H-France Salon Volume 16, Issue 5, #9

Jacques-Joseph Juge de Saint-Martin: Surviving the French Revolution in the Limousin

David G. Troyansky Brooklyn College and the Graduate Center, CUNY

Jacques-Joseph Juge de Saint-Martin (1743-1824) was a magistrate in Limoges, a landowner in the nearby countryside, a participant in local Revolutionary politics, and an acquirer of biens nationaux. More pertinent in the context of a project I am developing, he was a provincial intellectual whose career traversed the Revolutionary divide. Writing on cultural history, agronomy, forestry, philosophy, and psychology, Juge was a polymath whose work permits us to address what it meant to be a Revolutionary survivor who wrote in a range of disciplines.² Having a hand in Revolutionary politics – but not being as visible or evidently vulnerable as others – he had a refuge in the country that gave him the time and space to continue his agricultural and business pursuits while the intellectual work gestated before coming to fruition under Napoleon. In a local context, he represented the survival of a certain kind of intellectual activity from the Enlightenment into the nineteenth century.³ The publications themselves serve as key sources, but so do archival traces of political and economic activities as well as family connections between city and country, even extending for a time to the Caribbean, as does a commonplace book that includes poetry, riddles, puns, and stories.⁴ In retrospect, his Revolutionary and post-Revolutionary experience followed a model of humanist retreat that became characteristic of nineteenth-century regional elites.

We will begin with an outline of Juge's life and work and proceed to examine clues about how his intellectual career grew out of memories of Revolutionary survival and an evolving

¹ He figures briefly in David G. Troyansky, *Entitlement and Complaint: Ending Careers and Reviewing Lives in Post-Revolutionary France* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2023), 107.

² His published works include: *Traité de la culture du chêne* (Paris, 1788), *Notice des arbres et arbustes qui croissent naturellement ou qui peuvent être élevés en pleine terre dans le Limousin* (Limoges, 1790), *Proposition d'un congrès de paix générale* (Limoges, 1799), *Description pittoresque d'une métairie dans le département de la Haute-Vienne* (Limoges, 1806), *Théorie de la pensée, de son activité primitive et de sa continuité* (Paris, 1806), and *Changemens survenus dans les mœurs des habitants de Limoges depuis une cinquantaine d'années* (Limoges, 1808; 1817).

³ Survival is the theme of this Salon, but I have also presented Juge through the theme of "reconversions sociales" at the conference "Les reconversions sociales dans l'Europe de la Révolution française," Clermont-Ferrand, 19-20 October 2023.

⁴ Archives Départementales de la Haute-Vienne (ADHV): Juge de Saint Martin papers: F Non Classé 111: Family papers, including correspondence, records of property transactions, a speech for a Revolutionary festival, and an opération de cadastre, 1809; ADHV L 813-816: records concerning the Société des Amis de la Constitution and Société Populaire de Limoges; Bibliothèque Francophone Multimédia (Limoges): MS 66: Livre journal concernant l'enclos des Cy-devant Grands-Carmes; Mireille Della Giacomo, "Les correspondances et affaires commerciales de la famille Juge de Saint-Martin, entre Limoges et Saint-Domingue à la fin du XVIIIe siècle," Archives en Limousin, No. 54 (2021): 69-77; Archives Municipales (Limoges): Manuscripts: 1S 132/2: Pièces Fugitives, Juge de Saint-Martin, 300 p.

perspective on regional history. Indeed, he seemed to submerge those memories into a collective cultural history. We will put his career and principal publications in a longer-term context of intellectual history and sketch a comparison with one of his literary contemporaries, Jean Foucaud. While Foucaud maintained a reputation as a revolutionary, Juge constructed a cultural identity rooted in the magistracy, the land, and certain elements of Enlightenment and Revolutionary ideas.

