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Decot, Jérémy and Clare Siviter, eds., *Un engagement en vers et contre tous : Servir les révolutions, rejouer leurs mémoires (1789-1848)*. Clermont-Ferrand: Presses Universitaires Blaise-Pascal, 2022. 282 pp. Bibliography, notes. 20.00 € (pb.). ISBN 9782845169975; 13.00 € (pdf). ISBN 978238770176.

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In their introduction to this, the most recent contribution to the body of scholarship which deals with the French Revolution at the intersection of literature (here the concentration is primarily on poetry) and history, Clare Siviter and Jérémy Decot highlight an important point, one made by writers and scholars for centuries since, from Germaine de Staël to Victor Hugo, from Paul Bénichou to Pierre Nora: that there were (at the very least) two parallel revolutions, one socio-political, the other literary, which were inaugurated in 1789 and realized in the years and decades following. As they explain, “Outre les révolutions historiques, la période concernée est aussi témoin d’un autre bouleversement, celui d’une révolution littéraire avec l’avènement du Romantisme” (p. 10). This is an interesting enough premise on its own, one for which much has already been said, and which demands precisely the sort of interdisciplinarity we find throughout this collection of articles. Indeed, since the Revolution’s bicentennial in 1989 (and to some extent even before), scholarship has tended to engage more critically with the various intersections of literature, history, “popular” culture as social phenomenon, along with their internalization among individuals and arguably entire peoples—what we call “memory studies.”

Siviter and Decot, however, provide the reader with more than simply a roadmap with which to navigate the scholarly precedent; aptly titled “L’Écrivain dans les Révolutions,” the introduction also offers a thorough overview of the titular idea of *engagement*; “S’engager pour ou contre, mais avant toute chose s’engager, convoquer la mémoire d’événements, de figures, d’idées en lien avec l’ère des révolutions de 1789 à 1848” (p. 14). This conceptual framework, which unifies a collection of essays whose themes are spread across a relatively broad (though not clumsily so) space and time, provides a useful thematic coherence to an incredibly broad premise. Chronology also helps to this end; the first two essays, which deal with the Chénier brothers—André and Marie-Joseph—give an effective point of entry into this epoch of revolutionary poets (and in this case, poets of the Revolution). Thibaut Julian, for instance, explores the similarities between the two brothers’ poetry in “Entre Pindare et Archiloque: les frères Chénier, poètes de la Révolution.” The differences between the two, biographically, politically, are well established; yet in some of their works—André’s odes and *iambes*; Marie-Joseph’s odes and *poèmes satiriques*—Julian argues, the two converge on a common understanding of important principles, those specifically of virtue and of liberty. Without obscuring the established ideological differences

between the two, Julian's essay is concerned primarily with the similarities between their poetry; to this end, the juxtaposition of their verses, inset throughout the main body of text, is incredibly useful. Finally, it should be noted that Julian's discussions of André Chénier's final poems--the *Ode à Charlotte Corday*, in particular--written while Chénier was incarcerated, breathes new life into some of the most interesting verse written during the Revolution, those that the author calls "la poésie carcérale et révoltée," which conjure "une contre-histoire de la Révolution" (p. 41). Seeing André and Marie-Joseph as counter-historian and quasi-propagandist respectively is a fascinating way of reimagining the two poets in relation to each other.

The idea of Marie-Joseph Chénier as a sort of propagandist, or at least as an artistic visionary of the Revolution, is taken up at greater length in the subsequent essay, by Gauthier Ambrus, which begins with a brilliantly concise quote from the nineteenth century historian Augustin Challamel: "la Révolution peut être comparée à un grand drame lyrique, paroles de M.-J. Chénier, musique de Gossec, décorations de David" (p. 49). The premise, in a general sense, of Ambrus' essay regarding Chénier is not entirely unlike David Lloyd Dowd's conception of David as a "pageant-master of the Republic"; according to Ambrus, Chénier's hymns function largely in line with the concept of a civic religion (much like David's paintings, it should be noted), serving larger political ends as much as aesthetic ones. By more closely scrutinizing the hymns, furthermore, Ambrus effectively draws literary criticism into the historical discipline (or perhaps vice versa). These first two essays complement studies such as Mona Ozouf's *La fête révolutionnaire* especially well, giving a sort of artistic--and indeed, aesthetic--context to the celebrations discussed in the latter work.

