Remarks for the Kenshur Prize Colloquium

APRIL G. SHELFORD

I'm delighted and humbled by this prize from the Center for Eighteenth-Century Studies here at Indiana Bloomington, and I'm honored to be added to the list of Kenshur prize winners. Nothing's more satisfying than having colleagues think well of one's work—especially a project that took as long as this one did. My sincere thanks to Oscar Kenshur, Jesse Molesworth, Nush Powell, Brian Cowan, and Barbara Truesdell for everything you've done to make this prize and colloquium happen and to all of you here in the audience for your time and attention.

Figure 1: Queen Charlotte and her two oldest sons with a copy of Locke's *Some Thoughts Concerning Education* on the table at right.
https://www.rct.uk/collection/404922/queen-charlotte-1744-1818-with-her-two-eldest-

In November 1761, an overseer on an agricultural estate borrowed John Locke's *Some Thoughts Concerning Education* from a close friend. He returned it in March 1762 after filling eight pages with transcriptions from the book. He was a selective reader. He attended very closely to Locke's discussion of self-control and related advice on a child's education. "[T]he great Principle and foundation of all Virtue and Worth is plac'd in this," Locke wrote, "That a Man is able to *deny himself* his own Desires, cross his own Inclinations, and purely follow what Reason directs as best, tho' Appetite lean the other Way." Thus, the child "not us'd to submit his Will to the Reason of others *when* he is *young*, will scarce hearken to submit to his own Reason when he is of an Age to make Use of it. And what kind of a Man such an one is like to prove is easy to foresee."

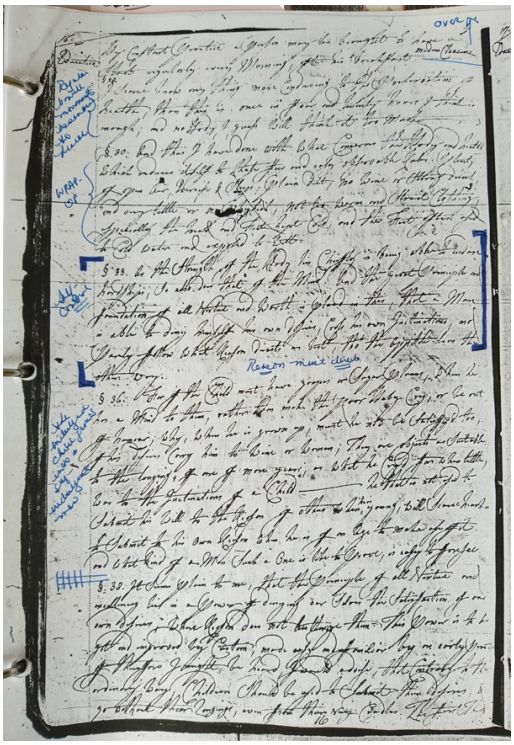


Figure 2: Transcriptions from Locke's *Some Thoughts Concerning Education* from Thomas Thistlewood Commonplace Books, annotated by April Shelford

As the judges have probably guessed, I'm quoting from the commonplace books of Thomas Thistlewood. Having migrated to Jamaica in 1750, he was overseer on a sugar plantation when he read Locke's *Thoughts*. His son was an infant, born a few months before to the enslaved woman who essentially became his wife. His transcriptions of Locke's advice about rationality and self-control is at best puzzling to anyone familiar with Thistlewood's reputation as a brutal, even sadistic slave master and a sexual predator, routinely accosting female slaves. Now none of this appears on page 99 of *A Caribbean Enlightenment*—I'll make that connection soon. I mention this first because my encounter with Thistlewood's manuscripts was the origin of *A Caribbean Enlightenment*.