As a story of survival, there are hidden aspects to Juge's life. Vincent Meyzie described Juge's withdrawal from the public in the most radical phase of the Revolution as a reaction to political events.⁵ Philippe Grandcoing, in a study of *châtelains* in the region, and Paul d'Hollander, in the most thorough overview to date of Juge's contributions, agree.⁶ They suggest an avoidance of public political stances after 1792. But it is worth discussing the nature of the intellectual work he undertook in that humanist retreat from political space, especially the surge in late-life publication, and how the historical *conjoncture* made for new opportunities in both public and private life. Survival involved tending to rural and urban properties, writing, and making periodic public appearances. A third-generation conseiller au Roi à la Sénéchaussée et Cour Présidial de Limoges who served in 1791-92 as Commissaire du Roi près le Tribunal criminel du Département de la Haute-Vienne and unsuccessfully sought a retirement pension from the Ministry of Justice in 1815 and 1817 (due to insufficient years of service), ⁷ he fathered another magistrate, Jean Aimé, who became mayor of Limoges in the 1830s. Thus, he and his family continued to play a role in the judicial and political systems. President of the local agricultural society and member of the Société Royale d'Agriculture, with connections to better-known botanists in the capital, he combined agricultural and intellectual pursuits.⁸ A moderately active member of the local Jacobin Club, he participated in various committees and announced on 1 December 1792 that he supported judging Louis XVI but not executing him.⁹ His reputation meant that he did not need to present the usual *mémoire* for assessment by the administration to become a professor of natural history at the local *École Centrale*, a quintessentially republican institution, on 11 pluviôse, year X.¹⁰

Juge was 46 years old in 1789, so his revolutionary experience should be viewed through the prism of mid-life, although a mid-life whose sense of authority and security was briefly shaken

⁵ Vincent Meyzie, "'Un temps d'orages et de Révolution' à l'aune d'écrits du for privé: les anciens magistrats présidiaux confrontés à l'événement politique (1789-1799)," in *Hommes de loi et politique (XVIe-XVIIIe siècles)*, ed. Hugues Daussy and Frédérique Pitou (Rennes: Presses universitaires de Rennes, 2007), 179-200. Juge also appears throughout Meyzie's magisterial *Les illusions perdues de la magistrature seconde. Les officiers 'moyens' de justice en Limousin et en Périgord (vers 1665-vers 1810) (Limoges: PULIM, 2006).*

⁶ Philippe Grandcoing, *Les demeures de la distinction: Châteaux et châtelains au XIXe siècle en Haute-Vienne* (Limoges: Presses universitaires de Limoges, 2000), 132-136; Paul d'Hollander, "Jacques-Joseph Juge de Saint-Martin, entre monarchie et révolution," in *Autour de l'herbier de Jacques-Joseph Juge de Saint-Martin (1743-1824), un homme des Lumières*. Expositions-Conférences-Workshop, Événementiel organisé de novembre 2020 à février 2021 (BFM, Limoges), 36-45.

⁷ Archives Nationales, BB25 35, dossier 237.

⁸ "Mémoire sur l'engrais des bœufs dans la ci-devant province du Limousin et pays adjacents, par M. Juge, correspondant à Limoges, le 17 février 1791 [inséré dans les *Mémoires de la Société d'agriculture de Paris*, 1791]." ⁹ ADHV, L 816, Folio 25 verso.

¹⁰ Maxime Berthomé, *L'enseignement secondaire dans la Haute-Vienne pendant la Révolution, 1789-1804* (Paris; Limoges: Guillemot et Lamothe, 1913); Lucien Tiffonnet, *Notice sur l'Ecole centrale de la Haute-Vienne (5 mars 1797-31 août 1804)* (Limoges: Ducourtieux, 1893).

early in the decade when he was sued by his father, who sought to undo a pre-mortem transmission of property. Toward the end of the *ancien régime* and into the early years of the Revolution, Juge contributed to the scientific literature on agronomy and forestry, recounting the development of his inherited and purchased properties and connecting with other experts in France. At 49, he weighed in on the fate of Louis XVI; he was 50-51 in the Year II; 56 when Napoleon came to power, and in his mid-60s when reaching his period of most active publication. Political withdrawal thus kept alive intellectual habits. He published the *Théorie de la pensée* at 63 in 1806 and his best-known work, *Changemens survenus dans les mœurs des habitants de Limoges depuis une cinquantaine d'années*, at 65 in 1808 with a second edition coming nine years later.

