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James R. Lehning, *To Be A Citizen: The Political Culture of the Early French Third Republic*. Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 2001. x + 193 pp. Illustrations, notes, chronology, and index. \$39.95 US (cl). ISBN 0-8014-3888-8.

Review by Pamela Pilbeam, Royal Holloway and Bedford New College, University of London.

The French academic community has always argued that, not only was the Third Republic inevitable, but also that it was a natural inheritance.[1] Anglo-Saxon historians were always more skeptical, and in recent years a robust critique has emerged, stressing how tentative and fragmented republican concepts were until well into the Third Republic. This volume shows how a republican political culture was painstakingly and hesitantly built up in France between 1870, when Napoleon III was defeated and captured by the Prussians, to 1892, a date presumably chosen because of the Panama Scandal, although there is no exploration here of its implications for the republic.

James R. Lehning illustrates how parliamentary republicanism and citizenship were constructed. He looks at the ideas of a wide range of individuals and groups, who either contributed to the successful version of what a republican ethos should be or who favoured ideals and practices that were lost in the battle. The author focuses first on those politicians usually defined as the 'founding fathers' of the republic, notably Jules Grévy, Leon Gambetta, Jules Ferry, and Georges Clemenceau. By 1870 in private, as we know, some republicans were disillusioned with what universal suffrage had yielded since its first introduction in 1848, but there is no hint of this in Lehning's exploration of these speeches and writings. Republican politicians accepted the right of all adult males to vote and the primacy of the National Assembly. All feared the insurgent tradition in republicanism, recently experienced in the Paris Commune.

Grévy was one of the older generation and a member of the Constituent Assembly in 1848. After 1870 he became successively president of the first National Assembly, the first republican to be elected president, and the first to be forced to resign. His son-in-law, Daniel Wilson, had replicated a still firmly established political tradition when he was found to be trafficking in the *Légion d'honneur* from his office in the Elysée. Not untypically, Grévy was a minimalist republican who shunned anything that smacked of Jacobinism and popular participation.

In contrast, Gambetta was one of the younger generation of republicans, like Grévy a successful lawyer, but unlike him a popular orator, keen to show his talents both in and out of parliament. He talked about encouraging peasants and workers to play a more active, though measured and legal role within the political community. On the other hand Ferry, architect of one of the main "components" of republicanism, the lay state, was suspicious of "citizens" doing more than voting for their parliamentary representatives.

Even radicals such as Clemenceau were nervous of politics reverberating beyond the National Assembly. However, Clemenceau put more stress on anti-clericalism, on the need for a social programme, and on a more democratic constitution, particularly a less elitist system of electing the Senate. As one might expect, all of the dominant republican politicians detested revolutionary and populist antecedents. They helped to piece together the defensively elitist one-dimensional democratic system that today has left many citizens with a profound sense of alienation from party politics.

Who qualified to be a citizen? Lehning goes on to explore the provincial contribution to the emerging republican political culture of prefects, school teachers and others. The state was an increasingly

important employer, and its salaried staff including also tax collectors and railway officials were, in traditional fashion, expected to be loyal to their paymaster. The "Ferry" Laws (1879-1886) were passed to ensure that citizens owed their first loyalty to a secular state by providing free, secular primary education and undermining the significant role as an educational provider the Roman Catholic Church had secured. In 1880 the Jesuits' right to teach was withdrawn by decree, and all non-authorized congregations were ordered to rectify their status in three months. Official reports of this process, which was far from peaceful, give the impression that the "people" should have accepted the decrees gratefully and passively. "Liberty" was equated with the right to attend a school run by the state. Schools played a leading role in establishing that a typical citizen of the Third Republic would be male and anti-clerical.

What sort of republic would Parisian workers honour, given that the capital had been so recently in a state of civil war with the elected national assembly? The new régime worked to create a peace-loving and very visible democracy by staging mass public ceremonies without violent popular unrest. In the early Third Republic the funerals of leading citizens were seized on as a way of sanitising public gatherings and collective memory, similar to the festivals of fraternity of the early 1790s, repeated briefly in 1848. During the constitutional monarchy when political associations and public meetings had been banned, state funerals were matched by those of leading republicans and socialists, offering political opponents the only occasion when crowds could gather to express their solidarity. After 1870 the new régime used the death of leading figures to proclaim consensual, rather than controversial, mourning. As Ben-Amos's recent study has shown, the deaths of Adolphe Thiers (1877), Léon Gambetta (1882), and Victor Hugo (1885) all provided the opportunity to orchestrate large processions in politically sensitive areas of the capital.<sup>[2]</sup> These occasions did not always go as planned—Thiers' widow rejected a state funeral, and Gambetta's family did not want his remains to stay in Paris—but officials were satisfied because violence was avoided.