Moving forward chronologically from the Revolutionary period itself, one might imagine the editors faced a rather daunting task in deciding what, among a half century of continental literature, best suits a collection such as this one. To this end, Siviter and Decot deserve immense praise for maintaining a general thematic coherence in the subsequent essays. Geneviève Boucher's contribution serves as a sort of bridge between the Revolution and "Le temps court de la mémoire de la 'Grande Révolution'", as the second part is so aptly titled. The implication of *mémoire* in this context is effective as conduit for exploring the cultural imprint left by the Revolution, on France and indeed on all of Europe and the world beyond. This process of memory formation, of mythologization, begins--as the articles in this section note--during the Revolution. Boucher's essay, for instance--which explores the role of *chansons* in the act of revolutionary mythmaking, specifically in parallel to the unveiling of dedicatory statues of Marat and Lepeletier de Saint Fargeau, two of the Revolution's most famous martyrs--reframes this historical moment in terms of its political and religious significance. The deaths of these *patriotes*, according to Boucher, function as a sort of catalyst for the formation of myth--indeed, as a distinct sort of revolutionary memorialization--of which the *chanson* is an important component. Although the concept of a national myth is perhaps a subtext of Boucher's essay, it is implied as a correlate of the *nous*: the crystallization of a broader national identity around the Revolution's martyrs, a contrived tradition for which both composer and patron are a part of the *We*. It is my view that Boucher's work offers a fascinating, fresh addition to the extant body of scholarship on the pantheonization of Lepeletier and Marat, to that of Jacques Guilhaumou and Guillaume Mazeau, in particular.

Along with Boucher, the second part includes the contributions of Erica Mannucci, Pierre Blanchard, and Louise Hincker, each of whose essays offer, among other things, a look at writers largely neglected in recent scholarship. So too does each approach their respective topics through

the lens of a unique scholarly approach; for Mannucci, we are reintroduced to Marie-Joseph Chénier, although this time in translation. Chénier, his *Hymne à l'être suprême*, functions in Mannucci's essay as a means of examining the transnational influence of such a work on revolutionary ideas and their expression in Italy as translated by the Italian patriot Giovanni Fantoni. Mannucci's study embraces an interdisciplinary approach by looking at the more "technical" aspects of translation as it relates to Fantoni's adaptation of Chénier's hymn.

Pierre Blanchard, meanwhile, finds in the political satires written at the end of the revolutionary decade (and those written during the Empire's early years) a more "serious" iteration of the genre. These texts, according to Blanchard's thesis, serve an important historical purpose by reassessing the Revolution, its violent excesses, and its foundational principles. Often critical of the Revolution and Directory, satires such as those written by Joseph Despaze--*Le Juvenal du Directoire*--reconceive, according to Blanchard, "la dichotomie aristotélicienne entre poésie et Histoire" (p. 132). This sort of historical engagement by poets certainly problematizes the relationship between artist and experience, as Louise Hincker discusses in her essay on Jean-Pierre Lacombe Saint-Michel, a *Conventionnel* and soldier who left behind manuscripts of autobiographical verse. Preserved, repurposed, and rehabilitated by his descendant, the *nouveau romancier* Claude Simon, Lacombe's poetry expresses an interplay of the personal and historical; Hincker's essay is a remarkably engaging foray into the life and work of an individual whose writings betray a precarity of circumstances, an insecurity of historico-political proportions, that seems to have been somewhat emblematic of his time, certainly of his station(s) in life. Hincker frames the essay's thesis largely around the themes of "presence" and "absence" in Lacombe's writings, a paradigm of moment and milieu which will certainly help readers toward a more nuanced reading of his texts.

In Clare Siviter's essay, which rounds out the second part of this collection, we return to the theme of revolutionary memory touched upon in the introduction. Framed by the historical context of Napoleon's marriage to Marie Louise in 1810, Siviter discusses the use of verse towards ends which served Napoleon and his regime, as well as the clandestine, proscribed poetry, which cut an entirely different image of the Emperor. Siviter's essay utilizes these two opposing sides to highlight precisely how the memory of the Revolution became a theatre of conflict for revisionism of different stripes; *les vers impériaux*, Lemerancier's "Ode à l'hymen" for instance, invoke an agonistic relationship between Clio and Mnemosyne, muses of history and memory, respectively, in order to elevate Napoleon's glorious revolutionary memory, in defiance of "true history." Such state sanctioned images of the Emperor, Siviter explains, reimagine Bonaparte as a sort of national hero, as *père de France*, in works written (and performed) as part of the marriage celebrations. *Les vers clandestins*, meanwhile, employ a revolutionary memory in order to bring into doubt Napoleon's legitimacy as Emperor, that his very existence could have impeded the Revolution's progress.

Clare Siviter's essay is doubly illuminating, as it problematizes the relationship between structures of power and collective memory, while engaging in a sort of meta-historiographical discourse on the Revolution; by framing this broader subject in a rather narrower context, that of texts written (and performed) during the Empire, at a moment of particular historical significance, one might draw two primary conclusions: first, as Siviter claims in the conclusion, that the Revolution's memory "est toujours vivante" (p. 174). The verses discussed in this chapter establish a link between political apparatuses and the correlating propaganda, either pro- or contra- the hegemon. As power shifts to new hands, memory must maintain a sort of dynamism

as well. Second, there is still much in the Archives nationales that has not been sufficiently explored, particularly regarding the memory of the Revolution in relation to Napoleon's coronation in 1804 (as this essay notes), though it may be inferred, in addition, that the memory of the Revolution during the Empire also demands more research; Siviter's essay is surely a thoughtful and important contribution to this body of scholarship and, one hopes, it will spark an interest in this subject.

