

Eighteenth-Century Studies 51.4- Abstracts

Paris Amanda Spies-Gans, “Exceptional, but not Exceptions: Public Exhibitions and the Rise of the Woman Artist in London and Paris, 1760–1830”

From 1760 to 1830, more than 1,300 women exhibited more than 6,000 works of art in London and Paris’ premier art exhibitions—an unprecedented surge in female artistic activity and its public reception. This article traces that transformation, which strikingly mirrors the progress of the French Revolutionary Wars, and contends that the Revolutionary era opened vital opportunities for female artists on both sides of the Channel despite cultural differences. It thus argues for a recasting of period’s historical narrative to integrate women’s omnipresence in the public, professional art world, and a reevaluation of their hitherto dominant categorization as “amateur” artists. It also challenges the historiographical argument that the Revolutionary era was principally a defeat for women in Britain and France.

Ellen R. Welch, “Diderot’s Theatrical Acoustics”

In his roles as playwright and dramatic theorist, Denis Diderot is best known for emphasizing visual techniques such as pantomime and tableaux that move the audience through the eyes alone. This article argues that sound and hearing play an equally central, if less obvious, part in Diderot’s dramaturgy, particularly with respect to matters of audience attention, sympathy with suffering characters, and the bond among spectators in the theater. Thinking about Diderot’s ideal spectator as a listening as well as a gazing body shifts the focus from the individual, subjective experience of a play to the intersubjective, sympathetic, and communal aspects of theatergoing, and therefore clarifies the stakes of the philosopher’s proposals to renovate theatrical culture.

Joseph Crawford, “‘Behindhand with their Countrymen’: Literary Culture and Economic Decline in Eighteenth-Century Exeter”

This article investigates the history of writing and printing in eighteenth-century Exeter. Writing in Exeter flourished during the same decades in which the city itself underwent a serious decline and local authors, proud of belonging to what had, historically, been one of Britain’s greatest cities, had to operate within a marketplace dominated by a metropolitan literary culture contemptuous of provincialism. Surveying the literary works written and printed in eighteenth-century Exeter, this article explores the ways in which these authors addressed the creative and logistical challenges which confronted eighteenth-century writers who lived and worked within ‘provincial’ contexts.

Damien Tricoire, “The Fabrication of the *Philosophe*: Catholicism, Court Culture, and the Origins of Enlightenment Moralism in France”

This article seeks to show that seventeenth-century moralist literature had a decisive influence on the way eighteenth-century philosophes conceived their own persona and positioned themselves in public space. It explores the fabrication of the philosophe’s persona in the milieu of moderate rigorists gathered around Jacques-Bénigne Bossuet at Louis XIV’s court. Doing this, it casts some light on the origins of the Enlightenment narrative’s central figure. It seeks to explore its history more comprehensively than has been done thus far and to give some answers to the question “why did the Enlightenment narrative emerge in France?”