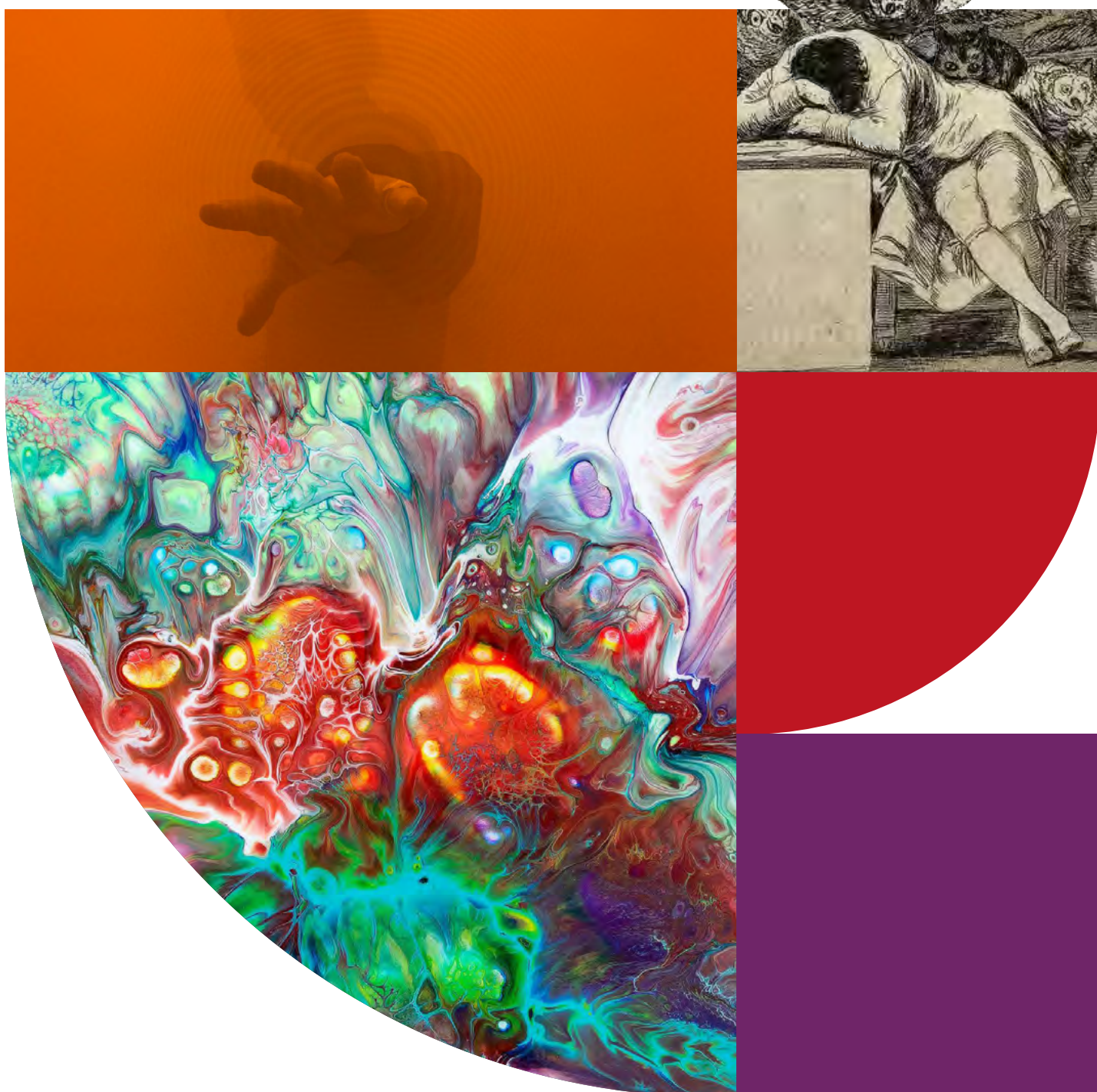


The Institute for Medical Humanities

2018-2023





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Director's Welcome

The Institute for Medical Humanities (IMH) at Durham University is a global centre for excellence in medical humanities research.

Medical humanities has had a dynamic institutional presence in Durham for nearly twenty-five years. Jane Macnaughton established the Centre for the Arts and Humanities in Health and Medicine in 2000 and developed this into the Centre for Medical Humanities in 2008. In 2017 she led a team of researchers to secure major development funding from Wellcome, and in 2018 the Institute for Medical Humanities was launched at the Durham Town Hall.

This brochure celebrates the achievements and activity of the IMH in its first five years. We hope that it piques your curiosity, captures your imagination and prompts you to continue to engage with a field that is growing in terms of its scholarly breadth, critical capacities and positive impacts in the world.

Angela Woods,
*Professor of Medical Humanities
and Director IMH*

What is Medical Humanities?

Medical humanities research draws on the methods and source materials of the arts, humanities and social sciences to improve our understanding of health and human experience.

It strives to be interdisciplinary and is often conducted in collaboration with non-academic partners such as health and voluntary sector professionals, people living with complex health conditions, family members, activists, advocates and creative practitioners. Medical humanities researchers seek societal change as well as transformations in scholarly understanding.

Medical Humanities at Durham: Improving health by understanding hidden experience

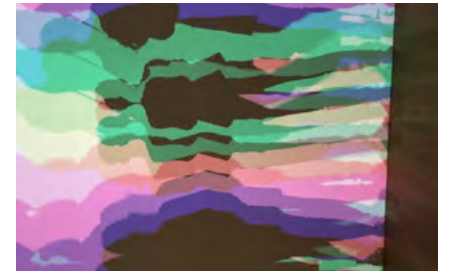
At Durham University's Institute for Medical Humanities, we conduct interdisciplinary and cross-sector research into what we call 'hidden experience.' We investigate experiences of health and illness which are marginalised, difficult, unspeakable, unacknowledged or invisible. Starting with the complexities of experience enables new questions to be posed, new methodological approaches to be harnessed, and new understandings of biomedical accounts to be developed, with tangible health benefits to individuals and communities.

Our Research Strands

From 2018–2023, our research into hidden experiences of health and illness spanned six interdisciplinary research themes.

Embodied Symptoms

Explored how medical symptoms come into being from embodied experiences



Thinking, Feeling & Imagining

Investigated the way insights from the arts and humanities enrich and complicate concepts of 'normal' and 'pathological'



Fringe Cognition

Explored liminal, ephemeral experience



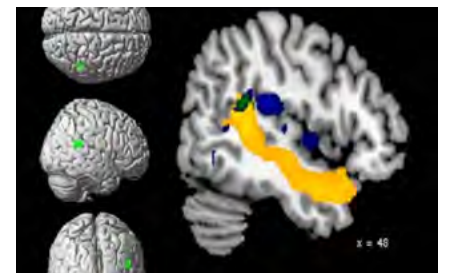
Everyday Environments

Examined situated experiences of health that are entangled with our everyday environments



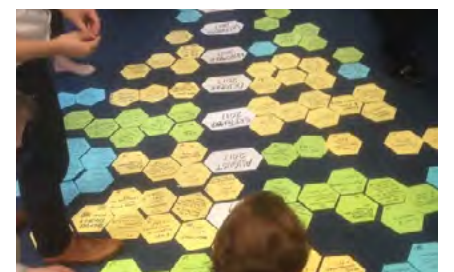
The Science of Human Experience

Advanced understandings of the mind and brain through the study of human experience



Critical Concepts

Methods and processes used to generate knowledge in the critical medical humanities



Research strand:

Embodied Symptoms



1

Long Covid

Long Covid has been a focal point for work in the IMH since the earliest days of the pandemic.

With support from IMH, Felicity Callard published with collaborator Elisa Perego the field-changing article 'How and why patients made Long Covid'. Jane Macnaughton is part of an international research team led by the Centre for Medical Humanities and Bioethics at Linköping University which is combining approaches from the humanities, social sciences, clinical

medicine and neuroscience to develop a better understanding of post-Covid syndrome (i.e. Long Covid) as a biomedical, clinical, socio-political and embodied phenomenon. Katharine Cheston, Marta Cenedese and Angela Woods collaborated in a study of temporality, suffering, and uncertainty in narratives following COVID-19, and Angela Marques Filipe has published innovative autoethnographic studies of pandemic life-lines.

“

Humanities scholarship tends to be slow burn and perhaps we need to be bolder and less fearful of getting it wrong; and to have the courage to change our narratives and interpretations as events unfold.

Macnaughton, 2023.

