

Soldiers, Citizens and Civilians

Experiences and Perceptions of the Revolutionary
and Napoleonic Wars, 1790-1820

Edited by Alan Forrest, Karen Hagemann
and Jane Rendall

War, Culture and Society, 1750-1850



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Edited by

Alan Forrest

Professor of Modern History, University of York

Karen Hagemann

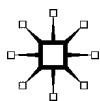
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Foreword to the Series

Rafe Blaufarb, Alan Forrest and Karen Hagemann

The century from 1750 to 1850 was a seminal period of change, not just in Europe but across the globe. The political landscape was transformed by a series of revolutions fought in the name of liberty – most notably in America and France, of course, but elsewhere, too: in Geneva and the Netherlands during the eighteenth century and across much of mainland Europe by 1848. Nor was such change confined to the European world. New ideas of freedom, equality and human rights were carried to the furthest outposts of empire, to Egypt, India and the Caribbean, which saw the creation in 1801 of the first black republic in Haiti, the former French colony of Saint-Domingue. And in the early part of the nineteenth century they continued to inspire anti-colonial and liberation movements throughout Central and Latin America.

If political and social institutions were transformed by revolution in these years, so, too, was warfare. During the quarter-century of the Revolutionary and Napoleonic Wars, in particular, Europe was faced with the prospect of ‘total’ war, on a scale unprecedented before the twentieth century. Military hardware, it is true, evolved only gradually, and battles were not necessarily any bloodier than they had been during the Seven Years War. But in other ways these can legitimately be described as the first modern wars, fought by mass armies mobilized by national and patriotic propaganda, leading to the displacement of millions of people throughout Europe and beyond, as soldiers, prisoners of war, civilians and refugees. For those who lived through the period these wars would be a formative experience that shaped the ambitions and the identities of a generation.

The aims of the series are necessarily ambitious. In its various volumes, whether single-authored monographs or themed collections, it seeks to extend the scope of more traditional historiography. It will study warfare during this formative century not just in Europe, but in the Americas, in colonial societies, and across the world. It will analyse the construction of identities and power relations by integrating the principal categories of difference, most notably class and religion, generation and gender, race and ethnicity. It will adopt a multi-faceted

approach to the period, and turn to methods of political, cultural, social and military history, and of art history, in order to develop a challenging and multi-disciplinary analysis. Finally, it will examine elements of comparison and transfer and so tease out the complexities of regional, national and global history.

Acknowledgements

This book is the result of a workshop hosted by the Anglo–German research group ‘Nations, Borders, Identities: The Revolutionary and Napoleonic Wars in European Experiences and Memories’ (NBI) and the German Historical Institute, London (GHI). The workshop held at the GHI in London on 24 and 25 February 2006 was organized by Karen Hagemann (University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill) and Ruth Leiserowitz (Berlin School for Comparative European History), in co-operation with the GHI. It built upon discussions held at previous NBI workshops, in November 2004 at the Military Research Centre, Potsdam, and in November 2005 at the European Academy, Berlin. At the London workshop seventeen participants from seven countries presented papers relating to the experiences and perceptions of soldiers and civilians in different European countries. For this volume the editors selected nine papers to be rewritten for publication, and invited two scholars to write new papers for the book on significant topics absent from the workshop. The Arts and Humanities Research Council, the GHI, and the German Research Foundation generously funded the workshop. The editors would like to thank all the participants in the workshop for their stimulating presentations and contributions to discussion, the authors for their willingness to co-operate so fully in the rewriting and editing of the essays, and the three foundations for making both the event and the resulting book possible.

*Chapel Hill and York,
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(with Yann Lagadec and Stéphane Perréon), 'The Experience and Culture of War in the Eighteenth Century: The British Raids on the Breton Coast, 1758', *French Historical Studies* 31:2 (2008).

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Introduction: Nations in Arms – People at War

Alan Forrest, Karen Hagemann and Jane Rendall

The period of the Revolutionary and Napoleonic Wars has been described as that of the first ‘total war’, a war that affected millions of people’s lives, brought a whole continent into contact with armies and bloodshed, and subsumed the economies of most European states to the needs and exigencies of the military.¹ The after-effects of the French Revolution, which permanently influenced European political culture far beyond France’s borders, have, of course, been widely analysed. But the extent to which the constant state of war that existed between 1792 and 1815 shaped the everyday experience of soldiers and civilians has been much less studied. Yet these wars affected nearly every European country as well as large areas of Asia, Africa and North America.² They were conducted by mass armies and often mobilized by patriotic and national propaganda, and they led to the circulation of millions of people – soldiers, prisoners of war and civilians – throughout Europe and beyond. The changing nature of warfare had far-reaching consequences for civil society as well as for those directly engaged in fighting. Those who lived through the period between 1792 and 1815 shared formative experiences and memories.

Though these conflicts were in many respects part of what may be regarded as the first ‘world war’, they were also the first wars fought by all combatant parties as ‘national wars’, with mass armies recruited on the basis of universal mobilization, supplied by requisitioning and plundering.³ The number of soldiers deployed surpassed anything ever seen in Europe. In order to defeat Napoleon, the *ancien régime* states appropriated French military strategy, with its general aim of annihilating the troops of the enemy. The changing character of warfare had a number of important consequences. Because of mass mobilization and the geographical scale of the conflict, ordinary men were sent to

serve in distant countries where they encountered unknown peoples, languages and customs, crossing new borders in more than one sense of that word. Both soldiers and civilians experienced a further brutalization of warfare, with war casualties rising to previously unheard-of levels. Yet, because of their character as 'national wars', these conflicts were closely intertwined with the process of political and cultural nation-building in Europe. The monarchies of Prussia, Russia and Spain, as well as the nation-states of France and Britain, appealed to national sentiment to mobilize not only men for military service, but also civilian populations, men and women alike. They needed civilian support to provide equipment for armies, militias and volunteers, medical services for sick and wounded soldiers and war charities for invalids, widows and orphans. Women's scope for action steadily expanded, since they often became solely responsible for supporting their families and carrying on the businesses of their soldier-husbands and were entrusted with wartime nursing and relief work.⁴

People at war

People were affected differently according to their circumstances – as soldiers and civilians, young and old, literate and illiterate, men and women, Protestants and Catholics, merchants and peasants. But few remained unaffected over nearly a quarter of a century of conflict; that, rather than any novelty in strategy or military hardware, is the distinctive quality of these wars. They did not produce a new kind of warfare, in the way that the First World War would do, or assume new tactics that would qualify as a military revolution. Many of the individual battles were no more ferocious than those of the Seven Years War, and, like the wars of the eighteenth century, they still belonged to the age of men, rather than of machines and technology.⁵ But because they involved so many people for so long and, at least in some areas of Europe, made a permanent contribution to the creation of regional and national identities, it is possible to see in these wars something new and formative, something that can be said to have had the attributes of a first 'world war' or as David Bell recently called them of a 'total war'.⁶

The Revolutionary and Napoleonic Wars provide a rare insight into the nature and variety of wartime experience in a period of transition from early modern to modern warfare. Armies were much larger than before, and they contained men from a far wider range of social backgrounds, including the sons of the professional and mercantile classes. Many more soldiers could write than in previous wars, and more were

able to comment on their experiences, bringing to the army something of the traveller's gaze as it crisscrossed the continent under Napoleon.⁷ Similarly, the resources of European states were far greater, and their expanded tax revenues increasingly dependent – especially in Britain and the Netherlands – on the product of commerce and overseas trade. The Revolutionary and Napoleonic Wars were part of a much longer imperial war between France and Britain, a war for supremacy in the colonization of states and societies across the globe, which lasted over a hundred years.⁸ In the course of this imperial war and the worldwide growth in overseas trade associated with it, more Europeans were travelling, fighting, working and living in non-European countries than ever before. Many reflected on their experiences in diaries, letters and memoirs. The move towards such reflexivity was throughout Europe fostered by spiritual revivals and by the enlightened exploration of personal identity, accompanied by a growth in published autobiographical narratives of the self.⁹ And much more unpublished autobiographical writing in the form of letters, diaries and memoirs can be found in the archives for this war than for earlier wars.

It has been suggested that another of the most significant changes in these years lay in the shifting relations between soldiers and citizens. In theory, these wars were above all patriotic and national wars, given the integral connection, as in France and Prussia, between military service and new understandings of citizenship. The *levée en masse* of 1793 in France most graphically exemplified that association. There the revolutionary citizen, with equal political rights, had to become a soldier to prove his citizenship.¹⁰ Prussian discourse also constructed a relationship between military service and citizenship, but a quite different one. Prussian men as subjects of a monarchical state had, after the introduction of universal conscription without exemptions in March 1813, first to demonstrate their loyalty to the state and their willingness to protect the 'fatherland'. They might then hope for more political rights and a constitution as a reward for their patriotic service, as promised by the Prussian king.¹¹ In Great Britain the absence of that link between citizenship and military service marked, in contrast, the continuity of the *ancien régime*, yet the wars also generated a conservative form of anti-French patriotism, and, it has been argued, a sense of British unity shared by a majority of all classes.¹²

As the French armies became less revolutionary and more imperial, as much of the continent was absorbed into the Napoleonic Empire, so, a familiar story suggests, popular resistance brought to many areas of Europe, including Prussia, Poland, the Netherlands, Spain and the

Tyrol, a heightened sense of patriotic or even of national identification. The wars were therefore indissolubly linked both with the changing meaning of citizenship and with ideas of national belonging. Nevertheless, although the terms 'citizen', *citoyen* and *Bürger/Staatsbürger* carried a powerful rhetorical charge, across much of Europe their concrete meanings as well as their political, legal and social implications, and the boundaries they drew between citizens, non-citizens and aliens, remained deeply unclear. This was a world in which the membership of a nation was simply one of a number of possible identities, including the membership of an estate, the freedom of a town, and the privileges of members of a guild.¹³

A further suggestion has been that this period saw an increasingly sharp separation between soldiers and civilians across Europe, and that it was in these years that the idea of the 'military' as a self-contained world – professional, introspective, with its own values and bonds – took shape.¹⁴ Long years of war meant that young men grew old in the army, separated from their families and their communities, and increasingly cut off from the everyday world of civil society. In France the growth of a discrete military culture helped to shape Napoleon's coup d'état of 1799. In Great Britain, Prussia and many other parts of Europe, the building of barracks – first for soldiers with families, and only later for single soldiers – created physical barriers between the military and the civilian population. Initially the barracks did include a certain number of wives and children, who were defined by most early modern army laws and regulations as members of the army, 'on the strength' and subject to military discipline. But this situation proved impossible to sustain. The large number of soldiers in the new conscript armies could not be billeted with their families in the houses of civilians, which had been the standard practice in earlier standing armies. Recruits were increasingly housed in barracks, apart from 'civilian' society. At the same time, army leaders tried to exclude soldiers' wives and children from any role in military life. Soldiers' wives lost their legal status as part of the army and only a very few were still allowed to live with their husbands in their barracks or quarters. Army leaders also tried to make dramatic reductions in the number of camp followers. Taken together, these changes contributed to the professionalization and masculinization of armies across Europe.¹⁵

In the eighteenth century there was no word, in English or French, for 'civilian'; those who played no part in army life were not identified as a discrete category. In both languages the term then meant a practitioner or student of civil law. However, the word 'civilian' was

used in English in the late eighteenth century to distinguish between the military and non-military servants of the East India Company, and the first recorded usage more generally for a 'non-military person' was in 1829.¹⁶ In France, too, it was 1835 before the term 'civil' was first used to define a distinct social condition that excluded both the military and the priesthood, a usage that first appeared in the *Dictionnaire de l'Académie* and was given greater popular resonance in the works of Balzac.¹⁷ Before then the concept of civilians as a clear category of men was not part of the British and French mindset. Army officers, in particular, enjoyed the respect of others both for their military role and for their position as members of the local nobility.¹⁸ The distinction that was made was between hired soldiers – the mercenaries who composed such a large part of all European armies and who were often treated with scant regard by those who encountered them – and the rest of society.

In Prussia and other parts of Germany the situation was different. The German language already differentiated at the end of the eighteenth century between *Militär-* and *Civilgesellschaft* (military and civilian society). An explanation might be that in the public understanding of the educated classes, and in particular the *Bürgertum* (the middle class), the military was an institution apart from 'civilized' civilian society. Until the military reforms of the early nineteenth century, only nobles could become officers and the rank-and-file conscripts came mainly from the rural poor. Before the introduction of universal conscription in 1813, middle- and upper-class men and the inhabitants of larger cities and some industrialized regions were exempt from military service. Such men regarded the army and the policy of conscription as necessary, but looked down on ordinary soldiers and 'uneducated' officers.¹⁹

Yet at the same time the changes in the conduct of warfare during the period of the Revolutionary and Napoleonic Wars, in particular the creation of mass armies and the economic impact of the wars, had profound economic and social effects on the fabric of European societies. In warfare itself the boundaries between civilians and the military became more and more blurred. Civilians became – in comparison with eighteenth-century wars – victims of the wars in far greater numbers, simply because of the unknown size of the new mass armies, as Karen Hagemann argues in this volume. Civilians died during the bombardment of villages and towns, from starvation in besieged cities, and most often because of the epidemics (especially dysentery and typhus) which soldiers brought to thousands of cities, villages and homes all over Europe. The greater size of the armies made an enormous difference, because their logistics were no longer mainly based on army provisions

but on general requisitioning.²⁰ The armies took what they needed from the lands they marched through or fought for. Civilians had to accommodate and feed armies marching through their territory, and to finance them through taxes and tributes.

Economic warfare, too – and in particular the Continental Blockade, as Katherine Aaslestad demonstrates in this volume – affected the livelihoods of millions of men and women through the disruption of established patterns of trade and industry.²¹ It could, as for Great Britain, mean expanding overseas markets, but it also led to periods of economic crisis. Such changes brought unprecedented tensions between the military and civilian spheres, including those relating to gender roles. In Britain rapidly expanding textile production, associated with new markets as well as with mechanization, increased the demand for the labour of women and children.²² Many rural communities suffered from a shortage of young men and a consequent loss of labour for agriculture. Here women often took over the jobs of their husbands or brothers on the farm, and over the years of war these shifts would test assumptions about gender roles as much as they challenged relations across generations. In short, the wars not only presented people with new experiences – tragic and painful ones for some, liberating and empowering ones for others – but they also helped to redefine people's assumptions and remodel their identities.

These narratives of changing warfare provide promising ways to make sense of a period of dramatic and unprecedented change. Yet they still leave us at some distance from the lived experience of individuals, and from the complexity of constructed identities that derived as much from past memories as from present impressions, and which still lay some way from the categories imposed by twentieth- and twenty-first-century historians. The essays in this collection suggest ways in which a focus on the direct experiences of soldiers, citizens and civilians at war may complicate and illuminate these patterns.

Analysing war experiences and perceptions

The subject of human experience has been widely discussed in recent years in the light of postmodernist analyses of history and the development of approaches derived from the 'cultural and linguistic turn'. If history is to be seen as composed of competing texts and voices, then that raises the question of how 'experience' can be defined; yet the term is still a key category for social history and has been the subject of considerable debate, not least among historians of everyday life and

women's historians. In the context of the German history of everyday life, 'experience' came to be seen as a site at which 'abstract structures of domination and exploitation were directly encountered'.²³ Women's historians used a similar notion when they constructed a shared female experience 'of sexual oppression' as the precondition for the development of feminist consciousness and hence as 'the basis for unity or identity among women'.²⁴

A key moment in this debate came in Joan Scott's 1991 essay on 'The Evidence of Experience', in which she challenged what she termed the 'authority of experience' in social and women's history. She questioned 'the appeal to experience as uncontested evidence and as a fundamental point of explanation' for subjective perceptions, identities and practices.²⁵ In particular she criticized those historians who adopt a purely empirical approach and try to make experience 'visible', or who take meaning as 'transparent' and reproduce rather than contest the given ideological systems, because they believe that the 'facts of history speak for themselves'.²⁶ She urged historians to look instead beyond the experience of their subjects, which she defines as the process by which subjectivity is constructed, in other words the ways in which individuals and groups try to make sense of the historical contexts in which they find themselves. Historians, argues Scott, should analyse the discursive systems underpinning experience, the forms of representation which those systems use, and the ways in which they operate, because 'discourses position subjects and produce experiences'.²⁷ In her view it is not individuals who have experiences, but rather historical subjects who are constituted through experience.²⁸

Thinking about experience in this way forces us to define the concept differently. William Sewell – following Scott – suggested that we should understand experience as 'the linguistically shaped process of weighing and assigning meaning to events as they happen', a process that is embedded in the 'cultural understandings and linguistic capacities' of historical subjects.²⁹ This is a useful and sensitive definition. But what does it mean for our analysis of war experiences and perceptions?

It has, we believe, two principal implications. On the one hand it forces us to focus more on the specific forms of articulation of war experiences and perceptions and their narratives. The form used – whether letters, diaries, unpublished or published memoirs – and its literary tradition, which had an inevitable influence on the writing style, had an important effect on what was said. So did the person to whom the account was written. It mattered whether the addressee was a member of the writer's family, a friend, an employer or a broader, less

closely-defined public; the nature of the correspondence shaped the narrative as much as did the time of writing and the distance in time between the experienced event and the writing of the record. Autobiographical documents like diaries produced in the immediate aftermath of an event might be closer to the contemporary experience but they are as much influenced by the collective memory of earlier events and by time-specific discourses as are memoirs, which were often produced 20 or 30 years later.³⁰

On the other hand, because these accounts are time-specific and born of particular, often unique circumstances, there is a need to historicize and differentiate war experiences and perceptions much more radically than has often been done in the past. People did not write in a void; and neither is their writing free from the dominant discourses and cultural constraints of their day. This implies that we must not read them in a literary void, but quite consciously analyse the norms and paradigms of the moment, the structural conditions that pertained to a given place and time, with their dominant discourses and contesting voices. In short, the writings have to be supplied with a context, and must be treated as the writings of specific individuals and groups, produced in a particular historical situation that may help explain their verbal, visual and practical expressions. Experiences can be as diverse as the individuals who live them, and they can be tantalizingly difficult to define with accuracy.

To take account of the sheer diversity of civilian and military experience during the Revolutionary and Napoleonic Wars, it is important to focus on a range of circumstances, which help to nuance their writings. We must be aware of the kind of army the population had to deal with, the range of military operations in the field, and the forms of warfare that were practised. We have to understand the economic and social situation of a region or community that was affected by war or by the passage of an army, since not all a people's ills had their origins in the war itself. We must look at the political traditions and structures of the area in question, the form of government, and the political assumptions that stemmed from it. Again, it is important to have some grasp of the underlying belief systems and patterns of perception shared by contemporaries, and to appreciate the influence of religion and of political propaganda. And, of course, we must realize that opinions, and the expression of these opinions, will reflect other social realities, most notably the social status, generation, gender, confessional faith and ethnic background of the writer, for all these are circumstances which affect expectation and help to explain the issues that are highlighted and the

language that is used. All are important factors in constituting human experience, and it is only by taking them all into account and noting the interplay between them that we can gain a sufficient grasp of the full range of war experiences and perceptions. The battlefield is only one part of a broader social and cultural picture, and warfare must be understood in its broad social context, that of civil as well as military society.

By adopting a comprehensive approach of this kind, it is possible to gain a firmer impression of how people lived through the war and reacted to it, how those who wrote about their lives and their experience of these years thought about what was happening and visualized their own role and the roles of others. Through the various letters, diaries and other forms of ego-documents that are extant – and their nature and quality will depend on a myriad of circumstances from the cultural habits of the elites and literacy rates in society at large to the value placed on personal writings by the archivists and librarians of successive generations – we can see how people responded to war at the time, or very close to the time of the events they describe. These accounts represent the closest we can get to immediate personal response, and for that very immediacy they are surely precious; while the fact that they are often written by individuals in a private capacity, without any of the bureaucratic sophistries imposed by officialdom, can give the impression that they, more than any other form of documentation, transport the reader into the conditions of wartime and share with us a potent sense of what it was like to be there.

The closest we can get; but it is salutary to ask the question, ‘how close?’ Can a letter written by a soldier to his mother in a French village on the day after a battle be said to express his ‘experience’, or merely a selection of facts and images which it seemed to him important to express? And why did he choose these? Was it because these were the scenes that had left the most powerful mark on his mind, and thus those which most formed his memory of the battle? Or were there other considerations – what he had read in the bulletin from his general or discussed with his friends in the bar, what he felt it was decent or appropriate to describe, or even what he felt a dutiful son should write about without causing too much pain and anxiety? The letter might seem to describe immediate experience; but all sorts of cultural constraints affect the form and content of what was written down, not least the difficulty many men in the ranks must have had in consigning their emotions to writing.

So with the correspondence of nobles or landed families – including the women of these families, where they wrote letters or commonplace

books – it is surely important to understand the constraints of class and gender, and to accept what subjects were deemed appropriate for discussion in polite society of the day. The silences can be as illuminating as what is actually said. These documents come with their cultural baggage, and with a considerable weight of foreknowledge and expectation. Thus a soldier who had already experienced combat, or had known life in previous campaigns, would often spice his account of the present with assumptions gleaned from the past, assumptions which helped form his understanding of the drama he was living through. In other words, experiences are not static; they stand, as Horst Carl has expressed it, ‘in a changeable socio-cultural context of meaning’ which makes them very difficult for the historian to capture at any fixed moment.³¹

According to this view, experience must be seen as a process, where the most immediate records form an important but not unique part. Reality must be seen as a social construction, and, like individual experience, as a construction that is in a constant process of manufacture. Previous experience, whether of life before the campaign began or of other battles, lived or related, feeds into their understanding of the current war and helps determine current actions, just as what they live through in the army affects their behaviour and assumptions once they return to civil society. Some of these assumptions may be purely personal and relate to their previous life as peasants, or Catholics, or women. Others may be collective, the presumptions shared by wide segments of society, like a fear of grain-hoarders or a hatred of Jews. And at a time when peoples across much of Europe were still evolving their patriotic and national consciousness, patriotic and national identities might also figure among these presuppositions, identities often marked by assumptions about a gendered national character and fear of ‘the other’ inside and outside the constructed nation. These identities exist and are expressed, though, significantly, rather infrequently in the writings that were penned in the heat of battle or at the time of the events that are being discussed.

This raises another question. Should ‘experience’ be seen as something static, something lived and recorded at a particular moment, or does such a stringent definition risk making it wholly elusive to history? An alternative view – that favoured, among others, by Ute Planert in her recent study of the Napoleonic Wars in southern Germany³² – is that experience is better seen as an evolving construct, a narrative that can take a number of different forms and which can be changed and enriched by the passage of time and the process of reflection. Experience itself, in its purest, most total form, will continue to elude us. We

cannot know the degree of emotion, the enthusiasm or fear, the extent of human affection or of a sense of loss. We cannot, from letters and diaries, however immediate and close to the events described, measure those intangible elements – the willingness of the writer to tell all, fear of the censor and of possible reprisals for rash revelations, a desire to please or a preparedness to shock – which could determine what was written and what was omitted. We cannot know the depths of affection between a young soldier and his parents: did a lack of detail or a short, formulaic letter mean that he felt little appetite for writing, or that he was too busy with army duties, or that he simply struggled to transfer words to paper? Again, what is written on the spur of the moment may be regretted the next day, or the arrival of the postman may have meant that there was time for only the sparsest of descriptions. In the uncertain physical and psychological world of war, there are so many imponderables, with the consequence that even the most immediate and apparently spontaneous of ego-documents have to be read with care.

This leaves us with a rather different view of experience, or at least of its expression in contemporary sources. If the recording of experience is seen as a process, as the bit-by-bit construction of a satisfactory narrative, then we can take account both of what is said in the immediate aftermath of an event – a battle, or the siege of a town, or the passage through a village of an enemy force – and the more measured account of the same event that can be found in later writing, in the journal or diary written up days later, or in the memoir or the collection of letters edited for subsequent publication. The latter documents have no claim to immediacy, of course; but they can compensate for that by what they provide in coherence and the product of reflection. Memoirs, far more than letters to relatives or the often sketchy lists of marches and destinations that obsess the writers of military diaries, lend themselves to the treatment of broader issues – the cause for which a man is fighting, questions of tactics and leadership, the quality of the enemy army, the state of morale and military motivation, the landscape through which he passes, even in some cases some thoughts on politics, ideology or religious faith. And if some memoirs were put together decades after the events described, others were written soon after the war was over, while events remained fresh in the writer's mind. Of course they do not describe immediately the experience of war; that experience has been mulled over and reconsidered, fermented and matured. Sometimes, as in all wars, it has caused the writer agony and torment to recall and make sense of what he had done. The closer in time it is to the events it describes, the more clearly it can be equated with that experience;

but all memoirs, even those written decades later, have this in common, that they are written by those who took part in the events and who seek to make sense of these events for their own satisfaction.³³ The writer is still an actor, whether a soldier or an officer reminiscing about his war, or a priest or a village schoolteacher describing the impact of war on his community. The memoir, seen from this perspective, can be said to constitute the last building brick in the construction of experience.

Revisiting the history of the Revolutionary and Napoleonic wars

The essays in this volume reconstruct the wartime experiences of men and women in Belgium, Britain, France, Germany, Poland and the Netherlands in a variety of different ways, drawing on a wide range of personal documents and archival sources. Some position themselves close to the moment of action, drawing heavily on letters and contemporary accounts to approach as closely as possible to the events they describe: such is the case, for instance, with Horst Carl's analysis of the role of religion in Napoleon's armies, John Cookson's discussion of the relationships that developed between British officers and men, or Catriona Kennedy's analysis of women's emotions behind the lines at Waterloo. Others look to memoirs and later writings to help offer a more reflective overview of wartime experience. Jarosław Czubyaty uses the memoirs and historical writings to expose the different meanings that have been attached to the service of Polish officers in these wars, while Johan Joor uses both contemporary and later sources to reconstruct popular protest in the Netherlands during the war years and to relate it to popular notions of a moral economy. In every case the evidence is used sensitively, with due regard to the context that produced it and to the particular contribution it can make to the reconstruction of the war years.

Although they are organized into three sections relating to soldiers, civilians and citizens, all the essays suggest the permeability of these still very opaque categories. All counsel a caution that is born of close attention to language, political context, and social, religious and cultural specificities. In doing so, they demonstrate how specific contexts shaped wartime experiences and influenced sharpening perceptions of identity, among civilians as well as among the soldiers themselves.

Some essays note the popular and literary paradigms which male and female observers and participants might use to reconstruct their own experiences. Thus David Hopkin, in his discussion of the role of female

soldiers in the French armies, points to the cultural baggage carried by a very small number of these women, and notes the difficulties of disentangling experience from fiction. Popular representations of female soldiers emphasized their relationship to the lovers and fathers in their lives, and though these drew upon the evidence of real people, they offered no guide to the reality of their wartime lives. The direct evidence that we have from a very few such soldiers suggests that their actions may well have stemmed from revolutionary enthusiasm and a sense of adventure, as well as offering an escape from poverty, and that in many respects they shared the same attitudes and experiences as their male counterparts.

Catriona Kennedy's examination of the languages of war used by upper-class British women encountering the battlefield for the first time at Waterloo challenges any simple privileging of the soldier-narrator. The aristocratic women of whom she writes claimed the authority of the experience of eyewitnesses, though they also expressed a feminine diffidence. But to express their reactions to the battlefield they drew upon contemporary literary models drawn from imaginative literature, including the poetry of James Macpherson and Walter Scott, and the Gothic novel, to allow them to write in both chivalric and Gothic modes. A more fully gendered understanding of the writing of war experiences would incorporate the extent to which both male and female writers drew upon the languages available to them.

Other essays remind us of the ways in which older national historiographies, linked to the nineteenth-century development of nations and nation-states, have obscured the understanding of wartime experiences. Jaroslaw Czubaty suggests that nineteenth- and early twentieth-century Polish historiography emphasized only the patriotic motives of the Polish officer corps in the service of the Polish nation, an issue that was largely ignored by Polish historians in the second half of the twentieth century. For the Netherlands, Johan Joor argues that the conservative national historiography constructed at the end of the nineteenth century effaced the history of popular protest under Napoleonic occupation, because it employed the traditional rituals of crowd action and could not be associated with the modern nation-state established in 1813 and 1830. Horst Carl, too, indicates the misleading nature of twentieth-century paradigms of modernization in his comparative study of the Netherlands, Belgium and the Rhineland, showing how the history of religion and the churches was associated only with traditional and declining functions in a world of increasing secularization, rather than with the strength of collective religious identities.

In Part I, which deals directly with military experiences of war, John Cookson, Natalie Petiteau and Jarosław Czubaty, writing on Great Britain, France and Poland, all question too easy an identification between military service and an overarching sense of patriotism and identification with the nation. Cookson's examination of the relationship between officers and soldiers stresses the significance of an intensified paternalism which, though characterizing British society generally at this time, operated with particular ease in the closed world of the army and its regiments. Soldiers' letters and memoirs reflect the expectations they drew from their roots in the culture of the poor or the comradeship of the regiment, the qualities they associated with good officers, and the possibilities of advancement in such self-contained societies. Officers sought to build regimental rather than national identities; though soldiers might be identified as Irish, Scottish or Welsh, 'Britishness' existed 'largely by default'.

Writing of Napoleonic France, Petiteau similarly comments on the extent to which military service was increasingly distanced from the idea of the nation-in-arms. The form which conscription took served to increase social distinctions and introduced young men to a separate and cohesive military world. If the memoirs of French soldiers record the harshness of the military conditions they experienced in Spain and especially in Russia, they also reflect a sense of being part of a military family, a family whose leader was the Emperor Napoleon. Reintegration into a civilian world after 1815 was to prove difficult, though some would make good use of their newly-acquired skills. Only in the 1850s did the veterans of the Napoleonic armies attain that sense of common identity which they bequeathed to the powerful national spirit of late nineteenth-century France. For Poland, on the other hand, Czubaty suggests that the Napoleonic period allowed Poles to hope to realize their national aspirations, with a newly formed army taking up aspects of the French republican tradition, a tradition which might also at some points inspire motivation among the ordinary, largely illiterate, soldiers. Yet Czubaty also emphasizes the diversity of recruitment and motivation among the officer corps; the correspondence of officers suggests that patriotism, though perhaps the most important, was by no means the only motive for military service. Dreams of glory, and pragmatic possibilities of career advancement, were also significant.

Hopkin's paper on the female soldiers of the French revolutionary armies concludes by pointing to the attempt of the French Convention to ban women, apart from those carrying out necessary support functions, from the military. After 1793, the masculinity of the army was

more sharply, though not always wholly effectively, enforced, and the image of the female soldier came to be associated with revolution and social disorder, suggesting more clearly defined gender roles in a military setting.³⁴

In the civilian worlds discussed in Part II, on the other hand, the gendering of wartime experience is not quite so clear-cut. Patricia Lin's paper analyses both the new responsibility taken by the British government in this period for the families of soldiers and sailors, and the detailed information that was collected about them. Using these records, she reconstructs the experiences of military and naval families, both in Britain and on active service overseas, emphasizing the extent to which war under these circumstances was 'a family affair', with a definition of 'family' here stretching beyond immediate family members to include more distant relatives and regimental comrades and officers. Katherine Aaslestad's study of civilian experiences of economic warfare points to the breakdown of the dichotomy between civilian and military worlds in Hamburg, as the scale and impact of economic warfare militarized a once peaceful and prosperous commercial society, turning the city of Hamburg into 'a war zone'. That experience was reflected in the poetry of Christine Westphalen as in the correspondence of middle-class men and women, and in the protests of similarly mixed crowds on the Hamburg streets.

Catriona Kennedy's discussion of the writing on the battle of Waterloo by upper-class British women emphasizes how their narratives might reflect a broader collective identification with a wider British patriotism or with the leadership and prestige of the British aristocracy, though they might also simply reflect immediate and personal loss. Karen Hagemann analyses civilian experiences and perceptions of the battle of Leipzig in October 1813. She demonstrates the far-reaching consequences of the new warfare of mass armies for civilians, and differentiates between town and countryside, between the educated and the illiterate, and between the rich and the poor. She also points to the important, but curiously neglected, subject of violence directed against civilians during these wars. By analysing the consequences of mass warfare for civilians she contributes to the history of everyday life in a civilian society at war.

The essays in Part III, on protest and patriotic mobilization during the years of war, relate less to the new definitions of citizenship emerging from the French Revolution than to different responses to the political challenges of war and occupation. They tend to suggest that while a new vocabulary of citizenship and modernization may have come into

play, the language of popular politics was more closely related to older assumptions of everyday life, to expectations of a 'moral economy' and mutual obligations between classes, and to the collective bonds of religious life. Johan Joor's recovery of the history of popular protest in the Netherlands during the Napoleonic regime, directed against conscription, heavy taxation and an alien government, shows how the men and women in the protesting crowds, often from the families of artisans and craftsmen, drew upon the notion of a 'moral economy'. Their violence was disciplined, targeted and often symbolic in nature. There was little national dimension to such protests. Similarly, Kevin Linch, writing of the artisans and craftsmen who joined the British volunteer movement, shows that their mentalities were deeply imbued with the sense of a 'moral economy' and of their just rights, even if such rights contravened military discipline. The volunteer who regarded himself as 'a citizen and not a soldier' was expressing exactly that sense, that even the part-time soldier had customary rights, rather than any sympathy with the revolutionary concept of citizenship; he would probably not have been entitled to vote, and did not conceive of citizenship in that context. Nevertheless, the volunteers were exposed to the patriotic rhetoric, festivals and celebrations of wartime Britain, and they came to some degree to share a sense of national purpose.

Horst Carl suggests that, though it has been assumed that the traditional structure of meaning derived from religious faith broke down in wartime, the evidence of the letters of soldiers from Belgium, the Netherlands and the Rhineland points to a rather different conclusion. In these letters there is little reflection of the clergy's rhetoric in support of Napoleon, nor of any growing enthusiasm for the nation; soldiers are identified mainly with their locality, their families and their confession. Only in later autobiographical accounts did they write of deeper religious experiences. The period of the Revolution and Napoleonic Empire did not see the emergence of a modern form of nationalism in these areas, but a strengthening of the confessional divisions which had offered soldiers and their families the collective identities and rituals which gave meaning to their lives.

The experiences and everyday lives of the soldiers, citizens and civilians of this period cannot be fully understood through the broader narratives of change imposed by historians. Yet close attention to the personal documents and to the social and cultural practices of the participants in the dramatic events of these years can help historians to understand such individual and collective experiences, even if the silences of participants also have to be recognized and are often as telling

as the accounts themselves. For if the period was indeed one of new and formative changes, ending in 1815 with the transformation of the map of Europe, these changes were unevenly experienced, often went unrecognized, and were only rarely conceptualized in the language of ordinary men and women.

Notes

1. David A. Bell, *The First Total War. Napoleon's Europe and the Birth of Warfare As We Know It* (London: Bloomsbury, 2007).
2. See Stig Förster, 'Der Weltkrieg, 1792 bis 1815: Bewaffnete Konflikte und Revolutionen in der Weltgeschichte', in *Kriegsbereitschaft und Friedensordnung in Deutschland 1800–1814*, ed. Jost Dülffer (Münster: Lit, 1995), pp. 17–38.
3. Robert Epstein, *Napoleon's Last Victory and the Emergence of Modern War* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 1994).
4. For further discussion of gender issues, see Karen Hagemann, Gisela Mettele and Jane Rendall (eds), *Gender, War and Politics. The Wars of Revolution and Liberation – Transatlantic Comparisons 1775–1820* (forthcoming, Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2009).
5. Michael S. Neiberg, *Soldiers' Lives Through History: The Nineteenth Century* (Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 2006).
6. Bell, *The First Total War*.
7. See Michael Epkenhans, Stig Förster and Karen Hagemann (eds), *Militärische Erinnerungskultur. Soldaten im Spiegel von Biographien, Memoiren and Selbstzeugnissen* (Paderborn: Schöningh, 2006).
8. William W. Lace, *Hundred Years' War* (San Diego: Lucent Books, 1994); Bruce Lenman, *Britain's Colonial Wars 1688–1783* (Harlow: Longman, 2001); Lawrence Stone (ed.), *An Imperial State at War. Britain from 1689–1815* (London: Routledge, 1994); P. J. Marshall (ed.), *The Oxford History of the British Empire. The Eighteenth Century* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998).
9. Dror Wahrman, *The Making of the Modern Self. Identity and Culture in Eighteenth-Century England* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2004); Charles Taylor, *Sources of the Self: The Making of the Modern Identity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989); Felicity Nussbaum, *The Autobiographical Subject. Gender and Ideology in Eighteenth-Century England* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1989).
10. Alan Forrest, 'La patrie en danger: The French Revolution and the First *Levée en masse*', and Daniel Moran, 'Arms and the Concert. The Nation in Arms and the Dilemmas of German Liberalism', in *The People in Arms. Military Myth and National Mobilization since the French Revolution*, eds Daniel Moran and Arthur Waldron (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), pp. 8–32, 49–74; Karen Hagemann and Stefan Dudink, 'Masculinity in Politics and War in the Age of Democratic Revolutions, 1750–1850', in *Masculinities in Politics and War. Gendering Modern History*, eds Stefan Dudink, Karen Hagemann and John Tosh (Manchester and New York: Manchester University Press, 2004), pp. 3–21.

11. Karen Hagemann, 'Männlicher Muth und Teutsche Ehre'. *Nation, Militär und Geschlecht zur Zeit der Antinapoleonischen Kriege Preußens* (Paderborn: Schöningh, 2002), pp. 271–305; idem, 'The First Citizen of his State: Paternal Masculinity, Patriotism and Citizenship in Early Nineteenth Century Prussia', in *Representing Masculinity. Citizenship in Modern Western Political Culture*, eds Stefan Dudink, Karen Hagemann and Anna Clark (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008).
12. Linda Colley, *Britons. Forging the Nation 1707–1837* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1992).
13. For a detailed discussion of this point, see Andreas Fahrmeir, 'Defining the Citizen', in *Napoleon and his Empire. Europe 1804–1814*, eds Philip Dwyer and Alan Forrest (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2007), pp. 185–201; see also idem, *Citizens and Aliens: Foreigners and the Law in Britain and German States 1789–1870* (New York: Berghahn, 2000).
14. See Bell, *The First Total War*.
15. Barton C. Hacker, 'Women and Military Institutions in Early Modern Europe: A Reconnaissance', *Signs* 6 (1981): 643–671; John E. Cookson, *The British Armed Nation, 1793–1815* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1997), p. 124; Clive Emsley, 'The Military and Popular Disorder in England 1790–1801', *Journal of the Society for Army Historical Research* 61 (1983):10–21, 96–112. See also Sabina Loriga, *Soldats: un laboratoire disciplinaire: l'armée piémontaise au XVIIIe siècle* (Paris: Mentha, 1991); Alf Lütcke, 'Die Kaserne', in *Orte des Alltags. Miniaturen aus der europäischen Kulturgeschichte*, ed. Heinz Gerhardt-Haupt (Munich: Beck, 1994), pp. 227–237.
16. Bell, *The First Total War*, p. 11; J. A. Simpson and E.S.C. Weiner (eds), *The Oxford English Dictionary*, 20 vols, 2nd edn (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1989), vol. 3, p. 256.
17. See the discussion of the etymology of the word 'civil', both as a noun and an adjective, in the *Trésor de la langue française*, consulted online at <<http://atilf.atilf.fr/tlf.htm>> (25 October 2007).
18. Bell, *The First Total War*, p. 11.
19. See Hagemann, 'The First Citizen'.
20. John A Lynn, *Feeding Mars: Logistics in Western Warfare from the Middle Ages to the Present* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1993).
21. François Crouzet, *L'économie britannique et le blocus continental, 1806–1813* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1958); idem, 'Wars, Blockade, and Economic Change in Europe, 1792–1815', *Journal of Economic History* 24 (1964): 567–588; Geoffrey J. Ellis, *Napoleon's Continental Blockade: The Case of Alsace* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1981).
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24. *Ibid.*, p. 73.
25. Joan W. Scott, 'Experience', in *Feminists Theorize the Political*, eds Judith Butler and Joan W. Scott (New York: Routledge, 1992), pp. 22–40, here 37, first

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26. Scott, 'Experience', p. 25.
 27. *Ibid.*, p. 37.
 28. *Ibid.*, pp. 36–38.
 29. William H. Sewell, *Gender, History, and Deconstruction: Joan W. Scott's Gender and the Politics of History*, CSST Working Paper 34 (Ann Arbor, MI, 1989), p. 19.
 30. For the theoretical and methodological discussion of autobiographical documents, see Winfried Schulze, 'Ego-Dokumente: Annäherung an den Menschen in der Geschichte?', in *Von Aufbruch und Utopie. Perspektiven einer neuen Gesellschaftsgeschichte des Mittelalters*, eds Bea Lundt and Helma Reimöller (Cologne: Böhlau, 1992), pp. 417–450; Benigna v. Krusenstjern, 'Was sind Selbstzeugnisse? Begriffskritische und quellenkundliche Überlegungen anhand von Beispielen aus dem 17. Jahrhundert', *Historische Anthropologie* 2 (1994): 462–471, 463; Dagmar Günther, 'And Now for Something Completely Different. Prolegomena zur Autobiographie als Quelle der Geschichtswissenschaft', *Historische Zeitschrift* 272 (2002): 25–61; and, with a focus on military history, Epkenhans et al., *Militärische Erinnerungskultur*.
 31. Nikolaus Buschmann and Horst Carl (eds), *Die Erfahrung des Krieges. Erfahrungsgeschichtliche Perspektiven von der Französischen Revolution bis zum Zweiten Weltkrieg* (Paderborn: Schöningh, 2001), in particular the introduction.
 32. Ute Planert, *Der Mythos vom Befreiungskrieg. Der deutsche Sünden und die französischen Kriege. Alltag, Wahrnehmung (Um)Deutung* (Paderborn: Schöningh, 2007).
 33. See Samuel Hynes, *The Soldiers' Tale. Bearing Witness to Modern War* (London: Allen Lane, 1997).
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Part I

Military Experiences

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1

Regimental Worlds: Interpreting the Experience of British Soldiers during the Napoleonic Wars

John E. Cookson

The 'army and society history' of the Napoleonic period has been predictably rooted in nation-making; for the fascination of these wars for historians has always been the extent to which they were 'wars of the nations' opening the way towards a modern age of state authority yet widely conceded citizenship. In British work on 'forging the nation', Linda Colley's *Britons* (1992) remains seminal. It depicted the long war against France and Napoleon as climactic, the British becoming totally confident of their national identity against the French 'other' and their armed nation compelling progress towards the broader political nation that soon afterwards came into being.¹ The emergence of a patriotism that over-arched ethnicity, sub-British nationality, religion, class and party was implicit in her narrative. This 'British' patriotism welled up most spectacularly when participation in national defence was required and in the moment of final victory.

The army, taken on its own, has been only loosely fitted into this narrative. It has often been assumed that the mix of English, Scots and Irish in the regiments made the army into a vanguard of Britishness.² Yet while rank-and-file soldiers articulated their loyalty to the regiment, their officers or their comrades on many occasions, they are rarely heard with their own voices fighting for a larger cause, such as the counter-revolution or British 'liberty' or 'King and Country'. Even the Francophobic nationalism of the wider British society seems to have been moderated in their case by the meritocratic aspects of the French military system that they observed, by their admiration of the aggressive spirit of the French in battle, and by their acceptance of a comradeship of soldiers that included their French enemies. As Czubaty and Petiteau also argue, it is easy to exaggerate

the extent to which armies of the period were unified by nationalistic ideals.

My preferred framework of interpretation is not Colley's nation-making, but rather the intensified paternalism that characterized late eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century British society. The focus of this chapter is therefore mainly on the officer-soldier relationship. Officers assumed a greater responsibility for the good order and welfare of their men, much as the propertied classes in general sought greater control over the lives of the poor. They can be said to have belonged to an elite that continued to see 'deference' as the key to social cohesion.³ In the British army that came out of the wars, the soldier's lot was much improved, officers had a greater sense of what was professional conduct, and regimental identities and loyalties were stronger. Furthermore, the regiment can be understood as a near-perfect field of paternalistic operation. It was, to a large degree, an enclosed community (including women and children as well as men) in which the authority and influence of officers could have great play and be used to create a world to their liking.

Ample material exists to interpret the experiences of British soldiers during the Napoleonic wars; its harvest by historians, however, has hardly begun. The very numerous published reminiscences of officers and rank-and-file soldiers have mainly been used by conventional military historians merely to add detail to their accounts of military operations. In addition, very few scholars have made use of the immense cache of records generated by the army as it developed a bureaucracy to collect a wide variety of information from regiments. One important purpose of this chapter is to show how personal, regimental and army sources in combination open up rich opportunities for further work. It can even be argued that investigating soldiers' lives can make a valuable contribution to the history of the wider society; probably more can be found out about soldiers than about any other social group belonging to the classes of the poor.

The officer-soldier relationship

Paternalism should be understood to describe an unequal relationship but not one without its own equilibrium. Soldiers in regiments had their own collective strength. Without exception, only varying in degree, the relationship between officers and men was built on an important element of reciprocity. Men had to be managed; officers needed to exercise leadership as well as command, especially when it came to the

close-order warfare of the times and the often severe privations of campaigning. Soldiers themselves distinguished between 'come on' and 'go on' officers.⁴ The honour of the regiment was no shibboleth either, for regiments were subject to comparison, formally by periodical inspections and reviews, informally by the show and good order they exhibited and by their battlefield performance. Officers had reputations to protect, and a good deal of that reputation depended on how their men regarded them.

Soldiers, for their part, resented treatment that demeaned their dignity and self-respect as men and disparaged their hardihood and skills. They also expected their officers to keep faith with them; the most serious trouble in the army – open mutiny – occurred when soldiers believed the terms of their enlistment were being flouted.⁵ It is not too much to say that soldiers (and seamen) had a conception of their 'rights' even if it often seemed to be nothing more than an elementary sense of justice and resistance to servility at the hands of their superiors. The highest encomium they could bestow on an officer was to speak of him as their 'father'. In all this they were hardly different from the poor in general.

The naval mutinies of 1797 'fundamentally changed the attitudes of officers and men throughout the Navy'. The lower deck had felt its strength and became more capable of organized representation. Captains paid closer attention to the happiness and harmony of their ship's company, not least because trouble was now more likely to be damaging to their careers.⁶ The event for the army that paralleled the naval mutinies may well have been the collapse of the royal army of France in 1789, for it produced deep anxiety in Britain concerning the loyalty of the soldiery at high times of popular discontent and radical agitation. The first major success in improving the soldier's lot occurred in 1792, the year when a sudden eruption of radical politics produced an equally powerful loyalist reaction. Army and politics were surely linked on this occasion. A pay increase for soldiers had been sought for a long time, the real value of their pay having deteriorated over 30 or 40 years; now an increase was suddenly conceded, the army having warned that the soldiers' circumstances were desperate, with loyalists adding their own concerns.⁷ The scenario was repeated in 1795, when again important concessions on pay were made amid fears that soldier discontent would coalesce with civilian disturbances over high food prices. Much the same thing happened yet again in 1797 when the mutinies of seamen threatened to spread to soldiers.⁸

These pay increases and adjustments ended the pauperization of the soldier which had been only too evident before the wars began when

labourers earned a better wage. They can count as the first steps taken towards re-building the soldier's self-respect. To sunder any possible connection between indiscipline in the army and political disaffection may have been an immediate and, as it turned out, relatively short-lived concern; but the larger view always kept in mind by the Duke of York and insightful officers was to develop the 'profession' (the word they used) of soldiering for the lower as well as higher ranks.⁹ This was the point on which paternalism in the army turned. What was being sought was a rank and file that found ample satisfaction and pride in soldiering. York and his generals saw themselves tackling the problem of forming a military class among the poor in a commercial society seen to be inhospitable to military interests.

York, commander-in-chief from 1795 to 1827 (with one brief interruption), came to win the accolade of 'The Soldier's Friend'. His soldiers, however, continued to be drawn overwhelmingly from those among the poor who, for whatever reason, lacked security and independence. Attempts to recruit the settled poor – most notably, by offering short-service enlistment from 1806 – were never successful. Soldier illiteracy is also evidence of soldiers' origins among the deprived poor; no more than half the men could sign their names, sometimes much less.¹⁰ The social distance between officers and men therefore remained enormous. Even though a long war and expanded army greatly freed up appointment and promotion in the officer corps, very few rankers got commissions.¹¹ Nothing bridged this class difference. Paternalistic attitudes were rooted in the moral and intellectual superiority that officers assumed over the 'thoughtlessness of the class of people' from whose ranks soldiers came.¹²

Wellington's 'scum of the earth' remark (made in-house) merely said brazenly what officers commonly said, and kept on saying well into the nineteenth century. Soldiers drawn from the classes of the poor belonged to the culture of the poor. In using the army as a haven from the adversities and insecurities of civilian life, soldiers were improvising an existence as the poor were forced to do. They continued to take advantage of opportunities in the army for the same purposes – for example, supplementing their pay with earnings as regimental tradesmen, officers' servants and as labourers on public works. On active service, among foreign populations, a 'moral economy' seems to have operated in that soldiers assumed a 'right' of forage, requisition and even plunder from civilians whatever the 'law', in the shape of military authority, directed.¹³ Officers, moreover, were quite prepared to concede that right. Sergeant Lawrence of the 40th Foot recalled an

incident when he and his comrades discovered a large stash of money in their Portuguese billet which they contrived to keep with their colonel's connivance and in defiance of the major.¹⁴

Not nearly enough is known about soldiers' culture as an extension of popular culture. The comradeship of the regiment in many ways recalls the gangs and clubs that apprentices and workers organized for themselves. After the war, discharged soldiers and seamen, usually pensioners, formed their own friendly societies.¹⁵ Soldiers' religion resembled the religion of the lower classes in general in that it scorned personal piety while going through the motions of formal observance. 'Methodists' in the army were deliberately provoked by drunken assaults and the swearing and lewdness directed at them.¹⁶ Marriage in the army often seems to have been like common-law marriage among the poor where couples came together without official cognizance but with the approval of those most immediately concerned. Whatever the powerful authority the officers wielded, soldiers lived in a world they largely made for themselves, more than has sometimes been imagined. Yet a paternalistic invasion came to be increasingly felt, where officers interfered in soldiers' lives not merely for the sake of military discipline or to improve their material conditions but also to engage with what many conceived to lie at the heart of their brutalization – their moral and spiritual poverty.

Gentlemen officers

Soldiers' popular culture contrasted with the aristocratic ethos of the officer corps. Army officers seem to have acquired the status of 'gentlemen' earlier in the eighteenth century. Yet the practice of buying military office obviously disadvantaged the less wealthy. On the other hand, war always had the effect of diluting the social exclusiveness of the officer corps because it opened up so many opportunities for appointment and promotion without purchase. During the Napoleonic wars the dilution must have been extraordinary as the number holding commissions increased enormously, possibly to the point where the officer corps – at over 15,000 – was five times larger at the end of the war than at the beginning.¹⁷ A measure of how much war freed up the system is the number of commissions held without purchase. Unfortunately there are no figures for these wars; but the later Crimean War provides some indication when the number increased 12 times.¹⁸ Further evidence is the huge number of Scots and Irish added to the officer corps. As they had done since the middle of the eighteenth century,

the Scots and Irish went on steadily increasing their share of commissions, and a great many sub-aristocratic, minor gentry and 'middling' families must have contributed to that result.¹⁹

The officer of small private means and minor social consequence who struggled to make his salary go a long way is a standard figure in the army of this period. Such men proliferated in the infantry regiments and knew their place. The 'aristocratically inclined' and connected preferred the cavalry to the infantry, and, better still, a staff employment among the generals.²⁰ While first appointment was on recommendation – and therefore depended on 'connections' – future promotion was by seniority which it was only within one's power to accelerate by exchanging into another regiment where the prospects were better. An ensign could expect to become a lieutenant within about two years, but the wait for a company and captain's rank could take an age, even in wartime when the turnover of officers was high. In a sample of 185 officers appointed during the war, the average wait for a captaincy from entering the army was between nine and ten years. Field rank was even more out of reach; under 20 per cent got there and it took, on average, 18 years.²¹ Professionalization is often the word applied to the Duke of York and Wellington's army; but it gave little recognition to professional merit, at least at the regimental level; length of service and wealth counted for far more.

On the other hand, war certainly had the effect of weeding out those officers who valued a commission only as a social investment. Overseas service, all too often in remote and insalubrious places, was inflicted on the British army to a unique degree, and resignations, exchanges and transfers multiplied in regiments ordered abroad, especially at the beginning of a war. The same hardship opened up the army to a generation of young men in that old and infirm officers were forced into half pay, home service battalions (including the militia) or out altogether. Since the numbers on half pay remained fairly constant throughout the war (around 3000), we can assume that many more left than stayed.²² The young age of Wellington's officers in the Peninsula has often been remarked upon. Yet that and York's efforts from the start of his command to improve the competence of the officer corps did not mean that the army served careers very well. True, a great many gained commissions that would, in other circumstances, have been denied them; but, in spite of some advances, pay, promotion and professional recognition within the army remained meagre. Only a flimsy structure of professionalism existed; as in the pre-bureaucratic state in general, it is easy to exaggerate what regulation and periodical inspection from

above were able to achieve. At the conclusion of the war the army was more professional most clearly in the sense that years of campaigning in many different places had added enormously to its fund of military experience.

Most officers stayed in the army a long time; only about one in eight, among those who did not die young, seems to have left within five years.²³ 'Careers open to talents' did not keep them in; the status accorded army officers by the wider society most certainly did. There was a public perception of the army as an aristocratic world in which officers observed the code and behaviour of 'gentlemen' as well as holding the king's commission and wielding authority over men. These were all powerful indicators of status. However much the social base of the officer corps was broadened thanks to the war, its aristocratic ethos remained intact, even becoming stronger with the army's growing prestige.

'Gentleman' in the society of the time was a broadening category, and it had an elusive definition. One could be a gentleman by reputation and appearances while possessing little property and little influence. Most of the attributes can be tracked back to the values and behaviour associated with notions of 'civility' and 'benevolence' by which the socially dominant acted in ways to maintain harmony among themselves and accepted an obligation to lend assistance to those less fortunate. This was where the Enlightenment played most strongly on the British army; certainly no interest was shown in abolishing the venality of the purchase system and very little in promoting the idea of the soldier as citizen.²⁴ But civility among officers was taken very seriously indeed in order to control personal disputes and officer insubordination and to emancipate the army from party politics. The former were threatening because personal honour easily got into conflict with military authority and because military commissions were a form of private property. As far as politics went, the British army had suffered severely earlier in the eighteenth century from royal control of military patronage which had produced forced dismissals of political opponents. And the fierce party contentions of George III's reign were kept at bay only by restraint on the part of the crown and by the increasing outdatedness of the idea that officers owed a personal loyalty to the king. Soldiers had a duty to the 'public' that took precedence over political differences within the state; civility among officers went hand in hand with this ethic of service.²⁵

Benevolence was founded on the idea of a common humanity and yet the existence of social hierarchy as part of the natural order of things,

imposing a social (and religious) duty on those with authority and means to relieve hardship and misfortune and to uphold morality. It had strong patriarchal overtones because the patriarch in domestic life was seen to possess the same power of benevolent government as the philanthropist in the wider society. The brave and kind officer, who again and again is the type admired in rank-and-file accounts, had already emerged as a role model in the late eighteenth century.²⁶ A great many officers must have been susceptible to the idea of benevolent authority because it was an idea of their class and also because it conformed to the practicalities of leading men in war. A general, presenting colours to the assembled 71st in 1807, surely used the occasion to say what was expected of him: 'Officers, be friends and guardians to the brave fellows committed to your care. Soldiers, give your confidence to your officers; they have shared with you the chances of war; they have bravely bled along with you.'²⁷

Soldiers' reminiscences present a remarkably consistent stereotype of the 'good' officer. The adjectives that tumble out are 'brave', 'gallant', 'daring', 'manly', 'just', 'kind', 'considerate', 'sympathetic', 'liberal', 'open-hearted', 'friendly' and 'devoted to his corps'.²⁸

Such deference should cause no surprise. Soldiers lived closely under authority and on many occasions their physical survival could depend on the leadership their officers displayed. Their respect for the humane and capable officer represented the protection and assistance that the dependent poor generally hoped for from their superiors.

Soldiering: aspirations and rewards

This does not mean that the soldier was servile; there was much about his life that his officers could not control or only fitfully. Rifleman Harris has been accused of obsequiousness for claiming that 'in *our* army the men best like to be officered by gentlemen, men whose education has rendered them more kind in manners than your coarse officer, sprung from obscure origin, and whose style is brutal and overbearing'. But in another passage he acknowledged the rugged independence of his class that made them dislike condescension and arrogance on the part of their superiors: 'They are a strange set, the English! And so determined and unconquerable, that they will have their way if they can. Indeed, it requires one who has authority in his face, as well as at his back, to make them respect and obey him.' Harris himself found a degree of independence through the army, setting up shop in Soho on the proceeds of his savings as a regimental shoemaker and battlefield pickings.²⁹

Harris was exceptional only in the size of the capital sum (£200) he was able to save. The informal arrangements by which men entrusted their officers to hold money on their behalf, sometimes as a regimental fund administered by the quartermaster, is evidence that the pauperization of the soldier can be overstated.³⁰ Nor were savings necessarily the plunder of war. Some soldiers seem to have regularly remitted money to their families without the army putting in place the formal scheme that Patricia Lin describes for the navy. In 1809 it was reckoned that a prudent soldier could save 2s. 6d. per week out of his wages.³¹ The great change that rescued the soldier from penury occurred with the pay increases of 1795 and 1797 that protected his basic wage against increases in the price of food. Much later in the war the army still thought him 'well and sufficiently paid' and needing no further financial incentive to join in the first place, or stay on.³² Windham's reform of military pensions in 1806 also made a generous enough provision to secure the independence of many men on their discharge from the army.

The soldier's (and sailor's) pension, paid quarterly at a convenient town, was a unique benefit among the occupations and trades of the poor. The army and the crown, in fact, showed real concern for the soldier's livelihood both while he was in the army and afterwards. A corollary to the pension was the old soldier's and seaman's right to set up in trade in any town, reaffirmed by an act of 1802 at a time when large numbers of men were being released on to the labour market with the reduction of the armed forces. Moreover, wives and children benefited from the same right. The idea clearly was to assist discharged men to form households and achieve economic independence. The same thinking explains the army's interest in securing for soldiers the family allowances paid to militiamen when embodied away from their parishes. York and his advisers were running the proposal from 1805.³³ Soldiers who had their wives and children with them in the army maintained a family economy through the paid work women obtained in the regiment, particularly laundering. The change that was mooted was to keep these dependents at home, preferably at regimental depots in barracks, where the family economy would be secured by remittances from the soldier, state-paid allowances, and work that women could pick up. While 'family money' was never introduced, soldiers' families were an increasingly common presence at the rapidly developing depots. A return of 1810 showed that in 18 line regiments stationed in Britain – 11,000 men – there was, on average, one 'lawful' wife for every eight soldiers.³⁴ The reform of the pension and short service enlistment

established a definite term of service for the soldier, which must have sharpened his anticipation of a return to civilian society. Old soldiers were frequently kept in the depots to serve their time out instead of wastefully being shipped out with their regiments overseas; and it seems that it was then, in this state of semi-retirement, that they often married. Veteran battalions could have more than a quarter of the men married.³⁵

The point to emphasize, then, is that the world of the army was not closed to the aspirations of the poor, emotional as well as material. Among soldiers, too, non-commissioned officers and privates constituted a hierarchy of status and achievement. Sergeant Morris's complaint in his recollections that the British army, in contrast to Napoleon's, denied commissions to rankers and that even non-commissioned rank was precariously held only highlights the ambitions that soldiers could nourish.³⁶ The establishment of an infantry regiment provided for one non-commissioned officer per ten or eleven men, though it was common for the proportion to be higher than this, as regiments kept the number of such officers up to establishment strength even while the number of effective men diminished.³⁷ A fair estimate is that one man in six achieved non-commissioned rank. Of 705 men from seven line regiments discharged for the pension in 1814–1816, one in five was a non-commissioned officer, though this figure was undoubtedly inflated by the disproportionate number of long-service men included in the sample.³⁸ If it is correct that one in six men was promoted in this way, the army offered good opportunities for professional advancement, especially for those who could read and write. A study of the 28th Foot, where signature literacy was a mere 41 per cent, suggests that literate men had at least a one in three chance of taking rank.³⁹

The authority and leadership bestowed on non-commissioned officers gave them significant status. Too little is known about these men, but there is good evidence that the army paid them increasing respect, acknowledging their key role within the regiment. The Duke of York was particularly concerned to increase their 'respectability' – perhaps an indicative word – in the eyes of their fellows.⁴⁰ In the course of the war, their pay, pensions, ranks and uniforms were all adjusted to advance their status over private soldiers'. In 1797 a private's pay was increased to a shilling per day, but non-commissioned officers received larger proportional increases. In the 1806 review of soldiers' wages, a private's pay remained at 1s., but a corporal's pay was advanced to 1s. 4d., and a sergeant's to 1s. 10d.⁴¹ Pensions for non-commissioned officers were also fixed at a higher rate, a maximum of 2s. 6d. per day for privates, 3s. for corporals, and 3s. 6d. for sergeants.⁴²

Higher-ranking non-commissioned officers holding staff positions were created; the establishment of an infantry battalion came to include a sergeant major, quartermaster sergeant, paymaster sergeant, armourer sergeant and schoolmaster sergeant, in addition to the company sergeants.⁴³ 'Colour sergeants' in each company were also appointed 'to meliorate the situation of the non-commissioned officers of the infantry and to hold out to the most deserving of them a station somewhat raised above their comrades'.⁴⁴ Sergeant majors and sergeants holding staff positions continued to wear lace on their coats, a nice affectation of their status. And chevrons for sergeants were introduced in 1802 in place of the less conspicuous shoulder knots.⁴⁵

The regimental world

These refinements of the regimental hierarchy are a reminder that regiments existed to a remarkable degree as self-contained societies. Unfortunately, the interior life of the regiment is a frustrating gap in our knowledge, frustrating inasmuch as it is well-known that regiments came out of the war with strongly developed identities that have served the British army ever since. It is easy to exaggerate the erosion of regimental autonomy by the state during the eighteenth century. Recruits were trained by their regiments, and regiments kept these men for themselves; fewer drafts and transfers occurred after 1795–1796 when York had been forced to disband many 'young' regiments to make good heavy losses in the rest of the army. Much else was kept within the regiment – the appointment of non-commissioned officers, the handing out of punishment for most offences, the detail of uniforms, the cost to officers of their mess and of the regimental band. Who belonged to the regiment was precisely known, and included, of course, women and children. With such a tight structure of authority and relationships, the regiment provided the dominant setting in which its people lived. Regiments existed for a specific purpose, to provide disciplined armed force, and ultimately to meet other disciplined armed forces at a time when survival might well depend on their unity and cohesion.

