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**Jill Harsin**, *Barricades: The War of the Street in Revolutionary Paris, 1830-1848*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2002. 417 pp. Notes, bibliography, and index. \$29.95 U.S. (cl). ISBN 0-312-29479-4.

Review by Pierre Simoni, Laurentian University.

One of the more dramatic episodes of *Les Misérables*, which occupies a central part of Hugo's novel, revolves around the defence of the barricade of the rue de la Chanvrerie erected during the revolt of 5 and 6 June 1832 following the funeral of General Lamarque.<sup>[1]</sup> This revolt was the first of a number of uprisings, marked by street fighting and barricades, that proved to be a feature of the first half of the July Monarchy before appearing again at the end of the regime in 1848.

Somewhat marginalised before 1830, republicanism was revitalized during the July Monarchy and became the expression of working-class revolt and aspirations. Given the particular path of French industrialisation, this meant the revolt and aspirations of the artisans. The July Monarchy was an important moment in the period that Roger Magraw identified as "the age of artisan revolution" and culminated in the "artisan republic" of 1848.<sup>[2]</sup>

The renascent republican movement of the July Monarchy has quite naturally attracted the attention of historians. Its ideological and intellectual links to the revolution of 1789, the role of interclass contacts through sociability structures and newspapers and almanacs, which were a means of spreading republican language and messages as well as pedagogical tools (to borrow from Maurice Agulhon),<sup>[3]</sup> the possible alliance between workers and students, and the experience of workers or artisans in the work place have all been the object of historical scrutiny.<sup>[4]</sup> Many of the works on these topics, notably Ronald Aminzade's comparative study of workers in Rouen, Saint-Etienne and Toulouse, are models of scientific and analytical method. With *Barricades: The War of the Street in Revolutionary Paris, 1830-1848*, Jill Harsin brings to this historical literature the eye of the novelist and in her narrative manages to recapture the drama of the events with a pen that Victor Hugo might not disavow.

That is not to say that Harsin eschews analysis or theory. The first of the five parts into which she divides her study includes an introduction that draws upon contemporary theory from anthropology, gender and labour studies, and cultural history in general to establish an analytical framework for the narrative itself. The following parts trace the development in the 1830s and the setbacks during the 1840s of radical, or *montagnard*, republicanism from the revolution of July 1830 to the June days of 1848. Although the emphasis is placed upon the preparation for the uprisings and on the battles of the barricades, the author also discusses at length the ideas that united and divided republicans and the political issues involved in the battles.

The author identifies three interrelated themes that provide a conceptual framework for her study of radical republican revolt: violence, sense of honour, and a romantic consciousness. Both violence and a romantic consciousness hark back to the revolution of 1789, and more specifically to 1793. Following Northrup Fry, Harsin defines the romantic consciousness as a form of "transcendence of the world of

experience”—to relive 1793—and a belief in one’s ability to transform this world (p. 16). Citing the social anthropologist David Riches, Harsin shows that violence was an instrument of the proletariat for this transformation; it was also a means of identification with the revolution of 1789 (p. 8). Indeed, violence was at the centre of the same debates during the July Monarchy as in 1793. These debates revolved around the question of subsistence and the violence inflicted on the people through starvation and around that of freedom and virtue. In addition, violence was present in masculine proletarian culture because it served as a means of defending one’s honour. Harsin interprets the radical revolt as a form of collective dueling and uses analogous explanations for the battles on the barricades to those provided by Robert Nye for dueling among the bourgeoisie. She sees street fighting as an attempt by working class men to redeem their lost honour, in a manner similar to Nye’s interpretation of the increase in dueling after the defeat of 1871. As Peter Stearns, William Reddy, and Joan Scott (all of whom Harsin uses) have argued, the affronts to male honour were numerous. They included threats to the status of artisans by industrialisation, the discipline imposed on workers in the industrial setting, and the competition for work and salaries from women and children. An identification of proletarian misogyny underlies much of this discussion of the mentalities of the radical republicans, and Harsin points out that radical republicanism’s lack of openness to women stands in sharp contrast to the attitude towards women in utopian socialism (p. 10). She argues that, in their revolt, radical republicans’ demonstration of selflessness and affectation of stoic manliness were motivated by the desire to eliminate the stigma of shame, including that inflicted upon their manhood by women.

Yet this motivation comes out less clearly among members of the radical republican movement than among those isolated individuals who sought to assassinate the king. Indeed, Louis-Philippe was confronted not only by periodic attempts in the 1830s to stage revolution but also by seven attempts on his life. Before embarking on her narrative, Harsin examines in detail the last of these attempts, which took place in July 1846. The existence of an autobiographical manuscript, the *préméditation*, written by the would-be assassin, Joseph Henri, fully justifies this digression.

