

Kerstin-Anja Munderlein (Ed.)

Final Frontiers: Exploring, Discovering and Conquering
in the Age of Enlightenment

LANDAU-PARIS STUDIES ON THE EIGHTEENTH CENTURY
LAPASEC

Peter Wagner and Frédéric Ogée (Eds.)

Vol. 7

Kerstin-Anja Munderlein (Ed.)

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 Wissenschaftlicher Verlag Trier

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Trier : WVT Wissenschaftlicher Verlag Trier, 2021

(LAPASEC, Vol. 7)

ISBN 978-3-86821-900-5

Cover illustration:

William Hodges, Resolution and Adventure with fishing craft
in Matavai Bay (1776) (Wikimedia Commons)

Cover design: Brigitta Disseldorf

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ISBN 978-3-86821-900-5

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WVT Wissenschaftlicher Verlag Trier

Bergstraße 27, 54295 Trier

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Acknowledgments

I wish to thank Université franco-allemande / Deutsch-Französische Hochschule for their generous support of the conference at Bamberg and this conference volume. Without their support, the continuation of LAPASEC would not have been possible.

I further wish to thank Dr Otto and Wissenschaftlicher Verlag Trier for publishing this book as no. 7 of the series *Landau-Paris Studies on the Eighteenth Century* and for their patience in waiting for the manuscript, which was long delayed due to the unavoidable Corona restrictions.

A heartfelt thank you goes to Professor Dr Christoph Houswitschka for his expertise in planning and organizing the conference; Dr Susan Brähler and Mareike Spychala for their highly useful criticism and proofreading efforts; Marcellina Scheller without whom the conference would never have run as smoothly as it did; and Ellen Werner for her invaluable input and admirable exactness in assisting with the editing process of this volume.

Lastly, I wish to thank all of the contributors for their cooperation in the long-winded process of the publication of and their wonderful contributions to this volume.

Foreword: The Origins and the Development of LAPASEC

Frédéric Ogée and Peter Wagner

Started in the early years of the twenty-first century by Peter Wagner (Campus Landau, Universität Koblenz-Landau, the Landau part of which, from 2023, will belong to the Technische Universität Kaiserslautern, with the new name Universität Kaiserslautern-Landau) and Frédéric Ogée (Université Paris Diderot, now Université de Paris), the **Landau Paris Symposia on the Eighteenth Century** (= LAPASEC) are, above all else, a truly European and international venture.

Frédéric Ogée and Peter Wagner first met when they were selected as representatives of the younger generation of *dix-huitiémistes* in their own countries to take part in the first 'East-West Seminar' organized by the International Society for Eighteenth-Century Studies (ISECS). It was held in the historic year 1989 at the Wissenschaftskolleg in Berlin. The LAPASEC initiative was intended as a continuation of the circulation of ideas that also inspires the Wissenschaftskolleg.

The primary wish of the original organizers has been to bring together, at bi-annual meetings in Landau and Paris respectively, both junior scholars from France and Germany (but also from other European countries) and internationally known experts in the field of eighteenth-century studies. Over the years, David Bindman (University College London), Daniel Brewer (University of Minnesota), Bernadette Fort (Northwestern University), Robert Mankin (Université Paris Diderot), Claude Rawson (Yale University), Peter Reill (UCLA), Angela Rosenthal (Dartmouth College), Peter Sabor, and Joanna Stalnaker (Columbia University), among many others, have kindly taken part in those convivial, intense and high-profile encounters. The LAPASEC conferences are organized less for the younger to learn from established scholars but rather with the Enlightenment idea of a *société de gens de lettres*, as Diderot called those who inspired and contributed to his gigantic *Encyclopédie*. In other words, LAPASEC wants to provide a forum for the discussion of national (i.e. emanating from a specific academic culture) and specialist approaches to be presented, discussed and critiqued on an international level.

