

Contents

Preface	ix
Introduction: Enlightenment natural history and literary invention	1
Style: combining rhetoric and knowledge	2
Harmonizing world and word	6
Natural history: between physics and history	9
The literary practice of natural history	17
Summary of chapters	24
1. Inventing natural language: the harmonization of mind and world	29
Mathematical rules and natural laws	31
Buffon and natural law: relativizing perception	39
Inventing and intervening: Montesquieu and the natural laws of history	46
Scaling the levels of perception: the evolving relationship with nature in the <i>Histoire naturelle</i>	51
2. Generating heat: the energy of natural language	59
Introducing heat: <i>De l'art d'écrire</i>	60
Heat: the material interface with nature	63
Between body and mind: the spirit of language	70
The energy of the natural historical text	76

3. Writing nature: the foundations of natural history	87
The ‘Discours sur le style’: translating the movement of nature	90
The <i>mise-en-scène</i> of style in the <i>Histoire naturelle</i> , 1749	96
From style to history: reading temporality into nature’s story	100
4. Hypothesis and the energy of invention	113
Hypothesis and the invention of a verisimilar world	117
Hypothesis and heat: inventing the hidden mechanism of nature	123
Making heat real: the hypothesis in the ‘Epoques de la nature’	131
5. Reinventing nature’s heat	141
Buffon’s theorization of heat	145
The natural history of human beings: a story of inventing the temperate	151
Writing the future with heat	160
Conclusion: preserving the heat of the <i>Histoire naturelle</i>	169
Rethinking Buffon’s intellectual legacy	170
Condorcet’s <i>Eloge de M. de Buffon</i>	177
Saving style for posterity	186
The literary experiment	192
Bibliography	197
Index	207