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THE CLASSICAL TURN IN ENLIGHTENMENT STUDIES

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Elena Russo, *Styles of Enlightenment: Taste, Politics, and Authorship in Eighteenth-Century France* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2007)

Louisa Shea, *The Cynic Enlightenment, or Diogenes in the Salon* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2010)

Thomas M. Kavanagh, *Enlightened Pleasures: Eighteenth-Century France and the New Epicureanism* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2010)

Antiquity is back. In some respects, it is surprising it ever went away: for the last forty years, Peter Gay's magisterial survey, which connected the "little flock" of *philosophes* with "pagan" authors, has loomed large over the field of Enlightenment studies.[1] But shortly after its publication, a methodological sea change pulled the field in an opposite direction. Robert Darnton hailed this rising tide of social and cultural history in a 1971 largely critical review of Gay's two volumes.[2] The hyper-*longue durée* of Gay's historical panorama, which extended from the age of Virgil to that of Voltaire, was soon to be displaced by more focused inquiries into the history of the book, forms of enlightened sociability, and national difference.[3] Intellectual history, particularly of Gay's epic brand, soon became scarce, despite the lasting presence of Gay's two volumes on bibliographies and course syllabi.

1 Peter Gay, *The Enlightenment: An Interpretation*, 2 vols. (New York, 1966–9).

2 Robert Darnton, "In Search of the Enlightenment: Recent Attempts to Create a Social History of Ideas," *Journal of Modern History* 43 (1971), 113–32.

3 A few significant markers in this very schematic overview of the post-Gay historiography would include, respectively, Darnton's own *The Business of Enlightenment: A Publishing History of the* Encyclopédie, *1775–1800* (Cambridge, MA, 1979); Margaret Jacob, *The Radical Enlightenment: Pantheists, Freemasons, and Republicans* (London, 1981); and Roy Porter and Mikuláš Teich, eds., *The Enlightenment in National Context* (Cambridge, 1981).

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Fast-forward to the present, and the situation is nearly reversed. Not only has intellectual history staged a comeback on the scene of Enlightenment studies, but recent works are returning to the relation between the *philosophes* and their ancient forebears.[4] Where Gay posited an unbroken chain connecting classical and modern "paganism," however, these new studies approach their relation from the angle of reception, and ask instead how eighteenth-century reconstructions of antiquity informed the style, philosophy, and even conduct of Enlightenment writers. Ironically, some of these studies are anchored in the same historiographical currents that Darnton had celebrated in his criticism of Gay. Jacob Soll combined intellectual history with the history of the book to demonstrate that well-placed quotations from Tacitus shaped the reception of Machiavelli in Amelot de La Houssaye's 1683 edition of *The Prince*.[5] Caroline Winterer has drawn on cultural history to show how women in the American colonies and young republic adopted classical models in their private and public lives.[6] Both these and other recent works also reflect the current prominence of early modern intellectual history, particularly as practiced by Anthony Grafton.[7]

But the current interest in classical reception during the Enlightenment is not merely a matter of historiographical trends. To put matters bluntly, antiquity is just *there*: it is an imposing presence in Enlightenment literature, political thought, and philosophy, as well as in its fashion, style, and art. If we can speak of a classical turn in the recent literature, it is arguably less because scholars are following a new trend, and more because they are *not* following one. The works under review, for instance, were all written by literary scholars, none of whom engage particularly with current questions of historical methodology. Instead, they set their sights on an issue that simply had great historical importance and was central to how Enlightenment figures conceived of themselves and of their social roles. Because some of the key texts of the Enlightenment employ literary genres, these authors are also particularly well placed to tease out the subtleties (and many paradoxes) that characterize the reception of classical thought in the eighteenth century. In so doing, they have produced some of the finest works of intellectual history in the field.

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4 I offer a fuller account of recent scholarship in *The Enlightenment: A Genealogy* (Chicago, 2010), which also touches on some of the other topics addressed here.

