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Mapping recreation in London (abstract)

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**The topography of recreation in London, 1760-1820**

Though historians have recently begun raising questions about topographies of leisure in Georgian London, thus far work has focused on analyzing the ways that location created meaning or on investigating the changing interactions of Londoners at the dawn of the modern period. These investigations are important, but they rarely account for how Londoners in practice chose to delimit their own cultural worlds. This paper sets out to create a topography from the point of view of the recreation seeker, rather than from the perspective of the institutions. Through a detailed examination of the diversions recorded in diaries written by merchants and men of gentry status, this paper will uncover the recreational horizons of Londoners. The amusements of the diarists will be mapped and frequency of visits will be accounted for in order to understand how Londoners exploited on the one hand local, on the other hand more distant but more specialized resources in choosing diversions. This method also allows for a better understanding of how London's enormous size could support different types of attractions and the ways that activities were grouped with relation to centers of wealth and population density. This paper will also examine how patterns of use differed with socio-economic status. The state and shape of the transport infrastructure will be considered as a factor shaping practice and affecting the location of recreational spaces. This approach will help to improve our understanding of how local communities within the metropolis interacted with the more remote areas and the extent to which the influence of the West End and other, apparently culturally significant, areas was felt in distant parts of town.