Both editions of *Changemens survenus* were retrospective works that encompassed a life's experience going back to youth, and in both Juge appeared to erase elements of his own history while allowing traces to emerge in the general narrative. He obscured his own role in the purchase of *biens nationaux* and, while praising liberty and declaring his opposition to slavery, he failed to mention his family's connection to the trade in Saint-Domingue. Similarly, he seemed to approve of secularizing tendencies while ignoring the dangers to family members in religious orders. His purchase of a large ex-convent, the *Grands Carmes*, was an opportune act in the Revolutionary moment; resale in parcels between 1791 and 1813 indicated a longer-term strategy or a series of individual opportunities.¹³

Changemens survenus could be called an histoire des mentalités avant la lettre. Both editions, in the Empire and the Restoration, may be read as initiating a tradition of praising the désenclavement of the Limousin by Royal Intendant Anne-Robert-Jacques de Turgot. ¹⁴ But Juge was juggling this longer-term perspective with an intimate knowledge of day-to-day politics. The earlier edition devoted more space to the Revolution while the latter added material on popular culture, but both incorporated the Revolution into a history of longer-term change. They referred to the accomplishments of the Revolution while lamenting the influence of luxury and spent many pages addressing superstition. In his work, Juge embodied the Enlightened figure and the local notable while choosing to emphasize gradual change.

In describing the changes occurring in Limoges, Juge saw a loss of gaiety and a rise of egotism, but, on the whole, he cast the defeat of superstition and isolation as a positive thing. The shift could be measured in the architecture of Limoges, people's diets, their entertainments, and their mentalities. He mentioned new enthusiasm for the theater and the newly widespread practice of

Clermont-Ferrand.

¹¹ BFM, Limoges: MAG.P LIM F 5623 (1): "Mémoire pour M. Me. Pierre-Nicolas Juge, seigneur de Saint-Martin, ancien conseiller du roi en la Sénéchaussée et Siege présidial de Limoges, défendeur, et autrement demandeur en relaxance et restitution. Contre Martial Garaud, maître boulanger, demandeur au principal. Et encore contre M. Me Jacques-Joseph Juge, conseiller du roi esdit Siege." Bordeaux: Impr. Des frères Labottiere, 1782, 1 vol. (95 p.).
¹² On the question of erasure and life-course, I acknowledge comments made when I presented a version of this work at an 18-century France workshop at Columbia University and the colloquium on "*Reconversions sociales*" in

¹³ Bibliothèque Francophone Multimédia (Limoges): MS 66: *Livre journal concernant l'enclos des Cy-devant Grands-Carmes*. An arched entrance eventually made its way to the Philadelphia Museum of Art: philamuseum.org/collection/object/42253.

¹⁴ For an overview of Turgot's role in opening up the Limousin to a wider world, see, for example, Michel Kiener and Jean-Claude Peyronnet, *Quand Turgot régnait en Limousin: un tremplin vers le pouvoir* (Paris: Fayard, 1979).

mothers nursing their own babies. He described how children had grown less obedient and how filial piety had declined. And he seemed to be using revolutionary rhetoric in describing "un peuple tout nouveau."¹⁵

The Revolution fit into a long-term change in *moeurs*. In metaphorical language that he tweaked in the next edition, he described revolutionary inhabitants of Limoges as avoiding any excess but constantly positioning themselves "...au milieu du torrent pour éviter les écueils du rivage." But while rejecting *excès*, he accepted other elements of the Revolution. He lauded the sale of *biens nationaux*, claiming that they benefited about 200 families. He did not admit his own role as the biggest beneficiary of all, putting his strategy of economic and political survival into a more general historical trajectory.

Some changes he recounted were short-lived. He mentioned the emptying of convents and the availability of many young women while men fought at the front, lamenting what he saw as the resulting debauchery. He signaled a parallel between monarchical and paternal power without offering a strong personal opinion, and he remarked upon a temporary end to traditional practices: from elaborate funerals, religious processions, *messes de Noël, gâteaux des rois*, the lighting of *feux de joie* on St. Jean's day (which he saw as an ancient cult of the sun borrowed from Greeks and Romans), to the abandonment of the *charivari*. In a Rousseauian manner, he regretted the spread of urban *moeurs* to the countryside, especially *l'oisiveté* and *le célibat*, and his remarks about the recent unreliability of artisans and the service class serve as reminders of his own activities in property management. While he lamented the role of rumor – "*exagérer les nouvelles*" – he approved of long-term cultural changes, the world of literary societies, concerts, and balls. His private writings certainly confirm this attitude, suggesting that a certain set of Enlightenment ideas survived with him. Personal and local observations merged with a more generalized discourse on cultural change.

