

siècle est crucial dans la formation de la classe ouvrière québécoise, particulièrement au niveau de la construction de sa conscience de classe. Ce livre est une contribution adéquate à l'étude de cette période d'agitation tous azimuts du mouvement ouvrier québécois, particulièrement en ce qui concerne la région de Québec, puisque l'historiographie du mouvement ouvrier au Québec s'est auparavant principalement concentrée sur les industries montréalaises. De plus, l'étude des espaces géographiques comme lieu de sociabilité et de mobilisation des travailleurs apporte de la profondeur aux propos de l'auteur puisque, dans le cas étudié, les membres sont répartis sur de grandes distances aux alentours du port de Québec ne facilitant pas le respect des directives syndicales. L'auteur porte ainsi son attention aux lieux de résidence des travailleurs qui constituent des endroits propices à la mobilisation pour les pétitions ou les manifestations. Cet aspect est particulièrement bien rendu.

Une critique peut être adressée à propos de la trame narrative du texte. Il est parfois difficile de saisir le lectorat visé. L'ouvrage est par endroit difficile d'accès pour un lecteur n'ayant pas une certaine connaissance de la période traitée bien que la lecture plonge ce dernier dans les événements phares de la vie de ce syndicat. Une contextualisation plus large aurait permis d'éviter ce piège.

Dans sa conclusion, l'auteur plaide pour que l'histoire du travail et l'histoire économique s'arriment davantage à l'histoire politique et à l'étude des espaces géographiques. Ce sont là effectivement des directions que doit entreprendre cette spécialisation afin de raconter l'expérience des hommes et des femmes qui ont été les moteurs de l'économie québécoise.

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Gabriel Audisio, *Preachers by Night: The Waldensian Barbes*, trans. Claire Davison, Leiden: Koninklijke Brill, 2007.

Gabriel Audisio's 'Preachers by Night' examines the evolution of the Waldensian heresy, specifically focusing on the role of the *barbes*, the so-called 'preachers by night,' in the sect's survival past the religious purges of the Middle Ages. In undertaking an examination of the importance of the *barbes*, Audisio presents the hypothesis that they were the mechanism of the Waldensians' survival; indeed, that their presence allowed the scattered believers, doomed to a clandestine existence, to persist and even flourish.

This is a shift from recent scholarship that tends to emphasize the importance of community and lay culture in the survival of the Waldensians rather than the role of these itinerant spiritual leaders.<sup>1</sup> Audisio, conversely, asserts that the *barbes* were singularly important in uniting the dispersed Waldensians. He predicates his theory of the *barbes*' primacy on the fervour with which the Catholic Inquisition pursued the *barbes*, and by highlighting the reverence the Waldensian believers professed for their preachers. Whether or not the *barbes* were as important as Audisio claims, or less so as Euan Cameron argues in *The Reformation of the Heretics*, and Audisio's primary source evidence for his contentions is solid, his research meticulous.

Audisio's book opens with an overview of the beginnings of the Waldensian dissent and traces the Poor of Lyons' evolution from evangelical group to heretical sect, to underground Nicodemites and finally to willing members of the Protestant Reformation. Throughout his analysis of this centuries-long evolution, Audisio is careful not to place undue importance on the *barbes* before their time; they only appeared in the early fifteenth century. In doing this, however, Audisio makes a key error. Like many historians, Audisio treats time as if it passed differently in the past. He discusses the origins of the Waldensians and their classification as heretics at the Lateran Council of 1215, but makes little note of what became of the group over the subsequent one-hundred-fifty odd years. If, as Audisio claims, the *barbes* were so essential for the survival of the Waldensian dissent, what drove the believers' faith and allowed for their endurance during decades of Inquisition before the *barbes* began circulating through the communities? A century and a half of clandestine survival should not be ignored, yet Audisio does not address the period.

Arguably Audisio places retrograde importance on the *barbes* after examining their undoubtedly intrinsic role in ushering in the Reformation to the Waldensian community. He demonstrates that the *barbes* were the catalyst of the dissolution of the Waldensian religion and the sect's incorporation into mainstream Protestantism, and uses their importance in this milieu to show that their influence must have been enormous to compel their communities to join with the Reformed Church despite the manifold differences between the beliefs and practices of the two groups. Audisio contends that it was on the *barbes*' initiative that the Waldensians united with the Calvinists; the *barbes* -- the itinerant 'preachers by night' -- were the backbone of the sect's organization, and upon their decision to reform and conform, the Waldensian communities simply fell in line. But were the *barbes* initially as influential as

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<sup>1</sup>Euan Cameron, *The Reformation of the Heretics* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1984).

they came to be? Early evidence is scarce, as Audisio is first to admit, so can we trust that this brotherhood sprang into existence fully formed and spiritually coercive from the outset?

The most contentious element of Audisio's book addresses the Waldensian 'synagogues,' or secret nocturnal assemblies. The Waldensians were accused by Inquisitors of using these meetings to instigate orgies, although according to recent historiography, these meetings ('synagogue' had multiple meanings at the time, and did not represent only the name for Jewish houses of worship) are a myth. Audisio's re-examination of the evidence surrounding the synagogues could stir up an interesting academic debate as he chooses not to dismiss confessions that indicate some truth to these accusations. Most reviewers of Audisio's book claim that this is the weakest section of the monograph, disparaging Audisio's credulity and inquisitiveness with claims of sketchy evidence and reliance on hearsay. I disagree. As Audisio notes, most historians are quick to dismiss claims that these sexually licentious meetings were at all associated with the pious Waldensians. Audisio is not so quick to shelve evidence because it does not conform to historiography's romantic portrait of the Waldensians. He does not explicitly state that he believes that these midnight congresses occurred, but instead urges historians not to dismiss the matter without giving it due investigation. He presents evidence for the nocturnal rendezvous and addresses the historiography's tendency to ignore said evidence, but he does not state categorically that the synagogues transpired, merely rejecting the immediate scepticism that accompanies allegations of midnight orgies. The weakness of this section does not come so much from its controversial nature, but rather that it sometimes seems as ridiculous as a soap opera plot. Perhaps the secret lives of the Waldensians did indeed merit an Inquisition for entertainment value alone.

Despite these contentious claims, Audisio's book is well researched and the evidence painstakingly explained and supported. He focuses on the training and patterns of dissemination of the *barbes*, as well as their reception in the community. He draws mainly on Inquisitorial documents, but also makes good use of the Masson-Morel report, an internal document written by two *barbes* to explain the Waldensian credo to the new Reformed Church.

Particularly interesting is Audisio's investigation of the beliefs and practices of the Waldensians, inspired by Vaudes, the founder of the dissent. He throws into sharp relief the differences between the practices of the Poor of Lyons and the practices of the group that emerged after joining with the Reformation. These distinct changes are what cause Audisio to speak of the 'death' of the Waldensians in the late sixteenth century.

Audisio's examination of the western *barbes* sheds light on a relatively untouched subject and presents a new perspective on many issues related to these mysterious preachers. His examination of the *barbes* is an in-depth look at an element of society that does not fit within the constraints of either Catholic history or the traditional history of medieval heresy. While far from flawless, Audisio's study is a quietly powerful work, displaying both a masterful examination of the information and an inquisitive and analytical mind that is clearly not yet finished with the intriguing and enigmatic world of the Waldensians.

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