher and consultant in mental health, and has participated in mental health policy at a European level. She has an honorary affiliation to the Institute of Psychiatry, King's College London (where she is Chair of the Oversight Committee for the [Clinical Record Interactive Search](#)).

### › Prof Saidiya Hartman: 'Beautiful Experiments'

**Prof Saidiya Hartman** was born and raised in New York City. She is a Professor in the Department of English and Comparative Literature at Columbia University. She is the author of *Scenes of Subjection: Terror, Slavery, and Self-Making in Nineteenth Century America* (Oxford 1997) and *Lose Your Mother: A Journey Along the Atlantic Slave Route* (Farrar, Straus & Giroux 2007). She has published articles on slavery, the archive, and the city, including "The Terrible Beauty of the Slum," "Venus in Two Acts" and "The Belly of the World." She has been a Cullman Fellow at the New York Public Library, a Fulbright Scholar in Ghana, a Whitney Oates Fellow at Princeton University, and a Rockefeller Fellow at Brown University.

**Dr Gail Lewis** is Reader in Psychosocial Studies in the Department of Psychosocial Studies at Birkbeck College and a psychotherapist. Her political subjectivity was formed in the intensities of black feminist and anti-racist struggle and through a socialist, anti-imperialist lens. She was a member of the Brixton Black Women's Group and one of the founder members of the Organisation of Women of African and Asian Descent. She has written on feminism, intersectionality, the welfare state, and racialised-gendered experience. Her publications include 'Race, Gender and Social Welfare: encounters in a postcolonial society' (2000), Polity Press; 'Citizenship: personal lives and social policy' (2004), ed. Polity Press; 'Birthing Racial Difference: conversations with my mother and others' (2009) *Studies in the Maternal*; 'Unsafe Travel: experiencing intersectionality and feminist displacements' (2013) *Signs: journal of women in culture and society*; 'Where Might I Find You': *Popular Music and the Internal Space of the Father*, (2012) *Psychoanalysis, Culture and Society*; 'Questions of Presence', (2017) *Feminist Review*, Issue 117; 'Black Feminism and the Challenge of Object Use' (forthcoming) *Feminist Review*. She believes that intergenerational conversations are among the most urgent in these times. She is an Arsenal fan.

## INSTALLATION

### › Read & Explore: Zine station (the Wellcome Library)

The Library at Wellcome Collection has a burgeoning collection of zines focused around first-person narratives of mental and physical health, body politics, illness, disability, gender, sexuality and beyond.

Zine Librarian **Loesja Vigour** and Visitor Assistant **Rob Bidder** run Wellcome's monthly Zine Club where visitors can make, read and chat about zines. They have brought a representation of the collection that are relevant to the conference, covering themes such as rest, recuperation, meditation, wellness, wellbeing, self-care and access to work. Drop by to have a look, and to find out more.

## FILM

### › Alberta Whittle, *between a whisper and a cry* (2019) **SHORT FILM**

*between a whisper and a cry* seeks to challenge conditions of racialised abjection and

find new methods for refusal. A chief linkage in this refusal is the sonic cosmologies found in Kamau Brathwaite's research on tidalectics and Christina Sharpe's work on 'the weather'. Sharpe positions 'the weather' as a lens to understand the inescapable conditions within the afterlife of slavery, while Brathwaite's theories of tidalectics expose the performativity of sound, revealing memories of transoceanic life. *between a whisper* speaks of memory, trauma, tensions between the land, the sea and the weather, which reveal the precarity and privilege of geography.

*Born in Barbados and currently resident in Glasgow, **Alberta Whittle** is an artist, researcher and educator. Her practice is motivated by the desire to work collectively towards radical self-love. Informed by diasporic conversations, she considers radical self-love a key method in decolonization for people of colour to battle anti-blackness. Her practice involves choreographing interactive installations, using film, sculpture and performance as site-specific artworks in public and private spaces.*

*Whittle's work has been exhibited internationally at venues including the Johannesburg Pavillion at the 56th Venice Biennale; Galerie de l'UQAM, Quebec; BOZAR, Belgium; Intermedia and David Dale Gallery, Glasgow; National Art Gallery of the Bahamas; VAN Lagos, Nigeria; the Apartheid Museum, Goethe on Main and Constitution Hill, South Africa. In 2018, Alberta will be an Associate Artist at the Gallery of Modern Art (GOMA) in Glasgow and a Fellow at RAW Académie in Dakar, Senegal. She will be presenting her research at The Showroom in London as part of Holding Space in April 2018. She has also been a Committee Member of Transmission Gallery since 2016.*

## **SESSIONS: PANELS & WORKSHOPS**

### **REFUSALS**

#### › **Amanda Diserholt, "Doing Nothing" - Fatigue as Resistance to the Ideologies of Late Capitalism'** **PAPER**

Contemporary society — dominated by the ideology of late capitalism — is characterised by a demand for constant flow and for everything to be registered and monitored. The body is increasingly compared to that of a machine as people are reduced to numbers and object of productivity. Thus, not unsurprisingly, we are witnessing a rise in different afflictions — fatigue being especially prominent (diagnosed as Chronic Fatigue Syndrome/Myalgic Encephalomyelitis). The increase in bodily symptoms suggests that the body is used as a way to say 'no' to what is asked of it. Using psychoanalysis, how can we better understand the current socio-cultural and political climate as it is shaped by late capitalism and how it contributes to resistance such as fatigue?

