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APRIL 2021

ASECS Announces Winners of 2021 Book Prize

The American Society for Eighteenth-Century (ASECS) awards the Louis A. Gottschalk Prize annually to the best scholarly book on an eighteenth-century subject.

In 2021, the Gottschalk Prize is given to **Dustin Stewart**, *Futures of Enlightenment Poetry* (Oxford University Press). Two books also have been awarded Honorable Mention: *The Woman on the Windowsill: A Tale of Mystery in Several Parts* by **Sylvia Sellers-Garcia** (Yale University Press) and *Painting with Fire: Sir Joshua Reynolds, Photography, and the Temporally Evolving Chemical Object* by **Matthew C. Hunter** (University of Chicago Press).

With a firm grasp of theology and exquisite attention to poetic artistry, Dustin Stewart, an assistant professor of English at Columbia University, examines the two afterlives entertained by Protestant poets of the long eighteenth-century: on the one hand, disembodied life in heaven that begins right after death, and on the other, re-embodied life on a new earth after the final judgment and resurrection of the dead. Poetry from the seventeenth- to the twenty-first century, Stewart generously shows, provides imaginative encounters with both these futures. John Milton dramatized Christian mortalism, or the belief in re-embodied life alone, while Edward Young, Elizabeth Singer Rowe, and Mark Akenside strove to unchain the soul in flights of imaginative, disembodied futurity.

Stewart designates these responses to the question of futurity and immortality as materialist, on the one hand, and spiritualist, on the other; the productive tension between these positions extends through the poetry of William Wordsworth, Phillis Wheatley, William Blake, and Emily Dickinson. Stewart's compelling dialectic reveals the power and importance of poems and poets whose full appeal and significance have been awaiting the proper framing for our own understanding. In providing that frame, Stewart not only enhances our appreciation for lesser-known eighteenth-century poets, but also encourages our broader love of poetry in general. *The Futures of Enlightenment Poetry* makes a major contribution to the religious turn in literary studies.

The Woman on the Windowsill: A Tale of Mystery in Several Parts leads readers through the streets of Guatemala City in pursuit of the perpetrator of violent crimes that took place in the summer of 1800. Sylvia Sellers-García, associate professor of history at Boston College, offers a gripping narrative: a scholarly investigation of a police investigation. *The Woman on the Windowsill* is both a page turner and a thoughtful consideration of how Spanish colonial history was recorded, by whom, and to what ends. Moving

among medical history, social history, religious history, urban history, and histories of sexuality and violence, Sellers-García deftly illuminates colonialism and power inequity, while asking readers to ponder the legacy of trauma and how history is recovered and made.

Why would the well-established academic painter Joshua Reynolds deploy chemically unstable colors with such stubborn audacity? Why risk losing his reputation and jeopardize the transmission of unaltered works to posterity? By setting Reynolds's bold experiments within the larger history of painters' interest in alchemy and chemistry, Matthew C. Hunter, associate professor of art history at McGill University, offers a refreshing account that reconnects the history of science and history of art at multiple points and historic moments. This holistic perspective allows him to redefine both these experimental paintings and early photographic attempts as “temporally evolving chemical objects.” Hunter thus blurs the usual boundaries and hierarchies between photography and painting. He also challenges us to reconcile iconography and materiality, experiment and art making.

The American Society for Eighteenth-Century Studies is a not-for-profit educational organization founded to promote the study of all aspects of the eighteenth century. It sponsors conferences, awards research fellowships and prizes, and publishes *Eighteenth-Century Studies* and *Studies in Eighteenth-Century Culture*. Eligibility information for the 2022 Gottschalk Prize is available at www.asecs.org.

