



Air's Appearance: Literary Atmosphere in British Fiction, 1660-1794

Jayne Elizabeth Lewis

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In *Air's Appearance*, Jayne Elizabeth Lewis enlists her readers in pursuit of the elusive concept of atmosphere in literary works. She shows how diverse conceptions of air in the eighteenth century converged in British fiction, producing the modern literary sense of atmosphere and moving novelists to explore the threshold between material and immaterial worlds.

Air's Appearance links the emergence of literary atmosphere to changing ideas about air and the earth's atmosphere in natural philosophy, as well as to the era's theories of the supernatural and fascination with social manners—or, as they are now known, “airs.” Lewis thus offers a striking new interpretation of several standard features of the Enlightenment—the scientific revolution, the decline of magic, character-based sociability, and the rise of the novel—that considers them in terms of the romance of air that permeates and connects them. As it explores key episodes in the history of natural philosophy and in major literary works like *Paradise Lost*, “The Rape of the Lock,” *Robinson Crusoe*, and *The Mysteries of Udolpho*, this book promises to change the atmosphere of eighteenth-century studies and the history of the novel.

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