5 Jacob Soll, *Publishing* The Prince: *History, Reading, and the Birth of Political Criticism* (Ann Arbor, 2005).

6 Caroline Winterer, *The Mirror of Antiquity: American Women and the Classical Tradition, 1750–1900* (Cornell, 2007).

7 See, for instance, Anthony Grafton, *Defenders of the Text: The Traditions of Scholarship in the Age of Science, 1450–1800* (Cambridge, MA, 1991); and more recently Anthony Grafton, Glenn W. Most, and Salvatore Settis, eds., *The Classical Tradition* (Cambridge, MA, 2010).

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While there are no signs of an emerging "classical school," Elena Russo's *Styles of Enlightenment* comes the closest to offering an overarching framework for interpreting the uses of antiquity in the Enlightenment. Her primary interest lies with aesthetics, but her study ranges broadly across historiography, philosophy, and social practices, while also taking in literature, theater studies, and art. This sweeping panorama not only amounts to a virtuoso performance, but serves a programmatic purpose as well. Indeed, Russo argues that aesthetic choices, rather than epistemological claims, constituted the real touchstone of Enlightenment thought. She goes about demonstrating this innovative thesis by emphasizing the central role that the *philosophes* attributed to the arts, and by showing how eighteenth-century readers evaluated works in all disciplines according to aesthetic norms.

At the heart of her study are two competing styles, the ancient and the modern. Not by coincidence, these are the same categories into which French (and European) scholars and artists divided themselves in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries. While historians had until recently portrayed the Moderns as the "good guys" in this Quarrel, and the champions of our own modern values, a series of newer studies have noted the less-appealing aspects of the Modern platform (e.g. political absolutism and religious intolerance), as well as the fact that the defenders of the Ancients often held equally "modern" views.[8] Russo extends this story up through the eighteenth century to show that it was the Ancients who ultimately triumphed as the arbiters of taste, and that their champions were none other than the *philosophes*.

Indeed, while dueling with Jesuits and government censors with one hand, the *philosophes* spent an inordinate amount of time and ink attacking *bel esprits* with the other. For their opponents, these "wits" embodied the Modern camp. More dangerously, they were also the evil twins of the *philosophes*: they frequented the same social spaces and discussed the same subjects, yet their objectives were diametrically opposed. Where the *philosophes* saw themselves as guiding the educated public toward greater enlightenment, the *bel esprits* sought merely to shine for their own personal benefit. They were not interested in truth, only in flashes of brilliance. They played the sophist to the *philosophes*' Socrates.

Underpinning their showy performance was a larger aesthetic program known as *le goût moderne*. Most intimately associated with Marivaux, this program placed great emphasis on "theatricality," defined by Russo as "manifestations of self-conscious[ness]" and the "theatrical awareness of form" (221). It was a hybrid style, mixing metaphors and registers; genealogically linked to the

[8] For the revisionist scholarship on the Quarrel see in particular Levent Yilmaz, *Le temps moderne: Variations sur les anciens et les contemporains* (Paris, 2004) ; and Larry F. Norman, *The Shock of the Ancient: Literature and History in Early Modern France* (Chicago, 2011).

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seventeenth-century *précieuses*, it was also deemed feminine, if not effeminate. Its rhetorical signature was the "sally" (*saillie*), a sudden burst of wordplay that awed, and often confused, the reader. Therein also lay its danger, in the eyes of its critics: language, for the Moderns, ran the risk of becoming purely self-referential, detached from the world of things.

Against this fast and loose style, the *philosophes* defended the *grand goût*, a "manly" style that drew explicitly on classical models and aesthetics. It imposed strict rules on tropes and terms, but most importantly demanded that language adhere to the dictates of clear, causal thinking, and not wander off on verbal escapades. The rhetorical signature of the *grand goût* was the absence of rhetoric; its proponents adhered instead to the higher norms of eloquence, which privileged artlessness over "affectation and pomp" (20). Aesthetically, practitioners of this neoclassical style aspired to produce sublime effects, fusing word and object, statement and deed.