Unable to find an academic job in the US, I'd come to the University of the West Indies in Jamaica as a visiting professor. That's how I found myself, a historian of seventeenth-century French intellectual life, leafing through Thistlewood's papers in the university's library in fall 1999. Until then, I knew embarrassingly little about the eighteenth-century Caribbean, its plantations, and its multitude of enslaved Africans. Thistlewood introduced me to Caribbean slavery, up close and personal, in savage detail. But there I also read about his ample library; his friendship with a traveling naturalist, who taught him Linnaean taxonomy and how to draw birds; his telescopes, thermometers, and garden. In short, a man who had an intellectual life, who found people who shared his interests in his rural corner of Jamaica, who participated in "Enlightenment."

Now Thistlewood was a very different man from Pierre-Daniel Huet, a humanist érudit and subject of my dissertation and first book, *Transforming the Republic of Letters: Pierre-Daniel Huet and European Intellectual Life, 1650-1720* (2007). By the time Huet died in 1720 he'd glimpsed with disapproval this vernacular, democratizing intellectual world, one very different from *his* Republic of Letters. Yet there were similarities: First, all those books! Intellectual sociability, friendships, and collaborations amongst men. Above all: wide-ranging curiosity. This encounter with Thistlewood compelled me to move into the eighteenth century proper and into the French and the British Caribbean to try to make sense of his world. Please note: Very few scholars were thinking about the Enlightenment in the Caribbean in 1999. Like Thistlewood's contemporaries, they generally considered these new societies "materialist and debauched, indifferent to the life of the mind, unfit for the slightest intellectual activity that did not promise immediate profit," as one scholar put it.[1]

Now don't get me wrong. There's a lot of truth in that stereotype. But it's not the whole story by any means. *A Caribbean Enlightenment* tells a chunk of it in four parts, two focusing on Jamaica, alternating with two on the French colonies, chiefly Saint-Domingue. Each explores a well-established theme in Enlightenment scholarship transposed to the Caribbean: 1. Before Breadfruit: Natural History, Sociability, & Colonial Identity in Jamaica; 2. Creating Enlightened Citizens: The Periodicals of Saint-Domingue in the 1760s; 3. Tristram in the Tropics: or, Reading in Jamaica; 4. Cultivating Knowledge: Agricultural Enlightenment in the French Caribbean.

In each part, I proceed in the same way: having discerned a cluster of Enlightenment practices in the Caribbean, I discuss what those practices meant in the metropole, their practice in the colonies, and what additional meanings those activities acquired in the context of Caribbean slave societies. Queen Charlotte and her two sons, Locke's enormously influential

[1] My translation from François Regourd, "Lumières colonials. Les Antilles françaises dans la République des Lettres," *Dix-huitième siècle* 33 (2001): 182. It should be noted that Regourd was pushing against this stereotype, urging scholars to investigate colonial intellectual life.

Thoughts, the practices of book exchange and commonplacing, Thistlewood and his mixed-race infant—taken together, they nicely visualize that way of proceeding.

Page 99 figures in the introduction to Part 2, which examines the creation of the Saint-Domingue press during the 1760s. Saint-Domingue was the wealthiest French Caribbean colony. That wealth derived from the cultivation of enormously profitable commodities—sugar foremost, but also coffee and indigo. These crops were cultivated on plantations powered by tens of thousands of enslaved Africans and their descendants. At the close of the Seven Years War in 1763, Saint-Domingue had also, according to its colonial boosters, turned the page on an earlier history of pirates and popular insurrection; it had become a civilized place, one deserving all the amenities of gracious metropolitan life, from *collèges* to public promenades to a press of its own.


ANNÉE 1766. [Nº. 4] 25

AFFICHES AMÉRICAINES.

Du Mercredi 22 Janvier.

ARRIVÉE de Navires Marchands.

Au Port-au-Prince, le 12 de ce mois, *le Jupiter*, de Dunkerque, Capit. Brufletyé, parti dudit lieu le 23 novembre 1764, venant de la Côte-d'Or avec 274 Noirs à l'adreſſe de M. *le Ray*, Négociant de cette Ville; le 14, *la Marguerite*, de Nantes, Capit. Cadou.

