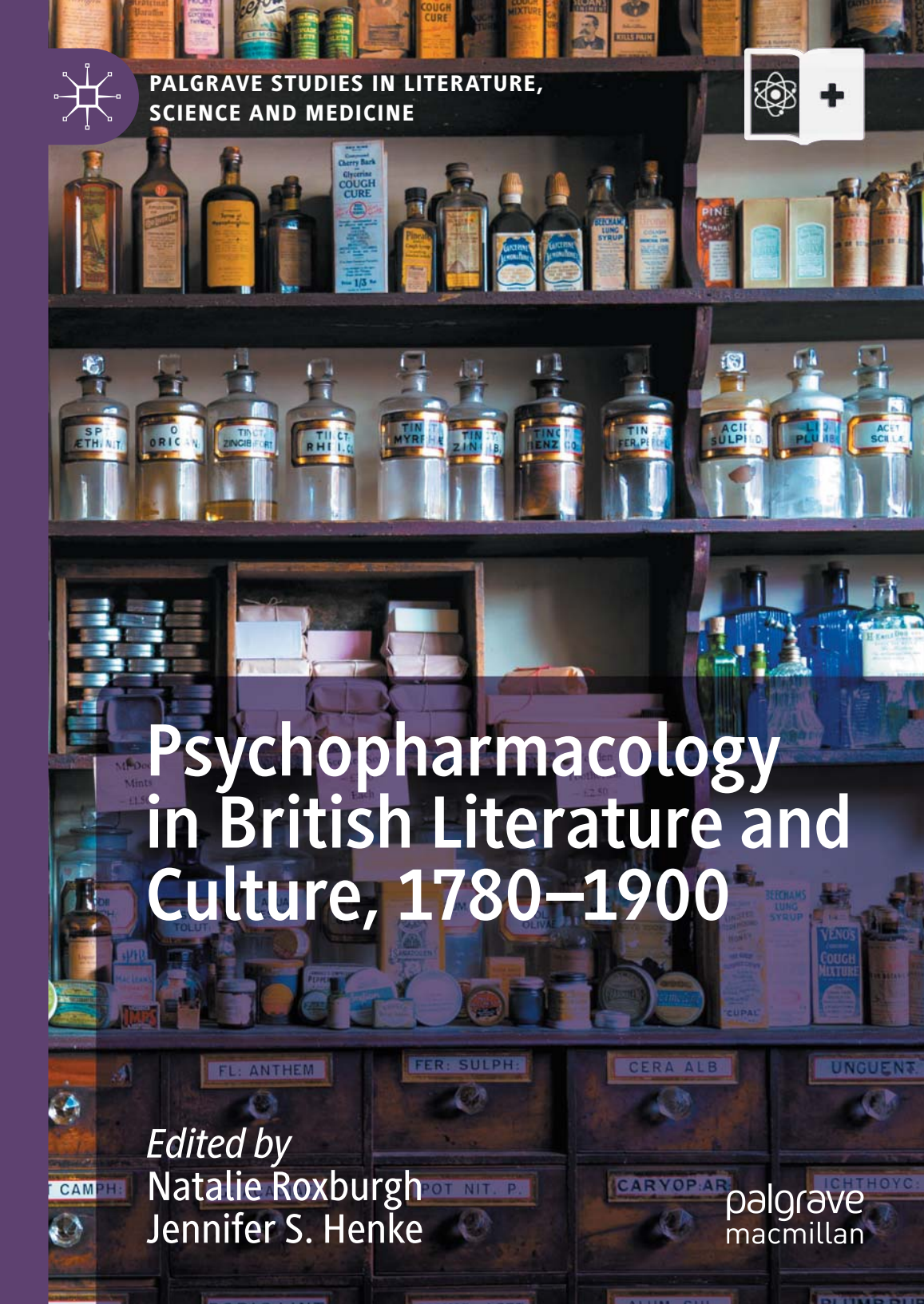
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Psychopharmacology in British Literature and Culture, 1780–1900
Edited by
Natalie Roxburgh
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Psychopharmacology in British Literature and Culture, 1780–1900

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Praise for *Psychopharmacology in British Literature and Culture, 1780–1900*

"This pioneering study of drug effects, not just addiction, in the nineteenth century ranges from opium to alcohol, lavender water, wormwood, and other herbal substances. Roxburgh and Henke have done a service for the fields of both medical humanities and literature and science by revealing the important role literary and cultural texts played in making possible the emergence of psychopharmacology in the next century."

