

Women, Men and Sport in France, c. 1870-1914: An Introductory Survey

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The study of gender as a factor in the development of sport in France is still in its infancy. This applies particularly to female sport. The substantial body of recent research on the history of sport in France, though rarely devoted to questions of masculine identity *per se*, provides a reasonable basis upon which to judge the extent, structure and ideology of male involvement. In this sense the study of sport in France is rapidly catching up with what has been taking place in the United States, Canada, Australia and Great Britain. However, as yet there is no body of work on female involvement in sport whether in terms of medical/scientific discourse, education, feminism or racial and nationalist ideology which can compare to the volume and quality of research which has appeared in North America and in Britain. Hence this survey will concentrate primarily on the origins of modern female sporting activity and the obstacles which men placed in the way of those limited number of women who made an effort to participate in organised exercise. A shorter section on forms of masculine identity and sociability, which can quite readily be studied elsewhere, will follow, mainly in order to underline the interdependency of gender roles.

The history of French women has not attracted the same attention from French historians that women's history has generated in the United States. In spite of the prominence given to gender in Theodore Zeldin's imaginative and influential general history of France, there are few major works on women; James Macmillan's solid survey of the condition of women around the turn of the century is an important synthesis and there have been valuable studies of, for example, elite education, the peasant family and specific occupational groups including prostitutes.¹ Amongst the female bourgeoisie's leisure activities there have been studies of shopping but not of sport, which is omitted entirely from Bonnie Smith's study of the wives and daughters of northern textile manufac-

1. T. Zeldin, *France 1848-1945*, vol. 1, *Ambition, Love and Politics* (Oxford 1973), vol. 2, *Intellect, Taste and Anxiety* (Oxford 1977); James Macmillan, *Housewife or Harlot: the social condition of women in France* (Brighton 1981) contains a good bibliography; Martine Segalen, *Love and Power in the Peasant Family*, trans. (Oxford 1986) gives the best account of rural women.

turers.² Political and social emancipation was a weak flower in France which lacked the strong Protestant middle class which seems to have been an important precondition in Britain, the United States and Germany. In France the Catholic Right required women to remain strictly wives and mothers whilst the Left feared female conservatism too much to promote emancipation. As Dorinda Outram recently noted:

The political culture of the French Revolution was constituted by the construction of images of masculinity and femininity which served to exclude all women and validate some men. As the nineteenth century progressed, scientific "facts" would increasingly be pressed into the service of maintaining the perceived differences between masculinity and femininity, until . . . feminists had to convince an unwilling public . . . that such differences were not "natural."³

Only a small number of feminists and a few other radical thinkers questioned this. Hence women's sport cannot be seen as partly the product of militant feminism challenging a male preserve. There are a few examples of sport as an analogue of emancipation but for the most part sports were used to enhance femininity and particularly natality. In a country obsessed by its demographic inferiority to its German neighbor, the possibilities of improving the numbers and physique of the next generation was the strongest and most widely accepted argument in favour of women's participation in sporting activity. Reformers in the world of physical education and sport for women tended to couch their arguments less in terms of rights than of duties. "La maternité l'exige" ("motherhood requires it") was a quotation chosen to preface Marie-Thérèse Eyquem's *La femme et le sport* (1944), the first serious work to appear on the subject.⁴ Each sex needed a proper amount and type of physical activity to fulfill their different possibilities and purposes. Similar activities should be adapted according to the sex of the participant to take account not merely of differences in physique but more importantly of manifest differences in character.

Making women tough and competitive was not the goal of women's sport. Significantly, on the rare occasions women took part in openly violent activities like boxing or wrestling, the purpose was the thinly veiled sexual gratification of the male audience. Half-naked girls from the Moulin Rouge might sometimes imitate men to amuse and excite a male audience by boxing or wrestling but this was very much the louche preserve of the Parisian "demi-monde." Female acrobats and circus performers were permitted, and even celebrated, but they most emphatically were not role-models of most French girls. All the same, this variety of female sporting spectacle is easily overlooked. One of the strengths of *Le Grande Livre du Sport Féminin* by F & S Laget and J-P Mazot, a large and profusely illustrated anecdotal history which is the nearest to a

2. Bonnie Smith, *Ladies of the Leisure Class: the Bourgeoises of Northern France in the Nineteenth Century* (Princeton 1981). I discuss this work in the context of the role of women in bourgeois culture in "Social History and Bourgeois Culture," *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 27 (October 1985): 713-26.

3. Dorinda Outram, *The Body in the French Revolution* (Yale UP 1989), pp. 154-55.

4. M-T Eyquem, *La femme et le sport* (Paris 1944), see preface.

general study of female sport in France to date, is that it rescues such performers from obscurity.⁵

Apart from this, there has been very little published. Two valuable articles on women's sports were published in the important collection of new research edited by Pierre Arnaud under the title *Les Athlètes de la République*;⁶ one provides a short survey of the origins of French women's sport whilst the other uses the presentation of sport in a major middle class women's magazine between 1902-04 as a means of explaining how outright hostility to female sport shifted towards a carefully qualified and limited approval. Innovative use of deconstructionist literary techniques permits a "reading" of the treatment of sport in terms of the wider cultural formation of the "ideal type" of bourgeois woman—elegant, dutiful and lively, and shows which sports and methods of playing them could enhance "true" femininity. Similarly, Georges Vigarello's recent *Histoire culturelle du sport: techniques d'hier et d'aujourd'hui* (1988) has a short section on gender stressing how "expert" opinion came to terms with the limited convergence of male and female activities by stressing the importance of modifying techniques to accommodate special female needs.⁷ Hence the moral and social opposition of the late nineteenth century gave way to a scientific caution which warned against overstraining the female body whilst accepting that certain forms of exercise were both necessary and desirable. The argument switched to what kinds of event and what sort of techniques were appropriate for women.

Of course, there was still a good deal of outright opposition to any form of female participation in competitive sport. The best example of this is the Baron de Coubertin, the founder of the modern Olympic Games. The recent three volume collection of his writings provides ample evidence. Coubertin opposed female involvement essentially because it was unnatural. "The role of woman in the world remains what it has always been," he wrote in 1901. "She is above all the companion of man, the future mother of a family, and she should be brought up with this fixed destiny in mind."⁸ For Coubertin women playing male sports was part of the wider demand for "equality" which, if unchecked, would lead to the collapse of (male) authority in the family and society as well as problems of public decency. Such fixed ideas played an important part in preventing women gaining access to athletics and limiting very severely their involvement in the Olympic movement before 1914.

5. F & S Laget & J-P Mazot, *Le Grand Livre du Sport Féminin* (Belleville sur Saone, FMT Editions, 1982) (hereinafter cited as Laget & Mazot, *Sport Féminin*).

6. P. Arnaud, *Les Athlètes de la République: gymnastique, sport et idéologie républicaine 1870-1914* (Toulouse, Editions Privat 1987) article 16, J. Thibault, "Les origines du sport féminins," and article 17, F. Labridy-Poncelet, "Imaginaires féminins et pratiques sportives; l'image de la femme bourgeoise et son usage des pratiques sportives: l'exemple de la revue La femme française (1902-1904)"

7. G. Vigarello, *Techniques d'hier et d'aujourd'hui* (Paris 1988), pp. 166-175; Vigarello is the author of important work on changing attitudes to health with significant bearing on gender relations, see esp. *Le propre et le sale: l'hygiène du corps depuis le moyen âge* (Paris 1985); also *Le corps redressé* (Paris 1977).

8. *Pierre de Coubertin, Textes Choisis*, vol. 1, ed. G. Rioux, (Zurich: International Olympic Committee, 1986), p. 261.

Yet female sport did develop. Though numerically insignificant, the success of sports amongst female members of the nobility, especially those who enjoyed the “le tout Paris”—the smart world of the salons, the Opera and Parisian high society—was very striking. Whether hunting with the Duchess d’Uzes, the first female master of hounds in France, or shooting with the Princess Marie Ghika, or simply riding in the Bois de Boulogne to show off one’s social position, female members of the nobility displayed little of the reticence of their bourgeois sisters when it came to physical activity. Partly this was simply because noble women, by virtue of their family wealth and position, had always been more independent of men than other women; hence the convention by which husband and wife sometimes led more or less separate lives after the succession was established by the birth of children. Baron de Vaux’s *Les femmes du sport* provides sporting portraits of these “amazones,” of which 24 came from the ranks of the aristocracy and only two from the bourgeoisie, a survey of attitudes to “the modern woman” carried out in 1900 by the *Revue des revues* underlined the fact that the nobility laid significantly less stress than the bourgeoisie on the duty of domestic management.⁹ The idea of “prowess” applied to a certain extent to noble women as well as to men. It was important to show spirit; to be courageous and stylish. Not many bourgeois women, for instance, took up driving motor cars with the furious enthusiasm of the duchesse d’Uzes who, unstoppable to the end, founded the Automobile Club féminin de France in 1926 along with the duchesse de Grammont and the baronne Henri de Rothschild. Though very few followed noble women into hunting or shooting, many more were impressed by their enthusiasm for the bicycle in the 1890s. For it was the bicycle which really began female sport in earnest in France.¹⁰

Eugen Weber has outlined the controversy this caused in terms of arguments about proper dress and fears of girls getting far too much freedom.¹¹ Alongside these quite well-known controversies, there developed a more specific medical debate about the dangers of the bicycle for the female anatomy. In 1894 a survey of 48 doctors by the Faculty of Medicine revealed that 39 of them thought that cycling which involved moderate distances and effort was not harmful to women.¹² The dangers of a more active kind of cycling were taken seriously enough for the recently formed Touring Club de France, which was set up to promote the use of the bicycle for recreation and holidays, to hold a special discussion in 1895 on the question of the effect of the bicycle on the female reproductive system.¹³ An array of medial experts and others—all men—gave their views on what became almost a fashionable topic of conversation. Some

9. Baron de Vaux, *Les femmes du sport* (Paris 1885). For an important analysis of noble sportswomen see, Monique de Saint Martin, “La noblesse et les ‘sports’ nobles,” in *Acte de la Recherche en Sciences Sociales*, no. 80, Nov. 1989, 22-32.

