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Carol E. Harrison, *The Bourgeois Citizen in Nineteenth-Century France: Gender, Sociability, and the Uses of Emulation*. Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1999. viii + 268 pp. Notes, bibliography, index, abbreviations. \$72.00 US (cl). ISBN 0-19-820777-8.

Review by W. Scott Haine, University of Maryland University College and Holy Names College.

This important study is especially relevant in light of the recent centennial of the law on associations (1 July 1901), which established freedom of association in France. Over the last two years an outpouring of books, articles, television shows, and websites have chronicled the origins of the law, explored the current state of associations in France, and speculated on the future of this fundamental human right.<sup>[1]</sup> But none of the literature thus far has provided an in-depth analysis of the history of association in the tradition of Maurice Agulhon. Harrison's book fills this gap even though she mentions the 1901 law only briefly. What she does provide is a prehistory of the law and a broad historical framework for understanding its enactment.

*The Bourgeois Citizen in Nineteenth-Century France* demonstrates the vital role that sociability and association played in nineteenth-century class and gender formation. Fruitfully applying the concept of the bourgeois public sphere, Harrison shows that the bourgeois learned and music societies, gardening and horticultural groups, gentlemen's clubs, and charitable institutions were associational forms that mediated between the Old Regime society of orders and the twentieth-century society of classes.

Harrison's work is much more than a modest monograph. Indeed, *The Bourgeois Citizen* shows a historian in full command of the secondary literature on associations, sociability, and gender. I have seldom read a historical study that more clearly interrelates archival research and a subject's secondary literature. Harrison brings to maturity the study of associational life and sociability for English-language students of French history by exploring male associations, clubs, and charitable institutions in three cities in eastern France: Besançon, Mulhouse, and Lons le Saunier (in the departments of the Doubs, Haut-Rhin, and Jura, respectively).<sup>[2]</sup> In doing so, she uses many of the same sources (such as the 1841 inquiry by the Minister of the Interior) into clubs (*cercles*) as the pioneer of club history, Maurice Agulhon, and plumbs not only the reliable series M on police and administration but also series F (agriculture), I (public opinion, festivals), Q (social assistance), and R (education). She has searched through local libraries, archives, and museums and has discovered a wealth of material in regional publications of learned societies. Harrison has also drawn throughout from the memoirs and insights of that scathing critic, and consummate member, of the bourgeoisie, Gustave Flaubert (see especially his *Dictionary of Platitudes*).

The first two chapters deftly situate the subject within the larger parameters of French history. Chapter One, "Emulation: Class, Gender, and Context," demonstrates how the largely forgotten nineteenth-century term "emulation" illuminates the gender and spatial patterns of bourgeois life. In essence, the language of emulation equipped members of the middle class with a vocabulary to balance the competitive energies of the marketplace with the companionable sociability of learned and fraternal groups. This emulative discourse negotiated well, from the perspective of a bourgeois male, the tensions of a society that was no longer anchored to the prescribed status categories of the Old Regime but had

not yet become dispersed into the "atomized individuals" of the twentieth century. In particular, the pursuit of the ideal of emulation created a kind of privacy that was "neither domestic nor feminized" (p. 14) and excluded the working classes and women.

In Chapter Two, "Contesting the Public Sphere: Associations and the Government in Nineteenth-Century France," Harrison argues that the Tocquevillian paradigm of a largely barren public life because of government centralization is not as fruitful or accurate as the Habermasian notion of the public sphere. She believes that the concept of the public sphere, now primarily used by scholars of the eighteenth century and the Revolution, should also be used to analyze the nineteenth century. For example, Harrison notes that despite the well-known mistrust of associations following the 1789 Revolution, France counted 45,000 legal entities before passage of the 1 July 1901 law. She abundantly illustrates that while nineteenth-century ministers of the interior continuously suspected even the most conservative society, association, or club of harboring potential Jacobins, "bureaucratic practice recognized [cercles] could contribute to making a town more prosperous, orderly, and governable" (p. 22). Nevertheless, Harrison shows that governmental suspicion of clubs' political activities did not subside until the end of the nineteenth century. Indeed, provincial sociability did contain a sub rosa quality based upon the influence of the Freemasonry. One irony that emerges from her work is that the cloistered and semi-clandestine nature of many clubs and societies involved heavy drinking and gambling much oftener than politics. Ostensibly, police attention to the working-class cafes centered on just such gambling and heavy drinking, especially after the 1873 law on punishing public drunkenness.

