

Cambridge University Press
978-0-521-46626-4 - French Bourgeois Culture
Beatrix Le Wita
Frontmatter
[More information](#)

The French gave us the term 'bourgeois', and then proceeded to argue endlessly about what it meant – 'of or pertaining to the French middle classes', according to the OED. But it is not a simple matter of social class. Béatrix Le Wita sets out to demonstrate that to be bourgeois one must master a system of words, gestures and objects that define a way of life, a particular culture. This requires the exercise of self-control and the ritualisation of daily routines. The bourgeoisie must furnish their rooms in just the right way, dress just so, tactfully invoke family history and custom. This witty, observant ethnography decodes the culture that dominates France.

Cambridge University Press
978-0-521-46626-4 - French Bourgeois Culture
Beatrix Le Wita
Frontmatter
[More information](#)

Cet ouvrage est publié dans le cadre de l'accord de co-édition passé en 1977 entre la Fondation de la Maison des Sciences de l'Homme et le Press Syndicate of the University of Cambridge. Toutes les langues européennes sont admises pour les titres couverts par cet accord, et les ouvrages collectifs peuvent paraître en plusieurs langues.

Les ouvrages paraissent soit isolément, soit dans l'une des séries que la Maison des Sciences de l'Homme et Cambridge University Press ont convenu de publier ensemble. La distribution dans le monde entier des titres ainsi publiés conjointement par les deux établissements est assurée par Cambridge University Press.

This book is published as part of the joint publishing agreement established in 1977 between the Fondation de la Maison des Sciences de l'Homme and the Press Syndicate of the University of Cambridge. Titles published under this arrangement may appear in any European language or, in the case of volumes of collected essays, in several languages.

New books will appear either as individual titles or in one of the series which the Maison des Sciences de l'Homme and Cambridge University Press have jointly agreed to publish. All books published jointly by the Maison des Sciences de l'Homme and Cambridge University Press will be distributed by the Press throughout the world.

Cambridge University Press
978-0-521-46626-4 - French Bourgeois Culture
Beatrix Le Wita
Frontmatter
[More information](#)

FRENCH BOURGEOIS CULTURE

Cambridge University Press
978-0-521-46626-4 - French Bourgeois Culture
Beatrix Le Wita
Frontmatter
[More information](#)

The collection *Social anthropology of France* publishes research undertaken in the study of French society and culture under the patronage of the Mission du Patrimoine Ethnologique of the French Ministry of Culture and Francophony.

Funding for the English translation of this book was made available through a grant from the French Ministry of Culture and Francophony.

Cambridge University Press
978-0-521-46626-4 - French Bourgeois Culture
Beatrix Le Wita
Frontmatter
[More information](#)

FRENCH BOURGEOIS CULTURE

Béatrix Le Wita

TRANSLATED FROM THE FRENCH BY
J. A. Underwood



EDITIONS DE
LA MAISON DES SCIENCES DE L'HOMME
PARIS

Cambridge University Press
 978-0-521-46626-4 - French Bourgeois Culture
 Beatrix Le Wita
 Frontmatter
[More information](#)

Published by the Press Syndicate of the University of Cambridge
 The Pitt Building, Trumpington Street, Cambridge CB2 1RP
 40 West 20th Street, New York, NY 10011-4211, USA
 10 Stamford Road, Oakleigh, Melbourne 3166, Australia
 and Editions de la Maison des Sciences de l'Homme
 54 Boulevard Raspail, 75270 Paris Cedex 06

Originally published in French as *Ni vue ni connue: approche ethnographique de la culture bourgeoise*
 by Fondation de la Maison des Sciences de l'Homme, Paris 1988
 and © Fondation de la Maison des Sciences de l'Homme

First published in English by Editions de la Maison des Sciences de l'Homme and
 Cambridge University Press 1994 as *French bourgeois culture*

English translation © Fondation de la Maison des Sciences de l'Homme and Cambridge
 University Press 1994

Printed in Great Britain by Bell and Bain Ltd., Glasgow

A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library

Library of Congress cataloguing in publication data

Le Wita, Béatrix.

[Ni vue ni connue.]

French bourgeois culture / Béatrix Le Wita; translated from the
 French by J. A. Underwood.
 p. cm.

Includes bibliographical references and index.

ISBN 0 521 44099 8. ISBN 0 521 46626 1 (pbk.)

1. National characteristics, French. 2. Middle classes – France –
 Social life and customs. I. Title.

DC34.L4 1994

944-dc20 93-29766 CIP

ISBN 0 521 44099 8 hardback

ISBN 0 521 46626 1 paperback

ISBN 2 7351 0575 X hardback (France only)

ISBN 2 7351 0576 8 paperback (France only)

CONTENTS

	<i>List of illustrations</i>	<i>page ix</i>
	Introduction	I
1	The investigation	8
2	Definition by defamation	23
3	The making of Laure	62
4	The parable of the talents	98
5	The three generations	118
	Conclusion	141
	Appendix	143
	<i>References</i>	162
	<i>Index</i>	165

ILLUSTRATIONS

1	The silverware	<i>page</i> 3
2	The ducks	4
3	A bourgeois silhouette?	9
4	Family strongholds	20
5	Smart districts	21
6	Old Adrien	31
7	Family seats I	34
8	The 'green elysiums' of childhood	37
9	<i>Pièces rapportées</i>	47
10	Ear-rings	58
11	Miniaturisation	59
12	The making of Laure	63
13	The ring	65
14	Behind the Silver Cross pram	67
15	Appearing natural	69
16	Mrs O. senior's drawing-room	75
17	Mrs O. junior's drawing-room	76
18	The family meal	77
19	The ball (photo Paris-Presse 1964)	80
20	The three generations	82
21	Sainte Marie de Neuilly, 1957	85
22	Sainte Marie de Neuilly, 1984	86
23	Notice of meeting	92
24	The privilege of privileges	121
25	The shrine of memory I	122
26	The shrine of memory II	124
27	La Guette is 100 years old!	126
28	Family seats II	128
29	Heirlooms I	130
30	Living memory	131
31	Heirlooms II	131
32	Mr O.'s study	133
33	The guest room	133

Cambridge University Press
978-0-521-46626-4 - French Bourgeois Culture
Beatrix Le Wita
Frontmatter
[More information](#)

x **List of illustrations**

34	The china collection	133
35	The salient bits of memory	136
36	Le Gué Gaillard, drawn by Mariel	142

Genealogical diagram 1	138
Genealogical diagram 2	139

Photographs 1, 4, 5, 9, 10, 11, 12, 15, 16, 18, 24, 26, 30, 31, 33 and 35 by Hugues Langlois. Photographs 2, 13, 14, 17, 25, 29, 32 and 34 by Jean-Michel Labat. Photograph 3 by André Pelle.