Eighty per cent of soldiers served in a single regiment. In a sample of 2000 men who entered the army between 1803 and 1814, 1601 had no record of service in another corps of the regular army, other than in garrison and veteran battalions.⁴⁶ Because most men were tied by service to a single regiment, their loyalty to it had an exclusive, frequently intense character not usually found among officers. That loyalty was refracted through comradeship; the regiment was the largest comrade group, the

sum of many small 'primary' affinities formed within the companies by men who fought and lived closely together.⁴⁷ Officers, in contrast, kept up acquaintances in other regiments and socialized as a class whenever possible – the pack of hounds which Wellington kept in the Peninsula said everything on this score.⁴⁸ Yet it did not take much for officers to understand how soldiers conceived the regiment as the closest association to which they belonged – their 'family', as they sometimes idealized it. Donald McDonald, whose father had also served in the 71st, called it '*his* regiment'.⁴⁹ 'Family' implied the brotherhood of the rank and file as well as patriarchal control by officers. The comradeship of men existed in constant tension with the exercise of military authority from above. It is not too much to say that a soldiers' republic lurked in the army – in the way incidents of injustice and 'tyranny' at the hands of officers were noted, the French system of promotion from the ranks admired, and nicknames given to officers to establish a fanciful equality.⁵⁰ Anger and dismay swept the ranks of the Waterloo soldiery when word spread that officers and men would not receive the same medal.⁵¹

The life of a regiment, in other words, does not make much sense if it is viewed in static terms as the imposition of authority. The 92nd cannot have been the only regiment to have a 'proper mode' for receiving representations from the rank and file.⁵² The relationship of officers and men was dynamic – conducted, managed, interrogated; and if it was not this, its real nature was being suppressed. The fiasco over the Waterloo Medal was the case writ large; the army moved quickly to allay discontent by giving the private and the commander-in-chief equal recognition. Regiment-building, with this understanding, becomes a process in which much was started below and completed above as officers formalized rank-and-file activities into regimental arrangements. Before there were regimental schools and libraries, there were soldiers like 'Bill' Wheeler who plundered books from the Retiro in Madrid and distributed them to others also 'fond of reading'.⁵³ Soldiers' savings (and windfalls) in time produced regimental banks and saving schemes; the 2nd Dragoons in 1805 set up their 'St Andrew's Fund' to which soldiers were invited to contribute a shilling per week to be repaid with interest on their discharge.⁵⁴ The presence of 'Methodists' in the ranks showed that soldiers were not immune to religion, and promoted, if it did not begin, a serious attempt under the patronage of some officers to evangelize the army. The colonel of the 51st relieved his men from intensive training – the 'drill' they detested – by organizing two 'play days' a week when officers and men competed with each other in a variety of sports.⁵⁵

Such explicit paternalism was regiment-building in that it sought to bolster the military authority of officers with *moral* authority by working on the 'good' propensities of soldiers. Under such a benign regime, in some regiments, especially those immured in garrisons, the soldier came to lead an existence far removed from the stereotype of the devil-may-care, predatory, brutalized fighting man. At the Cape from 1804 to 1814 the 93rd supported a regimental library, missionary fund, widows and children fund and their own church for Presbyterian worship (with NCOs and privates as the elders). The records over two six-month periods and one twelve-month period show that 33 floggings occurred. In comparison, the 1st battalion of the 87th, also at the Cape, flogged 116 men in five months.⁵⁶ Part of paternalistic concern in the army was a search for alternative punishments that did not brutalize the men, and the regimes that operated in different regiments came to vary enormously. The governor of Guernsey in 1807, on receiving the weekly reports from the regiments in garrison, noted that two regiments had flogged 'nearly double the number punished in the other six corps'.⁵⁷ York, in fact, in 1812 restricted the punishment regimental courts martial could award to 300 lashes, in effect requiring other options to be tried. The previous year the establishment of regimental schools had been ordered. A new model of regimental governance was being planted in the army, largely by individual officers acting in individual regiments; its progress was accordingly slow, in spite of the officers who found a voice as reformers after 1815. But the real point of comparison should not be with the dead hand of the 'Wellington legacy' in the Age of Reform, but with improvements that finally found a place on the agenda after the moribund years of the eighteenth century.

Regimental identities

Regiment-building also involved creating or strengthening regimental identities. These advanced significantly during the war, and even more so afterwards as regiments consolidated around the honours and histories bestowed on them. The outward show of regimentalism lay in dress, 'musick' and regimental colours. It was the golden age of military uniforms; immense variety was created as colonels strove for style and effect within the regulations – with or without practicality – and as the 'national' regiments of the Scots multiplied. The old drum and fife music gave way rapidly to military bands with wind instruments after the Duke of York brought in German musicians for the Coldstream Guards in 1785, to open an entirely new repertoire of regimental tunes

and marches, and, indeed, music for public entertainment. Meanwhile the Scots went their own way with their pipers and pipe-and-drum bands.⁵⁸ The British were not a singing soldiery, unlike, say, the Germans;⁵⁹ or perhaps the growth of regimental music suppressed what had once existed. But no soldier could have been indifferent to the *éclat* and spirit that bands and their music added to the regiment.

Soldiers, however, knew their regiment also carried its reputation from the past. Regimental histories as a genre belong to the period after 1815; like soldier autobiographies they contributed to the 'heroic' mythology that grew up around Britain's 'Great War'. But every regiment had a short history found on its colours, on uniform badges or other appurtenances, from its nicknames, and from its 'customs' that particularly celebrated the anniversaries of famous actions in which the regiment had been engaged. Battle honours embellished regimental colours, though in the Napoleonic wars none were added until the victories in Egypt in 1801 when the regiments involved were permitted to include a sphinx, which, in the case of the 92nd, was also worn as a crest on the men's bonnets. The 74th proudly carried a third colour besides the king's and the regiment's, granted by the East India Company in recognition of its gallantry at the battle of Assaye. The 28th wore their regimental badges on the back of their shakos in recollection of an incident during the battle of Alexandria in 1801 when the rear rank faced about to beat off a cavalry attack.⁶⁰ Nicknames for regiments abounded in the army, often recalling notable incidents or actions. After its 2nd battalion captured an imperial standard at Barossa in 1811, the 87th was known as the 'Aigle-Catchers', a name further advertised by the imperial eagle placed on its colours. Much of the 87th's 'custom' developed around this triumph, with an annual 'Barossa Day' when the 'Barossa song' was sung and the 'Barossa cup' passed around.⁶¹

There is good evidence that soldiers found satisfaction in all this observance and celebration of their regiment's history and traditions. Sergeant Wheeler of the 51st, a self-educated soldier of exceptional intelligence, found it fascinating to peruse an early account of his regiment. It was his comrades, too, who persuaded him to put into print his 'Journal' of the Peninsular War and Waterloo. Sergeant Morris of the 73rd was another who published in order to 'place on record some of the exploits of the regiment', shamefully neglected, he claimed, by the 'favouritism' bestowed on more aristocratic corps. Sergeant Robertson of the 92nd hoped that his account would inspire the 'men who now compose this gallant corps'.⁶² The same feeling for the past is evident in the way

regiments were rallied at critical moments by battle cries that called to mind previous triumphs. 'Remember Assaye', the 74th's colonel told his men as they prepared to hold their front at Busaco in 1810. 'My brave Highlanders! Remember Egypt!' Sir John Moore shouted to the 42nd as he led them in a charge at Corunna.⁶³

Regimental identities were well-kept, more deliberately worked on than national identities. It is true that the rank and file of some regiments had a strongly 'national' hue; the 42nd, 78th, 79th, 92nd and 93rd were at least 80 per cent Scottish; the 18th, 87th and 88th as predominantly Irish.⁶⁴ But these surface appearances were complicated underneath by profound differences between Highland and Lowland Scots and Catholic and Protestant Irish. In the end, the Scottish and Irish 'national' regiments were like all the others in that their identities were contrived for the sake of regiment-building rather than authentic. The point is well-made by the 42nd (Black Watch) – which one of its own soldiers called the 'most self-conceited' in the army – in building itself up as the epitome of 'Highland' bravery; a fair estimate is that nearly half the regiment were Lowland Scots.⁶⁵ Many regiments had long been 'national' in their 'customs' without having any stronger association with Scotland, Ireland or Wales. The 23rd (Royal Welsh Fusiliers) annually celebrated St David's Day, but Englishmen outnumbered Welshmen two to one in the ranks.⁶⁶ This 'national' occasion was obviously linked to the regiment's history and traditions. But there was a 'national' content in regimental symbols and ceremonial that was useful simply for acknowledging and therefore accommodating the diversity that existed within the ranks and also among the officers. 'The whole of our battalion, English and Irish', Edward Costello recalled, dressed themselves for St Patrick's Day in 1811 while on the march, though the 95th had been formed as recently as 1800 and was only as Irish as there were numbers of Irish in the regiment.⁶⁷

Conclusion

Regimental identities as constructed by regiments were one thing; the identities that soldiers carried quite another. Men clearly felt the strong pull of regimental comradeship. But within the regiment, comrades were usually identified by their nationality; Colonel Mainwaring, commanding the 51st, could describe his rank and file to their faces as 'John Bull from England; Swaney from Scotland, and Paddy from my own country'.⁶⁸ Sergeant Lawrence, a Dorsetshire man, described encounters with 'Mr Taffy', 'Paddy' and this or that 'Irishman'; he, in

common with other soldier autobiographers, tried to do justice to the medley of accents heard and to the different national characters he encountered.⁶⁹ Sergeant Wheeler's closest friendship was with another Englishman, Edward Costello's with a fellow Irishman; Thomas Howell from Edinburgh found a 'bedfellow' and 'firm friend' in Donald McDonald from Inverness.⁷⁰ There was jubilation when the 42nd, 79th and 92nd, all Scottish regiments, met up for the first time at Orthes in 1814, a meeting repeated at Ghent in May the following year just before Waterloo. Thomas Howell, the Scot, when on campaign in the Peninsula, broke down in tears on stumbling across 'four or five soldiers seated on the turf, who sung in their turn Scotland's sweetest songs of remembrance'.⁷¹

The conclusion must be that the Britishness of the British army sat lightly on the country allegiances of its soldiers. While in the enclosed world of the regiment a loyalty to comrades and the corps was created that superseded national affinities, this makes little sense as *British* patriotism. The huge Irish presence in the army from the beginning of the war mitigated against 'King and Country' influences – not least because Catholic Ireland up to the French Revolution carried a tradition of military service outside the British army. In response the army discounted the idea of the 'Protestant nation' by allowing Catholic soldiers to absent themselves from Protestant worship.⁷² Britishness existed among the soldiery largely by default, in the comparisons that were made with allies and enemies. The British army was as polyglot, composite and imperial as the other great armies of the period, including Napoleon's, with large foreign contingents of Germans, Portuguese and Spanish, not to mention sepoy regiments in India and negro corps in the West Indies. What British soldiers and officers most admired about themselves was their 'steadiness' under fire; but they also admired French *élan*. Observed Thomas Howell:

How different the duty of the French officers from ours. They, stimulating the men by example, the men vociferating, each chaffing each until they appear in a fury, shouting to the points of our bayonets. After the first huzza, the British officers restraining their men, still as death. "Steady, lads, steady" is all you hear, and that in an undertone.⁷³

In this perception of the French 'other', there was little that was xenophobic. Neither did British soldiers suppose that they had a monopoly on humanity and the French one on cruelty. The real difference they

could see was between military systems, intrigued as they were by the French practice of commissioning from the ranks and bemedalling the common soldier as well as the officer.⁷⁴ The experience of the British soldier had no strong focus in Francophobic enmity. It remained framed by the circumscribed communities of the army, and even more of the regiment.

Notes

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2. Stephen Brumwell, *Redcoats: The British Soldier and War in the Americas, 1755–1763* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), pp. 308–319; Stephen Conway, *The British Isles and the American War of Independence* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), pp. 179–202, 354–355.
3. J. C. D. Clark, *English Society, 1688–1832* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), pp. 64–93.
4. Edward Costello, *Edward Costello: The Peninsular and Waterloo Campaigns*, ed. Antony Brett-James (London: Longman, 1967), p. 82.
5. John Prebble, *Mutiny: Highland Regiments in Revolt 1743–1804* (London: Secker & Warburg, 1975); T. H. McGuffie, 'The Short Life and Sudden Death of an English Regiment of Foot', *Journal of the Society for Army Historical Research [JSAHR]* 33 (1955): 16–25, 48–56.
6. N. A. M. Rodger, *The Command of the Ocean: A Naval History of Britain, 1649–1815* (London: Norton, 2004), pp. 450–453, 489–495.
7. National Archives, London (UKNA), Chatham MSS, PRO 30/8/242 fols 5–6, Sir William Fawcett, 'Memorandum', 10 August 1787; *ibid.*, Cornwallis MSS, PRO 30/11/270 fol. 85, Fawcett to Lord Cornwallis, 3 March 1792; Mark Philp, 'Vulgar Conservatism', *English Historical Review* 110 (1995): 42–69, here 49.
8. UKNA, Brownrigg MSS, WO 133/1, Robert Brownrigg to the Duke of York, 20 July 1795; National Library of Ireland, Kilmainham MSS, MS 1004, General Order, 25 May 1797.
9. UKNA, WO1/628/209–39, Memorandum by the Duke of York, 14 July 1804.
10. R. S. Schofield, 'Dimensions of Illiteracy, 1750–1850', *Explorations in Economic History* 10 (1972–1973): 437–454, here 450.
11. Only three received commissions during the war out of a sample of 185 taken from Sir Charles P. Deedes, *History of the King's Own Yorkshire Infantry: Vol. 4: Register of Officers 1755–1945* (London: Lund Humphries, 1946).
12. UKNA, WO1/646/324, Henry Torrens to Henry Bunbury, 19 March 1811.
13. *Edward Costello*, p. 121. On the concept of the 'moral economy', see E. P. Thompson, 'The Moral Economy of the English Crowd in the Eighteenth Century', *Past and Present* 50 (1971): 76–136; John Bohstedt, 'The Moral Economy and the Discipline of Historical Context', *Journal of Social History* 26, no. 2 (1992): 265–284.

14. William Lawrence, *A Dorset Soldier: The Autobiography of Sergeant William Lawrence*, ed. Eileen Hathaway (Staplehurst: Spellmount, 1993), pp. 45–48.
15. National Archives of Scotland, FS1, holds records relating to four of these.
16. [Thomas Howell], *A Soldier of the 71st*, ed. Christopher Hibbert (Moreton-in-Marsh: Windrush Press, 1996), pp. xiii–xiv; *Narrative of a Private Soldier in His Majesty's 92nd Regiment of Foot* (Glasgow: A. & J.M. Duncan, 1820).
17. A return dated 11 May 1814 gave 15,424 army officers, including those on half-pay. To these would have to be added officers of the engineers and artillery. *Journal of the House of Commons [CJ]* 69 (1813–1814): 643–644. T. H. McGuffie, 'The Significance of Military Rank in the British Army Between 1790 and 1820', *Bulletin of the Institute of Historical Research* 30 (1957): 207–224, here 214, counts 3328 'regimental' officers on the Army List of 1790.
18. Edward M. Spiers, *The Army and Society, 1815–1914* (London: Longman, 1980), pp. 11–12.
19. Calculations from the 1813 inspection returns show 38.9 per cent of the officers as English, 35 per cent as Irish and 24.3 per cent as Scottish. UKNA, WO 27/90/102, 121–123. For 1757 figures see Brumwell, *Redcoats*, p. 87 n. 152.
20. William Keep, *In the Service of the King: the Letters of William Thornton Keep at Home, Walcheren, and in the Peninsula, 1808–14*, ed. Ian Fletcher (Staplehurst: Spellmount, 1997), pp. 80–81.
21. The data was collected from the register of officers in Deedes, *King's Own Yorkshire Infantry*.
22. There were 3328 on the half-pay list in 1795, 3654 in 1801 and 2950 in 1814. *Army List*, 1795, 1801; *CJ* 69 (1813–1814): 643–644.
23. Calculated from the register of officers in Deedes, *King's Own Yorkshire Infantry*.
24. However, the idea of enfranchising veterans was mooted, even within the army. See William Stewart, *Outlines of a Plan for the General Reform of the British Land Forces* (London: T. Egerton, 1806).
25. J. E. Cookson, 'Service Without Politics? Army, Militia and Volunteers during the American and Revolutionary Wars', *War in History* 10 (2003): 381–397.
26. Paul Langford, *Public Life and the Propertied Englishman, 1698–1798* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1991), p. 549.
27. William Gavin, *The Diary of William Gavin* (1921), p. 10.
28. Some examples are: W. Surtees, *Twenty-five Years in the Rifle Brigade* (London: Greenhill, 1996), p. 53; William Wheeler, *Letters of Private Wheeler 1809–1828*, ed. B. H. Liddell-Hart (London: Michael Joseph, 1951), pp. 19, 128, 254; Thomas Morris, *Recollections of Sergeant Morris*, ed. John Selby (Moreton-in-Marsh: Windrush Press, 1998), pp. 52, 68, 81; *Voices From the Peninsula: Eyewitness Accounts by Soldiers of Wellington's Army, 1808–14*, ed. Ian Fletcher (London: Greenhill, 2001), pp. 124, 146, 180.
29. John Harris, *Recollections of Rifleman Harris*, ed. Christopher Hibbert (London: Leo Cooper, 1970), pp. 28, 67.
30. *Ibid.*, p. 117; *Edward Costello*, p. 129.
31. UKNA, WO 25/3224, General Clinton to General Calvert, 6 December 1809. For remittances home see: C. G. Gardyne, *The Life of a Regiment: The History of the Gordon Highlanders from Its Formation in 1794 to 1816* (London:

- Medici Society, 1929), p. 79; A. E. J. Cavendish, *An Reisimeid Chataich: The 93rd Sutherland Highlanders, 1799–1927* (London: Private publication, 1928), p. 37. British currency before decimalization in 1971 was based on the pound (£), the shilling (s.), and the penny (d.). Twelve pence equalled one shilling, and twenty shillings one pound.
32. J. E. Cookson, *The British Armed Nation, 1793–1815* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1997), pp. 189–190 and n. 26; BL, Windham MSS, Add. MS 37883 fol. 221, D. Dundas, 'Remarks submitted referring to the number of the paragraphs in Mr W[indham]'s paper', 15 April 1806.
 33. BL, Sir J. W. Gordon MSS, Add. MS 49472 fols 9–10, Duke of York to J. W. Gordon, 22 August 1805; UKNA, WO 1/641/323–328, Henry Torrens to Henry Bunbury, 19 March 1811.
 34. UKNA, WO 25/3224, Clinton to [Bunbury?], 3 April 1810.
 35. *Ibid.*, WO 1/946/53, 'Return of women and children belonging to certain regiments at home'. See 8th and 11th Veteran Battalions.
 36. *Sergeant Morris*, pp. 50–52, 116.
 37. A full-strength 1st battalion of the 6th Foot in 1807 had 104 non-commissioned officers out of 1056 men. National Army Museum, London, Nugent MSS 6807–176.
 38. Out of 705 men, 144 were non-commissioned officers. The sample was taken from a register of Scottish pensioners, and included the 1st, 26th, 42nd, 71st, 91st, 92nd and 93rd regiments. National Library of Scotland, Edinburgh (NLS), MS Dep. 268/45. In the 58th Foot in 1759 one man in six achieved non-commissioned rank. Brumwell, *Redcoats*, p. 82.
 39. J. D. Ellis, 'Promotion within the Ranks of the British Army: A Study of the Non-Commissioned Officers of the 28th (North Gloucestershire) Regiment of Foot at Waterloo', *JSAHR* 81 (2003): 216–227. In this study 42 out of 114 who signed their attestations and discharges were non-commissioned officers.
 40. UKNA, WO 1/628/209–239, Memorandum by the Duke of York, 14 July 1804.
 41. George III, *Later Correspondence of George III*, ed. Arthur Aspinall, 5 vols (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1962–1970), vol. 2, p. 575; UKNA, WO 1/637/205, Duke of York to Lord Castlereagh, 1 February 1808.
 42. *Ibid.*, WO 69/618, Pension regulations, 5 July 1812.
 43. See establishment of 86th Foot, 1793–1814, in G. B. Laurie, *History of the Royal Irish Rifles* (London: Gale and Polden, 1914), pp. 5, 29, 91.
 44. UKNA, WO 25/3224, Memorandum, 24 May 1813.
 45. Laurie, *Royal Irish Rifles*, pp. 405–406.
 46. Data extracted from on-line index of UKNA, WO 97, attestation and discharge documents of soldiers.
 47. William Lawrence, on being promoted to corporal, greatly disliked being removed from his old company. *Sergeant Lawrence*, p. 73.
 48. See Surtees, *Rifle Brigade*, pp. 186–187 for the social life officers could create for themselves, even when on campaign.
 49. *Soldier of the 71st*, p. 12 n. 7.
 50. *Wheeler Letters*, pp. 15–16, 108–109, 133–134; *Sergeant Morris*, pp. 34, 50–51; *Edward Costello*, p. 6.

51. Sergeant D. [David] Robertson, *The Journal of Sergeant D. Robertson, late 92d.Foot: Comprising the Different Campaigns between the Years 1797 and 1818*... (Perth: printed J. Fisher, 1842), p. 164.
52. Gardyne, *Gordon Highlanders*, p. 118.
53. *Wheeler Letters*, p. 94.
54. UKNA, WO 27/236, Inspection return, 2nd Dragoons, 25 June 1834.
55. *Wheeler Letters*, p. 195.
56. Cavendish, *Sutherland Highlanders*, pp. 35–38; M. Cunliffe, *The Royal Irish Fusiliers, 1793–1950* (London: Oxford University Press, 1952), p. 35.
57. *Ibid.*, p. 64.
58. Sir F. Maurice, *The History of the Scots Guards from the Creation of the Regiment to the Great War*, 2 vols (London: Chatto and Windus, 1934), vol. 1, pp. 263–264; I. H. Mackay Scobie, *Pipers and Pipe Music in a Highland Regiment: A Record of Piping in the 1st Seaforth Highlanders* (Dingwall: Ross-shire Publishing, 1924).
59. *Sergeant Morris*, pp. 83–84; *Keep Letters*, p. 179 and n. 1.
60. Gardyne, *Gordon Highlanders*, p. 117; L. B. Oatts, *The Highland Light Infantry* (London: Leo Cooper, 1969), p. 12; *Keep Letters*, p. 132.
61. Cunliffe, *Royal Irish Fusiliers*, pp. 101, 449–450.
62. *Wheeler Letters*, pp. 7–8, 233–235; *Sergeant Morris*, p. xiii; *Sergeant Robertson*, p. vii.
63. Oatts, *Highland Light Infantry*, p. 22; Carola Oman, *Sir John Moore* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1953), p. 594.
64. UKNA, WO 27, Inspection returns, 1813–1815.
65. *Voices from the Peninsula*, p. 276. Of the Black Watch's Scottish pensioners in 1816, 37.2 per cent were born in the southern counties of Scotland.
66. Michael Glover, *The Astonishing Infantry: The History of the Royal Welch Fusiliers, 1689–1989* (London: Leo Cooper, 1989), pp. 39, 57.
67. *Edward Costello*, p. 60.
68. *Wheeler Letters*, p. 21.
69. *Sergeant Lawrence*, pp. 27, 41, 59, 78, 85; *Edward Costello*, pp. 7, 39, 44, 46, 54, 58, 71, 109, 122–123, 143.
70. *Wheeler Letters*, pp. 144–145; *Edward Costello*, p. 139; *Soldier of the 71st*, p. 12 n. 7.
71. *Sergeant Robertson*, pp. 130, 141; *Soldier of the 71st*, p. 67.
72. Gardyne, *Gordon Highlanders*, p. 170.
73. *Soldier of the 71st*, p. 60. See also *Voices from the Peninsula*, pp. 59–60.
74. *Wheeler Letters*, p. 185; *Sergeant Morris*, pp. 49–52.

2

Survivors of War: French Soldiers and Veterans of the Napoleonic Armies

Natalie Petiteau

The Napoleonic Wars have been the subject of an abundant historiography, but it is a very uneven one, both in its focus and in its quality. Historians of the period have tended to concentrate on the wars themselves, on the nature of the fighting, and on the details of battlefield operations. They have been concerned, above all else, with the chronology of military events. But by envisaging the years between 1800 and 1815 from a strategic or diplomatic point of view, historians have for too long neglected to view the period of these wars as a time of remarkable social experience. Too little attention has been paid to the everyday aspects of life that result from such long and intense years of military campaigning, years of constant fighting which bore so many of the characteristics of total war.¹ What is more, the historiography of these years has failed to recognise the exceptional human experiences that resulted from war on this scale as a major rupture in human history, a crucial moment in the development of civil society.² At the time civilians were most cruelly affected by large-scale recruitment, and especially by the series of annual conscriptions that were launched by the *Loi Jourdan* in 1798, which demanded that all young men should present themselves for army service, and that they should draw lots to decide who would serve in the regiments. Later, civil society was also affected by problems posed by the return of soldiers from war and their reintegration into the social fabric of the villages and urban areas from where the young, in their thousands, had poured forth to join the military. They returned fundamentally changed by their experience of battle, and not always well-prepared to resume their role in the workplace or in civil society.

Their return and their attempts at reintegration form an important part of the social history of Napoleonic France, and if we are to assess

the impact of these war years, it is essential to examine the fate of these anonymous soldiers: for if we can understand how they lived through the war, we can also see how a significant part of the French population went on to experience certain forms of modernity upon their contact with the returned servicemen, since their experience of serving in the army meant that they learned new ways of living communally, new ways of living in society. By taking an interest in the fate of these men, we are also able to grasp the means by which the idea of the nation became internalized, since that idea, and the national consciousness that accompanied it, was much more present among those under arms than it was in the day-to-day working lives of townsmen and villagers. To reconstruct the fate of these soldiers once they had returned to civilian life is to offer a new insight into the social impact of the Napoleonic years, and hence also to measure how the weight of these years continued to be felt well beyond 1815.

From war to peace

Departing for the army at the beginning of the modern era cannot be automatically taken as proof that the idea of the nation had been grasped or widely understood. If, indeed, such an idea existed at all, it was confused and mixed with other emotions, with a habitual submission to political power, or with an admiration for a leader whose role and status were increasingly recognised by the French people as they gradually distanced themselves from the ideas of 1792. The concept of dying for one's country in the Napoleonic armies was no longer linked to the principle of the nation-in-arms; it also involved inheriting the tradition of serving the sovereign, since prince and nation continued to be seen as one and the same, rather as they had been in the sixteenth century.³

In the same way, at village or district level, the act of leaving for the army had different resonances. Not only was it a rite of passage for the young, but it also became a source of division between those who were forced to leave and those who were allowed to remain behind. By dint of a medical examination, the army drew a clear distinction between the able-bodied, whom it called upon to serve, and those who were deemed to be physically weak and hence unfit for service, a group whom the conscription process officially placed on the fringes of the village community. The fact that the army recruited only a certain number of men from a particular age group caused those who were despatched to the army to resent those who had drawn a lucky number. And finally, by authorising the purchase of replacements, military

conscription underlined social inequalities. By the manner in which it functioned, Napoleonic conscription did little to foster the national idea, for it was, for many, a source of distinction and social division.

Through the imposition of this system of conscription, the Grande Armée saw nearly 2.5 million men pass through its ranks, 1,660,000 of whom were French. The Grande Armée constituted a social space in which a minority of professional soldiers mingled with civilians who had not chosen the profession of arms, but who now found themselves confronted with a war of unprecedented brutality. By adopting an anthropological approach, we can observe the response to the challenge of army life from the large numbers of young men who had been born into the popular classes of society. For the great majority of them, peasant boys in the main and more familiar with the rigours of farm-work, exposure to the army brought a need to change their most basic assumptions and to adapt to new practices.⁴

To submit to military discipline was to discover a whole culture that was different from that of civilian life. It was to adopt a fit and style of clothing that none of them were accustomed to wearing; it was to acquire a concern for correctness of dress, which no doubt appeared strange and rather vain to many; it was to learn how to use rifles which were very different from the hunting weapons that many among them would have already been familiar with, or knives that were nothing like those they might have handled in civilian life. They had to get used to draining physical conditions, too. In the hour of combat, the soldiers were very often exhausted, especially since they suffered from poor living conditions during the long months when they were on campaign.⁵ They were not issued with tents, with the result that, when they were not sleeping in light bivouacs, they had to make do with whatever buildings were available – sometimes churches or monasteries, at others uninhabited houses. In addition to these deprivations, they were constantly short of money and supplies. The daily pay of a simple soldier was no more than 35 centimes.⁶ The army provided only limited rations: bread, of course, with meat provided only during military campaigns. The men's pay had to serve to provide them with the most basic necessities, to buy food and to maintain their clothes and boots. To make matters worse, their pay was often late, so that for long periods soldiers risked penury and near-starvation: at the end of 1806, for instance, payments were overdue by as much as five months.⁷ Soldiers' memoirs are full of complaints about their material condition.⁸ Sergeant Faucheur, who served from 1812 in Napoleon's last great campaigns, gives a graphic description of the mashed meat and the 'ratatouille' of

biscuits which were their regular diet, and he makes the point that with such a diet it was difficult to face the rigours of a long march or to find the energy needed to fight battles.⁹

In many respects the Napoleonic army was still functioning like an army of the *ancien régime*, and the officers would forget that they had citizen-soldiers under their command. There was a major contradiction between the political aims which directed the war and the methods that were implemented to achieve the victory to which Napoleon was so deeply committed. When confronted with the constraints of a daily existence that was marked by poverty and deficiency, the soldiers found themselves deflected from the needs of war to those of simple survival, showing great resourcefulness in the pursuit of food and booty that could sustain them in their battalions. Not that they could remain deaf to the call of arms, for they had to face some of the most brutal and terrifying violence on the battlefield. Battles in the later eighteenth century – during the Seven Years War, for instance – had already shown a propensity to increased violence and higher mortality, but with the Wars of the Revolution and Napoleon they became more frequent and still more deadly in their impact, forcing men to confront a world where violence was omnipresent, the sounds and sights of battle inescapable. It was a time when the lives of soldiers were brutalised by what they experienced on the battlefield, to the point where those who survived no longer lived within the same mental boundaries as those who had not been forced to submit to conscription.¹⁰

These experiences were most extreme in Spain, where large numbers of soldiers had to brave the specific conditions imposed by guerrilla warfare, where the whole people, without distinction, were united in a struggle for independence.¹¹ The French soldiers who were sent to Spain felt that it was their status as human beings, and not simply as warriors, that was threatened. The rules of war were no longer respected.¹² In these conditions strength of character, that essential quality in winning military struggles elsewhere, proved insufficient to overcome fear. Here, men were driven mad by war, something that would happen again during the retreat from Moscow in 1812. In soldiers' memoirs we find innumerable accounts of the impact of cold in the Russian campaign.¹³ Soldiers no longer lined up for battle, and they ceased to look like soldiers; they were without uniforms, and sometimes reduced to the ragged remnants of clothing. In the view of many, even of the participants in this miserable campaign, the troops had ceased even to resemble human beings. The only struggle that remained for them – and even this proved futile when they were confronted with the Cossacks – was to try to

prevent the degradation of their own bodies. During the nineteenth century the levels of suffering experienced by the soldiers in Russia became a poignant symbol of the Napoleonic wars as a whole.¹⁴

But these were extreme cases. In other armies and other theatres of war troop cohesion proved a source of strength. This was largely due to the links that remained with each soldier's native area, the sense of cohesion reinforced by the fact that French conscripts of each *classe* were enlisted in cohorts rather than being divided randomly across the regiments. Each cohort of young recruits effectively brought to their assigned regiment a solid group of men who came from the same locality, some of whom may already have known each other in civilian life. The conscripts were not, therefore, faced with total isolation and the sense of alienation that it could bring; the break from their community of origin was only a partial one. The solidarity between men who came from the same place was even reinforced because of the sheer distances they travelled. When confronted with an army that brought together young men from across the entire nation, the soldiers continued to hear the accents of their vernacular tongue or stories born of a common past, and be alongside men who had the same customs as they did, knew the same places, and had common points of reference. Correspondence with home, letters received in far-flung corners of Europe, also contributed to their new sense of comradeship and collective identity.¹⁵

But the regiment gradually became another essential point of reference for the young soldier, to the extent that it constituted for certain men a substitute emotional unit within which the ties of friendship and camaraderie were fundamental. Captain Bertrand refers to his regiment as 'his military family'.¹⁶ Victor Dupuy explains how such a sense of cohesion is formed: 'Nothing binds us together like the dangers we have shared, like the happiness and the sorrow we have felt as a group'.¹⁷ More widely still, the whole army could be perceived as a new family, or at any rate as a group in which the sense of belonging had become particularly strong, to the point that there was a feeling of grief among many soldiers when the Imperial army was finally disbanded in 1815.¹⁸

These factors, and especially the sense of belonging to the army, of being part of a military family, shed light on the bravery and motivation of the troops, for the tenacity of men in combat was often the result of a desire to avenge the deaths of comrades. With time, too, the troops gradually came to find their occupation as soldiers appealing; the army became for many a way of life, a culture to which they felt more and more attracted.¹⁹ On the other hand, they did not necessarily know

why they were fighting; the world in which they were living was made up merely of friends and enemies who faced one another in a confrontation that did not necessarily have meaning any more, in contrast to the period of the French Revolution, when men were fighting for an ideal to unite the nation. Henceforth the stage on which the conflicts unfolded was, in their eyes, occupied first and foremost by the leader of their army. Their devotion to Napoleon Bonaparte was not in doubt, and it drew on a military tradition where the leader was perceived not only as the guarantor of victory, but also as a father figure, concerned to protect the lives and conditions of his men. It was in the person of Napoleon, and in the orders of their sovereign ruler, that these men finally found the meaning to give to the world in which they were operating. Forced to endure some of the most degrading living conditions while on long and arduous military campaigns, they accepted these sacrifices because they were compensated with the certainty of victory, and with the glory that accompanied it. Jacques Chevillet, when discussing morale during the battle of Ulm, notes that the troops were sustained by the presence and genius of Napoleon, and these reactions would remain very similar even at the nadir of the Moscow campaign.²⁰ For those men who cried 'Long live the Emperor', Napoleon was not necessarily the embodiment of the nation, any more than he was the bearer of the ideals of the Revolution.²¹ He was simply the leader one had to follow in order to secure victory. In this sense the men who served in the imperial armies fought less for their nation and more for one man; they must be understood in a specific context, against the backdrop of a specific war.

Napoleonic veterans after 1815

Napoleonic veterans would constitute a significant element in the political life of the early nineteenth century: small numbers of them came to acquire significant prestige when compared with their fellow citizens in urban districts and country towns, and for them the life of the nation could only be assured if France were governed by a charismatic sovereign.²² In this sense, the France of the Romantics was not confined to its social elites, and the political community extended far beyond the political parties that were in the process of being formed. Moreover, we know that those who voted for Louis-Napoleon Bonaparte in December 1848 were attracted not to a political movement but to the lure of one man. It could be argued, indeed, that it was this propensity to feel affection for a leader, a propensity that seemed so strong among many of those who had fought in the Napoleonic armies, which had done

the most to curb the diffusion of republican ideas among the working classes of nineteenth-century France.²³

Contemporaries were quick to assume that Napoleonic veterans were politically suspect, and they were often suspected of harbouring subversive ideas and Bonapartist sympathies. They were frequently dismissed as political outlaws, or as 'Bonapartist brigands'.²⁴ During summer and autumn of 1815, they often figured among the victims of the White Terror, particularly in the South. Incidents of violence and vilification are legion in the months following the restoration. In Marseille, for instance, a number of North Africans suspected of being veterans of Napoleon's campaigns – they were denounced for being 'Égyptiens' – and hence of being closet Bonapartists, were lynched and massacred.²⁵ In Avignon, General Brune was murdered on 2 August 1815, while in Toulouse, General Ramel met the same fate on 17 August. In the Franche-Comté, men who sported Napoleonic uniforms were subjected to threats and insults.²⁶ The fact that the White Terror was also directed against soldiers reveals how the army, at the beginning of the Restoration, was absolutely not perceived as an incarnation of a nation mobilised against a foreign enemy. This army was, on the contrary, regarded with suspicion, a force recruited and paid by an internal enemy. For a significant part of the population in 1815, being a soldier also meant being Bonapartist. Because of the widespread confusion that accompanied the dispersal of the army, veterans were often regarded as deserters. The new regime did little to help them regularize their administrative position. And though the government was concerned about some of the atrocities that took place, the general air of confusion was exploited and suspicions of the veterans remained.²⁷

This was all the more true since these men had trouble reintegrating into the apparent anonymity of civilian life. They did not form a recognised group as such, even if they shared the experience of having worn military uniform for a substantial period of time. The diversity of their situations and the very different periods they had spent in the army served to divide the group into several distinct generations: the experience of the relatively untried new recruits of the final years of war – the young men referred to as *Marie-Louise* in honour of the new empress – contrasted with that of those old soldiers who had begun their career under the Revolution. Because of their wide diversity of experience as soldiers, the veterans failed to appreciate that they shared a common culture of war, and scarcely acknowledged the large amount that they had in common. Besides, their paths often diverged once they returned to civilian life. For some the return from the war was a time of

marginality, but for many it meant returning to the world of work, at the risk, for those who had received the precious Legion of Honour, of infringing the rules that they were supposed to obey. These rules were quite restrictive: all functions that were more or less synonymous with domestic service were deemed to be degrading, in the proper sense of the word, and to accept one of these functions obliged a man to abandon wearing his decoration. For some individuals, therefore, the end of the war meant a change of lifestyle, which they saw as a form of social demotion, as a considerable drop in status. This was particularly true for non-commissioned officers.²⁸

In all, some 3.7 per cent of the population in 1815 found themselves facing the social and economic consequences of their involvement in war, while many had a long wait for recognition from the nation. Where did the veterans of Napoleon's campaigns stand in the hierarchy of nineteenth-century French society? And how far was the state able or prepared to answer their pleas or respond to their expectations? Legally, retirement pay was granted automatically to all of those who had completed 30 years of service. Yet, even if the years of campaigning counted for double, such an arrangement overlooked the majority of soldiers who had enlisted after 1804, unless they suffered from injuries that led to the loss of sight or the use of a limb. Those who did also had the automatic right to retirement pay, but this was fixed at a derisory sum: after 30 years of service, the ordinary soldier received 150 francs per year, or 300 francs if he had completed 50 years of actual service, a sum that was not equal to the salary of a day labourer. As for those soldiers who were deemed incapable of achieving 30 years of service due to disabilities, they could 'be nominated for retirement pay or for a simple bonus', the king reserving the right to determine the quota able to benefit from this compensation. Thus, a soldier who had participated in every campaign since 1808, finding himself so badly wounded that he could not remain in the army, but not suffering from the most serious categories of disability, risked being sent back to his home without any kind of pension. In addition, there were many soldiers who saw their retirement pay withdrawn for political or disciplinary reasons, most commonly because they had accepted to serve during the Hundred Days.²⁹

It was the July Monarchy in 1831 that finally offered a slight improvement in the conditions that were reserved for these soldiers, when it passed legislation that protected from arbitrary discrimination the victims of wounds that did not result in amputation or loss of sight. Article 14 of the law specified that a pension should be granted to any veteran prevented by his injuries from providing his own means of subsistence.

To qualify, however, the veteran had to produce documents certifying that his injuries were truly the result of his service in the armies, a condition that was to pose problems for many. A number of categories of veterans felt themselves unfairly excluded from pensions and state benefits, for, concealed behind the July government's apparent solicitude, were measures that continued to exclude all those who had served the homeland and returned unharmed, as well as those survivors who had suffered wounds but found themselves deprived of their papers. Documents were easy to lose, and many soldiers had failed to look after them carefully in the chaos of the last months of the war when they were driven back by an invading army; they had lost them in the heat of battle or during their frequently disordered dispersal across France in 1814 or 1815. And due to the confusion of demobilization, many soldiers returned home without official permission. They now found it impossible to prove their military status or to provide justification for their claims to a pension.³⁰

Surprisingly, Napoleon III also demonstrated a degree of prudence in the assistance he offered to former combatants in his uncle's armies. Admittedly, he instituted a more systematic aid policy and showed consistent sympathy for the claims of the veterans, and went on to grant pensions from his own purse to those former Revolutionary and Imperial soldiers whom he judged to be in greatest need. But he still did not consider offering assistance to the entire body of former soldiers: state aid remained subject not only to proof of long service or of serious injury, but also to a certificate from the mayor or from the prefect testifying to the veteran's destitution. This inevitably created serious discrimination, and those veterans who were hostile to the regime could expect little help. In fact, it was not until 5 May 1869 that a law was passed which established a pension that was available to all of the former non-commissioned officers and soldiers of the Republic and Empire, though, once again, on certain conditions. To qualify they had to have completed two years of service or two campaigns, or to have suffered a serious injury whilst serving under the First Empire; they also had to prove that they had insufficient personal resources to live independently. But the veterans were not fooled. They realized that the state was not making a huge financial sacrifice, and that, by claiming their pension, they would not, given their advanced age, weigh heavy on state finances for long. The right to a pension still depended on the conditions of a man's service and on his material situation. He had no automatic right to public support, as he would have in the twentieth century, and society continued to believe that such financial assistance

as it provided for veterans was a matter of charity, not of right. And charity in the nineteenth century was not the concern of the state; it continued to be a personal affair, a matter of private conscience.³¹

Reintegration into civilian life

The daily existence of veterans, therefore, was often far from comfortable, and the majority took their place back in the society of the poor, where everyone struggled to make ends meet, particularly in times of crisis. They eked out an existence that was quite unlike the conventional image of idle veterans on half-pay and invalids who displayed their wounds and their uniform with pride;³² indeed, for many their return to civilian life was strangely anonymous, as they returned home to blend in among the artisans and craft workers, to jobs in shops, workshops, or on the land. Many returned to the professions for which they had been preparing at the time of their departure for the army. This was the case for Lieutenant Louis Agricol Garby, who became a taffeta-maker again, a profession 'that is his family's'.³³ In the Bouches-du-Rhône in 1820, the prefect noted that 'the majority of servicemen in the former army have taken up their previous positions in the villages, and those who didn't have one are dedicated to an industry that is compatible with their skills'.³⁴ Unsurprisingly, in the Vaucluse in 1860, three-quarters of the survivors who have been identified worked in the commonest trades of a heavily rural area, as farmers, sharecroppers or labourers, whereas 8 per cent lived on income from small-scale industrial activity, especially in the textile sector, which was extremely active in the *département*, where a number of veterans had been able to train as wool carders, weavers or tanners. The remaining 16 per cent were employed in the tertiary sector, finding work as tobacconists or merchants, doctors, notaries, or council workers.³⁵ Many of the former soldiers in the Napoleonic armies were able in this way to reintegrate quietly into the world of work and to find a welcome anonymity in their home communities. Some, of course, were destined to fail, and we find among the veterans a small number who were destitute or reduced to begging, but in most cases they were not destitute until after they had made genuine efforts to reintegrate.³⁶

A minority, however, were able to reintegrate by using some of the skills they had acquired in the army, sometimes even by re-enlisting in the armed forces or in the Gendarmerie. But there were other opportunities to which they could turn. Some former soldiers made use of the mastery of literacy, and especially of writing, which they had acquired in

the army; they went on to become public letter-writers in village markets or primary school teachers in the small towns of rural France. Others again benefited from those jobs that were reserved for former soldiers, positions as forest wardens, rural policemen or tobacconists that offered only modest social status but which provided them with a source of regular income, for a while at least. As a result, the rural population became accustomed to finding former soldiers of the Napoleonic armies in positions where they held a fragment of financial or police-related power. Urban France, too, got used to the sight of Napoleonic veterans in minor official roles, often as castle, town hall, or hospice wardens under the Restoration or the July Monarchy. They found work, too, as hostel wardens, inn keepers, or reading room managers, jobs which again called for a degree of discipline and a sense of order. It is true that, when compared to the lives they had lived in the military, these jobs often implied some loss of social prestige; but the veterans who took them found new ways to participate in the supervision of the population and sometimes even to place themselves at the heart of a clandestine political life on the margins of respectable society.³⁷

Of course, not all army veterans enjoyed the same chance of reintegration, and they found very different niches once they returned to civilian life. Their success must be judged by their previous social expectations, the rank they had held in the army, and their ability to maintain a position in civil society similar to that they had enjoyed while in uniform. Not all could succeed. We can contrast those men who, benefiting from their reputation in the military, succeeded in being thought of as notables within their villages, with others, often non-commissioned officers and subalterns, who failed to preserve in civilian life the position that they had held in the army. The reasons for failure are numerous and predictable. Some refused to look for work and preferred to rely on their pension; others proved unable to find work or to accept the discipline of the workplace and, through their inability to commit to a professional path, experienced a drop in both earnings and status. For them the passage from military to civilian life was often painful. It is these men who inspired the legendary image of veterans dragging out an idle and miserable existence in lowly taverns and hostels, where they would express their fervour for Napoleon. But the fate of this hard core of nostalgic officers, condemned to poverty and public disdain, cannot in itself convey the complex social realities which were hidden behind the fate of every anonymous soldier. The unity of the group and their sense of collective identity owed much to the Napoleonic years and to the military past of each of its members.³⁸

The assertion of a common identity

The veterans were late to form a group identity: indeed, the image of the veteran was formed only gradually through political struggles in which only a small minority were involved, and through social protests which often emanated from individuals. From the July Monarchy onwards, they ceased to be looked upon by the rest of society as outlaws and bandits – the ‘brigands of the Loire’ – and instead enjoyed a more positive reputation as men who inspired enthusiasm for Napoleon and his Empire. But it was not until 1857, when the Second Empire honoured them with the Médaille de Sainte-Hélène and gave them the opportunity to come together for official ceremonies, that the image of the veteran and the reality of daily life began to converge, and that society recognised the great sacrifice they had made. They were still not a single group marked by shared views and politics; but there was at least greater solidarity among them. However, the comparative unity of the group became stronger with the invention of the term *vieux débris* – the only term to be used to describe the former soldiers, and akin in its way to the English ‘old contemptibles’ – in acknowledgement of what they had done for their country. In the wake of the Great War, associations would be formed in every commune to honour old soldiers, a circumstance that surely owed much to the fact that their families were at last able to convey to others the memory of those who had, for so long, faced the aftermath of war, alone. Four generations separate Napoleon’s ‘grog-nards’ from the ‘poilus’ of 1914, a long but not wholly unbridgeable gap in time. Indeed, some of the young soldiers who defended France in 1914 had been able to meet and mingle with the very old men who were among the last survivors of Napoleon’s campaigns. With each succeeding generation, there was a growing awareness that the state too often remained indifferent to the social misfortunes that resulted from the consequences of combat, and left unrewarded the years of youth sacrificed for the defence of the motherland.³⁹

By 1914, of course, there was far greater awareness in French society of the cause for which the young were being asked to fight. The men who left in 1914 clearly knew why they were called to battle, whereas those who had left in 1800, or 1812, or 1814 felt less strongly the need to take up arms. This is an important social and psychological change. By expressing, in the years following the creation of the Médaille de Sainte-Hélène, a group consciousness forged by a shared past, the veterans of the Empire reflected one of the processes of internalization of the national idea that occurred between the end of the

Revolution and the end of the Second Empire. Though the state may have called the French nation into being, that nation was established largely through the reconstitution of the past by those men who had been called upon by the state to take up arms in the name of national defence.⁴⁰ At the same time, from the 1830s, Louis-Napoleon repeatedly appealed to the glory and honour that France had inherited from the First Empire, and particularly from its armies in war. Under the Second Empire, the army's popularity continued to grow, and the festival of Saint-Napoleon, held every year on 15 August, was turned into a veritable national celebration, which demonstrated the unity of the nation by basing it around the triumphs of its former soldiers.⁴¹ So the soldiers, the veterans of Napoleon's armies, can be seen to have played a role in creating the powerful national sentiment that was expressed on this day, particularly in those years when France felt attacked, or her interests threatened. We know that in 1870, for instance, patriotism, if it was not universally shared, motivated a very strong majority of Frenchmen, especially, though not exclusively, in urban areas.⁴² In this the memory of the Grande Armée played an undeniable role. Letters bore witness to 'the weight of the memory of the epic that was the First Empire, in the France of 1870',⁴³ and some veterans of the First Empire even offered to take up service again for Napoleon III. In short, there is abundant evidence of the influence which the *vieux débris* came to exercise on the patriotic fervour of that time. During the period when the former soldiers were active in contributing to the expression of this patriotism, they undoubtedly knew how to explain to the younger generations just what this nation, which they had defended and which so dearly deserved to be defended, meant for them. And in describing their own patriotic impulses, they moved effortlessly from the enthusiasm they felt for a charismatic leader to the unconditional support they believed they owed to their nation and motherland. It was here that the specific and separate identities of the different generations in Napoleon's army – from the battle-hardened old soldiers who had served in a dozen campaigns to the untried conscripts of 1812 and 1813 – became permanently blurred.⁴⁴

Conclusion

Initially it is clear that the soldiers of the Napoleonic armies were united only by their shared participation in the devastating event that is war, a unity that would be shattered by the social and political realities of France after 1815.⁴⁵ But the Empire did not create a homogeneous

experience; rather it led to a highly diverse range of circumstances – political, social and cultural – to which its soldiers, like other citizens, were exposed. Following a time of shared human experience through their involvement in the Imperial armies, the men followed diverse personal itineraries that led them to undergo different experiences of war and different emotional responses, demonstrating, through the various paths they followed, how each individual might react differently and personally to the experience of war. This is not, however, how history remembers them. The legend that was formed around the survivors of the Grande Armée was that of a group of men at the margins of society, drawn to the person of their emperor by his success and his undeniable charisma, and this ended up corresponding closely to the way the majority of the veterans portrayed themselves when Napoleon III's regime officially paid them tribute in 1857. That legend would prove astonishingly powerful, and it explains why, during the second half of the nineteenth century, the Emperor's stock remained so high in military circles. It also explains the apparent consensus between veterans of very different backgrounds and army experience, till it seemed that even the youngest soldiers, caught up in the wars only in their final months, were won over to the legend, and were as loyal to the Napoleonic myth as the oldest veterans around whom it had originally been constructed.

Notes

1. See Jean-Yves Guiomar, *L'invention de la guerre totale, XVIIIe–XXe siècles* (Paris: Editions du Félin, 2004); David Bell, *The First Total War: Napoleon's Europe and the Birth of Warfare As We Know It* (London: Bloomsbury, 2007).
2. See Karen Hagemann and Katherine Aaslestad (eds), 'New Perspectives on the Period of the Anti-Napoleonic Wars, 1806–1815', special issue of *Central European History*, 39, 4 (December 2006). Here the reader will find further discussion of Central Europe, where this approach is more developed.
3. Philippe Contamine, 'Mourir pour la patrie, X^e–XX^e siècle', in *Les lieux de mémoire*. Tome II: *La Nation*, vol. 3, ed. Pierre Nora (Paris: Gallimard, 1986), pp. 25–29.
4. Natalie Petiteau, 'Pour une anthropologie historique des guerres de l'Empire', in Odile Roynette (ed.), *Pour une histoire culturelle de la guerre au XIX^e siècle*, numéro spécial de la *Revue d'histoire du XIX^e siècle*, 30 (2005): 45–63.
5. Gunther E. Rothenberg, *The Art of Warfare in the Age of Napoleon* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1978), p. 82; Capitaine Gervais, *A la conquête de l'Europe. Souvenir d'un soldat de l'Empire* (Paris: Éditions du Grenadier, 2002), p. 138.
6. Alain Pigéard, *L'armée napoléonienne, 1804–1815* (Paris: Curandera, 1993), p. 322.

7. Natalie Petiteau, *Lendemain d'Empire. Les soldats de Napoléon dans la France du XIXe siècle* (Paris: La Boutique de l'Histoire, 2003), pp. 57–63.
8. See also Alan Forrest, *Napoleon's Men. The Soldiers of the Revolution and Empire* (London: Hambledon and London, 2002), pp. 152–153.
9. Jacques Jourquin (ed.), *Souvenirs de campagnes du sergent Faucheur* (Paris: Tallandier, 2004), p. 108.
10. Petiteau, *Lendemain d'Empire*, pp. 63–68.
11. Natalie Petiteau, 'Napoléon, entre France et péninsule ibérique: du grand homme au fauteur de guerre', in Natalie Petiteau (ed.), *Conflits d'Empire. Cahiers du GERHICO*, 9, 2006, pp. 133–149.
12. Général De Brandt, *Souvenirs d'un officier polonais. Scènes de la vie militaire en Espagne et en Russie (1808–1812)* (1877; repr. Paris: Librairie des Deux Empires, 2002), p. 172–173.
13. *Mémoires du sergent Bourgogne* (Paris: Arléa, 1992); *Les cahiers du capitaine Coignet* (Paris: Hachette, 1968); *Journal du capitaine François, dit le dromadaire d'Égypte* (Paris: Tallandier, 2003).
14. The human tragedy of the Moscow Campaign is memorably related by Adam Zamoyski, *1812: Napoleon's Fatal March on Moscow* (London: Harper Collins, 2004). Zamoyski makes excellent use of first-hand accounts, both by soldiers and civilians.
15. Petiteau, *Lendemain d'Empire*, pp. 52–55.
16. Capitaine Bertrand, *Mémoires. Grande armée, 1805–1815* (Paris: Librairie des Deux Empires, 1999), p. 104.
17. Victor Dupuy, *Souvenirs militaires, 1794–1816* (1892; repr. Paris: Librairie des Deux Empires, 2001), p. 110.
18. *Journal du capitaine François*, p. 753.
19. Petiteau, 'Pour une anthropologie des guerres de l'Empire'.
20. See Jacques Chevillet, *Souvenirs d'un cavalier de la Grande Armée, 1800–1810* (Paris: La Boutique de l'Histoire, 2004), p. 73; *Journal du capitaine François*, p. 691.
21. Steven Englund, *Napoléon* (Paris: Éditions de Fallois, 2004).
22. For more details, see Petiteau, *Lendemain d'Empire*, passim.
23. Natalie Petiteau, 'Les fidélités républicaines sous le Consulat et l'Empire', *Annales historiques de la Révolution française*, 4 (2006): 59–74.
24. Capitaine Léon-Michel Routier, *Récits d'un soldat de la République et de l'Empire, 1792–1830* (Paris: Éditions du Grenadier, 2001), p. 143.
25. Henri Houssaye, *1815*, vol. 3 (Paris: Perrin, 1905), p. 160; Capitaine Maurice Bottet, *Vétérans, frères d'armes de l'Empire français, débris et médaillés de Sainte-Hélène, 1792–1815* (Paris: J. Leroy, 1906), p. 9; Jean Lucas-Dubreton, *Le culte de Napoléon, 1815–1848* (Paris: Albin Michel, 1960), p. 29.
26. Archives départementales du Doubs, M 806, police politique, circulaire du 21 novembre 1815.
27. Petiteau, *Lendemain d'Empire*, pp. 253–257.
28. *Ibid.*, pp. 148–154.
29. *Ibid.*, pp. 92–93.
30. *Ibid.*, pp. 86–88.
31. *Ibid.*, pp. 100–104.
32. A. Lorentz et É. de La Bédollière, 'L'invalidé', in *Les Français peints par eux-mêmes* (Paris: Furne, 1840), p. 81–94.

33. Archives départementales de Vaucluse, R 333, lettre du sous-préfet d'Avignon au préfet, 11 décembre 1815.
34. Archives nationales, F⁷ 6702, lettre du préfet des Bouches-du-Rhône au directeur général de la Police, 2 septembre 1820.
35. Natalie Petiteau, *Lendemains d'Empire*, pp. 228–232.
36. *Ibid.*, pp. 148–154.
37. *Ibid.*, pp. 142–148.
38. *Ibid.*, pp. 308–312.
39. *Ibid.*, pp. 304–308.
40. Eric Hobsbawm, *Nations et nationalismes depuis 1780. Programme, mythe, réalité* (1990, trad. Dominique Peters, Paris: Gallimard, 1992), p. 20.
41. Petiteau, *Lendemains d'Empire*, pp. 291–299; Sudhir Hazareesingh, *The Saint-Napoleon. Celebrations of Sovereignty in Nineteenth-Century France* (Cambridge, Mass. and London: Harvard University Press, 2004), esp. pp. 22–37.
42. Jean-Jacques Becker and Stéphane Audouin-Rouzeau, *La France, la nation, la guerre, 1850–1920* (Paris: SEDES, 1995), pp. 20–51 and 66; Stéphane Audouin-Rouzeau, *1870, la France dans la guerre* (Paris: Armand Colin, 1989), p. 25.
43. Petiteau, *Lendemains d'Empire*, p. 356.
44. *Ibid.*, pp. 308–312.
45. Roger Chartier, *Au bord de la falaise. L'histoire entre certitudes et inquiétude* (Paris: Albin Michel, 1998), p. 12.

3

Glory, Honour and Patriotism: Military Careers in the Duchy of Warsaw, 1806–1815

Jarosław Czuby

The image of an invincible Prussian army, which had so impressed itself on the Poles since the reign of Frederick the Great, was destroyed in a single day, on 14 October 1806. The retreat of the demoralized Prussians after the battles of Jena and Auerstädt opened Napoleon's way to Berlin and the east – to the Polish districts of the Prussian Kingdom that had been captured during the Partitions of Poland in 1772, 1793 and 1795. Within a month, on 4 November, the *avant-garde* of the Grande Armée reached Poznań and from there continued its march to Warsaw.

Napoleon then resolved to reinforce his position by appealing to the patriotic enthusiasm of the Poles. This decision was caused by his urgent need for additional supplies of men and materials. As well as the political advantages that would accrue from Polish co-operation, he knew that an autumn campaign in a poor country far from his army's own bases would be easier if the French could rely on the help of the inhabitants. And from a Polish perspective, Napoleon's initiative – rather unexpected after the disappointments of the 1801 and 1805 peace treaties, which had shattered their hopes of French support for the restitution of Poland – provided a welcome opportunity to realize their national aspirations.

The only possible way to restore the state and reunite the Polish lands that had been divided among the Prussians, Russians and Austrians was war, and in these circumstances it was little wonder that the Polish army came to embody the pride, ambitions and expectations of the Poles in the years from 1806 to 1815. Its officer cadre attracted the special attention of the public. This can be explained by the high social status of many of the young men wearing officers' uniforms and the prestige which resulted from the popular image of the officer as a

hero and liberator, to be compared in the popular patriotic poetry of the time to the brave knights from the brilliant past of the country, from the days of King Władysław Jagiełło or Jan III Sobieski. The paths which they followed during their careers in the army, their ambitions and their attitudes towards military service form the subject matter of the present chapter. These are questions that were largely neglected by Polish historians in the second half of the twentieth century, while Polish historiography in the nineteenth and in the first half of the twentieth centuries preferred to concentrate on the patriotic motives that lay behind their service. This approach reflected the common conviction of those times that the main aim of historiography was to draw attention to models of patriotism and sacrifice in the service of the nation. But it had the effect of omitting or marginalizing other reasons for military service in years between 1806 and 1815, reasons which are worthy of more detailed examination.

The raising of Polish forces in 1806 was inextricably linked to the activity of General Jan Henryk Dąbrowski, a veteran of the Kościuszko Insurrection of 1794 and the commander-in-chief of the Polish Legions in Italy.¹ At the start of the campaign he was still in Italy, along with the remnants of the Legions (the regiments of uhlans and infantry). After the Battle of Jena, he was summoned to Berlin, where on 6 November, after a brief conference with Napoleon and Józef Wybicki,² he issued a proclamation to his compatriots, appealing to them to give their support to the French Emperor.