A S. Marc, le 11 de ce mois, *l'Hermione*, de Nantes, Capit. Jean Halgan, parti le 17 novembre dernier; le 15, *le Ferme*, de la Rochelle, Capit. Coutun, parti le 13 novembre, ayant touché au Cap le 4 de ce mois; le 17, *le Marquis-de-Narbonne*, de la Rochelle, Capit. le Mire, parti le 14 décembre dernier.

Au Cap, le 14 de ce mois, *la Fidélité*, de Nantes, Capit. Halgan, parti le 30 novembre; le 16, *le François*, de Bordeaux, Capit. Lavaud, parti le 17 octobre; le 17, *l'Aimable-Angelique*, de la Rochelle, Capit. Cadou, parti le 30 novembre, & *la Dorille*, de Bordeaux, Capit. Defarneaux, parti le 17 octobre: le 18, *le Régime*, de Bayonne, Capit. la Courtaudiere, parti le 10 novembre; *le Saint-Martin*, du Havre, Capit. Germain, parti le 19 décembre, & *le Mentor*, de Marſeille, Capit. Durand, parti le 26 novembre: le 20, *le Duc-de-Choiſeul*, de Nantes, Capit. Samoual, parti le 18 décembre.

NAVIRES Marchands en expédition.

Au Cap, *le Prince-de-Rohan-Guemené*, Capit. Morel, pour Nantes; *l'Aſſaſſ*, Capit. Aycard, pour Marſeille; *l'Uranie*, Cap. Joannes du Colombier, & *le Maréchal-de-Luxembourg*, Capit. Bremont, tous les deux pour le Havre.

PRIX des Marchandiſes de la Colonie.

Au Port-au-Prince, Sucre blanc, 60 à 65 l. commun, 45 à 55 l. brut, 26 à 28 l. Indigo bleu, 7 l. à 7 l. 10 ſ. (très-rare); cuivré, 5 l. 10 ſ. à 6 l. (il n'y a point de Caffé ni de Coton).

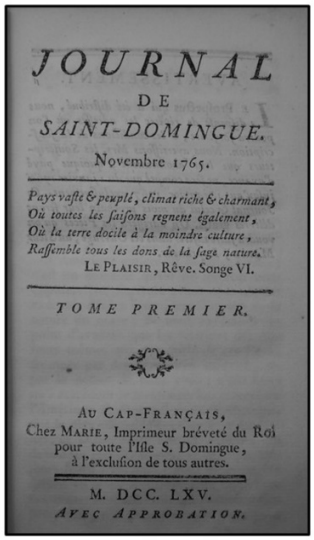
A Léogane, Sucre blanc, 58 à 63 l. commun, 43 à 48 l. brut, 26 à 28 liv. Indigo bleu, 7 l. 5 ſ. à 7 l. 10 ſ. cuivré, 5 l. 10 ſ. à 6 l. Caffé nouveau, 148 15 ſ. Coton, 180 l.

A S. Marc, Sucre blanc, 52 à 55 l. commun, 42 à 45 l. brut, 25 à 27 l. (très-rare). Indigo cuivré, 5 l. 5 ſ. à 5 l. 10 ſ. (il n'y en a point de bleu). Caffé nouveau, 14 ſ. à 14 ſ. 6 d. Coton, 160 à 170 l.

Au Cap, Sucre blanc, 56 à 64 l. commun, 40 à 52 l. brut, 18 à 26 l. Indigo bleu, 7 l. à 7 l. 15 ſ. cuivré, 5 à 6 l. Caffé nouveau, 14 ſ. à 15 ſ. 6 d. vieux, 12 à 14 ſ. Coton, 190 à 195 l. Cuirs, 7 à 9 l. Piaſtres gourd. 36 p. 100.

PRIX des Marchandiſes de France.

Au Port-au-Prince, Vin, 130 à


JOURNAL

DE

SAINT-DOMINGUE.

