

Jean Bodin is explained by emphasizing these same ideas. Rather than being coerced to join the association, it is plausible that Bodin's overriding concern for the protection of the proper order of the commonwealth chimed with the League's agenda.

The book concludes with a very interesting chapter about the overlapping notions of the *patria*. It resolves the seeming contradiction between a commitment to the fatherland as a territory and membership of the transcendent *patrie* of Christendom, which was at the heart of Leaguer identity. Nicholls convincingly argues that for Leaguers, these were not incompatible. For the writers studied, to be French necessarily meant being part of the supranational and metaphysical community of the Catholic faithful and to be a Catholic necessarily meant being a compatriot.

The book provides a systematic study of the ideas developed by members of the League. It concisely and clearly summarizes the key arguments of the authors studied, making it a valuable resource to anyone interested in the intellectual dimension of sixteenth-century religious and political conflict. More importantly, it demonstrates the importance of looking beyond simplistic ideological factions and to heed the dynamism and fluidity of early modern ideas.

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Le siècle de la légèreté: Émergences d'un paradigme du dix-huitième siècle français. Edited by Marine Ganofsky and Jean-Alexandre Perras.
Liverpool: Liverpool University Press. 2019. £75. 336 pp. ISBN:
9781786941954.

Situated somewhere between the figure of the stereotype and the discourse of ideology lies what Marine Ganofsky and Jean-Alexandre Perras, the co-editors of this collection of essays, name the paradigm. Example, model, pattern, archetype, matrix of knowledge, aesthetic form and analytic tool, the particular paradigm examined here is lightness, *légèreté*. In a thoughtful introduction, the co-editors expose the complex semantic field on which *légèreté* is situated. Associated with suppleness and subtlety, ease and virtuosity, *légèreté* recalls the *sprezzatura* of Castiglione's courtier, whose art of nonchalance conceals all artfulness and artifice, sign of a nobiliary self-performance and collective national character involving civility, gallantry, refined good taste and wit.

The paradigm of *légèreté* is dynamic and protean, calling for a transhistorical understanding of what the co-editors term *légèreté*'s 'emergence'—how the refined sociability of the Seventeenth century becomes the frivolous banter of the Eighteenth, how the rules of politeness are undone by the desire of self-interested hypocrisy, and how *légèreté* comes to signify the eighteenth-century's social, political and moral laxity and libertinage. At century's end, the Revolutionaries sought to correct the view of national character associated with *légèreté*, by excluding women from the republican political sphere whose virtues that were anything but *légères*, and by associating *légèreté* with a past that the Revolutionaries sought to rewrite. This complicated historical strategy would continue in the next century's production of a lush and luxurious imaginary eighteenth century.

It is difficult to do justice to the diverse forms of *légèreté* the volume's sixteen essays analyse, in texts ranging from literature, scientific writing, economic theory, aesthetics, painting and commerce. Patrick Wald Lasowski begins the examination of the multiple vectors of *légèreté* by considering its aesthetic and existential dimensions in the writings of the abbé de Voisenon. In her reading of La Morlière and his libertine novel *Angola*, Marine Ganofsky subtly argues that *légèreté* involves subjectivity, history, national character and politics, above all as a response to its threatening opposite, an eighteenth-century fear of emptiness and boredom. Maxime Triquenaux presents the 'ego document' of the Prince de Ligne's *Fragments de l'histoire de ma vie*, a text that constructs a symbolic identity for a curialized nobility by means of a 'poetics of indifference'.

Légèreté crosses national borders, as Kevin Hilliard and Kate Grandjouan show respectively in their articles on the importation of French poetic values into Germany, and on the English satirical representation of French identity. Crossing generic borders, the aesthetics of *légèreté* can be employed to treat otherwise weighty topics: in Ferdinando Galiani's dialogues on the grain trade, Azzurra Mauro shows a dialogical rhetorics at work that involves mockery, jest and irony; Maria Susana Seguin uses the paradigm of *légèreté* to analyse the discursive strategies employed in Fontenelle's *Histoire de l'Académie royale des sciences* to invent a new public space for the diffusion of new ideas; Jean-Olivier Richard examines how in the writing of Louis Bertrand Castel lightness offers a counterbalance to the treatment of weight in eighteenth-century scientific, philosophical and moral thought; James Fowler pursues the question of weight as he examines Voltaire's treatment of Newton and mechanism in his *Lettres philosophiques*.

The paradigm of *légèreté* shapes the public perception of new cultural figures and objects. Jean-Alexandre Perras shows how the French *cabriolet* or carriage evoked lightness, speed and fragility, materializing social inequalities and signifying a new social space of display and expenditure, the boulevard. Joël Castonguay examines how *légèreté* transfuses the representation of the first French aeronauts. As Elise Urbain reveals, a desire for *légèreté* joins theories of painting and clothing style, where negligence in clothing, both worn and depicted—the *négligé* and the *robe de chambre*—connotes the rejection of physical, social, moral and intellectual constraints. Anthony Wall displays an aesthetics of *légèreté* in Hubert Robert's pictorial examination of the links between space, time, matter and character.

At some point in French cultural history *légèreté* becomes the sign not of something experienced but of something remembered. Cyril Bardek shows how in Octave Uzanne's small nineteenth-century reviews the previous century becomes a memory site, associated with richly symbolic objects such as fans, sleeves, gloves, umbrellas, lace, powder and velours. Erika Wicky continues to plot the evocative return to a previous century in which perfume and all it connotes produce a *légèreté* that is at the centre of an historical imaginary.

In the diverse and richly suggestive story this volume tells, *légèreté* is a paradigmatic concept whose historical emergence and cultural remembrance define the eighteenth century. As a cultural, social, subjective and aesthetic paradigm, *légèreté* serves as a valuable methodological tool for analysing the eighteenth-century France's literary, cultural and intellectual history.

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