

## Abstracts

*Robert Aldrich*

### **France's Colonial Island: Corsica and the Empire**

“Without the Corsicans, there would never have been any colonies,” remarked one French colonial proconsul. Although Corsicans accounted for less than one per cent of the French population in the early twentieth century, they made up a fifth of colonial administrators and soldiers. The overseas empire provided much needed opportunities for migrants from the poor and underdeveloped Mediterranean island, and Corsicans became a mainstay of French colonialism. This paper examines the history and historiography of Corsicans in the empire, and the impact of both colonialism and decolonization on Corsica. It argues that colonialism helped solder the island to the mainland, but paradoxically also reinforced a sense of Corsican particularity, with repercussions in the post-colonial era. The case study provides perspectives on the links between regionalism, nationalism and imperialism in modern France.

*James Cannon*

### **Representations of the Paris Zone in Catholic and Communist Culture of the Interwar Years: Grégoire Leclos's *Notre-Dame de la Mouise* (1930-31) and Louis Aragon's *Les beaux quartiers* (1936)**

During the interwar period, the Catholic Church and the Communist Party struggled for control of the historic *zone* of Paris, a narrow strip of semi-rural land surrounding the city and inhabited by a mixed population of small tradespeople, impoverished factory workers and increasing numbers of Central and Eastern European refugees. This paper explores the cultural dimensions of that struggle through a brief comparative analysis of Grégoire Leclos's morality play *Notre-Dame de la Mouise* (1930-31) and Louis Aragon's socialist-realist novel *Les beaux quartiers* (1936). While Leclos used the *zone* to promote the ideal of a harmonious society redeemed by faith, Aragon used it to promote a potent mix of antimilitarism and class war. Both

writers were influenced respectively by the official policies of the Church and the Communist Party but also departed from these policies in significant ways.

*Georgina Cole*

### **Privacy and the Role of the Door in the Paintings of Jean-Baptiste-Siméon Chardin**

In the interior genre paintings of eighteenth-century artist Jean-Baptiste-Siméon Chardin, doors occur with a curious frequency. Rarely connecting the space of the home with the exterior world beyond, Chardin's doors excavate the levels of the domestic interior, unfolding the multiple spaces contained within the home. This paper argues that the use of doors in Chardin's genre paintings engages with the growing importance of privacy in eighteenth-century France. Doors, it contends, are developed by Chardin as visual devices that invest his paintings with "pictorial privacy." Defining privacy as exclusive access and selective disclosure, this paper examines the ways in which doors are used to conceal spaces, figures and the exterior world. Examining the delicate interplay between figures and interior space in Chardin's genre scenes, this essay offers privacy as the key to understanding the compositional construction and narrative themes of his deceptively simple paintings.

*Peter Cryle*

### **"Female Impotence" in Nineteenth-Century France: A Study in Gendered Sexual Pathology**

"Impotence" was an important topic in legal medicine framed by canon law. The main concern was the inability to engage in copulation, understood as a possible reason for the annulment of marriage. Its primary cause was considered to be (male) frigidity. Female impotence was recognized in principle, but was most often straightforwardly defined and summarily discussed. The habit of thinking which made of impotence and frigidity male disorders par excellence was disturbed by a series of revisions of sexual medicine led by such writers as Félix Roubaud. In 1855, Roubaud argued that copulation was not naturally complete unless it involved intense pleasure for the woman, so that women who consistently failed to achieve such pleasure were "impotent." Insofar as this view tended to prevail, women were now allowed their share of the themes of impotence and frigidity.

*David Garrioch*

### **Religious Identities and the Meaning of Things in Eighteenth-Century Paris**

Recent work on material culture has looked at the meanings of objects in a variety of social contexts, though primarily in relation to rank and class, to urban and rural difference and to gender. Less attention has been paid to religious differences, and particularly for the eighteenth century, widely regarded as a secular period when religion was of declining significance. This paper looks at differences and similarities

in the material surroundings of Catholics and Protestants in Paris in the eighteenth century and at what these might have meant in the context of continuing but declining religious persecution. It suggests that there were significant variations in the material cultures of different religious groups, but that even where the objects were similar there were sometimes differences in the way that orthodox Catholics, Jansenists, and Protestants understood the objects they possessed.

*Hamish Graham*

### **The Crown and the Community: Communal Woodlands and State Forestry in the Landes during the Eighteenth Century**

This paper forms part of a broader study to reassess the nature of government authority in Old Regime France by exploring the activities of royal officials who sought to monitor the management and exploitation of the kingdom's forests. The discussion focuses on case studies from regions in the southwest that later became part of the department of the Landes, where the woodlands belonging to village communities were targeted by naval shipwrights, who requisitioned trees that were deemed suitable for the royal dockyards, and by officers of the forest administration (Eaux et Forêts) whose management plans and forest maps aimed to make these resources more productive. In contrast to some historians' views about the origins of state-sponsored "resource management" or the symbiotic nature of the relationship between the monarchy and rural communities, the Landais examples suggest that the French state developed the capacity to intervene in communal woodlands well before 1789, although those policies were essentially self-serving and their effects were environmentally destructive.

