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Ludovic Frobert, ed., *L'Écho de la fabrique: Naissance de la presse ouvrière à Lyon, 1831-1834*. Lyon: ENS Éditions; Institut d'Histoire du Livre, 2010. 366 pp. Tables, graphs, illustrations, and notes. 27 € (pb). ISBN 978-2-84788-207-0.

Review by Christine Haynes, University of North Carolina at Charlotte.

Through a close examination of the context and content of a regional working-class newspaper of relatively short duration, this collection of essays contributes to a number of major fields in French history, including the history of print, the history of labor, the history of business, and the history of revolution. The product of a conference at Lyon in 2007, this collection revives the history, language, and role of the first durable workers' newspaper published in France, *L'Écho de la fabrique*, and its descendants. A supplement to the critical edition of the newspaper published online since 2004,<sup>[1]</sup> the book includes the perspective not just of historians, but of literary scholars, sociologists, linguists, political scientists, philosophers, and economists. Together, their various approaches to the newspaper of the silk workers of Lyon serve to illuminate, even if they never entirely explain, the intricate relationship between language and action in the formation of the working class in the first half of the nineteenth century.

Among the many contributions of this essay collection, one of the most important is to place *L'Écho de la fabrique* in the context of the history of print during the nineteenth century, a "golden age" of the French press, which (as Jeremy Popkin has shown elsewhere) exploded in the wake of the Revolution of 1830.<sup>[2]</sup> During some fifty months from October 1831 to May 1834, this weekly of eight pages written by and for the *chefs d'atelier* and their employees in the silk industry in Lyon grappled with the fall-out of technological change, as well as political revolution. Including minutes of the meetings of the local *conseil des prud'hommes*, poems and songs, descriptions of the theories of Fourierists, Saint-Simonians, and republicans, reports on negotiations over *tarifs* in the workshops, and practical advice on such issues as hygiene and jurisprudence, the newspaper addressed and debated a wide range of issues related to "social economy" (p. 7). Like other later publications of the silk workers, *L'Écho* was produced by a printing industry that was in the process of adapting to a new regulatory environment introduced by Napoleon, according to Dominique Varry. In the face of tight restrictions on the number of printers and the content of periodicals, producers of newspapers such as *L'Écho* developed a number of tricks, such as running literary pieces to avoid the *cautionnement* on political periodicals, changing the paper's title, or opening a workshop in the suburbs to circumvent the limit on licenses for printers within the city.

In this context, the significance of the run of *L'Écho de la fabrique* should not be underestimated. As Jeremy Popkin argues in a piece on the long-time manager of this paper as well as other proletarian publications, Marius Chastaing, "*L'Écho de la fabrique* est le premier journal en France à se poser comme porte-parole de la classe ouvrière," even if most of its editors came from the middle, rather than the working, class (p. 29). As time went on, other newspapers (including ones founded by Chastaing after he was removed from his post as manager) would challenge the role of *L'Écho* as spokesman for the working class. But, as Sarah Mombert and George Sheridan suggest in their analyses of the literary content and the journalistic heritage of the paper respectively, *L'Écho* played a critical role in the shift from the *presse ouvrière* of the early industrial era to the *presse populaire* of the late nineteenth century (p. 12).

As the contributors to this volume make clear, *L'Écho de la fabrique* was also instrumental in the formation of the working class itself. One of the major achievements of this collection is to illuminate how the language of labor shifted its focus from trade to class circa 1830-1840. In the first essay in the collection, Marie-France Piguet describes a competition sponsored by *L'Écho* to find a generic term to replace *canut*, derived from the Italian word for "cane," which was deemed by workers in the silk industry themselves to be pejorative and was thus rejected in a *stratégie d'évitement* by writers for the newspaper. In the end, no other word was selected in the competition and, in the half-century following the insurrections in Lyon, the word *canut*, which had previously symbolized suffering, came to signify the dignity of the worker (p. 28). In one of the most interesting contributions to this collection, Maurice Tournier performs a lexicometric analysis of the vocabulary used to describe workers in *L'Écho de la fabrique* between 1831 and 1834. Positing "une évolution des labels en usage, accompagnant les querelles sociales et politiques" (p. 53), he traces a shift in usage from *ouvriers* to *travailleurs*, for example, and from *classe ouvrière* to *peuple*, in this three-year period. At the same time, he sees the development of syndicalism in the increased use of the collective plural "*nous*" and of the term "association" and a turn toward politics, in new references to such words as *liberté*, *droit*, and *République*. As Tournier concludes, "*L'Écho de la fabrique* annonce, plus de quatorze ans à l'avance, et avec déjà une bonne part de leurs termes, les revendications qui surgiront en 1848" (p. 71). As another essay by Jacques Guilhaumou emphasizes, this new sense of identity among the working class was, from the beginning, defined in dialectical opposition to a new aristocracy based on wealth. In the pages of *L'Écho*, the notion of the people was born alongside that of a class struggle. In the formation of this proto-socialist working-class movement, according to another contributor, Emmanuel Renault, a vocabulary of *mépris* and *souffrance* was initially central. In short, a close reading of *L'Écho de la fabrique* provides fresh evidence for the thesis of a shift from a corporate to a class identity among workers, advanced by William Sewell, among others, since the 1980s. [3]

