

constituted a break in this pattern, and after 1685 they did not always conclude marriages for economic advancement. According to Mentzer, confessional compatibility, physical security, and psychological comfort became new and important factors in making marriage arrangements (p. 86).

Allegiances and kinship ties constituted one of the variables which Mentzer sees as particularly important in maintaining the prominence of the Lacger family after 1685. As previously mentioned, some of the family converted to maintain their offices and commissions. One of these, François de Lacger, was a decorated senior officer who had abjured Protestantism. At his death in 1758, he left to his closest male relative, Marc-Antoine II, a fortune of close to 200,000 *livres*, enough to re-establish the dwindling fortunes of the Protestant family. Mentzer notes that the kinship ties that bound together early modern families like the Lacgers transcended the superimposed religious “conversions” of the period after 1685.

The conclusions of *Blood and Belief* indicate that the Lacger family corresponded to the general comportment of minor noble families during the early modern period. They achieved noble status through holding office, expanded their fortune and holdings through astute management of their capital and land as well as through inheritance customs and marriage alliances. They deviated from these general patterns, however, by their adherence to Protestantism. Their religious beliefs, especially after 1685, put them on a different track from the majority of the minor noble families in France and excluded them from certain of the typical paths to social and economic advancement.

Mentzer’s book is well structured, well written, and generally very convincing. One quibble might be with his assumption that the Lacgers’ initial conversions to Protestantism in the 1560s were inconsistent with the family’s desire for social, economic, and political advancement (pp. 46–47). In fact, they were following a general trend at that time among judicial officeholders. Certainly, in Dauphiné during the 1560s there were a series of such conversions among the judges at Romans, Vienne, and Valence. Were the Lacger actions such a paradox in this context? As to the structure of the book, its thematic approach avoids the long and boring descriptive method, but does lead to annoying repetitions of people and cases, like François de Lacger who is mentioned in almost every chapter.

This is an excellent case study which transcends a simple treatment of one family. It is another interesting and useful contribution to the growing school of research on family history.

Daniel Hickey
Université de Moncton

Biancamaria Fontana, ed. — *The Invention of the Modern Republic*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994. Pp. xii, 234.

This is a fascinating work, both for what it is and what it is not. Assuredly it is a stimulating collection of scholarly essays on the intellectual history of the republic

and republican ideology. However, it is a collection that pointedly lacks due consideration of the Americans and of the Christian churches.

The absence of the Americans is puzzling, especially since in the introduction Biancamaria Fontana declares the 1989 world-historical victory of a particular political regime that she identifies with the American and French revolutions. Yet, of the various scholars presenting essays, only Bernard Manin directly considers the American case; he dedicates much space to elucidating the positions of the anti-Federalists of the 1780s. Certainly this is valuable historical scholarship; Manin amply illustrates that the anti-Federalists suffered not so much from incoherence as simply from defeat by superior forces and arguments. Yet one might ask why the editor could not allot at least equal coverage to the development of actual constitutional practice in the America of the 1790s. An overemphasis on France and the editor's apparent willingness to prefer any European subject (even the abortive Republic of Naples) make it difficult to understand the absence of the Americans except as wilful neglect. It is more difficult still to understand how a scholarly discussion of the emerging modern republic can proceed without some detailed analysis of the early United States Constitution.

While neglect of America is a fault, the second lacuna of *Modern Republic* results from theoretical proclivities, in themselves not guilty, but definitely provocative of debate. In the introduction, Fontana asserts that the "bourgeois liberal republic" has its origins in domains of political reflection distinct from traditional republican concerns with "civic identities and values". Instead of constituting a unique innovation of the modern commercial republic, Fontana's observation could also indicate its greatest historical failure. An unspoken theme of this book is the failure of republican theorists to present (sometimes even to care about) a stable definition of citizenship.

Surely this is a terrible gap in the *Invention of the Modern Republic*: it largely ignores the problems of "virtue" and "citizen". Despite the predilections of historians and political ideologues, those concepts have occupied a pivotal position in the intellectual construction of the republic. This book would have benefited from a consideration of moral culture in would-be republican societies, specifically the moral authority of the Christian churches. After all, the liberal catch-phrase, "the pursuit of legitimate self interest", obviously presupposes that citizens, or at least the law, will understand clearly just what constitutes "legitimate". Property is a moral category and, *pace* Fontana, the republic even in its commercial form must remain a metaphysical proposition.

It is no revelation that many eighteenth-century radical republican theorists used appeals to Reason to gloss over this question formerly handled by official religion. Reason, according to theory, would (perhaps not without controversy) validate the public moral practices necessary for stable republican society. In the only essay of *Modern Republic* relevant to this problem, Gareth Stedman Jones demonstrates that concerns about the moral construction of the citizen occupied Kant and placed limits on subsequent German republican thinking. Kant surmised, and we now know, that the republican experiment absolutely requires a definite moral description of Man. This is itself impossible to achieve from within the individual; we can only

do so by embracing a toxic moral relativism. In the West, the strongest argument against the ultimate nihilism of the moral relativist traditionally emanated from the Christian churches, and that is why they ought to have appeared in this volume.

