

Par ailleurs, l'horreur qu'inspire à Doin la traite et l'esclavage des noirs débouche sur une mise en accusation impitoyable des colons européens. Loin de chercher à excuser les blancs en avançant l'idée, courante aujourd'hui encore, que l'esclavage existait bien avant la traite des noirs, Doin insiste sur sa spécificité historique. Pour elle, le colonialisme, l'esclavage et la traite, sont des phénomènes qui ont pour origine la recherche insensée, véritablement déraisonnable, du profit matériel (10-12), et pour corollaire la destruction des "préceptes sacrés de notre religion" et "des principes du droit naturel" (6). Kadish souligne l'importance que tient la religion chrétienne tant dans la rhétorique que dans la pensée de Doin ainsi que l'harmonie entre religion ainsi conçue et pensée politique. Doin, qui ne cherche pas à cacher l'in vraisemblance de l'intrigue de la *Famille noire* ("J'ai fait peser sur une seule famille de nègres une faible partie des maux qui accablent les nègres en général depuis l'horrible invention de la traite," 6) a créé un roman à lire sur deux registres contraires, celui de l'esclavage, et celui de l'idéal universaliste chrétien-républicain auquel elle souscrit. Ironiquement, ce n'est plus la France qui symbolise cet idéal de liberté, d'égalité, et de fraternité dans *La Famille noire*. En 1825, pour Doin, c'est Haïti.

Il resterait beaucoup à dire sur la valeur politique actuelle des écrits de Sophie Doin tels qu'ils sont présentés dans ce petit livre – sur sa fine analyse de l'attrait irrésistible de la religion musulmane pour les peuples opprimés par des soi-disant chrétiens par exemple. Il est donc à espérer que ce livre se lira et qu'il stimulera l'intérêt pour une période historique fascinante et bien moins éloignée de la nôtre qu'il ne semble.

Downs, Laura Lee. *Childhood in the Promised Land: Working-Class Movements and the Colonies de Vacances in France, 1880-1960*. Durham: Duke UP, 2002. Pp. xv + 411. ISBN 0-8223-2928-X (cloth); 0-8223-2944-1 (paper)

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Childhood is biologically founded but a social construction. Every society creates experiences and opportunities for children that are based on its goals, expectations, and aspirations for the next generation. In educational programs, child welfare policies, and economic investments are revealed a culture's values concerning children's needs, potentials to develop, and vulnerabilities to safeguard.

This is one of the themes that emerges in Laura Lee Downs's engaging study of the *colonies de vacances* movement in France during the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries. The environment of wartime defeat in France in the 1880s caused many to conclude that the nation's future rested on the fate of working-class children whose physical and spiritual well-being were vulnerable to the depredations of overwork, injury, disease, malnutrition, and the unclean and cramped housing of urban poverty. At the same time, the abolition of child labor and the institutionalization of a national network of primary schools that provided free education for all children raised the problem of how to tend children in working-class districts during the long summer holiday, when school was no longer in session and children were not permitted in the factory or workshop. In response, the *colonies de vacances* provided a "vacation colony" in which urban children would live for a few weeks in the French

countryside, their bodies restored by healthy air and robust exercise, their spirits enlivened by the pure, natural setting, and their minds expanded by the natural and planned educational opportunities of their vacation experiences with the peasantry. In this Rousseauian vision of restoration by removal from urban pathology to the natural world, sponsors of the *colonies de vacances* tailored this general vision for urban children to their own particular constructions of the children's needs and societal aspirations.