The Menopause

IMH researchers have pioneered new understandings of women's experience of menopause.

Led by Jane Macnaughton, *We Need to Talk About the Menopause* was an interdisciplinary research project that drew on insights from history and activist movements to shed light on how society's attitudes towards - and treatments for - the menopause have changed over time. In *Moving through Menopause* directed by Cassandra Phoenix, our researchers used qualitative methods and creative, arts-based approaches to explore how women's often hidden experiences of menopause (including early- and perimenopause) affect their levels of physical activity and movement practices.

Cassie and Jane are now members of the Women's Marginalised Health Network (WoMaHN) - a new international research network that gathers together scholars with an interest in the marginalisation of women's embodiment and health from perspectives within the critical social sciences, gender studies, philosophy and medical humanities.



1 Luke Jarram, 'Coronavirus Covid-19' from the Glass Microbiology series.



Research strand:

Thinking, Feeling & Imagining



1 Hildegard von Bingen receives divine inspiration and passes it on to her scribe. Miniature from the Rupertsberg Codex of Liber Scivias. Public domain, via Wikimedia Commons.

2 James Hutton, holding an ear trumpet. Scan by NYPL, Public domain, via Wikimedia Commons.

3 Artwork from "Yo, Doc, Listen Up!" - An exhibition about Deafness, hardness of hearing, and inclusive healthcare.

Visions & Visual Hallucinations

Researchers in our Institute are exploring how literary and cultural sources from classical to contemporary can expand understandings of invisible or unusual experiences.

Corinne Saunders is investigating how mind, body and affect are constructed and intersect in medieval thought and literature, with a particular focus on how voice-hearing and visionary experience are portrayed and understood.

The IMH has also supported the development of an international, multidisciplinary network of researchers interested in visions and visual hallucinations led by Charles Fernyhough.

Deafness

We are also shedding light on different forms of sensory experience, particularly those that have been marginalised or neglected as a result of the long-standing dominance of sight.

For example, Ruben Verwaal has worked extensively on cultural experiences and medical perceptions of deafness in early modern Europe. He has also collaborated with clinicians and patient groups in the Netherlands to promote more inclusive forms of healthcare for people who are Deaf or Hard-of-hearing.

Fraser Riddell is building upon recent debates in Victorian studies on cognition and the senses, investigating the place of tactile sensory perception in nineteenth-century literature and culture.

Yo, doc, listen up! (Hoors een even!)

Installed at the Erasmus Medical Centre Rotterdam (EMCR) from July to September 2022.

This exhibition aimed to raise awareness among medical students and healthcare professionals about the many obstacles that Deaf or Hard-of-Hearing (DHH) patients regularly encounter. Developed in close collaboration with DHH interest groups in the Netherlands, it was incorporated into the clinical training curriculum at the EMCR to better prepare their medical students for their work as doctors in a diverse society.

hooreenseven.shorthandstories.com/yodoclistenup



Often Deaf and Hard of Hearing people struggle with physical health problems such as cardiovascular disease, obesity, and high blood pressure. This is due in part to poor communication with doctors and less access to health information. But if doctors and patients are aware of this, care can quickly improve.

3



Research strand:

Fringe Cognition



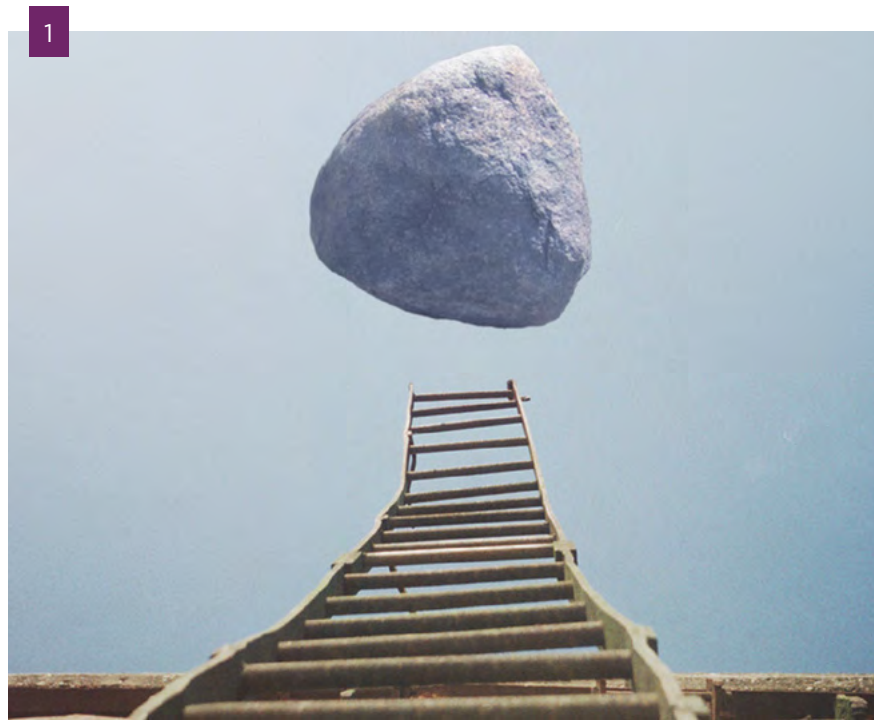
Threshold Worlds

Dreams have been fascinating multiple disciplines for centuries, from philosophy to literature to contemporary cognitive science.

Why we dream remains to a great extent an enduring mystery. Yet today we have more technologies, methods and conceptual frameworks than ever to explore how and what we dream. Are dreams similar to wakeful perceptual worlds? Are they narrative reconfigurations of our waking life? What happens to our self in and out of dreaming events? There is no single discipline that can answer these questions alone.

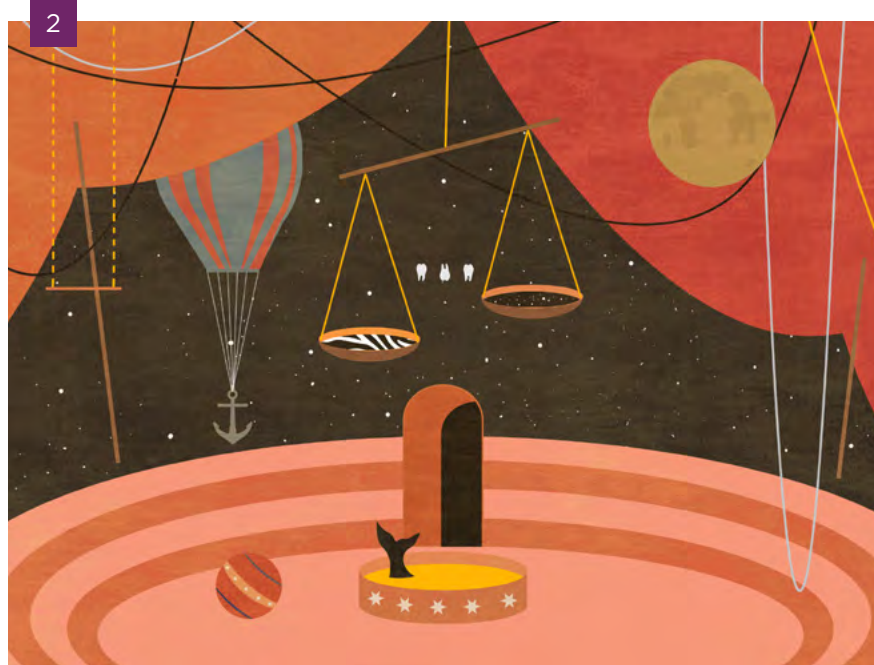
Threshold Worlds brought narrative theorists, psychologists, artists and literary scholars together for an interdisciplinary study of dreams and dreaming. It sustained a dynamic series of online seminars and workshops during the Covid-19 pandemic and founded a network of international scholars with an interest in dreaming and liminal states.

Highlights from *Threshold Worlds* include:



The Threshold Worlds Dream Survey

An interdisciplinary survey on dreaming, which collected over 300 dream reports from members of the public.



Sleep Circus

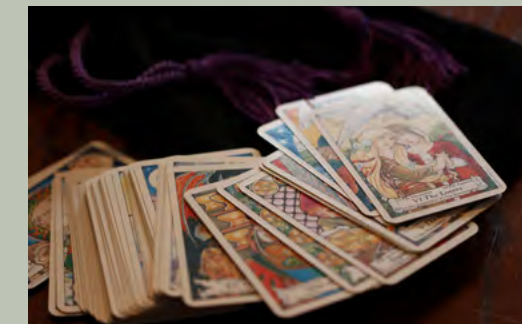
A digital poetry game produced in collaboration with the artist Lucie Treacher. The game was inspired by conversations with our researchers and dreams by members of the public collected through Lucie's online platform 'The International Archive of Dreams'.



