

CITIZENS OF
THE ENLIGHTENMENT

CITOYENS
DES LUMIÈRES

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CITIZENS OF THE ENLIGHTENMENT. AN INTRODUCTION

«The titles of *fellow-citizen* and *countryman*, unopposed to those of *alien* and *foreigner*, to which they refer, would fall into disuse, and lose their meaning», Scottish philosopher Adam Ferguson wrote in his *History of Civil Society* of 1767. «We love individuals on account of personal qualities; but we love our country, as it is party in the divisions of mankind.¹» Enlightenment notions of citizens and citizenship entailed legal and cultural dimensions, both of which were set up in relation or opposition to non-citizens². Being a citizen did not denote an ontological essence, but, as Ferguson pointed out, referred to a concept as well as to the definitions, uses, and meanings assigned to it. While the emergence of national citizenship is associated with the French Revolution, the idea of membership of a country, state, or realm goes both further back and far beyond clearly defined regulation.³ For a long time, the term «citizen» primarily described someone living in a city, a «Bourgeois, habitant d'une cité», according to the *Dictionnaire de l'Académie française* of 1694. Ephraim Chambers's *Cyclopedia* of 1728 defined a citizen as «a native or inhabitant of a city, vested with the freedom and rights thereof⁴», emphasizing that certain spaces conferred privileges, while also implying that other spaces and other

¹ Adam Ferguson, *An Essay on the History of Civil Society*, Dublin, 1767, p. 31.

² Tamar Herzog, *Defining Nations. Immigrants and Citizens in Early Modern Spain and Spanish America*, New Haven and London, Yale University Press, 2003; Peter Sahlin, *Unnaturally French. Foreign Citizens in the Old Regime and After*, Ithaca, NY, Cornell University Press, 2004. On the binary model of citizenship – national vs. non-national – and its diffusion through the French Revolution, see Djordje Sredanovic, «Was Citizenship Born With the Enlightenment? Developments of Citizenship Between Britain and France and “Everyday Citizenship” Implications», *Miranda. Revue pluridisciplinaire du monde anglophone*, 2017, 15: p. 1-13.

³ William Rogers Brubaker, «The French Revolution and the Invention of Citizenship», *French Politics and Society*, 1898, 7 (3): p. 30-49; Renée Waldinger, Philip Dawson, and Isser Woloch, eds., *The French Revolution and the Meaning of Citizenship*, Westport, CT, Greenwood Press, 1993.

⁴ Académie Française, *Le Dictionnaire de l'Académie Française, dédié au Roy*, 2 vols., Paris, 1694, vol. 1, p. 193; Ephraim Chambers, ed., *Cyclopedia, Or an Universal Dictionary of Arts and Sciences*, 2 vols., London, 1728, vol. 1, «CIT».

people did not possess them. Far from being self-evident, citizenship had to be constantly renegotiated and reappropriated, especially at the critical juncture during the Enlightenment, when it was transmuting from a cluster of laws and privileges into a matter of political representation. In France, in particular, where citizens had long been understood as naturally Catholic, civil identity had to be wrested from religious identity⁵. Such citizenship, moreover, codified as much as performed in the public sphere, involved material and emotional dimensions, the reality of one's country and the love one had or developed for it, because materiality and their affective valences mediated between abstract concepts and lived experiences.

In conjunction with a broader cultural turn in the discipline of history, Enlightenment studies of recent years have enriched the legal history of citizenship⁶ by understanding it as an active and multifarious form of participation in a political community⁷. In focusing on how citizenship was conceptualized in different contexts and how it was enacted (or done), not just on what it was, questions of individual or collective engagement, of space, materiality, and representation, have come to the fore⁸. Informed by global history and postcolonial studies, moreover, issues of participation and exclusion, enshrined in the question of citizenship, have been raised in a global context. In line with recent criticism of the assumption that Enlightenment ideas expanded from Europe to the rest of the world⁹, these

⁵ Jeffrey Merrick, «Conscience and Citizenship in Eighteenth-Century France», *Eighteenth-Century Studies*, 1987, 21 (1): p. 48-70.

⁶ Julius Kirschner and Laurent Mayali, eds., *Privileges and Rights of Citizenship: Law and the Juridical Construction of Civil Society*, Berkeley, Robbins collection publications, 2002.

