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Nicholas Cronk, ed., *Voltaire and the 1760s: Essays for John Renwick, Studies on Voltaire and the Eighteenth Century 2008:10*. Oxford, Voltaire Foundation, 2008, ix and 294 pp. \$145 U.S. (cl). ISBN 978 0 7294 0949 0. ISSN 0435-2866.

Review by Harvey Chisick, University of Haifa.

This is a commemorative volume for John Renwick, an eminent scholar of eighteenth-century French literature who has written extensively on Voltaire and Marmontel as well as a wide range of other subjects. Its uniformly high quality is unusual for a volume of this sort.

The decision to devote a volume of essays to a single decade in the long and highly diversified career of a leading writer seems initially a curious choice. However, in this case it is fully justified. As Nicolas Cronk points out, the 1760s mark the victory of the *philosophes* and their allies over their more traditionalist adversaries: the election of Marmontel to the Académie française in 1763 marked the beginning of *philosophe* dominance of that key institution; the end of the Seven Years War eased international tensions; the expulsion of the Jesuits from France meant the elimination of one center of opposition to certain strains of Enlightenment thought; the last volumes of the *Encyclopédie* appeared; the publication of Marmontel's *Bélisaire* became a cause célèbre that helped consolidate the *philosophes* as a group; and it was during this decade that Voltaire launched his campaigns to rehabilitate Jean Calas, Sirven and the Chevalier de La Barre, which developed into a broader campaign for toleration, undertook his defense of French classical theatre against influences of the British stage, and published his *Dictionnaire philosophique* as well a number of important *contes* and other pieces. Voltaire at this time became the leader, if not of the Enlightenment as a whole, at least of one of the main foci of enlightened thought and endeavor, though he did so from his exile on the Swiss border far from the institutional epicenter of the movement in Paris.

The collection, which is opened by a tribute to Renwick by his colleague at Edinburgh, Peter France, is divided into two broad sections. The first deals with Voltaire's contemporaries, the second with Voltaire's activities and writings during the 1760s.

Jean Ehrard, author of the classic *L'Idée de la nature en France dans la première moitié du XVIIIe siècle*, offers a closely argued defense and rehabilitation of M. Ozy, an apothecary of Clermont-Ferrand, for his role in the identification of the volcanoes of the Puy-de-Dôme. A number of articles are devoted to Marmontel, an author on whom John Renwick has worked extensively. David Adams makes a convincing analysis of the frontispiece of *Bélisaire*, pointing out that Marmontel has shifted the character of the protagonist from that of a warrior to that of a philosopher. Michael Cardy examines Marmontel's *Poétique française*, much of which consisted of reworkings of his contributions to the *Encyclopédie*, but which nevertheless assured his election to the Académie française. He looks at the author's treatment of English writers and finds considerable appreciation, though also a dropping off of the enthusiasm that marked the anglomania of the first half of the century, and notes that Marmontel's reputation as a *philosophe* was consolidated only with his publication of *Bélisaire* and its strong plea for toleration. The

subject of Catherine Astbury's contribution concerns stage adaptations of Marmontel's highly successful *contes moraux*, first published in 1761. The source of the popularity of this genre is not obvious today, and Astbury tries to determine why some of these tales were adapted to the stage more than others.

In an original and thought-provoking piece David McCallum examines the 'moral economies' of two of Chamfort's comedies. He finds that Chamfort uses the language of economics to pose moral problems, among them noble status, wealth and luxury. The theme of moral debt is central, and any notion of reward for a virtuous action debases it. The main characters in both plays represent types of natives, barbarians and the over-civilized. John Dunkley considers Sedaine's play *Maillard, ou Paris sauvé* and finds it contains criticism of court policy as well as covert portrayals of Maupeou (as villain) and Malesherbes in a more positive light. Cecil Courtney takes up the career of the little known Constant d'Hermenches, who was, however, a correspondent of both Voltaire and of Belle de Zuylen, better known as Madame de Charrière. We learn that Constant's relations with Voltaire were largely pragmatic and concerned with patronage, while those with Belle were much more intimate and reflected the search on the part of both correspondents for a sense of self.

