Fashionable Diseases:
Medicine, Literature and Culture, ca.
1660-1832
3-5 July 2014
Abstracts
Ashleigh Blackwood (Northumbria) - Books and Bodies: Unfashionable Influence or Fashionable Therapy?

‘Hope, so justly, so emphatically called the balm and life-blood of the soul,’ Martha Mears’ *The Pupil of Nature; or candid advice to the fair sex*, an instruction manual for midwives and birth attendants published in 1797, offered a variety of methods for creating a positive mind-set in young women and expectant mothers. The text revealed Mears’ own beliefs in the strong ‘influence of the mind on bodily health’, and advocated the merits of a variety of leisure pursuits for preserving the good mental health of patients. Her range of suggestions for appropriate activities included music, painting and reading for pleasure. Whilst Mears emphasized these benefits not all medical practitioners, or in fact members of the public, agreed with her approach to the impact of literature on health. Novels, in particular, were often viewed as objects that were potentially dangerous to both body and mind, particularly for women who it was believed were more easily, and detrimentally, influenced by recreations such as reading fiction, leading to immoral thoughts and emotional depravity. This debate captured the interests of practitioners including James Makittrick Adair and George Cheyne who contributed their own views regarding leisure and mental health. This paper explores medical responses to cultural perspectives of eighteenth-century reading practices, paying particular attention to literature and its relationship with women’s mental health.

Dr Katherine Inglis (Edinburgh) - Reading and disease in *Hygeia* and *Waverley*

This paper is developed from a larger project examining the intersections between the language of medicine and the rhetoric of censorship; the construction of an embodied reader in critical, fictional and medical texts; and the representation of reading as a physiological event. I will examine the characterisation of reading in Romantic-period medicine and literature, focusing on Thomas Beddoes’ *Hygeia: or Essays Moral and Medical* (1802). Reading, in Beddoes’ system, is a practice that bridges the conceptual gap between moral and medical, with dire consequences for character and physiology. Novel-reading leads to disinterest in the real world, to masturbation, to the total derangement of both body and mind; however, the source of disease, for Beddoes, is not the book itself, but the feelings with which it is associated. As such, his anti-fiction rhetoric is shaped by associationism. The reader who emerges in Beddoes’ essays is, I will suggest, akin to the reader characterised in the playful introduction of Walter Scott’s *Waverley* (1814), wherein the narrator proffers a series of alternatives to the novel’s subtitle ‘Tis Sixty Years Since, each conjuring in the imagined reader’s mind stock genre
conventions, heroic typologies, and hackneyed plots. The author of Waverley therefore defines his new brand of historical realism in opposition to this associative model of reading: his reader, in contrast, will read a chapter from ‘the great book of Nature’, and so will not succumb to the moderate Quixotism that mars the education of the novel’s hero.

**Dr Greta Perletti (Bergamo)- “Tis NOVEL beguiles the Female Heart”. Fashionable Sensibilities and the Pathologies of Women Readers**

In his *Essay on Diseases Incident to Literary and Sedentary Persons*, translated into English in 1769, the famous Swiss physician Samuel-Auguste Tissot wrote that “of all the circumstances hurtful to women, the chief has been the innumerable collection of novels published within these hundred years”. As many scholars in literature and medicine have demonstrated, in the 18th century the female organism increasingly became the focus of the debates on the pathology of sensibility; and while many physicians were concerned about the effects of education on women’s minds, Tissot’s words show that it was in particular the practice of reading novels that came to be regarded as an especially pernicious activity, straining the nerves of young women. By focusing on medical as well as literary discourse, this paper aims to place the stigmatization of the woman reader in the 18th and early 19th century – a subject that has been explored mainly from feminist standpoints – in the context of the broader cultural interest in fashionable diseases. Like other luxury products that had become widely available in the 18th century, also novels were an integral part of the consumer society that seemed to both refine and weaken the members of higher social classes. However, this paper will show that, while physicians tended to emphasize the pathological effects of reading, authors like Jane Austen were more willing to explore the potentialities inherent in the refinement offered by the habit of reading for the formation of the character and speech of young female readers.

**Session 2 – Fashionable Treatments**

**Professor Susan Sommers (Saint Vincent)- Dr. Ebenezer Sibly’s Reanimating Solar Tincture, or Pabulum of Life**

This presentation examines the career and significance of Ebenezer Sibly (London, 1750-1799), a quack whose audacious and ultimately successful business strategy helped establish the prototype for nineteenth-century quackery in Britain. Sibly was ambitious from the outset. Trained as a shoemaker, he moved into bookselling, publishing, astrology and freemasonic entrepreneurship before settling upon his life’s calling as a quack doctor and wholesaler of *Dr. Sibly’s Reanimating Solar Tincture*, a panacea he patented in 1795. Sibly’s head for keeping accounts was dubious, but his ability to
recognize a niche in the medical marketplace and exploit it was spectacular. Before his early death in 1799, Sibly put into place what soon came to be recognized (and decried) as the hallmarks of a successful quack empire: purchased or manufactured medical credentials, lavish and sometimes titillating publications that advertised his expertise as a physician as well as the efficacy of his nostrum, blanket advertising in key markets, an extensive network of shopkeepers to whom he sold at wholesale rates, and, importantly, a drug that made the patient feel better, at least for a time. His scheme was so effective that his business partner, the partner’s son, and Sibly’s own daughter continued to sell Solar Tincture and its companion Lunar Tincture, through the 1870s, and it remained on the tax register through the early twentieth century.

Dr Marcel Hartwig (Siegen) - Less Regulation, More Experimentation: Cinchona, Medical Science and the Changing Medical Market

Being of medical interest ever since the late 16th century, the cinchona or Peruvian bark became a most popular remedy for fevers and headaches in the 18th century. This was due, on the one hand, to the professionalization of mainstream medicine and, on the other hand, to the establishment of transnational networks of medical expertise. A plethora of books published on the detrimental nature of the “hot climates” to the fellow imperial European traveler praised the quinine extracted from the Peruvian bark as a cure for malaria. Such new found knowledge was a welcome alternative for English readers to the widely applied practice of bloodletting. The according availability of powders or “vital waters” made room for private therapy and practice. Eventually the popularity of quinine extracts accompanied a movement towards the commercial production of pure compounds and thus changed the medical market fundamentally. Medical professionals such as John Fothergill or John Ellis confirmed the value of the remedy in their publications, translations, and editions of medical literatures. This paper focuses on their work and correspondences in order to show how medical writings did not only propel medical science. Thus, the Peruvian bark here is argued as a trope for the commercial value of exotic plants that allows a reading of the interconnectivity of medical markets and transnational modes of truth production in medical knowledge. Last but not least cinchona will be shown as key to an understanding of the influences of a medical professional writer’s place and space on the logical value of medical knowledge.

