

MARK G. SPENCER, ed., *The Bloomsbury Encyclopedia of the American Enlightenment* (New York: Bloomsbury Academic, 2015), 2 vols., xxxvi + 1215 pp.

As to its scope, substance, and usability, this new reference work deserves nothing but praise. Interdisciplinary in perspective and over ten years in the making, *The Bloomsbury Encyclopedia* offers no fewer than 519 entries by 370 authors from sixteen countries on four continents¹—an awe-inspiring achievement by Mark Spencer, a historian at Brock University in Canada, who edited and coordinated this megaproject. Of the 519 entries in the encyclopedia's two hardcover volumes, 360 (almost 70 percent) are biographical, with considerable space being devoted to such leading figures as John Adams, Jonathan Edwards, Benjamin Franklin, Alexander Hamilton, Thomas Jefferson, James Madison, Thomas Paine, David Ramsay, David Rittenhouse, Benjamin Rush, George Washington, and John Witherspoon, but fortunately also including articles on "lesser lights of the American Enlightenment" (xxxii), such as the botanist Jane Colden. The remaining 159 entries (about 30 percent) are thematic, covering a broad spectrum of topics in fields as diverse as politics, religion, philosophy, education, literature, music, painting, architecture, philanthropy, geography, medicine, agriculture, science, or technology (cf. xxxiii–xxxiv). Taken together, these entries form a comprehensive source of reference and a welcome addition to the monographs, anthologies, journals, and electronic databases that have traditionally been used to study or teach the period between roughly 1720 and 1820.²

¹ The authors, mainly historians, hail from "Australia, Canada, England, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Ireland, Israel, Italy, the Netherlands, New Zealand, Scotland, South Korea, Taiwan, and the United States" (x). For the contributions of the encyclopedia's four German authors (Martin Brückner, University of Delaware; Patrick M. Erben, University of West Georgia; Fritz Fleischmann, Babson College; and Frank Kelleter, University of Göttingen), see entries on "Calvinism" (Kelleter); "Evans, Lewis (c. 1700-56)" (Brückner); "Germany and the American Enlightenment" (Erben); and "Neal, John (1793-1876)" (Fleischmann).

² For monographs, see, inter alia, Gay, *The Enlightenment: An Interpretation* (1966/69);

As to thematic inclusiveness, conceptual depth, and theoretical topicality, there are some caveats however. Although one might argue that a project of such magnitude, by necessity, must be incomplete, which is true enough, some of the absences in *The Bloomsbury Encyclopedia* clearly have deeper structural causes. That one looks in vain for biographical entries on Richard Allen, Quobna Ottobah Cugoana, James Albert Ukawsaw Gronniosaw, Briton Hammon, Lemuel Haynes, John Marrant, Ignatius Sancho, Venture Smith, or David Walker, for instance—African American and Afro-British writers³ presented and discussed in seminal collections such as *Black Atlantic Writers of the Eighteenth Cen-*

May, *The Enlightenment in America* (1976); Commager, *The Empire of Reason: How Europe Imagined and America Realized the Enlightenment* (1977); Kindermann, *Man Unknown to Himself: Kritische Reflexion der amerikanischen Aufklärung: Crèvecœur—Benjamin Rush—Charles Brockden Brown* (1993); Richard, *The Founders and the Classics: Greece, Rome, and the American Enlightenment* (1994); Ferguson, *The American Enlightenment, 1750-1820* (1997); Shields, *Civil Tongues and Polite Letters in British America* (1997); Kelleter, *Amerikanische Aufklärung: Sprachen der Rationalität im Zeitalter der Revolution* (2002); and Himmelstorf, *The Roads to Modernity: The British, French, and American Enlightenments* (2004). For anthologies, see Kramnick, ed., *The Portable Enlightenment Reader* (1995). For journals, see, e.g., *Early American Literature*; *Early American Studies*; *The Eighteenth Century*; *Eighteenth-Century Life*; *Eighteenth-Century Studies*; *Journal of American History*; *Journal of Early American History*; *Journal of the Early Republic*; *Journal of the History of Ideas*; *Literature in the Early American Republic*; as well as *William and Mary Quarterly*. For online databases, see *America: History and Life*; *American Antiquarian Society Historical Periodicals Collection / Series I*; *Early American Imprints, Series I: Evans, 1639-1800*; *Early American Imprints, Series II: Shaw / Shoemaker, 1801-19*; *Eighteenth Century Collections Online*; and *Eighteenth Century Journals / ECJI & II*.