—Jay Clayton, *William R. Kenan Professor and Director of the Curb Center, Vanderbilt University, USA*

"This collection offers useful consideration of the history of late-eighteenth- and nineteenth-century pharmacology; its essays suggest all kinds of possibilities for new conversations about medical science and the literary imagination."

—Adam Colman, *author of* Drugs and the Addiction Aesthetic in Nineteenth-Century Literature *(Palgrave Macmillan, 2019)*

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Notes on Contributors

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CHAPTER 1

Situating Psychopharmacology in Literature and Culture

Natalie Roxburgh and Jennifer S. Henke

In the last decades, scholars have become increasingly interested in the role psychoactive substances play in the making of and expression of human culture. Given the proliferation of documentaries, news items and political debates on decriminalisation in recent years, it is perhaps no wonder that drugs have become a focal point of scholarly concern. Indeed, in the public spotlight are issues such as the off-label (over-)use of medication, the proliferation of opioid addiction (the 'opioid epidemic') in the last decade through over-prescription in the United States and a scientific and cultural reassessment of real risks that both legal and illegal drugs pose. Such topics, despite their more recent political, social and

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cultural resonances, have been salient for centuries, at least insofar as they appear in literary and cultural texts.[1]

This volume historicises the way medical and scientific knowledge came to provide systematic accounts of how drugs work by honing the way they are represented in literary and cultural texts, which challenge, anticipate, interrogate, participate in and criticise their medical counterparts. Most studies on drugs in literature and culture have focused on the history of addiction, and many have used literary biography as the main source texts (Milligan 1995, 2005; Davenport-Hines 2001; Boon 2002; Redfield and Brodie 2002; Ronell 2004; Reed 2006; Zieger 2008; Jay 2011; Comitini 2012; Mangiavellano 2013; Foxcroft 2016; Malek), often focusing on Thomas De Quincey (Abrams 1971; Schiller 1976; Rzepka 1991; Clej 1995; Morrison and Roberts 2008; Morrison 2011). There is, however, much more to be said about psychoactive substances and the connections human beings have to them. As Susan Zieger points out, the expansion of international trade meant that people "became enchanted with marvelous substances from exotic locales: spices, sugar, tobacco, chocolate, coffee, tea, rum. Imperial commerce in the period from 1500 to 1800 laid the groundwork for a 'psychoactive revolution'" (4). During this period, and especially in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, knowledge about how drugs work on the brain, nerves and the body increased, and with this knowledge came a process of identifying and restricting their use. Breaking also from a tendency to emphasise the way writers used drugs as reflected in literary biography, this volume examines what contemporaries knew about how drugs affect the body, and what effects they have on mood, sensation, thinking and behaviour, in order to contribute to the discourse on addiction as well as to consider the cultural significance of psychoactive substances beyond addiction. There were, after all, many ways to use substances that were not based on drug-induced need.

The nineteenth century is a fascinating time to study drugs precisely because of the convergence of different medicines. One need only reflect on the experience of chemist Humphry Davy, who records his experimentation with nitrous oxide, stumbling his way into his own notion of the substance's effects and its subsequent use: "My labours are finished for the season as to public experimenting and enunciation. My last lecture was on Saturday evening. Nearly 500 persons attended, and amongst

[1]We would like to thank Norbert Schaffeld, Imke Grothenn and the Bremen English Studies Colloquium for support and feedback on this project.

other philosophers, your countryman, Professor Pictet. There was respiration, nitrous oxide, and unbounded applause—Amen. To-morrow a party of philosophers meet at the Institution, to inhale the joy-inspiring gas. It has produced a great sensation" (Davy 1858, 64). Experimentation with nitrous oxide (and a careful observation of its effects) led to the conclusion that the gas could function as an anesthetic drug: "Does not sensibility more immediately depend on respiration? […] As nitrous oxide in its extensive operation appears capable of destroying physical pain, it may probably be used with advantage during surgical operations in which no great effusion of blood takes place" (Davy 1858, 18). Indeed, as Davy's experimentation shows, the nineteenth century was rife with attempts to ascertain particular effects of particular substances, which were put to use in an increasingly systematised way.

