

Creative-critical Approaches to the Health Humanities Workshop

Tuesday, October 13 2026
Room A.1.09, OpenLab.Brussels

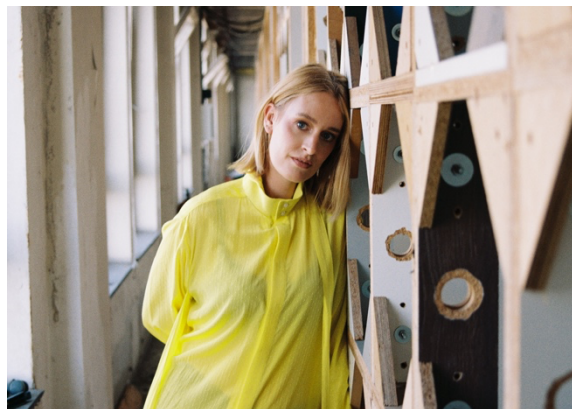
Research Highlights Panel

Dr. Mariske Broeckmeyer

“Nonperforming Migraine: The Failing Voice as Artistic Practice.”

This presentation examines migraine through the interaction between illness and voice, drawing on the artistic research project *Cripur Cripour*, a migraine opera consisting of six audio installations. Taking the failing voice as its point of departure, the research considers how migraine affects vocal technique, language, communication and the singer’s ability to perform. Rather than representing migraine retrospectively, the artistic methodologies were developed to record and work with the voice during migraine attacks, allowing the physical limitations of illness to shape the artistic process. The resulting work challenges conventional understandings of vocal performance by shifting attention from virtuosity and control towards failure, absence and nonperformance. In doing so, the project considers how artistic research can contribute to understandings of chronic illness that are not structured around recovery or therapeutic transformation.

Mariske Broeckmeyer is a Brussels-based vocalist, composer, and artistic researcher. She obtained a master's degree in Jazz Vocals at the Royal Conservatory of Brussels (2015) and studied composition at the Iceland Academy of the Arts (2016). Her music unfolds at the meeting point of experimental jazz, electronic sound, and intimate song-writing, using the voice as a site of vulnerability, resistance, and transformation. Her artistic practice is deeply informed by long-term research into voice, illness, and the aesthetics of failure. Alongside an international performance practice in concert halls, museums, and interdisciplinary settings, Broeckmeyer holds a Doctorate in the Arts from LUCA School of Arts and KU Leuven (2022). She is Head of the Jazz Department at LUCA School of Arts and teaches in the fields of voice theory, artistic research, and cultural studies, moving between pedagogy, performance, and theory.



Prof. Wendy Morris

“Wombs, Ears, Scolds and Scribes. Writing as a plurality of parts and beings.”

Wendy Morris’ work embraces histories of travelling women that connect pockets of contraceptive knowledge from the Pyrenees to Cape Town. Wendy works as the Company, a constellation of organs and entities that has evolved as an artistic-fictive conceit in the investigation into the fragile history of her Angolan ancestor. Forfeiting a sense of wholeness and a single-point perspective, the focus has shifted towards a plurality of parts and beings. The research project *Nothing of Importance Occurred. Recuperating a Herball for a 17th century Enslaved Angolan Midwife at the Cape* forms the framework.



Wendy Morris is an artist, writer and researcher. Her practice manifests in ephemeral gatherings, travelogues, processions, sonic herbals, radioworks, stitch-epics and fieldguides. Her work has a double focus on historical and transdisciplinary research, and on the artistic and written forms in which this research manifests itself. Her research is focused on anti-fertility plant histories as clandestine female archives. Wendy is expertise director of the network Art & Society at LUCA School of Arts, assistant professor at the University of Leuven, and founding member of the research group *deep histories fragile memories*.

Workshop Panel 1

Prof. Sarah De Mul

“At What Cost Success? Postcritique, Academic Vulnerability, and Natasha Brown’s *Assembly*” (co-written with Prof. Aagje Swinnen)

This paper utilizes postcritique, close reading, and collaborative autoethnography to challenge neoliberal models of professional success. Analyzing Natasha Brown’s novel *Assembly*, which follows a Black British corporate leader facing terminal illness, the authors examine systemic racism, tokenism, and structural violence. As European female professors, they map these fictional critiques onto their lived experiences of academic burnout and bodily toll. While the novel ends in individualized refusal, the authors argue it also acts as a collective witness. Sharing these “anti-success stories” transforms reading into a political act that counters meritocratic exhaustion.

