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Nimisha Barton and Richard S. Hopkins, eds., *Practiced Citizenship: Women, Gender, and the State in Modern France*. Lincoln and London: University of Nebraska Press, 2019. xv + 295 pp. 6 illustrations, notes, and index. \$35.00 U.S.; \$52.50 Canadian; £26.99 UK. ISBN-13: 978-1-4962-0666-4.

Review by Susan Foley, University of Melbourne.

This volume had its origins in a one-day conference to mark the retirement from Arizona State University of Professor Rachel Fuchs. The resulting collection of essays was intended as a tribute to an influential, generous, and highly respected colleague and teacher. But Professor Fuchs's sudden death while the book was in preparation gave added poignancy to this tribute.

Each of the essays in this volume acknowledges a debt to Rachel Fuchs. Moreover, each bears the stamp of Fuchs's influence in its subject matter and/or approach. Fuchs published extensively on the history of the family, especially poor families and their interactions with the state. Her particular interest in ordinary people, especially women, acting as best they could in difficult circumstances to secure their own ends, is well reflected in this collection. Fuchs's repeated demonstration in her work that women exerted agency, despite a lack of resources and a great imbalance of power with state officials, is also echoed in these essays.

The subjects of these chapters are extremely diverse. They range from the market women of Paris in 1791 to Princess Marie-Thérèse; from impoverished mothers of sick children and wives of immigrant workers, to bourgeois women engaged in social reform movements; from French and American equal rights activists in the 1920s to "familialist" Vichy sympathizers in the 1930s and 1940s. But the volume is very coherent in that each chapter engages with the issue of citizenship for women. It fits squarely in the revisionist camp, locating itself in opposition to the argument developed in the 1980s that women's exclusion was integral to the creation of "the citizen," who was inherently gendered male.[1] As the editors say in their introduction, the volume challenges "feminist readings of women's citizenship in France that tend to characterize theirs as a debased form of citizenship whose main features were formal political, economic, and civic disenfranchisement" (p. 13).

Women were, of course, excluded from "citizenship" if that is understood in legal terms, denoting a category whose members had the right to vote. But it is this definition of citizenship that the authors of this volume contest. Rather than seeing citizenship as a "discursive construction" (p.14) or a gift from on high, they insist on a much broader and more diffuse notion of "citizenship as practice," highlighting "how citizenship is lived, practiced, and

deployed by historical subjects who nevertheless lack the formal status of citizenship” (p. 3).

The “revisionist” project of this volume is thus twofold. First, it sets out to de-emphasize the significance of political rights, which are usually seen as the crux of citizenship. Barton, for instance, rejects the idea that “the attainment of formal citizenship [is] the ultimate litmus test for belonging in the national community” (p. 75). Second, it reframes our understanding of women’s activities in social and community life. Earlier scholars argued, we are told, that women were “severed” from “economic and associational life,” as well as political life, by virtue of not having the right to vote (p. 5). This paints an exaggerated picture: the vast literature on women’s employment and philanthropic activities from the late eighteenth to the twentieth century, for instance, is testament to the longstanding recognition that women were not shunted into seclusion. But such social activities (and others besides) are now interpreted, not as part of women’s expected roles or as an expression of religious faith, but as an expression of “social citizenship.” If some of the examples of “social citizenship” presented in this volume can be contested, the idea certainly provides some new insights into the lives of women and their relationships with the state in the period under discussion.

In redefining citizenship, the volume’s starting point is the work of T. H. Marshall.[2] He defined citizenship as a three-stage process: civil rights (such as the right to work) preceded political rights, which then gave rise to social rights and made possible social legislation (p. 1).[3] Long recognized as inapplicable to women’s historical experience, Marshall’s typology has nevertheless informed theories of social citizenship, and it is through a focus on the social realm that most of the essays here engage with the citizenship question. As the French state became more interested in the social domain—the realm of families, health, fertility, child welfare, etc.—particularly in the light of the perceived “crisis” of depopulation, “the newfound realm of the social” not only produced a body of social legislation from which women benefited, but “provided a space *for women* (sic) to maneuver, exert power, and achieve their own ends” (p. 3). It was, this volume contends, as vital agents of “the social,” and particularly as mothers, that women exercised “social citizenship” (p. 7).

Most of the chapters explore a variety of ways in which women acted in the social sphere to assert ideas and claim rights as citizens. But the first two chapters are more politically focused, discussing the French Revolution and the Bourbon Restoration respectively. In chapter one, Katie Jarvis examines the incident in which Parisian market women publicly beat nuns for supporting refractory priests in 1791. The tolerant official response on this occasion contrasted with another episode of female violence in 1793, when the Society of Revolutionary Republican Women tried to force the market women to wear patriotic dress. Women were banned from political activity as a result. The contrasting reactions to women’s interventions, Jarvis argues, “[overtun] the notion that the revolutionaries immediately envisioned citizenship as masculine” (pp. 20-21). Jarvis is no doubt correct that modes of citizenship evolved gradually. But her argument that, while women “could not transcend their gendered bodies ... they could use gender to creatively maneuver in politics” (p. 43) seems counter-productive: they did not need to transcend gender or maneuver creatively if political action was not yet gender-defined.