³ A seminal Native American voice for whom the editor, for inconceivable reasons, has not assigned a separate entry is the Mohegan preacher Samson Occom (1723-92).

ture (ed. Potkay and Burr] 1995), *Unchained Voices* (ed. Carretta] 1996), or *Genius in Bondage* (ed. Carretta and Gould] 2001), some of them mentioned in John Saillant's article on "African Americans" (22-30)—can be traced directly to the lack of a thematic and conceptual entry on the "black Atlantic," a key paradigm of cultural analysis in American studies, introduced by Paul Gilroy in *The Black Atlantic: Modernity and Double Consciousness* (1993). Analogously, the neglect of the "red Atlantic"—explored in *Between the Devil and the Deep Blue Sea: Merchant Seamen, Pirates, and the Anglo-American Maritime World, 1700-50* (1987) by Marcus Rediker and *The Many-Headed Hydra* (2000) by Linebaugh and Rediker—helps to explain the absence of a single entry on a topic as relevant as "piracy."⁴

Of the many concepts alluded to by individual contributors but not deemed worthy of separate entries in the encyclopedia's text and index, although they would have enabled the reader to better see the structural correlations between individual articles, as for example "cosmopolitanism" or "public sphere," the most serious absence may well be that of "performance," a concept that, as Joseph Roach has demonstrated in *Cities of the Dead: Circum-Atlantic Performance* (1996), connects the Atlanticist paradigm with what Shelley Fisher Fishkin has famously called "the transnational turn."⁵ The decision to ignore a category that plays such a prominent role in current American Studies⁶ is all the

more regrettable because, by illuminating the cultural hybridity and inherent transnationalism of the age of Enlightenment, the concept of performance, or performativity, has had a major share in rekindling our interest in the investigation of the long eighteenth century.

Other absences seem to be due to the preponderance of historians in the making of this long-awaited project. From a literary point of view, for example, it is hard to understand why diaries, captivities, criminal narratives, novels, or the Gothic—genres and traditions so important in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries—have not been portrayed in separate articles. The same applies to belles lettres and manuscript culture—forms of literary engagement that were constitutive of the era's republic of letters. In view of the fact that controversies about the effects of novel reading all but dominated the latter part of the period under examination, novels at least, instead of being treated cursorily in Seavey's survey essay on "Literature," would have deserved an entry as comprehensive as Neuman's article on "Sermons." Compared to such omissions, mitigated by generally informative essays on "Almanacs," "Autobiography," "Correspondence," "Journalism," "Journals and Magazines," "Newspapers," "Poetry," "Print Culture," "Publishing," "Reading," "Theater" and "Travel Writing," missing biographical entries on early American novelists as significant as Hannah Webster Foster, Gilbert Imlay, Rebecca Rush, or Tabitha Tenney appear almost secondary.

The most striking discovery, however, on perusing this new encyclopedia may well be the invisibility of sexual matters. There is no survey article on "sexuality," nor are there entries on, or references in the index to, subjects such as "cross-dressing," "erotica," "homoeroticism," "midwifery," "pornography," "prostitution," or "sexual violence." In lieu of entries informed by approaches developed in feminist criticism, gender studies, men and masculinities, queer theory, or the history

⁴ For a survey of the rise of Atlantic Studies and the academic debates about different "Atlantics," see Klaus H. Schmidt, Rev. of *The Creation of the British Atlantic World*, edited by Elizabeth Mancke and Carole Shammas (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins UP, 2005), *Amerikastudien / American Studies* 51 (2006): 621-26.

⁵ See Shelley Fisher Fishkin, "Crossroads of Cultures: The Transnational Turn in American Studies—Presidential Address to the American Studies Association, November 12, 2004," *American Quarterly* 57 (2005): 17-57.

⁶ For the enormous significance of performance as a heuristic category in today's Early American Studies, see "Special Section: Performance Studies in the Early Americas," *Early American Literature* 51.1 (2016): 179-205. For a recent call for an integration of performance theory into the field of transnational American Studies, see Birgit M. Bauridl and

Pia Wiegink, "Toward an Integrative Model of Performance in Transnational American Studies," *Amerikastudien / American Studies* 60.1 (2015): 157-68. For a monograph decisive in triggering "the performative turn" in the study of early American culture, see Jay Fliegelman, *Declaring Independence: Jefferson, Natural Language, and the Culture of Performance* (1993).

