

H-France Review Vol. 19 (July 2019), No. 127

Lucien Bély, ed. *Habitat et cadre de vie à l'époque moderne*. Paris: Presses de l'université Paris-Sorbonne, 2016. 216 pp. €12.00 (pb). ISBN 979-10-231-0515-5.

Review by Jean-François Bédard, Syracuse University.

*Habitat et cadre de vie à l'époque moderne*, the proceedings of a conference organized by the Association des historiens modernistes des universités française (AHMUF) in January 2012, features an eclectic collection of essays that investigate residential living in France from the Renaissance to the Enlightenment. It is divided into three parts. The first addresses noble living, a well-trodden field of study for historians of modern France. The second concerns the more mundane spaces of communal and professional use in Parisian houses of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. The last part focuses on rural living.

In the first section, Marjorie Meiss-Even, professor at the Université de Lille 3, revisits her study of the Guise family, the powerful Renaissance dynasty that was the subject of her dissertation and its subsequent publication, *Les Guise et leur paraître*. [1] In the book, Meiss-Even went beyond the interpretation of the Guise family's material goods as purely symbolic objects that served social and political purposes. Her essay, however, is too short to develop this theme satisfactorily. Readers who are interested by this argument will want to consult her full study.

The art historian Nicolas Courtin addresses the material culture of the nobility using an exacting documentary approach. His essay summarizes his dissertation research, which was recast in the lavishly published *L'Art d'habiter au XVIIe siècle*. [2] Thanks to the analysis of notarial inventories that list furniture, textiles, and decorative and functional objects, Courtin provides a more precise picture of interior planning of the seventeenth-century noble *hôtel* than those which only examine architectural drawings and literature. His statistical analysis of the archival documents also explicates decorative trends. One will find Courtin's 2011 book more engaging on these themes than this essay, which makes for rather dry reading.

Natacha Coquery, professor at the Université Lumière Lyon 2, reprises her study of the impact of aristocratic *hôtels* on the expansion of Paris as developers transformed these residences into commercial establishments and apartments for a non-aristocratic clientele. Readers familiar with her work, in particular with *L'hôtel aristocratique: le marché du luxe à Paris au XVIIIe siècle* [3], published over twenty years ago, will recall her demonstration of the importance not only of the bourgeoisie, but also of the aristocracy in real estate ventures. She studies here the Comte de Choiseul-Gouffier's business activity, showing how *hôtels*, while obvious markers of social rank, were also commodities in the fast-growing real estate market of late eighteenth-century Paris.

Frédéric Meyer, professor at the Université de Lorraine, scrutinizes inventories to reconstitute the lodgings of the secular clergy, from the humblest country priest to the most powerful cardinal, during the ancien régime. Meyer details the differences in living conditions, which he analyzes according to place and time. He shows that, unlike the lay population, secular clergymen, particularly those holding high offices, faced unique challenges when they constructed and furnished their residences. He points out that clerics in the upper tiers of the Church needed particular deftness to strike the proper balance between the display of magnificence requisite to a society of orders and the ideals of charity and poverty.

Linnéa Rollenhagen Tilly and Youri Carbonnier use the same archival documents—the procès-verbaux of the *experts jurés* of the buildings of Paris—to examine the houses of ordinary inhabitants of Paris. As she did in her doctoral work, Rollenhagen Tilly deploys a quantitative method to map the location of private and public functions within dwellings. Youri Carbonnier considers more specifically the spaces used by Parisian artisans and shop owners. Remarking that, in pre-industrial times, work and family life took place in the same buildings, Carbonnier argues that this arrangement forced artisans to locate their businesses according to the spatial requirements of their trade. He gives as examples the constraints that butchers and wheelwrights faced to secure the large surfaces they needed in the densely-built center of Paris. Carbonnier also shows that the merging of commerce and living activities resulted in feats of ingenuity in the configuration, or reconfiguration, of buildings. He demonstrates how the novelty of storefront shops, for instance, led to complex architectural gymnastics necessary to ensure safety and commodity. Readers interested in a broader study of Parisian houses should look at Carbonnier's *Maisons parisiennes des Lumières* [4], a book based on his dissertation research.

Michel Figeac, professor at the Université Bordeaux-Montaigne and specialist of the European nobility, addresses the vast differences that existed in noble lifestyles *aux champs*, as contemporaries specified country living. Figeac gives a numerical analysis of the objects owned by urban nobles and compares them to those living in the countryside. He determines that wealth, and not location, explains the ownership of fashionable items such as furniture crafted by *marchands-merciers* and up-to-date hygienic accessories. Figeac also demonstrates that disparity in income produced far more significant differences in living standards in the country than in the city. For Figeac, the demise of poor country nobles rested primarily on the accelerating consumerism that characterized noble prestige as the eighteenth century progressed.

In the collection's last essay, Martine Camiade (Université de Perpignan) and Jean-Pierre Lacombe-Massot examine the evolution of the *mas* (farmhouse) on the northern side of the Alpera mountains, which delimit the frontier between France and Spain. Through mapping, they correlate the fluctuating social and economic conditions of this remote region the evolution of the *mas* typology. They map the *mas*'s transformations onto the fluctuating social and economic conditions.

Although the research is solid throughout *Habitat et cadre de vie à l'époque moderne*, one might have desired that it would be less descriptive and more interpretative. It is also disappointing to see that some of the material the authors present in this compilation has been published elsewhere. One wonders if the conference's organizers and the collection's editor were inattentive to this want of new content. These reservations aside, the non-specialist reader will benefit from

this snapshot of the research that, over the last twenty years, has considered residential spaces and their uses during the Ancien Régime.

#### LIST OF ESSAYS

Marjorie Meiss-Even, “Bienvenue chez les Guise: sur l’habitat aristocratique à la Renaissance”

Nicolas Courtin, “Habiter un hôtel particulier à Paris au XVIIe siècle d’après les inventaires après décès”

Natacha Coquery, “L’hôtel aristocratique, lieu du changement urbain. Paris au XVIIIe siècle”

Frédéric Meyer, “Entre notabilité et modestie cléricale: l’habitat du clergé séculier en France à l’époque moderne”

Linnéa Rollenhagen Tilly, “Habiter ensemble les espaces communs dans les maisons ordinaires à Paris (1650-1790)”

Youri Carbonnier, “L’habitat et les locaux à usages professionnels en ville au XVIIIe siècle”

Michel Figeac, “Vivre en gentilhomme campagnard au siècle des Lumières”

Martine Camiade and Jean-Pierre Lacombe-Massot, “Structure et évolution du mas de l’Albera à l’époque moderne”

#### NOTES

[1] Marjorie Meiss-Even, *Les Guise et leur paraître* (Tours: Presses universitaires François Rabelais, 2014).

[2] Nicolas Courtin, *L’Art d’habiter au XVIIe siècle* (Dijon: Faton, 2011).

[3] Natacha Coquery, *L’hôtel aristocratique: le marché du luxe à Paris au XVIIIe siècle* (Paris: Publications de la Sorbonne, 1998).

[4] Youri Carbonnier, *Maisons parisiennes des Lumières* (Paris: Presses universitaires Paris-Sorbonne, 2006).

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ISSN 1553-9172