

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?

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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

at observing the subtle “art of detail” in bourgeois culture. For instance, she lists the components of bourgeois women’s costume: a tweed or flannel suit, straight or pleated skirts, pastel-coloured blouse, cashmere or shetland wool sweater, low-heeled, dark leather shoes, scarf, a small shoulder bag. These classic items of clothing are “elements of distinction” that enable the bourgeoisie to be recognized as their “own people”. Le Wita also notices “everyday practices” such as table manners, which her subjects simply consider polite behaviour, but she interprets as class-specific and class-reinforcing rituals. Historians could be more attuned to such details and rituals.

The only systematic attention to the historical bourgeoisie appears in the chapter on dictionary definitions, where early dictionaries and etymology are cited. One of Le Wita’s interesting perceptions is the historical shift in definition from bourgeois as urban dwellers to bourgeois as owners of rural property. Certainly her interviews and observations of contemporary bourgeois life point to the importance of a “family seat” in the countryside, to which the extended family can retreat for regular weekends of sports and other outdoor activities. In her estimation, possession of these family seats separate the bourgeoisie from the merely middle class. Friends without the appropriate background will not be invited to the family seat, which she calls “expelling” the Other. Indeed, her definition of bourgeois culture is based on their conception of otherness, which even extends to isolating closer “Others”, such as daughters-in-law, in their singularity in the family by referring to them as *pièces rapportées*. The historically oriented reader might get some ideas about practices of social exclusion beyond endogamy from *French Bourgeois Culture*.

The section on family histories draws on the work of historians and has implications for historical research. Asked about their family, all her subjects remembered at least three generations and knew far more relatives than peasant or working-class subjects asked similar questions. Le Wita’s conclusion is that it takes three generations to assimilate into the bourgeoisie. The family is paramount: “A person is bourgeois by family not by blood or divine right” (p. 132). Although her subjects recalled few personal memories and made few judgements about family stories, they did select from the stories, notably remembering more stories about the maternal side of the family. Le Wita does not fully explore the implication of this interesting discovery, but historians certainly might consider how this might slant family histories.

Alerted to the importance of women’s role in the reproduction of bourgeois culture, Le Wita attempted to do an ethnographic study of the prestigious girls’ school, the Collège Sainte Marie in the posh Paris suburb of Neuilly. Rebuffed by the college, she settled for a short history based on statements by the foundress and directors and on school publications, along with a survey of one class of pupils and interviews with 40 former pupils. According to the documents and to the “old girls”, the college stressed intellectual method, in part to curb excess sentimentality, and inculcated ideas of duty to others (charity) and group spirit. Although many ex-students complained about feeling “confined” at school, most valued the intellectual rigour, self-control, and personal modesty instilled. A decade after graduation,

they could identify another graduate of Sainte Marie by these and other quintessentially bourgeois qualities.

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John F. Hutchinson — *Champions of Charity: War and the Rise of the Red Cross*.
Boulder: Westview Press, 1996. Pp. xxii, 448.

In opening his history on the early years of the Red Cross, John Hutchinson turns to scandals during the 1990s in France and Canada involving the distribution of tainted blood. Despite its distance from the chronological focus of *Champions of Charity*, the tragic story of tainted blood sets well the theme of this book, which portrays an institution that has for too long escaped probing and critical inquiry — a situation produced in part by the decision of the International Red Cross to close its archives to all researchers except those willing to submit their conclusions to official vetting before releasing them for public dissemination. Despite such impediments, Hutchinson has produced a meticulously researched work, and one whose conclusions will, no doubt, displease many of those associated with the Red Cross.

Hutchinson describes an organization that, during its first half-century, strayed far from its initially stated goals — as expressed in the 1863 Geneva Convention — to promote a more Christianized international order. *Champions of Charity* presents an institution that instead transformed into a series of national societies increasingly linked to governments and their war policies. Through various auxiliary roles connected to the medical side of warfare, the Red Cross came to alleviate many of the attendant financial hardships and thus made it easier for governments to pursue war. Some foresaw and feared such a development, including the famed nurse, Florence Nightingale. Though long associated in the popular mindset with the Red Cross, she actually made a conscious effort to eschew formal ties with the organization because she insisted that it was the job of governments, not private charities, to underwrite the medical costs of warfare. Subsequent events bore out Nightingale's reservations; the Red Cross did indeed become a "militarized charity". Rather than adhering to the original intention of having a neutral, international third party on the battlefield, an increasing number of European nations, starting with Prussia in the 1860s, integrated national Red Cross societies into their military strategy. By the early 20th century, one saw Red Cross personnel undergo military-type training and change their official attire from simple armbands added to civilian garb to full-fledged uniforms.

As the Great War approached, the existence of an international and pacifist Red Cross became illusory. More typical was the reality in the United States, where the American Red Cross became a national corporation under government supervision; the first three presidential appointments to direct the organization were retired high-ranking military personnel. With the declaration of hostilities in Europe in 1914 and the onset of America's "preparedness campaign" by 1916, Red Cross volunteers