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Dominique Dessertine, *Enfance, santé et société: recueil d'articles*. Lyon: Équipe Religions, Sociétés et Acculturation, RESEA, du Laboratoire de Recherche Historique Rhône-Alpes, LARHRA, 2013. 373 pp. Maps, illustrations, notes, and bibliography. 25.00€. (pb.). ISBN 979-10-91592-00-0.

Review by Colin Heywood, University of Nottingham.

Dominique Dessertine is perhaps not a name familiar to historians in the Anglo-Saxon world, a few specialists in her areas of interest apart. This may be partly due to her tendency to work in a team with other historians on various projects, and her frequent immersion in detailed local studies concerning the southeast of France. Yet she has an impressive output, including substantial monographs of her own on divorce in Lyon during the Revolution and Empire, and on the Société Lyonnaise pour le Sauvetage de l'Enfance.[1] This collection of twenty articles, some of them drawing on these two works and others written in collaboration with Olivier Faure and Bernard Maradan (her husband), should allow her the wider audience she deserves.

The articles range from reprints of articles in learned journals to unpublished works based on lectures given on the anniversaries of institutions in the Rhône-Alpes region, all published between the 1980s and 2010. They are divided into three sections, indicated in the title of the book: childhood, health and (a rather eclectic) 'society.' If there is an overall focus, Olivier Faure is surely right in his introduction to assert that it is on the family, and above all its child and adolescent members at the turn of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries (p. 10). Hence, in the *Santé* part, there is material on the *écoles de plein air* of the early twentieth century, and in the *Société* part, an essay on the processions of the youthful Catholic gymnastic societies during the interwar period.

Given this subject matter, certain themes run like a red thread through the various articles. First, there is the Franco-French struggle between Catholics and Republicans, as the two sides sought to mould the young as they saw fit. Second, and relatedly, there is an interest in early efforts by the state and charities to promote the health and morality of young people, before the welfare state took over after World War II. And thirdly, there is a constant resort to the southeast, and to Lyon in particular, as a case study for wider issues, with the irrefutable argument that the region carries sufficient weight in national affairs to be a particularly useful one.

Part one of the book is the most substantial, containing over half of the essays (see the list of essays below). In the final one, on youth clubs in the Lyon area, the authors (Dessertine and Bernard Maradan) discuss the historical literature concerning young people at the time of writing in 1998 (pp. 165-168). Their entirely plausible argument is that, at this point, there was very little available on the behaviour of children outside the *institutions classiques* of the family and the school. Starting naturally with the work of Philippe Ariès, they suggest that one can trace three historical currents flowing from this pioneering effort—limiting themselves, it must be said, to the work of French scholars. During the 1970s and 1980s, historians delved into parish registers and the *état civil* to analyze the history of the French population in conventional demographic terms, including the number of births, nursing customs, infant mortality, and so forth. The five-volume *Histoire de la population française* was the crowning glory of this approach.[2] This demographic current also included investigations into love and marriage—obvious

parallels with the works in English of Lawrence Stone and Edward Shorter might have been made--and the "medicalization" of French society, notably of young children. The well-known work by Catherine Rollet-Echalier, on policies to protect young children under the Third Republic, looms large here, and indeed it is a starting point for many of the articles in the collection.[3] The second current revolves around works on the history of education, starting with secondary schools, and later moving into innovations in the pre-school sphere, notably with the work of Jean-Noël Luc.[4] Finally, the most recent current moves on to consider marginal childhoods identified as such by the legal system during the nineteenth century, spawning a host of medical and pedagogical discourses, as well as practical initiatives.

Dessertine and her colleagues in Lyon can claim to have advanced our knowledge in this third current, above all by researching efforts to protect the young outside the school system. Most of the essays in part one assess the efforts by the legal system and both Catholic and secular *patronages* (in the sense of societies to care for delinquent youngsters, and also of youth clubs) to classify, train and control young people whose families had failed them. Indeed, the first essay gives a useful outline of the gradual emergence of a social policy for children in France between the 1780s and 1940. The law of 1889 on morally abandoned children (tartly described by the Republican politician Jules Simon as a law for "those orphans who have the misfortune to have parents" [cited by author, p. 57]), and that of 1898 on crimes committed *by* children and crimes of cruelty *to* children crop up repeatedly. Dessertine has proved diligent in ploughing through court records in Lyon and the archives of assorted *patronages* to provide evidence for these studies--revealing, for example, that the 1889 law was a dead letter in Lyon.

For this reviewer, the most illuminating of the articles in this part is the one on the classification of childhood by the justice system. It reveals how the courts during the early Third Republic found themselves involved with providing welfare for children as well as punishment--starting from the insistence in article 66 of the Penal Code that children under sixteen acquitted of a crime because they acted "without discernment" could be sent to a "house of correction" for a suitable upbringing (p. 32). Unfortunately a shortage of resources meant that those who were victims of a crime often ended up in the same institution as those had committed one. The *Sauvetage de l'enfance* in Lyon was a case in point, documented in a further essay. Originally founded to help morally abandoned children in the wake of the 1889 law, it soon added to their ranks a number of delinquents under sixteen passed on by the Assistance publique. A final essay in this part deserves mention as a lively account of the rivalry in Lyon between Catholic and *laïque* youth clubs, with the former veering towards enticing the young with sporting activities, the latter cultural ones.