Resolutely interdisciplinary, the symposia and their subsequent publications have welcomed scholars from such fields as art history and criticism, history, philosophy, linguistics, literary criticism, English and other European literatures, and the performing arts (drama and music). The aim has been to foster the discussion and the interdisciplinary exchange of methods, approaches and theories much in the way practised by Laurence Sterne's Yorick in fiction, or by the Baron d'Holbach when he emigrated

from Edesheim (not far from Landau) to Paris and provided an open house for Diderot and his friends.

From the outset, Wissenschaftlicher Verlag Trier (WVT) have agreed to be partners in the project, regularly publishing a selection of papers presented at the successive symposia. The editors are grateful to Dr Otto, the publisher, for giving them not only a forum for their enterprise but also the freedom in editorial matters they would not have found elsewhere. The first volume in the series (also titled LAPASEC) appeared in 2006, and the present volume (7) is the latest in the series. Below is a list of the LAPASEC series to date, with Peter Wagner and Frédéric Ogée serving as general editors:

- Volume 1: *Representation and Performance in the Eighteenth Century* (2006)
- Volume 2: *The Ruin and the Sketch in the Eighteenth Century* (2008)
- Volume 3: *Taste and the Senses in the Eighteenth Century* (2011)
- Volume 4: Peter Wagner, Kirsten Dickhaut and Ottmar Ette, eds. *Der Garten im Fokus kultureller Diskurse im 18. Jahrhundert / The Garden in the Focus of Cultural Discourses in the Eighteenth Century* (2015)
- Volume 5: Frédéric Ogée, ed. *Sensing the World: Taste and the Senses in the Eighteenth Century* (2017)
- Volume 6: Peter Wagner, ed. *Intermediality and the Circulation of Knowledge in the Eighteenth Century* (2019)
- Volume 7: Kerstin-Anja Münderlein, ed. *Final Frontiers: Exploring, Discovering and Conquering in the Age of Enlightenment* (2021)

Also from the outset, the LAPASEC meetings and publications have received generous financial help, not only from Universität Koblenz-Landau and Université Paris Diderot, but also from the Université Franco-Allemande (UFA) / Die Deutsch-Französische Hochschule (DFH), a jointly funded Franco-German research foundation based in Saarbrücken. Frédéric Ogée and Peter Wagner are happy to be able to thank this unique institution for its unflinching support.

Since Peter Wagner left the LAPASEC ship at his retirement in 2016 to dedicate most of his time to real sailing in Brittany, a replacement had to be found in Germany. The general editors are more than pleased to have found a most competent and internationally known scholar in Christoph Houswitschka. A full professor in English Literature at the University of Bamberg, he has a strong interest and an extensive publishing record in the long eighteenth century and will no doubt steer the LAPASEC vessel. On the French side, with Frédéric Ogée nearing retirement too, a similar evolution will soon take place allowing the joint new captains to take LAPASEC towards fascinating, unexplored territories. Future conferences will now take place in Paris and Bamberg.

