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Isabelle Tremblay, ed., *Les Lumières catholiques et le roman français*. Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2018. viii + 274 pp. £65.00 (pb). Notes, bibliography, and index. ISBN 9781786941411.

Review by Jeffrey D. Burson, Georgia Southern University.

Studies of the Catholic Enlightenment abound in recent years. Once a peripheral (and in some sense controversial) subject as recently as the turn of the twenty-first century, attempts to understand how Catholic writers, readers, and other eighteenth-century figures engaged with the socio-cultural revolution of the Enlightenment have become quite common. In its inception, Catholic Enlightenment studies focused mostly on elite writers (theologians and their dealings with High Enlightenment *philosophes*). In recent years, the field has considerably broadened to include women, lay as well as clerical writers, Jesuit missionaries, so-called Grub Street and establishment figures, and a variety of different individuals from across the ideological and theological divides of the eighteenth century (French Jansenists and some Jesuits, Benedictines, and French nuns). Enlightenment Catholicism is now recognized by many (if not most) authors as both encompassing a breadth of often clashing theological perspectives and outlooks on the unfolding of major Enlightenment debates and as an indispensable part of increasingly dense networks of global exchange and empire.^[1] The study of Enlightenment Catholicism is also now very much an interdisciplinary affair, having become the concern of cultural and intellectual historians, philosophers, theologians, and specialists of French literature. Often and understandably, however, studies on the Enlightenment Catholicism remain lamentably anchored within the discursive parameters of their respective disciplines. The collection of essays under the direction of Isabelle Tremblay represents an admirable and, in most ways, highly successful attempt to bring historical and literary scholarship on Enlightenment Catholicism into a more constructive dialogue, while calling for greater attention to the genre of the late eighteenth-century novel and its role in the popularizing and transforming of the Catholic Enlightenment on the eve of the French Revolution.

Isabelle Tremblay's stirring and insightful introduction to the volume situates her collection's endeavor within the context of two problems. First, she challenges the arguably excessive zeal for pluralizing the Enlightenment that has been characteristic of the historiography until very recently. Second, Tremblay confronts what she calls "the reductionist approach of literary history," which still too often tends to reinforce the teleological focus on Enlightenment as tending toward anticlericalism and secularization (pp. 1-2). In addressing this problematic, Tremblay draws heavily on the scholarship of (among others) Helena Rosenblatt, Monique Cottret, David Sorkin, Ulrich Lehner, Darrin McMahon, Didier Masseau, and Jeffrey Burson to

the effect that many Enlightenment writers proceeded as though faith and reason were innately compatible (pp. 2-4).^[2] In quoting Ulrich Lehner's observation that "Catholicism and modernity remained in dialogue until the reign of Napoleon" (p. 4) and taking a cue from Zeev Sternhell that even the emergence of Counter-Enlightenment ought more profitably be seen as a kind of alternative modernity rather than anti-modernity, Tremblay effectively treats the Catholic Enlightenment novel as a genre of late eighteenth-century apologetics situated at the margins of a more radically secular late Enlightenment and a burgeoning Counter-Enlightenment.^[3] And yet, late Enlightenment and emergent Counter-Enlightenment, she contends, shared many arguments and sources, and both tendencies claimed to be "true philosophy" at war with superstition (pp. 4-7).^[4] In Tremblay's view, Catholic Enlightenment ("Lumières catholiques") represented the "grounds of understanding" ("terrain d'entente") between the more anticlerical Enlightenment and Counter-Enlightenment (p. 8). Tremblay's argument rests on a capacious definition of Catholic Enlightenment as "encompassing the work of any author (lay or cleric), statesman, monk, secular clergy, philosopher, or apologist from within Catholic Europe who participated in burgeoning networks of publication and eighteenth-century sociability with a view toward integrating eighteenth-century science, philosophy, philology, or political thought into their understanding of Catholic reform of church and society" (p. 8).^[5] This definition, however imperfect, has the advantage of momentarily sidestepping evident and no less significant divisions at the heart of Enlightenment Catholicism.^[6] Tremblay's use of this definition permits her to accomplish the goal of emphasizing the "plural and diverse" nature of "the French Enlightenment," which, she argues, must include a Catholic Enlightenment (p. 9). However lacking in "unity and consensus," Tremblay argues that the Catholic Enlightenment nonetheless occupied with "difficulty" "a space midway between extremes," and often performed a kind of cultural "mediation" between opposed but nevertheless irreconcilable values," even if that reconciliation was not achieved, in large measure due to the polarization of the revolutionary era (p. 9).

