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Guy Rowlands, *The Dynastic State and the Army under Louis XIV: Royal Service and Private Interest, 1661-1701*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002. xxiv + 404 pp. Maps, bibliography, and index. \$75.00 U.S. (cl). ISBN 0-521-64124-1.

Review by Jim Collins, Georgetown University.

No fundamental element of the early modern French state has received greater recent attention than the royal army. James Wood, David Parrott, John Lynn, and, now, Guy Rowlands have produced splendid books that transform our understanding of this essential monarchical institution.[1] Earlier reviews of Rowlands have focused on the military issues, as the debate, especially between him and Lynn, becomes more heated. Far be it from me to send troops into that battle, fought on grounds I have only lightly reconnoitered. In the one area in which I might claim some small expertise, military finance, I would urge readers to turn to Rowlands, who has a solid grasp of the issues, rather than Lynn.

Rather than add another brick to the wall of military reviews, I would like to address a broader aspect of Rowlands' fine monograph: his contribution to the study of the state. In that sense, one might compare Rowlands to three other recent books, by Sara Chapman, Jeroen Duindam, and Julian Swann. Perhaps fittingly, the monographs of Swann and Duindam appear in the Cambridge series, *New Perspectives in Modern European History*, that has replaced the *Cambridge Studies in Early Modern Europe*, which had brought forth both Parrott and Rowlands.[2]

Rowlands closes with a provocative statement of his thesis: "There was no coherent development or programme during Louis XIV's reign except the preservation and strengthening of the ruling line of the dynasty, and the maintenance of the prestige of the house of Bourbon as a whole" (pp. 361-62). This simple statement, too narrowly focused in my view, belies the remarkably sophisticated analysis set forth in the rest of the book. Like many English scholars--Peter Campbell, Roger Mettam, David Parrott, *et alia*--Rowlands rightfully rejects the simplistic absolutist arguments of earlier times. He does not imply that Louis XIV eschewed arbitrary behavior: his evidence provides many examples of the king's caprice in action. Yet Rowlands understands the complex interplay of forces at work. The crisis of the 1690s may have led to the sort of arbitrary behavior recently documented by John Hurt's excellent book on the Parlements, but the "absolutist" model ignores the many limitations Louis XIV and his successors faced, and emphasizes, wrongly in my view, the "domestication" model.[3]

As Rowlands superbly demonstrates in the case of marshal Luxembourg, Louis often used those limitations to his own purposes (pp. 326-35). The king deliberately avoided interfering in the precedence quarrels of his nobility, referring their cases--like that of Luxembourg, seeking recognition as a *prince étranger*--to the Parlement of Paris. Similarly, Louis did not interfere in property and inheritance law, except in rare cases, as when he allowed the Luxembourg family to pass its ducal title to female heirs, in the absence of a son.[4]

Rowlands documents Louis XIV's well-known concern for his immediate family, above all for his natural children like the duke of Maine. He attributes this concern both to the normal personal interest in one's children and to Louis's larger attachment to the house of Bourbon. Louis carefully shepherded the interests of the cadet Orléans and collateral Condé branches, but used greater caution with respect to the Conti, whose scion's considerable abilities--like those of marshal Luxembourg--marked him out for more delicate treatment.

The War of the Spanish Succession, which, as the title indicates, lies outside Rowlands' purview, would seem to bear out Louis XIV's obsession with dynastic interest. Indeed, one might go beyond Voltaire's comment about Louis as a country gentleman (cited by Rowlands in the final paragraph) and compare him to one of Jean-Marc Moriceau's prosperous *laboureurs* of the Ile-de-France. Louis's constant concern about status, about intermarriage, about expanding the property of the dynasty (and not simply the immediate family, although giving primacy to the restricted group), about ancestors and descendants alike: they all sound much like a rich *fermier* marrying his sons and daughters to children of his peers, buying up land, commissioning portraits of his ancestors, and obsessively protecting the interests of potential descendants.

Here one must stop and reconsider Rowlands' thesis about the purely dynastic character of Louis XIV's actions, and about the absence of a "coherent programme" outside of those dynastic interests. Rowlands is surely right that we have long given insufficient weight to this aspect of royal motivation, yet I would suggest that Louis XIV inherited a France fundamentally different from the dynastic kingdom of, say, Louis XII. The late medieval French polity had been a mixture of a family corporation (dynastic state), individual kingdom, and commonwealth (*république*). The family corporation gradually gave way to the individual king's realm, in part due to deaths in the extended royal family, and in part, I would argue, following Gerhard Oestreich, because of strong pressure from elites to insist on the integrity of the kingdom.[5]

Consider royal marriage policies: Louis XII and Anne of Brittany famously offered (1504) several French provinces, precisely Brittany and the Orléans family lands, i.e., the supposed "personal" property of the two monarchs, as part of their daughter Claude's prospective dowry for the later Emperor Charles V. After the death of Anne of Brittany, who had supported the marriage, Louis decided that Claude should wed his presumed heir, the later Francis I, so he turned (1506) to the "three estates," in a sort of rump meeting, to provide a legal excuse to break the marriage contract. Although an obvious royal ploy to get what the king wanted, from the perspective of the "three estates," their action preserved the unity of the kingdom of France. How different that situation was from the one in the early 17th century: when Henry IV's daughters married the kings of England and Spain, no one seriously suggested that they take French provinces, not even Béarn, with them as part of their dowries.

