**THE UNIVERSITY OF MANCHESTER**

**PARTICULARS OF APPOINTMENT**

**FACULTY OF HUMANITIES**

**SCHOOL OF ARTS, LANGUAGES AND CULTURES**

**DIVISION OF HISTORY**

**PHD STUDENTSHIP IN HISTORY**

**Salary:** Student Stipend £19,919-£23,298 (student fees will be covered in addition to the stipend)

**Hours:** Full time

**Duration:** 1 October 2021 for 3 years

**Location:** Oxford Road, Manchester, with archival work in the UK and North America

Informal inquiries may be addressed to Professor Sasha Handley ([sasha.handley@manchester.ac.uk](mailto:hannah.barker@manchester.ac.uk))

Background

This post will support the Wellcome Trust Investigator Award project *Sleeping well in the early modern world: an environmental approach to the history of sleep care*, coordinated by Professor Sasha Handley.

This project will be the first to define and analyse sleep habits as historically-situated environmental practices. It investigates how and why communities in Britain, Ireland and England's emerging American colonies c.1500-1750 engaged with their physical surroundings in an effort to sleep well and safeguard their health. The project will uncover an environmentally informed culture of 'sleep care', its conceptual underpinnings, and its manifestation in a range of everyday 'sleep care' practices from the preparation of soporific tonics to the composition of bedding materials. As such, it will demonstrate that 'sleeping well' involved much more than simply avoiding sleep disorders or coping with sleep loss.

The project's methodological innovation lies in its application of the concept of 'environing' to sleep care practices. Environments have complex ecologies and histories that are forged through interactions with their inhabitants. These interactions are conceptualised in this project as 'environing' practices whose recovery is central to this enquiry (Sörlin & Warde). Recovering environing practices highlights the active engagement of early modern communities with their surroundings, and permits an assessment of how these practices were distinguished by the ecological profiles of particular localities. This approach recognises the critical importance of *place* to sleep's fortunes that is recognised across multiple fields. Circadian rhythm research makes clear that optimal sleep depends on synchronizing internal biological processes with external physical environments. Researchers have documented the incidence of sleep and circadian rhythm disruption (SCRD) as human biological needs conflict with the environmental conditions (and demands) of industrialised '24/7' societies (Roenneberg; Kreitzmann). Some have declared a 'sleep crisis' because of the apparent rupture between environmental factors and circadian biology (Stevenson; Walker) and others cite 'sleep's growing disconnection from natural systems' as one cause of its deteriorating quantity and quality in the modern world (Reiss).

This project interrogates this 'rupture' thesis by recovering a longer, more complex, and more positive history of the sleep-environment nexus that shifts focus away from sleep 'crisis' and sleep disorders to environmentally-informed cultures and practices of sleep 'care'. In so doing it will challenge the assumed primacy of modern environmental change in transforming human sleep fortunes by assessing the implications of early modern environmental relations and changes, for the first time. Characterisations of 'preindustrial' sleep habits as homogenous products of harmonious relations between humans and 'nature' will also be overturned by examining how a variety of sleep care practices were afforded by select localities in this timeframe. How and why early modern communities engaged with their surroundings to optimise sleep, and how they adapted their sleep care practices to cope with environmental change, are highly pertinent to current debates about sleep's management.

Research questions that are central to this project include (but are not limited to):

* How did people understand the relationship between 'place' and sleep quality c.1500-1750?
* How did the diverse ecologies of Britain, Ireland, Virginia and Newfoundland shape the materials and practices of sleep care?
* How were practices of sleep care impacted by environmental change c.1500-1750?
* How did changes in medical, botanical and natural philosophical knowledge shape approaches to sleep care c.1500-1750?
* How did economic, social, age, gender and race hierarchies impact the practice and receipt of sleep care?