Although these specific arguments posed by Isabelle Tremblay's introduction would come as no surprise to most specialists, the focus of the essays in this volume on sentimental novels as vital sources for the study of the Catholic Enlightenment breaks new ground. It does so, first, by attempting to bring the study of eighteenth-century Francophone literature into dialogue with historical scholarship, and second, by endeavoring to elevate the centrality of the sentimental novel to the history of the Catholic Enlightenment. This focus is long overdue, and, in my judgment, an extremely important intervention for several reasons, many of which Tremblay highlights in her introduction. First, the explosive popularity of sentimental novels is one well-established symptom of what is now recognized to be a wide-ranging revolution in sentiment—a transformation in the history of emotions that, as Lynn Hunt has recently argued, informed individual self-fashioning, expressions of empathy, and the cultural valence of natural rights theories.^[7] Second, the popularity of the sentimental novel intersects with an apologetical shift in the second half of the eighteenth century, paradoxically signaled by Jean-Jacques Rousseau's *Profession de foi du vicaire Savoyard* (1762). Rousseau's own sentimental novel pointed toward the human heart—metaphorically natural affections—as the principal source of connection to the divine, and to true natural religion (p. 10). Despite their many criticisms of Rousseau, Catholic writers slowly adopted this sentimental apologetic in a way that foreshadowed, not only Counter-Enlightenment polemics, but the thrust of Chateaubriand and early nineteenth-century French Romantic Catholicism.^[8] Third, the writers of sentimental novels, including those Tremblay studies as part of the Catholic Enlightenment, were frequently women, and until very recently thanks to the work of Ulrich Lehner and contributors to his recent volume, the contribution of

women to Enlightenment Catholicism has generally been neglected (pp. 10-12).^[9] Tremblay's edited volume further moves the contributions of women from the periphery to the center of Catholic Enlightenment studies in France. In short, this "cult devoted to sentiment" (p. 11) is not merely a bridge between Enlightenment and the French Revolution. It is also a bridge between Catholic Enlightenment and Romantic Catholicism. Tremblay's introduction and the contributors to her volume collectively advance a compelling argument that the rise of the French novel and the centrality of women authors to that endeavor were, unsurprisingly, as important to the late eighteenth-century evolution of the Catholic Enlightenment as they were to the unfolding of the Revolutionary and immediate post-Revolutionary period in general.

The twelve contributions to this volume provide readers with a wealth of densely researched and expert literary analysis of a wide range of sentimental, pedagogical, and apologetic novels, many of them by important female authors worthy of far greater attention than they have received from historians and literary scholars. For example, the concentration on Madame Leprince de Beaumont in essays by Isabelle Tremblay, Alicia C. Montoya, and Ramona Herz-Gazeau in the second part of the volume are uniquely insightful and complementary (pp. 107-169). Nevertheless, historians may be a little dismayed by the uneven coherence of the volume, and the inconsistency of individual authors' engagements with the wider history of late Catholic Enlightenment. Most of the authors approach their subjects in ways that remain perhaps more typical of Francophone literary scholarship than of cultural historians. Thus, anyone seeking a wealth of admirably executed and intricately close textual analyses of individual novels will not be disappointed. But readers who may be seeking a more even and consistent engagement with the major contextual issues promised by Tremblay's introduction will most certainly come away intrigued and inspired, but still somewhat unsatisfied. This criticism, however, does not detract from the scholarly merits of the individual essays themselves, nor from the important *plan de recherche* regarding the importance of the Catholic Enlightenment novel toward which Isabelle Tremblay's volume points us. The virtues and lacunae of this volume will most certainly and profitably instigate further research. Overall, Tremblay's volume ambitiously contributes to significant new direction in the interdisciplinary study of the Catholic Enlightenment—one that is more attentive to gender, the history of women writers, and the importance of the novel as a genre of Enlightenment Catholicism.

