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Michael J. Hughes. *Forging Napoleon's Grande Armée: Motivation, Military Culture, and Masculinity in the French Army, 1800-1808.* Warfare and Culture Series. New York: New York University Press, 2012. 304 pp. $50.00 (cloth), ISBN 978-0-8147-3748-4.

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Few topics in history have received the scholarly attention with which the French Revolution and Napoleonic Wars have been blessed. As we approach the bicentennial anniversary of the conclusion of those conflicts, new works continue to expand our understanding of the time period. In *Forging Napoleon's Grande Armée*, Michael J. Hughes provides an excellent example of how new resources and methodologies can be applied to old questions. In particular, Hughes is interested in bringing together military, cultural, and gender history to better understand the motivation of the French armies led by Napoleon Bonaparte in the first decade of the nineteenth century.

Given the historiographic weight behind the subject matter, Hughes uses his introduction to situate his argument. It is clear from the outset that he owes a great intellectual debt to his mentor John A. Lynn. Hughes borrows heavily from Lynn's methodology in approaching the question of military motivation outlined in *The Bayonets of the Republic: Motivation and Tactics in the Army of Revolutionary France, 1791-94* (1984), and pairs it with a self-defined concept of "military culture." He, however, sets out to specifically refute Lynn's "army of honor" thesis for Napoleon's forces, positioning himself closer to Jean-Paul Bertaud's argument in *Quand les enfants parlaient de gloire: L'armée au Coeur de la France de Napoleon* (2006) of a more diverse reality on this front.[1] Hughes believes that the infusion of gender history is where he is breaking new ground for Napoleonic studies. He notes that despite Karen Hagemann's work on Prussia during the time period, no similar work exists for Napoleonic France.[2] A final, but important, element to Hughes's argument concerns the development of French patriotism and nationalism through French military culture. Drawing together these various strands, he argues, "no one single attribute defined the armies of Napoleon. Rather, the Napoleonic regime incorporated elements of Old Regime and Revolutionary military culture into a new military culture linked to Napoleon's rule and the preservation of French hegemony in Europe. Yet, this creation resembled a patchwork collage more than a seamless canvas in which the old merged harmoniously with the new" (p. 12).

To investigate this "patchwork collage," Hughes divides the work into topical chapters that allow him to address these elements in detail. This was a smart decision at the outset as a chronological approach appears unworkable given his argument. On the whole, these chapters work well together to display the multifaceted nature of motivation and military culture within Napoleon's armies. At the center of this work rests the Grande Armée, which was developed following the Peace of Amiens (1802) with the intent of being the spearhead of the invasion of Britain. That invasion was never to be; instead this force made its name in a slew of stunning victories in central and eastern Europe beginning in 1805. The years between the Peace of Amiens and the march toward Austerlitz are critical to Hughes's argument, as this period of relative stability and insularity in military encampments allowed Napoleon's regime to massage the motivation and military culture of the men enlisted in his cause.

Forging Napoleon's Grande Armée defies quick summary due to the articulated nature of the work. Chapters 1-3 are largely devoted to background on the Grande Armée and to addressing Lynn's "army of honor" thesis. With regard to the latter, Hughes makes a compelling case for an altered version of Lynn's argument. The central premise of Lynn's thesis was that the transition from the revolutionary government to that of the Napoleonic

regime was tied to the dismissal of the idea of an "Army of Virtue" for that of an "Army of Honor." A key element to this argument was that Lynn (intentionally) employed a very strict definition for "honor" and "virtue"–in shorthand: honor is driven by selfishness and personal reward, whereas virtue is driven by selflessness–making these concepts largely incompatible with one another. Hughes agrees with the premise that Napoleon brought an ideological embrace of honor to the army, but refutes the idea that this represented the death of virtue within France's armies. Rather, virtue continued to exist within French military culture alongside honor, and was continuously employed in motivational rhetoric citing the patriotic cause. This is a strong argument as it captures the fact that while Napoleon wanted to build a new monarchy in his name, he could not entirely escape his or the nation's revolutionary roots.