Juge also discussed economic, financial, educational, and judicial consequences of revolution. He noted inflation and the seizure of *meubles* of the rich by the lower classes. He mentioned Latin inscriptions in the ruins of St-Martial, but not his own trading in antiquities. ¹⁷ He spoke of educational benefits for children of *agriculteurs*, and singled out the teaching of natural sciences and the spread of botany and mineralogy, but did not mention his own role either in the classroom or as a collector. He singled out préfet Louis Texier-Olivier as continuing the tradition of Turgot and praised the *équité* of the judicial system and the development of secondary education, again without explicitly revealing his personal role. He only noted the problem of teachers being recruited from former clergy members but saw them as eventually dying off. Finally, he lauded the development of a *pépinière départementale* (tree nursery) without mentioning that he had donated it.

The section on the Revolution was cut dramatically in the edition of 1817, where he deployed a somewhat different riverine metaphor for the effects of the Revolution: "un fleuve long-temps débordé, qui serait enfin rentré dans son lit." From the idea of sticking to the middle of the river,

¹⁵ Juge, Changemens (1808), 62.

¹⁶ Juge, *Ibid.*, 66-67.

¹⁷ Charles-Nicolas Allou, *Description des monumens des differens ages, observés dans le département de la Haute-Vienne, avec un précis des Annales de ce pays* (Limoges: Chapoulaud, 1821).

he now saw the water returning to its bed after overflowing its banks. Later in the text, he evoked the themes of *perfectibilité* and evidence of human progress, developments that could be encouraged or temporarily halted by revolution: "Il faut avouer cependant qu'une catastrophe, ou une grande révolution, peuvent arrêter pour un temps le progrès de l'esprit humain, peuvent même replonger dans l'oubli tous les arts d'agrément." And he singled out agriculture and print as central means of ensuring humanity's perfectibility. ¹⁸ The cutting of passages on the Revolution suggests some prudence, but he continued to evoke justice, agriculture, fighting superstition, and the critique of luxury.

The big themes of Juge's *Changemens survenus* were changes in religious practice, language, and sociability. He was not lamenting a world that was lost. He was part of the push to change it, at least within limits. He was both observer and participant. Among his manuscripts in the *Archives Départementales* is a speech for a Revolutionary festival celebrating the *Décadi* that seems to anticipate his later published work. He offered a history of festival activity, ranging from Asia to Europe to the Americas, and he spoke of the evolution of the calendar, including what he had gleaned about Mexico. He notably countered those who adhered to Christian religious tradition and suggested that some people – he singled out women and the aged – would understandably have difficulty dealing with cultural change.

As he survived, so did an Enlightenment-style ideal of progress, which was central to his 1806 book on philosophy and psychology, *Théorie de la pensée*, *de son activité primitive*, *indépendante des sens, et de sa continuité prouvée par les songes*, which took the form of a dialogue with his son. It explored a theory of knowledge and particularly the continuity of thought revealed by dreams. It also displayed his knowledge of natural history and placed him in an intellectual tradition running back to the Ideologues. He rejected materialism, but he put himself in line with the canon of Enlightenment thought. Early in the *Théorie de la pensée*, he alerted his son to the idea of intellectual progress pushing beyond supposed limits to understanding, and recommended the marquis de Condorcet's *Tableau [historique] des progrès de l'esprit humain.*²⁰ Late in the book he commended Denis Diderot and Jean d'Alembert for having laid the foundations for continued intellectual progress.²¹

