



Rituals of Spontaneity: Sentiment and Secularism from Free Prayer to Wordsworth

Lori Branch

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In the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, a new-found love of spontaneity transformed Christian worship and revolutionized the Enlightenment's "culture of sensibility." *Rituals of Spontaneity* tells the story of how and why spontaneity came to be so revered. Using archival material and works of Bunyan, Shaftesbury, Goldsmith, Smart and Wordsworth, Branch shows that the rise of spontaneity was intimately connected to the forces of commerce and science at the dawn of the Enlightenment. By focusing on the language in which spontaneity was defended and on its psychological repercussions, *Rituals of Spontaneity* challenges previous understanding of secularization and demonstrates the deep, often troubling connections between religion and secularism in modernity.

Winner of the Book of the Year Award for the Conference on Christianity and Literature.

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