Harrison's third and fourth chapters are the heart of the book, for they delineate the dynamics of provincial bourgeois sociability and associational life. Chapter Three, "The Bourgeois as Scientist and the Sociability of the Learned Society," reveals the social uses to which science was applied, both as discourse and as marker of distinction. I use this latter word intentionally, as Harrison deftly employs Pierre Bourdieu's insights into culture and class. The seriousness these provincial bourgeois cultivated through their pursuit of amateur science provided a means of separating middle-class cultural practice from aristocratic religiosity (increasingly cultivated, as she shows, during the nineteenth century), female "frivolity," and proletarian "dissoluteness." Unlike politics and religion, science was a neutral subject that united the bourgeoisie. The fusion of learning and leisure proved a potent tool in promoting the image of the bourgeoisie as the most capable class to rule.

Chapter Four, "Honest Amusements," examines the dynamics of club life. Clubs often occupied the rooms above a cafe, allowing the bourgeoisie to enjoy the pleasures of the cafe (drinking, smoking, reading, and gambling) without the problems of cafe life (the unselected and promiscuous working-class clientele). In many ways, Harrison notes perceptively, the nineteenth-century provincial French club, with its upper-class clientele, abundant reading material, and often high-stakes gambling, was similar to an eighteenth-century English cafe or French salon. Unlike the eighteenth-century salon, women were not allowed, and conversation was therefore more spontaneous. Most of all, Harrison shows the nineteenth-century club as providing a venue for bourgeois male domesticity that also granted access to the public sphere. By simultaneously offering privacy and publicity, these clubs permitted the bourgeoisie to avoid the female influence of eighteenth-century salon life and the exposed and indiscriminate mixing of revolutionary democratic sociability. Harrison also enumerates other functions of these clubs: music, shooting, and horticulture. The flexibility of the bourgeois club permitted each new generation (usually every ten to fifteen years) to start its own club. As each generation aged, however, the members usually reconciled with the older generation either by joining older clubs or amalgamating. The synthesis of emulation and association, bolstered by the exclusion of women and the incorporation of succeeding generations of men, created a space for rational and fraternal bourgeois male sociability. Harrison's analysis provides a fresh perspective on an old topic: the notion of bourgeois respectability.

The two following chapters, one on middle-class attempts to extend emulation to the working classes

and the other on the attempt to administer charity by association, are less innovative than the previous ones. In these chapters Harrison relies less on primary and more on secondary sources. In general, she joins earlier historians to show the failure of the bourgeoisie to transform the mass of nineteenth-century workers into sober, striving imitations of themselves. Mutual benefit societies, which usually met in the hated cafe, facilitated proletarian celebration and recreation as much as or more than emulation of middle-class thrift. Moreover, working-class clubs, such as the Mulhousien cercle, although having the trappings of a middle-class club, seemed closer to cafe life than to middle-class clubs, though Harrison notes that the Franco-Prussian War and German annexation of the city in 1871 prevents a final judgment of the effectiveness of this "tantalizing experiment" (p. 155).

Her chapter on "Charitable Imperative" competently explains the complexities of the nineteenth-century bourgeois response to poverty and destitution. She points out that the provision of charity became dependent on discrete and distinct local conditions because of various tensions between men and women, between Catholics and free thinkers, between advocates of artisanal apprenticeships and opponents of the growing dominance of factory work, and between concepts of religious and scientific assistance. The goal of emulation became even more obscured on the question of charity than on the question of patronage amidst such contradictions. Nevertheless, Harrison's research absolves the bourgeoisie of the traditional charge of hypocrisy. Although she does not cite Foucault's work, she clearly shows that middle-class French desired to apply to the proletariat the same processes of character formation that they had developed for themselves.