Professor Alice Kuzniar (Waterloo) - Fashioning the vital life force: from macrobiotics to homeopathy

Two prominent German physicians around 1800, Christoph Wilhelm Hufeland and Samuel Hahnemann, believed that the Lebenskraft, or the vital life force, could be manipulated to maintain health. Their practices, macrobiotics and homeopathy, are the
only ones from that time (apart from vaccination) that have an afterlife today, and a fashionable one at that. After briefly discussing Hufeland’s major work on macrobiotics (1794), this paper turns to Hahnemann, who in 1796 first came up with his notion of *similia similibus curentur*. Lebenskraft signifies the regenerative force that, in responding to the homeopathic remedy, overcomes illness. It represents the adaptability of the body and operates in tandem with nature. Because it is a unified principle within the entire organism, the concept allows Hahnemann to interpret all symptoms to be interconnected. For him, diseases were diverse as the clouds in the sky. But if he did not ascribe to fashionable diseases, he did ascribe to a fashionable cure! Advancing the theory that everyone’s Lebenskraft was unique and, correspondingly, their symptoms dissimilar, Hahnemann necessarily spent considerable time listening to patients’ woes. In addition, his understanding of vitalism goes beyond that of his fellow physicians, who restricted their discourses to human health. Hahnemann saw a dynamic, even spirit-like force permeating all matter. He brought the widespread belief in the organic vitalism of nature to bear on the medicinal cure. Body and remedy worked energetically together. Indeed, in order to underpin his explanations of how homeopathy worked, Hahnemann increasingly turned to the fiction of the Lebenskraft.

**Session 3 – Freaks and Perverts**

**Dr Fiona Subotsky (Royal College of Psychiatrists) - Vampirism: from Medical Diagnosis to Metaphor and Fiction**

Within the archives of the Royal College of Psychiatrists there were recently discovered about 80 MD theses in Latin on psychiatric topics, dating from the eighteenth century. The thesis chosen for closer examination is entitled “Dissertatio inauguralis practico-medica de Daemonomania et variis ejus speciebus”; it was presented to the University of Vienna in 1782, and the author is Martinus Martini from Saxon Transylvania. He analyses the standard medical categories of demononomania with considerable scepticism, including “Vampirismus”. There had been a great interest in vampirism in Europe in the eighteenth century, particularly stemming from the reported cases of Peter Plogojowitz and Arnold Paole in Eastern Europe. Included in Martini’s critique is the observation that

- The majority with Demonomania are crude, untaught, poor and servile;
- but with melancholia belong to a group more delicate and tender, educated, clever and prosperous.

In comparison, the Scottish nosologist Cullen (1769) rejected Demonomania and its subcategories, as later did the French psychiatric reformer Pinel.
Meanwhile, the concept of vampirism was speedily adopted as metaphor, and elaborated in form in poetry and fiction, culminating in the image familiar today depicted by Polidori, Byron’s personal physician *The Vampyre* (1819). The wider category of Demonomania, however, did return to psychiatry and was used once again as a diagnosis by Pinel’s successor, Esquirol.

**Anna Hope (Northumbria) - Extravagant Conceit or Irregular Disease: The Lycanthrope in Eighteenth-Century literature.**

Lycanthropy is a rare medical condition whereby the sufferer believes they can transform into an animal. Lycanthropy was predominantly associated with the metamorphosis from human into a wolf, familiarly known as the werewolf, however, by the eighteenth century it became a generic term for any human transformation into animal or object with particular accounts of werewolves fading to the realms of superstition. Over the centuries, lycanthropy has been associated with the demonic, biblical and mythical, and in medical enquiry, a ‘species’ of melancholy, sign of insanity, or the result of hallucinogenic drug use. From creeping, crying and grumbling, night time wanderings, and howling at the moon to pale complexion, poor eyesight, and dry mouth, the symptomology of the disease has remained constant. This paper explores a number of eighteenth-century literary representations of lycanthropy from wolf-man to tea-cup. I illuminate how the medical, biblical and mythological underpin eighteenth-century understanding of the disease, exploring the extent to which lycanthropy itself was a fashionable extravagant conceit or a genuine malady.

**Imelda Ek (Stockholm)“Slutty, careless and immodest”: Swedish psychiatry and the diagnosis of nymphomania 1823–1860.**

Against a background of Swedish medical literature of the period 1823–1860, and through the analysis of asylum case histories of Sweden’s first County Lunatic Asylum at Vadstena, this paper, based on a thesis project on the medicalization of erotic behaviour in nineteenth century psychiatry, seeks to account for the ambiguous nature of the nymphomania label, its infrequent application to erotic female patients, and why it was seemingly abandoned as a diagnosis around mid-century. Among at least two hundred case histories examined, forty female patients from the period are recorded as having displayed “symptoms of an erotic nature”, but only seven patients were diagnosed with nymphomania. As a secondary objective, a small amount of British primary material, in the form of articles from *The Lancet* and *The Journal of Mental Science* will be used to compare and contextualise the Swedish findings. I will argue that nymphomania never held the status of a definitive medical diagnosis in Swedish psychiatry, but was considered at most a symptom, or a vague medico-cultural classification of abnormal
behaviour, which incorporated literary conceptions/notions of female insanity. This suggests medical attitudes quite disparate from those expressed in psychiatric texts; where erotic behaviour was increasingly viewed as pathognomonic.

2nd Parallel Panels
Session 4 – Portrayals of the Medical Experience of Fashionable Diseases

Dr James Kennaway and Dr Jonathan Andrews – Fashionable Diseases and Patient Experience

This paper draws on a wide range of testimony to try to establish what how patients and other lay people understood and experienced so-called fashionable diseases of the nerves, bowels and lungs during the long eighteenth century. As Heather Beatty has demonstrated with her recent book, the reality of fashionable disease was painful and embarrassing, not to mention flatulent, more often than it was glamorous. Looking at diaries, correspondence, etc. from as broad a range of social backgrounds as possible, this paper considers the extent to which medical theory and fashions influenced patient perceptions of diseases, and vice versa. Based on these sources, several broad conclusions can be drawn about the role of class, religion and gender in discussion of the subject. Beyond the aristocratic elite, the persistence of stoical attitudes based on Christianity and of traditional medical ideas of regimen is striking, even as the language of nerves and ‘hyp’ gradually gained currency. More broadly, it is striking that lay observers who use modish terminology often express real scepticism about the theories involved, using it in inverted commas, so to speak. Similarly, they also often display a subtler and more sympathetic understanding of psychosomatic ‘imaginary’ complaints than that expressed by physicians, who were generally keen to establish the reality of the conditions they specialised in.

Dr Monika Class (KCL) - Trends and Fashions in the writing of medical case narratives in eighteenth-century Western Europe

The paper sets out to compare trends in medical record taking in 18thC Western Europe. It traces continuities and discontinuities in medical writing. Taking Renaissance ‘observationes’ as a point of departure (Gianna Pomata 2010, 2011), the paper traces recurrent patterns from medical observations in 17thC scientific correspondence, especially between members of Leopoldina and the Royal Society to late eighteenth-century literary and medical writing. The paper examines popular prose narratives including D. Defoe, Laclos, C. Smith and Dr. T Beddoes and suggests that they made specific modes of medical observations fashionable. The paper is part of my current research project "Medical Case Narratives and British Novels: the Psychological Reader,"
1674 - 1880”. It also builds on my recent work on the special cluster ‘medical case histories as genre’ that I designed with contributions from Gianna Pomata, Brian Hurwitz, Meegan Kennedy and Nicolas Pethes and that is forthcoming with the journal ‘Literature and Medicine’.