In the second of the two chapters forming the first part of her book Harsin embarks upon an exercise that the French call “*commentaire de document*” and what might undoubtedly be termed deconstructing the document in contemporary jargon. Whatever one calls the exercise, the result is fascinating and recalls the work done three decades ago by students of Michel Foucault on the self-justification left behind by another assassin: Pierre Rivière.[5] The desire to avenge sexual humiliation inflicted by a wife (or mother against one’s father) was central to both stories, but in most other respects the situations were quite different. Joseph Henri’s story is closer to that of Denis Poulot, an artisan turned industrialist, whose autobiography was analysed by Alain Cottureau. Harsin contrasts the two destinies. Henri’s story is that of an artisan who sought to become a small entrepreneur, first through army contracts and then through the production of luxury goods, in order to escape from the world of piece wage production and the imposed rhythm of work. In her study of the composition of fortunes in Paris in the nineteenth century, Adeline Daumard demonstrated that the early stages of industrialisation were favourable to producing a real, albeit limited, degree of social fluidity.[6] But unlike Poulot, Henri did not succeed in making the transformation to industrialist, and his failure illustrates the pressure of competition that weighed on entrepreneurs, the difficulties of obtaining credit, and the dependency of small entrepreneurs on the family for both credit and help in the workshop. On this latter point the contribution of family members, more particularly of wives, was essential. Bonnie Smith has pointed out the important functions that women assumed in the running of the textile industries during the first half of the nineteenth century.[7] But Henri’s wife left him, and Henri proved incapable of dealing with the difficulties that he faced. The frustration and humiliation of marital and financial failure account for his attempted assassination of Louis-Philippe, which he staged to provoke his own death. The political crime was, in essence, a form of suicide. Joseph Henri was not very different from many radical republicans. But whereas he turned feelings of violence and aggression against himself, radical republicans directed these sentiments against the state. Jill Harsin proposes Henri as a foil against which to compare the behaviour of the *montagnard* republicans.

In the following section of her book, the author embarks upon the examination of the insurrections. These arose out of the failure of moderate solutions to the problem of regime change after July 1830. First among these possible, but failed, solutions was that presented by the Orleanist Monarchy. Brought forth by revolution, the regime was naturally confronted with the problem of legitimacy, which, given the original popularity of Louis-Philippe, could have been resolved through a referendum. But none was held, and the regime left itself open to accusations of having usurped the revolution of 1830. Harsin shows how Louis-Philippe's initial image as the "people's king" faded as the king moved away from "liberals" to "conservatives", that is, in the more common terminology, from the party of movement to that of resistance. In so doing the regime became more repressive. The *Société des Amis du Peuple*, a moderate republican association founded on 30 July 1830 and made up of students and young professionals, was one of the main victims of the repressive policy. By repeatedly bringing its members to trial and by making use of preventive detention, the regime was able to wear them down despite their inevitable acquittals. The association had been thoroughly weakened well before it was declared illegal in December 1832.

The turning point in the history of republicanism, however, had occurred half a year earlier in early June of 1832. Harsin shows how General Lamarque's funeral of 5 June, organised as a response to an earlier state-sponsored funeral for Casimir Périer, degenerated into a violent conflict following an unwarranted charge of dragoons. The ensuing fighting on the barricades of the Eglise Saint-Méry was to inspire Victor Hugo in his description of the barricade on the rue de la Chanvrière. But unlike Charles X, Louis-Philippe enjoyed a very favourable balance of forces: he was not abandoned by the *garde nationale*, and so what could have been a replay of July 1830 quickly turned into a defeat for the republicans. But, states Harsin, this defeat served as a catalyst for the conversion of republicans from the moderate to the *montagnard* variety. She attributes a part of the credit for this conversion to the behaviour in court of individuals such as Charles Jeanne, who demonstrated bravery, loyalty, and temperance (p. 62).

Unlike that of June 1832, the insurrections that followed were not spontaneous. They were willed insurrections, obeying a timetable determined by their organisers or set off in conjunction with events elsewhere, as the one of 14 April 1834 which coincided with the insurrection in Lyons. There are a number of threads to the narrative of these insurrections, which Harsin follows in an essentially chronological order.