LIST OF ESSAYS

Isabelle, Tremblay, "Introduction: Lumières catholiques en roman"

I. De la galanterie religieuse à l'apologétique Romanesque ou la recherche d'une alternative conciliatrice

Valentina Denzel, "La galanterie des *Contes indiens* (1715) de François-Augustin de Paradis de Moncrif, un parcours entre catholicisme et philosophie des Lumières"

Marilyse Turgeon-Solis, "Les *Entretiens de Clotilde* (1788), ou la symétrie inverse du roman antimonastique"

Fabrice Preyat, "Le roman du Sacré-Coeur: tradition et modernité dans *Cruzamante, ou la Sainte-Amante de la Croix* (1786) de Marie-Françoise Loquet"

II. Le roman pédagogique, nouvelle avenue de la piété

Marie-Laure Girou Swiderski, “Morale et passion dans les romans de Mme d’Arconville”

Isabelle Tremblay, “La foi et la raison, notions complémentaires dans les *Lettres de Mme Du Montier* (1756) de Mme Leprince de Beaumont”

Alicia C. Montoya, “Livre de piété ou roman? Sur quelques ouvrages pédagogiques de Mmes Leprince de Beaumont et Genlis”

Ramona Herz-Gazeau, “*Le Triomphe de la vérité* (1748) et *Les Américaines, ou la Preuve de la religion chrétienne par les Lumières naturelles* (1769) – lecture comparative de deux romans apologétiques de Marie Leprince de Beaumont”

III. Les romans des Lumières catholiques, efficaces et célèbres?

Paul Pelckmans, “‘Il n’appartient qu’au Christianisme de faire de vrais philosophes...’ Une lecture du *Vrai point d’honneur* (1774)”

Nicolas Brucker, “Un roman social catholique au siècle des Lumières: *Le Conte de Valmont* (1774) de l’abbé Gérard”

Marco Menin, “Bernardin de Saint-Pierre et l’énigme du mal: la double théodicée de *Paul et Virginie* (1788)”

Jan Herman, “Lenglet-Dufresnoy et la dévotion romance”

NOTES

[1] Ulrich L. Lehner, *The Catholic Enlightenment: The Forgotten History of a Global Movement* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016); Ulrich L. Lehner and Michael Printy, eds., *The Companion to the Catholic Enlightenment* (Leiden: Brill, 2019); Ulrich L. Lehner, *Enlightened Monks: The German Benedictines, 1740-1803* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011); Mita Choudhury, *Convents and Nuns in Eighteenth-Century Politics and Culture* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2004); Harm Klueting, ed., *Katholische Aufklärung—Aufklärung im katholischen Deutschland* (Hamburg: Meiner, 1993); Dale K. Van Kley, “From the Catholic Enlightenment to the Risorgimento: The Debate between Nicola Spedalieri and Pietro Tamburini, 1791-1797,” *Past and Present* 224, no. 1 (2014): 109-162; on Jesuits and Enlightenment Catholicism, see Daniel J. Watkins, “The Two Conversions of François de La Pilonnière: A Case Study of Rationalism and Religion in the Early Enlightenment,” *Eighteenth-Century Thought* 6 (2016): 33-59; see also Jeffrey D. Burson, “The Culture of Jesuit Erudition in an Age of Enlightenment,” *Jesuits in an Age of Enlightenment*, special issue of *Journal of Jesuit Studies* 6, no. 3 (August 2019): 387-415.

