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Damiano Matasci, *L'École républicaine et l'étranger: Une histoire internationale des réformes scolaires en France 1870-1914*. Lyon: ENS Editions, 2015. 276 pp. Tables, illustrations, notes, bibliography, and index. 24.00€. ISBN 978-2-84788-661-0.

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The goal of Damiano Matasci's study, a revised and shortened version of his *thèse de doctorat*, defended in 2012, is to internationalize French educational history by situating the well-known educational reforms of the pre-1914 Third Republic in a multinational context. In seven chapters, grouped into three parts, Matasci discusses the French acquisition of information about foreign systems of schooling; the place of French educators within an international context of school reform; and French uses of information about foreign schools. His sources include archival materials from Paris, Berlin, and Berne and a range of primary and secondary sources from Belgium, Germany, Great Britain, Switzerland, and the United States, as well as from France. Noting that other scholars, such as Christophe Charle, have studied French educators' interest in other countries as they planned for reforms at the university level, Matasci focuses on primary and secondary schooling. [1] His approach assumes that readers have some familiarity with major landmarks in nineteenth-century French educational history: not only the Ferry Laws of 1881-1882 but also the Guizot Law (1833), the Falloux Law (1850), and Victory Duruy's various reform efforts as minister of public instruction (1863-1869).

Why did the French want to acquire information about other countries' schools? Historians of educational reform during the early Third Republic have long cited the impetus that came from the loss of the Franco-Prussian War and the notion that Prussian schoolteachers had better prepared soldiers than had their French counterparts. Although that perspective remains important in Matasci's presentation, he demonstrates that examination of schooling elsewhere predated 1870, for reasons linked to new political notions about the importance of an informed citizenship and to changes stemming from an industrializing economy. Like France, other countries also accumulated information about schools beyond their own borders.

In chapter one on French pedagogical missions to other countries, Matasci cites the existence of more than 1,200 literary and scientific missions between 1842 and 1914, but he confines his detailed analysis to 131 (105 of them after 1870) which focused on schools and entailed visits to twenty-seven countries. Already in 1831, Victor Cousin had visited schools in Prussia and other German states and in 1832, published a report. Prussia's victory over Austria in 1866 also heightened interest in new encounters with Prussian education. School inspectors and professors at the university and secondary levels carried out nearly 60 percent of such missions, men of letters and school directors and teachers from lower ranks did another 21 percent, and the few women in the sample focused largely on early childhood education. The missions fell into three categories: information gathering to prepare for French reforms, individual study trips for pedagogical and professional purposes, and "*diplomatie scolaire*" to showcase French educational practices at international congresses. German states were the most common destinations (21 percent), followed by the United States (15 percent), Switzerland (14 percent), England

(11 percent), and Scandinavian countries (9 percent). Matasci links the substantial French interest in American public schools to a search for examples from another democratic republic which might be useful for stabilizing the new Third Republic, and he notes, by contrast, that German secondary education models better served French plans to maintain secondary schooling as the preserve of social elites.

Chapter two examines the dissemination of information gleaned from educational missions, particularly after 1870. The Musée pédagogique in Paris, created by Minister of Public Instruction Jules Ferry in May 1879, became a place for centralizing information and housing materials from international meetings. Republican control of both legislative houses as of 1879 ushered in the famous period of educational reform linked to Ferry and Ferdinand Buisson, the director of primary education. Previously Buisson, as a school inspector in the Seine department, had led a mission to visit schools in twelve American cities in 1876, and as an organizer of the education section at the 1878 Paris exposition, he pressed Ferry's predecessor, Agénor Bardoux, to lay the groundwork for the Musée. By 1900, it held 50,000 volumes, including the increasingly numerous statistical reports compiled by officials. Pedagogical reviews also circulated information about schooling elsewhere and Matasci highlights two: the *Revue pédagogique*, which was closely linked to the Ministry of Public Instruction and dealt especially with primary education, and the *Revue internationale de l'enseignement*, focused on universities and secondary education. The former was sent at no cost to school inspectors, normal school directors, and certain other teachers.

The three chapters in part two move French reformers into the exchange of information at international meetings, facilitated by improved transportation and communication links. Universal expositions, treated in chapter three, typically highlighted nations' economic and technological progress and often included sections devoted to education. The big expositions, like the international education congresses treated in chapter four, provided delegates with statistical and qualitative information useful for comparing the performance of schools in various nations. Paris hosted both primary and secondary education congresses in conjunction with the expositions of 1889 and 1900, all largely planned by administrators and higher-ranking personnel but well attended by classroom teachers. After 1900, teachers increasingly organized their own national and international professional congresses, one of the developments treated in chapter five, which traces the post-1900 evolution of previously informal exchanges toward more formal organization. The Bureau international des associations d'instituteurs (BIAI) was created after a 1905 primary education congress in Liège and, by 1910, had representatives from fifteen national federations, numbering 400,000 teachers. French delegates to the BIAI governing council represented the Fédération nationale des amicales d'institutrices et d'instituteurs, founded in 1901. The central focus of the BIAI, like that of the French federation, was the defense of teachers' professional interests. The Bureau international des fédérations nationales du personnel de l'enseignement secondaire public (BIES) was founded in 1912, with representatives from France, Germany, Belgium, the Netherlands, and Luxemburg. The organizers of an international congress could highlight educational practices in their own nation, but they typically avoided pushing for the endorsement of any single educational model.

