

Joint International and Interdisciplinary Conference:

**Experience, Memory and Media:
Transmitting the Revolutionary and Napoleonic Wars in
19th and 20th Century Europe**

October, Thursday 11 – Saturday 13, 2007

University of Mannheim, Schloss, Senatssitzungssaal

Abstracts

II. Experiences and Memories in Personal Writings

Marie-Cecile Thorat (University of York, Centre for Eighteenth Century Studies):

Diaries and Carnets de route of French Soldiers as a Material for the Elaboration of a Memory of War

During the Revolutionary and Napoleonic Wars, several soldiers and officers wrote not only letters to their relatives but a true diary, in which they mentioned the marches of the army, the ups and downs of everyday life, and, sometimes, their sensations and their perception of war. I would like to study, in this paper, the three distinct steps of the life of these diaries of soldiers. In the first part, I will study the writing process during the war (material conditions of writing: in the evening at the bivouac, during spare time, in captivity; frequency: every day or not; contents: topics tackled, comparison between the part of the diary devoted to everyday life and the one devoted to battles or to military strategy). In the second part, I will study the life of the diary after the war, how it is often used by its author for the writing of his memoirs, how it is read and perceived by the author's relatives or by the readership (for published diaries), and how it can

play a part in the elaboration of a memory of war. In the third part, I will study the use of these diaries by historians: their interest as a historical source, their scientific limits.

Catriona Kennedy (University of York, Centre for Eighteenth Century Studies):

Reading, Writing and Fighting: British Soldiers' Reading and the Experience of war, 1793-1815

In the immediate aftermath of Waterloo visitors to the field of battle were struck by the quantity of books and loose pages that covered the ground and 'literally whitened the surface of the earth' as one commentator put it. It is a striking image, indicating the extent to which books formed a key component of the soldier's equipage, and also how texts themselves might form a mediating layer in the apprehension and representation of war experience. Drawing upon soldiers' journals and letters from the Revolutionary and Napoleonic Wars, this paper will reconstruct the literary culture of the British army to provide an insight into the reading habits of both the common soldier and officers of higher ranks. It will examine the range of literary genres that British soldiers employed in their war narratives - from the eighteenth-century picaresque and Gothic novel, to the bible and the battle dispatch. Such texts, it will be suggested, influenced not only how combatants represented their experiences of war, but also, more fundamentally, the texture and nature of war experience itself.

Leighton James (University of York, Centre for Eighteenth Century Studies):

War Narratives: The Wars of 1813/14 and 1815 in Letters and Diaries of Austrian Officers

Although historians have recently begun exploring the narratives of German soldiers during the Revolutionary and Napoleonic wars, the Austrian case remains largely neglected. My paper explores how three Austrian officers constructed narratives of their wartime experiences. My paper poses two main questions. First, how were the soldiers' narratives were influenced by pre-existing discourses on warfare and foreign cultures? Second, what role did identities such as religion and gender play in shaping these narratives?

Philip Dwyer (The University of Newcastle, Faculty of Education and Arts):

French Military Memoirs and the Revolutionary and Napoleonic Wars

This paper examines the manner in which the French Revolutionary and Napoleonic Wars are represented in the memoirs of the period, and seeks to understand why particular representations succeeded in dominating the public imagination. These memoirs, and the stories that were told in them, informed and shaped the images surrounding the campaigns of the Revolutionary and Napoleonic Wars for generations to come. Given the distance that often separated the writing from the event, they almost always contained projections, evasions, myths and outright fantasies. But that is exactly where their value lies. It allows the historian to establish the extent to which those who took part in the wars began to romanticize, or indeed contest the wars and the man most responsible for their being there — Napoleon — and the degree to which they engaged in the political and cultural debates of the day.

III. Collective Memory in Historical Novels

Lars Peters, M.A. (Free University of Berlin, Centre for French Studies):

Warrior Sailors and Heroic Boys: The Narrative Imagining of Masculinities in Popular British Historical Novels on the Revolutionary and Napoleonic Wars

The nautical novel is one of the key genres in British fiction for the remembrance of the French Wars. As the wars never reached the British Isles, the sailors and their naval battles play a more important role in the memories of the wars than in any other European country. According to Linda Colley the French Wars had a crucial impact on the process of British nation-building during the nineteenth century. The war against France shaped a British identity and helped to bear down regional differences between England, Scotland, and Wales. The role of the Royal Navy in defending the British maritime empire was very important and had a direct impact in defining the position of the seaman in British society during the long nineteenth century. These novels not only describe the well-known British heroes of the Napoleonic wars such as Admiral Nelson. They also give us interesting insights into the conceptions and the images of masculinity in the Victorian society. By analyzing three of these novels I want to show how the collective memory of the Revolutionary and Napoleonic Wars is linked with the narrative imagining of masculinities in Britain. I argue that these narratives and images played a crucial role in the process of British nation-building during the nineteenth century.

