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Jessica Goodman, ed. *Commemorating Mirabeau: Mirabeau aux Champs-Élysées and other texts*. Cambridge, U.K.: Modern Humanities Research Association. Critical Texts 58, 2017. 205 pp. Notes and bibliography. \$17.50 U.S. (pb). ISBN 978-1-78188-218-4; ISBN: 978-1-781887-56-1 (JSTOR ebook); ISBN: 978-1-781887-57-8 (EBSCO ebook).

Review by Robert H. Blackman, Hampden-Sydney College.

In this fine book, Jessica Goodman provides the full corrected and modernized texts of five plays from the era of the French Revolution, three of them published in 1791 and two available only in manuscript. The three published plays are *Mirabeau aux Champs-Élysées* by Olympe de Gouges, *L'Ombre de Mirabeau* by Jean-Élie Dejaure, and *Mirabeau aux enfers* (an anonymous counter-Revolutionary play). The two manuscript plays are from the Soleinne collection at the Bibliothèque Nationale de France: *Le Démosthène français, ou l'Arrivée de Mirabeau aux Champs-Élysées*, and *Le Panthéon français, ou La Désertion des Champs-Élysées*. Finally, Goodman provides a collection of reviews from contemporary sources of a lost play from 1791, *Mirabeau à son lit de mort* by Jean-Baptiste Pujoulx. Goodman also provides a solid introduction to the works, a detailed discussion of the changes and corrections made to the texts, and copious informative footnotes (more on these later). All of the works provided here came out soon after Mirabeau's death on 2 April 1791 and give the reader a chance to see how his death was commemorated at the time.

The five plays are works of significant historical interest and the collection of reviews of the lost play is comprehensive. It is wonderful to have all of the plays collected together along with a generally well-written and always informative introductory essay, in which Goodman situates the plays in their literary context and explains their importance to a variety of scholarly discussions. Goodman intends by collecting these five plays and a dossier on a sixth lost play to “build up a panorama of how Mirabeau was commemorated in textual, and particularly, theatrical, form” (p. 4). She sees her work as fitting into the discussion of theater as a venue for reenactment and apotheosis, fitting into a gap left between the work of Philippe Bourdin and Yann Robert on Revolutionary-era theater (p. 4).^[1] We can see her work fitting, as well, into discussions of Classical Republicanism in the early Revolution and into works on Revolutionary theater in general, such as those of Marie-Hélène Huet and Paul Friedland.^[2] In particular, it is interesting to see how the plays function as texts meant to be read rather than performed, as in the case of the conservative satire. After all, “theatricality” means something else when the performance is on the stage of a reader's imagination.

Goodman provides a useful discussion of the place commemorations of “famous individuals” had onstage in the eighteenth century. Plays about Voltaire and Rousseau had appeared in the 1780s and others followed. Goodman argues that the Revolution itself made plays that commemorated the dead more possible, by allowing more venues to open, by providing examples of commemoration (such as the transfer of Voltaire's remains to the Panthéon in 1791) and later by demanding that theaters produce similarly edifying works (pp. 5-6). She argues that these theatrical commemorations were part of “an attempt to create a national identity for the new, free France” (p.7), putting these works into the broader context of imagining a new nation explored by David Bell.^[3]

Goodman reminds us that Mirabeau was the first to be formally interred in the Panthéon. But she contrasts theatrical commemorations to the mere “stone” of the Panthéon, arguing that the theatrical versions were meant to have an “emotional and collective facet, but also a personal, human one.” The plays were meant to “give a new body” to the figures represented on stage, encouraging the viewers to “imitate them” and putting the figures into “lineages of greatness” (p. 8). Most interesting is her discussion of the cult of great men, the “cult” that the Panthéon would serve as its premier temple. She reminds us that the practice of creating a lineage of great men did not originate with the Revolution, linking the commemorative plays to the eighteenth-century attempt to redefine the “great man” away from those who had been great warriors, relying on Voltaire, the abbé Saint-Pierre and Montesquieu (p. 9). She does not, however, link the “cult of great men” to attempts by Voltaire and the authors of the *Encyclopédie* to create a parallel lineage of great scientists, another example of an reformed lineage meant to show that there was an alternative to the fame of great conquerors.

Goodman also situates the plays in a longer tradition of “dialogues of the dead,” reaching back to the second century C.E. According to Goodman, the practice of staging dialogues between recently and not-so-recently deceased in Hades or in the Elysian Fields had undergone a revival in the seventeenth century and remained popular in the eighteenth, with plays depicting the arrival of such men as Voltaire and Henry IV to the underworld, where they met and were welcomed by the great men of the past. Moreover, she reminds us that this is a sub-genre of literature to which little attention has been paid (pp. 12-13). Examining dramatized dialogues as part of “the wider commemorative culture” of 1791 (p. 13), is the most important and substantive part of Goodman’s introduction, to which she dedicates 33 pages.

