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Waltraud Maeierhofer, Gertrud Roesch, Caroline Bland, eds. *Women against Napoleon: Historical and Fictional Responses to his Rise and Legacy.* Frankfurt: Campus Verlag, 2007. 303 pp. $40.00 (paper), ISBN 978-3-593-38414-6.

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Anti-Napoleonic Writings in the Voices of Women

If ever there was the perception that nineteenth-century women were too preoccupied with domestic tasks to care about politics, or that they were entirely excluded from the political discourse, this book provides an important corrective. Fourteen essays trace female opposition to Napoleon Bonaparte and the Napoleonic wars over a time span from about 1800 to the 1920s and across a geographic range from the British Isles to Naples, from France to Sweden, from German territories to Poland. The book delivers what it promises, documenting that women's opposition against Napoleon was more widespread, more vocal, and more diverse than is generally assumed.

Particularly refreshing is the volume's blurring of boundaries at different levels. Scholars based in four different countries of Europe and North America, and housed in seven different academic disciplines–German, French, English, and comparative literary studies, plus history, art history, and German as a foreign language–treat various types of historical and fictional writings as valid modes of political expression. The editors rightfully claim on the cover blurb that this book creates "new links between literary, historical, and gender scholarship."

That said, holding together fourteen disparate essays with uneven degrees of interconnectedness sets a lofty goal. One wonders, for instance, how much the Napoleon against whom contemporaries such as the Englishwoman Helena Maria Williams or the Austrian-born queen of Naples wielded their pen in diaries and letters has in common with the Napoleon of Gertrud Kolmar's Expressionist poetry cycle *Napoleon und Marie* (1920-21). On the other hand, the fact that later generations found in Napoleon a fitting foil for the discourse on nationhood of their own era underscores what Waltraud Maierhofer argues in her introduction, namely that "writing about Napoleon seems to lend itself to reflection and reveals as much about the writer as about Napoleon" (p. 11). In the end, the results revealed in this book are both notable and at the same time unsurprising.

Perhaps most notable is the wide spectrum of social standing of the women who voiced their express opposition to Napoleon–published writers, noblewomen and royals, businesswomen, educators, respectable daughters of bourgeois families (*Töchter aus gutem Hause*), and others. Therefore, their opposition to Napoleon usually had little to do with gender, and that male contemporaries of similar backgrounds generally shared similar views, should not come as a surprise.

How historiography dealt with women's political discourse, however, is another matter, one important for today's students of history to know. This book provides more evidence for how women involved in public matters faced a double standard. For instance, women soldiers in anti-Napoleonic armies disguised in men's uniforms tended to be treated like heroines if their sex was discovered after death in battle; discovered alive, they tended to be vilified. Similarly, the very vocal and prominent opponent of Napoleon, Maria Carolina, queen of Naples, daughter of Empress Maria Theresia, has generally found entry in historiography as a power- and sex-hungry *woman* who overstepped acceptable norms of female domesticity. Had her husband, the actual male regent, taken a similar stance and taken more interest in politics than in hunting, surely his opposition to Napoleon would have garnered less gender-biased attention. Such matters of historiography are very well presented and summed up in Maierhofer's introduction.

The subsequent thirteen essays are grouped into four sections, based on a combination of chronology and content. Eight of these essays deal with writings from before 1800 until 1810, that is, writings by women who at the time experienced Napoleon as a reality in their own

lives. The remaining five essays discuss anti-Napoleonic writings published between 1829 and 1921, during various stages of Germany's wrestling with national identity but when Napoleon no longer represented a concrete political and military threat. Making this difference explicit seems more important to me than dividing the book into four evenly sized sections with somewhat confusing headings. Especially the first two section headings are less helpful than intended.

For instance, the first section heading, "Contemporaries: With Scepter, Sword, or Pen–Forms of Resistance," implies that writers discussed in later sections were not contemporaries of Napoleon. Yet only the writers discussed in the four last essays, in the section entitled "Belated Nineteenth-century and Twentieth-century Opposition: Lessons of Nationalism," were *not* contemporaries of Napoleon. Also, to include in the second section, "Anti-war, Anti-Napoleon: Guardians of Material and Spiritual Welfare," an essay on Rachel Varnhagen's life as an army nurse does not make sense to me. Personal motivations to escape tight gender norms and family supervision notwithstanding, a woman who chose to organize an army hospital away from home cannot be considered antiwar, but rather an active supporter of and participant in the Wars of Liberation. In short, a reader is better off disregarding the section headings and letting the essays speak for themselves.

Deborah Kennedy's "Englishwomen and Napoleon Bonaparte" discusses Mary Berry (1763-1852), Frances Burney (1752-1840), Helen Maria Williams (1761-1827), Hanna More (1745-1833), Dorothy Wordsworth (1771-1855), and Jane Austen (1775-1817). Each had a different story, but all were directly affected by Napoleon's politics and warfare: sometimes caught in the wrong country at the wrong time, for years unable to return home; sometimes at first admiring Napoleon, only then to be subjected to censorship measures, including arrest; sometimes becoming an eyewitness of nearby battles; always worried about the life and safety of male relatives. Not necessarily intended for publication, their writings express the kind of toll the Napoleonic wars took on many other ordinary women.

