

# Northumbria Research Link

Citation: Carey, Brycchan and Warman, Caroline (2022) Introduction: Enlightenment Identities. *Journal for Eighteenth-Century Studies*, 45 (1). pp. 3-9. ISSN 1754-0194

Published by: Wiley-Blackwell

URL: <https://doi.org/10.1111/1754-0208.12784> <<https://doi.org/10.1111/1754-0208.12784>>

This version was downloaded from Northumbria Research Link:  
<https://nrl.northumbria.ac.uk/id/eprint/47405/>

Northumbria University has developed Northumbria Research Link (NRL) to enable users to access the University's research output. Copyright © and moral rights for items on NRL are retained by the individual author(s) and/or other copyright owners. Single copies of full items can be reproduced, displayed or performed, and given to third parties in any format or medium for personal research or study, educational, or not-for-profit purposes without prior permission or charge, provided the authors, title and full bibliographic details are given, as well as a hyperlink and/or URL to the original metadata page. The content must not be changed in any way. Full items must not be sold commercially in any format or medium without formal permission of the copyright holder. The full policy is available online: <http://nrl.northumbria.ac.uk/policies.html>

This document may differ from the final, published version of the research and has been made available online in accordance with publisher policies. To read and/or cite from the published version of the research, please visit the publisher's website (a subscription may be required.)

Brycchan Carey

Northumbria University

Orcid ID: 0000-0002-6220-3394

Introduction to Volume 1 of a Special Double Issue of *The Journal for Eighteenth-Century Studies* on Enlightenment Identities, edited by Brycchan Carey and Caroline Warman.

Pre-proof version of an article accepted on 8 September 2021 for publication in *The Journal for Eighteenth-Century Studies*. DOI: 10.1111/1754-0208.12784

This special issue of *The Journal for Eighteenth-Century Studies* is the first of two that aim to reflect the range and diversity of research that was presented in July 2019 at the International Congress on the Enlightenment at the University of Edinburgh. The Congress, a quadrennial event organised under the auspices of the International Society for Eighteenth-Century Studies (ISECS) has become over the decades the high point of the professional, intellectual, and, indeed, social calendar of eighteenth-century scholars the world over. As a sort of Olympic Games for researchers into the longest of long eighteenth centuries, it revolves from one nation to another, bringing into the same arena scholars from an astonishing array of disciplines, traditions, and languages. In 2019, the British Society for Eighteenth-Century Studies (BSECS) was privileged to host the congress, in partnership with the Eighteenth-Century Scottish Studies Society (ECSSS) and the University of Edinburgh. The congress took place across the week of 14 to 19 July, centred on the University's historic George Square, but including excursion and event venues as diverse as the National Museum of Scotland, Sir Walter Scott's Abbotsford House, and the Edinburgh Assembly Rooms. By the end of the week, to select just a few of the many revealing statistics, ten plenary addresses had been delivered, 1519 papers had been given in 472 panels,

approximately 8000 glasses of wine had been poured, and no fewer than three pipers had been paid. None of this happened by accident. A committee of eighteen people from BSECS, ECSSS, and Edinburgh University met over eight years, working with the university's events team, Edinburgh First, and other partners throughout the city and beyond. At the congress itself, hundreds of scholars came together to create and chair panels, organise 'fringe' events, and deliver papers. The congress was an illustration of what can be achieved by teamwork, goodwill, and voluntary service, and we would like to thank those many, many people who contributed to its success.

The International Congress on the Enlightenment is marked by its inclusivity and its diversity of research. Every four years, proposals for papers, panels, and roundtables on any topic relevant to the long eighteenth century are called for and received. At the same time, each congress has an overarching light theme with which many participants choose to engage. In 2019, we invited contributions that promised to address the theme of 'Enlightenment Identities'. As we noted in the congress call for papers, 'the question of "identity" was much disputed in the eighteenth century, in ways ranging from the local, regional, colonial, national, federal, imperial, to the global'. Addressing that global community of scholars, we suggested that 'identities are complex. They are forged by factors ranging from the personal to wider political, military, religious, intellectual, techno-scientific, cultural, ethnic, social, sexual, economic, class/caste, geographical, and historical contexts'. The geographical range and the array of social, cultural, and economic factors that we enumerated turned out only to skim the surface of the topics presented, and our assertion in the call for papers that 'the idea of Enlightenment was itself much debated' was amply justified by the numerous papers that showed how both Enlightenment identities and the identity of the Enlightenment itself were, and continue to be, the subject of extended and sometimes heated debate. We concluded our call by emphasising the importance of the Scottish Enlightenment. 'Given these interlocking complexities', we argued, "'Enlightenment Identities" constitutes an important theme for an international gathering in the Enlightenment city of Edinburgh, whose eighteenth-century denizens, like Adam Smith, were at once Scottish, British, and "citizens of the world"'.