Kirstin A. Schäfer (Free University of Berlin, Centre for French Studies):

Text and Image: The Napoleonic Wars in French Historical Novels and their Illustrations

France was the country, which was involved in the Revolutionary and Napoleonic Wars during the whole war period most heavily and which had the role of the main-aggressor. In these wars, the Empire took on a special role: with a mass army in a size which had never been seen before it conquered wide areas of Europe and rose to be the leading continental power. After such a glorious ascendancy, the defeats of 1814/1815 and the occupation that lasted until 1818 were all the more traumatically. My paper examines how individual and collective experiences of the Revolutionary- and Napoleonic Wars have been transformed into French historical novels as an important medium of memory. Taking Pierre Nora's *Les lieux de memoire* as a methodological starting point and interpreting the images, which are given in the texts as 'focal points of collective memory', I analyse how they perpetuate the memory of the period from 1792 to 1815 in Europe. Taking into account the roles of the respective national book market and national cultural politics, I also explore the mechanisms of circulation of (French) literature in the European landscape of memory and the transfer of inherent images: transfer on the one hand, into other media of memory like films, and on the other hand, the transfer of the images given in 'seminal' texts into epigonic texts.

Maria Schultz (Berlin School for Comparative European History):

Archetypes from the Past: Gender Images in German and Austrian Historical Novels on the Napoleonic Wars

Historical novels have a particular significance for the remembrances of the Revolutionary and Napoleonic Wars in the German-language area. This paper will examine the quantity and circulation of the German and Austrian historical novels on these wars. It will look, too, at the role they played in the constitution of collective memories. In this context gender images are very important. The focus of the talk is not to be solely on the question of which gender images were constructed in the historical novels. This paper also intends to briefly present those women and men who dominated the German and Austrian memories of the wars until 1945. The memories of the male and female heroes will be analyzed in terms of their peaks, variations, and specific features.

IV. Collective Memory in Literature and Poetry

Bernhard Struck (University of St. Andrews, School of History):

France and Poland in German Travel Reports during and after the Napoleonic Wars

For long, the key elements of the master narrative of 19th century German history have been modernisation via nation- and state-building as well as the emergence of nationalism and of the French hereditary enemy out of the Napoleonic Wars. Only recently has research on the experience of the war in Southern Germany (U. Planert) or in Northern Germany (K. Aaslestad) questioned the emergence of a wide spread anti-French nationalism and the picture of a hereditary enemy. However, the contribution refers to these latter interpretations by taking its starting point in travel and travel writing to France and thus in the direct encounter with Napoleonic France. The German travellers who went to France did hardly show any national resentment. Concerning the annexed territories they rather approved French rule – as long as it was “well done”. Thus, the annexation of territories during the French Wars can be seen in a longer perspective and compared for instance with the annexation of Polish territories in the era of partitions. In yet another long-term perspective the contributions compares the images of France and Poland depicted in travel writing after 1815. The comparison questions the image of a French hereditary enemy.

Ruth Leiserowitz (Berlin School for Comparative European History):

Female Heroism: Gender Images in Russian Memoirs and Historical Novels of the "Patriotic War" of 1812

Russia was involved in a number of wars between 1793 and 1815. For the most part, the Russian population experienced these wars only remotely: through correspondence or contact with those belonging to the army, through the loss of relatives on the battlefield, and through the return of physically and psychologically damaged family members. In 1812, however, civilians were faced with real war experiences, when the Grande Armée of France reached Russian territory. The memoirs and historical Novel – from the of earliest publication to Tolstoy's famous "Peace and War"- not only give an idea of how this part of society remembered civilian life during war time but furthermore marked a first turning point toward a national identity. My paper will examine the construction of masculinity and femininity and the importance of ideal gender types from the 30thies to the 70thies. It will investigate on which extent the representation of female heroism from Pogorelskis Aniuta to Tolstoy's Natasha - changed in the memory of 1812.