To begin, one can identify an institutional thread. Numerous societies followed in the wake of the *Société des Amis du Peuple* between 1833 and 1839: *La Société des Droits de l'Homme et du Citoyen*, its *Société d'Action*, the *Société des Familles*, finally *La Société des Saisons*, in its two incarnations. The societies were linked by personnel, with certain individuals passing from one to the others. Such was the case of Blanqui, already a member of the *Société des Amis du Peuple*, who was instrumental in the founding of the following societies (others, such as Raspail, dropped out as the societies became more radical). The societies were also linked institutionally. The SDHC had been created by the SAP as a means of reaching out to the working class. And the *Société d'Action* was the activist wing, or offshoot, of the SDHC.

Then there is an intellectual, or ideological, thread. The process of radicalisation, evident already in the evolution of the SAP with respect to the Orleanist regime, continued in the successor societies. This process involved doctrine. At stake was the degree of state intervention in the economy and in society and the nature of equality to be fostered. References to different stages of the revolution of 1789 served as a shorthand for different positions over these questions. Radicals relived the revolution of 1793, took after Robespierre, adopted his declaration of the rights of man, and dismissed the moderates—including the wing organised around Raspail—as girondins. The process of radicalisation also involved tactics. The moderates favoured the dissemination of propaganda; the radicals pushed for direct action. Blanqui's attempts to create a disciplined group as a nucleus of insurrection could be seen as the

precursor to Leninism, as could his goals of creating a revolutionary dictatorship. Although the radicalisation reflected a change of membership from bourgeois to working class, an important impetus to this process was police harassment, which forced the movement to go underground and devote itself to plotting *coups de main* (p. 106).

The relationship between the state and police, on the one hand, and the *montagnard* republicans, on the other, was in consequence one of cat and mouse. Harsin shows how republicans of different tendencies attempted to avoid the restrictions imposed by the regime. The organisers of the SDHC had hoped to circumvent the legislation on associations by creating sections of less than twenty members each (p. 65). The founder of the *Société d'Action*, Kersausic, attempted to elude police informers by continuously changing his place of residence (p. 81). And, naturally, after the introduction of legislation in May 1834 against the bearing of arms, a great deal of effort was made by the *Société des Familles* and by that of the *Quatre Saisons* to create clandestine factories for the making of ammunition, always in short supply. The continuous trials of the different associations, the police surveillance, the confessions of conspirators, and the denunciations of clandestine activity provide a source of information on the *montagnard* republican movement that Harsin skillfully exploits for her study.

The final thread, indeed the culmination, of the study is provided by the description of the insurrections and uprisings, those of the 1830s as well as that of June 1848. It is in this function that the author demonstrates fully her narrative talents. She follows the organisation leading up to the insurrections, notably those of 13 April 1834 and of 12 May 1839. Neither of these two proceeded according to plan, and the skirmishes, the attacks and retreats that Harsin describes border on the comic. This is in complete contrast to the fighting during the June days of 1848. She captures the emotions of the confrontations: the determination of the defenders of the barricades in June 1848, the ardour of the *garde mobile* that attacked them, and the manifestations of courage and cowardice by combatants on both sides. Cowardice was shown not only by fighters who abandoned their posts, such as members of the *garde nationale* responsible for the defence of the Hotel de Ville in 1839 who fled upon hearing of the death of six linesmen guarding the Palais de Justice (p. 126), but also by those who struck out at isolated opponents to avenge lost comrades. One example of such behaviour was provided by Charles Vappreaux, who boasted of the fact that the isolated mobile guardsman whom he had shot had “staggered some distance” bleeding “like a boar” (p. 303). Conversely, bravery was ostensibly demonstrated by those who were steadfast in defending their posts. As his men prepared to flee, captain Drouot of the *garde nationale* vowed to remain true to his word, claiming that “a soldier dies and does not surrender” (p. 127). Bravery was also shown by isolated individuals who protested against the retribution that others wanted to mete out to enemies. The most striking example is that of a woman who, on the barricades of June 1848, interposed between the captured colonel Desmarets and his captors bent on revenge, and pleaded for mercy (p. 307).

Harsin's description of the fighting on the barricades, especially that of June 1848, and of the élan of the *garde mobile* charging with bayonets, reminds the reader of the savagery of the encounters. Nonetheless, no episode can rival the brutality of the massacre of 12 rue Transnonain, made notorious by Daumier. Harsin describes the confusion at the origin of the massacre, with sniper fire coming from the buildings on the street resulting in the death of one of the officers, the ricochet shots that convinced the soldiers that they were the object of attack and their subsequent entry into the building and their room by room, floor by floor search for male occupants (p. 90-98). The situation is probably best summarized by the comments of one soldier who, upon breaking into one apartment, declared that he would be different and not “kill without knowing” (p. 93). The point of the example is that this soldier's behaviour was exceptional. Others, described as being in a “maddened” (p. 95) state, gave, as instructed, no quarter; they fired on sight and struck with bayonets in ignorance. Thanks to the testimony given during the inquiry after the massacre, Harsin is able to paint a vivid picture of one of the more tragic moments associated with the uprisings.

