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Hervé Joly, Ed., *Patronat, bourgeoisie, catholicisme et libéralisme. Autour du Journal d'Auguste Isaac. Actes de la journée d'étude du 18 juin 2003*. Cahiers Pierre Léon n° 5. Lyon: LARHRA, 2004. 230 pp. Notes. €20 (pb) ISBN 2-9519554-4-8.

Review by Carol E. Harrison, University of South Carolina.

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Auguste Isaac (1849-1938) was a notable citizen of Lyon in the early twentieth century, and the publication of his journal, edited by Hervé Joly, provided the occasion for the conference that produced this collection of essays on bourgeois life and politics at the turn of the twentieth century. [1] Isaac himself was a stereotypical bourgeois: he inherited the silk manufacture established by his grandfather in 1805 and represented the interests of Lyonnais industry on the boards of directors of a variety of companies, including the Paris-Lyon-Méditerranée railroad and the Suez Canal. United by marriage to most of the other silk families of Lyon, he socialized with their men folk in learned and leisure associations. He was a committed liberal and moderate republican and a founding member of the Fédération Républicaine, established in 1903 in opposition to the *bloc des gauches*. He took the obligations of status seriously, involving himself in various efforts to reform his social inferiors by providing them with better housing and education in Lyon and, on the national level, encouraging them to have large families. Capitalist, family man, philanthropist, and liberal: there could hardly be anyone more bourgeois than Auguste Isaac.

The essays in this collection are uneven in approach and in quality. Some adhere closely to Isaac and his journal, while others barely mention him. Isaac's life and journal make better source material for those authors who seek to ground their analysis in bourgeois private life. Thus Bernadette Angleraud and Catherine Pellissier recreate Isaac's overlapping familial and sociable ties to remind the reader that marriage alliances and associative networks reinforced bourgeois economic power. Hervé Joly also links economic influence and the demands of bourgeois family life in his discussion of Isaac's membership on various boards of directors. Isaac was neither a major investor in these firms, nor was he personally indispensable on their boards, but he was a prominent representative of Lyonnais interests. Isaac maintained his membership on all boards until his death because remuneration for service was a significant source of income. Bruno Dumons focuses on the introspective passages of Isaac's journal to discuss his liberal Catholicism, a position to which he stubbornly adhered even as Lyon's Catholics were drawn to the opposite poles of conservative ultramontanist or social Catholicism. Similarly, Virginie de Luca uses Isaac to draw useful distinctions among pro-natalists; Isaac had no use for militants who believed that three children constituted a *famille nombreuse*. Isaac believed a family of three children was merely the result of parents choosing to try again to get the son or daughter they particularly wanted when, in fact, the morally correct position—more important to Isaac than the politically expedient one—precluded choice of any kind.

Authors who are less interested in private life find their assignments for this volume more difficult. Hubert Bonin, considering the utility of autobiographical writings as a source for the history of banking, declares Isaac's journal frankly disappointing (pp. 117, 129). Isaac, who lacked the "soul of a banker," (p. 119) owed his position with the Caisse Lyonnaise de dépôts to his status as a representative of local industry rather than to any banking expertise, and he expected banks to act as local entities serving local families and firms rather than as investors on a national level. Pierre Vernus offers an account of the breakdown of the nineteenth-century free-trade consensus in Lyon's silk industry. As in his views on banking, Isaac remained a man of the nineteenth century, faithful to free markets, although he barely

appears in Vernus' essay. In contrast, Jean-François Klein works hard to inflate Isaac's importance. While noting that Isaac was not particularly interested in colonialism and hardly ever mentioned it in his journal, Klein analyzes a speech that Isaac delivered in 1901 on industrialization in French Indochina. "Anticipat[ing] the policy of association" of de Gaulle's Union Française (p.104), Isaac proposed that Indochina should partially industrialize in order to act as a conduit between France and Chinese markets. Klein draws the odd conclusion that by failing to adopt this proposal, France "avait manqué un sérieux rendez-vous avec le Vietnam" (p. 107).

The contributors who discuss Isaac's political activities similarly find it difficult to focus on a man who was often a bit player. For the most part, these writers analyze political networks and their contributions all detail a world in which influential men circulated in company boardrooms, learned societies, gentlemen's clubs, and political pressure groups. According to Mathias Bernard, Isaac was, above all, a "man with contacts," (p. 180) and contacts were all important in the world of conservative republicanism. Sylvie Geneste's essay on Edouard Aynard, Lyon's leading citizen of the late nineteenth century and mentor to Isaac, takes us back to the early Third Republic. Aynard and his circle of friends established the networks that encompassed learned societies, local banking, the chamber of commerce, and matrimonial alliances: all bound Lyon's bourgeois to one another and to republican politics. Bruno Benoit also focuses on Lyon, examining the relationship between the mayor Edouard Herriot and Lyon's traditional elites in the first half of the twentieth century. Herriot overcame his outsider status and his leftist politics to forge a working relationship with moderate Catholics like Isaac. Herriot inserted himself in Lyonnais circles: he published in the *Revue d'histoire de Lyon*, defended local economic interests and moved, with the rest of the Radical Party, toward the political center. Mathias Bernard's contribution discusses Isaac's role as a link between Lyon's business interests and Parisian politics. As deputy, then minister for Commerce, and finally national president of the Fédération Républicaine, Isaac "rapidly reached the peak of the Third Republic's *cursus honorum*" but without establishing a deeply rooted political movement in Lyon itself (p. 182). In an age of mass politics, Bernard argues, translating "associative, familial, and social solidarities" into "a true political network" was increasingly impractical (p. 173).

