

# Nausea and Vomiting: A History of Signs, Symptoms and Sickness in Nineteenth-Century Britain



Rachael Russell

**CHSTM**

Centre for the History of Science, Technology & Medicine  
& Wellcome Unit for the History of Medicine

MANCHESTER  
1824

E·S·R·C  
ECONOMIC  
& SOCIAL  
RESEARCH  
COUNCIL

# Research Questions

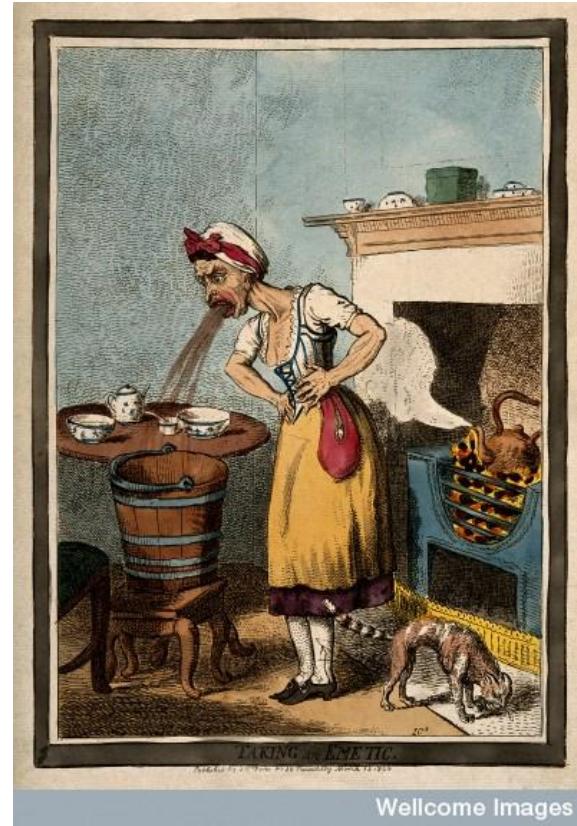
- Main research question:

*How did medical understandings and management of nausea and vomiting change throughout the nineteenth-century?*

- This will be pursued through five sub-sections, addressing:
  - Bedside Medicine, 1800-1833
  - Hospital Medicine, 1834-1869
  - Laboratory Medicine, 1870-1900
  - Case study: Sea-sickness
  - Case study: Morning sickness

# Historiography and Sources

- Subject matter
- Method and theory
- Sources
- But why nausea and vomiting?
  - Three theoretical/historical reasons
  - Plus interest of case studies...



*Coloured etching by I. Cruikshank, 1800.*

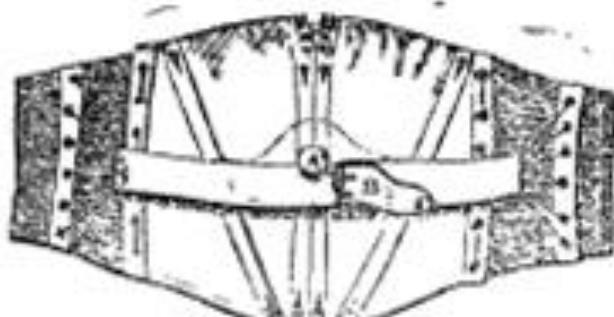
Wellcome Images

# The Experience of Sea-Sickness

*“How ill, not a few of us know; so ill that this illness makes us forget every other suffering and every danger. The moral and the physical prostration are equally complete. Far from fearing death, we are indifferent to it, wish for it, even pray for it. “Oh do throw me into the sea, and drown me!” is not a rare entreaty to escape from despairing victim’s lips”*

- Anon., ‘Sea-Sickness,’ *All the Year Round* (1872) 8:195, p. 342.

# Sea-Sickness - Treatments



“Levilly’s Thalaszone Belt” (1853)



Diagram of a swinging chair, designed by Michael Hodge Simpson (1867)



Diagram of flexible bandage, designed by Hortense Anastasie Bordin (1868)

# Morning Sickness

*“The secret is out”*

Letter from Elizabeth Shaw to John Shaw,  
31<sup>st</sup> March 1815, Shaw/43a, Birmingham  
University

*“A woman, after conception, during the time of her being with child, ought to be looked upon as indisposed or sick, though in good health; for child-bearing is a kind of nine months’ sickness, being all the time in expectation of many inconveniences which such a condition usually causes to those that are not well governed during that time.”*

Aristotle’s Works: (London: Printed for the Booksellers, 1861), p. 20



American Patent Medicine  
(~1850-1900)



Thank you...

Questions?

[rachael.russell@postgrad.manchester.ac.uk](mailto:rachael.russell@postgrad.manchester.ac.uk)