⁷ Sami Bargaoui, Simona Cerutti, and Isabelle Grangaud, *Appartenance locale et propriété au nord et au sud de la Méditerranée*, Aix-en-Provence, Institut de recherches et d'études sur le monde arabe et musulman, 2015, <http://books.openedition.org/iremam/3396>.

⁸ Dena Goodman, *The Republic of Letters. A Cultural History of the Enlightenment*, Ithaca, NY, Cornell University Press, 1996; Antoine Lilti, *Le monde des salons: Sociabilité et mondanité à Paris au XVIII^e siècle*, Paris, Fayard, 2005.

⁹ Sebastian Conrad, «Enlightenment in Global History: A Historiographical Critique», *The American Historical Review*, 2012, 117 (4): p. 999-1027. See also Conrad, *What is Global History?*, Princeton, Princeton University Press, 2016. Laurent Dubois, «An Enslaved Enlightenment: Rethinking the Intellectual History of the French Atlantic», *Social History*, 2006, 31 (1): p. 1-14; April Shelford, *A Caribbean Enlightenment. Intellectual Life in the British and French Colonial Worlds, 1750–1792*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2023; Alexander Statman, *A Global Enlightenment. Western Progress and Chinese Science*, Chicago, Chicago University Press, 2023. Somewhat related, but still distinct, is Jonathan Israel's view of the various revolutions since the 1770s as part of «a wider transatlantic revolutionary sequence, a series of revolutions in France, Italy, Holland, Switzerland, Germany, Ireland, Haiti, Poland, Spain, Greece, and

forays have underlined the need for a deeper understanding of the specific local and regional conditions in and through which ideas of citizenship, including its rights, duties, and privileges, were constructed¹⁰.

This edited volume brings together eleven articles by historians and literary scholars examining the legal, social, and cultural makeup of Enlightenment citizenship. They chart the political, social, and cultural construction of the citizen as it emerges in relation to the city, understood as both a real and an imagined space, which was believed to not just accommodate citizens but shape their self-understanding as such. To do so, the authors focus on the explicit and implicit norms, standards, codes, habits, and obligations that European citizens of the Enlightenment met with in these urban centres. Some applied to the whole nation, such as laws and regulations, some were informal cultural norms, but taken together, those legal, moral, or habitual rules did the groundwork of Enlightenment philosophy. They regulated everyday life and helped one to navigate the city; they moulded mindsets and modelled individual behaviour.

Moving from explorations of demarcated spaces to analyses of portraits, the articles in this volume investigate the values to which citizens were expected to subscribe and the diversity of forms through which these were disseminated. With this approach, we are building on what Peter Gay and, following him, Robert Darnton have elaborated as a «social history of ideas¹¹» with the aim of «situating the Enlightenment within the actualities of eighteenth-century society¹²». While originally a challenge from below to the «lofty affair» of Enlightenment intellectual history¹³, recent scholarly trends have mitigated combative dichotomies between top-down and grassroots developments. The recent reappraisal of intellectual history has seen rereadings of the Enlightenment through more traditional histories of ideas¹⁴, exemplified by Jonathan Israel's monumental

Spanish America». Israel, *The Expanding Blaze: How the American Revolution Ignited the World, 1775–1848*, Princeton, Princeton University Press, 2017, p. 17.

¹⁰ Simona Cerutti, «À qui appartiennent les biens qui n'appartiennent à personne? Citoyenneté et droit d'aubaine à l'époque moderne», *Annales. Histoire, Sciences Sociales*, 2007, 62 (2): p. 355-383; Adom Getachew, «Universalism After the Post-colonial Turn: Interpreting the Haitian Revolution», *Political Theory*, 2016, 44 (6): p. 821-845.

¹¹ Peter Gay, *The Party of Humanity: Essays in the French Enlightenment*, New York, Knopf, 1964, p. x. Robert Darnton, «In Search of Enlightenment: Recent Attempts to Create a Social History of Ideas», *The Journal of Modern History*, 1971, 43 (1): p. 113-132.

¹² Darnton, «In Search of Enlightenment», p. 113.

¹³ Darnton, «In Search of Enlightenment», p. 113.

¹⁴ Gary Kates, *The Books that Made Enlightenment Europe. A History in 12 Case Studies*, London, Bloomsbury, 2022.