After arriving in Poznań and leaving the negotiations with influential Polish aristocrats and noblemen to Wybicki, Dąbrowski concentrated his activity on the organization of the Polish forces. Two other well-known generals supported his initiative. The first was Prince Józef Poniatowski,³ a nephew of the late King Stanisław Augustus, who represented the inner circle of the aristocracy. The second, General Józef Zająček,⁴ was a former Polish Jacobin and a veteran of the Egyptian campaign, who was a member of Napoleon's general staff.

Creating the Polish army, 1806–1812

During the seven months following Dąbrowski's proclamation, the number of Polish troops reached almost 30,000, a figure that must be considered a real success when account is taken of the current financial problems, the lack of competent administration and the scale of the devastation of the country by the Russian, Prussian and French forces. The army of the Duchy of Warsaw grew to 60,000 soldiers by 1810;⁵

and by 1812 it consisted of 75,000 officers and men. It was composed of seventeen regiments of infantry, one regiment of foot artillery, one of horse artillery and sixteen regiments of cavalry (cuirassiers, chasseurs, hussars and, most important of all, uhlans).⁶ The relatively high number of cavalry units resulted from a specifically Polish military tradition and reflected Napoleon's high opinion of Polish cavalrymen.

In 1812 the Polish military effort – including Polish volunteers from the Russian partition and Polish troops in French service – totalled about 104,000 soldiers. Enormous casualties were sustained during the campaign, and the army lost some 90,000 men. But thanks to the determination of Poniatowski and other generals, within a few months of the defeat in Russia, the Polish army again numbered some 37,000 soldiers. In 1813, 20,000 of them – a few veterans of previous campaigns bolstered by the arrival of new recruits – left the Duchy of Warsaw (leaving behind only the garrisons in the fortresses of Zamość, Modlin, Gdańsk and Częstochowa) and fought on Napoleon's side as the Emperor's last ally in the months before his abdication in 1814.

The enlargement of the army depended on political will as well as the military situation of the country. The first measure taken to create new units was based on the tradition of the *levée en masse* long established among the Polish nobility, whereby regiments of volunteers were supplied with peasants from the landed estates of the aristocracy and wealthy nobles.⁷ This measure was adopted when turned to when rapid improvisation was required, notably during the campaign of 1806–1807 and the war of 1809, when Polish troops entered Galicia, or in 1812 in the territories of the Russian Partition. In more stable periods (1808, 1810–1811), the main source of new recruits for the army was conscription based on principles similar to those introduced by the French. In spite of the different methods of creating the units, the social structure of the Polish lands ensured that the great majority of ordinary soldiers came from the ranks of the peasantry. The majority of these soldiers were illiterate, and service in the army often provided them with their first opportunity to visit regions located far from their own villages. It is difficult to speak of their patriotism or national consciousness in the sense in which we would define it today, but there is no doubt that after a few months in the regiment they imbibed at least some of the general motivation towards the service felt by their commanders and their colleagues from bourgeois or poor noble backgrounds.⁸ To some extent this resulted from the fact that the Polish army was fighting against men they regarded as invaders from abroad, speaking German or Russian, a circumstance that was conducive to the spread of national ideas and

slogans among the ordinary soldiers. This process could be reinforced by the strong influence exerted on their colleagues by those soldiers who came from the poor nobility. In addition, the Polish army in 1806–1815 adopted some of the traditions of the republican army which they inherited from Kościuszko's insurrection or from the Polish Legions in Italy and Germany (1797–1801). The attempts by Poniatowski and by those officers who were former legionaries to inculcate in the minds of the ordinary soldiers a consciousness that they were the defenders of their country could also have had some effect.⁹ At the very least, relations between officers and men in the army of the Duchy of Warsaw were based on similar principles to those in the French army and were very different from the realities of service in the Austrian, Prussian or Russian armies. This could only reinforce fellow-feeling between the men in ranks and their officers and make them more susceptible to the ideas and opinions prevalent among the officer class.

The necessity for improvisation when the army of 1807 was being created and in subsequent years when it was further expanded raised the question of how officers should be selected. They had to be brave, of course, but they must also be competent. This was one of the most important problems that the military leaders of the Duchy had to face.

It would prove difficult to bring the officer corps up to full strength, and there were few groups capable of providing suitable candidates. In accordance with Napoleon's orders, about 30 officers from the former Polish Legions in Italy and Germany who were still serving with Dąbrowski in Italy arrived at the end of 1806.¹⁰ A larger group consisted of those of their colleagues who, after the disappointment of the 1801 peace treaty, had decided to return to Poland.¹¹ The members of this group, strongly connected with Dąbrowski, immediately answered his appeal and joined the army, usually serving with ranks ranging from captain to general. Among their most important qualities were experience gained during the campaigns of 1797–1800 and knowledge of French tactics, regulations and methods of training. The posts they were given confirmed the high opinion in which this group was held: in 1807 they made up 45.6 per cent of the commanders of battalions and squadrons,¹² while almost half the generals who served in the army of the Duchy of Warsaw in 1807–1815 were former legionaries.¹³ In spite of their experience and military skill, it was not this which led to their promotion; rather, the procedure of entrusting them with important posts was in compliance with the instructions received from Napoleon, who in this way tried to guarantee the loyalty of his new ally.¹⁴ The special position granted to the legionaries in the army provoked comment and

discussion. While some Poles – those who were conservative in outlook or remained distrustful of Napoleon – saw them as light-minded adventurers or mercenaries, the majority of their compatriots recognized in Dąbrowski and his officers steadfast and committed patriots.

Another method of improving the organization of the army and ensuring a high level of professionalism was to transfer officers from the Grande Armée itself. Some, like General Zajączek or Colonels Aksamitowski and Sokolnicki,¹⁵ were Poles. Napoleon also designated some French officers, like colonels Jean Pelletier and Jean Mallet, to be inspectors of the artillery and the engineers respectively.

The need to have officers familiar with service in modern armies also led to the appointment of Poles from the Prussian and (after the 1809 campaign) Austrian armies. It is perhaps significant that many of them had served in the Polish army before 1795. After the Third Partition (1795), some Polish soldiers and officers without landed properties or other means of subsistence decided to enlist in the armies of the partitioning powers. Their appearance in the army of the Duchy in 1806–1809 was not particularly controversial (except for a few quarrels and duels). It was commonly held that their resignation from enemy forces proved their patriotism and that their previous service provided a good training in military tactics which would be useful in the fight for Poland's independence. Since their competence was widely appreciated, the minister of war, Prince Poniatowski, ordered that 30 per cent of vacant lieutenancies and captaincies should be reserved for them.¹⁶

The rather small number of officers coming from the Russian army might at first glance seem surprising. One explanation may be that service with the Russians was more attractive to Polish volunteers when compared to the career prospects offered by the Austrian or Prussian armies. The Russian administrative and military system was more open to foreigners because of the non-existence in Russia of the educated cadres that were indispensable for the command of a large army. For Poles the chances for rapid promotion were also greater in the Russian forces because of the lack of a language barrier (thanks to the similarity of the Slavonic languages), something that proved a serious problem for Poles in the Austrian and Prussian armies.¹⁷

Another important group among the officer corps in the army of the Duchy consisted of those officers who had gained their rank before 1794, and who after the Third Partition decided to stay on in the country and lead a civilian life. Their military experience was not usually as considerable as that of the legionaries, but they had other qualities. A significant percentage of them came from the wealthy nobility, and

this ensured their popularity among their compatriots, which was a very important factor in an army built from scratch. They enjoyed the confidence of their fellow-citizens and could appeal to civic sacrifice.

Young volunteers, mostly from the nobility, filled the ranks of the lower officers. Born in the 1780s or 1790s, they had no military experience, but were motivated by a passionate patriotic zeal. Moreover, young men from aristocratic families were often ready to support the costs of forming the units or even to found them.¹⁸ Usually they did so to fulfil the dream of commanding their own regiment. This type of the young aristocrat was portrayed later in Adam Mickiewicz's epic poem *Pan Tadeusz* (1834):

... This was indeed the young Count,
 Joined up lately, but had spent a tidy amount,
 Out of his own vast income a regiment raised,
 In his very first battle was justly much praised,
 And the Emperor today had him colonel created.¹⁹

Since money and family influence were the key determinants of their promotion, the military authorities solved the problem of their inexperience by appointing older, better-qualified lieutenant-colonels and majors to assist them.

The method of forming the officer corps in new regiments (based on mixed groups of legionaries, veterans of the wars of 1792–1794 and volunteers) that was established in 1806–1807 was applied again in 1809 in Galicia, and in 1812 in Lithuania, with one modification – the novices of 1806–1807 now joined the group of experienced veterans. At the same time many older officers (who had briefly returned to service in 1806) resigned. Another tendency could also be observed – an exodus of officers from the army of the Duchy to the regiment of the *Chevaux-légers Polonais de la Garde* or to the uhlans and infantry units of the Vistula Legion.²⁰ Though this involved a relatively small number of individuals, it irritated the Minister of War, Prince Poniatowski, who was convinced that in this way his young army lost some of its most valuable officers.

The diversity of recruitment methods meant that the cadre of officers in the army of the Duchy of Warsaw was a group composed of men linked to very different political traditions. The levels of their military experience were also very different. This stimulated rivalry between factions among the officers, especially in periods of peace, when conflicts over both personal and military issues found a new intensity.

Officers and promotion

In 1812 the total number of officers in the army of the Duchy of Warsaw was 1882.²¹ It is difficult to define their social background with any precision. Many of the documents that emanated from the Ministry of War in 1807–1815 were destroyed during the Warsaw Rising in 1944, when almost all the regular reports, which included information about the officers' background, property, marital status and education, were burned. The lack of such materials makes any large-scale prosopographical study extremely difficult to undertake. But, using other sources, it is possible to suggest the general pattern of an officer's career.

There is no doubt that the vast majority of them came from the nobility (which, including the petty, landless nobility, constituted up to 8 per cent of the population of the Polish lands). After 1807, the trend for wealthy bourgeois to become officers, which had begun in the pre-partition era, continued.²² In the Polish Legions in Italy about 15 per cent of the officers belonged to the urban bourgeoisie.²³ In the army of the Duchy of Warsaw this percentage was probably a little lower. And the forces organized after 1806 were devoid of the shade of republican radicalism which had prevailed in the Legions. The relatively small contribution of townsmen to the newly formed officer corps could also be explained by the small number of townspeople in Poland (about 14–17 per cent of population). The urban elite, which could deliver candidates for the higher ranks in the army, was a rather small group. Moreover, facing the competition of numerous nobles, traditionally accustomed to military service, many educated young men of non-noble origins preferred to follow civilian careers.

In this context the example of the officer cadre of the *Cheveau-légers Polonais de la Garde* is instructive. Although this regiment was not a part of the army of the Duchy, it was formed in 1807 in Warsaw from volunteers. Its social structure was in some ways typical of the military as a whole, although the *Cheveau-légers* were an elite unit, and the representation of the aristocracy and wealthy nobility among the officers was probably a little higher than in other 'line' regiments.

The representatives of the aristocracy and wealthy nobility constituted 7 per cent of the officers of the regiment. Of the rest of the officers 26 per cent came from the 'middle nobility' (the owners of few villages), and 23 per cent from among poor nobles. The lack of information about the ancestry and property of the other 40 per cent of the officers whose names can be found in heraldic registers suggests that they also should

be classified as coming from the poor nobility. Townsmen, by way of comparison, constituted only 4 per cent of the officer cadre.²⁴

There were, nonetheless, signs that a process of social transformation and modernization was beginning to take place in the army. Several officers from a bourgeois background reached the rank of major or colonel. Two representatives of this group (Maurycy Hauke and Józef Rautenstrauch)²⁵ crowned their careers in the rank of general.

Yet the example of these officers only underlines the continued link between promotion and social origin. Commanders from an urban background, like Hauke, usually followed the career path of a typical line officer and were promoted to the rank of colonel or general after about 20 years of service. It is significant that none of the bourgeois officers in the *Cheveau-légers* obtained his promotion until 1811.²⁶

The path to the pinnacle of the military hierarchy was shorter for the young aristocrats – men like Antoni Paweł Sułkowski, Stanisław Małachowski, Ludwik Pac, and Michał Radziwiłł, who became generals within a few years of enlisting.

As was customary, prospects of promotion depended not only on ability, but also on connections and acquaintances. The career of Benedykt Łączyński shows that this principle did not apply only to members of aristocratic families. Łączyński was a brave officer in the Polish Legions, but his career could not be described as brilliant until the beginning of 1807 when, in the space of three months, he was promoted three times and reached the rank of colonel. The acceleration of his career resulted from the role played at the time by his beautiful sister Maria Walewska: Napoleon's mistress.

Usually the decisive influence on officers' careers was exerted by powerful military protectors, for instance, the French marshals or the three most important Polish generals. The relationship between Poniatowski, Dąbrowski and Zajączek was plagued with conflict and controversy. Poniatowski, who was chosen by Napoleon to be Minister of War, was not connected with the pro-French faction in Poland or with the tradition of freedom-fighting after the Third Partition. On the basis of his ministerial competence he issued orders to the other division commanders. Dąbrowski and Zajączek for a long time refused to acknowledge the prince as their superior,²⁷ and they appealed to Marshal Davout, who until 1808 was the commander-in-chief of Polish, Saxon and French forces in the Duchy, to mediate on their behalf. Each of the three rivals protected the interests of their supporters, who took precedence over all others in promotions and honours.²⁸ In consequence, almost all the officer corps in the army of the Duchy could be divided into three mutually

antagonistic factions, although – fortunately, perhaps – the sense of faction was largely stifled in the face of war.

Motives for service

What inspired so many volunteers to enlist? Undoubtedly, the principal reason was Polish patriotism. The majority of those inhabitants of the former Polish–Lithuanian Commonwealth who were interested in public affairs shared a common desire to achieve nationhood, and the belief that this could be achieved only by war and sacrifice attracted thousands to the cause. They even came from those territories that were under Austrian and Russian occupation, and that too in spite of a strong risk of repression.

But patriotism was not the only motive. It was both tradition and contemporary opinion that service in the army was an honourable career path, worthy of a nobleman. In the case of many officers coming from the urban middle class and the landless nobility, however, financial inducements should not be ignored. Another motive was the high prestige of the officer corps in public life, a reflection of the influence of the Napoleonic model of the role of the army in the state, but also the positive image of the soldier in Polish consciousness. Liberators and avengers occupied a special place in social life and in women's hearts. According to one memoir, the balls of those days remained military parades: the uniforms and epaulettes almost dislodged frock coats, and civilians were treated by young ladies with disregard and irony.²⁹

For young men without military experience, the prospect of an officer's career promised a life of adventure. Military service appealed especially to those who dreamed of achieving fame. In this they did not differ from the thousands of men wearing the uniforms of other European armies. The examples of Napoleon and his marshals offered powerful role models and persuaded them that the paradigms of honour, glory and career were shaped by the battlefield.

Typical representatives of this group of officers were two young aristocrats, Count Włodzimierz Potocki and Prince Dominik Radziwiłł.³⁰ The first was the son of Stanisław Szczęsny Potocki, one of the opponents of the Constitution of 3 May 1791 and a leader of the pro-Russian Confederacy of Targowica, regarded by many Poles as a traitor. In 1808, the 19-year-old Włodzimierz Potocki founded a battery of horse artillery and took part in the war against Austria, trying to atone for his father's failings and re-establish the ancient reputation of his family.

Prince Dominik Radziwiłł, one of the greatest landowners in Europe even though he was encumbered with enormous debts, foresaw in 1810 the future war with Russia and decided to take part in the struggle as commander of a cavalry regiment.³¹ His plan came close to failure when the military authorities of the Duchy told him that no regiments were available – especially as the young aristocrat was completely lacking in military experience. Radziwiłł's friends and advisers were also against the project; they pointed out that, since he was a Russian subject, his landed estates would be inevitably confiscated by the tsar. But in spite of their advice, the young aristocrat did not give up. He paid compensation to one of the older commanders, who agreed to resign his command, and broke the opposition of the Ministry of War by promising to supply the army with a contribution of about 12,000 ducats.³² Obviously, his landed estates in the Russian partition were confiscated, but the prince fulfilled his dreams. Indeed, his regiment entered Wilno as the first unit of the Grande Armée.

Dreams about military fame and an idealized image of war typified many young officers. Aleksander Fredro, a 16-year old volunteer in 1809,³³ described his beginnings in military life as an exciting adventure: 'I jump into the war', he wrote, 'like a young deer into a meadow full of flowers'. There is no doubt that for many the realities of military service appeared to substantiate such a colourful and joyous image. The daughter of Fredro's former commander, Adam Potocki (another young commander from an aristocratic family), describing the return of her father from the campaign of 1812, noted that the colonel was afraid of the dark and spent all the time in the brightly illuminated salon: 'That night he saw terrible spectres of slaughter and ravages before his eyes. He was crying and jumping out of his bed.'³⁴

A good example of the different competing motivations that came into play is to be found in the correspondence of another noble Prince Antoni Paweł Sułkowski, a richer relative of Józef Sułkowski, Napoleon's adjutant in Italy and Egypt.³⁵ The young colonel emerges from the letters he wrote to his wife as a man primarily driven by strong patriotic feelings. Because Napoleon was the only ruler who could restore nationhood to Poland, Sułkowski treated service in faraway Spain as a sacrifice which he was prepared to offer to the national cause.³⁶ Besides patriotic exaltation, his letters also reveal the typical mirage of personal military fame. Marching to Spain, he wrote to his wife: 'I have just learned the words of the song *'Il faut donc pour la gloire'*. Being solicitous for national pride, the colonel stressed that in foreign countries his regiment ought to display 'good bearing and reputation', because it contributed to 'the

honour of the Poles, my own and my regiment's'.³⁷ A similar mixture of national pride and the desire for military glory can be found in Major Kozietulski's cry, which became the signal for the famous *Chevau-légers'* charge at Somosierra in 1808: 'Forward, damn it! The Emperor is looking at us!'

It can be difficult to separate patriotism from dreams of glory. Both notes sound in the march of the *Chevau-légers* regiment:

We are conquering you
 For our Poland
 And our glory.
 Accustomed to victories
 We enter your town,
 Demanding from you politeness and hospitality.
 But you don't need to
 Be afraid of us.³⁸

It seems that the words of the march, together with the conqueror's pride in a sense of chivalry, reflected the elite character of the regiment, in which the tone for the officer cadre was set by rich, well-bred young gentlemen. It is also possible that many of their colleagues from other regiments would have preferred the French song written for the *Chevau-légers* in 1808 by their friend General Antoine-Charles Lasalle:

The French were in Poland
 Spain sees the Poles
 Europe will without disgrace
 Witness the reign of the French and Poles.
 Which nation is strong enough
 To resist their efforts?
 The French and the Poles,
 If they were inclined,
 Could put everyone to death.³⁹

Sułkowski's example shows that glory was not the sole motive for service. Though he expected that a future war could bring 'a thousand laurels', the young colonel did not forget about the more prosaic aims of soldiering. Giving thanks 'to his [lucky] star' for the possibility of service at Napoleon's side, he hoped that this could allow him to pursue 'the most beautiful career in the homeland' – without such support, he believed, he would fall victim to his compatriots' envy. He appealed

many times to his wife to maintain good relations with powerful personalities (like Prince Poniatowski or the French resident in the Duchy), who were able to accelerate the progress of his career. The same pragmatic approach can be found in Sułkowski's letter about a conversation with Poniatowski's sister, Maria Teresa Tyszkiewicz. The colonel frankly described all the flatteries he had addressed to Poniatowski's ears and the concealment of his critical opinions about the Minister of War, and he ended his letter with the cynical conclusion: 'But that's politics, isn't it?'⁴⁰ Some remarks in the letters of other officers prove that Sułkowski's attitude towards his service was not exceptional. Idealism and pragmatism were in no sense incompatible.

Conclusion

The Duchy of Warsaw ceased to exist in 1815. At the Congress of Vienna it was decided that 85 per cent of its territory should form a new Kingdom of Poland ruled by Alexander I. The remainder was handed back to Prussia and Austria. The end of the Napoleonic epoch and the creation of the so-called Congress Kingdom forced Polish veterans to decide whether or not to continue to serve in the Polish army now that it was commanded by the tsar's brother, Grand Duke Constantine. After 1815, many of the officers from the aristocracy and wealthy nobility retired. In some cases, their feelings towards the Napoleon were the deciding factor. An example of this attitude can be found in the declaration of General Józef Kossakowski, one of Napoleon's 'last faithful', at Fontainebleau in 1814. In 1815 he resigned arguing that 'the man who had been honoured to serve Napoleon could then serve only God in Holy Mass'.⁴¹ Others left the army, discouraged by the Russian style of command. The violent methods of training and the public humiliation of officers by Grand Duke Constantine provoked widespread indignation.⁴²

Despite this, many decided to stay in the army. Their decision owed much to a belief that the Kingdom – like the Duchy of Warsaw before it – was a transitional form of the Polish state, and that Alexander I's policies might lead to the future unification of the Polish provinces. Not all, however, acted from political motives. Many officers from the poorer nobility and the urban bourgeoisie had nowhere else to go, as military service was their only source of income. The army offered them comfortable, even high, salaries, as well as the prospect of a pension on retirement; and the most meritorious could expect profitable contracts to lease landed properties from the state. In these circumstances

the percentage of urban bourgeois among the officers rose. Overall, in 1815–1830 they yielded 18 per cent of the generals.⁴³ The changes in the social structure of the officer corps were similar to those in other European military forces, though the process of transforming and modernizing the army would be interrupted for over 80 years by the defeat of the November Uprising in 1831 and the subsequent liquidation of the Polish military.

The motivations that lay behind the decision to enlist in the army of the Duchy of Warsaw in 1806–1815 are explained by a complex mixture of patriotism, a desire for glory and pragmatic careerism. Polish patriotism was an important motive, but it was certainly not the only one that induced men to join the army as one of ‘King Sobieski’s successors’. It is impossible to measure the scale of influence of these different factors. It is also fairly pointless, since a military career in those days opened up a wide range of vistas, from fulfilling personal ambition to carrying out one’s national duty, and from gaining the esteem of one’s compatriots to achieving financial enrichment. The varying attitudes of Polish officers towards military service in the new conditions of the post-1815 world reflected divisions among the officers caused by their various emotional, political and financial concerns. It is significant, though, that no sharp distinctions can be drawn between those who took these different options (pro-Napoleonic patriots, pragmatic patriots and officers forced to stay in the army by their financial situation). It is possible to cite examples of individuals from the poor nobility who were dismissed in spite of their difficult financial situation, or of former followers of Napoleon from affluent families who decided to stay in the ranks. The decision whether to continue in military service was often the consequence of a number of considerations; it is sufficient to say that an officer’s career was perceived in very different ways, not only as patriotic duty, but as a source of income and, by many, as a very attractive style of life.

The different choices made by the Napoleonic veterans in the first years after 1815 did not seriously influence relations among the officers after the outbreak of the November Uprising. Many of those who had retired came back to the army as volunteers during the first weeks of the insurrection. Only the few generals who continued their career under the command of the Grand Duke Constantine opposed the uprising or declared their loyalty to the tsar (and constitutional king of Poland) Nicholas I. In the first dramatic hours of the so-called November Night (29/30 November 1830) they tried to use their authority to pacify the insurgents – young officers and cadets – treating their action as

an unreasonable fuss by 'feverish youth'.⁴⁴ The other generals and the majority of the officers joined the insurgents. This choice is to be explained by the influence of patriotism reinforced by a gradually developing consciousness of the new nation and new principles of collective loyalty which obliged the members of the national community to act together and take the risk of fighting with Russia in spite of their personal career prospects or old-style loyalty to the ruler.⁴⁵ Applying the same principles in October 1831, a few thousand Polish officers (from lieutenants to generals) refused the tsar's amnesty and left the Kingdom of Poland to lead the life of exile in France, Great Britain or Belgium. After 1830, taking part in a conspiracy or in an uprising to restore Polish independence (1846, 1848, 1863–64) carried far more risk of repression than promise of military honours or social advancement. In the historical consciousness of future generations the motives of the earlier volunteers became sanitized; and heroism came to overshadow the other, more complex, motives that lay behind the decisions by so many volunteers to join the Polish army in the period of the Duchy of Warsaw.

Notes

1. Jan Henryk Dąbrowski (1755–1818), in Saxon service from 1769; colonel in the Polish army, 1792 and general, 1794; creator and commander-in-chief of the Polish Legions in Italy, 1797–1801; in the service of the Republic of Italy as an inspector-general of the Italian cavalry, from 1803; general in the army of the Duchy of Warsaw, 1807–1812; general in the army of the Kingdom of Poland, 1815 [all biographical data without special references are from Jarosław Czuby, *Wódzowie i politycy. Generacja polska lat 1806–1815* (Warsaw: Neriton, 1993), and Marek Tarczyński, *Generacja powstania listopadowego* (Warsaw: Wydawnictwo MON, 1980)].
2. Józef Wybicki (1747–1822), Dąbrowski's friend and eminent emigré politician after 1794; senator in the Duchy of Warsaw, 1807 and the Kingdom of Poland, 1815; author of the words of 'Dąbrowski's Mazurka', the present Polish national anthem.
3. Józef Poniatowski (1763–1813), in Austrian service from 1780; general in the Polish army, 1789; commander of the army of the Polish Crown in the 1792 war with Russia; volunteer in Kościuszko's Insurrection, 1794; Minister of War in the Duchy of Warsaw, 1807–1813; commander of the V (Polish) corps of the Grande Armée, 1812; commander of the VIII (Polish) corps, 1813; marshal of France, died in the battle of Leipzig.
4. Józef Zajaczek (1752–1826), served in the Polish army from 1768; general, 1792; after the fall of the Insurrection prisoner-of-war in Austria; general in French service, 1797; general in the army of the Duchy of Warsaw, 1807–1812; prisoner-of-war in Russia, 1812–1813; governor in the Kingdom of Poland from 1815.

5. This is the figure following the annexation of West Galicia (part of the Austrian partition) in 1809.
6. The cuirassiers were heavy cavalry units. The uhlans (known also as lancers) belonged to the light cavalry, but due to the advantages of their lances they were often used on the battlefield as the offensive force to break the enemy's lines. The hussars and chasseurs were usually used to fight skirmish battles and for scouting, but in the army of the Duchy of Warsaw they were used often in the same way as uhlans.
7. In this part of Poland the wealthy nobility would include the owners of a few villages and more. Poor nobility consisted of the owners of less than one village or those without landed estates.
8. There is a great deal of evidence of the susceptibility of ordinary soldiers to patriotism and sentiments of national pride. See A. Białkowski, *Wspomnienia starego żołnierza* (Gdynia: Armagedon, 2003), pp. 47–48; M. Kukiel, *Dzieje oręża polskiego w epoce napoleońskiej* (Poznań: Nakładem Zdzisława Rzepeckiego i Ski, 1912), pp. 138, 248.
9. W. Tokarz, *Książę Józef jako wychowawca wojska*, in W. Tokarz, *Rozprawy i szkice*, vol. 2 (Warsaw: Państwowe Wydawnictwo Naukowe, 1959), pp. 288–314.
10. The Polish legions in Italy, founded in 1797 as the auxiliary forces of the Cisalpine (then Lombardian) Republic, were organized and commanded by General Dąbrowski. The so-called Danube Legion (1799–1801) was organized and commanded by General Karol Kniaziewicz in the German theatre of war; the majority of the Legions' units were transferred into French service in 1802 (as 113 and 114 *demi-brigades*) and sent to Saint-Domingue. The rest (the regiment of lancers and three battalions of infantry) went into the service of the Italian Republic (in 1806 the Kingdom of Naples). The officer corps of the Legions was based on volunteers from Poland and soldiers were recruited from Polish prisoners-of-war, captured from the Austrian army. The Legions reached their maximum effective force in 1801 (about 12,000 soldiers; see Jan Pachonński, *Legiony polskie 1794–1807* (Warsaw: Wydawnictwo MON, 1979), vol. 4, pp. 619–620. News of the heavy losses suffered by the legionaries in Saint-Domingue caused a serious crisis among Poles well disposed to France.
11. It was caused by the prospect of the general pacification in Europe, which seemed to shatter hopes of rebuilding Poland. The second reason for the mass resignation of officers was the transfer of the Polish Legions to French service, which was interpreted as a step towards the liquidation of their national character and political significance.
12. See the dissertation of Wojciech Kłosiński, 'Generał Jan Krukowiecki. Kariery oficera armii Księstwa Warszawskiego', Institute of History, Warsaw University 2001, pp. 25–26.
13. Czuby, *Wodzowie i politycy*, pp. 30–32.
14. Pachonński, *Generał Jan Henryk Dąbrowski* (Warsaw: Wydawnictwo MON, 1981), pp. 405–407.
15. Wincenty Aksamitowski (1760–1829) and Michał Sokolnicki (1760–1816) represented the group of former legionaries, who after 1801 decided to enlist in the French army.

16. Waclaw Tokarz, *Rozprawy i szkice*, 2 vols (Warsaw: Państwowe Wydawnictwo Naukowe, 1959), vol. 2, p. 296.
17. Viktor Bezotosnyj, 'Nacionalnyj sostav rossijskogo generaliteta 1812 g.' *Voprosy istorii* 7 (1999): 65–69. It should be emphasized that from the Treaty of Tilsit until 1812 Alexander I was officially Napoleon's ally, which could provide an excuse for Polish volunteers wearing Russian uniforms. During the war of 1812 the majority of them continued their service in Russian regiments. Some of them must have been deprived of favourable circumstances to flee, others were guided by honour and their sense of duty, while others calculated the risk – observation of the events of the war could have made them believe that it would be unwise to forsake the army.
18. Examples are Antoni Paweł Sułkowski (the founder and commander of the 9th infantry regiment in 1806), Włodzimierz Potocki (company of horse artillery in 1808), Konstanty Czartoryski (16th infantry regiment in 1809), Adam Potocki (11th regiment of uhlans in 1809), Stanisław Małachowski (14th regiment of cuirassiers in 1809) and Michał Tyszkiewicz (17th regiment of uhlans in 1812).
19. Adam Mickiewicz, *Pan Tadeusz*, trans. Marcel Weyland (London: Newman-Hemisphere, 2005), p. 284.
20. The Vistula Legion was organized in 1808. It was based on the units of the former Legions remaining in Neapolitan service (in Westphalian and then in French service from 1807). The Legion was composed of three (after 1809, four) regiments of infantry and one regiment of the lancers (uhlans). All the units of the Legion fought in Spain from 1808 to 1812.
21. J. Poniatowski to King Frederick Augustus, Warsaw, 1 January 1812, in *Correspondance du Prince Poniatowski avec la France* (Poznań: ed. Adam Mieczysław Skałkowski, 1928), vol. 4, pp. 4–7.
22. The right to promotion to the officer corps was guaranteed to townsmen by the Law on Royal Towns of 18 April 1791 and the Constitution of 3 May 1791.
23. Pachoński, *Legiony polskie*, vol. IV, p. 637.
24. Michał Karpowicz, 'Za gwiazdą cesarza. 1. Pułk Szwoleżerów Gwardii Napoleona I', in Michał Karpowicz and Mirosław Filipiak, *Elita jazdy polskiej* (Warsaw: Wolumen-Bellona, 1995), p. 38.
25. Maurycy Hauke (1775–1830), artillery officer, second lieutenant, 1794; lieutenant in the Polish Legions in Italy, 1798; general in the army of the Duchy of Warsaw, 1807; defender of Zamość fortress in 1813; acting minister of war after 1816; killed by cadets on the first day of the November Uprising 1830; Józef Rautenstrauch (1773–1842), staff officer, captain, 1794; back in the service as an adjutant of Poniatowski, 1806; general, 1813.
26. Karpowicz, *Za gwiazdą cesarza*, p. 39.
27. See Zajączek's letter to Poniatowski of 19 Apr. 1807: 'I am tired of your letters. The tone of your letters is unacceptable to me. It would be wisest for us to cease our correspondence. Please remember that I am a French General and that I command the Poles according to the wishes of His Majesty the Emperor.' Szymon Askenazy, *Książę Józef Poniatowski* (Warsaw: ed. Karol Rzepecki, 1913), p. xlii. Poniatowski's leadership became unquestioned after the successful campaign in Galicia in 1809.

28. See, for example, Zajaczek's letter to Poniatowski refusing to accept the officers sent to his division by the prince. Askenazy, *Książę Józef*, p. 41.
29. Ludwik de Laveaux, *Pamiętniki* (Kraków: ed. T. Dyakowski, 1879), p. 227.
30. Włodzimierz Potocki (1789–1812) fought in the 1809 campaign; Dominik Radziwiłł (1786–1813) commander of the 8th uhlán regiment, 1811–1812; *gros major* in the regiment of the *Cheveau-légers Polonais de la Garde*, 1813; wounded in the battle of Hanau (30 Oct. 1813), and died a few days later.
31. His landed estates on the territory of the Russian partition alone included about 1000 towns and villages with 200,000 'male souls'. Zbigniew Anusik and Andrzej Stroynowski, 'Radziwiłł, Dominik', in: *Polski Słownik Biograficzny* (Warsaw, Kraków, Gdańsk, Łódź: Polska Akademia Nauk), 1987, vol. 30, pp. 177–178.
32. Prince Józef Poniatowski to Frederick Augustus, Warsaw, 17 December 1810 and 18 March 1811, in *Correspondance du Prince Joseph Poniatowski . . .*, vol. 3, pp. 125–126, 186–187.
33. Aleksander Fredro (1793–1876), playwright; lieutenant in the army of the Duchy, 1809–1812; *officier d'ordonnance* of Marshal Berthier, 1813–1814.
34. Zbigniew Kuchowicz, *Aleksander Fredro we fraku i w szlafroku* (Łódź: Krajowa Agencja Wydawnicza, 1989), pp. 73, 75.
35. Antoni Paweł Sułkowski (1785–1836), colonel and commander of the 9th infantry regiment, 1806; general, 1810; commander of the brigade in the IV cavalry corps, 1812; commander-in-chief of the VIII (Polish) corps in the Grande Armée after the death of Poniatowski, 20–28 October 1813; Józef Sułkowski (1773–1798) veteran of the war with Russia, 1792; in the French military and intelligence service from 1796; Napoleon's adjutant in the Army of Italy, 1796; killed during the anti-French uprising in Cairo, 22 October 1798; Napoleon in his report to the Directory described him as 'un officier des plus grandes espérances'. Bonaparte to the Directory, Cairo, 6 brumaire an VII, *Correspondance de Napoleon I^{er}* 32 vols (Paris: A. Plon, J. Dumaine, 1858–1870), vol. 5, p. 96.
36. Sułkowski's regiment formed a part of the so-called Division of the Duchy of Warsaw, which fought in the Iberian Peninsula in 1808–1812.
37. Antoni Paweł Sułkowski, *Listy do żony z wojen napoleońskich*, ed. R. Bielecki (Warsaw: Czytelnik, 1987), pp. 55, 60.
38. *Źródła do historii pułku polskiego lekkokonnego gwardii Napoleona I*, ed. Aleksander Rembowski (Warsaw, 1899), p. 765.
39. Józef Załuski, *Wspomnienia* (Cracow: Wydawnictwo Literackie, 1976), p. 124.
40. Sułkowski, *Listy*, pp. 72, 124.
41. Józef Kossakowski (1772–1842), veteran of the campaigns of 1792–1794; after the Third Partition he retired to civilian life, before returning to service in Napoleon's headquarters, 1812 (Tarczyński, *Generalicja*, p. 32).
42. Between 1816 and 1820 Grand Duke Constantine's outrages against 'the officer's honour' caused several suicides among young officers (see Małgorzata Karpińska, 'Oblicza romantycznego "taedium vitae". Zamachy samobójcze na ziemiach polskich 1815–1830', *Przegląd Historyczny*, 90, 1 (1999): 46–50.
43. Tarczyński, *Generalicja*, pp. 253, 257, 263–264.

44. Six generals (out of a total of 39 in active service) were killed by the insurgents in the first hours of the uprising. Eight others retired over the next few days.
45. On the third day of the Uprising, the Patriotic Society (which grouped the most zealous partisans of war with Russia) appealed to the government to issue a proclamation which would oblige those generals who 'had not joined the nation yet' to return to the ranks on pain of being proclaimed 'the traitors of the nation and condemned to death'. Maurycy Mochnacki, *Powstanie narodu polskiego* 2 vols (Warsaw: Państwowy Instytut Wydawniczy, 1984), vol. 2, p. 92.

4

The World Turned Upside Down: Female Soldiers in the French Armies of the Revolutionary and Napoleonic Wars

David Hopkin

Much historical attention in recent years has been lavished on the figure of the female soldier (and sailor), the woman who disguises herself as a man to join the army (or navy). Even so, one cannot be certain about the number of women who put on military uniform and fought in the ranks of the Revolutionary and Napoleonic armies. Rudolf Dekker and Lotte van de Pol suggest 30,¹ Léon Hennet, the archivist of the Ministry of War at the end of the nineteenth century, 70,² while Dominique Godineau has more recently pushed the figure up nearer to 80.³ A thorough search of all archives would undoubtedly turn up a few more: for example the administration of the Department of the Vosges was petitioned for money and appropriate female clothing on behalf of Marie Lefebvre and Sophie Julien, otherwise unknown to history, who had served as trumpeters in the Second Artillery Regiment between 1791 and 1798.⁴ And of course we will never know the number of women who maintained their disguise throughout, though, according to one eyewitness of the stripped bodies on the battlefield of Waterloo, these may have been quite numerous.⁵ However, we may also have to subtract a few, since not all the well-known case-histories can be substantiated. Others do not really conform to the type: were the Fernig sisters, who wore military uniform and served as Dumouriez's aides-de-camp despite being known as women, part of the same phenomenon, or were they more of a mascot for Dumouriez's Girondin political credentials (and somewhat louche personal reputation)?⁶

The example of the Fernigs suggests that it would be useful to provide a taxonomy of female soldiers, because not every woman who

wore uniform, nor every woman who carried arms, can be labelled a female soldier, let alone all the women who accompanied armies. To deal with the last first, despite the occasional efforts of the French military authorities to exclude women, numbers were to be found in military encampments – either the wives (or mistresses) of soldiers, or service providers (or both). Madame Lefebvre, washerwoman and wife of the future Duke of Danzig, is exemplary of the type; she would later be immortalized in the theatre as *Madame Sans-Gêne* (a name appropriated from a genuine female soldier, Thérèse Figueur).⁷ In addition to the authorized suppliers of food, drink and laundry – the *cantinières*, *vivandières* and *blanchisseuses* – an informal service sector, including sex workers, travelled with armies. All of these women might sometimes wear aspects of military uniform, and some of them are known to have participated in the fighting on occasions.⁸

Martial attire became more generally fashionable for women in the early years of the Revolution – a sartorial rejection of the extravagances of the Old Regime and a public statement of commitment to the patriot cause. The early revolutionary feminists such as Théroigne de Méricourt, Olympe de Gouges and Etta Palm d'Aelders were all famous for their 'amazon' dress.⁹ Their previous connections to the world of the theatre may have made cross-dressing more conceivable. How important their choice of attire was to their political message is hard to assess, but contemporary commentators found it difficult to imagine emancipated women without invoking the imagery of the 'world turned upside down' with its pipe-smoking, gun-toting, trouser-wearing heroine.¹⁰ This popular motif was often used to undermine feminist claims, and yet revolutionary feminists also had recourse to it. Constance Evrard, a radical Parisienne, declared to the editors of the *Révolutions de Paris* in 1791 that 'If you need a tyrannicide... I would quickly throw off my women's clothes and don the garb of a sex whose courage I feel in myself.'¹¹

All three amazon feminists were also known for their calls for women's military participation in the form of female national guard units, to reinforce women's claims to citizenship. There are several reports of such units between 1790 and 1792 (Etta Palm cited one such, the Amazons of Vic-sur-Bigorre, as her inspiration and was made an honorary member of another, the Amazons of Creil). Although some of the songs and prints which historians have taken as evidence of genuine women's regiments were probably meant to ridicule feminist demands, even these satires might be emulated. Olympe de Gouges quoted approvingly from the declaration of the 'Amazons of Bellona', even though this unit probably originated in a street-singer's fantasy.¹²

It was not unheard of, then, for women to put on elements of military dress, nor was it unknown for them to carry weapons. Although women had largely been excluded from the field of war in early modern times, it was accepted that in exceptional circumstances, such as sieges, they could participate in defence of their homes.¹³ In fact it is quite difficult to find French women fulfilling this role during the Revolutionary and Napoleonic Wars (compared to Spanish women, for example), but nonetheless the possibility was conceivable. The legendary Jeanne Hachette of Beauvais, who defended her city against the Burgundians, underwent a revival in the eighteenth century, and was cited by Théroigne de Méricourt in her speeches calling for a women's militia.¹⁴ Michelle Perrot has argued that the figure of the 'popular rebellious woman', so much part of the revolutionary events in Paris in both the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, might be considered an extension of women's militant role as defenders of home and community, which also saw them to the fore in food riots.¹⁵ However, some of these women, with pikes and red bonnets, also accompanied the volunteers of 1792 and the *sans-culotte* battalions of the Terror when they marched out of Paris, perhaps in conscious imitation of the armed allegory of liberty. The Revolution extended the concept of community to encompass the whole nation.

A type of female soldier particularly prominent in the Revolutionary armies was the woman who wore uniform and who fought in the ranks, but who never disguised her true sex. About 50 examples are known from the period 1792–1793. This does connect to a particular revolutionary moment when all norms, in society as well as in politics, were called into question. Unsurprisingly most served in volunteer battalions; such women were only exceptionally found in regular units.¹⁶ Most, but not all, of these women, at least in their self-presentations before the Convention, followed male family members into the army. The best known examples are Rose Bouillon who fought beside her husband in the 6th battalion of the volunteers of the Haute-Saône, until he was killed at Limbach, and the recently married Rose Barreau, known as *Liberté*, who joined the 2nd Battalion of the Volunteers of the Tarn, in which her brother and husband served. Barreau in particular was celebrated in the first year of the Republic as a revolutionary counter-exemplar to Joan of Arc.¹⁷

All of these sit slightly apart from the well-established tradition of the *disguised* female soldier, although they do overlap. Reine Chapuy, who served as a woman for six weeks in the 24th regiment of horse, undoubtedly borrowed the language of feminists like Méricourt and Palm in her

petition to the Convention to be allowed to remain with her regiment, just as her story was taken up as proof of women's political capabilities by female *sans-culottes*.¹⁸ In early 1793, Manette Dupont presented a petition to the Convention, supposedly on behalf of 900 disguised female soldiers, demanding the creation of a women's army.¹⁹ These overlaps between Parisian radical women, early feminists and women warriors make it impossible to draw a clear distinction between female soldiers and other forms of female military engagement.

However, we can be sure that compared with the thousands of women who followed the armies or carried weapons during revolutionary events, we are dealing with quite small numbers. Their numerical significance dwindles yet further when set against the hundreds of thousands of Frenchmen mobilized for the war effort. At least one historian has argued that the fascination that female soldiers exert has detracted from the real story of women's relationship to armies and to war.²⁰ Why have they attracted attention out of all proportion to their military contribution? No doubt part of the answer lies in a general human interest in the exceptional, in the picaresque, and (in some accounts of female soldiers) in the pornographic. But there are at least three more reasoned responses that the historian can make. First, women's history has sought out precursors whose flouting of gender conventions revealed that the limitations placed on women derived from culture rather than from natural differences between the sexes. Second, historical anthropologists have investigated behaviour at the margins to understand the mainstream: just as cross-dressing during carnival tells us something about everyday gender relations, so do the activities of female soldiers. Third, the handful of female soldiers carried with them a huge amount of cultural baggage. Marie-Antoinette was just one woman, but no one would suggest that historians have been unduly interested in her fate, because we appreciate her wider symbolic significance. The same is true of female soldiers.

Unlike women's militias, disguised female soldiering was neither a particularly revolutionary phenomenon nor a specifically French one. Female soldiers were participants in a tradition known throughout Western Europe since the late sixteenth century. Sylvie Steinberg lists 44 examples of French female soldiers from the Old Regime²¹ – quite a small sample compared with the 119 Dutch cases studied by Dekker and Van de Pol.²² To what extent do the explanations put forward by historians for this behaviour in other periods and other countries continue to hold for post-revolutionary France? The increase in numbers during the early years of the Revolution suggests that new factors were

involved. However, we will see that there were plenty of continuities in the representations, including self-representations, of the female soldier.

Whatever the varied motivations of female soldiers, this period was a late flowering for the tradition. Certainly women would continue to put on uniform and take up arms during the nineteenth century: one thinks of Louise Michel dressed as a *fedéré*,²³ or Antoinette Lix who joined the *franc-tireurs* of the Vosges in 1870.²⁴ However, outside these revolutionary and other irregular military events, it was increasingly difficult for women to enter the ranks. The volunteer armies of the Old Regime could not afford to look too closely at their sources of manpower, but the conscript armies of the post-Napoleonic period introduced medical inspections, dormitory housing and other bureaucratic checks that made continuous deception tougher. Yet it was not just the practical difficulties that deterred later female soldiers. The late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries also saw an ideological shift, what Dror Wahrman in the parallel case of England has termed 'a cultural revolution'.²⁵ Numbers sharply declined from the spring of 1793 onwards. Behaviour deemed 'amazon', once tolerated and even applauded, was increasingly reprovved and outlawed. Some of the explanations for this change will be considered below.

Given that we are dealing with such small numbers, can one even talk about a distinctive military experience for female soldiers? Dekker and van de Pol make a convincing argument that there was in their Dutch study, but the source material in the French cases is thinner and more disparate. And, however carefully one approaches the topic, there are real problems distinguishing between fact and fiction.

Fact and fiction in the lives of female soldiers

To start at the end, in June 1816 the workshop of Charles Pellerin, the founder of the famous *imagerie d'Epinal*, was raided, as were many of his stockists around the country. The object was to find Napoleonic images banned under the restored monarchy, and one that attracted the prosecutor's eye was entitled *The New French Heroine* dating from late 1812 or early 1813. It told the story of Virginie Chesquière, a disguised female soldier.²⁶ Pellerin pictured Virginie receiving the cross of the Legion of Honour from a Marshal of the Empire. The text was light on biographical details, but noted that Virginie came from 'Delémont' in the Department of the Nord, and the song which accompanied the image explained that she had been made sergeant at Wagram and had served in Portugal. Her true sex was only discovered when she fell ill.

It was not the notion of a female soldier that the authorities found disturbing, but the mention of the 'Great Napoleon' in the song-text. Nonetheless, the prefect of the Somme, when writing to his counterpart in the Vosges, felt it necessary to remark that the story could only be an invention.²⁷ For Restoration bureaucrats, even fictional female soldiers were further damning evidence of the revolutionary disturbance in natural patterns of authority, whether in the state or in the home, and they drew a direct analogy between the two. However, it was not an invention, or at least not entirely. Pellerin's inspiration came indirectly from a story in the *Journal de l'Empire* of 31 October 1812. According to this news report, Virginie Ghesquière (not Chesquière) was born in Deùlémont, near Lille, in 1768. In 1806 she took her brother's place in the ranks of the community's conscripts. The report goes on to detail how she saved the life of her colonel and captured enemy officers in the Peninsular War. Her true sex was only recognized when she was wounded in battle. However, according to Léon Hennet, the reality of her military career was not quite as glorious. She was an inveterate deserter, and it was after her arrest on the third occasion that she was discovered to be a woman.²⁸ Nor is it likely that she was admitted to the Legion of Honour, as that organization refused to recognize the requests of any woman until the revolutionary female soldier Angelique Duchemin was decorated by Louis-Napoleon in 1851.²⁹ Virginie did, however, receive the Saint-Helena medal in 1857, ten years before her death.

The true adventures of Virginie Ghesquière raise a number of interesting questions, such as why did she do it? The songwriter's answer that she was motivated by filial affection does not seem entirely satisfactory, though there are other known cases of sisters replacing brothers. The problem of how she was able to deceive the medical officers who oversaw the conscription is more readily resolved; although it is not mentioned in the reports, her father was the mayor of Deùlémont, and he no doubt enabled the substitution. Her ability to maintain her disguise seems less easily explicable, though it is not without precedent. Early modern commentators seldom considered such deceptions implausible. In a corporatist society, where outward signs such as dress were a more direct indicator of status as well as gender, simply putting on male attire seems to have taken women quite a long way down the road towards a convincing disguise. Female sailors were often first discovered when their ships docked in ports whose cultures did not recognize the same dress markers. In France trousers made the man, but in Polynesia they did not. Female soldiers seem to have been able

to pass themselves off quite convincingly as boys if not as men, one reason why they were so often employed as drummers or trumpeters. Although Virginie was 38, she occupied the shoes of a 19-year-old conscript. And while it is true that these were societies with very limited privacy (soldiers regularly shared beds in billets and camp latrines were communal), yet precisely because intimate activities were carried out in public, soldiers developed codes of behaviour that respected personal space. Virginie appears to have had no problems adapting to the male, not to say misogynistic, culture of the regiment, nor with the physical demands laid on her, nor with the violence that was the soldier's stock-in-trade, unless her repeated desertions can be taken as a sign of her dissatisfaction. It would be interesting to hear her views on all these matters, but unfortunately our sources are silent. Instead, as is so often the case with female soldiers, they concentrate on heroism, patriotism and heterosexual love.

Recovering the experience of female soldiers is problematic because all our knowledge of them comes with a thick overlay of such moralizing. Real female soldiers were rare, but their representations were extremely common. Hence, although few people had met a genuine female soldier, everyone knew the tropes by which her life should be lived. She must, for example, be a successful warrior whose feats of valour implied that she was the exception that proved the rule of women's physical inferiority. The explanation for the female soldier's initial act of disguise was invariably love. She entered the army in pursuit of a lover or husband, or, to preserve the honour of a beloved father. The 'fraternal love' that motivated Virginie Ghesquière is an unusual variant, but pictorially she conforms to type. Even though the events of Virginie's life neither had nor would provide her with a husband, imagists had difficulty imagining her without one, or at least they assumed their public would be so challenged. Representing the disguised female soldier visually presents an obvious difficulty: if the disguise was effective, how can the artist simultaneously depict her femininity? The imagist solved this problem by putting Virginie back into female costume, turning a 44-year-old veteran of six years' campaigning into a Jane Austen heroine. Although the image celebrated the female soldier, this coyness about representing her in military attire might indicate some unease about the portrayal of gender transgressions. It also makes the image look like a wedding. We are presented with two main protagonists, male and female, the Marshal offering his hand to Virginie, while the Nike above could easily be mistaken for a Cupid. Although the male holds out a cross rather than a ring, this too could be interpreted as a love token.³⁰ The laurel wreath

could be mistaken for a bridal crown, especially as in North-Eastern France it was customary for brides to carry a laurel wand. In popular culture the symbolism and language of conquest in war and of conquest in love drew heavily on each other; so the laurel that, according to the song, Virginie harvests, is vested with a double meaning.

Female soldiers themselves were familiar with these cultural representations. It seems probable that the diffusion of songs and prints exercised an influence on their original choice. They drew on the familiar narratives in fashioning their own image, emphasizing these tropes of love and glory in their petitions to the authorities for pensions. Their biographers sought to make the facts of their lives conform to established models. Real-life female soldiers came to resemble their fictional sisters. Even Virginie Ghesquière passed into myth: according to a collection of stories about female soldiers, her story was still told around the fireside in the Swiss canton of Berne.³¹ However, it was also easy for romancers and impostors to pull off the reverse trick of turning fiction into fact. The same collection includes the story of Ducond-Laborde (in some versions Ducoud), better known by her nom-de-guerre Breton-Double under which she served in the 6th Hussars from 1798 to Waterloo. Her biography was published in 1833, taking advantage of a wave of Napoleonic nostalgia.³² Like Virginie, she saved her comrades, captured prisoners, was promoted and received a medal from the Emperor, the one difference being that she never seems to have made a secret of her real sex. She is one of the most commonly cited examples of a female soldier in the Napoleonic armies, but as there appears to be no record of her in any archive in France, Britain or Ireland (where she supposedly retired), we must assume she was an invention. The deception worked, and still works, because the author was so familiar with the expectations of the genre. The prefect of the Somme might be forgiven for his assumption that the Pellerin print was just another such imposition.

The female soldier in popular culture

The ubiquity of the female soldier in popular culture – in song, folktale, chapbook and vaudeville play – made such impositions possible, but also made it very difficult for the genuine voice of the real female soldiers to emerge. The dominance of cultural representations over reality meant that female soldiers were always viewed by the public in terms of their relationship to men – fathers, lovers, brothers or even ‘the Great Napoleon’. This can be illustrated by reference to just one genre, the

theatre. The female soldier was a stock character on the Parisian stage. She was the heroine of *Isabelle hussard* (1781) and Pariseau's *Lucy ou la fille soldat* (1785).³³ Under the First Republic Parisian audiences could catch her in Desfontaines' *La Fille soldat* which played right through 1795 and 1796 at the Théâtre du Vaudeville, or in Cuvelier de Trie's *La Fille hussard* at the Théâtre de la Cité. This play remained in repertoire throughout the Directory and Consulate, and was revived under the First Empire, Restoration and possibly the July Monarchy.³⁴ *La Belle Milanaise*, by Servières and Lafortelle, had its première in 1804.³⁵ And the tradition continued into the Restoration with Blache's *La Fille soldat* of 1818.³⁶ There were others of which we only know the title, such as *Le sergent Lambert ou la fille soldat* (probably from the Second Republic).³⁷ No doubt yet others remain undiscovered, themselves disguised by innocuous titles.

All these plays have a strong family resemblance to each other. In every case, the main source of the drama lay in the depictions of gender relationships, particularly those between the female soldier, her father and her lover. A plot summary of *La Fille hussard*, undoubtedly the most popular of these plays, will illustrate the point. The scene is near Belgrade. Catherine, the daughter of Fritz-Hébert, an old soldier, is loved by Christiern, a hussar, but she is captured by the Turks. Laureto, a Swedish sergeant, frees Catherine. Laureto loves Sophie, whose father, the comte de Caubor, is his commander. But the count has destined his daughter for the odious Baron Traufmandorf. When the count suspects the liaison, he has Sophie locked in a tower, while Laureto is court-martialled for raising his weapon to an officer. Christiern is set to guard the tower, and lets Sophie escape in his hussar uniform (hence the title). Sophie dashes in just as Laureto is about to be made to run the gauntlet, and swears to kill herself if he is harmed. Just then the Turks arrive, the odious Baron is killed, but Laureto saves the day. Both couples, Catherine and Christiern and Sophie and Laureto, are now free to marry with their fathers' consent.

Cuvelier de Trie is credited as the father of French melodrama, and his plays were largely excuses for bangs, crashes and displays on horseback. In as much as historians now (or audiences then) can attach any significance to the plot, it is obvious that the military disguise is used by Sophie to escape the power of her father in order to be with the man she loves. Sophie is definitely an agent in her own story, she asserts her autonomy in order to achieve her desires, but she does not join the army for patriotic or political reasons, or even to escape domesticity. The play ends with the creation of a new domestic unit. Sophie remains defined

by her relationships with men. And this is true of almost all these plays. *Isabelle hussard* puts on military uniform in order to fight a duel with her lover and thus test his feelings for her. *La Belle Milanaise* dresses as a man to help her lover, the captured commander of the French forces, escape from his tower, and so on. The only exception to this rule is Desfontaines' *La Fille soldat*, a more clearly political text than the others. Here Julie, disguised as the volunteer Victor, is a female patriot who joins the army not for love but to fight. Julien, her lover, only meets her there, and woos her in her disguise as a man. Nonetheless the action on stage focuses on Julie's tangled love-life and her relationship with her father.

This emphasis on the female soldier's relationships to men is standard in other popular cultural genres, such as songs and tales, from which theatre often drew its inspiration. There is an entire section in the French folksong catalogue dedicated to her exploits.³⁸ *Isabelle Hussard* was related to songs like *La Brave Claudine* in which the disguised female soldier challenges her errant lover to a duel. *La Fille hussard* and *La Belle Milanaise* both borrowed motifs from the song-cycle about the woman who helped her lover to escape from punishment by swapping clothes.³⁹ Even Desfontaines' *La Fille soldat*, the most overtly revolutionary of these plays, made use of folkloric sources. In the play Julien, a captain in the army, dreams that Victor is really a girl. He tries various stratagems to trick her into an admission, what folklorists would call 'tests of sex', which Victor/Julie foils with ease. He finally catches her out with a faked letter from her father, which contains false news of his mortal illness. Historians of the salon storytellers of the late seventeenth century will recognize in this the same plot which inspired Mademoiselle L'Héritier's *Marmoisan* and Madame D'Aulnoy's *Belle-Belle, ou le Chevalier Fortuné*, in which a young woman goes to court to save her father's honour, catches the eye of the King who tests her sex, but is only revealed through her filial piety.⁴⁰

Such stories, in whatever genre, seem to contain a proto-feminist message: the female soldier's success while disguised as a man belies the notion that the gender hierarchy was natural. If a woman could outperform men as a soldier, as Julie/Victor does by capturing the enemy's colours, then it follows that the limitations placed on women's lives were culturally created, not just recognition of their physical or mental incapacity. Yet each play ended with the 'world turned right side up again', the soldier resuming woman's dress and with it her 'proper' role as daughter, wife and mother-to-be. While Desfontaines acknowledged that the post-revolutionary woman would have a public role as a

citizen, that role was resolutely traditional. The play concludes with the cast singing that the duty women owe the state was to bear children, who would grow up to be soldiers or the mothers of soldiers.

Popular cultural representations of the disguised female soldier had a paradoxical relationship to reality. They both drew on the examples of actual women who entered the armed forces, and they probably inspired others to follow their example. All these plays rely on the public knowledge that women did sometimes dress as men to join the army, although Desfontaines' was the only one to claim direct inspiration from a real-life female soldier. Yet her existence in culture was very different to that experienced by actual women in the barracks and on the battlefields of Europe. As a cultural icon, her actions were overwhelmingly motivated by her personal relationships with men. While certainly possessed of audacity, she used her disguise not to escape the domestic sphere, but rather to transform it into a more congenial environment. No doubt this made her a less threatening figure to her male audience. Men who enjoyed the idea of the female soldier were horrified when confronted with the reality. The volunteer Gabriel Noël liked to imagine his surrogate mother and mentor, Madame Durival, putting on a uniform and being made to go through her military paces, but felt no such enthusiasm when he saw a woman leading a Parisian volunteer battalion just before Valmy.⁴¹

Dror Wahrman's much more extensive study of female soldiers and related characters on the British stage discovered a rapid shift from positive to negative representations in the 1780s. The reappearance of female soldiers in the French theatre in every regime from the Old Regime to the Restoration might indicate that she suffered no such falling off in popularity there, but this continuity may hide more subtle changes. Dianne Dugaw's research on ballads in the Anglophone world suggests that, whereas in the early modern period a successful female soldier was readily conceivable, in the nineteenth century her hands became softer, her waist thinner, the physical and emotional burdens of war harder to bear. Either her inability as a soldier quickly revealed her true sex or she paid a much higher price for her gender transgression than her predecessors, finding death on the battlefield rather than triumph. In the age of separate spheres one could be fitted for love, or for war, but not both.⁴² A similar trajectory is apparent in French popular cultural sources, including the Pellerin company's prints. In 1874 it issued an image entitled *The Child of the Troop* which told the story of another Julie who, in 1792, had followed her husband into the army dressed as a man.⁴³ However, at the first sound of battle, Julie

was overcome and fainted, leading to the discovery of her true sex. She stayed on in the regiment as a *vivandière*, but even this reversion to proper gender roles could not save her and she was killed while tending to a wounded soldier. How different to the image of Virginie Ghesquière, the *New French Heroine*, issued 60 years earlier!

The real lives of female soldiers

If love did not explain the actions of real female soldiers, what did? For the revolutionary period one should not discount ideological motivations. Obviously it was sensible for women to stress their patriotism and loyalty to the Republic when petitioning the Convention for a pension: the authorities were unlikely to be generous if they raised less worthy motives. Female soldiers in the Old Regime had likewise strategically trumpeted their patriotism and their loyalty to the king.⁴⁴ However, the influx of women into the army in 1792–1793 suggests that there was a genuine outpouring of revolutionary enthusiasm. ‘Unlike most other women, who are perhaps led by foolish love to follow the army, I can plead only my love for the fatherland... in my defence’ claimed Reine Chapuy.⁴⁵ The imminence of the danger also encouraged them. ‘When the survival of the community demands it, women are permitted to assume the tasks of men’, note Dekker and Van de Pol; wars ‘lowered the threshold of resistance and made it easier for women to make the decision to change gender.’⁴⁶

However it was not just the novel threat of invasion in 1792 that inspired this response, but the prospect of the destruction of the revolutionary regime to which many were committed. According to Godineau, most women who joined the army in 1792–1793 came from ‘families animated more by revolutionary spirit than by a military model’. She cites the example of Catherine Pochetat, present both at the storming of the Bastille and at the Tuileries, and who rose to the rank of sub-lieutenant in 1793.⁴⁷ Patriotism dispensed with the need for disguise, so that Marguerite Genay of Epinal could write in July 1792 that ‘enflamed by the desire to fly to the defence of the Fatherland, through her courage she would overcome all the obstacles that her sex seemed to present’, and so asked that the administrators of the Department include her on the list of volunteers.⁴⁸

At the same time these women challenged gender norms. The Revolution had upset so many established social hierarchies, so why not gender too? ‘I leave my spindles and distaff to whoever is coward enough to

stay at home and I take it on myself to shoulder his gun and his sabre in order to fill his place in the ranks', Marie Morel stated after enlisting in June 1793.⁴⁹ Reine Chapuy was even more forthright in her conscious rejection of gender norms: 'I shall prove that the arm of the woman is as good as that of a man, when its blows are directed by honour, a thirst for glory, and the certainty of exterminating the great and powerful [*les grands*].'⁵⁰ Many female soldiers felt their characters unsuited to social roles expected of women: Thérèse Figueur's description of herself as a tomboy echoes statements by other, non-French cross-dressers such as Mary Lacy, who wrote that 'I had so much of my own will that, when I came to have some knowledge, it was a difficult matter for them [her parents] to keep me within proper bounds.'⁵¹ But in 1792–1793, this instinctive feminism and gender rebellion could take on a more ideological tinge.