10. Laget & Mazot, *Sport Féminin*, pp. 128, 130.

11. E. Weber, *France Fin de Siècle* (Cambridge, Mass., 1987), esp. chap. 10, pp. 202-3.

12. C. Pasteur, *Les femmes et la bicyclette à la belle époque* (Paris 1896) is specifically devoted to exhuming these arguments, reprinting long quotations from the ‘experts’ concerned, esp. part 2, pp. 65-88; this work also covers debates over dress and is useful if lightweight. For a contemporary account see C. de Loris, *La femme et la bicyclette* (Paris 1896).

13. Pasteur, *Les femmes et la bicyclette*; see also Dr. L. Petit, *Dix ans du Touring Club* (Paris 1904), ch. 1.

thought that a long period in the saddle would damage the internal reproductive organs whilst others thought that women who stayed indoors were more likely to be fertile than those who liked fresh air. The majority, however, favoured gentle exercise and some even claimed recreational cycling would increase the birthrate by stimulating the body and the sexual drive. As recent research has stressed, much “scientific” opinion in relation to women was often nothing more than a thin rationalisation of fears and prejudices, frequently speculative and sometimes more the product of male fantasy than anything else.¹⁴

A similar undertone saturated in sexual innuendo is evident in the arguments about “rational dress” for cycling. Female critics of “bloomers” were concerned that women would lose their “femininity” in the sense of their grace and elegance; a male society journalist for the smart *La Vie Parisienne* called them “ugly and ridiculous.”¹⁵ Men were concerned that women would either lose sex appeal or, conversely, that they as men would lose control of their own wives and daughters. The cycling issue was a kind of prism in which the whole gamut of men’s attitudes towards women was put on display. Many men could only conceive of female cyclists as either sexless athletic spinsters or, as was frequently portrayed in the posters of the period, half-naked, voluptuous and, by implication, sexually available. It was yet another example of the madonna/mistress syndrome whereby women were either pure daughters and mothers or “fallen” women and fair game. Some men were even fascinated by the possibilities of the bicycle itself for sexual stimulation. Doctors disagreed about whether the riding of a bicycle could lead to masturbation. A leading clinician published a refutation of this view in *La France Médicale* in 1894. No innocent girl could accidentally masturbate by riding a bicycle, he argued, but it was possible for a woman to press against the saddle in such a way that she could deliberately sexually stimulate herself.¹⁶ Girls, therefore, could not just ride their bikes for the fun of it. Their enthusiasm for riding was drawn into a kind of medical and moral discourse obsessed with the sexual implications of physical activity for women.

All of this was far removed from the feminist ideal of greater individual freedom and shared recreation. Some of the strongest support from women for cycling came from those who wished to promote mixed activities. Women would become the friends of men and wives would be true partners, sharing the joys and difficulties of the open road together. Whether this actually took place is hard to say. In fact, the extent to which women took up cycling may have been much exaggerated by the furor which arose over the sight of fashionable women riding around the Bois de Boulogne. The tax figures do not distinguish between

14. J. A. Mangan, & R. J. Park, *From Fair Sex to Feminism: sport and the socialisation of women in the industrial and post-industrial era* (London 1987) contains several good discussions of pseudo science; see also, P. Vertinsky, “Escape to Freedom : G. Stanley Hall’s Totalitarian Views on Female Health and Physical Education,” *International Journal of the History of Sport* 5 (May 1988) : 69-95. Similar work on France is overdue despite the influence of Foucault on the study of the socio-cultural assumptions behind scientific discourse; see also Vigarelli, *Techniques d’hier*, n. 7.

15. Laget & Mazot, *Sport Féminin*, p. 289.

16. Pasteur, *Les femmes et la bicyclette*, pp. 73-8.

male and female permit holders and so it is not possible to get an exact idea of the number of women who rode. The Touring Club had only 14 women members out of a total of 1,138 applicants in its founding year of 1891 and the proportion does not seem to have increased dramatically thereafter.¹⁷ A survey of cyclists leaving Paris on a summer's day in 1893 counted only 192 women out of a total of 5,653.¹⁸ What we need to know is how many women took up cycling after it ceased to be chic and when it began to become more affordable around the turn of the century.¹⁹

Significantly, the first women's sporting events devised as spectator entertainment were cycling contests. The top male riders were predictably dismissive talking of women competitors as "acrobats" and the races as "ridiculous masquerades."²⁰ The first women's races seem to have taken place in the north of France in 1890 but it was not until the *Echo de Paris* sponsored a one hour race between two prominent actresses in 1893 that the vogue for women's racing began to attract crowds at the velodromes of Paris. Here such riders as Helene Dutrieu, who also rode in marathon tandem races with her brother, and Amélie le Gall, competed for the title of female Champion of the World. Just as track racing, which was monotonous and open to bribery, declined for men, so it also seems to have done for women. Women did not compete in the major road races which were considered far too demanding despite the fact a woman succeeded in completing the course of the Tour de France in 1908. In 1912 the Union Vélocipedique de France in fact banned women from all competition.²¹ Despite a few early successes, it seemed as if the cause of women's spectator sport had not been established.

This was certainly true of other activities, notably athletics. The most famous pre-war women's sporting event, in the sense of the publicity it attracted, was "La Marche des Midinettes," a race from the Tuileries Gardens in the heart of Paris to the suburb of Nanterre for the working girls of Paris. The event, which attracted 2500 entrants, some of whom stopped at cafes for alcoholic stimulation, drew large crowds. The winner, a milliner who arrived in front of two seamstresses, covered the twelve kilometres in one hour ten minutes. Appropriately, as a prize she was given a contract to appear in vaudeville at the Olympia.²² Women's spectator sport was still seen as an eccentric extension of the music hall. To opponents of women's sport like de Coubertin this race, in which the participants finished "sweating, dishevelled and on the point of collapse" and where the interest of many men seemed more voyeuristic than anything else, was proof of the unsuitability of women for serious competitive sport.²³ What men seem to have found especially difficult to accept was that

17. R. Holt, "The Bicycle, the Bourgeoisie and the discovery of rural France 1880-1914," *British Journal of Sports History* 2 (Sept. 1985): 129-30.

18. *Ibid.*

19. For a general discussion of cycling as a competitive activity, see R. Hoit, *Sport and Society in Modern France* (London 1981), ch. 5.

20. Laget & Mazot, *Sport Féminin*, p. 290.

21. *Ibid.* pp. 196-99.

22. *Ibid.* pp. 52-4.

23. Eyquem, *La femme et le sport*, p. 24.

women could suffer to win. Suffering, it seemed, was a male preserve—something about which any woman who had given birth might reasonably have a very different view—and part of the proof of masculinity was the ability to endure pain and exhaustion. To see women voluntarily submitting themselves to such challenges undermined the rationale of masculinity.

The most important sources of support for women's sports came from two very different directions: the first not surprisingly was linked to the overriding concern of nationalists of various kinds for the future of the race, which was expressed in a qualified support for female gymnastics and later, and to a lesser extent, athletics; the second arose from the sociable requirements of elite society, especially the need to permit a supervised and socially regulated mixing of the sexes for courtship either in the family home or on holiday, which explains the prominence of tennis. Women, in other words, made headway in these activities because they were working within rather than against the dominant system of social and political values.

Gymnastics for women had been raised as an issue in the early nineteenth century, especially in relation to the remedial possibilities of exercise. A treatise on *Gymnastique des demoiselles* published in 1828 made an early step in bridging the gap between male and female. There were exercises for boys which when adapted could enhance “the shining moral qualities which distinguish the good and caring woman; we want to keep her sense of grace, her freshness, her soft and delicate manners whilst adding to them greater strength and vigour, and more suppleness and dexterity.”²⁴ The first all-female gymnasium appears to have been opened in Paris in 1829 and it seems that segregated and restricted gymnastic exercise was available to bourgeois and upper class girls in a limited way thereafter. In 1903 there was a request for a separate chair of female physical education at the prestigious College de France by a feminist group. Whilst predictably this came to nothing there are indications that programmes of dance and exercise were becoming more widespread amongst the middle classes.²⁵ This awaits further research. Gym also was seen as a means of combatting frailty and the ubiquitous fear of nervous “hysteria”—a kind of weakness and anxiety prevalent amongst bourgeois women which was a major concern of early psychiatrists.