**Drs Maureen and Richard Park (Glasgow) - The Art of the 1831-32 Cholera Pandemic – Illuminating the Literary Accounts**

Prior to the 1831-32 cholera pandemic, literary sources, including articles in newspapers and medical journals, books, posters and adverts, had dominated the historical record of outbreaks with almost negligible contribution from illustrations. For the first time cholera provided the opportunity for contemporary artists to produce a wide range of images including cartoons, caricatures, paintings and illustrations of patients. Each served different roles. The cartoons and caricatures were designed for entertainment by illustrating contemporary social and political topics in a humorous and satirical fashion. In addition they also provided an important historical record of these events. The topics ranged from attacks on political policies such as the Reform Act and the creation of the Board of Health, and the mistrust of doctors over their arguments on the existence, diagnosis and treatment of cholera. Art became a powerful tool for social commentary on the inequality of experience of this most unfashionable disease and the failure of society to relieve the plight of the poverty ridden victims. An educational role was provided by numerous illustrations of preventive measures, which although primarily designed to entertain, offered very basic public health advice. The publication of several prints illustrating individual patients was a novel extension to the detailed case histories which filled many medical journals and books, and which had been the source of established medical narrative of previous outbreaks. Cholera was one of the catalysts for the future standard format of documenting human disease through both contemporary visual and literary sources.

**Session 5 – Fashionable Diseases in Continental Literature**

**Dr Pauls Daija - Glad to Have a Disease: Discourse of Sensibility in 18th Century Latvian Literature**

Sensibility (sentimentalism, Empfindsamkeit, Empfindelei) has been sometimes compared to a „modern disease” in 18th century German public debates. A fashionable social phenomenon, as analysed by Gerhard Sauder among others, sensibility acquired new meaning in the Volksaufklärung – literary movement of enlightening lower social classes (mostly peasants) in Germany and German/Latvian speaking provinces of Russia – Courland and Livonia (contemporary Latvia). Sensibility has been set as an example for
peasants to imitate as it incorporated bourgeois values and thus had a potential to change peasants’ mentality. The paper will focus on understanding of sensibility as metaphorical “disease” within the context of lower classes’ literature by comparing literary models in Germany and Latvia and turning attention to discourse of medicine in 18th century Latvian instructional books addressed to peasants, mostly adaptations from German handbooks. Literary representations of physical manifestations of sensibility (e.g., spontaneous tears or fainting) will be analysed in comparison to other mental disorders thought to be fashionable and discussed in the peasant literature, such as melancholy.

Jessica Hume (Bellarmine) - Depression as Vogue: The Sorrows of Young Werther as Illness Narrative
Over two hundred years before narrative medicine would be coined as a field of study, and before chaos narrative would be articulated as a type of illness narrative in Arthur Frank's seminal work, *The Wounded Storyteller*, Goethe's *The Sorrows of Young Werther* captured the title character's descent into suicidal depression, a descent which typifies chaos narrative. According to Frank, chaos narratives are characterized by a lack of traditional narrative sequence and transparent causality of events, which allows the readers to vicariously experience the anxiety of the character(s). Chaos narratives also provoke anxiety in readers because they demonstrate how easily any reader might be afflicted with the illness described. These characteristics are designed to induce readers to feel the character's vulnerability more acutely. With its unconventional framework of letters, and its neurotic descent toward suicide, *The Sorrows of Young Werther* causes readers to become enmeshed in this chaos narrative, feeling Werther's anxiety and vulnerability. This depth of emotion came as the Enlightenment's emphasis on rationality had begun to feel oppressive to the young and creative; it's structure as chaos narrative may have contributed to its popularity. A fresh examination of Goethe's *The Sorrows of Young Werther* as chaos narrative offers new insight as to the reasons for its fanatical appeal at the beginning of the Romantic Era.

Professor Edward Potter (Mississippi) - Hypochondria and Illness in Anton Reiser
Hypochondria played a significant role in the cultural imagination of the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. In the literary and medical writings of this period, hypochondria was understood as a physical disease with mental and emotional components, and it was used by medical writers as a means of promoting healthy behaviors and of disparaging behaviors believed to be unhealthy. Hypochondria fulfilled a metaphorical function as well, as it allowed not only medical writers but also literary writers to medicalize non-normative behaviors such as an excess of scholarly thinking;
religious enthusiasm; excessive sentimentality; overindulgence in luxury, food, and drink; or even non-normative sexual behaviors such as onanism, same-sex desire, or overindulgence in sexual activity, thereby promoting a moral agenda under the guise of inoculating readers against disease. Karl Philipp Moritz’s psychological novel *Anton Reiser* (1785-90) engages in an interesting and productive manner with contemporary conceptions of the disease hypochondria and with illness more generally. Early in the novel, Anton is explicitly described as a hypochondriac, and illness in general often functions ambivalently in the novel as a liberating element for Anton Reiser. My paper will investigate the construction of hypochondria, and illness more generally, in Moritz’s novel *Anton Reiser* and will draw upon Moritz’s *Magazin zur Erfahrungsseelenkunde* as well as contemporary medical literature in order to illuminate the ways in which disease is used to promote specific conceptions of moral norms as well as the ways in which illness can function as a potentially liberating element in characters’ lives.

3rd Parallel Panels

Session 6 – Sociability and Fashionable Diseases

**Dr David Clemis (Mount Royal) - Chronic Drinking in Eighteenth-Century England: Fashionable Vice or Pathetic Illness?**

This paper examines the shifting moral and social perceptions of chronic drinking within the context of medical understandings of drunkenness emerging in the later eighteenth century. Historians have ascribed an important paradigm shift to the eighteenth century wherein conceptions of the chronic drunkard as a sinner willfully inclined to vice gave way to the medicalization of alcoholism as a disease. This paper explores how new neurological thinking helped to recast the perception of the chronic drinker. It is argued that the medicalization of chronic drinking afforded a new basis for the critique of fashionable, luxurious lifestyles, while at the same time understanding the drinking of the working people in terms that reinforced social distinctions. Young gentlemen “addicted to drink” were once seen as amusing rogues, deserving of little more than the censure due any scallywag. Eventually, however, they come to be seen as afflicted persons deserving of sympathy for a condition they endured in consequence of the crushing burdens and pressures of their onerous duties and station in life. At a different social strata, working people deemed to be chronic drunkards, came to be seen less as persons guilty of vice and moral weakness as persons suffering from a disease attributable their inferior nature and condition. The paper seeks show that while the new medical understandings of chronic drinking ascribed a much reduced moral agency and cognitive capacity to all habitual drinkers, it would not immediately change the social lenses through which those seen as victims of drink were assessed.
Dr Helen Williams (Northumbria) - Laurence Sterne, Laughter and Medical Sociability: The Good Humour Club of York

As a celebrity icon of the mid-eighteenth century, Laurence Sterne’s tall and emaciated figure as it appears in prints and paintings of the period yoked his fashionable status with his consumptive frame. When Sterne and his friend Thomas Bridges collaborated on a self-portrait, they depicted themselves as a mountebank (Bridges) and his harlequin assistant (Sterne). This paper suggests that Sterne situated himself within a culture of medical sociability prevalent in York at the time he was writing some of his best known works. Through a consideration of Sterne’s art through the lens of medical sociability, this paper suggests that the local Good Humour Club, whose membership throughout the eighteenth century included a growing number of apothecaries, physicians as well as a male midwife, influenced and shaped his conception of laughter in A Political Romance (1759) and Tristram Shandy (1759-67).

