



Slavery was an issue that greatly preoccupied the philosophical and political writings of the European Enlightenment. However, the debate was fought out not only in weighty tomes and punchy pamphlets, but across the whole of the cultural sphere, spilling out on to the stage and the canvas, and even layering itself into the built environment. This conference focuses on this less well understood side of Enlightenment thinking about slavery and abolition, exploring how representations of slavery across the media ecology of eighteenth-century Europe influenced ideas in this most vital of debates.



Performances of Slavery

REMEDICATIONS OF TEXT
IN IMAGES AND REPERTOIRES

22-23 OCTOBER
2026

CONFERENCE PROGRAMME

TURIN

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OCTOBER 22 / THURSDAY

17:00-17:15

Nicholas Cronk

THP Senior Fellow, Voltaire Foundation, University of Oxford

Opening remarks

17:15-18:00

Caroline Gleason-Mercier, Morgan Golf-French, Samuel Harrison

THP Junior Fellow Book Presentations

18:00-19:00 Drinks/toast

OCTOBER 23 / FRIDAY

CHAIR Caroline Gleason-Mercier

THP Junior Fellow

9:30-10:15

Julia Prest

University of St Andrews

Writing Enslaved People into the (Hi)story of Theatre Performance in Colonial Saint-Domingue

10:15-11:00

Scott M. Sanders

Dartmouth College

The Price of Virtue: Enslaved Performance and the Making of French Empire

11:00-11:30 Coffee Break

CHAIR Jill Burke

THP Senior Fellow, University of Edinburgh

11:30-12:15

Sofya Dmitrieva

Voltaire Foundation, University of Oxford

Voltaire among the Peasants: Patriarch of Ferney, Advocate for the Serfs of Saint-Claude

12:15-13:50 Lunch

CHAIR Samuel Harrison

THP Junior Fellow

13:50-14:35

Cristina Trinchero

University of Turin

Voltaire e i servi mainmortables del Jura: strategie narrative e retorico-stilistiche al servizio della libertà. Il contributo del philosophe di Ferney alla rappresentazione di una realtà e di un simbolo dell'Ancien Régime

14:35-15:20

Aleksander Musiat

GTA Institute, ETH Zürich

Peaceful slavery or dangerous liberty? Anette Tyszkiewicz-Potocka and the origins of Bertel Thorvaldsen's Poniatowski monument in Warsaw, ca. 1813-1829

15:20-15:40 Coffee Break

CHAIR Morgan Golf-French

THP Junior Fellow

15:40-16:25

Karīna Janova-Jannava

Riga, Latvia

The Abolitionist's Paradox: The Image of the Eighteenth-Century Livonian Peasant in the Writings of Heinrich Johann von Jannau and Garlieb Merkel, and Its Afterlife

16:25-17:10

Obenewaa Oduro-Opuni

University of Arizona

Performing Abolition: Black Protagonism, White Self-Reference, and Managed Freedom in Nesselrode's Zamor und Zoraide

17:10 Closing Remarks

Nicholas Cronk

THP Senior Fellow, Voltaire Foundation, University of Oxford

Jill Burke

THP Senior Fellow, University of Edinburgh

Caroline Gleason-Mercier

THP Junior Fellow

Morgan Golf-French

THP Junior Fellow

Samuel Harrison

THP Junior Fellow