In the later nineteenth century concern for national regeneration through improvement of the race took over as the main stimulus for female exercise. The ideological motives that underpinned the growth of a large gymnastic movement for men had an impact on women too. Around the turn of the century a few gymnastic clubs began to form special sections for women. In 1898 a teachers' association formed a women's group at the Gymnase Voltaire and in 1900 the Enfants du Havre accepted women and others followed their example. In 1905

24. Cited in Vigarello, *Techniques d'hier*, pp. 166-67.

25. The standard histories of physical education provide little information, see F. Legrand & J. Ladegaillerie, *L'Education Physique au XIX et XXe Siècle*. vol. 1, (Paris 1970), pp. 135-42; J. Ulmann, *De la gymnastique au sports modernes* (Paris 1971) and J. Thibault, *Sports et education physique* (Paris 1972) do not discuss female developments nor specific gender identities.

women gymnasts made their first appearance at a national gymnastic festival.²⁶ Women were cautiously being accepted into the world of male gymnastics with its emphasis on German-style exercise rather than the agility stressed by the Swedish school. The extent to which women's gym developed within either the state-subsidised gymnastic union or within the large rival Catholic grouping is unclear but there were no separate female gymnastic clubs until 1909. In 1912 a separate female gymnastic organisation was set up, the Union française de gymnastique féminine, in Lyon by a Madame Ludin with the support of her husband, an open air enthusiast. This organization began with only six clubs but, when it held its first national congress at Deauville in 1913, 23 clubs were represented including several from abroad. It seems the membership of these women's clubs was drawn from the ranks of the lower middle classes-shop assistants, clerks and minor officials as well as teachers-which marks an important departure from the exclusive world of the upper class huntswoman, fencer or tennis player.²⁷

Women's athletics, in fact, developed not out of the male athletics clubs, which seem to have opposed women's sport but as an offshoot of the growth of gymnastics. A leading Parisian gymnastic club, En Avant, set up a women's section named Femina Sport which offered its members basic track and field events alongside gym for an annual membership fee of 12 francs a year. Three years later the first entirely independent female athletics club was set up after the initiative of a male journalist, Gustave de Lafrete, who organized a female athletics meeting in the Stade Briancon on 2 May 1915.²⁸ The new club was called Academia in "gratitude to Plato, who in his Laws proclaimed the same obligations for women as for men in protecting the city-state."²⁹ Perhaps this neo-hellenist touch was also designed to appeal to the classical influence on male athletics embodied in the vision of Coubertin but the main factor seems to have been the Great War. France was holding the Germans at the Somme with the help of the British. The sense of national peril produced a surge of patriotism which may have persuaded educated Frenchwomen to take up sport as part of a wider ideological drive for national efficiency. Academia was presided over by the formidable Duchess d'Uzes, the slayer of 1200 stags, with the declared intention of "purifying and beautifying the woman in order to beautify and purify the race."³⁰ Out of Academia came first a national body for women's athletics in France, the Federation des sociétés françaises des sports féminins (FSFSF) in 1916.

Here a key personality emerges who was to shape the future development of women's sport and whose career has been usefully discussed in an earlier issue of this journal.³¹ Alice Milliat was born in 1884 into a bourgeois family; she was

26. J. Thibault, "Origines du sport féminin," in P. Amaud, *Athlètes de la République*, pp. 336-37.

27. Laget & Mazot, *Sport Féminin*, pp. 63-4.

28. Thibault, "Origines du sport féminin," pp. 337-38.

29. M. H. Leigh & T. M. Bonin, "The pioneering role of Madame Alice Milliat and the FSFI in establishing international track and field competition for women," *Journal of Sport History* 4 (Spring 1977): 74.

30. Eyquem, *La femme et le sport*, p. 21.

31. See note 29.

well-educated, a good linguist and briefly married to an Englishman before his premature death widowed her and left her childless and free to devote herself to the cause of women's sport. She began by taking up rowing with Femina Sport and soon became club treasurer; she was a dedicated and uncompromising figure who by 1920 had become president of the recently formed FSFSF. From this position she challenged the Olympic movement to admit women to a far wider range of events than the tennis, swimming and skating that were then permitted. When this was refused she took on the male establishment by setting up a rival international women's sports body under the title of the Federation Sportive Feminine Internationale in October, 1921, Our concern is not so much with the complex interwar personality and institutional struggles that ensued, but with the fact that women's sport was at last moving into the realm of formal organisation.

The growth of female participation in various forms of sport between the wars is probably the most important topic which awaits its researcher. By the time of the Popular Front's program to "democratise leisure" and the new fashion for discovering the countryside by hiking in the later 1930s there had clearly been some change in the social composition of sportswomen with a shift away from middle and upper class dominance, although the picture still remains unclear. A few women's football and rugby teams came to nothing after the initial scandal they caused in the early 1920s. In 1921 Suzanne Werth, France's first famous woman swimmer, complained of the lack of facilities for women's competitive swimming despite the success of swimming as a resort activity.³² It may be that it was the reactionary and patriarchal regime of Vichy which paradoxically did most for the provision of female sport as part of its semi-fascist ideology of exercise and effort. It would certainly be interesting to know more.³³

The one area where there was sustained growth pre- and post-war both at the level of participation and in terms of spectatorship was tennis. France, after all, had produced the first international tennis star, Suzanne Lenglen, who reached the final of the French national championship in 1914 at the age of fifteen and became the leading woman player in the world after the war. She won Wimbledon each year from 1919 to 1925 before trying to capitalise on her fame by turning professional in the United States and even toying with a film career. More than any other woman Lenglen embodied the possibilities of competitive sport for women; her graceful play was justly famous but she was also a hard hitter of the ball at a time when the drive shot was still not considered really feminine. She was a fierce and temperamental competitor with a desperate need to win. She was a prototype of the contemporary star and it would be interesting to know the extent to which she acted as a role model for subsequent generations of serious sportswomen in France.³⁴

32. Laget & Mazot, *Sport Feminin*, p. 373.

33. Eyquem's *La femme et le sport* claimed significant growth in the number of sportswomen after 1939; however, it was written during Vichy and may not be unbiased.

34. Holt, *Sport and Society in Modern France*, pp. 178-79; Larry Englemann, *The Goddess and the American Girl: The Story of Suzanne Lenglen and Helen Wills* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988).

The early success of tennis in France had little to do with outstanding competitors or spectator events. It was linked with elite tourism and sociability. Tennis was a leisure activity par excellence. Tennis courts were built in the leading resorts, at Deauville and Monte Carlo for example, by hoteliers anxious to attract the sporting British. An English survey of international tennis published in 1903 praised the range of facilities, noting that "although very many French ladies play tennis, there are but few good players amongst them."³⁵ This was hardly surprising in the sense that girls were expected to play tennis not so much as a competitive sport but as a pleasant recreation in the company of suitable young men. The young Marcel Proust, son of one of France's most famous doctors, attended tennis matches patronised by the social elite. The late nineteenth century saw the formation of the Ile de Puteaux club in Paris by the vicomte de Janze; in Bordeaux there was the Villa Primrose and in Lyon the Tennis Club de Lyon.³⁶ All these clubs were extremely exclusive charging very high entrance fees. Girls were expected to dress elegantly; the emphasis on female fashion was central to the purpose of these clubs which was to provide an environment where social and perhaps marital connections could be made within the elites of birth and wealth, whilst providing at the same time entertainment for the growing numbers of men and women whose style of life was underpinned by the massive growth of the international economy in the nineteenth century. This was the age of the "rentier," the person who lived comfortably off his or her shares with cheap domestic help and without the inflation which ravaged some post-war bourgeois families. What began, however, as a series of private parties grew into a more organized and competitive activity which attracted substantial crowds. Competitions became part of the social calendar. Tennis, therefore, because of its social value to the elite established in France as in Britain a unique position as the only modern sporting activity in which women could compete either with each other or with men in mixed games.³⁷

Although gender roles and expectations in sport are most explicit in the treatment of women, they also clearly had a profound impact on men. Indeed the whole concept of gender suggests that sexual identities were interdependent; men could only be strong if women were weak, and so on, each stereotype interlocking with the other in a kind of self-reinforcing cycle. In fact, it was the threat to established distinctions between the sexes that lay behind much of the hostile male reaction. As Coubertin had said, "the role of women was to crown the victor's brow with laurels."³⁸ In this sense sport involves a kind of display of prowess which was unique to men. If women undertook the same kind of

35. A. Wallis Myers, *Lawn Tennis at Home and Abroad* (London 1903), p. 264.

36. Thibault, "Origines du sport féminin," pp. 334-35; Halt, *Sport and Society in modern France*, pp. 177-78.

37. Jennifer Hargreaves, "Playing like Gentlemen while behaving like Ladies," *British Journal of Sports History* 2 (May 1985), esp. 42-43. The importance of tennis has also been recognized by Eric Hobsbawm, "Mass Producing Traditions," in E. Hobsbawm & T. Ranger, *The Invention of Tradition* (Cambridge 1983), pp. 289-300; see also, R. Halt, *Sport and the British: a modern history* (Oxford 1989), pp. 125-28.

38. Cited in L. Callebat, *Pierre de Coubertin* (Paris 1988), p. 191.

activities, how could men be distinctive? This gender identity dimension of sporting activity has not been much studied *per se* and there is virtually no published historical research specifically devoted to the way in which sport helped to construct male identity. However, this subject can be approached with some success from an oblique angle via such topics as sociability and nationalism, which are the twin axes around which much of the recent research on French sport has revolved.³⁹ In addition, although there is no explicit study of male socialisation through sport, we do have the magisterial doctoral thesis on sport, schooling and republicanism recently produced by Pierre Arnaud, that contains material on male socialisation as part of a wider discussion of sport as vehicle for political ideology.⁴⁰

Looking at sport as a provider of male identity, the inculcating of combativeness and patriotism through the gymnastics movement is inescapable. Gymnastics were supposed to turn puny or cerebral boys into men whose very manliness resided in the fact they spent their spare time preparing themselves physically and emotionally for the Darwinian struggle and, if necessary, for the ultimate sacrifice in the name of patriotism. Exercise was for many an explicitly paramilitary activity designed to secure “Revanche” (revenge) for the defeat of France by Prussia in 1870-71. The discourse of militant nationalism provides abundant material for the definition of masculinity through sport. According to the rhetoric of the Union des Sociétés de Gymnastique de France the explicit purpose of gym was to produce “men” in the sense of fighting men. “Faites moi des hommes, nous en ferons des soldats” (“Provide us with the men and we will turn them into soldiers”) were the precise words of General Chanzy which the Republican gymnasts took as their motto. The rival Catholic federation were equally committed to using exercise as a way of developing male youth into a disciplined, patriotic, martial force.⁴¹

Eugen Weber opened up this area with his pioneering article on Gymnastics and Sports in Fin-de-Siècle France which appeared twenty years ago.⁴² It is possible to tease out of Weber’s seminal analysis of the competition between essentially German gymnastics and English sports as competing sources of national regeneration rather different ideals of how masculinity is constructed and of what it ought to consist. To the gymnasts masculinity was inherently militaristic. They followed the German style of gym which stressed strength, discipline and patriotism. Being ready and able to fight for France was the first duty and prime characteristic of a Frenchman. The 1880s saw a systematic attempt to promote militarism in schools by the setting up of “school battalions”

39. For a review of this work see R. Holt, “Ideology and Sociability: a review of new research into the history of sport under the early Third Republic,” *International Journal of the History of Sport* 6 (Dec. 1989): 368-77; I have developed my own views on male sociability through sport at greater length in *Sport and Society in Modern France*, ch. 8.