*Nicholas Hewitt*

### **"Les Contes de *France-Soir*": Gender and Popular Fiction in Post-Liberation France**

After the Liberation, the former Resistance press frequently heralded a "Renaissance" in French culture. A survey of French publishing in 1945, however, especially through literary prizes, popular publishing and books reviewed and advertised in the press, shows a less revolutionary picture, with considerable continuity from the pre-war period, relatively little reflection of the tensions and ambiguities of the Occupation and reinforcement of traditional gender stereotypes. This is particularly true of an invaluable corpus of fiction: the "Contes de *France-Soir*," published in the summer of 1945, directed at a readership which does not wish to be reminded of the tribulations of the war-years and which feels comfortable in a world in which women characters may be depicted in a cartoon-like manner as either victims, frivolous or harridans. In this way, popular publishing departs not merely from a notion of "Renaissance," but also from the realities of women's involvement in the Resistance.

*Jonathan W. Marshall*

**The Archaeology of the Abstract Body: Parascientific Discourse and the Legacy of Dr J.-M. Charcot, 1876-1969**

The influence of Spiritism and parascience upon modern art has been described by Sixten Ringbom, Linda Henderson and others, whilst the contradictory exchange between neuropsychiatry and parascientific models of body and self has been detailed by John Monroe, Antonio Melechi and Adam Crabtree. This essay brings together these trends to demonstrate how the research of Jean-Martin Charcot (1862-93), and of those who passed through the Salpêtrière (especially Paul Richer, Pierre Janet and Jules Luys), helped lay the groundwork for the cultural trope of modernist abstraction, tracing a web of connections between those avant-garde movements active within the arts (Futurism, Surrealism, Cubism, synaesthesia, *musique concrète*), Spiritist and Theosophical research and medicine. Charcotian neurology, metapsychology, spiritualism and the aesthetic avant-garde contributed to a set of discourses which figured body and self as an abstract, indeterminate entity, whose form resisted attempts to frame it. Psyche and body became a composite receptacle for electrical, vibratory and fluid forces whose patterns flowed into and out of a subjective matrix, serving as a precursor for today's information body.

*Peter McPhee*

**The Making of Maximilien: Robespierre's Childhood, 1758-69**

What can we say about Robespierre's early childhood which might help us understand better the country town lawyer who arrived in Versailles at the age of thirty-one in 1789? Most accounts of Robespierre's life devote no more than a chapter to his life and formation between 1758 and 1769, as if the first eleven years of his life do not really matter. Nevertheless, his reactions to the unfolding drama, achievements and horror of 1789-94 were not those of an innocent: he brought to his participation in the Revolution values and beliefs that had developed across these years. The years of his early childhood were remarkable and instructive, even if historians remain sharply divided about the nature of their impact in molding the young man; they also remind us of the perils of amateur psychology.

*Jolanta T. Pekacz*

**Music, Identity and Gender in France in the Age of Sensibility**

After the French Revolution music became a source of identity for many upper- and middle-class women and a point of cohesion for salon sociability. This new interest in music was related to the aesthetics of sensibility, which emerged in France as a reaction to the classical aesthetic theory in the second half of the eighteenth century, as well as to the traditional perception that women were unsuited for abstract thinking but excelled in sensibility. However, it soon became evident that music as a source of women's identity was problematic due to complex and ambiguous relations between music and gender. The impact of the German musical idealism in France with its idea

of musical genius and “good” and “bad music” further divided the field of music production along gender lines. A vocal *romance* with an instrumental accompaniment discussed in this article epitomizes this development.

*Nicole Starbuck*

### **Sir Joseph Banks and the Baudin Expedition: Exploring the Politics of the Republic of Letters**

Sir Joseph Banks, as the central figure in the international scientific community and the chief advocate of the ideals of the republic of learning, is understood to have given vital support to the French scientific voyage of discovery, the Baudin Expedition (1800-04). However, his support may not have been offered purely in the spirit of scientific cooperation. The Baudin expedition intended to explore a part of the globe very close to Banks’s heart and critical to his nation’s imperial strategy in the south seas: Australia. Significant national, as well as scientific, interests were at stake. How did Banks balance these conflicting concerns and what exactly were his motives in assisting the expedition? These questions may be addressed by an examination of his correspondence, which reveals that Banks’s interest in the French voyage was far more complex than previous studies have recognized.

*Robert Weston*

### **Epistolary Consultations on Venereal Disease in Eighteenth-Century France**

This paper examines the way in which medical consultations by letter were employed to seek and receive advice on venereal diseases in eighteenth-century France. Epistolary consultations from across eighteenth-century Europe have been used by historians for purposes that have included examining physician/patient power relationships; as a reflection of medical practice; to analyze perceptions of the female body; and to examine the different ways patients and physicians saw illness and therapy. This paper differs in being focused on two particular socially significant diseases, *la vérole* and *la gonorrhée*. Venereal diseases have not previously been examined in the context of epistolary consultations. The correspondence, involving patients, their local medical practitioners and consultant physicians, has been analyzed for evidence of differentiation between the treatments offered to and attitudes towards, male and female patients. It is argued that the nature of these ailments led to a uniquely contested market. By the eighteenth century only the plague had been written about more as a social, medical and historical phenomenon; this level of historical attention has continued up to today. The paper is a part of a larger study into medical consultations by letter in early-modern France and utilizes material hitherto overlooked in published research.