Coined by the pharmacologist David Macht in 1920, the term *psychopharmacology* is usually associated with the scientific study of drugs and their capacity to treat mental disorders. In this volume, we use the term to discuss the representation of drugs in late-eighteenth- and nineteenth-century literary and cultural contexts: contemporaries hypothesised about what might now be called *drug action* (even though in this time, drugs were thought to affect the body) and explored utilising certain substances for particular known *drug effects*. Our book differentiates itself from what has already been published on drugs in literature and culture by considering the role emergent psychopharmacological *knowledges* play in literary and cultural texts during the period when the field slowly began to develop. Nineteenth-century science was growing, dynamic and controversial—and with no separate concepts of psychology or psychiatry to speak of. The history of known drug effects dovetails with the development of others fields. The nineteenth century is crucial for the history of psychiatric medicine, for the development of a theory of addiction and also for a theory of drug effect that moves beyond humouralism.

Abandoning humouralist theories of the body that posited nerve system as tubes of liquids (which left little room for a theory of drug effect), these new methods included new materialist medical theories that afforded mechanical agency to inert substances. Many embraced an organicist materialist view of the body (see Ruston 2012, 24). One such theory was that of Brunonianism, which scholars such as Gavin Budge and Roy Porter have emphasised were influential on the development

of medicine in general and psychiatry in particular (Budge 2013, 12–13, 56–57; Porter 1988, 89). Scottish physician John Brown posited that afflictions were the body's nervous reaction to external stimuli caused by an under- or over-stimulation, dividing diseases into two classes, asthenic and sthenic, respectively. Drugs, and especially opium, were considered to be stimulants used to bring users back to a healthy state of equilibrium. Owing to Brown's influence on figures such as Thomas Beddoes (who, in turn, was a great influence on Samuel Taylor Coleridge)—as well as to the Opium Wars (1839–1860)—opium takes up a lot of space in this volume as it takes centre stage in the development of the science of drug effects. At the same time, alcohol, tea, tobacco and other herbal substances became increasingly relevant for medical knowledge. While the focus is on Britain, several of our essays show how Britain is interwoven with colonial contexts. Several of our essays address the impact of the Opium Wars, revealing a global circulation of drugs as well as colonial contexts for the known effects that go with them.

Studying psychopharmacology in the context of eighteenth- and nineteenth-century literature encompasses three areas: (1) considering what was known about the human brain, nerves and body, (2) accounting for contemporary knowledges about substances (usually plant-based) and (3) studying the manner in which literary texts represent how the use of drugs is embedded in specific cultural contexts. In what ways were drugs seen as empowering, healing or detrimental? What were the cultural—or even aesthetic—contexts for this assessment? How do these factors inflect the way substances are experienced? We address these questions in our four sections. First, our contributors examine the question of the aesthetic by looking at the relationship between genre and drugs. Second, we consider the way psychopharmacology in its cultural contexts puts pressure on a strict division between humans and drugs, and also humans and plants. Third, we assess the cultural and political influences that inform the way that known drug effects were described, discussed, classified and put to use. Finally, we conclude by examining early frameworks and attitudes towards medication and self-medication, thinking about the emergence of the prescription in literary texts.

Psychopharmacology in British Literature and Culture asks the question about what recent science and medicine say about drugs, and it historicises this knowledge with what contemporaries knew and thought about them. People take drugs for a variety of reasons: for medicine,

for pleasure, for relieving withdrawal symptoms or for enhancing certain qualities for particular social or cultural ends. That is to say, the relationship between how drugs work on the brain (drug action) and how people think and feel while taking drugs (drug effects) is complex when we consider cultural contexts. And what we learn from literature cannot be deduced from a medical textbook alone. This book aims at extending the socio-historical investigations that concentrate on the discovery of drugs in the context of the history of psychopharmacology, on the boundaries between use and abuse in society, on the distribution and sale of (medicinal) drugs, on the drug trade and drug wars and on the way in which economic considerations have affected the determination of 'good', 'bad' or 'forbidden' drugs (Porter and Teich 1995; Drews 2000; Courtwright 2001; Curth 2006; Wallis 2012; Barbara 2015). Drugs are, first and foremost, material objects with specific chemical attributes that have particular benefits and/or detrimental effects depending on specific contexts. Our focus is on the drug itself, in whatever form the substance takes, an approach that factors in the way these chemicals were thought to work on the brain and/or body. Despite this volume's general focus on opium, examining several drugs in depth allows us to see that different cultural imaginaries of different drugs inform the way that they are interpreted. In so doing, articles in this collection add to the discussion by considering the way drug effects were thought to enable or enhance certain mental states and functions in various cultural contexts. In the end, this volume tells a story about the way a knowing use of drugs helped users become fit, or unfit, for certain social and cultural aims. Certainly, the early science of other drugs not emphasised in this volume—such as cocaine, which (as one gleans from the *oeuvre* of Arthur Conan Doyle) became popular at the end of the century when our volume closes—can also be better understood through the story we are telling (see Small 2016).

