

From the Editor

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With its reputation for charm, cleverness, and urbanity, the salon looms large as an institution in eighteenth-century studies. Yet perhaps Madame Vichy du Deffand's wit entices us—as does Julie de Lespinasse's sensitivity and Madame Geoffrin's intellect—because we know little of what these women actually said. Historically easy to idealize but almost impossible to analyze, the great (and not-so-great) conversations and conversationalists of the past are nearly all lost to us. We know of course that conversations happened in the eighteenth century—from Rousseau talking with Diderot when he visited him in prison to bakers or dressmakers chatting with their customers—but this knowledge is not the same as the conversation itself. All too aware of the spoken word's ephemeral status, we have started this publication with an eye to making some of our own conversations—with each other and with our many visitors—more permanent. In the pages of this inaugural number of *The Workshop*, the reader will find a faithful and unvarnished record of much that was said during the Indiana Center for Eighteenth-Century Studies' eleventh annual Workshop and its fourth celebration of a book awarded the Kenshur Prize for Eighteenth-Century Studies. Our goal is to publish such a volume on an annual basis and eventually to compile a retrospective volume that will collect or summarize some of the many texts presented, and conversations had, at the Center's events over the years.

It has sometimes been claimed that with their cross-disciplinary conversations, cosmopolitan culture, and fertile imaginations, specialists in eighteenth-century studies are not just students and scholars of the philosophes but their worthy successors, as well. As did Voltaire, Diderot, Smith, Hume, Gibbon, and Goethe, we write histories that are literary, literature that is philosophical, and philosophy that is historical. We travel to the capitals of Europe (and beyond) to talk about ideas; we are theoretical in our sentiments and encyclopedic in our theories. Not for us, the nation-state and genre confines of the nineteenth century nor the deadly seriousness of other eras. May this publication, with its verbatim transcriptions of conversations be a mirror that shows the truth—or the error—of such assertions.

Our epigraph from Martial, “[No gorgons, centaurs, or harpies here;] these pages smack of humanity” enjoyed a certain popularity in the eighteenth century (having previously served as the epigraph to Ben Jonson's ill-fated *Sejanus, His Fall*—a play that landed its author in jail and was performed only once between its publication and 1929—and for Burton's *Anatomy of Melancholy*). Addison and Steele translated Martial's epigram as “Men and their manners I describe” and used it to introduce *Spectator* n. 49, “On those who figure at coffee-houses” (Thursday, April 26, 1711), an essay that not incidentally begins by observing that anyone who speaks needs someone to listen. Bonnell Thornton and George Colman the Elder used it in their *Connoisseur*, no. 136 (Sept. 2, 1756); it appeared as well as an epigraph to Jane Collier and Sarah Fielding's *The Cry: A New Dramatic Fable* (1754) and to Johann Blumenbach's *On the Natural Variety of Mankind* (1795). At the end of the century, the Orientalist, MP, and future follower of Joanna Southcott, Nathaniel Brassey Halhed, rendered Martial in the idiom of his own day:

“Ah, quit these dabblers in romantic sphere,
And take a dose of genuine nature *here!*—
Nor witch, nor ghost, nor fairy, *here* you scan;
No monster *we* present, but that call’d *man!*—”

Imitations of Some of the Epigrams of Martial part III (London: R. Faulder, 1794).

The pages that follow are full of the “smack” or “savour” of humanity. Many sentences are not quite finished and ideas, still in the process of being thought, may be imperfectly expressed. But there are also many traces of the spontaneous humor, unanticipated connections, and flashes of insight that continue to make our discussions a pleasure for those who participate in them and that, we hope, will make *The Workshop* a useful resource for those who join the conversation after the fact.

None of this would have been possible without the help and support of many people. The Dean of the College of Arts and Sciences at Indiana University-Bloomington, Larry Singell, has been extremely generous in his support of the Center for Eighteenth-Century Studies, as were his two predecessors, Bennett Bertenthal and Kumble Subbaswamy. The Center’s current Director, Professor Mary Favret, and its founding Director, Professor Dror Wahrman, worked very hard to make it the institution it has become. Neither the Workshop nor the Kenshur Prize event could have happened without the daily assistance of the Center’s Administrator, Dr. Barbara Truesdell. And without the exceptional dedication of our two transcribers, Tracey Hutchings-Goetz and Robert Wells, those events might have happened but, like nearly every other conversation, they would have left no trace. It is a pleasure and honor to thank them all.