

place alongside a reinvestment in other ancient philosophical traditions, Epicurean and Stoic materialism in particular. If it is not always clear, however, where Cynicism begins and other kinds of philosophical attachment end, Shea shows with great care and intelligence how it is the very ambiguity of the Cynical legacy that gives it its critical purchase on more genteel—and teleologically inclined—traditions. Cynicism is also, as Shea demonstrates by way of her analyses of Sloterdijk and Foucault, a means of living otherwise. The doggedness of the attempts, by writers such as d’Alembert, Diderot, and Wieland, to tame Diogenes suggest the extent to which the Enlightenment as critical inheritance becomes the product of the very divisions that its exponents appear to want, most urgently, to extinguish.

Natania Meeker is associate professor of French and Comparative Literature at the University of Southern California; her current research project focuses on libertine femininity and the making of modernity.

Thomas M. Kavanagh. *Enlightened Pleasures: Eighteenth-Century France and the New Epicureanism*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2010. x+254pp. US\$45. ISBN 978-0-300-14094-1.

Thomas Kavanagh has written extensively on eighteenth-century France, on its libertine literature and esthetics, and on its culture of gambling. His latest book provides him with another intriguing, elusive object of inquiry, creating an original oeuvre that provides a different narrative of the Age of Voltaire, away from the pessimistic version of Max Horkheimer and Theodor W. Adorno, or the idealistic version of Ernst Cassirer. Kavanagh returns to what he would call the original “French story” of the French Enlightenment, his preferred preoccupation: pleasure. He does so by probing the classical heritage of this notion in the eighteenth century. It is what he calls the Enlightenment’s new Epicureanism that Kavanagh meticulously examines in this rich, concise book, not the libertinage perceived more commonly as sexual licence but the recasting of it as an exceptional synthesis of Epicureanism and Stoicism. This book is divided into eight chapters covering a variety of known and under-studied texts (Jourdan, Mirabeau), the visual arts, and the erotic theatre, a welcome addition.

Chapter 1 offers a new reading of a turbulent, little-known memoir-novel, *Le Guerrier philosophe* by Jean-Baptiste Jourdan. This hard-to-follow novel (a detriment to this chapter that opens the book) narrates a story that establishes, Kavanagh argues, the primacy of the experience of love, of “the evanescence of pleasure” (16). The characters are repeatedly confronted with the renunciation of Stoic principles, with reason.

Chapter 2 is devoted to La Morlière's oriental tale *Angola*. The tale relates a story about "coupling," understood as "a practice of pleasures sought and found within a conviviality" (34). Kavanagh unveils the various tools with which the novel inspires pleasure, especially the mirroring apparatus that reverberates all the way to the reader. Comparing Rousseau's *Julie* and *Angola* in that light, the author stresses the differences of ideology between the two novels. Fantasies and pleasure are substituted by Rousseau with the imagination and sentiment.

In his next chapter, Kavanagh studies a perfect novel for his thesis, *Thérèse philosophe*. Nowhere in libertine literature is the Epicurean philosophy better articulated. The character of the Abbé who becomes Thérèse's mentor is of the essence. His Spinozan speech with its distinctive precepts determines the course of the erotic education of the heroine. Kavanagh examines the various parts of Boyer d'Argens's loose narration and follows Thérèse's trajectory from fear to full consciousness of pleasure, realized as "exchange with another" (65). Pleasure is then transformed as *volupté*.

Considering the role of pleasure in the visual arts, Kavanagh devotes an entire chapter to the eighteenth century's primary suspect, François Boucher. But it is by way of Abbé Du Bos that Boucher's innovation about the depiction of pleasure is studied. Kavanagh shows how Du Bos, radically putting the viewer's pleasure first, creates the conditions for the success and marketability of Boucher's productions. It is also from Du Bos's *Critical Reflections*, according to the author, that Boucher will derive a technique of representation of pleasure that is immediate and intense. Reviewing a number of the artist's paintings, Kavanagh replaces Boucher expertly within the sensationist aesthetics that makes him a more complex painter of rococo, rescued from Diderot's harsh judgement. He becomes instead the great manipulator of colour and form, the magician of *plaisir pur*.

In that new landscape, chapter 5 considers the inescapable case of Jean-Jacques Rousseau. Kavanagh recognizes the challenge in the face of Rousseau's "shaming of pleasure" and its substitution by liberty (103). What will be the positioning of the author of the *Confessions* vis-à-vis this emerging "legitimacy of pleasure" (103) in the century? To resolve this dilemma, he reconsiders Rousseau's philosophy through the concept of "eudemony" (well-being), where the alliance of pleasure and happiness appears more credible. The challenge of this chapter was to wrestle with Rousseau's separation of liberty (as collective) from pleasure (reserved nostalgically for the solitary individual). Going back to Hesiod's *Works and the Days*, Kavanagh offers a step-by-step analysis of the *Second Discourse*, explaining the different phases of (secular) human history and Rousseau's establishing of liberty as a new religion.

The dramatic consequence of this history is that eudemony is found only in the solitary state of the individual, indeed the man of nature portrayed in *Reveries of a Solitary Walker*.

In the following chapter, Kavanagh turns to Choderlos de Laclos and examines his Epicureanism in his little-known essay *On the Education of Women*. Focusing on Laclos's debt to Rousseau, Kavanagh also shows that Laclos's preoccupation is "natural woman," a supplement to Rousseau's hypothesis, and with a gender-specific historical attention. The question of pleasure emerges as a result of that history, when women see it as a way to tactically reverse the oppression of men over them. It is in light of this essay that Kavanagh decides to read Laclos's famous novel, *Les Liaisons dangereuses*, particularly the predominant role of women and the self-fashioning of Mme de Merteuil, her singular askesis and tactical self-control.

Kavanagh addresses the legacy of Rousseau in the next chapter with a novel by Victor Boniface Mirabeau, *La Morale des sens* (1781), that he also compares with *Les Liaisons dangereuses*, its almost contemporary. But straying from sentiment and introspection, Kavanagh locates Mirabeau's Epicureanism in what the novel highlights: surface over depth, the experience of the senses, and the body. Mirabeau writes a novel of circumstances instead of subjectivity, with the narrator emphasizing event over introspection. "They are only feelings," proclaims the narrator in a scene of seduction. In the same manner, the novel parodies the novels of the century, the libertine as well as the sentimental, and ends up deconstructing types and orders, replacing them with roles and performances.

The final chapter, the most intriguing in the book, is on the little-studied erotic theatre of the eighteenth century. Kavanagh revisits the denigration associated with that theatre in early criticism, and he provides a brief history of this minor genre. Those plays were staged in *petites maisons* and brothels, mixing actors and prostitutes. In the rest of the chapter, he analyses a sample of these plays (by Collé, Grandval père, Caylus) and concludes with *The Spirit of Manners* (1789) by MÉRARD de Saint-Just, which is, for Kavanagh, the masterpiece of the genre.

This original effort at grasping the heterogeneity of ideas of pleasure achieved in the eighteenth century is to be applauded. Scholarly, challenging, and pleasant at the same time, *Enlightened Pleasures* should reach its goal defined by the doctrine of pleasure as communication and conviviality. Kavanagh brings pleasure out of "the dark side" he mentions at the beginning of the book, a side that too often attempts to entomb it.

Pierre Saint-Amand is professor of French Studies and comparative literature at Brown University.