Paris and Saarbrücken, February 2021

Introduction

Kerstin-Anja Münderlein

During the long eighteenth century, the Age of Discovery, or Age of Exploration, reached its fulminant peak. A broad variety of people travelled and mapped the world, tapped into and exploited previously little known or unknown regions and their resources. The reasons for exploring, discovering, and – not rarely – conquering *terrae incognitae* varied depending on the purposes the voyages intended to fulfil. Apart from professional exploration, such as the geographically motivated travels around the world of James Cook and Louis Antoine de Bougainville, travelling to Continental Europe, for example on the Grand Tour, and further abroad had become fashionable – and possible! – for many people of independent means. Seeing the world with one's own eyes, i.e. empirically experiencing the Otherness one had read about, had become a mark of distinction. Yet the travellers not only saw the world, but they also recorded what they saw – or rather described the world as they perceived it. The literature of the time is replete with travel writing, ranging from scientific reports following exploration tours, via observations of countries and their people, such as Lady Mary Wortley Montagu's letters, to satiric (and fictitious) "travel reports", such as Jonathan Swift's *Gulliver's Travels*. In short, (British) people had taken to roaming the earth and sharing their travel enthusiasm, adventures and opinions by publishing their experiences. In so doing, they did not only see the world, but created a (Eurocentric) narrative of the world, shown through the eyes of the usually male, affluent, white European traveller. With the authority over the narrative, the travel writer (or writing traveller) made "the world", i.e. the part of the world as they perceived it, accessible to a wider readership, especially since the public readership grew with the increase in the publication of periodicals. "[L]iterary, cultural, scientific and learned journals circulat[ed] on a weekly or monthly basis" (Pettegree 269) and catered to the diversifying interest of the readers at home. In turn, this increased availability of material, which led Andrew Pettegree to describe this time as the "age of the journal", allowed for intellectual and interdisciplinary exchange conducted via publicly accessible media (288) and thus formed the basis of a scientific discourse open to a much larger group of people than before. Accounts of travels and scientific discoveries, whether abroad or in any other scientific field, became common property in that they were no longer reserved for the rich, but available to all – at least in writing.

In addition to yielding an extensive amount of literature, travel provided the traveller and the people at home with objects (in the broadest sense) to marvel at. Curio collections in private households attested to the travels of the owner and – in the tradi-

tion of Empiricism – allowed for a study of remarkable objects in the comfort of the home for those unwilling or unable to afford extensive travelling. By the middle of the century, the desire to see the exoticism of the world resulted in the foundation of the British Museum, the first "public national museum and library" (Sloan 14). "In January 1759 the British Museum was opened free to 'all persons desirous of seeing and viewing the [collections] [...] that the same may be rendered as useful as possible, as well towards satisfying the desire of the curious, as for the improvement, knowledge and information of all persons'" (Sir Hans Sloane qtd. in Sloan 14). Collecting and, more importantly, exhibiting objects was more than a mere instance of what we would now call 'infotainment'. Ordering objects and presenting them to a British (or European) audience created and upheld a cultural narrative that intended to showcase one's own cultural Enlightenment; especially the antiquities collections, focussing on artistic progress, attempted to draw "physical parallels between evolved ancient Greek perfection and the current 'enlightened' regimes under whose auspices the collections were built up and displayed" (Syson 109-110). The curators of the museum ascribed themselves and their own culture the authority to narrate knowledge through objects and create a global narrative of progress and civilisation from a European point of view. This then placed the museum's visitor in the comfortable position of being assured of their own cultural superiority that allowed them to gaze at the Exoticism before them unhindered. The museum, specifically the British Museum, thus became an intersection of knowledge; its basic principles, laid down in the British Museum Act of 1753, defined its purpose to be to advance and improve all branches of knowledge (Sloan 14). Travelling and bringing home objects to be studied fuelled this narrative of superiority and it conveniently provided the traveller with an excuse to take with them what they had discovered to add to the knowledge at home. The traveller thus not only saw and recorded the world, but curated it from their perspective. Being able to present the Other at home through carefully curated collections of objects created wonder and an appreciation of other parts of the world – or at least curiosity in the exotic and the desire (and possibility) to see more and know more.

Even before the long eighteenth century, trade had been a driving force of exploration. Traders profited from the markets they created abroad and brought back luxuries and exotic goods from afar; hence, both individual traders or trading companies and the national economy benefited from a commerce-driven discovery and economic utilisation of spaces and routes previously unknown or little known to the European. These new markets became a driving force of the industrialisation in Britain as exports increased five-fold during the century (Elsenhans 178). Especially the upper and middling classes developed a taste in Oriental luxury goods and trade adapted to meet this demand (Berg 49). "Oriental commodities were profoundly attractive [...]. Apart from the objects themselves, there was an enormous fascination with the exotic skills and production processes behind the materials, colours, patterns otherwise undiscovered in Europe" (49). For the European consumer, "China was associated not with sensuality and