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Katherine Astbury and Mark Philp, eds., *Napoleon's Hundred Days and the Politics of Legitimacy*. Basingstoke, U.K.: Palgrave-Macmillan, 2018. xvii + 288. Index and notes. \$109.00 U.S. (hb). ISBN: 978-3-319-70207-0.

Review by Charles J. Esdaile, University of Liverpool.

Three years after the bicentenary of the Battle of Waterloo the flood of publications associated with that event has largely abated. Given the poor quality and ephemeral nature of many of the works concerned—the vast majority of them narrative accounts of the battle that add little or nothing to the historical canon and in some cases actively detract from it—the reaction of many specialists in the period to this fact is likely to be to offer up a heartfelt prayer of thanksgiving. However, amidst the many pot-boilers are to be encountered a number of books whose adoption of a more original approach means that they are likely to stand the test of time, this being something that is particularly visible in the field of cultural history. Thus, 2014 saw the publication of R. E. Foster's excellent *Wellington and Waterloo: The Duke, the Battle and Posterity 1815-2015* [1] and 2015 Brian Cathcart's highly entertaining *The News from Waterloo: The Race to Tell Britain of Wellington's Victory* [2], whilst worthy of mention too is Alan Forrest's *Waterloo* [3], a work that can be included in this role of honour on account of the fact that it concentrates not on the events of the Hundred Days but on the manner in which they have been remembered and commemorated in the 200 years since 1815. And, finally, mention ought also to be made of Stephen Clarke's deservedly merciless *How the French Won Waterloo or Think They Did* [4]: whilst scarcely the most scholarly publication to appear over the course of the bicentenary, this is yet a devastating assault on a whole range of Gallic myth-making that makes for a read that is both entertaining and informative.

Astbury and Philp, then, are not the first scholars to consider Waterloo from a cultural perspective, but *Napoleon's Hundred Days and the Politics of Legitimacy* is not to be dismissed because of that. On the contrary, what it affords is a fascinating collection of essays that does not just speak to the discreet discipline of how Waterloo has been written about and otherwise remembered, but also the manner in which the return of Napoleon was received in 1815 in France and elsewhere. If what we have is inevitably something of a *pot pourri*, it is therefore one that is at the very least sweet smelling. Broadly speaking, meanwhile, we have a work that has one common theme, namely the near universal rejection of the idea of a resurrected Napoleonic empire. Whilst most non-French areas of Europe contained a handful of figures who either mourned the erstwhile emperor as a tragic hero—one thinks here of the poets George Byron and William Hazlitt—or who, like the Bavarian chief minister, Maximilian Mongelas, lamented the collapse of the political projects that his mantle had enabled them to pursue, it is clear that these were at best isolated voices, the fact being that only one attempt was made to take military action outside France in support of Napoleon, namely that launched by Joachim Murat as King of Naples, and that even that collapsed almost at once. In a series of essays on Britain, Germany, Italy, and Holland, we learn that the dominant mood was everywhere one of fear and suspicion. That this was always likely to be the case in respect of the old elite is understandable enough, but the message of the book is that hatred of the emperor and all his works had by 1815 become far more deep-rooted.

Thus, taking the British example, it is hardly surprising that, as Erica Buurman and Oskar Cox Jensen show, the books of dance music that were used by the musicians who played at such events as the Duchess of Richmond's famous ball were replete with waltzes with titles such as "The Battle of Salamanca" and "Wellington in Vienna," but to learn from Mary-Anne Constantine that the Welsh-language newspaper, *Seren Gomer*, a title that catered to the middle classes of industrial Swansea, was firm in its condemnation of the emperor cannot but raise eyebrows: more than that, indeed, given the enthusiasm of much of the industrial and commercial classes for peace prior to 1814, it is downright unexpected. At best we see a measure of ambivalence; as John Moores points out, whilst the British cartoonist, George Cruikshank was sharp in his condemnation of Napoleon, his view of the sometime French ruler's escape from Elba having him born back to France on the shoulders of the Devil, his treatment of Louis XVIII in the same image was just as critical—but that is all. Such little sympathy as was expressed for the emperor failed to provoke even the least of riots, let alone wholesale popular insurrection. And, if the bourgeoisie did not rally to the "flight of the eagle" in Wales, neither did they do so in Belgium, an area that traditional accounts of the Hundred Days have always been inclined to portray as being likely to go over to the French on the grounds that it had been ruled by the latter to 1814, Lotte Jensen's work on public opinion in the United Netherlands in 1815 having turned up but a single example of pro-French sentiment in the Brussels press.

