

This is a pre-copyedited, author-produced version of an article accepted for publication in French Studies following peer review. The version of record Linton, Marisa [Reviewer] (2021) Book Review of: 'Enlightenment virtue, 1680–1794' edited by James Fowler and Marine Ganofsky. French Studies, 75(4), pp. 552-553. ISSN (print) 0016-1128 is available online at: <https://doi.org/10.1093/fs/knab151>

M.Linton@kingston.ac.uk

*Enlightenment Virtue, 1680–1794*. Edited by JAMES FOWLER and MARINE GANOFSKY. (Oxford University Studies in the Enlightenment, 2020:03.) Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2020. xiii + 282 pp., ill.

Virtue was arguably one of the most important — and certainly one of the most complex and multifaceted — conceptual terms of the eighteenth century. Concerning morality at its heart, virtue provided an intellectual and rhetorical framework to evaluate politics, religion, literature, and moral philosophy. This edited collection is far from being comprehensive: indeed, the subject is too broad for any one volume to encompass; instead, it tracks the concept of virtue through a range of texts and themes. Each contributor highlights the central role of the concept of virtue in their chosen subject in fruitful and thought-provoking ways.

While most chapters focus on aspects of the French Enlightenment, including works by Laclos, Rousseau, and Diderot, alongside lesser-known texts, some consideration is given to English writers, primarily John Locke and Anthony Ashley Cooper, Third Earl of Shaftesbury. Many of the texts discussed are literary, from a range of genres, including plays, novels, memoirs, and libertine literature. Questions of moral philosophy and secular morality are well served in several chapters. In the Introduction the editors deftly lay out the changing parameters of secular morality from the late seventeenth century to the French Revolution.

Michael Moriarty explores the moral philosophy of virtue in the period before the Enlightenment; Nicholas Treuherz reconsiders Pierre Bayle's 'virtuous atheist', arguing that whilst the 'defence of virtue remained controversial' (p. 75). Bayle's formulations were increasingly significant and won a wide audience; Fowler looks at Shaftesbury's influence on Diderot; and Alicia C. Montoya considers how religious virtues changed into 'Enlightenment virtue' through examples from pedagogical texts which 'reveal a movement leading from the traditional Christian virtues that were essentially centred on the individual's salvation, towards an understanding of virtue in civic or political terms, aimed towards the good of

society as a whole' (p. 108). Daniel Brewer's discussion of the ethics of virtue, and how the rise of civic virtue eclipsed noble virtue, is particularly insightful, and includes a fine-grained account of Rousseau's problematic concept of virtue. One of the principal themes explored in this volume is that of gender and varieties of feminine and masculine virtue, including chapters by Mathilde Chollet on the concept of nobility in the work of Henriette de Marans, and her argument that the only true nobility lies in virtue; Ganofsky on libertine variations on the Myth of Gyges; Lydia Vázquez on female virtue and bliss; Karen Nehlsen Manna on *honnêteté*, effeminacy, and masculinity in Enlightenment comedy; and Jean-Alexandre Perras on how the figure of the *petit-mâitre*, familiar from the court of Louis XIV, came to be seen as 'an incarnation of a failure of masculine virtues in eighteenth-century France' (p. 152). The chapters by Vázquez and Ganofsky are particularly insightful on the complex interplay of sexual pleasure and virtue. The relationship between politics and virtue — a key eighteenth-century concern, as evidenced by the reference at the outset to Robespierre's 1794 speech declaring Terror to be 'an emanation of virtue' — is discussed by Patrice Higonnet, who draws links between Robespierre's concept of virtue and subsequent transfigurations of moral politics within two traditions, one associated with the work of Marx, the other with that of Tocqueville. Themes of gender and virtue return, this time in relation to French revolutionary politics, in a chapter by Pierre Saint-Amand on Mme de Staël's defence of Marie-Antoinette as a virtuous woman. Ioana Galleron evaluates 'Bernard-Joseph Saurin, the *comédie de mœurs* and the Civic Function of Plays'. Whilst there has been considerable attention to the concept of virtue recently, there is scope for more work. This volume is a worthy contribution to the existing body of literature, and one which is likely to interest especially specialists and advanced students of virtue as a literary, religious, philosophical, and gendered concept.

MARISA LINTON