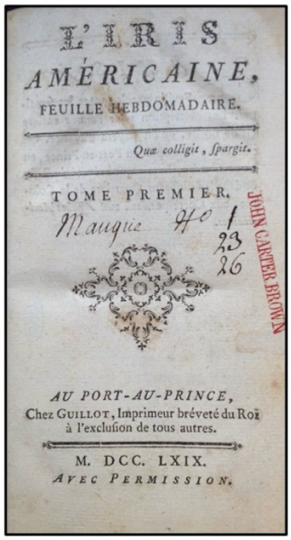
Novembre 1765.

Pays vaſte & peuplé, climat riche & charmant,
Où toutes les ſaiſons regnent également,
Où la terre docile à la moindre culture,
Raſſemble tous les dons de la ſage nature.
Le Plaisir, Rêve. Songe VI.

TOME PREMIER.

Au Cap-Français,
Chez Marie, Imprimeur bréveté du Roi pour toute l'Iſle S. Domingue, à l'excluſion de tous autres.

M. DCC. LXV.
Avec Approbation.


L'IRIS

AMÉRICAINE,

FEUILLE HEBDOMADAIRE.

Quæ colligit, ſpargit.

TOME PREMIER.

Maugie 40 1 23 26

JOHN CARTER BROWN

AU PORT-AU-PRINCE,
Chez Guillot, Imprimeur bréveté du Roi à l'excluſion de tous autres.

M. DCC. LXIX.
Avec Permission.

Figure 3: The Periodicals of Saint-Domingue during the 1760s

From mid-century to the eve of the French Revolution, provincial publications like the *Affiches Américaines* were established throughout France. Indeed, this colonial *Affiches* was a pioneer in the genre, and it flourished well into the revolutionary period. Scholars of French intellectual life used to consider the genre of *Affiches* too constrained by censorship and too risk-averse politically to qualify as "enlightened." But their intellectual engagement has become apparent as the Enlightenment is less defined by attitudes towards politics and religions and less identified with leading *philosophes*. In another French scholar's words, these publications didn't offer their publics Enlightenment-lite; rather, they gave it local energy: "Whether it was a matter of public utility, patriotism, or social ethics, the *Affiches* thereby adapted to their use notions obviously picked up from the *Lumières*. They transformed them into social practices: somewhat abstract values mutate[d] into rules of life and became charged with experience."[2]

Just about every French scholar working on Saint-Domingue has mined the *Affiches*, which has now been digitized.[3] The two other periodicals you see here—the short-lived and very

[2] My translation from Jean Sgard, "La presse provincial et les Lumières," in *La presse provincial au XVIIIe siècle*, ed. Jean Sgard (Grenoble: Centre de recherches sur les sensibilités, Université des langues et lettres de Grenoble, 1983), 59.

[3] Available at the Digital Library of the Caribbean (https://www.dloc.com/). Please note that this doesn't include precursors of the *Affiches*, which were also edited by Monceaux. These contain much interesting material and are very useful for seeing how the periodical's organization and design evolved and eventually stabilized.

rare *Journal de Saint-Domingue* and the *Iris Américaine*—were more like metropolitan magazines.[4] They featured lengthier articles, and some, like the *Iris*, explicitly targeted female readers. I was convinced early on that the *Affiches* was an underutilized window into the colony's intellectual life, so I knew that analyzing it would be important to my project. Having access to all three periodicals helped me accomplish one of my priorities for the book: combining insights drawn from familiar sources used in new ways with insights from new sources.

If you will, page 99 is the windup to my pitch that this trio of periodicals figured in a common Enlightenment project. To paraphrase myself, Saint-Domingue's newly established press simultaneously conjured, elaborated, and addressed the colony's White male citizens and their female counterparts. The *Affiches* and the *Journal* encouraged White men to confront their colonial problems and those of the French state ideally through rational, impartial discussion. Though both periodicals also encouraged the acquisition of *politesse* and taste, the *Iris* fully reveals the stakes in those cultural moves. In her pages, the White wife assumed the indispensable civilizing role of nurturing the literary arts; by doing so, she brought order into a colonial household disrupted by interracial sex, domesticating her husband's passion and inspiring tender familial sentiments.