Hypnagogia

'Hypnagogia' or hallucinations on the borders of sleep and wakefulness can involve experiences like hearing voices, seeing shadowy figures, feeling an emotionally charged presence in the room and sleep paralysis.

Our researchers have investigated spiritual and religious interpretations of hypnagogia in 19th and 20th century Mormonism, as well as in present day Christian and Spiritualist medium communities.



Weekday Worldviews

Led by IMH's Adam Powell, *Weekday Wordviews* is a new project that takes our research into liminal, ephemeral experiences into a different direction by exploring the relationship between worldviews and psychological wellbeing among the audiences of public psychic events in England. After the initial stages of the project were supported by IMH, the project received funding from The International Network for the Study of Science and Belief in Society.

¹ Lucie Treacher, *Light Sleeper*. Reproduced with kind permission of the artist.

² Lucie Treacher, *Artwork from Sleep Circus*.

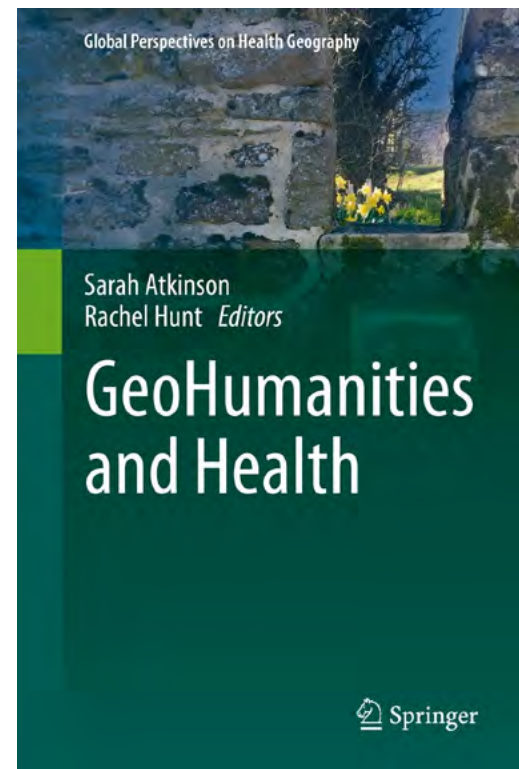
³ Henry Fuseli, *The Nightmare*, 1781. Public domain, via Wikimedia Commons.

Research strand:

Everyday Environments

Geohumanities

The time, space and place we occupy can both positively and negatively affect our individual and collective experiences of health.



How can we understand health experiences that are entangled with our 'everyday environments' and influenced by social interactions and norms, lived and imagined histories, politics and cultures?

Edited by Sarah Atkinson and Rachel Hunt, *Geohumanities and Health* is a collection of essays that illustrate the benefits of humanities-inspired approaches in understanding and confronting global health challenges linked to the environment. Through an exploration of three themes – *bodies*, *voices* and *practice* – it showcases a rich array of work bringing medicine and health into conversation with the concerns of geography.



Straddling disciplines and reaching beyond the academy, contributions to this collection – poetic, evocative, experiential, experimental, scholarly and critical – tellingly illuminate multiple new possibilities for GeoHumanistic medical-health inquiry and care-full, practical interventions

Christopher Philo
University of Glasgow

This engaging collection offers insightful encounters with the geographical imagination that bring a depth of human experience to medical and health concerns.

Robin Kearns
University of Auckland

Addiction

The Institute for Medical Humanities is also exploring the complex interplay between geography and hidden and highly stigmatised health experiences like drug and alcohol addiction.

Drawing on ethnographic research with drug users leaving prison in Chicago, Illinois, Jesse Proudfoot has used psychoanalysis to examine the life stories of two men whose addictions to drugs and alcohol are deeply linked to what he calls 'traumatic landscapes'. Through this work, he has developed two different ways of understanding addiction: one in which violent and precarious environments produce stress leading people to self-medicate, and another in which past traumas give rise to addictive, self-destructive behaviours that are connected in complex, unconscious ways to the places in which they occurred. This research has important implications for the therapeutic treatment of addiction and social justice for drug users.



Close attention to lived experience is crucial to understanding the connections between large-scale issues like poverty, racism and the personal trauma underlying many addictions. While harm reduction is essential, treatment should focus less on drug use itself and more on the traumas and social and political forces that shape substance misuse.

Jesse Proudfoot



Research strand:

Critical Concepts

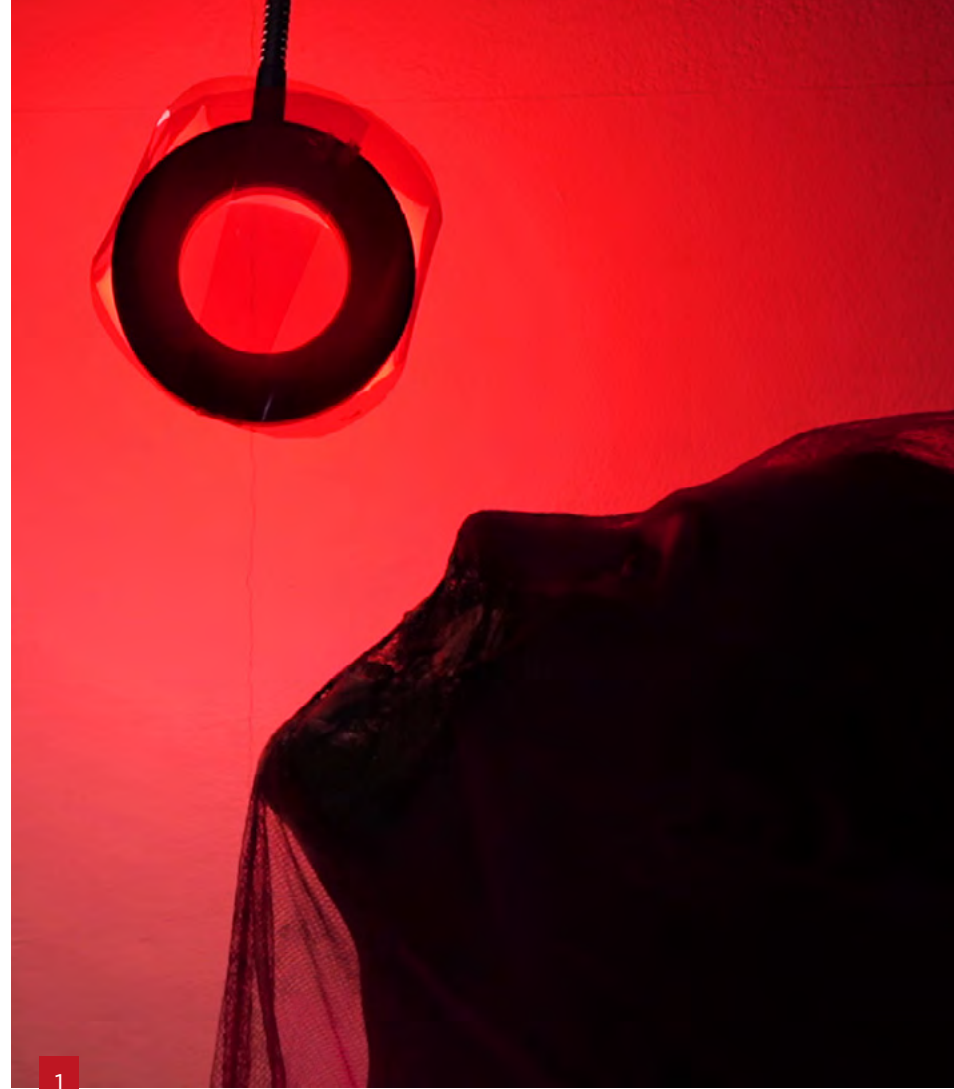
Led by Angela Woods and Creative Facilitator Mary Robson, this cross-cutting strand reflects on the processes and methods used to generate knowledge in the critical medical humanities, bringing together insights from across our research strands.

Visual Medical Humanities

IMH researchers have pioneered the field of visual medical humanities in the UK.