40. P. Arnaud, *Le Sportman, l’écolier, le gymnaste : le mise en forme scolaire de la culture physique*, Univ. of Lyon, 1986, to be published in 1990/1 by Presses Universitaires de Lyon.

41. R. Holt, *Sport and Society in Modern France*, ch. 3.

42. E. Weber, “Gymnastics and Sport in fin-de-siècle France: opium of the classes,” *American Historical Review* 76 (Feb. 1971): 70-98; this is a pioneering and crucial article which anyone approaching the topic should read.

which involved male children marching up and down drilling with wooden rifles. Pierre Arnaud's indispensable collection of articles on sport and republicanism, *Les Athlètes de la République*, contains several extremely detailed studies of this movement.⁴³ Research has tended, however, to gloss over the specific gender assumptions of the organisers, mostly middle class and often doctors, about what being a man was supposed to mean, preferring to concentrate on the strategies and rivalries of the major associations involved. Hence there are studies of the competition between Catholic and anti-clerical clubs to attract young men but not much on the kind of masculinity these organisations fostered.

With around one-third of the five thousand clubs a year which were formed in France between 1900 and 1910 being connected with sport, it could plausibly be argued that sports clubs were the largest single source of male socialisation through voluntary association.⁴⁴ However, it would probably be a mistake to assume that the same kinds of masculinity were being promoted across the board. Here Weber's distinction between gymnasts and sportsmen is crucial, i.e., gymnastics as a source of military revival through group strength and cohesion and the "Anglo-Saxon" athletic sports which stressed individual initiative, good temper in defeat and not taking unfair advantages in order to win. There was an "officers" and "men" element in this. Anglo-Saxon sports were initially confined to the social elite whilst gymnastics drew a fair number of lower class urban youths. Gymnastics stressed obedience, precision and organisation whilst the Anglo-Saxon sports carried with them the moral philosophy of "fair play." Sport was not simply meant to turn a boy into a strong, patriotic man who obeyed orders but to promote honesty, self-control and individual initiative combined with a respect for team effort. A sportsman was supposed to become a "gentleman."⁴⁵

These were the kind of virtues which de Coubertin claimed he saw in the British system and which he and others tried to implant in France. The adaptation of this ethic to French conditions has been cleverly analysed by MacAloon. He stresses Coubertin's efforts to establish a new kind of elite male culture based upon the concept of "prouesse," which he defines as the achievement of honour through action in noble culture.⁴⁶ Coubertin admired the British elite schools and universities for fostering a new gentlemanly ethic amongst the old elite of land and the new elite of money. Sport was at the heart of the new "manliness" and thus partly responsible for the solidarity, stability and imperial success of the British. By 1914 the sports movement had overtaken gymnastics as the largest single provider of competitive exercise and under the aegis of the

43. Arnaud, *Les Athlètes de la République*, esp. articles by A. Bourzac and P. Arnaud, pp. 27-86.

44. P. Arnaud, "La sociabilité sportive," in *ibid.*, pp. 359-79.

45. Weber, "Gymnastics and Sports"; see also Holt, *Sport and Society in Modern France*, ch. 4; see also note 46 below.

46. J. J. MacAloon, *This Great Symbol: Pierre de Coubertin and the origins of the modern Olympic Games* (Chicago 1981) esp. pp. 14-17 of what is a most sophisticated work; the link between the ideology of athleticism as discussed by J. A. Mangan and others and the concept of 'prouesse' seems important and worth pursuing at length in terms of the changing ideals of 'gentlemanly' conduct. Chapter 3 of MacAloon's study provides the basis for such a synthesis ("The Vision at Rugby Chapel").

Union des Sociétés Françaises des Sports Athlétiques it fostered the ideal of physical and moral character-building through amateurism and fairplay. France had its “gentlemen amateurs” and “le fairplay” became a commonly used term. However, when considering this influence one must bear in mind the more recent work of Tony Mangan which has stressed the degree to which high-sounding ideals of fairplay could act as a cover for a code of aggression, racism and conquest based upon a crude Darwinism and the overwhelming power of imperialism.⁴⁷

It is, of course, easy to generalise about forms of male socialisation when working at the level of propaganda. In other words, we know what the leaders of the gymnastic movement or the proponents of athleticism wanted young men to be like; what we do not know is what they made of the lessons in socialization they received. As the extensive body of research into the social history of the nineteenth century British working classes has established, there was a huge gap between intention and effect.⁴⁸ The desire to control and form the characters of the young was one thing, the actual degree to which this was possible was another. In my own work on the gymnastics movement in France I came to the conclusion that members may have had very different priorities and values than the leadership.⁴⁹ What masculinity meant to the rank and file probably had more to do with friendship, drinking and having fun than with concepts of militarism or honour. Indeed it could be argued that such ideals could only be assimilated within the pre-existing framework of a sociable male group. Sport, then, was first and foremost an arena in which men could be separate from women and enjoy their own company.

Here the history of sport and masculinity fortunately flows into the wider currents of historical research. Male sociability has been a major theme in modern French social history ever since Maurice Agulhon used the forms of male fraternity to help explain the eventual triumph of republican democracy in nineteenth century France.⁵⁰ The idea of sociability, therefore, was placed on the thematic agenda in the 1970s and has had a considerable influence on the research agenda of sports history in France. Sociability provided the theme of the first issue of *Sport Histoire*, a recent French journal on the history of sport, which contains a preface by Agulhon;⁵¹ it also provided a crucial element in the two recent collections of new research, *Les Athlètes de la République* and *La naissance du mouvement sportif associatif en France*. What emerges here is that eating, drinking, making speeches, organising concerts, going on picnics and the like made up a very significant proportion of the activities of sports

47. J. A. Mangan brings out the aggressive and racist value of amateur elite *sport* in *The Games Ethic and Imperialism* (London 1986) and in “The grit of our forefathers: invented traditions, propaganda and imperialism,” in J. M. Mackenzie, *Imperialism and Popular Culture* (London 1986), pp. 113-39.

48. For a full discussion see F. M. L. Thompson, *The rise of respectable society* (London 1988); also Holt, *Sport and the British*, pp. 136-48.

49. Holt, *Sport and Society in Modern France*, ch. 3.

50. M. Agulhon, *La République au village* (Paris 1970); also *Le Cercle dans la France bourgeoise, 1810-1848: étude d'une mutation de sociabilité* (Paris 1977).

51. *Sport Histoire: revue internationale des sports et des jeux*, 1988, 1, and P. Arnaud and J. Camy, *La naissance du mouvement sportif associatif en France* (Lyon 1986).

clubs. Even attending funerals, which some clubs took very seriously, involved a kind of male sociability. Of course, the forms and the content of such sociable activities varied considerably according to the status of members and the kind of communities they belonged to. Work on the structure of clubs stresses the advance of urban over rural areas and tends to reinforce the view that there was relatively little social mixing within the male group. The bourgeoisie were prominent as honorary members but did not join in with the lower classes. In industrialised areas workers were cautious about joining clubs formed by employers and tended to prefer their own.⁵² Future social research into sport might try to establish which forms of sociability were distinctive to particular kinds of male groups. This would make a valuable contribution to the wider historical study of masculinity, which has developed gradually since the pioneering, if premature efforts at synthesis by Peter Stearns.⁵³

What is most needed is the reconstruction of the rituals of club life, the rites of passage from junior to adult membership, and the role of women as sisters, wives or mothers within clubs. For the club is the microcosm of gender relations within sport. This requires not only a more anthropological approach but access to source material which is rarely found in club histories or in sports newspapers but is still in the memories of old men and women. Recently researchers at the University of Nantes among others have begun to look at the male sporting group in this fashion.⁵⁴ A prominent anthropologist has studied male ritual, joking and rivalry among the contemporary football crowds of Marseilles with remarkable results.⁵⁵ The role of humor is central to male sporting behaviour and still little known. Sadly, the world of the male sporting club of the later nineteenth and early twentieth centuries cannot now be explored that way, although there is still time to study interwar male and female clubs through oral history. What can be done is to piece together the scattered and forgotten accounts of sporting life from the explicit perspective of gender so as to put some flesh on the bones of the medical and patriotic tracts which sought to lay down how sport might determine what it was to be a man or a woman in the Belle Epoque.

52. Amaud, *Les Athlètes de la République* summarized in Holt, "Ideology and Sociability," pp. 373-75.

53. P. Stearns, *Be a Man; Males in Modern Society* (New York 1979); J. A. Mangan and J. Walvin (eds.), *Manliness and Morality* (London 1986); the historical study of the forms of French masculinity as a cultural construction has not yet begun in earnest.

54. J-M. Faure, *Le Sport et la culture populaire: pratiques et spectacles sportifs dans la culture populaire*, Cahiers du LERSCO, no. 12, March 1990, Univ. de Nantes/CNRS.

55. C. Bromberger, A. Hayot, J-M. Mariottini, "Allez L'O.M. ! Forza Juve ! La passion pour le football à Marseille et Turin," *Terrain: Carnets du Patrimoine ethnologique*, no. 8.

