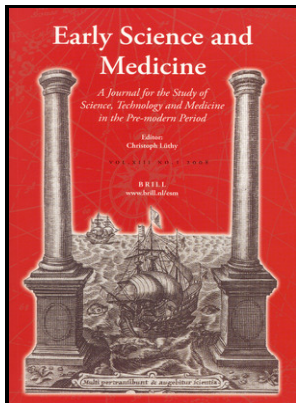


Nerves, spirits and fibres - towards defining the origins of sensibility

Australian National University Press - HYPOCHONDRIA AND HYSTERIA: SENSIBILITY AND THE PHYSICIANS on JSTOR



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Nerves, spirits and fibres (1976 edition)

Given the empiricist epistemology that lay in back of it, it is interesting that a second lineage developed, emphasizing the moral, emotional, and literary elements of character, rather than simply its material sense-receiving capacity. A new translation was published in 1996. If the cultural history of representation focuses on the primacy of the objects being represented—for example, the body as a site of cultural meaning, or the study of blackface minstrelsy as racial representation—the history of sensibilities focuses on the primacy of the various modes of perception and feeling, the terms and forms in which objects were conceived, experienced, and represented in the past.

Nerves, spirits and fibres (1976 edition)

The second body of scholarship focuses on the history of the senses themselves. The problem with the history of emotions is its tendency to separate emotion from cognition, to treat emotions as if they were a discrete realm rather than seeing them as linked to larger characterological patterns involving modes of perception and thinking as well as feeling. *The Rhetoric of Sensibility in Eighteenth-Century Culture*.

Sensibility : definition of Sensibility and synonyms of Sensibility (English)

Yet *Nervous Acts: Essays on Literature, Culture, and Sensibility* is a significant collection and not simply because it will facilitate research. Power is but one dimension of culture, a dimension that might be more or less important for the historian and analyst, depending upon the concrete specifics of the cultural moment being studied. The complaint of those historians who would see a false uniformity, stability, and consensus in such approaches is the same one that has been voiced at Geertz and others: Why has no attention been paid to the dimension of power that is necessarily implicated in culture? According to Eliot, modern culture after the metaphysical poets of the seventeenth century was marked by a fundamental and negative change: a previously comprehensive and immediate way of regarding the world was fragmented into its component parts of thought and feeling.

Nerves, spirits and fibres (1976 edition)

Anyone who has been following cultural historiography—and cultural studies more generally—for the past thirty years cannot be unaware of the centrality to the field of issues of power, hegemony, and domination, on the one hand, and agency, resistance, and complicity, on the other.

What Is the History of Sensibilities? On Cultural Histories, Old and NewDaniel WickbergWhat Is the History of Sensibilities?

Theorists of the a priori distrusted sensibility because of its over-reliance on experience for knowledge. Even as the cult of sensibility became the object of parody and satire, leading to its decline in late-eighteenth-century Britain, it provided much of the moral orientation of nineteenth-century American middle-class culture.

What Is the History of Sensibilities? On Cultural Histories, Old and NewDaniel WickbergWhat Is the History of Sensibilities?

On the Marxist concept of ideology, see Raymond Williams, *Marxism and Literature* Oxford, 1977 , 55—71. But if this fact has not narrowed the scope of social or economic history, there is no reason why it should delimit the field of the history of sensibilities.

What Is the History of Sensibilities? On Cultural Histories, Old and NewDaniel WickbergWhat Is the History of Sensibilities?

It also became associated with sentimental moral philosophy. On the influence of Geertz on the new cultural history, see Ronald G.

Nerves, Spirits and Fibres: Toward the Origins of Sensibility (1975)

Rather, it is a difference of sensibilities. Lionel Trilling, *Beyond Culture: Essays on Literature and Learning* New York, 1965.

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