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H-France Review Vol. 11 (January 2011), No. 22

Colin Heywood, *Growing Up in France: From the Ancien Régime to the Third Republic*. Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 2007. xi + 313 pp. Illustrations, notes, bibliography and index. \$108.99 U.S. (hb). ISBN 0-521-86869-6; \$43.00 U.S. (pb) ISBN-13: 9780521123112.

Review by Christine Adams, St. Mary's College of Maryland.

In the introduction to his latest book, Colin Heywood notes that “It is a common complaint that histories of childhood tend to leave out the children” (p. 4). He seeks to rectify that problem with this study. Relying primarily on what he calls “ego documents” of both the famous (Rousseau, Sand, Colette, Gide, among many others) and the obscure (for example, Ephraïm Grenadou, Emile Nougouier, and Caroline Brame)—diaries, correspondence, memoirs, and autobiographies—Heywood argues for the value of studying young people on their own terms, delving into their experiences and memories of childhood and adolescence, and taking seriously the seemingly small and inconsequential preoccupations, concerns, and delights of children. He supplements these materials with treatises on child rearing and education, novels about childhood and adolescence, folklore studies, and some official documents investigating various youth movements. The result is a rich and absorbing foray into the lives of children and young people in times past.

The time frame of Heywood's book is the period between the 1760s and the 1930s. The beginning date, during the age of Enlightenment, marks the period when childhood and adolescence began to emerge from the shadows, notably in Rousseau's famous *Confessions*. Heywood here defines “growing up” as the stages of life between the ages of approximately seven and twenty-five. Traditionally, seven was the “age of reason”; twenty-five marked the end of “civil puberty”, which was “defined as the point at which a male is able to love a woman faithfully, support a family and participate in the political order” (p. 12), while for a woman, marriage was the key event that marked adulthood. Drawing on the “new social studies of childhood” that emerged in the 1960s, Heywood relies on three propositions to frame his study: first, a desire to give young people a more active role in their own history than has usually been the case; two, an effort to analyze the age categories of childhood and adolescence according to such variables as gender, social class, and religious affiliation; and third, a commitment to the belief that the categories of childhood and adolescence should be understood as social constructions rather than biological absolutes.

Heywood divides his book into three major sections. Part one (“Representations of childhood and adolescence in France”) is intended to lay a framework for a study of growing up in France. In it, he examines the types of documents he plans to use throughout the study. This first chapter is theoretical, relying heavily on the work of scholars such as Philippe Lejeune, the well-known specialist in autobiography. From this, he moves to an analysis of the new conceptions of childhood and adolescence that appeared in the eighteenth century, emphasizing the growing volume of materials written about children and adolescents from that time onward. The theoretical approach continues in the next chapters, as Heywood examines growing up in theory and practice, drawing on the tools of family historians (life cycle and life course analysis), as well as the traditional French interest in the Ages of Man, and links these to the autobiographical model that many of his subjects use, with an emphasis on specific life events and turning points. Heywood argues that “all these individual experiences were a counterpoint to the universal turning points marking French childhood and adolescence during the

modern period. They introduced a random element into the rigid framework of the *rites de passage*, and make it clear that ultimately everyone had their own particular life course" (p. 103).

Part two ("Growing up among family and friends") looks at the experiences of children as part of family and other social networks. Like part one, this section covers familiar ground, as it summarizes the historical debates over family demographics and the effects of urbanization and industrialization on family structures, as well as the narrowing function of the nuclear and extended family over time. Separate chapters treat motherhood and fatherhood; in the case of both, Heywood highlights the adaptability of children in forming relationships with a wide variety of parental types, and, when necessary, turning to other adults for support and nurture. More compelling and original is his treatment of what he calls "small memories" from childhood: the stuff of material life, the physical and visual memories of comfort and misery, boredom and amusement. Chapter nine, "The Society of Children and Youth," considers the impact of peer groups, and suggests that a genuine change for children of all social classes across the course of the long nineteenth century was that young people came to spend more time with adult authority figures--parents, teachers, and youth leaders--and less with their peers, a process that Heywood refers to as the "colonization" of children and youth by adults (p. 214).

