

## The Eighteenth Century According to Jeffrey Merrick

### Introduction

Victoria E. Thompson  
Arizona State University

The three papers that make up this forum were first presented at the 2013 meeting of the Society for French Historical Studies. They focus on the work of Jeffrey Merrick, Professor-Emeritus of the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee. The papers explore three of the central axes of Merrick's body of work thus far: political culture, same-sex sexuality, and the family. While we divided these areas for the sake of a set of focused papers, one of the truly innovative aspects of Merrick's work is his continual demonstration that politics, sex and the family are inextricably linked; they overlap and intersect in his work in ways that are both unexpected and that provide a deeper insight into the politics and culture of the Old Regime.

Jeffrey Merrick is a wonderfully creative and innovative scholar; he is also a very productive scholar. He is the author of *Order and Disorder under the Ancien Régime* (2007) and *The Desacralization of the French Monarchy in the Eighteenth Century* (1990). A prolific scholar, Merrick has written thirty journal articles—the most recent is “Domestic Violence in Paris, 1775,” in the October 2012 issue of the *Journal of Family History*—and twelve book chapters, including most recently “Gender in Pre-Revolutionary Political Culture” in *Deficit to Deluge: Essays on the Origins of the French Revolution*, edited by Thomas Kaiser and Dale Van Kley, which appeared in 2011. Merrick is also a scholar who works well with others. As Suzanne Desan commented in her conference talk, “Jeff embodies the best combination of intellectual inquiry, generosity, tireless efficiency, and personal warmth.” He has engaged in numerous collaborative projects. He is the co-editor, with Tip Ragan, of *Homosexuality in Modern France*, published by Oxford University Press in 1996 and, also with Ragan, of *Homosexuality in Early Modern France: A Documentary Collection*, which appeared with Oxford in 2001. He is the co-editor, with Suzanne Desan, of *Family, Gender and Law in Early Modern France*, published in 2009. He also co-edited *André Morellet: Texts and Contexts* (2003) and *André Morellet in the Republic of Letters and the French Revolution* (1995), both with Dorothy Medlin, and *Homosexuality in French History and Culture* (2002), with Michael Sibalis.

Jeffrey Merrick has won numerous grants and fellowships, including awards from the American Society for Eighteenth-Century Studies, the American Council of Learned Societies, the American Philosophical Society, and the National Endowment for the Humanities. Throughout his career he has been an active member of the profession. He served as President and Vice-President of the Society for Eighteenth-Century French Studies; President and Vice-President of the Western Society for French History; Co-President of the Society for French Historical Studies; Meeting organizer and executive board member of the American Society for Eighteenth-Century Studies; and Coordinator for the Committee on Gay and Lesbian History. He has served on the advisory or editorial board of four different scholarly journals, and has evaluated manuscripts for many, many others. When you add into this picture the tremendous amount of service Merrick has undertaken for his department, college and university, you have to ask yourself, “does this man ever sleep?” But far from being a workhorse, turning to his books so that he can withdraw from the world, he is a great guy, sociable, generous with his time, and with a great sense of humor. His influence on the field extends beyond the works he has authored to those of the many historians that he has mentored. As Mita Choudhury noted in her original conference

presentation, Merrick has made the field of eighteenth-century French history, “one that is engaging, supportive, and fun!”

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