The final section follows in the work's chronology by focusing on the period from the Restoration to the 1848 Revolution. It might be expected that this final section, which attempts to cover over three decades, would present the greatest challenge. It is my view, however, that the essays chosen for this section fit well both chronologically and thematically with those of the first two sections. With contributions by Laetitia Saintes, Sophie-Anne Leterrier, and Patrice Adico, readers will find that the third section, appropriately titled "Le temps long de la mémoire révolutionnaire, en France et au-delà," adequately closes out this study with essays that draw on many of the themes discussed in earlier chapters. In Saintes' "Si mon vers est trop cru, si sa bouche est sans frein, / C'est qu'il sonne aujourd'hui dans un siècle d'airain." Modalités du symbolisme révolutionnaire dans les Iambes (1831) d'Auguste Barbier," for instance, we see how the revolution of 1789 (and 1793) is employed in Barbier's satires as a means of critiquing the mediocrity, the decadence, of *les trois glorieuses*, in particular the monarchy which it inaugurated; in Barbier's poems, history is fated to repeat itself, and *la grande révolution* acts almost as a mirror with which to view, perhaps to condemn, both the memory of '89, and the events of 1830. One might conclude, from Saintes' essay, that Barbier invokes revolutionary memory as a sort of tongue-in-cheek lament of history's infernal motifs.

Béranger's songs, in contrast to Barbier's work, engage with the memory of the Revolution in more neutral, we might say even say "national" terms. It is therefore intuitive, as Sophie-Anne Leterrier highlights at the beginning of her essay, that he was close friends with the historian Jules Michelet. This gives some idea of the nature of Béranger's work; as Michelet's project was to contrive a national myth out of the Revolution, Béranger's songs, Leterrier argues, rouse a sort of mythical sentiment from 1789. Leterrier's description of these *chansons* — songs at times historical, at others parabolic—unambiguously links them with Michelet's own project: "Béranger écrit en chansons une histoire de la Révolution bien proche de celle de Michelet" (p#). The primary distinguishing factor between the two, as Leterrier suggests, is formulaic; however ornate and poetic Michelet's *Histoire* may be, Béranger's songs evoke a decidedly active spirit, one which the author categorizes as infused with the very spirit of revolution.

Perhaps there is more than merely a soupçon of nationalist sentimentalism in Béranger's songs; Leterrier describes the cultural importance of these revolutionary *chansons* as eminently socio-political, "capable de 'former les mœurs d'un peuple' et de 'soutenir' et épurer 'l'esprit public'" (p. 212). This of course refers to a rather particular set of circumstances (France under the constitutional monarchy), rooted in traditions inaugurated by the French Revolution; but what might the memory of the Revolution look like outside of France? Erica Mannucci's essay has already given a clear picture of how revolutionary poetry crossed into Italy, bringing with it the ideas expressed by Chénier, Maréchal, and others. Patrice Adico's work on the German poet Georg Herwegh explains the transnational exchange of ideas in the backdrop of the revolutions of 1848. This influence, according to Adico, is both multidimensional and multigenerational; the principles of 1789 (*liberté, égalité, fraternité*) are almost ubiquitous in Herwegh's poems and various other writings in the 1840s. The 1848 Revolution in France, meanwhile, was a guiding light for

German revolutionaries such as he; Adico's essay argues persuasively that the French revolution(s) was an important component of the burgeoning German nationalist spirit, such as that expressed by Herwegh.

Adico's essay, which closes out this volume, reminds us that the French Revolution's influence—politically, culturally, artistically—was never contained by time, nor by space. One need only throw a dart at a map, choose a nation at random, to find a poet reacting in verse to the Revolution, its effects, and its memory. This should not be interpreted as a criticism; on the contrary, it is always an ideal outcome when, having finished reading a work of scholarship such as *Un Engagement en vers et contre tous*, one is compelled to inquire further into the various subjects and methods discussed. The essays contained in this volume are exceptional, furthermore, because each is thematically focused (which is not to say, pejoratively, narrow), methodologically diverse, yet forms part of a coherent whole. This text is a useful addition to the body of extant scholarship on the memory of the Revolution; it effectively rehabilitates less illustrious writers, reintroducing them into the nineteenth century cultural fold from which they may have been omitted, left to drift into obscurity, thus highlighting their places within the broader, often disparate attempts to contemplate and reimagine the Revolution's enduring significance. Such a heterodox collection of essays will undoubtedly be of great utility to those who wish to better understand the role of verse in the memory of the French Revolution.

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