Members of constituent societies of ISECS today may be fully naturalised citizens of the world, but that identity was itself only barely imaginable in the eighteenth century.

Mariners and other travellers were increasingly recognised, by themselves as well as others, as having a distinct cultural identity, but few if any could genuinely claim a global identity. The earliest global circumnavigation had been completed by Juan Sebastián Elcano, one of the survivors of Ferdinand Magellan's expedition, some 150 years before the dawning of what we might now think of the Age of Enlightenment, but circumnavigators were still a tiny group of people even by the start of the Age of Industry and its development of steam ships and railways. Jeanne Baret, James Cook, and Alejandro Malaspina remained in very select company. In an age of growing empires, it was, however, certainly possible to imagine and assert a regional identity, or to believe that one's local identity could be extended to, or imposed upon, others. Eighteenth-century empires were various and included Qing Dynasty China, the Russian, the Mughal, the Benin, and the Ottoman empires, as well as the European colonial empires of Spain, Portugal, France, and Great Britain. While all asserted unified religious, linguistic, or cultural identities to some extent, the reality was that all were complex intermixtures of different languages, faiths, customs, cultures, economic systems, and intellectual traditions. Hindus, Muslims, and Sikhs lived alongside one another in Mughal India just as Presbyterians, Catholics, and atheists could be encountered in the coffee houses of Enlightenment Edinburgh. Many communities were multilingual: Spanish and Nahuatl were spoken side by side in Mexico City, Danish and German in Copenhagen, Arabic, Persian, and Turkish in Baghdad, Cornish and English in Penzance. Regional dialects, still a notable feature of many modern languages, meant that compatriots ostensibly speaking the same language might find themselves mutually incomprehensible after only a day's ride. Educated travellers may have had recourse to Latin, Arabic, or Mandarin but, for many, cultural identity was more a function of local than national and international languages and cultures.

Language, faith, and region may have been important determiners of identity, then as today, but they were by no means the only factors. Our personal identity is in part determined by the world into which we are born but it is also achieved through our daily actions—and sometimes thrust upon us by extraordinary situations that require extraordinary responses. What we might consider professional identity, in its broadest sense, was already highly differentiated by the early modern period and, as eighteenth-century economies and technologies expanded and complexified, such identities grew ever

more intricate. Metalworkers and clothworkers learned how to use new smelting and casting processes, unfamiliar fibres, and mechanical looms that threatened their jobs and with them their personal identities. Farmers adopted new technologies of crop rotation, drilling, and enclosure. Miners introduced railways and steam pumps. Military forces saw entire regiments formed to deploy advanced new guns and tactics while warships reached heights of complexity that required a lifetime's dedication to understand and use. The age-old identities of soldier and sailor proliferated into hundreds of military subcultures. It was not only military and industrial technology that impacted on identity. Incremental improvements to printing and papermaking across this period saw the price of books and periodicals steadily decline and as a result literacy extended into regions and social groups whose cultures had hitherto been primary oral. Increased access to literary as well as oral cultures transformed the identity of individuals and communities across the globe, while technologies such as translation, transliteration, and long-distance mail facilitated by better roads and ships, brought hitherto distant communities closer together. Increasingly, Enlightenment identities were shaped by an engagement with knowledge that circulated widely in both image and text.

Such technologies and cultures were not evenly distributed, and, across the world, a small minority of people held the majority of land and property. They used their wealth to invent systems of banking and investment that allowed them to express their personal and class identities in forms of opulence and sophistication hitherto unknown. On the other hand, although most people had very little, among the poor, distinct cultures and identities flourished and were increasingly recorded, even celebrated, by artists and authors. Even vagabonds and thieves differentiated themselves into different criminal fraternities, often with their own codes and dialects. Professional identities were often highly gendered, but in some parts of the world gender boundaries began to soften a little. With a few exceptions such as midwifery, men showed little inclination to take on roles traditionally identified with women, but the European Enlightenment was a period in which women increasingly defined their identities on their own terms, in particular, through the rapid expansion of women's participation in literature and the arts.

