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Emmanuel de Waresquiel, *L'Histoire à rebrousse-poil: Les élites, la Restauration, la Révolution*. Paris: Fayard, 2005. 190 pp. Notes and index. 14€ France (pb). ISBN 9-782213-625324.

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Emmanuel de Waresquiel's latest book is something of a curiosity. It is both a *pièce de circonstance* offering a rare window into modern French academia and an interpretation of the Restoration that, in method at least, echoes the nineteenth century. This small book began as a *mémoire d'Habilitation à diriger des recherches* which Waresquiel successfully defended at the Sorbonne (Université Paris IV) in December 2004. It has become common in France to be made a director of research (or graduate instructor) not on the basis of a gigantic piece of research (once ominously called a *thèse d'état*), but on the basis of a collected body of work of sufficient quantity, quality and inter-relatedness. Because *L'histoire à rebrousse-poil* began life as a capstone essay, it is replete with references to Waresquiel's other works. These include his acclaimed biographies *Le Duc de Richelieu* (Perrin, 1990) and *Talleyrand* (Fayard, 2003), his important *Histoire de la Restauration* (Perrin, 2002) co-authored with Benoît Yvert, and his doctoral thesis on the peers and the chamber of peers from 1814 to 1831 (to be published by Fayard next year), as well as numerous articles in edited conference collections and professional periodicals, especially *Commentaire*. The advantage of this approach is to provide a provocative interpretation of the Restoration in a short book; the disadvantage is that most of the evidence needed to support the interpretation lies elsewhere. What evidence is included here comes mainly in the form of well-chosen quotations from newspapers, memoirs, and other published works from the period under investigation, in other words, history as it used to be written from François Guizot to Hippolyte Taine.

Waresquiel saves himself from any charge of anachronism, however, by a self-conscious discussion of methodology. This short book is a history of discursive representations of the elite as the driving force of political change. Waresquiel "seeks to find and gather scattered traces of the elite's discourse on itself" (p. 16) in order to understand how they viewed their place in society and the state in the wake of the French Revolution and Napoleon. It is by "brushing against the nap of history," that is by questioning the inevitability of clashes between liberals and ultraroyalists which culminated in the revolution of 1830, that Waresquiel seeks to discover the essence of Restoration politics. This approach yields several important insights. First, as one would expect from a biographer and prosopographer, Waresquiel notes that most members of the elite during the Restoration, whatever their political leaning, had one thing in common: they had reached maturity before 1789. Therefore, it was their political response to the destruction of the Ancien Régime and to subsequent alternatives that divided them. Differences between Restoration elites lay more in the past than in the present. Second, consolidation of the restored monarchy depended more on increasing royal absolutism at the expense of both political extremes than on the politics of equilibrium. By the 1820s, the consolidated power of the monarchy could be used to define the elite in terms of individual service to the state and social distance from the people. Third, the consequence of this trajectory was for the government to move from using the most important political institutions in France to promote a fusion of elites, as was the case at the

start of the Restoration, to using them to reinforce the dominance of nobles possessed of large estates and haughty attitudes, as was the case in the late 1820s. Whether viewed from upstream or downstream, this reversed the general direction of social and political change in France, and therefore constituted "*histoire à rebrousse-poil*." Finally, Waresquiel turns his metaphor into a *triple entendre* by ending with an analysis of the Restoration's first major crisis, Napoleon's Hundred Days of 1815, rather than with its last, the July Revolution of 1830. Here he emphasizes the resurgence of revolutionary divisions largely suppressed by the Napoleonic years. Of particular importance in the *moyen durée* was the transformation of Waterloo from a disastrous folly into the culmination of the French nation in arms doing battle with the Bourbons as allies--and worse, dependents--of France's enemies. All of these points are made in a bravura analysis of political discourse familiar to readers of François Furet, Patrice Gueniffey, Bronislaw Baczko, and Pierre Rosanvallon.

A modern study of elites usually includes an analysis of social and economic standing. Furthermore, when such a study focuses on politics, one expects a discussion of political practices. Waresquiel's essay has neither.[1] This is surely a consequence of his definition of Restoration elites, which is explicitly--and tautologically--reduced to those whose sayings and writings claim or proclaim their membership (p. 16). Any other criteria of inclusion or any political behavior other than verbal expression is, therefore, deemed almost completely irrelevant. But readers of Waresquiel's essay cannot judge it alone, any more than could members of the examination committee for his *Habilitation*. It is his collective *oeuvre* that must be read in order to understand why Waresquiel's approach to elites is leading the way in reviving debate about the Restoration in France.

NOTES

[1] Nor does it engage with the most important works in English on political elites during the Restoration. Missing are such works on Restoration politics in English as Thomas Beck, *French Legislators, 1800-1834* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1974), Pamela Pilbeam, *The 1830 Revolution in France* (London: Palgrave, 1991), and Robert Alexander, *Re-Writing the French Revolutionary Tradition: Liberal Opposition and the Fall of the Bourbon Monarchy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003).\

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