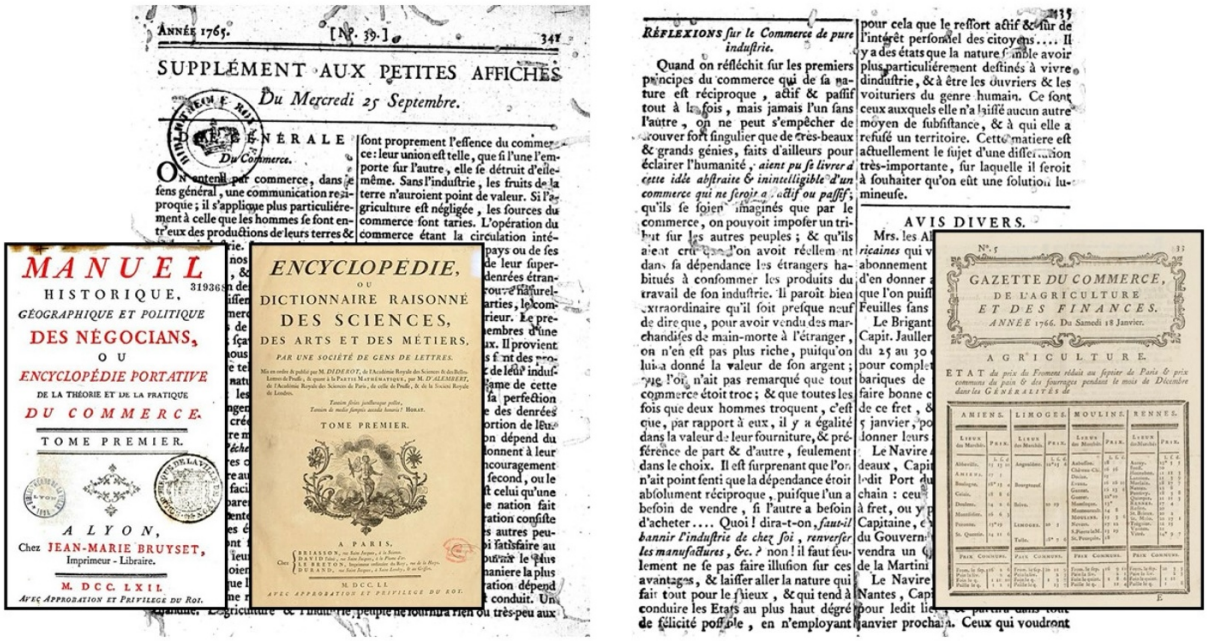
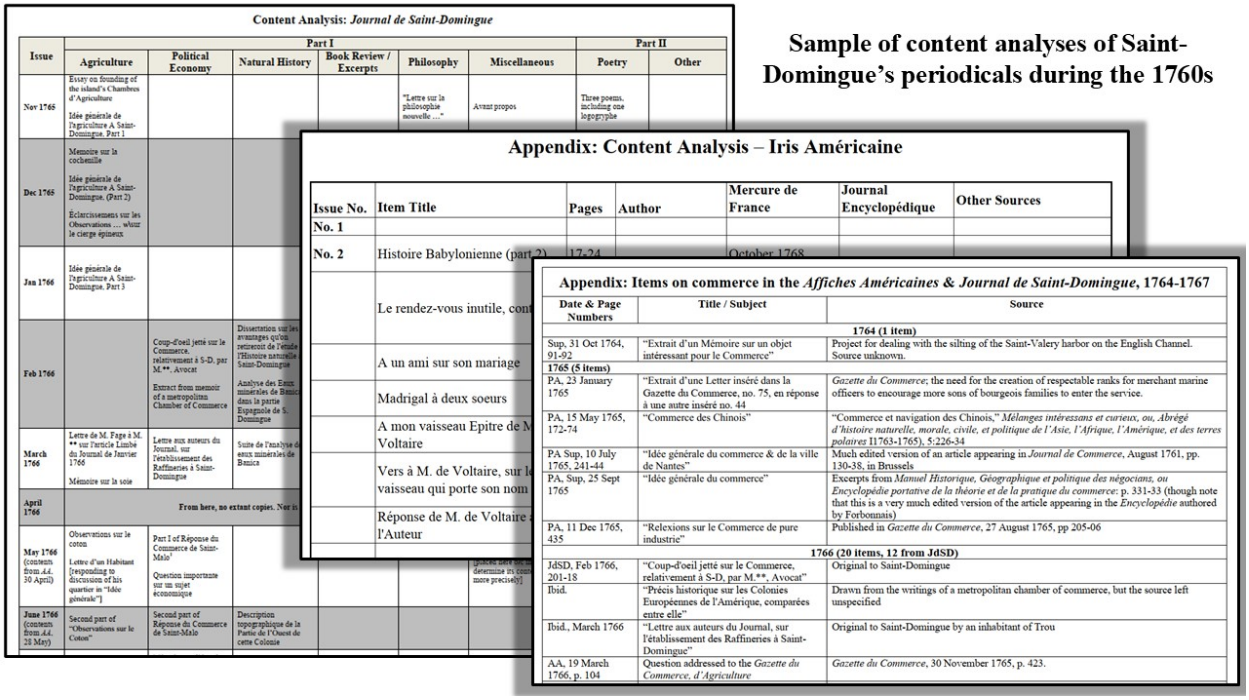