Dr Mascha Hansen (Greifswald) - “All the world is gone to the assembly “: Headaches and (In-)sociability

“All the world is gone to the assembly,” Elizabeth Carter somewhat wistfully told a friend, while she had to stay at home, “in bed with the head-ache.” Catherine Talbot, among others, considered her friend’s headaches to be due to “too much retirement and constant study,” urging her to try “a little idleness and gaiety” as a remedy. However, not even fashionable Tunbridge Wells managed to cure Carter’s persistently aching head, and when one of her headaches plagued her, even people she delighted in meeting seemed mere “noise and impertinence” to her. Headaches, here presumably in the form now known as migraine, confined the sufferer to a quiet room, with at best the imagined company of a correspondent – sometimes a solitude not otherwise obtainable, as in the case of Queen Charlotte, another victim of severe headaches, but more often signalling an unwelcome exclusion from society. Nevertheless, ‘the megrim’ – a term avoided by Carter – was also used to describe the fancies of the sufferers from more fashionable ‘nerves’. In this paper, I will discuss the records – in verse and prose – by women who suffered from headaches, their struggle between a desire for company and the fear that too much talking would give them a headache, the remedies recommended to and by them, in the context of the representation of the megrim in novels and plays of the period.
Lisa Gee - “Marvellous mental infelicities”: William Hayley, his first wife, Eliza, and William Cowper, “the most interesting of Sufferers”.

William Hayley (1745 – 1820), writer, Poet Laureate refusenik and amateur doctor had a long and involved interest in the relationship between madness and creativity. He supported and encouraged friends with fashionable maladies, including George Romney and Joseph Wright of Derby, through periods of depression, tried to cure Cowper, wrote “Elegy On a Lady who laboured under an Insanity of many years, and recovered in the close of a long life an imperfect use of her reason.” about his late mother-in-law, and is believed to be responsible for preserving the manuscript of Christopher Smart’s extraordinary madhouse poem ‘Jubilate Agno’. Drawing from the second of the Two Memorials of Hayley’s Endeavours to serve His Friend Cowper, his Memoirs (both print and partial manuscript versions) and the often sparky correspondence between him and Eliza – or Hotspur and Kate, as they signed themselves during the early, happier days of their marriage – this paper will explore the history of Hayley’s relationships with Cowper and Eliza, comparing and contrasting the extraordinary lengths Hayley went to in order to try to cure Cowper’s final bout of mental illness, with his apparent helplessness in the face of Eliza’s “marvellous mental infelicities”.

Professor Michelle Faubert - “Beyond Sentiment: Contagious Suicide and the Rage for Liberty”

Johann Wolfgang von Goethe’s Sorrows of Young Werther (1774) supposedly inspired so many copy-cat suicides – a “Werther-mania” – that the novel was deemed dangerously infectious. This insanity was contagious, the precursor, perhaps, to Charles Mackay’s mob madness in the Victorian period. The discourse of contagion that permeated discussions about Goethe’s iconic text greatly influenced not only subsequent interpretations of the novel, but also the very notion of suicide, including its relationship to debates about human freedom, of which it had been a part throughout the eighteenth century. In this paper, I will explore the implications of the belief that discussing suicide could be infectious, and, in so doing, I will illuminate the Romantic-era relationship between the concept of contagion, bodily autonomy, and power.

Dr Marco Solinas (Florence) - On the End of Fashionable Melancholy

The paper analyze the crucial moment of rupture in the history of the definitions, descriptions and classifications of melancholy within the ambit of medicine that occurred between the end of the Eighteenth- and beginning of the Nineteenth-century, in particular in France. That is the point at which Philippe Pinel, absorbing the
contributions of Seventeenth-century British psychiatry, proceeded to abandon both the humoral doctrine and the old Renaissance conception of the dual character – melancholy as a psycho-physiological illness and as a literary and philosophical mood. Pinel now locates melancholy only among forms of mental alienation. I will proceed with the subsequent contributions made by Jean-Étienne Dominique Esquirol, who explicitly refused to attribute to melancholy that particular form of duality that was attributed to it in the Renaissance. More generally, I will seek to locate the new conceptualisations of melancholy within the wider scientific and cultural context of nascent modern psychiatry, and of the clinical forms to which it leads. It was in this context that a strict theoretical and therapeutic programme was launched, which aimed at the systematic medicalization of all the human passions and emotions, and proposed, at the same time, their treatment in a vast body of public and private institutions, specifically set up for the purpose. Thus, a variety of figures gradually came to be transformed: suffice it to think of the melancholic poet, the impassioned lover, the fanatic rebel, and their transfigurations and transpositions in literature and theatre. In other words, this is the end of the old renaissance fashionable melancholy.

4th Parallel Panels
Session 8 – Spas and Fashionable Diseases

Rose McKormack (Aberystwyth) ‘An Assembly of Invalids’: Leisured women as patients and carers at the eighteenth-century spa.

Eighteenth-century novels, poems and prints frequently portray the spa as a topsy-turvy society in which enfeebled men, with flannel bound limbs, stumbled their way to ‘take the waters’ for their health, whilst their buxom and rosy cheeked wives and daughters pursued pleasure, husbands or romantic dalliances. This fictional representation, visible in the prints of Thomas Rowlandson and James Gillray, in the novels of Tobias Smollett and Jane Austen, and in the verses of Christopher Anstey and numerous anonymous poets, has coloured the historian’s perception of the eighteenth-century spa; and consequently, the female spa invalid has become an almost invisible figure. Utilising guide books and medical treatises, and the letters and journals of female spa visitors, this paper explores the health complaints which brought leisured women to the spa. It investigates a range of physical and psychological complaints, and pays particular attention to the gynaecological ailments which the waters were believed to heal, including ‘the green sickness’, ‘the uterine flours’ and ‘barrenness’. The effect which contemporary medical literature and the advice of spa physicians had on women’s perception of their health is also taken into consideration. Taking Bath and Tunbridge Wells as case studies, this paper locates the presence of the female invalid and invalid’s companion at the
eighteenth-century resort; it argues that ill health was not a pretence for female spa visitation but often a genuine cause which coloured their experience of the fashionable resorts either through personal experience, or through witnessing the ailing friends and family they accompanied.

