



The Department of French Studies at Brown University presents:

Modernity, Authority and Media Manipulation in the French Enlightenment

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In the 1760s, Diderot and d'Holbach were at the center of a collective effort that produced dozens of clandestine books. They presented these books as the translations of English, Spanish and Italian authors. But the texts were modified to the extent which transformed these foreign authors into auctorial fictions that everyone, and for some of them, until today, believed real. This manipulation of the auctorial power was based on a malleable conception of authority, inherited from Hobbes, theorized by Diderot and used in different ways by Holbach and Voltaire. This emergence of author's authority as fiction, or fabrication, sounds the death knell of classical certainties and opens up the paths of modernity. Inasmuch as author's authority is warrant of truth, this "fictionalization" of authority is particularly interesting in today's "post-factual" US.

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5:30pm

Rochambeau House Music Room

84 Prospect Street

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