Directed by Fiona Johnstone, *Thinking Through Things* (2019–2021) was a collaborative project developed by a team of early career researchers from the Northern Network for Medical Humanities and funded by a Wellcome Discretionary Award. It asked what might be gained through 'doing' medical humanities through museum objects and images and invited interdisciplinary dialogue around the holdings of the Wellcome Collection.



1



Fiona also directed *Confabulations* (2021–2023) – a series of conversations and interactive events highlighting the contribution that artists and art historians can make to our understanding of health and human experience. Topics and debates explored through *Confabulations* include cross-cultural representations of medicalised bodies, the use of visual humour in medical contexts, institutionalised violence in mental health, critical responses to art therapy and creative approaches to complex health issues that are poorly served by clinical medicine.



Narrative

Narrative is a focal point for research across the medical humanities, whether as an approach to conducting empirical research, an important part of healthcare practice, or a way of coming to understand experiences of illness and healing.

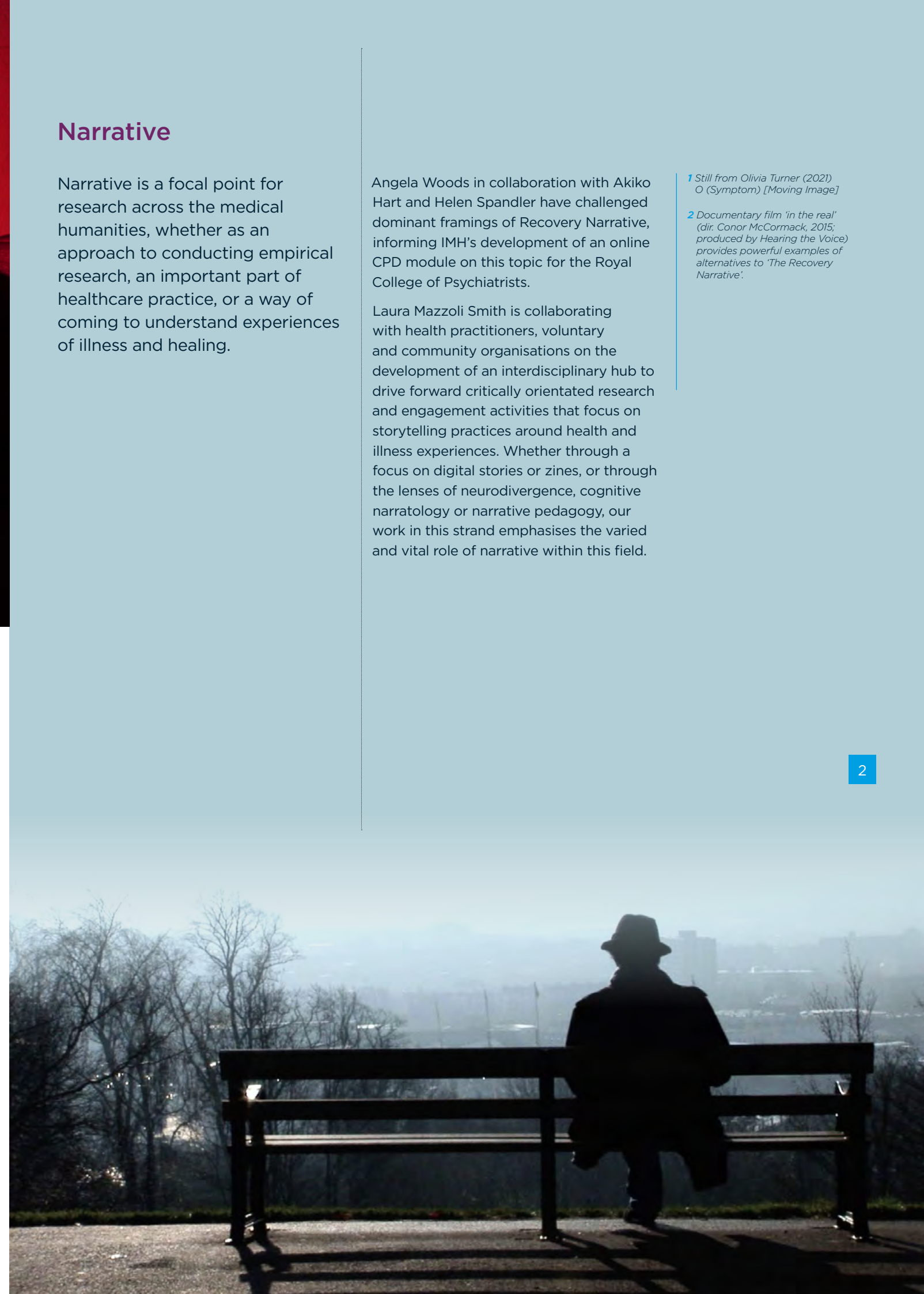
Angela Woods in collaboration with Akiko Hart and Helen Spandler have challenged dominant framings of Recovery Narrative, informing IMH's development of an online CPD module on this topic for the Royal College of Psychiatrists.

Laura Mazzoli Smith is collaborating with health practitioners, voluntary and community organisations on the development of an interdisciplinary hub to drive forward critically orientated research and engagement activities that focus on storytelling practices around health and illness experiences. Whether through a focus on digital stories or zines, or through the lenses of neurodivergence, cognitive narratology or narrative pedagogy, our work in this strand emphasises the varied and vital role of narrative within this field.

1 Still from *Olivia Turner* (2021) *O (Symptom)* [Moving Image]

2 Documentary film 'in the real' (dir. Conor McCormack, 2015; produced by Hearing the Voice) provides powerful examples of alternatives to 'The Recovery Narrative'.

2

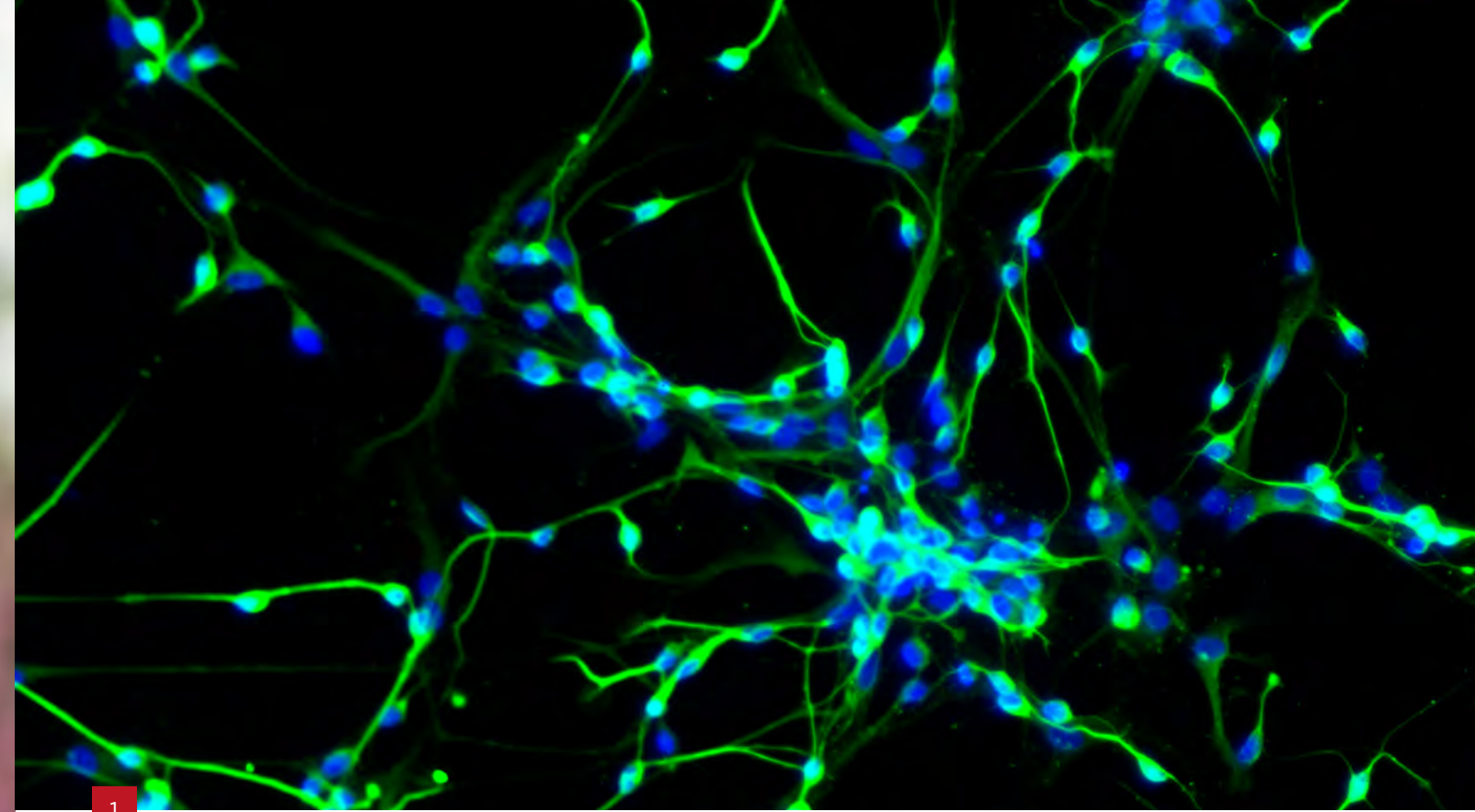


Engaged Research

Our researchers work closely with community and activist groups to agitate for change on issues they care about.