In chapter two, Victoria E. Thompson discusses the roles played during the Restoration by Princess Marie-Thérèse, the Duchess of Angoulême. As niece of the widowed King Louis XVIII, Marie-Thérèse was the most senior female figure in the royal family. Her self-representations as devoted mother and daughter supported Louis’s attempt to establish the

monarchy's legitimacy through a familial and affective narrative. But Marie-Thérèse's mother, Queen Marie-Antoinette, had become a vilified and hated figure during the Revolution. By taking on official duties and playing a role in Ultraroyalist politics, then, Marie-Thérèse conjured up the "politically powerful queen" and evoked "troubling" images of female power (pp. 53; 67). Her case reflects the shifting roles, both allegorical and real, of royal women in the early nineteenth century. But does it suggest "a measure of acceptance for diverse models of femininity" (p. 56)?

Chapters three and four discuss poor women and families who engaged with officials in order to extract services and resources for themselves and their children. In chapter three, Nimisha Barton argues that French and immigrant women "co-opted a wide network of overlapping regulatory systems trained on the surveillance of both single immigrant men and negligent breadwinners and used it to their own ends" (p. 76). Stephanie McBride-Schreiner demonstrates in chapter four how families (especially mothers) negotiated with hospital authorities over medical care for their children. Both authors emphasize women's agency in this struggle for resources. Rather than being "passive recipients of charity" (p. 102), women asserted the "rights" they assumed they possessed. "In the process," writes McBride-Schreiner, "families engaged in a critical form of social citizenship" (p. 102).

The focus switches to bourgeois women in the remaining chapters. Jean Elisabeth Pedersen shows in chapter five how, rather than relying on "social science" to make their case, women deployed social novels in order to create sympathy and support for those in need. Eliza Earle Ferguson traces the efforts of campaigners against the white slave trade, arguing that, despite their exclusion from decision-making bodies, women were influential both in "fram[ing] the problem" and developing the strategies to combat it (p. 175).

The juxtaposition presented by the final two chapters provides a platform for considering some of the broader issues raised by this collection. Cheryl Koos considers, in chapter seven, the case of "Vérine" (Marguerite Lebrun) and the *École des Parents*, a conservative Catholic organization committed to natalist and nationalist ideas, whose work "helped to create the ideological climate for the transition to the Vichy Regime and contributed to its early popularity and acceptance" (p. 208). By contrast, in chapter eight, Sara L. Kimble studies the efforts of French and American feminists to use international law to secure an Equal Rights Treaty in the 1920s. Both chapters, in Koos's words, show how women across the political spectrum found "myriad ways to engage politically in the public sphere while lacking formal voting rights" (p. 190). But if Vérine carved out an influential niche for herself, she did so while promoting a model of femininity that excluded women from formal political engagement. The feminists, on the other hand, argued for women's full legal equality with men and sought to end "a variety of dependencies (financial, civil, political, psychological)" (p. 219).

As Elinor A. Accampo points out in a wide-ranging and valuable afterword, all the essays, with the exception of Kimble's, show women asserting "rights" on the basis of their roles as mothers or potential mothers (pp. 278-9). Many of the chapters show them successfully deploying their maternal duties to win entitlements from authority figures. Indeed, the word "savvy" or "savviness" is used several times to describe women's demonstrated ability to leverage their status as mothers to their own benefit and that of their families (pp. 10, 14, 75). But as Accampo notes, Koos reveals how this could be turned against women. Indeed, the editors themselves note that Koos's chapter "lays bare the central question of this volume: Did women, by

adopting traditional gender hierarchies rather than challenging them, enhance the scope of creative possibility for women” (p. 12)? Or did they (as Koos herself states) “further reinforc[e] women’s structural political marginalization at a crucial moment in France’s history” (pp. 12, 208)?

In their introduction, the editors place firmly in the past the question of whether rights for women were best argued for on the basis of women’s “equality” with men or their “difference” from men (p. 5). But this issue still resonates in the volume. The contributors are alert to the limitations under which women endeavored to assert themselves as citizens. They were forced to “creatively maneuver” (p. 43); theirs was “a different model of citizenship” from that of men (p. 93); they devised strategies in response to their inability to vote or run for office (p. 144); they “ma[d]e the most of the limited options available to them for political action” (p. 179). But if Koos’s chapter highlights the dangers of relying on motherhood as the basis for women’s rights, Kimble’s points to the problems of pursuing the principle of women’s legal equality with men. Discussing the disagreement between French and American feminists over issues like protective legislation, Kimble notes that the American insistence on absolute legal equality—attempting to make “the person,” as the legal subject, a gender-neutral term—“failed to address the material reality of intersectional human identity and experience.” The “person” was already “a gendered subject” (p. 242). As Accampo observes, the “enduring and intractable paradox of ‘equality vs difference’ ... is implicit in this volume’s essays” (p. 277).^[4]