In the end, the insurrections accomplished nothing and proved to be as senseless as the dueling of which they were, according to Harsin, the working-class equivalent. In 1868, Blanqui himself rejected street fighting as a means of effecting political change (p. 143). The consequences of this failure constitute the object of the following two sections of Harsin's study. In parts three and four Harsin investigates alternatives to insurrection and radical republicanism in the realm of both actions and politics. The author also examines the fate of the defeated *montagnard* republicans.

As in her discussion of the assassination attempts, Harsin demonstrates her narrative skills in her description of the conditions of republican leaders' imprisonment. Although the prison of Mont-Saint-Michel may have not been the equivalent of the Habsburg Spielberg prison, contrary to the claims of the republicans wishing to present themselves as martyrs, the sojourn in the French prison was nonetheless physically and mentally destructive. Harsin brings this out vividly thanks to accounts written by *montagnard* leaders such as Martin-Bernard. She succeeds as well in reconstituting the lives, replete with failures, of the would-be assassins who preceded Joseph Henri, beginning in 1836 with the Corsican shepherd, Fieschi. Despite claims to be acting on behalf of republicanism, they were, Harsin points out, disavowed by most republicans. There were exceptions, namely the *Travailleurs égalitaires* who saw the king as the linchpin of a structure that would fall with his death. But both imprisoned *montagnard* republicans and failed assassins illustrate the author's basic approach by which she ties insurrectional behaviour to ideas of masculinity. The former attempted to exemplify in their refusal to give in to the difficulties of their situation the "masculine ideal of stoicism and endurance" (p. 234). And what Harsin writes of one of the assassins, Meunier, could apply to all: "republican regicide offered a much needed path to manhood" (p. 176). As in the case of Joseph Henri, shame stemming from rejection by a woman was at the core of a number of decisions to embark upon the path of assassination.

Defeated by the government counter-offensive, republicanism was further discredited by the assassination attempts. In the 1840s it therefore had difficulty defining a place for itself on the French political and intellectual landscape. It was in competition with ideologies and movements such as socialism (notably Louis Blanc's associationist socialism), Cabet's Icarian communism, and Babouvist communism. Harsin's attempt to describe these differences is rendered difficult by the fluidity of membership and by the tendency over the decade for socialist, communist, and republican groups to converge. This convergence helps explain the fact that by 1848 republicanism had gained working-class adherents, while just a few years earlier it appeared to have lost its momentum (p. 211-228).

The last part of Harsin's study is devoted to the revolution of 1848 and takes us, by way of the different demonstrations--notably that of May 15--from the confrontations on the streets of Paris in February to the barricades of June. In 1848, *montagnard* republicanism was again a force to contend with, but June presented it with a new defeat.

Harsin's study of street fighting during the July Monarchy is an ambitious and far reaching work. Often fascinating, it nonetheless has some room for improvement. There are a few inconsequential, if unnecessary, errors of fact in the text, but this is really a simple editorial matter.[8] More serious is a lack of cohesion; *Barricades* is overly ambitious and strikes out in too many directions. What should have been the central idea--the notion of masculine identity in working class culture--does not really provide the needed cohesion. The suggestion that republican activism constituted a means to redeem honour is best applied to the would-be assassins. Workers who manned the barricades may have done so in respect of a code of honour, but this code did not prevent members of the *montagnard* republican groups from not showing up at the crucial moment. Indeed, absenteeism was one of the plagues of the movement. Like the Communist Party that Annie Kriegel compared to a sieve,[9] the republican movement had great difficulty in keeping its members. Many fighters, whether insurgents or members of the *garde nationale*, felt no shame in fleeing danger. In courts of law, many republicans denied their beliefs and, in order to lessen a sentence through attenuating circumstances, could present themselves as pathetic individuals acting under stress. They were, states Harsin, "frequently described as objects of

pathos" (p. 317). Honour seems to have been forgotten. Moreover, qualities that the author identifies as masculine had not always been universally conceived as such. In the past, as baroque paintings inspired by Plutarch's Lives illustrate, women could very well serve as models of stoicism; it is not just a "masculine ideal." [10] Likewise, courage was not specifically masculine, and Harsin gives a number of examples of women on the barricades who showed courage equal to that of the men. Their enemies may well have labelled such women as viragos. But one of the examples provided, that of Simonne Chignon who beheaded eight wounded national guardsmen (p. 317), did not convince this reader that such a label was necessarily unwarranted.