Youthful adventurousness is an apparent motivation for the women of 1792–1793, most of whom were young, just as it was for many male volunteers, and the same can be said of female soldiers more generally. However, if we use the more longitudinal studies of the tradition in the Dutch and Anglophone worlds, we can also identify more everyday explanations. Push factors were involved, as well as the better-advertised pull factors. According to the archives of the Old Regime army, female soldiers were as likely to be fleeing men as pursuing them. Exploitative or abusive fathers, brothers and occasionally husbands figure in their excuses for their actions, alongside that stock character of fairy-tales and soldiers' autobiographies, the wicked stepmother.⁵² Soldiering could be an escape from difficult family circumstances. The ideologically charged atmosphere of the revolutionary era tended to keep any such motivations hidden, but one can but wonder at the domestic situation of the Ghesquière family that led the father to collude with his daughter's disguise.

Even more prosaic were the financial incentives. Men's occupational opportunities were more numerous, and they were paid more. For proletarian women facing unemployment and poverty, dressing as a man was a readily available means of escape. If we widen our sample of occupational groups from soldiers to include servants, labourers and artisans then it may be that cross-dressing for economic reasons was not so rare.⁵³ In the case of soldiering, it is clear from the French Old Regime records, as well as the Dutch and British studies, that poverty was a driving force. For example, Geneviève Grondar joined the dragoons in 1711 because she could no longer afford to feed herself and her children. In her case, Steinberg suggests, male disguise was a last

resort before suicide.⁵⁴ Given the economic dislocations of the late 1780s and 1790s, it is unlikely that women's needs then were less pressing. Such rationales were only infrequently cited during the revolutionary decade, but Dekker and Van de Pol argue that 'Poverty was certainly the prime mover in case of Madeleine Petit-Jean, widow, who joined the cannoniers in 1793 at age 47.'⁵⁵

However, extreme poverty was quite a commonplace experience for women in the 1790s, but few pursued soldiering as a way out. Poverty alone was not a sufficient, or even a necessary cause. For those who did take this route, given they chose the most masculine profession, it seems reasonable to consider their sexual motivations. Were women who dressed as men transvestites, lesbians or caught up in some trans-gender syndrome? Popular culture emphasized the heterosexual preferences of female soldiers, but occasionally liked to play with the homosexual possibilities that their disguise made possible. In Desfontaines' *La Fille soldat* we find Julien worried about his own feelings for his comrade Victor, for whose affections he has a rival in the shape of Jacqueline, a farm girl.⁵⁶ However, even if real female soldiers were so motivated, they probably did not have the language to describe their own reasonings, and absolutely no incentive for voicing them. Both under the Old Regime and the puritanical Jacobin Republic, even the hint of sexual impropriety – heterosexual, let alone homosexual – would close off the possibility of a pension. The relative absence of detailed autobiographies from French female soldiers also makes it hard to investigate this aspect of their lives. Thérèse Figueur discusses courting girls in the disguise of a boy, but it is clear from the context that this was mainly an attempt to fit in with the male culture of the regiment. Otherwise she deliberately says nothing about her sexual life other than that 'I could not be one of those women who know how to separate the gift of their heart from the gift of their body'. Dekker's and Van de Pol's speculations on their fuller Dutch case-studies are probably as far as one can take this line of inquiry.⁵⁷

Once female soldiers were in the army it is difficult to separate their experience from those of their male comrades. Some of those mentioned here, such as Rose Barreau and Reine Chapuy, only served for a relatively short time. Those whose service was measured in years rather than months quickly adapted to the mores of the regiment. As Julie Wheelwright puts it, 'The constant need for male acceptance is a feature of [their] autobiographies... the women endured endless self-imposed tests of their masculinity, proving over and over again that they measured up'.⁵⁸ For this reason Dekker and Van de Pol conclude that 'although

the wish to bear arms was sometimes defended as part of a struggle for equal rights, it would be incorrect to view the female soldiers as feminists.⁵⁹ The radical potential implicit in the female soldier was seldom exploited by the women themselves.

Conclusion: the end of a tradition

On 30 April 1793 the Convention decreed that all women not required in necessary support functions be immediately turned away from the army. Women were, supposedly, overrunning military encampments; they were spreading confusion, enticing men from their service, seducing them into counter-revolution, and emasculating them. This decree was part of a year-long campaign against women's involvement in the political and military sphere which ran from Cavaignac's blaming the women of Verdun for that city's rendition, through the cockade war, the banning of women's clubs, the expulsion of women from the sections, to the execution of Marie-Antoinette. By the end of 1793, Etta Palm would be in exile, Théroigne de Méricourt incarcerated in a madhouse, and Olympe de Gouges guillotined. Revolutionary feminism was effectively dead. Thereafter the Revolution retreated from even those reorderings of the gender hierarchy that had been achieved before the Jacobin seizure of power, such as divorce. If the punitive campaign against women was relaxed after 1795, under Napoleon the boundaries of gender were ever more firmly policed.

Many feminist historians have argued that the Revolution, far from being a moment of liberation for women, actually closed opportunities and reinforced gender stereotypes. It is impossible to do justice to that debate here. Nor is there room to do more than outline some of the reasons historians have put forward for the Jacobins' violence towards political women. The masculine language of virtue had always been present during the Revolution, but it was only in 1793 that this was turned so directly against real women. Lynn Hunt has used the Freudian concept of 'the family romance' to explore the impact of the revolt against the king, the father to the nation, and how the rivalry between his children, the French, led to an increased concern for proper gender roles.⁶⁰ Disorder in the house was equated to disorder in the state, as the Revolution became less concerned with liberty than with authority. The outbreak of civil war, a war between brothers, in March in the Vendée may well have exacerbated such gender disquiet. Wahrman makes a similar point about the impact of the American War of Independence,

widely perceived in Britain as a civil war, and the cultural revolution against amazons.⁶¹

To what extent were female soldiers caught up in this misogynist campaign? The April decree was not primarily aimed at them; nonetheless Rose Barreau, Reine Chapuy and Catherine Pochetat had their requests for reinstatement turned down. Others who had escaped the immediate impact were combed out of the army in the months that followed as deputies on mission brought revolutionary government to the armies. Madeleine Petit-Jean was ordered out of the army of the Vendée in January 1794. However others, such as Thérèse Figueur (who mentions the decree in her memoirs), were able to stay in the army, either through subterfuge, apathy or positive dispensation. It is not clear why some commanders were more accommodating than others.

Perhaps more important than the fate of individuals is the impact of the decree on the female soldier as a cultural icon. She took on increasingly negative connotations, to the extent that Fabre d'Eglantine, in the debate that led to the forced closure of the Club of Revolutionary Republican Women, condemned its members as 'female grenadiers' who forgot their proper duties as wives and mothers to make speeches, demonstrate on the streets and demand guns.⁶² 'The world turned upside down' was no longer a subject of humour, but rather of fear and recrimination.

The legacy of this period for the nineteenth century was that the female soldier carried with her overtones of radicalism. Before 1789 'the world turned upside down' could be imagined as a social reversal without wider political consequences, but after 1793 individual gender revolt implied revolution in the state as well as the home. Every period of revolutionary turmoil witnessed her re-emergence in popular culture, whether in the form of the Saint-Simonian legionnaires of 1830, the Vésuviennes of 1848 or the Amazons of the Seine in 1870.⁶³ Conservatives used the image of the militant woman to ridicule feminist ideas, but also as a way of undermining the claims of all social revolutionaries. Not just Commune women, but the entire Commune project, were tainted by their connection to the largely invented figure of the hysterical *pétroleuse*.⁶⁴ Further revolution was not just threatening to the bourgeois social order but might denature all men. And yet on each of these occasions, some women perceived the radical possibilities inherent in the person of the female soldier, and took the name of Amazon or Vésuvienne to be their own. It was always the idea of the female soldier, rather the reality of her experiences, which was the more subversive.

Notes

1. Rudolf Dekker and Lotte van de Pol, 'Republican Heroines: Cross-Dressing Women in the French Revolutionary Armies', *History of European Ideas* 10 (1989): 353–363, here 355.
2. Raoul Brice, *La Femme et les armées de la Révolution et de l'Empire* (Paris: Ambert, n.d.), p. 311.
3. Dominique Godineau, 'De la guerrière à la citoyenne. Porter les armes pendant l'ancien régime et la Révolution Française', *Clio* 20 (2004): 43–69.
4. Léon Schwab, 'Variétés: Les Femmes aux armées', *La Révolution dans les Vosges* 6 (1912–13): 109–115, here 110.
5. Sergeant-Major Edward Cotton quoted in Julie Wheelwright, *Amazons and Military Maids: Women Who Dressed as Men in the Pursuit of Life, Liberty and Happiness* (London: Pandora, 1989), p. 17.
6. Ian Germani, 'Staging Battles: Representations of War in the Theatre and Festivals of the French Revolution', *European Review of History* 13 (2006): 203–227, here 206–207.
7. The play, by Victorien Sardou and Emile Moreau, was originally shown at the Théâtre du Vaudeville in 1893.
8. For numerous examples see Brice, *La Femme et les armées*.
9. The historical literature on the feminists of the French revolution is now extensive, including Joan Wallach Scott, *Only Paradoxes to Offer: French Feminists and the Rights of Man* (Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press, 1996); Joan Landes, *Women and the Public Sphere in the Age of the French Revolution* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1988); Dominique Godineau, *The Women of Paris and Their French Revolution* (Berkeley: California University Press, 1998); Harriet Applewhite and Darline Levy (eds), *Women and Politics in the Age of Democratic Revolution* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1990).
10. This topos has been extensively explored by historical anthropologists and cultural historians: see Barbara Babcock, *The Reversible World: Symbolic Inversion in Art and Society* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1978); Mary Bellhouse, 'Visual Myths of Female Identity in Eighteenth-Century France', *International Political Science Review* 12 (1991): 118–132.
11. Dominique Godineau, *The Women of Paris and Their French Revolution* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998), p. 386.
12. Marc de Villiers, *Histoire des clubs de femmes et des légions d'amazones* (Paris: Plon, 1910), p. 81.
13. See Brian Sandberg, "'Generous Amazons Came to the Breach": Besieged Women, Agency and Subjectivity in the French Wars of Religion', *Gender and History* 16 (2004): 654–688.
14. Linda Nochlin, *Representing Women, Interplay* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1999), pp. 38–41.
15. Michelle Perrot, 'La Femme populaire rebelle', in *Les Femmes ou les silences de l'histoire*, ed. Michelle Perrot (Paris: Flammarion, 1998), pp. 153–175.
16. There are non-French examples: see Nadezhda Durova, *The Cavalry Maiden: Journals of a Female Russian Officer in the Napoleonic Wars*, ed. and trans. Mary Fleming Zirin (London: Angel, 1988).
17. Dekker and Pol, 'Republican Heroines', 353; Brice, *La Femme et les armées*, p. 312.

18. Chapuy is quoted extensively by Brice, Godineau, Dekker and Pol. For her influence see Jane Abray, 'Feminism in the French Revolution', *American Historical Review* 80 (1975): 43–62, here 49.
19. Godineau, *The Women of Paris*, pp. 243–244.
20. Peter Wilson, 'German Women and War, 1500–1800', *War in History* 3 (1996): 127–160.
21. Sylvie Steinberg, *La Confusion des sexes: le travestissement de la Renaissance à la Révolution* (Paris: Fayard, 2001), p. 76. Her count is based on files Ya496 and Ya507 in the Archives de la Guerre.
22. Rudolf Dekker and Lotte van de Pol, *The Tradition of Female Transvestism in Early Modern Europe* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1989), p. 3.
23. Gay Gullickson, *Unruly Women of Paris: Images of the Commune* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1996), p. 212.
24. Françoise d'Eaubonne, *L'Amazone sombre: vie d'Antoinette Lix* (Paris: Encre, 1983).
25. Dror Wahrman, 'Percy's Prologue: From Gender Play to Gender Panic in Eighteenth-Century England', *Past and Present* 159 (1998): 113–160.
26. Pellerin's image was copied from a Parisian print by Madame Croisey, which is reproduced in Jean Adhémar *et al.*, *Imagerie populaire française* (Milan: Electa, 1968), fig. 84.
27. André Philippe, 'Les Débuts de l'imagerie populaire à Epinal: images napoléoniennes de Jean-Charles Pellerin (1810–1815)', *L'Art populaire en France* 1 (1929): 173–174.
28. Brice, *La Femme et les armées*, p. 343.
29. This is the information supplied by the Legion's own website <<http://www.legiondhonneur.fr/shared/fr/histoire/fhisto.html>> (17 September 2008). There is some question about whether Marie Schellinck was decorated in 1808.
30. David Hopkin, 'Sons and Lovers: Popular Images of the Conscript, 1798–1870', *Modern and Contemporary France* 9 (2001): 27–36, here 33.
31. Alfred Tranchant and Jules Ladimir, *Les Femmes militaires de la France* (Paris: Cournol, 1866), p. 408.
32. *La Femme Hussard*, (Lyon: Boursy, 1833). The book is anonymous, but the author was probably M. J. Chaudron-Junot. There are comparable impositions in the Anglophone world.
33. *Isabelle Hussard* (Paris: Vente, 1783). I have been unable to trace a text for Pierre-Germain Pariseau's *Lucy ou la fille soldat*, but according to the inestimable *César* database, it played at the Théâtre de l'Ambigu-Comique, Paris, in 1795. For this and others see <<http://www.cesar.org.uk/>> (17 September 2008).
34. F.-G. [pseud. François-Georges Fouques Deshayes] Desfontaines, *La Fille soldat: fait historique* (Paris: le libraire au théâtre du Vaudeville, An III [1795]). Jean-Guillaume-Antoine Cuvelier [de Trie], *La Fille hussard, ou le sergent suédois* (Paris: Barba, An X [1801]). This play was first published anonymously at Bordeaux in 1796, and was republished in 1798, 1805, 1810 and 1814.
35. Joseph Servières and A.-M. Lafortelle, *La belle milanaise, ou la fille-femme, page et soldat* (Paris: Fages, An XII [1804]).
36. Jean-Baptiste Blache, *Lisbeth et Muller, ou la fille soldat* (Paris: Fages, 1818).
37. Only an undated programme note exists in the Bibliothèque Nationale.

38. Patrice Coirault *et al.*, *Répertoire des chansons françaises de tradition orale*, 2 vols (Paris: Bibliothèque nationale de France, 2000), vol. 1, nos. 3501–3511.
39. *Ibid.*, vol. 1, nos. 1427–1429.
40. Historical study of ‘strong women’ in the literature of the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries is substantial. See, for example, Joan DeJean, ‘Violent Women and Violence against Women: Representing the “Strong” Woman in Early Modern France’, *Signs* 29 (2003): 117–147.
41. Joseph-Louis-Gabriel Noël, *Au temps des volontaires 1792: Lettres d’un volontaire de 1792*, ed. G. Noël (Paris: Plon, 1912), pp. 118 and 249.
42. Dianne Dugaw, *Warrior Women and Popular Balladry, 1650–1850* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989).
43. Archives départementales des Vosges: images du dépôt légal, 1874.
44. For British examples, see Scarlet Bowen, ‘“The Real Soul of a Man in Her Breast”: Popular Opposition and British Nationalism in Memoirs of Female Soldiers, 1740–1750’, *Eighteenth-Century Life* 28 (2004): 20–45.
45. Dekker and Pol, ‘Republican Heroines’, 356.
46. *Ibid.*, p. 361.
47. Godineau, ‘De la guerrière à la citoyenne’, 58–59.
48. Schwab, ‘Variétés: les femmes aux armées’, 109.
49. Quoted in Godineau, ‘De la guerrière à la citoyenne’, 67.
50. Quoted in *ibid.*, 59.
51. Quoted in Suzanne Stark, *Female Tars: Women Aboard Ship in the Age of Sail* (London: Constable, 1996), p. 126.
52. Sylvie Steinberg, ‘Un brave cavalier dans la guerre de Sept Ans, Marguerite dite Jean Goubler’, *Clio* 10 (1999): 145–154.
53. See Fraser Easton, ‘Gender’s Two Bodies: Women Warriors, Female Husbands and Plebeian Life’, *Past and Present* 180 (2003): 135–174.
54. Steinberg, ‘Un brave cavalier’, 153.
55. Dekker and Pol, ‘Republican Heroines’, 356.
56. For the application of ‘queer theory’ to female warrior ballads see Pauline Greenhill, ‘“Neither a Man nor a Maid”: Sexualities and Gendered Meanings in Cross-Dressing Ballads’, *Journal of American Folklore* 108 (1995): 156–177.
57. Dekker and Pol, *The Tradition of Female Transvestism*, pp. 48–72. The authors note the absence of obvious homosexual motivations in the French cases: Dekker and Pol ‘Republican Heroines’, 360.
58. Wheelwright, *Amazons and Military Maids*, p. 58.
59. Dekker and Pol, ‘Republican Heroines’, 361.
60. Lynn Hunt, *The Family Romance of the French Revolution* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993).
61. Wahrman, ‘Percy’s Prologue’, 159.
62. Godineau, *The Women of Paris*, p. 168.
63. Laura Struminger, ‘The Vésuviennes: Images of Women Warriors in 1848 and Their Significance for French History’, *History of European Ideas* 8 (1987): 451–488; Hollis Clayson, *Paris in Despair: Art and Everyday Life under Siege (1870–71)* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2002), pp. 134–136.
64. Gay Gullickson, ‘La Pétroleuse: Representing Revolution’, *Feminist Studies* 17 (1991): 241–265.

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Part II

Civilians at War

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5

Caring for the Nation's Families: British Soldiers' and Sailors' Families and the State, 1793–1815

Patricia Y. C. E. Lin

What was the experience of the families of over a million common soldiers and seamen who fought abroad for Britain during the French Revolutionary and Napoleonic Wars? Traditionally it has been thought that the answer to this question could not be fully known due to the dearth of relevant documents. While such families might be mentioned in the diaries of officers, or be the subject of a few contemporary prints, the fact that most of them were illiterate prevented us, it has been believed, from really knowing their story.¹ They are, to use a well-used phrase, another group whose experience is lost to history.

In fact, the experiences of these families are not lost. During these wars the British national government, through its War and Navy Offices, spent a great deal of time, energy and money on understanding the details of the lives of these families, for the first time systematically collecting personal data about a significant section of the non-elite non-male population. They did so as part of the task of administering the innovative new system of care for the military which the national government created and funded during these wars. The system included access to programmes not available to the wider labouring poor from which soldiers' and sailors' families came. These pioneering programmes included schools for children and a system by which men could make ongoing monthly remittances from their wages.²

The data collected on forms such as standardized school applications, wage remittance requests and casualty returns included, depending on the programme, the names of women and children, their addresses, information on places of marriage and birth, and testimony on families' economic circumstances and travel with the regiment. These documents reveal that families were integral to the British war experience at home

and abroad, and that during these wars the government had become increasingly aware of the importance of their role.

In the following sections, I discuss the reasons for this new care system for military families and the principal features of the scheme. I then analyse the experience of sailors' families, primarily wives and mothers, who resided in Britain. I call attention to the physical and virtual communities that these families created across the nation as well as the potential some of them had for social mobility because of survivors' benefits. I conclude by looking at the experience of soldiers' families on the march, and highlight the international, multi-racial and multi-cultural nature of their experiences and of the families themselves.³ Throughout, I point to the broad definition of family utilized by the state and by the military families alike, to include not only immediate family, but relatives and military comrades.

The welfare of military families as a matter of national importance

In 1812, statistics presented to the House of Commons estimated that approximately 25 per cent of soldiers and seamen were heads of families.⁴ This number did not include the many men who under the poor law were legally responsible for their parents or siblings.⁵ By the time the Napoleonic Wars ended, more than one million husbands, fathers, sons and brothers had fought for Britain in her army and navy and 315,000 of these men had died.⁶ In departing for service and in their deaths, they left behind countless family members.

In previous wars, the welfare of these families both during a man's service and after his death was a task left to the local poor-relief system and to charity.⁷ It was well-known, however, that neither of these provided adequate help, and many military families quickly became destitute.⁸ Early in the French Revolutionary Wars, the Duke of York, the Commander-in-Chief of the Army, Henry Dundas, Treasurer of the Navy and Secretary of War, and Britain's other military leaders decided that for both economic and military reasons such destitution could no longer continue. The national government, in some form, needed to provide for soldiers' families.

John Cookson argues in this volume that over the course of the wars, the government improved soldiers' welfare as part of the broader conservative increase in paternalism that characterized society during this period.⁹ It appears that the government's motive for caring for soldiers' and sailors' families was instead rather a pragmatic one that resulted

from two factors: first, the burgeoning costs of poor-relief to local parishes, particularly those near seaports, and second, unprecedented recruiting demands.¹⁰

The conditions of service in the army and navy were so poor that, unlike the home-based auxiliary forces of the volunteers and the militia, only men in most desperate circumstances joined them voluntarily.¹¹ Soldiers' pay was a very low 6d per day, out of which they had to pay for their own food and clothing.¹² This pay was equal to one-seventh of that of a bricklayer.¹³ Seamen's conditions were not much better. Until they mutinied in 1797, the pay was 8d per day for an ordinary seaman, a wage established more than a century earlier; thereafter it was still only 11d.¹⁴ Harsh punishment was the norm in both services, death by disease was common, and until 1806, men could only join the army for a life term.¹⁵ The problem of manning was so bad that hitherto the government had used impressment to raise the number of sailors required. Now, however, this was more problematic because it was labour-intensive, expensive and, increasingly in the view of the public, a violation of civil liberties.¹⁶

In an attempt to recruit more successfully, the British government improved some conditions for soldiers. These included an option for shorter army service and slightly higher pay.¹⁷ Despite these changes, however, potential recruits stated that in order to enlist, they would need more incentives, and in particular they insisted that provision be made for their families.¹⁸ This was especially the case of militiamen who were being encouraged to join the regular forces. However, by serving in the militia, their families were guaranteed a weekly allowance equal to one week's wages funded by the county.¹⁹ This assistance would disappear if these men joined the regular forces, leaving their families destitute.

In reaction to these pressures, the national government, led by the Duke of York, created and funded a number of modern and innovative programmes to provide for soldiers' and sailors' families. Based on the system of self-help, they were shaped by the contemporary debate about poor-relief that was then raging. At the same time, they instituted for these particular members of the poor access to programmes, such as education, deemed dangerous for the poor as a whole for fear of causing revolution. These programmes included progressive boarding schools for soldiers' and seamen's sons and daughters, teaching reading, writing, arithmetic and training in skilled trades, a system by which seamen could remit one half of their wages to their wives or mothers every month, and a new programme by which soldiers' survivors could petition for their effects. The government also expanded and improved an

existing but hitherto seldom utilized provision, which enabled sailors to make one-off lump-sum wage transfers to their extended family.

Huge amounts of national funds and manpower were invested in these new provisions. By the end of 1796, the use of the seamen's wage remittance scheme was so common that the Navy Office established a new branch, the Allotment Office, specifically to deal with the paperwork and record the details relating to seamen allotting wages to their families.²⁰ The Royal Military Asylum, the school for soldiers' sons and daughters, was allotted more than £300,000 in government funds by the end of the wars.²¹ This was the largest sum the national government had ever granted to an institution dedicated to the welfare of civilians. With these funds, the Asylum educated more than 2000 children.²² Thousands of other children were educated in many restructured regimental schools whose teachers were now being officially trained at the Asylum.

To organize and administer the benefits for military families, the national government mobilized the personnel and administrative structures of the nation's fiscal-military state. During the late seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, Britain underwent a radical transformation of government to enable it to fund the war effort more efficiently; financial, tax and administrative structures and personnel were professionalized and modernized.²³ However, the work and impact of the fiscal-military state went beyond the strict funding and pursuit of war; it also extended to caring for eligible veterans, including the distribution of veterans' pensions. Customs and excise officials were responsible for distributing pensions to veterans throughout Britain. With the French Revolutionary and Napoleonic Wars, the work of tax and military personnel extended further into the civilian population as they played critical roles in the functioning of the system providing care for soldiers' and sailors' wives, mothers, children and other relatives.²⁴

Moreover, with the new programmes, the national government used modes of information collection, categorization and surveillance which had never before been used with women and children in the general population. Because of the French and Napoleonic Wars, the state began to gather an increasing amount of information about the nation and its people. It instituted the use of standardized forms requesting the input of detailed information and later, through its professionally trained clerks, transferred all that data on to well-organized ledgers where to this day much of it remains. These include returns under the Defence of the Realm Act of 1798 which sought to take stock of Britain's civil defence resources – including, for each county, the number of able-bodied men and their availability and willingness to serve, and Great Britain's first

census in 1800.²⁵ Because of the wars, information was gathered with a new precision, and the lives of women and children, and particularly poor women and children, were much more closely observed.

Depending on the form of benefit for which they were applying, the details collected on military family members included their first and last names, their relationship to the soldier or seaman, the number of children distinguished by gender, and their exact place of residence. For some programmes, such as the Royal Military Asylum, the data collected included a soldier's marriage certificate, the birth or baptism certificates of his children, their full names, and information on the family's economic circumstances, including whether or not they were currently living in the parish workhouse. Through these documents we get a glimpse of women and children whose lives have never before been exposed.

The lives of British sailors' families

The British government tried to make it easier for the more than 240,000 naval seamen serving in the war to send half of their wages every month to their wives or mothers.²⁶ The commanding officer of any man desiring to use the scheme was legally required to assist him to complete the requisite forms in triplicate. The information the sailor was required to provide on these forms included his full name, his wife's or mother's full name, the number of his children, with a separate count of boys, and his wife's or mother's address.²⁷ Once these forms were submitted, the remittances remained in force until the sailor was discharged or died.²⁸

After these forms were signed by the seaman's commanding officer and by three Navy Commissioners, one was kept by the Navy Office, one was sent to the revenue official, customs or excise collector, receiver-general of the land tax, Clerk of the Cheque or Navy Treasurer – who would distribute the remittance – and the third was sent to the designated wife or mother. Which revenue official the sailor's wife or mother would meet to collect her remittance depended upon where she lived.²⁹

In order for a woman to collect her monthly remittance from her husband or son, she needed to prove her identity. The allotment form assisted the revenue official in determining a woman's identity in two ways. First, in order to receive any remittances, the woman's remittance form had to match that which had been sent to the tax official by the Navy Office. Second, the remittance form should indicate her name and address. She verified these by providing the revenue official with an identity pass which she would have obtained from her minister or

churchwarden. Only after the revenue official had scrutinized the forms and was convinced that the woman was indeed the person to whom the wages were designated, was she allowed to collect her money.³⁰ For some of these women in impoverished circumstances, it was likely to be the first time they had interacted with a national government official.

Numerous sailors, mothers and wives participated in the programme, receiving much-needed regular income ranging from 3d to 5d depending on the rank of their husbands or sons. A tiny glimpse of the nationwide impact of the provision on women can be seen by looking at the ledger entries for the 62 men serving on HMS Theseus who initiated remittances to their wives and mothers starting on 1 January 1802. Many other men serving on the ship had in the past and would in the future follow the same procedure. Similarly, men serving on hundreds of others of His Majesty's ships also initiated remittances to their wives and mothers throughout the war.

In February 1802, HMS Theseus would set sail for the West Indies where in the coming years the men would do battle with the French and the Dutch. Meanwhile their remittances would be sent to wives and mothers who lived across the British Isles, in both rural and urban areas, on the coast and inland, including in England, London, Manchester, Plymouth, Berwick-on-Tweed, Sunderland and King's Lynn; in Scotland, Glasgow, Dysart and the Orkney Islands; and in Ireland, Dublin, Stonetown near Dundalk, and Hoxton near Youghal.³¹

Each of the women receiving remittances met regularly with the designated tax collector nearest to her home to collect her remittance. Elizabeth Newman, mother of ordinary seaman Samuel Newman, and a resident of Colchester, met monthly with the customs tax collector of Colchester to receive her remittance of £5 11s 8d. Mary Blane, wife of able-bodied seaman Joshua and living in Brampton, met monthly with the excise collector of Brampton to receive her remittance of £6 14s.³² These women were among many thousands of seamen's wives and mothers who participated in the same transaction with the nearest tax collectors of the national government, on the same dates. As such they can be seen as being part of a virtual community of seamen's wives and mothers spread across the British Isles.

Another likely by-product of the government's use of tax collectors to distribute remittances was the creation of physical communities of seamen's wives, mothers and children. These communities were not only formed by women and children whose men were serving on the same ship, but also by those related to men serving on many other of His Majesty's ships. All these women were required to collect their

remittances from their nearest customs or excise collectors. Thus Mary Blane, noted above, collected her remittance from the excise collector of Brampton as did other women living in the area whose men served around the world on other vessels.

By looking at a sample of the records detailing wage remittances begun on a single date for a single ship – on 1 January 1802 by men serving on HMS *Theseus* – to women residing in the coastal town of Kirkcaldy, in Fife in Scotland, we can see, on a very small scale, how local communities could develop and what they might entail.

From early January 1802 until late November 1804, four women who were related to men serving on HMS *Theseus* met every month with the customs collector of Kirkcaldy to collect wage remittances. These women were seamen's mothers, Jenny Todd of Dysart and Margaret Ross of Kirkcaldy, and seamen's wives, Margaret Watson of Kinghorn and Ellen Wilson of Pathhead. Mrs Watson and Mrs Wilson were mothers as well as wives, with the former currently raising on her own two boys and the latter a large family of three boys and four girls.³³

The women met the customs collector every month for two years. Thus it is conceivable that these women, and their children, knew each other and established some sort of relationship, be it distant or close. The fact that their husbands were serving on the same ship would have provided a further bond. Perhaps a connection was formed between the young mothers, or perhaps one of the sailors' mothers became a mentor to one of the young women. The tragic news and circumstances resulting from the wars might also have brought them together.

Margaret Ross was the first in the group to receive bad news. Her son James died on 11 November 1803.³⁴ The other women might have given her comfort when she went to get her last remittance. Only one year later, most of the other women experienced similar grief. On 16 November William Wilson perished, leaving Ellen a widow and his seven children without a father.³⁵ That same day, Margaret Watson's husband was involuntarily discharged, in his case because he had become disabled.³⁶ Four days later, Jenny Todd, the last member of the group, lost her son George.³⁷

Not all seamen's wives and mothers would lose their husbands and sons. Of the 62 men on HMS *Theseus* who began monthly wage remittances to their mothers and wives on 1 January 1802, only 12 women – eight mothers, and four wives – lost their loved ones while they served on that ship.³⁸ More commonly, their sons and husbands, after a period of serving on the ship were discharged to serve on another naval vessel, where they continued to send remittances to their mothers and

wives. Among those women whose men had transferred ships while continuing to send their wages were Esther Jones, resident of Bristol and mother of able seaman James Jones. From early January 1802 until late September 1805, Esther met every month with the Customs collector of Bristol to receive the wage remittance her son had sent her while serving on HMS *Theseus*. On 21 September 1805, James was transferred to HMS *Powerful*.³⁹ However, Esther would not find any changes in the process of collecting her remittances. Only in the government offices was there a change. From that date onwards, clerks for the Admiralty Allotment offices would list Esther's personal details, as well as the particulars of the transactions, in the remittance records for HMS *Powerful* instead of HMS *Theseus*.

Sailors' wives and mothers collecting their monthly remittances were also joined by other sailors' family members – sailors' survivors – who were meeting with the same revenue officials just once to collect their deceased's effects. In the course of the wars more than 100,000 sailors died, and many survivors met with customs and excise officials for this purpose.

Survivors' funds were distributed through the lump-sum allotment system, which shared many similarities with the system distributing monthly remittances in terms of the paperwork involved and the process of payment.⁴⁰ The records of the allotments call attention to the extent to which a broad spectrum of a sailor's family, not merely his wife, children and mother, could be affected by his national service. Of 36 survivors' cheques made out on 12 September 1800, 12 each went to seamen's mothers and fathers, five to seamen's widows, three to seamen's brothers, two to seamen's aunts, one to a seaman's first cousin and one to a sailor's executor who was not a familial relation. The laws behind the system also allowed allotments to be sent to grandparents.⁴¹

These lump-sum payments were usually much larger than the monthly remittances. They included prize money that men may have received as a result of victory in battle as well as any pay that a sailor had not chosen to remit to his wife or mother. Totals were often between £20 and £50 and could exceed that. Mary Shackle, widow of James Shackle, late of HMS *Zealous*, living at William Rose's, West Court Street, Gillingham, Kent, received £110 17s from the Clerk of the Cheque at Chatham on 29 December 1800; and Margaret Hume, of New Foundry Street, Greenock, Scotland, sister of John Hume, late of HMS *Hussar*, received £153 8s 6d on 17 October 1815 from the customs collector at Greenock.⁴²

What was the impact of this money on the recipients' lives? The funds could not take away the pain of the loss of the seaman. However, the sums had the potential to make a radical and very positive transformation in the lives of their recipients. At the highest level of compensation, recipients could join the middle class.⁴³ At a lower level, they could enjoy security as members of the upper echelons of the working class. Were recipients, despite their lack of formal education, able to use their monies to access these opportunities, and perhaps to establish a business, or in cases such as Mary Shackle and Margaret Hume, to purchase property? Further research is necessary. At the very least, for many thousands of very poor individuals, the French Revolutionary and Napoleonic Wars brought a substantial infusion of funds, funds with which they could participate in the burgeoning consumer society and, in some cases, radically transform their lives.

Family members as soldiers' survivors

No such system of wage allotment was put in place for the families of the 750,000 soldiers who served in the Revolutionary and Napoleonic Wars. However, the records collected from some of the new programmes for soldiers allow us to gain detailed insight into the lives of their families and the impact of war on their welfare. These include the collection of casualty records of privates and non-commissioned officers, a system by which family members could petition for effects and the Royal Military Asylum, the progressive new boarding school for soldiers' daughters and sons. Before this time, except for officers, the names of Army dead were not systematically collected by the British government. As a consequence family members were unsure of the fate of their loved ones. In 1797, this began to change. The Commander-in-Chief ordered that all commanding officers were to report the names of the dead to the War Office.⁴⁴ This new record-keeping enabled the introduction in 1809 of a systematic process by which family members could petition for the effects of the deceased soldiers.⁴⁵ The system was neither as professionalized as that for naval allotment nor as organized. Nevertheless, it introduced many soldiers' families to interaction with the central government, as well as marking the beginning of some system of nationalized record-keeping about the lives of all soldiers and their families.

As part of this provision, the War Office introduced a standard petition form for use by family members. As with the lump-sum allotment system for seamen, the system recognized that the definition and

experience of 'family' for soldiers could extend far beyond the nuclear family. In this case it included uncles and aunts and nephews and nieces as well as immediate family members.

In order to maximize the chances that family members could successfully petition for a soldier's effects, the War Office ordered all its commanding officers to fill in, carefully and precisely, a revised casualty return which this time included not only the soldier's name and date of death, but the extent of his debts and credits, the person whom he had named as his next of kin, and the circumstances of his death.⁴⁶ This last material would be of particular interest to relatives who in previous wars had known only that their loved one had not returned.

Unfortunately, commanders did not complete their returns as precisely as they were asked to. Nevertheless, the returns provide a unique lens through which to consider the experience of soldiers' families. Considering the returns for the 12th Light Dragoons for the years from 1811 to early 1817, among others, it is clear that the financial experience of soldiers' survivors was radically different from that of relatives of deceased seamen. While it would be conceivable for some seamen's widows, mothers, fathers and other relatives to enter or contemplate entering the middle class from their survivors' benefits, the surviving relatives of soldiers received more modest amounts which, while certainly welcome, would only help ensure that they could purchase life's necessities during the following months.⁴⁷ Payments to next of kin by the men of the 12th Light Dragoons ranged from around 9s ¾d to a high of £11 11s 8d. In November 1813, the regimental agent paid the latter amount to the wife of Corporal William Hammon, who had been reported missing in action.⁴⁸ The sum most commonly distributed was around £3.

Most men named their wives, parents, siblings or children as their next of kin. The casualty records of the men of the 1st Foot for 1810–1816 remind us that because of the distant corners of the globe in which the army was fighting, and the far-flung areas of the nation's empire from which troops came, members of military families were often culturally, ethnically and racially diverse.

During the time covered by the return, the regiment was serving in India, and some of the men listed had died at Poonamallee or on the march there. Of the 19 men who were listed on the casualty return, 10 left their effects to 'his Native Woman', 'his Native Girl', or to a named woman followed by the term 'a Native Woman'. Private Matthew Monks, for example, died with the regiment on 19 December 1813 and willed his effects to 'Booba, a Native Woman'.⁴⁹ Eight months earlier,

Private John Verblaken, himself a 'foreigner', died on 21 April 1813, leaving his effects to 'Mutamah (a Native Woman)'.⁵⁰

It is not surprising that soldiers had relationships with women in the local population. This was common in many parts of the world where the army served. However, the fact that they were listed as next of kin on equal terms with the soldiers' brothers, daughters and fathers, and that the national government recognized them as such, suggests that for the soldiers themselves these women were more intimate and more equal than the term 'his Native Woman' implies. This seems particularly so where the records indicate that the soldiers legally willed their effects to the women. The entry for the late Sergeant William Lake suggests that some if not all of the relationships between soldiers and 'native women' did not merely mimic those between married couples but had been codified in law. When William died in September 1815, his effects were sent to 'Mary Lake a Native Woman'.⁵¹ The fact that Mary and William have the same last name, despite her being 'a Native Woman', makes one suspect that their relationship had been legally endorsed.

Records that were collected as part of the running of the Royal Military Asylum indicate that such interracial and international relationships were common, and that with them came multi-racial, multi-cultural and multi-national children. More broadly, the Asylum records offer us a window into the lives of women and children who lived abroad with their soldier husbands and fathers.⁵²

Life on the march for soldiers' families

As suggested by the casualty records of the 1st Foot, some women met and married their soldier husbands while these men were serving with their regiments abroad. These included Mary Foster, who was married to her husband David, a private in the 4th Foot, in Bobadilla, Portugal by the regimental chaplain on 1 January 1813.⁵³ Mary Draycott married her husband Joseph, sergeant in the 11th Foot, while he was serving in Martinique in the West Indies.⁵⁴

Since most women were not allowed to join the regiments unless they were married to soldiers prior to embarkation, it is most likely that these women were natives of the countries where these couples married. This was certainly the case for Caroline Koskloskie who on 1 January 1801, married her husband Ferdinand when he was serving in Amsterdam.⁵⁵ Her application for the admission of her son to the Asylum stated that she was in desperate circumstances following the death of her husband,

'being a Foreigner and incapable of supporting' her three small children.⁵⁶ Despite his foreign-sounding name, we know that Ferdinand was British because his children were admitted into the Asylum, an institution whose admission was strictly limited to the children of British soldiers.⁵⁷

One major barrier that faced foreign women who married British soldiers was that of language. In 1802, Rosanna Daft married Sergeant Major John Daft of the 85th Regiment in her 'native country of Madeira' during the regiment's stopover on the way to the West Indies. Travelling with her husband in the West Indies, she gave birth to three children and returned to the Isle of Wight six years later. Unfortunately, when Rosanna's husband died, she found that her knowledge of 'very little of the English Language' posed a huge problem. Not being a native of England, and unable to discover her husband's parish of settlement, the one place in Britain where she would legally be entitled to poor relief, she was unable to secure any aid. Instead, she found herself and her children penalized and placed in a workhouse on the Isle of Wight. She applied for her children to go to the Asylum in the hope that there they would be well cared for and that she could then return home to Madeira.⁵⁸

Rosanna was one of many soldiers' wives to give birth while travelling abroad. Another was Ann Harvey, whose husband William was a sergeant in the 4th Royal Veterans Battalion. Ann gave birth to her son William Jr in Annapolis Royal, Nova Scotia on 10 April 1807 after marrying William Sr in St Vincent in the West Indies almost five years earlier.⁵⁹ The birthplaces of other children admitted into the Asylum included Minorca, Malta, Corsica, Jamaica, Ceylon and New South Wales.⁶⁰ Due to the demands of the regiment, some women had no choice but to give birth to their children while on the move. James Lynch, the son of Private Patrick Lynch and his wife Caroline, arrived in this world on 16 December 1805 while Caroline was 'on the transport to the Cape of Good Hope'.⁶¹ Catherine Smith gave birth to her son John on 11 March 1801, while 'on the passage to the West Indies'.⁶² As ships were cramped – incubators of disease – limited in provision of fresh water and food, and regularly at the mercy of both rough seas and the enemy, it is a small miracle that the mothers and their newborn sons survived.⁶³

Death was an ever-present risk for these women as it was for their husbands. Sometimes the women were the survivors. Ann Harvey survived the sinking of the 'Harpooner Transport' from Quebec. However, her husband and three of her four young children perished. Destitute and in mourning, she petitioned to the Asylum for the care of her remaining

child, nine-year-old William.⁶⁴ In Antigua, Louisa Bond found herself unable to care for her three-year-old son Christopher after the death of her husband, Sergeant John Bond of the 70th Foot, from yellow fever on 13 July 1804.⁶⁵

Often, and it is a fact sometimes overlooked by military scholars, women were themselves among the deceased. Like soldiers, they were most commonly felled by disease rather than enemy action. A number of women succumbed to the deadly fevers that spread in the tropics. These included Judith Hoy, who 'died in Gibraltar of the Dreadful Fever of 1813', leaving behind three young children and her husband Private James Hoy who in the year after her death became 'subject to acts of derangement'.⁶⁶ The wife of Private Michael Corrigan of the 8th Foot died on the same island leaving behind six children aged two to twelve as well as her husband.⁶⁷ Other mothers died and left their families behind in Canada, India and in the various islands of the West Indies.⁶⁸

In dying, these women left their husbands as widowers, but also as single fathers. The long-service requirements of the army did not make it easy for these men to succeed in their new role. The records make clear, however, that despite these challenges, many of these fathers dedicated themselves to fulfilling their parental responsibility. The fact that, although they were themselves often illiterate, they made such great efforts to prepare the complex admission application for their children, and collected the required documents and signatures, is testament to their dedication.⁶⁹

Following their wives' deaths, many fathers cared for their children in the regiment while simultaneously serving the nation. Private George Lonsdale of the 56th Foot remained stationed in India while caring for his two-year-old son Richard and his five-year-old son Martin. His wife, Jane, had died in 1807 at 'Calabah near Bombay'.⁷⁰ In Kingston, Jamaica, Private James Fair of the 60th Foot had been caring for his now five-year-old son William for two years following the death of his wife Phoebe.⁷¹

Simultaneously parenting and soldiering was no doubt challenging both economically and practically. While the government created some new provisions for military families, it did not supplement the wages of soldiers who suddenly found themselves in that position. Consequently men needed to find some way to pay for their children's basic necessities such as food, clothing and childcare. Some were quite creative. Edward McMurdy, a gunner in the Royal Artillery, augmented his salary while his regiment was in Jamaica by being employed 'as a singing man'. This enabled him to provide for his two sons, Edward and John, aged five and ten, who had been left behind following his wife's death. However, upon

returning to serve in England at Woolwich, he found that his craft was no longer in demand, and was thus left without resources to provide for his sons.⁷²

The lives of these single fathers were difficult. However, even more difficult were those of soldiers' children who while living with the regiment abroad suddenly found themselves total orphans. The circumstances of some parental deaths were particularly tragic. Only one month apart, both parents of 12-year-old James Mahon died 'in Hospital at Port Antonio, Island of Jamaica, in a state of insanity due to Fever'.⁷³ Four-year-old Hippen Mullaly's father, Private Stephen Mullaly of the 6th Foot, died in December 1805 in Quebec while standing sentry 'by falling down a precipice at Cape Drummon owing to the Inverity [*sic*] of the weather'.⁷⁴ Hippen's mother Mary married another private in the same regiment and continued life on the march, only to die less than three years later in Gibraltar.⁷⁵

The experiences of such orphans confirm the extent to which the definition of 'family' members of military families extended to include relatives a father's commanding officer, and his regimental comrades. Seven-year-old Thomas Frith was among those orphans who were cared for by an extended family after their parents died. Following the death in Gibraltar in 1798 of his father, William, a private in the Royal Engineers, and his mother Elizabeth in Cadiz three years later of plague, Thomas was raised by his aunt Ann Knight.⁷⁶

Not surprisingly, a number of the fathers' commanding officers stepped in to care for an orphaned child after his father's death.⁷⁷ More striking is the significant number of the fellow soldiers of the deceased who, despite the great economic and practical burden that was involved, took on the responsibility for raising orphaned children while at the same time fulfilling their service obligations. Several members of the late Sergeant John Keenan's regiment, the 89th Foot, helped to care for his son, ten-year-old Michael, after the sergeant died of wounds 'after the taking of the Isle of France' (Michael's mother had died with the regiment some years previously).⁷⁸ Immediately after the sergeant's death, his fellow soldier Charles Hartley took the boy with the regiment to India, and then back to Britain. Unfortunately, Hartley had since become seriously ill and had spent his last four months in hospital. With this, John Donohoe, another private from the late Sergeant Keenan's regiment took over Michael's care.⁷⁹

Dedication to one's fellow soldiers' children is understandable if we realize that for some soldiers their comrades were as much, if not more, a part of their family as their biological family. This is confirmed by

returning to the casualty roll of the 1st Foot. Not uncommonly, men willed their effects to fellow soldiers. These include Drummer George Bowman who named 'Drummer Tandy' of the 2nd Battalion as his next of kin, and Private Denis Treacey who willed his effects to Sergeant Grogan.⁸⁰ To take care of a deceased comrade's child was, for some soldiers, to care for a relative, of a brother's child.

Conclusion

War is often a family affair. This was certainly the case for the British during the French Revolutionary and Napoleonic Wars, when the welfare of the families of common soldiers and sailors became a matter of national importance. New support programmes were developed by central government, which also began systematically to record details of the lives of the whole service community, men, women and children. By studying the information collected, it is possible to see beyond well-worn stereotypes about military families. More broadly, the documents reveal that the experience of military families was truly national and international.

Behind the familiar figure of the drunken soldier and sailor, we see the identity of a family man who while serving abroad elected to make provision for his family. Behind the image of the weeping wife, we find strong women who travelled across national boundaries, regularly interacted with the state administration to provide for themselves and their children, and were sometimes given the opportunity to improve their class standing. And behind the distant fiscal-military state, we discover something rather more humane, a state that was beginning to take care of servicemen and their families and to enter the lives of ordinary men, women and children.

Notes

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1. British Museum, London, Department of Prints and Drawings, Thomas Rowlandson, 'Soldiers on the March', 1808 is an oft-cited print of soldiers' families. Kathleen Wilson brings together existing work on the wives and families of non-commissioned officers and privates in the eighteenth century wars prior to 1793: Kathleen Wilson, *The Island Race: Englishness, Empire and Gender in the Eighteenth Century* (London: Routledge, 2003), pp. 97–105, notes 16–37. Clive Emsley, *British Society and the French Wars, 1793–1815* (London: Macmillan, 1979) was one of the earliest studies to mention these military families during the French Wars.
2. For more information about the new system of care, see Patricia Y. C. E. Lin, 'Citizenship, Military Families and the Creation of a New Definition of 'Deserving Poor' in Britain, 1793–1815', *Social Politics* 7 (Spring 2000): 5–46, also Lin, 'Extending Her Arms: Military Families and the Transformation of the British State, 1793–1815', University of California, Berkeley, Ph.D. dissertation, 1997. The East India Company provided some pensions for selected widows and training for selected orphans of its soldiers. However, the benefits for the families of His Majesty's forces were far more extensive, systematized and institutionalized. See Durba Ghosh, 'Making and Un-making Loyal Subjects: Pensioning Widows and Educating Orphans in Early Colonial India', *Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History* 31:1 (January 2003): 1–28, and Ghosh, *Sex and the Family in Colonial India: The Making of Empire* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), pp. 206–245.
3. Linda Colley highlights the multi-racial and multi-cultural aspect of the pursuit of the British empire during this period: *Captives: The Story of Britain's Pursuit of Empire and How Its Soldiers and Civilians Were Held Captive by the Dream of Global Supremacy, 1600–1850* (New York: Pantheon Books, 2002).
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5. M. A. Crowther, 'Family Responsibility and State Responsibility in Britain before the Welfare State', *Historical Journal* 25:1 (1982): 131–145, here 132.
6. Geoffrey Best, *War and Society in Revolutionary Europe, 1770–1870* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1982), p. 125.
7. Clive Emsley, 'Social Impact of the French Wars', in *Britain and the French Revolution, 1789–1815*, ed. H.T. Dickinson (London: Macmillan, 1989), pp. 211–227, here 215.
8. William Windham in *The Senator or Clarendon's Parliamentary Chronicle Weekly Register of Parliamentary Debates*, 4 July 1799.
9. See Chapter 1 by John Cookson in this volume.
10. Emsley, *British Society*, p. 40.
11. Linda Colley, *Britons: Forging the Nation 1707–1837* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1992), pp. 283–319; Emsley, *British Society*, pp. 36–37.
12. Richard Glover, *Peninsular Preparation: The Reform of the British Army, 1795–1809* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1963), pp. 214–215. British currency before decimalization in 1971 was based on the pound (£), the shilling (s) and the penny (d). Twelve pence equalled one shilling. Twenty shillings equalled one pound.

13. Correlli Barnett, *Britain and Her Army, 1509–1970* (London: Allen Lane, 1970), p. 241.
14. Michael Lewis, *A Social History of the Navy, 1793–1815* (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1960), p. 300.
15. Glover, *Peninsular Preparation*, pp. 215 and 240–242; Barnett, *Britain and Her Army*, p. 241.
16. Lewis, *A Social History*, pp. 102, 106.
17. David Gates, 'The Transformation of the Army, 1783–1815', in *The Oxford Illustrated History of the Army*, eds. David Chandler and Ian Beckett (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994), pp. 144–145; John E. Cookson, *The British Armed Nation 1793–1815* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1997), pp. 122–124. Soldiers were still strongly encouraged to enlist for life-time service and those who did so were paid significantly more.
18. National Archives, Kew, London (UKNA), HO 50/36, Robert Harvey to Henry Dundas, 25 October 1799.
19. J. R. Western, *The English Militia in the Eighteenth Century: The Story of a Political Issue, 1660–1802* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1965).
20. UKNA, ADM 46/69, 'An Account of What Offices or Employments under the Crown Have Been Created in the Navy Office Since the 5th January 1780', 1810; Great Britain, *Parliamentary Papers (GBPP)*, 'Fourth Report of the Commissioners of Naval Enquiry, Civilian Affairs', vol. 5, 1806; *GBPP*, 'Sixth Report of the Select Committee on Finance', 1817, pp. 223–240.
21. *GBPP*, 'The Nineteenth Report of the Commissioners of Military Enquiry Appointed by 45 Geo. III, c. 47', 26 May 1812, p. 474; *GBPP*, 'Returns of the Total Expense of the Public of the Royal Military Asylums at Chelsea, Isle of Wight, Southampton, Hibernian School, &c. since their first Establishment to the 31st December 1830' (78) 1831–1832, xvii, p. 349. 1831–1832, 4–5; Great Britain, *Hansard's Parliamentary Debates*, 1st series, 'Army Expenditures, 1803–1815'.
22. *GBPP*, 'The Nineteenth Report of the Commissioners of Military Enquiry', appendix 23; *GBPP*, 'Return of the Number of Children who have been admitted to the Royal Military Asylum, Chelsea... specifying the number vaccinated who had small-pox', *Report from the Select Committee on the Vaccine Board*, 1833 (753) xvi, p. 319.
23. John Brewer, *Sinews of Power: War, Money and the English State, 1688–1783* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1988).
24. William Hersee, *The Spirit of the General Letters and Orders Issued by the Honorable Board of the Excise for the Guidance of Officers of Every Station from 1700 to 1827 inclusive* (London: n.p., 1829), pp. 6, 55–56.
25. Linda Colley uses the data collected in the returns of the Defence of the Realm Act of 1798 to argue that during the Revolutionary and Napoleonic Wars the British were more patriotic than has hitherto been claimed by scholars. See *Britons*, pp. 283–319.
26. The source for the number of seamen is Michael Lewis, *A Social History of the Navy, 1793–1815* (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1960), pp. 440–443.
27. 35 Geo. III, c. 28 (1795); revised and updated by 46 Geo. III. c. 127 (1806).

28. In rare exceptions, a seaman could cancel the remittances. However, he would need the approval of the Navy Commissioners and minister and churchwarden of his wife's or mother's parish.
29. Most women were served by the tax official closest to their home. Women living within five miles of the port towns of Portsmouth, Plymouth or Chatham were served by the Clerks of the Cheque employed at the dock-yards of those towns. Women living in London collected their money at the office of the Treasurer of the Navy.
30. 35 Geo. III, c. 28 (1795).
31. UKNA, ADM 27/6, Register of monthly remittances to families by seamen on HMS Theseus under 35 Geo. III, c. 28 (hereafter referred to as REMIT).
32. REMIT, no. 169, triplicate 35784, 1 January 1802.
33. REMIT, no. 400, triplicate 35808, no. 384, triplicate 35804, no. 488, triplicate 35820, no. 486, triplicate 35819, 1 January 1802.
34. REMIT, no. 384, triplicate 35804, stop no. 33603.
35. REMIT, no. 486, triplicate 35819, stop no. 33088.
36. REMIT, no. 488, triplicate 35820, stop no. 33089.
37. REMIT, no. 400, triplicate 35808, stop no. 33077.
38. REMIT.
39. REMIT, no. 149, triplicate 35831.
40. The lump-sum allotment system was codified in 31 Geo. II, c. 10 (1757). N. A. M. Rodger, *The Wooden World: An Anatomy of the Georgian Navy* (London: Fontana Press, 1988), p. 132. The system did not become widely used until improvements were made through 32 Geo. III, c. 32 (1792) and 35 Geo. III, c. 5 (1795).
41. UKNA, ADM 26/4, 'Register of Allotments Sent by Seamen to Their Families'.
42. UKNA, ADM 26/4, check sent 13 December 1800 and ADM 26/14, check sent 15 September 1815.
43. For an excellent study of gender and the middle class, see Leonore Davidoff and Catherine Hall, *Family Fortunes: Men and Women of the English Middle Class, 1780–1850*, rev. edn (London: Routledge, 2002). There is debate about the income cut-off for inclusion in the middle class, but some indicate the lower range to be £100 and no less than £50 per year (p. 23).
44. Emsley, *British Society*, p. 93.
45. 'Regulations for Ensuring the Prompt Payment of Sums Due to the Relatives of Soldiers Killed or Dying in His Majesty's Service' (War Office, by Order of the Secretary at War) 25 March 1810.
46. 'Explanatory Directions for the Information and Guidance of Paymasters and Others', War Office, 25 April 1805, in *A Collection of Orders, Regulations and Instructions for the Army on Matters of Finance and Points of Discipline* (War Office, 25 April 1807), pp.179–180; UKNA, WO 4/208, p. 243; War Office (G. Gower) to the Commissary General of Muster, 22 July 1809; WO 4/464, p. 322, War Office Circular no. 221 to Regimental Commanding Officers, 10 April 1814; WO 25/1196–1359 'Register of Casualties, 1797–1817.'
47. UKNA, WO 25/1437, 'Casualty Returns, 12th Light Dragoons, 1811–1817.'
48. Ibid.
49. UKNA, WO 25/1499, 'Casualty Returns, 1st Foot, 1810–1816'.
50. Ibid.
51. Ibid.

52. My sample consists of 662 original applications of boys admitted into the Royal Military Asylum, 1803–1815. The original application petitions for girls admitted during this period appear to have been destroyed. I used accepted social science sampling techniques to extract this sample from the several thousand applications that I discovered in 1993 at the successor to the Asylum, the Duke of York's Royal Military School. The applications are now housed in the archives of the Duke of York's Royal Military School, Dover, England.
53. Duke of York's Royal Military School, Dover, England, Royal Military Asylum Application (hereafter RMAP), (Blue) no. 3235.
54. RMAP, no. 2381.
55. RMAP, no. 1974.
56. Ibid.
57. UKNA, WO 143/6, Royal Military Asylum, Commissioners Board Meeting Minutes, 1801–1813: Minutes for 14 April 1810.
58. RMAP, no. 960.
59. RMAP, no. 2558.
60. RMAP, Sample.
61. RMAP, no. 1452.
62. RMAP, no. 887.
63. Wilson, *The Island Race*, p. 98.
64. RMAP, no. 2558.
65. RMAP, no. 937.
66. RMAP, no. 1992.
67. RMAP, no. 760.
68. See, for example, RMAP, no. 735, no. 1341 and no. 914.
69. For a discussion of the difficulty of completing the application, see Lin, 'Citizenship, Military Families', 19–37. Only 49 per cent of the parents submitting applications for their children could sign their name.
70. RMAP, no. 1341.
71. RMAP, no. 394.
72. RMAP, no. 2848.
73. RMAP, no. 3085.
74. RMAP, no. 1045.
75. Ibid.
76. RMAP, no. 340.
77. See, for example, RMAP, no. 2114 and no. 2115.
78. RMAP, no. 1900.
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80. UKNA: WO 25/1499, 'Casualty Returns, 1st Foot, 1810–1816'.

6

War without Battles: Civilian Experiences of Economic Warfare during the Napoleonic Era in Hamburg

Katherine B. Aaslestad

In 1811 Christine Westphalen expressed her deep frustrations and anxieties regarding the sad fate of her city-state of Hamburg. Occupied by the French since 1806 and annexed into the Napoleonic Empire in 1810, the once prosperous commercial emporium and republican city-state faced serious economic dislocation and social instability. In her poem, Westphalen wondered if she would ever again see ships on the Elbe:

No keel ploughs through the once crowded river anymore,
Flags and sails are no longer seen from the [river] banks,
No residents look with curiosity to the tides, to see which
 beflagged mountains deprive them of their sky.
Quiet is the river and her banks, and the surrounding groves, and
 the distant horizon;
The current flows sluggish and slowly, because the life-giving
 charm seems to have died long ago;
The water nymphs disappeared; or did they succumb to their grief?
Even the wind hardly hurries to bring the waves to life:
Only sighs stir the dying waters.¹

Westphalen, married to the respected merchant and senator Johan Ernst Friedrich Westphalen, understood clearly Hamburg's economic decline. Her poem presents the Elbe as dead, symbolizing the demise of a commercial republican society, and reveals that civilians suffered at the hands of economic warfare as much as soldiers on the field of combat. Indeed, in her collection of poetry she traced her city's fate from military

occupation in 1806 to its mobilization for war against and liberation from the French in 1813–1814.

When measuring the impact of Napoleon's Continental System, historians have explored such long-term consequences as structural transformations based on institutional and administrative reforms or the geographical shifts in trade inland from the Atlantic seaboard to the European heartland.² Recent studies emphasize that the impact of Napoleon's economic strategies were far from uniform on the continent and largely ineffective against his enemy, the British.³ This article places the Continental System and economic warfare at the centre of relations between civilians and military operations to illustrate an often-overlooked dimension of war experiences during the Napoleonic era. By 1813, the deterioration of livelihoods brought on by imperial commercial warfare and exploitation generated an ever-growing anti-French sentiment that would become increasingly explosive. In this case, economic warfare played a significant role in militarizing a commercial civil society for war.

Recent historians emphasize that the Napoleonic era, like the world wars of the twentieth century, must be examined beyond the 'drums and trumpet' genre of conventional military operational histories. Only multi-dimensional scholarship on the Revolutionary and Napoleonic Wars can uncover the full impact of war on individuals and society.⁴ Recent studies on twentieth-century warfare illustrate how economic instability, scarcity, and declining livelihoods brought war to the home front. Similarly, this case study on the consequences of economic warfare in Hamburg analyses connections between civil society and military combat, suggesting that expanding military actions often target civilians and in turn mobilize them for war. If traditional scholarship tacitly accepted the dichotomy between the civilian and the military as well as the contrast between the 'home front' and the field of battle, the experience of military occupation and economic warfare breaks down this dualism for north Germany between 1806 and 1813. As one contemporary recorded in 1809, 'Everyone, even those who do not hear the resounding drums of war, feel themselves oppressed, half numb, hopeless, and reduced to desperation'.⁵ French policies in Hamburg and along coastal areas across Europe brought the consequences of war to businesses, shops, and homes. By 1813, the scale of economic dislocation, unemployment and poverty, combined with the mobilization of material and manpower against the Napoleonic army, dramatically transformed the home front into a war zone.