Like a number of other contributors to this volume, Christopher Todd examines the way France was perceived in England during the 1760s. Todd's study is based on three provincial newspapers, all of which used London papers as their main source. He finds that the predominant feeling toward France is hostility, partly because of the recent Seven Years War, partly because of inveterate anti-Catholicism, something which Russell Goulbourne also found in his study of English attitude toward the Calas affair and Voltaire's role in it, and partly because absolutism, which the British had forestalled in 1688-89, was perceived as a continuing threat in France. The two French authors most written up in the provincial papers used are, not surprisingly, Voltaire and Rousseau. Todd's article has some impressive quantitative data, but it is unfortunately not presented as either tables or graphs. Graham Gargett studies the way enlightened rhetoric was adapted and used by Caveirac, a Catholic apologist for the revocation of the Edict of Nantes, and by government bureaucrats treating an instance of repression of public Protestant worship. His contribution shows that spokesmen of the Enlightenment and certain of their traditionalist opponents shared a common language and assumptions about how best to appeal to the public. This is a useful reminder that the worlds of the *philosophes* and traditionalists sometimes overlapped, and that is simplistic to posit that their outlooks and languages are mutually exclusive.

David Coward, the author of a masterful monograph on Restif de la Bretonne, describes how in the course of the 1760s this poorly educated autodidact and print shop foreman turned himself into an author, and, moreover, how he developed a distinctive realist style and his own brand of vitalist pantheistic materialism. In a piece entitled "Voltaire, Rousseau and the Uses of Frivolity," Katherine Swarbrick braves the perils of psychological theory to argue that Rousseau, while clearly paranoid later in life, felt most threatened by those who took him seriously. Voltaire, by contrast, usually treated him with frivolity, and as a consequence of this the troubled Genevan never felt totally alienated from the older man, and indeed took the news of his death badly. While Rousseau's mental state is not easy to deal with, Swarbrick does so sensitively, and on the whole, convincingly.

The second section of this collection begins with an examination of Voltaire's contribution to the notion of public opinion. While the concepts of the public sphere and public opinion derived from the work of Jürgen Habermas have become key categories for cultural and intellectual history, there have been, at least for eighteenth-century France, relatively few case studies indicating how these concepts originated and developed. This makes James Hanrahan's

examination of Voltaire's use of the 'cri public' particularly welcome. Hanrahan finds that the term was not much used by Voltaire before the Calas case, and that it was in the course of the campaign to rehabilitate Calas that Voltaire came to appeal to the concept, largely for rhetorical effect (p. 135). Voltaire thought in terms of European opinion, but was aware of the practical limitations of opinion in influencing government. Nevertheless, Hanrahan argues, Voltaire's appeal to a "cri public" or "an imagined public opinion" (p. 136) contributed the creation of this category whose importance was to grow in the second half of the eighteenth century.

Russell Goulbourne analyzes British views on the Calas affair and Voltaire's involvement with it. He points out that anti-French and anti-Catholic feelings ran high in England at the time, so that Voltaire's criticisms of the Catholic Church and of the fanaticism ascribed to it resonated with English opinion. Voltaire's *Treatise on Tolerance* was received enthusiastically, and it seems to have triggered renewed interest in the subject, reflected in the re-publication of Locke's *Letters Concerning Toleration* in 1765. The practical interest of the British in the case extended to making a subscription for the Calas family. According to Goulbourne, "The turning point in the creation of Voltaire's international reputation was his intervention in the Calas affair..." (p. 169). Also on the theme of Voltaire's growing interest in justice during the 1760s is Christiane Mervaud's treatment of the relation between Voltaire and Michel-Joseph-Antoine Servan, the avocat général of the Parlement of Genoble, who like Voltaire admired Beccaria, defended a Protestant from a legal system that treated them prejudicially, wrote some broad cultural history and was a forceful advocate of toleration. Though their views were compatible and their relations cordial, Servan had reservations, the origins of which are unclear, about Voltaire's aspirations to excessive influence in the world of letters.

During his later years Voltaire both continued to write new material and recycled things that he had already published, especially in his collections of short items arranged alphabetically. A number of articles address this propensity. Olivier Ferret concentrates on the many collections of his writings (*mélanges*), often with much overlap, which Voltaire published. He could do so both because his popularity was such that anything he wrote would sell, and because he did not need income from his writings and so could offer publishers profitable manuscripts at no initial cost. These collections, in which Voltaire indulged in a strategy of fragmentation (pp. 190-191) were also preparations for editions of his complete works. Nicolas Cronk treats Voltaire's *Le philosophe ignorant* of 1766 as a *mélange* in its own right. It is subdivided into multiple sections that include different genres such as brief expositions, dialogues, *contes* and commentaries. Though the book has been dismantled in various editions of Voltaire's complete works, Cronk argues that the thematic unity of the work, which consists in the importance of conscious not-knowing to the value of toleration, justifies our respecting the integrity of the original. *Le Pyrrhonisme de l'histoire*, studied by Simon Davies, was published in 1769 and is another example of a work fragmented and recycled. For the most part it serves up materials from Voltaire's *Essai sur les mœurs*, slanting them so as to reinforce many of the morals of the earlier work, particularly the need for healthy skepticism and toleration. Voltaire's mission, Davies writes, was to save people from not from a state of sin, 'but from a state of error' (p.215).

