



Dramatic Experiments: Life according to Diderot (SUNY series in Contemporary French Thought)

Eyal Peretz

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A major new interpretation of the philosophical significance of the oeuvre of Denis Diderot.

Dramatic Experiments offers a comprehensive study of Denis Diderot, one of the key figures of European modernity. Diderot was a French Enlightenment philosopher, dramatist, art critic, and editor of the first major modern encyclopedia. He is known for having made lasting contributions to a number of fields, but his body of work is considered too dispersed and multiform to be unified. Eyal Peretz locates the unity of Diderot's thinking in his complication of two concepts in modern philosophy: drama and the image. Diderot's philosophical theater challenged the work of Plato and Aristotle, inaugurating a line of drama theorists that culminated in the twentieth century with Bertolt Brecht and Antonin Artaud. His interest in the artistic image turned him into the first great modern theorist of painting and perhaps the most influential art critic of modernity. With these innovations, Diderot provokes a rethinking of major philosophical problems relating to life, the senses, history, and appearance and reality, and more broadly a rethinking of the relation between philosophy and the arts. Peretz shows Diderot to be a radical thinker well ahead of his time, whose philosophical effort bears comparison to projects such as Gilles Deleuze's transcendental empiricism, Martin Heidegger's fundamental ontology, Jacques Derrida's deconstruction, and Jacques Lacan's psychoanalysis.

Eyal Peretz is Associate Professor of Comparative Literature at Indiana University Bloomington. He is the author of *Becoming Visionary: Brian De Palma's Cinematic Education of the Senses*.

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