During the reign of Henry IV, the old commonwealth died, to be replaced by the State as the political community. Many of the old citizens—nobles, jurists—continued to act as Aristotelian "citizens," in that they shared political power through its execution, but these citizens lost much of their control of public policy to the king and his immediate advisors. With the family corporate monarchy gone and the commonwealth dead, the individual king's realm could merge with the State to form the polity.

Throughout the seventeenth century, this new political community stumbled and fumbled, caught up in the rise and fall of individual ministers. Certain ministers—Richelieu, Colbert, the Le Tellier family—lasted a long time, and so gave continuity at the top during their ascendancy. When they fell, however, especially in the realm of finances, the shake-up involved subordinate personnel and even the structures of administration. Michel Antoine's *Le Coeur de l'État* offers countless examples of this phenomenon, as, for example, in the persistent re-definition of the status (*officier-commissaire*) of even the highest officials, like the *intendants des finances* or the controller general himself.[6]

One cannot argue with Rowlands' conclusion that Louis XIV took great care to protect the dynastic interests of his family, but those interests increasingly looked anachronistic. France here developed along a different line than states with national representative bodies, because those bodies looked out for the national interest, above all the territorial integrity of the political unit, long before princes did so. Lacking a national representative body that looked out for the commonwealth's interest—the way that

the Estates of Brittany or those of Languedoc looked out for the collective interest of their “commonwealth”—France’s “national” interest had to be protected within the royal government, by the State itself. Louis XIV’s memorable dying words, “I am going, but the State remains,” remind us that he knew perfectly well the difference between one and the other.

The research of Rowlands, Chapman, Duindam, and Swann points the way to a dramatic shift in the nature of the French State at the end of the 17th and beginning of the 18th century. Chapman’s work on the Pontchartrain family, another of those long-serving ministerial clans, illustrates the difference between transition in the era of the “great” ministers (say Colbert to Le Peletier, which led to the destruction of the General Tax Farm, re-created a few years later with a new cabal of financiers) and changes from the Pontchartrain onward. Swann’s book on the Estates of Burgundy seems to me to illustrate the radical shift in relationships between provincial estates and the Crown at the turn of the 18th century, although, as William Beik pointed out in his H-France review, Swann himself refused to draw such a conclusion. As in the ministerial case, we find with the provincial estates precisely the sort of routinization that Weber associated with nascent bureaucracies.

The State replaced the commonwealth at the end of the 16th century, after the latter had perished in the flames of the Wars of Religion. As Sharon Kettering, Orest Ranum, Beik, and so many others have argued, however, that State functioned at a highly individualistic level, relying on clientage and the traditional coupling of *bienfait* and service. Louis XIV’s great change, which I believe Rowlands demonstrates to have been a largely unconscious one, was to enable the State to take on the structures necessary to intervene more successfully in the affairs of civil society. Here, Rowlands makes a telling point about control over the military, arguing that Louis XIV successfully cut the link between service and immediate reward: “requests for *bienfaits du roi* on the whole lost their overtones of blackmail by the mid-1670s” (p. 341). Rowlands amply documents Louis XIV’s continued use of such rewards, but he attributes to the king a much more effective control, indeed a near monopoly over military commissions, a goal that had eluded all his predecessors (p. 349). Given Louis XIV’s understanding of the distinction between the king and the State, it is hard to believe that he saw such control purely in dynastic terms, as Rowlands suggests in his conclusion. Rowlands is walking a tightrope on this issue, because, while attributing greater freedom of action to Louis XIV, he has earlier commented “increasingly, Louis felt the need to provide incentives for dedication,” in his examination of military and social promotions (p. 325).

Duindam’s book on the Courts of Vienna and Versailles offers precisely the broadening scope that places the other three works in European context. Duindam, too, comes to the conclusion that “integration seems to be a more suitable term than domestication, with its connotations of taming and subduing,” for the evolving relationship between princes and Court nobles.^[7] He reminds us as well that the high places in the prince’s household held enormous social and economic power, as well as a political clout more difficult to measure.

Rowlands, like Swann, seems to be caught in a contradiction with respect to the old absolutism model. Consider the following comments:

Louis was set on nothing less than the reshaping of the rules and conventions of French political life. Traditionally this has been interpreted as a campaign to crush the high aristocracy, but, as historians have shown for some three decades, this view is seriously deficient. Indeed, Louis XIV believed that ultimately his throne, or rather that of his successors, was best defended through the political and military support of the princes and peers in the service of the crown. He was enough of a realist to understand that such goodwill could not be commanded—it had to be cultivated, and carefully so (p. 340).

