



ISECS Roundtable Panels Submission Writing Doctors I and II

Chair: Professor Clark Lawlor, Director of 'Writing Doctors: Medical Personality and Representation, ca.1660-1832', Northumbria University, clark.lawlor@northumbria.ac.uk

Northumbria University is currently exploring the long eighteenth-century world of texts, art and medicine through a Leverhulme-funded major project, 'Writing Doctors: Medical Personality and Representation, ca.1660-1832'. This project analyses the consequences of the language of medical expression moving from Latin to English towards the end of the seventeenth century for medical workers (not limited to doctors or men), patients and the public at large. Themes for investigation include examining trends for representing medics in literature and art, the various relationships between medical and creative literature, women's contributions to and experience of medicine, public engagement with medicine, and relations between the public and practitioners through writing. Our teams of speakers include project members, advisors and some of those whose scholarly work has helped develop the ideas being tested as part of our work. Our first roundtable scrutinises the work of physician-writers in the form of poetry, novels and medical works to consider the role that literary production played in the professional and personal lives of some of the more famous medical figures of the period. Our second roundtable provides an insight into some of the lesser-seen aspects of culture around medicine and writing, venereology, women's contributions to medicine and doctors' personal histories of ill health.

Writing Doctors I

Medics in Metre: Bath Buns and Pastoral Poetry

Professor Allan Ingram, Northumbria University, allan.ingram@northumbria.ac.uk

William Oliver (1695-1764), the Bath physician and populariser of the health benefits of Bath spa, is remembered as the inventor of the Bath Bun and the Bath Oliver. What he is less known for is his poetry. While some poetic medics, like Richard Blackwell and John Armstrong, remain acknowledged, for better or worse, as authors of distinctive works, Oliver, who was also a friend and correspondent of Pope, is regarded for his medical and culinary innovations. Yet his 1753 poem, *Myra: A Pastoral Dialogue, Sacred to the Memory of a Lady who died Dec.29th 1753, in the 25th year of her age*, has both personal relevance and is a revealing reflection on the relations between medicine and religion within a traditional poetic form. This presentation will be on the place of poetry and other non-medical writing within Oliver's career.

Polidori, Byron, and the Perils of Fictionalizing Patient Case-Histories
Dr Michelle Faubert, University of Manitoba, Michelle.Faubert@umanitoba.ca

Particularly with respect to patient confidentiality, ethical difficulties sometimes arose when the physician-writer used his patients' case-histories as the raw material for his literary output. Ironically, John Polidori plundered, vampire-like, his patient Lord Byron's case history to feed his own novel, *The Vampyre* (1819), and again the incestuous tale of *Ernestus Berchtold; or, The Modern Oedipus* (1819), which interpolated Byron's relationship with his half-sister in quasi-autobiographical detail. Such works, dubious in ethical terms to say the least, were the product of a predisciplinary period in which it was common, even expected, that physicians demonstrate their urbanity and cultural understanding by expressing themselves through creative writing. This combination of the medical professional and creative writer was encouraged by the predisciplinary status of psychology, which was seen as a part of medicine rather than an offshoot as it would be later in the nineteenth century.

Smollett's Medical Writing as Experimental Writing
Dr Sophie Vasset, Université Paris Diderot, sophie.vasset@univ-paris-diderot.fr

Tobias Smollett's medical treatise on Bath, *An Essay on the External Use of Water* (1752) was published a few years after his first novel, *Roderick Random* (1748), and has often been read in parallel with his last novel, *The Expedition of Humphrey Clinker* (1771), as the narrator Matthew Bramble gives several satirical accounts of the waters at Bath. The two works, however, were published almost thirty years apart in very different literary contexts, and even though the themes are similar, the tone of the narrator, and the literary devices at play have evolved because the literary stakes were different. I will therefore present Smollett's experimental writing in the *Essay* in the literary context of the 1750s, during which Smollett's publications were versatile, ranging from novel-writing to periodicals, history and controversial pamphlets.

Writing Doctors II

Mock the Rock: Venereologists in Eighteenth-Century Satire
Dr. Noelle Dückmann Gallagher, University of Manchester, noelle.gallagher@manchester.ac.uk

In this paper, I explore the representation of prominent eighteenth-century venereologists and their nostrums in literary and graphic satire. I demonstrate how figures like Richard Rock and Jean Misaubin—immortalized in plate 5 of Hogarth's *A Harlot's Progress* as the two squabbling quacks oblivious to their dying patient—became emblems within a wider satiric discourse that connected venereal infection with elite masculinity, prostitution, and foreignness. Just as Misaubin's foreign nationality, thin physique, and trademark French bag-wig made him a particularly appealing target for writers who sought to condemn the "French disease," so figures like Isaac Swainson—proponent of the popular Velno's Vegetable Syrup—became a powerful symbol for lampooning the fashionably-infected man about town. Ranging from poetry and plays to portraits and caricatures, this paper takes a comic look at the public personae, products, and advertising of some of this period's most prominent venereological entrepreneurs.



‘To take up the Pen to write for public Perusal’: Eighteenth-Century Women Reading and Writing Medicine

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Studies of medicine in the eighteenth century have proliferated over the last few decades, and fruitfully so. The age of enlightenment brought with it a series of new ideas and approaches to scientific creativity, innovation, experimentation, clinical education and practice, as well as the available forms, availability, volume and content of medical writing. Yet women are still notably absent from much scholarly work on the period’s medical marketplace, particularly that of its print history. Though a number of medical and cultural historians have sought to understand a handful of specific examples, including Lady Mary Wortley Montagu’s contribution to the fight against smallpox, or how women’s participation and leadership in midwifery practice changed during this period, there is more to be done to understand fully the contribution women made to medical developments of the eighteenth century. This paper considers evidence of women participating in the development of professional healthcare through their own literacy and production of scientific written outputs. While midwifery remains among the strongest of discourses in terms of women’s participation, the history of female-led clinical practice is here eschewed in favour of what these women were able to offer in terms of their textual legacies, and is certainly not a standalone discourse in terms of the kinds of medicine women chose to pursue. The production of remedies, pharmaceuticals and medical botany also play a role in women’s advancement and sharing of medical knowledge, as does nursing and the provision of therapeutic care. In bringing these works together, this presentation seeks provide a new understanding and recognition for women’s scientific work, often in spite of a full academic education being denied to them.

Dying like a Doctor: Physicians’ Self-Case-Histories and the Making of the Romantic Consumptive Dr Roberta Barker, Dalhousie University, Roberta.Barker@Dal.Ca

French physicians Gaspard-Laurent Bayle (1774-1816) and René-Théophile Laënnec (1781-1826) are widely recognized as two of the most influential researchers into the etiology and diagnosis of pulmonary tuberculosis in the last decades of the long eighteenth century. Less recognized, perhaps, is the impact of their own life stories—and especially of their writing about their own illnesses—on the development of consumption’s Romantic literary image. Both Bayle and Laënnec died of the pulmonary disease they were so dedicated to understanding, and both left behind detailed autobiographical case histories of their own declining health. The tone of these self-case-histories—part rigorous objectivity, part rueful resignation—reflected the dual discourses of medical materialism and religious faith that informed both doctors’ careers. That tone also helped to shape the profile of the Romantic “dying doctor” character who would soon appear in European, English, and North American novels and drama. After analyzing the self-writing of Bayle and Laënnec (in many ways two very eighteenth-century doctors), my presentation will argue that this self-writing—as much as their medical research—affected the representation of consumption over the course of the nineteenth century that followed their deaths.

Panels to be followed by a tour of the Edinburgh Royal College of Physicians for delegates and panel members.