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**David Garrioch**, *The Making of Revolutionary Paris*. Berkeley, Los Angeles, and London: University of California Press, 2002. xiv + 382 pp. Illustrations, notes, selected readings, and index. \$34.95 US/£24.95 (cl). ISBN 0-520-23253-4.

Review by Colin Jones, University of Warwick.

Considering the enormous volume of publication on aspects of the history of eighteenth-century Paris over the years, it comes as something of a shock to realize that David Garrioch's new synopsis of a century in the city's history is filling a massive gap in the literature. Gap-filling is, however, a slighting term for such an important, densely-researched, pleasingly-illustrated, and ambitious work that will command a wide readership. Dr. Garrioch's knowledge of Parisian archives--already gratefully sampled in his fine two monographs, *Neighbourhood and Community in Paris, 1740-90* (1986) and *The Formation of the Parisian Bourgeoisie* (1996)--is unmatched among anglophone historians of the eighteenth century. What makes the present work such a fine piece of historical writing is the way in which that knowledge has been used to illuminate multifarious themes in the history of the city, and indeed in French urban society, up to and including the Revolution.

Dr. Garrioch introduces us to eighteenth-century Paris with a stunningly brilliant evocation of the sounds and smells of the city--and by inference its sights--as hypothetically experienced by a group of blind beggars from the Quinze-Vingts hospital touring the streets. The street is, fittingly, the vantage-point from which Dr. Garrioch feels most comfortable in writing his history. Mercier, Rétif de la Bretonne, and Ménétra are amongst his most loquacious interlocutors, and he never seems happier than when plunging his readers into the neighbourhood disputes, labour conflicts, street brawls, and traffic jams recounted in police archives and sundry memoirs. Although he seeks to provide an over-arching view of the city over the period, the urban pedestrian, the craftsman, the market trader, and the pauper are at the centre of the story he has to tell.

Following a convention which these days comes a little too easily to us *dix-huitémistes*, Dr. Garrioch splits the eighteenth century into two, around the pivotal decade of the 1750s. In the first chapters he thus presents "the social order of customary Paris," a world whose texture is hinted at by his chapter-headings: "The Poor You Have Always With You" (ch. 2) and "Each According to His Station" (ch. 4). The custom-driven, corporative, and hierarchical world is viewed in a condition of relative stasis, which is massively subverted from mid century onwards under the impact of a range of social, cultural, and political developments--increasing anxieties around provisioning (ch. 5), the royal government's clash with the Paris Parlement in the Jansenist issue (ch. 6), growing secularization and the desacralization of the monarchy (chs. 7, 8), the pressures of government-directed urban development (ch. 9), the emergence of public opinion and the commercialization of urban society (chs. 10, 11). By the 1780s, he argues, a "metropolitan" culture was in existence which unified the social elite around wealth rather than corporative status. That urban elite--in the vanguard of which, interestingly, were the professional classes (lawyers, doctors, architects, writers, students, engineers, administrators, and officials)--increasingly defined itself over and against a "plebeian" culture more rooted in the work experience of

the mass of the population. “Pre-revolutionary social relations,” he tells us, “made possible and influenced the Parisian revolution, yet without predetermining its course” (p. 299). The Revolution of 1789 was a revolution of Parisian bourgeois, it seems,<sup>[1]</sup> though not of the Parisian capitalists (many of whom were nobles). Although the class tensions involving workers were less determinate in triggering 1789, they too influenced the vigour and the volume of popular political participation over the revolutionary decade.

Dr. Garrioch thus makes a significant contribution to the continuing debate over the origins of the Revolution. He pitches to make those origins social, and Parisian, and bourgeois—and his conviction will carry much support. It seems a shame, however, that he does not really engage with the ways Parisians thought about their own history. There is a stronger emphasis in this work on *mentalités* and social practices than ideas. “Social relationships, not institutions or occupations” (p. 7) are what Dr. Garrioch focuses on, and if there are rich gains to be had from such an approach, there are drawbacks, too. These become especially apparent as the Revolution approaches. Dr. Garrioch presents us with Parisians “aspiring to become citizens” (p. 236) through the mechanisms of a Habermasian public sphere, yet this perhaps underplays the extent to which such aspirations were viewed as the recapturing of civic rights and responsibilities whittled away over the Bourbon centuries (but not forgotten). The major institutional actors in urban politics, the municipality and the Parlement, are only fleetingly present in this account, yet they were depositories of a collective Parisian memory that stretched back even before the advent of the Bourbons, and they had political agendas which they diffused widely within Parisian society. What worried Camille Desmoulins on 13 July 1789 was, as Dr Garrioch records (though without any follow-through), “a Saint-Bartholomew massacre of patriots” (p. 295). Moreover, many Parisians continued to view their relations with the monarchy through the prism of the Fronde (the converse was true too)—yet the phenomenon commands only two glancing references in the whole book.<sup>[2]</sup> By underestimating the role of the Parlement, especially in Parisians’ political imaginations and in helping to keep alive a consciousness of their own collective history, Dr. Garrioch arguably simplifies the nature of the political conflicts of the last decades of the eighteenth-century.

Yet if I become increasingly restive with the story Dr. Garrioch tells as he analyses the role of Paris leading up to the political crisis of 1789 and pine for an approach more inclusive of political ideas, there is absolutely no denying the enormity of his achievement in providing a masterly social history of eighteenth-century Paris from which we all have much to learn. *The Making of Revolutionary Paris* is also written with an enviable lightness of touch that makes learning enjoyable.

## NOTES

[1] I say “seems” advisedly because, in his work on the Parisian bourgeoisie, Garrioch argues that the bourgeoisie did not in fact exist until circa 1830.

[2] On a similar tack, there are only four references to Maupeou.

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