Drawing on interviews conducted with those who suffer from fatigue, this paper will explore the manifestation and function of the phenomenon in today's society, in the form of 'doing nothing', and how it might be used as resistance to the demand for constant activity and presence. The paper will turn around Jacques Lacan's notions of the drive and desire, particularly as elaborated in relation to separation and the structure of anorexia (as a refusal of an activity and embodiment of a disappearance). Lastly, the rebellion offered through fatigue will be explored from the perspective of the notion of mourning, as a way to shed light on whether or not fatigue constitutes a 'successful' resistance to the metaphor 'the body as machine'.

***Amanda Diserholt** is a PhD candidate at Edinburgh Napier University at the School of Applied Sciences. Her research looks at the symptomatology of fatigue from a Lacanian psychoanalytic perspective. She is also the secretary of [Lacan in Scotland](#).*

#### › **Janine Francois, 'Reparations for Black People Should Include Rest'** **PAPER**

The transatlantic slave trade produced racist tropes about Black bodies being inherently lazy whilst forcing them into centuries of unpaid labour. One of the many legacies of chattel slavery is the wealth gap, understandably this is where conversations regarding reparations focus on. However, North American research dubbed the 'sleep gap'

(Lauderdal et al, 2005; Gradner et al, 2015) suggests that Black people get significantly less sleep than white people and according to Reiss (2017) this is a legacy of slavery. This paper will problematise reparations by offering 'rest' as a pleasure-based-alternative historically denied to Black bodies and structurally afforded to white ones. More so, how art/cultural institutions are pleasure-based pursuits as a result of the enlightenment's imperialist-modernity-project which dictates the art canon/history and who ultimately has the 'time' to become an artist. By comparing the art practices of: Hersey's, 'The Nap Ministry' (2016-19), Knowles's 'Binz' (2019) and Cullors, 'Respite, Reprieve and Healing: An Evening of Cleansing,'(2019). This paper will discuss how each artist performs 'rest' as a ritualised-motif and aesthetic evoking pleasure as both a historicised and contemporary resistant strategy that critiques racialised notions of un/productivity. I will draw on Gilroy's (1993) the 'Black Atlantic,' Copeland and Thompson's (2018) 'afrotrope' and Brown's (2019) 'Pleasure Activism' to discuss how these practices forms part of a wider visual and cultural discourses that sits in content to the #carefreeblackgirl phenomenon; in particularly how such visuality is re/produced, circulated and consumed within physical and digital cultural spaces

**Janine Francois** a Lecturer on the 'BA Culture, Criticism and Curation,' at Central Saint Martins, University of the Arts London. Her Ph.D explores how art museums can become 'safe(r) spaces' to discuss race and cultural difference within a teaching and learning context and is a collaboration between the University of Bedfordshire and Tate. Janine is interested in (re)production of dominance, ethics of care and the cultural politics of emotions (Ahmed, 2004) within cultural institutions. You can follow her thoughts via twitter at: @itsjaninebtw or her blog: [itsjaninebtw.com](http://itsjaninebtw.com)

## ► **James Rakoczi, 'The neuro-politics of sleep: narcolepsy activism, work, life, and death' PAPER**

In this paper, I seek to outline the ways in which sleep as a non-event or a not-doing has been made unthinkable by contemporary shifts in "somnolent epistemologies." Sleep is no longer posited as the absence of wakefulness, a privation or inactivity. Instead, it has become instantiated as one of several self-regulations of the body (see Kleitman 1963; Dement & Caskadon 2005), an 'endogenous, recurring' state that optimizes 'physiology, behaviour, and health' (National Institute of Mental Health 2013). I consider how the rise of the sleep specialist and proliferation of sleep labs co-constitutes the diagnostics, aetiologies and therapeutics of disorders such as insomnia, apnoea and narcolepsy. And I also trace how the conceptual framework of the sleep-wake cycle is popularised through self-monitoring apps such as Sleepio and Sleep++. In contrast to previous, predominantly phenomenological, approaches – in which the knowable was confined to the margins of consciousness, e.g., dreams, hypnogogic and hypnopompic states (Merleau-Ponty 1945; Crary 2013) or the postures and comportments of lying in bed (Levinas 1978) – sleep now correlates around a set of neurophysiological, global-economic and cognitive-behavioural assemblages which mobilise the moral injunction of good sleep as the prerequisite of productive and somatic citizenship (see Biddle & Hamersmesh 1990). Imagined as both a constraint to work and an optimizable utility, sleep is being re-situated in economy management theory as a third complement to leisure and work (Cardon et al. 2018). Against these models, then, I offer a reading of literatures produced by patients and patient advocates of severe sleep disorders (Flygare 2009; Benjamin 2018) in order to assess the political possibility fragmentarily presented in texts and practices that uneasily redraw the terrain of sleep as a kind of death in life: a bodily non-performance or not-doing at the heart of inter-corporeal regulation.

