The Enlightened Mind

Education in the Long Eighteenth Century

Edited by

Amanda Strasik
Eastern Kentucky University

Series on the History of Art

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About the Editor

Amanda Strasik is an Associate Professor of Art History at Eastern Kentucky University. She received her Ph.D. in eighteenth- and nineteenth-century European art history from the University of Iowa in 2016. Her research focuses on representations of royalty, childhood and family relationships, and issues of gender identity in French art during the long eighteenth century. Strasik has received numerous grants and fellowships to conduct research in France at the Musée du Louvre, the National Museum of the History of Education in Rouen, the Palace of Versailles, as well as The Frick Collection in New York City. She has presented her work at the Art Institute of Chicago, The Cedar Rapids Museum of Art, and conferences for the American Society for Eighteenth-Century Studies and the Historians of Eighteenth-Century Art and Architecture, where she served on the executive board as the organization's first secretary. Strasik's scholarly publications explore notions of female agency in eighteenth-century French genre painting and portraiture and have appeared in *Women and French Studies*, *New Perspectives on the Eighteenth Century, Art Inquiries*, and, most recently, *Eighteenth-Century Life* with Duke University Press.

About the Contributors

Dorothy Johnson

Roy J. Carver Professor of Art History
The University of Iowa

Dorothy Johnson is Roy J. Carver Professor of Art History at the University of Iowa. She received her Ph.D. from the University of California, Berkeley, where she later taught as visiting professor. Her area of specialization is eighteenth and nineteenth-century French and European art. She has published articles on Chardin, the Romantic child, Rousseau and landscape painting, myth in French art, David d'Angers, Delacroix, Géricault, Jacques-Louis David, and most recently, on art and anatomy in France. She is the author of *Jacques-Louis David: Art in Metamorphosis* (Princeton University Press, 1993), *Jacques-Louis David: the Farewell of Telemachus and Eucharis* (Getty Museum Monograph Series, 1997) and is editor and contributing author of *Jacques-Louis David: New Perspectives* (University of Delaware Press, 2006). Her book, *David to Delacroix: the Rise of Romantic Mythology* (UNC Press) appeared in 2011 and won the Choice Outstanding Academic Title Award. Her articles and essays have appeared in *The Art Bulletin*, *Art History*, *Gazette des Beaux-Arts*, *Eighteenth-Century Studies*, *Master Drawings*, *The Cambridge Companion to Delacroix*, *Studies in Voltaire and the Eighteenth Century*, among others. Recent essays in edited volumes include "The Body Speaks: Anatomical Narratives in French Enlightenment Sculpture" (in *Body Narratives. Motion and Emotion in the French Enlightenment*, Brepols Press, 2017), "Visceral Visions: Art, Pedagogy, and Politics in Revolutionary France", in *Bellies, bowels, and entrails in the Eighteenth Century* (Manchester University Press, 2018), "Food for Thought: Consuming and Digesting as Political Metaphor in French Satirical Prints", in *Gut Feeling and Digestive Health in Nineteenth-Century Literature, History and Culture*", (Palgrave, 2018) and "Fabulations of the Flesh: Géricault and the Praxis of Art and Anatomy", in *Visualizing the Body in Art, Anatomy and Medicine since 1800: Models, Modelling,* (Routledge, 2019). She is currently working on a book on art and anatomy in France from 1750-1850.

Amanda Strasik

Associate Professor of Art History
Eastern Kentucky University

Amanda Strasik is an Associate Professor of Art History at Eastern Kentucky University. She received her Ph.D. in eighteenth- and nineteenth-century

European art history from the University of Iowa in 2016. Her research focuses on representations of royalty, childhood and family relationships, and issues of gender identity in French art during the long eighteenth century. Strasik has received numerous grants and fellowships to conduct research in France at the Musée du Louvre, the National Museum of the History of Education in Rouen, the Palace of Versailles, as well as The Frick Collection in New York City. She has presented her work at the Art Institute of Chicago, The Cedar Rapids Museum of Art, and conferences for the American Society for Eighteenth-Century Studies and the Historians of Eighteenth-Century Art and Architecture, where she served on the executive board as the organization's first secretary. Strasik's scholarly publications explore notions of female agency in eighteenth-century French genre painting and portraiture and have appeared in *Women and French Studies*, *New Perspectives on the Eighteenth Century*, *Art Inquiries*, and, most recently, *Eighteenth-Century Life* with Duke University Press.

