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Pierre-Yves Beaurepaire, *L'espace des francs-maçons: Une sociabilité européenne au XVIIIe siècle*. Rennes: Presses Universitaires de Rennes, 2003. 234 pp. Notes, illustrations, documents, and index. € 16.00 (pb). ISBN 2-86847-852-2.

Review by Michael R. Lynn, Agnes Scott College.

Innovative work by a number of historians, along with suggested links between Masonic lodges, democracy, and the public sphere, has pushed freemasonry into the forefront of scholarly attention.^[1] One of the biggest problems facing such historians has been inadequate or sketchy source material. However, the history of Masonic lodges in eighteenth-century Europe has received an enormous boost in the last few years. A large number of archival documents, recently made available to researchers, have fueled a plethora of scholarship on this topic. These records, now available in Paris, had been seized by the Germans during World War II who then lost them to the Russians in 1945. Pierre Beaurepaire has contributed voluminously to the research in this area and has published three books in the last two years alone.^[2] His current book explores the social and cultural side of European freemasonry with an eye toward using the newly available archival material to undertake a fresh analysis of freemasonry.

Beaurepaire begins his book with a brief but wide-ranging historiographical survey of eighteenth-century freemasonry. He examines the various topics, foci, and historiographical approaches on a regional basis, looking at books and articles emerging from both Europe and North America, and explores the methodological and institutional basis of current work on this topic. He suggests that the research into Masonic lodges in Europe still suffers from academic marginalization, and he therefore wishes to drag it into the center of scholarly attention. In addition, Beaurepaire wants to avoid approaches that treat Masonic lodges as harbingers of a specifically bourgeois sociability; he feels that this view is inherently misleading and unsatisfactory. Instead, freemasonry should be explored across social groups, in different spaces, and with an eye toward identifying a broader interconnectedness across regional and national boundaries. He argues that historians need to approach the topic in a different manner, one that reflects the social and cultural history of a European Enlightenment, which takes advantage of the newly rediscovered archives, and which utilizes new research tools.

Chapter two turns to look at how historians might filter documents on freemasonry and grapple with the morass of information now available to them. To take full advantage of the records, Beaurepaire suggests that all of the archival material be entered into a database operating under a program called Arcane. This program, he feels, will allow historians to trace individuals within the social and cultural world of the European Enlightenment. This database allows historians to collate information about freemasons, including biographical facts, such as date and place of birth, profession, and the level of their participation in Masonic lodges. It will also, furthermore, facilitate explorations into the social relations of freemasons with each other and with people outside of the lodges.

Essentially, a series of cross-references for every document entered into this database will allow researchers to track multiple types of interpersonal and intellectual interactions. In this manner, cultural and social maps can be generated that show the circle of relationships around any particular freemason while simultaneously indicating the social connections within the group as a whole. In essence, a graphic representation of someone's social and cultural milieu can be drawn using any number of parameters such as time and place. More interestingly, however, a researcher could formulate, for example, a list of someone's enemies (or friends) and calculate how many times he talked about these

people; alternately, a historian could identify a rubric within which a certain freemason's conversations, correspondents, and mealtime companions were delineated.

In the last two chapters, Beaurepaire provides case studies in which he utilizes the newly available archival documents and attempts to elucidate the nature of Masonic sociability. Chapter three examines the social space of freemasonry and disputes, for example, Habermas' vision of a bourgeois public sphere. Instead, Beaurepaire argues for a much more socially mixed social space and one in which freemasonry exists between the public and the private spheres. Chapter four focuses on Saxony and outlines the interconnections between freemasonry and broader cultural and social networks, particularly in Dresden and Leipzig.

Throughout the book, Beaurepaire emphasizes the diversity among freemasons, the importance of aristocrats in determining the social space of Masonic practice and creating lodges, the interconnections between public and private spaces, and the international nature of freemasonry. The book as a whole, however, lacks a strong coherence. Instead, it goes back and forth between a number of different tasks. On the one hand, Beaurepaire presents several microhistorical analyses of individuals and locations. On the other hand, he argues for a new methodological (and technological) approach to the subject. Thus, while his case studies show great promise and provide an interesting lens through which historians might explore the topic, they are as yet somewhat underdeveloped. With such a promising array of materials now available, however, further research and analysis will almost certainly prove fruitful.

NOTES

[1] See, for example, Ran Halevi, *Les Loges maçonniques dans la France d'Ancien Régime* (Paris: Colin, 1984); Margaret Jacob, *Living the Enlightenment: Freemasonry and Politics in Eighteenth-Century Europe* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991); and Jürgen Habermas, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere*, trans. Thomas Burger (Cambridge, Mass: The MIT Press, 1989).

[2] Pierre-Yves Beaurepaire, *Nobles jeux de l'arc et loges maçonniques dans la France des Lumières: Enquête sur une sociabilité en mutation* (Grosley, Val d'Oise: Éditions Ivoire-Clair, 2002); idem., *L'Europe des francs-maçons, XVIIIe-XXIe siècles* (Paris: Éditions Belin, 2002).

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