Figure 4: Material from metropolitan publications published in *Petites Affiches* (predecessor of the *Affiches Américaines*), 25 Sept & 10 Dec 1765

[4] Incomplete runs of the *Journal de Saint-Domingue* and *Iris Américaine*, held respectively by the Library of Congress, Washington, DC, and the John Carter Brown Library, Brown University, Providence, RI.



Content Analysis: *Journal de Saint-Domingue*

Issue	Part I						Part II	
	Agriculture	Political Economy	Natural History	Book Review / Excerpts	Philosophy	Miscellaneous	Poetry	Other
Nov 1765	Essay on founding of the island's Chambres d'Agriculture Idée générale de l'agriculture A Saint-Domingue. Part 1				"Lettre sur la philosophie nouvelle ..."	Avant propos	Three poems, including one logogryphe	
Dec 1765	Mémoire sur la cochenille Idée générale de l'agriculture A Saint-Domingue. (Part 2) Eclaircissemens sur les Observations ... wuur le clergé épineux							
Jan 1766	Idée générale de l'agriculture A Saint-Domingue. Part 3							
Feb 1766		Coup-d'oeil jetté sur le Commerce, relativement à S-D, par M.**, Avocat Extract from memoir of a metropolitan Chamber of Commerce	Dissertation sur les avantages qu'on retireroit de l'etude de l'Histoire naturelle Saint-Domingue Analyse des Eaux minerales de Banica dans la partie Espagnole de S. Domingue					
March 1766	Lettre de M. Page à M. ** sur l'article Limbe du Journal de Janvier 1766 Mémoire sur la soie	Lettre aux auteurs du Journal, sur l'etablissement des Raffineries à Saint-Domingue	Suite de l'analyse d eaux minerales de Banica					
April 1766	From here, no extant copies. Nor is							
May 1766 (contents from *AA*, 30 April)	Observations sur le coton Lettre d'un Habitant [responding to discussion of his quartier in "Idée générale"]	Part I of Réponse du Commerce de Saint-Malo' Question importante sur un sujet economique						
June 1766 (contents from *AA*, 28 May)	Second part of "Observations sur le Coton"	Second part of Réponse du Commerce de Saint-Malo	Description topographique de la Partie de l'Ouest de cette Colonie					

Appendix: Content Analysis – Iris Américaine

Issue No.	Item Title	Pages	Author	Mercure de France	Journal Encyclopédique	Other Sources
No. 1						
No. 2	Histoire Babylonienne (part 2)	17-24		October 1768		
	Le rendez-vous inutile, cont					
	A un ami sur son mariage					
	Madrigal à deux soeurs					
	A mon vaisseau Epitre de M Voltaire					
	Vers à M. de Voltaire, sur l vaisseau qui porte son nom					
	Réponse de M. de Voltaire l'Auteur					