Haley Russell (Murray State) – The Woodhouse’ Use of an Apothecary: The Ambiguous Mr Perry

For years, the texts of Jane Austen have been examined and scholars have not waned in their studies of her 1815 novel *Emma*. This scholarship, however, lacks any sort of analysis of Mr. Perry, the Woodhouse’s beloved apothecary, while scholars that do briefly mention the medical man of often incorrectly name him “Doctor Perry.” In this paper, I examine the significance of Mr. Perry’s character and the stance that Austen takes on the apothecary’s rise to general practitioner. Using dated periodicals, Austen’s novels and original letter manuscripts, and medical journals, it is evident that Regency England’s medical system saw a massive transformation throughout the mid-1700s to early 1800s. In place was a strict medical hierarchy, of which the physicians took the peak. Apothecaries were, then, considered “low class” medical men, focusing on prescriptions, and the diagnoses of lower-class patients, those who had no access to a traditional physician. None of these qualities define the rich and worrisome Mr. Woodhouse of Austen’s *Emma*. His use of Mr. Perry’s services allows Austen to rebel against the common idea of the unworthy apothecary, and participate in a social debate that defines the apothecary’s worth as valuable medical professionals. Austen’s argument against the social medical ranks demonstrates a critical understanding of *Emma*, as Mr. Perry plays a huge, overlooked role, not only in the plot’s development, but also the development of Highbury and Surrey’s social structures.

Anna Fancett (Aberdeen) - Madness and Money: A Comparative Study of Fashionable and Unfashionable Ill Health in Sanditon and St Ronan’s Well.

In Scott’s 1823 novel St Ronan’s Well and Austen’s unfinished Sanditon, communities gather around “healing” spas with a motley collection of fashionable and imaginary ailments. The fashionably ill are a figure of fun to the novels’ narrators but in both instances the communities hide real mental or social illnesses. Both novels open with a tone of despair; St Ronan’s Well’s opening panoramic of a ruinous landscape and struggling local community foreshadows the novel’s melancholic closing chapters, where the fashionable spa and the ancient Mowbray line is in neglected tatters; the destruction of the first caused by the almost vampiric vapidity of the fashionable well society with its fashionable ailments, petty intrigues and complete disinterest in anything external to itself. The second, of course, is a result of Clara Mowbray’s real yet unfashionable,
unrecognised and untreated mental breakdown. Sanditon’s small, local community lives in hope of attracting ailing rich health tourists, whilst the reader is unconvinced that the group will be successful, the grasping and desperate nature of the community is revealed as a form of social sickness. This paper will explore the juxtaposition between the mocking depiction of the fashionably ill, their resorts and traders on the one hand, and those with genuine but unfashionable diseases, and serious, insidious social sickness, on the other hand.

Session 9 – Ennui as a Fashionable Disease

Jane Taylor (UCL) - ‘What is fashionably termed ennui’: The Clinically Bored in Maria Edgeworth, Hannah More, and the Lady's Magazine

By the end of the eighteenth century the term ‘ennui’ was, in Britain, increasingly associated with fashionability. Yet the term occupies a curious space in literary and journalistic discourses of the Romantic period, straddling both the fashionable and the medical world. Commentators on this object-oriented boredom often paradoxically posited fashionable dissipations - which provided novelty as well as new stimuli - as both causes of, and temporary remedies for, this disease. More recently, psychoanalyst Adam Phillips has suggested that ‘we should speak not of boredom, but of boredoms, because the notion itself includes a multiplicity of moods and feelings that resist analysis.’ From Edgeworth’s ‘Ennui’, a narrative published in her Tales of Fashionable Life (1809-12) to Hannah More’s Strictures on Female Education (1799) and the widely circulated and self-proclaimed fashionable journal, the Lady’s Magazine, various ‘boredoms’ are presented, ranging from the mildly unoccupied to the suicidally depressed. Yet, how do these literary texts, which present ennui variously through descriptions of physical illness (blindness and palsy, for example) invite, rather than resist, interpretation? Do they posit this illness simply as another exclusive commodity of the fashionable world? I will explore the ways in which the narratives of medical case study and fashionable fiction merge within texts such as Edgeworth’s ‘Ennui’, and how this is complicated by the very perception of reading itself as a remedy for boredom.

Ian Higgins (Leicester) - “We are perishing of the thing for which we have no name!”: Ennui, Language, and Medical Rhetoric in England, 1780-1830

This paper will discuss English uses of the French term ennui during the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, analysing the relationship between its status as a relatively recent loanword and its uncertain identity as a form of nervous disease. From its earliest appearances in English print, several different writers comment on the lack of an English equivalent (John Evelyn, 1667) for what in the eighteenth century became widely
acknowledged as a peculiarly English, and exclusively upper-class, complaint (Cheyne, 1733; Jean Bernard Le Blanc, 1747). In the period concerned here, such observations on the lack of an English equivalent multiply, while the medical rhetoric surrounding it persists; in her novel *Ennui*, Maria Edgeworth’s aristocratic protagonist laments that ‘there is no precise English name’ for this ‘mental malady which baffles the skill of medicine’.¹ The medical, diagnostic bafflement and the linguistic bafflement, I will argue, are intimately linked. Presenting evidence from a range of sources, fiction and non-fiction, this paper will show how a medical rhetoric of ennui persists in this period, even in spite of the frequent scepticism of medical professionals. Adair for instance comments tartly on that ‘dreadful *Ennui*, from which dress, balls, routs, scandal, and novel reading, may not always relieve beings who have just pretensions to rationality’.² While several recent critics on the subject have theorised about the ‘democratization’ of ennui during the nineteenth century, this paper will conclude in contrast by arguing for the continued importance of the discourse on ennui as a ‘fashionable disease’ long into the same period.

5th Parallel Panels
Session 10 – English Fashionable Diseases 1590-1714

Professor David Walker (Northumbria) - Piety and the Politics of Anxiety in Nonconformist Writing of the Later Stuart period

This paper offers a reading of selected texts in a range of genres in prose and poetry written by nonconformists in the later Stuart period. It does so in relation to recent and current scholarship on the cultural history of the emotions – especially melancholia and depression. Nonconformists wrote vividly about their spiritual state often in a highly emotive language that was often breathtakingly frank. It was also revelatory about their mental health. The early modern religious world is justifiably well known for the quality of literature that deals specifically with religious devotion. Spiritual autobiographies, for instance, form a considerable and significant genre of sixteenth- and seventeenth-century prose. The most vivid example of this in the period is *Grace Abounding* (1666) by John Bunyan, a work that brilliantly captures not only Bunyan’s view of his own salvation, but also the psychological torments suffered by its author. This has led his most recent biographer to analyse the work in relation to clinical depression.