One would anticipate that Rowlands would move from this analysis to a rigorous rejection of the absolutism model, but he stops short. I believe Chapman, Duindam, Rowlands, and Swann empirically provide us with a telling description of the fundamental changes that took place at the end of the 17th century, after Colbert and Louvois had left the scene, during what Beik, in his review of Swann, justly called “the little-known years from 1680 to 1715.” John Brewer’s work argues that precisely the same change happened in England in those years; in both cases, the grotesque efforts of the wars between 1688 and 1713 provided greater impetus to dramatic change.^[8] The key force for change, however, seems far more likely to have been economic and social forces. Whether one looks at Clare Crowston’s path-breaking *Fabricating Women* or Tom Brennan’s splendid *Burgundy to Champagne*, the dramatic shift in the economic system in the last quarter of the 17th century and the opening years of the 18th century jumps off the page.^[9]

Chapman, Rowlands, and Swann all point to the capitation of 1695, with its taxation of all lay people, privileged or unprivileged, as a decisive event. Because of the centrality of the little-known years, and because of the need to treat the period 1688 to 1713 as a unit, one would very much like to have had Rowlands continue his story through the War of the Spanish Succession. Rowlands himself (accurately) writes that “I have looked at a great many of the archives relating to the 1690s, a decade which has barely been touched by earlier historians” (p. 22). Aside from Corvisier’s specialized work on soldiers, one could say the same for the next decade, with the exceptions of the new work on finances (Antoine and Chapman) and Gary McCollim’s doctoral dissertation on controller general Desmarets.^[10]

One might argue that the taxation of even the privileged demonstrated to French elites that the replacement of the commonwealth by the State had not, in fact, sufficiently protected the private sphere—the realm in which the king did not make law—from the public power. Sharing that power’s execution hardly provided a mechanism for the protection of property, above all family/dynastic interests. Rowlands shows that the powerful noble families, quite as much as Louis XIV, thought in such terms. While they were protecting those “dynastic” interests, however, the world had changed, and dynasties, above all national ones, had to operate in a different political universe.

Louis XIV once contemplated the dismemberment of his kingdom, with the loss not only of his own gains, like Strasbourg, but those of Henry II, Toul and Verdun, in order to achieve peace in 1709. In the end, he refused the terms, in part because he did not want to send troops against his grandson, Philip V of Spain. Yet Louis, in his famous letter to his subjects of June 1709, appealed to them on nationalistic grounds, and gave the following justification of his refusal of the Dutch terms: “I am persuaded that they would themselves oppose the acceptance of conditions equally contrary to justice and to the honor of the name French.” Rowlands might want to consider that such is not simply the voice of a man concerned only with his dynasty and his family, but of the King of France, a State whose honor he held as dear as his own.

NOTES

[1] J. Wood, *The King’s Army: Warfare, Soldiers and Society during the Wars of Religion in France, 1562–1576* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996); D. Parrott, *Richelieu’s Army: War, Government and Society in France, 1624–1642* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001); J. Lynn, *Giant of the Grand Siècle: The French Army, 1610–1715* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997).

[2] Truth in advertising here requires me to say that I am one of the editors of Cambridge’s *New Perspectives*, and that I was Chapman’s dissertation advisor, so I have personal connections to these

works. S. Chapman, *Private Ambition and Political Alliances: The Phélypeaux de Pontchartrain Family and Louis XIV's Government, 1650-1715* (Rochester: University of Rochester Press, 2004); J. Duindam, *Vienna and Versailles: The Courts of Europe's Dynastic Rivals, 1550-1780* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003); J. Swann, *Provincial Power and Absolute Monarchy: The Estates General of Burgundy, 1661-1790* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003).

[3] John J. Hurt, *Louis XIV and the Parlements: The Assertion of Royal Authority* (Manchester, U.K.: Manchester University Press, 2002).

[4] The revised book manuscript based on Z. Schneider's doctoral thesis on Norman local courts from 1670 to 1730 (Georgetown, 1997) provides chapter and verse on the near irrelevance of royal legislation to civil justice, above all to property cases.

[5] G. Oestreich, *Neostoicism and the Early Modern State* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981).

[6] M. Antoine, *Le Coeur de l'État: Surintendance, contrôle général et intendances des finances, 1552-1791* (Paris: Fayard, 2003).

[7] Duindam, *Vienna and Versailles*, p. 319.

[8] John Brewer, *The Sinews of Power: War, Money, and the English State, 1688-1783* (New York: Knopf, 1988).

[9] T. Brennan, *Burgundy to Champagne: The Wine Trade in Early Modern France* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1997); C. Crowston, *Fabricating Women: The Seamstresses of Old Regime France, 1675-1791* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2001).

[10] Antoine, *Le Coeur de l'État*; Gary McCollim, "The Formation of Fiscal Policy in the Reign of Louis XIV: the Example of Nicolas Desmaretz, Controller General of Finances (1708-1715)," Ph.D. Diss. (Ohio State University, 1979). John Rule's long awaited monograph on Colbert de Torcy is reputedly in the final stages at Cambridge, and will surely do much to fill in the gaps in one part of the institutional history of the monarchy.

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See also Guy Rowlands' response to this review.

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