Appendix: Items on commerce in the *Affiches Américaines* & *Journal de Saint-Domingue*, 1764-1767

Date & Page Numbers	Title / Subject	Source
	1764 (1 item)	
Sup, 31 Oct 1764, 91-92	"Extrait d'un Mémoire sur un objet intéressant pour le Commerce"	Project for dealing with the silting of the Saint-Valery harbor on the English Channel. Source unknown.
1765 (5 items)		
PA, 23 January 1765	"Extrait d'une Letter inséré dans la Gazette du Commerce, no. 75, en réponse à une autre inséré no. 44	*Gazette du Commerce*; the need for the creation of respectable ranks for merchant marine officers to encourage more sons of bourgeois families to enter the service.
PA, 15 May 1765, 172-74	"Commerce des Chinois"	"Commerce et navigation des Chinois," *Mélanges intéressans et curieux, ou, Abrégé d'histoire naturelle, morale, civile, et politique de l'Asie, l'Afrique, l'Amérique, et des terres polaires* [1763-1765), 5:226-34
PA Sup, 10 July 1765, 241-44	"Idée générale du commerce & de la ville de Nantes"	Much edited version of an article appearing in *Journal de Commerce*, August 1761, pp. 130-38, in Brussels
PA, Sup, 25 Sept 1765	"Idée générale du commerce"	Excerpts from *Manuel Historique, Géographique et politique des négocians, ou Encyclopédie portative de la théorie et de la pratique du commerce*: p. 331-33 (though note that this is a very much edited version of the article appearing in the *Encyclopédie* authored by Forbonnais)
PA, 11 Dec 1765, 435	"Relexions sur le Commerce de pure industrie"	Published in *Gazette du Commerce*, 27 August 1765, pp 205-06
	1766 (20 items, 12 from JdSD)	
JdSD, Feb 1766, 201-18	"Coup-d'oeil jetté sur le Commerce, relativement à S-D, par M.**, Avocat"	Original to Saint-Domingue
Ibid.	"Précis historique sur les Colonies Européennes de l'Amérique, comparées entre elle"	Drawn from the writings of a metropolitan chamber of commerce, but the source left unspecified
Ibid., March 1766	"Lettre aux auteurs du Journal, sur l'établissement des Raffineries à Saint-Domingue"	Original to Saint-Domingue by an inhabitant of Trou
AA, 19 March 1766, p. 104	Question addressed to the *Gazette du Commerce, d'Agriculture*	*Gazette du Commerce*, 30 November 1765, p. 423.

Sample of content analyses of Saint-Domingue's periodicals during the 1760s

How did I arrive at such conclusions when we know little about the editors of these periodicals beyond a few names and professions and some editorial overlap? First, like editors in France, they poached material from other periodicals. But they had to be very selective because their periodicals had far fewer pages than their metropolitan counterparts. They had to make choices, choices that are clues to editorial intent, which I uncovered through a lot of content analysis. I also paid close attention to what they requested from their readers, unsolicited letters to the editors, their own programmatic statements, and their responses to readers' criticisms.