References ran from antiquity to the present, with an emphasis on the Enlightenment. The themes were thought and sensation, false distinctions between body and mind, language and literature, anatomy and botany, and especially human perfectibility. Perhaps most original were chapters on sleep, dreams, continuity of thought, and sleepwalking. But he put it all in a sweeping history of civilization, with references to scientific collecting in Macao, Virginia, India, West Africa, the Amazon, and Cayenne, writings from India, China, Egypt, Mexico, and Peru, and mining in Potosi, Peru, and Germany. He emphasized print and calendars (the subjects of his revolutionary *discours*). Juge also wrote of orphaned children raised by animals in the forests of France, Germany, and Russia, of his having acclimatized trees from America, and of the ways in which slavery brutalized people and enervated the master.²² He criticized

¹⁸ Juge, Changemens (1817), 197-198.

¹⁹ ADHV: Juge de Saint Martin papers: F Non Classé 111.

²⁰ Juge, *Théorie de la pensée* (1806), 11.

²¹ *Ibid.*, 445-446.

²² *Ibid.*, 301.

colonialism, which, as he saw it, began with the spread of religion by priests, listing three principal evils: "Guerre, superstition, servitude; telles sont les causes qui ont resserré la sphère de l'esprit humain, perverti la morale des nations, et détruit la portion de bonheur que la nature réservoit à chaque individu." At that point he heaped praise on Napoleon, seeing him as "l'homme le plus extraordinaire qui ait paru sur la terre," and as capable of imposing universal peace, the subject of another publication. ²⁵

Paul d'Hollander has contrasted Juge to the Ideologues because of his criticism of materialism and the abbé de Condillac's sensualism,²⁶ but Juge actually wrote approvingly of some of Condillac's writings on intelligence and perfectibility as well as on human creativity and the ability to make revolutions: "L'homme est seul capable d'opérer les révolutions: l'homme seul peut cultiver les arts; il est le seul être qui sache s'élever au-dessus des objets sensibles, le seul être moralement reconnoissant, le seul enfin qui soit digne d'admirer une Providence, distributive éternelle d'éternels bienfaits!"²⁷

In discussing predictions, he distinguished between those who claimed supernatural powers and those who used reason, for example in connecting Enlightenment and Revolution, and evoked the predictability of revolution:

Quand Rousseau, Voltaire, Helvétius, Raynal, et tant d'autres, ont prédit la révolution de France; quand Montesquieu a prédit les événements de la politique future et la chute de l'empire ottoman; quand Cardan a deviné l'existence d'un atmosphère autour des corps électriques; quand le même auteur a prédit qu'à la fin du dix-huitième siècle la religion catholique auroit à souffrir de grandes persécutions en France: c'est par une suite du progrès des lumières et par la combinaison de leurs pensées purement intellectuelles. Ils ont cru, avec raison, que *ce qui est futur est dans sa cause*. ²⁸

This allowed him to predict continued progress over the next fifty years.

Surviving the Revolution, for Juge, meant putting his individual life into a broader regional and national context. It also meant balancing somewhat different temporalities and reacting quickly to political events and economic opportunities while imagining the Revolution as contributing to longer-term cultural change and economic strategies. When, during the Old Regime, the monarchy encouraged clearing of land, he responded.²⁹ When the Revolutionary republic did something similar, he was ready with a proposal.³⁰ And rural retreat did not rule out urban activities. He had a foot in each place. He continued to sell pieces of the Grands Carmes – he left a record of transactions for the years 1791-1813 – and when he rented out urban properties,

²³ *Ibid.*, 449.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 450.

²⁵ Proposition d'un congrès de paix générale (Limoges, 1799).

²⁶ D'Hollander, "Jacques-Joseph Juge de Saint-Martin, entre monarchie et révolution," op. cit., 43.

²⁷ Juge, *Théorie de la pensée* (1806), 353.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 388-389.

²⁹ ADHV F non classé 111. Papiers de Famille Trouvés à Boubeau, including a printed Déclaration du Roy, qui accorde des encouragements à ceux qui défricheront les landes et autres terres incultes, 1767.

³⁰ Ibid. Déclaration de l'intention de défricher...les terrains..., loi du 3 frimaire an 7 (23 9bre 1798).

he made arrangements to provide firewood from his estate. Political events in Limoges may have induced him to go to the country, but an expert on trees had much to do there, taking a long view that included thinking ahead to the production of his own coffin.