David Hopkin (University of Oxford, Hertford College):

The Soldier's Fairytale: Oral Tradition as an Expression of Soldiers' Experience and Vehicle for Memory' of the French Wars

Although it may not have been recognised at the time, the 1812 publication of the Grimms' *Kinder- und Hausmärchen* was *the* landmark literary event of the Napoleonic era. However, the Grimms' choice of title hid the fact that soldiers counted among their sources, and gave a distorted impression of this form of oral culture. Fairytales were as much the cultural expression of adult male work communities, such as barracks, as they were of the domestic fireside. It will attempt to show how this cultural form influenced soldiers' own memories of the events they had experienced, as well as how they communicated these to those around them. In contexts where language was disciplined, fantasy was a cover for subversive talk, a way of sounding out comrades' views about officers, desertion and violence. The fairytales told in barracks and camps were a means of inculcating a particular military outlook among new recruits. This paper attempts to understand the oral culture of barracks and camp by looking at fairytales collected from soldiers, together with references to storytelling in soldiers' memoirs. It also seeks to demonstrate how veterans' skill as narrators shaped popular attitudes to the army.

V. Experience, Memory and Visual Representation

Rolf Reichardt and Marina Peltzer (University of Giessen, Department of History):

Transnational War of Images in Caricatures against Napoleon: The British and the Russian Case

Imagining the Invasion of England (1798-1804): As Napoleon intensified preparations for a French invasion of England, London cartoonists responded with an avalanche of suggestive satires which spread across Europe, either as smuggled originals or in copies and adaptations. This war of images pursued essentially two strategies: the cartoonists first ridicule France's ineptness in naval warfare; and second and more particularly, stoke popular fear – real or imaginary – by conjuring up an invasion with all the horrors of the French Revolution. Characteristic of their arguments is the presentation of a French occupation in the form of the Reign of Terror of Year II as seen by the counter-revolutionaries.

The Triumph of the 1812 Patriotic War: With unassailable serenity, Russian political imagery between 1812 and 1814 celebrates the resistance to the enemy of the peasantry, emblematic of all that is Russian. Their unquestioning support of their

country's autocratic system is seen as exorcising the spectre of revolution. The image-makers mock the misfortunes of the French army, terrorized by the very mention of Cossacks. Napoleon is checked and destroyed by the determination of the Russian people. On the positive side of the caricature: national identity, an awareness of Europe, and even liberal ideas unbeknown to autocratic codes. This fervent message, marking each stage of Napoleon's reverses, brings about the copying of Russian images in Europe and internationalizes political caricature. Indeed we can ask to which myth of Napoleon - as devil or hero? - the visualization of the French emperor as a monster, fool or buffoon to the public imagination ultimately led.

David O'Brien (University of Illinois, Urbana, Department of Art History):

Napoleonic Painting, Memory, and the Museum

This paper explores the special relationship of large-scale painting under the Napoleonic regime to memories of war, both during the Empire and after. I will focus on a painting by Antoine-Jean Gros, *Napoleon Visiting the Battlefield of Eylau the Morning after the Battle* (Louvre, 1808). Fought in rural Poland (then part of western Prussia) on 7 and 8 February 1807, the battle was one of the bloodiest of the Napoleonic wars and ended in a stalemate, though Bonaparte was able to claim victory because of a Russian retreat. Thus the painting had to manage particularly painful and contested memories. I wish to explore three features of the painting in relation to memory: its status as a work of art, as a public monument, and as a visual representation.

VI. Memories and Cultural Practices

Holger Hoock (University of Liverpool, School of History):

British War Monuments of the Napoleonic Wars in a Comparative Perspective

This paper will explore British national military and naval monuments of the French Revolutionary and Napoleonic wars in European context. In the 18th century, sculpture was considered the pedagogically most effective form of public art, and an effective medium of memory: the solid marble promised eternity; the medium forced the artist to focus on one few expressive gestures; as a three-dimensional form sculpture was more live-like than painting; and monuments were easy to set in scene in ceremonies staged around them. Focusing on the only ever British national pantheon at St Paul's Cathedral between 1794 and 1830 and on plans for post-war monuments in London and Edinburgh, the paper will consider the political and constitutional contexts of national commemoration and the semantics of the heroic discourse and of memorialization (religion; masculinity; aesthetics). Comparisons, especially with France and Prussia, will serve to put British experience into wider European contexts.

Colin White (Royal Naval Museum):