Readers will discover that essays here are located at the intersections of medical humanities and literature and science. Studies in the medical humanities have considered both the objective knowledge about the brain and body and the subjective experiences of being ill as well as changing discourses on madness and an ethics of prescribing drugs (Weber 2006; Petryna et al. 2006; Racine and Forlini 2010; Franke et al. 2015; Maier and Schaub 2015; Svenaeus 2017; Malleck 2020). In literature and science, interest in neuroscience and neurology (Stiles 2007; Walezak 2018; Servitje 2018) has been sparked by questions regarding the relationship between the brain (as part of the body) and the mind, the

latter of which is represented in literature. Similarly, research in botany has provoked new understandings of the way plants were classified, used (by whom and with what social, geopolitical or colonial effects) and conveyed in literature (Schiebinger 2005, 2007, 2017; Campbell 2007; Martin 2011; Francia and Stobart 2015). Finally, research on drugs as chemical substances has explored the way people in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries thought about and understood the relationship between the material brain and the subjective experiences attached to it, whether drugs were and are taken owing to addiction, for medicine, for pleasure or for spiritual reasons (Vice et al. 1994; Partridge 2018). The essays in this volume attempt to weave some of these threads together by starting with the drug substance itself. Our project is not to comprehensively study all drugs used in the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries; rather, we examine the way knowledge about drugs in general is woven into cultural texts. Alcohol, tea, various herbs and wormwood are some of the drugs explored here in addition to opium.

In literary studies, a lot of attention has been given to the concept of the *pharmakon* made especially relevant by Jacques Derrida in his 1981 reading of Plato's *Phaedrus* in *Disseminations*. Meaning *poison* as well as *remedy*, at first glance the term seems contradictory (Derrida 1981, 97). The question of 'what is a *pharmakon*'—a remedy or poison—is related to the role of science in society, as it is about identifying 'good' versus 'bad' drugs (see Herlinghaus 2018). After all, it is medical science that creates a taxonomy of illnesses and remedies, which in turn has cultural values and practices connected to them. This is something that literary texts capture, as they seek to represent the experience of drug-taking with science and cultural contexts attached, a task that medical literatures or science textbooks are not able to undertake by themselves. Our study distinguishes itself from the Derridean—and poststructuralist—tradition by taking the science of drugs quite literally: the *pharmakon* is, in the true sense of the word, a drug that can be a poison or a remedy, and it is not merely a stand-in for technology writ large (cf. Pies 2006; Stiegler 2011; Jenkins 2011; De Boever 2013). Another aspect that sets our volume apart from others is the consideration of the blurred boundaries between not only poison and remedy but also the drug as corrector and enhancer. It is pharmacological knowledge that helps to sort drugs into categories, which in turn have cultural influences and ramifications.

Late-eighteenth- and nineteenth-century literary texts analysed here do not all explicitly deal with the discourses of modern psychopharmacology, as this field is still very much in development. And yet, each essay explores the effects of drugs on the human brain and body in a way that would have been seen as adding to knowledge in a period in which psychopharmacology was still discovering itself: literary texts both anticipate and produce what will come next. Thus, this collection reads late-eighteenth- and nineteenth-century literature through what we now know about psychopharmacology while also rethinking the relevance of these literary texts for the development of the field.

Drugs and Genre

In some cases, a drug's established psychopharmacological effects were historically linked to how texts in various genres explained to the reading public how these effects come about. Although various plants were explored and represented in literature from the seventeenth to the nineteenth century, the most prevalent drug given literary treatment was opium, although alcohol's effects also garnered attention. Octavia Cox's "Historicising Keats' Opium Imagery through Neoclassical Medical and Literary Discourses" sets the stage for our volume by tracing the way opium was represented over the course of several centuries by focusing on two distinct genres: medical texts and literary ones. She draws from classical and neoclassical discussions of opium in order to contextualise divergent understandings of the drug by the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries when John Keats wrote his well-known poetry under the influence. By contrast to understandings of opium's drug effects that gained popularity in the early nineteenth century, such as those of John Brown or Thomas De Quincey, many writing during the period (including and especially Keats) still relied on classical and neoclassical understandings of the drug. This chapter explores ways in which drug-effect imagery in long-eighteenth-century medical books and poetry overlapped, presenting opium as inhibiting activity in both body and mind, specifically in the form of indolence, drowsiness, dulling and forgetfulness.