The question of how he survived the most radical phase of the Revolution remains open. Did he go just far enough in a revolutionary direction to stay out of trouble? Perhaps his attachments to other notable families, and others' hopes of taking advantage of his skills and connections were key to his survival.³¹ Michel Cassan has argued that Limoges avoided violence at the time of the Saint Bartholomew's Day Massacre because of the human connections that people had developed with each other and with an urban identity that was more important than a religious one, at least an extreme religious one.³² Perhaps we are dealing with a similar phenomenon two centuries later that benefitted individuals in Juge's position.

Looking at Juge's life in parallel with that of another Limougeaud illustrates these human connections and how a shared intellectual identity may have trumped political differences and helped Juge to survive. His more radical contemporary, Jean Foucaud, now memorialized with a street in Limoges which identifies him as an Occitan poet, never shook his association with the Revolution and was known for violent anticlerical outbursts – despite the fact that he was himself a former priest. Juge and Foucaud were both members of the local Jacobins, professors at the *Ecole Centrale*, and participants in revolutionary festivals, where Foucaud gave lectures and speeches that lauded the accomplishments of the Revolution, while Juge tended to incorporate Revolutionary history in a longer, more gradual, temporality. They were of different social origins, Foucaud's less elevated, but the two clearly shared an interest in the local language, with Foucaud studying it in detail and Juge collecting sayings and including poems in patois in his commonplace book.

Juge's economic activities bridged divides as well. Paul Hanson distinguished between Caen and Limoges in the period of the Federalist Revolt by seeing a distinction between places with big landowners on top and places with magistrates and professionals in the ascendancy.³⁴ Juge was both landowner and magistrate. He straddled a number of divides. And in a city as compact as Limoges (despite its having been two cities, *Cité* and *Château*), there were practical reasons why people might want to avoid antagonizing one another. Juge managed to steer the right course at the right time. The riverine metaphor he used to describe the Revolution in his

³¹ I wish to acknowledge conversations on the matter with Paul d'Hollander, Vincent Meyzie, and Mireille della Giacomo

³² Michel Cassan, "Les violences à Limoges au temps des troubles de religion," in *Violences en Limousin à travers les siècles*. Rencontre des historiens du Limousin, 20^e anniversaire, ed. Paul d'Hollander (Limoges: PULIM, 1998), 121.

³³ J. Foucaud, *Poésies en patois limousin*, édition philologique complètement refondue pour l'orthographie, augmentée d'une vie de Foucaud, par M. Othon Péconnet, d'une étude sur le patois du Haut-Limousin, d'un essai sur les fabulistes patois, d'une traduction littérale, de notes philologiques et d'un glossaire, par M. Émile Ruben, Conservateur de la Bibliothèque de Limoges, Secrétaire général de la Société archéologique de Limoges (Paris: Librairie de Firmin Didot Frères, fils et co., l'Imprimerie de l'Institut et de la Marine, rue Jacob 56, 1866); *Quelques fables choisies de La Fontaine, mises en vers patois limousine...* pr J. Foucaud,...avec le texte français à côté...1809.

³⁴ Paul R. Hanson, *Provincial Politics in the French Revolution: Caen and Limoges*, *1789-1794* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1989).

Changemens may tell us something about his particular revolutionary career. He might have used his time in the Jacobins to take the pulse of the city and adjust accordingly. Somehow the gradualist (proto-liberal?) won out. Juge and Foucaud emerged safely from revolutionary turmoil to achieve lasting local renown, but the more radical Foucaud was said to have been embittered later in life.

In one sense, Juge managed to continue a life learned in a notable Old-Regime family. But in another, it was the experience of the French Revolution, which had cost his kin dearly but offered economic opportunities to him, that turned him into the writer and polymath he became. Surviving the Revolution meant creating a corpus of material that extended Enlightenment-era reflections and modeled a long-term representation of Limousin cultural geography and progress.

David G. Troyansky Brooklyn College and the Graduate Center, CUNY

H-France Salon ISSN 2150-4873 Copyright © 2024 by H-France, all rights reserved.