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**Mark Hulliung**, *Citizens and Citoyens: Republicans and Liberals in America and France*. Cambridge, Mass. and London: Harvard University Press, 2002. xiv + 250 pp. Notes and index. \$39.95 U.S. (cl). ISBN 0-674-00927-4.

**Frederic Cople Jaher**, *The Jews and the Nation: Revolution, Emancipation, State Formation, and the Liberal Paradigm in America and France*. Princeton, N.J. and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2002. x + 295 pp. Notes and index. \$45.00 U.S. (cl). ISBN 0-691-09649-X.

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Trans-Atlantic invective has reached new lows lately. The American press finds fun and profit in reporting the Bush administration's harsh pronouncements against French opposition to a United States-led war in Iraq. At the same time the French press is replete with hyperboles of its own about American hegemony in world affairs. Donald Rumsfeld's provocative reference to France and Germany as the "old Europe" was greeted by an acerbic editorial in the stately *Le Monde* entitled "Ce 'vieux Rumsfeld'."<sup>[1]</sup> Such diplomatic and journalistic contretemps are nothing new, of course. They are reminiscent of the divided response to Charles de Gaulle's withdrawal of French military participation in NATO nearly forty years ago. The latest round of anti-Americanism in France and francophobia in the United States, however, no longer concerns the Cold War. Well-informed commentators such as Richard Kuisel and Tony Judt note the strategic imbalance of power between the U.S. and Europe in general and of France's diplomatic efforts to create a European counterweight to the American hyperpower in particular.<sup>[2]</sup> And they well may be right.

What this commentary overlooks is something more enduring. As Mark Hulliung and Frederic Cople Jaher suggest in their comparisons of Franco-American political traditions, the roots of these differences stretch back to the eighteenth century. Liberal democracy of the Anglo-American sort, so scholarly conventional wisdom has it, never really developed in France. Taking their cue from Alexis de Tocqueville's *De la Démocratie en Amérique* (1835-40) and *L'Ancien régime et la révolution* (1856), social scientists have assumed that the U.S. embodied the civil society first prescribed by John Locke for a truly democratic state. France, on the other hand, suffered a stunted civic life first described by Jean-Jacques Rousseau that was reinforced by the centralized bureaucratic state resulting from absolute monarchy, Jacobin republic, and Napoleonic empire. America was fortunate in its moderate, liberal origins, while France suffered a radical, republican revolution. These events appear to have marked their politics ever since. Consequently, it might be argued, such a sharp divergence lies at the heart of the frequent misunderstandings between these two political cultures: American liberals suspect that French politics is conducive to totalitarianism, and the French republicans are convinced that American politics is beholden to savage capitalism. Their foreign policy differences follow accordingly.

This perspective is not precisely the implication one can draw from the books by Hulliung and Jaher. Their analysis is better informed and more subtle. Both authors are keen on dispelling the persistent myths about French and American liberal and republican politics used by contemporary political

interests for their own purposes. Hulliung, for example, is alarmed by the convergence of the American New Right and New Left who have made common cause against state-orchestrated liberalism since the Progressive Era. "New Deal Liberalism and its commitment to social justice suffer most of all in a world in which small is beautiful, the federal government ugly, and a concern for procedural fairness is regarded as an abdication of moral responsibility," writes Hulliung passionately in his preface (p. xii). A serious distortion in the accounts of the liberal and republican traditions in the U.S. has made for some strange history writing as well as political practice. A comparative study of those traditions in France and the United States, however, suggests that liberalism and republicanism are not in such sharp opposition to each other: republicans after 1870 actually saved liberalism from itself in France, and both liberals and republicans shared responsibility for the ideals of the Declaration of Independence in the U.S. long afterwards.

By comparing the emancipation of marginal social groups, the Jews especially, in revolutionary and Napoleonic France with their treatment in the United States in the same period, Jaher defends the same liberal consensus that has fallen out of political favor recently. "The findings for liberalism are decidedly mixed," he writes, "but indicate that for the majority of Americans (white men and women) the trend, well before the 1940s, expanded political participation. Notwithstanding significant, tragic, and huge exceptions, painful and slow progress, and injustices yet to be completely erased in the attainment of full citizenship, liberalism has been a vital force for most of the nation's history" (p. 31). On balance, the results in France have been less impressive. There, Jacobin tendencies interfered with sustained liberal progress, and the contrast with the achievements of American liberalism illuminates the obvious partisanship in ideological accounts on both sides of the Atlantic. For Jews especially, the result has been a greater civic integration in the U.S. than in France.