Commercial and civil society amidst international warfare

Eighteenth-century Hamburgers gave the credit for their city-state's autonomy, republican freedom, and prosperity to their constitution and commerce. The self-governing republic's constitution represented freedom from arbitrary state interference and encouraged the republic's residents to expend their energies in their own and the public's interests, which in turn facilitated economic development. The vitality of commerce penetrated all areas of life in the city, leading one native to remark, 'The spirit of trade provides the city with its soul'.⁶ Within this commercial republic, merchants enjoyed elevated civic, economic, and social status: the Senate reserved half of its seats for merchants. As contemporaries frequently noted, commerce occupied most of the attention of Hamburgers. Most of the city's 100,000 inhabitants – merchant bankers, insurance agents, dock labourers, sail makers, and sugar refiners alike – depended either directly or indirectly on commerce.⁷ Trade necessitated freedom, open competition, and political equilibrium, all features characteristic of republican Hamburg. Thus, the requirements of commerce influenced all elements of the city's political life. Trade dictated a policy of neutrality, independence, and nonalignment in international affairs as well as the adoption of liberal economic practices.

More than just a mercantile centre and gateway to international trade, Hamburg functioned as a financial, diplomatic, and communication hub as well. The port city was a natural gathering place for all kinds of information and news, and by the second half of the eighteenth century, Hamburg possessed the most sophisticated press in Central Europe, second only to London in the number and circulation of newspapers in Europe.⁸ In fact, the city's press, like the dense overlapping social networks located in the Stock Exchange, coffee houses, and civic associations, embodied the republic's particular utilitarian Enlightenment experience.⁹ Hamburg represented one ideal form of eighteenth-century civil society, with a literate, well-read, politically informed, and engaged population focused on commerce, prosperity, and practical reform.

After 1792, the course of the French wars profoundly influenced the north German coastal economy. Warfare and French conquest elsewhere in Europe prompted many foreign banks and merchants to relocate to the neutral Hanseatic cities. The volume of and profit from trade and shipping peaked in the 1790s as Hamburg dominated continental wholesale trade, and hundreds of new businesses flourished. Following the flight of capital and trade from Holland to north Germany,

the Elbe became the gateway distributing English and American goods to the continent.¹⁰ Traffic through Hamburg's port increased dramatically, and though most cargo arrived in Hamburg in foreign ships, the republic's own neutral merchant marine expanded. The rapid growth of the Bank of Hamburg and a marked increase in insurance companies signalled Hamburg's emergence as a critical site of international finance. Yet many contemporaries noted with worry that the booming economy generated reckless speculation, staggering insurance rates, and rapid inflation. A succession of bankruptcies in 1799 demonstrated commercial instability. Moreover, this tremendous economic activity and prosperity depended on the neutrality of the city-state and free flow of trade through its harbour. By 1795, following the temporary occupation of Bremen by Hanoverian and British troops, it was clear that the wars that provided commercial opportunity also threatened Hamburg's sovereignty.

Throughout the eighteenth century, Hamburg successfully countered territorial and monarchical ambitions to defend its autonomy through imperial law and diplomatic negotiations. To ensure their survival as neutral autonomous republics, Hamburg, Bremen, and Lübeck sought to redefine themselves as a neutral free-trade zone. Throughout the 1790s the cities contemplated a common neutrality programme and waged a public campaign in the press to gain international recognition of Hanseatic neutrality. Hanseatic statesmen sought to convince France and Great Britain that the independence and neutrality of Hamburg, Bremen, and Lübeck served the trade, banking, transportation, and communication interests of all nations.¹¹ Hamburg and Bremen also sought to purchase French support; yet after years of diplomatic negotiations and numerous 'gifts' and 'contributions', appeals for international recognition of Hanseatic neutrality came to nothing.¹²

The escalating conflict between France and Britain – both perceived as equally dangerous – engulfed the Hanseatic cities even before Napoleon's armies occupied them in 1806. In response to the French occupation of Hanover and Ritzbüttel in 1803, the British blockaded the Elbe, Weser, and Eider rivers, underscoring the growing pattern of great power reprisal by targeting small neutral states. In Hamburg, the blockade caused serious economic hardship as overseas trade became dependent on smuggling and the expensive and risky transport of goods by land. Trades associated with shipping – ships' carpenters, rope makers, loaders, grain clerks, and wine haulers – lost their work, regular income, and savings.¹³ The local press lamented the social consequences of skyrocketing food prices and unemployment generated by

the blockade.¹⁴ As the number of the impoverished grew, the city government implored the British to permit ships bearing food through the blockade to avert complete social catastrophe.¹⁵ Notorious for the ruthless exploitation of their naval superiority, the British punished small powers to retaliate against French actions. Britain's command of the sea ensured that it could blockade French ports as well as the continent in general.

The Continental Blockade 1806–1812

Napoleon's victorious war against Prussia in October 1806 extended French military power across northern Germany and ended any lingering hope of Hanseatic neutrality or non-involvement in the international conflict. After occupying the Hanseatic cities, Napoleon issued the Berlin Decrees in November 1806, designed to deprive his enemy of continental trade and destroy the British economy. Under the Emperor's dictate, all trade, traffic, and correspondence between Britain and the continent were to be immediately halted, British nationals imprisoned, and all British property, merchandise, and correspondence confiscated. Britain's Orders in Council and Napoleon's 1807 Milan Decrees further extended the war to neutral shipping and broadened economic warfare throughout the Atlantic. If economic warfare generally sought to reduce the military and civilian capacity of an enemy to wage war, both France and Britain expanded blockades to target civilians in allied as well as neutral states.

Moreover, Napoleon's Continental System set out to do more than simply damage the British economy. He sought to subjugate and reshape the continent's economies to serve France. By denying British industrial products and colonial re-export outlets in traditional continental markets, the blockade strove to disrupt British commerce, generate a balance-of-payments deficit, and thereby reduce its capacity to wage and finance war. Equally important, it also aimed to establish French industrial and commercial hegemony on the continent. Thus, the blockade established in 1806 had far-reaching goals beyond subduing Britain; in fact, the real target of French economic restructuring was the continent.¹⁶

Isolated from trade with Britain as well as deprived of continental markets following Napoleon's export restrictions, port cities along the North Sea coastline experienced immediate commercial and industrial decline. Sustaining the blockade, however, proved difficult, and French military power could not ensure consistent or adequate implementation of the

blockade during the first four years. In fact, the Continental Blockade is best understood as two phases: from 1806 to 1810 and from 1810 to 1812. Economic stagnation and decline with short-term fluctuations in illicit trade characterized the first phase, and an abrupt halt to trade and limited food supplies distinguished the second.

Napoleon's Continental System encouraged a shadow economy (*Schattenwirtschaft*) across the European continent. Smuggling, fraud, bribery, and alternative trade routes emerged along the North Sea coastline to ensure the survival of commerce with Britain and her colonies. Trade between Britain and Hamburg revived in small harbours in Danish Tönning and Glückstadt. Coastal geography supported smuggling, as river deltas, mudflats, marshes, coastal islands, and sand dunes were particularly difficult to monitor and secure.¹⁷ In 1807 Britain seized the Danish island of Heligoland to facilitate its illicit commerce. As a key transit station for smugglers, it emerged as the 'warehouse of Europe'.¹⁸ British colonial goods as well as cotton and tobacco from the United States continued to make their way to Hamburg's warehouses. Corruption among the French administrators, soldiers, and even customs agents also undermined the blockade. Merchants passed English merchandise under the cover of false certificates that attested their origin in Denmark, Sweden, America, or Russia. Hamburg spent 1.5 million *francs* to encourage the new French authorities to overlook trade on the Elbe, and in the six months following the Berlin Decree, 1475 vessels arrived in Hamburg without impediment. British goods estimated at 590,000 tons were sold openly without any seizures.¹⁹ In 1807 a French police report stated, 'Trade with English goods in the city continues as prior to the decree.'²⁰

The porous nature of the blockade along the North Sea coastline ceased dramatically after 1810. The Fontainebleau, Trianon, and Saint Cloud Decrees generated a new level of economic warfare, and Napoleon annexed the north German coastline into the Empire. In a frontal attack against illegal British goods and smuggling, Napoleon strengthened the already privileged position of French industry and commerce by raising imperial tariffs and issued special licences for agricultural exports and imports in order to turn smuggling to the advantage of the French Treasury. Napoleon enforced the blockade with growing numbers of customs officials and imperial troops along the recently annexed coastline, punished smugglers brutally, and burned confiscated British goods in public bonfires in the last months of 1810 and first months of 1811. Though some illicit trade based on falsified documents continued, imperial reinforcement of the blockade with arbitrary nocturnal arrests,

extensive searches, and seizures combined with the eastward shift of contraband to Sweden and the Baltic restricted most large-scale smuggling operations by 1812. Annexation combined with enforcement of the blockade produced new levels of damage in a battered northern European economy blocked from legitimate international commerce.

The consequences of economic warfare and military occupation

Flexible enough to adapt in the short-term to the Continental System, many of Hamburg's leading merchants continued to prosper after 1806, though their profit margins may not always appear on their merchant ledgers.²¹ But if the commercial elites continued to indulge their fancies in balls, concerts, and parties, this was not so for the majority of the population. All who had been dependent on the once thriving import and export trade lost their livelihood.²² As one contemporary observed, 'In a city where the poorest and the wealthiest members live from commerce . . . the stagnation of that industry can only result in the worst kind of long-term misery'.²³ Shortages of coal as well as imperial taxes on sugar, rum, and tobacco supplies dismantled local industries. Dock labourers, ships' carpenters, sail makers, artisans, cigar-rollers, oil pressers, and brewers faced destitution. As contemporaries pointed out, shipping and commerce formed the framework of the city's economy:

This hardship is not simply felt by one area of commerce, rather all trades on land or sea are coerced, destroyed, and restricted. . . . The merchant is not alone in his decline, those who depend on him – brokers, agents, accountants, sailors and boatmen, loaders and all kind of labourers – have their existence threatened.²⁴

Even solid middle-class lawyers severely economized their households out of necessity.²⁵

For most of the population, thrown out of work by the Continental System and new export tariffs, smuggling provided the only means of subsistence. For the local population smuggling developed into a guerrilla war against imperial toll inspectors and customs agents.²⁶ Small-scale smuggling, pervasive at city gates, relied largely on women, youth, and servants who concealed bags of coffee beans, sugar, pepper, and syrup in their clothing, stockings, boots, and hats. Despite the danger and harassment entailed in small-scale smuggling, it paid well. One pound of coffee slipped from neighbouring Danish Altona

into Hamburg could bring the equivalent of a day's wages.²⁷ Such *Kaffé Trager*, as they were known, multiplied like mushrooms and by 1810 'all types' engaged in smuggling, noted lawyer Ferdinand Beneke in his diary.²⁸ Authorities in Hamburg estimated that some 6000 to 10,000 persons smuggled goods between the two cities each day. French authorities confiscated no more than 5 per cent of this contraband.²⁹ Indeed, smuggling between Altona and Hamburg developed into a quasi-legitimate business involving fixed business transactions, including commissions and insurance rates.³⁰ In the long term, even black market trade could not replace steady employment for the mass of the population.

A complete understanding of the difficulties associated with Napoleon's Continental System must include the costs and burdens of French occupation. The obligation on the general population to billet and support the occupying Grande Armée aggravated economic decline. Military occupation in 1806 brought a variety of transient Dutch, Spanish, and French officers and soldiers who lodged in domestic quarters. In Hamburg's, residents were obliged to provide the occupying troops with daily rations of meat, bread, vegetables, rice, a bottle of beer, and a glass of brandy, and, in addition for officers, monetary allowances.³¹ As the number of soldiers increased, so did the costs demanded of the population.

Occupying forces changed the face of the former trade republic. Foreign soldiers replaced hawkers, merchants, and shoppers on the city streets, rendering the city more a military establishment than a commercial centre.³² In December 1807 Ferdinand Beneke reflected in his diary on this transformation, 'we have seen French, Italian, Dutch, and Spanish [soldiers] celebrate as we lost our peace, trade, prosperity, and freedom. Plundered one and all, slaves to foreign occupation, and cut off from all sources of acquisition . . .'³³ The French military requisitioned private and public buildings as barracks and obliged the Hanseatic cities to procure coats, boots, shirts, and medical supplies for imperial armies.³⁴ With the arrival of more French troops in August 1810 Beneke complained that 'quartering is oppressive. Only well-fed and fine-clothed soldiers strut around the market places that once engaged in commerce.'³⁵ Regardless of the city's economic decline, the Empire obliged occupied territories like Hamburg to provide the Grande Armée with increasing requisitions of horses, waggons, food, clothing, and other equipment.

Expecting the cities to finance his wars, Napoleon demanded in October 1807 that the Hanseatic cities pay 400,000 francs monthly in salary for his troops at a time when occupation costs alone had risen to

over 10 million francs.³⁶ In 1808, Beneke complained in his diary more about the growing costs of quartering and official contributions than the decline of trade, which reached its nadir that year.³⁷ In a letter to an American correspondent, one contemporary explained the depressing interconnection between economic warfare and military occupation:

All the conquered lands are exhausted by paying exorbitant contributions, by continual requisitions, by victualling the troops marching through their towns and villages, and all that at a time when trade is disturbed and stopped everywhere, when all is exceedingly dear, and even the necessaries of live [*sic*] not to be got at any rate.³⁸

Two years later, in 1809, this same correspondent prophesied the ruin of Europe based on the destruction of civil society and the annihilation of commerce.³⁹

Hamburg's annexation into the French Empire in 1810 made a bad situation worse; it reinforced the Continental System and subjugated Hamburgers to commercial relationships intended to benefit France. Initially annexation into the Empire generated hope among merchants. As new members of the Empire and part of its preferential market zone, they hoped to benefit from imperial reforms and trade with France on equal terms. To their bitter disappointment, tariff barriers remained as the expansion of the Empire sought to meet short-term logistical needs. Napoleon's licence system privileged French ports at the expense of annexed ports. Moreover, the reforms offered to the new territories could not mitigate the deepening negative consequences generated by ongoing war: economic decline, unemployment, and requisitions of men, money, and goods. The city also provided resources and strategic location for eastward military operations.

After 1811, the quality of life in the Hanseatic cities degenerated further. With the expansion of the imperial army and navy into the rivers and mudflats, transporting colonial goods through Heligoland became too risky, and the island lost its prominence as a smuggling emporium.⁴⁰ If blockade enforcement, high taxes, and arbitrary fees caused many north German wholesale merchants to relocate to London, St. Petersburg, Gothenburg or Kiel, mid-sized firms, no longer able to bribe the French to secure their existence with false papers, folded. In 1811, a record number of such businesses failed.⁴¹ Illicit commerce, as well as investments and finance, retreated east toward Sweden and the Baltic.⁴²

If ongoing economic decline forced merchants and bankers from their villas into exile or diminished their profits, it drove the vastly larger

urban lower class to complete impoverishment and ruin. Economic warfare shattered livelihoods and left poverty in its wake. French ship-building programmes did not provide sufficient work to compensate for the economic dislocation of workers on such a vast scale. Unstable market prices and rampant inflation further impoverished the unemployed. All inhabitants of the cities paid heavy direct and indirect taxes to support the French administration and military. As a French city, Hamburgers paid a wide range of taxes on property, workshops, and patents as well as on tobacco, spirits, playing cards, jewellery, carriages, and public transport. Far worse for the general population were the taxes on daily necessities such as bread, animal feed, and wood.⁴³ In addition, after 1811 tolls on imports and exports, including basic foodstuffs entering Hamburg from Danish Holstein, increased the price of daily groceries. As elsewhere conditions of war aggravated inflation; bread sold for 1 mark in 1798 and rose to 16 marks by 1813.⁴⁴ Since it was impossible to obtain overpriced coffee and sugar, Hamburgers drank 'German' or 'Continental Coffee' made from chicory and acorns.⁴⁵

With the collapse of legitimate seaborne commerce and reduction in smuggling, the harbours of the city were dead. Sailors and fishermen alike abandoned Hamburg; river traffic on the Elbe was limited to the transport of food, travellers, and soldiers.⁴⁶ One contemporary wrote of Hamburg, 'All traces of wealth have slowly vanished. There is no mention of trade.'⁴⁷ Sugar refining and the textile industry collapsed; of Hamburg's 435 sugar refineries only 40 survived the city's annexation and decline in colonial trade. Likewise, of the 27 calico printing workshops that employed 5000 workers in 1800, only 4 remained in 1811.⁴⁸ During 1811–1812 an estimated 15,000 labourers lost their livelihood in manufacturing, and at least twice as many working in shipping.⁴⁹ The high taxes and arbitrary fees that plagued the city's remaining businesses caused many to relocate to neighbouring Altona or as far away as Sweden and Russia.

Many unemployed labourers emigrated, but others resorted to begging or banditry, and charity. By early 1811, over 17,000 inhabitants of Hamburg lived off welfare and support from charitable institutions, which themselves faced fiscal crisis. Hamburg's General Poor Relief, once recognized as the best welfare programme in Europe, deteriorated from a holistic system that focused on poverty prevention to a mere alms-giving institution.⁵⁰ As economic life worsened under Imperial rule, the French undermined civic institutions that had traditionally assisted the impoverished and rendered urban poor relief incapable of assisting the unemployed. When the merchant, philanthropist, and former

director of the city's poor relief Caspar Voght returned to Hamburg in September 1812, he noted with despair:

With what misgivings, in what spirits did I approach the city from Harburg, the once fortunate shores, the towers of the once so prosperous city! I landed. Everything I saw and heard demonstrated the ruin of earlier prosperity, [the city] stripped of its attributes, cloaked in the fog of a threatening future. How my heart bled... The city empty and desolate, benefactors of the poor impoverished, the poor without help, my life's work destroyed.⁵¹

Voght's observations underscore the rapid and deep economic decline that Hamburg experienced during the Napoleonic era.

Sites of conflict: city gates, *douaniers*, and popular revolt

Hamburg's residents faced the 1806 occupation and 1810 annexation of their city without resistance. Indeed, the city government sought to cooperate with the French in the hope of gaining some sort of local autonomy and economic concessions. The Senate continually urged residents to comply peacefully and in an orderly manner with French officials, and reminded them that anyone who defied the French would answer for it themselves. The government would not put the city in jeopardy to protect individual residents. Even when the economy declined, most Hamburgers complained bitterly and appealed to Napoleon for relief, but they did not openly challenge French rule.⁵² French officials noted that despite popular dissatisfaction with Imperial policies, and in particular resentment toward the Continental System, the populace remained surprisingly tranquil and attributed public demeanour to the merchants' desire for order and stability. Indeed, popular resistance seemed futile in a city without a strong military tradition and accustomed to bribes (known as gifts) or negotiation to resolve international difficulties.

Increasing popular frustration with the declining standards of living and unceasing exploitation associated with warfare, however, fed hostility against Napoleonic rule. In fact, between 1811 and 1813, Hamburg's inhabitants transformed themselves from a resigned and compliant populace into a hostile, desperate, and lawless one. The city gates emerged as the site of growing anti-French sentiment. Even prior to annexation, numerous altercations took place between the local population and the toll officials (*douaniers*) at the city gates, and in 1810 one dispute led

to open violence and the shooting of several civilians.⁵³ The local press reported popular disturbances at the Altona gate in 1809 and new regulations for the Millern and Deich gates in 1810.⁵⁴ Following annexation and the strengthening of the Continental System, controls at the city gates were further augmented with more inspectors, harsher punishments for smugglers, and single-file access through the gates. Opened in June 1812 to prosecute infractions against the Continental System, the Toll Court appeared another tool of French oppression as punishments grew increasingly harsh. For example, smugglers caught with sugar and coffee received ten years of hard labour and branding, and two smugglers faced death for possessing 220 pounds of illicit tobacco in November 1812.⁵⁵

In letters, memoirs, and contemporary accounts of Hamburg's French occupation, the *douaniers* are consistently portrayed as the most hated French officials. Along with *gendarmes*, Ferdinand Beneke described the *douaniers* as 'the vampires of our trampled freedom'.⁵⁶ Easily identified in their green uniforms and three-cornered black hats, their enforcement of the Continental System brought them into direct confrontation with the local population. At the city gates, they searched wagons, carts, clothing, baskets, containers, and bags of all sorts. They rummaged through the carriages of elderly grandmothers, vegetable baskets carried by housemaids, coffins en route to burial, and the boots and socks of children.⁵⁷ Many contemporaries were outraged that women, regardless of their social standing, were bodily searched – by other women – in the gatehouses.⁵⁸ In fact by 1811, the women in Beneke's family, fearing harassment or 'a scene' at the city gates, refused to traverse them and encountered difficulties when they did.⁵⁹

In their quest to track hidden colonial goods, English merchandise, and forbidden journals, pamphlets, and English correspondence, the *douaniers'* arbitrary nocturnal arrests, extensive searches of private property, seizures of contraband commodities, and arrogant conduct fed popular hostility. As they became the target of popular fury and jest by 1812, the French reinforced the police presence at all Hamburg's city gates to quell daily conflicts between the population and toll officials. Imperial police reports also document local economic hardships and the growing tension between the populace and French officials. General Police Director Louis Philippe Brun d'Aubignosc arrived in Hamburg in 1811 and, though understaffed, sought to enforce the Emperor's policies. He provided Paris and Governor-General Davout with vast amounts of information regarding the political, military, economic, and social milieu in Hamburg.⁶⁰ He recognized the link between severe economic

decline among the lower classes and smuggling, and noted that only extreme physical punishment could hope to halt business dealings that were based on such great social need. In early spring 1812, he reported on the growing tensions between the local populace and the toll and tax inspectors and the increase in anti-French sentiment in general.⁶¹ Similarly, he reported merchants' complaints voiced in coffee-houses about the fall of commerce. Public dissatisfaction, d'Aubignosc stated, concentrated on concrete economic grievances, rather than political conspiracy. In another report he emphasized that in Hamburg, 'all energy, all ideas, all calculations are directed solely toward commerce'.⁶²

Despite dissatisfaction with the French authorities, the public mood, according to French police documents, remained surprisingly tranquil. Local people usually expressed hostility to the French by throwing mud or excrement at the Napoleonic eagles which had displaced Hamburg's crest at all gates and public buildings, and the police handled the few occasions of disorder without the assistance of French troops until February 1813.⁶³

Following the retreat of the Grande Armée from Russia and in anticipation of imminent liberation by Russian forces, the popular mood in Hamburg hardened against the French in January 1813. The arrest of petty smugglers in front of an angry and impoverished crowd, combined with the escape of a few incarcerated conscripts, aggravated public discontent, and a spontaneous revolt quickly spread throughout Hamburg on 24 February. Unemployed workers, women, and children attacked and destroyed palisades, customs, and watch houses. Angry throngs stoned the despised French officials and threw many of them into the canals.⁶⁴ Gaining strength in numbers, protesters tore down French flags, signs, and imperial eagles. More concerned with dispensing 'natural justice' than with driving the French from Hamburg, they focused their hostility on the hated tax collectors, customs agents, and police, rather than the imperial army or individual French families.⁶⁵ The French authorities attempted to forestall any further rebellion through harsh reprisals and rapid executions, but these brutal tactics misfired. Hostility toward the French intensified. Though it was short-lived, the revolt triggered subsequent insurrections in the neighbouring cities of Harburg, Lübeck, Stade, and Lüneburg, as well as in towns along the Elbe.

Popular unrest against the Empire, even when violent, was very symbolic. Protesters attacked tollhouses, administrative buildings, and imperial ensigns, representations of French authority. Targeting officials like toll inspectors and tax collectors illustrated the source of local

grievances and popular hostility. The French were hated and despised because their rule brought war, poverty, and misery. As the angry crowds vented their frustration on the French authorities, they sang the popular civic anthem *Auf Hamburgs Wohlergehn*, relating their actions to the French destruction of their city's prosperity and their own livelihoods.⁶⁶ Those who revolted had nothing left to lose. Faced with growing popular hostility and approaching Russian Cossacks, French forces withdrew from Hamburg in early April 1813.

Conclusion: economic warfare and the militarization of civil society

One month later, in March 1813, Hamburgers established a Citizens' Militia and united with the liberated citizens of Lübeck to form a voluntary militia, the Hanseatic Legion, to protect their cities. Up to this point, most Hanseatics were content to let other Europeans fight and simply await liberation from French rule. The formation of local militias during the spring of 1813 represented a noteworthy break in Hamburg's political culture. The city's residents, men and women alike, underwent an intense militarization and mobilization for war in 1813.⁶⁷ Material distress and economic decline combined with imperial occupation alienated the populations of northern Europe from Napoleon's Empire by 1813 and fostered a new militarized ethos. The Continental System radicalized economic warfare and aggravated the day-to-day experience of military occupation, billeting and requisitions, and increased poverty. It brought war into the harbours, warehouses, marketplaces and homes and ensured that the home front became a war zone. As Hamburg reveals, civilians became soldiers in 1813.

The Continental System left a lasting legacy in Hamburg. Its popular memory was carefully cultivated during the long nineteenth century to associate it with the worst forms of 'slavery and misery suffered under the oppressive French yoke', remembered ominously as the *Franzosenzeit*.⁶⁸ It was recalled to mobilize Hamburgers against the French in the Franco-Prussian Wars. In fact, based on their collective memories of the Napoleonic experience more than 60 years before, Hamburgers responded to the outbreak of the Franco-Prussian War with deep anxiety. Fearing bombardment of the city, blockade of the Elbe, and a total breakdown of commerce, ship-owners ordered their fleets to safe ports, and north German civilians volunteered to protect the coastline and dismantled lighthouses to prevent a French invasion.⁶⁹ Triggered by memories and lore from the last struggle against the French,

Hamburgers could not conceive of a war that would be fought and won far from their harbours and homes and that would be over in a matter of months.

During the centenary celebration of the Wars of Liberation in 1913, accounts of the Continental System and French occupation reminded another generation of Hamburgers of past French malevolence. Members of the civic club from Harvestehude-Roterbaum, dressed as smugglers and *douaniers*, marched in a commemorative parade depicting prominent moments leading to the Wars of Liberation.⁷⁰ The hardships associated with the city's occupation and commercial decline appeared in all forms of festive literature as well as in an exhibit in the Museum of Hamburg History. Yet within two years, the British, not the French, emerged as the new masters of economic warfare. During and after World War I, the Continental System was compared to the British blockade.⁷¹ In this 'total war', the north German home front once again emerged as a site of civilian militarization and radicalization.

Between 1806 and 1812 economic warfare shattered livelihoods and left unemployment and poverty in its wake. Examining the experience of war from the perspective of civilians on the home front provides a broader understanding of Napoleonic warfare and demonstrates the significance of material hardships in radicalizing and ultimately militarizing civil society. By targeting civilian life, the Continental System contributed to the military mobilization of Hamburg by 1813 and transcended the increasingly fluid borders between civil society and armed combat.

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Notes

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7

From the Ballroom to the Battlefield: British Women and Waterloo

Catriona Kennedy

In 1823 the English novelist Fanny Burney, in fulfilment of her promise to make a comprehensive record of certain episodes for posterity, began to compile an account of her days in Brussels at the time of the Battle of Waterloo.¹ Although she originally intended merely to transcribe the letters which she had sent to her husband during this period, she soon abandoned the task. 'The rising of my memory so interlards every other sentence', she wrote, 'that I shall take my Letters but as outlines, to be filled up by my recollections'.² The flood of recollection set in train by Burney's narrative revisiting of Brussels in June 1815, gives some sense of the enduring impact of this eventful period in her life, and in her account she vividly conveyed the chaos and terror that engulfed the city as the Coalition and Napoleonic armies fought nearby. While the presence of British women, such as Burney, in the vicinity of Waterloo has found a place in conventional narratives of the battle, such accounts have tended to focus on the Duchess of Richmond's ball held on the eve of the contest, with the much represented scene of gallant British officers taking leave of tearful women acting as a prelude to the main action: the battle itself.³ The Duchess's ball also famously features in one of the best-known literary accounts of Waterloo, William Makepeace Thackeray's *Vanity Fair* (1847–1848). Yet, rather than moving sequentially from the ballroom to the battlefield, Thackeray's narrative remains focused on the women who stayed in Brussels during the battle, and the entire campaign is filtered through the female characters' responses and experiences. Although Thackeray's decision not to include a description of the battle of Waterloo in *Vanity Fair* has led the novel to be described as '*War and Peace* without the war', it can also be read as a tacit recognition that the events which the British women in Brussels lived through were also an integral part of the experience of war.⁴

Editors and critics of *Vanity Fair* have long noted Thackeray's indebtedness to the account of the battle by the former army officer, George Robert Gleig, *The Story of Waterloo* (1847).⁵ It is only more recently that Fanny Burney's 'Waterloo journal', which was posthumously published with her collected letters and journals in 1846, has been identified as a further likely source for the novel.⁶ Burney's journal is one of several personal accounts written by British women resident in Brussels at the time, on which I will be drawing in this paper. Taken together these narratives provide a unique record of British women's first-hand experiences of battle and its aftermath during the Revolutionary and Napoleonic wars. As the occlusion of Burney's 'Waterloo journal' as a source text for *Vanity Fair* suggests, however, such female-authored accounts tend to be neglected in studies of writing about war. The ideal war-text, as Michael Nelson has observed with reference to the American civil war, is an eyewitness account written by a man at the front and read by a woman at home, a model that positions women as consumers but not producers of writing about war and which reinforces a rigid division between home and front, domestic and martial, male and female. 'Witnessing the business of war', Nelson concludes, 'is a privilege that men jealously guard against female interlopers'.⁷

The designation of war-writing as a masculine prerogative, feminist critics have argued, is reinforced by a broader assumption that only the male combatant has the right to tell 'stories about war'.⁸ It is an assumption that rests upon both a narrow definition of war as the direct experience of battle, and the belief that only those who have undergone such experiences can speak truthfully about them.⁹ Arguably, the construction of the soldier-narrator as the bearer of truth about war is a twentieth-century phenomenon, the disparity between the rhetoric and reality of warfare having been most fully demonstrated in the brutal conditions of World War I.¹⁰ At the same time, there was a substantial public appetite for authentic testimony from the front line during the Revolutionary and Napoleonic wars, as evidenced in the numerous officers' letters that appeared in the press and in the huge number of war memoirs published during and after the conflict.¹¹ Waterloo alone generated more eyewitness accounts than any other British battle before World War I.¹²

In this paper I would like to consider how female-authored accounts of Waterloo can illuminate women's problematic status as narrators of war experience, as they negotiated both their absence from, and the presence of, the battlefield. I will draw upon four narratives, which, despite differences in form, content and authorial background, share

certain similarities: Fanny Burney's retrospective 'Waterloo journal'; the travel writer Charlotte Anne Eaton's narrative of the campaign, a version of which was first published in August 1815; the letters of the young aristocrat Georgiana Capel to her grandmother; and finally Lady Magdalene de Lancey's account of her husband's final days following his wounding at Waterloo.¹³

Of course the privileging of these texts as narratives of war experience relies, to a certain extent, upon a narrow, front-centred definition of war. By 1815 Britain had been at war almost continuously for over two decades and the conflict had had a significant impact on every aspect of the nation's social, cultural and political life. Yet the majority of the British public were also profoundly conscious of their providential exemption from the ravages inflicted by contending armies on continental Europe. The full violence and brutality of war was experienced by Britons in a highly mediated fashion, through literary, cultural and artistic representations.¹⁴ An insistence on their compatriots' ignorance of the true horrors of warfare would feature repeatedly in British women's Waterloo narratives, bolstering their own authority as eyewitnesses. At the same time, their exclusion from the battlefield also made their status as eyewitnesses uncertain. They were awkwardly positioned between imagining the horrors of combat, as they anxiously waited for the outcome of the engagement, and a more immediate encounter with the bloody actuality of warfare, as they were confronted with the sight of wounded soldiers and the corpse-strewn battlefield. This paper explores the tensions between imagination and experience in women's accounts of Waterloo, and the languages of war which they appropriated to describe their experiences. It concludes by briefly analysing what these personal narratives reveal about British women's relationship to broader narratives and identities forged by war.

The women of Waterloo

British women had, of course, entered the theatre of war before Waterloo. As the work of Kathleen Wilson, Patricia Lin and others has shown, a significant number of women accompanied the British army on campaign during both the American war and the wars against revolutionary and Napoleonic France.¹⁵ Officially, at least six regimental wives per 100 men were allowed to accompany a regiment on active service, though the unofficial figure may have been much higher and it has been estimated that in 1813, when the British army was at its greatest strength, as many as 33,000 women were also on campaign.¹⁶ As part

of the 'penumbra of service and support groups' that surrounded the army, British camp followers, like their counterparts in other national armies, provided key services as laundresses, sutlers, cooks and nurses.¹⁷ Nearly all of these women were attached to the rank and file. While some officers' wives accompanied their husbands to British garrisons in Ireland, the Mediterranean and the West and East Indies during the Revolutionary and Napoleonic wars, they did not, as a rule, follow them on expeditions abroad. There were some exceptions, but we can only speculate as to the impact of campaign and battle on officers' wives and the other women of the regiment as no first-person accounts survive.

The presence of female camp followers with the British army at Waterloo is well documented. Several women were killed during the fighting and there are numerous stories of women giving birth on the battlefield.¹⁸ But how can we account for the large numbers of women of higher rank who were in Brussels at this time? The women whose narratives are considered here were drawn to the city for various reasons. Fanny Burney had been living for many years in Paris when Napoleon escaped from Elba and was dispatched to Brussels by her French husband, General d'Arblay, a member of Louis XVIII's royalist guard, in the belief that she would be safer there.¹⁹ The 20-year old Georgiana Capel had accompanied her parents, the Hon. John Thomas and Lady Caroline Capel, to Brussels in June 1814. Like many other cash-strapped British aristocrats, the Capels were attracted to the city by the prospect of being able to live more cheaply on the continent. The stationing of a British garrison in Brussels ensured an atmosphere of a lively sociability for the British expatriate community during the 'false peace' that preceded Napoleon's return to power, and Georgiana's letters from this period record a pleasurable round of picnics, parties and balls. As a member of one of the foremost British families in Brussels, she was amongst the select group invited to the Duchess of Richmond's ball for the Duke of Wellington held on June 15.²⁰ Magdalene, Lady de Lancey was one of several officers' wives who joined their husbands on the campaign in Flanders. She declined an invitation to the Duchess's ball, preferring to spend the evening with her husband, Colonel Sir William de Lancey, to whom she had been married for only two months prior to his appointment as Quarter Master General at Brussels, where she accompanied him at the beginning of June.²¹ Though Charlotte Anne Eaton had no immediate military connections, she also sailed with her brother and sister to Ostend on 10 June to begin an ill-timed tour of the continent, arriving in Brussels only a few days before the battle of Waterloo. As it was clear by this stage that a confrontation between Napoleon and the Coalition

forces was imminent, Eaton's decision to travel to the continent appears to have been motivated by a desire to be near to the scene of such a momentous event.²²

It is unlikely that she anticipated how near they would ultimately be to the battlefield. As Napoleon and his troops moved more rapidly than expected, Brussels, it soon became apparent, would be not just the point of departure for the British forces, but the seat of war itself. Although the civilians who were gathered in Brussels in June 1815 would have had some idea that an engagement between the British and French forces was imminent, many did not make a serious attempt to flee the city until after the battle of Quatre Bras on the 16th. By this stage, however, most forms of transport had been requisitioned by the military, and they were trapped in the city.²³ On June 18, as the battle raged less than ten miles away, Fanny Burney wrote to her husband of the 'indescribable horror' of being so near 'the Field of Slaughter', being able to hear the sound of the 'death-dispensing balls of fire' and shortly after to witness its effects in the form of the 'wounded, the maimed, and the bleeding'.²⁴

Burney and the other women remaining in Brussels were soon mobilized to help these wounded soldiers and employed in making lint for their bandages.²⁵ When not thus occupied, they attempted to gather reports on the progress of the campaign. Eaton recalled how the shared experience of fear and uncertainty led to an almost liberating dissolution of social constraints and distinctions as 'all ranks were confounded; all distinctions levelled; all common forms neglected' and 'ladies accosted men they had never before seen with eager questions'.²⁶ Fanny Burney recorded a similar abandonment of formal conventions as she set aside her 'natively reserved' character to gather intelligence on the battle from the Scottish Highland soldiers who were quartered in the city.²⁷

Throughout the day various reports reached Brussels that the French had been victorious and would soon be arriving in the city. As Linda Colley and others have shown, the particular threat the French soldiery presented to the personal security and virtue of British women was a recurring theme in loyalist propaganda and atrocity literature during the Revolutionary and Napoleonic wars.²⁸ As the prospect of a Napoleonic victory became increasingly real, the imagined horrors associated with the French forces resurfaced in the minds of the British women gathered in Brussels, Charlotte Eaton anxiously reflecting on the 'dreadful list of uncertain, undefined evils to which we might be exposed, in the power of those merciless savages'.²⁹

Imagination and experience

The spectre of the savage French soldier, which Eaton drew from British patriotic propaganda, is a reminder of the extent to which the British experience of war was mediated through such sources. For all the women considered here, and for the majority of British civilians in Brussels, Waterloo was their first direct experience of warfare. With the exception of the short-lived French invasion of the west of Ireland and a brief landing in Wales, the British civilian population had been protected by the 'wooden walls' of the navy from the immediate experience of an invading army. The war was brought home to Britons in other ways – by the militarization of the landscape; through the letters of friends and relatives fighting abroad; and in theatrical, literary and artistic representations – and the British population was undoubtedly profoundly conscious that they were a nation at war. Yet scholars of Romantic literature have recently questioned the extent to which the war was truly brought home to Britons. Mary Favret has argued that imaginative representations of war cocooned the British public from real knowledge of its devastating impact, raising a 'paper shield – a shield of newspaper reports, pamphlets, songs and poems – against the destructive violence of war'.³⁰ In his study of British poetry during the wars, however, Simon Bainbridge counters that far from insulating the public from 'the horrors of war', writers, and in particular poets, during this period were deeply concerned with rendering conflict real and immediate for their readers, enabling them through 'imagination' or 'fancy' to position themselves in scenes of war.³¹

Romantic literature's emphasis on the power of the imagination to understand and represent war suggests a more complicated vision of the gendered relationship between war writing and war experience than the privileging of the soldier-narrator allows. Understood to be a facility particularly associated with women, the emphasis on 'fancy' and 'imagination' in eighteenth-century representations of war allowed the female poet to transport herself to the field of battle and to engage sympathetically with those left behind: the wives and families of British soldiers and sailors.³² While this insistence on the importance of the imagination in making war visible and emotionally palpable for the British public could sanction women's war poetry, Bainbridge has also discerned a degree of unease with this 'imaginative consumption of war' and a greater stress on the authority of the eyewitness in the latter stages of the conflict. In *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage*, for instance, Lord Byron, who had travelled to Spain during the Peninsular campaign, presented himself as

an actual observer of the battles he described, suggesting that it was only through first-hand experience of the battlefield that war could be properly conceived.³³

A desire to be, however belatedly, an eyewitness to history and to encounter directly the tangible vestiges of conflict inspired a flood of British tourists to Waterloo in the immediate aftermath of the battle.³⁴ Amongst them was Walter Scott who would use his visit to lend a degree of authenticity to his poetic rendering of the battle in *The Field of Waterloo* (1815).³⁵ Though Scott's celebratory mode of war poetry achieved a great deal of critical and commercial success during the Peninsular campaign, his versification of Waterloo attracted a more hostile critical reception, reflecting a widespread belief that the battle defied literary representation. Pondering on British poets' failure to do justice to Waterloo, the literary journal the *British Critic* attributed this to the momentous nature of the victory which meant that the 'grandeur of reality overpowers the faint gleam of fiction'.³⁶ For those who were in Brussels at the time of the battle, Scott's efforts to convey Waterloo in verse were hopelessly inadequate. Writing from Brussels in November 1815, Georgiana Capel declared that she was 'enraged' by the poem and ridiculed both its pretensions to sublimity and the exaggerated description it gave of the battlefield: 'The fact is', she wrote to her grandmother,

Scott came to Brussels with the intention of writing a Poem, *par conséquence* it is very flat & not altogether correct, for certainly he must have been dreaming when he bestowed *Towers* upon the Farm of Hugoumont [the Chateau d'Hugoumont, the farmhouse which had been stubbornly defended by a British garrison during the battle].³⁷

As Georgiana Capel drew on her own first-hand knowledge of the battlefield to critique Scott's poem, Charlotte Anne Eaton similarly underlined her privileged position as an eyewitness to distinguish her narrative from the many accounts of the campaign and battlefield published by the 'Waterloo pilgrims' who had travelled to Brussels after the victory. In August 1815 she published anonymously a 'Circumstantial Detail' by a 'Near Observer'. Although Eaton's text was primarily written as an accompaniment to the panoramic sketches of Waterloo painted by her sister Jane, a brief account of her experiences during the campaign was included with her description of the battleground. It proved hugely popular and had already gone through ten editions by 1817 when Eaton published a more extensive account of her experiences under the title *Narrative of a Residence in Belgium during the Campaign of 1815... by an*

Englishwoman. Acknowledging the many other works that had since appeared on the subject, she nevertheless asserted the superiority her own account of Waterloo could claim as an eyewitness report:

The Author must be permitted most earnestly to disclaim all idea of entering into competition with the writers whose talents and genius have been so well displayed in describing the battle and the field of Waterloo. But they were not, like the Author of this Narrative, on the spot at the time these glorious events took place.³⁸

An insistence upon the authority of experience would feature repeatedly in women's narratives of Waterloo, as they maintained that the true horrors of war could not be understood by a nation that had been shielded from its destructive forces. Justifying her graphic description of the corpse-strewn battlefield, Eaton maintained that it was necessary to 'dwell upon those scenes of horror' in order to impress upon the British nation, 'hitherto preserved from being the theatre of war', the devastation wrought by conflict and the sacrifices made on their behalf by the British army.³⁹ Thinking of those in England who lived in 'peaceable comfort ... surrounded with every luxury' but nonetheless thought themselves unhappy, Lady de Lancey reflected bitterly: 'I can fancy no better cure for all imaginary evils, than a week's residence at Waterloo'.⁴⁰ Though the sound of cannons and guns firing would have been familiar to British civilians from military reviews and theatrical set pieces, such mock military enactments could not compare with the actual roar of artillery. As Caroline Capel explained to her mother, 'To an English Ear unaccustomed to such things, the Cannonading of a *Real* Battle is Awful.'⁴¹

An emphasis on the limited and partial perspective available to the author has been identified as a common characteristic of battle narratives.⁴² Eschewing the objective, elevated view of the military historian who describes battle formations, tactics and strategy, soldier-narrators reinforce the authenticity of their account by confining it to a description of their individual, subjective experience. This commitment to record only what they had seen and experienced also featured in women's narratives of Waterloo. In doing so they asserted a conventional feminine diffidence regarding their encroachment on to the masculine domain of war and politics, whilst simultaneously affirming their status as eyewitnesses. Fanny Burney thus opened her retrospective narrative of Waterloo by declaring that she would not write 'an account of those great events, which have been detailed so many hundred

times, & in so many hundred ways' but would write instead 'simply the narrative of my own history at that awful period'.⁴³

While they may have been committed to recording only those aspects of war which they directly experienced, women's Waterloo narratives were also framed by an understanding of the 'in-between' position which they occupied within war's home/front dichotomy and an awareness that their experience of battle remained indirect. They could only bear witness to the backwash of battle; physical knowledge of combat was beyond them. In his analysis of soldiers' war narratives, Samuel Hynes identifies embodied experience and the 'reality' of fear, dismemberment and death on the battlefield as the defining aspect of war experience, stressing the importance of '*seeing* and *smelling* and *feeling* war'.⁴⁴ It is a viewpoint that tends to exclude women and non-combatants from the narration of war experience. In Charlotte Eaton's account of Waterloo, however, we can discern an effort to displace the body as the key site of experience as she, like the Romantic poets, emphasizes the power of imagination in visualizing war. Though she could not be physically present on the battlefield, Eaton repeatedly referred to herself and her family during the engagement as being like 'moving automatons' or 'bodies without souls'. 'Our persons and our outward sense were indeed present in Antwerp', she wrote, 'but our whole hearts and souls were with the army'.⁴⁵ And, while Eaton sympathized with the sufferings of the wounded returning from the fray, it was her imagining of their comrades still lying upon the battlefield, which, she claimed, agitated her most. 'Dreadful, indeed, is the *sight* of pain and misery', she wrote, 'but far more dreadful are the horrors imagination pictures of the scene of carnage'.⁴⁶

If Eaton's imagination enabled her to transport herself to the battlefield and to visualize the 'scene of carnage', she also drew upon her imaginative resources to roam back to 'Albion's shores' in order to envisage the domestic impact of the battle. Employing an image common to British women's writing about war, she drew attention to the tragic cost of the victory at Waterloo for the mothers and wives of the fallen soldiers. The influence of women's war poetry and its sentimental evocation of the victims of war is evident as she shifts from prose to verse to picture, 'Ye dames of Albion!... Who sadly sitting on the sea-beat shore,/Long look for lords who never shall return!'⁴⁷

The language of war

Reviews of Eaton's narrative readily acknowledged the advantages it possessed as the work of a 'personal witness'; they were, however, more

critical of Eaton's 'warm imagination', noting her tendency to stray from factual description, her 'propensity to the flowery and the poetical' and 'fondness for the sentimental'.⁴⁸ Because of their historical exclusion from combat, women have been understood as particularly prone to propaganda and platitudes about war, and even the feminist scholar Jean Bethke Elshtain has discerned in women's war-writing a tendency to rely on 'stereotypical tropes that bear little relation to war's realities'.⁴⁹ In contrast, soldier-narrators, according to Samuel Hynes, do not 'glorify war, or aestheticise it, or make it literary or heroic; they speak in their own voices in their own plain language . . . they bear witness'.⁵⁰ This distinction between the direct, authentic speech of the combatant and the 'high diction' civilians use to talk of war is, of course, questionable. Even the most laconic accounts of Waterloo by combatants drew implicitly on available linguistic templates, such as the battle dispatch, and many employed the standard locutions of warfare: regiments fought 'gallantly', the fighting was 'tremendous', the victory 'glorious'.⁵¹

Though his efforts to portray Waterloo in verse were deemed a critical failure, Walter Scott's metrical romances still provided the most influential literary model for writing about war at this time, and his hugely popular tales of chivalry in the sixteenth-century Scottish borders were instrumental in mediating conflict to the British wartime nation.⁵² The realities of Napoleonic warfare, of mass armies and modern artillery, were thus imaginatively translated into a world of heroic individual combat and broadswords. In this way modern war could be rendered palatable, even aesthetically pleasing for the British reading public. Though the women considered here may have criticized Britons' ignorance of the true horrors of modern warfare, they, too, invoked the chivalric model in their depiction of Waterloo. Charlotte Eaton proclaimed that the 'deeds of British valour' performed there were 'more like the tales of chivalry and romance than the events of real life'.⁵³ On a twilight visit to the graves of British officers buried near the battleground, Georgiana Capel similarly drew upon James Macpherson's *Poems of Ossian* (1761) and its even earlier depiction of chivalric Celtic warriors to evoke the pervasive melancholy of the scene. As she moved across the burial field she quoted liberally from the text, conjuring up 'dim ghosts' who defended the tombs of these 'slumbering Heroes'.⁵⁴ *Ossian* has been interpreted as presenting a particularly feminized vision of warfare, softening the rugged violence of Celtic warriorhood with the more tender language of sensibility.⁵⁵ As such, it provided an appropriate and familiar framework through which Georgiana could filter her description of the aftermath of Waterloo.

These efforts to reconfigure the battlefield as a romantic or picturesque landscape, however, were invariably disrupted by the still visible detritus of war. Women did not shy away from describing these gruesome details. Georgiana Capel wrote of the flocks of birds of prey hovering above the open graves and the caps filled with congealed blood that lay upon the ground.⁵⁶ In Eaton's account of the field of Waterloo, she described her horror at perceiving a human hand reduced almost to a skeleton reaching out from one of the mass graves.⁵⁷ The fixation upon such arresting and grotesque details is a common feature of soldiers' memoirs, a narrative mode that Hynes has dubbed the 'battlefield gothic'. Whilst he understands such episodes as reflecting combatants' unflinching engagement with the 'realities' of war, in the context of the early nineteenth-century they must also be understood as indebted to the imagery of the gothic novel. Indeed, Eaton had written a draft novel in the gothic style, and Georgiana Capel confessed that in the weeks following Waterloo she and her sister endlessly discussed the horrific details of the battlefield, seemingly deriving from such macabre discussions a thrill not dissimilar to that provided by popular horror novels.⁵⁸ The appropriation of available literary models can help to explain the contradictory impulses in these female responses to Waterloo and their desire both to romanticize war and to focus on its gruesome details. By filtering the experience of war and its aftermath through established narrative frameworks, whether chivalric or gothic, it could be rendered less disturbing.

In her letters to her grandmother Georgiana Capel reveals some awareness of how contemporary literary genres may have shaped her narrative of Waterloo. Relating an encounter with the sweetheart of a British officer who had been killed during the battle, she described how the 'poor creature', having retrieved the portrait of herself that her lover had worn into battle, had now, in her grief, got it 'shivered almost to pieces'. Georgiana immediately followed this sentimental vignette with a self-conscious admission of its debt to romantic fiction. Entreating her correspondent to excuse this lapse into sentimentality, she pleaded in her defence that 'the fertile inventor necessity makes me compose my ideas into romance to *please* myself and *amuse* others'.⁵⁹ A sense that the feminized language of the sentimental novel could not convey the full experience of war was combined with a recognition of her own exclusion from a more masculine discourse of war. On one of her many visits to the field of Waterloo, she expressed her desire to hear an account of the battle from one of the British officers who had actually been there and could 'explain all I wish to know in their own language, not

womanised, for tho' I do not pretend to understand their *military* terms it loses much of the effect when the same is conveyed in *civil* terms'.⁶⁰ Her comments indicate a perceptive understanding of how the language in which war is narrated can serve to reinforce the gendered distinctions between civilian and military spheres. Yet her preference for military terminology does not seem to derive from a belief that it provided a more accurate, or unmediated version of battle. It is the 'effect' or aesthetic impact of such language that she privileges rather than its capacity for realistic description.

Narrating the self

The narration of personal experience, as is now widely recognized, is closely related to the construction of the self.⁶¹ Personal narratives can reveal the extent to which individuals are shaped and shape themselves according to the public roles that are available to them. Unlike autobiographies, the Waterloo narratives considered here are concerned with a discrete episode and set of experiences; they do not explicitly narrate the evolution of a personal identity. In the context of the ongoing debate regarding the relationship between warfare and the construction of modern identities, however, they can perhaps shed light on women's relationship to the British wartime nation, and the ways in which, as Kathleen Wilson has put it, individuals 'insert themselves into the weft of collective narratives'.⁶²

Having spent most of the period between 1802 and 1812 in France, Fanny Burney's exposure to British war propaganda was relatively limited.⁶³ Her long residence abroad and marriage to a Frenchman thus complicated her relationship to Britishness, and ambivalence towards assertions of national superiority would mark her novel *The Wanderer* published in 1814.⁶⁴ While her Waterloo narrative recalled her pride at the 'brilliancy of the success' over Napoleon, her exultation at the victory was tempered by a profound sympathy with the defeated French troops whose ravaged forms she had watched from her window in the week following the defeat. 'To see them without commiseration for their direful sufferings', she maintained, 'must have demanded an apathy dead to all feeling but what is personal, or a rancour too ungenerous to yield even to the view of Defeat'.⁶⁵ Here Burney draws upon her own dual identification with both the British and French nations to plead for recognition of the sufferings shared by victor and vanquished alike and of the common humanity that transcends narrow national antagonisms.

Charlotte Eaton's account of the battle struck a more emphatically patriotic note designed to chime with the anticipated audience for her text. As the only work written expressly for publication, Eaton addressed her account to the British reading public, adopting a public and national persona that was clearly signalled in her narrative's titular claim to have been written 'by an Englishwoman'. English and British were often used interchangeably during this period, and it is clear from her account that Eaton's sense of national identity encompassed more than identification with England alone. Although Eaton had been born in the north of England, her father was Scottish, and she lived for many years in Scotland. As a result she felt a particular affinity with the Highland regiments who fought at Waterloo, and throughout her narrative paid tribute to their good behaviour, good humour and gallantry. While Eaton was quick to point out the horrors of war and the tragic cost of victory, she nevertheless advanced a conception of British patriotism in which the nation's military prowess was understood as both the most important component of British national identity and the guarantor of all the other elements upon which British pre-eminence rested. In reply to those who might query what Britain had gained from years of war and bloodshed, Eaton was insistent that national glory alone was sufficient to justify these sacrifices:

Glory is the highest, the most lasting good. Without it, extent of empire, political greatness, and national prosperity are but a name, without it, they can have no security... Fortune may change; arts may perish; commerce may decay; and wealth and power, and dominion and greatness may pass away – but glory is immortal and indestructible.⁶⁶

National glory, Eaton was keen to stress, rested upon more than the heroic actions of the British army's aristocratic leaders. At Waterloo, she wrote, 'every private soldier acted like a hero', and in her reflections on the domestic suffering of these soldiers' wives and mothers, she suggested how British glory also depended upon women's sacrifices. By elaborating such an expansive vision of British patriotism, one which transcended rank and gender, Eaton was able to stake her own claim to a share in this national glory, a claim that was enhanced by her experience as an eyewitness to this momentous British victory. 'I returned to my country', her narrative concluded, 'after all the varying and eventful scenes through which it had been my lot to pass more proud than when I left it of the name of AN ENGLISHWOMAN.'⁶⁷

In contrast to Eaton's inclusive model of British armed patriotism, Georgiana Capel understood the victory at Waterloo as a distinctly aristocratic achievement and more particularly as the source of familial pride. Her uncle, Lord Uxbridge, had commanded the allied cavalry troops during the battle and was widely celebrated for his gallant conduct in the engagement. Famously, his leg, which had to be amputated, was buried with a headstone on the battlefield, becoming a site of pilgrimage for Waterloo tourists. In Georgiana Capel's letters to her grandmother, Lord Uxbridge's mother, the reflected glory which they derived from their male relative's heroism was continuously underlined and affirmed. As Georgiana assured Countess Uxbridge, 'If ever a mother had reason to be proud of a son, you have.'⁶⁸ She eagerly reported on the high regard in which Lord Uxbridge was held by the Belgians and the portraits and memorabilia that were produced in his honour. Describing a snuff box engraved with Uxbridge's portrait which she had seen in a local shop, Capel confessed that she longed to write upon it, 'I have the honour of being the Earl's niece.'⁶⁹ The Napoleonic wars, as Linda Colley has observed, played a crucial role in consolidating the prestige and authority of the British aristocracy, the military prowess displayed at Waterloo contributing to a cult of elite heroism. In trumpeting the heroic exploits of her uncle, Capel bolstered the aristocracy's claim to be a dutiful service elite and drew upon a long-established model of aristocratic female patriotism that centred upon the promotion of dynastic honour.⁷⁰

While Eaton and Capel's accounts reveal some effort to weave their individual existences into a broader fabric of collective identities, whether national, aristocratic or familial, the final Waterloo narrative that I want to consider was written in the personal and private voice of the grieving widow and appears to resist assimilation to any broader collective narratives. Lady de Lancey's account of her tragic honeymoon and final days with her dying husband at Waterloo was originally written in 1816 at the behest of a friend. The memoir is so closely concentrated on her fears for her husband that it may almost be termed a 'non-eyewitness' account: throughout the conflict de Lancey deliberately averted her attention from the battle, shutting her windows in order not to hear the distant rumbling of artillery, drawing the curtains so as not to see the wounded and forbidding her maid servant from bringing any reports on the progress of the contest.⁷¹ Rather than engaging with the battle, the account centres on the enclosed world of the sick chamber, minutely detailing de Lancey's ministrations to her husband. In an analysis of narratives of war grief in the twentieth century, Carol

Acton has observed that the impulse to find meaning in personal loss often leads the bereaved to draw upon publicly sanctioned discourses of 'honour' and 'sacrifice'.⁷² Lady de Lancey's narrative, however, makes no effort to present her loss in terms of patriotic abstractions or her husband as a noble hero gallantly sacrificing himself for the sake of his country. The stone that she erected to mark his grave briefly recorded the date of his death and the circumstances of his wounding, with no reference to the significance of the battle in which he fell. Nor did she express any affinity with the countless other women who had been bereaved, or seek solace in a wider community of suffering. It is the sense of grief as a profoundly isolating experience that pervades her account.

Although Lady de Lancey's narrative would not be published in full until 1906, copies circulated in manuscript form throughout the nineteenth century, and it achieved some recognition in literary circles; Walter Scott, the Irish poet Thomas Moore and Charles Dickens all read versions and claimed to be deeply affected by it. As early as 1825 Walter Scott urged the family to publish the memoir, suggesting that this 'heartrending diary' might be appended to an edition of his own account of the battle and field of Waterloo, *Paul's Letters to His Kinfolk* (1816). Although he acknowledged that the work was of a 'domestic nature', Scott insisted that it was 'one of the most valuable and important documents which could be published as illustrative of the woes of war.'⁷³ Lady de Lancey may have resisted the public role of the war widow, but the response to her narrative suggests that she became an emblem of suffering femininity nonetheless. The enduring appeal of Lady de Lancey's story – a fictional version was published as recently as 1988 – can perhaps be explained by this assumption that it is primarily a 'domestic narrative' rather than a war narrative and as such does not challenge the gendered dichotomy between home and front, domestic and martial.⁷⁴

Conclusion

The 'in-between' position in which many British women found themselves during the Waterloo campaign – neither at home nor at the front – complicated distinctions between these realms, and generated distinct tensions in women's war narratives. Their proximity to the battlefield allowed them to claim the authority of the eyewitness, but their exclusion from the battle could also lead them to stress their imaginative engagement with events beyond their field of vision. Though they drew a distinction between the 'imaginative consumption' of war

at home and the direct experience of the realities of conflict at the front, their own experiences were, nonetheless, mediated through available literary discourses. While I have attempted to identify some of the common features of women's Waterloo narratives, the varied subject positions adopted by these authors – from the public and national persona of Charlotte Anne Eaton to the private and personal voice of Lady de Lancey – point to important differences in the interpretation and presentation of their experiences.

What emerges from these female-authored accounts, however, is an understanding that their experiences were worth recounting and that, like the more familiar figure of the soldier-narrator, they also had war stories to tell. Recent theoretical literature on gender and war writing has emphasized how the 'fetishization' of male combat experience acts to marginalize women's writing about war in the twentieth century. Though women's exclusion from combat undoubtedly imposed certain constraints on their narratives of Waterloo, the link between the lived experience of battle and the narration of war was not necessarily so firmly established in the early nineteenth century. The value of soldiers' war testimony was even challenged by the Duke of Wellington. In his scornful dismissal of the flood of Waterloo narratives that appeared in the decades after the victory, Wellington famously likened the history of a battle to the history of a ball, insofar as no one could accurately remember what exactly had happened.⁷⁵ It is a telling comment, hinting that the gendered gulf between ballroom and battlefield is not always as wide as we may sometimes imagine.

Notes

1. Claire Harman, *Fanny Burney: A Biography* (London: Harper Collins, 2001), p. 363.
2. Fanny Burney, 'Waterloo Journal' in Peter Hughes *et al.* (eds), *The Journals and Letters of Fanny Burney (Madame d'Arblay)*, vol. 8 (Oxford: Clarendon, 1980), p. 424.
3. See, for example, Lord Byron's evocation of this chivalric gathering of 'fair women and brave men', in *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage*, canto III, line 184, in Lord Byron, *The Major Works* ed. Jerome McGann (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), p. 110.
4. John Carey, 'Introduction', William Makepeace Thackeray, *Vanity Fair* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 2001 [1847–1848]), p. xxviii.
5. Gleig's account of the campaign only devotes one brief chapter to the experiences of the civilian community in Brussels, tellingly entitled 'State of Feeling *Where the War Was Not*'. George Robert Gleig, *The Story of the Battle*

- of Waterloo* (New York: Harper and Brother, 1875), chapter 25, pp. 125–133 [my italics].
6. Donald Hawes, 'Fanny Burney and Thackeray', *Notes and Queries* 49 (2002): 63–65.
 7. Michael C. Nelson, 'Writing during Wartime: Gender and Literacy in the American Civil War', *Journal of American Studies* 31 (1997): 43–68, here 43 and 63.
 8. Indeed, in explaining why Thackeray, unlike Tolstoy, did not include a description of battle in his Napoleonic novel, John Carey suggests that it is because Thackeray had not seen battle, in contrast to Tolstoy who had served in the Crimea. Carey therefore concludes that 'for him to write battle-narrative would be a pretence – and a pretentiousness'. Carey, 'Introduction', *Vanity Fair*, p. xxviii.
 9. Jean Bethke Elshstain, *Women and War* (Brighton: Harvester, 1987), p. 212. For a critical analysis of some of the scholarship on war literature see Leonard V. Smith, 'Paul Fussell's *The Great War and Modern Memory: Twenty-Five Years Later*', *History and Theory* 40 (2001): 241–260; Lynn Hanley, *Writing War: Fiction, Gender and Memory* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1991), pp. 18–37; Margaret R. Higonnet, 'Not So Quiet in No-Woman's Land', in Miriam Cooke and Angela Woollacott (eds), *Gendering War Talk* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1993), pp. 205–206.
 10. According to Samuel Hynes the twentieth century is 'the century of personal narratives of war'. Samuel Hynes, *The Soldier's Tale: Bearing Witness to Modern War* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1997), p. 30.
 11. As Clive Emsley notes, the campaign in the Peninsula was the first in British history to be written up by significant numbers of literate men from the other ranks. Clive Emsley, *British Society and the French Wars* (London and Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1979), p. 172.
 12. John Keegan, *The Face of Battle. A Study of Agincourt, Waterloo and the Somme* (London: Pimlico, 2004 [1976]), p. 119.
 13. A further female-authored narrative of Waterloo, not discussed here, can be found in Georgiana, Lady de Ros' recollections of the Duke of Wellington. See Blanche Arthur Georgiana Swinton, *A Sketch of the Life of Georgiana, Lady de Ros, with Some Reminiscences of Her Family and Friends, Including the Duke of Wellington* (London: John Murray, 1893). One of the more well-known civilian accounts of the campaign is contained in the journals and reminiscences of the Member of Parliament Thomas Creevey. John Gore (ed.), *Thomas Creevey's Papers, 1793–1838* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1985). Creevey's wife, Eleanor, was with him in Brussels at the time, and there is a surviving letter written by her shortly after the battle. Public Record Office Northern Ireland (PRONI), Belfast. D/481/2. Letter from Mrs E. Creevey to Mrs Dickson, 5 July 1815.
 14. On literary and cultural mediations of the war see Gillian Russell, *The Theatres of War: Politics, Performance and Society, 1793–1815* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995); Simon Bainbridge, *British Poetry and the Revolutionary and Napoleonic Wars. Visions of Conflict* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003); Mary A. Favret, 'Coming Home: The Public Spaces of Romantic War', *Studies in Romanticism* 33 (1994): 539–548, here 539.