**James Rakoczi** is a fourth year PhD student based in the English Literature department and Centre for Humanities and Health at King's College London. His thesis focuses on the making of "illness life writing" in works constellated around neurological injury and disorder from about 1990 to the present. He also runs a research seminar working group entitled *Configurations of Empire through the London Arts and Humanities Partnership* and from University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. His first publication, "Moving without Movement: Merleau-Ponty's "I can" and *Memoirs of Bodily Immobility*," is forthcoming in an edited volume with SUNY Press.

## PUBLICNESS

### › **George Townsend, 'Landlocked: an exploration of river bathing, pleasure and sociality in the UK'** **PAPER**

Familiar from adverts for shampoo and conditioner, the presiding image of the bather in contemporary culture revolves around an individual – often a young, conventionally good-looking woman – gaining sensual, indulgent pleasure alone in an enclosed private space. In the catalogue notes to the exhibition, *Soak Steam Dream: Reinventing Bathing Culture* (2016), the designer Jane Withers argues that the historical period this lone bather inhabits should be understood as a 'dark dry ages, the nadir for most ancient and sociable water rituals'. Meanwhile, since the publication of the Roger Deakin's *Waterlog: A Swimmer's Journey Through Britain* in 1999, the appetite in the publishing industry for 'wild swimming' titles has gone from strength to strength, with many authors orienting their fiction and poetry, as well as nature writing and autobiography, around the UK's waterways. The relationship between these two strands is far from straightforward, however. Does wild swimming represent a positive movement against the disappearance of sociable bathing places and the communal, everyday rituals Withers laments? Or, with British Canoeing stating in 2018 that a meagre 4% of the country's navigable waterways are accessible to the public, is there some danger of wild swimming discourse patching over the cracks of a deeper, more long-term capitulation regarding public access to so-called 'blue space'? Following Withers' emphasis on pleasure and the idea of the bathing culture, this paper reconsiders the received dichotomy between 'wild' and 'civilised' bathing, examining a variety of historical materials with a view to thinking through a radical vision for the future.

***George Townsend** is a second year PhD student in English and Humanities at Birkbeck. His thesis research revolves around the cultural history of Parson's Pleasure, a river bathing place on the River Cherwell near Oxford, active between 1607?-1992.*

### › **Heather McKnight, 'Forever Strike! Estrangement and Utopian Temporality on Sussex Campus'** **PAPER**

This paper discusses how the 2018 UCU pensions strike disrupted the accelerated and competitive managerial time space of the university campus. Strike action and campus occupations of buildings and spaces actively changed how time was experienced on campus. Utopian estrangement caused by strike action and other forms of protest enforce a reduction of hierarchy and created communities of critical pedagogy that tries to resist modes of cultural reproduction through stopping and slowing down normal university operations. This slowing down challenges the idea of a corporate university operating on accelerated time, which usually displaces social agency with individualistic consumerism. In this construct time is stolen back, repurposed, used for imagining, planning and building communities. It creates space for creativity, play and song. In these moments, estrangement is about surprise as well as dislocation. This utopian estrangement is an emotional response to the world being not as you expected, a re-sensing of the aesthetics of power. Here we see new networks emerging and interdisciplinary solidarities, where people come together to reimage different ways of working, being and collaborating on campus.

***Heather McKnight** is a critical utopian scholar and activist with research interests in unions, protest, education, feminism, gender, aesthetics and speculative fiction. She is currently a Doctoral Researcher at the University of Sussex Law Department, studying resistance to the marketisation of higher education through the lens of a reimagined academic freedom. She is currently chair of the anti-racist and transinclusive CHASE Feminist Network which aims to create spaces of resistance in what continues to be a patriarchal higher education sector with ongoing and intersectional discrimination happening at all levels. Coming from a working background in equalities, campaigning and education research, she has worked for charities, students' unions and local government. She is founder of the social*



*enterprise Magnetic Ideals which works on projects that use creative and artistic ways of bringing communities together to create social change. She is also a musician who dabbles in visual arts and creative writing.*

### ► **Miloš Kosec, 'Architecture of Passivism'** PAPER

Architecture is all about what architects do, isn't it? It is the skyscraper that gets built, the square that gets designed and the house that gets constructed that shape the professional canon and our everyday lives. This "active bias" is telling in its own right. It also helps to conceal the enormous spatial and social impact of what is consciously not done in architecture. In 1996, architectural office Lacaton & Vassal was commissioned to redesign a small Bordeaux square. By creating a project that specified keeping everything exactly as it was, insisting on a projective quality of this seemingly passive statement and issuing an invoice for their services, the architects addressed some of the constituent myths of the architectural profession. They also demonstrated a counter-gentrification practice far more radical to any participatory or community-led strategy. More than any potential design act, not doing became a contentious and transformative gesture. In a profession where the notions of inventiveness and creativity proliferated beyond measure, the decision not to do something is acquiring a new, critical and projective relevance. The paper addresses the phenomenon of 'Passivism' that relativizes dichotomous contradictions of activity and passivity, offering a chance to redefine criticality beyond simplistic imposed dichotomies into a projective as well as a dissenting strategy. Building on the legacy of Critical Theory, passivism insists on the centrality of reflective (self)critique as well as on the transformative quality of a projective act. It unearths the 'negative capability' of the architect, already implicit in the notion of creative potentiality, and redefines it for a world where incessant activity every day demonstrates its impotence by merely perpetuating the status quo.

