

ANAÏS PÉDRON and CLARE SIVITER, eds. *Celebrity across the Channel, 1750–1850*. Performing Celebrity. Newark: University of Delaware Press, 2021. Pp. 307. \$34.95 (cloth). doi: 10.1017/jbr.2022.217

In *Celebrity Across the Channel, 1750–1850*, Anaïs Pédron and Clare Siviter stage a valuable conversation between perspectives and disciplines, illuminating a critical period in the history of celebrity, and generating some remarkable insights into its wider cultural significance. Although not all of the essays make direct comparisons or deal with both French and British celebrity, Pédron and Siviter’s thoughtful editing helps to draw out some intriguing points of contact. For example, Gabriel Wick’s discussion of the representation in manuscript newsletters of the *princes du sang*, junior members of the Bourbon dynasty, follows—and is beautifully if implicitly contextualized by—Emrys D. Jones’s cautionary suggestion that British eighteenth-century theatrical families gained public currency less from ideas of intimate domesticity than from “a discourse of royal power that was at once central and antithetical to the concept of celebrity” (186).

In the section “Representing Celebrity,” the juxtaposition of chapters by Anna Senkiw on Sarah Siddons and Pédron on Hyppolite Clairon, and then Miranda Kiek and Siviter on the cross-channel fame of Germaine de Staël and the Chevalier d’Eon, respectively, offers a crash course in the differences, overlaps, and close connections between celebrity cultures emerging in these distinctive national contexts, especially in relation to ideas about gender and sexuality. Senkiw uses *The Orators Journey*, a 1785 caricature of Siddons and the politicians Edmund Burke and Charles James Fox, to illustrate how the mechanisms of eighteenth-century British news culture represented and circulated publicly affective personalities in theater and politics alike. Pédron’s chapter suggests that the contemporary celebrity of actresses in France was determined by very different circumstances, institutions, and forms of media, although both Clairon and Siddons also had some agency in the shaping of their own reputations, and both faced forms of invasive curiosity which tended to associate public women with sexual promiscuity.

The cases of Staël and d’Eon follow these analyses neatly, as examples of celebrity which moved between these two national contexts. Siviter traces the career of d’Eon, focusing particularly on the later part of their life, as an extreme case study of public curiosity and private self-fashioning in the changing political spheres of Britain and France. Focusing on cross-channel links in the early nineteenth century, Kiek reads Staël’s *Corinne* (1807) as a meditation on the relationship between femininity and fame, comparing the novel to an anonymous British parody which exemplifies a growing anti-Jacobin backlash against public women. As she points out, relatively little scholarly attention has been paid to the depiction of fictional celebrity in this period, and her chapter opens this up as a promising future avenue for research. Similarly, both Blake Smith’s chapter on the Orientalist traveller and scholar Abraham Hyacinthe Anquetil-Duperron, and Meagan Mason’s on the use of phrenology and physiognomy in musical celebrity, suggest some extraordinary possibilities for the future use of celebrity as a concept in histories of Orientalism and empire, medicine, and the science of race.

Of course, these encounters between different academic fields also bring their own difficulties. Enlightenment historian Antoine Lilti begins his preface by explaining that, ten years earlier when he began research for his 2015 *L’invention de la célébrité* (something of a touchstone in this volume) celebrity “did not seem to exist in scholarship,” or at least that “the topic’s bibliography was slim at best” (Lilti, ix). Such a claim is probably uncontroversial to scholars working in intellectual history or French cultural history; it will likely be more surprising to a reader coming from British eighteenth-century studies, especially in theatre and literary studies—which a decade ago saw a flourishing of important studies of celebrity in the broad period covered by both this book and Lilti’s, much of it by feminist scholars who saw in theorisations of celebrity by Richard Dyer, Diane Negra, and others a way to

uncover and take seriously various marginalized texts, stories, and figures. Jane Moody and Mary Luckhurst's collection *Theatre and Celebrity 1660–2000*, for example, was published in 2005, Claire Brock's *The Feminization of Fame* and Gilli Bush-Bailey's *Treading the Bawds* in 2006; Joseph Roach's *It* in 2007; Tom Mole's collection *Romanticism and Celebrity Culture* and Felicity Nussbaum's *Rival Queens* in 2010. Although almost all these works are cited and acknowledged throughout *Celebrity across the Channel*—and although several of the individual chapters participate in similarly motivated projects—Pédrón and Siviter take their lead from Lilti in placing the book as a whole primarily within a more recent scholarly turn to celebrity by intellectual and political historians interested in its potential for reworking Habermasian ideas of the public sphere. This move is legitimate and perhaps necessary when dealing with such a complex subject, but it does produce the odd paradox: work analyzing “the gendered nature of celebrity” (xii)—or challenging what is described as “the dominant view that Rousseau was the first celebrity” (15)—is thus presented as entirely new, rather than founded on a substantial existing body of scholarship. Nevertheless, if *Celebrity across the Channel, 1750–1850* does not manage to be all things to all scholars, it should still be seen as essential reading for anyone interested in historicizing celebrity, or in the wider cross-channel culture of this period.

Ruth Scobie 

University of Oxford

ruth.scobie@ell.ox.ac.uk

SUJIT SIVASUNDARAM. *Waves across the South: A New History of Revolution and Empire*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2021. Pp. 496. \$20.00 (paper).
doi: 10.1017/jbr.2022.219

With *Waves across the South: A New History of Revolution and Empire*, Sujit Sivasundaram has written a big history: big in geographical and temporal scope and in ambition. Calling his work a new history of revolution and empire, he carries forward this promise by, in effect, going small. He focuses on islands and ports, webs of engagements, and the radiating effects of overlapping and interconnected locales from the Indian Ocean and Tasman Sea to Mauritius, Tonga, Aotearoa New Zealand, the Sri Lankan and Burmese coastal kingdoms, Chinese and Chilean ports, and the Cape of South Africa. It is these places, he says, in a tilt against more conventional historiographies, that shaped—and sometimes led—upheavals against colonial orders and the generation of political modernity, long a foundation of Atlantic histories in the later eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries.

It is a bracing, convincing narrative, though not a neat one—the many illustrations and elegant maps upfront are necessary, and readers must patiently work to assemble fragments and artifacts. The rewards are tales of ceremonial boats, revolts and petitions, scientific experiments, packets of letters, treaties, spiritual declarations, political tracts, and chiefly alliances in dozens of locales across generations. This requires focused attention, and much will be new to many readers. Whatever else it is, this is a book about a traditional subject: British Empire. Yet, as one does a plank boat, Sivasundaram disassembles his objects of study and puts them back together in new configurations.

Still, empire remains his keel and rudder. Within empire, Sivasundaram argues for a new tradition in historiography, cutting into “Britain’s supposedly revolution-less, pragmatic and ordered past,” to generate narratives looking toward “small seas in the Indian and Pacific Oceans . . . obliterated by narrators who focussed on colonial units in a network of relations with a centre, London” (332).