

Polite and **IMPOLITE** *Pleasures*

ENTERTAINING THE GEORGIAN CITY

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Abstracts Booklet



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‘Whirling wheels of glory’: thrill-based carriage driving as entertainment in the Georgian city

Velocity has fascinated humanity ever since Phaethon demanded the reins to the Sun Chariot, but it wasn’t until the eighteenth century that great speed was able to transcend the realm of mythology. The simultaneous improvement of British roads and the technological advancements of the coaching revolution allowed subjects to at last fully surrender to the rapturous effects of rapid motion. Fuelled by the insatiable desire for what Jeffrey Schnapp termed the ‘drug of modernity’ in his essay ‘Crash (Speed as Engine of Individuation)’ (1999), a new, thrill-based culture of travel emerged as a distinctly modern form of entertainment, consequently transforming the Georgian metropolis and its peripheries into perilous hippodromes. This paper explores the social and gendered implications of thrill-based cruising as entertainment, taking as its focal point the liberty that is afforded by the luxury of travel via carriage. Using selected works by authors Frances Burney and Jane Austen as contemporary references, this paper shall unpack what exactly this liberty entails, covering key ideas such as the perceived correlation between speed and status and/or masculinity; the driver’s inflated sense of autonomy and egocentricity as author of his own ecstatic velocity; and issues of morality that arise from the recreational use of a vehicle which, as early as 1630, had been associated with ‘knavery’ and libertinism since poet John Taylor’s scathing characterisation of coaches as ‘upstart Hell-carts’.

Gabriella Barnard-Edmunds is a doctoral student in the Department of English and the Centre for Eighteenth Century Studies at the University of York. Her project examines the social and material culture of the horse-drawn carriage in the late eighteenth century, with a particular interest in the carriage’s presentation in the works of authors such as the inimitable Jane Austen and her contemporaries.

Mary Chapman
University of Leeds

The “Noble Institution for the Insane”: late-Regency and early-Victorian visiting practices at Bethlem

During much of the Georgian era, the oldest asylum in England, Bethlem, opened its doors to visitors. Trips to the hospital were an extremely popular form of entertainment, and people of all classes came to view the mad. However, the cultural understanding of madness underwent a dramatic shift during the early 1800s, and this had a huge impact on the way in which asylums were run. Mary Chapman explores the changes in visitation practices at Bethlem that went hand in hand with the changes in public perception during this period. Using sources from Bethlem’s archive such as visitors’ logs and a Regency scrapbook, we can investigate the record left by those who came to see the asylum, whether to be entertained or to learn.

Mary Chapman completed an MA in Nineteenth-Century Studies at King’s College London in 2014, and is now a doctoral student at the University of Leeds. She is working on an interdisciplinary thesis which explores the impact of nineteenth century psychiatry on urban women, looking in particular at the transference of medical theories from a professional to a public context within literature. Her research interests focus on the Victorian period, and include women’s history and writing, the history of the mind sciences, urban culture and literature, and gothic fiction.

Helen Cowie

Lecturer in History, University of York

‘A disgusting exhibition of brutality’: animals, the law and the Warwick lion fight of 1825

On 26 July 1825, the quiet market town of Warwick was host to an extraordinary spectacle: a fight between a lion and six bulldogs. The event was organised by the showman George Wombwell, owner of a popular travelling menagerie. The lion was a handsome beast called Nero, born in captivity and widely esteemed ‘a beautiful and majestic animal’; the dogs were veteran fighters, known for their strength and ferocity. Around 500 people congregated to watch the combat, which, against expectations, ended in victory for the dogs.

This paper offers a detailed study of the Warwick lion fight, its reception and consequences. Noteworthy in itself for its drama and novelty, the lion bait was particularly significant on account of its timing, falling during an important decade for human-animal relations. When Wombwell first announced the contest, the rights of animals were becoming a matter for discussion. The House of Commons was debating a bill to ban popular blood sports, including bull and bear baiting; magistrates across Britain were grappling with the interpretation of existing laws on animal cruelty; and the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals was campaigning to stop a variety of abuses, from the whipping to death of pigs to the boiling alive of lobsters. In this climate, the lion fight assumed new importance, generating much debate in newspapers and periodicals. I use this material to explore contemporary attitudes towards animals in a period when their treatment was closely connected with issues of class, public decency and national identity.

