

**As Deep as it is Vast: An Introduction  
to *The Dawn of Everything* in Early  
America**

# **THE DAWN OF EVERYTHING**



## **A NEW HISTORY OF HUMANITY**



**DAVID GRAEBER AND  
DAVID WENGROW**

The Dawn of Everything provides a framework that engages with “big history” or “deep history” while avoiding explanations that flirt with biological, demographic, environmental, or technological determinism.

---

## [Bookends: Two Authors Reflect on their First Books](#)



Ultimately, books are static, material things. As historians and writers, we’re always changing, and so is the field of history.

---

## [A Minister’s Desk? Reanimating Space, Rethinking Furniture](#)



What happens when we place furniture into a context of lively and fraught interaction?

---

## [How Love Conquered a Convent: Catholicism and Gender Disorder on the 1830s Stage](#)



Pet of the Petticoats extends the reach of Anglo-Atlantic anti-Catholicism to the stage, illustrating the ways its tropes and anxieties moved across genres and into sentimental stage comedy.

---

**To Remember or to Forget: The Story of Philanthropists Catherine Williams Ferguson and Isabella Marshall Graham's Unlikely Interracial Collaboration**



Not only was women's and African Americans' public leadership new and controversial, but also, well into the 1800s, Black and white women didn't typically cooperate in charitable activity or reform efforts.

## [Bad Money and the Chemical Arts in Colonial America](#)

COINS.	Weights.			Value.	Lawful Money.	Silver Coins	Weights.			Value.			
	OL.	dw	Gr.				OL.	dw	Gr.		£	s	d
Guinea	0	5	9	10	10	28/-	Eng Crown	0	19	8 1/2	2	10	
Half D.	2	16	1/2	5	5	14/-	Half Ditto	9	16	1/4	1	5	
Moidore	6	2	2	13	10	36/-	Dollar	17	12		2	5	
Half D.	3	11		6	15	18/-	Half Ditto	8	18		1	2	6

4 Grains is one penny  
Penny is one Ounce.

Depending on one's relationship to the monetary regime, coining could either appear a heinous offense that threatened the ruling order by undermining public trust in its currency, or a creative solution to the shortage of specie across much of the Atlantic world.

## “The Greatest Eloquence”: James Cathcart and the Power of Words in Eighteenth-Century Barbary



Cathcart's moves through the slave hierarchy to a position of relative comfort and prosperity were accomplished partly through his ability to navigate—or manipulate—complex relationships and partly through the power of literacy.

---

## The Story the Torn Gown Told: Forensic Evidence and Lanah Sawyer's Prosecution of Henry Bedlow for Rape, New York, 1793



“The life of a citizen,” they reminded the all-male jury, “lies in the hands of woman.” The result made prosecuting sexual assaults among acquaintances all but impossible.

---

## [A Tale of Two Toms: On the Uses and Abuses of History](#)





While we strive to approach our discipline objectively—to maintain distance—we also want to bridge the gap between ourselves and the past. We want to understand it, to feel it, and distance makes that empathy difficult.

---

## [Can We Scan the Piggin?: Revisiting Early American Material Culture and Campus Collections across Pandemic Time](#)



To put it otherwise, we cannot naturalize or uncritically center the extant assemblage of materials. We must historicize and contextualize why certain belongings, stories, and memories are visible, and others much less so.