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Guillaume Lancereau, Suzanne Rochefort, and Jan Synowiecki. *Échos des Lumières. Un XVIIIe siècle pour aujourd'hui*, Paris: Nouveau Monde, 2022. 376 pp. €19.90. (pb). ISBN 9782380942644.

Review by Valentina Denzel, Michigan State University.

In his *L'héritage des Lumières. Ambivalences de la modernité*, Antoine Lilti reminds us that the Enlightenment represents both a historical period and a philosophical movement that continues to the present day, a feature that distinguishes the Enlightenment from the Renaissance, Romanticism, or the *Belle Époque*.^[1] The authors of *Échos des Lumières. Un XVIIIe siècle pour aujourd'hui*, Guillaume Lancereau, Suzanne Rochefort, and Jan Synowiecki, put Lilti's statement into practice through their analysis of current topics to emphasize differences and continuities between the eighteenth and the twenty-first centuries. These topics are categorized into six main chapters that examine politics, economics, society, technology, as well as the local and the global. A variety of sub-chapters focus, for example, on corruption and police violence, precarity, animal rights, masturbation, kidnapping, and slavery. As the authors explain in the introduction, their book is an invitation to “relire l'actualité au prisme de l'histoire et à prendre des distances par rapport à notre régime médiatique anhistorique, où tout paraît sans précédent et souvent sans lendemain” (p. 8).

While the focus of the book seems to be France and the French kingdom, the authors also include information about other kingdoms, empires, and duchies, e.g., England, Russia, Spain, and Florence, to better contextualize the authors' analyses. Each sub-chapter begins with a brief overview of current events prevalently taken from French news, that are then connected with analogous incidents and developments during the eighteenth century, going sometimes back to the seventeenth and sixteenth centuries. The sub-chapter “Que fait la police? Violences, justice et résistance au siècle des Lumières,” for instance, briefly enumerates a series of cases of police violence and corruption scandals, including the rape of 22-year-old Théo Luhaka in 2017 by four police officers in a Paris suburb. In the following more detailed analysis the reader learns about the creation of the *Lieutenance Générale du royaume* in 1667, how its specific functions differed in part from current police administration, and the ambivalent relationships between police and population depending on the latter's social status and nationality. Each short sub-chapter, sometimes not more than seven pages long, is bookended by a brief conclusion that summarizes the main points and foreshadows successive historical events. Some of these conclusions, like that of “Du service du roi à celui de l'État: la haute fonction publique avant l'ENA,” are particularly helpful for our understanding of the legacies of the Enlightenment through their enhancement of connections made throughout the chapters between the eighteenth and the twenty-first

centuries. Some of the conclusions seem, however, somewhat abrupt. The chapter on police violence, for example, introduces new historical events without further explanation.

Each sub-chapter ends with a short bibliography and contains between four to twenty-two bibliographic entries that allow the reader to explore topics of interest in more depth. While some bibliographies do not always contain the works and authors cited in the chapters, as for example Stéphane Durand's work on the Languedoc region, these bibliographic references are a useful tool to expand one's knowledge regarding specific thematic content. According to the preface, the authors were "animés d'une double ambition de démocratisation des savoirs historiques et d'approfondissement du dialogue entre le monde de la recherche et le grand public" (p. 7). Here lies, in my opinion, the greatest contribution of this work: in line with the Encyclopedic endeavour of democratizing knowledge, Guillaume Lancereau, Suzanne Rochefort, and Jan Synowiecki create a succinct overview of questions and themes of the Enlightenment that are still relevant today, while inviting their readers to take their education in their own hands. This book is therefore appealing to the general public, to scholars who might not be familiar with all the various issues discussed in this work, and to teachers and professors who are (desperately) looking for a strategy to make history, politics, and culture appealing to a (possibly) disengaged student population. The chapters are short, written in an engaging tone, and often containing colloquialisms, including the humorous chapter on "Prendre une cuite au XVIIIe siècle," which make the text entertaining and accessible to a wider audience. The detailed quotations of primary sources, including texts by Pierre Marivaux, Louis-Sébastien Mercier, and excerpts from national archives, make the past more palpable which reinforces the authors' goal of highlighting analogies and differences between the present and the past.

While the variety of the topics and the authors' emphasis on marginalized communities, including the poor, as well as enslaved and Roma populations, are commendable in creating a more diversified representation of the Enlightenment, it is regrettable that the status of women and their social and political contributions remain understudied in this volume. The sub-chapter "Un crime au temps des Lumières. Vivre, dire et punir le viol au XVIIIe siècle," focuses, for example, on the particularly vulnerable position of female subjects in the French kingdom and Republic, yet the important thoughts and contributions of women writers, philosophers, and female spies remain mostly unmentioned. Those absent include the ambivalent figure of the Chevalière d'Éon (1728-1810) or Etta Lubina Johanna Palm d'Aelders (1743-1799) who would have enriched the chapter on spies entitled "Le Bureau des légendes au XVIIIe siècle." Despite this oversight, this volume is a meaningful contribution to contemporary works focusing on the legacies of the Enlightenment. By providing historical, social, and political perspectives on current events and phenomena that are anchored in the eighteenth century, the authors help the reader better grasp continuations and differences between the present and the past, and position their work within a wider lineage of scholars who have been working on the legacies of the Enlightenment from a philosophical and historical point of view.[2] This book also complements a more specific contemporary scholarly emphasis on the importance of the Enlightenment in modern societies, including Anne Coudreuse's *La Conscience du présent. Représentations des Lumières dans la littérature contemporaine*, which tackles contemporary literary representations of the Enlightenment, as well as studies of the impact of particular Enlightenment figures, such as Éric Marty's research on the Marquis de Sade (1740-1814), *Pourquoi le xxe siècle a-t-il pris Sade au sérieux?*[3] In sum, *Échos des Lumières. Un XVIIIe siècle pour aujourd'hui* is not only an excellent introduction to or revisiting of the Enlightenment period, for scholars and neophytes alike, but also a perfect example of the importance of humanities to help us better understand our current societies.

NOTES

[1] Antoine Lilti, *L'héritage des Lumières. Ambivalences de la modernité* (Paris: Seuil, 2019), p. 16.

[2] Keith Michael Baker and Peter Hans Riell, eds., *What is Left of the Enlightenment? A Postmodern Question* (Palo Alto: Stanford University, 2002); Anthony Padgen, *The Enlightenment and Why it Still Matters* (New York: Random House, 2013); and more recently, Antoine Lilti's *L'héritage des Lumières. Ambivalences de la modernité*. Lilti also wrote the afterword to *Échos des Lumières. Un XVIIIe siècle pour aujourd'hui*.

[3] Anne Coudreuse, *La Conscience du présent. Représentations des lumières dans la littérature contemporaine* (Paris: Garnier, 2015); Éric Marty, *Pourquoi le xxe siècle a-t-il pris Sade au sérieux ?* (Paris: Seuil, 2011).

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