Helen Cowie is lecturer in history at the University of York. Her research focuses on the history of animals and the history of natural history. She is author of *Conquering Nature in Spain and its Empire, 1750-1850* (Manchester University Press, 2011), *Exhibiting Animals in Nineteenth-Century Britain: Empathy, Education, Entertainment* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2014) and *Llama* (Reaktion Books, 2017).

Ivan Day

British and European culinary historian, scholar, broadcaster and writer

Keynote address

Crocants, Collops and Codsounds: fashions in dining and food in Georgian provincial towns and cities

This keynote address explores fashions in dining and food in Georgian provincial towns and cities. Citing records of actual meals, rather than the aspirational bills of fare offered in the printed cookery texts, Ivan Day will demonstrate how rapidly *à la mode* entertaining was taken up in provincial centres remote from London and the court.

Ivan Day has an international reputation for his research on British and European culinary history. As well as a scholar, broadcaster and writer, he is also a gifted professional cook and confectioner. He is noted particularly for his re-creations of meals and table settings. His work has been exhibited in many museums, including the Paul Getty Research Institute, Philadelphia Museum of Art, the Museum of London, Fairfax House, the Bowes Museum and the Rothschild Collection.

Katharine Hogg

Librarian of the Gerald Coke Handel Collection at the Foundling Museum, London

‘A very numerous Band of capital Musicians’: the rise of the provincial music festival in the late eighteenth century

The late eighteenth century saw the rise of the ‘music festival’ in England; the Handel Commemoration Festival in London in 1784 produced concerts on a scale not seen before, and major cities were quick to follow suit. The provincial festivals in major cities such as Birmingham (1768), Chester (1772), Norwich (1788), and York (1791), as well as the long-established Three Choirs Festival, brought large-scale performances to large-scale audiences, allowing the growing middle classes to access and take part in high quality musical performances, and establishing the ‘English choral tradition’ which flourishes today. The mix of sacred and secular concerts allowed performances in cathedrals as well as in concert halls, which grew in number during the century with the development of public concerts in general. The association of the Festivals with fundraising for charitable causes – notably local hospitals – generated interest and support from a wider public, and ensured that the Festival was an essential part of the social calendar for the affluent, as well as enabling a broader spectrum of the population to enjoy the performances.

Katharine Hogg is Librarian of the Gerald Coke Handel Collection at the Foundling Museum. She was previously Head Librarian at the Royal Academy of Music, and a freelance music library consultant for various digital projects including Cecilia, Ensemble and Music Libraries Online. She has contributed to publications and broadcasts on library digitisation, music librarianship and Handel scholarship, and has curated several exhibitions at the Foundling Museum. She was editor of the UK music library journal *Brio*, and is editor of the *Handbook for studies in 18th century English Music*.

Samantha Howard

Assistant Curator, Historic Royal Palaces

‘Rational recreation’: science as public spectacle in Georgian Britain

The eighteenth century saw the advent of the propagation of science as entertainment in more accessible venues in the form of public lectures in a variety of venues ranging from theatres to coffee houses. These technology-driven entertainments were often advertised as polite events for polite audiences, both male and female; science was even adapted for the home where scientific talk and demonstration supported by the right equipment for the polite edification of men and women, and the polite education of children. Indeed scientific apparatus were popular consumer goods of the period for both sexes, in particular optical instruments and devices were used for study and amusement from the palace to the street; microscopes, camera obscura and magic lanterns are recorded in the personal accounts of royal consorts, Queen Caroline, Princess Augusta and Queen Charlotte.

This paper will focus on the use of the magic lantern- an early form of image projector - to inform and entertain eighteenth-century audiences. As an optical device, the magic lantern did indeed have polite associations with instructive leisure pursuits, but not always - they were also deployed in more earthy and grand-scale populist entertainments. Using the rich evidence that can be gleaned about such entertainments from contemporary print culture, such as newspaper advertisements, instructional manuals and graphic satire, I will explore the ways in which tensions around class, gender and ‘knowledge’ emerging from contemporary perceptions of this form of ‘scientific’ public spectacle were expressed, thus reshaping our notions about the contexts of eighteenth-century entertainment.