The project is organised into the following four work packages, and the successful candidate will be responsible for one of them during the course of the PhD:

1. **Latitudes of sleep:**

Which climatological, meteorological and topographical factors were judged to affect sleep quality? What material strategies did people deploy to control the photic and thermal conditions of their sleep environments at different times of year?

2. **Sleep dietetics:**

What foodstuffs were consumed and prepared to support healthy sleep in different localities? How did shifts in dietetic advice and physiological knowledge affect sleep care practices? Who were the chief agents of soporific food sourcing and preparation?)

3. **Plant cultivation and botanical soporifics:**

Which botanical materials were used to support healthy sleep in a period of rapid environmental change? How far did new botanical knowledge and changing views of sleep physiology influence the use/composition of botanical soporifics? Who were the chief agents of soporific plant cultivation, preparation and application?

4. **Multispecies sleep:**

How did the labour demands of agricultural work direct human sleep timings and spaces? How far did interactions with domestic animals, livestock, and wild animals in different localities direct the sensory dimensions of human sleep? In what ways did animal produce regulate sleep's material environments?)

The project findings will be disseminated in a variety of ways, which include:

* a co-authored monograph;
* single and co-authored journal articles;
* two workshops, one at Manchester's John Rylands Library and one at the Wellcome Collection in London;
* an international conference in Manchester 'Environing for Health in the Early Modern World';
* conference papers at major UK and international academic conferences;
* website and social media;
* public engagement/impact activities with external partners (tbc)

Full project details can be accessed as part of the post further particulars: **xxxx**.

Job description

The PhD student will work alongside Professor Handley, two Postdoctoral Research Associates, and a Project Officer.

The PhD project will help to support the project team's ambition to discover how people's efforts to sleep well c.1500-1750 were influenced by a distinctive set of environmental relations and linked 'environing practices' in which people engaged with their physical surroundings to optimise their sleep timings, bedding materials, climatic conditions, and to prepare soporific tonics. The team will reconstruct the principal agents, materials, and 'environing' practices that were used to manage sleep in ecologically distinct parts of Britain, Ireland and England's emergent American colonies of Virginia and Newfoundland, alongside the bodies of medical, botanical, climatic and material knowledge associated with them. The project will also assess the immediate and longer-term impacts of early modern processes of environmental change (e.g. the 'Little Ice Age'; agrarian reform; new land management practices; increased urbanisation; global mobility of people and goods). A diverse range of source materials will be used, including different forms of life writing, travel writing, material and archaeological evidence, inventories, recipe books, medical treatises, health regimens, herbals, almanacs, climatological treatises and natural histories. Most of these primary sources will be located in UK-based archives and at libraries, archives and museums in North America.

The PhD student will be responsible for locating relevant material and for collecting data via digital images and transcription. They will be jointly responsible with Professor Handley and the research associates for analysing this data and producing written work pertinent to the project as part of the PhD programme. After graduation from the PhD programme, there may be an opportunity for the successful candidate to become a Postdoctoral Research Associate on the project for one further year, during which they will contribute to the project's publications. The successful candidate will present papers at the project workshops and conferences, and produce blog posts as required. The successful candidate may also be able to contribute to linked public engagement and impact activities (to be confirmed).

Person specification

Essential qualifications:

* a BA and MA in early modern history which demonstrates an area of research expertise pertinent to this project, for example: environmental history; medical history; social history; material culture; food history; early American history;
* a strong grasp of recent historiographical debates pertinent to the project, including those linked to environmental change, health and medicine; material culture;
* the ability to understand and engage quickly with new historiographical debates and with the arguments and approaches adopted in allied fields, and to frame research findings within a variety of historiographical and methodological contexts;
* excellent analytical and writing skills;
* experience of working with archival sources in archives and libraries;
* excellent organisational skills;
* ability to work both independently and as part of a team.

Desired qualifications:

* palaeographic skills and the ability to read a variety of early modern handwriting;
* experience of organising conferences and/or other events;
* experience of promoting research via websites and social media;
* experience of using databases/digital analytical software (e.g. nvivo).