

## Please, Come In!

REBECCA L. SPANG

I'm Rebecca Spang and as the Director of the Indiana Center for Eighteenth-Century Studies it is my pleasure to welcome you to this, our thirteenth workshop: the Hospitality Workshop. Or perhaps I should say instead that it is *you* who have a *right* to be welcomed here and that doing so is for us a duty and a sacred responsibility? And perhaps you will reply that commercial hospitality is hardly hospitable at all, that it is only because we have been corrupted by luxury and commerce that we lodge you at the Grant Street Inn and serve you Starbucks coffee.

In short, while making a few welcoming comments at the start of this conference initially seemed simplicity itself, reading the assembled papers and related materials has complicated matters (at least in my mind). After all, by welcoming you, we become implicated in whatever plots you may be hatching (be they against Jean-Jacques Rousseau or only against George II);<sup>1</sup> we open the possibility of having our gifts misrecognized as foolish bargain-basement deals; and we run the risk that you will all go away remembering the rainy weather and poor accommodation more clearly than you do any of our conversations.

So lest we all become our own Dr. Stupicz's,<sup>2</sup> I want to take just a few minutes here—without, I hope overstaying my welcome—to lay out what I already see as a few key intellectual issues for the next few days. The first is what I have come to think of as the “pineapple” problem. In other words: hospitality's intelligibility or unintelligibility. I think of it as the pineapple problem because when I was doing the various graphics for this workshop, it seemed self evident *to me* that pineapples would feature prominently. As our materials circulated, however, I found that while some colleagues “knew” that the pineapple symbolizes hospitality, others made no such association between the two terms. For them, my reference to U.S. colonial architectural and decorating motifs instead “said” exoticism; perhaps some of them, well versed in Ligon's *History of Barbados*, thought the pineapple—that “king of fruit” with its crown of leaves—was meant to evoke a royal culture of hospitality; maybe others, knowing that Christopher Wren used pineapple finials on many of the churches he designed, thought it signified the long association between religion and hospitality (Hogarth was so taken with the beauty of the pineapple's form that he recommended using it atop Saint Paul's Cathedral as well). So, in short, I thought by featuring it that we were being hospitable but others may have seen us as colonizing (or colonized) or religious (or sacrilegious). Hospitality requires some degree of difference—in any given hospitable encounter, host and guest do not play the same roles—but also enough same-ness for understanding.

The second issue relates closely to the pineapple problem but while the first might be considered a question of content the second is one of form, genre, or mode. As we did some background reading for this workshop, I was struck by the suggestion—in Judith Still's *Enlightenment Hospitality* and, in a different form, in David Simpson's *Romanti-*

---

<sup>1</sup> See the abstracts by Jimmy Casas Klausen and Dana Rabin in this volume.

<sup>2</sup> See the abstract by Heather Morrison and the discussion of her paper in this volume.

*cism and the Problem of the Stranger*—that hospitality might be not a topic to study so much as it is a way of encountering each other and encountering texts. A mode of reading that may have something in common with what Michel Chaouli has called pre-critical criticism (others have called it “post-critical”—among literature scholars, the question I believe is also the one of “just reading” [a reading that is fair and just, but that is also *just* reading]) whereas the nearest equivalent among historians may be the calls occasionally made for a “new empiricism.” So perhaps hospitality’s major contribution to Eighteenth-Century Studies is not that it alerts us to yet another domain in which the eighteenth century is different from seventeenth and/or the nineteenth, but that it is a way of pointing toward a sort of multi- or interdisciplinarity that does not abolish other-ness but acknowledges and works with it. “Hospitality” (or, perhaps, “hospitalability”) names not what we study but how we study.

Now I need to say something about the protocols and etiquette that will structure our interactions for the next few days.

1. We have asked commentators to begin each session with 5-10 minutes of remarks, after which the authors of the papers under discussion will be invited to respond. We then open the floor for questions and discussion. In order to keep things both orderly and conversational, we ask that when you want to intervene, you indicate so in one of two ways. If you want to raise a new question or make a comment, raise your hand in the usual fashion. If you want to say something that follows directly—a small comment that is pertinent at the moment but would be much less so later—and if you are prepared to make your comment briefly, then please make the “hook” gesture with your forefinger. These “little” comments really do need to be brief, conversational, and on topic since they allow you to “jump the queue” of people with new questions or more expansive comments. Please do not abuse this privilege!

We also want to make sure that everyone—not just paper authors and commentators—feels welcome in the conversation, so this year to encourage participation, session chairs have been instructed to let students “jump the queue.”

2. Because these conversations are the bulk of our activity as a group—they, not the papers, constitute the “workshop”—we are going to do as we have for the past two years and plan to record, transcribe, and then publish them. This is only made possible by the labor of Tracey Hutchings-Goetz and Bobby Wells, so let’s take a moment now to thank them for the hours (and hours and hours) they devote to the task of transcribing. (Applause) Moreover, you should all have release forms, indicating that you are willing to have your words recorded, transcribed, and published. Please make sure I get those by the end of the conference.

3. Finally, the sharp-eyed among you will have noted that some sessions have one commentator, others have two, or even three. This variation is intentional and is meant to ensure that we not only discuss but enact different forms of self-other encounter. And so as to facilitate those encounters, more introductions are in order. So let’s go around the room and introduce ourselves... [which happened]