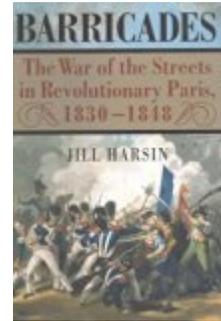


Jill Harsin. *Barricades: The War of the Streets in Revolutionary Paris, 1830-1848*. New York and Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2002. x + 417 pp. \$29.95 (cloth), ISBN 978-0-312-29479-3.

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Radical Republicanism under the July Monarchy

While barricades do rise and fall repeatedly in Jill Harsin's vivid retelling of successful and aborted revolutions between 1830 and 1848, this book's real subject is a quixotic cadre of radical republicans who struggled to organize themselves between their battles in the streets of Paris. Although broader histories of the period are available, scholars and teachers will relish *Barricades* for its accessible introduction to the record of these rebel "soldiers of equality" (p. 235), its fresh insights into their motives, and its ambition to recapture the texture of the times in which they lived.[1]

Barricades tells its story by neatly balancing chronological and analytical exposition. The book's organization can be divided (with only slight oversimplification) into narrative and analytic chapters. Indeed, the decision to take both modes of narration seriously as necessary challenges for the historian is as interesting a contribution to the historiography as is the substance of the book.

The narrative chapters retell the history of the conflict that erupted intermittently in Paris between republicans and the forces of the state. Borrowing an apt phrase from the habitual revolutionary Louis-Auguste Blanqui, Harsin refers to this struggle as "la guerre des rues," or War of the Streets. In the book, the war begins in July 1830 (albeit with occasional backward glances) even though more might be made of republican activism under the Restoration. Recounting the period from the July Revolution to the uprising of 1832, chapter 3 underlines the failure of moderate republicans caught between the new liberal regime and the emerging radicals. The

insurrection of 1834 comes next (chapter 5), along with its culmination in the massacre of the rue Transnonain (later made infamous in Daumier's lithograph), and its denouement in trial. This is one of the best chapters in the book and might well serve as a supplementary reading on nineteenth-century urban revolutionary warfare for a Western Civilization or European history course. It is also a fine example of Harsin's painstaking technique of reconstructing the history of events in minute detail from a wide array of primary sources. (In other sections of the book, the effort at comprehensiveness occasionally makes the narrative overly dense.) Chapter 7 continues in this vein by describing the uprising of May 1839. Chapters 13 through 15 conclude the narration of events by judiciously recounting the revolution of February 1848 and its aftermaths in the rebellions of 15 May and the June Days.

Scattered throughout the book, analytic chapters provide a broader context for understanding the War of the Streets. The introduction lays out the argument and themes for Harsin's focus on radical republicans and their ideology of "Montagnardism." Although it wanders from the argument at times in relating the chronology of events, the book does consistently make its case for the distinctiveness of radical republican identity. The construction of that identity out of a cult of violence associated with the Great Revolution, male honor, and Romanticism is the explicit argument of the Introduction that recurs (mostly indirectly) in the subsequent chapters.[2] Later analytic chapters reconstruct the history of the development of that identity through the efforts to organize

under increasing political repression. Consequently, the book moves steadily from examples of quasi-legal association in the early 1830s (chapter 4) to the consideration of secret societies (chapter 6), socialist and communist competitors (chapter 11), and an interesting exploration of common imprisonment in the 1840s (chapter 12), before considering the reappearance of republican organizations after February 1848. An epilogue briefly explains what became of the veteran republican street fighters in their later years.

The lack of information about clandestine and failed rebels against the state is of course a central obstacle to the history of their movements. Harsin is often innovative in confronting this challenge within the analytic chapters. Nowhere is this more true than in chapter 2 which reconstructs the life of Joseph Henry, an artisan of stainless steel and later a master and employer, who attempted to assassinate King Louis-Philippe in 1846 and left manuscript accounts of his troubled life and premeditated crime. Harsin follows up on this with three more chapters (8-10) on assassination attempts against the royal family. The inclusion of these would-be assassins within a history of republicanism is a telling move. Regicide was a controversial weapon in the republican arsenal—embraced by some elements of the republican press and repudiated by others. *Barricades* makes a case for the importance of a broader republican acceptance of assassination in the late 1830s, without pushing the case too hard (pp. 181-187). Moreover, in telling the stories of Henry and the others, the book pursues a larger purpose of illuminating both the personal decision to embrace radical action and the general context of violence at the time. Harsin's choice to include the assassination attempts pays off in an excellent chapter on the Fieschi attack of 1835 (chapter 8). Like the account of 1832, "Fieschi's Infernal Machine" shows the book at its best as the history delves into the details of individual lives before treating the ramifications of the chain of events.

The largest ramifications in this section, however, are implied rather than spelled out. Consequently, despite the virtues of its separate chapters, the section on the assassination attempts remains poorly integrated into the general presentation of the history of republicanism in the period. (So, for example, the Fieschi's attack of 1835 appears abruptly after the discussion of May 1839 in the preceding chapter.) On one view, the book's argument seems to hinge on the experience of the late 1830s: the failure of 1839 and the divisiveness of the assassination attempts. Indeed, the list of the five section titles from the table of contents—"Honor," "Insurrection," "Assassina-

tion," "Recrimination," "Defeat"—suggests that the failure of radical republicanism predates 1848 by about a decade. But as is too often the case in *Barricades*, one looks in vain for extended argument from the author on these points that the book prefers to explore amid the welter of facts without sustaining larger conclusions.

