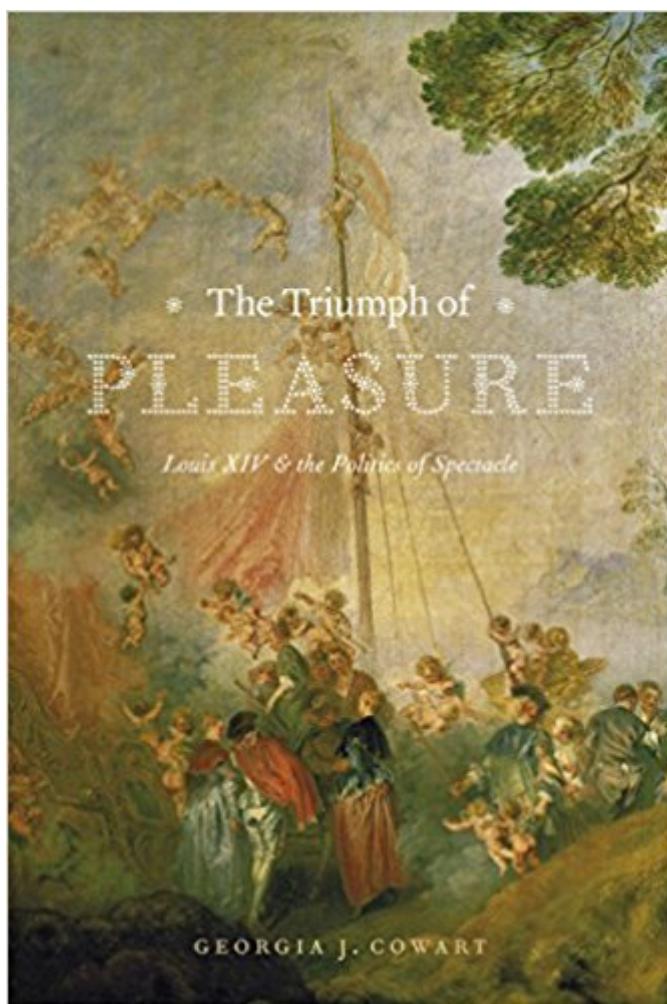


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The Triumph Of Pleasure: Louis XIV And The Politics Of Spectacle



Synopsis

Prominent components of Louis XIV's propaganda, the arts of spectacle also became sources of a potent resistance to the monarchy in late seventeenth-century France. With a particular focus on the court ballet, comedy-ballet, opera, and opera-ballet, Georgia J. Cowart tells the long-neglected story of how the festive arts deployed an intricate network of subversive satire to undermine the rhetoric of sovereign authority. With bold revisionist strokes, Cowart traces this strain of artistic dissent through the comedy-ballets of Jean-Baptiste Lully and Molière, the late operatic works of Lully and the operas of his sons, the opera-ballets of André Campra and his contemporaries, and the related imagery of Antoine Watteau's well-known painting *The Pilgrimage to Cythera*. She contends that through a variety of means, including the parody of old-fashioned court entertainments, these works reclaimed traditional allegories for new ideological aims, setting the tone for the Enlightenment. Exploring these arts from the perspective of spectacle as it emerged from the court into the Parisian public sphere, Cowart ultimately situates the ballet and related genres as the missing link between an imagery of propaganda and an imagery of political protest.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

"One of the great strengths of Cowart's book is precisely its chronological scope. . . . Cowart's reach, combined with her considerable erudition and meticulous scholarship, allows her to make some very suggestive parallels between works that might otherwise have passed unnoticed." (Times Literary Supplement) *The Triumph of Pleasure* is a splendid addition to the literature on

French baroque music. Cowart makes a strong argument for her position that many works from the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries constitute an unofficial counterculture, diametrically opposed to the official court culture in the later years of Louis XIV's reign. Her knowledge of a very wide range of works that are generally unknown even to specialists in this area throws much light on this vast topic. This fascinating and subtle study continues to resonate in the mind long after reading. • (Davitt Moroney, University of California, Berkeley) A subtle, distinguished, and learned work. Through her careful, succinct descriptions and analyses of the dance and its place in the fêtes at Louis XIV's court, Georgia Cowart elucidates a fundamental shift from the emphasis on the bombastic, glory-obsessed celebrations of war and conquest for the Sun King to performances that stressed the virtues of peace, sensual pleasure, and more private lifestyles. Well-researched and elegantly written, *The Triumph of Pleasure* will be welcomed by readers interested in elite and courtly cultures and by scholars who study the history of dance, music, and art. • (Orest Ranum, Johns Hopkins University) "Cowart details the ideological intricacies embedded within and across a wide range of performance modes. . . . [Her] elegant prose and nuanced observations will appeal to a wide range of readers interested in cultural history and the arts." (Anne Hogan Times Higher Education Supplement) "Cowart's study is of impressive scope and offers a rich synthesis that draws on a breadth of scholarship by musicologists, art historians, literary historians/theorists, and dance specialists. Her cross-disciplinary approach yields important insights into the field of seventeenth-century studies." (French Studies)

Georgia J. Cowart is professor of music at Case Western Reserve University.

I really enjoyed the way how the auteur structured her book. Normally one finds research about the ballet choreography, the livrets,... It is rare to find a book that tries to encompass it all and tries to find a logical and historical explanation for all the elements (music, dance, scenography, galanterie, art ...) of which court ballet consists. Really usefull for research on graduate level (and higher) and written with a clear purpose to make the reader understand what court ballet under Louis XIV is all about.

This is an important book, required reading for all interested in French Baroque music.

Haven't had a chance to read it yet, but it looks like a well-written book with lots of good information. Good for a French history geek!

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