Each in his own way, Hulliung and Jaher celebrate republican liberalism and its unsung achievements on both sides of the Atlantic. It is worth reviewing more precisely how each author does so. Hulliung has written a thematically organized, historiographic essay; Jaher prefers chronological, comparative histories, taking each country in turn. As one would expect, the authors are more comfortable with one country, the United States, than the other, even though Jaher's focus is more on France. Both historians are drawn to making global evaluations of liberalism; Hulliung is more generous to the French, Jaher to the U.S., as one would expect of their efforts to correct prevailing misconceptions in American political, historical, and intellectual conversations since World War II. Hulliung wants to rehabilitate the liberal tradition in France, especially in the nineteenth century, while Jaher is much more skeptical of that tradition, at least of its implications for Jews during the revolutionary and Napoleonic period. The net effect in both accounts, however, is the same: a corrective affirmation rather than a critical exploration of the Anglo-American model of civil society and political life.

Hulliung's purpose is easily summarized: "to highlight the liberal possibilities of French republicanism and the civic possibilities of American liberalism" (p. 21). Specialists will find it difficult to evaluate this historiographic effort to redeem liberalism in two different historical contexts; few of us have the expertise, much less the inclination, to make such sweeping assertions.<sup>[3]</sup> In contrast to the communitarian ideals associated with the likes of Bernard Bailyn and Gordon Wood, Hulliung asserts, "Republicanism in America did exist, of course, but was from the beginning distinctively modern and infused with seeds that would later develop into modern liberal ideology. Far from being antithetical to liberalism, the republican ideology shipped to the colonies on English boats actually served as midwife at the birth of American liberalism" (p. 10).<sup>[4]</sup> Well, maybe, but how would one verify this notion? As a historian of modern French culture and society, I must beg the question. I will leave that assertion for Americanists to assess.

For France, Hulliung is equally bold: "the standard Anglo-American depiction of an eternal Jacobin republican tradition, illiberal to the core, is not only overdrawn but fatally misleading. In reality, it was the nineteenth-century liberals who undermined the cause of French liberalism, largely because of their

fear of the dawning democratic age; and it was the republicans who saved liberal ideals, as symbolized by their constant efforts to enshrine the Declaration of Rights of Man and the Citizen, which the liberals repeatedly sought to put out of sight and out of mind" (pp. x-xi). In light of the equivocal politics of nineteenth-century figures such as François Guizot, Adolphe Thiers, Emile Durkheim, and Daniel Halévy, the cause of liberalism was not well served by its most familiar adherents. Hulliung's critique of them is devastating: "The sadness of [Halévy's] life and that of French liberalism are one and the same: a tale of brilliance, refinement, culture, and abject political failure" (p. 158).

The ardent supporters of the moderate Third Republic, apparently, were much firmer champions of liberal ideals. Léon Gambetta, Jules Ferry, Léon Bourgeois, even Jean Jaurès contributed mightily to the French liberal cause by their insistence upon republican ideals, even at the expense of their other ideological commitments. Emile Zola's defense of Alfred Dreyfus, for instance, deserves attention for its affirmation of civil liberties, national sovereignty, and democratic institutions. But Hulliung does not discuss them. He says nothing about French republicans. His is a strange argument based almost entirely on a critique of liberals as they contended with political enemies on both the extreme left and the extreme right throughout the nineteenth century. In the face of republican revolution, for example, Tocqueville himself abandoned his liberal faith, but the likes of Odilon Barrot and Armand Marrast on the eve of 1848 and then Alphonse de Lamartine took up the liberal cause in his stead, giving it a particular coloration that requires further analysis. Hulliung clearly needs another chapter here.

Jaher's project is more focused than Hulliung's. He wants to test the theoretical relationship of revolution, emancipation, and state formation by examining the fate of Jews in France and America during the early years of their national histories. More to the point, Jaher posits an American definition of liberalism whose application worked to advantage of Jews more in the United States than it did in France: "The liberal paradigm that Tocqueville and [Louis] Hartz regarded as regnant in America is the fundamental interpretive challenge of this study. As defined by them, its conceptual components include: the lack of a past (feudal and early modern with its religious and class conflicts); equality of status, if not condition (no legal orders of nobility or other seigniorial privileges, no established church); and individual rights and voluntary association as civic virtues (personal choice and responsibility, and diversity, pluralism, and federalism precluding corporate communities and centralized concentration of power)" (p. 44).<sup>[5]</sup> It is therefore no accident that Jaher finds America more liberal than France and much more hospitable to Jews and other social marginals.

The most interesting chapters in Jaher's book are devoted to the French history of Jewish emancipation from 1789 to 1815. The record is mixed. Although Jews received citizenship as a result of revolution and the emergence of a modern nation, most of the historical repressions remained. "Until well into the nineteenth century," Jaher writes, "Jews and Gentiles remained parted by religious and cultural traditions and historic loyalties, fantasies, and grievances. Even in revolutionary France, the first nation after the United States to emancipate the Jews, resisting equality did not stop after conferral of citizenship" (p. 62). The vote on Jewish emancipation was contested and slow—the Sephardim became citizens in January 1790, the Ashkenazim only in September 1791—and the limitations on it were almost immediate. Jews were specifically required to renounce their corporate privileges that protected their particular interests as a religious community. The state must prevail over the synagogue.