The identities we construct for ourselves may, however, be very different from those that others impose upon us. The eighteenth century was an age of enlightenment but it was

also marked by extensive and increasing conquest, colonisation, and enslavement. In particular, the Atlantic slave trade and the plantation societies it serviced rested on the systematic and state-sponsored theft of freedom, labour, and identity. The identities of farmer, warrior, griot, or chief may reflect birth, ambition, or ability, but European slave traders saw only a marketable commodity, an African slave, and sought to erase other markers of identity including faith, language, and personal name. In so doing they inflicted untold injury and trauma, but enslaved Africans and their descendants in the New World and beyond created new identities and new societies. *Quilombos* and maroon settlements were founded in remote mountains and forests across the Americas. In San Domingue, uprising became revolution and the nation of Haiti was born. New World slavery persisted into the 1880s but the seeds of its destruction were sowed a century before. While many Europeans adopted the new political identity of abolitionist, those formerly enslaved reasserted their African identity. In 1789, Gustavus Vassa reminded the world that his true identity was 'Olaudah Equiano, The African', and through his testimony brought the horrors of slavery home to a European public.

Equiano's autobiography brought him a certain measure of celebrity. The lives of kings, saints, and warriors had been recounted since antiquity, often in highly stylised or laudatory terms, but the attempt to represent people as they really were, or as they genuinely had been, gave the genres of biography and autobiography a new impetus in this period and fuelled an interest in personal identity as well as achievement. Biographers such as Samuel Johnson sought truth over panegyric, and while Johnson's *Lives of the Poets* unsparingly revealed its subjects' literary and personal identities, Johnson himself became the posthumous subject of the most celebrated, and most carefully researched, biography of the age. Many sought to assert their own identities in autobiography. Jean-Jacques Rousseau's *Confessions*, Voltaire's *Mémoires*, and Benjamin Franklin's *Autobiography* are among the most revered self-representations of the age. Others, like the much-ridiculed *Apology for the Life of Colley Cibber*, were self-serving attempts to promote the author's public image. While poets, novelists, and performers became celebrities, driven by a public desire to read about their lives in increasingly affordable books, journals, and newspapers, autobiography was by no means the preserve of the wealthy and famous. Alongside the 'slave narratives' of Equiano and others, clerics, soldiers, sailors, servants, and travellers

with an eye to posterity told their stories and asserted their identities in print. Nor did biographers confine their attentions only to the wealthy and admirable. In London, publications such as *The Newgate Calendar* and Charles Johnson's *General History of the Robberies and Murders of the most notorious Pyrates* revealed and reviled the personalities of the criminal underworld. The characteristic cultural form of the century, the novel, began its rise in the form of fabricated biographies and autobiographies of obscure individuals—an enslaved African prince, a London cutpurse, a shipwrecked mariner, an unwanted orphan—whose identities are explored and developed in unprecedented detail.

Human identity is not everything. A growing number of European Enlightenment thinkers sought to identify and classify objects and ideas, overturning typologies that in many cases originated with Aristotle, creating thereby new understandings of the nature of humanity, life, and the cosmos. The invention of the telescope had transformed the understanding of the universe in the seventeenth century. Eighteenth-century astronomers such as John Flamsteed, William Herschel, Johannes Hevelius, and Charles Messier painstakingly identified and catalogued stars, planets, comets, and nebulae, revealing a cosmos that was vaster and more complex than had hitherto been imagined. The identity of the Earth was newly uncovered by scientists such as Georges-Louis Leclerc de Buffon, Charles Marie de La Condamine, James Hutton, and Nevil Maskelyne who, by carefully measuring its shape, mass, and composition, showed that our planet was an ancient and dynamic system. In biology, a huge if informal international project sought to identify and classify all living organisms. Taxonomic systems were developed in England, by John Ray, and France, by Joseph Pitton de Tournefort, but it was a Swede, Carl Linnaeus, whose binomial nomenclature allowed naturalists to precisely identify and describe species and genera. His system would strike at the heart of what it meant to be human. Although seeking simply to describe God's creation, Linnaeus's hierarchical system based on morphological resemblance implied to others a more direct relationship between different species. By the late eighteenth century, the fact that evolution had taken place across time was increasingly clear to many scientists including Buffon, Erasmus Darwin, Jean-Baptiste Lamarck, and James Burnett, Lord Monboddo. Although it would be the nineteenth century before the mechanism of evolution would be understood, Enlightenment natural history set the stage for the most profound reassessment of human identity in history.