Rachel Harmeyer

Ph.D. Candidate
Rice University

Rachel Harmeyer is a Ph.D. Candidate in Art History at Rice University. She earned her BFA from The School of the Art Institute of Chicago (2008) and holds an MA in Art History from the University of Houston (2013). Her primary focus is on the transatlantic circulation of visual and material culture during the long eighteenth century between Britain and the United States. Her doctoral thesis, *After Angelica Kauffman*, explores the ways in which the work of Angelica Kauffman, RA (1741-1807) 'went viral' in global eighteenth- and nineteenth-century visual and material culture, inspiring decorative and amateur artists to employ a wide variety of media to reiterate her designs, from stipple engravings and mechanical paintings to handpainted fans, British and Chinese export porcelain, silk embroideries, and ephemeral confections. Harmeyer's investigation of the "angelicamad" world will contribute to an examination of the late eighteenth-century culture of copying, consumption, and Kauffman's celebrity and legacy within and beyond Georgian Britain.

Brigitte Weltman-Aron

Professor of French and Francophone Studies
The University of Florida

Brigitte Weltman-Aron is a Professor of French and Francophone studies at the University of Florida, and the author of several articles and book chapters in literature, history, and philosophy. She published *On Other Grounds: Landscape Gardening and Nationalism in Eighteenth-Century England and* France (SUNY Press, 2001), co-edited with Laurence Mall a special issue of *L'esprit créateur* on

Rousseau and Emotions. De l'émotion chez Rousseau (vol. 52, no. 4, Winter 2012). She also specializes in contemporary francophone literature, and among other publications in that field, she is the author of *Algerian Imprints: Ethical Space in the Works of Assia Djebar and Hélène Cixous* (Columbia University Press, 2015).

Franny Brock

Ph.D. Candidate
University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill

Franny Brock is a Ph.D. candidate at the University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill, specializing in eighteenth-century French art and works on paper. She was advised by Dr. Mary D. Sheriff until Dr. Sheriff's passing in fall 2016. Her dissertation, entitled "Drawing the Amateur," is now supervised by Dr. Melissa Hyde (The University of Florida). Franny's project examines drawings made by amateurs, particularly women, working outside of the Académie royale de peinture et de sculpture in eighteenth-century France. Before arriving at UNC, Franny completed her BA in Art History at Oberlin College and her MA in the History of Art at The Courtauld Institute of Art in London. She completed her master's degree in eighteenth-century French and British drawings, taught by Dr. Katie Scott and Professor David Solkin. Franny has held positions at the Allen Memorial Art Museum, The Frick Collection, the Dallas Museum of Art, and the Ackland Art Museum. She has curated and co-curated a number of exhibitions, including "Visions of Antiquity in the Eighteenth Century" at the Dallas Museum of Art and "Celebrations and Revelries in Seventeenth-Century Dutch art" at the Ackland Art Museum. She also has expertise in student and faculty support, through her work at the UNC Writing and Learning Center and the Center for Faculty Excellence.

Madeline Sutherland-Meier

Associate Professor
Department of Spanish and Portuguese, University of Texas at Austin

Madeline Sutherland-Meier is an Associate Professor in the Department of Spanish and Portuguese at the University of Texas at Austin. Her area of specialization is Spanish literature, with particular interests in the Spanish Ballad or *Romancero* and eighteenth-century Spanish literature and periodicals. She also works in Disability Studies. She has collected ballads in the *pueblos* of Spain and has published on the modern oral tradition, including the Judeo-Spanish tradition, and the *romance de ciego* or blindman's ballad. She has also written on the relationship between high culture and mass culture in early modern Spain. The eighteenth-century writer and editor Antonio Valladares de Sotomayor has been the focus of her most recent research as has the history of

the blind in Spain. She is the author of *Mass Culture in the Age of Enlightenment: The Blindman's Ballads of Eighteenth-Century Spain* and co-editor of *Leo Spitzer: Representative Essays.*

Karissa E. Bushman

Assistant Professor of Art History
Quinnipiac University

Karissa E. Bushman is an assistant professor of art history at Quinnipiac University. Her research focuses on the artwork of Francisco de Goya. Much of her research on Goya has dealt with his complex relationship with religion during the age of the Enlightenment and her dissertation was on his depictions of anticlericalism. She is also working on a monograph of Goya's various depictions of the human body.

