

## The Idols of the Eighteenth Century (Indiana Univ. – 11–15 May 2005)

VOLTAIRE

### "The Idols of the Eighteenth Century"

The Center for Eighteenth-Century Studies at Indiana University is pleased to announce the fourth Bloomington Eighteenth-Century Workshop, to be held on 11-14 May 2005 at Indiana University. The workshop is part of a series of annual interdisciplinary events that has been running since 2002, with 20-30 scholars presenting and discussing pre-circulated papers on a broad topic in a congenial setting.

Our topic for 2005 is "Custom, Ritual, Habit, Fetish: The Idols of the Eighteenth Century." Religious ritual, pagan fetishes, the customs of the unwashed, the habits of the unlettered: these were the idols eighteenth-century men and women sought to cleanse from human society and culture, at times by force of conquest. Even so, it was precisely in this period that the very modes of description observers developed to represent others, they turned back on themselves, making custom, habit, and ritual into crucial elements of social and mental life. In so doing, they raised a host of questions about everyday life in the domestic sphere, habit in the operations of the mind, custom and tradition as the essence of nations, and ritual as a structure of religious belief, among others.

Papers might address questions such as:

- What drove this eighteenth-century obsession with custom and ritual?
- How are the categories of ritual, habit, custom, and fetish produced in the first place, in ethnology, travel writing, and so on?
- How is the eighteenth-century concern with ritual and custom distinct from that of earlier and later centuries? or is it?
- What habits and rituals are identified as central for society and sociability?
- How do habit, custom, ritual, and fetish shape social and cultural experience?

- How did representations of custom and habit inflect notions of popular culture and class?
- Under what circumstances does custom become resistance?
- What happens when these categories cease to be fixed and travel between cultures?
- How are notions of the fetish integrated into ethnographies of consumer society and even into accounts of aesthetic response?
- In what ways do ritualistic practices persist within discourses such as pedagogy and gender formation?
- What rituals or customs are invented for utopian societies, and why?
- To what extent did the formation of the disciplines influence these descriptions and their value?

The workshop format, which has proven to be extraordinarily fruitful, will consist of intense discussion of 4-6 pre-circulated papers a day, amidst socializing and refreshment. The workshop will draw both on the wide community of eighteenth-century scholars and on the large and growing group of scholars in this field at Indiana University-Bloomington. Papers will be selected by an interdisciplinary committee. The workshop will cover most expenses of those scholars chosen to present their work: accommodations, travel (up to a certain limit) and most meals.

We are asking for applications to be submitted by the 4th of January 2005. The application consists of a two-page description of the proposed paper as well as a current CV. Please email or send your application to Dr. Barbara Truesdell, Ashton-Aley West, Room 264, Bloomington, IN 47405, Telephone 812-855-2856, email [voltaire@indiana.edu](mailto:voltaire@indiana.edu). For further information check our website, <http://www.indiana.edu/~voltaire/cfp05.html>, or contact Dror Wahrman, Dept. of History, e-mail [dwahrman@indiana.edu](mailto:dwahrman@indiana.edu).

Reference:

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