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Alan Forrest, Étienne François and Karen Hagemann, eds., *War Memories: The Revolutionary and Napoleonic Wars in Modern European Culture*. Basingstoke, Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012. xxi + 414 pages. Figures, notes, bibliography and index. \$120.00 U.S. (hb). ISBN 978-0230272163; \$35.00 U.S. (pb). ISBN 978-1137365408.

Review by Christopher Tozzi, Howard University.

Napoleon Bonaparte, who reportedly once quipped that “immortality is the recollection one leaves in the memory of mankind,” would no doubt be pleased to know that the wars he helped instigate, first as a general in the service of the French Republic and then as Emperor of the French, have not been forgotten.[1] On the contrary, as the rich assortment of essays in this edited volume, the latest addition to Palgrave Macmillan's series on “War, Culture and Society, 1750-1850,” shows, the French revolutionary and Napoleonic wars have exerted a tremendous influence on the formation of collective memories and culture within Europe from the early nineteenth century through the present. It is the aim of the co-editors and contributors of this book, which reflects the work of an Anglo-German research group on “Nations, Borders and Identities: Experiences and Memories of the Revolutionary and Napoleonic Wars in Europe, 1792-1945,” to unpack those memories. They do so by explaining the processes and mediums through which the memories were transmitted, analyzing the ways in which they have changed over time, and considering how the experiences and memories of individuals interacted with those of groups, regions and nations to form collective imaginings of the wars.

In studying memories of the revolutionary and Napoleonic wars in this way, the volume's co-editors and contributors work quite consciously within the shadow of the study of the memory of twentieth-century wars, which scholars have already pursued extensively. Yet, if later conflicts, particularly the world wars, have proven “among the most innovative” for expanding understanding of the way in which groups and societies collectively remember military struggle, as the introduction to this volume notes, scholars have much to gain by investigating memories of the revolutionary and Napoleonic conflicts as well (p. 5). For although sources from those earlier wars are less abundant than those from the twentieth century, the wars of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries helped to constitute a foundational moment in Europe for the transition to modernity and the formation of the states and societies that continue to structure the continent today. Understanding how Europeans have collectively remembered the French revolutionary and Napoleonic wars (to which I generally refer hereafter as “the wars”) thus helps to answer bigger questions about the evolution of European societies and cultures over the course of the two centuries that separate the revolutionary era from the present.

This volume pursues a deeper understanding of that issue through sixteen essays by scholars who represent several disciplines and engage a diverse set of geographies, methodologies and bodies of sources in their analysis of memories of the wars. Prefaced by an introduction written by the three co-editors that very effectively summarizes the current state of scholarship on war memory, particularly in Europe, the chapters are structured into four sections, each of which corresponds to the type of source material that its constituent contributors engage.

The first section focuses on personal writings. Leighton S. James examines the memoirs of Austrian

cavalry officer Karl Johann Nepomuk von Gruber to emphasize the importance of interpreting personal writings from the wars within the framework of the wider literary developments of the time, such as the desire by writers to entertain readers as much as to recount their experiences accurately. He adds that patriotic and nationalist sentiments were rarely a central feature of memoirs at the time of their production, but were grafted onto the writings later in the nineteenth century by co-editors who published the texts for widespread public consumption. In a similar vein, Laurence Montroussier-Favre concludes in chapter two, on the basis of a study of 125 memoirs written by British and French soldiers who served in the wars, that national antagonisms between these groups were not as pronounced in the primary sources as the collective memories that formed later suggested. Bernhard Struck reaches a similar conclusion in a study of travel accounts, which show that travelers in Germany under the Napoleonic Empire did not report a great deal of animosity between Germans and the French, despite the formation in later generations of a collective memory that presented the Napoleonic period as the moment in which German nationalism awoke in reaction to French occupation and influence.

Integrating another type of personal writing into the book, Catriona Kennedy engages the medium of diaries produced by Britons at home during the wars. She contends that although diarists noted international events associated with the wars in an incidental manner, their writings exhibited few “self-conscious statements” (p. 90) that reflected people's conscious awareness of the wars and their impact on their own lives. She attributes this trend, which stood in sharp contrast to diary-writing from twentieth-century wars, primarily “to a differing conception of the diary, which was not, as yet, understood as a private chronicle of historical events” (p. 90). Marie-Cécile Thorat completes the first section of the book with an examination of autobiographies and novels, arguing that while Orientalist thought was well established in France before the revolutionary period, Napoleon's expedition to the Middle East “initiated a new kind of 'Orientalism', more tightly connected to imperial or colonial objectives and ideology” (p. 131).