Part two of the book draws attention in various ways to the efforts of the medical profession to combat tuberculosis: a campaign that is now fast receding into the past in the developed nations, but is familiar to historians. This includes an account of the trials and tribulations surrounding the construction by the Rhône department of a sanatorium for children, notably difficulties with the fees it could charge and its excess capacity. There is also a brief examination of the three "open air schools" in the Lyon agglomeration, designed at the outset to help sickly, tubercular children, and later adapted to the needs of those from deprived or dysfunctional families. Part three, to round off, begins with a handy survey of the way the divorce laws worked in Lyon during the Revolution, and includes an interesting look at freemasonry and the world of the workers in Lyon: to be precise, at a *patronage* that left poor children in their families, but supported their education through school and apprenticeship.

Inevitably in such a large collection of essays, there are elements of repetition, and for each reader some will be more useful than others. But then doubtless for most scholars it will be a book to be dipped into rather than read from cover to cover. All of the articles are very well crafted. They pose their questions clearly, outline the existing historiography in their area, provide a critique of their primary sources, organize their material effectively, and read easily--many of them started out as lectures, and are written with a light touch. The approach relies heavily on quantitative evidence. Dessertine is careful to give

numbers of children assisted, the amount spent on hospital buildings, the turnout at processions, and such like. It will be evident by now that there is an interest in the various laws that sought to protect children, and the numerous institutions that arose in the nineteenth and twentieth century with the same aim. The author has clearly been successful in using her local connections to gain access to archives that are not always easily accessed, notably the private ones of the *patronages*.

The downside to all this is the narrow focus on the French experience, and the “top-down,” adult-orientated perspective—in contrast with the recent tendency to try to give a voice and some agency to children. This latter approach, of course, is in some ways much more challenging than the institutional approach, above all with the availability of sources, but one wonders what former clients of the societies claiming to “protect” children would have had to say, or patients who survived time in a sanatorium. Some of the essays are also on distinctly arcane topics: whether tubercular patients suffered a dramatic decline in their conditions in hospital during the Occupation, for example. Overall, though, those specialising in the history of young people and the history of medicine will find something of interest here.

NOTES

[1] *Divorcer à Lyon sous la Révolution et l'Empire* (Lyon: Presses universitaires de Lyon, 1981), and *La Société lyonnaise pour le sauvetage de l'enfance (1890-1960)* (Toulouse: Erès, 1990).

[2] Jacques Dupâquier, ed., *Histoire de la population française* (Paris: PUF, 1988-1990), 5 vols.

[3] Catherine Rollet-Ecalier, *La Politique à l'égard de la petite enfance sous la IIIe République* (Paris: INED, 1990), 2 vols.

[4] Jean-Noël Luc, *L'Invention du jeune enfant au XIXe siècle. De la salle d'asile à l'école maternelle* (Paris: Belin, 1997).

LIST OF ESSAYS

Part I: Enfance

“L'émergence de la politique sociale de l'enfance (1780-1940)”

“La catégorisation de l'enfance par la justice”

“Le Sauvetage et l'émergence des droits de l'enfant en justice sous la Troisième République”

“La loi de 1889 et ‘ces orphelins qui ont le malheur d'avoir des parents’”

“Aux origines de l'assistance éducative. Les tribunaux pour enfants et la liberté surveillée (1912-1941)”

“Les tribunaux face aux violences sur les enfants sous la Troisième République”

“La paroisse, le vicaire et les enfants: L'éducation catholique populaire en milieu urbain (1919-1939)”

“Cent cinquante ans de l'orphelinat Saint-Joseph de Vienne”

“Former une jeunesse laïque. Les amicales entre éducation populaire et civilisation des loisirs (1894-1939)”

“Le Prado en son temps. Identité et adaptations”

“La socialisation de l’enfant hors de l’école. La belle époque des patronages (1900-1939)”

Part II: Santé

“Le sanatorium du département du Rhône à Saint-Hilaire-du-Touvet (des origines à 1940)”

“Les infirmières visiteuses de la lutte antituberculeuse en France (1900-1930)”

“La mutualité et la médicalisation de la société française”

“Les écoles de plein air de l’agglomération lyonnaise. De l’innovation sanitaire à l’internat d’assistance (1907-1939)”

“Une population privilégiée? Les tuberculeux en sanatorium”

“Les ‘cliniques ouvertes’, matrices de l’humanisation de l’hôpital”

Part III: Société

“Le divorce sous la Révolution, audace ou nécessité?”

“Cinquante ans de l’histoire de l’association des veuves civiles de l’Isère”

“La franc-maçonnerie et le monde ouvrier (1840-1914)”

“Le centre social et l’utopie urbaine à Lyon: Ménival au début des années soixante”

“Les défilés catholiques dans la ville: Identités locales et revendications nationales (1919-1939)”

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