Goodman has done wonderful detective work, providing us with the performance history of the plays, the number of people likely to have seen them, and the amount the authors made on the productions. Gouges’s play, for example, only ran twice but was seen by perhaps 2,000 people, whereas Dejaure’s play had a longer run but fewer in the audience each time, selling about as many tickets (pp. 16-17). Goodman also provides snippets from contemporary reviews of the plays, which were generally positive but complained about the lack of action: critics were not charmed that the plays involved simple discussion on stage without much plot or resolution beyond the arrival of Mirabeau to the afterlife. As Goodman notes, the reviews recognize that while both plays “captured the public mood” in their “patriotic tone” and their praise of Mirabeau, the plays were not considered “great works of art.” For Goodman, this places the plays in the realm of Revolutionary ephemera, but does not mean that they should not be given serious consideration for what they can show us about the “commemorative cult” that surrounded Mirabeau and the role of the “commemorative play” in the broader trend of celebrating the *grand homme* (pp. 17-21). As she explains, these plays, existing in words instead of stone, matter because of their flexibility, their ability to be reimagined and “reinterpreted” by audiences and scholars. The great praise (or encomium) they heap on Mirabeau persists, where statues and gravesites have not endured (pp. 41-2). They encourage us “to engage with their protagonists, to hear their real or imagined voices...” putting us in contact with Mirabeau on the “shadowy border between life and death, presence and absence, remembering and forgetting” (p. 45).

Goodman gives us a good comparative introduction to the texts, showing us which characters the plays share in common beyond Mirabeau. She claims that they have the same “structuring principle” as the Panthéon, as “they are collections of great men, brought together in death, and charged with representing...the greatness of a new, free French nation” (p.23). The men who praise Mirabeau in the plays include great orators, writers and statesmen, and they praise Mirabeau for his talents, for his hard work and for his personal sacrifices. Voltaire appears in all five plays, Rousseau in four, Henry IV, Cicero, Demosthenes, Lucius Junius Brutus, and Benjamin Franklin in two each. As Goodman notes, the particular configuration of great men chosen by the authors reveals to us something about their conception of what French national greatness meant in 1791 (pp. 23-24).

One additional area explored by Goodman is worth the price of admission itself. Toward the end of the introduction, Goodman discusses how Gouges used the format of “dialogues of the dead” to expand the field of greatness to include women as well as men. Gouges included three women in her play, the authors Madame Deshoulières and Madame de Sévigné, and the great courtesan Ninon de Lenclos. Goodman notes that these very real women take on roles normally given to “allegorical representations of virtues” (pp. 29-31). This is a fascinating moment in the play and gives us a sense that Gouges saw the potential for women to be included in the Panthéon for their contributions to the Revolution. Goodman notes that the scene shows us a “specifically female sanctioning” (p. 31) of Mirabeau’s greatness. Later, Goodman shows how Gouges used her work to influence the way in which posterity would view her (pp. 34-8). Goodman’s discussion of how Gouges used literary tropes to fashion her own image as well as that of Mirabeau is very insightful, and I hope Goodman will follow up on it in future work.

The last section of her introduction revolves around what I think is the best play of the lot, the counter-Revolutionary *Mirabeau aux enfers*. Those who know the right-wing newspaper of the early Revolution *Les Actes des Apôtres* will find the satirical tone of the play familiar. In this anonymous play all of the tropes of commemorative plays are used, but they are used to destroy the image of Mirabeau as a great man rather than build it up. It is really wonderful to have this text and I wish there were an English translation available for use in classes on the French Revolution. This is by far the wittiest of the five plays, both in its depiction of Mirabeau as the endpoint of a grand tradition of infamy stretching from Henry IV’s assassin, François Ravaillac, to Oliver Cromwell to Voltaire, and in its reversal of the *grand homme* format of the eighteenth-century, as the great men who appear towards the end to condemn Mirabeau are French warrior-statesmen or theologians rather than philosophes or scientists. Nevertheless, Goodman’s claim that the denunciations of the Revolution in the text predicted the excesses of the Terror goes a bit too far (pp. 39-40).

Goodman does a fine job of situating the works in ongoing discussions of literature and commemoration in the early French Revolution. However, these plays can also usefully be situated in the context of Classical Republicanism, explored by Keith Michael Baker (especially since Gabriel Bonnot de Mably appears in Dejaure’s play), Marisa Linton and others.^[4] One is amused to hear Dejaure’s Mirabeau convince Lucius Junius Brutus that Louis XVI was no Tarquin, and that monarchy was appropriate for France (pp. 128-30). But a discussion of such things belongs in the context of the eighteenth-century educational system and the use of Classical tropes in contemporary media. One thinks of Camille Desmoulins’ repeated use of the Cataline conspiracy in his writings, for example. Even more, one thinks of the way in which Mirabeau himself invoked Catalina, Cicero, Sulla and others in his great speeches before the National Assembly. A discussion of the literature on the use of Classical tropes during the era of the French Revolution would help readers to better understand why Cicero and Lucius Junius Brutus appeared in these plays, rather than Julius Caesar and Marcus Junius Brutus.