The second part of the volume shifts to a focus on novels, which contributor Lars Peters, noting that more than 1,500 novels related to the wars were published in Europe up to the mid-twentieth century, calls a particularly important medium through which “the wars were engraved onto the collective memory of the nations of Europe” (p. 140). Focusing on novels consumed by British and Irish audiences, Peters argues that these books played a key role in popularizing among later nineteenth-century middle-class readers the British ideals of manliness—exemplified in the figures of fictional military men—that flourished within the British elite classes during the wars. In the following chapter, Maria Schultz, who takes an explicitly interdisciplinary approach by insisting that the study of memories of the wars must employ “methods drawn from both history and literary studies” (pp. 155-56), affirms some of the arguments advanced in the first section of the book by contending that German novels written after the wars promoted a sense of German national identity that was not evident in personal writings from the period itself. Moving further east, Ruth Leiserowitz in chapter eight contends that although early Russian novels depicting the events of 1812 portrayed women as central participants in the struggle against the French, this trend disappeared from later writing. As a result, in “the *longue durée* of the collective memory of 1812, the women of the war years were shown...caring for their families, rearing children, and providing political support for their husbands” (p. 185), activities that did not correspond with the actual experience of the generation that had lived through the wars.

Section three of the book examines cultural practices and material culture. Holger Hoock studies the British state's transformation of Saint Paul's Cathedral in London into “Britain's main official, national site of memory” (p. 193). The cathedral acquired sculptures and inscriptions that helped to shape public memories of the wars, albeit in a manner constricted by the political context, aesthetic conventions, and physical and intellectual accessibility of the site. In a similar way, co-editor Karen Hagemann shows that the Prussian and then German governments, throughout the nineteenth century and into the twentieth, leveraged the Iron Cross medal, which king Frederick William III introduced in 1813, as a tool of

memory politics, although public interpretations of the symbol variously emphasized both regional, monarchical patriotism, and liberal, pan-German nationalism. Hagemann's essay is also notable for its engagement with present-day debates in Germany surrounding the federal government's decision in 2008 to revive a medal for the military celebrating valor in combat.

The final, longest part of the volume shifts to visual representations of the wars. Rich in illustrations, this section begins with an essay by Rolf Reichardt, who examines engravings and cartoons, with some attention to political speeches as well. Reichardt demonstrates how the French and British during the wars presented each other as depraved and inhuman, laying the foundation for the formation of memories in which succeeding generations conceptualized the wars as a struggle between civilization and barbarism. Marina Peltzer deals with a similar topic in a chapter on Russian caricatures of Napoleon, in which she argues that the cartoons were important in forming Russian memories of the "Great Patriotic War" against the French because they "challenged Napoleon's claim that it was the frost," not Russian determination and sacrifice, "that had caused the debacle and mediatized the people's victory" (p. 269).

In the following chapter, which out of all of the contributions stands to make the most significant theoretical contribution to the field of memory studies, David O'Brien conceives of paintings of Napoleon as a *lieu de mémoire* in order to challenge what he presents as a tendency on the part of Pierre Nora, the highly influential memory scholar, to over-emphasize the role of the national in memory formation.^[2] He argues that even paintings of a figure as nationally significant as Napoleon did not preclude the formation of memories that prioritized entities other than those of the collective nation. O'Brien contends that "Nora's distinction between private and public interests relies on a specifically French republican vision of society that subordinates the interests of a heterogeneous and plural civil society to an abstracted national citizen and refuses, in the name of equality, to recognize difference" (p. 309). In another essay that focuses on paintings, Peter K. Klein makes the case that Francisco Goya's well known paintings of the Peninsular War, as well as his etchings of the same event, far from celebrating the themes of Spanish nationalism and resistance against Napoleon with which scholars often associate them, in fact presented "an extremely unconventional, modern view of war as a senseless combination of brutal killing, abysmal fear and painful dying" (p. 350). For this reason, according to Klein, Goya's works were largely ignored by Spanish nationalists as they promoted collective memories of the Peninsular War as a galvanizing moment for Spanish unity. When the images finally received greater attention in the wake of World War II, memories of the Peninsular War in Spain were already largely fixed. Consequently, "over the last 200 years Goya's images of war have never had a major impact on Spanish memory of the Peninsular War" (p. 359).

Changing focus to another visual medium, Kirstin Buchinger discusses the importance of lithography for producing images of many types that helped to shape memories of the wars throughout the nineteenth century, a trend that continued into more modern media because twentieth-century films reproduced scenes from lithographed images. Wolfgang Koller studies film further in the last chapter of the volume, examining twentieth-century German cinematic depictions of the Napoleonic Wars—which accounted for nearly one-fifth of all historically themed films produced in interwar Germany—to argue that German filmmakers under the Weimar Republic promoted "a militant-dogmatic masculinity" that challenged democracy and individualism, ultimately contributing to the militarization of interwar German society and the emergence of radical nationalism (p. 381).

The volume closes with a concluding essay by Étienne François, one of the co-editors, that, like the chapter by O'Brien, seeks to intervene in memory studies by conceptualizing the wars as a "Shared and Entangled European *lieu de mémoire*." François thus challenges the tendency of historians (which, he admits, is evident in many of the essays of this volume, each of which deals primarily with collective memory within a specific country or compares the memories of two particular countries) to align memory-formation with distinct national communities. A pan-European memory of the wars also

exists, according to François, reflected in the symbols, monuments and artistic and literary exchanges between European societies.

