

EIGHTEENTH-CENTURY STUDIES

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Editor’s Note

This is my last issue as editor of *Eighteenth-Century Studies*. It has been an honor and a privilege to view the scholarship in the field from this vantage point. I would like to thank the executive board and the membership of the American Society for Eighteenth-Century Studies for entrusting me with this responsibility for the last eight years.

harm a woman's long-term health. Medical discourse, Wu argues, was philogynistic: healthy childbirth was essential to social order, women's long-term health was precious, and *fuke* medicine flourished in consequence. But the new understanding of gestation as naturally healthy also placed a heavy onus on women to monitor their own bodies, and to control the emotions and impulses that were considered primary factors in triggering pathologies (here again, the parallels with contemporary biomedicine are intriguing). In tune with other feminist histories—including Dorothy Ko's *Teachers of the Inner Chambers* (1994), Susan Mann's *Precious Records* (1997), Grace Fong's *Herself an Author* (2008), and my own *Technology and Gender* (1997)—Wu's superb study highlights the importance that elite discourses in late imperial China placed upon women (or, at any rate, gentlewomen) as moral subjects: no longer victims of their own biology, but active participants in the reproduction of the social and moral order.

ANDREI POP, *Universität Basel*

Eva Kernbauer, *Der Platz des Publikums: Modelle für Kunstöffentlichkeit im 18. Jahrhundert* (Cologne: Böhlau, 2011). Pp. 338. €39.90.

“In Berlin the thing is now called *Publicum*,” wrote Gottsched in 1760, suggesting the novelty of the word, which Kleist fifty years later still rendered as the Italianate “*Publico*.” There had been from the beginning a welter of theories of what the “public” is, and of the human groups picked out by these definitions. For the public was no idle matter; it was held to be judge and consumer, seat of aesthetic and of political validation. This ideal, which mirrors the rise and fall of the Enlightenment, has come to define the art history of the eighteenth century, from Thomas Crow to Krzysztof Pomian, sealing the neglect of eighteenth-century art in Italy, Iberia, and Eastern Europe, regions not yet equipped with an all-authoritative Public distinct from courtly and church patronage.

Eva Kernbauer's *Platz des Publikums* [*The Place of the Public*] sums up this work from a feminist perspective that subtly changes the subject. Despite fine feminist studies of the period and of individual figures, the mid-level topic of the art public remains largely the province of men. This has had typical results: the lionization of one theory, artist, or public, pushed to extremes of idiosyncrasy (e.g., Michael Fried's Diderot); and an anxious search for the “right” public, one that a Jacques-Louis David might grasp by the shoulder and say, “come, we have work to do.” Instead, Kernbauer coolly charts models of the public advanced in Paris, London, and Scotland. The public as a soothing abstraction akin to the “rising standard of living” is not tolerated: “Whenever there is talk in the eighteenth century of the ‘enlightened public’ or ‘publique éclairé,’ it is hard to draw the boundaries between polite evasion, euphemism, irony, and *oratio pro domo* [self-defense]” (24). Kernbauer's prose is spiky and learned. Her main insight—that “the public” is not a goal synonymous with modern art, but a means on a par with the best propaganda painting, aiming to form political allegiances—is of broad value. That said, however, it is odd that her penultimate chapter on the staging of publicity turns into a monograph on Jacques-Louis David's unfinished but wildly ambitious *Tennis Court Oath* (1791–). Given Kernbauer's citation of

the claim that Thomas Crow's book on the French public is really a preamble to the 1784 *Oath of the Horatii* (12), one supposes she is comfortable with having her book read as a preamble to David's second oath. The interpretation, in any case, is plausible and elegant, and shows that Kernbauer can write as well about pictures as she does about the art public. The book ends with a brief chapter on the birth of the museum, ironically exposing the respectful silence that artworks are granted there, which is an enemy to thought.

At the book's center is a fascinating discussion of "multitudes"—a term some think invented by Antonio Negri. Kernbauer's research is impressive, touching on prominent critics but also on the London daily press and academic *proces verbaux*. Despite this erudition, Rousseau goes unmentioned; what we get instead are up-to-date insights from Claude Lefort and Jacques Rancière, meant to make us attentive to the fact that eighteenth-century art was *contemporary* art. (The cover image by Raymond Pettibon, who astonishingly cites an eighteenth-century critic, makes the same point.) Kernbauer is right to emphasize the actuality of her history, but she is also right to complain about art-historical use of Habermas's *Öffentlichkeit* [public sphere] as a "black-box" into which paintings are thrown to get a reassuring result (20). The solution is not to abandon recent theory, but to think through how it relates to what historical actors actually thought. For instance, Turgot's notion of *la masse totale*, and Rousseau's distinction between a legitimate *volonté générale* and a brute *volonté de tous*, might illuminate the contrast between ideal and real publics that Kernbauer's "multitude" exemplifies.