Acknowledgements

This edited volume began as an interdisciplinary panel on education during the long eighteenth century that I co-organized with Karissa Bushman for the 2020 American Society for Eighteenth Century Studies (ASECS) conference in St. Louis, Missouri. My idea for this panel's inception grew from research on bourgeois girls' education in eighteenth-century Paris that I had conducted in 2019 at the Musée National de L'Éducation (MUNAÉ) in Rouen, France. This research was generously supported by a University Funded Scholarship Faculty Mini-Grant from Eastern Kentucky University.

While the COVID-19 global pandemic forced organizers to cancel the 2020 ASECS conference, our panel convened in 2021 at the virtual ASECS meeting and was a sweeping success. I wish to thank panel participants Franny Brock, Dorothy Johnson, Madeline Sutherland-Meier, and Brigitte Weltman-Aron for their flexibility and good spirits, both at the conference during a time of worldwide uncertainty and throughout the development of this project. Expanded versions of their original presentations can be found within this volume. I am also grateful for Rachel Harmeyer and Karissa Bushman, whose essays here have sparked new and lively discourses. Indeed, I am deeply indebted to all of the contributors to this collection, who not only joined me in rethinking meanings and implications of "education" during the Enlightenment era but demonstrated great understanding, insight, and patience at every turn. To Vernon Press, namely Blanca Caro Duran, Argiris Legatos, and Rosario Batana, I am forever appreciative of your counsel, support, and unwavering professionalism throughout the duration of this project. I also want to express my sincerest gratitude to the anonymous readers at Vernon Press for their invaluable feedback. And finally, I thank Christopher Richards, Elizabeth Spear, Ilona Szekely, and Patrick and Leslie Strasik for teaching me something new along the way.

The Enlightened Mind: Introduction

Amanda Strasik

Eastern Kentucky University

The rise of Enlightenment philosophical and scientific thought during the long eighteenth century in Europe and North America (c. 1688-1815) sparked artistic and political revolutions, reframed social, gender, and race relations, reshaped attitudes toward children and animals, and reconceptualized womanhood, marriage, and the family.[1] This movement also instituted new approaches to knowledge that emphasized rationality and empiricism over superstition, myth, and many religious traditions. As the period expanded global trade and commerce, introduced rapid technological changes, and fostered greater political freedoms (albeit to privileged population subsets), Enlightenment culture became synonymous with modernity in the West.[2]

The meaning of "education" at this time was wide-ranging and access to it was divided along the lines of gender, class, and race. As authors in this volume attest, learning happened in diverse environments under the tutelage of various teachers, ranging from bourgeois mothers at home, to Spanish clergy, to the outdoors and nature itself. For bourgeois and elite classes, approaches to education included instruction in specific academic, professional, and practical skillsets, as well as the advancement of physical health and mental wellness. For the female sex, the inculcation of virtue, along with the acquisition of manners and politeness, prevailed.[3] By 1750, new efforts to educate large swaths of the population were underway. Literacy rates climbed in urban areas and Paris became the center of intellectual exchange. French writings on the value of education emerged in different formats, namely Denis Diderot and Jean le Rond d'Alembert's authoritative *Encyclopédie*, with its lofty aim to systematize and make knowledge widely available, and pedagogical texts like Jean-Jacques Rousseau's *Emile, or On Education* (1762), which numerous contributors to this volume analyze. An explosion of printed materials on the natural and biological sciences, political treatises and memoirs, travel guides, novels and domestic advice pamphlets (many targeted at women), and more would have profound effects on artists, who engaged with these new ideas through dynamic visual imagery. French genre paintings of conjugal love and familial affection by artists like Jean-Baptiste Greuze, Marguerite Gérard, Etienne Aubry, and Jean-Honoré Fragonard were part of a visual campaign to educate elite and bourgeois audiences about the positive effects of these new social and cultural ideals.[4] The confluence of art and science became salient as artists and

critics questioned the validity of anatomical instruction in art education at the Académie royale de peinture et de sculpture in Paris.