Instead of offering a conclusion, Harsin terminates the study with an epilogue that recounts the fate of the major members of the *montagnard* movement. A conclusion could have helped give cohesion to the study by bringing together loose threads. It could have dealt with questions arising from the use of gender analysis. The author could also have used the conclusion to generalize about certain aspects of radical politics. The processes that she identifies were to repeat themselves in other contexts. During the Second Republic, as in the early 1830s, the repression of bourgeois republicanism in the villages of France left the door open to the secret societies that would rise up in response to Louis-Napoléon's coup of 2 December 1852. [11] The question of tactics that beset the *Société des Droits de l'Homme et du Citoyen* was exactly the same that would divide the Russian populists during the last third of the nineteenth century: were they to favour propaganda or engage in direct action? [12] And populism's justification of assassination--attack the edifice from the top--was similar to that used by the rare French republican movements that countenanced the tactic.

These are not major criticisms. They remain within the realm of editorial comments; a vigilant editor could have encouraged Professor Harsin to address these issues.

## NOTES

[1] Thomas Bouchet provides an excellent discussion of the relationship of the episode in the novel to the historical event in his paper "Les 5 et 6 juin 1832. L'événement et Les Misérables," presented March 1997 to the Research Seminar "Littérature et civilisation du XIXe siècle" at the Université Paris 7, Jussieu: <http://groupugo.div.jussieu.fr/Groupugo/97-03-22Bouchet.htm>.

[2] Roger Magraw, *A History of the French Working Class*, vol. 1, *The Age of Artisan Revolution, 1815-1871* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1992). Magraw uses the term as a chapter heading. See also, for instance, Mary Lynn Stewart-McDougall, *The Artisan Republic: Revolution, Reaction, and Resistance in Lyon, 1848-1851* (Kingston and Montreal: McGill-Queen's Press, 1984).

[3] Préface to Ronald Gosselin, *Les almanachs républicains. Traditions révolutionnaires et culture politique des masses populaires de Paris (1840-1851)* (Paris: Harmattan, 1992): 10.

[4] William Sewell, "La confraternité des prolétaires: conscience de classe sous la Monarchie de Juillet", *Annales: Economies, Sociétés, Civilisations* (1981): 650-671; Ronald Gosselin, *Les almanachs républicains*; Maurice Agulhon, *La République au village* (Paris: Plon, 1970); Jean-Claude Caron, *Généralisations romantiques. Les étudiants de Paris et le quartier Latin (1814-1851)* (Paris: Armand Colin, 1991); Ronald Aminzade, *Ballots and Barricades: Class Formation and Republican Politics in France, 1830-1871* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993).

[5] Blandine Barret-Kriegel, et al., *Moi, Pierre Rivière, ayant égorgé ma mère, ma soeur et mon frère ... un cas de parricide au XIXe siècle* (Paris: Gallimard, 1973).

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[6] Adeline Daumard, *Les bourgeois de Paris au XIXe siècle* (Paris: Flammarion, 1970): passim; A. Daumard (dir.), *Les fortunes françaises au XIXe siècle* (Paris: Mouton, 1973): 122-139; 195 et seq.

[7] Bonnie G. Smith, *Les bourgeoises du Nord : 1850-1914* (Paris: Perin, 1989): 40 et seq.

[8] For instance, on p. 4, Harsin states that the German Confederation was composed of 35 states. The source that she cites, Tim Chapman, *The Congress of Vienna: Origins, Processes and Results* (London and New York: Routledge, 1998): 45, provides the more usual number of 39 states (after 1817).

[9] Annie Kriegel, *Les communistes français: essai d'ethnographie politique* (Paris: Le Seuil, 1968): 39. Kriegel attributes the formulation to Pierre Sémard.

[10] For example, Elisabetta Sirani's painting, "Portia Wounding her Thigh," 1664, discussed in Veron Hyde Minor, *Baroque & Rococo: Art & Culture* (London: Laurence King Publishing, 1999): 163.

[11] Ted W. Margadant, *French Peasants in Revolt: The Insurrection of 1851* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1979): 127.

[12] David Saunders, *Russia in the Age of Reaction and Reform* (London: Longman, 1992): 329 et seq. Avrahm Yarmolinsky, *Road to Revolution: A Century of Russian Radicalism* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1986): 170 et seq.

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