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Editorial

Introduction

The papers collected here are brought together under the heading of 'Instruments of Enlightenment'. For the *Oxford English Dictionary*, the principal definition of an instrument is that 'which is used by an agent in or for the performance of an action; a thing with or through which something is done or effected; anything that serves or contributes to the accomplishment of a purpose or end; a means'. For this collection of essays, the contributors were asked to consider how 18th-century European ideas were implemented, and asked by extension to trace the passage of what we now call 'Enlightenment' ideas from theoria to praxis. To that end, following the dictionary definition, the essays represent a number of ways of considering how a broad set of practices and ideas may come to have a collective purpose, agency and end. The 'Enlightenment' is here taken to be an emergent quality: a process and not a thing. The essays consider a range of approaches to 18th-century ideas 'made real': from the creation of actual scientific instruments, through to the implementation of political values, from the writing of history to the plotting of maps, from attempts to influence the political sphere to understandings of the world based on the botanical realm.

If historians of 18th-century ideas agree upon anything, they surely agree that the word 'Enlightenment' can be as infuriating as it is necessary.[1] Here 'Enlightenment' is treated as an epiphenomenon of concrete events within the 'long' 18th century, one which is constituted by the activities of agents within that period. What binds these essays together is that they are all concerned with how 18th-century agents, be they writers, painters, instrument makers, historians, improvers or fraudsters, contributed to (and sought to make real) the set of ideas which we refer to as 'Enlightenment' in Europe. To return to the dictionary definition, the essays here seek to analyse 'the means' by which 'Enlightenment' may be said to have come about, the 'contribution to the accomplishment' of that term. The essays each trace a distinct performance, or the contribution of a distinct agent, amidst the history of 18th-century ideas.

The collection opens with three papers, by Tom Verschaffel, John Shufelt and Marc Olivier, that examine the continental and international enlightenment. Verschaffel charts the development of historiography in Belgium, and analyses

[1] There is, of course, a continuing and robust debate about the use of the definite article in front of the word 'Enlightenment'. Contributors to this collection have used both the definite article (as well as inverted commas and capitalisation) at different times to signal different things about the register of the word: a sign of its continuing polyvalence.

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how the 18th century in Belgium (then the Austrian Netherlands) witnessed the implementation of new forms of historical writing. John Shufelt studies the activities of the remarkable international fake George Psalmanazar, whose continental European background was no bar to his claims to be Formosan, and whose deceit played-out in 18th-century Britain by way of Holland. Marc Olivier treats of microscopy and the relationship between instrument and book in Europe, and analyses how the microscope, an iconic 'instrument' of enlightenment, changed in appearance and signification between the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.

The relationship between Britain and Europe is given a gendered inflection by Sam George and Lisa Anscomb, who analyse the relationship between reason, gender and language in the period, focussing on how women learnt (and acted as educators in turn). Anscomb examines the use of translation and dialogues in French, Italian and English texts, particularly Aphra Behn's translation of Bernard le Bovier de Fontenelle's *Entretien sur la pluralité des Mondes* (1686) and Elizabeth Carter's *Sir Isaac Newton's Philosophy Explained for the Use of Ladies* (1739) translated from Francesco Algarotti's *Il Newtonianismo Per le Dame* (1737). Sam George compares and contrasts writers on female education, picking out Rousseau and Wollstonecraft for special attention, and finding in European educative writing a tension between male and female acculturation, no matter how 'enlightened' the educator. The relationship between 'culture' on the one hand and 'cultivation' on the other, argues George, allows us to open-up the gender inflections of 18th-century education.

The fault lines in the universal, totalising, claims of 'Enlightenment' are then explored further in three essays that consider how 'counter-enlightenment' was manifest in the 18th Century. Antonio Lázaro-Reboll takes the Spanish painter Francisco José de Goya as his subject, and finds in him a representation of unreason that is sited in the representation of the body. For Lázaro-Reboll, the corporeal and libidinal in Goya's late etchings is where a profound distrust of enlightenment is voiced, and where the human body itself becomes an unstable instrument for the carriage of reason. Lázaro-Reboll's concerns are developed by two other contributors, Adam Rounce and Jason Snart. Rounce finds in the English satirist and political agitator Charles Churchill an immutable distrust of reason. In Churchill's short but bright period of fame, Rounce finds a poet who cannot dissociate reason from the institutions that guarantee it: political, cultural and economic. The sceptic Churchill set about insisting that the dominant social order manufactures art and artistic value for its own purposes, and in doing so provided a searing, and pessimistic, account of mid-century accounts of progress in the arts and sciences. If Goya the artist and Churchill the poet distrusted the totalising claims of reason, that distrust is given fullest voice by that most awkward of 18th-century artist-poets, William Blake, addressed here by Jason Snart. Snart finds Blake troubled by Newton (or, indeed, vice versa). For Snart, Blake's impulse was not to reject reason, just as Newton never rejected representation: rather both characters had to come-to-terms with, on the one hand, science's need to understand how it would be represented (Newton) and art's need to acknowledge its own programmatic qualities (Blake).