These plays can also be seen as evidence of attempts to discover (or create) a lineage for the Revolution that stretched back to Antiquity. As noted above, Goodman discusses in her introduction the notion of literary immortality as present in the eighteenth century and links it to the notion of the *grand homme*. As she puts it, there was some debate in the plays over what behavior in life merits a place in the Elysian Fields, and by implication, in the Panthéon (p. 31). In discussing the invention of a lineage for Mirabeau stretching from Antiquity through the Enlightenment, Goodman enters into the debate opened up by Roger Chartier over whether the Enlightenment had led to the French Revolution, or the French Revolution to the Enlightenment.^[5] In these plays, Mirabeau is posed as the logical successor to the greatness of the past, with great orators, scientists, writers, and statesmen all coming to praise him for his accomplishments, and to lament his departure from the world of the living. In choosing specific figures, each author makes up an imagined lineage for the Revolution itself. Perhaps an intrepid scholar will take up the challenge posed by these plays and explain how the differences between who appears in the Elysian Fields reveal subtly different views of the constitutional monarchy. Given that Rousseau, Voltaire, and Lucius Junius Brutus (whose bust appeared in the hall of the National Convention) would be re-purposed

as predecessors of the Republic of Year II, it would be good to have a follow-up to Goodman's fine start here in discussing how theatrical depictions of these figures changed.

Overall, the footnotes are informative, well-formed, and useful. There is some ground, though, for caution on the part of the reader when Goodman gives pocket biographies of Old Regime figures. In one note, Goodman describes the Old-Regime ministerial stalwart Armand Marc, count of Montmorin, Louis XVI's minister of foreign affairs from 1787-1791, as Mirabeau's "puppet" (n. 57, p. 69). This is a very strong claim, and I would like to know what led Goodman to make it. Sadly, she gives no reference to support it. This view of Mirabeau as a puppet master strikes me as a very outdated one. Work of more recent historians does not seem to support the claim, which credits Mirabeau with far too much influence over Louis XVI and his ministers.[7] As François Furet cannily observed, when Mirabeau penned his secret letters advising Louis, Mirabeau thought himself one of the king's ministers, perhaps the most important man on the royal council. In reality, Mirabeau had very little influence on the Court at all. Great politician that he was, Mirabeau could not see that the king might have asked for advice in order to gain Mirabeau's support, rather than to follow his recommendations.[8]

This is, however, a fairly minor fault in a good book. I hope that Goodman will continue to haunt the archives and bring more gems like these plays back into circulation, and I am confident that readers of her introduction and notes will find them useful and instructive.

NOTES

[1] Philippe Bourdin, "Les Apothéoses théâtrales des héros de la Révolution (1791-94)" in *Héros et héroïnes de la Révolution française*, ed. Serge Bianchi (Paris: CTHS-Société des études robespierristes, 2012), pp. 139-58; Yann Robert, "Living Theater: Politics, Justice and the Stage in France (1750-1800)" (unpublished doctoral thesis, Princeton University, 2010).

[2] Marie-Hélène Huet, *Rehearsing the Revolution: The Staging of Marat's Death* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1982) and *Mourning Glory: The Will of the French Revolution* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1997); Paul Friedland, *Political Actors: Representative Bodies and Theatricality in the Age of the French Revolution* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2002).

[3] David A. Bell, *The Cult of the Nation in France: Inventing Nationalism, 1680-1800* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2003).

[4] Keith Michael Baker, "Transformations of Classical Republicanism in Eighteenth-century France," *Journal of Modern History* 73 (2001), pp. 32-53 and *Inventing the French Revolution* (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 1990); Marisa Linton, *The Politics of Virtue in Enlightenment France* (New York: Palgrave, 2001) and *Choosing Terror: Virtue, Authenticity, Friendship and Authenticity in the French Revolution* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2013); Rachel Hammersley, *English Republicans and the French Revolution: Between the Ancients and the Moderns* (Manchester and New York: Manchester University Press, 2013); Chantal Grell, *Le Dix-huitième Siècle et l'antiquité en France, 1680-1789*, 2 vols. (Oxford: Voltaire Foundation, 1995); J. Kent Wright, *A Classical Republican in Eighteenth-Century France: The Political Thought of Mably* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1997).

[5] Roger Chartier, *Cultural Origins of the French Revolution* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 1991), p. 5. See also Darren McMahon, *Enemies of the Enlightenment: The French Counter-Enlightenment and the Making of Modernity* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001).

[6] John Hardman, *Louis XVI* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1993), p. 180.

[7] See, for example, Thomas Kaiser, “A Tale of Two Narratives: The French Revolution in International Context, 1787-93,” in Peter McPhee, ed., *A Companion to the French Revolution* (Chichester: Wiley-Blackwell, 2013), pp. 161-77; Munro Price, *The Road from Versailles: Louis XVI, Marie-Antoinette and the Fall of the French Monarchy* (New York: Macmillan, 2002), John Hardman, *The Life of Louis XVI* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2016).

[8] François Furet, “Mirabeau,” in François Furet and Mona Ozouf, eds., *A Critical Dictionary of the French Revolution*, trans. Arthur Goldhammer (Cambridge, Mass. and London: Harvard University Press, 1989), pp. 265-72.

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