Lehning compares the funerals with the celebration of the centenary of the 1789 Revolution. This was potentially a more provocative occasion. In 1880 for the first time the Revolution was celebrated on 14 July, traditionally remembered as a "popular" revolt. Despite the apprehension of the conservative press, a restrained elitist gathering at Longchamps was followed by the first of what was to become the traditional *fête nationale* of fireworks and dancing in areas of central Paris previously fought over, replacing social conflict with staged mass conviviality. The transformation of the memory of 14th July into the "Bastille Day" excuse for a national party has much to tell us about how and how successfully the Third Republic constructed its self image. What Lehning has to say is valuable, and more exploration would be rewarding.

The next chapter deals with those citizens who were most feared and kept on the margins: workers, particularly those of Paris, and women, the half of the adult population excluded from citizenship. Lehning describes the repercussions when, in December 1888, women leather dyers in the Croulebarbe area of eastern Paris went on strike principally over a reduction in what they were paid per skin. Their action followed a decade of industrial downturn. The strike spread, and meetings of up to 500 protesters were held, in which women were unusually prominent. The episode, with echoes of traditional insurgency, caused some alarm within the republican elite. Louise Michel, deported after her role in the Commune and amnestied, along with other Communards, in 1880, spoke at several meetings. She broadened the debate, criticising capitalist exploitation in the bourgeois republic and demanding radical change. The support of Blanquists also caused some alarm. Lehning illustrates the degree to which such protest was monitored and marginalised. It would be interesting to know whether support for internationalism or worker protest in industrial areas such as the Nord/Pas de Calais region seemed more threatening to new concepts of citizenship.

Did foreign residents qualify as citizens? Here Lehning again treads less familiar territory, and his findings are absorbing. In 1867, legislation simplified naturalisation and gave foreign-born citizens equal rights. By 1881 there were about a million foreigners (p. 113), and by the first decade of the twentieth century there were three million out of about 40 million. Hostility to foreign workers, always present in the nineteenth century in times of unemployment, began to increase. In 1889 a new law on

naturalisation made children born to foreigners automatically French, which sounds enlightened until one realizes that this made them liable to military service. It was hoped that the law would resolve doubts both about the loyalty of foreigners to their new state and the ability of the state to assimilate them. Eugenicists doubted the potential of Arabs to become French. Some linked the native population of Algeria to another fashionable concept, degeneration. Others, fascinated by the harem and its idle and desirable inhabitants, delighted in postcards that pictured Algeria as a brothel (an illustration would have been informative). The French feminist, Hubertine Auclert, who lived in Algeria for a time (1888-1892), while also convinced that "Muslim women being of a free blood bolted doors and bludgeons can't control them" (p. 150), held to her faith in the republican mantra that education would make Algerians into French citizens.

Finally Lehning takes up a theme that worried many republicans: that universal suffrage could again be subversively manipulated to undermine the democratic state. Boulanger's multiple electoral success in January 1889 was not designed, he claimed, to challenge the republic but in pursuit of reform in how the Senate was elected; however, many politicians and newspapers were alarmed at the unity of right and left wing groups behind the former minister of war and his implicit challenge to the authority of parliament. Boulanger himself faded away in a comic opera suicide on his mistress's grave in Brussels, but he had shown the way in which future enemies of the republic could work against it.

The middle class politicians who took over France after 1870 wanted a parliamentary system stripped of revolutionary traditions of popular intervention and the threat of violence. Through their control of the institutions and servants of the centralised state and the press, they staged charades of participation to manoeuvre the enfranchised masses to be passive bystanders. Lehning has blended recent research with his own investigations to produce a closely argued and carefully interwoven account of the variety of groups and themes that helped to make France a republic of a deeply conservative hue. Inevitably a short volume devoted to such a large topic raises more questions. The examination of nascent socialist and worker elements could be more extensive. It would also be worthwhile to note, as this reviewer has done, that the way in which politicians smothered popular movements was far from innovative. Third Republic politicians used exactly the same weapons of political control that Napoleon, the constitutional monarchy, and Napoleon III had employed: observation and prosecution. Why were they successful? Why was the Paris Commune an end rather than a beginning? In the early decades of the Third Republic there was an illusion of greater liberty; associations were permitted and press censorship was less rigid. However, in some respects the perception of what was "politically acceptable" was actually narrowed. This was due to long standing fears of mass violence, and perhaps even more, although it is beyond the scope of this book, disillusion with the choices made by universal suffrage during the Second Republic and Empire.

It is a pity that a useful volume, which will circulate with profit among postgraduate and more dedicated undergraduate students, has no bibliography, a curious decision in a book designed for a specialized academic audience.

#### NOTES

[1] Georges Weill, *Histoire du parti républicain en France de 1814 à 1870* (Paris, 1900). The Paris Commune was completely absent from this standard, and still reprinted account.

[2] Avner Ben-Amos, *Funerals, Politics and Memory in Modern France 1789-1996* (New York and London: Oxford University Press, 2000).

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