Russo's great achievement, however, is to challenge this neat binary opposition, and to show that practice and theory were often divorced. The *philosophes* who ranted the loudest against the modern style, for instance, were often among its secret devotees. Diderot offers perhaps the best example: "when he was not perched on his pontifical soapbox," Russo comments, "he would write like a *moderne* of the first hour, in a skeptical, self-reflexive, ironic, fragmented, discontinuous, and digressive mode, a problematic style unreconcilable with sublime pathos and earnest advocacy" (261). Accordingly, she argues, the *philosophes* were "somewhat schizophrenic in their perception of themselves and of their function as writers" (21). Montesquieu's *Considérations sur les causes de la grandeur des Romains et sur leur décadence* (1734) presented a "sublime" portrait of Rome as "the ideal of a society in which sovereignty was achieved effortlessly and unselfconsciously" (172), yet the writer whom Mme de Tencin called *mon petit romain* was also accused of indulging in "*Saillies*, hyperbolic exaggeration, and a desire to astonish," traits which were "typical of worldly conversation" (178). Even Voltaire, whose crusade against bad taste took second place only to his crusade against religious intolerance, ended up in the paradoxical position of demanding an end to those very literary practices that distinguished his own works (129–30).

Throughout her book, Russo highlights how the *philosophes*' distaste for the modern style has wide-ranging consequences for how we understand the Enlightenment writ large. From a political perspective, their adherence to classical norms of taste could translate into a generalized distrust of popular judgment, not only in aesthetic, but also in public, matters. On the plane of philosophy, this same opposition to the modern style led the *philosophes* to view imagination with skepticism, and to privilege judgment as the sole locus of reason (152–3). Finally, with regard to historiography, writers emulating the sublime style of the

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Ancients presented the past as an object of admiration and marvel, often reveling in its very foreignness (182–8).

Ultimately, by the end of the eighteenth century, it looked as though the *goût moderne* might be staging a comeback—quite literally, since it was on the stages of the Comédie-Française and the *foires* that Russo finds a resurgence of the theatricality associated with this style. One of the most rewarding qualities of Russo's study is indeed how she unravels the remarkable sophistication of popular attempts—emblematized by the boisterous *parterre*—to mock and delegitimize the often pompous *anticomanie* of high Enlightenment writers. Yet by the late eighteenth century, the *philosophes* had the artistic and political establishment on their side: as Russo notes in her conclusion, it is no small irony that on the eve of the French Revolution modern writers could be painted as hopelessly unfashionable (i.e. unmodern) by a triumphalist neoclassical clique. The old vision of a decaying *ancien régime* society that rotted from the inside out misses the key fact that, even before the Revolution, statesmen and politicians were already dressing up as Romans. Antiquity was the order of the day.

But antiquity was not just a collection of homogeneous stage props; it encompassed its own set of philosophical and aesthetic tensions. Louisa Shea's *The Cynic Enlightenment* focuses on the fortunes of one particular strand of classical thought in the Enlightenment. Instead of proposing a single definition, however, Shea underscores the ways in which "the Cynic" received a variety of different, even contradictory, incarnations. This instability of meanings was not exceptional: as the reader learns from Shea's insightful introduction on the reception history of Cynicism, every period onward from the Renaissance reinvented the Cynic to fit its needs. The Cynic thus emerges as a volatile and kaleidoscopic figure, a philosophical Humpty-Dumpty who is never put back together in a completely satisfying way.

