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Annie Jourdan, *La Révolution, une exception française?* Paris: Flammarion, 2004. 461pp. Appendices, bibliography and index. €24 (pb). ISBN 2-082-10318-8.

Review by James Livesey, University of Sussex.

In this lengthy essay, Professor Jourdan synthesizes the recent corpus of largely French language work on the Revolution. In gathering together the insights of scholars such as Jean-Claude Martin, Bernard Gainot, Lucien Jaume, François Hinker, and Jean-Pierre Jessenne Professor Jourdan performs a great service for the field. Professor Jourdan does not impose a false or constraining consensus on what is a diverse body of work. Instead she describes a series of discussions and debates that converge on a series of themes. The strength of this book is its illustration of the manner in which the interaction of some revived and some new questions is transforming the study of the Revolution.

The book is organized into two sections. The first analyzes the historiography of the Revolution. While there are some familiar elements to this section, such as the narration of the overthrow of the social interpretation of the Revolution in favor of explanatory strategies derived from the study of political culture, for the most part these familiar themes give way to new, or revived, ideas and problems. One of the most important of these new themes is the approach to the Revolution through the optic of the commercialization of France. This idea of commercial civilization allows Professor Jourdan to integrate the detailed work of an older historiography on *subsistances* with a more contemporary concern for political culture. This is particularly relevant to her account of Parisian popular politics where she wishes to argue for a distinction between popular revolutionary engagement and *sans-culotterie*. The notion of commercial civilization unites what was previously divided. Instead of seeing the provisioning of bread as a question of social history analytically distinct from the problems of politics, she argues that the provisioning of markets was inherently political, and understood to be so. Without resorting to the notion of a moral economy, she asserts that popular Parisian politics, especially in the year II, turned on political economy, on the effect of political power on commerce. Her criticism of William Sewell's notion of a "sans-culotte rhetoric of subsistence" points the way to the kinds of debates this approach promotes.

Jourdan also reflects the approach to the Revolution as an open process. Jourdan's Revolution does not play out a logic, rather it explores multiple, often contradictory possibilities. While one section on festivals and revolutions is organized by the liberalism versus republicanism paradigm, in general she argues that the Revolution created a new world of practice in a more organic and surprising way. By 1793 she asserts that a kind of "revolutionary everyday" had emerged that was uncontrollable and fissiparous. One consequence of this position was that the revolutionary process continued until 1799 and the brumaire coup. Between 1795 and 1799 the French population had explicitly adopted the values of the Republic, to the extent that "une culture démocratique" had become embedded among the people (p. 210). Here, again, there is much to debate since she asserts this democratic acculturation was unwitting rather than planned. Clearly, even those who see the Revolution as the advent of democracy do not agree on how to interpret its democratic nature.

The second section considers how we might situate and evaluate the French Revolution understood as neither the forerunner of the future nor the origins of totalitarianism. She argues that the idea of the Atlantic revolution associated with Robert Palmer and Jacques Godechot is a good place to begin to answer this question. Jourdan argues that by placing the French Revolution in the context of other revolutions—those of seventeenth-century England, its North American colonies in the eighteenth

century, and the Netherlands—we can reestablish its significance in both national and European terms. She argues that there is a typology of Atlantic revolutions. They were characterized by violent critique of the old regimes and the promotion of republicanism. The republicanism they promoted was heavily inflected by the Enlightenment and comprised a commitment to civic virtue, popular sovereignty, and the idea of rights rather than the ancient constitution. This component profits enormously from the work done in the last thirty years in the history of political thought by scholars inspired by J.G.A. Pocock and Quentin Skinner. Finally, all of these revolutions developed similar modes of organization, such as political clubs, a popular press, and ritual. In England, America, and the Netherlands the revolutions developed out of associative cultures dominated by the values of Protestant merchants and so had a liberal trajectory. The broadest support for the French Revolution was among the peasantry, who were Catholic and largely atomized. As a result, she argues, that revolution was egalitarian and so had a democratic vector but with a terroristic underside.

Professor Jourdan amply acknowledges that these comparisons and contrasts are tentative suggestions for future research rather than firm conclusions from a developed research program. The comparisons she draws are not rigid, and she is aware of elements that undermine her distinctions. She points out that one can reasonably characterize the American Revolution as a peasant revolution, like the French, given the number of farmers involved. She also hints at the possibility of a terroristic phase of the English Revolution in the Cromwellian period. Her comments on the peasantry are particularly tentative and reflect the renewal of interest in that field. One might add the names of such scholars as John Markoff, Peter Jones, and Philip Hoffman to the array of francophone scholars that are cited in the book as an indication of the energy now being invested in the study of the rural Revolution. Jourdan's plea for a comparative history of revolutions sits well, though ambitiously, with the work now being done on rural France that tries to integrate historical institutionalism in economics with cultural history and the traditional empirical strength of provincial work. Yet however one might refine particular distinctions or comparisons, or indeed redefine some of the questions posed, the ambition of this comparative approach is both exciting and refreshing.

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