News Letter

“Ignorance in other men may be censured as idleness, in an academick it must be abhorred as treachery.” (The concluding sentence of “On the Character and Study of an Academick”) 

I look forwarding to seeing all of you in Columbus for the April meeting of our society. David Brewer has lined up a splendid program, as you will see below. At the end of this News Letter you will find a registration form for the meeting, which should be filled out and sent to David by March 7, along with a check for registration and meals. Note that we are also asking you to enclose a separate check for the Society dues, which continue to be inflation-proof.

Editor’s Column: Online Tools You May Not Know About

Members of our society are probably familiar with the English Short Title Catalogue (http://estc.bl.uk) and its many uses, but they may not know about the Universal Short Title Catalogue (USTC; http://ustc.ac.uk). The USTC is a database for books printed in Europe from the beginning of printing through the end of the sixteenth century. The records in this database direct you to where original copies of the books may be found, and in some instances, where open-access digital copies may be viewed and downloaded. Without only a little effort, I was able to download copies of a 1511 edition of Erasmus’ Moriae encomium and a 1532 edition of Rabelais’ Gargantua. The USTC intends to expand its coverage into the seventeenth century, and so it looks to be a resource well worth exploring now and in the near future. Happy hunting!

Here is a wide-ranging cultural report from Howard Weinbrot that I could not fit into the Fall News Letter:

Some Play, Some Music, Some Books

Most of us know, and a few of us have seen George Farquhar’s The Beaux’s Stratagem. Farquhar wrote it while ill, saw it open on March 8, 1707, but sadly died on April 29th. It deservedly was a great hit and often finds its way into regional and university theaters, as it does not in New York’s larger venue. Apparently it was produced in that city once in each century: 1751, 1843, and 1928. Fortunately, it had and has friends among adapters who hope to remedy that error. Thornton Wilder began his own version of The Beaux’s Stratagem in October and November of
1739 with, as Wilder said, “lots that Farquhar never tho’t of, and whole new twists to the plot.” By December, however, he lost interest in the *Beaux* in favor of what would be *The Skin of our Teeth*, which won the Pulitzer Prize for drama in 1943. As the fates had it, in 2000 Wilder’s nephew and literary executor Tappan Wilder rediscovered the half-finished manuscript at the Beinecke Library, regularly burst out laughing, and received stern scoldings by a more earnest scholar at work on medieval illuminated manuscripts. Not to be daunted by Dr. Fuddydudd, young Wilder met and contacted the playwright Ken Ludwig, who both studied and borrowed from Restoration-era comedy. Ludwig was delighted with the portions he read, appropriately pruned and polished, added about half again, and came up with a Wilder-Ludwig adaptation well worth seeing and laughing with.

Farquhar’s play is meticulously ordered by means of houses and the actions therein. The action moves from Boniface’s felonious inn, seat of good faces and bad hearts, to Lady Bountiful’s home, seat of physical curing. She is “An old civil Country Gentlewoman that cures all her Neighbours of all Distempers and foolishly fond of her Son Sullen.” She represents the solid and virtuous country, but still lacks the judgment to control her son or to help her daughter. Wilder-Ludwig drop Gibbet and Count Belair from the Inn and Gipsy from Lady Bountiful’s home. More importantly, they turn Lady Bountiful’s benevolent doctoring into comic, nearly sadistic, quackery. Her management of medicine is about as good—that is, quite bad—as her management of her family, and she thinks it quite jolly to amputate a leg here and an arm there. In the end of course Archer, Aimwell, Mrs. Sullen, and Dorinda remain about as they are in Farquhar’s play; but Lady Bountiful is the prize with whom Baron Frankenstein would have been glad to have studied.