The Enlightenment chapter of Shea's history begins with the attempt, in the mid-eighteenth century, to transform the disreputable Cynic into an acceptable member of worldly society. Shea locates this effort in Jean-le-Rond d'Alembert's 1753 *Essai sur la société des gens de lettres et des grands*. Here d'Alembert calls for a "new Diogenes" to speak truth to power, implicitly breaking contemporary norms of politeness, yet without going so far as to *épater la salonnière*. Indeed, the *philosophes* were well aware that such a stance could unleash uncontrollable forces that might disrupt the very society in which they thrived: "Admiration for Cynic speech was carefully balanced by the warning *cave canem*, 'beware the bite of the sharp-fanged dog'" (37). Some authors took it upon themselves to defang the Cynic completely: a case in point was Pierre le Guay de Prémontval, who pursued and elaborated on d'Alembert's proposal in his 1754 *Le Diogène de D'Alembert ou Diogène décent*. The German playwright Christoph Martin Wieland, in his *1770 Sokrates mainomenos* (Socrates Out of His Mind) similarly depicted Diogenes as

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a charming, tasteful young man ("Get out of my sun—if it please your majesty," reads one of Shea's witty subtitles). The very fact that the Cynic could appear under such a "decent" guise, however, is in itself remarkable for his intellectual history.

The earlier image of the scandalous and shocking Diogenes did not vanish, either. In what is perhaps the best chapter in her book, Shea shows how these competing versions of the Cynic philosopher slugged it out in Diderot's *Le neveu de Rameau* (most likely written in the 1760s). The crazed nephew—*Lui*—is often identified with Diogenes, first and foremost by himself ("I am as shameless as [Diogenes]," the nephew proclaims early in the book). As Shea reminds us, however, a second Diogenes appears toward the end of the text, this time as the ideal counterpart of *Moi*, the Diderot character. This second Cynic is "self-sufficient, self-contained, and virtuous" (64); he is not without recalling d'Alembert's respectable Diogenes. But even he does not have the last word in the joust between *Lui* and *Moi*: in the end, the nephew's powerful vision of a parasitical world derails *Moi*'s struggle to exempt the philosopher from its rules. (Shea suggests that a third ideal of the Cynic philosopher emerges out of the conflict between the first two, but she does not define him very clearly.)

It was, of course, another philosopher, Jean-Jacques Rousseau, whom contemporaries most commonly labeled a Cynic. But Shea rightfully points out that Rousseau's actual interest in Cynicism was marginal and ambiguous. On one occasion, he rejected Diogenes as an eccentric; on another, he declared, "je me fis cynique . . . par honte." Shea ultimately argues that Rousseau did adopt a kind of "Cynic primitivism," and suggests that his originality lies in his desire to *live* his philosophical beliefs, rather than simply to declare them. This may be true, though her reading of Rousseau's retreat from Paris "Cynic style" (101) does not address the classical republican arguments that Rousseau was also making at the time (in the first *Discourse*, and as related in the *Confessions*). In either case, Shea underscores how Rousseau's "Cynic" moment was short-lived: with the exception of a passing reference in the *Rêveries*, none of his mature works reveal any particular sympathy for the school or style of Diogenes. His "Cynicism" lay primarily in the eyes of his opponents.

The pivotal author in Shea's account of Enlightenment Cynicism is Sade. With Sade, we pass from an interpretation of Cynicism that remains wedded to ancient models to our modern, more common understanding of (lowercase) cynicism as "disillusioned self-interest" (106). This transformation, Shea argues, is not so much due to a break with Enlightenment accounts of Cynicism, but rather to Sade's taking them to a logical, and paradoxical, extreme. Indeed, like Rameau's nephew, Sade's characters also challenge traditional authority and polite norms in the name of nature. But the empiricist and sensualist redemption of the bodily senses is amplified here to become a full-throated celebration of

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personal *jouissance*. While recognizing that Sade's hedonism far surpasses Cynic licentiousness (which was justified as the mere fulfillment of physical needs), Shea suggests that the preferred mode of Sadean sex—sodomy—nonetheless renews with the Cynic ambition to provoke and "use the body to break social taboos" (114). Of course, there is more at play in Sade's sex games than simple Cynicism: Shea readily acknowledges that other philosophical currents, such as Epicureanism, color the discourse and practice of Sade's libertines. Nonetheless, a Cynic element dominates in Sade's writings, particularly in the case of the "anomalous" political tract inserted into *La philosophie dans le boudoir*. Like the ancient Cynic Republic, Sade's utopia is a *reductio ad absurdum* of French republican discourse. It aims not to found, but to critique.