Sarah De Mul is Professor of Literature, Culture and Diversity at the Open University in the Netherlands, where she heads the Department of Culture, Diversity and Inclusion. Her research spans comparative postcolonial and gender studies, focusing on Dutch and English literatures, multiculturalism, and systemic workplace exhaustion. She is a 2026–2027 Fellow at the Netherlands Institute for Advanced Study (NIAS-KNAW), leading the NWO Open Competition project “Re-imagining Burnout and the Cultural Narrative of Productive Adulthood through Literature”, in collaboration with Aagje Swinnen (Maastricht University) and Warda El-Kaddouri (OU).



Prof. Emilia Nielsen with Prof. dr. Hannah Van Hove

“Creative Critical Approaches to the Health Humanities: An Attempt at Editorializing”

In this collectively constructed paper—a manner of work-in-progress editor’s notes for an anticipated edited collection of essays on creative-critical approaches to the health humanities, we begin with the tension embedded in defining what creative-critical is, or might be, as well as its generative possibilities.

Some have argued that creative-critical writing might best be understood as a methodology rather than a genre (Ellis, 2024), a suggestion worthy of further consideration by scholars in the health and medical humanities. These editor's notes take a slightly different approach and suggest that we might think of creative-critical writing as one of many methods, perhaps forms, supported by an arts-based, practice-led or research-creation methodology. Here we also reflect on our own creative-critical contributions, and our ongoing motivations for working in such a manner. In adopting a reflective rather than an argumentative stance, this exploration centres on what creative-critical approaches can make happen through embracing "reparative reading" (Sedgwick, 2003), when approaching the critical-creative scholarship of others.



Emilia Nielsen is the author of two critically noted collections of poetry, *Body Work* (Signature Editions, 2018) and *Surge Narrows* (Leaf Press, 2013). Her book *Disrupting Breast Cancer Narratives: Stories of Rage and Repair* (University of Toronto Press, 2019) received the Elli K  ng  s-Maranda Prize. Her most recent funded research explores experiential knowledge of chronic illness, hybrid forms of life writing, and critical-creative approaches which appear in her forthcoming monograph, *Wayfinding Disability: On Chronic Illness and Identity* (University of British Columbia Press, 2027). She hosts and executive produces the podcast "*On Being Ill*": *Conversations on Creativity, Disability and Identity* with support from the Creative Entanglement Collaboratory. She is an associate professor in the Health & Society Program at York University,

Toronto, Canada.

Hannah Van Hove is Assistant Professor (Research) at Vrije Universiteit Brussel and an FNRS Postdoctoral Research Fellow at Universit   Libre de Bruxelles. She works on various aspects of twentieth-century and contemporary literature in Britain and the United States, and has a particular interest in experimental fiction, women's writing, health humanities and creative-critical methodologies. Her first monograph, *Experiments in Subjectivity in Post-War British Women's Fiction: Unsettling Identity*, is forthcoming with Edinburgh University Press. Together with Andrew Radford, she is the editor of *British Experimental Women's Fiction, 1945-1975: Slipping through the Labels* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2021) and her work has been published in international peer-reviewed journals such as *Women: A Cultural Review*, *Forum+*, *Translation and Literature*, the *Journal for Literary and Intermedial Crossings*, as well as in edited volumes published by Palgrave, Edinburgh University Press and Academia Press. She served as PI on the OSL-funded research incubator project 'Creative-critical approaches to the Health Humanities' (2023-2025) and on the FWO-Tournesol project "Mapping Performative Writing and the Page as an Expanded Field (1966-the present)" (2024-2025).



Workshop Panel 2

Tess Casher, PhD Student

“Thinking in the Hyphens: How Dysfluency-Informed Oral Autobiography Fosters Situated Storytelling”

This chapter introduces the term “parasonic” to refer to the unintentional utterances that bespeckle all vocal communication. As a primary text, it studies the Library of Dysfluent Voices, a living digital aural archive of people who stutter reflecting on their speech. From a sound studies and life writing perspective, the oral gaps, prolongations, and repetitions, more commonly found in stuttered speech, emerge as illuminating life writing features. These vocal textures invite nuance and encourage embodied listening, both of which situate meaning within the speaker-listener relationship. Underscoring the value of this life writing ethos, the chapter calls for autobiographical narratives to be communicated in voice recordings that incorporate, not edit out, the parasonic.