European Enlightenment scientists, thinkers, and authors bequeathed a powerful set of intellectual tools with which to understand identity. Among the philosophers, John Locke argued that consciousness is at the core of personal identity, not the physical body nor the metaphysical soul, and that we are in effect the sum of our memories. Gottfried Leibniz proposed that if two objects shared all the same properties then they were in fact the same object, a law sometimes given as 'A is A'. David Hume argued that self-identity could be understood as a collection of perceptions, which he divided into impressions and ideas, and that when perception ceased then so did identity. Of course, these are almost absurdly reduced summations of complex philosophical positions, but the urge to sum up, to abridge, and to collate human knowledge was itself a distinct contribution of the Age of Enlightenment, while the enthusiasm for identifying and classifying the various components of the natural world also extended to language, culture, and ideology. The first complete *Dictionnaire de l'Académie française* appeared in 1694 and was followed, half a century later, by Samuel Johnson's *Dictionary of the English Language*; both publications examples of the way that national and personal identity was increasingly asserted through language in this period. In 1728, Ephraim Chambers issued the first edition of *Cyclopædia, or an Universal Dictionary of Arts and Sciences* in London, which was comprehensively outdone in France by the *Encyclopédie* edited by Denis Diderot and, initially, Jean le Rond d'Alembert in the 1750s, 60s, and 70s. These ventures sought not only to compile useful knowledge but also to assert cultural and linguistic identities. At a more local level, almost every profession and cultural activity was captured in a proliferation of guides and manuals. One no longer needed to be born, raised, or trained as a farmer, lawyer, or craftsman when there were manuals pouring from the press that allowed one to quickly acquire the skills and adopt the identity and language of any chosen lifestyle. Likewise, if man is indeed what he eats, then the Enlightenment systemisation of regional and national cuisines can be said to be at the heart of the humanities. The establishment of French *haute cuisine* as an international benchmark was an Enlightenment project bounded by François Pierre La Varenne in the seventeenth century and Marie-Antoine Carême at the start of the nineteenth, but other national cuisines were identified and asserted in this period, not least in England. Hannah Glasse's *The Art of Cookery Made Plain and Easy*, published in London in 1747, offered John Bull the first printed recipes for Yorkshire pudding and curry; dishes now central to British identity.



All these topics, and many more, were discussed among the 1519 papers offered at the 2019 International Congress on the Enlightenment. There was no sign by the end of the congress that the subject of Enlightenment identity had been either exhausted or resolved. As an imperfect reflection of the diverse and energetic debates that took place across that July week, the organisers decided to invite submissions to a special edition of *The Journal for Eighteenth-Century Studies*. We received more than 70 papers, each of which made a unique contribution to our understanding of identity in the long eighteenth century. In making our selection, we were keen to reflect the considerable national, linguistic, and disciplinary diversity of the congress, but we should note that the majority of our contributors, grounded in the arts and humanities, are primarily interested in exploring cultural and personal identity. This allowed us to organise the essays into two categories. In this, the first instalment of our special double edition, the contributors focus on the ways in which identity was constructed, experienced, understood, asserted, and performed in a variety of public and political spaces. The second instalment considers the same questions in relation to personal and private identity. While these fifteen essays show that there is considerable overlap between the ways in which identity was asserted, performed, or adopted in public and in private, it is nevertheless also apparent that group identities and individual identities are constructed and deployed differently, are often in tension, and sometimes entirely at odds with one another.

This first instalment opens with Timothy Léchoť' s observation that little is known about the distribution of the French newspapers and magazines of the Ancien Régime and there are few sources on readers, their geographical origins, and their social positions. In 'Profils d'un lectorat: enquête sur les signatures d'énigmes du *Mercur de France* (1724-1778)', Léchoť studies the authors of the riddles in verse that were published every month to demonstrate the existence and identity of a new type of reader: the reader-contributor who supplies the periodical with poems. In the second essay, 'Among 'savage and brutal Nations': Instructing Identity and Science in the Pacific', Thomas Combe and Bruce Buchan read the 'hints' given to James Cook by the President of the Royal Society as a 'technology of identity' that curated the perceptions of the Indigenous people Cook's expedition encountered but which also guided the performance of European identity on Cook's first Pacific voyage. The third essay in this special issue, Daniel Fulda's 'Identity in Diversity:

Programmatic Pictures of the Enlightenment' switches the focus from text to image. Using examples from late eighteenth-century France and early eighteenth-century Germany, Fulda shows how pictures were used to propagate agendas of enlightenment and, sometimes, to draft it in the first place. Moving to the other end of the Enlightenment, Caitlin Kitchener shows that, in 1819 England, female reformers were radical activists who attempted to forge a 'feminine' radicalism by connecting their politics to their domesticity and families. In 'Sisters of the Earth: The Landscapes, Radical Identities and Performances of Female Reformers in 1819', she uses an historical archaeology framework to analyse the contested identities female reformers performed within radical landscapes and spaces. The fifth essay, Michał Bajer's 'Les passeurs et passeuses littéraires dans le discours identitaire en Pologne des Lumières', explores the emergence of new literary identities in Enlightenment Poland. These, he argues, arose among aristocratic men and women who simultaneously valued their participation in a cosmopolitan literary elite while also contributing to the rise of the idea of the nation. The theme of nationhood is continued in the following two articles, both of which consider identity in the Scottish Enlightenment. Mark McLean's 'Scotch on the Rocks: Literary Identity and Linguistic Anxiety in Enlightenment Scotland', explores the 'linguistic conundrum' faced by the Scottish Enlightenment literati who recognised the need to conform their language to the 'polite' model of their southern neighbours but who also realised that national dignity required that such conformity should not appear servile. The resulting tension, argues McLean, led not only to friction between the Scots themselves but to an anxiety which constituted a crisis of identity. In "'Perhaps the Highlanders may imitate them.'" Highland Identity and the British Empire, from the Forty-Five to the Seven Years' War', Alastair Noble examines the complicated process by which Highlanders, once regarded as a threat to the British state, were assimilated through imperial service. This process, he argues, allowed Highland and British identities to co-exist even although Highland soldiers in the British Army continued to be regarded as 'others' whose supposedly untamed nature remained, but was now regarded as useful to the Empire. The final essay in this special edition returns to eighteenth-century France and to one of the most celebrated figures of the Enlightenment. In 'Identité du moi et identité du philosophe. Rousseau dans le miroir de Socrate', Vera Waksman reconsiders the extent to which Rousseau constructed an identity based on the figure of Socrates, and she concludes that rather than abandoning

Socrates in his later writings, as some have argued, he does the reverse but instead measures himself against Socrates rather than emulating him.

These eight essays collectively explore a variety of ways in which national, professional, and other public identities were developed and performed across a stage that extended over the entire planet. In the second instalment of this special edition, a further seven essays will consider personal experience and private identity. Nevertheless, as these essays show, whether in public or in private, questions of identity were at the heart of the human experience in the long eighteenth century, and they continue to be the location of important and fruitful scholarly investigation.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

### Volume 1: Public and Political Identities

- 1.0 Brycchan Carey and Caroline Warman, Introduction
- 1.00 Author Biographies
- 1.1 Timothée Léchet, Profils d'un lectorat: enquête sur les signatures d'énigmes du *Mercur de France* (1724-1778)
- 1.2 Thomas Combe and Bruce Buchan, Among 'savage and brutal Nations': Instructing Identity and Science in the Pacific.
- 1.3 Daniel Fulda, Identity in Diversity: Programmatic Pictures of the Enlightenment
- 1.4 Caitlin Kitchener, Sisters of the Earth: The Landscapes, Radical Identities and Performances of Female Reformers in 1819
- 1.5 Michał Bajer, Les passeurs et passeuses littéraires dans le discours identitaire en Pologne des Lumières.
- 1.6 Mark McLean, Scotch on the Rocks: Literary Identity and Linguistic Anxiety in Enlightenment Scotland
- 1.7 Alastair Noble, 'Perhaps the Highlanders may imitate them.' Highland Identity and the British Empire, from the Forty-Five to the Seven Years' War
- 1.8 Vera Waksman, Identité du moi et identité du philosophe. Rousseau dans le miroir de Socrate

## Volume 2: Personal and Private Identities

- 2.0 Brycchan Carey and Caroline Warman, Preface
- 2.00 Author Biographies
- 2.1 Marc André Bernier, L'‘Histoire de ma littérature’ de M<sup>me</sup> d'Arconville (1720-1805): écriture de soi et généalogie d'une personnalité intellectuelle
- 2.2 Deirdre Coleman, Creole Identity in the Enlightenment
- 2.3 Florence Fesneau, L'identité du dormeur en question: de l'expérience du sensible à la représentation du cauchemar
- 2.4 Wen Jin, Self-Absorption and Performance in *Tanci* Fiction: Eighteenth-century Chinese Conceptions of Identity in Comparative Perspective
- 2.5 Rotraud von Kulesa, Écriture et identité féminines : Giustiniana Wynne Orsini v. Rosenberg : économie relationnelle et formation d'identité de femme auteur dans ses correspondances.
- 2.6 Robert Paulett, ‘This Mighty Fabric’: Allan Ramsay, British Union, and the Body of the King
- 2.7 Alexis Wolf, Identity and Anonymity in Lady Mount Cashell's 1798 Rebellion Broadside