

# 1650-1850: Ideas, Aesthetics, and Inquiries in the Early Modern Era

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## Front Matter

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**1650–1850**

Ideas, Æsthetics, and Inquiries  
in the Early Modern Era

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1650–1850  
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in the Early Modern Era  
*Volume 20*

Kevin L. Cope  
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*Book Review Editor*

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## CONTENTS

<i>List of Illustrations</i>	ix
<i>Foreword from the Editor</i>	xi
 A. G. MONACO, <i>LOUISIANA STATE UNIVERSITY</i> Loyalty Oaths: A Reminder from the Enlightenment	 3
 FLORIAN VAULEON, <i>PURDUE UNIVERSITY CALUMET</i> Philosophizing the Game: The Morals of Chess in Diderot's <i>Rameau's Nephew</i>	 17
 ASHLEY MARSHALL, <i>UNIVERSITY OF NEVADA, RENO</i> Swift and Temple	 33
 MURRAY L. BROWN, <i>GEORGIA STATE UNIVERSITY</i> Marketing the "Good Man": Sir Charles Grandison and the Clementinas	 79
 NORBERT COL, <i>UNIVERSITÉ DE BRETAGNE-SUD</i> Burke's Target in <i>A Vindication of Natural Society</i> : From Bolingbroke to "this sort of Writers," or an Early Burkean Defense of Church and State	 89

*Special Feature*  
UNORTHODOX TRANSPORTATION AND  
THE ENLIGHTENMENT

Edited and Introduced by  
Jessika Wichner,  
Deutsches Zentrum für Luft- und Raumfahrt (DLR)

SPECIAL FEATURE INTRODUCTION	115
DORIT ENGSTER, <i>ALTHISTORISCHES SEMINAR, GEORG-AUGUST-UNIVERSITÄT GÖTTINGEN</i>	
The Paddle Wheel Boat: A Technical Invention of Late Antiquity	119
FRIEDA KOENINGER, <i>SAM HOUSTON STATE</i> , AND RAQUEL GUTIÉRREZ ESTUPIÑÁN, <i>UNIVERSIDAD AUTÓNOMA DE PUEBLA</i>	
Seafaring Nuns: The Journey of Six Capuchin Sisters from Toledo to Mexico City, 1665	147
MELVIN PEÑA, <i>INDEPENDENT SCHOLAR</i>	
Cosmopolitan Friendship in Boswell's <i>Journal of a     Tour to Corsica</i>	169
JESSIKA WICHNER, <i>DLR</i>	
Winter Travelers: Captain Jones's <i>Treatise on Skating</i>	195

## BOOK REVIEWS

- Thomas P. Campbell and Elizabeth A. H. Cleland, eds., *Tap-  
estry in the Baroque: New Aspects of Production and Patronage*  
Reviewed by Alison Saunders 209
- Donna J. Bohanan, *Fashion Beyond Versailles: Consumption  
and Design in Seventeenth-Century France*  
Reviewed by Claire Cage 213
- R. E. Pritchard, *Passion for Living: John Wilmot, Earl of  
Rochester*  
Reviewed by Kirk Combe 216
- Laura Linker, *Dangerous Women, Libertine Epicures, and the  
Rise of Sensibility, 1670–1730*  
Reviewed by Sayanti Ganguly Puckett 219
- Natasha Gill, *Educational Philosophy in the French Enlight-  
enment: From Nature to Second Nature*  
Reviewed by Tania S. Smith 222
- Sophus A. Reinert, *Translating Empire: Emulation and the  
Origins of Political Economy*  
Reviewed by Trevor Burnard 225
- Philip Smallwood, *Critical Occasions: Dryden, Pope, Johnson,  
and the History of Criticism*  
Reviewed by Paul D. Cannan 229
- Laura Engel, *Fashioning Celebrity: Eighteenth-Century  
British Actresses and Strategies for Image Making*  
Reviewed by Leslie Ritchie 231
- Julie Park, *The Self and It: Novel Objects in Eighteenth-  
Century England*



Reviewed by Chloe Wigston Smith	234
James G. Basker et al., eds., <i>The Adventures of Roderick Random</i>	
Reviewed by Alfred Lutz	238
Jon Mee, <i>Conversable Words: Literature, Contention, and Community, 1762 to 1830</i>	
Reviewed by Michèle Cohen	241
David Porter, <i>The Chinese Taste in Eighteenth-Century England</i>	
Reviewed by Tillman W. Nechtman	245
Claudia Thomas Kairoff, <i>Anna Seward and the End of the Eighteenth Century</i>	
Reviewed by Teresa Barnard	248
Manuel Barcia, <i>The Great African Slave Revolt of 1825: Cuba and the Fight for Freedom in Matanzas</i>	
Reviewed by Doris Y. Kadish	251
<i>Cumulative Index, Volumes 1–20</i>	255

# LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

Loyalty oath of Benedict Arnold (1770)	5
Spiro Agnew subscribes to the oath of office for Vice President of the United States	12
Rod Blagojevich swears loyalty to the state of Illinois	15
<i>De Rebus Bellicis</i>	121
Boswell's Corsican Suit	191
Christian Siegmund Zindel, <i>Der Eislauf</i> (excerpt)	203
Christian Siegmund Zindel, <i>Der Eislauf</i> (excerpt)	204
Christian Siegmund Zindel, <i>Der Eislauf</i> (excerpt)	207

# FOREWORD

## *From the Editor*

The most overworked word of the early twenty-first century is surely “strategic.” Universities promulgate strategic plans; “units” within universities “think strategically”; persons who once protested Pentagon strategies for the conduct of foreign wars now routinely aspire to administrative positions in which the prosecution of “strategic initiatives” absorb the majority of their “strategic” efforts. Corporate giants with lilliputian products such as Domino’s Pizza promise their shareholders the *annual* delivery of a *long-term* strategic plan; the United States Department of Agriculture notches it down another level by publishing—in the plural—an array of “pest management strategic plans” so that even cockroaches and boll weevils can experience at least the receiving end of the new strategy mania.

Strategic activity would seem to be minimal in a discipline such as eighteenth-century studies in which the phenomena to be managed have already occurred. Strategy, however, was an important if now overlooked topic during the long eighteenth century, indeed was so much a concern that, like the trees within the proverbial forest, it is easily overlooked. Our contemporary obsession with strategy derives from our post-Enlightenment, neo-Baconian assumption that for every problem or goal there must be not only some suitable means of achieving the desired end but also a full menu of options and approaches, some of which are more effective or cunning—more strategic—than others.

Addressing the origins and early applications of strategic thinking is

central to this volume of *1650–1850*. Continuing a tradition of outreach to the distant precincts of eighteenth-century studies, the volume opens with an exploratory essay by “HRM” (Human Resources Management) executive A. G. Monaco, who explores the early history of the loyalty oaths that many academic professionals must sign in order to work at public universities. With this signature but scholarly wit, Monaco wonders whether the oath signed by Benedict Arnold provided comfort or security to the early American revolutionaries. Florian Vauleon explores the philosophical, literary, and psychological strategies appropriate to the more confined space of the chess board in his devilishly clever exploration of the role of that game in the writings of Diderot. From Murray Brown we learn of Samuel Richardson’s multi-pronged strategies for dealing with the religious diversity of his day, especially with that large-scale complication called “Catholicism.” Similarly, Norbert Col explains how an urbane orator such as Edmund Burke found strategies for sustaining elegant and informed political discourse in a time when revolutionary shrieks were replacing harmonic debates. Strategy can be personal, too, as Ashley Marshall demonstrates in her irreverently erudite exposé of the stresses and strains in the Swift-Temple relationship.

To the extent that a journal, which depends on the unpredictabilities of human wit, can adopt a strategic plan, *1650–1850* has always affirmed the key role of special features: of sets of essays organized by prominent or promising guest editors who detect contemporary scholarly trends and who anticipate the next collective turn of thought. Hailing from both the familiar field of history and also the unexpected area of aerospace engineering, Jessika Wichner, archivist for the DLR (Deutsches Zentrum für Luft- und Raumfahrt) has come—or, perhaps, paddled or sailed or slipped—forward with an astounding ensemble of essays concerning unorthodox transportation in the Enlightenment. In essays covering modes of motion from skating to rowing, Wichner and her authors celebrate yet another strategic effort: the figuring out of ways to get from point A to point B under any conceivable circumstances, whether confronted with an icy expanse or whether handed a splintered oar.

Given the rich selection of essays in this volume, strategic planners may want to stand down from innovation long enough to read the book in the conventional fashion, one page at a time, from cover to cover. That, of course, is the best way to reach the abundant review section, where the best of scholars survey the best (and sometimes the worst) of scholarship, keeping colleagues up-to-date and thereby able to form strategic plans for learning.

**1650–1850**