of sexuality—entries on, say, “femininity,” “masculinity,” or “gender”—there is a survey essay on “Women.” For an encyclopedia on a period in which luminaries, like William Byrd or Benjamin Franklin, wrote freely about things sexual; European and oriental erotica, like John Cleland’s *Memoirs of a Woman of Pleasure* (better known as *Fanny Hill*, 1749), French libertine novels, or the *Arabian Nights*, were imported, circulated, and reprinted on a regular basis; and medical books, like *Aristotle’s Masterpiece*, “served as a kind of ‘ersatz’ for hard-core pornography,”⁷ this omission is astonishing indeed. The absence of a subject as central as sexuality turns out to be a real weakness in light of the vast amount of new scholarship published since Merrill D. Smith’s *Sex and Sexuality in Early America* (1998), with queer studies inspired histories of early American sexualities, such as Godbeer’s *Sexual Revolution in Early America* (2002), Lyons’s *Sex Among the Rabble* (2006), or Foster’s *Long Before Stonewall* (2007), and special issues of renowned journals⁸ greatly

expanding our knowledge about the erotic diversity, sexual playfulness, and transgressive radicality of Enlightenment culture.

These caveats aside, Spencer’s *Bloomsbury Encyclopedia* is a much-needed tool for the unraveling of arguably the most complex period in American cultural history. Meticulously edited and available in both print and electronic formats, it provides us with a wealth of information on a vast array of topics and subjects, presented in categories ranging from biographies, documents, and events to institutions, fields of inquiry, and concepts. Among the many strengths of this immensely helpful new resource are its comprehensive treatment of religion and its truly transnational perspective.⁹ Encouraging “further exploration into the causes, nature, and consequences of the American Enlightenment” (xxxvi), this impressive reference work is a compelling invitation to immerse ourselves in the highways and byways of a circumatlantic phenomenon eventually leading a world in flux into what we now call modernity.

⁷ Peter Wagner, *Eros Revived: Erotica of the Enlightenment in England and America* (London: Secker and Warburg, 1988) 292-302; quote on 295; for a more extensive treatment, see Wagner, “Eros Goes West: European and ‘Homespun’ Erotica in Eighteenth-Century America,” *The Transit of Civilization from Europe to America: Essays in Honor of Hans Galinsky*, ed. Winfried Herget and Karl Ortseifen (Tübingen: Narr, 1986) 145-64. For Benjamin Franklin, see Wagner, *Eros Revived* 299-301. For William Byrd, see Richard Godbeer, “William Byrd’s ‘Flourish’: The Sexual Cosmos of a Southern Planter,” *Sex and Sexuality in Early America*, ed. Merrill D. Smith (1998. New York: New York UP, 2003) 135-62, and Wagner, *Eros Revived* 297-99. For a detailed analysis of *Aristotle’s Masterpiece*, see Vern L. Bullough, “An Early American Sex Manual, or, Aristotle Who?,” *Early American Literature* 7.3 (1973): 236-46; see also Mary E. Fissell, “Hairy Women and Naked Truths: Gender and the Politics of Knowledge in *Aristotle’s Masterpiece*,” *William and Mary Quarterly* 60.1 (2003): 43-74. For pornography and the early American book market, see Cathy N. Davidson, *Revolution and the Word: The Rise of the Novel in America* (New York: Oxford UP, 1986) 88-89.

⁸ See Sharon Block and Kathleen M. Brown, guest eds., *Sexuality in Early Ameri-*

Klaus H. Schmidt (Mainz/Germersheim)

ca, spec. issue of *William and Mary Quarterly* 60.1 (2003). See also Renée Bergland, “Looking Back: Scholarship in Early American Sex,” *American Literary History* 17.1 (2005): 148-59. For more recent publications, see, inter alia, Mark E. Kann, *Taming Passion for the Public Good: Policing Sex in the Early Republic* (2012); Thomas Foster, “Reconsidering Libertines and Early Modern Heterosexuality: Sex and American Founder Gouverneur Morris,” *Journal of the History of Sexuality* 22.1 (2013): 65-84; Doron S. Ben-Atar and Richard D. Brown, *Taming Lust: Crimes Against Nature in the Early Republic* (2014); as well as Jason Shaffer, “The Arts of War and Peace: Theatricality and Sexuality in the Early Republic,” *Journal of the Early Republic* 35.2 (2015): 279-85.

⁹ In this context, see the well-written entries on “the American Enlightenment’s connections with Canada, the Dutch Republic, England, France, Germany, Ireland, Latin America, Russia, and Scotland” (xxxiv). For a new anthology that has the potential to serve as a useful companion piece, see Oliver Scheiding and Martin Seidl, eds., *Worlding America: A Transnational Anthology of Short Narratives before 1800* (Stanford: Stanford UP, 2015).