



INSTITUTE OF
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Arts and
Humanities
Research Council



University
of Exeter

Reading Bodies: Narrating Illness in Spanish and European Literatures and Cultures (1870s to 1960s)

A One-Day Workshop

Woburn Suite, Institute of Languages, Cultures and Societies, Senate House, Malet Street, London WC1E 7HU

Friday 26 April 2024

The interconnections between literature and medicine have been the focus of increasing scholarly interest. Building on recent studies in this field of Modern Languages (Fernández-Medina, 2018; Murphy, 2017; Wong, forthcoming) and transnational Medical Humanities (Elsner and Wilson, 2022; Novillo-Corvalán, 2015), the workshop will analyse cultural narratives of illness in Europe from the late-nineteenth to the mid-twentieth century. Drawing together specialists across language disciplines (foregrounding Hispanic Studies alongside French, German, Italian and Portuguese), the project traces the development of narratives of ill-health from the 1870s to the 1960s and beyond, with particular attention to gendered representations of psychological and physical conditions. This transnational approach seeks to foster collaboration and shared insights across languages. The research includes the importance of language and cultural representation for the dissemination and legitimisation of ideas about health and illness, and the ways in which literary and other cultural texts express societies' fears and preoccupations, including during periods of social change. The workshop will also encourage discussion about the legacy and ongoing echoes of cultural narratives of the body, health and illness up to the present day. This is the first of two research workshops on the project theme.

This project is generously funded by an AHRC Research, Development & Engagement Fellowship [AH/X01133X/1]: [Reading Bodies \(exeter.ac.uk\)](https://www.exeter.ac.uk/research/projects/reading-bodies)

For enquiries about the workshop, contact the Project Lead: K.A.Murphy@exeter.ac.uk

Registration is free and all are welcome to attend.

Programme:

9.30 Arrival

9.50 – 10.00 Welcome by Katharine Murphy (Principal Investigator for 'Reading Bodies') and Olivia Glaze (Postdoctoral Research Associate)

10.00 – 11.30 Panel 1: Transnational and Decolonial Perspectives (Chair: Patricia Novillo-Corvalán)

Steven Wilson (Queen's University Belfast) - Incommunicable Disease: Colonial Biopolitics in Camus and Sartre

Rocío Rødtjer (Independent Scholar) - Aping Other Nations: Darwinism as British Colonial Degeneration in Nineteenth-Century Spanish Short Fiction

Natalia Santamaría Laorden (Ramapo College of New Jersey) - *Indianos* as the Healthy Alternative to Lead the Country in Spanish *fin-de-siècle* Literature

11.30 – 11.45 Tea / coffee

11.45 – 12.45 Keynote

Patricia Novillo-Corvalán (University of Kent) - Feverish Cities: Modernity, Culture, and Yellow Fever in Barcelona and Buenos Aires (Chair: Katharine Murphy)

12.45 – 13.45 Lunch

14.00 – 15.30 Panel 2: Gender and Ill-health in Literature and Film (Chair: Rocío Rødtjer)

Catherine Ramsey-Portolano (American University of Rome) - *Nevrosi* in Italian Cinema in the years of the Economic Boom

Katharine Murphy (University of Exeter) – Mapping Neurasthenia in Spanish Fiction: Urban Exhaustion and the Literary Legacy of Baroja's Madrid Novels (1902-1911)

Lorraine Ryan (University of Birmingham) - Mental Illness in Carmen Laforet's *Nada*

15.30 – 15.45 Tea / coffee

15.45 – 17.15 Panel 3: Narrating Illness (Chair: Ina Linge, University of Exeter)

Annja Neumann (University of Cambridge) – The Afterlives of Dr Tulp: Illness Narrative Vs Medicine as Performance in German Cultures of the Long 20th Century and the Present Day

Olivia Glaze (University of Exeter) – Lovesickness and Longing: The Unwell Female Body and Mind in Fernando Pessoa's *Carta da Corcunda para o Serralheiro*

Kit Yee Wong (Independent Scholar) - Reading Illness as Myth in Émile Zola's *Rougon-Macquart* (1871–93)

17.30 – 18.30 Drinks reception



[Reading Bodies \(exeter.ac.uk\)](http://exeter.ac.uk)