Women, Men and Sport in France, c. 1870-1914: An Introductory Survey

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The study of gender as a factor in the development of sport in France is still in its infancy. This applies particularly to female sport. The substantial body of recent research on the history of sport in France, though rarely devoted to questions of masculine identity *per se*, provides a reasonable basis upon which to judge the extent, structure and ideology of male involvement. In this sense the study of sport in France is rapidly catching up with what has been taking place in the United States, Canada, Australia and Great Britain. However, as yet there is no body of work on female involvement in sport whether in terms of medical/scientific discourse, education, feminism or racial and nationalist ideology which can compare to the volume and quality of research which has appeared in North America and in Britain. Hence this survey will concentrate primarily on the origins of modern female sporting activity and the obstacles which men placed in the way of those limited number of women who made an effort to participate in organised exercise. A shorter section on forms of masculine identity and sociability, which can quite readily be studied elsewhere, will follow, mainly in order to underline the interdependency of gender roles.

The history of French women has not attracted the same attention from French historians that women's history has generated in the United States. In spite of the prominence given to gender in Theodore Zeldin's imaginative and influential general history of France, there are few major works on women; James Macmillan's solid survey of the condition of women around the turn of the century is an important synthesis and there have been valuable studies of, for example, elite education, the peasant family and specific occupational groups including prostitutes.¹ Amongst the female bourgeoisie's leisure activities there have been studies of shopping but not of sport, which is omitted entirely from Bonnie Smith's study of the wives and daughters of northern textile manufac-

1. T. Zeldin, *France 1848-1945*, vol. 1, *Ambition, Love and Politics* (Oxford 1973), vol. 2, *Intellect, Taste and Anxiety* (Oxford 1977); James Macmillan, *Housewife or Harlot: the social condition of women in France* (Brighton 1981) contains a good bibliography; Martine Segalen, *Love and Power in the Peasant Family*, trans. (Oxford 1986) gives the best account of rural women.

turers.² Political and social emancipation was a weak flower in France which lacked the strong Protestant middle class which seems to have been an important precondition in Britain, the United States and Germany. In France the Catholic Right required women to remain strictly wives and mothers whilst the Left feared female conservatism too much to promote emancipation. As Dorinda Outram recently noted:

The political culture of the French Revolution was constituted by the construction of images of masculinity and femininity which served to exclude all women and validate some men. As the nineteenth century progressed, scientific "facts" would increasingly be pressed into the service of maintaining the perceived differences between masculinity and femininity, until . . . feminists had to convince an unwilling public . . . that such differences were not "natural."³

Only a small number of feminists and a few other radical thinkers questioned this. Hence women's sport cannot be seen as partly the product of militant feminism challenging a male preserve. There are a few examples of sport as an analogue of emancipation but for the most part sports were used to enhance femininity and particularly natality. In a country obsessed by its demographic inferiority to its German neighbor, the possibilities of improving the numbers and physique of the next generation was the strongest and most widely accepted argument in favour of women's participation in sporting activity. Reformers in the world of physical education and sport for women tended to couch their arguments less in terms of rights than of duties. "La maternité l'exige" ("motherhood requires it") was a quotation chosen to preface Marie-Thérèse Eyquem's *La femme et le sport* (1944), the first serious work to appear on the subject.⁴ Each sex needed a proper amount and type of physical activity to fulfill their different possibilities and purposes. Similar activities should be adapted according to the sex of the participant to take account not merely of differences in physique but more importantly of manifest differences in character.

Making women tough and competitive was not the goal of women's sport. Significantly, on the rare occasions women took part in openly violent activities like boxing or wrestling, the purpose was the thinly veiled sexual gratification of the male audience. Half-naked girls from the Moulin Rouge might sometimes imitate men to amuse and excite a male audience by boxing or wrestling but this was very much the louche preserve of the Parisian "demi-monde." Female acrobats and circus performers were permitted, and even celebrated, but they most emphatically were not role-models of most French girls. All the same, this variety of female sporting spectacle is easily overlooked. One of the strengths of *Le Grande Livre du Sport Feminin* by F & S Laget and J-P Mazot, a large and profusely illustrated anecdotal history which is the nearest to a

2. Bonnie Smith, *Ladies of the Leisure Class: the Bourgeoises of Northern France in the Nineteenth Century* (Princeton 1981). I discuss this work in the context of the role of women in bourgeois culture in "Social History and Bourgeois Culture," *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 27 (October 1985): 713-26.

3. Dorinda Outram, *The Body in the French Revolution* (Yale UP 1989), pp. 154-55.

4. M-T Eyquem, *La femme et le sport* (Paris 1944), see preface.

general study of female sport in France to date, is that it rescues such performers from obscurity.⁵

Apart from this, there has been very little published. Two valuable articles on women's sports were published in the important collection of new research edited by Pierre Arnaud under the title *Les Athlètes de la République*;⁶ one provides a short survey of the origins of French women's sport whilst the other uses the presentation of sport in a major middle class women's magazine between 1902-04 as a means of explaining how outright hostility to female sport shifted towards a carefully qualified and limited approval. Innovative use of deconstructionist literary techniques permits a "reading" of the treatment of sport in terms of the wider cultural formation of the "ideal type" of bourgeois woman—elegant, dutiful and lively, and shows which sports and methods of playing them could enhance "true" femininity. Similarly, Georges Vigarello's recent *Histoire culturelle du sport: techniques d'hier et d'aujourd'hui* (1988) has a short section on gender stressing how "expert" opinion came to terms with the limited convergence of male and female activities by stressing the importance of modifying techniques to accommodate special female needs.⁷ Hence the moral and social opposition of the late nineteenth century gave way to a scientific caution which warned against overstraining the female body whilst accepting that certain forms of exercise were both necessary and desirable. The argument switched to what kinds of event and what sort of techniques were appropriate for women.

Of course, there was still a good deal of outright opposition to any form of female participation in competitive sport. The best example of this is the Baron de Coubertin, the founder of the modern Olympic Games. The recent three volume collection of his writings provides ample evidence. Coubertin opposed female involvement essentially because it was unnatural. "The role of woman in the world remains what it has always been," he wrote in 1901. "She is above all the companion of man, the future mother of a family, and she should be brought up with this fixed destiny in mind."⁸ For Coubertin women playing male sports was part of the wider demand for "equality" which, if unchecked, would lead to the collapse of (male) authority in the family and society as well as problems of public decency. Such fixed ideas played an important part in preventing women gaining access to athletics and limiting very severely their involvement in the Olympic movement before 1914.

5. F & S Laget & J-P Mazot, *Le Grand Livre du Sport Féminin* (Belleville sur Saone, FMT Editions, 1982) (hereinafter cited as Laget & Mazot, *Sport Féminin*).

6. P. Arnaud, *Les Athlètes de la République: gymnastique, sport et idéologie républicaine 1870-1914* (Toulouse, Editions Privat 1987) article 16, J. Thibault, "Les origines du sport féminins," and article 17, F. Labridy-Poncelet, "Imaginaires féminins et pratiques sportives; l'image de la femme bourgeoise et son usage des pratiques sportives: l'exemple de la revue *La femme française* (1902-1904)"

7. G. Vigarello, *Techniques d'hier et d'aujourd'hui* (Paris 1988), pp. 166-175; Vigarello is the author of important work on changing attitudes to health with significant bearing on gender relations, see esp. *Le propre et le sale: l'hygiène du corps depuis le moyen âge* (Paris 1985); also *Le corps redressé* (Paris 1977).

8. *Pierre de Coubertin, Textes Choisis*, vol. 1, ed. G. Rioux, (Zurich: International Olympic Committee, 1986), p. 261.

Yet female sport did develop. Though numerically insignificant, the success of sports amongst female members of the nobility, especially those who enjoyed the “le tout Paris”—the smart world of the salons, the Opera and Parisian high society—was very striking. Whether hunting with the Duchess d’Uzes, the first female master of hounds in France, or shooting with the Princess Marie Ghika, or simply riding in the Bois de Boulogne to show off one’s social position, female members of the nobility displayed little of the reticence of their bourgeois sisters when it came to physical activity. Partly this was simply because noble women, by virtue of their family wealth and position, had always been more independent of men than other women; hence the convention by which husband and wife sometimes led more or less separate lives after the succession was established by the birth of children. Baron de Vaux’s *Les femmes du sport* provides sporting portraits of these “amazones,” of which 24 came from the ranks of the aristocracy and only two from the bourgeoisie, a survey of attitudes to “the modern woman” carried out in 1900 by the *Revue des revues* underlined the fact that the nobility laid significantly less stress than the bourgeoisie on the duty of domestic management.⁹ The idea of “prowess” applied to a certain extent to noble women as well as to men. It was important to show spirit; to be courageous and stylish. Not many bourgeois women, for instance, took up driving motor cars with the furious enthusiasm of the duchesse d’Uzes who, unstoppable to the end, founded the Automobile Club féminin de France in 1926 along with the duchesse de Grammont and the baronne Henri de Rothschild. Though very few followed noble women into hunting or shooting, many more were impressed by their enthusiasm for the bicycle in the 1890s. For it was the bicycle which really began female sport in earnest in France.¹⁰

Eugen Weber has outlined the controversy this caused in terms of arguments about proper dress and fears of girls getting far too much freedom.¹¹ Alongside these quite well-known controversies, there developed a more specific medical debate about the dangers of the bicycle for the female anatomy. In 1894 a survey of 48 doctors by the Faculty of Medicine revealed that 39 of them thought that cycling which involved moderate distances and effort was not harmful to women.¹² The dangers of a more active kind of cycling were taken seriously enough for the recently formed Touring Club de France, which was set up to promote the use of the bicycle for recreation and holidays, to hold a special discussion in 1895 on the question of the effect of the bicycle on the female reproductive system.¹³ An array of medial experts and others—all men—gave their views on what became almost a fashionable topic of conversation. Some

9. Baron de Vaux, *Les femmes du sport* (Paris 1885). For an important analysis of noble sportswomen see, Monique de Saint Martin, “La noblesse et les ‘sports’ nobles,” in *Acte de la Recherche en Sciences Sociales*, no. 80, Nov. 1989, 22-32.