15. Kathleen Wilson, *The Island Race: Englishness, Empire and Gender in the Eighteenth Century* (London and New York: Routledge, 2003), chapter 3, pp. 92–128; Amend to 'Patricia Y. C. E. Lin', 'Extending her Arms: Military Families and the Transformation of the British State, 1793–1815', University of California, Berkeley, PhD, 1997; Paul E. Kopperman, 'The British High Command and Soldiers' Wives in America, 1755–1783', *Journal of the Society for Army Historical Research* 60 (1982): 14–34; Brigadier F. C. G. Page, *Following the Drum: Women in Wellington's Wars* (London: André Deutsch, 1986).
16. Lin, 'Extending her Arms', p. 16; Louise P. Carter, 'British Women during the Revolutionary and Napoleonic Wars, 1793–1815: Responses, Roles and Representations', University of Cambridge PhD, 2005, p. 175.
17. Barton C. Hacker, 'Women and Military Institutions in Early Modern Europe: A Reconnaissance', *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society* 6 (1981): 643–671, here 655.
18. Andrew Uffindell, 'Women at Waterloo' <http://www.historynet.com/magazines/military_history/3031026.html> (29 August 2007).
19. Burney, 'Waterloo Journal', Hughes (ed.), *Journal and Letters of Fanny Burney*, p. 353.
20. Nick Foulkes, *Dancing into Battle. A Social History of the Battle of Waterloo* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicholson, 2006), pp. 3–22.
21. 'Lady de Lancey's Narrative' in David Miller (ed.), *Lady de Lancey at Waterloo. A Story of Duty and Devotion* (Staplehurst: Spellmount, 2000), pp. 105–143.
22. Charlotte Anne Eaton, *Waterloo Days. The Narrative of an Englishwoman Resident at Brussels in June, 1815* (London, 1888 [1817]), p. 1.
23. Foulkes, *Dancing into Battle*, p. 181. Fanny Burney's escape from Brussels was cut short when the barge she was to travel on was commandeered by the British army. Burney, 'Waterloo Journal', p. 435.
24. *Ibid.*, p. 424.
25. Burney to General d'Arblay, 19 June 1815, *Journals and Letters*, p. 215. See also Georgiana Capel to Countess Uxbridge, June 1815 in Marquess of Anglesey (ed.), *The Capel Letters: Being the Correspondence of Lady Caroline Capel and her daughters with the Dowager Countess of Uxbridge from Brussels and Switzerland 1814–1817* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1955), p. 119.
26. Eaton, *Waterloo Days*, p. 67.
27. Burney, 'Waterloo Journal', Hughes (ed.), *Journal and Letters of Fanny Burney*, p. 430.
28. Linda Colley, *Britons. Forging the Nation 1707–1837* (London: Vintage, 1996 [1992]), p. 271.
29. Eaton, *Waterloo Days*, p. 41.
30. Favret, 'Public Spaces of Romantic War', 539.
31. Bainbridge, *British Poetry*, pp. 18–19.
32. *Ibid.*, p. 56; Stephen C. Behrendt, "'A Few Harmless Numbers": British Women Poets and the Climate of War, 1793–1815' in Philip Shaw (ed.), *Romantic Wars. Studies in Culture and Conflict, 1793–1822* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2000), pp. 13–36.
33. For a discussion of Byron's attack on the 'versification of war' by Scott and others see Bainbridge, *British Poetry*, pp. 170–179.

34. Stuart Semmel, 'Reading the Tangible Past: British Tourism, Collecting and Memory after Waterloo', *Representations* 69 (Winter 2000): 9–37.
35. Although Scott did not visit Waterloo until several months after the battle, his account of the battlefield in *Paul's Letters to his Kinfolk* (1816) gave the impression that he had seen it at a much earlier date when corpses still lay upon the ground. Philip Shaw, *Waterloo and the Romantic Imagination* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2002), p. 45.
36. *British Critic*, 6 (1816): 611.
37. Georgiana Capel to Lady Uxbridge, November 1815, *Capel Letters*, p. 150.
38. Charlotte Anne Eaton, *Narrative of a Residence in Belgium during the Campaign of 1815; and of a Visit to the Field of Waterloo. By an Englishwoman* (London, 1817), pp. iii–iv. This work was republished in 1888 under the title *Waterloo Days*. Although the preface was slightly altered the main body of the text does not differ from the 1817 version. Most of the subsequent references to the text are taken from the 1888 version.
39. Eaton, *Waterloo Days*, p. 155.
40. 'Lady de Lancey's Narrative', p. 118.
41. Caroline Capel to Lady Uxbridge, 18 June 1815, *Capel Letters*, p. 110.
42. Keegan, *Face of Battle*, p. 128–133; Hynes, *Soldiers' Tale*, pp. 12–15.
43. Burney, 'Waterloo Journal', p. 421.
44. Samuel Hynes quotes a French soldier-writer of the First World War to illustrate this point: 'The man who has not understood with his flesh cannot talk to you about it.' Hynes, *Soldiers' Tale*, p. 2. For a discussion of some of the issues arising from the relationship between discourse, bodily experience and war see Smith, 'Paul Fussell's The Great War and Modern Memory', pp. 259–260; Kathleen Canning, 'The Body as Method? Reflections on the Place of the Body in Gender History', *Gender & History* 11 (1999): 499–513.
45. Eaton, *Waterloo Days*, pp. 57, 66.
46. *Ibid.*, p. 51.
47. *Ibid.*, p. 94.
48. *British Critic*, 7 (April 1817): 421; *Monthly Review; or Literary Journal*, 84 (November 1817): 292.
49. Elshtain, *Women and War*, p. 214.
50. Hynes, *Soldiers' Tale*, p. 30.
51. See for example Sir Jeremiah Dickson to his mother, Mrs Dickson, Le Cateau, 23 June 1815. PRONI, Belfast, D/481/1; Lieutenant C. W. Short to his mother, Nivelles, 19 June 1815, National Army Museum, London, 7702–05.
52. Bainbridge, *British Poetry*, p. 120.
53. Eaton, *The Battle of Waterloo*, p. 37.
54. Georgiana Capel to Countess Uxbridge, August 1815, in *Capel Letters*, p. 137.
55. Adam Potkay, 'Virtues and Manners in Macpherson's Poems of Ossian', *PMLA*, 107 (1992): 120–130.
56. Georgiana Capel to Countess Uxbridge, July 1815 and August 1815, *Capel Letters*, pp. 128 and 137.
57. Eaton, *Waterloo Days*, p. 137; on this 'gothic intrusion' in the description of Waterloo see Shaw, *Waterloo and the Romantic Imagination*, p. 76.
58. Although she abandoned the novel in 1814 due to similarities with the plot of Maria Edgeworth's *Patronage*, a revised version entitled *At Home or Abroad, Memoirs of Emily de Cardonell* was published in 1831. *Oxford*

- Dictionary of National Biography* online entry for Charlotte Anne Eaton. <<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/28447>> (29 August 2007).
59. Georgiana Capel to Countess Uxbridge, 23 July 1815, *Capel Letters*, p. 131.
 60. Georgiana Capel to Countess Uxbridge, August 1815, *ibid.*, p. 137.
 61. On narrative and the self see, for example, Elinor Ochs and Lisa Capps, 'Narrating the Self', *Annual Review of Anthropology* 25 (1996): 19–43 and essays in Jens Brockmeier and Donal Carbugh (eds), *Narrative and Identity. Studies in Autobiography, Self and Culture* (Amsterdam and Philadelphia: John Benjamins, 2001).
 62. Wilson, *Island Race*, p. 3. The most influential work on the relationship between war and British national identity in this period is Colley, *Britons*. See also J. E. Cookson, *The British Armed Nation, 1793–1815* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1997); Wilson, *Island Race*; Dror Wahrman, *The Making of the Modern Self: Identity and Culture in Eighteenth-Century England* (New Haven: Yale, 2004).
 63. Indeed, when she returned to England in 1812 Burney had to ask her friends what 'Trafalgar' meant; so complete had the news blackout been during her stay in France. Harman, *Fanny Burney*, p. 310.
 64. Maria Jerinic, 'Challenging Englishness: Frances Burney's *The Wanderer*' in Adriana Craciun and Kari E. Lokke (eds), *Rebellious Hearts: British Women Writers and the French Revolution* (New York: SUNY, 2001), pp. 63–84.
 65. Burney, 'Waterloo Journal', p. 447.
 66. Eaton, *Waterloo Days*, p. 163.
 67. *Ibid.*, p. 168.
 68. Georgiana Capel to Countess Uxbridge, 12 July 1815, *Capel Letters*, p. 123.
 69. Georgiana Capel to Countess Uxbridge, July 1816, *ibid.*, p. 168.
 70. See Judith S. Lewis, *Sacred to Female Patriotism. Gender, Class and Politics in Late Georgian Britain* (New York and London: Routledge, 2003).
 71. 'Lady de Lancey's Narrative', p. 109.
 72. Carol Acton, *Grief in Wartime: Private Pain, Public Discourse* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), p. 12.
 73. Walter Scott to Captain Hall, 13 October 1825 reproduced in Miller, *Lady de Lancey at Waterloo*, Appendix A, pp. 160–161.
 74. James B. Lamb, *In Love and War: The de Lanceys at Waterloo* (Toronto: Macmillan, 1988).
 75. Quoted in Keegan, *Face of Battle*, p. 117.

8

‘Unimaginable Horror and Misery’: The Battle of Leipzig in October 1813 in Civilian Experience and Perception

Karen Hagemann

The battle of Trafalgar decided mastery at sea, that of Leipzig the defeat of Napoleon and with it the dawn of the most recent era, which is no longer determined by the will of the princely ruler, but by economic and national questions. The mighty mass struggle thus proved a milestone in the history of Europe.¹

With these words, the Berlin historian Julius von Pflugk-Harttung began his voluminous documentation of the ‘Battle of the Nations’ at Leipzig. Between 16 and 19 October 1813 a total of more than 171,000 men under Napoleon’s supreme command, including many soldiers of his remaining German allies Baden, Saxony and Württemberg, faced 301,500 Coalition forces in Leipzig under the command of the Austrian field marshal Prince Schwarzenberg, among them 103,000 Russian, 78,000 Austrian, 70,000 Prussian, 33,000 Polish and 18,000 Swedish troops.² A substantial number of the forces on the European continent – more than 470,000 soldiers of the most diverse nationalities – German, English, French, Dutch, Italian, Croatian, Latvian, Lithuanian, Austrian, Polish, Portuguese, Russian, Swedish, Spanish, Hungarian etc. – had massed in Saxony.³ This made Leipzig – the ‘Battle of the Nations’, as it was already known to contemporaries – the largest battle in history before the First World War.

The liberation of Germany, which had begun on 13 March 1813 with the declaration of war by the Prussian–Russian Coalition, gained momentum after the armistice between 4 June and 10 August 1813, when Austria, Britain and Sweden joined the Coalition following the

failure of peace talks. In August and September 1813 Napoleon suffered his first defeats on German soil in many years. On 8 October, Bavaria left the Confederation of the Rhine. All other member states of the Confederation of the Rhine followed this example, with the exception of Baden and Saxony. The 'Battle of the Nations' did not, to be sure, bring an end to the Sixth Coalition War – Napoleon was not deposed until 2 April 1814 after the entry of Coalition troops into Paris – but it did represent a dramatic defeat for him. In his book on the Franco-Prussian War in North Germany in 1813, Michael V. Leggiere recently compared the consequences of the battle with those of the Russian campaign a year earlier. 'Germany was lost for good. Following Leipzig, the remnants of the Grande Armée of 1813 retreated to the Rhine River to defend France's natural frontiers as Napoleon's empire crumbled.'⁴

In this assessment of the military significance of Leipzig, the new military history differs little from the old.⁵ Since the end of the 'Wars of Liberation' of 1813–1815, hundreds of books and articles have been written on these wars and this battle in the centre of Germany. It occupied a key position in German national historiography as well as in the collective memory of the long nineteenth century. The 'victory of the united German people' was at the heart of the national myth of Germany's 'renewal' in 1813–1815 after the crushing Prussian-Saxon defeat of 1806–1807, which was interpreted as a 'national debacle'. In the popular memory of this time, revived especially on the occasion of the 100th anniversary in 1913, the 'Battle of the Nations' became the central event leading to the 'liberation of Germany'. This 'mighty, ultimately successful struggle' had given back to 'Germany's peoples' their 'righteous anger, their joyous, resolute belief in their own strength'.⁶ It was not just the countless historical treatises, popular commemorative books, biographies, autobiographies, historical novels, songs, poems and prints that recalled the battle and its 'heroic age'. Local memorial stones and plaques were also erected and, in October 1913, a national 'monument to the Battle of the Nations' near Leipzig.⁷ Naturally, the anniversary of the battle also gave rise to commemorative ceremonies. These celebrations were already popular in the immediate post-war years of 1814–1817. The first 'National Festival of the Germans' was celebrated in many parts of Germany on the first anniversary of the Battle of Leipzig in 1814. A festival volume 1146 pages long documented more than 780 events attended by tens or even hundreds of thousands of people.⁸ Not until the 50th and 100th anniversaries of the 'Battle of the Nations' was this historical event again marked on such a lavish scale.⁹

By now, the Leipzig battle has been researched relatively well from the perspectives of both military history and the history of memory. Rather remarkably, however, we still lack a study of this central battle, as well as of the wars of 1813–1815 more generally, from the viewpoint of social history, everyday life and experience. Ute Planert has recently undertaken such a study for southern Germany.¹⁰ Nothing comparable exists for Prussia, Saxony and the entire North German region. The scholarship on Napoleonic Germany since the late 1960s has focused on three main subjects: military campaigns and alliances, emerging sovereign states and reform movements, and early articulations of modern nationalism. It has ignored the economic, social and cultural dimensions of the Napoleonic Wars and the plurality of local war experiences in the German-speaking region. Most importantly, it has failed to explore the often violent and destructive everyday experience of these wars by soldiers and civilians.¹¹

As a result of this gap in the literature, scholars have tended to overlook the modern character of these first ‘total wars’ as David Bell recently termed them, which were conducted by mass armies, were mobilized by intensive patriotic and national propaganda, and affected millions of people all over Europe and beyond.¹² These wars altered the everyday lives of women and men of different regions and social strata in various ways, because the vast scale of the new mass armies, combined with intensified forms of economic warfare such as the Continental System, had far-reaching consequences for the military and for civil society alike.¹³ Detailed study demonstrates that – contrary to Bell’s argument that the Napoleonic Wars, the first ‘total wars’, saw increasing separation between the military and civilian society – at least in Central Europe the opposite took place. Bell’s argument may be true in times of peace, even if it is often difficult to identify exactly when war begins and ends in this period. It may also be true for regions which did not experience war. However for all areas directly involved in warfare, and in particular those which experienced battles, occupation, and the passage of troops, the separation between the military and civilian society was much less clear-cut. The sheer mass of the number of soldiers involved had far-reaching consequences not only for the military but also for civilian society. Civilians were much more often involved in the business of warfare than they were in the eighteenth century.¹⁴

An approach that relates the analysis of the military and warfare to social, political, cultural and gender history and focuses on the diversity of war experiences and perceptions could help us to grasp the character of the period of the Napoleonic Wars, with all its ambiguities

and paradoxes, better.¹⁵ Because of its extraordinary significance in its own time but also in national memory, the Battle of Leipzig provides an excellent example for such a study. Focusing on the battle as the most violent culmination of the war, one can explore how the conduct of war with mass armies affected soldiers and civilians, how they interacted with each other, and how they experienced and perceived events. In the case study that follows, these questions will be applied to the civilian population. My focus will mainly be on educated civilians who lived in Leipzig and the surrounding villages and towns where the battle took place, for the simple reason that many more primary documents – letters, diaries, accounts and memoirs – produced by these literate eyewitnesses have come down to us.

The historical context

The population of Saxony, particularly in the region around Leipzig, had already suffered greatly during the years and months of war preceding the Battle of Leipzig. They had to bear the usual burdens of billeting, requisitioning, taxes and duties. Saxony, whose territory at the time stretched over some 40,000 square kilometres, was among the most densely populated German regions. Because of its location in the middle of Germany, the trade fair city on the North German Plain with its approximately 40,000 inhabitants was a commercial and transport hub as well as the centre of the book trade.¹⁶

Apart from agriculture, the most important branches of the Saxon economy were mining, metal production and metalworking, textile manufactures and musical instrument making. Like the Prussian economy, the Saxon economy suffered under the Continental Blockade, albeit not to the same extent, since it still had access at least to the markets of the Confederation of the Rhine and the Grand Duchy of Warsaw, and until 1810 de facto of Russia as well. Protected from British competition, the textile industry in particular developed impressively after Saxony joined the Confederation of the Rhine, doubling its production. However, the growing material obligations of membership of the Confederation, including the payment of substantial taxes, duties and tributes and the raising and equipping of a large army, increasingly had a negative impact on the monarchy's finances and economy. From 1810, when Napoleon intensified the Continental Blockade and economic problems grew as a result, popular discontent with French rule also increased, as it did in other regions.¹⁷

For the Saxon population, the war itself had already begun in the spring and summer of 1812. Apart from Prussia, Saxony was the Grande Armée's main deployment zone for the Russian campaign, which began on 24 June 1812 with the crossing of the Russian frontier. For this, Napoleon mobilized a total of 655,000 men, drawn from all regions of his empire. The Confederation of the Rhine had to supply more than 120,000 soldiers and the Prussians 30,000.¹⁸ The population of Saxony and Prussia also had to billet, provision and equip the gigantic army marching through their territory. We have no data for Saxony, but the Prussian figures demonstrate the dimensions of the support that was requested. The monarchy had to deliver 600,000 hundredweight of flour, two million bottles each of beer and brandy, one million hundredweight of hay and straw, six million bushels of oats, 15,000 horses, 44,000 oxen and 3600 horse-drawn wagons with carters, as well as field-hospital supplies and munitions.¹⁹

The Russian campaign ended in disaster for the Grande Armée. Only 81,000 members of the huge army returned. At least 370,000 soldiers died during the campaign, and 200,000 were taken prisoner, of whom fewer than half survived. Of the 25,500 soldiers the Saxons were obliged to provide in 1812, only 6000 came back alive.²⁰ The troops who began returning in early 1813 presented a picture of misery. Gone was the army's smart appearance, replaced by ragged, weary, starving, sick and often wounded soldiers. For the Saxon population, the retreat meant not just renewed billeting, but also the risk of disease and epidemics. Many soldiers were infected with 'nerve or field-hospital fever' – as contemporaries called typhus – and dysentery, and they in turn infected the civilian population. During the retreat, 3499 inhabitants of Leipzig alone died.²¹ The field hospitals set up by the French army in Leipzig were soon full.²²

In early May 1813 Leipzig and its immediate environs experienced combat directly for the first time since the dramatic Prusso-Saxon defeat of October 1806. The city and the surrounding villages suffered substantially from the effects of the battle of Lützen on 2 May 1813 and the smaller skirmishes in its wake. Napoleon had vanquished the Prusso-Russian army and reoccupied the region temporarily liberated by Prussian and Russian troops, which would remain a key position for the French army in central Germany until October 1813. For the civilian population, the consequences were 'continual and very oppressive billeting, deliveries and taxes', which persisted throughout the entire period of the ceasefire, which both sides used to rearm.²³ By August 1813, inhabitants of the region felt that the situation had long since

become unbearable. Ferdinand Heinrich Grautoff, who studied theology in Leipzig during the war years, recalled that,

After the uninterrupted marches through of troops, with which the French emperor supplemented his army throughout the summer, the wealth of the middle classes appeared quite exhausted; even now the numerous occupiers of the city appeared more burden than protection; add to this the many field-hospitals and a French administration that could not have permitted greater acts of violence had they been on enemy territory.²⁴

The region between Berlin, Leipzig, Dresden and Breslau formed the heart of the autumn campaign of 1813 in Germany. Napoleon had already suffered a heavy defeat at the first great battle at Großbeeren near Berlin on 23 August, and five more defeats were to follow before the beginning of October.²⁵ On the orders of the Napoleonic military administration, a large number of the soldiers wounded in these battles were transported to Leipzig, which, along with Halle, was expanded into a centre for hospital care.²⁶ By early September the city had to create beds for 18,000 wounded and sick men. In addition, there were the Coalition's prisoners of war, including 8000 Austrians, who were forced to camp outside the city.²⁷ In the few weeks between the end of August and the beginning of October 1813, 90,000 sick and wounded soldiers passed through the city.²⁸ Every day the people of Leipzig saw 'long columns' of 'sick, wounded and detached troops' pass through the city gates. Grautoff describes their appearance:

They were truly terrible to behold! – Even the subsequent misery cannot erase the impression made upon me, and I can still see those wretched figures, as loathsome as they were terrible, on miserable crutches, scarcely half-clothed in rags, the proximity of death on their hollow-cheeked faces, dragging themselves laboriously through the streets, groaning loudly with hunger and pain.²⁹

The city's military hospitals, all of them set up in large public buildings, looked just as terrible. The sick and wounded were neither adequately fed nor carefully bandaged and nursed.³⁰ In and around the city, hardship and misery grew apace. This notwithstanding, the number of troops to be billeted increased since Napoleon, hard-pressed by the Coalition forces, assembled even more troops in the Leipzig region and the city proper. The supply problems grew with the number of soldiers, for the

Grande Armée lived exclusively from requisitions. Because the demand for supplies increasingly could not be met, as all reserves had been exhausted, violent pillaging became more common.³¹ Many accounts emphasize that higher-ranking officers tried to maintain military discipline and prevent plundering, but the hungrier and more wretched the soldiers became, the less successful these efforts proved. Those civilians who spoke French and could thus communicate with the officers and men had the best chances of being spared. This was mainly the case with the better-off and correspondingly more educated citizens, who had less difficulty in supplying the occupying troops.³²

Ludwig Wilhelm Gottlob Schlosser, who for many years served as pastor at Großschochau near Leipzig, describes how in early October, after the lost battle at Wartenburg, 600 Württemberg cavalry and 600 French infantry soldiers fell upon the village without warning 'and set up camp in a large field of vegetables outside the village and on the beds of plants':

From our houses they proceeded to remove tables, chairs and benches, saw-jacks and planks, doors and shutters, wood, straw, hay, sacks, pots and pans, plates, basins, wheelbarrows, axles, buckets and pails, candlesticks and lamps. They not only fed their horses very well, but also took away with them forty bushels of oats. The Württembergers played the master . . . on 6 October the village had to supply 1800 lb. of bread, an ox, eight hundred rations of oats and four waggons of hay. On the seventh we had to send to Lindenau two hundred full rations of oats and hay, and two hundred of bread, butter, meat, beer and brandy. On the eighth we thought we would be let off, but that night we were obliged to produce two hundred rations of oats and hay, and as many portions of meat and bread.³³

Such incursions continued until the Battle of Leipzig. Not all units marching through were satisfied to set up camp outside the villages. Others, like a unit of 800 French dragoons and 400 infantrymen, demanded to be quartered in villagers' farms and cottages, with the result that some householders had to house and feed 80 or even 100 men.³⁴

In the course of the month of October, both sides assembled more and more troops in the Leipzig area. The front lines shifted almost daily with many troops marching through. Badenese, French, Italian, Austrian, Russian and Württemberg units alternated in the days before the battle. In the perceptions of villagers, it made little difference to their everyday

lives whether the troops they had to put up and provision were 'friend' or 'foe', German-speaking or foreign. 'Friends', who included until the capitulation of the Saxon king the units of the Grande Armée, in fact appear frequently to have behaved far worse than the 'enemy'. Only the Russian soldiers, above all the Cossacks, were as greatly feared as the French and Württemberg troops.³⁵

The antipathy towards Napoleon and his multi-ethnic army reached its highest point in the weeks before the battle.³⁶ One reason was Napoleon's order that his retreating troops should 'take all of the inhabitants' livestock, burn the forests, hack down the orchards and destroy all other means of nourishment', in order to deprive these regions of 'every possible means of livelihood and transform them into a desert'.³⁷ The aim of this 'scorched earth' policy, which according to eyewitness reports the retreating French army continued to practise as much as possible, was to leave the enemy with no means to sustain their own troops.³⁸ This policy was one reason for the defection of Saxon troops during the Battle of Leipzig. They refused to participate in the destruction of their homeland, thereby defying their king, who stood by Napoleon only to be deposed by the Coalition after his defeat at Leipzig.³⁹

The more troops massed in the area around Leipzig, the more tightly the Napoleonic troops encircled the city, and the closer the Coalition forces approached, the clearer it became to the inhabitants of the city and the neighbouring villages that a great battle was impending. Cut off as they were from all news, because both the domestic and the French press were subject to strict censorship and outside newspapers could only occasionally be smuggled into the city, their fears grew with the explosion of rumour.⁴⁰

The civilian experience of the battle

For the village population of the region surrounding Leipzig, the fighting began days before the battle's official start on 16 October. With the massing of troops in early October, the number of smaller battles over individual villages also increased, and the inhabitants could consider themselves fortunate if they were warned in advance by the local occupying troops of the impending fight over their territory. This information was often followed by orders to evacuate.⁴¹ The pastor of Liebertwolkwitz and Großpösna, Dr Karl August Goldschab, gave the

following account of his village's experiences on 14 October. Still occupied at that time by French troops, they found themselves suddenly besieged and bombarded by the Coalition on that day:

In this great emergency we knew not where to turn and seek shelter, which we could no longer find in our houses, and a large number of the local inhabitants fled to the church, which they believed to be safe from the shells because of the thick masonry; others hid in the cellars of their houses⁴²

Goldschab goes on to say that others took refuge on the nearby estate, hiding in the cellar. The fighting continued all day, and the bombardment intensified. Even the church was not spared:

The groaning and lamenting inside the church was heart-rending, particularly because the church doors had been blasted open and the shells fell in through the windows . . . Our wretchedness increased still further when some of the men noticed through the narrow openings in the tower that the greater part of the houses on Windmill Lane had gone up in flames.⁴³

In the end, the church was fiercely besieged. Before it was bombarded, a French officer ordered those sheltering inside to leave and flee to Leipzig. Goldschab also described people's perception of this situation:

Now a terrible spectacle presented itself to us outside the church as well. Dead and dying soldiers lay all about, and the massacre continued, particularly on the market and in the lower reaches of the village, while a large part of our homes appeared to us as smoking ruins. Human misery could scarcely be any worse. Bereft of everything, even the most basic necessities, separated from our loved ones, husbands having lost their wives, parents their children and children their parents, we now found ourselves fleeing to Leipzig, and behind us we saw one structure after another in the village going up in flames.⁴⁴

The fighting in this village ended only on 17 October. Fifty buildings had burnt down, and everything left standing, including the church, was completely stripped by the soldiers. The church was so badly damaged that its reconstruction took an entire year. All the next winter the inhabitants suffered 'the greatest hardship and extreme want'.⁴⁵ Quite

similar reports by local pastors, and occasionally also by estate owners or schoolmasters, survive for most of the other villages affected by the battles around Leipzig. In 1843, the 'Association to Commemorate the 19th of October in Leipzig' began collecting eyewitness accounts and published them in a voluminous documentation marking the 50th anniversary.⁴⁶ All of these accounts indicate that the destruction and pillaging in the wake of the fighting destroyed the livelihoods of many people in Leipzig's rural environs. This was particularly true of those who possessed little and who, unlike many of the wealthy landowners, did not have a main or second residence in town.

At first, the people of Leipzig experienced actual combat only from a distance. By 14 October, the rapidly swelling number of refugees from the surrounding villages was a clear harbinger of the impending battle that would soon reach them as well. Anyone with a second home in the city or friends or relations there left their villages and fled either to Leipzig or to another, more distant town.⁴⁷ Christian Hussell, a scholar and journalist living in Leipzig, captured these impressions in an eyewitness account published only one year after the battle:

As soon as the advance columns in the bivouacs had reached the nearby villages thousands of harbingers appeared Weeping mothers with featherbeds packed into baskets, two or three nearly naked children in tow, their infants on their backs; fathers looking for their wives and children; children who had lost their parents in the crowd; sick people in wheelbarrows being pushed through the throng of horses; everywhere weeping and lamentation – these were the heralds and trumpeters.⁴⁸

The inhabitants of Leipzig had to house and feed these many refugees alongside the rapidly growing number of sick and wounded soldiers brought into the city. This led to a serious food shortage even before the battle, so that bread, a staple of the diet, was then provided only to members of the French occupying army.

The citizens were cut off from all news, although those with access to an attic window could imagine the scope of the battle to come. A remarkable image presented itself to the beholder: the swelling columns of approaching Coalition forces covered entire ranges of hills.⁴⁹ On the eve of the battle some 200,000 Coalition soldiers faced the same number from the Grande Armée. The total count of soldiers continued to grow in the days that followed. Persistent rains had left streets, roads and terrain in very poor condition, which made it far more difficult to move and

encamp these masses of soldiers. Because of the rain, many soldiers who would otherwise have camped outside sought a roof over their heads.

The battle began on 16 October with a Coalition offensive, which achieved little, and the troops were soon forced back. Napoleon's outnumbered forces, however, were unable to break the Coalition lines, resulting in a hard-fought stalemate. The villages of Markkleeberg, Wachau, Liebertwolkwitz and Möckern were the main scenes of battle on this day, and suffered greatly as a consequence. The fighting was largely suspended on 17 October. The Coalition forces obtained further reinforcements which allowed them to gain the upper hand.

On 18 October Napoleon and his troops came still closer to Leipzig, and entered the city while at the same time securing their withdrawal to the west. After Austria refused Napoleon's offer of an alliance, the Coalition forces began fierce attacks at Probsheida and Schönefeld. A bitter struggle ensued over a number of individual villages, which the French had often turned into little fortresses. The Napoleonic army lost one village after the other. During the day, first Saxon and then Württemberg units went over to the Allied side. 'The night of 18 October was at first clear and starlit . . . The fires of twelve burning villages . . . glowed and everywhere the countless watchfires blazed as well.'⁵⁰ After night-fall Napoleon ordered a withdrawal through Leipzig towards the river Saale, which was supposed to be covered by the remaining troops of the Confederation of the Rhine.

On 19 October Coalition forces attacked Leipzig, entered the city despite fierce French resistance, and pursued the enemy. The suburb outside the city walls was especially embattled and extensively destroyed. The Allies spared the city itself, whose representatives had begged for 'mercy', in as far as that was possible, but bombardment was necessary since the French refused to deliver Leipzig without a fight.⁵¹ The howitzer shells and cannonballs reached the city centre: 'As they hit roofs and walls a fire broke out . . . in a hay storehouse, and the fleeing [from the bombardment] and loudly crying inhabitants of the suburb increased the terror and dismay' of Leipzig's citizenry.⁵² Many dwelling houses were hit by cannonballs. Unlike in the deserted villages, where nobody was left to put out the fires, the people of Leipzig managed to prevent a major conflagration.⁵³

On this day additional Saxon and Württemberg contingents went over to the Allies. Conditions were increasingly chaotic in the completely overcrowded city. The premature demolition of the bridge over the river Elster cut off the escape route for thousands of soldiers of the Grande Armée, and they drowned trying to cross the river or were killed or taken

prisoner. While the fighting continued in many places, the rulers of the Coalition states were already entering Leipzig with large retinues, welcomed by tolling bells. 'A protracted cheer rang out from a thousand throats' to greet the Russian and Prussian monarchs, who were the first to enter the city. 'White cloths waved from all the windows. It was an overwhelming spectacle when the Allies with Prince Schwarzenberg and the highest officers of the victorious armies passed through Grimmaische Straße to the marketplace at the head of their guards, to the sound of martial music', a contemporary reported.⁵⁴

Contemporaries all agreed that the presence of the monarchs and the Allied military leadership in the city contributed significantly to the troops' considerate treatment of Leipzig after the victory. Leipzig's mayor at the time, Dr Johann Groß, for example, wrote in his memoirs:

There is no question that the presence in the city of the Emperor of Russia and the King of Prussia was of the greatest importance, and contributed a good deal to preserving the city – with a few, on the whole insignificant exceptions – from the horrors that threatened a town taken by storm.⁵⁵

Unlike other cities taken by force, Leipzig was not plundered, and no violent excesses occurred. There were also no reports of sexual violence – which does not mean, however, that it did not take place. There are surprisingly few reports on this subject, which seems to have been taboo, discussed only in metaphorical terms as a threat to the honour of the nation or men. The Russian and Prussian monarchs had ordered the strictest military discipline, to be implemented by force, if necessary, and had also issued an order for the troops to camp outside the city. Marauders were to be arrested along with plunderers from the civilian population who sought to exploit the chaos in the city and the surrounding countryside. Private civilian property was to be protected.⁵⁶ All those Russian irregulars, especially the Cossacks, who had been wandering the environs weeks before the battle, were ordered to return immediately to their (generally quite distant) home units, bypassing the city.⁵⁷

Napoleon withdrew to France with only 60,000 soldiers. Of 470,000 soldiers deployed on both sides, some 120,000 were killed. The Coalition forces estimated their total losses at 54,000 men. Napoleon lost approximately 73,000 men, including 30,000 prisoners of war and 5000 German deserters.⁵⁸ Twenty villages around Leipzig had been heavily shelled during the fighting and largely burnt down. In all, at least 60

villages in the region suffered serious direct damage from several days of combat.⁵⁹ The transport of all the wounded and the removal of the dead from the battlefields around Leipzig lasted more than a fortnight. Prisoners of war were deployed for this purpose, and citizens of Leipzig and its environs were also conscripted to help.⁶⁰

The figures for the number of soldiers left sick and wounded after the battle vary substantially. In a report of 26 October to Freiherr von Stein, head of the Allies' central administrative council, which oversaw the liberated territories, Johann Christian Reil, the physician and Halle professor responsible for organizing the Prussian field hospitals, estimated that there were 5000 wounded men in Halle and 20,000 in Leipzig. Other contemporaries in Leipzig estimated the number of injured and sick soldiers of all nations in the city in the days immediately following the battle at around 38,000, only slightly less than the city's entire population. The latter figure appears more realistic, but it quickly fell because of the high mortality rate. Every day, 600–800 wounded men died. At the end of November there were still more than 18,000 sick and wounded soldiers in the city.⁶¹ Fifty-four large private and public buildings – the poorhouse, infirmaries, schools, storehouses, churches, large town-houses, manor houses on the farms outside the city gates – were turned into military hospitals, in which more than 800 local men and women cared for the sick.⁶² In addition, the military hospitals employed 17 doctors and 23 surgeons. Officers with less serious injuries were put up in private homes.⁶³

The situation in and around the city was catastrophic in the days and weeks following the battle. Despite the gradual arrival of aid from elsewhere in Germany, the inhabitants struggled to cope with the large number of wounded. They lacked not merely adequate medical assistance, but also the means of housing and feeding all of these people properly.⁶⁴ Christian Reil described the situation as follows in his report to Stein:

The wildest fantasy would be incapable of painting a picture of the misery in as garish colours as I found here [in Leipzig] in reality . . . Our wounded had been dumped on places which I should not like to offer the grocer's wife for her sick pug. They lie either in stuffy, damp gin-shops in which even underwater creatures would not find enough oxygen, or in windowless schools and vaulted churches, where the cold atmosphere increases as the corruption diminishes, until eventually individual Frenchmen are pushed into the air, where the heavens are the ceiling and where howling and teeth-chattering

prevail. On one side lack of air kills the sick while on the other it is frost which destroys them.⁶⁵

Others were equally shocked by the situation. Pastor Ludwig Wilhelm Gottlob Schlosser described the following scene, which he observed during his first visit to Leipzig:

Outside a brick barn which had been converted into a hospital I saw a French soldier sitting on a dead horse and cutting from it large slices of flesh which another man carried away to a third who roasted them on a wooden spit over fire. All three of them looked black and bloody, like cannibals.⁶⁶

Many other reports also recount that the hunger of the French wounded and prisoners of war remaining in the city was so terrible that they consumed anything that looked edible to them.⁶⁷ Their plight was so wretched not simply because of the general lack of necessities, which meant that the majority of civilians also went hungry, but because the little that was available was distributed so unequally. The Coalition soldiers received the first and best provisions. The Coalition army commands ran the military hospitals, and their main responsibilities were for their own sick and wounded soldiers, and in ensuring that the greatest number of men were made fit for deployment.⁶⁸

The vast number of sick and wounded soldiers brought typhus and dysentery back into the city. In the final three months of 1813 ever more citizens fell ill, an average of 700–800 every week. Of these, 5–10 per cent died. The mortality was particularly high among doctors and nurses, of whom nearly 50 per cent sickened and died. In all, some 13,500 citizens of Leipzig were infected with typhus in 1813, and 2700 perished.⁶⁹ By June 1814 a further 1000 had succumbed to the disease, which killed one-tenth of the population of the city and its environs.⁷⁰ The epidemic spread so widely not least because, even months after the battle, the population was still suffering the 'greatest hardship and want', and children and old people in particular were much weakened.⁷¹

It would be nearly a year before most of the wounded and sick soldiers left the cities, the refugees could return to their provisionally rebuilt villages, and the most obvious signs of the fighting had been removed. Many villages and most fields and gardens were so devastated as to be unrecognizable. Building materials were scarce. Harvests and livestock had been destroyed. Seeds were hard to come by. When the fields were tilled for the first time in the spring the epidemic returned, for the

farmers unearthed half-decayed corpses hastily buried during battle.⁷² The sum of the damage to Saxony as a whole as a result of the war of 1813–1814 was estimated at 100 million *taler*.⁷³ Above all in the villages around Leipzig, which had suffered most from the battle, reconstruction took years. The city itself, in contrast, where the destruction had been limited, recovered relatively quickly from the trauma of the battle and the war.

The public perception of the battle

While Napoleon's army was beginning its retreat and the commanders of the Coalition army were planning their pursuit, doctors and nurses were doing their best to help the sick and wounded soldiers, and local civilians were coping with the trauma of the battle and its aftermath. Staff officers drafted official dispatches and sent out their couriers to the capitals of Europe with the news of victory. It took some time before the news reached the press in other places.

The first newspaper to report the victory was the *Deutsche Blätter*, which had appeared since 13 October 1813 as the official organ of Allied headquarters. The paper's editor was the early liberal publisher Friedrich Arnold Brockhaus, whose publishing house was located in Altenburg near Leipzig. Beginning on 14 October, the paper appeared every day with the most recent news from headquarters. Number 7 for 21 October reported:

Leipzig has been occupied by the Allies following the complete and most splendid victory of the 19th. The official and detailed reports of the great events of the last days, which decided the fate of the French army and the liberation of Germany, will follow forthwith.⁷⁴

The more detailed account promised here appeared on 22 October, describing the battle primarily as a military event, stressing individual particularly heroic skirmishes and otherwise providing factual information on gains and losses. At this time other German newspapers were only just informing their readers of the French defeats of 16 October. It was not until the end of October that the national press disseminated as certain the news of the victory at Leipzig and the hasty retreat of the French army. Most accounts repeated the wording of the official army reports and were composed in the style of the article in the *Deutsche*

Blätter described above. Contemporaries elsewhere generally heard little in the press about the scope of the battle, the violence and the 'unimaginable horror and misery' expressed in eyewitness accounts.⁷⁵

Thus initially it was mainly rumours spread by refugees and travellers, and soon by letters, that proclaimed the victory and the sacrifices made by soldiers and civilians, first in other parts of Saxony, and later throughout Germany. Philippine von Griesheim, who lived with her parents on an estate near Köthen in Saxony-Anhalt, heard the news from a Prussian army courier who stopped there on 20 October on his way from Leipzig to Berlin. That same day she wrote in a letter to her friend Charlotte von Münchhausen:

Triumph, triumph, dearest Lotte. The cause of right has been victorious and the enemy defeated! A stormy October evening, which tempted one to have a cup of tea by a warm stove and to enjoy a cosy chat with our neighbours, was interrupted by a loud knocking at the door. An officer who had formerly been billeted on us rushed into the room all out of breath to tell us the joyful news of the glorious victory won at Leipzig. . . . I have no words to describe our joy, after our expectations of the outcome [which were] most agonising! The fighting is said to have been awful. The entire axis of world history has turned as a result of this great battle of nations. . . .⁷⁶

Word of victory spread simultaneously to Berlin and other distant cities. In her memoirs, Countess Sophie Schwerin describes how rumours of a great battle began to circulate in Berlin on 19 and 20 October: 'For the first time the rumours fell far short of the truth, and for the first time people still thought it exaggerated. . . . So people did not absorb the full effect. But how did we feel when the certain and credited news far exceeded that rumour, that dream even!'⁷⁷

The Prussian army's official courier entered Berlin on 21 October accompanied by 24 trumpeting postillions. All the city's bells rang out. Amidst the 'continual crowing of the populace', the procession arrived at the palace square where the announcement of the victory was read aloud.⁷⁸ The actual celebration of thanksgiving and victory to mark the Battle of Leipzig, which was centred on a service of worship, took place everywhere in Prussia and Saxony on Sunday, 24 October 1813. It had been proclaimed the day before in an official 'Announcement of Victory'. Even the tiniest hamlets tried to organize a worthy victory celebration.⁷⁹ In the royal residence the King, who had travelled from Leipzig for this express purpose, personally attended the service of

thanksgiving at the garrison church. Services were held simultaneously in all of the city's churches, with a collection for victims of the war at the end. Afterwards the king participated in a great parade of the troops stationed in the city outside the palace. In the evening the city was festively illuminated, and the elites flocked to a festival performance at the opera house.⁸⁰

At first, joy at the victory overshadowed people's fears for their male relations in the army, which, in Prussia at least, affected nearly every family. Like other eyewitnesses from Berlin, Sophie Schwerin described strangers falling into each other's arms. 'Not one eye was dry, not a face unmoved. Acquaintances sought out one another in the crowd and did not avoid strangers.' But everybody avoided asking for news of relatives in the military.⁸¹ In the first flush of happiness over the victory, worries about fathers, sons, brothers, fiancés and husbands fighting in the war were suppressed.

At the same time, she describes the great spirit of self-sacrifice in large segments of the population, who gladly made donations for war victims and tended to the growing number of wounded soldiers brought into the city. Since everyone hoped that people elsewhere would care for their own family members in the army, they were more than willing to help the sick and injured soldiers who were billeted in the city in large numbers.⁸² This impression is substantiated by an account by Priscilla Wellesley, who came to Germany with her husband Lord Burghersh, the commissioner appointed to the headquarters of the Austrian army. She was in Berlin just after the battle, and wrote to her mother on 27 October in these terms:

It is certainly a most interesting moment to be here. Everything is so enthusiastic, and there is a patriotism and eagerness of which we have no idea in England; nor have we any conception of what these poor people have sacrificed in the good cause, for the poverty and wretchedness to which they have reduced themselves are quite shocking. There are now 38,000 wounded in this town and the princesses and ladies have many of them sold their jewels to assist them . . . *Tout respire le militaire* throughout the country.⁸³

Accounts from other towns in the German-speaking region reveal a similar mood after the victory at Leipzig and increasing activities by the newly founded patriotic women's associations which took care of sick and wounded soldiers, war widows and orphans, as well as impoverished soldiers' wives and their children.⁸⁴

Conclusion

With its focus on the Battle of the Nations in Leipzig, this article has tried to show what impact the conduct of war with mass armies had on the everyday lives of the civilian population directly affected by the fighting. Analysis in the form of 'thick description' points to several especially important factors that influenced the experience and perceptions of the war.⁸⁵ These factors include differences between the urban and rural population and the educated and illiterate, but also a variety of social factors such as class, gender, family status and age. As in many other cases, the rural poor were hit particularly hard, losing everything they owned as a result of the fighting. While the better-off rural and urban population also suffered severe material losses, they were not deprived of their entire means of livelihood. Moreover, people who spoke French could communicate with officers and soldiers, which, as many eyewitnesses indicate, protected them from the more extreme forms of plunder. Family networks were also important for survival amidst warfare: relatives offered refugees shelter and food, nursed the sick and helped in rebuilding homes. Since many men of military age had been conscripted, numerous women were left without the support of a partner and thus more in need of assistance from their families. Like children and the elderly, they seem, along with doctors and nurses, to have been among the first victims of epidemics, since starvation and exhaustion had left them in poor health. Women and girls on their own were presumably also vulnerable to sexual violence, but the sources are virtually silent on the subject.⁸⁶

The case study illustrates the dramatic and varied ways in which the new warfare with mass armies affected the civilian population. Even in areas far removed from the theatre of war, civilians financed the fighting with taxes and duties and everywhere suffered more or less from the effects of economic warfare in the form of the Continental Blockade. They had to bear the burdens of billeting, outfitting and arming the troops. They were subject to plundering by armies, whose soldiers seldom distinguished between friend and foe when they needed food and shelter. Under the requisition system, soldiers had to fend for themselves in the everyday life of war. When the fighting came to their towns or villages, the civilian population had either to flee, leaving their property unprotected, or to wait out the bombardment in terror. Apart from loss of property and the fear of violence, the physical effects of war were particularly ominous: shortages, exhaustion, hunger and disease. Epidemics of typhus and dysentery, brought to the city by sick and

wounded soldiers, spread fear and death among the civilian population. Wartime epidemics were nothing new, to be sure, but the huge size of the armies involved lent them a new quality. Unless we take these varied experiences of the civilian population into account, scholars cannot hope to recognize the modern character of these wars or understand why this event came to occupy such a prominent place in popular national memory.

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Notes

1. Julius v. Pflugk-Harttung, *Leipzig 1813: Aus den Akten des Kriegsarchiv, des Geheimen Staatsarchivs Berlin, Staatsarchivs in Breslau und des Ministeriums des Ministeriums der auswärtigen Angelegenheiten in London* (Gotha: Perthes, 1913), p. iii.
2. Robert Naumann, *Die Völkerschlacht bei Leipzig. Nebst Nachrichten von Zeitgenossen und Augenzeugen über dieselbe* (Leipzig: Weigel, 1863), pp. 5–7.
3. The Grande Armée was around 440,000 strong and the Coalition field army around 510,000 strong. See Karl-Heinz Börner, 'Die Völkerschlacht bei Leipzig 1813 – Bedeutung und Wirkung', *Militärsgeschichte* 4 (1988): 323–326.
4. Michael V. Leggiere, *Napoleon and Berlin: The Franco-Prussian War in North Germany, 1813* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2002), p. 276; see also David Chandler, *The Campaigns of Napoleon* (New York: Macmillan, 1966), p. 936.
5. See F. Loraine Petre, *Napoleon's Last Campaign in Germany, 1813* (London: Arms and Armour, 1874); Karl-Heinz Börner, *Völkerschlacht bei Leipzig 1813* (Berlin: Deutscher Verlag der Wissenschaften, 1984); J. P. Riley, *Napoleon and the World War of 1813: Lessons in Coalition Warfighting* (London: Frank Cass, 2000), in particular, pp. 163–210; Digby G. Smith, *1813, Leipzig: Napoleon and the Battle of the Nations* (London: Greenhill Books, 2001); Hezi Shelah, *Napoleon 1813* (London: Janus, 2000); Leggiere, *Napoleon and Berlin*.
6. Herman Müller-Bohn, *Die deutschen Befreiungskriege. Deutschlands Geschichte von 1806–1815*, 2 vols. (Berlin: Kittel, 1901), vol. 2, p. 741.
7. Stefan Hoffmann, 'Sakraler Monumentalismus um 1900: Das Leipziger Völkerschlachtendenkmal', in *Der politische Totenkult: Kriegerdenkmäler in der Moderne*, ed. Reinhart Koselleck and Michael Jeismann (Munich: Fink, 1994), pp. 249–280; Wolfgang Siemann, 'Krieg und Frieden in historischen Gedenkfeiern des Jahres 1913', in *Öffentliche Festkultur: Politische Feste in Deutschland von der Aufklärung bis zum Ersten Weltkrieg*, ed. Dieter Düding et al. (Reinbek: Rowohlt, 1988), pp. 298–320.
8. Karl Hoffmann (ed.), *Des Teutschen Volkes feuriger Dank- und Ehrentempel...* (Offenbach: Brede, 1815).

9. See Siemann 'Krieg und Frieden'; Stefan-Ludwig Hoffmann, 'Mythos und Geschichte: Leipziger Gedenkfeiern der Völkerschlacht im 19. und frühen 20. Jahrhundert', in *Nation and Emotion: Deutschland und Frankreich im Vergleich 19. und 20. Jahrhundert*, ed. Etienne François et al. (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1995), pp. 111–132; George Mosse, *Fallen Soldiers: Reshaping the Memory of the World Wars* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990), pp. 53–158.
10. Ute Planert, *Der Mythos vom Befreiungskrieg. Der deutsche Sünden und die französischen Kriege. Alltag, Wahrnehmung, (Um)Deutung* (Paderborn: Schöningh, 2007).
11. On the state of research, see Karen Hagemann and Katherine Aaslestad, '1806 and its Aftermath: Revisiting the Period of the Napoleonic Wars in German Central Europe', *Central European History* 39:4 (2006): 547–579.
12. David Bell, *The First Total War: Napoleon's Europe and the Birth of Warfare as We Know It* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 2007).
13. Stig Förster, 'Der Weltkrieg, 1792 bis 1815: Bewaffnete Konflikte und Revolutionen in der Weltgeschichte,' in *Kriegsbereitschaft und Friedensordnung in Deutschland 1800–1814*, ed. Jost Dülffer (Münster: Lit, 1995), pp. 17–38; see also Robert Epstein, *Napoleon's Last Victory and the Emergence of Modern War* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 1994); Bell, *The First Total War*.
14. Bell, *The First Total War*.
15. For a discussion of the analytical categories of 'experience' and 'perception' and different methodological approaches, see the 'Introduction: Nations in Arms – People at War', by Alan Forrest, Karen Hagemann and Jane Rendall, in the present volume.
16. See Reinhard Köpping, *Sachsen gegen Napoleon. Zur Geschichte der Befreiungskriege 1813–1815* (Berlin: Frieling & Partner, 2001), pp. 16–26; and Robert Beachy, *The Soul of Commerce: Credit, Property, and Politics in Leipzig, 1750–1840* (Leiden: Brill, 2005), chapters 5 and 6.
17. See also Kathleen Aaslestad's paper (Chapter 6) in this volume.
18. Alex Martin, 'The Russian Empire and the Napoleonic War', in *Napoleon and Europe*, ed. Philip G. Dwyer (Harlow: Longman, 2001), p. 258; Ilja Mieck, 'Preußen von 1807 bis 1850. Reformen, Restauration und Revolution', in *Handbuch der Preußischen Geschichte*, ed. Otto Büsch (Berlin and New York: Gruyter, 1992), vol. 2, pp. 3–292, 38ff.
19. See *ibid.*, pp. 38ff.; Bernd v. Münchow-Pohl, *Zwischen Reform und Krieg. Untersuchungen zur Bewußtseinslage in Preußen 1809–1812* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1987), pp. 352–384.
20. Martin, 'The Russian Empire', p. 260; Adam Zamoyski, *Moscow 1812: Napoleon's Fatal March* (New York: Harper & Collins, 2004).
21. Naumann, *Völkerschlacht*, p. 327.
22. Dr J. C. Groß, *Die Franzosenzeit in Leipzig. Persönliche Erinnerungen an 1813* (Leipzig: Xenien Verlag, 1913), p. 5.
23. Wilhelm Gottlob Schlosser, *Erlebnisse eines sächsischen Landpredigers in den Kriegsjahren 1806–1815* (Wiesbaden: Verlag Volksbildungsverein, 1914), pp. 60; see also Naumann, *Völkerschlacht*, pp. 182–183 and 193.
24. Ferdinand Grautoff, *In Leipzig während der Völkerschlacht ...* (Leipzig: Dieterich'sche Verlagsbuchhandlung, 1913), p. 69.

25. The French were defeated on 26 August at Katzbach, 27 August at Hagelberg, 29 and 30 August at Nollendorf, 6 September at Dennewitz and 3 October at Wartenburg.
26. Grautoff, *In Leipzig*, 15ff.
27. *Ibid.*, 73.
28. *Ibid.*, pp. 75–76.
29. *Ibid.*, p. 74.
30. *Ibid.*, pp. 77–78.
31. Gerhard Graf, *Die Völkerschlacht bei Leipzig in zeitgenössischen Berichten* (Berlin: Köhler & Amelang, 1988), p. 265.
32. Schlosser, *Erlebnisse*, pp. 54ff.
33. *Ibid.*, p. 77; English translation in Anthony Brett-James (ed.), *Europe against Napoleon: The Leipzig Campaign, 1813 from Eyewitness Accounts* (London: Macmillan, 1970), pp. 91–92.
34. Schlosser, *Erlebnisse*, p. 80.
35. Naumann, *Völkerschlacht*, pp. 209, 213 and 241.
36. Naumann, p. 86.
37. Karl Heinrich Aster, *Die Gefechte und Schlachten bei Leipzig im Oktober 1813* (Dresden: Arnoldsche Buchhandlung, 1852), p. 48. Aster was a lieutenant in the Saxon army in 1813 and taught at the military academy in Dresden. Naumann, *Völkerschlacht*, pp. 91–92.
38. Naumann, *Völkerschlacht*, p. 283.
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40. Friedrich Rochlitz, *Tage der Gefahr. Ein Tagebuch der Leipziger Schlacht* (Leipzig: Insel Verlag, 1875), pp. 18–19; Naumann, *Völkerschlacht*, p. 334.
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42. Printed in Naumann, pp. 145–152, 147–148.
43. *Ibid.*, p. 148.
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47. Christian Hussell, *Leipzig während der Schreckenstage der Schlacht im Monat Oktober 1813 ...* (Leipzig, 1814; reprint, Leipzig: Zangenberg & Himly, 1896), pp. 20–27.
48. *Ibid.*
49. Rochlitz, *Tage*, p. 36; Heinrich Steffens, *Was ich erlebte* (Leipzig: Dieterich'sche Buchhandlung, 1938), p. 359.
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55. Groß, *Franzosenzeit*, p. 55.
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57. Groß, *Franzosenzeit*, p. 55.
58. Leggiere, *Napoleon*, p. 276.
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63. *Ibid.*, pp. 431–433.
64. Graf, *Völkerschlacht*, p. 138.
65. Reil to Stein, Leipzig, 26 October 1813, translated in Brett-James, *Europe*, p. 244.
66. Schlosser, *Erlebnisse*, 96f, translated in Brett-James, *Europe*, p. 247.
67. Graf, *Völkerschlacht*, p. 140; Grautoff, *In Leipzig*, pp. 163–164.
68. Naumann, *Völkerschlacht*, pp. 421.
69. *Ibid.*, pp. 423–424 and 429–430.
70. Graf, *Völkerschlacht*, p. 138.
71. Naumann, *Völkerschlacht*, pp. 153.
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73. Graf, *Völkerschlacht*, p. 144.
74. *Deutsche Blätter*, no. 7, 21 October 1813.
75. Naumann, *Völkerschlacht*, p. 59.
76. Edith V. Cramm (ed.), *Briefe einer Braut aus der Zeit der deutschen Freiheitskriege, 1804–1813* (Berlin: Fleischel, 1905), pp. 186–187, translated in Brett-James, *Europe*, p. 251.
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78. 'Berlin, 22ter Nachmittags', *Berlinische Nachrichten* no. 127, 23 October 1813.
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82. See Karen Hagemann, 'Female Patriots: Women, War and the Nation in the Period of the Prussian-German Anti-Napoleonic Wars', *Gender & History* 16:3 (2004): 396–424.
83. Quoted in Brett-James, *Europe*, p. 254.
84. Hagemann, 'Female Patriots'; Dirk Reeder, *Frauenbewegung und Nation. Patriotische Frauenvereine in Deutschland im frühen 19. Jahrhundert (1813–1830)* (Cologne: SH-Verlag, 1998).
85. Clifford Geertz, 'Thick Description: Toward an Interpretive Theory of Culture', in his *The Interpretation of Cultures* (New York: Basic Books, 1973), pp. 3–30.
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Part III

War, Patriotism and Protest

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9

'A Very Rebellious Disposition'¹: Dutch Experience and Popular Protest under the Napoleonic Regime (1806–1813)

Johan Joor

In the historiography of the Netherlands the Napoleonic period (1806–1813) has mainly been studied as part of a broader Batavian–French period. This era started in January 1795 with the Batavian Revolution, generated by the shock waves caused by the invasion of the French revolutionary armies. The French were joined by former Dutch proto-democratic Patriots (*Patriotten*) who had gone into exile in 1787, and their arrival led to the flight of the last Dutch Stadtholder (*Stadhouder*), William V, with his family, to England. The period ended in November 1813 with the collapse of the Napoleonic regime in Holland, clearing the way for the proclamation of a National Government in the name of Orange and for the subsequent return of the son of William V, who had died in exile in 1806, as future sovereign.

The Batavian–French period is characterized by a strong French influence on Dutch policy, on domestic as well as external affairs, an influence manifest from the start. The Batavians had to finance a standing French army corps of 25,000 soldiers and were forced to maintain a defensive and an offensive alliance, which in practice meant continuous war with England. After Napoleon Bonaparte seized power in 1799, French domination became more intense. Holland was of special interest to Napoleon because of its strategic geographical position, the strength of its navy, French aspirations for a continental blockade, and the still impressive holdings of capital by Dutch merchants and bankers, especially those of Amsterdam. In 1801 and 1805 Napoleon ordered regime changes in Holland. The first ended most of the embryonic democratic experiments; the second introduced a single head of

state in the person of the diplomat Rutger Jan Schimmelpenninck, who was instructed to keep Holland under firmer imperial control. Schimmelpenninck was installed with the title of 'Grand Pensionary' (*Raadpensionaris*) in April 1805.

In the same year the wars of the Third Coalition, which resulted in British hegemony at sea and French dominance on the continent, propelled Napoleon's policy towards his 'Continental System'. His aim was both to reinforce French military, political and economic supremacy on the continent, and to defeat his arch-enemy England through a blockade conducted by France and a chain of satellite states. To be successful, it was crucial to have highly loyal regimes in the dependent states, and to this end members of the extended Bonaparte family were recruited as heads of state. In March 1806 Napoleon drew up a Family Statute that made him officially *chef de famille* and imposed obedience on other members of his family. As one of this constellation of rulers, Napoleon's younger brother Louis was proclaimed King of Holland in June 1806.

The Napoleonic period can be considered as a 'neglected' part of Dutch history. For a long time traditional historians focused on the years of the Dutch Republic in the 'Golden Age' or on the Kingdom of the Netherlands established after 1813. It is only in the last two decades, partly because of the bicentenary of the French Revolution of 1789, that historical research into the 'Patriots' and the Batavian Revolution has been intensified.² However, historians have continued to ignore the years from 1806 to 1813. Though there are some notable exceptions,³ this was – and in many ways still is – especially true of the social and economic history of the Napoleonic years.

