Ph.D. Candidate, Philosophy

The Pleasures of Art

Works of art are rich sources of pleasure. But, what sorts of pleasure do they afford? Conscious sensory perception is a paradigmatic and relatively well-understood type of conscious experience. Thus, a common theoretical approach in philosophy of mind seeks to reduce all conscious experience to the senses, including all experience of pleasure. I argue that this approach to consciousness is mistaken; it cannot do justice to the variety and complexity of human experience. To illustrate, I review some examples of aesthetic pleasure and explain why they cannot be reduced merely to the sensory. I conclude with a discussion of the ethical implications of my argument. Some pleasures reach deep into our psychology and are as cognitively rewarding as they are demanding; consequently, pursuing pleasure need not be incompatible with striving for self-perfection.

Ph.D. Candidate, English

Women’s Vulnerability and the Realist Novel’s Alternative Judgments

How does a community respond to harm done by a man to a woman when he has not committed any legally actionable offense, yet the harm is real? Centuries before #metoo, sentimental epistolary novels like Frances Burney’s *Evelina* (1778) and novels of manners like Jane Austen’s *Sense and Sensibility* (1811) and *Pride and Prejudice* (1813) took up questions of gender and power to theorize men’s accountability in relation and in opposition to contemporary shifts in legal discourse. Both authors manipulated genre and narration, and navigated legal concepts and terminology, to indict chivalric combat as counterproductive (dueling is represented as both ineffective and anachronistic), and to avoid the harmful publicity of the courtroom (the law proves a greater threat to the women victims than to the perpetrators). Burney and Austen approach the novel as an alternative locus of judgment: they suppress questions of intent by using layered narration and subordinate direct punishment by instead sentencing predatory men to emasculating plots and unhappy endings.