For example, Veronica Heney is working with psychiatric survivor and user led groups to explore representations of anxiety and self-harm in fiction. She is the co-founder of Make Space – a user-led collective which creates spaces for more generous, nuanced and caring ways to support those who self-harm – where she has developed research-informed information and support resources for health professionals, families and teachers, as well as guidance for writers thinking about depicting experiences of self-harm in their fiction.

In 2023, Veronica ran a community consultation with Make Space to understand people's experience of providing and receiving care for self-harm in Torbay (South Devon), contributing to local health policy and making recommendations for meaningful changes to practice. They have recently submitted evidence to government bodies, campaigning for amendments to the Online Safety Act and proposed Criminal Justice Bill that prioritise survivor voices and limit the criminalisation of vulnerable people.



1

Neurodiversity

How can we make medical humanities research more accessible to neurodivergent scholars and students?

This question underwrites a core strand of activity within our Institute, where we are developing new methods and approaches to accommodate the diverse needs of scholars working at the intersection of the humanities and health.

In April 2022, we hosted a two-day workshop for contributors to *(Neuro) divergent Textualities* – a forthcoming collection of essays edited by Louise Creechan and colleagues which will work towards the development of a neurodivergent framework for literary scholarship.

A range of different arts-based and creative techniques were deployed to support everyone to participate and make the event accessible for different learning and communication styles. Contributors could stim, move about the space, wear headphones, and interact in whatever ways they felt most comfortable. Sensory objects, including fidget toys, were provided. There was also a quiet room where people could go to decompress during or between sessions. Afterwards, participants described the workshop as ‘a game changer ... it felt like a paradigm shift in an academic space.’

The IMH also supports the Neurodivergent Humanities Network (ndhumanities.com) – a safe and generative space that accommodates the diverse, individual needs of scholars working in the humanities, while offering a shared sense of community and support – and is home to the world's first Assistant Professor in Critical Neurodiversity Studies.

1 Neurons derived from human neural stem cells. Yirui Sun. Attribution 4.0 International (CC BY 4.0). Source: Wellcome Collection.



Creative Facilitation

Creative facilitation is the use of arts-based and experimental techniques to bring people from diverse backgrounds together to collaborate, take risks and form meaningful connections.

The Institute for Medical Humanities is known internationally for pioneering creative facilitation in interdisciplinary and cross-sector health research.

Led by Mary Robson, our Creative Facilitation Unit supports the development of new projects, partnerships and collaborative working practices that generate new research questions and forms of knowledge.

The Fundamentals of Creative Facilitation

In July 2022, we launched the UK's first training programme in creative facilitation and reflective practice for academics and professional practitioners working in health and wellbeing.

Delivered in Durham and London, our interactive courses have already introduced more than sixty trainees to core methods in creative facilitation and participatory research practices in a secure and supportive environment.

Visit the IMH website for information about our ongoing training programme, including how to book your place.

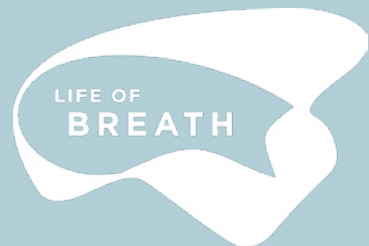
durham.ac.uk/imh

- 1 The Fundamentals of Creative Facilitation training workshop, July 2022.
- 2 Mary Robson, Senior Creative Facilitator at the IMH.
- 3 Participants at a workshop in Krishnagiri, India, 2023.
- 4 Creative facilitation in action at a University of Groningen workshop, June 2023.



Find out more





Life of Breath

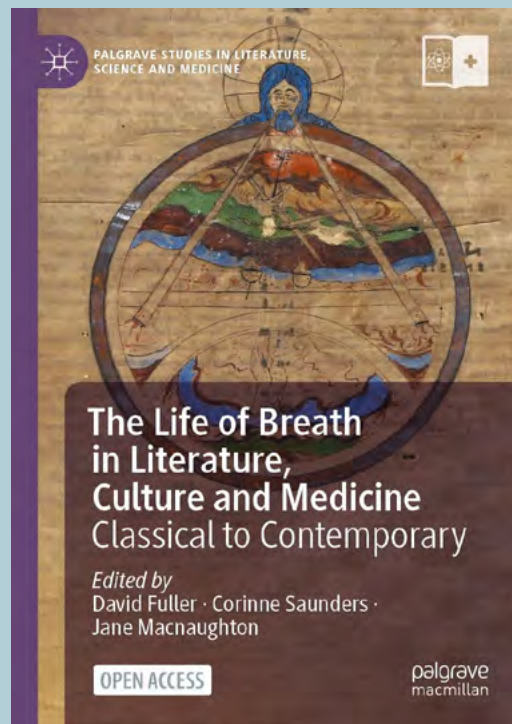
Life of Breath was an interdisciplinary research project on breath and breathlessness led by Jane Macnaughton (Durham University) and Havi Carel (Bristol University).

It brought together researchers from different disciplines, healthcare professionals, charities, people affected by lung disease, and people who use their breath in interesting ways (e.g. musicians) to find new ways of answering questions about breathing and breathlessness and their relationship to illness and wellbeing.

Highlights from the project include:

The Life of Breath in Literature, Culture and Medicine: Classical to Contemporary

A landmark collection of essays edited by David Fuller, Corinne Saunders and Jane Macnaughton exploring ideas of breath and breathlessness, their cultural and creative significance, and their resonances for contemporary understanding and treatment from the classical and medieval period all the way through to the twenty first century.



Dance Easy

A pilot project with physiotherapists, dance instructors and a Darlington Breathe Easy group exploring the potential of dance to offer an engaging and effective form of exercise for people with chronic breathlessness. Videos developed after the pilot became an important resource for many people with lung conditions during the COVID-19 pandemic and are now recommended by the British Thoracic Society, Isle of Wight NHS Trust and Lung Foundation Australia.

1 Image courtesy of Ian Derry.

2 Catch Your Breath at Durham's Palace Green Library, 2018-2019.



Catch Your Breath

A major exhibition exploring how our relationship with and understanding of breath has developed over time from ancient philosophers who equated breath with life itself to the latest advances in medicine.





Hearing the Voice

Up to 1 in 10 people hear voices that others don't.

These experiences can be highly stigmatised, rarely talked about, and often hidden from public view. Yet it is now increasingly recognised that voice-hearing is not always a symptom of pathology but an important aspect of many people's lives. It can be distressing and upsetting, but also positive and meaningful.