This paper deals with popular protest in Holland in the Napoleonic years. Its focus is not primarily on the elite but on 'the people in the street'. The study is based on extensive and systematic research into the archives of administrative, judicial, police and military authorities on different operational levels, central, departmental and local. The main sources are series of administrative documents, including minutes and correspondence, and police reports and judicial records, such as arrest warrants and court verdicts. Although this information strongly reflects the 'official' view on the protest and the people, and therefore has certain limitations, it gives historians a useful tool with which to reconstruct, at least partially, the experience of ordinary people at a time when other windows on public life, such as a free press, were closed by state repression.⁴

The Napoleonic period in Dutch history

The Kingdom of Holland (*Koninkrijk Holland*) was proclaimed on 5 June 1806 in a typically Napoleonic way. There was an ultra-short ceremony in the Tuileries in Paris that was deliberately informal and crammed between an official imperial welcome for the Turkish ambassador and the obligatory and elaborate admiration of his gifts. By doing this, the Emperor Napoleon made it perfectly clear to the Dutch ('Batavian') envoys that they should be under no illusions about the true position of their new state. During the ceremony itself Napoleon briefly proclaimed his younger brother Louis King of Holland, after which the new king was forced to promise never to forget to be 'French' first and foremost. Louis, who after his more-or-less forced marriage with Hortense de Beauharnais, was also Napoleon's son-in-law (not an insignificant relationship from a psychological-historical point of view), obeyed his brother whom he humbly called 'sire'.⁵

With the proclamation of the Kingdom of Holland, the unique Dutch Republic, which *de facto* had been in existence for more than 200 years, finally came to an end. At the same time, the proclamation marked a new period in Dutch history, which can accurately be defined in Dutch historiography as the 'Napoleonic period'. During the first four years of this period, from June 1806 until July 1810, the Netherlands were nominally an independent Kingdom under Louis. In the last three years, after Louis was forced to take flight because of his ambiguous attitude towards Napoleon's blockade politics, the country was a part of the French Empire. In this period of 'Incorporation' (*Inlijving*), which lasted from July 1810 until the middle of November 1813, Holland lost its national independence completely, although the northern part of the territory, above the rivers, remained a separate administrative entity with its own administration (*Gouvernement Général*) in Amsterdam, with the former third Consul Charles François Lebrun as Governor-General. This area was divided into seven French *départements* and would be referred to for administrative purposes as the 'Dutch Departments' (*Les Départements de la Hollande* or *Hollandse Departementen*).

As we have noted, the Napoleonic period ended with the collapse of the French regime in November 1813. After the flight of Lebrun on 21 November 1813, a group of three men under the direction of the leading Orangist Gijsbert Karel van Hogendorp proclaimed a 'General Government' (*Algemeen Bestuur*) named the House of Orange. Subsequently the son of the late Stadtholder William V sailed from England

in a fishing boat and stepped ashore on 30 November at Scheveningen, a little fishing village near The Hague. Soon afterwards he was sworn in as 'Sovereign' (*Soeverijn Vorst*). In 1815 he became King William I of the extended Kingdom of the United Netherlands, which remained intact until 1830 when the Belgians proclaimed their own independent state.

At the time when Louis was proclaimed king, Holland was a country of around two million inhabitants. Most Dutch people, 56 per cent of the population, lived in the urbanized western part of the country. Amsterdam was by far the largest city with a population of 200,000, followed by Rotterdam with 60,000.⁶ In March 1810, in line with a more severe blockade policy and in anticipation of full-scale incorporation, Napoleon annexed the southern part of Holland, the land below the Waal, the southern branch of the river Rhine. This partition left 1.7 million Dutch people in Louis's realm, including the inhabitants of East Frisia (*Oost Friesland*), a department in Northern Germany that had been transferred to Louis in 1807. The rump Kingdom of Holland was overrun in the spring of 1810 by a French army accompanying a corps of French customs officials; and though it was officially limited in its task to the conduct of the blockade, in practice it functioned as an occupation force. The final march by French military forces on Amsterdam, announced at the end of June 1810, led Louis to abdicate and flee to Austria, leading, as we have seen, to the incorporation of the remaining parts of his Kingdom into the French Empire.

From a demographic and economic point of view, the Napoleonic period was beyond doubt a difficult time in Dutch history. Poor medical and sanitary conditions, especially in the densely populated west, caused high levels of mortality, with the annual rate peaking at more than 35 deaths per thousand.⁷ Commerce and shipping, the mainstays of the economy of the Dutch Republic, came to an almost complete standstill. Because trade had functioned as the driving force behind other industries, especially shipbuilding, this decline contributed significantly to unemployment, already very substantial in the towns. Agriculture was the only bright spot in these dark economic times. This sector was flourishing because of growing foreign demand for butter and cheese, with high prices for all agricultural products. As a consequence agriculture became an autonomous force for economic growth.⁸ For the majority of the population, however, the high food prices imposed an exceptionally heavy burden on daily life. But this was not the only significant change, and, though relatively short, the Napoleonic period turned out to be of great importance in Dutch history. Through the implementation of a single executive authority, a strict hierarchy and

a professional civil service, successive Napoleonic regimes enforced the process of centralization in the Netherlands, a process which had already started after the Batavian Revolution in 1795 but had come to an almost complete standstill after the conservative regime change which Napoleon had ordered as First Consul in 1801. In the years after 1806 the administration was further centralized, the judicial system unified and a new fiscal system, developed under Schimmelpenninck, implemented. In short, it was under successive Bonapartist regimes that the nation-state was shaped and the process of modernization really began in Holland. This transition to modernity would contribute powerfully to Dutch popular protests in the Napoleonic period.

Recovering Dutch popular protest in the Napoleonic period

For Dutch historians 'popular protest' and 'Napoleonic regimes' were for a long time incompatible. In Dutch historiography the Napoleonic years have been known as a time of general calm in the country and extreme passivity amongst the people. This image was largely constructed at the end of the nineteenth century and the beginning of the twentieth. It was based on a selective choice of sources, an aversion for mass activities, conservative ideas about the role of elites, and, most importantly of all, a historical determinism, partly inspired by particular national and class concerns, in which the foundation of the centralized state in the form of the constitutional monarchy under the House of Orange after 1813 was seen as the natural continuation of a historical process begun in Burgundian times and temporarily disrupted during the Dutch Republic.⁹ As a result the first 13 years of the nineteenth century were stigmatized as rather dull and barely worthy of historical study, and the image of a veil of lethargy draped over Napoleonic Holland has grown stronger in what is now known as the 'collective memory'.

One exception was made to this general view: the forced introduction of the Registry Office for the civil registration of births, marriages and deaths was, according to oral tradition, fiercely opposed, and for a long time it was maintained that many people had registered with 'protest' names, often funny and indecent names, and nicknames. But in fact the opposite was true: the use of nicknames was common practice in most of the Netherlands well before the Napoleonic period and even before Napoleon was born, and therefore their use cannot be seen as proof of opposition. On the other hand, there were other ways in which popular opposition was expressed, and in general the population was not at all lethargic.¹⁰

Some years ago the need to reconsider this image of absolute peace and passivity became necessary, because of the discovery of new primary documents in the archives of an orphanage in Amsterdam, which report on popular protests at the time of Louis Napoleon. It seems that Louis, under pressure from his brother, who insisted on raising more and more soldiers for his campaigns, had attempted to recruit boys from the charitable institutions for the army and the navy. The King of Holland hoped to fulfil his military obligations with this recruitment of orphans and poor boys, without having to introduce widely hated French measures of conscription. An added benefit of this policy was that it offered structural relief for the deplorable situation of the charities. Totally against his expectations, his plans, which had seemed so perfect on paper, encountered fierce resistance, and even led to outbreaks of popular violence as crowds tried to prevent the military transportation of the boys.

A further investigation in the provincial administrative archives revealed an elaborate secret report by the *landdrost*, Louis's version of the French prefect, in which more public disturbances were systematically and carefully registered.¹¹ These discoveries put the Napoleonic era in a new perspective and encouraged systematic research into the extent and character of popular protest in Holland between 1806 and 1813. The central point of this research became, as indicated in the introduction, an intensive and systematic examination of the archives of local, departmental and central authorities in which evidence for all forms of protest was collected and analysed.

For this research it was necessary to differentiate the concept of 'protest' and introduce three sub-categories: 'unrest', 'incitement' and 'unwillingness'. 'Unrest' is defined as popular action which was considered by the government to constitute an actual or potential disturbance of the peace or to pose a threat to public safety; and 'incitement' as the public expression of dissatisfaction with the government, government decisions, or government officials, where elements of rebellion were evident. 'Unwillingness' is used to describe people's deliberate evasion of rules or of the requirements forced upon them by the government.

The results of the intensive archival research were, given the prevailing interpretation in Dutch historiography, remarkable. The research uncovered literally thousands of documents reporting protest activities. They varied from the spreading of anti-French rumours and the relatively harmless mockery of civil servants to massive draft evasion and large-scale riots, which caused casualties and sometimes lasted for days.

Although figures need to be interpreted with care, it is telling that the research identified over 580 collective actions in the category of 'unrest', a qualitatively very significant category, though it was not the most important numerically. These actions included more than 80 revolts, defined as disturbances of the peace in which 20 or more people collectively and violently challenged the authorities in public. The other protests that were classified as 'unrest' consisted mainly of non-violent gatherings and riots, in which small numbers of people participated. In spite of their small scale, these riots could, however, have a disproportionate impact. This was the case with a confrontation in May 1810 in Amsterdam, in which six people molested the (Dutch) servant of the French ambassador, and which became Napoleon's final justification for occupying Holland.¹²

The research also identified six conspiracies, also categorized as 'unrest'. Half of these conspiracies were aimed against the regime of Louis, half against the French regime during the 'Incorporation'. Almost all were primarily figments of the government's imagination, or were strictly limited in their effects. However, the conspiracy against Lebrun, which was discovered by the police in February 1813 in Amsterdam, does seem to have had a basis in reality, and it certainly made a deep impact. Several people were arrested and accused of helping English military agents. One of the suspects, Augustijn Maas, a former army officer, gave in to police pressure and, in return for promises of release, provided an official statement in which he confirmed his revolutionary plans. The promises of release, made by a high police official, soon proved to be false. Maas was brought before a Military Commission, a special military court whose purpose was to intimidate the people rather than to do justice, was sentenced to death, and, together with a friend, Thomas de Jong, was executed on 23 February 1813 by firing squad.¹³

Besides the large number and the extreme variety of these protests, this new research also pointed to the rapid outbreak of rioting that followed Louis's coronation. Already before his arrival on the throne the radical pamphlet 'Appeal to the Batavian People' (*Oproeping van het Bataafsche Volk*) had denounced what its author termed the 'foreign oppressor'. This pamphlet was written and illegally distributed in several large towns by the radical Maria Aletta Hulshoff, the daughter of a dissenting minister. She was in close contact with certain former Batavian democratic leaders, especially Samuel Iperusz Wiselius and Johan Valckenaer. The pamphlet explicitly praised the democratic Batavian Constitution proclaimed at the beginning of 1798. Maria Hulshoff was quickly arrested and sentenced to two years in the House of

Correction, which did not prevent her after her release from distributing at least one and possibly two pamphlets directed against the King.¹⁴

The new King of Holland was also quickly confronted with unrest. The first disturbance, in the very month of his arrival, came in response to the new tax system already introduced by his predecessor, the Batavian head of state Grand Pensionary Rutger Jan Schimmelpenninck. From October 1806, however, Louis's own measures on conscription – or rather his attempt to prevent its implementation – were the cause of protests. As we have seen, the King of Holland hoped to fulfil his military obligations through the recruitment of orphans and poor boys from charitable institutions, which would prevent the introduction of conscription and bring the charities financial relief. However, to his great surprise, his measures were rejected, and to prevent such recruitment abuses petitions were organized throughout the country. On 12 October 1806 there was even a large-scale riot in Sneek in the province of Friesland, in which crowds freed several boys from the grip of a military escort.¹⁵ Shocked by such resistance, Louis decided to withdraw his plans, at least temporarily. New attempts to recruit orphans in 1808 and 1809 met with the same result. Again massive revolts occurred, especially in 1809 in Amsterdam and Rotterdam, where citizens surrounded the orphanages and fought to prevent the recruited boys from being taken away. The 'orphan' revolt in Rotterdam lasted for three nights and was only stopped by the intervention of a hastily despatched military force.¹⁶

Louis's policy of recruiting orphans and poor boys was not the sole cause of conflict. Fiscal measures frequently sparked off street protests, especially the collection of the tax on flour (*Gemaal*). Many of these riots took place in the eastern part of the Kingdom, as did a massive and extraordinarily violent attack on a tax servant in January 1808 at Wamel, a little village in the department of Gelderland.¹⁷

Public holidays were also sometimes an occasion for unrest. In 1806, the first year of Louis's reign, the name day of Louis Napoleon on 25 August was, in line with the French Roman Catholic tradition, the day for public festivities. But from 1807 onwards Louis followed the Dutch Protestant tradition and declared his birthday on 2 September the day of official and national celebration. In 1806 serious unrest was reported in Flushing (*Vlissingen*), a strategically important naval town in the province of Zeeland, and in Groningen. In the latter town, in the northern part of Holland, a man was shot while he was standing on his doorstep and criticizing the festivities in the town.¹⁸ Outbreaks of rioting also occurred in 1807 and 1808 in Meppel, in what is today the province of Drenthe, and in Amsterdam.¹⁹ In 1809 the celebration

of Louis's anniversary was cancelled because of the English invasion of Zeeland. However, August and September 1809 were still very turbulent months, not least because English military manoeuvres, which had been aimed at Antwerp but soon proved to be abortive, triggered a series of uprisings in various towns and villages in Holland, largely and unsurprisingly in the south-west.²⁰

The revolt in Rotterdam on 23 May 1810 is the final example of large-scale unrest in the years of Louis Napoleon. In this riot over 6000 people gathered when a detachment of the French occupation force entered the town. The French were shouted at and pelted with cobblestones. The gatherings around the military barracks continued for several days, and it again took the arrival of a military reinforcement to restore peace. Measured in quantitative terms, the Rotterdam revolt was one of the largest collective actions during the period of the Kingdom of Holland, and one of the last of Louis's reign.²¹

If all forms of unrest are considered, 45 per cent (261 instances) took place during the years of the Kingdom of Holland. Focusing only on the revolts, 33 per cent occurred before 1810. As this last figure shows, protests and violent unrest intensified after Holland was incorporated in the French Empire. Not only did the number of revolts rapidly increase after July 1810, but other forms of collective action were to be more violent. Even though the revolts in Rotterdam in 1809 and 1810 had already reached considerable proportions, the most significant uprisings took place during the period of Incorporation.

The intensification of protest during the period of Incorporation was a response to the grim character of the French regime. Where Louis Napoleon had preferred a policy of reconciliation and was reluctant to use violence, Napoleon ordered from the start of the annexation a policy of harsh repression to nip all forms of protest in the bud. In a letter to Lebrun, in response to an uprising in Amsterdam on 20 September 1810 caused by the violent actions of customs officials, he angrily stated that '[t]he people are never right to start a revolt'.²²

The causes of unrest

The most serious Dutch revolts in the Napoleonic period were the result of conscription. The draft was finally introduced in Holland on 1 January 1811, when the French regime and laws officially came into force. In April 1811, Amsterdam was again the scene of a major revolt. This time the uprising was triggered by the transport of the first conscripts. A girl wanted to say goodbye to a departing conscript but was

brutally pushed away by the military escort. Immediately the outraged crowd started to throw stones. Most of the soldiers and recruits fled, but some tried to respond and started to fire into the crowd, resulting in several casualties. The fighting spread to other districts, and soon thousands of people were demonstrating shouting, 'Death to the French!'.²³ A strong police and military force was needed to end the protest late that night. In the aftermath, a Military Commission was installed, again more as an instrument of terror than a vehicle of justice. Three men were sentenced to death, including Francis Staargaard, who had played no part at all in the revolt but was arrested because a police spy had reported him for insulting Napoleon in a private conversation. To the horror of the people of Amsterdam the sentences were carried out the same day by firing squad.²⁴

The conscription protest was not limited to Amsterdam or to a single month. Incidents were sparked by the registration of conscripts, the drawing of lots (*le tirage*) and the departure of recruits, with at least 20 revolts taking place in villages and towns all over the country in 1811 and 1812. In April 1813 the protest against the draft for a National Guard (*Garde Nationale*) involved a chain of uprisings, which started in a few villages in the countryside around Rotterdam. Rumours spread that this time not only young 'recruits', but also men of the age of 26 and above, would be drafted. In several villages farmers assembled by the town hall and attempted, sometimes with violence, to gain possession of the enrolment registers. When these were successfully destroyed in one village, the farmers continued to the next village to repeat their action. This form of opposition quickly sparked unrest in the towns, and in April 1813 the larger cities of the present province of Zuid-Holland – Leiden, Den Haag, Dordrecht and Rotterdam – revolted. The citizens of Amsterdam, probably still impressed by the fierce repression of the conspiracy of Maas, stayed calm. However in Zaandam, a town in the immediate hinterland of Amsterdam, the people sided with the revolt and forced a hasty retreat by the local French military and civil servants. Both uprisings were suppressed with heavy military force. French soldiers aimed at the crowds with live ammunition, which resulted in many wounded and possibly dozens dead. The Governor-General even decided to send a warship to put an end to the revolt in Zaandam.²⁵

The repression did not end after public order was restored. As before, Napoleon ordered the installation of repressive Military Commissions, which brought more than 60 people to trial. Nineteen received death sentences. In Zaandam six men were sentenced to death by military judges, most of whom did not understand Dutch. Among the men

executed was Jacob Rek, a commissioner of the barge services. As a man with a distinctive local position and authority he had urged the insurgents to act in a disciplined way. Subsequently he had become an informal leader of the revolt and negotiated with Lebrun's government to restore peace.

The new research has also yielded information about the geographical distribution of the protests, and especially of unrest. Protest was distributed throughout the country, with a considerable number of collective actions taking place in the countryside, during the Kingdom of Holland as well as in the years of Incorporation. This last finding is quite remarkable, as the countryside, because of the booming agricultural sector, was relatively well-off. This shows that economic hardship and poverty were not necessarily a determinant of protest. Most protests and the largest uprisings took place, however, in the poorer west of the country and its larger cities. Napoleon was very much aware of this during the years of Incorporation. The western part of Holland was considered a turbulent region of the Grand Empire, and as a result, until late in 1813, the Emperor attempted to maintain a large army in the area, averaging some 15,000 men.²⁶

Military obligations, particularly conscription, were one of the most important causes of popular protest during the Kingdom of Holland and the period of Incorporation; in all, 35 per cent of incidents can be traced to dissatisfaction about military measures and especially conscription. However, as suggested earlier, it was clearly not the only reason for protest. A second significant motive was fiscal, including the measures proclaimed as part of the blockade or Continental System: 26 per cent of the unrest was generated by taxes and the blockade policy. The third important cause of protest was the direct dissatisfaction of the people with the regime or with Louis or Napoleon: 24 per cent of the unrest can be attributed to this category. Examples of this are riots during public celebrations, such as those on Louis's birthday on 2 September, and after the annexation on 'Napoleon's Day' on 15 August and 'Coronation Day' (*Sacre*) in the first week of December. Of the remaining 15 per cent the majority can be traced back to conflicts between citizens; only 4 per cent can be considered religious in origin.

Although the religious element indirectly played a larger part, the relatively small amount of protest with a distinct religious character – such as riots resulting from the restitution of churches from Protestants to Catholics – is again a very unexpected finding. The Dutch revolt against Spain in the sixteenth century stemmed directly from the heart of the Reformation, and the relationship between Calvinists and

Roman Catholics had remained a source of conflict until well into the eighteenth century.

The faces in the crowd

The source material, especially the police reports, the law court reports and the sentences passed, contains detailed information about the rioters and those protesting; this allows, in the words of the historians Asa Briggs and George Rudé, a reconstruction of 'the faces in the crowd', their sex, age and social background. From the sentences it seems that women played only a minor part in unrest, especially in revolts. Only 10 of more than 100 participants in collective actions brought to trial and sentenced were women. The sentences, however, give a somewhat distorted picture, because it would appear that the police and judicial authorities were reluctant to arrest and prosecute women. A wide variety of other reports suggest that a substantial number of women took part in the protest. According to police reports women were particularly active at the beginning of riots as instigators of the protest. Various collective actions started with marches by women and children, often to the town hall or to representatives of the government, where they loudly and dramatically expressed their feelings of injustice. Examples of this are a fishermen's uprising in Scheveningen in 1812 and the revolt in Amsterdam on 15 November 1813, which finally resulted in the flight of almost every member of the Dutch administration, including Lebrun and the head of the police, Devilliers Duterrage, who was chased from his office by an angry crowd.²⁷

The sentences also provide a great deal of information about the socio-economic background of the protesters, not least because the profession of the accused is almost always mentioned. These data show that the large majority of rioters were craftsmen, followed by day labourers, shopkeepers, farmers, skippers and bargemen, and domestic servants. Amongst the condemned were also people with better-paid jobs, such as white-collar workers and even a bailiff from the court in The Hague, but, strikingly, no beggars or paupers, the real poor, can be found among them.

This social profile of the Dutch protesters during the Napoleonic period strongly confirms the conclusions of George Rudé in his seminal work on *The Crowd in History*.²⁸ Their average age, which, according to the sentences, was 28, their marital status – many of them were married – and also the lack of recidivists prove that participants in revolts were not criminal elements or *canaille* from the lowest rungs of

society, as was often claimed by the high officials of the regime. On the contrary, most people who took to the street to protest were common craftsmen, often fathers with families, with a regular and decent existence. Moreover, during the protests rebellious citizens almost always acted in a disciplined and purposeful manner. Most of the revolts developed a regular pattern, with a march to the town hall or the office of the highest representative of the government and the freeing of political prisoners playing an important part. The violence used by the people was almost always 'functional', in as much as that it was aimed at the subject of dissatisfaction, and the 'collateral damage', especially looting, remained very limited. Where violence was used, it mainly destroyed buildings and material objects. Excessive violence against other people was rare. Most of the time, in personally aimed actions, the rioters were satisfied with a symbolic humiliation, such as the removal of hats, caps and other distinctive symbols by which those in authority were wont to distinguish themselves. During the 'orphan revolt' in Rotterdam in 1809, the crowd almost systematically collected the metal shields or *ringkragen*, the distinctive emblems of the officers of the local city guard. During the same uprising, according to the court reports, a Sergeant Vos had to retreat from the turbulence bareheaded, because his hat 'which cost seventeen guilders' was deliberately destroyed ('cut into pieces') by the people.²⁹ The total number of those who died as a result of rebellious crowd violence was probably not more than ten. This was far fewer than the number of victims killed by government repression, including the sentences of the Military Commissions.

Tradition versus modernity: the Dutch protest viewed from a European perspective

Compared with other periods in Dutch history, the Napoleonic era was more a time of turmoil than one of calm. The number of protests, which included more than 80 revolts, and the variety of protest forms, could even be regarded as impressive, if we compare these findings with the results of one of the few other studies of popular protest in Dutch historiography, that on unrest in the province of Holland during the *ancien régime* by the Dutch historian Rudolf Dekker. Although direct comparison is difficult because of Dekker's indirect quantitative presentation of his material, his use of a different method and a different geographical scope, it is still striking that he found only some 80 revolts across two centuries, compared to over 40 revolts in the same area in the seven years of Napoleonic rule.³⁰

As is almost always the case, economic, social and political grievances reinforced each other. Economic hardship was surely an important motive in Napoleonic Holland too. Trade and industry almost came to a standstill, and there is no doubt that the slump and poverty encouraged dissatisfaction. During the revolt on 15 November 1813 in Amsterdam, for example, a banner *For Peace and Trade!* was carried.³¹ Nevertheless, economic circumstances were not always decisive, since uprisings also occurred in the relatively prosperous countryside. Moreover, the years 1806, 1807 and 1812, when food prices were extremely high, were the quietest of the period, and a closer look at the sentences passed on those convicted of taking part in the unrest suggests that those who lived on charity seldom figured among the rioters.

The prime motive for protest was more often political and social outrage. It would appear that the rioters were inspired by a 'moral policy', almost parallel to Thompson's concept of 'moral economy'.³² The political component of the protest is apparent when the main reasons for the unrest are considered. In the main it was caused by an aversion to government decisions or to the supreme government itself – in particular conscription measures, higher taxes or other newly imposed regulations – and was explicitly anti-French or anti-Bonaparte.

Furthermore, the distinctive character of the Napoleonic period gave the protests an extra, deeper socio-political dimension. The process of modernization, generated by the Napoleonic regime through the construction of the nation-state, inevitably involved an attack on traditional patterns of authority and the morality of the socio-political order. Therefore the protest could also be interpreted as a conflict between tradition and modernity. In their confrontations with the regime, the protesters acted according to traditional patterns, in their operational framework and in their assumptions, and, as such, showed themselves to be the defenders of the old order and its value system.

There are many indications of this. The participation of women in collective actions was, as in other early modern forms of protest such as hunger riots, considerable. Regarding timing, protesters preferred, in the words of Cobb, the traditional 'riot days' (Sundays, market days and public holidays).³³ There was, not surprisingly, a lack of collective action in the 'modern repertoire' (demonstrations and strikes), in Charles Tilly's terminology.³⁴ Above all the protest had a strong local character. Complementary to this strong traditional and local orientation was the lack of a national dimension to the protest. Only in the case of the protest of Maria Aletta Hulshoff does there seem to be a kind of supra-local network of former democratic activists. But there is

no documentary evidence for this, and it is the traditional character of popular protest, in which the people who took action in the streets did *not* act according to the concept of the nation-state to be founded after 1813, that has dominated the historiography of the Napoleonic period. Historians have seen the lack of any modern national protest as being equivalent to *no* protest, with an image of 'peace' and 'passivity' as a consequence.

When we consider these protests from an international point of view, the mere presence of substantial Dutch popular resistance in the Napoleonic period is the first, if not the most important, point that should be made. A second point is that substantial protests also took place in the early phase of the Napoleonic period in Holland during Louis's Kingdom. The brilliance and the overall validity of the work of Stuart Woolf on the opposition to Napoleon are not questioned, but the findings here may very slightly modify his general conclusions. In particular, they may qualify his emphasis on the almost total concentration of disorder in the 'remoter areas of the European countryside' during the Napoleonic years, and his claim that the characteristic form of collective political opposition in this period lay in revolts which, in his words 'until the final years . . . seemed of Mediterranean Europe, rather than the northern or central areas . . .'.³⁵

In addition, some minor qualifications should be made in relation to Woolf's conclusion that 'apart from Spain, only two revolts seriously challenged French authority: the endemic war in Calabria and the Tyrol rising of 1809'.³⁶ Although popular protest in Holland could prevent neither the establishment of Louis's kingdom in 1806 nor its annexation in 1810, the protests and the threat of protests were certainly not without impact on the Napoleonic regime. Louis frequently changed or withdrew his plans when he was confronted with popular opposition, and even the authorities during the Incorporation were willing to adapt unpopular measures under pressure of collective action, as when they adopted a more relaxed approach to the use of replacements in the National Guard.³⁷ It is also very likely that Napoleon postponed the final incorporation of Holland – which he planned from 1809 and was considering the previous year – partly because of his fear of protest.³⁸ And it is certain that the revolt of the people of Amsterdam in November 1813 led directly to the fall of Lebrun and his administration, which in turn caused the collapse of the French regime in Holland. In conclusion, although popular protest could not prevent its imposition, it did modify and shorten the Napoleonic regime.³⁹

A further interesting finding of research into popular protest in Napoleonic Holland seems to touch on Michael Broers' concept of the 'inner empire', in his compelling *Europe under Napoleon*.⁴⁰ Broers' overall view of the transformation of Napoleon's European policy after 1807 corresponds very well with the changes in Napoleonic policy towards the Kingdom of Holland and also with the linked question of the relationship between the brothers Bonaparte, and he is certainly right to classify the Netherlands as a part of the 'inner empire' when it comes to the introduction of powerful and lasting institutional reforms.⁴¹ Yet the presence of popular protest in Holland and, especially, the increase in and intensification of protest during the period from 1806 to 1813 may lead us to question his thesis that

Perhaps an essential, defining characteristic of the lands which became the 'inner empire' (those acquired up to 1807) was that the balance slowly – and usually grudgingly – tipped away from resistance, towards collaboration.⁴²

The research results lead to further analysis of the position of Holland as 'inner state'. New questions are raised, such as whether the concept of Holland as an 'inner state' is really appropriate only to the elite, or a select group of the elite, and whether there was a transformation in Holland (or certain areas of Holland) from 'inner' to 'outer' empire after the Incorporation in 1810. It is unfortunately not possible to deal with these questions in detail here. However, even Broers seems to be inclined to diversify the standing of the Netherlands within the Empire during the Napoleonic years, firmly characterizing Holland until 1813 as part of the 'inner empire', while dealing with the Dutch departments, especially the North Sea coast, after 1810 in the context of the 'outer empire'.⁴³

From a more comparative perspective, it is interesting that the Dutch protests were in many ways similar to anti-French protests in other areas of Napoleonic Europe. Although 'the subject of armed popular resistance in Napoleonic Europe is an area of which we still know surprisingly little', the study of popular protest in Napoleonic Europe has steadily gained momentum in recent years, a momentum most clearly reflected in the collections edited by Charles Esdaile and Michael Rowe.⁴⁴ The similarities are striking. Conscription and taxation, including the imposition of the Continental System, were the main causes of collective popular protest across the whole of Europe.⁴⁵ The years 1809 and, of course, 1813 were turbulent in other areas of Napoleonic Europe. And on a micro-historical level it is striking that the average age of the rebels in Napoleonic Italy was between 20 and 30 years, and that Easter was a

time of growing tension 'all over the Empire'.⁴⁶ These details correspond surprisingly well with the findings of the research into Dutch popular protest.⁴⁷

However, much more important from a broader comparative viewpoint is the essentially local and traditional character of popular resistance in Napoleonic Holland. The absence of a 'modern patriotic' or 'modern national' direction certainly coloured popular protest in other regions of Napoleonic Europe.⁴⁸ Although some qualifications can be made, the results of the research into Dutch protest largely confirm Broers's conclusion that 'The struggle against Napoleon was one of diversity against standardization, of tradition against innovation.... It was a popular struggle..., but it was about preserving the past, the past in which the "nation state" had no part'.⁴⁹

Even so, there are some differences. The Dutch protest was relatively non-violent and was unlike that of southern Europe, especially Spain, Italy and the south of France, in that it was not Roman Catholic but Protestant in inspiration. It was strongly encouraged by reformed ministers, yet was not religiously motivated and legitimated to the same extent as in other European regions, in particular Russia, Spain and the Tyrol. As a result of the Batavian Revolution, the State and the (Reformed) Church were already officially separated in 1796. Moreover, the troubles which were generated by the Concordat, Napoleon's policy towards Pius VII and the introduction of civil marriage, including the legalization of divorce, which infuriated pious Catholics all over Napoleonic Europe, did not antagonize the Protestant Dutch.⁵⁰ The lack of religious fanaticism is one of the reasons why the protest never developed into a complete reaction against the Enlightenment. Apart from the role of the Protestant ministers, this lack of anti-Enlightenment feeling can also be ascribed to the civil (*burgerlijke*) inclination of the former Dutch Republic and to the political and scholarly work of the Patriot and Batavian revolutionaries, who were active in the last two decades of the eighteenth century. Although the modern institutional nation-state had yet to be constructed in the Netherlands, the relationship between the political government and civil society in the Netherlands was in several aspects already 'rationalized' before the Napoleonic regime was formally imposed on the Dutch by the proclamation of Louis Napoleon as King of Holland in June 1806.

Conclusion

The Napoleonic period (1806–1813) is a short but important phase in Dutch history. Under successive Bonapartist regimes the nation-state

was finally shaped, and subsequently the first phase of the modernization process began in earnest. In Dutch historiography the Napoleonic period has long been considered as a time of internal peace, characterized by the extreme passivity of the Dutch people. However, detailed research in the archives of the administrative, judicial, military and police authorities has resulted in a quite different image of the Napoleonic years. Many and varied protests, across the whole period 1806–1813, come to light. The main reasons for protest were conscription, fiscal measures and hostility towards the regime. At a secondary level there are economic, social and political explanations for protest. Of special historical importance are the traditional form, targets and extent of popular actions. Because of its traditional character Dutch popular protest has been long neglected in Dutch historiography: the focus of leading historians for this period was on the modern nation-state under the House of Orange, established after 1813. The traditional elements make the Dutch protest congruent with popular protests in other parts of Napoleonic Europe, though some aspects are typically Dutch: the protest was relatively non-violent, strongly inspired by the Protestant church and never directed against the Enlightenment.

The study of popular protest based on governmental material in central, departmental and local archives can make a valuable contribution to our understanding of the experiences and perceptions of ordinary people during the French Wars, even where ego-documents do not exist. Such research can make even ordinary soldiers, citizens and civilians from the early modern period visible to the twenty-first-century historian.

Notes

1. 'Les dispositions éminemment séditeuses de la populace de la Hollande'. See Archives Nationales (AN), F7 3064, report by Devilliers Duterrage, Director of Police in Holland, to the Ministry of Police, 22 November 1813, concerning the uprisings in the Dutch Departments.
2. For a historiographical overview in 1989, see Willem Frijhoff and Joost Rosendaal, 'La Révolution régénérée: Nouvelles approches et nouvelles images de la révolution néerlandaise', in *L'image de la Révolution Française. Communications présentées lors du Congrès Mondial pour le Bicentenaire de la Révolution*, ed. Michel Vovelle (Paris: Pergamon Press, 1990), vol. 1, pp. 543–561.
3. See the work of such Dutch economic and social historians as H. F. J. M. van den Eerenbeemt, P. M. M. Klep, L. Noordegraaf and J. L. van Zanden.
4. The text is primarily based on my book *De Adelaar en het Lam. Orrust, opruiging en onwilligheid in Nederland ten tijde van het Koninkrijk Holland en*

de Inlijving bij het Franse Keizerrijk (1806–1813) (Amsterdam: De Bataafsche Leeuw, 2000).

5. The ceremony is described in detail in Louis Bonaparte, *Documens historiques et réflexions sur le gouvernement de La Hollande*, 3 vols. (Paris: chez Aillaud etc., 1820) vol. 1., pp. 125–132.
6. These figures are drawn from both secondary and primary sources for the historical demography of the period. See Stadsarchief Amsterdam (SAA) (formerly Gemeentearchief Amsterdam), 5053, Nieuw Stedelijk Bestuur (NstB) (New Municipal Administration), Maire, 718, Verbaal (report) and 798, Bijlagen (attachments), 1811, Missive Prefect De Celles (Departement Zuiderzee), 30 November 1811, and Imperial Decree 21 October 1811 ('Circonscription'). For an overview of the literature and sources for historical demography see Joor, *De Adelaar en het Lam*, pp. 60–63.
7. E. W. Hofstee, *Korte demografische geschiedenis van Nederland van 1800 tot heden* (Bussum: Unieboek b.v., 1981), p. 123 (table 1).
8. J. de Vries and A. M. van der Woude, *The First Modern Economy: Success, Failure and Perseverance of the Dutch Economy, 1500–1850* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), p. 227. Joor, *De Adelaar en het Lam*, pp. 60–70.
9. See Joor, *De Adelaar en het Lam*, pp. 28–37 for a historiographical overview. See also Note 10.
10. *Ibid.*, pp. 535–536.
11. For 'Amstelland', the current province Noord-Holland, see Noord-Hollands Archief (NHA) (former Rijksarchief Noord-Holland), Haarlem, Gewestelijke Besturen (GB) (Departmental Administrations) 1799–1810, Departementaal Bestuur van Amstelland, Landdrost, Divisie van Politie, 596, Secrete verbalen van de Landdrost betreffende politiezaken (secret reports of the Landdrost concerning policing), 1807–1810, and 597–602, Relatieven (attachments), 1807–1810.
12. Nationaal Archief (NADH) (former Algemeen Rijksarchief), Den Haag, Ministerie van Justitie voor 1813 (MvJ) (inventory 2.01.10.04), 355, Indices op de verbalen van de Minister van Justitie en Politie (indexes to the reports of the Minister of Justice and Police) for 1810, 'Oproerige Bewegingen', 2, 6, 8, 17, 21 and 23 June and 24 July 1810. NADH, MvJ, 277, Secreet confidentieel verbaal van het verhandelde bij het Ministerie van Justitie en Politie (secret confidential report of the Ministry of Justice and Police) 1810, 29 June 1810 and 366, Register (Index), 1808–1810, 29 June 1810 (324a). More details in SAA, 5053, Burgemeester, 717, Verbaal (report) and 759, Bijlagen (attachments), 18 June 1810 and SAA, 5061, Schout en Schepenen (SenS) (Sheriff and Bench of Aldermen), 629, Sententieboek (sentences), 1810, 25 October 1810 and 526, 528 and 529, Confessieboeken (confessions), 17 July, 17, 22 and 26 September and 5 and 25 October 1810. See for the diplomatic consequences in H. T. Colenbrander (ed.), *Gedenkstukken der algemeene geschiedenis van Nederland van 1795 tot 1840* (10 vols., The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1905–22), vol. 5, letters Serurier (to De Champagny), 15, 28 and 29 May and 3, 15, 27 and 28 June 1810 and letter De Champagny (to Serurier), 25 June 1810; pp. 134–136 etc. See also Felix Rocquain, *Napoléon Ier et le roi Louis, d'après les documents conservés aux Archives Nationales* (Paris: Firmin-Didot & Cie, 1875), Napoléon to Louis, 23 May 1810, pp. 276–277,

and Napoléon to M. de Champagny, Duc de Cadore, Ministre des Relations Extérieures, 23 May 1810, pp. 277–278.

13. AN, AF IV 1725b, Archives du Cabinet de Louis Bonaparte, Roi de Hollande, 1806–1810, lettres de Lebrun à Napoléon, 7–23 February 1813; AN, F⁷ 3054, Troubles dans le grand-duché de Berg et en Hollande, 1813, correspondence between De Celles, Préfet du Zuyderzée and De Montalivet, Ministre de l'Intérieur, 2 February–15 April 1813. AN, F⁷, 3064, Rapports du Directeur de la Police en Hollande, 1811–1813, Bulletin of Devilliers, Directeur-général de la Police en Hollande, to Savary, Ministre de la Police générale, 19 February 1813. For more detailed information, SAA, Bibliotheek (Library), B 72, Dossier Maas, incl. sentence of the Military Commission, 22 February 1813. See also Joor, *De Adelaar en het Lam*, pp. 138–141 and passim. In 2007 a Dutch biography of one of the (supposed) conspirators was published by Salvador Bloemgarten, *Hartog de Hartog Lémon, 1755–1823, Joodse revolutionair in Franse Tijd* (Amsterdam: Uitgeverij Aksant, 2007).
14. For information about the distribution of the pamphlet and the legal proceedings against Maria Aletta Hulshoff, see SAA, 5061, NstB, 625, Sententieboek, 18 July 1806 and 507, Confessieboeken, 15 and 22 April, 17 and 29 May and 3 and 6 June 1806. There is more detail about the intriguing Maria Aletta and her other oppositional activities in Joor, *De Adelaar en het Lam*, pp. 291–294, 305–307, 480–490 and 568.
15. NADH, Binnenlandse Zaken (BiZa) (Ministry of Home Affairs), 1795–1813 (Inventory 2.01.12), 887, Index and minuut verbaal, uitgaande brieven en ingekomen stukken (index and original report and correspondence), October 1806, 16 and 21 October 1806 (p. 210). NADH, MvJ, 351, Indices verbaal (p. 26vso) and 13 and 14, Verbaal van de Minister van Justitie en Politie, 1806–1807, 16 and 18 October 1806. Tresoar Fries Historisch en Letterkundig Centrum (THLC) (former Rijksarchief Friesland (Provincial Archive Friesland)), Leeuwarden, BRE, Gewestelijke Besturen in Friesland in de Franse tijd (Departmental Administrations of Friesland during the French period), Departementaal Bestuur van Friesland, 1802–1807, 826, Notulen (minutes), 13–24 October 1806. See also 837 and 949, Correspondence, October 1806. THLC, Hof van Friesland (HvF), 7530, Sententieboek (sentences), 20 November 1806 and 6774, 6775 and 6776 (records).
16. For Rotterdam, see AN, AF IV 1745, Minister van Justitie en Politie Rapports du Ministre de la Justice et de Police, 1806–1810, 15 July 1809; NADH, BiZa, 809, Index (p. 737) and 657–658, minuut verbaal, July 1809, 15–18 and 22 July 1809; NADH, MvJ, 354, Index verbaal, 'Oproerige Beweigingen', 15–17, 19–21, 28 and 31 July 1809 and 366, Register secreet confidencieel verbaal and 274, Secreet confidencieel verbaal, 23 July and 4 August 1809; NADH, Ministerie van Oorlog (MvO) (Ministry of War) (inventory 2.01.14.07), 1247, Index verbaal A-K, 16 July 1809 (p. 659m) and 1248, Index L-Z, 16 and 31 July 1809 (pp. 851 f-g). NADH, Departementaal Bestuur van Maasland (Departmental Administration of Maasland) (inventory 3.02.08), Landdrost, 178 (former V178), Index verbaal, 'E', 16 and 21 July 1809, 'G', 3 July 1809 and 'K', 9, 11 and 14 July 1809; Gemeentearchief Rotterdam (GAR), Rotterdam, 1.01, Oud Archief van de Stad Rotterdam (Ancient Municipal Archives), OASR, 319, Verbaal van het gepasseerde voor de Burgemeester

- (report), 22, 23, 27, 30 and 31 July 1809 and OASR, 418 and 485, correspondence; GAR, 15, Oud Rechterlijk Archief (Ancient Judicial Archive) (ORA), 242, Getuigenverklaringen (eyewitness accounts), Criminele attestatie (criminal attestation of) J.C. Reepmaker and others, 21, 28 and 31 July and 11 September 1809 and 264, Register, houdende sententies (sentences), 27 September 1809 and 9 February 1810. For Amsterdam see NADH, BiZa, 839, Minuut secrete notulen (secret minutes), 21–23 July and 1 August 1809 and 840, Relatieven (attachments). NHA, GB, Landdrost, 596, Secrete verbalen, 25 July and 1 and 8 August 1809; 341, Index verbaal 1809, 'Etablissementsen', 12 and 21 June and 19, 22 and 29 July 1809 and 228, Verbaal and 296, Relatieven, July 1809; SAA, 5053, Burgemeester/Maire and Wethouders/Adjoints, 716, Index notulen and notulen (Index minutes and minutes) ('Atroupementen'), 741–742, 'Bijlagen (Attachements) and 841, Missivenboek (correspondence), 21 July 1809; SAA, 343, Regenten Aalmoezeniersweeshuis (Regents Aalmoezeniers Orphanage), 1613–1825, 1828, 34, Notulen (minutes), 1806–1810, 20–21, 24, 26 and 27 July, 2–3, 9 and 16 August, 18 and 25 October and 1 November 1809 and 4 April 1810. See for more details and source material Joor, *De Adelaar en het Lam*, pp. 312–15 and passim.
17. NADH, MvJ, 353, Index verbaal, 1808, 'Oproerige Bewegingen', 25 January and 1 March 1808 and 'Arresten', 1 March 1808; 117 and 121, Verbaal, January and March 1808. Gelders Archief (former Rijksarchief Gelderland (Provincial Archive Gelderland)), Arnhem, 006–14, Landdrost/College van Landdrost en Assessoren, 4524, Boek van Criminele appointementen en sententiën, 1806–1810 (sentences), 9 February 1808.
 18. For Flushing, see NADH, MvJ, 7, Verbaal, September 1806, 5 September 1806. For Groningen, see NADH, MvJ, 351, Index Verbaal, 1806, 'Oproerige Bewegingen', 4 and 5 September 1806 and 6, Verbaal, 4 September 1806.
 19. For Meppel, see NADH, MvJ, 352, Index Verbaal, 1807, 'Oproerige Bewegingen', 10 and 28 September and 28 October 1807 and 81 and 91, Verbaal, 28 September and 28 October 1807; Drents Archief (DA) (former Rijksarchief Drenthe (Provincial Archive Drenthe)), Assen, 0001, Oude Staten Archieven, Gewestelijke Besturen (Departmental Administrations), 1805–1813, Landdrost, 1532, Index Verbaal, 1807–1808, 'Policie', 7 and 26 September 1807 and 1524, Minuut Verbaal, 1807–1809, 7 and 26 September 1807; DA, 0085, Etstoel, 105, Register criminele sententiën (Register of sentences), 1803–1811, 11 December 1807. For Amsterdam, see NADH, MvJ, 353, Index Verbaal, 1808, 'Oproerige Bewegingen', 5 September 1808; NHA, GB, Landdrost, 596, Secrete Verbalen, 6 September 1808.
 20. See for details Joor, *De Adelaar en het Lam*, pp. 465–470.
 21. AN, AF IV 1744, report to the Minister of the Interior, 23 May 1810; and 1745, reports of 3 and 6 June 1810 (with attachments). NADH, BiZa, 839, Secrete notulen, 29 May 1810 and 841, Relatieven, 24 and 31 May, 1, 3 and 8 June 1810; NADH, BiZa, 891, Index notulen, 1810, 15, 18 and 30 May and 2 June 1810 (p. 213) and 718 and 720, Notulen, 18 and 30 May and 2 June 1810; NADH, MvJ, 355, Index Verbaal, 1810, 'Oproerige Bewegingen', 3 and 5 June 1810 and 223, Verbaal, 3 and 5 June 1810; NADH, MvO, 1251, Index verbaal L-Z, 1810, 25 and 29 May 1810 (p. 1422); NADH, GB, Landdrost,

- 179 (former V179), Index verbaal, 'B', 25 and 29 May and 1 June 1810; NADH, GB, Drost Tweede Kwartier, 850, Index Verbaal, 1807–1810, 24, 28 and 31 May, 1–4 June 1810 (p. 300 etc) and 841–842, Verbaal, 24, 28 and 31 May, 1–4 June 1810; GAR, 1.01, OASR, 320, Verbaal, 1809, 23–26, 28 and 29 May, 1 and 4 June 1810 and 420, 421 and 486, correspondence. GAR, 15, ORA, 243, Getuigenverklaringen, Criminele attestatie (criminal attestation) of H.A. Hulsinga, 3 June 1810 and 318, Stukken betreffende onlusten in de stad tussen burgers en Franse soldaten (items concerning the riots in the city between citizens and French soldiers), 1810. See also Joor, *De Adelaar en het Lam*, pp. 263–264 and passim.
22. Napoleon to Lebrun, 26 September 1810, *ibid.*, p. 572.
23. See report of Devilliers, Directeur-général de la Police (to Réal), 12 April 1811, in Colenbrander, *Gedenkstukken*, vol. 6, pp. 543–544. Devilliers reported that 'bands of between four and five thousand men were angrily scouring the area, shouting and urging that we cut the throats of the French'.
24. See Joor, *De Adelaar en het Lam*, pp. 664–665, and for more details of this revolt, *Ibid.*, pp. 180–184 and 346–348.
25. AN, AF IV 1725b, Lebrun to Napoléon, 22 April 1813. For a copy of the sentence and details about the Military Commission – most of the 'judges' were Swiss soldiers of the hastily sent repressive military force – see NHA, 15, Arrondissement Amsterdam, Openbare Orde en Veiligheid (Public Safety), Politierapporten (police reports), 1811–1813, 26 April 1813. For a full overview of the revolt in Zaandam and the National Guard-revolts of April 1813 in Zuid-Holland, including an extensive collection of source material, Joor, *De Adelaar en het Lam*, pp. 209–218, 264–265, 348–350 and 666–674.
26. *Ibid.*, pp. 687–688 and 641–648.
27. For Scheveningen (the crowd walked from Scheveningen to The Hague where the actual revolt took place), see the information about the participation of women in 'Gedenkschrift van Tulling' (the memoirs of Tulling, the commanding officer of the civil guard), in Colenbrander, *Gedenkschriften*, vol. 6, p. 1655. On the participation of women in Amsterdam and the flight of French officials from the city, see AN, AF IV 1725b, Lebrun to Napoléon, 16 November 1813. There is more information about the revolts in Scheveningen/The Hague, 26 March 1812 and in Amsterdam, 15–17 November 1813, in Joor, *De Adelaar en het Lam*, pp. 165–166 and 261–262 (Scheveningen/The Hague) and pp. 210–212, 264, 266–267, 495–499 (Amsterdam).
28. George Rudé, *The Crowd in History 1730–1848*, rev. edn (London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1981).
29. *Ibid.*, pp. 227–229.
30. Rudolf M. Dekker, *Holland in beroering. Oproeren in de 17^{de} en 18^{de} eeuw* (Baarn: Uitgeverij Ambo bv, 1982). See for my comment on Dekker's study, Joor, *De Adelaar en het Lam*, pp. 677–678. Dekker focuses on the period 1600–1780, while the politically turbulent years of the 'Patriottentijd', from 1780–1787, present different issues. According to Dekker, the Dutch Republic should not be considered as an 'isle of inner peace', given the fierce disturbances at times of international crisis, notably in 1653, 1672 and 1747. See Rudolf

- M. Dekker, 'Some remarks about collective action and collective violence in the history of the Netherlands', *Tijdschrift voor sociale geschiedenis* 15 (1989): 158–164.
31. Joor, *De Adelaar en het Lam*, p. 561.
 32. E. P. Thompson, 'The Moral Economy of the English Crowd in the Eighteenth Century', *Past and Present* 50 (1971): 76–136.
 33. Richard Cobb, *The Police and the People: French Popular Protest 1789–1820* (London: Oxford University Press, 1970), p. 266.
 34. Charles Tilly, 'Hauptformen kollektiver Aktionen in Westeuropa 1500–1975', *Geschichte und Gesellschaft* 3 (1977): 153–163; idem., *The Contentious French: Four Centuries of Popular Struggle* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap, 1986); idem., *Popular Contention in Great Britain 1758–1834* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1995).
 35. Stuart Woolf, *Napoleon's Integration of Europe* (London and New York: Routledge, 1991), p. 231.
 36. *Ibid.*, p. 232.
 37. Joor, *De Adelaar en het Lam*. pp. 626 and 688.
 38. *Ibid.*, pp. 42, 92, 96–97, 688.
 39. *Ibid.*, p. 688 and passim. With reference to the comparison with the Tyrol, it is remarkable that in the aftermath of a massive revolt in Oud Beierland in the department of Bouches de la Meuse on 21 February 1813, de Stassart, the prefect of this department, indirectly defended his conduct to Lebrun by comparing this revolt with two earlier ones in his department, and with an earlier revolt in the Tyrol. In his words, 'The more I consider this affair, ... the more I examine my part in it, and the more I believe I showed as much prudence by taking vigorous action in this instance as I did in the Tyrol in 1805, at Katwick in 1811 or at The Hague in 1812, when, without spilling any blood, I gained the same results which it required severe measures to achieve at Oud-Beyerland'. See de Stassart to Lebrun, 28 February 1813, in Colenbrander, *Gedenkstukken*, vol. 6, pp. 984–985.
 40. Michael Broers, *Europe under Napoleon 1799–1815* (London: Arnold, 1996).
 41. *Ibid.*, p. 267.
 42. *Ibid.*, p. 101.
 43. *Ibid.*, p. 202.
 44. Charles J. Esdaile, 'Patriots, Partisans and Land Pirates in Retrospect', in Esdaile (ed.), *Popular Resistance in the French Wars. Patriots, Partisans and Land Pirates* (Basingstoke, New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005), pp. 1–24, here 1; Michael Rowe (ed.), *Collaboration and Resistance in Napoleonic Europe. State-Formation in an Age of Upheaval, c. 1800–1815* (Basingstoke, New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003).
 45. See for example Alexander Grab, 'State Power, Brigandage and Resistance in Napoleonic Italy', *European History Quarterly* 25 (1995): 39–70, here 40 and idem, 'Army, State and Society: Conscription and Desertion in Napoleonic Italy, 1802–1814', *Journal of Modern History* 67 (1995): 25–54. For comments, see Esdaile, 'Popular Resistance in Napoleonic Europe: Issues and Perspectives', in Esdaile (ed.), *Popular Resistance*, pp. 201–224, here 216–217. For the importance of conscription as a 'litmus test of administrative competence' and 'battleground' in France, see Alan Forrest, 'State-formation and Resistance: the Army and Local Elites in Napoleonic

- France', in Rowe, *Collaboration and Resistance*, pp. 37–54, here 46–47. Broers identifies conscription as the central issue in Napoleonic Europe (Broers, *Europe under Napoleon*, p. 70). Woolf mentions conscription but stresses taxation as the main cause for resentment (Woolf, *Napoleon's Integration*, p. 232).
46. Grab, 'Brigandage in Napoleonic Italy', p. 44; Broers, *Europe under Napoleon*, p. 113.
 47. For reflections on Easter as a time of growing tension, see Joor, *De Adelaar en het Lam*, p. 270.
 48. Woolf, *Napoleon's Integration*, p. 186; Philip G. Dwyer, 'War and Resistance in Napoleonic Europe: Some Recent Works', *European History Quarterly* 27 (1997): 549–561, here 550; Broers, *Europe under Napoleon*, pp. 151 and 242; Charles Esdaile, 'Popular Mobilisation in Spain, 1808–1810: A Reassessment', in Rowe (ed.), *Collaboration and Resistance*, pp. 90–106, here 103. On 'provincialism', see also Vittorio Scotti-Douglas, 'Regulating the Irregulars. Spanish Legislation on *la guerilla* during the Peninsular War', in Esdaile (ed.), *Popular Resistance*, pp. 137–160, here 152–155.
 49. Broers, *Europe under Napoleon*, p. 270. In addition, Woolf's observation that 'the struggle for national independence, the formation of new nation states... provided historians with a teleological interpretation...' is for Dutch historiography on the Napoleonic period surprisingly to the point (Woolf, *Napoleon's Integration*, p. 236).
 50. In the sixteenth century, soon after the Dutch Revolt against Spain, civil marriage was introduced in the Dutch Republic and separation and divorce were legalized. See Johan Joor, 'Echtscheiding en scheiding van tafel en bed in Alkmaar in de periode 1700–1810', *Tijdschrift voor sociale geschiedenis* 11 (1985): 197–230.

10

‘A Citizen and Not a Soldier’: The British Volunteer Movement and the War against Napoleon

Kevin B. Linch

The massive conscription-based armies raised by Napoleonic France forced all European states to consider how to increase their military manpower, and Britain was not an exception in this regard. Moreover, manpower demands in Britain were fuelled in the 1790s by a fear of insurrectionary movements, or at the very least domestic disturbance. In both these areas the British Army had traditionally provided the government with its ‘internal defence’ force, but in also acting in an imperial role and as an offensive expeditionary force, the army was liable to be dangerously overstretched.¹ These manpower demands, the increased threat of invasion, and the titanic nature of the struggle between Britain and France during the period 1793–1814 led the government to create a mass part-time army for home defence. This posed all sorts of questions for the government and local authorities over the discipline, organisation, and military role of such a force. As significant as government grappling with the problem of mass mobilization was the impact this had on the men themselves. For the first time, a large proportion of the male population was brought, however tenuously, into some form of armed service at the behest of the state. Exploring the impact of mass mobilization on the identity of those who joined Britain’s part-time forces demonstrates that these men often took into these new forces assumptions about terms and conditions drawn from civilian life, illustrating the fragile and subtle border between the civilian and the soldier, which was under constant negotiation throughout the period.

Military expansion: the volunteers in context

Facing ever increasing demands to raise large military forces was not a new problem for the British government in the Revolutionary and

Napoleonic Wars, and steps had been taken during the long series of conflicts with France in the eighteenth century to increase the manpower at the government's disposal for defence of the British Isles. In 1757, the English militia was reformed so that during wartime each county had to raise a regiment in proportion to its population, creating a supplementary source of manpower, albeit one restricted to home defence in times of war.² What was different about the Napoleonic Wars was the sheer scale of the manpower required, surpassing anything the army could raise when parliament was generally hostile to the expansion of the army, and even what was feasible through the militia system, although both expanded massively in their own terms.³ In 1813 the British Army reached 250,000 men. The militia was expanded geographically to Scotland and Ireland in 1793 and 1797 respectively and, in terms of numbers, peaked at 89,000 in 1805.⁴ A further consideration for the government in any expansion of manpower was simply cost, in terms both of the expense to government of maintaining a large military establishment, and of the potential economic damage caused by large-scale mobilization. In reviewing Britain's military in 1811, Lord Liverpool, then Secretary at War, concluded that the army was 'as large a force, combined with the Regular Militia and Navy, as the Population and Finances of the Country could well support'.⁵

It was in the early 1790s, when the spectre of insurrection was coupled with the fear of invasion, that the government called for self-funding part-time local defence forces to be raised: volunteer units.⁶ Although not a new idea – volunteer units were raised in 1745 during the Jacobite rebellion on a very limited scale and during the later stages of the American War of Independence in the late 1770s and early 1780s⁷ – the figures for the volunteer movement during the Napoleonic Wars were nothing short of staggering, reaching around 380,000 in 1804, a level of mass participation not seen until the two world wars of the twentieth century and perhaps only paralleled by the Home Guard of the 1940s.⁸

This 'addition of mass', as John Cookson has referred to it, was given further impetus by strategic and diplomatic circumstances.⁹ As revolutionary France defeated continental opposition, so the threat of a French invasion of Britain increased, both because of France's greater ability to concentrate on its cross-Channel enemy when it did not have to face Austria, Prussia or Russia, and because of French dominance of the Netherlands, which provided increased maritime operational freedom for a descent on the British coast. During 1797–1798 and 1803–1805 Britain was under serious threat of invasion for these reasons, and it

was at these times that volunteer numbers swelled due to government incentives and legislation.¹⁰

The volunteer movement allayed political sensibilities over increasing the size of the armed forces and escalating the administrative powers of the Whitehall government. The volunteers, particularly in their early phases, were largely self-governing and self-financing, run in many cases like a typical eighteenth-century British club or society. The government made use of the county Lord Lieutenants and the local bureaucratic machinery of the militia to administer the volunteer force. Established by the militia acts, counties held Lieutenancy general meetings, followed by meetings for sub-divisions of a county, with the Lord Lieutenant corresponding with the Home Secretary on these matters. Typically, the Lord Lieutenants were the county's highest-ranked aristocrats and as such were an eclectic group, ranging from military officers such as the second Duke of Richmond in Sussex, to the eleventh Duke of Norfolk for the West Riding of Yorkshire who detested soap and water and was dismissed from his Lieutenancy in 1798 for toasting 'Our sovereign's health – the majesty of the people', and the fourth Duke of Queensberry (Lord Lieutenant of Dumfriesshire) who was famous for his womanizing and general pleasure-seeking.¹¹ Utilising the Lord Lieutenants, the government was able to devolve much of the administration and decision-making to local authorities, although the extent of their business varied with the size and population of the county. It is hardly surprising that Earl Fitzwilliam, Lord Lieutenant of the West Riding of Yorkshire, one of the most densely populated and largest counties in Britain, apologised to a correspondent in 1799 that 'I have had so much to do lately' and therefore had not been 'as regular as I ought to have been in writing'.¹² Again, utilising local officials was a typical *modus operandi* of Britain in the eighteenth century, avoiding another bugbear of parliament, the expansion of bureaucracy. As such, volunteering was generally popular amongst the political elite, in the sense that it was well-suited to the political situation, despite vocal opposition to the system by a few, such as William Windham.¹³ It is, however, much harder to assess the experience and popularity of volunteering amongst the several hundred thousand men who were participants in volunteer units.