*Miloš Kosec is a PhD candidate at Birkbeck, London, researching reluctance and passivity in contemporary critical architecture. He is also an architect, editor and publicist living and working in London, UK and in Ljubljana, Slovenia. In 2013, Miloš published the book »Ruin as an Architectural Object«. He is a member of the editorial boards of Praznine and Outsider Magazines and the editor of the internet site Outsider.si. He was one of the authors of the Slovene Pavilion at the 2018 Venice Architectural Biennial. His research work is focused on architecture, architectural history, political and social aspects of architectural design.*

## WORK/LEISURE

### ► **Sophie Bullock and Sophie Huckfield, 'Ambience Factory'** PERFORMANCE

Artists Sophie Bullock and Sophie Huckfield are the performance duo 'Ambience Factory' (AF). A faux-corporate brand whose remit is to satirise the commodification of anxiety generated through toxic work practices, used to make individuals more productive under a transparent guise of better wellbeing.

Developed in collaboration with the 'The Contemporary Philosophy of Technology Research Group' at the University of Birmingham. We expanded upon their academic works surrounding the social, political and emotional impacts of neoliberalism.

We use playful performances to disseminate this research to wider audiences. Taking the form of an inspirational TED style talk or motivational PowerPoint presentation. We echo corporate jargon to promote our vacuous self-help brand, selling products and services to unleash worker potential, whilst subversively criticising the corporate adoption of mindful exercises to increase productivity and profits.

We aim to push beyond satire and foster new forms of activism or 'counter-corporate

activism'. Using the "tools of neoliberalism to chip away at neoliberalism itself"

## › **Stephanie Grace Anderson, '(Un)Dead Time: Spatial Confinement and Non-Productive Labor in Contemporary Art'** **PAPER**

"Life is a life sentence; life is passing time; life is freethinking."

- Tehching Hsieh.

On September 30, 1978 artist Tehching Hsieh entered a cell-like cage constructed in his New York apartment, where he would remain until September 29, 1979. The first of five one-year performances for which he is now well known, *Cage Piece* was premised on the artist's commitment to 'producing nothing' for the duration of his self-imposed confinement—speaking, reading, television, writing, etc. were all prohibited. In a sense, during *Cage Piece*, Hsieh committed to a life stripped down to its most bare essentials, enacting "empty time" (Michael Hardt) in as pure a form as could be artificially produced. And yet, many scholars argue that Hsieh's work represents a sustained inquiry into the nature and location of freedom. This paper reflects on the paradoxical nature of this claim, given the restrictive parameters of *Cage Piece* and Hsieh's other performances. In it, I explore claims made by Adorno, Hardt, Foucault and others that, "Free time is shackled to its opposite" (Adorno) and investigate works that directly juxtapose, question, and undermine notions of 'free' and 'unfree time.' The artistic projects examined will include Antonio Vega Macotella's "time exchanges" with inmates at the *Santa Martha Acatitla* prison in Mexico City (Time Divisa, 2006-2010) and Andrea Fraser's installation, *Down the River*, at the Whitney Museum of American Art (2016), in addition to more oblique evocations of carceral themes in performance, installation, and video works which combine spatial confinement with nonproductive labor (especially in the work of Bruce Nauman).

Through consideration of the friction that appears between the imposition of 'dead' time in the prison and the willing occupation of non-productive time by artists operating under the value-conferring aegis of art, this project explores the unevenness with which time regimes are experienced across the social stratum, while attempting to locate zones of potentially liberatory time where they emerge in artistic practice and everyday life.

**Stephanie Anderson** is a PhD candidate in the Department of Visual Arts at Western University, Canada. Her current research explores the historically fraught relationship between artistic production and the wider structures of work and labour which characterize late capitalism. Her writing at the intersection of performance, labour, and museum studies has been published in international journals such as *Textile: The Journal of Cloth and Culture*, and *The Journal of Canadian Studies*.



› **Dr Valeria Graziano, 'Figures of Unwork'** PAPER

The depth and significance of the shifts associated with the post-work society has provoked a newfound interest in the role of imagination in political thinking, made explicit by many authors who turned to the literary genre of utopian and sci-fi writing to sketch possible scenarios of the near future. This paper turns to another mode of constructing political narratives, a complementary mode often adopted in feminist storytelling: that of *figuration*. I will reclaim three specific figures of trans-individuation (or collective becoming) to demonstrate how it might be possible to build a public sphere of *unwork*: Bazlen, a write who never wrote but took care of other writers; the collective figure of Afro-American 'other-mothers', as narrated by Patricia Hills Collins and bell hooks; and Amy, the little girl articulated by Carol Gilligan to give flesh to her 'ethics of care' proposition. Departing from these specific figures rather than from vast, panoramic views of a society-to-come, I wish to shed light on the problem of re-imagining the labours (and pleasures) of social reproduction and creative action away from their subsumption into the work regime. I will show how processes of subjectivation sedimented in the collective imaginary as figures of 'public intellectuals' impact the shape and sustenance of various modes of being together, understanding the production of thought and naming social cooperation. As I shall describe, the relationship between living labour and knowledge (including the one embedded in technologies) is a nexus that can escape the violence of work only by locating the possibility of political action as a plural capacity located in a *materialist and feminist public sphere*.

