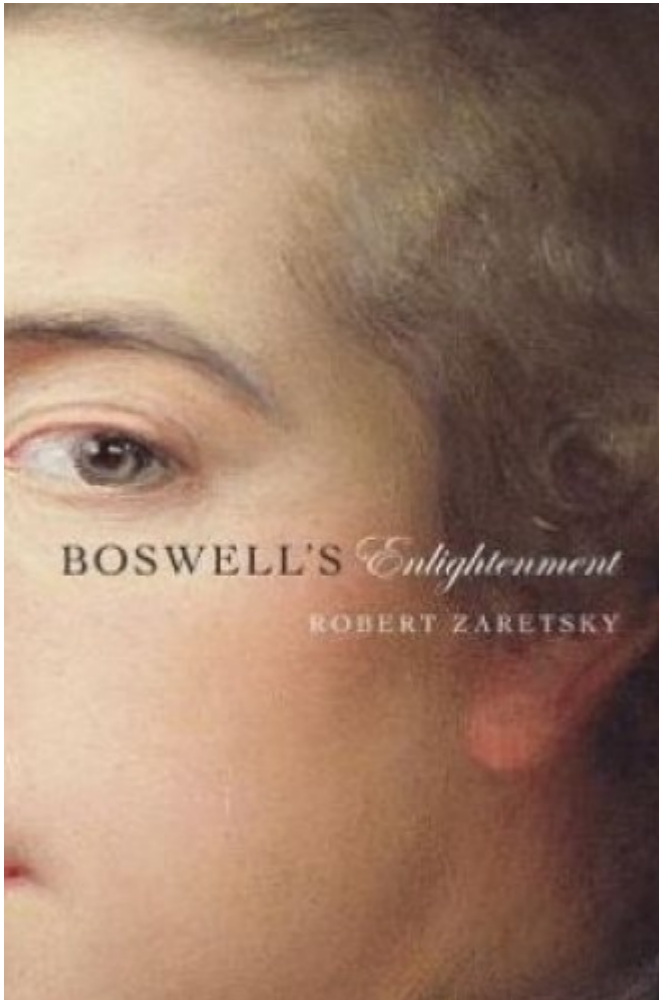


Boswell's Enlightenment, by Robert Zaretsky

Books in the [April 1, 2015](#) issue

In Review



Boswell's Enlightenment

By Robert Zaretsky

Belknap Press of Harvard University Press

James Boswell, best known as Samuel Johnson's biographer, was a lifelong seeker of truth. He struggled to put together his Calvinist religious heritage with the insights and perspectives of the Enlightenment. From 1763 to 1765 he toured Europe not

just to see the historic sites but to encounter some of its greatest living thinkers, among them Rousseau and Voltaire. Zaretsky adroitly chronicles Boswell's intellectual journey and introduces the reader to the varieties of 18th-century Enlightenment. Boswell's struggles remain with us—over the relationship between faith and reason, the nature of human liberty and equality, the duties of citizenship, the role and limits of the state, and what constitutes the good life.