

ANTHONY J. LA VOPA. *The Labor of the Mind: Intellect and Gender in Enlightenment Cultures. Intellectual History of the Modern Age*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2017. Pp. 360. \$79.95 (cloth).  
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Anthony J. La Vopa's monograph grapples with how seventeenth- and eighteenth-century writers "conceiv[ed] the mind as manly" (2). Contrary to, say, Mary Wollstonecraft's characterizations of the literature as monolithic in its dismissal of women's intellectual capabilities, La Vopa insists that the Enlightenment yields a robust discourse of the gendered mind that fashions a "lexicon fraught with ambivalence, ambiguity, and argument" (2). At the outset, La Vopa admits that his scope is narrow: his primary focus is white "educated and cultivated" men and a few women "in their circles" (2). Yet he frames his book's main contribution as a feminist one, since it aims to move "the history of gender, as a practice of fundamental critique, to the center of historiography" (5–6). La Vopa works toward an understanding of intelligence as a discursive category by interrogating the "rhetorical culture" of the mind that rooted itself in gendered ideologies of the period (6, 298). Thus, La Vopa understands his endeavors as feminist despite his rather exclusionary focus *because* he brings questions of gender to the forefront of these readings, and because he recognizes intelligence as a constructed, rather than a real or natural, category (6). Furthermore, La Vopa argues that his interdisciplinarity advances his gendered critique as he blends "listen[ing] closely to the past," the historian's cap, with textual analysis, the literary-critical hat (5). Drawing primarily from treatises and correspondences, La Vopa examines "biographical episodes" to make sense of writers' "rhetorical personae" as constructs of gendered intelligence (15, 17).

La Vopa begins in the seventeenth-century French salon, where notions of "play" and "labor" were considered incompatible for social elites. Intelligence was less a performance of the mind, La Vopa contends, and more a performance of *aisance*. Men sought in the salons opportunities to cultivate a tasteful wit that appeared effortless. For example, La Vopa observes in the discourse of *honnêteté* how men pleased women in "erotically charged but inconsequential conversational play" (25). In these scenarios, women functioned more often as cultural whetstones against which men sharpened their sociability. François Poulain de la Barre embraced this playful adoption of femininity in manly discourse, suggesting women had equal capacity for intellectualism, while Nicolas Malebranche lambasted the "effeminacy" of seventeenth-century intellectual culture, seeking instead to recover Augustinian masculine "rigorism" (47, 64). Finally, La Vopa punctuates that the intellectual friendships emerging from salon culture between men and women signified a move away from the classical ideals of male-male friendship toward a culture of gallantry and exchange in the Republic of Letters.

La Vopa makes a brief sojourn to England and Scotland in the middle of the book. He builds a persuasive bridge, though, between the earl of Shaftesbury's critique of intellectual effeminacy and Malebranche's, noting that Shaftesbury aimed his censure at how politeness, as a womanly engagement, hid passive-aggressive power plays that rendered powerful figures servile. Rejecting French manners as "patholog[ies] of modern politeness," Shaftesbury traded the salon for the club, gallantry for asceticism, crafting a "distinctly British tradition of political liberty" rooted in unapologetic manliness (129, 119). David Hume, however, strove to negotiate stoic traditions with the modern demands of sociability by "commercializing gallantry" as a means to reconcile masculine labor and polite style. Throughout this process of reconciliation, La Vopa writes, Hume offered a "positive revaluation of women" and invited them into his studies (189).

The final chapters sail back to late eighteenth-century France. La Vopa frames Antoine-Léonard Thomas's friendship with Suzanne Curchod Necker as vital to Thomas's defense of women's equal capabilities in sustained intellectual pursuits. But Thomas also imagined "genius" as a masculine quality, one that extends beyond women's grasps, but most men's,

too. Indeed, La Vopa frames Thomas as a fence-straddler of sorts, not only in regards to masculine sensibility, but also in relation to women's intellectualism. Such a strategy had its critics. Denis Diderot dismissed Thomas's work in "On Women" (1772), arguing Thomas's lack of rigorous sexual passion contributes to a misunderstanding of women's abilities. Thus, Diderot adopted a "clinical voice," La Vopa claims, to connect poetical metaphors of the mind with medical frameworks of the body. This medico-poetic language enabled Diderot to rationalize women's imaginations as "potentially anarchic ... fantas[ies]" tied to hysterical systems, while men are capable of a poetical-scientific form of imagination through which they can grapple with abstract thought as they concretize their genius (260). La Vopa ends with Louise D'Épinay's playful work, suggesting that she refashioned a "gender-neutral" vision of reason that may trouble contemporary feminists, but that registered initially as progressive (297).

The organization of the book underscores the diverse audience La Vopa essays to engage, from gender studies scholars to historians and literary critics, across the English Channel and time periods. La Vopa's greatest strength lies in his deft demonstration of how an interdisciplinary reexamination of this archive is much overdue in eighteenth-century studies. I am not as certain that scholars of gender studies will find the study as impactful. As La Vopa hints himself, some feminist scholars may be resistant to his work, specifically his claim that feminism has dulled its edge, "losing its purposefulness as a political movement" (5). La Vopa cites concern as to "whether feminist constructionism can accomplish its purpose if it continues to use the categories 'men' and 'women'" (6). But this focus seems dated, while comments regarding feminism as a political movement, though published in 2017, already struggle to hold against the realities of our present and most recent histories. Indeed, a quick glance at the bibliography reveals that a majority of La Vopa's feminist citations stem from the 1980s and 1990s. While La Vopa nods briefly to more intersectional scholarship (such as postcolonialism), he decries much of its application to eighteenth-century history as an "abuse," claiming especially that he finds the work of "some feminist literary scholars ... woefully ignorant," though he does not cite which studies he finds objectionable, or offer concrete evidence (9). Certain readers may find these claims sitting uncomfortably within the book's touted critical framework, but the study may yet appeal to readers looking to enter this charged methodological debate.

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RHODRI LEWIS. *Hamlet and the Vision of Darkness*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2017. Pp. 392. \$39.95 (cloth).  
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In *Hamlet and the Vision of Darkness*, Rhodri Lewis argues that Shakespeare's most famous play should be understood as a violent repudiation of practically every tenet of Renaissance humanism. Aristotle, Cicero, Boethius, Erasmus, and many others, Lewis contends, are permitted to haunt the words spoken in Shakespeare's Denmark only so that the ghosts of these thinkers can finally be laid to rest once and for all. Hamlet himself is presented as a bricolage of this intellectual hall of fame, whose befuddled articulations of conventional wisdoms work precisely to lay bare the toxic nonsensicality and ultimate futility of the mainstream of sixteenth-century intelligence. The author of *Hamlet* is, then, for Lewis, a "boldly contrarian" affirmer of dramatic poetry's ability to subvert "the fictions and artifices through which humankind seeks