*Valeria Graziano is a Research Fellow at the Center for Postdigital Cultures of the University of Coventry. She is a member of the Postoffice Research Group and of the Network for Institutional Analysis (UK). Her work focuses on organizational forms and cultural practices that foster the rejection of work, the collectivization of social reproduction and the politicization of pleasure. Her approach is informed by autonomous Marxism, institutional analysis, materialist feminism and critical organization theory. She is convenor of the international project Pirate Care and editor of 'Repair Matters', a special issue of ephemeria: theory & politics in organization (May 2019). Her recent writings include 'Learning from #Syllabus' (in State Machines, Institute of Network Cultures, 2019); 'Recreation at Stake' (in Live Gathering, b\_books, 2019); and 'What's On? An Ethology of Public Programming' (in Organizing Counterpublics, Angewandte, 2019).*

› **Dr Shoniqua Roach, 'Theorizing Black Domesticity'** PAPER

Black women's productive and reproductive labors were critical to the constitution and maintenance of new world geographies. Indeed, the literal space(s) between black women's legs—pussies, bellies, wombs—established the boundaries of humanity and inhumanity; slavery and freedom; public goods and private property; blackness and whiteness (Philip 1997; McKittrick 2006; Hartman 2016). Yet, dominant geographies—from social policy to city planning, critical theory to institutional archives—continue to paradoxically spatialize black women as "ungeographic"—hyervisible yet marginal; captive yet undomesticable; foundational yet negligible. This is in part why black women, black feminists, continue to articulate a political and erotic investment in the production of black feminist geographies, black feminine spaces for pleasure and resistance, rest and reprieve. Working at the intersections of geography studies, political theory, and black feminist thought, this paper homes in on one paradigmatic, yet woefully undertheorized black feminist geography: black domesticity. I start by examining US social policies, including the 1965 Moynihan Report, to demonstrate how such policies have historically served as paradigmatic spatial models through which Western subjects have come to map, view, and plot black domesticity as a site of abject poverty and unrelenting gendered and sexual pathology. By establishing how such social policies function as dominant spatial models through which "racist-sexist geographic domination" is reinforced (McKittrick 2006), I disturb long-standing tendencies within strands of Black, white feminist, and queer studies to view the domestic sphere as apolitical, anachronistic, and anti-erotic.

In the second part of the paper, I turn to a quiet tradition within 1970s and 80s black feminism, specifically Audre Lorde's theoretical archive, to query the erotic

potentiality of *black* domesticity. In the process, I theorize the varied ways in which black feminists have historically articulated black domesticity as a paradigmatic zone of black eroticism and respatialize black domesticity as a site of insurgent potential, one that provisionally interrupts a legal, social, political, and economic world that is always already anti-black.

**Shoniqua Roach** (Ph.D. in Performance Studies, Northwestern University, 2017) is Assistant Professor of African and African American Studies & Women's, Gender, and Sexuality Studies at Brandeis University, where her research and teaching focuses on Black Feminism, Black Sexuality Studies, Performance Theory, & African-American Literary and Visual Cultures. Her work appears in *Women and Performance*, *Feminist Theory*, *The Black Scholar*, *Signs: journal of women in culture and society*, *Journal of American Culture*, and *differences: a journal of feminist cultural studies*. She is currently at work on her book manuscript, provisionally titled *Black Sexual Sanctuaries*, which explores the possibilities for black women's erotic freedom within overlooked or dismissed domains such as privacy and domesticity.

## SELF-CARE

### › LiLi Kathleen Bright, 'Practical self care and community care: How to recover from burnout & get our energy back 🧠👤'

#### WORKSHOP

Caring for one & all: a toolkit to help yourself & others recover from burnout or overwhelm

- Slow down, get support & re-evaluate goals and priorities to replenish your energy
- Learn & practise Liberating Structures to work through ways of recovering from burnout
- Create together & take away resources

Burnout is pretty common amongst marginalised people. Sometimes it's at a level that requires medical intervention. Sometimes it's not and there are practical things you can do to help yourself recover and to help other people to recover.

As someone who's been affected by burnout, depression & anxiety, and who cares about wellbeing and mental health, I love to do what I can to share what I've learned.

As a bonus, the practical activities we use in the workshop can be used in other ways to improve interactions with others. You can [learn about Liberating Structures](#) in various places, but the best way is to experience them.

**LiLi Kathleen Bright** regularly designs and leads workshops to include & engage everyone, and has worked with groups of 100 in Hamburg & 300 in Seattle. LiLi supported people to recover from burnout at Afrotech Fest in London and Margins tech conference in Nottingham earlier this year. They have successfully delivered wellbeing workshops at housing and music organisations. Working as part of a team, LiLi Kathleen organises the Liberating Structures London user group and leads 2-day immersion workshops to help people have better interactions. As an Agile Coach in tech, LiLi looks out for individual & team health, creating environments that help people thrive and facilitating effective work practices. Their continued learning about wellbeing supports them personally, as well as helping those around them. 1 of 12 writers selected for *The Future is Back* creative writing scheme in 2019, LiLi is writing a speculative fiction novel about a scientist, an artist and a dragon, as well as a secular companion to *The Artist's Way*. LiLi loves trees, crocodiles and bullet journalling, and is usually happy to enthuse about any and all of these.