Voltaire continued to write *contes* in his later years, and a number of contributions treat some aspect of this genre. Richard Francis examines three *contes*—*La Princesse de Babylone*, *L'Homme aux quarante écus* and the *Lettres d'Amabed*—that followed *L'Ingénu*, often regarded as the last of Voltaire's major achievements in this genre. Francis examines the roles of heroes and heroines in these stories, comparing them to the leading characters of *L'Ingénu*. Like Jonathan Mallinson, who compares Madame de Graffigny's bestseller, the *Lettres d'une Péruvienne*, to Voltaire's *Lettres d'Amabed*, Francis finds that Voltaire was out to subvert the sentimental novel, especially as represented by Richardson. Adrienne Mason examines the way in which ideas and literature

are adapted across cultures, making a case study of two English translations of *L'Ingénu*. From basic differences in the two texts Mason is able to draw interesting conclusions about the target audiences of the two translations, the backgrounds of the anonymous translators and processes of cultural appropriation.

The final essays of this collection treat a variety of issues. David Williams considers Voltaire's defence of French classical theatre, and particularly that of Corneille and Racine, against the English stage of the Elizabethan and Restoration periods, particularly the work of Thomas Otway. Though Voltaire's denunciations of Shakespeare and the English stage do not sit well with readers today, they do show how deeply he was invested in the esthetics of classicism and how important they remained for him. Haydn Mason examines the complex relationship between Voltaire and Madame du Deffand as reflected in their correspondence, which extended over more than twenty years. In the last piece in this volume Peter France fittingly looks at the way Voltaire concluded his works, and finds that generally his endings are tentative, avoiding "closure" (p. 276). Often, and appropriately for a thinker who linked toleration with our inability to know all, or even many, things thoroughly, Voltaire ends his compositions with "the declaration of ignorance and the refusal of pointless speculation" (p. 279). Open endedness, then, is an invitation to open mindedness.

There are a few minor errors of fact. *Bélisaire* was not published in 1766 (pp. 10-11), but the following year, and the Hurons were did not live on the plains (p. 218) but around the Great Lakes. There is also a matter of judgment that seems rather questionable. The assertion that "Underneath Voltaire has to believe that humankind can both be trusted and educated" (p. 141) overlooks the recognized elitism of the *philosophe*, who thought that the masses, whom he mistrusted deeply, neither could nor should be educated, that they could not do without religion as a social restraint, and that enlightenment was a reasonable aspiration only for a very small portion of humankind. And indeed, there are a number of citations in this volume making just these points (pp. 20, 148 and 151). To maintain that Voltaire believed that humankind, rather than certain select parts of it, could be trusted and should be educated is to project backwards our own democratic and liberal values and to misconstrue the elitism of Voltaire and many other *philosophes*. It is also to fail to recognize the conditions of the time that, regrettably, made this a not unreasonable position.

Despite the diversity of the articles in this volume, a number of themes emerge. One concerns an underlying animosity between England and France in the eighteenth century, an animosity fuelled, to be sure, by long military conflict, but also feeding on the centuries-long mutual hostility of Protestants and Catholics. Voltaire's popularity in England followed in part from his Anglophilia, in part from his wit, but also, as his advocacy for the Calas family showed, from his criticism of Catholic intolerance. Considerations of Voltaire's *mélanges* bring attention to the way this engaged and militant intellectual reformulated and recycled his own work in almost modular formats to drive home positions that he had worked out in more extensive narratives. This is particularly the case for works such as the *Dictionnaire philosophique*, which first appeared in 1764 but receives little attention, *Le Philosophe ignorant* and *Le Pyrrhonisme de l'histoire*, but also holds for the late *contes*, which continue the campaign against l'infâme, as well as fighting another of Voltaire's battles, this one against the sentimental novel.

*Voltaire and the 1760s* offers the reader a wide range of informed and searching investigations into the work of one of the leading writers and thinkers of the eighteenth century and his time. Not the least of its merits, in the opinion of this reader, is the interest it succeeds in creating in some of Voltaire's less well-known works of this period.

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