To communicate a little of their flavor: Jean Monceaux ran the *Affiches* from its beginnings in 1764 to his death in 1768. Departing from metropolitan models, he organized news items by state, and he created a new category, *Amérique*, that encouraged colonists to consider their concerns together with those of other French and British colonists to the North and in the Caribbean. Under his leadership, the *Affiches* facilitated reader inquiries into, for example, the chemistry of sugar refining and the potential agricultural utility of a new pump. These inquiries provided me with precious glimpses of colonists' bookshelves, how they shared information, and how they tested "knowledge." By late 1765, the *Affiches* could hand off subjects requiring lengthier treatment to the *Journal*, and sometimes the two offered complementary coverage. For example, the *Affiches* published extensively on the Stamp Act Crisis. This North American controversy functioned as a proxy for debating colonial governance without treading into taboo subjects, that is, colonists' vehement antipathy to the royal governor and Louis XV's power struggle with the province of Brittany over taxation. At roughly the same time, the *Journal* published articles from metropolitan periodicals critical of the economics of the French colonial regime along with articles by Saint-Domingue authors. A great admirer of Voltaire, Monceaux probably would have published more literary news had he the space. The *Journal* picked up the ball a bit by running some book reviews and publishing poetry by colonists, sometimes with detailed critiques. At decade's end and after the *Journal*'s collapse, the *Iris* focused nearly exclusively on literary works from orientalizing tales to salon poetry. Taken together, the *Iris*

retailed a secular, sweet, and voluptuous virtue that endowed conjugal love with a new luster and that charged the white wife with an indispensable civilizing role.[5]

Like the other three parts, Part 2 supports the over-arching claim of the book: that is, how participating in Enlightenment intellectual culture made available to White male colonists a colonial identity that rejected stereotypes of Caribbean degeneracy while simultaneously validating their power to enslave on a cultural basis. Two examples of what I mean by this.

The first is from Part 1 on natural history in Jamaica. For a while now scholars have agitated for acknowledging the contributions of the enslaved to knowledge production—and rightly so. But the social context of this production, intellectual friendship amongst men, excluded the enslaved by its very nature. Yes, the enslaved were often trained as assistants; yes, they shared with physicians and naturalists their knowledge of plants. But the enslaved could never be friends, thus never true collaorators. They lacked liberty, the currency needed to circulate in a commerce both intellectual and affective. The fact that their masters could choose to become learned, disciplined, and—in their minds—virtuous men pushed against the stereotype of Caribbean degeneracy and philistinism. So did the fact that their patronage made possible the publication of a major scientific work, Patrick Browne's *A Civil and Natural History of Jamaica* in 1756.

Similarly in Part 2: It was not enough for colonists in Saint-Domingue to protest the post-war order the royal government was trying to impose. They could certainly be—and were—impassioned. But they couched their objections in a rhetoric of despotism versus rights. They countered the dominant paradigm of colonial-metropolitan relations, drawn from Montesquieu, with well-reasoned arguments in intellectually respectable terms.

When it comes to validating the power to enslave on a cultural basis, I turn to the conclusion of Part 2. There I discuss a debate published in the *Affiches* in several issues of 1769. Two colonists were arguing the pros and cons of establishing an intellectual society in the colony—again, something happening in many French provincial cities. A third, undoubtedly white colonist abruptly ended the debate with a satire in which he ventriloquized an enslaved man, "Toussaint." Through "Toussaint," the anonymous author deflated the arguments of the two debaters. But he also—and perhaps more importantly for readers—put Africans in their allegedly natural and inferior intellectual place. According to his own account, Toussaint had acquired an education along with his master's dim-witted son. He'd continued to cultivate his talents in secret; he boasted that, "although among my [fellow slaves], I am no idiot, they do not know all my *savoir faire*." His essay proved that he'd learned to write—"and passably for a Negro," he claimed without irony. He concluded with the promise that, should "my correspondence please you, I have many more subjects to discuss." But this was Toussaint's first and last appearance. The anonymous author had made his point: By underscoring the absurdity of Toussaint's intellectual pretensions, he deftly wielded the power of condescension. He delineated unambiguously the charmed circle of a White public comprising allegedly rational citizens and their elegant wives.

Thank you very much.

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[5] Sentence combines some paraphrase of Thomas M. Kavanagh, *Enlightened Pleasures: Eighteenth-Century France and the New Epicurianism* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2010) and Guillaume Faroult, *L'amour peintre* (Reigate, England: Cohen & Cohen, 2020). The *Iris* ran an article by Voltaire that discussed women's civilizing role in the context of an essay that responded to Walpole's criticism of Voltaire's characterization of Shakespeare.