[2] Helena Rosenblatt, “The Christian Enlightenment,” in *The Cambridge History of Christianity*, vol 7: *Enlightenment, Rearwakening, and Revolution, 1660-1815*, ed. Stewart J. Brown and Timothy Tackett (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 283-301; David Sorkin, *The Religious Enlightenment: Protestants, Jews, and Catholics from London to Vienna* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University, 2008); Monique Cottret, *Jansénisme et Lumières: pour un autre XVIIIe siècle* (Paris: Albin

Michel, 1998); Didier Masseau, *Les ennemis de philosophes: l'antiphilosophie au temps des Lumières* (Paris, Albin Michel, 2000); Darrin M. McMahon, *Enemies of the Enlightenment: The French Counter-Enlightenment and the Making of Modernity* (Oxford: Oxford University, 2001); Ulrich L. Lehner, *The Catholic Enlightenment*, 2-17; Jeffrey D. Burson, *The Rise and Fall of Theological Enlightenment: Jean-Martin de Prades and Ideological Polarization in Eighteenth-Century France* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame, 2010).

[3] Zeev Sternhell, *Les anti-Lumières: Une tradition du XVIIIe siècle à la guerre froide* (Paris: Fayard, 2006), 14.

[4] Laurence Devillairs, "La voie d'une apologétique rationaliste: de Descartes à Fénelon," in *Apologétique 1650-1802: la nature et la grâce*, ed. Nicolas Brucker with a preface by Antony McKenna (New York: Peter Lang, 2010), 85-105 at 88; for an explicit argument that attributes the emergence and transformation of the Radical Enlightenment, Enlightenment, and Counter-Enlightenment to discursive entanglement within a shared early modern cultural history, see Jeffrey D. Burson, *The Culture of Enlightening: Abbé Claude Yvon and the Entangled Emergence of the Enlightenment* (Notre Dame, Ind.: University of Notre Dame, 2019), 1-39, 113-127; a somewhat different but similarly compatible perspective is afforded by Mark Curran, *Atheism, Religion and the Enlightenment in Pre-Revolutionary Europe* (Suffolk: Boydell & Brewer, 2012), 6, 110-111.

[5] Tremblay's definition is here quoting Jeffrey D. Burson, "Catholicism and Enlightenment: Past, Present, and Future," in *Enlightenment and Catholicism in Europe: A Transnational History*, ed. Jeffrey D. Burson and Ulrich L. Lehner (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2014), 1-41 at 14.

[6] On the rift between philo-Jansenist and Augustinian-inspired "Reform Catholicism" and philo-Jesuits within Catholic Europe, and its ramifications for a the study of Catholic Enlightenment, see Dale K. Van Kley, *Reform Catholicism and the International Suppression of the Jesuits in Enlightenment Europe* (New Haven: Yale, 2018), 13-57; see also Dale K. Van Kley, "Varieties of Enlightened Experience," in *God in the Enlightenment*, ed. William J. Bulman and Robert G. Ingram (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), 278-316.

[7] Lynn Hunt, *Inventing Human Rights* (New York: W. W. Norton, 2007), 15-34.

[8] Daniel J. Watkins, "Enlightenment, Catholicism, Conservatism: The Isaac-Joseph Berruyer Affair and the Culture of Orthodoxy in France, c. 1700-1830" (Ph.D. diss., Ohio State University, 2014); Masseau, *Les ennemis de philosophes*, 372; Albert Monod, *De Pascal à Chateaubriand: les défenseurs français du christianisme de 1670 à 1802* (1916; Geneva, Slatkine, 1970), 409; Hisayasu Nakagawa, "J.-J. Rousseau et J.-G. Le Franc de Pompignan: La 'Profession de foi du vicaire Savoyard,' et 'De la religion civile' critiqués par l'Instruction pastorale," *Dix-huitième siècle* 34 (2002): 67-76; Carolina Armenteros, "The Anti-Theological Theology of Jean-Jacques Rousseau," in *The Oxford Handbook of Early Modern Theology, 1600-1800*, ed. Ulrich L. Lehner, Richard A. Muller, and A. G. Roeber (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), 594-600; also William R. Everdell, *Christian Apologetics in France, 1730-1790: The Roots of Romantic Religion* (Lewston and Queenston: Edwin Mellon, 1987); Carol E. Harrison, *Romantic Catholics: France's Postrevolutionary Generation in Search of a Modern Faith* (Ithaca: Cornell, 2014).

[9] Ulrich L. Lehner, ed., *Women, Enlightenment, and Catholicism: A Transnational Biography* (London: Routledge, 2017).

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