Such criticism should not be overdrawn, however; what interests Kernbauer is not the coherence of theories, but their effects. Her binocular focus on Britain and France is sharp, as is her sense of relevance. The book should be translated, and will stimulate debate. In what remains, I focus on a text central to her thesis, David Hume's "Of the Standard of Taste" (1757).

The discussion of Hume comes just after the chapter on the multitudes, and gives theoretical weight to Kernbauer's historical thesis. Academic theory sought in the public not free speech, but a stamp of approval on official art production; however, the flesh-and-blood public did not play along. The discourse thus walked a tightrope between populism and the need to groom the public for appreciating the "right" kind of art. Hume's "Of the Standard of Taste" cuts through this morass. Hume advances the conventionalist thesis that there is such a standard, but that it consists in what experts take to be good, their expertise in turn consisting in habitual acquaintance with the goods graded. Critics have purported to see a circle here: "The critic decides what is good art, but good art is what the critic decides it is!"

In contrast, Kernbauer points out that Hume tries to demonstrate the objectivity of such judgments, citing an anecdote from *Don Quixote* in which two experts are ridiculed for identifying different tastes in a sample of wine: one says "iron," the other "leather." On investigation, it turns out that a key on a leather thong had been submerged in the barrel. So expertise can be objective knowledge, although it cannot always be verified, and is not unerring. Kernbauer identifies this result with a Kantian regulative ideal: the standard of taste is never given, but relies on the "feeling of a norm-giving community" (217). And the latter, when specified by Hume's contemporaries, was, as Kernbauer shows with pitiless clarity, an elite outfit excluding women and those who worked for a living—in fact, it could have excluded Hume. Hume's ideal is less restrictive because more elusive, and so Kernbauer is content to end where he begins: with the ironic insight that the only thing agreed upon about taste is that there is no agreement.

It is convenient, in reading Hume, to end with a relativity of taste that is now orthodox. However, this cannot be deduced from the social critique of taste. The wine anecdote may evoke an elite milieu, but it does not show that taste belongs there (imagine a proletarian version with a barrel of ale), only that taste is a subjective judgment of what may be known objectively. The wine experts rightly identified iron and leather, but not the key; aesthetics does not ground itself. It is an unstable creature of habit, but like most habits it can be strengthened: by education, especially self-education. From this it is a small step to Mary Wollstonecraft's argument that whatever the difference between the sexes, women should be allowed to develop their abilities to a maximum.

To this positive training there is a negative pendant, the shedding of prejudice. This, Hume allows, is difficult, and in some cases dangerous, as when moral standards are suspended in an effort to understand a distant culture. Hume's moral about the standard of taste is a historical one: time, as the summation of habit and judgment, makes taste converge in the long run as it cannot among contemporaries, however like minded. Homer is universally acclaimed, but one doesn't know yet about Congreve. The point is valid; we have only to substitute a modern author: Coetzee, for instance. According to Hume, the critic is more likely to be right if well versed in both contemporary art and the art of the past. For history tends to fish out the key from the barrel.

CAROLE SARGENT, *Georgetown University*

Mark Stoye, *The Black Legend of Prince Rupert's Dog: Witchcraft and Propaganda during the English Civil War* (Exeter: University of Exeter Press; Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2011). \$85.00.

"Who is Prince Rupert?" asks an anonymous 1643 writer in *The New Interpreter*: answering that, thanks to the presence of his mysterious companion, he is "a witch, an incubus, and a Devill" (114). So went much of the flurry of allegations surrounding Prince Rupert of the Rhine, Charles I's nephew and a prominent figure in the English Civil War, and Boy, his "necromantic dogge." Early modern historian Mark Stoye has gathered pamphlets, ballads, satires, news items, memoirs, dialogues, letters, images, and mock elegies to piece together the truth behind the legend of the famous dog that accompanied his prince into battle, dying at Marston Moor in 1644.

Boy was probably a white standard poodle, a then-exotic breed all but unknown in 1640s England except among aristocrats who collected them as elegant yet strangely sinister curiosities. Hack writers on both Parliamentary and Royalist sides enlisted Boy as a political symbol, and the poodle became the antihero of poem and ballad. When enemies accused Rupert of being a bulletproof witch, Boy became his shape-shifting familiar. Dogs were the most common animals to be suspected as imps, but the book also features the devilish attributes of monkeys, rabbits, ferrets, and cats; Stoye engagingly tracks how Boy's public reception illuminates larger changing patterns of witch belief at the start of the Civil War.