Irmtraud Huber's "'Grief's comforter, Joy's guardian, good King Poppy!': Opium and Victorian Poetry" considers questions of literary form alongside references to debates over the known drug effects of opium. She references debates stemming from contemporary medical

texts, which disagreed about whether opium should be considered what they called a 'stimulant' (as in the case of most readings of Brown's system) or a narcotic. Huber argues that Victorian poetry paints a picture of attitudes towards the drug that differ from those that have emerged from many critical discussions of Victorian narrative fiction. She suggests that there might be a link between the cultural shift that increasingly privileged narrative fiction over poetry during the nineteenth century on the one hand and the rise of a discourse of addiction on the other. Drawing on authors such as Alfred Tennyson as well as less familiar figures, she locates this link in the way in which poetry and narrative fiction—and the novel in particular—invest to a different degree in the idea of the autonomous, rational individual who is in control of her or his actions and desires. Such a perspective highlights a genre politics that can be seen to lie at the heart of different literary attitudes towards the drug. Narrative fiction and lyric poetry thus may be said to show affinities with different aspects or interpretations of the drug's known effects.

In "Dangerous Literary Substances: Discourses of Drugs and Dependence in the Nineteenth-Century Sensation Novel Debates", Sarah Frühwirth shows that understanding drugs and their effects in the nineteenth century went hand-in-hand with a heightened awareness of their potential dangers and habit-forming qualities, leading also to widespread public concern. Nineteenth-century public anxieties not only centred on psychoactive substances—in particular, opium and alcohol—but also on other kinds of consumables: books. Owing to their sensational content and their alleged unhealthy effect on readers, sensation novels came under fire from all sides. In order to discredit the genre, reviewers frequently compared sensation fiction to opium and alcohol in order to refigure their readers as addicts. Similar to anti-drug campaigners, critics of sensation fiction focused on the pharmacodynamics of drugs in order to illustrate the dangers they posed to the reader's health and moral integrity, noting symptoms such as sweating, an increased heart and breathing rate and mental excitement as well as pointing to possible long-term adverse effects. Frühwirth further argues that, similar to the concerns voiced by anti-drug or anti-alcohol campaigners, reviewers' fears regarding 'drug effects' of this particular literary genre were not limited to individual bodies but also extended to the social and national body. In this light, the reviewers' recourse to the language of drug effect and addiction in their criticism of sensation fiction can be seen as an elaborate discursive

strategy that enabled them to voice a wide variety of anxieties concerning social and national stability.

Rethinking the Pharmacological Body: Drugs and the Borders of the Human

In "Blurring Plant and Human Boundaries: Erasmus Darwin's *The Loves of the Plants*", C. A. Vaughn Cross explores Erasmus Darwin's role in the development of Western psychopharmacological knowledge. His first major literary work *The Loves of the Plants*, a poem which discussed drug experimentation, was published in 1789 and revised in 1792 as a literary jigsaw puzzle for non-specialists. This essay considers how Darwin's amalgamation of old and new paradigms of knowledge about plants, minerals and animal bodies sought to educate the public about potential pleasures, dangers and overall value of psychoactive substances, arguing that right use of various plants could contribute to the civic good, exploring the way drugs facilitate human and plant-interconnection alike. A popular health paradigm among Darwin's network of Edinburgh-trained physicians was Brunonianism, which looked for over- or under-stimulated, blocked or depleted nervous energy. One of several significant attempts of the era to advance knowledge of drug efficacy, Darwin's work stood out from contemporaries' efforts by combining Linnaeus' classificatory system with French naturalism, sensationalism, hermeticism and his own Baconian experiments and theories of psychophysiology. From recipes rendering single psychoactive entities edible to suggestive groupings of complex admixtures of liqueurs, gasses and powders containing psilocin, opiates or eugenol, *The Loves of the Plants* contains Darwin's prescriptions for health and happiness by interacting with psychoactive—'affecting'—substances, including warnings about doses and lethality. While the essay addresses Darwin's better-known contributions to opium use, it also takes into account his view of more than ninety potential drugs and new drug technologies such as pipes, chimneys and syringes for ingesting drugs such as cannabis, mushrooms and various forms of alcohol.