Bunyan, however, was far from being alone in the intensity of his belief in the seventeenth century. Nor were his medical symptoms unique. Other notable writers in

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² James MacKitterick Adair, *A Philosophical and Medical Sketch of the Natural History of the Human Body* (Bath: R. Cruttwell, 1787), xviii.
this vein whose work is drawn upon in this paper, and who drew extensively upon their mental illness in their prose, include the nonconformist divine, Richard Baxter, whose *Autobiography* bears witness to his spiritual condition, the Ranter, Lawrence Clarkson, and the Quaker, Richard Davies. All of these nonconformists, and many others, used writing therapeutically in times of stress, anxiety, and mental crisis. They sometimes figured their suffering in relation to Christ to demonstrate their piety. More than this though their spiritual and mental health was often determined by more pragmatic issues reflected in the politics of the day as it affected their vocation. Like Christ and his followers, they perceived themselves as a persecuted people, forced to endure under what for many of their number was a godless regime. And so the third and final context to consider here is the manner in which nonconformists negotiated their position with the political authorities of the day between the regicide in 1649 and the Hanoverian succession in 1714.

Dr Marga Munkelt (Muenster) - Age and Ageing in Shakespeare

Shakespeare embeds his portraits of old or ageing characters in the historical contexts of the 16th and 17th centuries when the average mortality age was thirtysomething. But age in Shakespeare is relative: Rather than give us their exact number of years (with Falstaff and Lear among the exceptions), Shakespeare usually suggests his characters’ ‘oldness’ by comparison or by affiliation with the older generation. Age is also subjective. But characters’ feeling younger than they are does not entail attempts at denial or cosmetic and medical ‘cure’ (although there are differences between the social classes). Juliet’s Nurse, for example, rather than lamenting the loss of her teeth, is proud that she still has four left; it does also not occur to her that Romeo’s friends are in pursuit of fun rather than sexually motivated when they follow her. Corresponding to the social conditions of Elizabethan England, male and female ageing in Shakespeare is evaluated differently. Thus menopause is considered a near-disease because women can no longer produce the desired offspring. Catherine of Aragon is therefore ‘discarded’ by Henry VIII (historically as well as in Shakespeare’s play) almost under quarantine conditions. Shakespeare allows, however, other ‘older’ women to continue being sexually attractive and active (e.g. Gertrude in *Hamlet*) and even fertile (e.g. Tamora in *Titus Andronicus*). If age is considered a disease at all, it must be called ‘unfashionable’ as it is not wished for and inevitable. In Shakespeare, it is not an experience to be feared or concealed but mostly accepted as a natural aspect of life. Mental decline is likewise not an issue (with King Lear as a possible exception)—presumably, because, in accordance with the historical context, human beings do usually not get old enough to develop senile dementia. Instead, the standard symptoms of physical decay are balanced by mental growth, and the qualities of age become an asset or gain rather than a decline or loss. In this sense, Shakespeare’s
presentation of age is likely to have only an indirect if not a negative connection with the conference topic. The chronological distance between Shakespeare’s time and the target time-span invites, however, a discussion of the two different worlds—especially the questions when and why ageing becomes a condition to be feared or to be transformed and when longevity becomes an issue.

**Anoushka Sinha (Columbia) - A Fine Balance: Sprezzatura and Melancholy in Nicholas Hilliard’s Henry Percy, Earl of Northumberland (1590-5)**

By the time Nicholas Hilliard was commissioned to paint a miniature of Sir Henry Percy, Earl of Northumberland, this “most English of English painters” was already established as a favorite of Queen Elizabeth. His art not only shaped the political image of the queen, but Hilliard’s miniatures also became a powerful status symbol of the aristocracy. Northumberland, known as “The Wizard Earl,” was favored at court but also an important intellectual figure of the period. His compelling persona as both a cavalier courtier and a melancholic genius are captured by Hilliard in the miniature, with the artist deftly depicting the earl as the exponent of two fashionable, yet altogether opposing, styles of the period: *sprezzatura* and melancholy. In this paper I explore how the ideal of *sprezzatura*, as expressed in Castiglione’s massively popular *Book of the Courtier*, influenced Hilliard’s depiction of Northumberland. In addition, I discuss how the fashionable sickness of melancholy inhabits the painting, aligning with descriptions made by Timothy Bright, court physician to Elizabeth, in his *Treatise of Melancholie*; Robert Burton in his seminal work *The Anatomy of Melancholy*; and Albrecht Durer in his engraving of *Melencolia*. I then explore the delicate balance of conveying both *sprezzatura* and melancholy in Tudor court life and the theatre, for instance in Shakespeare’s *Hamlet*, a balance finely captured by Hilliard’s celebrated miniature.

**Session 11 - Leisure, Consumerism, and Authenticity**

**Panel Abstract**

Examining water treatments, recipe books, and medical works, this panel addresses the culture of eighteenth-century fashionable disease from the perspectives of both medical practitioners and the elites, comparing the consumption of healthcare in a range of modish formats. Together, our papers analyse the ways in which medical theory and social practice exerted a mutual influence upon one another, fuelling the development of a discourse of fashionable disease. We also explore the conceptual tensions that arose from the mingling of fashion and disease within medical theory and social practice. As Jessica will argue in her paper, the commercialisation of medicine, the pursuit of healing as an elite leisure activity, and the recognition that medical diagnoses were shaped by
cultural trends, all threatened to undermine the authenticity of fashionable diseases such as hypochondria and hysteria. However, as Rachael and Katherine’s papers will indicate, the pursuit of leisure was not always incompatible with the pursuit of health. Moreover, the classification of diseases as ‘fashionable’ did not necessarily render them unthreatening. Nevertheless, those participating in the culture of fashionable medicine still felt it necessary to vindicate the authenticity of these conditions, and such concerns were only heightened as the century progressed, as Jessica concludes.

**Dr Rachael Johnson (Leeds) - Fashionable Illness at Kent's Spas and Seaside Resorts: Continuity, Change and Authenticity**

As venues dedicated to the conspicuous consumption of health, eighteenth-century watering places had a unique connection with fashionable illness. Combining the pursuit of health with fashionable leisure, spas were multidimensional arenas that placed significant cultural capital on the experience and treatment of illness. From the mid-eighteenth century seaside resorts emerged across the country as novel and exciting venues. Imitating the pattern established at the spas, seaside resorts similarly offered visitors a potent combination of medicine and leisure and sea water was widely used by the leisured elite to treat a wide variety of genuine, feigned and fashionable illnesses. Through a study of Kentish spas and seaside resorts, this paper will examine how fashionable illness fits into our wider understanding of watering places as centres for health and leisure. Examining the portrayal of ‘fashionable’ illnesses in medical and promotional literature, this paper will consider the continuities and variations in approach between the inland spas and the emergent seaside resorts. Looking in particular at the impact of expanding middling class patronage on resort culture and the practice of the water cure, it will be argued that significant differences can be identified in the experience of fashionable illness at the seaside as opposed to the spas. Offering an overview of the medical development of Kent's resorts, this paper will also address doubts over the authenticity of the water cure; arguing that the prevalence of fashionable illness was not incompatible with the role of watering places as medical centres.