Matasci's final chapters evaluate French reformers' use of other national models when they framed reforms in education. Chapter six features republicans' repeated emphasis on the notion of a French *retard scolaire*--as compared to Germany, the United States, or Switzerland--in order to make a compelling case for the necessity of the Ferry Laws of 1881-1882 that made primary schooling compulsory and public primary schools, free and *laïque*. Like other scholars, Matasci notes that the Ferry Laws did not lead to great quantitative changes because most French children already benefited from some schooling.[2] But previously public schooling was completely free only in a minority of French communes (7,000) and many students had not stayed in school until the new required age of twelve or thirteen. Making schooling compulsory and public schools free had obvious parallels in other countries seeking a better-educated work force and a (male) citizenry sufficiently informed to cast a

ballot. But with *laïcité*, Matasci admits there is French singularity in the extent to which secularization of public schools was achieved, even as he seeks parallels elsewhere. For example, the new Italian state, confronted with papal hostility after the completion of unification in 1870, dropped religious history and catechism from official programs in 1877, but in practice many Italian public schools continued to include religious history. Not surprisingly, in light of the hostility between French Catholic monarchists and secular republicans during the early Third Republic, republican reformers often cited Protestant countries as models of educational progress.

Arguments about economic modernization rather than notions of “*retard scolaire*” marked the path to the secondary school reform of 1902 discussed in chapter seven. The French backdrop included Duruy’s creation in 1865 of special secondary schools as an alternative to the traditional classical curriculum in *lycées* and *collèges*. This alternative, renamed “*moderné*” in 1891, featured modern languages and sciences and was designed to have practical appeal to the middle classes. German models were much cited during the decades of debate about secondary school curricula and the *baccalauréat*, but, Matasci emphasizes, the French opted for keeping classical and modern options within the same secondary school, rather than embracing the German division into classical *Gymnasia* and *Realschulen*, a separation seen in France as too aristocratic. That contrast should not be overdrawn, however, because the longstanding French organizational separation of primary schooling from secondary schooling meant that the primary school system had its own post-primary education in the form of *cours complémentaires* and *écoles primaires supérieures*, increasingly numerous after the 1880s. There were also *écoles pratiques* placed under the Ministry of Commerce as of 1892. Such structural separation, in France as in Germany, reflected the desire to preserve secondary schooling primarily for social elites and to avoid creating a secondary proletariat of parvenus, like those portrayed in Maurice Barrès’s novel *Les Déracinés* (1897). Easing the path for bright French primary school students to advance to secondary school did not become a major concern until the interwar years.

Is there anything missing from Matasci’s wide-ranging treatment of French educators’ study of schooling in other nations? The international history of early childhood education, to which France contributed the *école maternelle*, is mentioned only briefly.[3] Treatment of the special issues and controversies connected with the education of girls and young women is also surprisingly minimal, even though republicans, pushing to educate students in laicized public schools, routinely contended that the survival of the new French democracy required drawing the next generations of wives and mothers away from the influence of the Catholic church. Feminist international congresses, which devoted much attention to women’s education, are admittedly not part of Matasci’s research, but he could have done more with certain international education congresses, such as the one in Paris in 1889 which featured lengthy discussion of women’s roles in education. The question of coeducation, especially in secondary schools, appears mainly in footnotes, one educator dismissing it as a feature of Protestant countries and unsuited to France. Matasci’s bibliography shows, however, his familiarity with recent work on coeducation (*mixité*) and girls’ secondary education.[4]

If Matasci has not covered every topic discussed by educators on an international level, he has certainly argued convincingly that a fuller understanding of French educational reform before 1914 requires attention to the international context in which it occurred. In recognition of the merits of Matasci’s longer *thèse de doctorat*, the Académie des sciences morales et politiques awarded it the prix Louis Cros in 2013.

NOTES

[1] Christophe Charle, Jürgen Schriewer, Peter Wagner, eds., *Transnational Intellectual Networks: Forms of Academic Knowledge and the Search for Cultural Identities* (Frankfurt and New York: Campus Verlag, 2004); Christophe Charle, “Jalons pour une histoire transnationale des universités,” *Cahiers d’histoire: Revue d’histoire critique*, no. 121(2013): 21-42.

[2] Jean-Noël Luc, *La Statistique de l'enseignement primaire aux XIXe et XXe siècles* (Paris: INRP-Economica, 1985); Raymond Grew and Patrick Harrigan, *School, State, and Society: The Growth of Elementary Schooling in Nineteenth-Century France* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1991).

[3] Jean-Noël Luc, ed., *L'école maternelle en Europe XIXe-XXe siècles*, numéro spécial, *Histoire de l'éducation*, no. 82(May 1999).

[4] Rebecca Rogers, ed., *La Mixite dans l'éducation : Enjeux passés et présents* (Lyon: ENS Editions, 2004) ; James Albisetti, Joyce Goodman, and Rebecca Rogers, eds., *Girls' Secondary Education in the Western World from the 18th to the 20th Century* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010).

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