This anti-foundational, satirical ambition of modern cynicism reappears in Shea's three final chapters, which deal with the modern historiography of both Cynicism and the Enlightenment. More particularly, Shea turns to their surprising conjunction in the work of Peter Sloterdijk and Michel Foucault, who independently championed Cynic thought in the early 1980s. To explain this odd coincidence, Shea shows how Cynicism, which had largely been neglected by nineteenth- and early twentieth-century historians of philosophy, emerged in the 1970s as a "third way" (198) in the battle over the legacy of the Enlightenment. Where the followers of Jürgen Habermas, on the one hand, drew inspiration from Kant and considered the Enlightenment an "unfinished project" that was essential for constructing a free and just society, post-structuralist thinkers, on the other, aligning themselves with the Frankfurt school, viewed the Enlightenment as inseparable from the ambition of political domination. For Sloterdijk and Foucault, Cynicism provided a means of redeeming the Enlightenment project, by keeping the philosopher on the outskirts of society rather than at the heart of power. Where the *philosophes* (minus Sade) sought to make Diogenes palatable to polite society by cleaning up his act, Sloterdijk and Foucault wanted the philosopher, quite literally, to go to the dogs. By incarnating in their very lifestyle the principles of brazen speech, they believed they could thus both "legitimate Cynicism" and "contain its potential nihilism" (199).

Shea's book is a remarkably subtle and sophisticated work of intellectual history, as well as of literary scholarship. It also offers an important counterpoint to Michael Sonenscher's recent discussion of Enlightenment Cynicism in *Sans-Culottes*, as Sonenscher misses the nuances of both Diderot and Rousseau's positions (most notably Diderot's effort to reclaim Diogenes from the Nephew's grip).[9] While Shea's intelligent and original treatment of Cynicism is exemplary, it may be regretted that she does not bring quite the same investigative spirit

[9] Michael Sonenscher, *Sans-Culottes: An Eighteenth-Century Emblem in the French Revolution* (Princeton, 2009), 142.

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to the other topic in her title, the Enlightenment. This is in part due to an unfortunate tendency among literary scholars to ignore the recent scholarship on the Enlightenment produced by historians. In this particular case, Shea also settles on Dorinda Outram's wishy-washy description of the Enlightenment as a "series of debates" (137), a view that proves heuristically beneficial for Shea's own analysis of Cynicism's different values, but is less than satisfactory when the spotlight no longer shines on Diogenes. Clearly, not all claims were equal or even plausible in the debates between *philosophes*. Much as the Scylla of reification threatens the scholar, so too does the Charybdis of indeterminacy.

Thomas Kavanagh's latest book, *Enlightened Pleasures*, seeks precisely to pinpoint and define one of the central preoccupations—and pastimes—of the *philosophes*. An expert on libertine literature and the culture of gambling in France, Kavanagh argues in this brilliant and original work of intellectual, literary, and art history that French Enlightenment writers crafted a new philosophy of pleasure that synthesized strands of Epicureanism and Stoicism. This is a surprising claim, as these philosophical movements had been sworn enemies during antiquity. While Kavanagh's concept of an "Epicurean Stoicism" reflects in part his own reconstruction of Enlightenment theories of pleasures, it is not simply a label that he applies to works which could be just as easily defined without recourse to classical philosophy. As he demonstrates in the introduction, the *Encyclopédie* entries on "Epicuréisme" and "Stoicisme" (both by Diderot) reveal how these antagonistic currents of ancient thought found common cause in the eighteenth century through their joint opposition to Christian dualism: "Beneath their surface differences," Kavanagh argues, "Epicureanism and Stoicism share a materialist philosophy that presupposes continuity between the physical world of things and human world of consciousness" (4–5). From an Enlightenment perspective, they shared the same objective as well. Kavanagh quotes Diderot's defense of Epicurus: "Portrayed as an apologist for debauchery, he devoted his life to a constant practice of all virtues, especially that of temperance" (4).