**Katherine Allen (Oxford) - ‘What wont we do for health!’: Recipe Books and Fashionable Diseases in Eighteenth-Century English Households**

Recipe collections were records of knowledge that provided personalised instruction for everyday activities. Part of a long tradition of preserving advice and technical procedures, these domestic compendiums were created, modified, and passed down through generations and are representative of the thriving information exchange that existed across social boundaries throughout eighteenth-century England. Many of these manuscripts included, or focused solely on, medical recipes and were used for treatment
supplementary to purchased medical care. Hence domestic medicine – and recipe books – was part of a cooperative system of healthcare that became the norm for eighteenth-century elites. Engaging with perceptions of fashionable illness within recipe books illustrates the household’s centrality as a space for intellectual and cultural discourses surrounding the questions of authenticity in medicine. The presence of recipes for fashionable diseases in manuscript collections reflects the active engagement the household had with broader discourses in medicine and cultural attitudes towards health as part of elite sensibilities. Focusing on several types of fashionable ailments, including melancholy, consumption, and indigestion, my paper explores the ways in which domestic compilers of recipe books collected and prepared medicinal waters, an activity that functioned as both a leisure pursuit and self-medication. Sourced from family and friends, medical texts, and newspapers, remedies for fashionable illnesses were part of an evolving tradition of recording medical knowledge used domestically. As will be illustrated in our panel of papers, the continued use and value of recipes for medicinal waters is intimately connected to the rise of health regimens championed by physicians like Dr Cheyne, as well as the surge in therapeutic vacations to spa towns and the seaside.

Jessica Monaghan (Exeter) - Tis betraying our Sex not to be sickly, and tender:
Gender, Authenticity and Fashionable Illness

From the very beginning of the eighteenth-century writers questioned the authenticity of fashionable invalids. Periodicals, drama, poetry and even medical treatises satirised the tendency of elite individuals to perform sickness in deference to fashion or as a marker of social distinction, with fictional characters such as William Burnaby’s Lady Dainty attaining long-standing popularity as caricatures of sickly affectation. Writers commented on the popularity of fashionable diseases amongst both men and women, yet the practice of performing or feigning fashionable illness was regarded as a particularly feminine behaviour, as this paper will demonstrate. Not only were portrayals of such simulation more likely to feature females, but writers also suggested that women had particular gendered motivations for assuming the role of a fashionable invalid. The belief that feminine love of fashion rendered ladies more likely to assume modish illness was a key theme of debates, yet commentators also suggested that women might perform sickness in order to conform to contemporary perceptions of femininity. As Lady Dainty remarked in The Reform’d Wife (1700), “tis betraying our Sex not to be sickly, and tender”, a view later cemented by the rising profile of nerve theories and the culture of sensibility. While the level of concern prompted by inauthentic invalids varied over the course of the century, the gendering of simulated sickness as a feminine behaviour remained fixed,
with social and literary developments only reinforcing the perception that ‘a lady who is not indisposed at least three days in a week, is looked upon as a Hottentot’.

6th Parallel Panels

Sessions 12 – The Pox and Fashion

Dr Emily Cock (Adelaide) - The à la mode disease: syphilis and temporality.

This paper will use a study of syphilis/the pox to explore the intersections of disease, fashion and temporality in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries. In this period, syphilis was often referred to as the ‘alamode disease’, and its victims ‘fashionable cripples’. As the ‘à la mode’ (literally, ‘in the fashion’) distemper, the pox was simultaneously fashionable and highly stigmatised, easily adopted for critiques of the decadence of Charles II’s court and so on. However, the foregrounding of the disease’s ‘à la mode’ nature also established a specific, problematic narrative temporality for the patient, through framing the disease as short-term, curable, of-the-moment, and placing its patient in a brief space of cutting-edge illness in a way that belied the long-term effects of the disease. I therefore employ recent work on the temporality of illness to read representations of syphilis in texts such as The Tatler and William Hogarth’s Marriage à la Mode, and the more focussed medical discussions of men like Daniel Turner and John Marten.

Dr Noelle Gallagher (Manchester) - The Good News about Pox

The greatest Evil that... could well befall Mankind, is Propagation of that infectious Disease, call’d the French Pox, which, in two Centuries, has made such incredible Havock all over Europe. In these Kingdoms it so seldom fails to attend Whoring, now-a-days mistaken for Gallantry and Politeness, that a hale, robust Constitution is esteem’d a Mark of Ungentility; and a healthy young Fellow is look’d upon with the same View, as if he had spent his Life in a Cottage.” - Bernard Mandeville, A Modest Defense of Public Stews (1725). In advocating for publicly regulated brothels, Mandeville may have been proposing a rather extreme remedy for the problem of venereal disease—but he was by no means the only commentator to remark on the prevalence of what Wycherley and his contemporaries referred to as the ‘modish distemper.’ In this paper, I consider the fleeting ‘fashion’ for venereal disease among aristocratic and middle-class men in the Restoration and eighteenth century. Reading texts that condone or even champion the disease alongside texts that identify it as a punishment for social ambition or concupiscence, I argue that the sexual double standard (whereby men were praised for promiscuity and women condemned for it) effectually worked to identify venereal disease as a male problem, and to regard it as a sign of male potency. While Mandeville’s
description seems far from the reality of patient experience, his comments reflect a culture in which the symptoms of venereal infection were identified as the ‘honourable scars’—to borrow Rochester’s phrase—of vigorous sexual warfare.

**Professor Hermann J. Real - "The Satirist as Physician: Dean Swift on the Great Pox, Maladie à la Mode, and Collections of Spare Parts."**

"The Satirist as Physician: Dean Swift on the Great Pox, Maladie à la Mode, and Collections of Spare Parts." The paper will focus on Swift’s preoccupation with the problem of venereal disease, particularly in 'scatological' poems like *Pethox the Great, The Lady's Dressing Room*, and *The Beautiful Young Nymph*, but also touch on the progress poems and *Gulliver's Travels*, raising the most urgent issues of contemporary social history: youthful prostitution and the spreading of the Great Pox. Contextual sources to be considered are Defoe and Mandeville, Rochester and Prior, among others.

**Session 13 – Dangerous Books**

**Professor Nigel Wood - “Pope as Eloisa, Belinda and Sappho: hysteria and poetic sublimation”**

In his early identification with female protagonists, Alexander Pope projected his own fragility and vulnerability. As Mack and others have attempted to explore, this early choice of subject promotes a display of hysteric fixation. The question remains, did Pope intend to show how this could be confessional and revelatory? Or – at arm’s length – an anatomy of excessive sensibility, observed with a cool eye? This paper follows the trail of allusions in these characterisations, and tries to isolate two factors: (a) the degree to which he rendered his “Young Ladies” as his own as opposed to objects of derivative celebration, and (b) the ambiguities of identification that only become evident once these allusions have been recovered. The likely result is that Pope rejects as much as he borrows from Virgil, Sappho and the early traditions of Heloïse tragedies, and that the results cannot be definitely categorised.