In her essay "Maria Carolina, Queen of Naples: The 'Devil's Grandmother' Fights Napoleon," Maierhofer traces the resistance of Maria Carolina (1742-1814), queen consort of Ferdinando IV of Naples, against Napoleon. This essay is particularly valuable for its inclusion of the historiography discussion mentioned above.

Dorothy Potter's "Marseilles to Stockholm–Bonaparte to Bernadotte: The Unique Life of Désirée Clary," reconstructs the life of a French silk merchant's daughter, Désirée Clary (1777-1860), who became queen of Sweden and Norway. The essay appears in the first section of the book ("Contemporaries") because it discusses Napoleon's one-time fiancée, who refused suitors whom Napoleon lined up after breaking off his engagement to her, once he had fallen in love with Joséphine de Beauharnais. Refusing not only one, but two marriage matches, and choosing instead to marry Jean Baptiste Bernadotte, must indeed count as a "supreme act of defiance" (p. 90) against a man of world power. But whether Clary understood herself in this way is impossible to tell from this essay. Taking as its starting point Annemarie Selinko's (1914-86) best-selling novel *Désirée* (1953) and the film (1954), both with an invented diary at the center, and relying entirely on secondary, generally twentieth-century sources, this essay invited a discussion of Selinko's post-World War II literary treatment of Napoleon. Potter even points out the connection between Selinko's novel, her experiences during WW II, and her understanding of imperialistic tyranny. Unfortunately, the topic is never developed. With a clearer distinction between the historic figure of Clary and the novel, this essay would have been perfect for placement at the end of the book.

In the essay "French Women Respond to Napoleon," Denise Davidson points to the difference between female prescriptive behavior, set forth in the Code Civil, and how women actually responded to Napoleon. While the majority of the French population loved Napoleon as long as his armies were successful, the three women presented here consistently opposed him: Julie Pellizzone (1768-1837), a writer and convinced monarchist; Catherine Arnaud-Tizon (c. 1764-c. 1830), a bourgeois woman involved in the family textile business; and Adélaïde Bauche (1797-1869), from a profoundly Catholic and monarchist family of textile producers. This essay makes clear that under Napoleon's repressive military system, women were "no more, or less silenced than the men around them" (p. 106).

Gertrud Maria Roesch's "The Liberation from Napoleon as Self-Liberation: The Year 1813 in the Letters of Rahel Varnhagen" contrasts Rahel Levin Varnhagen's (1771-1833) response to the Napoleonic crisis with that of Caroline de la Motte Fouqué (1775-1831) and Caroline von Humboldt (1766-1829). Ironically, Levin's ability to travel in 1813 to support the war against Napoleon was possible because of Napoleon's earlier victories over Prussia (1806), which eventually led to the Prussian Edict of Emancipation (1812), granting Jews citizenship and free movement. Roesch points out that Levin's work

at an army hospital in Prague represented a significant step in her personal quest to free herself from family expectations and control.

In "Friederike Brun's *Briefe aus Rom* (1816): Cosmopolitanism, Nationalism, and the Politics of Geistlichkeit," Kari Lokke discusses spirituality and non-violent resistance to abusive power, as presented by Danish-German writer Friederike Münther Brun (1765-1835). A member of the outspokenly anti-Napoleonic circle of Coppet, Switzerland that centered on Germaine de Staël, Brun lived in Rome at the height of the Napoleonic era, witnessing Bonaparte's despotism against the local population and even his own brother, Lucien. To be sure, her letters from Rome, which portray Pope Pius VII as "the ultimate model of moral authority and spiritual purity" (p. 143), appeared only after Napoleon was safely in exile.

Staël (1766-1817) did not wait until Napoleon's fall from power, though in order to stay alive she had to be highly circumspect in how she published her opposition. This is the topic in Heather Belnap Jensen's "Diversionary Tactics: Art Criticism as Political Weapon in Staël's *Corinne, ou l'Italie* (1807)." Jensen shows how Staël cloaked her politically subversive ideas under the guise of a seemingly harmless discussion of art. Contemporaries knew what that meant. Ironically, in systems today where freedom of expression is taken for granted, readers need explanations and instructions on how to read such books.

In "Rewriting the National Paradigm: Staël's *De l'Allemagne* (1810) and the 'German' Defence of Sociability," Beatrice Guenther discusses another of Staël's works of the Napoleonic era, and the responses it elicited on the part of Betty Gleim (1781-1827), Esther Gad (1767-1833), and Motte Fouqué. Notably, all these responses appeared only in 1814, when it was safe again to publish. Guenther's goal is to show that Staël describes "a nation that did not exist politically" and how the three German women "undertake a defence of this imaginary Germany" (p. 188). Guenther argues that Staël's focus on the art of conversation, which she found lacking in Germany, points to "the intense nostalgia of an expatriate" (p. 190), whereas the German women resented Staël's lack of an insider's experience of Germanness. The essay's penultimate page explains why this essay is included in this volume. Though continually talking past each other, all four women shared Enlightenment ideals, valued intellectual autonomy through the practice of reading, and abhorred Napoleon's politics.