Yet, while the wealth of detail that Harsin catalogues is not wholly new, the fresh retelling does more than provide a useful introduction to the world of republican revolutionaries. Other historians have focused on explaining republicanism in relation to the contexts of the history of ideas, or economic contingency and class-consciousness, or the institutional history of political parties, or even the peculiarities of generational change.^[4] Harsin's contribution is to place the construction of personal identity at the center of the history of political mobilization. *Barricades* emphasizes a participatory, gendered identification (rather than a narrowly intellectual one) built up out of symbols, myths, and attitudes derived eclectically from the Great Revolution and a Romantic age. And this analytical perspective justifies the narrative approach of the book. On this view, Montagnardism was more a social movement constructed from a shared participation in the flow of events rather than a direct expression of social forces or political ideas. The memory and the myth of the great days of revolution sustained this tiny minority in a rebelliousness that often seemed futile, if idealistic. Indeed, the sanctity of suffering became an end in itself. Thus one republican orator at Cavaignac's funeral in 1845 encouraged the gathered crowd with the injunction: "To fight, always to fight, obscurely, patiently...not at the head of a quivering nation and to the acclamation of a million men, but against discouragement and disgust, under the weight of defeat and in the midst of universal silence...this is the zenith of heroism" (p. 19).

Given the largely descriptive approach, most scholarly readers will probably find Harsin's account instructive rather than conclusive. But the book is constantly suggestive about the basis for further arguments about the discursive and practical construction of a post-1830 Montagnard identity. Key words—like "exhaltation"—and references to representative figures—like Saint Just—recur often in the self-description of the radicals and remain underanalyzed here. The book is informative in other ways, including useful asides synthesizing the literature on gun laws and ownership (chapter 6), prison reform and the memoirs of the incarcerated (Chapter 12), and the role of women both practically and symbolically in the Second Republic and the June Days (chapters 14-

15). Rather usefully for teachers, *Barricades* gives longer translated quotations of interesting documents, including catechisms for initiating members of the secret Societe des Familles and Societe des Saisons (pp. 113-114). The book also finds room for sixteen pages of black-and-white reproductions (even though the illustrations themselves are rarely subject to interpretation).

Scholars will also be edified by the example of Harsin's original revival of narrative form within an analytic framework. On the whole, the result is successful and some sections are riveting. There is much art in this re-creation and it would be interesting to hear more about the procedures and decisions that went into the effort. At times the text makes plain the conflicting testimony on which the reconstruction of events is based. Yet, all too often the story seems to pass silently over the inevitable choices historians face in reconciling witnesses and privileging certain texts. If we are to achieve the return to narrative history in a social scientific mode that Harsin's work promises then there surely is more room to note issues of complexity and doubt.

In undertaking both narrative and analysis, *Barricades* runs the risk of sitting between two stools and so failing to satisfy its potential audiences among scholars and a general public. Yet the result—creative, sophisticated, and enlightening—is sure to please the larger readership that this book deserves.

Notes

[1]. On the history of the July Monarchy, see H. A. C. Collingham, *The July Monarchy: A Political History of France 1830-1848* (London and New York: Longman, 1988); and, for more recent perspectives, Jo Burr Margadant, "Gender, Vice, and the Political Imaginary in Postrevolutionary France: Reinterpreting the Failure of the July Monarchy, 1830-1848," *American Historical Review* 104 no.5 (1999): pp. 1461-1496. Possibly, of more direct use for Western Civilization courses, is a website created and maintained by Robert Schwartz at Mount

Holyoke College: "France in the Age of Les Miserables," available at <http://www.mtholyoke.edu/courses/rschwartz/hist255-s01/index.html>. On the history of Paris, there are a number of recent books to choose among: Patrice Higonnet, *Paris: Capital of the World* (Cambridge: Belknap Press, 2002); Philip Mansel, *Paris between the Empires, 1815-1852* (London: John Murray, 2001); Johannes Willms, *Paris, Capital of Europe: From the French Revolution to the Belle Epoque* (New York and London: Holmes and Meier, 1997). One should note here, too, Jill Harsin's earlier *Policing Prostitution in Nineteenth-Century Paris* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1985). For an alternative approach to working-class activism that cites many useful sources, see Casey Harison, "The Rise and Decline of a Revolutionary Space: Paris' Place de Greve and the Stonemasons of Creuse, 1750-1900," *Journal of Social History* 34, no. 2 (2000) pp. 403-436. On the history of barricades, see Mark Traugott, "Barricades as Repertoire: Continuities and Discontinuities in the History of French Contention," in *Repertoires and Cycles of Collective Action*, ed. M. Traugott (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 1995).

[2]. For context on recent theoretical approaches to the study of political conflict, see Ronald Aminzade, et al., *Silence and Voice in the Study of Contentious Politics* (New York and Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001).

[3]. For introductions to the historiography on French republicanism from a longer view, see, Ronald Aminzade, *Ballots and Barricades: Class Formation and Republican Politics in France, 1830-1871* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993); Francois Furet, *Revolutionary France 1770-1880*, trans. Antonia Nevill (New York: Blackwell, 1992); idem, "French Historians and the Reconstruction of the Republican Tradition, 1800-1848" in *The Invention of the Modern Republic*, ed. B. Fontana (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 1994); Pamela M. Pilbeam, *Republicanism in Nineteenth-Century France, 1814-1871* (London: MacMillan, 1995).

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