The essays that focus more closely on the national political scene also emphasize the importance of personal contacts and elite networks. Isaac virtually disappears in Jean Garrigues' discussion of liberal networks, which analyzes the paths that Lyonnais notables followed into national political circles. The elite sociability of company boardrooms, free-trade pressure groups, and the liberal press ensured that liberalism, despite its declining electoral fortunes in the Belle Époque, retained a real political influence. Jean Vavasseur-Desperriers also focuses on Isaac's career in national politics as founding member and eventual president of the Fédération Républicaine; under Isaac's leadership in the 1920s the Fédération Républicaine was dominated by industrialists, but during the 1930s "the rise of mass political movements eventually contaminated the old federation," with some parts of the movement indistinguishable from right-wing leagues (p. 169). Aspects of Third Republic political culture—notably concerning the relationship between the rise of mass politics and the decline of the bourgeois networks in which Isaac was at home—tend to slip into the cracks between the essays without being explicitly addressed.

The reader of these essays occasionally has the sense that the scholars present at this conference did not always listen to one another carefully. For instance, on the question of Isaac's liberalism, Jean Garrigues assures us that we ought not consider Isaac a liberal "in the strict sense of the term" because his path to liberalism—via the Catholic *ralliement* of the 1890s—"does not correspond to the classic path of pure liberals" (p. 41). Later in the volume, Bruno Dumons argues that liberalism was the guiding principle of all aspects of Isaac's life: his belief in individual liberty had "religious dimensions as well as political, economic, and social ones" (p. 196). Immediately following Dumons' essay, Virginie de Luca, describing Isaac's role as president of La Plus Grande Famille, tells us that Isaac maintained that everyone had "to

choose between the good of the family and individualism” and that “the latter negated the former” (p. 226). Isaac opted for family and supported a variety of measures intended to privilege those individuals who produced children in quantity. The problem here is not that the authors disagree, but rather that they never address one another. They thereby miss an opportunity to discuss the meanings of liberalism as they persisted under the Third Republic and faced new challenges from the radical and socialist left. There are other missed opportunities in this volume. Like liberalism, “bourgeoisie” appears in the title without being subject to any interrogation. None of the authors is interested in recent, largely English-language, debates over the meaning of class in general or the bourgeoisie in particular.[2] Finally, there is no critical reflection on Isaac’s journal itself—no discussion of diary keeping, male bourgeois interiority, or self-reflection.

#### LIST OF ESSAYS

- Hervé Joly, “Introduction”
- Bernadette Angleraud and Catherine Pellissier, “L’insertion d’une dynastie sur la scène lyonnaise”
- Jean Garrigues, “Les réseaux libéraux au temps d’Auguste Isaac”
- Sylvie Geneste, “Edouard Aynard, leader d’un groupe libéral”
- Pierre Vernus, “Protectionnisme et libre-échange dans la Fabrique lyonnaise de soieries (années 1880-1917)”
- Jean-François Klein, “Lyon l’exception coloniale: Auguste Isaac défenseur de l’industrialisation indochinoise”
- Hubert Bonin, “Auguste Isaac et la place bancaire lyonnaise”
- Hervé Joly, “Auguste Isaac, administrateur de sociétés”
- Jean Vavasseur-Desperriers, “De la présence à la distance: les milieux d’affaires et la Fédération républicaine”
- Mathias Bernard, “Auguste Isaac et les réseaux modérés à Lyon”
- Bruno Benoit, “La municipalité Herriot et les élites traditionnelles”
- Bruno Dumons, “Aux sources du catholicisme libéral d’Auguste Isaac”
- Virginie De Luca, “Auguste Isaac parmi les familiaux et les natalistes dans l’entre-deux-guerres”

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#### NOTES

[1] Auguste Isaac, *Journal d’un notable lyonnais. 1906-1933*, ed. Hervé Joly (Lyon: Éd. BGA Permezel, 2002).

[2] David Garrioch, *The Formation of the Parisian Bourgeoisie, 1690-1830* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1996); Carol E. Harrison, *The Bourgeois Citizen in Nineteenth-Century France: Gender, Sociability, and the Uses of Emulation* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999); William M. Reddy, *Money and Liberty in Modern Europe: A Critique of Historical Understanding* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1987). Interested readers will also want to consult Sarah Maza, *The Myth of the French Bourgeoisie: An Essay on the Social Imaginary, 1750-1850* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2003) which appeared in the same year as the Auguste Isaac conference.

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