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Gilles Feyel, ed., *Dictionnaire de la presse française pendant la Révolution, 1789-1799: La presse départementale, tome III*. Ferney-Voltaire, Centre international d'étude du xviii<sup>e</sup> siècle, 2013, xi and 475. 220€ (hb). ISBN 978-2-84559-072-4.

Review by Harvey Chisick, University of Haifa.

This substantial volume by Gilles Feyel and his collaborators is the third in a projected five that will provide comprehensive bibliographical information on all newspapers known to have appeared during the French Revolution down to 1799. As such it will prove an invaluable research tool for scholars working on the press during the Revolution, and indeed in some cases, where periodicals were founded before the Revolution and continued to publish at least into 1789, for the last decades of the Old Regime as well. In many ways this dictionary complements the very useful works edited by Jean Sgard. [1]

The volumes of the *Dictionnaire de la presse française pendant la Révolution* are organized geographically. The first volume was devoted to Normandy, Lorraine, Alsace, the Limousin and the departments of the Rhône-et-Loire and Ain-et-Isère, and the second to Picardy, Champagne, the Auvergne and the departments of the Nord and Pas-de-Calais. This volume covers the old provinces of Brittany, Burgundy, Franche-Comté and the region of the Midi-Pyrénées. Journals are presented by department and by the towns in which they were published. Each journal is numbered for easy reference, and this volume treats a total of 132 periodicals (numbers 325 to 457).

Each periodical is analyzed in terms of a uniform grid of twenty factors. Though information is seldom available on all of them, the uniformity of treatment is a boon to the researcher, who can easily find the information that he or she might seek. The categories systematically examined are 1) title(s) 2) dates of appearance 3) periodicity 4) place of publication and main area of diffusion 5) owners 6) editors 7) printers 8) press runs 9) price of subscription and means of distribution 10) format 11) numbering 12) frontispiece 13) pagination 14) usual length 15) typographic presentation 16) political tendency 17) headings 18) references to collections of the journal 19) relevant archival sources and 20) bibliography of the journal and cultural context.

The length of entries for each periodical varies enormously. Where journals of which there are no surviving numbers were mentioned by contemporaries, the journal is cited, but the entry is extremely brief, as in the case of the *Journal philosophique, politique et littéraire* of Montauban (p. 450). With long-lived periodicals of which copies survive—and it is surprising how few such collections there are, and how often these have lacunae—the entries sometimes reach more than fifteen double-columned pages, as with the *Journal patriotique de Bourgogne* (pp. 133-58) or *L'Observateur du département de l'Yonne* (pp. 325-42). Items for which there is the fullest information and that therefore receive most space concern the editors, and sometimes owners and printers (criteria 5-7), and political tendency (criterion 16). Treatments of the politics of the journal can be derived from the journals themselves, so the source is usually available and lends itself to extensive analysis and citation. This is often the most substantial item for any journal.

Scholars interested in the publication history of the press during the Revolution will not find as much information here (item 8) as they would have liked. Of the 132 journals treated, there is a mention of press runs for only thirteen. Most often figures for press runs are given only when they are mentioned in notices published in the journals themselves. For example, according to the editor of the *Journal de la Nièvre* of 1797-1798, his paper had between 300 and 400 subscribers (p. 189). The publisher of *L'Observateur de département de la Yonne*, which appeared between 1796 and 1800, stated that his paper did little better than break even, a situation that suggests a minimal press run of between 250 and 300 (p. 329). Similarly, in 1797, the editor of the *Ami des campagnes* of the Haute Garonne wrote that his paper had a press run of two or three hundred (p. 403). For the most part, journals that approached or reached a press run of a thousand copies benefited from extensive government subscriptions (pp. 372 and 441). In only one case, *Les Documents de la raison* of 1794, is there reference to a printer's receipt for 900 copies (p. 435).

While an invaluable tool for researchers, this dictionary is more than that, for it contains short introductory essays for each province or main region. Patricia Sorel provides the introduction to Brittany, Jean Bart for Burgundy, Michel Vernus for the Franche-Comté, and Michel Taillefer for the Midi-Pyrénées. These essays not only describe and quantify the journals published during the period under consideration, but also treat the institutional and cultural factors that distinguished each region, thus providing valuable context and background for the press and the way it functioned. Each introduction includes a table and a graph that shows how many journals were published during each year between 1789 and 1799, as well as how many were founded each year and how many ceased publication. For the most part the information on publication confirms what has generally been discovered. The press peaked in the years 1789-1790, then tended to decline as the Revolution became more confrontational and the level of violence rose, but the work also nuances what is generally known. In Brittany the peak period lasted through 1791, in Burgundy there was a significant recovery in 1797, in the Franche-Comté in 1793 it again reached its peak of 1790, and in the Midi-Pyrénées the peak exceptionally came in 1797, during which year twice as many periodicals appeared as during 1790. As in French history generally, regional variations are decisive. It is not clear, however, how one can square the statement in the introduction to Brittany that "Au total, au cours de l'année 1789, six périodiques voient le jour..." (p. 2) with the table on the same page that shows that nine periodicals were published during 1789 and eight were still active at the end of that year. The graph for Brittany shows the same figures as the table (p. 3).

The work done by Gilles Feyel and his collaborators to produce this volume borders on the heroic, and will without doubt prove a great boon to future historians of the press in France, particularly in the provinces.

Note

[1] Jean Sgard, ed., *Dictionnaire des journalistes d'Ancien Régime, 1600-1789* (Grenoble: Presses Universitaires de Grenoble, 1978), *Bibliographie de la presse classique, 1600-1789* (Geneva: Slatkine, 1984) and *Dictionnaire des Journaux d'Ancien Régime, 1600-1789*, 2 vols. (Paris: Universitas, 1991).

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