**Call for Papers: Habit in the Long Eighteenth Century**

Institute of Advanced Studies, UCL

Friday, October 16th – Saturday October 17th, 2020

The essayist William Hazlitt frames the tensions in the idea of habit as follows:

Habit in most cases hardens and encrusts by taking away the keener edge of our sensations: but does it not in others quicken and refine, by giving a mechanical facility and by engrafting an acquired sense?

A contentious issue within philosophy as well as a largely unobserved feature of our everyday lives, habit reappears with a special pervasiveness in the culture and literature of the long eighteenth century. As a person’s ‘second nature’, habit troubles distinctions between consciousness and unconsciousness, internal and external, intention and accident, nature and artifice. Its ambiguity and ‘double nature’ means that it is variously championed and distrusted: Locke cautions against the deadening effect of the ‘empire of habit’, while Mary Wollstonecraft goes against the radical grain in writing that she ‘like[s] the word affection, because it signifies something habitual’. Politically, habit appears to stand on the side of conservatism and stasis, preserving the routines of the past. However, the very mutability of our habits, their capacity to be dropped and picked up, also suggests a human potential for change, inviting utopian possibilities for the future.

The organisers invite you to respond to the idea of habit (between 1660 and 1830) in any way you like. Contributions may include, but are not limited to:

\*the philosophy of habit \*habits of devotion \*political economy

\*the politics of habit \*self-help \**habitus* and habitat

\*moral perfectionism \*habit and agency \*prejudice

\*bad habits \*theories of education \*social character

\*repetition and mechanism \*writing habits \*nostalgia

\*theories of sociability

Please send proposals of up to 250 words, along with a short biographical note, to [hannah.tran.13@ucl.ac.uk](mailto:hannah.tran.13@ucl.ac.uk) and [ehh24@cam.ac.uk](mailto:ehh24@cam.ac.uk) by **31st May 2020**. For more information, including the full CFP, please visit habitconference.wordpress.com or find us on Twitter @ConferenceHabit.