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Jane McLeod, *Licensing Loyalty: Printers, Patrons and the State in Early Modern France*. University Park: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 2011. vi +302 pp. Tables, figures, notes, bibliography and index. \$74.95 U.S. (cl.). ISBN 978-0-271-03768-4.

Review by Harvey Chisick, University of Haifa.

In *Licensing Loyalty*, Jane McLeod has produced a scrupulously researched, well-written and challenging study of the relations between government and provincial printers during the old regime. McLeod's book is particularly welcome because while much innovative and impressive research has been carried out on the underground book trade, especially for the second half of the eighteenth century, the established, government-approved press has received less attention. McLeod throws much light on this relatively neglected aspect of publishing history, and she effectively puts developments in the book trade into broader contexts.

Chapter one deals with French printing from its origins to 1660. In addition to bringing attention to the role of German printers in early French publishing, McLeod describes five distinct and sometimes contradictory "identities" that provincial printers adopted, namely those of university men, clients of local notables, businessmen (perhaps underestimated), guild members, and loyal agents of the crown (pp. 13-23). The older term "role" might have been preferable to "identity," as it directs attention to relations in broader social and economic contexts, while "identity" emphasizes inwardness. The issues affecting publishing during this period were religious controversy, labor strife and copyright. The second chapter examines the Order in Council of 6 October 1667 that forbade new printers to set up shop in the provinces. This legislation accepted the claim of the larger printers that small and marginal shops would be more likely to produce clandestine and pirated works, and so posed a danger to the state (pp. 37-38; 43-45 and 193-94).

The third chapter treats a census of printers carried out in 1701 and the establishment of the *Bureau de la librairie*. It is followed by a chapter treating the government-enforced reduction in the number of printers in 1704, or "purges" which were carried out by means of government licensing. In the provinces this resulted in a reduction from 360 to 248 recognized printing houses between 1701 and 1764 (p. 98). This was intended to strengthen government oversight and had the effect of favoring larger printers at the expense of smaller ones. Everywhere it heightened conflict among printers. The fifth chapter examines the lines of argument put forward by the printers in claiming licenses for themselves or their families. These arguments were based on merit, which at the time included a working knowledge of Latin and Greek; family rights; property; character—with honor, orthodoxy and respectability being deemed necessary qualities in publishers—and policy, which consisted largely of allegations that marginals, especially Protestants and the less well off, though also women, would represent a threat to public order. After dutifully reporting the arguments made by printers to the authorities in their efforts to be granted licenses, McLeod has the good sense to

comment that, "Rhetoric has its limits as a historical source..." (p. 144). She later shows just how wide the gap between words and deeds often was among printers.

Chapter six treats the issue of relations between local patronage and the central bureaucracy and brings our attention to the roles of local nobles and notables and clerics, and of law courts and the *parlements*, with which printers often worked closely. This chapter contains two lively accounts of the careers of Jean-Marie Bruyset (pp. 151-59) and Aimé Delaroche (pp. 160-65), both of Lyon, which reflect the complexities of the publishing business in the eighteenth century. The final chapter returns to the rhetoric and politics of provincial printers and gives a convincing profile of the social and economic standing of these men and their families. Though they usually presented themselves to the central authorities as intensely loyal, but in difficult financial situations, McLeod uses data from dowries and wills to conclude that most printers could fairly be characterized as "wealthy local notables" (p. 183).

This observation is reinforced by evidence that printer families were allied through marriage to members of the liberal professions, wholesale merchants and the clergy, not to artisans or peasants (pp. 186-89), and that the most successful printers succeeded in entering the nobility (pp. 164, and 170-72). As for their much-vaunted loyalty, officially licensed printers often produced clandestine and oppositional books and pamphlets. Their motives were sometimes religious, as in the case of Jansenists, sometimes economic, for underground publications were often highly profitable, and sometimes political, as when, as longstanding allies and clients of the *parlements*, they became involved in printing materials criticizing the Maupeou reform of 1770-74 and the May Edicts of 1788. As such they contributed to forces that challenged the crown toward the end of the old regime.

