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Pauline Lemaigre-Gaffier, *Administrer les Menus Plaisirs du roi: L'État, la cour et les spectacles dans la France des Lumières*. Ceyzérieu: Champ Vallon, 2016. 380 pages. £20.40/€ 28 (pb). ISBN-10: 1026700531. ISBN-13: 979-1026700531.

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In 1756, Denis Jean Papillon de la Ferté became *intendant des Menus Plaisirs et de l'Argenterie du Roi*. He is well known to historians thanks to the account of his work he left in the *Journal*, a rare bulletin from the inside of the court machine, available since 1887 in a print edition by Ernest Boysse. However, the structures and mechanisms within which he operated have remained mysterious, despite their familiarity, as there has been little attempt to date to describe their function in full. In this, her first monograph, Pauline Lemaigre-Gaffier offers a detailed and scholarly history of this part of the French court. This densely argued book derives from her doctoral thesis and is grounded in the impressive archival research already showcased in her numerous articles.^[1] It covers the vast range of activities of this little-known department of the King's Household.

From her very first pages, Lemaigre-Gaffier invites us to reassess our categories of understanding of the *Menus*, or to give it its full name, *l'Argenterie, Menus, Plaisirs et Affaires de la Chambre du Roi*. She attributes the historiographical neglect of the *Menus* to difficulties in characterising it, a difficulty shared by historians and contemporaries for whom the work and remit of the *Menus* were often perplexing. Though the department was associated with the glamorous world of theatre and of court spectacle, its administrative character and wide-ranging responsibilities mean it has not attracted the same sort of interest as the more sociable salons. It presents difficulties for *idée reçues* about the nature of public space in eighteenth-century France, since it straddles private and public domains, and what are seen as “feminine” (or even “effeminate”) and “masculine” environments. Taking a serious administrative approach to organising royal ceremonies, it has not generally found a place in studies of ceremony either. Lemaigre-Gaffier tackles the unwieldy scope of the department's work by dividing the body of the book into five parts, as follows: the real and metaphorical spaces straddled by the *Menus* (court and state, chamber and household, court and city); the development of the written administrative record; the *Intendants* of the *Menus*; the management of the stores (*magasins*); and the politics of spectacle and the public. As such, she addresses many of the most pertinent issues around court ceremony and, indeed, in the wider field of court studies. Though the study of both ceremony and theatre has enjoyed peaks of popularity, Lemaigre-Gaffier is one of very few historians to pay attention to the administrative structures that united these fields.

Her study of the *Intendants* of the *Menus* highlights this important yet comparatively lowly office as the nexus of interpenetrating social realms, a microcosm of eighteenth-century ambition, and puts Papillon de la Ferté into context. The astronomical cost of the office (200,000 *livres*) ensured candidates came from backgrounds in finance, were connected to the notorious *fermiers*, and had the ability to guarantee significant funds to the monarchy, around one and a half million *livres* between 1782 and 1790. Yet these men were obliged to seek goodwill and secure patronage within the court in order to obtain, and

remain in, office. This was not simply a question of direct patronage of those empowered to grant the office, but also of indirect influence. Papillon de la Ferté was assiduous in his cultivation of the king's official mistresses, first Madame de Pompadour and then Madame du Barry, as well as Louis XV's devout son and his wife. None of them had direct power to place or maintain him in office but all of them counted, with the king's mistresses helpful in securing funding for the *Menus*, according to Papillon de la Ferté.[2] He accumulated offices throughout the wider court, including in the households of the king's brothers. His position was part of a family strategy for incremental advancement: his father acquired a gradually ennobling office, the family purchased a lordship at La Ferté, and Papillon de la Ferté himself was busy throughout his tenure as *Intendant* securing the office of king's secretary in order to hasten the family's entry into full nobility. His success came too late for him to enjoy it, with letters of nobility being granted in July 1789.

The influence of Antoine Lilti's seminal *Le monde des salons* runs through Lemaigre-Gaffier's work.[4] She adduces further evidence for Lilti's thesis of a social continuum, in particular in her emphasis on the continuity between the court and the city in the work of the administrators of the *Menus*. Lemaigre-Gaffier thus offers an enhanced interpretation of the common expression *la cour et la ville*. Rather than being in a competitive relationship, at least in cultural terms, these mirrored each other, with control and governance remaining on the court side. At a mundane level, the *Menus*, through its permanent presence in Paris, was the employer of many local artisans as well as junior officers of all stripes. The involvement of the *Menus* in the management of the privileged theatres shored up the unity of the kingdom by allowing the king and some of his people to share the same leisure pursuits. The often spectacular *plaisirs* were, according to her, part a unifying project seeking to draw the king and subject closer together while, at the same time, the increasingly well-organised administration of these events attested to the improving bureaucratic abilities of the king's servants. These elements combined to contribute to the shoring up of the monarchical state. This changes our perception of the power dynamic between court and city, which too often is seen as a zero-sum struggle rather than the generally peaceful coexistence which was the rule.