Samantha Howard was a member of the team at the Fairfax House Museum in York, before joining the curatorial department at Historic Royal Palaces in 2014. She is now working with the senior curator at Kensington Palace on a major exhibition project in partnership with the Yale Center for British Art in New Haven, Connecticut. The exhibition – ENLIGHTENED PRINCESSES: Caroline, Augusta, Charlotte and the Shaping of the Modern World – explores the roles played by Queen Caroline, Princess Augusta and Queen Charlotte in the promotion of the arts and sciences in eighteenth-century Britain; it opens next year at the Center in New Haven in February before transferring to Kensington Palace in June 2017. She is a University of York alumna; she attained her MA in Eighteenth-Century Studies and her PhD in Art History. Her main research interests are eighteenth-century visual cultures; portraiture and graphic satire, Empire and British identities in the long eighteenth century.

Gillian Hughes

Visiting Scholar, University of Edinburgh

A spy on the pleasures of Edinburgh

In February 1810 the shepherd turned would-be literary man James Hogg (1770-1835) moved from the rural Scottish Borders to the capital city of Edinburgh, and a few months later began his own periodical entitled *The Spy: A Periodical Paper of Literary Amusement and Instruction*, which ran for a single year. Using the persona of the Spy, Hogg and his contributors provide an exceptionally full account of the city's pleasures, both polite and impolite, many of them focused around the terms of the law-courts and Edinburgh's dominant legal profession with the late summer and early autumn proving something of a cultural desert in the city.

Edinburgh is shown as a centre for every kind of education and self-education, its various institutions, societies, and charitable associations providing entertainment, but also anxiety about the lack of segregation between classes. Students, unconstrained by the English university collegiate system, are described as running at large over the streets, themselves contaminated by the presence of prostitutes and bawdy and profane ballad-singers. The buildings, activity, street-signs and carriages all serve to overpower and bewilder the country-dweller in Edinburgh, and anxiety is expressed over the waste of time of both sexes in an urban environment in which 'our youth walk about the streets all morning and are in a public place to which follows a *public* party at a *private* house each evening'. The Spy himself participates in this urban lack of accountability, uncertain of his role and even unstable in his physical appearance.

Gillian Hughes is currently an Honorary Research Fellow at the University of Edinburgh. Her publications include the biography *James Hogg: A Life* (2007) and she is the editor or co-editor of nine volumes of the Stirling/South Carolina Research Edition of the *Collected Works of James Hogg*, including the three-volume *Collected Letters of James Hogg* (2004-08) and *The Spy* (2000). Her edition of Stevenson's *Weir of Hermiston* for the New Edinburgh Edition of the Works of Robert Louis Stevenson will be published in 2017, for which series she is an Advisory Editor. She is also an Advising Editor for the multi-volume Edinburgh Edition of Walter Scott's Poetry, for which she is co-editing (with Peter Garside) a volume of Scott's shorter poems.

Philip Newton

York Museums Trust

Queering the Georgian city: examining the world of same sex desire and gender identity in the long eighteenth century

Between 1680 and 1830 people with same sex desires and mixed gender identities sought out ways to express them. The period had a mixture of liberties and oppressions against those who desired the more impolite pleasures of their nature. Georgian society was one of self expression in clear boundaries. However these pioneers were able to subvert them in order to apply their own identities and desires to their lives. From Molly houses to Macaronis, from lamp lighters to lesbian erotic literature, from cross-dressing pirates and blackmailing buggerers the Georgian city could be an outlet for many different pleasures be them polite or impolite. The capital had a vibrant culture of same sex desire and gender identities, if you knew where to look. The provinces had their own hidden world, harder to find, but still there and still as impolite. With these pleasures you could become famous, infamous, or most likely if you were not an aristocrat, hanged for all to see for breaking the boundaries of the polite Georgian society. This paper will examine the Georgian city through a queer lens to unmask a vibrant, colourful and thrilling world that has been forgotten by history.

Philip Newton is a curatorial professional and volunteers coordinator with York Museums Trust with an interest with Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Trans histories. He studied History at Northumbria University (2009) and Heritage Management at Newcastle University (2012). He is also working towards an Associateship of the Museum Association and is a freelance LGBT curator. Philip grew up in Teesside and now lives in York.