10. Laget & Mazot, *Sport Féminin*, pp. 128, 130.

11. E. Weber, *France Fin de Siècle* (Cambridge, Mass., 1987), esp. chap. 10, pp. 202-3.

12. C. Pasteur, *Les femmes et la bicyclette à la belle époque* (Paris 1896) is specifically devoted to exhuming these arguments, reprinting long quotations from the ‘experts’ concerned, esp. part 2, pp. 65-88; this work also covers debates over dress and is useful if lightweight. For a contemporary account see C. de Loris, *La femme et la bicyclette* (Paris 1896).

13. Pasteur, *Les femmes et la bicyclette*; see also Dr. L. Petit, *Dix ans du Touring Club* (Paris 1904), ch. 1.

thought that a long period in the saddle would damage the internal reproductive organs whilst others thought that women who stayed indoors were more likely to be fertile than those who liked fresh air. The majority, however, favoured gentle exercise and some even claimed recreational cycling would increase the birthrate by stimulating the body and the sexual drive. As recent research has stressed, much “scientific” opinion in relation to women was often nothing more than a thin rationalisation of fears and prejudices, frequently speculative and sometimes more the product of male fantasy than anything else.¹⁴

A similar undertone saturated in sexual innuendo is evident in the arguments about “rational dress” for cycling. Female critics of “bloomers” were concerned that women would lose their “femininity” in the sense of their grace and elegance; a male society journalist for the smart *La Vie Parisienne* called them “ugly and ridiculous.”¹⁵ Men were concerned that women would either lose sex appeal or, conversely, that they as men would lose control of their own wives and daughters. The cycling issue was a kind of prism in which the whole gamut of men’s attitudes towards women was put on display. Many men could only conceive of female cyclists as either sexless athletic spinsters or, as was frequently portrayed in the posters of the period, half-naked, voluptuous and, by implication, sexually available. It was yet another example of the madonna/mistress syndrome whereby women were either pure daughters and mothers or “fallen” women and fair game. Some men were even fascinated by the possibilities of the bicycle itself for sexual stimulation. Doctors disagreed about whether the riding of a bicycle could lead to masturbation. A leading clinician published a refutation of this view in *La France Médicale* in 1894. No innocent girl could accidentally masturbate by riding a bicycle, he argued, but it was possible for a woman to press against the saddle in such a way that she could deliberately sexually stimulate herself.¹⁶ Girls, therefore, could not just ride their bikes for the fun of it. Their enthusiasm for riding was drawn into a kind of medical and moral discourse obsessed with the sexual implications of physical activity for women.

All of this was far removed from the feminist ideal of greater individual freedom and shared recreation. Some of the strongest support from women for cycling came from those who wished to promote mixed activities. Women would become the friends of men and wives would be true partners, sharing the joys and difficulties of the open road together. Whether this actually took place is hard to say. In fact, the extent to which women took up cycling may have been much exaggerated by the furor which arose over the sight of fashionable women riding around the Bois de Boulogne. The tax figures do not distinguish between

14. J. A. Mangan, & R. J. Park, *From Fair Sex to Feminism: sport and the socialisation of women in the industrial and post-industrial era* (London 1987) contains several good discussions of pseudo science; see also, P. Vertinsky, “Escape to Freedom : G. Stanley Hall’s Totalitarian Views on Female Health and Physical Education,” *International Journal of the History of Sport* 5 (May 1988) : 69-95. Similar work on France is overdue despite the influence of Foucault on the study of the socio-cultural assumptions behind scientific discourse; see also Vigarelli, *Techniques d’hier*, n. 7.

15. Laget & Mazot, *Sport Féminin*, p. 289.

16. Pasteur, *Les femmes et la bicyclette*, pp. 73-8.

male and female permit holders and so it is not possible to get an exact idea of the number of women who rode. The Touring Club had only 14 women members out of a total of 1,138 applicants in its founding year of 1891 and the proportion does not seem to have increased dramatically thereafter.¹⁷ A survey of cyclists leaving Paris on a summer's day in 1893 counted only 192 women out of a total of 5,653.¹⁸ What we need to know is how many women took up cycling after it ceased to be chic and when it began to become more affordable around the turn of the century.¹⁹

Significantly, the first women's sporting events devised as spectator entertainment were cycling contests. The top male riders were predictably dismissive talking of women competitors as "acrobats" and the races as "ridiculous masquerades."²⁰ The first women's races seem to have taken place in the north of France in 1890 but it was not until the *Echo de Paris* sponsored a one hour race between two prominent actresses in 1893 that the vogue for women's racing began to attract crowds at the velodromes of Paris. Here such riders as Helene Dutrieu, who also rode in marathon tandem races with her brother, and Amélie le Gall, competed for the title of female Champion of the World. Just as track racing, which was monotonous and open to bribery, declined for men, so it also seems to have done for women. Women did not compete in the major road races which were considered far too demanding despite the fact a woman succeeded in completing the course of the Tour de France in 1908. In 1912 the Union Vélocipedique de France in fact banned women from all competition.²¹ Despite a few early successes, it seemed as if the cause of women's spectator sport had not been established.

This was certainly true of other activities, notably athletics. The most famous pre-war women's sporting event, in the sense of the publicity it attracted, was "La Marche des Midinettes," a race from the Tuileries Gardens in the heart of Paris to the suburb of Nanterre for the working girls of Paris. The event, which attracted 2500 entrants, some of whom stopped at cafes for alcoholic stimulation, drew large crowds. The winner, a milliner who arrived in front of two seamstresses, covered the twelve kilometres in one hour ten minutes. Appropriately, as a prize she was given a contract to appear in vaudeville at the Olympia.²² Women's spectator sport was still seen as an eccentric extension of the music hall. To opponents of women's sport like de Coubertin this race, in which the participants finished "sweating, dishevelled and on the point of collapse" and where the interest of many men seemed more voyeuristic than anything else, was proof of the unsuitability of women for serious competitive sport.²³ What men seem to have found especially difficult to accept was that

17. R. Holt, "The Bicycle, the Bourgeoisie and the discovery of rural France 1880-1914," *British Journal of Sports History* 2 (Sept. 1985): 129-30.

18. *Ibid.*

19. For a general discussion of cycling as a competitive activity, see R. Hoit, *Sport and Society in Modern France* (London 1981), ch. 5.

20. Laget & Mazot, *Sport Féminin*, p. 290.

21. *Ibid.* pp. 196-99.

22. *Ibid.* pp. 52-4.

23. Eyquem, *La femme et le sport*, p. 24.

women could suffer to win. Suffering, it seemed, was a male preserve—something about which any woman who had given birth might reasonably have a very different view—and part of the proof of masculinity was the ability to endure pain and exhaustion. To see women voluntarily submitting themselves to such challenges undermined the rationale of masculinity.

The most important sources of support for women's sports came from two very different directions: the first not surprisingly was linked to the overriding concern of nationalists of various kinds for the future of the race, which was expressed in a qualified support for female gymnastics and later, and to a lesser extent, athletics; the second arose from the sociable requirements of elite society, especially the need to permit a supervised and socially regulated mixing of the sexes for courtship either in the family home or on holiday, which explains the prominence of tennis. Women, in other words, made headway in these activities because they were working within rather than against the dominant system of social and political values.

Gymnastics for women had been raised as an issue in the early nineteenth century, especially in relation to the remedial possibilities of exercise. A treatise on *Gymnastique des demoiselles* published in 1828 made an early step in bridging the gap between male and female. There were exercises for boys which when adapted could enhance “the shining moral qualities which distinguish the good and caring woman; we want to keep her sense of grace, her freshness, her soft and delicate manners whilst adding to them greater strength and vigour, and more suppleness and dexterity.”²⁴ The first all-female gymnasium appears to have been opened in Paris in 1829 and it seems that segregated and restricted gymnastic exercise was available to bourgeois and upper class girls in a limited way thereafter. In 1903 there was a request for a separate chair of female physical education at the prestigious College de France by a feminist group. Whilst predictably this came to nothing there are indications that programmes of dance and exercise were becoming more widespread amongst the middle classes.²⁵ This awaits further research. Gym also was seen as a means of combatting frailty and the ubiquitous fear of nervous “hysteria”—a kind of weakness and anxiety prevalent amongst bourgeois women which was a major concern of early psychiatrists.