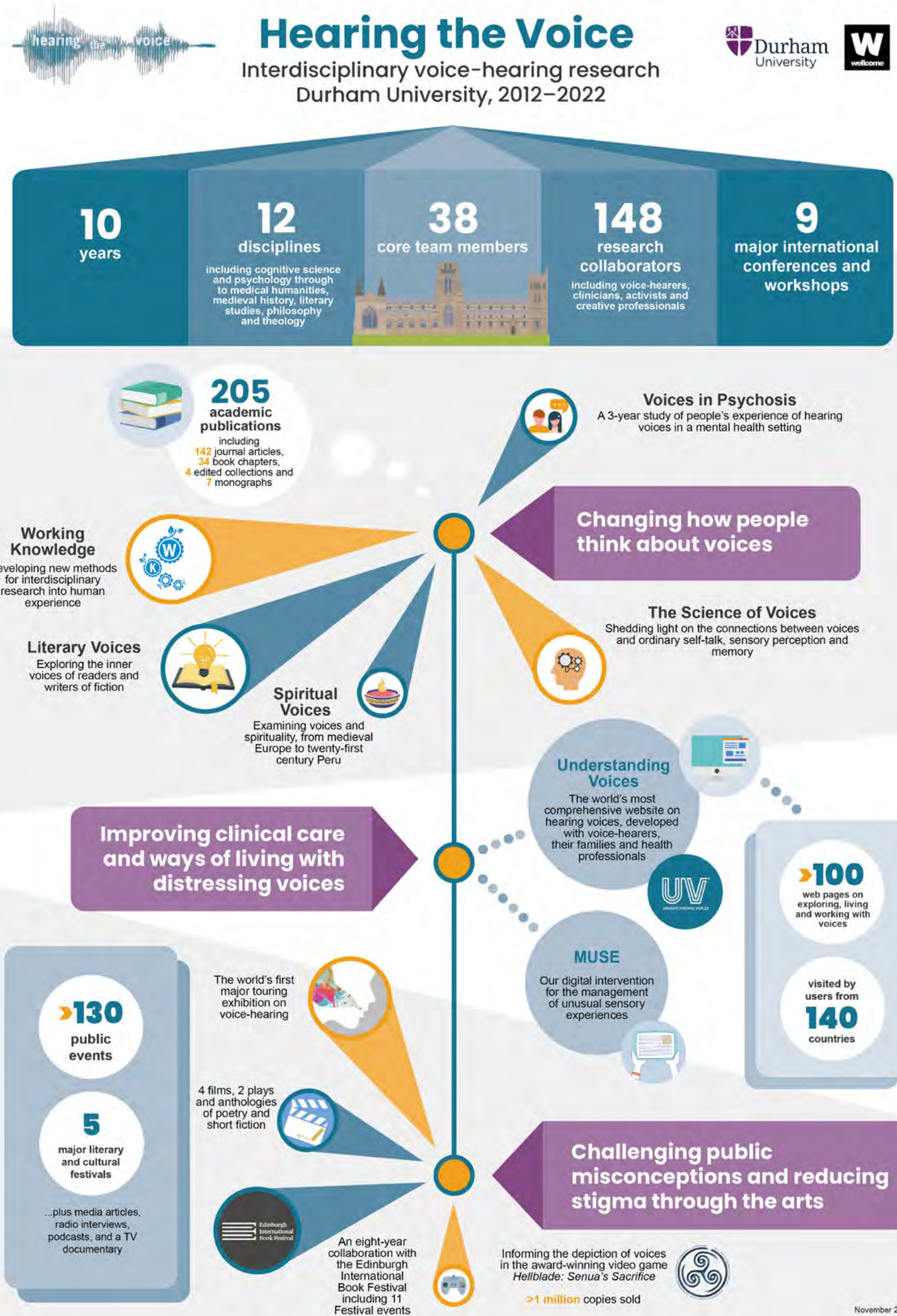
Hearing the Voice was a 10-year interdisciplinary research project that set out to shed light on this phenomenon. It brought academics from anthropology, cognitive neuroscience, history, linguistics, philosophy, English studies, medical humanities, theology and psychology together with clinicians, artists, activists and experts by experience to improve the way people understand, clinically treat, and live with experiences of hearing voices.

In 2020, the project was awarded the Medical Humanities Award for Best Research by the Arts and Humanities Research Council and the Wellcome Trust.

Find out more



hearingthevoice.org

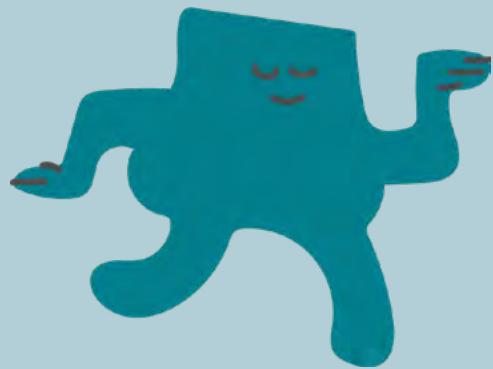




The living with voices app.

LIVV

A collaboration between Hearing the Voice and the Institute for Medical Humanities, LIVV is a smartphone app that is designed to help young people who hear distressing voices understand and cope with their experiences.



It provides normalising information about hearing voices and access to a moderated peer support forum. Users can also create their own personalised coping strategy toolkit, based on tips and techniques that other young voice-hearers have found helpful.

The current version of LIVV is a pilot app developed in close collaboration with a dynamic group of young people who hear voices that took part in our co-design process. It is currently in Beta testing.

Our partners on the project include Voice Collective (a London based organisation that supports young people who see, hear and sense things that others don't), Rai Waddingham (a voice-hearer, researcher, mental health trainer and Chair of the English Hearing Voices Network) and Dr Sarah Parry (a clinical psychologist and researcher specialising in children and young people's mental health).



“

It's made me feel ... not like as labelled and stigmatised with things ... it made me feel not as lonely.

Kamil

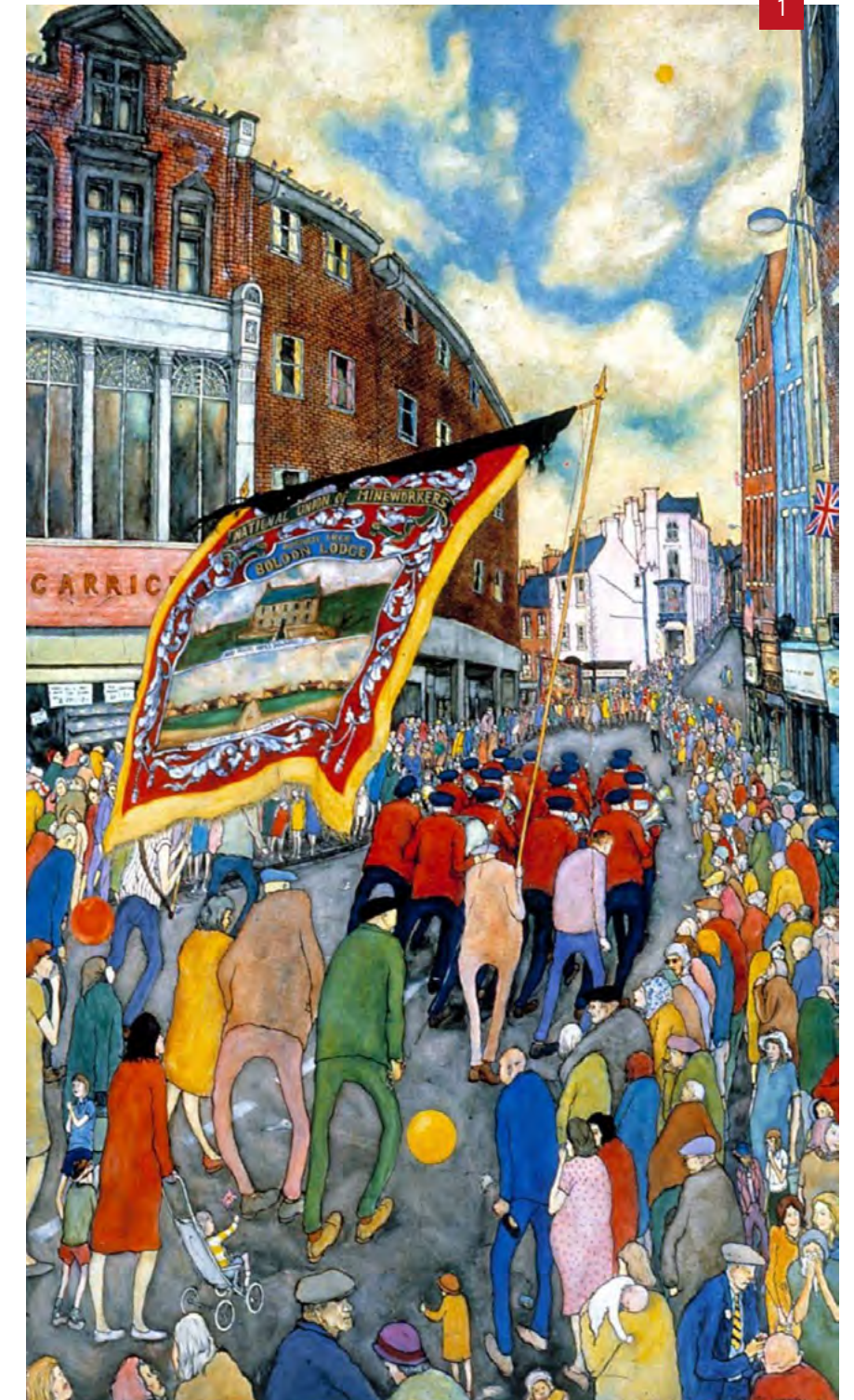
I think the fact you can personalise it and create your own coping skills is amazing.