The eight chapters of the book offer elegant, persuasive, and highly original case studies for this thesis. Kavanagh is a master at retrieving works from the *oubliettes* of literary history and showing how the formal and narrative aspects that render these texts distasteful to our modern literary palettes are precisely what makes them fascinating for the cultural and intellectual historian. His plot summaries are lively and analytical, avoiding the unfortunate tendency among some literary critics today to compose long-winded book reports. Most importantly, his close readings challenge many of the commonplaces both about libertine literature and Enlightenment philosophy.

One of the dominant themes that appears throughout these chapters is the role that reading itself plays in libertine fictions. Some novels, such as Jean-Baptiste Jourdan's *Le guerrier philosophe* (1744), dismantle the moral claims made in

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favor of exemplary fiction, by emphasizing their powerlessness in the face of passion (11). Others, such as Jacques Rochette de La Morlière's *Angola, histoire indienne* (1746), depict the libertine novel as an instruction manual for would-be couples—a characterization that allows Kavanagh to challenge Jean-Marie Goulemot's description of the libertine novel as (in the words of Jean-Jacques Rousseau) "books to be read with one hand" (41–2). Kavanagh could have added that *Angola*, in this regard, renews an older view of medieval romances, one which landed Paolo and Francesca in Dante's *Inferno* ("One day for pleasure we were reading/About Lancelot, and how love captured him . . . That day we read no farther"), and which later served as a subtitle for Boccacio's *Decameron* ("Prince Galahad," a reference to the book Paolo and Francesca were reading). Finally, books read in solitude do not only lead to solitary pleasures: a diet of pornographic novels, capped by a painting portraying *The Loves of Mars and Venus*, led the eponymous heroine of *Thérèse philosophe* (1748) to abandon herself to her noble lover.

These works can rightfully be described as Epicurean, as they seek less to celebrate pleasure at all costs than to integrate it within an economy of desire. *Thérèse philosophe*, most likely authored by the marquis Boyer d'Argens, offers a paradigmatic example, as the main contention of the book is that "sexual pleasure must be acknowledged as the body's legitimate need" in order to achieve "the Stoic ideal of achieving equilibrium within the self" (58). Thérèse is not introduced to Sadian orgies, but taught to avoid penetration (for fear of pregnancy) and to prefer solitary means for assuaging her desires.

Kavanagh's interest lies not only with the cultural redemption of pleasure during the Enlightenment, but also with its new epistemological role. This philosophical importance of pleasure, he suggests, appears most clearly in theories of aesthetics. In a mesmerizing chapter on "The Esthetics of Pleasure," Kavanagh examines the fascinating connection between the abbé Jean-Baptiste Dubos, author of the hugely influential *Réflexions critiques sur la poésie et la peinture*, and the painter François Boucher, notorious for his sensual and often sexualized depictions of female figures. Ever since he first exhibited his paintings at the Parisian *salons*, critics—Diderot in chief—have expressed discomfort with Boucher's apparent depravity. For Kavanagh, by contrast, Boucher is the perfect exemplar of Epicurean Stoicism. By simultaneously stimulating the senses through hyperrealist depictions of the flesh *and* framing these sensual portraits in a highly unrealistic fashion, "Boucher's images open the way to a utopia of visual perception impossible within the real . . . Boucher's spectators, scrutinizing his images, are offered the intense pleasure of a desire born in sight but impervious to the anguish of referral" (93).

The theorist behind Boucher's aesthetics of pleasure, Kavanagh convincingly argues, is Dubos. His 1719 treatise made pleasure, not abstract aesthetic principles,

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the decisive factor in determining the value of a work of art. Kavanagh underscores the dramatic shift that this "radical step" signaled (74), through which the audience, not the academic expect, became the sole arbiter of taste. All genres of painting, and not just the high genre of history painting, could now compete for the viewer's attention—and wallet. Indeed, this "democratization" of taste had the effect of turning the art world into a free-market economy.