In the later nineteenth century concern for national regeneration through improvement of the race took over as the main stimulus for female exercise. The ideological motives that underpinned the growth of a large gymnastic movement for men had an impact on women too. Around the turn of the century a few gymnastic clubs began to form special sections for women. In 1898 a teachers' association formed a women's group at the Gymnase Voltaire and in 1900 the Enfants du Havre accepted women and others followed their example. In 1905

24. Cited in Vigarello, *Techniques d'hier*, pp. 166-67.

25. The standard histories of physical education provide little information, see F. Legrand & J. Ladegaillerie, *L'Education Physique au XIX et XXe Siècle*. vol. 1, (Paris 1970), pp. 135-42; J. Ulmann, *De la gymnastique au sports modernes* (Paris 1971) and J. Thibault, *Sports et education physique* (Paris 1972) do not discuss female developments nor specific gender identities.

women gymnasts made their first appearance at a national gymnastic festival.²⁶ Women were cautiously being accepted into the world of male gymnastics with its emphasis on German-style exercise rather than the agility stressed by the Swedish school. The extent to which women's gym developed within either the state-subsidised gymnastic union or within the large rival Catholic grouping is unclear but there were no separate female gymnastic clubs until 1909. In 1912 a separate female gymnastic organisation was set up, the Union française de gymnastique féminine, in Lyon by a Madame Ludin with the support of her husband, an open air enthusiast. This organization began with only six clubs but, when it held its first national congress at Deauville in 1913, 23 clubs were represented including several from abroad. It seems the membership of these women's clubs was drawn from the ranks of the lower middle classes-shop assistants, clerks and minor officials as well as teachers-which marks an important departure from the exclusive world of the upper class huntswoman, fencer or tennis player.²⁷

Women's athletics, in fact, developed not out of the male athletics clubs, which seem to have opposed women's sport but as an offshoot of the growth of gymnastics. A leading Parisian gymnastic club, En Avant, set up a women's section named Femina Sport which offered its members basic track and field events alongside gym for an annual membership fee of 12 francs a year. Three years later the first entirely independent female athletics club was set up after the initiative of a male journalist, Gustave de Lafrete, who organized a female athletics meeting in the Stade Briancon on 2 May 1915.²⁸ The new club was called Academia in "gratitude to Plato, who in his Laws proclaimed the same obligations for women as for men in protecting the city-state."²⁹ Perhaps this neo-hellenist touch was also designed to appeal to the classical influence on male athletics embodied in the vision of Coubertin but the main factor seems to have been the Great War. France was holding the Germans at the Somme with the help of the British. The sense of national peril produced a surge of patriotism which may have persuaded educated Frenchwomen to take up sport as part of a wider ideological drive for national efficiency. Academia was presided over by the formidable Duchess d'Uzes, the slayer of 1200 stags, with the declared intention of "purifying and beautifying the woman in order to beautify and purify the race."³⁰ Out of Academia came first a national body for women's athletics in France, the Federation des sociétés françaises des sports féminins (FSFSF) in 1916.

Here a key personality emerges who was to shape the future development of women's sport and whose career has been usefully discussed in an earlier issue of this journal.³¹ Alice Milliat was born in 1884 into a bourgeois family; she was

26. J. Thibault, "Origines du sport féminin," in P. Amaud, *Athlètes de la République*, pp. 336-37.

27. Laget & Mazot, *Sport Féminin*, pp. 63-4.

28. Thibault, "Origines du sport féminin," pp. 337-38.

29. M. H. Leigh & T. M. Bonin, "The pioneering role of Madame Alice Milliat and the FSFI in establishing international track and field competition for women," *Journal of Sport History* 4 (Spring 1977): 74.

30. Eyquem, *La femme et le sport*, p. 21.

31. See note 29.

well-educated, a good linguist and briefly married to an Englishman before his premature death widowed her and left her childless and free to devote herself to the cause of women's sport. She began by taking up rowing with Femina Sport and soon became club treasurer; she was a dedicated and uncompromising figure who by 1920 had become president of the recently formed FSFSF. From this position she challenged the Olympic movement to admit women to a far wider range of events than the tennis, swimming and skating that were then permitted. When this was refused she took on the male establishment by setting up a rival international women's sports body under the title of the Federation Sportive Feminine Internationale in October, 1921, Our concern is not so much with the complex interwar personality and institutional struggles that ensued, but with the fact that women's sport was at last moving into the realm of formal organisation.

The growth of female participation in various forms of sport between the wars is probably the most important topic which awaits its researcher. By the time of the Popular Front's program to "democratise leisure" and the new fashion for discovering the countryside by hiking in the later 1930s there had clearly been some change in the social composition of sportswomen with a shift away from middle and upper class dominance, although the picture still remains unclear. A few women's football and rugby teams came to nothing after the initial scandal they caused in the early 1920s. In 1921 Suzanne Werth, France's first famous woman swimmer, complained of the lack of facilities for women's competitive swimming despite the success of swimming as a resort activity.³² It may be that it was the reactionary and patriarchal regime of Vichy which paradoxically did most for the provision of female sport as part of its semi-fascist ideology of exercise and effort. It would certainly be interesting to know more.³³

The one area where there was sustained growth pre- and post-war both at the level of participation and in terms of spectatorship was tennis. France, after all, had produced the first international tennis star, Suzanne Lenglen, who reached the final of the French national championship in 1914 at the age of fifteen and became the leading woman player in the world after the war. She won Wimbledon each year from 1919 to 1925 before trying to capitalise on her fame by turning professional in the United States and even toying with a film career. More than any other woman Lenglen embodied the possibilities of competitive sport for women; her graceful play was justly famous but she was also a hard hitter of the ball at a time when the drive shot was still not considered really feminine. She was a fierce and temperamental competitor with a desperate need to win. She was a prototype of the contemporary star and it would be interesting to know the extent to which she acted as a role model for subsequent generations of serious sportswomen in France.³⁴

32. Laget & Mazot, *Sport Feminin*, p. 373.

33. Eyquem's *La femme et le sport* claimed significant growth in the number of sportswomen after 1939; however, it was written during Vichy and may not be unbiased.

34. Holt, *Sport and Society in Modern France*, pp. 178-79; Larry Englemann, *The Goddess and the American Girl: The Story of Suzanne Lenglen and Helen Wills* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988).

The early success of tennis in France had little to do with outstanding competitors or spectator events. It was linked with elite tourism and sociability. Tennis was a leisure activity par excellence. Tennis courts were built in the leading resorts, at Deauville and Monte Carlo for example, by hoteliers anxious to attract the sporting British. An English survey of international tennis published in 1903 praised the range of facilities, noting that "although very many French ladies play tennis, there are but few good players amongst them."³⁵ This was hardly surprising in the sense that girls were expected to play tennis not so much as a competitive sport but as a pleasant recreation in the company of suitable young men. The young Marcel Proust, son of one of France's most famous doctors, attended tennis matches patronised by the social elite. The late nineteenth century saw the formation of the Ile de Puteaux club in Paris by the vicomte de Janze; in Bordeaux there was the Villa Primrose and in Lyon the Tennis Club de Lyon.³⁶ All these clubs were extremely exclusive charging very high entrance fees. Girls were expected to dress elegantly; the emphasis on female fashion was central to the purpose of these clubs which was to provide an environment where social and perhaps marital connections could be made within the elites of birth and wealth, whilst providing at the same time entertainment for the growing numbers of men and women whose style of life was underpinned by the massive growth of the international economy in the nineteenth century. This was the age of the "rentier," the person who lived comfortably off his or her shares with cheap domestic help and without the inflation which ravaged some post-war bourgeois families. What began, however, as a series of private parties grew into a more organized and competitive activity which attracted substantial crowds. Competitions became part of the social calendar. Tennis, therefore, because of its social value to the elite established in France as in Britain a unique position as the only modern sporting activity in which women could compete either with each other or with men in mixed games.³⁷

Although gender roles and expectations in sport are most explicit in the treatment of women, they also clearly had a profound impact on men. Indeed the whole concept of gender suggests that sexual identities were interdependent; men could only be strong if women were weak, and so on, each stereotype interlocking with the other in a kind of self-reinforcing cycle. In fact, it was the threat to established distinctions between the sexes that lay behind much of the hostile male reaction. As Coubertin had said, "the role of women was to crown the victor's brow with laurels."³⁸ In this sense sport involves a kind of display of prowess which was unique to men. If women undertook the same kind of

35. A. Wallis Myers, *Lawn Tennis at Home and Abroad* (London 1903), p. 264.

36. Thibault, "Origines du sport féminin," pp. 334-35; Halt, *Sport and Society in modern France*, pp. 177-78.

37. Jennifer Hargreaves, "Playing like Gentlemen while behaving like Ladies," *British Journal of Sports History* 2 (May 1985), esp. 42-43. The importance of tennis has also been recognized by Eric Hobsbawm, "Mass Producing Traditions," in E. Hobsbawm & T. Ranger, *The Invention of Tradition* (Cambridge 1983), pp. 289-300; see also, R. Halt, *Sport and the British: a modern history* (Oxford 1989), pp. 125-28.

38. Cited in L. Callebat, *Pierre de Coubertin* (Paris 1988), p. 191.

activities, how could men be distinctive? This gender identity dimension of sporting activity has not been much studied *per se* and there is virtually no published historical research specifically devoted to the way in which sport helped to construct male identity. However, this subject can be approached with some success from an oblique angle via such topics as sociability and nationalism, which are the twin axes around which much of the recent research on French sport has revolved.³⁹ In addition, although there is no explicit study of male socialisation through sport, we do have the magisterial doctoral thesis on sport, schooling and republicanism recently produced by Pierre Arnaud, that contains material on male socialisation as part of a wider discussion of sport as vehicle for political ideology.⁴⁰

Looking at sport as a provider of male identity, the inculcating of combativeness and patriotism through the gymnastics movement is inescapable. Gymnastics were supposed to turn puny or cerebral boys into men whose very manliness resided in the fact they spent their spare time preparing themselves physically and emotionally for the Darwinian struggle and, if necessary, for the ultimate sacrifice in the name of patriotism. Exercise was for many an explicitly paramilitary activity designed to secure “Revanche” (revenge) for the defeat of France by Prussia in 1870-71. The discourse of militant nationalism provides abundant material for the definition of masculinity through sport. According to the rhetoric of the Union des Sociétés de Gymnastique de France the explicit purpose of gym was to produce “men” in the sense of fighting men. “Faites moi des hommes, nous en ferons des soldats” (“Provide us with the men and we will turn them into soldiers”) were the precise words of General Chanzy which the Republican gymnasts took as their motto. The rival Catholic federation were equally committed to using exercise as a way of developing male youth into a disciplined, patriotic, martial force.⁴¹

Eugen Weber opened up this area with his pioneering article on Gymnastics and Sports in Fin-de-Siècle France which appeared twenty years ago.⁴² It is possible to tease out of Weber’s seminal analysis of the competition between essentially German gymnastics and English sports as competing sources of national regeneration rather different ideals of how masculinity is constructed and of what it ought to consist. To the gymnasts masculinity was inherently militaristic. They followed the German style of gym which stressed strength, discipline and patriotism. Being ready and able to fight for France was the first duty and prime characteristic of a Frenchman. The 1880s saw a systematic attempt to promote militarism in schools by the setting up of “school battalions”

39. For a review of this work see R. Holt, “Ideology and Sociability: a review of new research into the history of sport under the early Third Republic,” *International Journal of the History of Sport* 6 (Dec. 1989): 368-77; I have developed my own views on male sociability through sport at greater length in *Sport and Society in Modern France*, ch. 8.

