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Andrew Jainchill, *Reimagining Politics after the Terror: The Republican Origins of French Liberalism*. Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 2008. xii + 317 pp. \$45.00 U.S. (cl). ISBN 978-0-8014-4669-6.

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What is the relationship between classical republicanism and liberalism as traditions of political thought? The entrenched view, originally formulated with reference to the origins of the American republic, dates back to the seminal work of Bernard Bailyn and J.G.A. Pocock.^[1] These writers see a sharp divide between the two traditions. Republicanism was rooted in a cyclical view of history, and derived much of its force from its invocation of political models drawn from classical antiquity, whereas liberalism espoused a progressive conception of history and was strongly modernist. Republicanism was communitarian whereas liberalism was individualist. For republicans, liberty depended on “manners,” and in particular on civic virtue and public spirit; whereas for liberals, it was constitutions which would make it possible for people to live together in freedom, irrespective of their moral qualities. Republicans distrusted commerce because it tended to dissolve civic virtue, whereas liberals celebrated the commercial spirit both for its wealth-creating capacity and because it underpinned modern freedom.

This dichotomy between republicanism and liberalism has been reasserted by latter-day republicans such as those rediscoverers of the neo-Roman “third concept of liberty,” Quentin Skinner and Philip Pettit.^[2] But their account has struggled to find favour with historians of nineteenth-century liberalism, who are increasingly prone to find liberal discourse shot through with republican themes, including enthusiasm for the Athenian polis. Eugenio Biagini, Paul Nolte and Nadia Urbinati, to name but three, have made important historiographical interventions along these lines.^[3]

The French case is the test-case for the continuity thesis. On the one hand, classical republicanism was particularly powerful in revolutionary France, under the influence of Rousseau and others, although we now know thanks to the work of Rachel Hammersley and others just how much French revolutionary politics owed to the *English* tradition of classical republicanism.^[4] On the other hand, the progenitors of a distinctively liberal tradition of political thought in France—notably Germaine de Staël and Benjamin Constant—drew a sharp distinction between ancient and modern liberty, and argued that the critical failing of revolutionary politics lay in its pursuit of the former in a modern commercial society. Does not Constant's critique of the republicanism of Rousseau and Mably, and of their love of Sparta, provide the clearest evidence for those who see a sharp break separating republicanism from modern liberalism? Did not French liberalism take as its starting-point a rejection of revolutionary politics inspired by classical republicanism? As Andreas Kalyvas and Ira Katznelson put it in a recent book, “Staël's liberalism can be understood as the result of a struggle first within and then against the civic tradition.”^[5] Moreover, is not the longer-term fortune of French liberalism explained by its difficult coexistence with a strong republican tradition?

In fact much recent work on Constant denies this account, and points out how ambivalent he was towards modern liberty, and how careful he was not to deny the importance of political liberty to the preservation of freedom in modern society. But if there was no sharp break, what alternative account can we construct of the transformation of republicanism into liberalism, or of the ability of liberalism to

subsume republican themes? In attempting to respond to this challenge, historians of liberalism have been hampered by our lack of a full study of republicanism through the whole revolutionary period. This gap has now been admirably filled by Andrew Jainchill's excellent new book, based on his Berkeley Ph.D. This will be indispensable reading for anyone concerned to reconstruct the intricate story of how modern political forms and political languages emerged out of the wreckage of the French Revolution. Crucially, Jainchill argues—against Constant, but also against recent scholars such as Keith Baker—that classical republicanism reached the peak of its influence not during the Terror, but after it. Far from being discredited by the experience of the Terror, as a reader of Constant might suppose, classical republicanism in fact constituted “the dominant political language of post-Terror France” (p. 11).

In fact Jainchill's substantive argument is rather less clear-cut than this over-statement of his case, drawn from the introduction, suggests. The bulk of the book consists of a rich and detailed excavation, not of the classical republican tradition, but of *modern* republicanism—of that tradition that took as its focus the distinctive forms that a republic must take in modern commercial society. To that extent, Jainchill echoes other recent authors, such as James Livesey, and picks up on themes Biancamaria Fontana and her collaborators defined in their study *The Invention of the Modern Republic*.^[6] It is no surprise to learn how important the idea of the modern republic was to the political debates of the post-Thermidorean period. Jainchill's originality lies in his demonstration of the extent to which the modern republican writers of this period—unlike their Girondin precursors, such as Condorcet—were animated by classical republican themes: in other words, there was no clean break between these two traditions, and the origins of liberalism, therefore, cannot straightforwardly be traced to the triumph of modern republicanism over its classical precursor.