While ideologues advocated for unspoken access to knowledge and education, women, together with people of color and other socially vulnerable groups, faced barriers in their pursuits of institutionalized study. In the case of women, the Enlightenment's redefinition of bourgeois feminine identity led to fiery debates about what constituted womanhood (according to physiological, philosophical, and social concepts), women's roles in society, and how women were to participate in Enlightenment culture.[5] Middle- and upper-class women were not denied educational opportunities outright, but there were concerns about what subjects to teach girls, whether girls should learn in convents or privately at home, who was best suited to instruct girls, and for what purpose education served the female population.[6] In the first half of the eighteenth century in Paris, women helped to develop social and intellectual networks and created serious, collaborative working spaces for the French Republic of Letters. Career *salonnières* and friends of the Encyclopedists like Louise d'Epinay—who Brigitte Weltman-Aron and Amanda Strasik will address further in this volume—were educated in their own right. Through their organization and management of regular gatherings in private salons, these women became commanding facilitators of civil discourse that furthered the Enlightenment agenda.[7]

By the 1760s, some moralizing philosophes opposed women's powerful hand in guiding social reforms and called for them to return to the domestic sphere to serve as loving wives and devoted mothers. Children were now considered to be inherently innocent and women alone faced the unprecedented responsibility of shaping society's moral future by caring for and educating their young ones at home. This sweeping appeal for women to fulfill their "natural destinies"—however marginalized—also functioned politically to exclude women from public life, due to the looming fear of uncontrolled female authority, sexual unruliness, and the overt feminization of French social and intellectual life.[8] In his 1758 *Lettre à M. D'Alembert*, Rousseau warned against the social corruption that resulted from immodest women who pursued ambitions beyond the household. He wrote:

> There are no good morals for women outside of a withdrawn and domestic life; if I saw that the peaceful care of the family and the home are their lot, that the dignity of their Sex consists in modesty, that shame and chasteness are inseparable from decency for them, that when they seek for men's looks they are already letting themselves be corrupted by them, and that any woman who shows herself off disgraces herself.[9]

With strong allusions to the act of prostitution, such commentary complicated the identity of women and their place in society. Excessive ambition, exposure

to institutionalized learning, or engagements with subjects beyond those required for the cultivation of feminine traits could endanger women's modesty. Rousseau's critique of public women especially relates to professional women artists that solicited clients and publicly displayed and sold their artworks, which doubled as extensions of themselves.[10]

The contributors to this cross-disciplinary volume weave together methods in art history, women and gender studies, and literary analysis to reexamine "education" in different contexts during the age of Enlightenment. They explore the implications of redesigned curricula, educational categorizations and spaces, pedagogical aids and games, the role of religion, and new prospects for visual artists, parents, children, and society at large. Collectively, the authors demonstrate – many for the first time in their fields – how learning reforms transformed not just familial structures and the socio-political conditions of major European cities, but redefined traditional artistic practices and women's roles as creators. The volume begins with Dorothy Johnson's overview of eighteenth-century debates about the teaching of anatomy to aspirant artists of the French Academy in Paris. Some feared that knowledge of the human body's interior, obtained through dissection and direct observation of cadavers, would corrupt notions of ideal beauty that artists were expected to attain. By midcentury, rising interests in natural science, the intellectual and social cachet of medical study, and the revival of classicism, once again led audiences to reflect upon the necessity of anatomical lessons to create ideal beauty. Johnson points to the French sculptor Jean Antoine Houdon who, together with a surgeon in 1767, created a life-size *Ecorché* figure to function as a pedagogical tool, demonstrating that naturalism, mimesis, and ideal beauty could co-exist in artistic creation.