The earliest *colonies de vacances* were organized by Protestant evangelicals who borrowed from a program created by a Swiss pastor who gathered 68 children from the urban poor in Zurich in 1876 and took them on a three-week holiday in nearby mountain villages. From this modest start, the movement quickly grew in France, with more than one and a quarter million children participating in the early 1960s before the movement started its slow decline. Downs masterfully describes the growth and evolution of the *colonies* movement in the context of other programs for children that formed its ideological and pedagogical framework, including the *patronages* (after-school youth programs) of the Catholic church, the Socialist efforts at municipal and human reform, and France's scouting movements, including the leftist Faucons Rouges and their orientation toward working-class children. Downs also discusses the *colonies* in light of changes in educational pedagogy of the era, crediting the organizers of certain *colonies* (particularly those of the Catholic seminarians) with pioneering a child-centered pedagogy of leisure that would influence educational innovations of the mid- and late-twentieth-century.

Within the broad umbrella of the restorative, socially hygienic goals of the movement, it was inevitable that different forms of the *colonies de vacances* would emerge under the sponsorship of educational, religious, and municipal institutions that each had distinctive views of needs of children and the societal purposes to be achieved. Downs organizes her study around contrasting models of the *colonies* that were based on different constructions of the nature and needs of childhood, the naturally restorative power of the natural countryside, the transformative effects of education, and the inherently pedagogical nature of children's unguided play activity.

The original Protestant *colonies de vacances*, for example, maintained fidelity to the Swiss vision of the physically therapeutic benefits of life in the countryside, and children were weighed and measured on their departure and return from summer vacation to convincingly demonstrate the gains that resulted from fresh air, good food, rest, and exercise. Children lived with peasant families who were paid a fee for each "petit Parisien" lodged in their homes, and children were given considerable freedom to amuse themselves in the countryside in the company of other urban children in the colony or children of the rural village. By contrast, the *colonies scolaire* of schoolteachers emphasized the educational value of rural summer activity, with teachers guiding small, school-based (rather than family-based) collectives that were often housed in vacant school buildings in the countryside. Teachers organized hikes and visits to natural and historical sites, inaugurated games in inclement weather, and required written journals of the children to ensure an educational benefit from children's summertime placements.

The *colonies catholiques* had yet a different goal of maintaining a positive Catholic identity in the children of the parish and of character development through exertion and sacrifice, community-building, and moral education. The pedagogical orientation was also different, with the summer retreat providing the opportunity to strengthen fellowship between children and Catholic adult leaders through shared activities, play, and recreation with the goal of strengthening children's connections to the church and redeeming lost humanity through its youngest members. Socialist and other leftist models of the *colonies* likewise sought to redeem humanity through childhood by ensuring a summer of renewal for the offspring of the urban proletariat (as in the *colonie municipale* of early twentieth-century Suresnes) or by using the collective summer placement as a forum for enlivening class consciousness, strengthening political awareness, and fostering collective action on behalf of workers (as in the *colonies prolétariennes* of the Popular Front).

Downs enlivens her description of these alternative visions of the *colonies de vacances* with evocative illustrations of children's experiences during their summer countryside vacations and their positive and negative reactions to the countryside, and the book includes many photographs of the children on rural holiday. The volume is beautifully written but not always effectively organized, with foundational insights into the *colonies* movement revealed much too late in the book. Even so, Downs's multilayered analysis also highlights the transformation of France during this period from an agrarian and small-town to an urban, industrial society, and illuminates the republican view of the responsibility of the state to its youngest citizens that was manifested in the *colonies* movement. Among the themes Downs develops throughout her study is the gendered organization of activities within each *colonie* – regardless of its ideological, religious, or educational purpose – as another implicit construction of childhood that was rarely explicitly considered by the organizers or sponsors. It is another reminder that the gendered opportunities afforded children reflects further the cultural construction of childhood.

The *colonies de vacances* gradually evolved from a late-nineteenth-century beneficence for the most needy proletarian children into a more universal program of popular summertime education. The decline of this movement after the late 1960s derived, in part, from the postwar prosperity of French families. With longer vacation benefits extended to larger numbers of working families, children today embark on their summer vacations in the company of their parents rather than in peer- or family-based collectives organized by the municipality, church, or school. In this, Downs perceives the continuing transition of postwar French society from a collectivist to an individualist orientation to the education and development of children.