The crucial chapter, from this point of view, is chapter three, on “Liberal Republicanism during the Directory.” Here he contextualizes the work of Staël and Constant, and demonstrates that the former, in particular, stood at the ‘aristocratic’ end of a spectrum of modern republican writers, several others of whom were notably more influenced by classical republican concerns. The key figure in Jainchill's account here is the little-known Charles-Guillaume Thérémin, whom he interprets as putting forward a “Kantian version of modern republicanism” which “constituted an important, and underappreciated, undercurrent of French Liberalism” (p. 113). Jainchill stresses that Thérémin was “resolutely and explicitly a modern republican,” although “his political philosophy was often marked by tensions between classical-republican and liberal themes” (p. 115). Like Constant, he was no straightforward celebrant of the triumph of commercialism, but remained a critic of many of the consequences of the commercial spirit. He was a modern republican whose work was infused with classical republican anxieties. Jainchill most effectively demonstrates the connection between classical anxieties and “modern” solutions in his analysis of Thérémin's advocacy of the extension of political rights to women. This proposal was, of course, alien to most of the classical republican tradition, with its central concern for the distinctively masculine quality of civic virtue. But for Thérémin the need for the enfranchisement of women stemmed the critical dependence of the republic on the mores of the citizens, for it was women, much more than men, who were the educators of the next generation of citizens.

Jainchill's work has another important implication: French liberalism was formed less by the reaction against the Jacobin Terror than by resistance to Napoleonic rule (p. 17). His key case-study here is of the liberal rejection of the growing authoritarianism of the Consulate, and in particular the response to the 1801 law establishing military tribunals to crush rural brigandage. Constant was a notably articulate defender of the jury system, and for Jainchill the key exposition of this anti-Bonapartist liberalism is to be found in *De la possibilité d'une constitution républicaine dans un grand pays*, an incomplete manuscript which Constant drafted mostly during the Consulate and which was not published until 1991.^[7] Here Constant outlined “a constitutional architecture for a liberal republic,” but “its language of balance and advocacy of an active political life reprised key features of the early modern classical-republican tradition” (p. 285). Its emphasis on individual liberty as its core value makes this a fundamentally liberal text, but it was a liberalism strongly inflected with classical republican

preoccupations with how to sustain an active citizenry. Jainchill makes a good case for the importance of this text, but given that Constant's political writings were powerfully shaped by historical conjunctures, I would have liked to see some consideration of where it fits in the evolution of his thought. It is, interestingly, neglected (except by Marcel Gauchet) in Helena Rosenblatt's excellent recent edited volume, *The Cambridge Companion to Constant*.^[8]

Jainchill concludes with a stimulating epilogue on "The Fate of French Liberal Republicanism." This makes two central points. The first is that the bifurcation which emerged in the 1790s between the "liberal republicanism" of Constant and Thérémis and the "liberal authoritarianism" of Sieyès and Roederer anticipated the subsequent division between individualistic and elitist strands which Lucien Jaume has made the centrepiece of his account of French liberalism in the nineteenth century.^[9] The second point concerns Tocqueville. He has long been recognized as a liberal whose preoccupation with civic virtue gives his writings a curiously classical republican tint. For that reason he has often been regarded as a rather isolated figure in French liberalism. Jainchill's account makes Tocqueville's liberalism look significantly less strange; although it still leaves us with the puzzle of why Tocqueville should have displayed so little interest in Constant's writings.

NOTES

[1] Bernard Bailyn, *The Ideological Origins of the American Revolution* (Cambridge, Mass.: Belknap Press, 1967); J.G.A. Pocock, *The Machiavellian Moment: Florentine Political Thought and the Atlantic Republican Tradition* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1975).

[2] Philip Pettit, *Republicanism: A Theory of Freedom and Government* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1997), especially 41-50; Quentin Skinner, *Liberty before Liberalism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998).

[3] Eugenio F. Biagini, "Liberalism and direct democracy: John Stuart Mill and the model of ancient Athens," in Eugenio F. Biagini, ed., *Citizenship and Community: liberals, radicals and collective identities in the British Isles, 1865-1931* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 21-44; Nadia Urbinati, *Mill on Democracy: from the Athenian polis to representative government* (Chicago, Ill., and London: University of Chicago Press, 2002); Paul Nolte, "Bürgerideal, Gemeinde und Republik: "Klassischer Republikanismus" im frühen deutschen Liberalismus," *Historische Zeitschrift* 254 (1992), 609-56.

[4] Rachel Hammersley, *French Revolutionaries and English Republicans: The Cordeliers Club, 1790-1794* (Woodbridge: Boydell, 2005).

[5] Andreas Kalyvas and Ira Katznelson, *Liberal Beginnings: Making a Republic for the Moderns* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008) p. 121.

[6] James Livesey, *Making Democracy in the French Revolution* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2001); Biancamaria Fontana, ed., *The Invention of the Modern Republic* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994).

[7] Benjamin Constant, *Fragments d'un ouvrage abandonné sur la possibilité d'une constitution républicaine dans un grand pays*, ed. Henri Grange (Paris: Aubier, 1991).

[8] Helena Rosenblatt, ed., *The Cambridge Companion to Constant* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009).

[9] Lucien Jaume, *L'Individu effacé : ou, le paradoxe du libéralisme français* (Paris: Fayard, 1997).

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