The volunteer experience

There was some debate during the Revolutionary and Napoleonic Wars over the volunteer experience, and a pamphlet from the early period

of the volunteer force neatly sums up the contemporary and historical problem of the novelty of mass mobilization in Britain: volunteering 'compelled you to blend with your innocent and peaceable employments, the study of military arts'.¹⁴ There were major concerns over discipline, first over how to create a viable military force out of part-time soldiers and then, once the volunteers became a mass force, over maintaining discipline when recruiting from a potentially discontented population.¹⁵ The British government had the example of the Irish volunteers in the American War of Independence as a warning, and fears of mass arming were further fuelled by the French Revolution and re-invigorated radicalism in Britain.¹⁶ On the other hand, some were prepared to see volunteering as a positive movement in Britain, fostering a sense of loyalty. In particular, William Pitt, British prime minister from 1783 to 1801, and again from 1804 until his death in 1806, was the keenest advocate of volunteering as a cohesive and unifying force within society, to the point that he felt bringing in the disaffected into volunteer corps would actually help to integrate society rather than present the government with a potentially volatile situation. In some sense, Pitt was correct since the volunteers remained largely apolitical throughout the period, as Austin Gee has shown.¹⁷

Understanding the experience of part-time soldiering in Britain is a difficult task. The Napoleonic Wars generated a significantly larger volume of memoir material and recollections of personal experience than previous conflicts. Unlike the British Army, explored in this volume by John Cookson, volunteering was a limited time investment, usually 20 days training a year, and so little direct testimony of volunteering exists. Furthermore, the volunteers were never used in anger and saw no active service, a key feature of many of the personal testimonies from this period. There is, however, abundant material from those involved in organising and training these part-time soldiers and detailed reports of their activities. Needless to say, relying on secondhand material has its own problems, but the most difficult issue is dealing with the amount of material. Even in the early twentieth century, the Hon. J. W. Fortescue recognised that surveying the official papers alone would be a lifetime commitment.¹⁸ And in working with these sources it is difficult to ascertain the impact of volunteering. Historical interpretations range from viewing them as an expression of the overt loyalty of the vast majority of the British population, to indicating the growing power of the state to mobilize its population outside politics, using local elites, by appealing to an ethic of service.¹⁹

Leaving aside these questions for the moment, even some of the basic information on the volunteer force, and the potential experience of part-time soldiering, is not widely known. Not least amongst the challenges surrounding the study of the volunteers is their tortuous development, particularly given the frequent shifts in parliamentary policy towards them in the turbulent military and political situation of the Revolutionary and Napoleonic Wars. Describing them as a single entity does not do justice to the complexities of this force. Briefly, four phases of volunteering can be discerned after their establishment in 1794. From the small force of the early Revolutionary Wars, characterised by defending the local order, a second phase of expansion occurred in 1797–1798, although it should be noted that the Irish volunteers never moved into this phase of expansion.²⁰ Linked to the collapse of the second coalition, this expansion was a result of the dearth of military forces in Britain and a sense that the war was now ‘defensive’. These forces were given approval and support from the government under the 1798 Defence Act.²¹ The volunteers (but not the volunteer cavalry, also known as the yeomanry) were disbanded peacefully in 1802, although their strength and efficiency were beginning to wane before they ended. The resumption of the war in 1803 saw a third phase with the re-establishment of the volunteers, their numbers reaching a peak in 1804–1805. This force was organised under various volunteer acts and regulations in 1803 and 1804, with numerous revisions, and is often what is referred to when volunteers are discussed, the classic example of this being Linda Colley’s *Britons*.²² The last phase was one of mass mobilization through the local militia, created in 1808 by Lord Castlereagh (then Secretary for War), a quite different force backed by compulsory service if quotas were not met. In the first instance, it consisted mostly of volunteers who transferred their service.²³

A further level of complexity in the volunteer force was added by the different types of units that were raised. The titles of units include volunteer infantry, volunteer cavalry, rifle infantry, armed associations, volunteer artillery, legions, yeomanry, corps of guides, and sea-fencible units (naval volunteers under the direction of the admiralty),²⁴ indicating the variety of military roles that a volunteer could be expected to perform.²⁵ As an example, on the south coast in Sussex around Lewes and Brighton, in 1803 there were two volunteer artillery companies at Newhaven and Brighton, with units of sea fencibles also in these towns, three troops of yeomanry, two volunteer infantry units, and a small corps of guides.²⁶ The differences between infantry, cavalry and artillery are fairly straightforward militarily, but in terms of their experience it is

worth considering the different training and attributes they required. The heavy physical exertion of being a member of the Eastbourne Artillery Volunteers in Sussex may explain its relatively high turnover in manpower. During 1803–1805, on average 9 per cent of its privates quit each quarter resulting in 54 men leaving in these years from the unit's strength of just over 100. This compared to 40 men from the nearby Hastings Volunteers who left their corps during 1804, out of a total of 590. We can only speculate on the reasons why such men as John Hart, Neal Taylor and William Riddle left the Eastbourne Artillery in 1804, but the fact that the unit trained 85 days a year, compared to 20 in the majority of volunteer units, allied perhaps with heavy manual work and an eighteenth-century military hierarchy which placed artillery at the bottom of the pile in social standing, may have contributed.²⁷

It is also worth highlighting the individual history of volunteer units in considering the experience of the men who served in them. A significant proportion of volunteer units existed in one form or another, even sometimes under different names, throughout the Revolutionary and Napoleonic Wars, with the Amiens truce proving to be a temporary lapse in their existence. A very select few had a longer history. Particularly noteworthy is the London and Westminster Light Horse Volunteers, raised in the American War of Independence and very consciously resurrected in the 1790s. Most, however, were a new feature of the political and social landscape of Britain, and the only units to survive the Napoleonic Wars were the yeomanry units, which continued into the nineteenth century, becoming a permanent feature of the county establishment.²⁸ At the other end of this spectrum, many of the armed associations were ephemeral organisations, barely leaving a trace of their existence. Continuity of service also played a part in shaping a volunteer's identity, even though it could be in different units. On resigning his commission in February 1813, John Hardy could testify that 'I have now borne arms as a domestic soldier in one capacity or another since the year 1794', amounting to 18 years service even accounting for the Amiens truce.²⁹

These variations of existence, regulations, and laws under which the volunteers operated changed the impact that being a volunteer could have on a man. The early volunteers decided for themselves how many drills they had to attend; but as government intervention increased from 1797, new terms were set for them if they were to be able to claim the government's incentive of pay and uniforms. Under the August 1803 allowances, volunteers could receive pay for a maximum of 20 days drill a year, and not long after they were permitted to go on permanent

duty for up to a week.³⁰ The local militia of 1808 dispensed with the odd drill days entirely, and the force was embodied for annual training each year.³¹ The pattern of part-time soldiering in a man's life, then, varied according to when he was a member. Just as important when considering their identity is what they were being asked to do. The early volunteers were very much a civic police force, who also added some military ceremony to public events. By the time of the local militia, however, these men were being asked only to attend drill camps once a year, and so they had a very different character, and were perceived differently.

Not only were there changes across the period under discussion which need to be borne in mind, but volunteering also had a complex regional history. As the force grew to its peak in 1804, it necessarily expanded geographically. Typical of this is the expansion in the West Riding of Yorkshire, where it moved from the large towns out into the country. However, the volunteer movement also intensified in certain areas. Leeds, for example, had 300 volunteers in 1798 and 1400 by 1803.³² As Linda Colley has indicated, at a county level there were wide variations across the United Kingdom in the response to volunteering.³³ Further down the administrative scale there were also differences, particularly between town and country. However, these regional variations should be looked at carefully. In the West Riding, the Lord Lieutenant, Earl Fitzwilliam, collected all the volunteer offers in 1803, and then accepted offers from rural areas rather than urban corps as he wished 'for the counterpoise of the agricultural parts of the county'.³⁴ Consequently, the sub-division (known locally as wapentakes) of Leeds and Skyrac had 23 per cent of its men aged between 18 and 45 in the volunteers in 1803, whilst the rural Barkston Ash attained 54 per cent; in contrast, the wapentakes of Agbrigg and Morley, containing Bradford, Huddersfield and Halifax, had only 11 per cent. In Sussex, the Duke of Richmond set more equitable volunteer quotas across the county; but the important point is that volunteering was being restrained and organised much more than is often suggested.³⁵ Urbanization also facilitated the training of volunteers, and although rural units often united parishes, they usually trained separately and so were unable to attain the urban units' level of training. In the West Riding, it was often the corps based around the large towns that were often reported as suitable to fight alongside regular troops, whilst the more rural units only reached a standard suitable for garrison duty.³⁶

The difference in the training between the urban and rural units points to a very different experience for the men who formed the

units. The impact of volunteering on the 16 men of the Little Horsted company of the North Pevensey Legion in Sussex, who initially only agreed to meet in their parish in 1803, contrasted sharply with the sheer spectacle, collective mass, and organization of the Leeds Volunteers, which numbered 1400 men in two battalions and were ordered not to be absent from the town for more than 48 hours.³⁷ Contemporaries were also aware of the impact of size. Earl Fitzwilliam was particularly concerned with making volunteer corps 'respectable', by which he envisaged a certain size of force, to avoid volunteering becoming 'play time, and arms play things'.³⁸ Even in the early phases of volunteering, it was recognised by some that the units should look the part. Wilberforce was keen for the Halifax Volunteers to be on 'a respectable footing' and they certainly delight the costume historian in their scarlet coats faced with black silk velvet and silver lace, even extending to the grenadier company being attired in bearskins.³⁹ Nor was Halifax unusual in this level of military grandeur, as is seen in the survey of the London volunteers in 1799, which includes many regiments such as the St Mary-le-Strand and Somersetshire House Volunteers in fashionable light infantry 'Tarleton' helmets or the Light Horse Volunteers of London and Westminster in their scarlet Hussar jackets.⁴⁰

Volunteer culture and civil society

Beyond sartorial elegance, the early volunteers' functions were couched very much in terms of them being raised as a political force, an 'aid to the civil powers', and as such they were intended to reflect a certain section of the community. The 1794 Act was concerned with establishing discipline, or more importantly the limits of it, but it implied certain expectations of those who would join this force: they would receive pay only when called out on actual duty; requirements for attendance at drills were set by units; and generally the volunteers were a separate force in terms of discipline. In essence, these volunteers were meant to be 'citizens' already, and so ready to defend the existing social order from the revolutionary threat. Many of their terms and conditions have the hallmarks of an eighteenth-century public society, though organised for very different ends as a manpower boost to the local forces of law and order. Their preoccupation with local policing can be seen in their terms of enrolment, with most of them only agreeing to serve in a very limited area, usually just the town or parish. Such a social composition with such terms of service necessarily produced some discussion over how such a force should be organised. In many ways these early units,

particularly the more 'independent' yeomanry or volunteer cavalry, had strong democratic tendencies: any monies received were put into 'stock purses' and split regardless of rank; officers held their commissions by vote in a frank admission that this was a collection of equals; and the units were run by committees.⁴¹ Needless to say, instilling military discipline in a gathering of respectable men proved to be a subject of some debate.⁴²

Externally, the volunteers' position within and towards society was also subject to some negotiation at an early stage. Quickly, they became established as a defensive arm of the church and state. During the numerous presentations of colours that took place in 1794, the sermons that were preached often spoke of defending the constitution, both civil and religious.⁴³ However, these presentations reveal a change taking place. First, the colours were almost always presented by women, usually the wives of commanding officers or local aristocracy (not necessarily the same). Quite overtly, then, the volunteers were staking their position as defenders of the female kind, and the family more generally.⁴⁴ The blessing of the colours then sanctified this agreement between the volunteers and the rest of society in a very public manner. The increasingly gendered role that the volunteers were taking was an almost natural progression of an increasingly military outlook, but these ceremonies also reveal another trend, one that was to become increasingly obvious from 1797. All of these ceremonies were very military, in the sense that they aped military conventions, forms and appearance. This may seem logical, but soon it became apparent that increasing militarization of the force, coupled with a huge expansion, reduced their overtly political nature.

For the volunteers involved, these ceremonies were a very public act of participation and alongside the ceremonial gift of colours, there were Church parades and the King's birthday, as well as military parades. Volunteer parades attracted significant local attention, not only being regularly reported in the local press but also attracting sizeable crowds. At the 'Military Festival' held in Leeds in 1795, which units from all over the West Riding of Yorkshire attended, it was reported that 'a great concourse of people, and numbers of horses and carriages on Chapel Town Moor, exceeded all expectations'.⁴⁵

Public appearances sometimes attracted the wrong kind of attention. In a scathing handwritten poem entitled *The Alarm*, the Upper Agbigg Volunteers of the West Riding were savaged as a social club sent into disarray when 'some wag rushed in and boldly swore/The Beacon long had blazed' signalling that an invasion had occurred. The stanzas then

proceed through the responses of the officers: a debate ensues between Major Nally and Major Bram over whether they should walk or ride; and when someone suggests that they should see if the invasion had occurred, there is a remarkable reluctance and 'all our Heroes loiter'. Needless to say, once the alarm proves to be false, all of them declared that their disappointment 'was ten times worse than death'.⁴⁶ The poem is pretty clear in its views of the martial prowess of volunteers, but also suggests how little progress these officers had made in the journey to being military men, and perhaps men overall.

The huge expansion of the part-time forces in 1798 and again in 1803 provides the historian with more evidence, albeit still from secondhand sources. In these years, the complexities of volunteering are particularly apparent, as there is evidence of volunteers' indiscipline and imperviousness to patriotic propaganda, whilst there is also evidence to the contrary. This expansion brought into the volunteers a much wider section of the British society, particularly artisans. The mentalities that these artisans carried into the volunteers were impregnated with customs and beliefs which included the idea of a 'moral economy' whereby they were prepared to use physical actions such as protests and riots to regulate and protect what they saw as their rights. In the case of part-time soldiering, this not only meant observing customs relevant to themselves as civilians, but also those that they felt they were due as soldiers, and in particular part-time soldiers.⁴⁷

There is abundant evidence that volunteers did default to their civilian mentalities based on the moral economy, on which Fortescue almost delighted in reporting in his *County Lieutenancies and the Army*.⁴⁸ Moving beyond Fortescue's concerns over their military efficiency, a brief survey of these 'mutinies' and other un-military activity reveals something about the way that the volunteers thought of themselves. There was a long-running dispute in the Ripon Volunteers after a member refused to serve more than 20 days in 1805 as he considered himself 'a Citizen and not a Soldier'.⁴⁹ Moreover there were a series of quasi-industrial disputes over pay and regulations throughout the wars, which are particularly reminiscent of the moral economy. In 1796 the commander of the Royal Wakefield Volunteers was forced to quit after a threatened mass-resignation by the corps over a pay dispute.⁵⁰ This troubled regiment experienced another dispute in 1804, with men throwing down their arms on parade demanding their 'marching guinea' and a return to electing officers, as had been the practice before, demonstrating how relatively new experiences and customs could be quickly absorbed into the corpus of rights that were governed by the moral economy.⁵¹

Clashes between civilian and military mentalities were an inevitable by-product of mass mobilization. More worrying for the government and local authorities were the loyalties of the volunteers when called upon to fulfil their 'aid to the civil powers' role. In times of distress, it is clear that most volunteers did not see themselves in this role. During the hard year of 1800 in Sheffield, three-quarters of the Loyal Independent Sheffield Volunteers, as they styled themselves, went as far as to decide that they would not support the magistrates if called out, and in a riot later that year, only 50 out of 500 enrolled men appeared when called upon by the magistrates.⁵² In 1812, it is even clearer that being a member of a part-time military force did not encourage more obedience to local authority. Three local militiamen were committed to trial for involvement in a food riot in Sheffield that turned upon the local militia's depot there and from which trophies of cap-plates and other items were stolen.⁵³ During one Luddite trial it emerged that many Luddites were members of the 'militia', and Mr Cartwright, the owner of Rawfolds Mill, found himself looking at a wounded Luddite after the attack on his property, one Samuel Hartley, whom he knew from the Halifax Local Militia.⁵⁴ This does not appear to have been exceptional; the 1st Middleton Local Militia in Lancashire was reported to have all but one of its members 'twisted in' [having taken a secret oath], and the Newtown and Failsworth regiments were similarly described.⁵⁵

On the other hand, volunteers were exposed to patriotic propaganda, and their experiences as part-time soldiers led some to redefine themselves. At various periods during the wars the government sought to inculcate a wider awareness of the war and a sense of unity.⁵⁶ In the late 1790s, circulars were distributed to the volunteer units to publicise Nelson's victory at the Nile and the Egypt campaign, and at the height of the invasion crisis in 1803–1805, the volunteers, and society in general, were bombarded with exhortations from the press and reports of speeches from inside parliament.⁵⁷ Going beyond the rhetoric and casting a critical eye over reporting of the raising of the volunteers, there does seem to have been a genuine desire to do something. At the Lieutenancy General Meeting of the West Riding in 1803, Fitzwilliam reported privately that 'the whole population, capable of bearing arms, had on many occasions enroll'd'.⁵⁸

Once enrolled, the volunteers engaged with a wider identity. Many units gained a strong esprit de corps, sometimes to the embarrassment of the county authorities as they tried to organise them into larger forces.⁵⁹ Also, volunteers often provided military pageantry for local or even national events; Pitt's funeral included some of the Cinque Ports

Volunteers, and units were involved in the Jubilee celebrations besides other regular, less high-profile, parades such as those held on the King's birthday.⁶⁰ Such actions placed the volunteers in a relationship with each other in their units, and with their wider society, such that in some towns volunteer units were raised because it was thought to befit municipal dignity.⁶¹

One of the few individual memoirs which provide evidence of the transforming power of the volunteers is that of Sergeant Thomas Morris. As a 16-year-old volunteer in the Loyal Volunteers of St. George's Middlesex in 1812, he felt so ashamed of being a part-time soldier whilst hearing of the 'glorious achievements of the British troops in Spain' that he enlisted in the second battalion, 73rd Regiment. This is not to say that his experience in the volunteers was the exclusive reason Thomas joined up, as his brother was in the unit he later joined, nor that he did not have doubts, as he witnessed the punishments parade whilst he was in the act of signing up, which had 'almost overcome... my desire for glory'. The 2/73rd was dispatched to north Germany, where Thomas saw action at the battles of Göhrde, Holland and Waterloo. It may be no coincidence that he experienced volunteering in London, which witnessed the largest volunteering events in the country and was perhaps the most active in terms of training and appearances. Thomas was involved in a sham fight between his volunteer unit and the Ratcliff Volunteers, and the proficiency of his drill was noted whilst he was training with the 2/73rd.⁶² Another example of the transforming nature of volunteering is provided by Henry Redhead Yorke, in this case an act of reconciliation. Henry Redhead Yorke was a notorious radical in Sheffield in the 1790s, yet in 1798 the then Captain Yorke was recruiting for a volunteer company. Despite some protest, Fitzwilliam supported the reformed radical; as for Yorke himself, the volunteers were part of the 'road to fortune and an honourable establishment'.⁶³

Conclusion: negotiated identities

It is clear that the volunteers were a complex social phenomenon. How can one account for the spectacular turnout in 1805 of the West Riding Volunteers after a false alarm, which witnessed 3500 men on the move according to a pre-arranged military plan, with their obvious civilian mindset expressed during the Luddite troubles, mutinies over discipline and issues of pay?⁶⁴ Even more startling is the example of the Halifax Volunteers who dutifully trooped off to suppress riots in Lancashire

in 1808, for which they might be supposed to have had significant sympathy.

In many ways, the volunteers brought their own identities into this force, drawing on their artisan culture, which helps explain their activities as part-time soldiers that defied authority.⁶⁵ The demands for 'rights', often expressed through 'mutinies', suggest belief in the working of a moral economy and reveal that the borders between civilian and soldier in the volunteers were thin indeed. Being a volunteer, however, meant that several hundred thousand men were also subject to the imposition of identities, both locally based around civic or neighbourhood pride and in relation to a larger conception of them as a socially unifying force. Volunteers, subtly affected by the simple wearing of the red coat, regularly exposed to government propaganda, participating in victory celebrations, and organized and frequently re-organised by local authorities into a more effective military force, were throughout the war against Napoleon experiencing new collective identities. Given the scale of the volunteer force, the identities brought to it by the men themselves from their communities and culture, and the construction of new identities based around military units, region and nation, it becomes apparent that the identity of the volunteers was a process of negotiation, and one that was constantly under revision.

Notes

1. Jeremy Black, *Britain as a Military Power, 1688–1815* (London: Routledge, 1999), pp. 11–43; J. A. Houlding, *Fit for Service: The Training of the British Army 1715–1795* (Oxford: Clarendon, 2000), pp. 1–98; Christopher D. Hall, *British Strategy in the Napoleonic War 1803–15* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1999), pp. 76–80.
2. J. R. Western, *The English Militia in the Eighteenth Century* (London: Routledge, 1965).
3. *Ibid.*, pp. 111–117; L. G. Schworer, "*No Standing Armies!*": *The Antiarmy Ideology in Seventeenth Century England* (London: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1974).
4. Hall, *British Strategy*, pp. 2–6.
5. British Library, London, Liverpool Papers, Add. MS. 38,361 ff. 65–69, Draft Measure for keeping up the Regular Army (undated, but probably 1810). The Secretary for War and the Colonies had overall charge of the conduct of war. Richard Glover, *Peninsular Preparation: the Reform of the British Army 1795–1809* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1963), pp. 15–16.
6. Austin Gee, *The British Volunteer Movement 1794–1814* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), pp. 15–28.
7. *Ibid.*, pp. 11–14; Linda Colley, *Britons: Forging the Nation 1707–1837* (London: Pimlico, 2003), appendix 1, for details on the 1745 Armed

Associations; Stephen Conway, *The British Isles and the War of American Independence* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), pp. 19–25, for the volunteers in the 1770s and 1780s.

8. John E. Cookson, *The British Armed Nation, 1793–1815* (Clarendon: Oxford, 1997), p. 66.
9. *Ibid.*, Chapter 1.
10. *Ibid.*, Chapter 1 and pp. 66–80.
11. William C. Lowe, 'Lennox, Charles, third duke of Richmond, third duke of Lennox, and duke of Aubigny in the French nobility (1735–1806)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2004 <<http://0-www.oxforddnb.com.wam.leeds.ac.uk:80/view/article/16451>> (17 May 2007); Gordon Goodwin, 'Howard, Charles, eleventh duke of Norfolk (1746–1815)', rev. S. J. Skedd, *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2004 <<http://0-www.oxforddnb.com.wam.leeds.ac.uk:80/view/article/13890>> (17 May 2007); William C. Lowe, 'Douglas, William, fourth duke of Queensberry (1725–1810)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2004 <<http://0-www.oxforddnb.com.wam.leeds.ac.uk:80/view/article/7937>> (17 May 2007).
12. Sheffield Archives, Sheffield (SA), Wentworth Woodhouse Muniments (WWM) Y16/83, Fitzwilliam to Harewood, 16 December 1799. I wish to acknowledge my thanks to the Director of Culture, Sheffield City Council, for permission to use these sources and that the Wentworth Woodhouse Muniments have been accepted in lieu of Inheritance Tax by HM Government and allocated to Sheffield City Council.
13. Gee, *British Volunteer Movement*, pp. 72–82.
14. Robert Hardy, *An Address to the Loyal Volunteer Corps of Great Britain: In Two Parts* (Chichester: printed by P. Seagrave, 1799), p. 4.
15. The debate still continues on the stability and loyalty of British society; amongst the classics in this discussion are Edward P. Thompson, *The Making of the English Working Class* (London: Penguin, 1991); Roger Wells, *Insurrection: The British Experience, 1795–1803* (Gloucester: Alan Sutton, 1983); John Stevenson, *Popular Disturbances in England, 1700–1870* (London, New York: Longman, 1979); Mark Harrison, *Crowds and History: Mass Phenomena in English Towns, 1790–1835* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988); Linda Colley, *Britons*; Ian R. Christie, *Stress and Stability in Late Eighteenth Century Britain* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1984).
16. Conway, *The British Isles*, pp. 210–217.
17. Gee, *British Volunteer Movement*, pp. 204–229.
18. Hon. J. W. Fortescue, *The County Lieutenancies and the Army, 1803–1814* (1909: repr. Eastbourne: Anthony Rowe, 2003), p. v.
19. Colley, *Britons*, pp. 387–388; John E. Cookson, 'Service without Politics? Army, Militia and Volunteers in Britain during the American and French Revolutionary Wars', *War in History* 10 (2003): 381–397.
20. Allan Blackstock, *An Ascendancy Army: The Irish Yeomanry, 1796–1834* (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 1998).
21. *The Statutes at Large*, 38 Geo. III, c.27
22. Colley, *Britons*.

23. This summary is largely drawn from Cookson, *The British Armed Nation*, pp. 66–94, and Fortescue, *County Lieutenancies*, pp. 12–13, 32–34, 59–69, 211–214; for a local study see Kevin B. Linch, 'A Geography of Loyalism? The Local Military Forces of the West Riding of Yorkshire, 1794–1814', *War & Society* 19 (May 2001): 1–21. Castlereagh was replaced by Liverpool as Secretary for War in October 1809.
24. Nicholas Rodgers, 'The Sea Fencibles, Loyalism and the Reach of the State' in *Resisting Napoleon: The British Response to the Threat of Invasion, 1797–1815* ed. Mark Philp (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2006), pp. 41–59.
25. A complete survey of part-time forces would be an almost impossible list to collate; a snapshot can be found in [House of Commons] *Return, Presented to the House of Commons, in pursuance of an Order of 10th August 1803 of all Volunteer and Yeomanry Corps, whose services have been accepted by His Majesty, describing each corps. Ordered to be printed 9th December 1803* (London, 1803).
26. East Sussex County Record Office, Lewes, (ESCRO), Lieutenancy Papers, Lewes sub-division, LLD / 6 / E2.
27. National Archives, London (UKNA), War Office Papers, Volunteer Pay Lists, WO13/4564.
28. Regiments can be traced in J. B. M. Frederick, *Lineage Book of British Land Forces 1660–1978: Biographical Outlines of Cavalry, Yeomanry, Armour, Artillery, Marines and Air Force Land Troops of the Regular and Reserve Forces* (East Ardsley: Microform Academic Publishers, 1984); for a local view, see E. W. Gladstone, *The Shropshire Yeomanry, mdccxcv/mcmxlv: The Story of a Volunteer Cavalry Regiment* (Manchester: Whitehorn Press, 1953).
29. SA, WWM, Y16/437, John Hardy to Fitzwilliam, 18 February 1813.
30. Fortescue, *County Lieutenancies*, p. 64.
31. *Ibid.*, pp. 212–213.
32. SA, WWM Y16/189, Wrightson to Fitzwilliam, 27 October 1803.
33. Colley, *Britons*, pp. 298–300; appendixes 2 and 3, pp. 378–384.
34. UKNA, Home Office Papers, HO51/91, Fitzwilliam to Hobart, 24 August 1803.
35. ESCRO, LCG/3/EW1, Schedule Number 3 for the Defence Act, 1 August 1803.
36. SA, WWM Y41 Inspection Reports.
37. ESCRO, Sheffield Park Papers A2713; SA, WWM Y11/24a Yorke to Bacon Frank, 1 March 1804.
38. UKNA, HO50/91, Fitzwilliam to Hobart, 24 August 1803.
39. UKNA, HO50/346 Wilberforce to Portland, 1 November 1794; T. W. Hanson, 'The Early Volunteer and Cavalry of Halifax.', *Papers of the Halifax Antiquarian Society* (1920):103–34.
40. *Loyal Volunteers of London & Environs, Infantry & Cavalry, in Their Respective Uniforms. Representing the Whole of the Manual, Platoon, & Funeral Exercise, in 87 Plates. Designed & etched by T. Rowlandson . . .* (London, [1799]). The 'tarleton' helmet was designed by Banastre Tarleton and worn in the American War of Independence by the British Legion. It consisted of a metal and leather helmet, with a woollen comb running across the top from front to back, a coloured 'turban' wrapped round the bottom, and often finished

off with a tall plume at the side. It was used by the British Army for its Light Cavalry regiments until 1813.

41. A good survey can be found in Gee, *British Volunteer Movement*.
42. Francis Perceval Eliot, *Letters, on the Subject of the Arm'd Yeomanry, addressed to the Rt. Hon. Earl Gower Sutherland, ... Printed at the desire of the committee of subscribers, to the internal defence of the county, held at Stafford, October 1st. 1794*, 2nd ed. (Stafford, 1794).
43. See, for example, Samuel Clapham, *A Sermon, preached at Knaresborough, before the Royal Knaresborough Volunteer Company, on Sunday, October 12th, 1794...* (Leeds, 1794), vol. 1; Thomas Taylor, *A Discourse delivered at the Presentation of the Standards to the Yeomen Volunteer Cavalry of the county of Surrey, assembled upon Epsom Downs, on Friday, the twenty-second of August, 1794...* (London?, 1794?); Thomas Robinson, *Address to the Loyal Leicester Volunteer Infantry, at the Presentation of their Colours, in the Parish Church of Saint Martin, Leicester, October 19 1795. To which is annexed the prayer used on that occasion...* (Leicester, 1795).
44. The motto on the standards of the Staffordshire Volunteer Cavalry was *Pro Aris, et Focis* (For our altars and hearths). Eliot, *Letters, on the Subject of the Arm'd Yeomanry*, p. 29.
45. *Leeds Mercury*, 30 May 1795.
46. Kirklees District Archive, Huddersfield, KC585. It probably dates between 1803 and 1805, and may be linked to the false alarm of 1805.
47. E. P. Thompson, 'The Moral Economy of the English Crowd in the Eighteenth Century', *Past and Present* 50 (1971): 76–136. Debate over the nature of the moral economy still continues; see John Bohstedt, 'The Moral Economy and the Discipline of Historical Context', *Journal of Social History* 26, no. 2 (1992): 265–284.
48. Fortescue, *County Lieutenancies*, pp. 98–110.
49. UKNA, HO50/148, Ripon Volunteer Inquiry, 28 January 1805.
50. *Leeds Mercury*, 30 April 1796; UKNA, HO50/346 Tennant (Wakefield Volunteer Committee Chairman) to Portland, 6, 15 June and 12 September; Norfolk to Portland; *Leeds Mercury*, 22 October 1796.
51. SA, WWM Y10/107, Orderly Room, 11 January 1804; Y10/108b, Yorke to Fitzwilliam, 11 January; Y10/112, Tottenham to Fitzwilliam, 19 January; Y10/109, Tottenham to B. Frank, 21 January; Y10/113, Yorke to B. Frank, 21 January; Y11/18b, 'A friend of King and Constitution' to Yorke (copy), 30 January.
52. UKNA, HO50/91, Taylor to Dundas, 30 September 1800.
53. UKNA, HO50/291, Fenton to Ryder, 18 and 22 April 1812.
54. Brian Bailey, *The Luddite Rebellion* (Stroud: Sutton, 1998), p. 55.
55. National Army Museum (NAM), London, Papers of Lieutenant Colonel Clay, 7409/8, Clay to Liverpool, 6 September 1812. For 'twisting in' see Thompson, *The Making*, pp. 518–519.
56. In particular, Pitt viewed the volunteers as having a social function. Cookson, *British Armed Nation*, p. 80.
57. For the effect of a *Leeds Mercury* editorial on enrolments in Leeds, see E. Hargrave, 'The Leeds Volunteers, 1803–1808', *Thoresby Society* 28 (1928): 292–312.
58. SA, WWM Y10/84, Fitzwilliam to Hobart, 24 August 1803.

59. For example, in the West Riding Fitzwilliam unsuccessfully tried to amalgamate offers from the Dewsbury area. Y16/159, Richard Walker to Fitzwilliam, 8 September 1803; Y16/162 Haigh to Fitzwilliam, 14 September; Y16/166, Greenwood to Fitzwilliam, 17 September; HO50/91 Fitzwilliam to Yorke, 30 October; Y16/194, 5 November; HO50/91 Fitzwilliam to Yorke, 7 November (for Fitzwilliam rejecting all the offers).
60. J. Ehrman, *The Younger Pitt* (London: Constable, 1996), vol. 3, p. 819.
61. Two small units were formed in Knaresborough and Ripon in 1794 as they sent members to Parliament. UKNA, HO50/346, Duncombe to Dundas, 9 July 1794; Duncombe to Portland, 29 August, incl. Dalton to Duncombe, 24 August.
62. John Selby (ed.), *Thomas Morris: The Napoleonic Wars*, (London: Longmans, 1967), pp. 2–8.
63. For Yorke's early career, Seaman, 'Reform Politics at Sheffield', *Transactions of the Hunter Archaeological Society* 7: 215–228; see also J. G. Alger, 'Yorke, Henry Redhead (1772–1813)', rev. Peter Spence, *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2004 <<http://0-www.oxforddnb.com.wam.leeds.ac.uk:80/view/article/30241>> (9 February 2006); WWM Y10/16, Fitzwilliam to Portland, 10 October 1798.
64. *Leeds Intelligencer*, 19 August 1805; UKNA, HO50/147, Bacon Frank to Hawkesbury, 17 August 1805; SA, Y11/67, Hawkesbury to Bacon Frank, 22 August 1805; Y31/99a, Gen. Vyse's Official thanks to those corps that assembled, 26 August; UKNA, HO50/147, Bacon Frank to Hawkesbury, 28 August.
65. John Bohstedt, *Riots and Community Politics in England and Wales, 1790–1810* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1983), pp. 154–155; HO50/206, Halifax volunteer C.O. to Home Office, 3 June 1808; Y10/171, Hawkesbury to Fitzwilliam, 14 June.

11

Religion and the Experience of War: A Comparative Approach to Belgium, the Netherlands and the Rhineland

Horst Carl

The French Revolution and the Napoleonic Empire are often presented as decisive stepping stones on the path towards modernization. Yet this view raises the central problem of the importance of war and of religion as factors in the radical changes taking place around 1800. On the one hand, modernization paradigms of all kinds have tended to regard the violence of these changes as an unpleasant, but necessary, accompaniment to the shift towards the modern. On the other hand, within the context of a universal and historical process of secularization, the churches and institutionalized religion have been placed on the losing side from the beginning of the modern period.¹ Yet the perceptions of contemporaries corresponded to neither of these views. For them the period between the French Revolution and the downfall of Napoleon was an epoch dominated by war. Indeed, the extraordinarily rapid series of wars between 1792 and 1815 – in little more than a generation – was essential in shaping perceptions of the epoch.² New research into the history of religion has shown that around 1800 ‘no one understood how to control collective behaviour as well as the churches’,³ and suggests that religion and the churches continued to exert a ‘decisive influence and power [over] the existence, consciousness and behaviour of people’ well beyond this period of change.⁴ However, the major research questions in religious and church history have remained focused on the institutional position of the churches.⁵ Yet, if the relationship between war and religion is examined within the context of ‘war experience’, it is possible to reach a different assessment of the role of the churches and of religion in giving meaning to both individual and collective experiences around 1800.⁶

If we take the area of north-western Europe made up by Belgium, the Netherlands, Luxembourg and the left bank of the Rhine as the focus for such an approach, we are presented with a set of political conditions that converged between 1780 and 1815, although they had very different starting points. Already in the 1780s this pre-revolutionary corner of Europe had experienced the most spectacular political unrest. In the Netherlands this culminated in 1787 in civil war between the Patriots and the House of Orange. In the same year open resistance to Joseph II's reforms broke out in Belgium, and ultimately led to the violent secession of the Austrian Netherlands from the Habsburg Monarchy. Finally, neighbouring Lüttich and the two most important cities in the Rhineland, Aachen and Cologne, were plagued by serious internal unrest from 1786.⁷ In all these confrontations Enlightenment ideas about the proper relationship between state and church, and the principle of religious tolerance, played a decisive role, and the churches and their representatives were inescapably drawn into these conflicts. The struggles not only culminated in confrontation with the French Revolution and the Napoleonic Empire, but were played out in increasingly similar political situations. From 1795 Belgium and the Dutch border regions formed an integral part of the French state. The left bank of the Rhine followed in 1801. Finally, after the interregnum from 1801 to 1805, the Netherlands was first formed into a satellite kingdom under Napoleon's brother, Louis, before being annexed by France in 1810.⁸ The absorption of the neighbouring territories into one state structure remained a political option for the future following the downfall of Napoleon. Indeed, the Dutch King William I in 1814 demanded that the area from the Rhineland to the Moselle be combined into one territorial unit. The variant that was realized in 1815 retained Belgium and the Netherlands as a single state, although unification eventually broke down in the 1830 Belgian Revolution. This failure was the result of continuing structural and, above all, confessional differences. The Napoleonic political settlement could not be effaced easily.

As a result, the question remains: what meaning did religion – or more specifically, the church-based Christianity of different confessions – have in this period of radical change around 1800? Since the most recent research has convincingly shown the extent to which this period was shaped by warfare, it is possible to focus specifically on the meaning and importance of religion.⁹ This is not simply a question of the institutional consequences of war for churchmen and their congregations. This paper asks rather whether the traditional system of meaning which interpreted military violence in religious terms was undermined and disempowered

by the experience of war, or whether it acquired a new force during a time of massive dislocation.

The churches in conflict with the revolution

Belgium had experienced a high degree of politicization in the years before the confrontation with the French Revolution.¹⁰ Yet despite the disorientation of the laity, the pre-revolutionary unrest of 1789–1790 was characterized by an immense, widespread support for the Catholic Church. The higher clergy had led the resistance to Joseph II's religious reforms, and the leaders of the Brabantine Revolution of 1789, whether middle-class liberals or aristocratic conservatives, maintained a close relationship with the church.¹¹ They inscribed the defence of a time-honoured republican constitution as well as the Catholic religion on their banners. The peasant uprising in Flanders in 1790, which was directed *against* the new Belgian Republic and its middle-class elite, was also closely linked to the Catholic Church, but had exactly the opposite goal: the reintroduction of monarchical order.¹² On the other hand, the Lüttich uprising of 1789 against the Prince-Bishop contained an expressly anti-clerical, even anti-religious, tone.

The position of the Belgian clergy was soon the concern of revolutionary France. The victory of the Revolutionary armies in 1792 and their conquest of Belgium not only threatened the material position of the clergy, but also the very existence of the Church as an institution. In turn, the Catholic laity had to assume that the exercise of their traditional religious practices was under threat. However, attempts to use religion to incite believers to oppose the Revolution occurred only occasionally. The clergy already had a stereotype of the enemy in the notion of the 'godless French', an anti-French image that had deep roots stretching back into the early modern period and was mainly equated with immorality. The Church could also reach back to a traditional theological concept, that of the 'just war'. But in the pastoral letters of the Belgian bishops in 1793 and 1794, at a time when the Austrians toyed with ideas of arming the people as a response to the radical challenge of the *levée en masse*, there were no new elements. The bishops presented a very traditional argument and did not advocate a radicalization of the war. They preferred to present the war as 'God's punishment' for individual sins, a view that scarcely provided a basis for mobilizing the people, but preached suffering and acceptance.¹³ Admittedly, the last Lent letter before the final conquest of Belgium, presented in February 1794 by Cardinal von Franckenberg, the Archbishop of Mechelen and highest

representative of the Belgian clergy, described the French as the enemies of God and humanity, whose armies had been sent under their sacrilegious and blood-streaked banners for renewed invasion of Belgium. But, the letter continued, it was only the most worldly who appealed to God to punish the crimes of the revolutionaries. The true Christian recognized in these events, for which there was no parallel in history, God's anger at the ingratitude and lack of faith of humanity.¹⁴

The example of the northern Netherlands provides an informative contrast. Here there was a long tradition of commentary during sermons on current political questions during days of repentance (*Bid- and Bededagen*). Facilitated by the authorities, these *Bededagen* can be seen as an early, quasi-nationalist ritual of collective identity affirmation. On specific occasions, such as the outbreak of war or the conclusion of peace, the Dutch States-General would announce a countrywide day of thanksgiving to ask for God's blessing. The States-General used the printed announcements sent to the provincial estates (*Biddagsbrieven*) as a means of making public their views on the condition of the state or foreign events. As a result the tenor and content of the sermons were predetermined, the priests having only to select the relevant biblical readings. Sermons, especially those of the preachers of the established Dutch Reformed Church, were often printed alongside the official letters of thanksgiving. These documents provide an extraordinarily rich and extensive source for examining the combination of religious and political influences on believers in the early modern Netherlands.¹⁵

However, the authorities' control of sermons was already a political issue due to the partisanship of the preachers in the intense confrontation between the Patriots and the Orangists. In 1793 a satirical poem, which characterized the faithful as 'dumb dogs', sparked a passionate polemic for and against the Reformed Church.¹⁶ The 'general political' mandate of the preachers was completely undermined, when the same preachers, who only a year before had proclaimed the danger posed to every temporal and spiritual order by the godless French, thanked them in 1795 for their 'liberation' and the imposition of peace through the new Batavian Republic. Consequently, despite individual attempts to whip up religious outrage, there was no mass religious mobilization in the area against the French Revolutionary armies.

The churches' struggle and the 'distress' of the faithful

In Belgium – and in a weaker form in the Rhineland – the confrontation between the Revolution and the Christian churches reached its peak

between 1795 and 1799.¹⁷ The confrontation can be divided into two phases. The first phase was dictated by the requirements of the French military. Anti-church measures aimed at driving the Catholic Church from its public position and at bringing about its economic ruin through requisitions and the sale of secularized church property. The second phase began with the Jacobin coup of 4 September 1797, which restored the struggle against the Church to the level of state doctrine.¹⁸ Priests in both France and the annexed areas of Belgium were expected to swear a stronger oath of loyalty to the Republic, which included 'hatred of monarchy and anarchy'. The majority of the clergy rejected the oath in the belief that an obligation to hatred was unchristian. Consequently, the Belgian clergy experienced the same split that occurred among the French clergy in 1791 when they had divided over the oath of loyalty to the Civil Constitution of the Clergy, the majority rejecting the oath. Fundamental positions were marked out, and the revolutionary state began persecuting dissenters, a policy which culminated, as in France, with the deportation of refractory priests.¹⁹

The Catholic Church in Belgium, as in France, lost much of its social status after 1797 and was plunged into a deep crisis of identity. This was paralleled by a growing spirit of independence among the laity. This did not necessarily mean a break with the Church. Some of the laity, both those who had sworn the oath and, more often, those who had rejected it, were from rural areas that lay away from the urban centres of the de-christianization policy. Since priests who had refused the oath were prevented from fulfilling their pastoral functions, laymen were forced to assume responsibility for church life and culture to an extent that, until now, has remained unrecognized.²⁰ They took over the duties of prayer leaders, the recitation of the catechism, funerals and other rituals. Personal forms were developed for church services, like the so-called dry Mass, which usually involved saying the rosary. Official reports noted, disparagingly, that it was mostly women and children who participated in these events. However, they misjudged the essential roots the churches had in daily life and especially their influence upon the family and on education. That the individuals who took over these duties as leaders of the faithful, teachers or church officials were often 'devout ladies', drawn from the circles of the local notables, underscores the point that in this situation women had greater opportunity to play a role in public life.

The functions of the established churches were not, however, entirely displaced. During the crisis years between 1797 and 1800 there was a growth in popular religious traditions. The spontaneous pilgrimages,

miraculous cures and miracles of 1798–1799 in Catholic Belgium and the neighbouring Rhineland provide ample evidence of this trend. Among the latter was a direct intervention by God: the ‘lettres tombées du ciel’. In these letters, which supposedly fell directly from heaven, God expressed his contempt for the revolutionary decimal calendar and called upon the faithful to maintain the sanctity of Sunday.²¹

The religious excitement of the crisis year of 1800 also fed into the belief that the year would see the coming of the millennium, the medieval and early modern religious interpretation of crisis par excellence.²² Among the Protestants of the northern Netherlands this eschatological perspective on their own history – that they were one of the new peoples of Israel – had a long tradition. The legal emancipation of Catholics between 1796 and 1802 and the consequent loss of the Protestants’ dominant position merely reinforced the belief among both orthodox and pietist Protestants that this immense change represented the ‘beginning of the end’.²³ Although this eschatological reading of history was more widespread among Protestant circles, the same patterns of interpretation and meaning can be found in Catholic attitudes towards the Revolution. Here, too, it was regarded as the last stage in a path that ran from the conflict with the atheistic enlightened elite, through the struggle with the Josephist reformers of the 1780s, and terminated in the existential threat to the church itself posed by the Anti-Christ, the Revolution.

It would therefore be a fallacy to assume that a crisis of institutionalized religion in areas conquered by the Revolutionary armies was coupled with a wider process of dechristianization. Indeed, a greater differentiation of religious practice and behaviour can be observed. The conflict between the churches and the revolutionary state meant that religious practice and beliefs were no longer self-evident or taken for granted. Instead, adherence to a confession increasingly took on the character of a conscious decision. In a divided society such a decision also had a political dimension. In Belgium, this process, which had begun here earlier than in other regions of Europe, occurred within the context of war and occupation. As a result, the experience of the churches’ struggle hardened into a crucial part of the experience of war.

At the high point of the crisis in late autumn 1798, the laity’s involvement in their own salvation culminated in the peasants’ uprising which spread from the Flemish departments between Antwerp and Maastricht to the eastern border regions, the Eifel and into Luxembourg.²⁴ For the rebellious peasants – and for contemporary observers – the uprising was in defence of traditional religion. It was under banners showing the cross

and under the inscription of the Emperor Constantine, 'by this sign you will triumph', that they marched against the revolutionary enemies of true religion.²⁵

The trigger for the uprisings was not, however, anti-church policies, but rather the unprecedented intervention into the lives of urban and peasant families, that was conscription. The introduction of conscription into the annexed Belgian departments meant a widening of the pool of men liable for military service. That a policy of forced recruitment by an occupying regime could act as the final straw in provoking armed resistance had been clear in earlier, larger, peasant revolts in the *Reich*, the most spectacular of which, the great Bavarian peasant uprising of 1705, had been cruelly put down in the so-called Sendlinger Christmas Murders. A mixture of military and religious grievances was infinitely more explosive. The revolutionaries should have foreseen the likely consequences of their policies, since just such a combination had provoked civil war in the Vendée in 1793. They also underestimated the intertwined nature of war experiences and religion in Belgium and were surprised by the intensity of the rebellion. In essence the rebellion remained a traditional, early modern peasant uprising. It was based on the region, and there was no interregional co-operation between different revolts. In their defence of 'home and altar' – family and religion – against the unholy alliance of conscription and anti-religious legislation, these uprisings were part of the local resistance to state-led attempts to modernize that characterize the early modern period.²⁶

Contemporaries recognized the religious component of these uprisings. In the neighbouring Rhineland conscription had not been introduced and the actual trigger for the revolts was lacking. Yet there were numerous oblique demonstrations of sympathy for the 'Brabanters'. Among the most effective was that of the population of Cologne, who sent their children into the street clothed in the colours of the rebels. At first glance, the children, clad in red, yellow and black, represented nothing more than innocent processions.²⁷ There were other reactions in the Rhineland. North and east of Aachen, in the mixed confessional provinces of the former Duchy of Jülich, news of the Belgian revolt led to clashes between Catholics and Protestants.²⁸ The Catholics were accused of insulting vicars, smashing the windows of Protestant churches and exhuming the bodies of Protestants buried in Catholic cemeteries. Meanwhile, the Catholics claimed that the Protestants had bought the right to prohibit processions or destroy the external iconography of the Catholic faith.

The extent to which confessional stereotypes were drawn upon and resurrected to give meaning to the consequences of the Revolution and events in Belgium is striking. This was in no way an isolated or specifically Catholic phenomenon. Looking back, the President of the Reformed Consistory in Maastricht also interpreted the uprising in the spirit of confessional antagonism.²⁹ In an extensive report to the Ministry for Cultural Issues, he presented a positive image of peaceful co-existence between the confessions in Maastricht under the *ancien régime*. In fact, Maastricht was something of a special case. Since 1632 the city had been under the bi-confessional authority of the States-General and the Bishop of Lüttich. Both authorities had sought to ensure the tricky co-existence of Catholic and Protestant in the city by governing through consensus. This balance had been disrupted by the Revolution and the peasant uprisings, during which 'a number of Catholics from the surrounding countryside indulged in sickening atrocities, ... and were involved in seditious movements which provoked the murder and looting of local Protestants...'.³⁰ The level of violence would doubtless have been even greater had the state not intervened to put down the riots.

For the reformed Protestants of Maastricht the peasant violence in the city's hinterland was a new religious war. Although it was a rural phenomenon and the enlightened Catholics of Maastricht itself were not involved, they could no longer trust there would be peace between the confessions since the spectre of fanaticism had been reawakened. The peasants' war of 1798 precipitated a rapid deterioration in the relations between the confessions, despite the fact that Revolutionary and Napoleonic legislation had enshrined religious tolerance and equality in law.

The concordat churches, the cult of the state and war

Inclusion in the Napoleonic state meant that the regions had to accept the departmental system and other aspects of French centralized administration. After some delay the Netherlands also adopted a religious policy characterized by unprecedented and rigid state control.³¹ Napoleon's post-Concordat church policy provided a model, and from 1807 it influenced the Dutch authorities in their attitudes towards religious questions.³² Of more importance for the population in general was military policy, specifically conscription. This was introduced into the Netherlands in 1810, although the newly formed Dutch army had fought on the side of France since 1806.³³ It was under French flags that

soldiers from the area marched with the Grande Armée to the catastrophe in Russia in 1812 and to the Battle of the Nations at Leipzig in 1813.

Statistical research on the impact of conscription and war leaves no doubt that the social burden of conscription was devastating. In relative terms and, in some areas, even in absolute terms, the war losses in the affected departments were greater than those suffered during the two World Wars. Even in the Netherlands, where the French conscription system applied only from 1810 to 1813, losses were considerable. Out of around 28,000 recruits raised, 70 per cent did not return. The four Rhineland departments present a similar picture. Between 1802 and 1813 around 80,000 recruits were drafted.³⁴ This represented almost 30 per cent of the young male population capable of bearing arms, a percentage that completely overshadows subsequent epochs. Admittedly the record is incomplete, since replacements could be provided.³⁵ Rates of recruitment also varied over time. The burden of recruitment for the *classes* up to 1806 was comparatively low, but of those in the youngest age band, those born between 1790 and 1795, some 60 per cent were eventually drafted. In 1812 the Grande Armée was raised and, although the regime attempted no fewer than six levies in 1813, it despaired of compensating for the losses in Russia and of raising a new army for the war in Germany.³⁶ It was now under such extreme strain that the recruitment systems, which had reached the peak of bureaucratic perfection and rigidity, collapsed. In the second half of 1813 the number refusing to serve – the *réfractaires* and deserters – reached a critical mass. Until then the annexed provinces of Belgium and Rhineland had had a desertion rate of around 7 per cent. This placed them in the middle range for levels of desertion for all French departments, and rates were lower than those in the central French provinces. News of the decisive defeat at Leipzig in 1813, however, resulted in a massive increase in desertion. Recruits deserted en masse and returned home to await the arrival of the Allied armies. ‘Liberation’ in the annexed provinces was experienced as liberation from conscription, not as an act of national rebirth.³⁷

That the conscription system in the annexed provinces was able to function almost to the very end, despite the hardship it caused, was not only due to state action, such as the introduction of mobile columns in 1811 to hunt deserters, but also due to the churches. Following his victory over the Second Coalition, Napoleon sought to secure internal peace and regulate relations with the churches – and specifically the Catholic Church – through the Concordat of 1801 and the Organic Articles. However, the churches had to pay a high price to end the

persecution they had experienced under the Jacobin dictatorship and Directory.³⁸ Not only were they materially and organizationally dependent on the state, they also had to accept a supporting role in the post-revolutionary, Napoleonic social order, including the military system. It was but a short step from that to using the notion of the just war to define conscription and military service not merely as a national, but as a religious, duty.

The representatives of all the churches in the Rhineland, Belgium and, somewhat later, the Netherlands concurred with the panegyrics offered to the heroic image of Napoleon by temporal authorities. Moreover, the extent to which they were involved in legitimizing the wars and providing a spiritual basis for the mobilization of the populace has long gone unrecognized.³⁹ The portrayal of Napoleon as the saviour of the church and a Redeemer reached a high point in the pastoral letters of the bishops of Lüttich and Aachen, and Zaepffel and Berdolet. Both were from Alsace and had attained their positions because of their loyalty to the state. In their sermons and pastoral letters both bishops portrayed Napoleon before his coronation as Emperor as a 'new Kyros', who had led God's chosen people from their exile in Babylon.⁴⁰ Yet, despite state pressure to provide spiritual support for mobilization after 1802, the churches tried to maintain a degree of spiritual autonomy through the choice of biblical quotations and theological formulations.⁴¹ Napoleon was certainly feted as a 'saviour', and the churches thereby contributed to the construction of the 'myth of the saviour' in collective memory in the Rhineland and in Belgium.⁴² But it was no coincidence that although prominent examples of Christian monarchs, such as Constantine and Charlemagne, were available to them, the image chosen was that of a heathen ruler. Napoleon's holy mission was thus recognized, but also limited. The new Kyros had saved the people from oppression, but his authority ended at the steps of the temple, which remained the domain of the church alone. Should the saviour overstep these boundaries and involve himself in church matters, then he betrayed his mission. For many priests, however, Napoleon had already overstepped his authority by introducing the imperial Catechism of 1806, which had defined the refusal of military service and desertion as mortal sins.⁴³ The step from a new Kyros to a new Nebuchadnezzar was small, and the notion that Napoleon was the instrument of God was mocked by a widespread joke in the Rhineland: 'Out of Christian conviction one died for many. Now many must die for one'.⁴⁴

The potential for establishing a theological, and after 1809 a political, distance scarcely impaired the churches' function in supporting the state

and its system of conscription. This symbiosis was clear in the public presence and presentation of the churches. The return of the churches to the public sphere after the persecution of the revolutionary phase was an indicator of their usefulness to the state. They had to contribute to the legitimization of Napoleon's wars. This took many forms – the inclusion of victory sermons in the *Te Deum*, bishops' pastoral letters and consistorial announcements, calls for respect for the authorities, support for military service, and the involvement of soldiers or the National Guard in church festivals and processions.⁴⁵

The conscription system functioned relatively smoothly for so long because state pressure was effectively applied to local communities, which were threatened with punitive collective fines if recruits dodged the draft.⁴⁶ In these local communities it was the priest, and not a representative of the state or the military administration, who preached publicly the necessity of obedience to the authorities.⁴⁷ His role in promoting respect and obedience among young recruits meant that the priest often appeared inseparable from the temporal authorities. Correspondingly, the churches also celebrated their religious justifications for military service, and co-operated with the states in the *rites de passage* for young urban and rural recruits. Before new recruits marched out the whole community gathered, not in the town hall, but in the local church, where the priest held Mass and provided blessings. Thus the churches helped establish conscription as part of everyday life in both urban and rural communities.⁴⁸

Church officials undoubtedly had reservations about the strict military system, but they did not express their reticence openly. There is little evidence of priests supporting deserters.⁴⁹ In the last years of the regime many Belgian priests were arrested. Characteristically, however, this was a result of their refusal to perform obligatory prayers of intercession for Napoleon following his arrest of the Pope and his divorce. No cases of priests suspended for advocating desertion or the refusal of military service have been uncovered. Naturally, this does not exclude more subtle forms of dissent, but within the context of conscription the reticence of the church did not receive practical expression.

These findings do not apply to the Catholic Church alone. The Protestant churches were sometimes even more enthusiastic in their recognition of Napoleon and in their support for the warlike nature of his regime. This was especially the case in those parts of the Rhineland where Protestants were in a minority and had been recently emancipated. Even after the Battle of Leipzig, the Protestant churches there continued to celebrate Napoleon as the instrument of God because he

still seemed the only guarantee of church and middle-class emancipation.⁵⁰ Despite the various interpretations used by different confessional milieux to argue for or against French rule, the use of religious arguments to counter the increasing demands of the military for recruits took place outside or only on the edges of the established churches.⁵¹ The Netherlands, with its religious diversity, provides a particularly characteristic example of this trend, which came to encompass individual Reformed preachers, who represented the dominant church before the revolutionary turmoil.⁵² Here open resistance to plans to recruit orphans into the Royal Guard began in the nonconformist churches, which rejected military service in principle. Despite state censure this became a broad public campaign in 1807.⁵³ Yet even in the Netherlands religiously motivated protest did not converge with wider unrest over the eventual introduction of conscription following annexation in 1810.⁵⁴ There was, however, one exception. In April 1811 there were armed clashes in many Jewish communities, especially in Amsterdam, when recruitment commandos first entered Jewish ghettos. This was despite the fact that the rabbis had promoted military service.⁵⁵ Several soldiers were killed and three of the Jewish ringleaders were subsequently executed. Military service was, of course, a corollary of emancipation. But emancipation had fulfilled neither the Jewish expectations of civic equality nor the state's assumption that the Jewish minority would be fully integrated.⁵⁶

Religion in an irreligious army

One need look no further than the broad array of ego-documents to find evidence that religion was a crucial element in the experience of the Napoleonic armies. Apart from the numerous autobiographies, the soldiers' letters available in some departments provide the 'ordinary soldier' with a voice.⁵⁷ Around 1600 of these letters, some partially edited, are available.⁵⁸ These letters were passed on to departmental archives, although they were not initially placed in files of their own, but were hidden among documents relating to conscription or in correspondence between the military authorities and individual communities.⁵⁹

That these letters ended up with the departmental authorities was due to the functioning of the conscription system itself. Families who already had a son serving with the army sought to have other sons placed at the bottom of the 'class' for their year. This meant that they would be among the last of that class to be drafted and offered a realistic chance that they would be spared military service. As evidence that they already had one son in the army a family had to submit either an

official *attestat d'authenticité* from a superior officer or a letter from their son currently serving with the military.⁶⁰

Since the letters themselves were not intended for the authorities it is rare to find multiple letters from one soldier. The portrait of the soldiers remains therefore a snapshot. The formal diction of the letters resulted not only from lack of articulacy, but also from the trivial reason that the form letters provided by the army meant that unpractised writers had very little space upon which to write. Moreover, it is often unclear whether the author wrote the letter himself or dictated it to a more literate comrade who then converted sentiments that were expressed verbally into standard written formulations.

For these reasons the soldiers' letters seem on first glance a brittle source. But the quantity of letters alone allows access to the daily life of the soldier, which, in the context of the relationship between religion and the experience of war, goes beyond simplistic ideas of cause and effect.⁶¹ For example, letters written by Catholic soldiers from rural areas illustrate the influence of religion in shaping experiences in the total institution of the army. The word 'God' is most often used in relation to the state of the author's health, in the sense of 'thank God I am still well'. Death is also present and often invoked for prudence or emphasis. In more than half the letters addressed to fathers and mothers, the son promises in the closing sentence to be 'true until death'.⁶² For a soldier who had just survived a battle, or was preparing for the next one, such phrases had a special resonance. Perhaps these phrases were also meant to reassure parents that their son had accepted his destiny as determined by God and would not desert, an action that could have ruinous consequences for the family.⁶³

Alongside expressions of religious devotion, soldiers often requested relatives to pray for them or undertake a pilgrimage.⁶⁴ Soldiers also promised to conduct pilgrimages of their own should they return home unscathed. Requests for relatives to pray are particularly common in letters sent from Spain and can be interpreted as a reaction to changing experiences of war. In many letters reference is made to the different nature of the war in Spain, to the ever-present guerrilla threat, and to the constant danger of meeting a 'bad' death.⁶⁵ In only three letters is there any reference to wider church issues, such as the Concordat or fears of renewed persecution after 1809.⁶⁶ What were central issues for the clergy were clearly of minor importance to the soldiers.

Traditional religious bonds did, however, hinder the process of socialization in the military. Around 10 per cent of the letters complain that religious services had been banned or that prayer was dismissed as 'old

wives' superstitions'. On the other hand, it is clear from some letters that relatives had asked young soldiers to remain true to their traditional beliefs. The army seems to have been perceived as a place where a soldier could unlearn his prayers.

The letters provide an insight into everyday life while on campaign, but not into the shock of battle which disrupted this routine. The soldiers' letters provide no indication as to whether war, through the threat it posed to life, encouraged prayer. The concept of a 'religious experience' through confrontation with the extraordinary is best not sought in soldiers' letters, but in the many autobiographical accounts written soon after the Napoleonic period.⁶⁷ Accounts written by former Dutch and Belgian conscripts describe battles during which the soldiers broke into prayer or sang hymns.⁶⁸ Others describe how in the hospitals some wounded soldiers asked to be attended by a priest.⁶⁹ Such descriptions are found predominantly in accounts written by those who had participated in the 1813 campaign and were therefore not long-service veterans of the Napoleonic armies but recruits from the 'last levy'. They often came from social groups who had previously managed to avoid conscription by employing replacements. For them the war represented a deep break in their civilian lives and was clearly a traumatic experience. They were confronted with the reality of war before their socialization into the military was fully complete, before the routine of army life had invested them with a certain insensitivity. Veterans' autobiographies, on the other hand, rarely describe praying soldiers, underlining the point that long-term military socialization weakened civilian modes of behaviour and with it the bonds of traditional religion.

In general there is little affinity between the modes of expression in the soldiers' letters and the religious interpretation of warfare present in the rhetoric of the clergy. Similarly, there is little congruity between the autobiographical accounts and the cult of Napoleon promoted by the authorities or the stylized, religiously influenced pathos of the Wars of Liberation.⁷⁰ The war was a calamity and it was expressly depicted as such in the soldiers' letters. They accepted their fate with a good portion of fatalism.⁷¹ Even harder to find are any traces of a burgeoning enthusiasm for the nation.⁷² The most important points of reference remained the immediate region along with a soldier's family and confession. Nowhere is there expressed a consciousness of belonging to a wider national entity, let alone a sense of being duty-bound to serve the nation. Ultimately, the soldiers seem to have accepted Napoleon as their sovereign without any recognizable prejudice.⁷³

Conclusion

Recent research on north-western Europe during the Revolution and the Napoleonic Empire has downplayed the caesura of 1800 by indicating the partial modernity of the pre-revolutionary period.⁷⁴ Yet this research remains wedded to a master narrative of modernization and is limited by governmental or social perspectives. However, if one analyses religion and mentalities in their widest sense, and concentrates upon the challenges posed around 1800 by radical and violent change, then other narratives of this process become more meaningful. At first glance the churches and confessions of north-western Europe in the first half of the nineteenth century appear to have asserted their traditional roles without any break in continuity. Yet when looked at in the context of the wars, changes in the place and function of religion in society become more clear.

The soldiers experienced the Revolutionary and, even more so, the Napoleonic armies as 'total institutions', separated from religious spaces. The churches suffered the ideological and political conflict that had occurred earlier in Belgium and the Rhineland, as a result of the anti-church policies of the revolutionaries in the late 1790s, for a second time. Again they were driven out of the public sphere. In return for supporting Napoleonic rule, and especially its military aspects, the churches were permitted to return to that space. But their support of conscription made it clear that their place in society had altered. The conscript armies absorbed young men in unprecedented numbers. As a result, families were both socially and spatially separated. The churches either played a ritual and organizational role in facilitating the transition from civilian to military life through accepted rites of passage or they concentrated their activities on the families, and especially women, on the 'home front'.

When the motivation for fighting is examined, religion does not seem to have provided a strong means of identification. On the one hand, recruits from the Rhineland, Belgium and the Netherlands did not share the outlook of French revolutionary soldiers who had internalized patriotic impulses, or that of the French armies of the Napoleonic period in which there remained a residue of anti-religious sentiment. Yet, on the other hand, religion provided no basis in north-western Europe for mobilizing wars of liberation against Napoleon as it did in Spain, Russia and Prussia.

After 1815 the Dutch, Belgians and Rhinelanders did not have at their disposal a religiously inspired narrative of a war of liberation for the

purposes of nation-building. However, this does not mean that religion was irrelevant to either politics or society. The assertion of religious identities during the tumultuous period around 1800 occurred under the influence of autonomous confessional milieux. The fundamental experiences of the Revolution and the Napoleonic Empire did not stimulate the development of a modern nationalism of the 'military nation', a nationalism that could integrate different social groups and milieux. Instead, it hardened these confessional milieux to create the vertically divided (*versäulten*) society that remained characteristic of the region well into the twentieth century.⁷⁵

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Notes

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