While this book provides a detailed account of provincial publishing under the old regime, it also engages some of the big questions in French history. One of these concerns the nature of absolutism. In broad agreement with William Beik, McLeod finds that far from representing dictation of the central authorities to the provinces, relations between the Court and provincial printers were characterized by an ongoing process of negotiation, with the larger provincial printers successfully using the machinery of the central administration to achieve their own goals locally, particularly the elimination of smaller rivals. The larger printers also succeeded in convincing the central government that poorer and marginal printers were liable to produce *libelles*, pirated and oppositional works, and on this basis to slant regulation of the printing trade against them. In the event, however, privileged printers were also guilty of publishing clandestine and oppositional works, whether because they sought larger profits or because they were already aligned with forces contesting the authority of the crown. Printers favored by the government produced *mazarinades* during the Fronde, Jansenist works sporadically, and oppositional publications in the second half of the eighteenth century (pp. 46, 41-42 and 193-94). On the one hand, McLeod finds that the influence of bishops and local notables on printing that was strong in the sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries was gradually replaced by agents of the central government, particularly the *intendants*, during the reigns of Louis XIV and his successors. On the other hand, she shows that whether because of clientage or common local concerns, provincial printers willingly provided the means necessary for their regional *parlements* to publicize their criticisms of the crown.

A second subject of broad significance that McLeod takes on is the role of the Enlightenment in provincial printing. She describes Delaroche of Lyon as "a committed

agent of the Enlightenment” (p. 160) and Jean-Marie Bruyset of the same city as a “major promoter of Enlightenment” (p. 151). Bruyset published religious books, as did many provincial printers, as well as the works of the *philosophes*. McLeod wisely refrains from trying to determine which Enlightenment was being promoted—radical, moderate or other—or whether adherence to Enlightenment values was compatible with the printing of orthodox religious texts. It is probable that, as Robert Darnton has maintained (and whose work McLeod skillfully employs), that publishing was above all a business, and like all businesses was primarily concerned with making money. The church was probably the largest single consumer of printed materials during the old regime, and so would have been an attractive client for any printer. McLeod sees business as one of five “identities” of provincial printers (chapter one), but does not try to determine their relative importance. An attempt at ranking these “identities” might have been useful.

In some ways McLeod goes against or modifies accepted views on the publishing history of the eighteenth century. She maintains, against scholars who have studied Grub Street and extraterritorial francophone publishing, that government control of printing increased over the eighteenth century (p. 212). She further argues that the authorities and printers “shared a vision of media control,” and that overall printing served to strengthen the monarchy (pp. 212-13). She also qualifies Darnton’s view that one of the most powerful forces undermining the old regime was the vicious and hate-filled books and pamphlets emanating from Grub Street, and maintains instead that “opposition printing was the product of France’s own elites” (p. 214).

Jane McLeod’s *Licensing Loyalty* is a valuable study. In treating relations between the central government and provincial printers, she examines an important question that has been largely overlooked by historians drawn to the more dramatic world of the clandestine book trade. Her use of archival sources is extensive, and provides the book with a firm basis and unusual perspectives. Perhaps most important, McLeod asks questions of broad historiographical significance and is able to challenge some of the key features of our understanding of printing and politics under the old regime.

McLeod’s bibliography is admirably full and up to date. She might, however, have included and used Gille Feyel’s work, and there is no mention of Restif de la Bretonne. As Restif began his career as a type-setter and wrote copiously about all aspects of his life, an examination of his work might have provided a view from the shop floor of the printing trade during the later eighteenth century.

Production of this book is generally good, though there are a few proof-reading slips, for example, “the edict of and Gaillon” (p. 28), an apparent confusion of Laon and Châlons (p. 56), “passing it on the intendants,” (p. 122) and 18,8055 (Appendix A, Part 2, “Lyon”; unpaginated). The editorial staff at the Pennsylvania State University Press may be interested to know that there is an opinion that one of the darkest and dankest corners of purgatory is reserved for publishers who put notes after the text, rather than at the bottom of the page where they belong, and that such publishers will be relegated for near-eternity to leafing back and forth between text and notes without being able to appreciate either.

Notes

[1] Gille Feyel, *L’Annonce et la nouvelle: la presse et l’information en France sous l’Ancien Régime* (Oxford, Voltaire Foundation, 2000).

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