**Jessica Roberts (Salford) - Radical Contagion in Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine**

In this paper I examine the trope of radical politics as a form of contagion: an idea that was prevalent in conservative writing during the turn of the nineteenth century. The idea that the contagion was likely to infect the poor in particular was taken up by *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine*, a city-based magazine with a middling-class readership, as a new sense of social responsibility surrounded theories about the transmission of diseases. The ways in which various physiological diseases could be transmitted were debated by
politicians, medical reformers, practitioners, travellers and merchants in the early
nineteenth century. Contagion was a social problem with political dimensions due to
quarantine laws that restricted the movement of ships carrying goods and it was
particularly linked to the poor: debate surrounded whether the poor were prone to
disease due to inherent inferiority or their surroundings, which would mean that there
was a sense of social responsibility on the part of Blackwood’s middle class
audience. Blackwood’s also applied this sense of responsibility to the control of radicalism
by using the language of contagion. This political contagion was described
by Blackwood’s as “rag[ing]” through the ranks of the rural poor as late as 1830.
Confronted by this threat, Blackwood’s promoted itself as the cure for the political poison
or infection that radicals were spreading amongst the poor.

Dr Paul Whickman (Derby) - Diseased and Injurious Texts: The Problem of Free
Speech in the Long Eighteenth Century (1660-1822)

In An Essay on the Regulation of the Press (1704), Daniel Defoe weighs up the dangers of
‘the prodigious looseness of the Pen’ with the threat posed by legal ‘restraint’ on, in
Defoe’s words, ‘Liberty’ in the press. Defoe illustrates his concern through simile: “To
Cure the ill Use of Liberty, with a Deprivation of Liberty, is like cutting off the Leg to
cure the Gout in the Toe, like expelling Poison with too Rank a Poison, where both may
struggle which Poison shall prevail, but which soever prevails, the Patient suffers.”
Defoe’s image here reveals how blasphemous, obscene or seditious texts can be
considered as ‘injurious’ or even diseased. Not only was such discourse commonly
encountered in periodicals and the press in the period, it is also evident in legal statutes
and trial proceedings such as Burnet v. Chetwood (1721) and Rex v. Curll (1727). This paper
will address how far such texts are deemed to be ‘injurious’ or ‘diseased’, and what it is
that they specifically ‘injure’. In fact, if the written text is likened to the physical body as
argued by theorists such as Mikhail Bakhtin in Rabelais and His World (1941), this
metaphorical body could be perceived as ‘diseased’ and thus corrupting or infectious.
Defoe’s simile on the ironically poisonous constraints on free speech will therefore be
extended to consider how many acts to curtail press freedom failed, and could be said to
have indeed ‘poisoned’ the ‘body politic’ of the public sphere they sought to save.

Session 14 – Consuming Beauty

Dr Roberta Barker (Dalhousie University) - Consumption and the Stage: A Late-
Blooming Fashion?

As numerous studies have shown, consumption reigned for much of the long eighteenth
century as one of the most modish ailments of the Western élite: a disease imagined as
spiritualizing its victims even as it expressed their superior sensibilities. In English and French theatre of this period, however, consumption tended to appear more risible than glamorous. Not until the turbulent years around 1830 did it gain onstage the vogue it had long enjoyed elsewhere. Through a comparative analysis of English and French performances, my paper explores consumption’s belated—but eventually triumphant—emergence as a fashionable stage disease. Early modern European theatre inherited from classical comedy an association of ailing bodies with the grotesque. When the consumptive cough was heard in plays such as Molière’s *Le Malade Imaginaire* (1673) and Destouches’s *L’Amour Usé* (1741), it appeared as a sign of characters’ comic imperfections. Far from propagating the sentimental vogue for consumption, the theatre often satirized it as a bourgeois affectation—as when, in Goldsmith’s *She Stoops to Conquer* (1773), Mrs. Hardcastle exposes her pretensions by imagining her beer-guzzling son Tony as consumptive. Only with the birth of French Romantic theatre, which defied neoclassical decorum and aristocratic aesthetics, did dramas like Saint Hilaire’s *Valentine* (1828) and Dumas Père’s *Angèle* (1833) depict noble consumptives who embodied a new conception of bourgeois heroism for a revolutionary age. As French plays with consumptive protagonists gained popularity on English-speaking stages, the theatre became a key vector of the disease’s transatlantic vogue in the later nineteenth century.

**Dr Carolyn Day (Furman) - Dying to be Beautiful: Fragile Fashionistas and Consumptive Dress in England, 1780-1820**

Historically, the chasm often exists between the sometimes gruesome biological manifestations of certain diseases and the comparatively positive representations employed as part of the socio-cultural strategies for experiencing them. This dichotomy is particularly evident in the representations of consumption in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. During this period, there was a tubercular moment in which cultural ideas about beauty increasingly intertwined with the disease process to allow the ravages of consumption denoted female beauty. During this period, there was a tubercular moment in which cultural ideas about beauty increasingly intertwined with the disease process to allow for the ravages of consumption to be presented in an aesthetically pleasing light. This was not simply a literary creation, for medical authors and beauty writers also helped construct this relationship, and the results of this discourse were visible in the fashions and beauty ideals of the period. Physicians, like George Cheyne in his *The English Malady* (1733) asserted that beauty relied on the appearance of fragility or delicacy. These connections were strengthened when in 1757, Edmund Burke argued that the beautiful was characterized by delicacy. Beauty was also one of the noteworthy symptoms of the hereditary predisposition to consumption, and once established, the symptoms increased the attractiveness of the sufferer as the disease’s effects were visible
in the complexion, eyes, and even the smile. This paper will address the dynamic interaction between fashion and disease in the period from 1780-1820, as dress was not only accorded responsibility as a causative agent of consumption but the ravages of the illness were also often highlighted by the prevailing fashions.

Katie Aske (Loughborough) - Cosmetics and Morality in Jonathan Swift's Dressing-Room Poetry

The eighteenth-century theory of the body as an expression of the mind meant that ugliness was often regarded as a sign of immoral character. However, with the possibility of changing the physical outside using cosmetics, the stereotypical association of beauty with morality and ugliness with immorality, becomes problematic. Following the subject of aesthetic and moral judgment, this paper will explore and contextualise the cosmetics and the morality of the characters in Swift's dressing-room poems. While Swift's poetry paints a grotesque image of the cosmically enhanced woman, he can also be seen to consider how cosmetics come to represent women, both in the physical body and the moral conscious. Through the comparison of his poetry with the relevant historical and social context, this paper will address the social practicalities of cosmetic enhancement and consider these in light of the moral signification of female beauty. In particular, the paper will consider the relationship between cosmetics and personal health. As recipes for cosmetics began to surface in health manuals, they allowed make-up products to be considered as restorative, rather than deceptive or immoral. This allowed women to preserve their natural beauty as they would their health. The paper will explore Swift's references to cosmetics, their use and advertisement and how physical beauty can influence the judgment of a person's moral character.