



Becoming Bourgeois: Love, Kinship, and Power in Provincial France, 1670-1880

Christopher H. Johnson

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Becoming Bourgeois traces the fortunes of three French families in the municipality of Vannes, in Brittany—Galles, Jollivet, and Le Ridant—who rose to prominence in publishing, law, the military, public administration, and intellectual pursuits over the course of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Revisiting complex issues of bourgeois class formation from the perspective of the interior lives of families, Christopher H. Johnson argues that the most durable and socially advantageous links forging bourgeois ascent were those of kinship. Economic success, though certainly derived from the virtues of hard work and intelligent management, was always underpinned by marriage strategies and the diligent intervention of influential family members.

Johnson's examination of hundreds of personal letters opens up a whole world: the vicissitudes of courtship; the centrality of marriage; the depths of conjugal love; the routines of pregnancy and the drama of childbirth; the practices of child rearing and education; the powerful place of siblings; the role of kin in advancing the next generation; tragedy and deaths; the enormous contributions of women in all aspects of becoming bourgeois; and the pleasures of gathering together in intimate soirées, grand balls, country houses, and civic and political organizations. Family love bound it all together, and this is ultimately what this book is about, as four generations of rather ordinary provincial people capture our hearts.

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