Several authors consider how women intervened in Enlightenment culture as artists, pedagogical writers, teachers, activists, and consumers of enlightened textual and visual materials. Amanda Strasik and Rachel Harmeyer's analyses of women artists and their works in this volume, including French genre painter Jeanne-Elisabeth Chaudet (1761-1832) and embroiderers Caroline Williams (1789-1825), Lucy Coit Huntington (1794-1818), and Maria Crowninshield (1789-1870) from Britain and the United States, demonstrate how the Enlightenment paradox of progress and restriction affected women's lives. Against the backdrop of widespread misogyny, along with serious legal and social obstacles ushered in by the French Revolution (1789-1799), women found ways to navigate patriarchal systems and gendered rules to exercise personal agency. In Chapter Two, Strasik establishes that modern-day feminist art historians have not paid much attention to Chaudet's artistic identity, despite the artist's connection to Empress Joséphine Bonaparte, one of the most important patrons that supported women artists in late eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century France. Chaudet's subjects feature meaningful dialogues with Enlightenment discourses on

girlhood, female sexuality and education, dolls as pedagogical toys, and the rise of petkeeping. At the 1799 French Salon—distinct for its record number of female exhibitors—Chaudet's *Little Girl Teaching her Dog to Read* captured critics' attention. One observer regarded the depicted girl's lapdog as her "doll and victim" while another doubted her virtue. These comments call attention to viewers' deep concerns over corrupted innocence in the education of girls, thus revealing the social magnitude of Chaudet's seemingly lighthearted genre painting—a subject that was historically more accessible to women artists but disparaged for its lack of intellectual and technical rigor. Strasik argues that as a genre painter of children and small animals, Chaudet inserts herself into Enlightenment discourse without transgressing the bounds of feminine propriety. Moreover, Chaudet's subject matter in *Little Girl Teaching* parallels her real-life experience as a women artist in post-revolutionary Paris, where Chaudet paradoxically faced new professional opportunities and severe limitations and prejudices at the same time.

Harmeyer's essay further contributes to this volume's discussions of women's education, challenges to the hierarchy of genres, and female artistic agency. She examines how British feminist writers like Catherine Macaulay (1731–1791), Hannah More (1745-1833), and Mary Wollstonecraft (1759-1797), in their demands for women's educational reforms, cited the superficiality of needlework and other feminine accomplishment arts as the flaw in women's education. Harmeyer contends that women's embroideries did not have to be viewed as purely ornamental and derivative. Women embroiderers' techniques and interpretations of existing subjects indicate their ambitious approaches to artmaking and a negotiation of gender expectations. Harmeyer identifies a subset of women embroiderers in Britain and the United States that re-presented Angelica Kauffman's *Hector and Andromache*, a neoclassical history painting shown publicly at the British Royal Academy's 1769 exhibition. By adapting elements of Kauffman's didactic and moralizing narrative as their needleworks' subjects, the aforementioned Caroline Williams, Lucy Coit Huntington, and Maria Crowninshield created a cross-continental fellowship of women artists. Their works highlighted strong heroines while functioning as models of eighteenth-century ideal femininity. Harmeyer believes that these women helped to elevate what was customarily a denigrated artform to a more serious endeavor, thus expressing their erudition and virtue from within an appropriately feminine framework.

Macaulay, More, and Wollstonecraft were part of a cohort of British and French women writers, whose publications on education vehemently denounced current pedagogical practices that were steeped in prejudice and outmoded traditions. These women reformers wrote to communicate with and help other women; to improve women's education, they proposed more progressive programs,

bolder teaching methods, and new learning resources like game play, visual aids, and the development of children's books.[11] In France, by the end of the century, the general opinion on female pedagogy promoted the domestic education of girls and the crucial roles of women as domestic educators.[12] Stéphanie-Félicité, the Comtesse de Genlis, was a prolific writer whose novels and treatises on childhood education circulated widely throughout France and Britain. Franny Brock analyzes Genlis's 1800 treatise, *A New Method of Instruction for Children from Five to Ten Years Old*, alongside visual representations of children's drawing lessons, especially those for girls. While Genlis had no formal artistic training herself, she designed new processes for teaching children how to draw that emphasized amusement and entertainment to create a refined sense of judgment in her students. Brock explores how Genlis's techniques in *A New Method* engage with the Enlightenment reconceptualization of childhood and the development of children's pedagogy. Brock also mentions draftsmanship training for both boys and girls as a professional endeavor, or as a way to generate income for themselves and their families. Newly founded free drawing schools in Paris publicized drawing as a practical skill instead of one that cultivated personal refinement. Like Strasik and Harmeyer, Brock draws attention to the paradox of girls' education, access to art training, and the purpose of what girls could hope to achieve with their art.