Emulation would lead to greater success among the petty bourgeois, but at the cost of shattering the bourgeois public sphere. This is the theme of the last chapter, which matches the excellence of the earlier chapters in its primary research and insights. By the 1860s and 1870s the growing diversity of the bourgeoisie—with the rise of white-collar work and the growing professional consciousness of such occupations as architects, pharmacists, and veterinarians—spells for Harrison the end of the unified nineteenth-century bourgeois public sphere. This fragmentation was especially evident in the largest city in the study, Mulhouse. (Regretfully, German annexation again prevented her from following this important point into the 1870s and 1880s.) In short, fault lines emerged between, on the one hand, the property owner or industrial entrepreneur with capital and, on the other, the accountant, supervisor, or shopkeeper who could depend only on his salary. The various strata of petty bourgeois, with neither capital nor leisure time, could not pursue the same sort of disinterested learning, culture, or recreation. The petty bourgeoisie therefore turned to sport and singing more than to science and erudition as a source of emulation. Ironically, as sport and song became associated with the petty bourgeoisie, these activities fell into disfavor among the middle class. In short, the petty bourgeoisie failed to win full admission to the bourgeois public sphere. Harrison adroitly refers to Pierre Bourdieu on this point: what is crucial for an individual or social class is not the amount of learning but one's social relation to it.

This study is a superb corrective to the fragmented quality of contemporary historiography on nineteenth-century France. Harrison's book does much more than detail associational life among the provincial bourgeoisie; it provides a framework within which to explore the evolution and dynamics of the bourgeois public sphere in the nineteenth century. Class formation, gender segmentation, political discourse, scientific experimentation, leisure patterns, and various strategies of social control are all melded into an overall vision of the formation of the nineteenth-century middle class. Few monographs are so resonant for further research.

Indeed, let me close this review with suggestions for future research. First, Harrison's book invites a series of local studies in other areas of France—Patricia Turner's forthcoming work will fit nicely here. Second, future studies should explore the links between association and sociability, especially as lived by the participants. Next, Harrison's study, although impressively documented, could have made more use of memoirs, letters, song lyrics, plays, novels, and journal articles to capture the feel of associational and club life. In addition, the growth of French associational life needs to be placed in an international

perspective. For example, how does the number of 45,000 authorized associations compare to Great Britain, Germany, or the United States during this era? Finally, although Harrison's work is one of the best studies of masculine gender formation since Robert Nye's *Masculinity and Male Codes of Honor in Modern France*, future studies in this field should explore at great length the tensions between men and women, especially over the nature and provision of charity.

In essence, Harrison shows that association and emulation in nineteenth-century France helped to expand the bourgeois public sphere but that such forms of education and leisure could not overcome economic constraints. Concerning the 1901 law on associations, the hope of some thinkers is that new forms of association and the sociability attendant upon them can lead to configurations of social life that transcend the seemingly dominant patterns of contemporary capitalism. One hopes that this story of twentieth and now twenty-first-century association will find historians as adept as Harrison.

## NOTES

[1] Because the literature is too voluminous to be cited in full, I will mention only a few important and recent research tools. One of the most useful websites on associations, offering links and listing resources, may be found at <http://www.adminet.fr/associations/>. The Conseil d'État recently issued a copious report on the jurisprudence of the law of 1 July 1901, its evolution, and the international context for understanding France's regulatory regime on associations. See Conseil d'État, Rapport public 2000: les Associations et la loi de 1901, cent ans après. Études & documents no. 51 (Paris: la Documentation Française, 2000). In addition the French government set up an interministerial commission to commemorate the law. This commission has supported publication of a long list of books, the chief among them being the complete texts of the debates and laws on association from 1901 to 1987. See *L'avènement de la loi de 1901 sur le droit d'association. Genèse et évolution de la loi au fil des journaux officiels*, préface de Jean-Michel Belorgey, annotations de Jean-François Merlet (Paris: Les Éditions des Journaux Officiels, 2000). One of the most provocative books in this series is Martine Barthélemy, *Associations: un nouvel âge de la participation?* (Paris: Presses de Sciences Po, 2000). As the question mark implies, this is a critical and historical examination of the concept of association. In particular, the author questions the contemporary relevance of the Toquevillian view, which privileged American over French associational life. Finally, see a collection of essays edited by Jean-Louis Laville, Alain Caillé, et al., *Association, démocratie et société civile* (Paris: Éditions la Découverte, 2001). These wide ranging essays explore the connections between association, democracy, and civil society in the context of French history and in light of the collapse of the Soviet model and the advent of evolving European integration. One of the most engaging questions tackled in this collection is the degree to which associational life offers an alternative to both the market and state socialism.

[2] Patricia Turner's *Democracy in France: Associational Life, Civil Society and Urban Politics in the Early Third Republic* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, forthcoming) will cover associational life, especially among the working class, after 1870. She, too, fruitfully uses the Habermasian notion of the public sphere and confirms Harrison's contention that associational life prior to 1870 was highly class specific.

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