There is much to commend in this volume, not least the extensive research that underpins each essay. Its central concept of “citizenship as practice” enables a diverse exploration of the ways in which women carved out spaces for themselves in the social domain and were far from silent, especially on issues about which their womanhood gave them some particular interest under the gender norms of the day. Several chapters show how successful they were in influencing policy and shaping politics, even if they could not formulate policy or vote. This approach gives complexity to the notion of “citizenship” and highlights the different interpretations that can be applied to it.

But the broader the definition of citizenship, the greater the risk of overreach, and some examples of “citizenship” in the book give me pause. We might ask, for instance, whether royal actions on the public stage should be termed “civic participation.” Thompson writes of Marie-Thérèse: “Rather than seeing the family as a unit that constrained women to domestic roles, the example of Marie-Thérèse demonstrates how family belonging could also provide women with novel ways of exercising civic participation” (p. 68). Can we validly extrapolate from her case as a member of the royal family to women in general? And rather than “civic participation,” is her action better understood as “performance,” aimed at projecting an acceptable image of the royal family?^[5] Another troubling example is that of Madame Morot, who summoned police “protection” to prevent the Algerian migrant, Boubeker, from reclaiming money he had deposited with her (p. 92). True, she showed an ability to work the system to her advantage, but this seems more an expression of female criminality than of female citizenship. And we might ask (as Accampo does, p. 270) whether the foreign women who used state agencies to track down errant partners did so as self-defined “citizens,” or whether they simply used every device they could think of in order to secure financial support (p. 90).

However inventive and “savvy” women may have been, at no time in the period discussed here, whatever the regime in power, did the citizenship of women equate to that of men. Men could

establish or join organizations, publicize causes, advocate for outcomes, embody ideas and concepts, as women could. But, in addition, men could vote and stand for office in order to implement their goals directly. Besides, their role as voters gave them leverage with politicians, while women “had little more than the lever of moral authority” to deploy, as Ferguson observes (p. 176). In that context, the volume highlights not only the many creative ways in which women carved out spaces for themselves in the social domain, but also their exclusion, since they were forced to work through oblique avenues to influence social life.

LIST OF ESSAYS

Johnson Kent Wright, “Foreword”

Nimisha Barton and Richard S. Hopkins, “Introduction”

Katie Jarvis, “‘Patriotic Discipline’: Cloistered Behinds, Public Judgement, and Female Violence in Revolutionary Paris”

Victoria E. Thompson, “Restoring the Royal Family: Marie-Thérèse and the Family Politics of the Restoration”

Nimisha Barton, “Gender, Immigration, and the Everyday Practice of Social Citizenship”

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Eliza Earle Ferguson, “French Girls Are the Most Desired: Organizing Against the White Slave Trade in the Belle Epoque”

Cheryl A. Koos, “Vérine, the Ecole des Parents, and the Politics of Gender, Reaction, and the Family, 1929-1944”

Sara L. Kimble, “Politics, Money, and Distrust: French-American Alliances in the International Campaign for Women’s Equal Rights, 1925-1930”

Elinor A. Accampo, “Afterword”

NOTES

[1] In note three to the introduction, the editors cite Joan B. Landes, *Women and the Public Sphere in the Age of the French Revolution* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1988); Joan Wallach Scott, *Only Paradoxes to Offer: French Feminists and the Rights of Man* (Cambridge, M.A.: Harvard University Press, 1996); Dominique Godineau, *The Women of Paris and Their French Revolution* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998); Françoise Gaspard et al., *Au pouvoir,*

citoyennes! Liberté, égalité, parité (Paris: Seuil, 1992); Charles Sowerwine, "Revising the Sexual Contract: Women's Citizenship and Republicanism in France, 1789-1944," in Christopher E. Forth and Elinor A. Accampo, eds. *Confronting Modernity in Fin-de-Siècle France: Bodies, Minds, and Gender* (Basingstoke, UK: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010).

[2] T. H. Marshall, *Citizenship and Social Class, and Other Essays* (Cambridge, UK.: Polity Press, 1988).

[3] See the detailed summary by Elinor A. Accampo in her "Afterword," pp. 258-9.

[4] The classic analysis of this "paradox" is Joan Wallach Scott, *Only Paradoxes to Offer: French Feminists and the Rights of Man* (Cambridge, M.A.: Harvard University Press, 1996).

[5] For examples of women's "performances" on the political stage in the nineteenth century, see Jo Burr Margadant (ed.), *The New Biography: Performing Femininity in Nineteenth-Century France* (Berkeley and London: University of California Press, 2000).

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