Brigitte Weltman-Aron follows this investigative thread as she examines children's pedagogy and the upbringing of girls in Louise d'Epinay's (1726-1783) *Conversations d'Emilie* (1774), which won the prix Montyon in 1783 shortly before her death. Specifically, Weltman-Aron observes the author's response to Rousseau's recommendations of gendered outdoor activities for children in his treatise *Emile*. Weltman-Aron emphasizes D'Epinay's focus on girls' need to openly play, exercise, and develop physical strength in nature just as Rousseau's Sophie—Emile's female counterpart introduced to readers in Book V of *Emile*—while addressing to self-control during gameplay, beginning at an early age. In fact, Rousseau mostly examines outdoor activity in boys' "natural education." By contrast, in *Conversations*, D'Epinay recommends a series of outings that are educationally beneficial to little girls, revealing that "outside" has different meanings, particularly for upper-class French girls who lived in urban landscapes.

This volume's final two essays discuss key artists and pedagogical theorists of Enlightenment Spain.[13] Ideas on shifting perceptions of childhood, childcare, and the role of the family in early phases of children's education circulated against the backdrop of Catholicism. Given the Spanish crown's French roots, the Bourbon king Charles III (r.1759-1788) ruled Spain as an enlightened monarch. Charles III was sympathetic to change and employed ministers like José Moñino, the Count of Floridablanca, that supported progressive economic,

industrial, and agricultural reforms. The renowned eighteenth-century Spanish artist Francisco de Goya (1746-1828), who Karissa Bushman will discuss in greater detail, came of age during this era of Enlightenment.

Significantly, during his childhood, Goya was likely enrolled in Spain's Pious Schools – one of the first free public schools in Europe that José de Calasanz, a Spanish Catholic priest and later venerated saint, originally founded in Rome in 1597. Calasanz strongly believed in free education for the poor across religions, and his initiative radically challenged class privileges that had long favored the wealthy. Curriculum at the Pious Schools featured instruction in religion alongside general subjects like reading, writing, and mathematics. Bushman suggests that Goya's attendance at this institution as a boy influenced his strong Catholic beliefs and approaches to religious painting. Later in life, once his artistic career was underway, Goya painted José de Calasanz, thereby suggesting an ideological kinship between the two.

Meanwhile, Madeline Sutherland-Meier's essay focuses on Spanish scholar and Benedictine monk Martín Sarmiento (1695-1772) and his thoughts on education from his publication *Discurso sobre el método que debia guardarse en la primera educación de la juventud* (1768). Sarmiento asserted that education should be a happy, fulfilling experience, where young students embraced and studied even the most difficult subjects to become lifelong learners. Sutherland-Meier notes that families, particularly mothers, fathers, and possibly an uncle in the clergy, played a significant role in children's early educations. Parents' duties included instilling the fear of God and respectful behaviors in their young ones, in addition to overseeing their physical health. Similar to the French pedagogical writers addressed in this volume, Sarmiento stresses the importance of maternal attachment and breastfeeding, thereby granting women an essential duty based on their sex.

As I have briefly outlined here, the seven contributors to this volume express ideas that frequently echo one another; at other times, they diverge entirely. Themes on children's pedagogy, artistic instruction, girlhood, and the plight of women artists and writers continuously surface, thus establishing a clear foundation for understanding the complexity of education for various populations during the period of Enlightenment in Western culture.

Notes

[1] Literature on the Enlightenment is vast and cannot be fully listed in this space. Two comprehensive sources are Dena Goodman and Kathleen Anne Wellman, eds., *The Enlightenment* (Boston: Wadsworth, Cengage Learning, 2004) and Dorinda Outram, *Enlightenment*, 4th ed. (Cambridge University Press, 2019). On women during the Enlightenment, see Margaret R. Hunt, *Women in Eighteenth-Century Europe* (London: Routledge, 2014). For a more global approach to Enlightenment studies, consult Lauren

R. Cannady and Jennifer Ferng, eds., *Crafting Enlightenment: Artisanal Histories and Transnational Networks* (Liverpool: Voltaire Foundation in Association with Liverpool University Press, 2021).