Anna

When Categories Constrain Care

Our researchers are exploring how measurements, and their manipulation, have been underestimated as historical forces motivating and guiding the way we think about experiences that are invisible or hard to articulate, including disability.

Recent work from Coreen McGuire has shed light on the implicit connections between technology, biometrics and disability in the interwar period. Her new project, *When Categories Constrain Care: Investigating Social Categories in Health Norms through Disability History 1909-1958*, combines insights from disability history and history of science to explore how the categories we view as integral to health assessments (e.g. height, weight and sex) were constructed, and how they have influenced subsequent provision and compensation for the disabled.



1 Tom McGuinness, *Miners' Gala, 1976 (1977)*. In the case of coalmining compensation disputes, miners and trade unionists sought to prove the influence of the environment over heredity in the categorisation of disability.





The Polyphony

The Polyphony is a web platform that aims to stimulate, catalyse, provoke, expand and intensify conversations in the critical medical humanities.

It was founded by the IMH in 2018 and now reaches a global audience of over 10,000 followers.

A dynamic and talented editorial team of early career researchers produce *The Polyphony*, publishing more than 100 essays and reviews per year in some of the most exciting areas of medical humanities scholarship. It provides a space for researchers at different career stages, health professionals, arts-in-health practitioners and people living with complex health conditions to connect with each other, experiment with new ideas and share work in progress. *The Polyphony* reflects our commitment to providing a platform for marginalised voices, and to diversifying and widening the perspectives that contribute to dominant debates within the medical humanities through engagement with the Global South.

In 2023, the editorial team included Chase Ledin (Editor-in-Chief), Aly Fixter, Alex Henry, Anna Jamieson, Jordan McCullough, Eva Surawy Stepney and Nicole Xuan Chen.

The Polyphony advances a number of core projects, including:



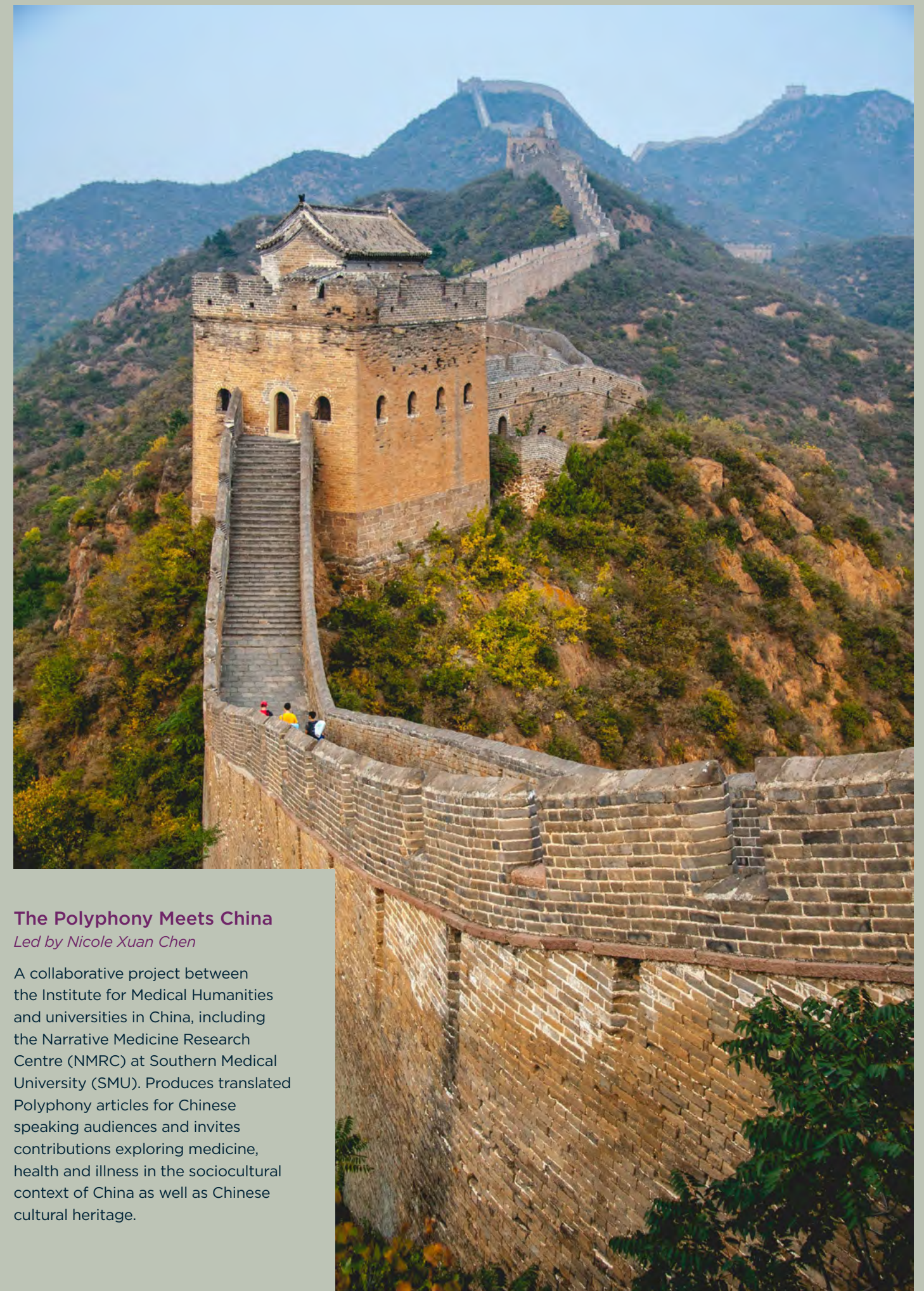
MedHums 101 *Led by Aly Fixter*

A collection of essays exploring foundational concepts within the critical medical and health humanities that aims to make the discipline more accessible to non-academic audiences.



Multilingual MedHums *Led by Jordan McCullough*

A series that challenges the predominance of English language scholarship as the key positioning of the medical humanities discipline by showcasing the work of scholars based in and working on non-anglophone countries.



The Polyphony Meets China *Led by Nicole Xuan Chen*

A collaborative project between the Institute for Medical Humanities and universities in China, including the Narrative Medicine Research Centre (NMRC) at Southern Medical University (SMU). Produces translated Polyphony articles for Chinese speaking audiences and invites contributions exploring medicine, health and illness in the sociocultural context of China as well as Chinese cultural heritage.



The Northern Network for Medical Humanities

The Northern Network for Medical Humanities Research (NNMHR) is an interdisciplinary group which acts as a hub for academic researchers in the medical humanities as well as practitioners, artists and others who may wish to collaborate.

Our Institute is proud to have supported two NNMHR international congresses:

(In)Visibility (April 2021)

The global and local health inequalities revealed and perpetuated by the Covid-19 pandemic required us to reflect upon how we do medical humanities research. Attended by over 1,300 delegates from Europe, the Americas, South Africa, the Middle East, and Australasia, this Congress asked participants to consider the ways in which our work renders some aspects of health and illness visible, while leaving others out of sight.

Critical (April 2023)

Marking a decade since conversations at a symposium held in 2013 first began to articulate a 'critical turn' for medical humanities, this Congress invited global researchers and practitioners to consider the future of humanities and social science research in relation to healthcare and medicine. An international delegation of over 800 people came together to explore what the field of medical humanities looks like now and where it might be going in the future.

Both Congresses were held fully online: the digital format helped to maximise accessibility and inclusivity for global audiences.

nnmh.org.uk



A new MA in Medical Humanities

In 2023, the Institute launched a new suite of taught postgraduate programmes in medical humanities, including the world's first online Masters in this field.

Find out more



Our MA programme has a truly interdisciplinary pedagogy. Students learn from world-leading medical humanities researchers, health and policy professionals, activists and experts by experience.

It is also highly flexible. With online and in person options, a postgraduate certificate, diploma or full MA, students can find something to suit their aims and preferred mode of study.

Our courses are suitable for humanities and social science graduates, intercalating medical students, and health and social care professionals interested in using interdisciplinary perspectives to enrich their practice.



Overall, the programme has exceeded my expectations. More importantly, it has shown me what is possible in an academic environment despite my physical limitations. In short, the format of the MA in Medical Humanities fully reflects the principles of the discipline.