Part three ("Moving towards Adulthood") examines the ways in which young people gradually sought independence beyond the home and the peer group. Here, issues such as education and other types of training, the adoption or strengthening of regional, religious and political identities, and relations with the opposite (or occasionally, the same) sex take center stage. In his chapters on school, apprenticeship, and work, Heywood indicates that while more children were spending more time at school rather than work as time went on, that social class (along with gender) still was the single most important determinant in access to higher education, with social inequalities still evident in the 1960s. The prolonged experience of childhood in secondary school (and more rarely, at university) was primarily for elite and middle-class boys and young men for most of the period under investigation--and really until the middle of the twentieth century. The final chapter deals with the experiences of young people as they moved into the adult world of politics and sexual activity in a world that was becoming progressively more secular, especially under the Third Republic.

As is the case with all books that deal with the history of childhood, the ghost of Philippe Ariès looms large. Heywood acknowledges that the framework laid out in Ariès's classic study provides "both inspiration and theoretical support for this study" (p. 6).<sup>[1]</sup> While he notes that Ariès "probably overplayed a good hand in asserting that medieval society lacked any sentiment de l'enfance, an 'awareness of the particular nature of childhood, that particular nature which distinguishes the child from the adult'" (p. 37), Heywood seems to a large degree to accept Ariès's theory of the evolution in both attitudes towards childhood and the experience of children and adolescents over time. In general, though, Heywood is more optimistic about those changes than was Ariès, noting that "overall there was a story of fairly steady improvement in the condition of young people growing up in modern France" (p. 287), while still arguing that "adopting the perspective of the young in earlier generations removes some of the sheen from developments that one normally considered progressive" (p. 289).

However, I found myself wondering whether the mass of anecdotes to which the reader is treated illuminate in a clear fashion that broad evolution in the experience of childhood over the course of a very long nineteenth century. I do not doubt that there were substantial changes in lives of boys and girls of all social classes over a period of 170 years, especially in the realm of material culture, in ways that affected both rich and poor. And yet, Heywood is dealing with so many moving parts in his book: social class, gender, geography, opportunity, religious affiliation, and the inevitable specificity of individual lives and circumstances (some poor parents are gentle and loving; many bourgeois parents are cold and withdrawn). The uniqueness of the lives and experiences of these children can make it difficult to tease out genuine or universal shifts, or rather, to discern what those might be. Thus, while he largely falls

back on the evolution that Ariès traced in his seminal work--the shift to a more child-centered family (at a much earlier stage for the elite and the middle classes than for workers) with both its advantages (education and greater protections for children) and disadvantages (surveillance and discipline)--it's not always easy to line up those changes with the actual cases he analyzes.

The nature of the sources themselves--since Heywood relies heavily on autobiographies, autobiographical novels, and memoirs, which are more abundantly available than family correspondence and young people's diaries--can also make them a problematic guide, as he himself acknowledges. For example, in considering the evolving relationship between mothers and children, Heywood notes "Families among the middle classes appeared to provide exceptionally favourable material and cultural conditions for a close attachment between mother and child, along the lines envisaged by Rousseau." However, "such a textbook bond rarely appears in the reminiscences, perhaps because it would be too banal. Instead, the extremes grab the attention of the reader, running from males enjoying a somewhat overheated relationship with their mother to people recalling feelings of outright hostility" (p. 131). We must at least consider the fact that autobiographies and memoirs are written by a set of individuals whose childhoods and familial relations do not represent the norm. Or perhaps, this is a salutary reminder that all lives are unique and none truly represents an "ideal type."

But the uniqueness of those individual lives and the voices of children and young people from the past are what make this book an interesting read. This would have been an even stronger book had Heywood allowed those reminiscences to more consistently drive the book's narrative. The long introductory theoretical chapters discussing how historians should handle "ego documents," as well as the historiography of the stages of life and life course theory, seemed redundant for the specialist and tedious for the more casual reader. The pace of part one picked up considerably in chapter four as Heywood turned to the primary sources. The same was true in part two; the discussion of the demographic context in chapter five appeared more detailed than necessary, while subsequent chapters detailing mothers, fathers, and the material lives of children were far more absorbing. Some streamlining would have produced an equally useful, but more focused, book. Still, this text is an important contribution to our understanding of childhood and youth culture, and essential reading for historians interested in the voices of French children and young people during a crucial period of flux and change.

## NOTES

[1] Philippe Ariès, *Centuries of Childhood: A Social History of Family Life*, trans. Robert Baldick (New York: Vintage, 1962). Originally published as *L'Enfant et la vie familiale sous l'Ancien Régime* (Paris: Plon, 1960).

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