Tess Casher is a doctoral student in the English Literature and Film Studies Department at the University of Alberta. Her work focuses on fictional and autobiographical representations of dysfluency by authors who stutter. She looks to the stuttering archive to illuminate the generative characteristics of dysfluent speech and a disability-informed, approach to life writing. Alongside her academic work, Tess operates as the development co-ordinator for SPACE (Stuttering, People, Arts, Community, Education) and a writer for the BC-based Listening Equity Project.

Femke Van Hout, PhD Candidate

“Shaping pain, shaping narrative: An empirical-philosophical study of narrative practices among young people with chronic pain”

This empirical-philosophical study questions how narrative practices and chronic pain experiences might shape one another. Sixteen young people (aged 17-27) were interviewed. They shared different narrative practices, including diaries, photographs, vlogs, decorated mobility aids, creative planning, and jokes. This study questions how different narrative forms were used to 1) gain insight over time 2) to create ‘events’ 3) to deal with a constantly changing future 4) to bear witness to the “reality” of the pain, and 5) to tell a (aesthetically and ethically) “good” story. Throughout the paper, I engage with the concept “narrative labour” to describe the embodied, social and ethical work of making chronic pain narratable.

Femke van Hout is a PhD-researcher at the Department of Cultural Studies of Tilburg University. Her interdisciplinary research combines philosophy, literary analysis and ethnography to examine narratives of chronic illness and pain. Next to her academic work, she writes for *Filosofie Magazine*, the Dutch magazine for public philosophy.



Dr. Ruth Alison Clemens

“Poeting the Clinical Archive”

Scout Tzofiya Bolton’s poetry book *The Mad Art of Doing Time* (2025) was written while the author was incarcerated due to a crime committed during schizoaffective psychosis. The book begins with a prologue of excerpts taken from official clinical documents, prompting us to consider the poetic affordances of clinical texts and their forms. What is the relationship between form and content in the construction of meaning in the diagnostic process? How might heuristic models of diagnosis and poetry share an unexpected set of approaches? In an era of mental healthcare as the management of the self through dividualised data excess, what should we do with the archive created for/of each of us? This paper presents a creative-critical exploration of the poetic affordances of clinical archives. In this way, poetry becomes a mode of taxonomy but also a possibility for taxonomic escape.



Ruth Alison Clemens is a research fellow in modernist media cultures at Leiden University and a CLIC grant writing resident. Her work has been published in *Comparative Critical Studies*, *Modernist Cultures*, and *Feminist Modernist Studies*, and she has contributed to the books *Deleuze and Guattari and Fascism*, *More Posthuman Glossary*, and *Flann O’Brien and the Nonhuman*, among others. Ruth explores creative-critical methods in her research, and she has led workshops at the Posthuman Summer School, the Dutch Royal Academy of Art, West Den Haag, Hypha Studios London, and other independent cultural organisations. She was recently awarded the 2026 LUCAS Public Engagement Prize.

Prof. Hanna Meretoja

“Counter-Narrating Cancer: Creative-Critical Entanglements”

In this paper, I reflect on my experiments with creative-critical writing so far, focusing, in particular, on how such writing has allowed me to engage with the complexities of cancer experience. I look back at my early attempts to bring the first person to my scholarly writing, and I reflect on how I have explored cancer experience in my two novels, *The Night of Ancient Lights* and *The Tree of Life and Death*, both of which question a sense of narrative mastery and try to make room for the experience of being in a messy middle, in a place of radical uncertainty. I suggest that critical to the ethical potential of creative-critical writing is its ability to expand our sense of the diversity of the narrative modes through which we can make sense of our experiences, to provide us with more existential breathing space when we go through experiences of crisis, and to contribute to our narrative imagination as futural beings.

