

Jonathan Spangler

The Chevalier de Lorraine as “Maître en Titre”

Article. Source : Bulletin du Centre de recherche du château de Versailles

Jonathan Spangler, « The Chevalier de Lorraine as “Maître en Titre” », Bulletin du Centre de recherche du château de Versailles, Articles et études, 2017

Extrait de l'article

In June 1701, the only brother of Louis XIV of France, Philippe, Duke of Orléans, passed away in his château in Saint-Cloud just outside of Paris. He left behind a widow and a son, but also a significant male favourite, with whom he had shared his life for nearly forty years : Philippe, Chevalier de Lorraine. The new Duke of Orléans offered to continue his late father's gift to the Chevalier of a pension (about 10,000 écus, or 30,000 livres), and to allow him to keep his apartments at the Palais-Royal. Several contemporaries noted the gesture, and added that the Chevalier retained the rooms, but refused the pension. Dangeau quotes the young Orléans as offering it because, “I inherit the totality of his wealth, thus it will always be him who gives it to you”. With a similar gesture towards fidelity and generosity of spirit, Saint-Simon says the Chevalier's refusal was made “with grandeur, since by grandeur it had been offered”. Souches adds that in addition to the apartment, the Chevalier wished only to retain the honour of the young duke's protection. The Chevalier outlived his long-term patron and partner by only a year, dying in his apartments at the Palais-Royal in December 1702.

The Chevalier de Lorraine came from a princely family, a distant cousin to the sovereign dukes of Lorraine. But he was the younger son of a younger son and arrived at the French court with little but his birth and his good looks to support him. At the end of his life, the Chevalier de Lorraine could consider himself secure, with a large income and a powerful patronage network. He was abbot of four large abbeys, owned a substantial country house at Frémont, enjoyed pensions from the king and from his brother, and held a dominant position within the household of the Palais-Royal, headquarters of the large and profitable apanage of the Duchy of Orléans. He had survived the turbulent years of the youthful and sexually potent court of Louis XIV in the 1660s to emerge as the undisputed partner of the king's only brother (known at court as “Monsieur”), despite years of violent conflict with Monsieur's first wife (known as “Madame”) - some said ending in her death at the favourite's hands - and continuing with Monsieur's second wife in the succeeding decades. Monsieur's most recent English-language biographer describes how Madame and the Chevalier de Lorraine had established a sort of “truce” by the 1690s, and we can see from other sources that although Monsieur was by no means completely monogamous in his affections for men at the French court, there is a remarkable constancy in his relationship with the Chevalier from the late 1660s until his death in 1701.

[Lire la suite \(journals.openedition.org\)](https://journals.openedition.org/)