On the heels of arguing that virtue continued to have currency within the military culture created by Napoleon, Hughes turns to subject matter that casts some doubt on the actual virtuousness of French soldiers. I suspect that, in Hughes's mind, chapter 4, "Napoleon's Manhood: Sex and Martial Masculinity in the French Army," is the most important historiographic chapter of this work. Taking particular advantage of such sources as songs and bulletins, Hughes examines how the rhetoric of masculinity and sexual virility were incorporated into the identity of French soldiers. He sees a sharp distinction in the source material between the military and civilian spheres. Martial experience made men "better lovers than the men who remained at home because they acquired strength and endurance in the army" (p. 124). More important, though, rhetoric of the masculine and sexual superiority of French men was employed to encourage French troops in their clashes with foreign armies and people. On the battlefield and in the bedroom, French soldiers were told to expect conquest over both sexes. While much of this rhetoric anticipated willing sexual partners, Hughes finds evidence that French military culture and rhetoric did not actively condemn rape as long as the act "did not involve excessive force, public disorder, murder, or child rape [a girl less than fourteen years of age]" (p. 129). Thus, masculinity and sexuality in the French army was a double-sided coin. By asserting the superiority of French masculinity, soldiers were "enhancing the reputation of the patrie, which constituted one of the primary goals of Imperial virtue." At the same time, Hughes argues that the insertion of this "sexual mission" revealed the face of the Napoleonic regime "in its most arrogant, vulgar, and brutally oppressive form" (p. 134).

Chapters 5-7 examine the culmination of the preceding chapters in the creation of the Napoleonic cult at the apex of French military culture, and the transfer of this package to French officers and enlisted men. The cult of Napoleon, Hughes argues, incorporated the combination of the Old Regime and revolutionary France similar to that of honor and virtue. Additionally, Napoleon's battlefield prowess–Napoleonic legitimacy replaced victories for that of divine right–displayed the conquering masculinity that was transmitted down to the French army. For readers familiar with Alan Forrest's *Napoleon's Men: The Soldiers of the Revolution and Empire* (2002), Hughes's examination of officers and men strikes similar notes and relies on similar source material, such as diaries, memoirs, and letters. Additionally, he incorporates some secondary material to flesh out our understanding of troop motivation in more general terms. Perhaps not surprisingly, Hughes finds that officers were far more accepting of the military culture imposed on them. While there were multiple factors in this, on the one hand, he suggests that the "army of honor" thesis holds strongest among this group, but he also finds that patriotism became an important factor for those who served in the Army of the Coasts, the Army of Hanover, and the Grande Armée where cultural indoctrination was strongest. The rank and file, on the other hand, were far less unified in their acceptance of Napoleonic military culture and cult, which is neatly captured in the title "Devoted Soldiers and Reluctant Conquerors." While grognards–the truly dedicated–did exist in the rank and file, Hughes argues that the far stronger motivation for some in this group was fear of the consequences for desertion. Thus, military indoctrination was only so effective under Napoleon's leadership.

In many respects, *Forging Napoleon's Grande Armée* reads as an evolution of Lynn's examination of the Armée du Nord applied to the Grande Armée, making for a strong addition to the scholarship on the period. Hughes chose and used his source material well. The weaving together of military, cultural, and gender history is nicely done and largely seamless as part of the overarching argument. One potential complaint is the periodization that Hughes has chosen for this work. By confining his study to 1800-1808, he avoids what are potentially exciting questions concerning the development of the outlined military culture. The decision is defendable, however, given the wastage that occurred among the men encamped from 1802 to 1805 during various campaigns. Hughes hints that he believes patriotism increased as a

motivating factor as events turned against Napoleonic France, and suggests in the conclusion that military indoctrination played an important role in burgeoning nationalism in post-Napoleonic France. The work, however, is largely silent concerning the men who were bled in the Peninsular War, marched to Borodino, fought at Leipzig in 1813, and then rallied to the banner once again for Waterloo. How were motivating factors and military culture of French forces altered when endless victories were suddenly faced with harsh setbacks? This, however, represents a flimsy criticism of what is a very strong work that improves our understanding of the military culture created by Napoleon, and why France's sons fought beneath the eagles.

Notes

[1]. John A. Lynn, "Army of Honor: The Moral Evolution of the French Army, 1789-1815," *French Historical Studies* 16, no. 1 (1989): 152-173.

[2]. Karen Haggeman, "Of 'Manly Valor and German Honor': Nation, War, and Masculinity in the Age of the Prussian Uprising against Napoleon," *Central European History* 30, no. 2 (1997): 187-220.

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