To be sure, investigating two centuries of collective memories of Europe's longest-running series of military conflict in modern times is no simple proposition, and this volume leaves open many questions that will, one hopes, inspire further research. For one, notably absent from the book is study of the medium of music, which, considering the influence of the wars on such well known contemporary composers as Ludwig van Beethoven, or their inspiration for later nineteenth-century compositions like Pyotr Ilyich Tchaikovsky's *1812 Overture*, stands to complement the findings presented in this book significantly.[3] Less official, more "popular" forms of music also represent a valuable opportunity for studying the revolutionary period, as Laura Mason has shown, and it is likely that they would do the same for understanding subsequent collective memories of the wars if scholars expand upon work such as that of Guy Beiner, who has studied memories of the 1798 rebellion and French invasion of Ireland through folk history, including songs.[4] Indeed, even the popular music of recent generations offers examples of the persistence of memories of the wars in modern culture.[5]

The volume also invites further study of memories of the initial phases of the French revolutionary wars. The bulk of the material in this book deals with the era of Napoleon's ascendancy. In fact, only five of the sixteen chapters engage events of the earlier 1790s at all, and no chapter focuses exclusively on the revolutionary wars. Yet, the first several years of the conflict between France and its various enemies that began in 1792 give rise to a series of compelling questions that can help to shed light on ideological and cultural developments of key significance for succeeding generations and, in some cases, the present as well. For instance: How did the "battle" of Valmy in 1792 influence Romantic thinkers such as Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, who famously called it the beginning of "a new era in the history of the world"? Do popular memories of the Reign of Terror parallel the work of earlier generations of academic historians by associating the Terror with war, and therefore linking the suppression of civil liberties to the contingencies of national defense?[6] How have memories of the brutal civil wars inside France during the first half of the 1790s shaped the identities and cultures of Lyon, the Vendée and other regions that they affected? In what ways have memories of the wars impacted the world beyond metropolitan Europe, especially those overseas areas to which the fighting extended?

To note that this volume does not address these questions is not to criticize the excellent work of the co-editors and contributors, but rather to emphasize the knowledge that scholars might gain by expanding upon the research in this book. This admirably written and well organized volume, which is all the more valuable because it assumes no special expertise on the reader's part in revolutionary-era military history, offers a glimpse of just how much scholars stand to learn about the French revolutionary and Napoleonic wars themselves, their impact on later generations, and the diversity of sources and approaches for studying them by analyzing the collective memories of these conflicts with as much rigor as historians have done for twentieth-century wars.

LIST OF ESSAYS

Leighton S. James, "War, Experience and Memory: An Austrian Cavalry officer Narrates the Napoleonic Wars"

Laurence Montroussier-Favre, "Remembering the Other: The Peninsular War in the Autobiographical Accounts of British and French Soldiers"

Catriona Kennedy, "Bayonets across the Hedges: British Civilian Diaries and the War at Home, 1793-1815"

Bernhard Struck, "Conquered Territories and Entangled Histories: The Perception of Franco-German and German-Polish Borderlands in German Travelogues, 1792-1820"

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Lars Peters, "Warrior Sailors and Heroic Boys: Images of Masculinity in English Nautical Novels on the Revolutionary and Napoleonic Wars"

Maria Schultz, "German Patriots and French Soldiers: Memories of the Napoleonic Wars in German Historical Novels on the Rhineland"

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Marina Peltzer, "Peasants, Cossacks, 'Black Tsar': Russian Caricatures of Napoleon during the Wars of 1812 to 1814"

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Kirstin Buchinger, "*La pierre et l'empereur*": Remembering the Revolutionary and Napoleonic Wars in French Lithography"

Peter K. Klein, "The Disasters of a People's War: Goya's Image of the Peninsular War"

Wolfgang Koller, "Heroic Memories: Gendered Images of the Napoleonic Wars in German Feature Films of the Interwar Period"

NOTES

[1] Louis Antoine Fauvelet de Bourrienne, *Mémoires de M. de Bourrienne, ministre d'Etat, sur Napoléon, le Directoire, le Consulat, l'Empire et la Restauration*, 10 vols. (Paris: Ladvocat, 1830), 4:280.

[2] Pierre Nora, "Between Memory and History: Les Lieux de mémoire," *Representations* 26 (Spring 1989): 7-24.

[3] On the impact of the wars on Beethoven's life and work, see Stephen Rumph, *Beethoven after Napoleon: Political Romanticism in the Late Works* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004).

[4] Laura Mason, *Singing the French Revolution: Popular Culture and Politics, 1787-1799* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1996); Guy Beiner, *Remembering the Year of the French: Irish Folk History and Social Memory* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2007).

[5] For example, ABBA, “Waterloo” (1974); Al Stewart, “Palace of Versailles” (1978); Michel Sardou, “Un jour la liberté” (1989).

[6] For the best summary of scholarly debates on the relationship between war and the Terror, see Mona Ozouf, “War and Terror in French Revolutionary Discourse (1792-1794),” *The Journal of Modern History* 56 (1984): 579-97.

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