40. P. Arnaud, *Le Sportman, l’écolier, le gymnaste : le mise en forme scolaire de la culture physique*, Univ. of Lyon, 1986, to be published in 1990/1 by Presses Universitaires de Lyon.

41. R. Holt, *Sport and Society in Modern France*, ch. 3.

42. E. Weber, “Gymnastics and Sport in fin-de-siècle France: opium of the classes,” *American Historical Review* 76 (Feb. 1971): 70-98; this is a pioneering and crucial article which anyone approaching the topic should read.

which involved male children marching up and down drilling with wooden rifles. Pierre Arnaud's indispensable collection of articles on sport and republicanism, *Les Athlètes de la République*, contains several extremely detailed studies of this movement.⁴³ Research has tended, however, to gloss over the specific gender assumptions of the organisers, mostly middle class and often doctors, about what being a man was supposed to mean, preferring to concentrate on the strategies and rivalries of the major associations involved. Hence there are studies of the competition between Catholic and anti-clerical clubs to attract young men but not much on the kind of masculinity these organisations fostered.

With around one-third of the five thousand clubs a year which were formed in France between 1900 and 1910 being connected with sport, it could plausibly be argued that sports clubs were the largest single source of male socialisation through voluntary association.⁴⁴ However, it would probably be a mistake to assume that the same kinds of masculinity were being promoted across the board. Here Weber's distinction between gymnasts and sportsmen is crucial, i.e., gymnastics as a source of military revival through group strength and cohesion and the "Anglo-Saxon" athletic sports which stressed individual initiative, good temper in defeat and not taking unfair advantages in order to win. There was an "officers" and "men" element in this. Anglo-Saxon sports were initially confined to the social elite whilst gymnastics drew a fair number of lower class urban youths. Gymnastics stressed obedience, precision and organisation whilst the Anglo-Saxon sports carried with them the moral philosophy of "fair play." Sport was not simply meant to turn a boy into a strong, patriotic man who obeyed orders but to promote honesty, self-control and individual initiative combined with a respect for team effort. A sportsman was supposed to become a "gentleman."⁴⁵

These were the kind of virtues which de Coubertin claimed he saw in the British system and which he and others tried to implant in France. The adaptation of this ethic to French conditions has been cleverly analysed by MacAloon. He stresses Coubertin's efforts to establish a new kind of elite male culture based upon the concept of "prouesse," which he defines as the achievement of honour through action in noble culture.⁴⁶ Coubertin admired the British elite schools and universities for fostering a new gentlemanly ethic amongst the old elite of land and the new elite of money. Sport was at the heart of the new "manliness" and thus partly responsible for the solidarity, stability and imperial success of the British. By 1914 the sports movement had overtaken gymnastics as the largest single provider of competitive exercise and under the aegis of the

43. Arnaud, *Les Athlètes de la République*, esp. articles by A. Bourzac and P. Arnaud, pp. 27-86.

44. P. Arnaud, "La sociabilité sportive," in *ibid.*, pp. 359-79.

45. Weber, "Gymnastics and Sports"; see also Holt, *Sport and Society in Modern France*, ch. 4; see also note 46 below.

46. J. J. MacAloon, *This Great Symbol: Pierre de Coubertin and the origins of the modern Olympic Games* (Chicago 1981) esp. pp. 14-17 of what is a most sophisticated work; the link between the ideology of athleticism as discussed by J. A. Mangan and others and the concept of 'prouesse' seems important and worth pursuing at length in terms of the changing ideals of 'gentlemanly' conduct. Chapter 3 of MacAloon's study provides the basis for such a synthesis ("The Vision at Rugby Chapel").

Union des Sociétés Françaises des Sports Athlétiques it fostered the ideal of physical and moral character-building through amateurism and fairplay. France had its “gentlemen amateurs” and “le fairplay” became a commonly used term. However, when considering this influence one must bear in mind the more recent work of Tony Mangan which has stressed the degree to which high-sounding ideals of fairplay could act as a cover for a code of aggression, racism and conquest based upon a crude Darwinism and the overwhelming power of imperialism.⁴⁷

It is, of course, easy to generalise about forms of male socialisation when working at the level of propaganda. In other words, we know what the leaders of the gymnastic movement or the proponents of athleticism wanted young men to be like; what we do not know is what they made of the lessons in socialization they received. As the extensive body of research into the social history of the nineteenth century British working classes has established, there was a huge gap between intention and effect.⁴⁸ The desire to control and form the characters of the young was one thing, the actual degree to which this was possible was another. In my own work on the gymnastics movement in France I came to the conclusion that members may have had very different priorities and values than the leadership.⁴⁹ What masculinity meant to the rank and file probably had more to do with friendship, drinking and having fun than with concepts of militarism or honour. Indeed it could be argued that such ideals could only be assimilated within the pre-existing framework of a sociable male group. Sport, then, was first and foremost an arena in which men could be separate from women and enjoy their own company.

Here the history of sport and masculinity fortunately flows into the wider currents of historical research. Male sociability has been a major theme in modern French social history ever since Maurice Agulhon used the forms of male fraternity to help explain the eventual triumph of republican democracy in nineteenth century France.⁵⁰ The idea of sociability, therefore, was placed on the thematic agenda in the 1970s and has had a considerable influence on the research agenda of sports history in France. Sociability provided the theme of the first issue of *Sport Histoire*, a recent French journal on the history of sport, which contains a preface by Agulhon;⁵¹ it also provided a crucial element in the two recent collections of new research, *Les Athlètes de la République* and *La naissance du mouvement sportif associatif en France*. What emerges here is that eating, drinking, making speeches, organising concerts, going on picnics and the like made up a very significant proportion of the activities of sports

47. J. A. Mangan brings out the aggressive and racist value of amateur elite *sport* in *The Games Ethic and Imperialism* (London 1986) and in “The grit of our forefathers: invented traditions, propaganda and imperialism,” in J. M. Mackenzie, *Imperialism and Popular Culture* (London 1986), pp. 113-39.

48. For a full discussion see F. M. L. Thompson, *The rise of respectable society* (London 1988); also Holt, *Sport and the British*, pp. 136-48.

49. Holt, *Sport and Society in Modern France*, ch. 3.

50. M. Agulhon, *La République au village* (Paris 1970); also *Le Cercle dans la France bourgeoise, 1810-1848: étude d'une mutation de sociabilité* (Paris 1977).

51. *Sport Histoire: revue internationale des sports et des jeux*, 1988, 1, and P. Arnaud and J. Camy, *La naissance du mouvement sportif associatif en France* (Lyon 1986).

clubs. Even attending funerals, which some clubs took very seriously, involved a kind of male sociability. Of course, the forms and the content of such sociable activities varied considerably according to the status of members and the kind of communities they belonged to. Work on the structure of clubs stresses the advance of urban over rural areas and tends to reinforce the view that there was relatively little social mixing within the male group. The bourgeoisie were prominent as honorary members but did not join in with the lower classes. In industrialised areas workers were cautious about joining clubs formed by employers and tended to prefer their own.⁵² Future social research into sport might try to establish which forms of sociability were distinctive to particular kinds of male groups. This would make a valuable contribution to the wider historical study of masculinity, which has developed gradually since the pioneering, if premature efforts at synthesis by Peter Stearns.⁵³

What is most needed is the reconstruction of the rituals of club life, the rites of passage from junior to adult membership, and the role of women as sisters, wives or mothers within clubs. For the club is the microcosm of gender relations within sport. This requires not only a more anthropological approach but access to source material which is rarely found in club histories or in sports newspapers but is still in the memories of old men and women. Recently researchers at the University of Nantes among others have begun to look at the male sporting group in this fashion.⁵⁴ A prominent anthropologist has studied male ritual, joking and rivalry among the contemporary football crowds of Marseilles with remarkable results.⁵⁵ The role of humor is central to male sporting behaviour and still little known. Sadly, the world of the male sporting club of the later nineteenth and early twentieth centuries cannot now be explored that way, although there is still time to study interwar male and female clubs through oral history. What can be done is to piece together the scattered and forgotten accounts of sporting life from the explicit perspective of gender so as to put some flesh on the bones of the medical and patriotic tracts which sought to lay down how sport might determine what it was to be a man or a woman in the Belle Epoque.

52. Amaud, *Les Athlètes de la République* summarized in Holt, "Ideology and Sociability," pp. 373-75.

53. P. Stearns, *Be a Man; Males in Modern Society* (New York 1979); J. A. Mangan and J. Walvin (eds.), *Manliness and Morality* (London 1986); the historical study of the forms of French masculinity as a cultural construction has not yet begun in earnest.

54. J-M. Faure, *Le Sport et la culture populaire: pratiques et spectacles sportifs dans la culture populaire*, Cahiers du LERSCO, no. 12, March 1990, Univ. de Nantes/CNRS.

55. C. Bromberger, A. Hayot, J-M. Mariottini, "Allez L'O.M. ! Forza Juve ! La passion pour le football à Marseille et Turin," *Terrain: Carnets du Patrimoine ethnologique*, no. 8.