While figures such as John Brown, Thomas Beddoes and Thomas De Quincey had a lasting impact on how the public came to understand opium in particular, from today's perspective, such accounts of how opium works on the brain and the body are technically incorrect. In "Pharmacokinetics and Opium-Eating: Metabolites, Stomach Aches

and the Afterlife of De Quincey's Addiction", Hannah Markley relies on current psychopharmacological understandings of how drugs act and, in turn, are acted on by the body to produce drug effects, drawing attention to the entanglement of action and effect (and of drug and human body) in modern scientific discussions of drugs. By focusing on the ways opiates are metabolised by the body, Markley argues that, despite his technically flawed accounts, De Quincey's rhetoric of 'opium-eating' in *Confessions* (1821) ironically anticipates current psychopharmacological explanations of how bodies and drugs interact to produce what is understood as a drug effect. Hence, recent psychopharmacological descriptions of drugs and their metabolisation help to confirm De Quincey's descriptions of the bilateral relationship between the opium user, or 'eater', and the drug itself. In this context, De Quincey's physical dependence is, in fact, the result of a complex entanglement of the mind, the body and the drug as they interact with prior maladies, eating habits and the consumption of other substances such as alcohol. Markley emphasises the interaction between opium and the stomach in particular by pointing out that opioid receptors are not only located in the brain but also in the gut. Most importantly, she adds that opiates must first be absorbed into the body before even having any recognisable drug effect on the central nervous system. What is more, the products of the body's digestive processes, *metabolites*, are no less potent than the drug itself. In this way, Markley discusses *pharmacokinetics*—the movements of drugs in a physiological system—to investigate the complex interactions that subtend the two most common pharmacological heuristics of drug action and drug effect. She then identifies how De Quincey's gastro-intestinal rhetoric remaps the interrelation of drug actions and effects as well as their side effects. Specifically, Markley traces how, in *Confessions*, the narrator's stomach pains are conflated with memories of starvation, emotional pain and drug withdrawal. In a pharmakonian sense, then, the drug becomes pain and relief, poison and remedy in ways that extend the pharmacological significance of 'opium-eating' to include the affective and psychological circuits in which De Quincey inscribes his habit. Markley concludes that while De Quincey's pharmacological explanations of addiction are inaccurate, they nonetheless hold possibilities for rethinking the social, cultural and biomedical contexts of our modern concepts of addiction.

One way of considering the relationship between humans and drugs is to rethink the way we imagine the boundary between the two. In "A Posthumanist Approach to Agency in De Quincey's *Confessions*", Anna

Rowntree takes a vital materialist approach arguing that substances, and not only humans, have a kind of agency. She points to De Quincey's own claim that opium is the 'true hero' of *Confessions*, taking this as her cue to de-centre the human and put pressure on the belief that the human is rational and self-governing. Rowntree's reconsideration of addiction takes into account the substance's power to affect the human body, arguing that the human and the drug act in assemblage with each other. Rowntree reads *Confessions* as a document of symptoms interesting to the medical practitioner, which points to the drug's power to exceed human comprehension and perhaps even empirical understanding.

Drug Action and Effect: The Cultural Politics of Psychopharmacological Knowledge

Our third section explores the way literary texts entice us to think about the way external forces—cultural and political—inflect the way contemporaries interpreted drug effects. In "Reading De Quinceyean Rhetoric Against the Grain: An Actor-Network-Theory Approach", Anuj Gupta considers the relationship between De Quincey's *Confessions* and nineteenth-century medical texts on opium by writers such as John Awister, John Jones and John Brown. He argues that the concept of 'anthropocentric utilitarianism' was the dominant discursive trope across medical and literary genres, a trope that conditioned the ways in which the nineteenth-century English public understood the drug effects of psychoactive substances. In other words, what mattered most in these texts was the question of which advantages or disadvantages drugs—in this case opium—had for the human body, whether they were useful and beneficial or whether they caused harm. In a rapidly industrialising age, these texts became increasingly occupied with the calming effects of opium, which led to the conceptualisation of the drug as an antidote for a culture in need of relief from the 'side effects' of capitalism. Gupta points out that this utilitarian orientation in De Quincey's writings and those of contemporary medical experts was limited by an anthropocentrism that imagined the interaction between humans and drugs as a one-way linear process involving an agential human being as subject and a lifeless, passive psychoactive substance as an object. He further argues that this rigid 'anthropocentric utilitarianism' is concomitant with a significant epistemic limitation of the modern Western world. In this regard, he calls attention to a so-called plant blindness characteristic to modern society,

one that emerges in the nineteenth century. Gupta proposes that Actor-Network-Theory (ANT) offers a possible method to read these texts on opium against the grain in order to overcome these limitations. Using this method, he debunks the idea of opium as an inert substance and contextualises it with a complex history of human-plant co-evolution.