For the casual reader, let alone anyone steeped enough in the legend of Napoleon, all this may come as a surprise. However, no sooner does a contributor link the expression of anti-Napoleonic sentiment to the conditions that were actually experienced in the *pays réunis* and *pays conquis* prior to 1814 than the scales are inclined to fall away. As Martina Piperno asks in her essay on Italy, for example, why should ardent Italian nationalists have been inclined to follow Joachim Murat into battle given the fact that he was, first, a foreigner and, second, a ruler who for many years had bowed to the will of Napoleon? Meanwhile, even had the king of Naples not been so inappropriate a figurehead, Italy was exhausted after nearly a quarter of a century of war, occupation, economic disruption, and political turmoil, the result being that few Italians were inclined to prolong the agony.

All this helps to explain why the author of the current review argued very strongly in his recent *Napoleon, France and Waterloo: The Eagle Rejected* that the emperor was doomed to failure in 1815.[5] In brief, this work seeks to show that, if the Bonapartist cause was so, it was because he had long since lost the support of the French people. Meanwhile, that such was the case is hardly challenged by the various essays on France included in *Napoleon's Hundred Days*. As Michael Sibalís admits, then, while the lower classes of Paris certainly evinced much support for the emperor, they appear to have been much less inclined actually to turn out to fight for him, and, as for John Dunne, his argument—in brief, that "the current consensual view that Napoleon was losing the battle for opinion rests on insecure foundations"—concludes with the rather less than rousing statement that "the grounds we have for supporting or dismissing claims about Napoleon's legitimacy in the Hundred Days remain seriously inadequate" (p. 55). That there is more work that could be done the current reviewer would not deny—he would, indeed, welcome such a development—but for him there is one point that remains unanswerable, this being the emperor's refusal to resort to conscription: throughout the history of the Napoleonic empire the ability of the state to enforce the Loi Jourdan of 1798 had been the very touchstone of its capacity to wage war, and the fact that Napoleon would not make the attempt in his hour of greatest need speaks volumes for the realities of his situation.

To conclude, there is much to welcome in this volume and many of the essays which it contains can be read with interest and pleasure alike. That said, however, there is little here to comfort those who are inclined to think that victory at Waterloo would have placed the re-establishment of the First Empire on a firm footing: Napoleon's propaganda machine continues to function to this day, but in 1815 the realities of French conquest in the *pays conquis* and the *pay réunis* alike were just too raw for the legend to take hold, just as in France the sufferings endured under the emperor could only rarely be expunged by the shortcomings of Bourbon rule.

LIST OF ESSAYS

Katherine Astbury and Mark Philp, "Introduction"

Michael Sibalis, "The Hundred Days and the Birth of Popular Bonapartism in Paris"

John Dunne, "Back by Popular Demand? Historians and the Problem of Public Opinion During Napoleon's Hundred Days"

Alessandra Aloisi, "The Melancholy of the Revolution: Maine de Biran Facing Napoleon's Hundred Days"

Leighton James, "German Central Europe and the Hundred Days"

Valentina Dal Cin, "Venetian Elite Reactions to the Hundred Days: News Circulation and Political Commentaries"

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Martina Piperno, "'A People Grown Old in Revolutions': Conflicting Temporalities and Distrust in 1815 Italy"

Alan Forrest, "The Hundred Days, the Congress of Vienna and the Atlantic Slave Trade"

Susan Valladares, "'All the World's a Stage and All the Men Are Merely Players': Theatre-Going in London During the Hundred Days"

Erica Buurman, "Dancing the 'Waterloo Waltz': Commemorations of the Hundred Days – Parallels in British Social Dance and Song"

Mary-Ann Constantine, "Napoleon in Swansea: Reflections of the Hundred Days in the Welsh Newspaper *Seren Gomer*"

John Moores, "George Cruikshank and the British Satirical Response to the Hundred Days"

NOTES

[1] R. E. Foster, *Wellington and Waterloo: The Duke, the Battle and Posterity, 1815-2015* (Stroud: The History Press, 2014).

[2] Brian Cathcart, *The News from Waterloo: The Race to Tell Britain of Wellington's Victory* (London: Faber and Faber, 2015).

[3] Alan Forrest, *Waterloo* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015).

[4] Stephen Clarke, *How the French Won Waterloo or Think They Did* (London: Arrow Books, 2016).

[5] Charles J. Esdaile, *Napoleon, France and Waterloo: The Eagle Rejected* (Barnsley: Pen and Sword, 2016).

Charles J. Esdaile
University of Liverpool

Epsom@liverpool.ac.uk

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