## IMPROPER FREEDOMS

### › **Dr Holly Pester and Dr Ed Luker, 'Dreaming, Non Sensing and Means'** **WORKSHOP**

Dreams and poetry rest in the border ground between fantasy and reality, freedom and property, re-sourcing imaginative materials. As poet and theorist Fred Moten writes, poetry, like dreams, has an "improper" freedom.

We propose a poetry workshop that uses William Blake's poem, *The Dream* as a template for writing and imagining unofficial resources, and new means of meanings. In Part One of the workshop we will follow the poem's imagined materials: the bed, the dream, the lost ant's guided way. We argue that the poem creates a form of resource in its poetic language; shelters in rhyme, escape routes and rest spots in line-breaks. In Blake's poetry, means and meaning emerge otherwise to property and law, in a fantastical forms of commoning.

In Part Two workshop participants will write from remembered dreams, ascertaining resources from them, that unlock unofficial means of collective invention. As in Blake's poem, our cultivated forms of life beyond work-based survival, into pleasure and imagination, see the dream as a shade, a shelter, and a means for thought.

In this un-workshop the poets, dreamers, time-wasters, Holly Pester and Ed Luker invite you to dream, write and re-source with us, to elaborate the relation between dreams and reality, sense and nonsense, means and meaninglessness.

This workshop will be accessible for all. No previous experience of writing poetry is required. The structure will allow for experimentation and faltering, pausing, no-productivity. We will not impose expertise or hard work, using our experience of cultivating imagination and invention. Accordingly, the care taken for participants will be methods and environment that ground practically this emphasis on un-working. Like the glowworm and the beetle in Blake's poem, illumination and structuring are extended details of care.

**Ed Luker** is a poet, teacher, and writer. He teaches at University of Surrey and the Bishopsgate Institute. In 2017 he was poet in residence at Performing Arts Forum, France. He has lead poetry workshops at the Poetry School, Baltic 39 gallery, Northumbria University, Goldsmiths, University of Surrey, and PAF, amongst other places. His latest book of poems is *Heavy Waters* on The87Press.

**Holly Pester** is a poet and lecturer at University of Essex where she convenes and teaches the module, *Dreaming and Writing*. She has run community and professional experimental writing workshops across all levels including in her capacity as a Collaborator and Researcher with Hubbub, at Wellcome Collection's Hub Residency 2014-2016. She has written critical creative work on lullabies and rest/worksongs, and is currently researching forms of materialised aborted and latent time.

## PLEASURE

### › **Louisa Harvey, 'Un-writing' (10 mins)** **INTERVENTION**

There is a violent imperative to better ourselves, to be productive in all that we do, and that if we are to have a 'hobby' then it should be with a view to achieving something at the end. The outcome should aim at self-improvement, largely so that we can enter the workplace with greater gusto and more 'resilience'. So what can 'producing' writing do to subvert this? This creative intervention features one or two small writing exercises to get everyone activated and thinking about play for the sake of play and sharing as a micro-community whispers of the heart and psyche, rather than focusing on form, grammar, style, or even appraising the words that emerge.

**Louisa Harvey** is currently studying on the MA in Psychoanalytic Studies at Birkbeck.

*She has experience of running poetry open-mic events for people experiencing mental distress to find a space in which to express that which is frequently unwelcome in the mental health system with its focus on recovery narratives and the goal of a return-to-work. Louisa also runs a writing group at the Psychosis Therapy Project in Islington. She has written for various publications including the Guardian, Independent, open Democracy, and Diva magazine, and recently performed a selection of her poetry at the Tate Modern.*

### › **Niamh Vlahakis, 'Xenogenesis: An Exploration of Skin & Touch'**

#### **PAPER**

Octavia Butler's novel, *Dawn* (1987), recounts the repopulation of earth by humans and the Oankali, an alien culture, two centuries after a catastrophic global nuclear war which had made the planet uninhabitable. The Oankali are complex, sexual and powerful beings whose world does not conform to the cascading binary of sexuality/gender, masculine/feminine, spiritual/sexual, political/emotional. Though they appear starkly different to humans, I am interested in uncovering all the ways in which the Oankali, in their strangeness can reveal the blunted sensitivities all humans possess, which sharpened, become a source of pleasure. In response to the articulated complexity of Butler's alien society in *Xenogenesis*: I pose the following question: How can attention to the skin, touch and its relationship to the central/peripheral nervous system during the sexual act in *Dawn* deconstruct the hegemony of phallic order and alert us to sensitivities/susceptibilities of being that are obfuscated by anglo-saxon heteronormativity? Ultimately this paper seeks to draw out the importance of feminine modes of being that though relegated to the margins in fact are crucial aspects of human activity that do not need to be transformed or made more masculine to be valued. This essay will perform a close reading of the gendered and erotic power dynamics in the sexual scene in *Dawn*. Holding the concept of female power as conceived by Audre Lorde and elaborating on its machinations through the concept of Metis and Ahmed's 'stickiness', I peel back the cultural and biological underpinnings of skin, explore its connection to touch and the nervous system in the sexual encounter to consider it as a site of sexuality defined by *porosity* that creates bonds and borders which gives shape to the social body.