But Kavanagh resists highbrow dismissals of rococo art as merely catering to the crass nouveaux riches. Instead he develops a sophisticated theory of rococo semiotics, in which a *cultural* code, which draws on pre-existing iconographic associations (e.g. phallic cucumbers), is supplemented by a *narrative* one, which each individual painting produces. These codes, as Kavanagh illustrates via a series of astute analyses of Boucher and Fragonard paintings, do not always work in tandem—in fact, one of the specificities of rococo painting may well be the way in which it short circuits this semiotic structure. Boucher's alluring and sexualized figures address the senses with an immediacy that the narrative context paradoxically places at a distance.

This neo-Epicurean theory of pleasure was not without its critics, even in the Enlightenment camp. Chief among them was Rousseau, who saw in the celebration of individual pleasure a threat to the well-being of society as a whole. In a chapter entitled "Rousseau's Eudemony of Liberty," Kavanagh shows how Rousseau pioneered the modern split between the (good) happiness of the many and the (louche) pleasures of the few. Yet even Rousseau could not resist the Epicurean tendencies of his age, as his own retreat late in life into the "solipsistic" pleasures of *rêveries* attests.

Kavanagh's luxuriant study is particularly satisfying for its sustained and patient engagement with texts—including many not mentioned here—and its multilayered approach to intellectual history. While the book has a clear unifying thesis, its contents are not subjected to an *esprit de système*; each chapter has its own logic and coherence. Understandably, then, certain large-scale questions are left unresolved. First, it is not always clear what degree of pleasure Kavanagh's writers, artists, and theorists pursued. At times, he suggests that the goal of Epicurean Stoicism was to maximize pleasure, on the libertine model, whereas on other occasions he showcases utilitarian arguments that sought merely to "decriminalize" it. The Abbé T. . . of *Thérèse philosophe*, for instance, places sex on the same level as urination—no more, no less. While these two views can no doubt be situated on the same spectrum, it is not entirely clear which one is more representative; even Dubos and Boucher arguably fall on opposite ends.

The second question is more philosophical. One point of intersection between Epicureanism and Stoicism, Kavanagh informs us, is their shared "materialist philosophy," which he defines as the belief in a continuity between the senses and consciousness (4). But he also recognizes that Stoicism retained a metaphysical

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horizon (the belief in a "divine fire," 5), whereas Epicureanism was fundamentally atheistic. Which of these competing models corresponds to the Enlightenment version? Kavanagh clearly tends toward the latter, but then how can Epicurean Stoicism be the "signature worldview of French Enlightenment" (52), if it leaves out, say, Voltaire and Rousseau?

These questions highlight the richness and importance of Kavanagh's subject, which will hopefully inspire future scholars. There is, however, another theme to Kavanagh's work that can serve as a fitting conclusion to this review. Throughout his book, Kavanagh develops an argument that Enlightenment authors had a fundamentally *literary* conception of philosophy. By this, he means not only that they employed literary genres to explore philosophical themes, but more importantly that they viewed literature as providing a more certain route to truth than philosophy. "As we live our lives," Kavanagh asks in the guise of an eighteenth-century reader, "should we do so as readers of philosophy or as readers of novels? Should life be approached with the expectations the reader brings to a philosophical treatise, or with the expectations one brings to a novel?" (22). What these questions, and the individual works that Kavanagh analyzes, underscore is how repeated exposure to contingencies, temptation, and novelty can break down even the most robust system of moral philosophy. In an earlier work, Kavanagh uncovered how libertine authors focused on the perils of "the moment" in their accounts of seduction.[10] Even the most virtuous of maidens or wives will experience momentary lapses of will, which practiced libertines can exploit. *Enlightened Pleasures* generalizes this insight, building a persuasive case that some of the most important insights of eighteenth-century philosophy are in fact to be found in novels.

[10] Kavanagh, *Esthetics of the Moment: Literature and Art in the French Enlightenment* (Philadelphia, 1996).

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