Mariana Gudino-Castanon
MA Medical Humanities student

Superb course design which caters to different learning styles and makes the materials come alive.... A varied range of assessments invites deep reflection and can be also readily applied in different professional and academic contexts.

Gosia Bugaj
Postgraduate Certificate Medical Humanities student



The Black Health and the Humanities Network

IMH is proud to host a variety of networks aimed at increasing interdisciplinary and cross-sector dialogue around critical health issues.

Previously supported by Bristol University, the Black Health and the Humanities Network (BHH) is a community of academics, artists and activists whose work is broadly situated in the field of Black health. It was born of a critical call to address issues related to racism in healthcare, particularly in the wake of the Covid-19 pandemic and the Black Lives Matter movement.

The BHH is currently led by Principal Investigator Arya Thampuran and Co-Investigator Kelechi Anucha.

blackhealthhumanities.com

1 Participants at the Black Health and the Humanities Network festive gathering, December 2023.

2 CPEMPH provides a platform for interdisciplinary research into the philosophical aspects of human health.

3 Studenthuset, Linköping University, Sweden.

4 Peking University, Beijing, China.

Find out more



International Collaborations

Over the past five years, we have developed a strong network of international partners and collaborators, with whom we have worked closely to deliver conferences, funding bids, research projects and centres, academic and creative outputs.

For example, Alex Broadbent has collaborated with the University of Johannesburg to develop the Centre for the Philosophy of Epidemiology, Medicine and Public Health (CPEMPH) – a nexus for interdisciplinary research into the philosophical aspects of human health which seeks to integrate perspectives from the Global South and establish new North-South collaborations across the African continent.

Other global partners include the Centre for Medical Humanities and Bioethics at Linköping University in Sweden, the Aletta Jacobs School of Public Health at the University of Groningen in the Netherlands, and the Centre for Medicine, Health and Society at Vanderbilt University in the US, as well as the Universities of Capetown and Pretoria in South Africa, Peking University in China and Nanyang Technological University in Singapore.



Looking to the Future



The Discovery Research Platform for Medical Humanities

What would happen if health research was more creative, collaborative, risky and experimental? What if people with lived experience set the agenda? How can 'blue skies' research shift our thinking about mental health and health inequalities?

In September 2023, the IMH received a £9.5 million grant from Wellcome to develop a new vision for interdisciplinary health research through the Discovery Research Platform for Medical Humanities.

The Platform will bring together humanities and social science researchers, people with lived experience and healthcare and community partners to collaborate in tackling barriers – of diversity, connection, risk, evidence and scale – faced in medical humanities research.

1 Illustration of The Discovery Research Platform for Medical Humanities by Beppe Conti. beppeconti.com

2 Participants in fourth Discovery Research Platform for Medical Humanities Lab Summit, 22 March 2024. Photo credit: Alona Snisarenko

Through international research networks, fellowships, and a wide range of voluntary and health sector partnerships, it will centre people with lived experience and people from marginalised communities as the co-creators of health research, including research on mental health and health inequalities.

Researchers on the Platform come from a wide range of arts and humanities and social science disciplines including Literary Studies, Psychology, Philosophy, History, Sport and Exercise Sciences, Education and Sociology.

Beyond Durham University, work on the Platform will take place across three sites including The Practice (St Anthony's Health Centre – a GP surgery in one of the most deprived areas of the UK), The WellSpring (ReCoCo – a radical peer led mental health recovery college based in Newcastle upon Tyne) and The Festival (Edinburgh International Book Festival).

It will also host six 'method Labs' which will generate new research questions on topics such as chronic pain, addiction, mental health, movement, neurodiversity and disability, as well as critiquing storytelling practices around health and human experience.

The Discovery Research Platform will be supported by the Institute for Medical Humanities and funded by Wellcome until 2030.



medhumsplatform.org



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GP practices like ours are traditionally under-represented in health research, which means that research findings are not representative of our communities. When these findings translate to policy, the voices of our patients are absent. This partnership with Durham is an exciting opportunity to bring the voices of our patients to the forefront of the healthcare agenda.

Dr Jonny Coates
St Anthony's Health Centre

The potential to engage new and diverse audiences and to transform our understanding of the relations between stories, wellbeing and health is enormous.

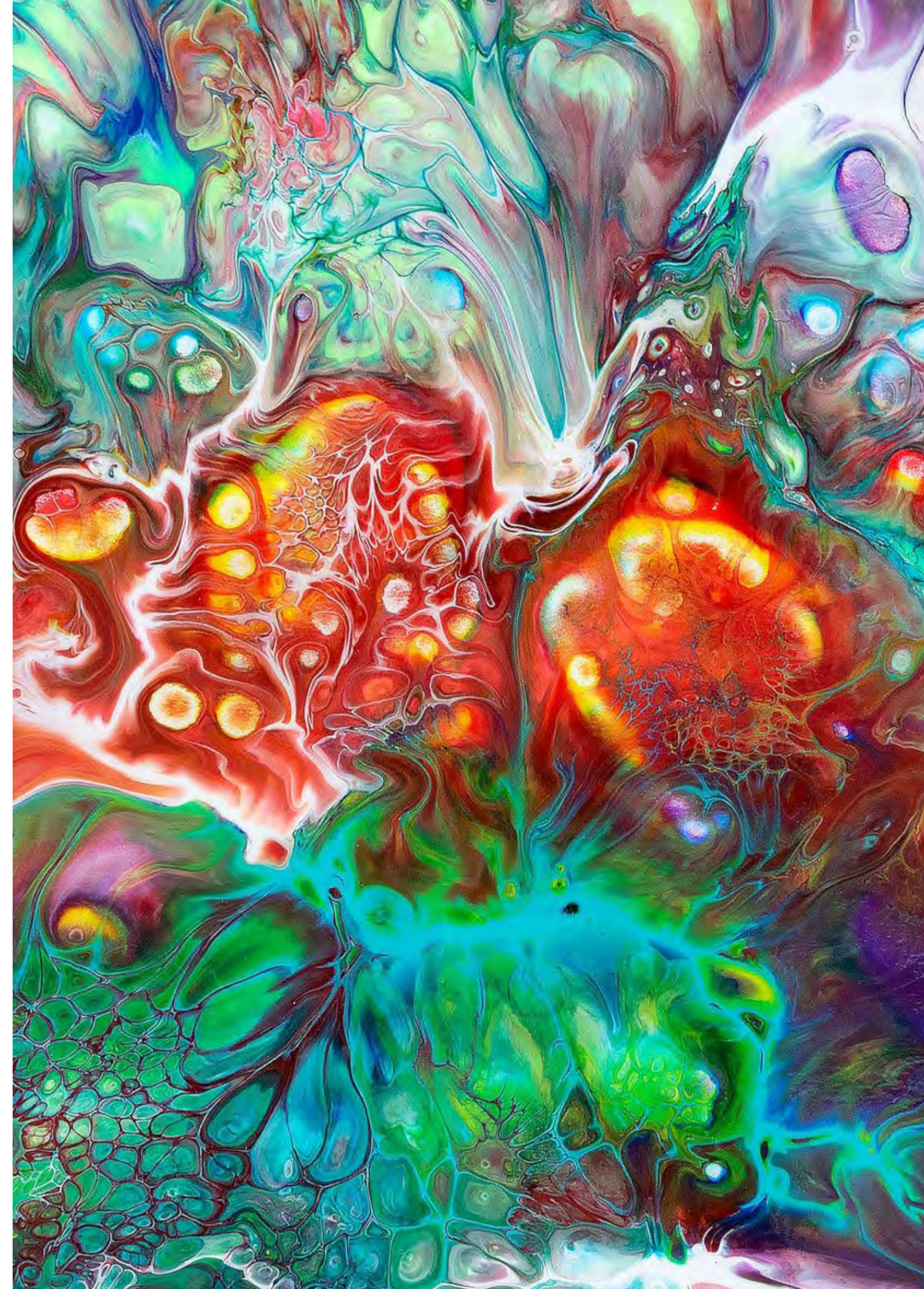
Nick Barley
Former Director of the Edinburgh International Book Festival

This Platform means that communities that have waited far too long for the privilege of inclusion will now be able to use their hard-won insights, skills and lived experience to support themselves, establish best practice and co-create research that will shape the future of mental health services.

Alisdair Cameron
Co-Director of ReCoCo

Thank you to everyone who contributed
to the flourishing research culture at the
Institute for Medical Humanities between
2018 and 2023.

We look forward to a bright future.



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