***Niamh Vlahakis** is a greek/irish thinker and writer, she combines her background in neuroscience and the humanities to explore corporeality through wetness, sensuality and textures. She co-organises exhibitions and club nights with Riposte - a queer collective of artists and is currently completing her masters in psychosocial studies.*

### › **Victoria Okoye, 'Producing knowledge, in pleasure, together'**

#### **PAPER**

This paper presents on my doctoral research undertaken with a community NGO in Accra, Ghana to produce knowledge on young people's embodied experiences of public space in their marginalized community and to imagine and experiment with inclusive possibilities. Over a period of 7.5 months, we conducted participatory photography, body mapping, group mapping and storytelling sessions, as well as a site-specific street intervention. Framing our research as a deliberately pleasurable activist project, I interrogate how our approach responds to adrienne maree brown's provocation to "make justice and liberation the most pleasurable collective experiences we could have" (2019: 34) – moving beyond (only) producing abstract knowledge to also producing a shared and embodied experience of enjoyment. I reflect on three aspects of our time together: First, that our research collaboration was rooted in an existing friendship between the NGO founder and myself and our appreciation for each other, our experiences engaging youth in public space art projects, and our views of the world. Second, enabling harmony as an everyday practice by consistently tending to ourselves and each other – eating, joking, and running errands together; organizing our activities around their prayers and religious rituals; and allowing space and time for rest and taking naps, sitting and laying around, and checking on each other. Third, occupying a street as a temporary, site-specific intervention to create a safe space for young people to be playful, to

perform music, poetry, and comedy, to rest and relax, and to “feel free.” This reflection in turn informs my shift from framing our activities as collaborative fieldwork to collaborative cultivation – enjoying the experience of together producing new learnings, while also tending to ourselves and each other as living, breathing, emotional, spiritual beings, enabling the growth of ourselves, each other, and our friendship.

**Victoria Okoye** is a PhD candidate in the School of Architecture at the University of Sheffield, UK. Her research, grounded in collaborative and participatory practice, explores young people's embodied experiences of community space in Accra, Ghana. This research emerges from her longstanding relationships collaborating with artists in Accra, and her scholarly interests in critical and global Black thought (from Africa and the African Diaspora), decolonial thought, and feminist methodologies, as well as a commitment to engaging in and attempting to produce alternative narratives in the city.

### ► **Dr. Christine “Xine” Yao, ‘I Don’t Care: The Practice of Unfeeling as Feminist, Queer of Colour Theory in the Flesh’** **PAPER**

How might “I don’t care” operate as self-care and open up new forms of sociality precisely because of its antisociality? I propose “unfeeling” as the term towards a methodology that refuses the demand for the marginalized to prove their affective interiorities as evidence of their humanity. In my research I argue that racialized and queer unfeeling dissents from expectations of expressive and responsive affective labour according to sentimental biopolitics. In doing so, I follow from queer of colour theorist Martin Manalansan IV’s figuration of disaffection in its causal, affective, and political senses. The negativity of “unfeeling” registers how minoritarian affects are occluded in the American culture of sentiment; instead, I take this demonization of affective tactics of survival and resistance as indicative of the insurgent potential of alternative structures of feeling.

My paper then explores how the term intervenes in the inadequacies of affect theory to address race through the antisocial turn. I share how “unfeeling” brings together conversations about refusal and dissatisfaction with the universal human and belonging from Black, Asian American, and Indigenous studies informed by feminist and queer of color critique. While I briefly sketch the racial and sexual politics of specific modes I study elsewhere in more depth like Oriental inscrutability, unsympathetic Blackness, and queer frigidity, this presentation also offers “unfeeling” as a useful heuristic for understanding other dimensions of concepts like Edouard Glissant’s right to opacity and Koritha Mitchell’s shamelessness as necessity for the formerly imprisoned.

In closing I discuss how unfeeling operates as praxis for scholars of colour and those others marginalized whose affective resources are continually drained by the structures of the academy. By legitimating unfeeling in our activism and pedagogy to decenter whiteness, I claim that we can create collective space to survive and thrive.

**Dr. Christine “Xine” Yao** is Lecturer in American Literature to 1900 at University College London. Her book *Disaffected: The Cultural Politics of Unfeeling in Nineteenth-Century America* is forthcoming from Duke University Press. Her work has appeared in *J19*, *Occasion*, *American Quarterly*, and *American Gothic Culture: An Edinburgh Companion*. Xine is the co-host of *PhDivas*, a podcast about academia, culture, and social justice across the STEM/humanities divide, as well as the founding Chair of the *C19 Podcast*. Her honours include the Yasuo Sakakibara Essay Prize from the American Studies Association. In 2019 she was a judge for the inaugural Orwell Prize for Political Fiction.

## › Farzana Khan, 'Inside My Darkest and Deepest Everything: The Politics of Pain and Bodies of Counter Creativity' **READING**

'Inside My Darkest and Deepest Everything: The Politics of Pain and Bodies of Counter Creativity' explores how re-membering our relationship to our bodies and pain offer us alternatives embedded in gender justice and health emerging from justice and joy. Rooted in my lived experiences of deep industrialised health care systems and battling the brutalisation of my body in this space. I broaden out the piece to explore the nuances and intersections of pain, where it is valid and where it is not and how this hinders healing. Beyond this, I look at how we draw out the transformative quality of pain, without romanticising it, by creating counter cultures in art, in our bodies, beyond pains, oppression and productivity. At the heart of the piece I examine, what it means for working-class women of colour, or women on the frontlines, to balance their exchange/ labour with the world and how we can use our being to fuel our doing, to do that work, as part of the practice and art of not doing. The piece works as a homage to Frida Kahlo, whose art embodies this.