In addition to explicating the language of labor in the 1830s, these essays illuminate the place of *L'Écho de la fabrique* in the evolution of social and political thought in this period, which saw the rise of socialism and feminism, but also the persistence of corporatism. Describing the mix of Fourierist and Saint-Simonian influences on *L'Écho*, the contributors show how the newspaper navigated between tradition and innovation in a period of dramatic change. From Charles Fourier, the paper adopted a criticism of "civilized" commerce and a vision of a deep attraction to work, as well as a model of association, exemplified for instance in a local consumer cooperative founded by Michel Derrion (pp. 136-137). From the Saint-Simonian elite in Paris, the editors of *L'Écho* appropriated the "religion of industry," which (as Philippe Régnier asserts here) left the working class of Lyon waiting for a savior--la Femme-Messie who was prophesied to appear as a companion for Père Enfantin--who never came (p. 343). This attitude of resignation was exacerbated by the persistence of corporatism among the workers represented in *L'Écho de la fabrique*. Such corporatism is seen, for example, in the newspaper's resistance to an institutional, as opposed to a personal, form of credit such as the *caisses de prêts* and in its suspicion of any technological innovation that did not preserve the traditional work of the *canuts* (elucidated in the essays by Simon Hupfel and Betsey Price, respectively). The conservatism of the paper, and of the working class in general at this moment, is also exemplified by its stance toward women. As Anne Verjus asserts, *L'Écho* (along with the feminist publication *Le Conseiller des femmes*) advanced a "conjugalist" versus a "sexualist" view of women, whereby their rights were defined not by a "class" based on sex but along with those of the men in their same socioeconomic group, whether bourgeois or proletarian. In short, as represented in *L'Écho de la fabrique*, the working class of Lyon was reformist, not revolutionary.

Within the newspaper, as well as the working-class movement as a whole, there was a split between mutualists and republicans. While the former thought the problems of workers could be solved through association, the latter thought they should be addressed by the state. Exemplary of this split was a debate in the fall of 1832 between Anselme Pétetin and Joseph Bouvery over machines, described in the

last essay of the collection by editor Ludovic Frobert. Such division certainly contributed to the failure of the insurrections of 1831 and 1834. As Ludovic Frobert emphasizes in the introduction, one of the strengths of this volume is to resurrect the role of *L'Écho de la fabrique* in the *événements* of Lyon in the 1830s, which (at least until the study of Robert Bezucha) was long underestimated (pp. 7-9).<sup>[4]</sup> (The place of the newspaper in the insurrections of this period is substantiated vividly by the beautiful “Cahier d’illustrations” in the middle of the book.) Ultimately, however, both the paper and the movement failed to effect real change, at least in the short term.

In the end, then, this otherwise thorough collection begs the question: Given its short duration and limited effect during the insurrections of the 1830s, why was *L'Écho de la fabrique* so important? What was its legacy for the working-class movement in Lyon and the rest of France? The answers to these questions may be gleaned here and there in this collection, for instance in the lexicometric analysis of labels for workers by Maurice Tournier and the description of the working-class newspapers that succeeded *L'Écho* by George Sheridan. Because the editor made a conscious decision not to classify the various contributions, however, the collection lacks an overarching narrative. Since sources on the readers of such working-class newspapers remain limited, this volume on *L'Écho* does not ultimately untangle the knotty relationship between text and action in the history of working-class uprisings, such as the *événements* of Lyon. Nonetheless, taken together, the essays in this volume expand our knowledge of the history of the periodical press and of the language of labor in the first half of the nineteenth century.

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## NOTES

[1] <http://echo-fabrique.ens-lyon.fr>.

[2] Jeremy Popkin, *Press, Revolution, and Social Identity in France, 1830-1835* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2002).

[3] William H. Sewell, Jr., *Work and Revolution: The Language of Labor in France from the Old Regime to 1848* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1980).

[4] Robert Bezucha, *The Lyon Uprising of 1834: Social and Political Conflict in the Early July Monarchy* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1974).

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