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ARTICLES

SOCIETY AND CULTURE

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Diane Berrett Brown

Embedded in the structure of Mercier's utopian city is a sustained commentary on the transmission of knowledge.

"The Pedagogical City of Louis Sébastien de Mercier's L'An 2440"

Monuments and social structures in 2440 function as educational props that build consensus and uniformity. By juxtaposing the 1771 novel with the educational crises of the 1760s, I argue that the novel serves as an experimental treatise that imagines a society after the eradication of its teachers.

PEDAGOGY

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Cet article propose des stratégies pratiques pour l'enseignement d'un cours sur le cinéma de l'Afrique francophone au sud du Sahara aux étudiants américains de niveau dit "avancé" (quatrième année d'université). Les suggestions présentées prennent en compte le fait que les étudiants sont rarement des cinéphiles avisés formés à l'analyse de films (de films étrangers de surcroît), et le fait que les professeurs amenés à enseigner ce type de cours ne sont pas nécessairement des spécialistes du cinéma et/ou de l'Afrique. Les objectifs, la méthode et le contenu du cours sont discutés.
give us an example based on the 1989 film *Monsieur Hire* from Georges Simenon’s novel *Les Fiancées de Monsieur Hire* (1933).

Additional essays by students include *L’Atalante* by Jean Vigo (1934), *Weekend* by Jean-Luc Godard (1967) *Le Jour se lève* by Marcel Carné (1939) *Le Matin* by Jean-Jacques Beineix (1986) and *La Haine* by Matthieu Kassovitz (1995). Each sample essay is followed by suggestions for further reading. Forty-nine pages of appendices for quick reference comprise ten tables summarizing the history of French cinema (stars, movements, directors); French theorists of the cinema; the numbers of spectators and the numbers of films produced; the share of the French market; the best-sellers; the top 50 French films, French prizes; the Oscar for best Foreign Film won by French films; and a glossary of technical terms in English and in French. All these aforementioned rubrics cover the period 1945–1999. Two pages recapitulate major works published in the last twenty years, books written in English and in French on French cinema. Each reference is followed by a brief commentary. An excellent bibliography and a four-page index complete the appendices. Throughout the book twelve full-page black and white photos illustrate scenes from classic films.

Powrie and Reader’s study constitutes a challenging and thorough introduction to French cinema as both a teaching tool and a directory for use by scholars and students of film and literature. It is unique among guides dealing with cinematic “core concepts,” both for its breadth and for the fact that it is exclusively dedicated to French filmmakers and their films, and, as such, a useful instructional resource.

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**Society and Culture**

*edited by Marie-Christine Koop*


Readers seeking novel perspectives on the “epistemological underpinnings of cultural changes in the French Enlightenment” (23) might want to change their minds before selecting *Changing Minds: The Shifting Perception of Culture in Eighteenth-Century France*, as it offers little new information. Rather, it brings together primarily articles and essays O’Neal published previously in collections in English or in French; those originally published in French appear here in English. His goal in compiling these texts is “to show how most, if not all, disciplines are preoccupied with perceptual or epistemological questions about knowledge and experience that informed the attempts throughout the century to define a new culture” (23).

Indeed, the book’s seven chapters, preceded by an Introduction and followed by an Afterword, cover an array of Enlightenment disciplines ranging from art and history to medicine. O’Neal uses renowned philosophers such as Voltaire, Montesquieu, and Rousseau, but also less famous writers such as David-Renaud Boullier and the abbé Jean-Baptiste Du Bos, to represent these disciplines. Some of
their texts are quite well known, such as Montesquieu’s *L’Esprit des lois*, whereas others are not nearly as familiar, such as Rousseau’s comedy *Narcisse*. Chapter One examines how Du Bos traces the origin of culture to nature in his *Réflexions critiques sur la poésie et sur la peinture*. In Chapter Two, O’Neal distills from Voltaire’s *Essai sur les mœurs* and *Œuvres historiques* the philosophical mindset required of people if cultural change is to be successful; his attempt to apply Voltaire’s teachings to modern politics by referring to the despotism in the former Soviet Union and re-feudalization appears far-fetched since a modern context is otherwise lacking. Chapter Three sketches convincingly how the notion of experience as it pertains to the question of animal souls changed both from the seventeenth century to the eighteenth century, from Descartes to Boullier, and within the Enlightenment, from Boullier to Condillac. Containing much summary and numerous translated quotations from *L’Esprit des lois*, Chapter Four explores the link between climate and culture in Montesquieu’s work.

Chapters Five and Six concern Rousseau. While Chapter Five analyzes myth, language, and perception in *Narcisse* surpassing most other criticism by moving beyond its preface, Chapter Six attempts to deduce the author’s unstated theory of wealth from several of his (unfinished) writings, including the *Discours sur les richesses*, and then connects it to revolutionary zeal. O’Neal is an established rousseauiste: he has published articles on the author, a book entitled *Seeing and Observing: Rousseau’s Rhetoric of Perception* in 1985, and more recently in 2003, he co-edited *Approaches to Teaching Rousseau’s Confessions* and *Reveries of the Solitary Walker* for the Modern Language Association. Much of these two chapters dates back to the mid 1980s and would have benefited greatly from a critical update revealing O’Neal’s expertise.

The seventh and final chapter, entitled “Auenbrugger, Corvisart, and the Perception of Disease,” arguably includes one of the strongest claims made for an individual Enlightenment discipline in *Changing Minds*: medicine. Comparing Leopold Auenbrugger’s 1761 (then unconventional) treatise on percussion of the thorax as a diagnostic tool to its 1808 French translation by Corvisart, which explicitly advocated a hands-on approach by physicians, O’Neal traces how the growing influence of Sensationism affected the treatise’s reception.

Although the book’s interdisciplinary perspective constitutes partly its *raison d’être*, *Changing Minds*, through its greatly differing chapter orientations, risks losing sight of the larger context to which it aspires to contribute, the culture of the Enlightenment. A framework of reference and more elaborate definitions of those terms, culture and Enlightenment, would have been useful for readers.

The book contains several carefully selected illustrations, endnotes, a bibliography listing “French primary works” and “Other sources” as well as an index.

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Cette nouvelle biographie, divisée en dix chapitres auxquels s’ajoutent dix pages d’illustrations en couleur, un index des noms cités et une précieuse bibliographie en fin de volume, marque l’aboutissement pour Olivier Blanc, spécialiste de la Révolution et de l’Empire, de longues années de recherches dans les archives publiques et privées. C’est avec la même exigence méthodique et docu-