Another way economics informs psychopharmacology is through the way political economy and the Opium Wars are intertwined. In "Blood Streams, Cash Flows and Circulations of Desire: Psychopharmacological Knowledge About Opium in Nineteenth-Century Women's Fiction", Nadine Böhm-Schnitker focuses on the discourse on opium at the dawn of the First Opium War. Early nineteenth-century women's fiction about the domestic use of opium—whose effects are here understood within a Brunonian medical framework—cannot be read without considering global reverberations. Opium circulates in bloodstreams as well as in economic channels, and the logic of these circulations intersects with the social construction of gender and class inequalities at home. Nineteenth-century women writers document these intersections and betray the sociopolitical workings of opium by showing what kinds of psychological and physical relief the drug provides. Maria Edgeworth's *Belinda* (1801), for instance, foreshadows the concerns of later sensation fiction writers and documents the ways in which the psychological impact of opium betrays the intertwinements of the economic desires of empire, the cravings and addictions of the body, the structures of gendered suppression and political economy. Elizabeth Gaskell's *Mary Barton* (1853) connects the political with the private and reveals opium addiction to be a crucial relay between individual desire, empire and domesticity. The works of fiction under consideration here not only focus on the gendering of different forms of opium consumption but also render it abundantly clear that opium correlates with economic as well as colonial aspects that consequently interconnect the management of the body with the management of finances and colonial expansion. These texts provide a double reflection on psychopharmacology in that they represent the characters' knowledge about opium's effects on mind and body on the diegetic level and reveal the wider sociocultural contexts in which the drug plays a role.

Besides economics, national discourses also inflect the way contemporaries understood drugs. This is particularly telling in the case of absinthe, a drink made from alcohol and wormwood (whose active ingredient is a drug called thujone). In "The Indeterminate Pharmacology of Absinthe in Nineteenth-Century Literature and Beyond", Vanessa

Herrmann considers the known drug effects of absinthe in the Victorian period alongside today's scientific knowledge. She draws on results provided by twenty-first-century medico-scientific studies that are, interestingly, not consistent in their findings about thujone's drug effects. Some studies deny any hallucinogenic or lethal attributes of thujone while others confirm it. In order to highlight the drink's indeterminate effects, Herrmann provides a reading of two nineteenth-century literary texts—by Christina Rossetti and Robert Hichens—representing a common understanding of the beverage. Absinthe was the drink of choice for artists such as Wilde, Toulouse-Lautrec, Picasso and Van Gogh. Attitudes and interpretations of the drink's effects are sometimes ambiguous, and they reflect national attitudes (in this case, ones about the French) as well as moral outlooks.

Historicising the Prescription: Medication and Self-Medication

With the growing professionalisation of medicine came a more structured and systematic way of recommending and dispensing drugs, and a tighter definition of how drugs should be used as medications, but this was a long time coming. Our first two contributions in this section argue that gender plays a significant role in the way drugs were prescribed. In "'She furnishes the fan and the lavender water': Nervous Distress, Female Healers and Jane Austen's Herbal Medicine", Rebecca Spear draws on the question of gender to understand the way drugs were prescribed by laypeople. Although medicinal botany was becoming increasingly associated with professional medical practice, the dispensation of simple medicines for acute nervous distress remained synonymous with the medical care intrinsic to women's social interactions and private experiences. Spear states that a reference to lavender water—a common plant-based remedy for nervous distress in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries—was deleted in the history of Austen's novella "Kitty, or the Bower" (1792–1816). In addition to power shifts from medicinal to scientific botany that affected women's medical practices and proto-feminist communities, Spear examines the effects of fashion and sexual difference upon the uses of lavender as a substance associated with strengthening the nerves. Advancing its discussion of nervous disease, sexual difference and the fashionable remedy, this contribution also takes Austen's Steventon novels *Northanger Abbey* (1818) and *Sense*

and Sensibility (1811) into consideration. Austen's depictions of lavender's use, its soothing and restorative drug effects, function as a means of subverting hypotheses regarding women's predisposition to nervous disease. Discussing the experimental *materia medica*, Spear suggests that portrayals of lavender's potency serve as Austen's protest against patriarchal suppression through professionalisation of the medical practice and medicalisation of women's proto-pharmacological knowledge. She asserts that lavender—a substance regarded as efficacious in folk and rational medicines—becomes a metonym for the recovery of women healers, their knowledge and proto-feminist communities in Austen's writings.