**Farzana Khan** is a writer, director, cultural producer and award-winning Arts educator. Farzana is the co-founder and Director of [Healing Justice London](#). She has a background in Youth and Community work particularly focused on arts-based education projects both in the UK and internationally. Farzana is the former creative and strategic director at [Voices that Shake](#). She is a current Fellow at the [International Curatorial Forum](#). Recently, in collaboration with the Stuart Hall Foundation, she launched and curated the [Black Cultural Black Activism Map](#). Farzana was recently awarded Writer in Residence at Toynebee Hall, working on 'All Water Has a Perfect Memory' a screenplay exploring trauma, poverty, womanhood and bodily dignity amidst gentrified East London and ecologically violent times.

## WORTHY

## › Xiri Noir, 'Your Worth Is Not Measured By Your Productivity: A Radical Self Care Workshop for Queer Activists And Allies'

### **WORKSHOP**

"In being everything for everyone, when am I anything for myself?" - Malebo Sephodi, Miss Behave

In a society that glorifies productivity and discriminates and punishes difference, being marginalized and taking care of yourself is a radical action. This workshop is a space for us as activists to take the time to determine for ourselves who we want to be, rather than who society wants us to be.

Together we will critically re-think the ways in which we struggle, and confront our own prejudices surrounding what it means to be 'a good activist'. We will work towards developing tools to start practicing 'the world that we want' in the ways we organize ourselves as individuals, and as communities. We will work with how to create our own self care strategies and to set up our own healthy barriers.

As community activists and care takers we are supporting areas of our society in critical states. We need to continue this work, without running ourselves into the ground.

Radical self care, recuperation and pleasure are crucial for continuing our struggle for a sustainable society for all.

The workshop will draw on BDSM consent practices. It is inclusive and open to all genders and bodies, but encourages individuals who identify or have been identified as queer and/or female to participate. The work doesn't require any experience, just come as you are and with clothes that you feel comfortable and can move in.

**Xiri Tara Noir** is a community activist, organizer, performance artist and choreographer. S.he has facilitated research labs, workshops and lectures for artists and activists, who are both able-bodied and differently-abled-bodied. As an activist s.he has her roots in the radical queer feminist and sex worker community and has been working in various collaborations with women on the edge of society, amongst other things as a



*teacher of feminist self defense. In her choreographic practice s.he examines the edges that separates and connect academic research from our everyday gestures and practices. Within a variation and exchange of social roles her work explores the boundaries and hierarchies between 'artist' and 'audience', and between what it means to be observing or participating in an event. [www.xiritaranoir.wordpress.com](http://www.xiritaranoir.wordpress.com)*

## ABOUT THE ORGANISERS

**Lise Villemoes Grønvold** is a second year PhD candidate in English at Birkbeck. Her research focuses on the political and economic dimensions of contemporary illness writing by women and nonbinary writers. Originally from Denmark, Lise has a background in English studies and literary theory from Oxford and UCL. Lise has volunteered with a number of organisations working with cultural exchange and more equal access to higher education and also had a short-lived career in marketing, working as the Head of Communications for a tech startup.

**Ama Josephine Budge** is a Speculative Writer, Artist, Curator and Pleasure Activist whose work navigates intimate explorations of race, art, ecology and feminism, working to activate movements that catalyse human rights, environmental evolutions and troublesomely queered identities. Ama is a PhD candidate in Psychosocial Studies with Dr Gail Lewis at Birkbeck. Her research takes a queer, decolonial approach to challenging climate colonialism in Sub-Saharan Africa with a particular focus on inherently environmentalist pleasure practices in Ghana and Kenya.

Ama's fiction and non-fiction has been published internationally and she is working on her first book: a speculative duology for young adults. Ama has worked with arts institutions across the UK and abroad including the ICA, Free Word, Wellcome Collection and the V&A. She has been published by *Aperture*, *The Independent Newspaper*, *Dispatch Feminist Moving Image*, *Media Diversified*, *Skin Deep*, *Consented*, *CHEW Magazine*, *B. Dewitt Gallery*, *Autograph ABP*, and commissioned to respond to the work of artists Travis Alabanza, Zanele Muholi, Gray Wielebinski and Alberta Whittle (forthcoming). Ama is convenor of I/Mages of Tomorrow anti-conference (Goldsmiths 2017), co-founder of The Batty Mama Black queer club & performance night (2015-present), and initiator of Self Love and Ecstasy pleasure collective (aka SLAE). SLAE works to invoke power, pleasure, and healing with breath, touch and trust for self, community and planet. SLAE manifests predominantly with and for QTIBPOC (queer, trans, intersex, a-gender, black, people of colour). Ama has a background in performance art with a BA in Contemporary Performance Practice from the Royal Conservatoire of Scotland then took a U-turn with an MA in Postcolonial Culture and Global Policy from Goldsmiths University working on a thesis exploring Queer Modes of Encounter with Climate Colonialism and Black speculative art practices, which went on to inform her PhD.