With Silke Arnold-de Simine's essay, "Napoleon, the Museum, and Memory Politics in Motte Fouqué's *Geschichte der Moden* (1829-30)," the focus of the book shifts from opposition to Napoleon while he was in power to dealing with his legacy. After the vandalism and pilfering of art and cultural artifacts in conquered territories, a wave of newly founded museums all across Europe reflected efforts to recreate, and even invent, a national cultural heritage. At the same time, women were increasingly shut out of new cultural institutions. Fouqué experienced these developments first-hand. In her essay on fashion, she reflects on post-Napoleonic museum practices and asserts that fashion–dress, artifacts, behaviors, trends–reflects societal values at specific times in history. Validating everyday experiences that are also accessible to women, Fouqué's history of fashion resists official historiography, which is why this essay has a place in this volume.

The last four chapters of this volume deal with literary works, all by writers who had no personal memory of the Napoleonic era and who approached Napoleon from the vantage point of their own historical setting, specifically the situation in Germany. Three essays discuss historical novels, the last one poetry. The genre of historical fiction is important because novels could express nuances in the debate of the national question that were not possible otherwise.

In "The Triumph of Moderation? The 'Wars of Liberation' in the Writing of Louise von François," Caroline Bland examines three works by Louise von François (1817-93): the novels *Fräulein Muthchen und ihr Hausmeier* (1859) and *Frau Erdmuthens Zwillingssöhne* (1872), and the work *Geschichte der preußischen Befreiungskriege in den Jahren 1813 bis 1815* (1873). By the time these works appeared in print, close to the outbreak of the Franco-Prussian War, Napoleon had became the perfect, tyrannical adversary for a Germany struggling to develop a unified national identity. Bland notes that François was very consistent in her portrayal of the inhumanity of Napoleon; the modesty and moderation of German heroes (in contrast to French heroes); and the self-sacrifice of women in the patriotic cause. This essay deserves special commendation for its succinct argument and clarity of style.

Jeffrey L. Sammon's essay, "Fighting Napoleon-Loving the French. Friedrich Spielhagen, *Noblesse oblige* (1888)," has the distinction of being the book's only chapter by a male contributor about a male writer's work. Presumably it is the female protagonist of *Noblesse oblige* that led to this essay's inclusion in a volume specifi-

cally entitled *Women against Napoleon.* Set during the 1813 French occupation of Hamburg and closely following historic details, the novel presents a female character who marries a rich banker but loves a Frenchman, ultimately losing them both and spending her old age alone. German readers were not impressed. Sammons convincingly argues that a novel where the female protagonist falls in love with a Frenchman was not anti-French enough for a post-1871 German readership. One wonders whether Friedrich Spielhagen (1829-1911) had lost touch with public opinion not only on French matters, but also on gender role expectations. Perhaps his portrayal of strong, smart, capable, and active women overstepped late-nineteenth-century sensitivities about proper female behavior.

Proper female behavior and socialization is the topic of Jennifer Drake Askey's "Growing into a Nation: Queen Luise and the Lessons of Nationalism in Adolescent Fiction for Girls." Partly due to her death at the height of the Napoleonic era, Luise of Prussia (1776-1810) became stylized into a cult figure, "the paragon of German womanly virtue" (p. 265) who held up the country by fulfilling the sacred duties of wife and mother. Such cult images of Queen Luise, blended with elements of fairy tales and coming-of-age stories, became popular reading material for girls, "the ideal vehicle for conveying the lessons of nation and gender to the young women of the German empire" (p. 267). Typically, the protagonist would be a young female companion of the queen, someone with whom readers could identify. Askey examines two such novels, *Königin Luise* (1893) by Elisabeth Halden (1841-1916) and *Die Erben von Scharfeneck* (1889) by Brigitte Augusti (otherwise known as Auguste Plehn, 1839-1930). The essay convincingly argues that these novels represent a link between pre-Napoleonic Germany and the German empire, and that their seemingly domestic focus represented a political message.

Finally, Barbara Besslich's essay, "Thwarted Enemy: Eros and Self-Assertion in Gertrud Kolmar's Poem Cycle *Napoleon und Marie* (1920-1921)," discusses post-World War I perceptions of Napoleon, specifically as expressed in poetry by the young Jewish writer Gertrud Kolmar (1894-1943). The cycle depicts the young Polish countess Maria Walewska as Napoleon's lover, which according to Besslich, was the Polish aristocracy's strategy. Kolmar portrays Maria as patiently playing her assigned role in a power play that really only used her as a pawn. Besslich perceptively draws parallels between Kolmar's portrayal of self-sacrificing Maria and "Jewish sacrificial willingness" (p. 291), almost foreshadowing in 1921 her own end in Auschwitz two decades later. What Besslich has to say is important. Unfortunately, this translation of an essay on German Expressionist poetry offers limited accessibility to an English-speaking audience.

In summary, this book should be required reading for anyone who teaches the Napoleonic age. But with such rich content that is relevant to scholars in so many different disciplines, why was it published without an index?

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