Taking the problem from another angle, note that the modern republic grew up in the soil of Christendom at a time when the churches (politically imperfect though they could and can be) still commanded the role of cultural guarantor of virtue and definitions of human freedom. In fact, the Christian heritage so thoroughly undergirded acceptable public manners among the higher and aspiring Western classes that republican theorists (usually in the negative sense) could take it as the norm. Of course men and women then, as always, evaded or rejected Christian moral precepts and prohibitions, but never safely in public. Thomas Jefferson's free thinking was notorious at his dinner table. In public life he rooted his political doctrines in language which purposely gave the impression (despite his obvious personal reservations) of invoking the moral authority of the Protestant Christian understanding of God. Even the most decadent British and European aristocrats faced limits and public censure for open transgressions.

Traditional arguments against the liberal republic, or aspects of it, attack on this very point. What has been the product of republican thinking without definitive moral reference? Admirable and precious statements of the inherent dignity of each human being, notably couched in distinctly Christian traditional language. But in pursuit of a rather abstract freedom, republican thinkers frequently assumed the moral autonomy and sufficiency of the individual self. For that very reason republican ideals have been gutted by the licence and materialist excesses of republican populations. Why? Because under "bourgeois liberal" republican theory the freedom and dignity of the citizen emanated primarily from within and of himself, that is to say without referent, thus rendering the concept of self meaningless. The confines of the "referenceless" self are too small to house such treasures. Within such a self alone, freedom cramps into narcissism and infantile gratification; dignity stifles under ego; truth wilts into a relative concept subsumed into the pursuit of unfettered consumption and the appeasement of other appetites.

Unwilling and thus unable to confront the intellectual and spiritual collapse of meaningful freedom and civil dignity, contemporary modern republics have simply retreated. Contemporary republics emphasize tolerance (even of the intolerable) over truth, for such flabby tolerance is all that remains of freedom without moral reference. For it to be otherwise, Western societies once again would have to undertake a real investigation of freedom and personhood, and that would entail making distinct decisions and judgements in the spheres of morality and public behaviour. Without the churches in their former roles of defining those decisions and evaluating those judgements, the process cannot even begin. Tragically, it has already become unthinkable, even incomprehensible, for far too many denizens of the West. Long live the individual (if he can); the citizen (even as an aspiration) is dead.

The choice not to address this "dilemma of the citizen" in concrete historical terms is the contentious strategy of *Modern Republic*. Jones's essay on Kant is an exception, but that approach is limited. After all, the philosophy of Kant was and is an extremely elitist affair; the vast majority of Europeans never heard of him in

his lifetime or afterward. They have instead wrestled with questions of morality, virtue, and the validity of the republic, inasmuch as they have done so at all, within the context of Christian tradition. Since the republics were intended to be popular governments constructed from popular societies, the virtue inherently necessary to make a citizen (if he even agreed to undertake the project) had to be cast in language intelligible to him. Thus, by definition, the theory of the republic cannot exist isolated from the “civic identities and values” which Fontana casts off in the very first pages of the book. She could only do so by pointing to the stratospheric realms of theory. The revolutionary upheavals of the latter eighteenth century gave birth to republics on the ground.

No civil society in the West before now has ever attempted to exist without serious reference to God. In part, Western republican ideology, so singularly unsuccessful at producing a morally meaningful notion of freedom, has led us into the attempt. We do not know, and must rather doubt, whether any such society can persist. Scholarly inquiry into the theory and nature of the Western republic literally cannot succeed without God. Until the middle twentieth century, God remained the historical language of civic values in the societies from which republican theorists hoped to construct their projects. To plan such projects without formal recognition of God seemed crassly utopian. If we seek real understanding of the emergence of republican theory and practice, why repeat that mistake?

Ken Hendrickson

Sam Houston State University

Beatrix Le Wita — *French Bourgeois Culture*, translated by J. A. Underwood.
Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994. Pp. x, 168.

This brief study of an elusive subject is primarily an ethnography informed by Pierre Bourdieu’s sociological concepts of distinction, practice, and reproduction, published as part of an agreement with the Fondation de la Maison des Sciences de l’Homme. *French Bourgeois Culture* pays little attention to classic economic or occupational definitions of class. Instead, Beatrix Le Wita set out to answer the questions: why is it so hard to name the bourgeoisie, or why are quotation marks placed around the term bourgeoisie? After a fascinating account of the difficulties of gathering wary bourgeois subjects in comparison to the conventional non-European and non-privileged subjects of ethnographies, she describes how she conducted interviews with about 100 men and women and observed many of them in their homes. She had to rely upon personal and professional contacts to act as intermediaries and limited her study to Catholics. Although her findings are about contemporary, Catholic bourgeois culture, they offer historians more than a glimpse into “the discreet charm of the bourgeoisie”.

To answer the question about naming the bourgeoisie, Le Wita draws on Roland Barthe’s notion of “name deflection”, whereby bourgeois people deprecate or deny the label, in effect forbidding its use to describe them. Fortunately, Le Wita excels