Digital Encyclopaedia of British Enlightenment Sociability

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Origins

  - University of Western Brittany (UBO Brest)
  - University of Paris 13
  - Nothumbria University and other partners.

- Research Collaboration Agreement University of Western Brittany/University of Paris 13 (2012–17) + extension of international partnership

- 2014–15: HIDISOC project: organisation of seminars and conferences

- GRISOL (Groupe de Recherche Interdisciplinaire sur la Sociabilité des Lumières): [https://grisol.hypotheses.org](https://grisol.hypotheses.org)

- Creation of the *Transversales* series (Le Manuscrit, Paris), edited by Annick Cossic (UBO): 6 volumes since 2012.
What is DIGITENS?

- Collaborative interdisciplinary project
- International research partnership
- Intersectoral cooperation
- Digital humanities project
Aims

- To explore and develop the scope of research into British Enlightenment sociability.
- To trace its historical foundations.
- To map sociability: people & networks, places & institutions, concepts & practices, objects.
- To publish the results in an open-access digital encyclopaedia featuring 200 entries and a complementary anthology of primary resources.
Why British Enlightenment sociability?

- Sociability

- British sociability:
  - to expand on the current state of the art
  - to take advantage of our partners’ research expertise
  - to explain the emergence of a British model of sociability

- Comparing European models

- Studying cross-cultural transfers

- 1660–1832: significant landmarks in the history of British sociability
First open-access digital encyclopaedia and anthology

Search engine

Keywords and related entries.

Hyperlinks to primary sources
An international and intersectoral consortium
Main academic partners
Non-academic partners

- I–def [http://www.i-def.fr]
- Bibliothèque Nationale de France
- The National Archives
- Musée Cognacq–Jay
si d’autre remette à cette mascarade épiquinique que l’esprit philosophe, qui, le principe, rebute enfin les mœurs des hommes, et qui prévient les oisifs du boeuf mal-entendu, enroge, il faut fur et tranche, qu’il soit purifié. Les lois et les peines ne contribuent pas des êtres ; la religion, non d’être pour elles un aliment et en poisson dans les cervelles infâmes. Ces maléfiques ont sans cesse prêtres d’Aod qui assassine le rois Egion ; de Judith qui coupe la tête d’Holopherne lui ; de Samuel qui hâche en morceaux le roi Agag ; du prince Ioud qui assassine de leurs cheveux, etc. Ce ne voient pas que ces égarements qui sont respec-
qté, sont abominables dans le temps et dans les temps. Le pouvoir leurs. Connaissant a qui les condamne. Les intérêts, encore une seconde fois, et chez qui les peines est au-dessus du dessein. Ne jugez pas, que répondez à un homme de plus de vingt ans, d’où qu’a

si en conséquence est sûre de mentir.
Bibliothèque Nationale de France
Paris

Histoire de ma vie. Tome IX
Giacomo Girolamo Casanova. Dux, 1789–1798
Coloured image of interior plan of the Theatre Royal, Drury Lane, built by Henry Holland in 1794

Musée Cognacq-Jay
Paris
Building the Digital Encyclopaedia

- Role of the editorial committee:
  - definition of guidelines
  - 5 categories of entries
  - selection of entry proposals
  - validation of related sources chosen by authors

- Role of I-def:
  - creation of keywords and databases
  - implementation of the digital platform
**EXCEPTIONS:**

**Entry title:** Cosmetics  
**Categories:** Object and Practice  
**Subject:** how cosmetics are used in society as well as their role as a sociable object/practice, how they are made, sold/advertised and bought and how they affect sociability practices

**Entry title:** Spa  
**Categories:** Practice and Place (Health and Travel)  
**Subject:** how central spas are to 18th-C sociability, how they are used, visited, who used them, their health benefits...

**Entry title:** Beau Nash  
**Category:** People (Celebrity)  
**Subject:** Beau Nash and his influence on sociability practices and networks

**Entry title:** Politeness  
**Category:** Concept and Practice  
**Subject:** as a social practice ‘the art of pleasing’, and as a concept in formal sociability
Website layout example

BEAUTY

KEYWORDS: cosmetics, sociability, body, skin, rouge, powder, beau monde, gender, class, social hierarchy, consumerism, hair, wigs, health, disease, consumption

DEFINITION: Various attempts to explain beauty and its affect on the senses throughout the long eighteenth century evidence a concern with its social significance, particularly concerning its influence and its role in questions of morality, sensibility and sociability. Between 1720 and 1760 there was a significant rise in the production of materials considering the subject of beauty, infiltrating the market across multiple platforms, from philosophical treatises and moral conduct manuals, art and poetry to critical satires.

FULL ENTRY: Between 1720 and 1760 there was a significant rise in the production of material considering the subject of beauty, infiltrating the market across multiple platforms, from philosophical treatises and moral conduct manuals, art and poetry to critical satires. Women were often the main focus of these discussions, but the various attempts to explain beauty and its affect on the senses evidences a concern with its social significance, particularly concerning its influence and its role in questions of morality, sensibility and sociability.

Identifying the features of a perfect physical beauty is somewhat simpler than identifying the moral values and stereotypes associated with the concept. As Ruth Klig points out, the standards of physical female beauty, with the exception of the changing trends in hair colour, have changed very little throughout history.

The preferred type of beauty is well known—long fair, curling hair, dark eyes, arched black eyebrows, white skin faintly tinged with pink. [...] these features most commonly praised belong to a convention that reaches back to the Greeks.

One celebrated beauty of the eighteenth century was Georgiana Cavendish, Duchess of Devonshire (link to Leigh’s entry), exhibiting all of the typical eighteenth-century qualities of ideal beauty: pale skin, rosy cheeks, red lips, dark eyes and brown, curling hair. But these trends and ideals were perpetuated by a society obsessed with understanding the impact of beauty and how it could be expressed. While it is easy to assume a collective agreement on what makes a person beautiful, explaining why they are beautiful is much more complex. When issues of virtue, morality, sensibility and behaviour are considered in terms of their relationship with physical attractiveness, particularly for women, beauty can be most readily understood through its social visibility.

With the rise of the bourgeoisie and the growing emphasis on taste and morality, women were seen as the ideal template of grace, beauty and social etiquette. This left the taboos somewhat turned in the definition of the sexes; men were still bestowed with greater reason, but women were acknowledged to be in possession of a greater sensibility, delicacy and, above all, beauty. Women were becoming more socially visible, leaving their role somewhat unstable: they began to face competing expectations with an increased emphasis on correct social conduct, domestic values and their physical perfection.

According to Edmund Burke in A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of Our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful, both sexes are capable of beauty, but the female of the greatest, which I believe will hardly be attributed to the superior exactness or proportion in the fair sex, [...] An air of robustness and strength is very prejudicial to beauty. An appearance of delicacy, and even of fragility, is almost essential to it [beauty]. The beauty of women is considerably owing to their weakness, and delicacy, and is even enhanced by their frigidity, a quality of mind analogous to (beauty).

In terms of sociability, women’s beauty become a public symbol of moral superiority and their increased sensibility. However, men wishing to adopt this social morality, particularly through the use of cosmetic products (link to possible entry on cosmetics), such as...

REFERENCES:
9. Asquith, id., The Long-Term Social Development of this Book, p. 279.
Future perspectives

- Set up a GIS (Groupe d’Intérêt Scientifique)/RIG (Research Interest Group)

- Integrate new partner institutions and experts in the field

- Apply to new regional, national, EU or international funding schemes