Hanna Meretoja is Professor of Comparative Literature and Director of SELMA: Centre for the Study of Storytelling, Experientiality and Memory at the University of Turku (Finland). She runs the Research Council of Finland projects “Counter-Narratives of Cancer: Shaping Narrative Agency” (2023-2028) and “Narrative Agency Reading Group Model: Applications for Libraries, Schools and Hospitals” (2025-2027). Her research is mainly in the fields of narrative studies, memory studies, and medical and health humanities. Her publications include *The Ethics of Storytelling: Narrative Hermeneutics, History, and the Possible* (2018,



Oxford UP) and the co-edited volumes *The Use and Abuse of Stories: New Directions in Narrative Hermeneutics* (2023, Oxford UP), *The Routledge Companion to Literature and Trauma* (2020), and *Storytelling and Ethics: Literature, Visual Arts and the Power of Narrative* (2018, Routledge), as well as the novels *Elotulet* (2022, The Night of Ancient Lights) and *Elämän ja kuoleman puu* (2027, The Tree of Life and Death).

Online panel: Publishing Creative-critical Work in the Health Humanities



Dr. Colleen Derkatch is Professor of Rhetoric in the Department of English at Toronto Metropolitan University. Her research and teaching focus on rhetorical theory and criticism, particularly rhetoric of science, health, and medicine, as well as the health humanities and science and technology studies. Her research seeks to understand “in-between” spaces in health and health discourse, such as spaces between medical research and practice, mainstream and non-dominant models of health care, doctors and patients, and expert and public understandings of evidence. Dr. Derkatch’s books include *Why Wellness Sells: Natural Health in a Pharmaceutical Culture* (Johns Hopkins University Press, 2022) and *Bounding Biomedicine: Evidence and Rhetoric in the New Science of Alternative Medicine* (University of Chicago Press, 2016). She has published articles in a range of journals such as *Canadian Food Studies*; *Health: An Interdisciplinary Journal for the Social Study of Health, Illness and Medicine*; *Rhetoric of Health & Medicine*; and *Technical Communication Quarterly*. She is also co-editor (with historian Sharrona Pearl) of the new Hopkins Health Humanities book series at Johns Hopkins University Press.

Dr Sabina Dosani is a consultant child and adolescent psychiatrist, writer and Editor-in-Chief of *Medical Humanities*. She has served as a Clinical Editor at *The BMJ*, a Visiting Fellow at the Centre for Humanities and Health, King’s College, London, and as Ambassador for Medical and Health Humanities at the University of East Anglia. She has a PhD in Creative-Critical Writing and is a Fellow of the Royal College of Psychiatrists. Her creative and critical work has appeared in medical, literary and interdisciplinary contexts, including on radio in her capacity as a BBC New Generation Thinker. Her editorial interests include long-form analytical narratives, especially those written from interdisciplinary perspectives, and creative scholarship that unsettles the boundaries of conventional academic writing.





Prof. Sharrona Pearl is the Andrews Endowed Chair of Interdisciplinary Studies at TCU. A historian and theorist of the face and body, Pearl has published widely on health humanities, history of science and medicine, media and religion, and critical race, gender, and disability studies. Her recently released book *Do I Know You? From Face Blindness to Superrecognition* with Johns Hopkins University Press is the third in her face trilogy, following *Face/On: Face Transplants and the Ethics of the Other* (University of Chicago Press, 2017) and *About Faces: Physiognomy in Nineteenth-Century Britain* (Harvard UP, 2010). She also just published a trade book entitled *Mask* with Bloomsbury Academic. Pearl maintains an active freelance profile, with bylines in a variety of newspapers and magazines including *The Washington Post*, *Aeon*, *The Conversation*, *Tablet*, *Lilith*, *Bon Appetit*, *Real Life Magazine*, and numerous other places.

Dr. Monica Kidd is a family physician and for four years has been associate editor of humanities at the *Canadian Medical Association Journal*. An award-winning journalist for thirty years, she holds Masters degrees in science and fine arts, and is at work on her ninth book, a nonfiction book about coastal erosion globally. She lives in Calgary, Canada.



This workshop is made possible because of financial support from York University, Toronto, Canada through the Global Research Excellence Fund and the Office of the Vice-President Research & Innovation, and the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada. It is also made possible because of space and support provided by Vrije Universiteit Brussel and Université Libre de Bruxelles.

This workshop continues conversations started at the [2025 symposium](#) on the same topic, held at Perdu in Amsterdam and organised by Hannah Van Hove, Andries Hiskes, Sarah De Mul, Mia You and Nadia de Vries as part of the research network 'Creative-critical Approaches to the Health Humanities', funded by the Netherlands Research School for Literary Studies (OSL).