In response to anti-Semitic complaints, the Napoleonic regime restricted Jewish business activities, especially in Alsace and Lorraine where Jews had long lived a world apart. And in 1808 Jews were forced to create the consistory system of religious governance, the same year that the emperor issued two decrees which imposed stringent restrictions on Jewish commerce, residence, and military service and on Jewish naming practices. For all intents and purposes Napoleon ended the emancipation of Jews and reimposed their corporate status and organization. Since then French Jews have been citizens with a difference that led to legal discriminations applicable only to them: limited support for rabbinic seminaries and Hebrew schools, denial of state salaries for Jewish religious leaders (until 1831),

retention of pre-revolutionary debts and special taxes (until 1861), quotas for the admission of Jews in state schools and public institutions, and the like. Given this restrictive civic context, the Dreyfus Affair at the end of the nineteenth century and the deportation of Jews under the Vichy regime during World War II were almost predictable.

Jaher then applies the liberal paradigm to the civic integration of women and blacks in France and the U.S. His conclusion is unsurprising: France managed the politics of race better than the United States, and both countries were reticent to give women a full role in public life. "The Tocqueville-Hartz thesis," Jaher states, "illuminates important dimensions of American life and history and distinctions between France and the United States, but obscures the contradiction between racism and sexism, on the one hand, and individual liberty, universal republican values, and national consensus, on the other" (p. 219). And so the book finishes not far from where it began. Emancipation of Jews, Blacks, and women is situation specific. There is no one theoretical formula, either republican or liberal, that fits equally well all groups. Jaher's grand political theory in historical study thus remains only modestly useful.

My preferences here are clear. I would engage the more pragmatic perspective taken by Lynn Hunt in her presidential address at the annual meeting of the American Historical Association last December. "The history of the nineteenth, twentieth, and now twenty-first centuries repeatedly confirmed what the revolutionaries [in France] had already discovered: that it is very difficult to establish an enduring and productive tension between the effervescent experience of the social contract and the more mundane daily life with political institutions. In that sense, the French Revolution prepared the way for many different futures,"[6] liberal and republican alike. The republican liberalism in France and the United States lends itself to contradictory tendencies, at once democratic and totalitarian, revolutionary and imperial.

Let's be frank: American-style republicanism has its own dramatically illiberal tendencies. The U.S. constitution protected slave owners' propertied interests at the expense of human rights, and John Adams chose not to "remember the ladies," as his wife Abigail had charged him in a famous letter.[7] The Civil War and thirteenth amendment would finally liberate the blacks; the suffragist movement and World War I would set the stage for women's enfranchisement. But war, such as the present campaign against international terrorism, has led once again to the illiberal violation of civil liberties in the name of their defense. It seems that there has been a trans-Atlantic exchange of liberal ideals and realities that only historians with a less theoretical instinct will be able to untangle some decades from now. How ironic it is that a French republic should now become the more liberal state.

## NOTES

[1] "Ce 'vieux Rumsfeld'," *Le Monde (Sélection Hebdomadaire)*, No. 2830 (February 1, 2003): 11.

[2] "Deconstruct This: 'First Iraq, Then France.' Deteriorating U.S.-French Relations," *The Chronicle of Higher Education: The Chronicle Review* (February 28, 2003): B4.

[3] Except for Patrice Higonnet, *Sister Republics: The Origins of French and American Republicanism* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1988) and Susan Dunn, *Sister Revolutions: French Lightning, American Light* (New York: Faber & Faber, 1999), to varying degrees of success. As one would expect, Hulliung and Jaher commit some gaffs in areas outside their expertise. Hulliung, for instance, mistakes the colonial governor of New Jersey, Jonathan Belcher (he calls him Jonathan Boucher), while Jaher relies almost entirely on English translations of his sources and misspells too

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many French words and names (e.g., Marie-Jeanne Roland née Phlipon becomes Jeanne Philipson Roland, p. 202). Such are the perils of comparative scholarship.

[4] Cf. Bernard Bailyn, *The Ideological Origins of the American Revolution* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1967) and Gordon Wood, *The Creation of the American Republic, 1776-1787* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1969).

[5] See Louis Hartz, *The Liberal Tradition in America* (New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, 1955), the clearest statement of the liberal consensus view of American history, now largely forgotten.

[6] Lynn Hunt, "Presidential Address. The World We Have Gained: The Future of the French Revolution," *American Historical Review*, 108, no. 1 (2003): 19.

[7] Abigail Adams to John Adams, March 31, 1776, in *The Feminist Papers from Adams to de Beauvoir*, ed. Alice S. Rossi (New York: Columbia University Press, 1973), 10.

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