I suspect that most of us think of England’s great eighteenth-century composer as either George Frederick Handel or Georg Friedrich Haendel. How about Giorgio Federico? Recently two major groups have attended to the young Italian influenced Handel. On June 11, the Academy of Ancient Music performed an evening of Italian baroque at London’s Wigmore Hall. Scarlatti and Correlli filled most of the first half of the program before the main event, Handel’s 1707 *Clori, Tirsi e Fileno*, which “il caro Sassone” (the dear Saxon) wrote while in service to the Marquis Francesco Maria Russoli. Rudolf Ewerhart discovered the complete score in 1960 in Münster’s Santini Collection. The comic plot of course is silly, but the music and the AAM’s performers, in concert not in costume, were stunning: sopranos Sophie Junker, Lucy Crowe, and Charlotte Hellekant (mezzo). The shepherds Tirsi and Fileno woo their beloved shepherdess Clori, who when not near the man she loves, loves the man she is near. In Act I she agrees to marry Fileno. In act II she agrees to marry Tirsi. The shepherds are wise enough not to squabble, and so let Clori choose one of them, which she cannot do because she loves them both. Or whomever. Friendship rather than love wins the day.

Not to be outdone, in June as well the Boston Early Music Festival performed Handel’s first opera *Almira* (1705), written when Handel was 19. Heidi Waleson, *Wall Street Journal* June 18, gives the plot:

The young composer took a convoluted German and Italian libretto—a farrago of love complicated by ambition, misunderstanding, rank and concealed identity—and wrote music that holds it own next to the great works of his mature years. The opera is a
wonderful amalgam of comedy and seriousness, with crowd-pleasing ensembles and dance numbers.

Almira, the Queen of Castille, is instructed by her father’s will to marry a son of her guardian, Consalvo, but she is in love with her secretary Fernando, who is a commoner and therefore off limits. Osman, Consalvo’s son, is having a romance with Edilia, a princess, but wants the power that would come with marrying Almira. Raymondo, a king from Mauretania, arrives in disguise with his own marriage aspirations. Bellante, another princess, is in love with Osman. Everything works out for the best—eventually.

Ms Waleson goes on to praise the singing, especially Amanda Forsythe, the sets, the costumes, and the “superb BEMF Orchestra, lead by violinist Robert Mealy,” and just about anything associated with the group and the opera—four hours of “a constant delight of anticipation, as one wondered what they would all do next.” So did Clori in another Handelian context. Meraviglioso per Giorgio. Wunderbar für Georg. Great for George.

Yes, a few relevant books were published amidst this cornucopia of culture. As many of you will have heard, Lord Grantham took about an hour to read a chapter of Howard Weinbrot’s *Literature, Religion, and the Evolution of Culture 1660-1780* to the staff of Downton Abbey. Sales took off and now have reached about 500,000, making J. K. Rowling huffy about being replaced on the Amazon A List. If you are skeptical of that story, you may want to look at Iaian McDaniel’s *Adam Ferguson in the Scottish Enlightenment* (Harvard, 2013). Ferguson was the chaplain to the Scottish 42nd regiment that performed so well at the British defeat in the battle of Fontenoy in 1745, and indeed covered the Duke of Cumberland’s retreat. His later major works included the *Essay on the History of Civil Society* (1767), and the *History of the Progress and Termination of the Roman Republic* (1783). The first text studies civilization’s rise from barbarity, often guided by wealth, commerce, and loyalty to basic communal values. The Roman text suggests how those best values contributed to Rome’s triumph and how its abandonment of the values contributed to its collapse. In much of Ferguson’s work, as in his life, martial virtues contribute to the cement of a thriving culture. Wealth and commerce are valuable civilizing forces, but they also have their downside—public credit, as with the Bank of England, apparent national self-interest, and the consequent subjugation of traditional values to wealth and material acquisition would lead to despotism and moral collapse. Ferguson’s politics and, loosely, sociological approach are nostalgic rather than “progressive.”

