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Special Virtual Issue: Social History of Medicine, "Emotions, Health, and Well-Being"

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By Aaron Seaman

In light of the upcoming "Emotions, Health, and Well-Being" conference (to be held September 10-12, 2012, at Queen Mary University of London), ***Social History of Medicine*** has compiled a [virtual issue of relevant articles from across the years, currently online and available through the end of October 2012](#). Along with [a brief introduction by Colin Jones](#), the issue consists of nine book reviews and the following 11 articles. As Jones writes of the issue: "Social History of Medicine journal has been one of the places in which the prehistory of our current history of the emotions has been developed. The accompanying collection of classic articles from the journal in the field of the history of the emotions highlights the processes at play in the setting of our current agenda."

[Musical Hypnosis: Sound and Selfhood from Mesmerism to Brainwashing](#)

James Kennaway

Music has long been associated with trance states, but very little has been written about the modern western discussion of music as a form of hypnosis or 'brainwashing'. However, from Mesmer's use of the glass armonica to the supposed dangers of subliminal messages in heavy metal, the idea that music can overwhelm listeners' self-control has been a recurrent theme. In particular, the concepts of automatic response and conditioned reflex have been the basis for a model of physiological psychology in which the self has been depicted as vulnerable to external stimuli such as music. This article will examine the discourse of hypnotic music from animal magnetism and the experimental hypnosis of the nineteenth century to the brainwashing panics since the Cold War, looking at the relationship between concerns about hypnotic music and the politics of the self and sexuality.

[Identity-Formation and the Breastfeeding Mother in Renaissance](#)

[Generative Discourses and Shakespeare's Coriolanus](#)

Victoria Sparey

The article argues that fresh insight into Renaissance infant feeding practices can be gained by situating maternal milk within the context of the mother's material contributions to children in the generative narrative as a whole. The humoral milk of the mother (itself redirected uterine blood) is shown to have consolidated the influence of the mother's generative blood that influenced offspring during gestation. The milk of the wet-nurse, however, disrupted the influence of the mother over her child. Through the examination of Renaissance midwifery tracts and the representation of Shakespeare's Volumnia in *Coriolanus*, this article reveals the humoral potency attributed to the breastfeeding Renaissance mother and challenges modern psychoanalytic readings that isolate Renaissance selves in a manner that overlooks the blurred boundaries that existed between humoral bodies.

[Children's Physic: Medical Perceptions and Treatment of Sick Children in Early Modern England, c. 1580–1720](#)

Hannah Newton

Historians of medicine, childhood and paediatrics have often assumed that early modern doctors neither treated children, nor adapted their medicines to suit the peculiar temperaments of the young. Through an examination of medical textbooks and doctors' casebooks, this article refutes these assumptions. It argues that medical authors and practising doctors regularly treated children, and were careful to tailor their remedies to complement the distinctive constitutions of children. Thus, this article proposes that a concept of 'children's physic' existed in early modern England. This term refers to the notion that children were physiologically distinct, requiring special medical care. Children's physic was rooted in the ancient traditions of Hippocratic and Galenic medicine: it was the child's humoral make-up that underpinned all medical ideas about children's bodies, minds, diseases and treatments. Children abounded in the humour blood, which made them humid and weak, and in need of medicines of a particularly gentle nature.

[The Great Dread: Cultural and Psychological Impacts and Responses](#)

[to the 'Russian' Influenza in the United Kingdom, 1889–1893](#)

Mark Honigsbaum

This article examines the impact of the 1889–93 'Russian' influenza on late Victorian society and culture. Using medical officer of health and national and local newspaper reports, and the poetry and memoirs of prominent survivors, I argue that the rapid progress of the influenza across Europe and the morbidity of leading politicians and other members of the British establishment occasioned widespread 'dread' and in some cases panic. This dread of influenza was fuelled by the high mortality rate in northern towns such as Sheffield, as well as by the disease's association with pneumonia, neurasthenia, psychosis and suicide. However, the key factor was the growth of mass circulation newspapers and the way that the influenza drew on fin de siècle cultural anxieties about urbanisation and the increasing speed of modern life.

[The Letter as Medicine: Studying Health and Illness in Dutch Daily Correspondence, 1770–1850](#)

Willemijn Ruberg

This article gives an overview of the methodology used to study letters as sources for the history of medicine, describing the shift from a social to a cultural history of medicine, and its effect on the analysis of correspondence, based on both an overview of secondary literature and on the analysis of over 2,300 Dutch manuscript letters written by the Dutch elite from 1770 to 1850. The first part of the article outlines how the letter was used by social historians of medicine, who mostly concentrated on the contents of letters in regard to disease and patients' attitudes to physicians. Cultural historians, on the other hand, focus on the making of meaning and the second part of the article discusses how health and illness in letters may be analysed in terms of language use, omissions and a focus on the functions of correspondence, specifically on the performative use of letters.

[Families, Patients and Emotions: Asylums for the Insane in Colonial Australia and New Zealand, c. 1880–1910](#)

Catharine Coleborne

Historians have successfully challenged the social control thesis in

relation to nineteenth century insane asylums in many different parts of the world. They have asserted that families were actively involved in committal. Their work has enriched the field, and provided new possibilities for historians researching in asylum archives. Yet despite the very 'emotional' content of these archives, historians have not often specifically examined the question of emotional relationships between the 'mad' and their families. This article examines correspondence and patient case notes, among other archival materials, from four hospitals for the insane in New South Wales, Queensland, Victoria and New Zealand from the 1880s to 1910. This was a critical period in the development of asylum management, and was also shaped by an emerging discourse of modernity expressed through new prescriptions for family roles. Drawing upon existing historical explorations of similar themes in other contexts, the article demonstrates the potential of this approach, to suggest both new paths for historians of psychiatry, families and the asylum, and to engage with histories of the emotions.

[Imagining the Pain and Peril of Seventeenth-century Childbirth: Travail and Deliverance in the Making of an Early Modern World](#)

Sharon Howard

[On the Tracks of Trauma: Railway Spine Reconsidered](#)

Ralph Harrington

[An Unmanly Vice: Self-Pollution, Anxiety, and the Body in the Eighteenth Century](#)

Michael Stolberg

[Rhetoric and the Social Construction of Sickness and Healing](#)

Davis Harley

[Body, Image, Text in Early Modern Europe](#)

Mark Jenner

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