Joseph Crawford's "'When poor mama long restless lies, / She drinks the poppy's juice': Opium and Gender in British Romantic Literature" brings the question of domesticity to bear on prescription and gender. By the later eighteenth century, it had become clear that opium could function either as a 'stimulant' or as a 'relaxant'. These different drug effects, however, did not have equal cultural status, and while the use of opium as a sedative and painkiller was routine and unremarkable, the recreational use of the drug for its stimulant and hallucinogenic properties was the subject of widespread disapproval and was associated with the deviant figure of the 'oriental opium-eater'. Samuel Taylor Coleridge and Thomas De Quincey both wrote about the vision-inducing powers of opium, and its importance to their respective works has been repeatedly investigated by scholars. It has more seldom been noted, however, that another literature of opium use existed in Romantic-era Britain, which is to be found in the less well-known works of their female contemporaries. Opium literature written by women depicted the drug in a very different light: not as a seductive and destructive stimulant which enticed the (male) artist away from his domestic responsibilities, but as a relaxant that helped its (female) users to cope with the demands imposed by the very world of mundane domesticity which male opium-eaters were stereotypically regarded as using the drug to forsake. Crawford suggests that this distinction between male and female writing about opium in the period corresponds to the double role played by the drug in contemporary British society as a whole. By aligning their use of opium with the 'moderate' and medicinal consumption of opiates recommended by contemporary doctors rather than with the deviant figure of the selfish and hedonistic opium-eater, these female writers were able to imply that their drug use was compatible with, and indeed contributed to, their ability to selflessly and effectively discharge their domestic duties.

Our final essay marks a transition from self-medication and prescription to the rise of a more regulated professional medicine and pharmacy. Björn Bosserhoff's "*Middlemarch* and Medical Practice in the Regency Era: From 'Bottles of Stuff' to the Clinical Gaze" argues that during much of the nineteenth century, rather than being perceived as an exotic recreational drug, opium was very much part of the daily lives of Britons—usually taken in the form of laudanum, a wildly popular tincture prescribed for anything from common coughs and colds to tuberculosis and 'insanity'. In his discussion of George Eliot's *Middlemarch*, Bosserhoff focuses on the novel's doctor-protagonist, Tertius Lydgate, and his stance towards the use of drugs in medical practice. *Middlemarch* portrays a time when, though little was actually known about drug action, most British practitioners nonetheless resorted to shotgun polypharmacy as treatment of choice for most diseases. Trained in Paris, Lydgate instead champions a largely noninterventionist approach, based—as Bosserhoff shows by contextualising Lydgate's views within contemporary discourses on pharmacotherapy—on models such as Vitet's and Laënnec's *médecine expectante*. Eliot's fictional doctor thus emerges as one of the foremost examples of an early clinician in the Foucauldian mode, a pioneering scientist-physician with a greater understanding of the effects drugs like opium have on individual bodies.

In 2017, the philosopher Fredric Svenaeus published a study on phenomenology and bioethics in which he argued that medical technologies, among them psychopharmacological drugs, have altered our understanding of what it means to be human. Svenaeus calls for a philosophical analysis of this question and criticises the absence of such studies in the field of medical ethics. In the same way that Svenaeus' book brings phenomenology and bioethics together, our volume interweaves psychopharmacology and literature in order to tackle questions that often get left out of public discussion of drugs owing to disciplinary boundaries. Literary and cultural texts help to do the work that Svenaeus and others have been calling for: to consider the social, cultural and political contexts alongside the science of drugs, a context which forces one to address the nuances of interpreting how one feels under the influence, and how the drug effect is situated within a nexus of other forces. Such work is tantamount to parsing out the human condition and is therefore a relevant

supplement for other cultural practices fused with the allure and promises of technological progress. It is this sort of insight that the present volume hopes to create by focusing on literature from the last decades of the eighteenth century to the close of the nineteenth, from Erasmus Darwin to the use of absinthe in the *fin de siècle*.

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