D. G. Hart’s *Calvinism: A History* (Yale, 2013) is not about predestination or Article 17 of the Thirty-Nine Articles of the Church of England. Practically speaking, it is a history of how successful reformed Protestantism was based upon two major concepts: the only authority for religious action, or inaction, is the written word of the Bible; and the church best prospers when it is distinct from the state, that is, becomes Erastian. This was a long and often painful process but, Hart argues, is alive, well, and theologically prosperous in much of the world.

Pete Brown’s often chatty *Shakespeare’s Pub* (St. Martin’s, 2013) chronicles the history of what claims to be the oldest pub in London, the George Inn, on Borough Street in Southwark. This medieval structure is London’s only surviving galleryed coaching inn, was mentioned in Dickens’ *Little Dorrit*, was rebuilt in 1676, and now is managed by the National Trust. The George also was relatively near the awful Marshalsea debtors’ prison. Brown includes a relevant
anecdote regarding the young M.P. Edward Digby (1730-1757). On Christmas and Easter Digby would change his fashionable clothing for a shabby blue coat and disappear into the depths of London. His concerned uncle had agents follow him to the Marshalsea, where the guard said yes, they knew the man in the blue coat: “but he is not a man, he is an angel.” On Christmas and Easter Digby would visit the prison, pay some prisoners’ debts, and invite the free men for dinner at the George. Whether benign myth or history, the tale has attached itself to the George and gives Johnsonians a reason other than the Thrales to visit Southwark.

And now, courtesy of David Brewer, the crucial details for the Columbus meeting:

Hotel Reservations

A block of rooms has been reserved for April 3, 4, and 5 at The Blackwell, a quite nice hotel on the Ohio State campus that’s within walking distance of all conference activities, except for the optional Saturday evening party at the house of Sandra Macpherson. The rooms (all of which have king-size beds) are $133/per night, plus tax and valet parking (should you wish the latter; there is also a self-park option). Check in is at 3 pm, and check out is at noon. To reserve a room at the conference rate, please contact The Blackwell at 614-247-4000 or 866-247-4003 by Tuesday, 4 March 2014 and identify yourself as part of the Johnson Society of the Central Region conference.

The Blackwell is located at 2110 Tuttle Park Place, Columbus, Ohio 43210. It’s just south of Lane Avenue and quite close to State Route 315 (which connects to all the major highways coming into Columbus). You can find additional information about The Blackwell at http://www.theblackwell.com.

Transportation and Parking

If you want to use The Blackwell’s valet parking, it is $15/overnight with unlimited in and out privileges. If you want to use the self-park in the Lane Avenue Parking Garage (just north of the hotel), it is $10/day [$2/hour for the first three hours, then $1/additional hour up to a maximum of $10] without any in or out privileges—i.e., if you leave and return, the meter starts anew.

The Blackwell offers transportation to and from the airport, but it needs to be arranged in advance.

If you are flying into Columbus and would like to avoid renting a car, please let David Brewer (brewer.126@osu.edu; 614-603-9549) know. Columbus is a sprawling city in which a car can be quite useful, but between the local talent and the attendees who will be driving here, we can probably arrange rides (to and from the airport, to any dinners you arrange on your own, to the party on Saturday night at Sandra Macpherson’s house) for all who need them.
Registration

The registration fee will be $40 and will cover coffee, tea, and bottled water throughout the conference, snacks during the talks, and a reception on the evening of Friday, 4 April.

There are also two meals that we’ve arranged for the conference for an additional fee:

A dinner on the evening of Friday, April 4 (after the reception). This will be at The Blackwell and will cost $44. The menu includes grilled beef sirloin, pan roasted mahi mahi, and grilled vegetable ravioli, along with soup, salads, side vegetables, desserts, and wine.

A lunch on Saturday, April 5 (right before our guest speaker). This will be in the Thompson Library and will cost $25. The menu includes Tuscan chicken [with artichokes, sundried tomatoes, olive tapenade, and parmesan], boneless braised beef short ribs, and grilled vegetable ravioli [a different vegetable ravioli than the one included in the Friday dinner], along with side vegetables and dessert.