Lemaigre-Gaffier observes shifts in spending over time which indicate the dynamic nature of the work of the *Menus*. The fact that the various elements of competence, such as household and theatre to name but two, existed in relationship to each other and not in isolation means that they were subject to subtle, and perhaps at times unintentional, change. The increase in spending on the court theatre meant a corresponding contraction in budget for the personal service of the king and royal family, and the related daily ritual elements. These were changes not only in the amounts spent but also in how the money was spent. Increasingly, as the eighteenth century wore on, purchases for the king's use were made only from merchants already enjoying royal privilege, whereas purchases for the use of others by the *Menus* were more or less equally divided between privileged and non-privileged providers (see the graph, p. 284). According to Lemaigre-Gaffier, this was dictated by the hierarchical need to differentiate consumption by ensuring that the king had nothing but the best, with this principle extending all the way to mourning clothes, those for the death of the king being the most expensive. The *Menus* seem to simply have honoured the asking price for important purchases, such as the items used directly by Louis XVI at his coronation in 1775, rather than negotiating or seeking a discount as might be expected. It would be interesting to hear more about Louis XVI's involvement in such decisions since Papillon de la Ferté's journal attests to the king's attention to and involvement in the coronation preparations.

This reflection of hierarchy through consumption is revealed in the discussion of the 1775 coronation where costume was manipulated so that cost reflected status. The ermine mantles worn by some of the principals were made of skins of varying quality discreetly matched to alter the value of each piece. Thus, those representing the lay peers—the king's brothers and the princes of the blood—had the highest quality cloaks while the great officers of the crown wore those of lesser degree, with the constitutionally correct exception of the Keeper of the Seals, Armand Thomas Hüe de Miromesnil, whose cloak was of a quality second only to the king's, and thus surpassed even those of the royal blood. Equally, the First

Gentleman of the Bedchamber, Emmanuel Félicité duc de Duras, benefitted from a mantle of the highest quality, a fact Lemaigre-Gaffier attributes to status deriving from his proximity to the king's sacred person. Thanks to the system of years of responsibility agreed by the four Gentlemen of the Bedchamber, Duras alone had overseen the organisation of the *Sacre*. He appeared at the coronation ceremony as a one of a group of Great Officers of the Crown representing the king's household, alongside the Grand Master, the Grand Master of the Wardrobe, and the Grand Chamberlain. The three other gentlemen of the bedchamber did not occupy such an exalted place in the ceremony. The king's putative sacredness was not the only factor at play in a process of costume allocation which would, in any case, allot Duras a robe in keeping with his role and which he was well-placed to manipulate to his own advantage.

As Lemaigre-Gaffier acknowledges, her work can be seen as a response to Jurgen Habermas's ideas, put forward in the classic *Structural Transformation of the Bourgeois Public Sphere*, of the disintegration over the eighteenth century of the obsolete court into its constituent public and private elements, as if in inevitable resolution of an untenable contradiction.[3] Certainly, she shows, there was change over time in the organisation and activities of "the court," a vast and ill-defined term in its own right. In this new account, however, what is demonstrated is a non-teleological shift in the nature of administration rather than a split along lines of utility. Not only did the *Menus* always have one foot in the public and one foot in the private arena—given its remit which encompassed court ceremonies and public theatres—but its task morphed over time into a professionalised exercise of administration in both realms. This is not to say that earlier officers did not hold themselves to a high standard, but rather that developments within the *Menus* mirrored ideas of public service, accountability, and good administration which were common currency in the later eighteenth century. Ideas discussed in the classical public sphere of print influenced how activities of government, which straddled public and private, were carried out. The fact that this key point is referenced via a footnote in the conclusion is characteristic of this volume which reveals a wealth of new material yet perhaps underplays its hand. A fuller working out of the Habermas point grounded in her extensive research would be most welcome in the future.

This is, above all, a study of administration focused on hard information gleaned from wide-ranging archival work and grounded in an impressive bibliography. Administration here is seen as the hinge between court and state: Lemaigre-Gaffier rejects the notion that modernity and monarchy were necessarily incompatible. The sedentary court at Versailles is active and vigorous in the eighteenth century, not fossilised or fading. The arrangement of ceremony is shown to be dynamic rather than repetitive. Lemaigre-Gaffier charts activity as well as changes in administration, aiming to capture the specificity of the period and present it on its own terms. In this, she succeeds admirably.

NOTES

[1] See her webpage for a full list.

<http://www.dypac.uvsq.fr/lemaigre-gaffier-pauline-291811.kjsp>

[2] Denis-Pierre-Jean Papillon de la Ferté, *Journal de Papillon De La Ferté, intendant et contrôleur de l'Argenterie, Menus-Plaisirs et Affaires de la Chambre du roi, 1756-1780*, ed. Ernest Boyse (Paris: P. Ollendorff, 1887), p. 20.

[3] Jürgen Habermas, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere: An Inquiry into a Category of Bourgeois Society*, trans. Thomas Burger (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1989).

[4] Antoine Lilti, *Le monde des salons: sociabilité et mondanité à Paris au XVIIIe siècle* (Paris: Fayard, 2005). Available in English as *The World of the Salons: Sociability and Worldliness in Eighteenth-Century Paris*, trans. Lydia G. Cochrane (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015).

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