[2] We must recognize that the atrocities of eighteenth-century colonialism and the barbarity of the slave trade contradicted this idea of an enlightened, civilized, and modern European identity. See Dena Goodman, "Women and the Enlightenment," in *Becoming Visible: Women in European History*, eds. Renate Bridenthal, Susan Mosher Stuard, and Merry E. Wiesner (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1998), 239-242.

[3] Michèle Cohen, "Introduction," in *Journal for Eighteenth-Century Studies, Special Virtual Issue: Education in the Eighteenth Century* (2008): 1-4. Also see Dena Goodman, *The Republic of Letters: A Cultural History of the French Enlightenment* (Ithaca: Cornell University, 1996) and Adrian O'Connor, *In Pursuit of Politics: Education and Revolution in Eighteenth-Century France* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2019). A study of the education of members of lower social classes (e.g. urban laborers and rural peasantry) is mostly beyond the scope of this volume; however, educational opportunities for the Spanish poor are briefly addressed. Franny Brock, in Chapter Four of this volume, mentions free drawing schools in Paris. For more information on this topic in Enlightenment France, see Harvey Chisick, *The Limits of Reform in the Enlightenment: Attitudes Toward the Education of the Lower Classes in Eighteenth-Century France*, rev. ed. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2014).

[4] Carol Duncan, "Happy Mothers and Other New Ideas in French Art," *The Art Bulletin* 55, no. 4 (Dec 1973): 570-583.

[5] Goodman, "Women and the Enlightenment," 233-262. Also refer to Melissa Hyde, "Questions about the 'Woman Question': Déjà-Vu All over Again?," in *Becoming a Woman in the Age of Enlightenment: French Art from the Horvitz Collection*, eds. Melissa Hyde and Mary Sheriff. (The Horvitz Collection, 2017), 13-17 and Barbara Taylor and Sarah Knott, eds. *Women, Gender and Enlightenment* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007).

[6] Samia Spencer, "Women and Education," in *French Women and the Age of Enlightenment*, ed. Samia Spencer (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1984), 83-96.

[7] The London bluestocking circles of women also carried out a similar function. For more on these powerful women and their prominent roles in the Enlightenment Republic of Letters in France and England, see Goodman, "Women and the Enlightenment," 234-237. Also, Dena Goodman, "Enlightenment Salons: The Convergence of Female and Philosophic Ambitions," *Eighteenth-Century Studies* 22, no. 3 (1989): 329-50.

[8] In Europe, thinkers like Jean-Jacques Rousseau, Diderot, Antoine Léonard Thomas, and numerous women writers weighed in on the Woman Question. For further reading, refer to Melissa Hyde and Jennifer Milam, "Introduction: Art, Cultural Politics, and The Woman Question," in *Women, Art, and the Politics of Identity in Eighteenth-Century Europe*, eds. Melissa Hyde and Jennifer Milam (Ashgate, 2003), 1-19.

[9] Jean-Jacques Rousseau, "Letter to D'Alembert and writings for the theater," in *The Collected Writings of Rousseau*, eds. Roger D. Masters and Christopher Kelly (Hanover: University Press of New England, 1990), 311-312.

[10] In her study of Elisabeth Vigée-Lebrun, Mary Sheriff discusses the reconciliation of the public and private identities of female artists. See Mary Sheriff, *The Exceptional Woman: Elisabeth Vigée-Lebrun and the Cultural Politics of Art* (Chicago, 1996), 39-71.

[11] Spencer, "Women and Education," 88.

[12] Samia Spencer, "Introduction," in *French Women and the Age of Enlightenment*, ed. Samia Spencer (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1984), 14-16.

[13] For more context on Enlightenment discourse in Spain, see Jesús Astigarraga, *The Spanish Enlightenment Revisited* (Oxford: Voltaire Foundation, 2015). Also consult Francisco Sanchez-Blanco, *La Ilustración goyesca: La cultura en España durante el reinado de Carlos IV (1788-1808)* (Madrid): Consejo Superior de Investigaciones Científicas, 2007) and Francisco Aguilar Piñal, *La España del Absolutismo Ilustrado* (Madrid: Colección Austral, 2005). I thank Karissa Bushman for recommending Sanchez-Blanco and Aguilar Piñal's texts.

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