

ABSTRACTS

Jennifer Germann, “‘Other Women Were Present’: Seeing Black Women in Georgian London”

Women of African descent were found at all levels of Georgian society though their presence was not always recorded or acknowledged. Dido Belle Davinier (c.1760/1–1804), Elizabeth Sancho (1766–1837), and Jane Harry Thresher (c.1758–1784) are offered as case studies to argue that the fragmentary archival record can be augmented through the investigation of portraiture. Portraits can affirm the presence of Black women and their status as historical subjects and trace the operations of power and privilege that produced their limited appearance in the historical record.

Rochelle Raineri Zuck, “Staging the Empire: Samson Occom and the Eighteenth-Century London Theater”

This essay uses Mohegan minister Samson Occom’s 1766 journal entry on the mockery of his preaching by London “Stage Players” to explore connections between Indigenous peoples, the London theater, and empire in the eighteenth-century Atlantic world. I examine stagings of and by Indigenous people in theatrical and paratheatrical performances that drew English audiences into enactments of the colonial relation and exposed anxieties about empire’s transformational ambitions. Occom’s ministerial performances (and the players’ mockery) can be read as one act of a long-running colonial drama that both enacts and challenges what Elizabeth Maddock Dillon has termed “intimate distance.” I argue that Occom’s performance as an “Indian Preacher,” more than earlier stagings of Indigenous visitors, challenged notions of intimate distance that circulated in the wake of the Seven Years’ War. The players’ mockery serves not to marginalize Occom, but to position him as a key player in a circum-Atlantic performance of empire.

Amanda Danielle Moehlenpah, “‘Les assemblées qu’elle occasionne’: Danced Sociability in Enlightenment France”

Eighteenth-century sociability has often been depicted as a network of interactions. Modes of being-together, such as conversation, print-culture, coffeehouses, salons, theaters, etc., established autonomous collectivities and communities that echoed Enlightenment-era societal values. Dance, however, and particularly the French *contredanse*, remains largely unconsidered in studies of sociability. I analyze André Lorin’s “Les Cloches” and its English inspiration, John Playford’s “Christchurch Bells,” in light of early modern models of conversation to demonstrate the unique mode of being-together that the *contredanse* enacted: one echoing Enlightenment-era sociable values such as natural spontaneity, self-government, and the pleasure of reciprocity.

Jon deTombe, "Both Political and Poetical: Robert Lowth on Enthusiasm"

Robert Lowth publicly theorized enthusiasm three times: twice as Professor of Poetry at Oxford in the 1740s and later, in 1767, before the house of Lords as Bishop of Oxford. While, in his late sermon on the subject, he attacks dissent as a form of political enthusiasm, he is careful to not contradict the terms of the "true and genuine enthusiasm" articulated in his lectures and inspired by his theorizing of the Hebraic sublime. The importance of the influence of the Hebrew scriptures on his thinking is highlighted by the consideration of his celebration of Solon's poetic inspiration of the men of Athens in Plutarch's account. This article analyzes Lowth's three notions of enthusiasm in literary, religious, and political contexts, demonstrating both his debt to John Dennis and the limitations of his theorizing.

Elliott Schreiber, "The Virtue of Play: Games and Stories for Children in Three Pedagogical Texts of the Enlightenment"

My essay both substantiates and complicates the widespread conception that children's literature of the Enlightenment consistently tethers entertainment to a didactic or moral goal. I do so through an analysis of two prominent German works of the period by Johann Bernhard Basedow and Johann Gottlieb Schummel. Like John Locke, their primary inspiration, Basedow and Schummel each make play integral to their texts, and they each regard stories as an extension of play. Unlike Locke, however, they each also incisively challenge their own teleological approach to play, thereby setting the stage for the innovations of romanticism.

Scott K. Taylor, "Coffee and the Body: From Exoticism to Wellness in Eighteenth-Century Europe"

Normally coffee gains historical attention for the coffeehouse's role in the emerging public sphere. Yet critics were equally troubled by coffee's effects on the body. When coffee first arrived in western Europe, observers worried about its potential to alter the drinkers' bodies sexually, racially, and religiously. Once coffee became domesticated, concern shifted to its effects on the nerves and its role in the luxury and over-civilization of the consumer revolution. At the intersection of the social history of medicine and of consumption, coffee and its sister "soft drugs" point to the origins of today's culture of wellness.

Melchior Jakubowski, "The Introduction of the Potato in Eastern Europe: State or Peasant Initiative?"

The article takes the beginnings of potato cultivation and consumption in Eastern Europe as a case study in Enlightenment socioeconomic history. Reading narrative and economic sources from the territories of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth against the broader regional and European context, it retraces a trajectory whereby the tubers spread bottom-up via foreign immigrants to local peasantry and thereafter to nobility. That the new beneficial crop proliferated in Poland-Lithuania without state or elite official promotion, while Austrian authorities only partly succeeded in introducing potatoes in Habsburg eastern provinces, demonstrates that state-led modernization could only be effective in coincidence with local needs.

Amanda Vickery, "A Self off the Shelf: The Rise of the Pocket Diary in Eighteenth-Century England"

This essay explores a little studied but ubiquitous genre of life-writing that flowered in the mid eighteenth century—the pocket diary. It analyzes the way the texts structured human diversity, imagining society as a gallery of social types, while inviting self-reflection within a set format. Consumers conformed to, developed and resisted their received scripts. Polymorphous uniformity was the way publishers balanced individuality and the market. Diaries are commonly understood with a narrative of burgeoning selfhood. Yet most consumers were not pioneers of literary interiority. Most were happy to pick a self off the shelf for a shilling.