Murray Pittock

Bradley Professor of English Literature, University of Glasgow

Keynote address

Music, theatre, innovation and resistance: Edinburgh in the first age of Enlightenment

The focus on Georgian London as the primary – if not sole – location of innovative cultural change in the British Isles in recent studies and media coverage is arguably more reflective of the rising status of the capital in contemporary British economy and society than on the nature of the evidence alone. This is perhaps nowhere as clear as in the case of Britain's other national capital, Edinburgh. The population, commercial, mercantile and professional mix of Edinburgh society in the long eighteenth century reflected its history as the longstanding capital of an independent state, with a significantly different make up from other British cities. This was reflected not only in the Enlightenment, but in the recreations of Edinburgh society and the cosmopolitan influences on leisure and pleasure in the city. Using modern social science theory, this keynote lecture explores the diffusion of innovation in rest and recreation in early Georgian Edinburgh.

Murray Pittock is Bradley Professor of English Literature at the University of Glasgow.

Jennifer Wawrzinek

English Institute, Freie Universität, Berlin

Fanny Burney's animal pleasures

Fanny Burney's *Evelina* depicts an unruly and threatening animalistic passion as potentially damaging to the sociability upon which eighteenth-century English civil society was attempting to ground itself, and in distinct opposition to the excesses of the aristocratic Restoration court. The final scenes of the novel describe an encounter with a monkey who has been dressed up to imitate one of the characters in the salon where everyone is gathered, and who is introduced to the party with the result of chaos and violence. Yet the monkey scene is prefigured throughout the entire novel by a series of (often cruel) practical jokes by certain male characters at the expense of certain female characters, and by dangerous visits to the pleasure gardens and the pump room in which the novel's heroine, Evelina, becomes prey to the voracious sexual desires of the young men of the crowd. In this paper, I use Brian Massumi's notion of 'animal politics' in order to examine the permutations of sexual desire and animal play in Burney's *Evelina*. If, as Massumi argues, animal politics enables a field of modulated becomings as a productive site of transformation that is intrinsically posthuman, what do Burney's animal encounters allow and disallow in an era of political, religious, scientific and economic upheaval where mutual tolerance and understanding were seen as the key to social stability and order? As I will argue, for Burney, the animal encounters of sexual desire and the practical joke function as signs of a dangerous social instability in which women are easily the prey of men. For this reason, Burney throws the monkey out of the room in order to generate an idea of polite Georgian society, founded on friendship, equality and sensitivity to others.

Jennifer Wawrzinek is Junior Professor in British Romanticism at the English Institute, Freie Universität Berlin. She is the author of *Ambiguous Subjects: Dissolution and Metamorphosis in the Postmodern Sublime* (Rodopi 2008), as well as numerous articles on British Romanticism. She has been a British Academy Visiting Fellow (University of London, 2012) and an Australia Research Council Distinguished International Visitor to the History of Emotions Research Group (University of Melbourne, 2015). Her latest monograph is titled *Beyond Identity: Decreation and British Romanticism*.

Alison E. Wright

University of East Anglia/Tate Britain

‘An exhibition ought not to be like a menagerie’: animal paintings in high and low London art exhibitions from 1790 to the 1820s

In 1821, the *Literary Gazette* commented that the British Institution had too many animal paintings in its annual spring exhibition, and ‘an exhibition ought not to be like a menagerie’. The conflation of an elite art exhibition with the ‘lower’ entertainment of the animal show is striking, and highlights the unsteady contemporary status of animal painting – a flourishing but not very prestigious genre in late eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century Britain, and one which, despite the significant numbers of animal subjects exhibited, has also been paid little attention in the recent upsurge of academic interest in the Georgian exhibition scene. This paper will reconstruct the presence and effect of animal painting across London’s exhibition culture, from portraits of highly bred horses and dogs at the Royal Academy to spectacularly staged displays at popular commercial venues such as the Lyceum and Egyptian Hall, and aims to uncover the animal connections between these different kinds of shows, and examine the peculiar interplay of the sensory, the emotional and the aesthetic in the reception of the animal artwork. In particular, it will draw attention to the public’s apparent enthusiasm for naturalism and illusionism in animal painting, and to responses emphasising the ‘real’ presence of depicted animals, suggesting that it might be worth considering whether art exhibitions might indeed have something in common with the menagerie.

Alison E. Wright is a collaborative doctoral student at UEA and Tate Britain, researching British Sporting and Animal Art, 1760-1840. Prior to this she worked in the Department of Prints and Drawings at the British Museum, where she curated the touring exhibition *Curious Beasts: Animal Prints from the British Museum*. She has a long-term interest in the Georgian period and has also published on John Flaxman and Saartjie Baartman, the ‘Hottentot Venus’.