The conference fee, along with payment for whichever meals you select (we certainly hope you’ll join us for both) should be paid with a check made out to The Ohio State University and sent to the attention of Professor David A. Brewer, Dept. of English, The Ohio State University, 164 W. 17th Ave., Columbus, OH 43210-1370. The deadline for receipt of your conference and meal fees is **Friday, 7 March 2014**.

Please enclose a separate check (in the same envelope) for $3 made out to the Johnson Society of the Central Region to cover your annual dues.

The conference will begin on Friday, April 4, just after noon in Denney Hall, Room 311. Denney Hall is located at 164 W. 17th Ave., just west of College Road. It is about one-half mile southeast from The Blackwell. For a handy map of the Ohio State campus, go to: [http://www.osu.edu/map/pdf/map.pdf](http://www.osu.edu/map/pdf/map.pdf). You will find The Blackwell at G5 on the grid, just northeast of the football stadium. Denney Hall is at H6 on the grid.
Program for the 2014 Meeting of the Johnson Society of the Central Region

FRIDAY, APRIL 4:
12:30-1:15 pm (Denney 311): Emily M. Friedman (Auburn University), “Considering Johnson’s ‘Nose of the Mind’”
1:15-2:00: Manushag N. Powell (Purdue University), “Mid-Century Periodical Writing and the Legacy of Eliza Haywood”
2:00-2:15: coffee break
2:15-3:00: Jesse Molesworth (Indiana University), “Queer Temporality: Tristram Shandy”
3:00-3:45: Wolfram Schmidgen (Washington University in St. Louis), “Locke vs. Stillingfleet: Class, Print, and the Style of Anti-Essentialism”
4:00-5:00: hands-on exploration of Ohio State’s eighteenth-century holdings (Rare Books and Manuscripts Library—Thompson Library 105)
5:00-6:30: reception (Mortar Board Room—Thompson Library 202)
7:00 on: dinner (The Blackwell)

SATURDAY, APRIL 5:
9:00-9:45 am (Denney 311): Nicholas Seager (Keele University), “An Account of the Afterlife of Mr. Richard Savage”
9:45-10:30: David Francis Taylor (University of Toronto), “Gulliver’s Adventures in Caricature”
10:30-10:45: coffee break
12:15-12:30 pm: coffee break
12:30-1:15: Matthew J. Kinservik (University of Delaware), “‘The English Aristophanes’: Fielding, Foote, and Debates over Literary Satire”
1:30-2:29: lunch (Multi-Purpose Room—Thompson Library 165)
2:29-2:30: business meeting
2:30-3:30: Guest Speaker: Eve Tavor Bannet (University of Oklahoma), “Guides to Study for Idlers”

Dinner on your own

8:00pm on: drinks and dessert at Sandra Macpherson’s house (239 E. Torrence Rd, Columbus 43214)
Registration for the 2014 Meeting of the Johnson Society of the Central Region

The Ohio State University, Columbus, Ohio
April 4-5

Name:

Affiliation:

Email address:

Telephone number (ideally, a cell):

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Please circle which meals you will be joining us for and send a check for the total made out to The Ohio State University, attn: Professor David A. Brewer, Dept. of English, The Ohio State University, 164 W. 17th Ave., Columbus, OH 43210-1370. The deadline for receipt of your registration is Friday, March 7.

Registration fee: $40.00

Dinner (optional) on April 4: $44.00

Lunch (optional) on April 5: $25.00

please check this box if you’d like the vegetarian option for the lunch:

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TOTAL

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Please enclose a separate check for $3.00 made out to the Johnson Society of the Central Region to cover your annual dues (still at their 1959 levels).

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Should you have any questions, please don’t hesitate to contact David Brewer at brewer.126@osu.edu or 614/603-9549.
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