

Robert A. Palmer — *From Jacobin to Liberal: Marc-Antoine Jullien, 1775–1848*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993. Pp. x, 243.

Marc-Antoine Jullien, often called Jullien of Paris, was a prolific writer about public affairs and education whose active life began in the most critical period of the French Revolution and ended soon after the June Days in 1848. Happily, though far from fortuitously, this representative selection of his works has been compiled by Robert R. Palmer, a pre-eminent authority upon the earlier political and educational history of the period. Palmer also gives the selection continuity and perspective by providing an on-going survey of Jullien's life and times.

As Palmer explains, educationalists initially "discovered" Jullien in the 1940s, when he was hailed as "the father of comparative educational history" (p. 150) and a precursor of those engaged in the work of UNESCO. Further, in the 1960s he attracted the attention of socialist historians because in 1795 he was in prison with Babeuf, with whom he was also briefly associated in a futile attempt to revive revolutionary zeal among the people of Paris. Yet no substantial study of Jullien's whole life has appeared in English, nor have his works previously been available in that language. Palmer's translation of the most interesting of these formidably voluminous writings and his exposition of the ever-changing circumstances to which they relate are thus doubly valuable. Moreover, while this book is primarily one for historians of the period, it includes much of general interest, for during the 1820s Jullien, as the principal editor of *Revue Encyclopédique*, recorded many aspects of a world in transition. We may, for example, find here both his description of the trial run of "The Rocket" in 1829 and his scathing denunciation of Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*, in which he asserted that a woman should not concern herself with hideous and absurd stories, but should write to instruct and elevate her readers.

The book does not purport to be a definitive biography. Periods corresponding to intervals between Jullien's most revealing writings have necessarily been treated summarily, and only occasionally are we afforded glimpses of other people's opinions of him. The structure of the work, too, excludes any searching consideration of his actual activities. Together, however, the documents and the survey constitute a revealing biographical study of a notable man whose career was perpetually blighted by the record of his youth, when he became irrevocably identified with Robespierre and the Great Terror of 1794.

While Palmer's title, *From Jacobin to Liberal*, indicates his success in imparting thematic unity to potentially discursive material, his preface poses the question of the real meaning of those terms. Whatever that may be, Jullien certainly began life as a Jacobin. He was the son of a future regicide (Marc-Antoine Jullien "of the Drôme"); his mother readily, albeit regretfully, accepted massacre as an "atrocious necessity" (p. 21); and at the age of 16 he, like Robespierre, told the Jacobin Club that war against Austria could only benefit the monarchy. Less than two years later he was sent by the Committee of Public Safety "to gather information and reanimate the public spirit" (p. 33) in all the principal parts of France. Able, attractive, and ardent for the Revolution, Jullien met the Committee's expectations so well that in May 1794 he was explicitly authorized to enforce the revolutionary laws in

Bordeaux. He so stimulated the local committee that some 200 "moderates" were guillotined there during the last weeks of the Terror. He also seems to have been particularly responsible for hunting down those outlawed Girondins who were concealed in the area. Despite protestations of his own moderation, he was consequently fortunate in being imprisoned instead of executed after Thermidor. Moreover, although Palmer shows that only a third of his reports were addressed to Robespierre and that he had urgently recommended the recall from Brittany of the brutal Carrier, Jullien was henceforth commonly regarded as one of Robespierre's henchmen, even being called "the butcher of Bordeaux".

Certainly, too, Jullien became a liberal. Although he served the Empire well in Italy, he was unable either to give Napoleon his complete support or to free himself entirely from his own reputation. Consequently he was never again able to obtain an important political appointment in France, or even to secure a seat in any of the parliaments that assembled there during the next half-century. He was therefore compelled to confine his political activity to proffering advice, which was usually ignored, to one regime after another. These counsels, which Palmer cites extensively, often seem unrealistic in their insistence upon the importance of general unity, and they may well reflect Jullien's own hopes of rehabilitation. Nevertheless his break with Babeuf in 1795 marks his final repudiation of revolutionary violence: thereafter he consistently called for constitutional government, parliamentary institutions, and the essential civil liberties. Although it was not until 1848 that he again found democracy acceptable, he was also constant in insisting upon the importance of the welfare of all the people of France.

As Palmer points out, a similar evolution is evident in Jullien's works on education. At first he favoured a form of the ill-famed Le Peletier Plan of 1793, whereby children over the age of five were to be shaped in communal schools to form "a better race" (p. 152). He later thought that education appropriate to the pupils' "taste and talents" (p. 157) would be more useful to society and even a safeguard against revolution. True, the studies he proposed for those who would form the administrative elite seem appallingly exacting, if not as unrealistic as his conviction that the tabulation of answers to an international questionnaire could make teaching an "almost positive science" (p. 171). Again, however, his concern for society was modified by his interest in the methods of Pestalozzi, so that he increasingly emphasized the importance of fostering the individual development of children and promoting upward social mobility.

Few forms of historical writing are as illuminating as biographical studies, and this one is perhaps particularly stimulating because Palmer ultimately leaves his readers to determine the meaning of generic terms like Jacobin, liberal, and "bourgeois democrat" for themselves. In this context, it is worth considering that, although Jullien soon eschewed the enforcement of virtue by the state and continually emphasized the vital importance of a constitution, he seems to have lived happily enough with the concept of the sovereignty of the people.

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