The Immortal Memory - Celebrating the 200th Anniversary of Nelson and Trafalgar

In 2005, the 200th anniversary of the Battle of Trafalgar was celebrated with a remarkable programme of events, The Trafalgar Festival. Lasting from June to October, the events covered the whole of Britain - and even extended overseas as well. Over the 'Trafalgar Weekend' alone (21-23 October), some 6,000 events were held worldwide. This extraordinary outpouring of popular interest in Nelson, Trafalgar and the Royal Navy was in striking contrast to the strangely muted celebrations in France to mark the bicentenary of Austerlitz. In particular, it was noticeable how little official interest there was in France compared with the enthusiastic support for the Trafalgar celebrations from key elements of the British Establishment. Moreover, the Trafalgar bicentenary produced a remarkable intellectual legacy – with a flood of books, articles, exhibitions, lectures and conferences. In this special lecture, he will: reflect on the Festival itself and will consider the extent to which it met its aims and objectives; explore how the Festival demonstrates the importance of what he calls 'performance history' in capturing modern audiences for History as a subject; and examine why the ordinary British people found the story of Nelson and Trafalgar so appealing, in such marked contrast to the apparent French lack of interest in one of the great events of the Napoleonic myth. His lecture will be illustrated with images from some of the main events of *The Trafalgar Festival* and with prints and paintings from the fine collections of the Royal Naval Museum.

Guido Hausmann (Trinity College, University of Dublin, Department of Russian and Slavonic Studies):

The Wars of 1812 in Russian Material Memory

Jakob Vogel (Centre Marc Bloch, Berlin):

The Revolutionary and Napoleonic Wars in French and German Celebrations of the 50 and 100 Years Anniversaries

The commemorations of the 50th and 100rd anniversaries of the Revolutionary and Napoleonic Wars in Germany and France took place around 1850 and 1900 in very different political settings, caused on both sides by the outcome of the Franco-German war of 1870/71. While on the French side the Second Empire with its annual celebrations of the defunct Emperor was replaced by the Third Republic and its anti-Napoleonic sentiments, in Germany the newly founded Kaiserreich created also a new context for the remembrance of the Napoleonic times and the so-called "wars of liberation". But notwithstanding all these fundamental differences, both societies faced the same problem: the transposition of a more or less lively memory of the wars still

present in the ceremonies of the 1850s and 1860s (notably in the figure of the “veteran”) into an historic commemoration that was connected to the events around 1800 only through a more or less mythical history. Through the description of the different commemorations in France and Germany the paper tries to highlight these general evolutions of the memory after the dieing off of the generations that had experienced themselves the wars at the beginning of the 19th century.

Margarette Lincoln (National Maritime Museum):

The Wars as Kitsch: The Napoleonic Wars in Everyday Life

This paper explores the extent to which commemorative objects coloured everyday life in Britain and particularly the lives of women during the period 1793 – 1815. It focuses on the production of commemoratives relating to naval warfare and considers the volume of commemoratives produced and market penetration. The material and popular culture surrounding naval warfare cannot be said to have reached a mass market in the modern sense of the term. Yet it permeated all social levels, particularly the diverse middling ranks, and so allows us to explore the complexity of women's position in relation to this phenomenon, to chart aspects of their identities, and to consider the meanings invested in domestic objects. The increasing range of naval commemoratives on the market, many of which were kitsch, offered opportunities for consumers to assert their individuality and power of choice while also acquiring goods that strengthened their sense of belonging. These objects helped to create an evolving sense of national distinctiveness supported by popular culture as well as by more authoritative versions of culture and identity.

VII. The Revolutionary and Napoleonic Wars in Feature Films

Wolfgang Koller (Free University of Berlin, Centre for French Studies):

Heroic Times: Gendered Images of the Anti-Napoleonic Wars in German Feature Films of the Interwar Period

In a phase of rapid social, economic, cultural and gender transformations, which followed the First World War, picturing the Anti-Napoleonic Wars became popular in the emerging mass medium cinema in Germany. The Napoleonic time was used as an important vehicle to create an imagined common national past and to promote gender roles imagined as traditional. This paper will explore how the images of masculinity and femininity were represented in historical feature films produced in Germany in the 1920s and 1930s. It will examine how the question of national identity influenced the conceptualisation of gender images and how film itself contributed in the shaping of gender images.

James Chapman (Leicester University, Department of Art and Film):

British Cinema and the Napoleonic Wars?

It has long been recognised that the historical feature film often has as much to say about the time in which it was made as about the period in which it was set. This paper will explore this idea through a discussion of British feature films about the Revolutionary and Napoleonic Wars. A range of examples, illustrated by extracts, will demonstrate the strategies adopted by British film makers for representing this period in response to the ideological and cultural determinants of the present. In 1934, for example, the Gaumont-British Picture Corporation produced *The Iron Duke*, which used the story of Wellington at the Congress of Vienna as an allegory of appeasement, drawing explicit parallels between the treatment of France in 1815 and the treatment of Germany in 1919. Its plea for fair and tolerant treatment of a defeated nation had clear contemporary overtones during the mid 1930s. During the Second World War, however, the narrative of British resistance to Napoleon is mobilised as propaganda in the context of the war against Hitler's Germany. Films such as *Lady Hamilton* (1940) – a 'Hollywood British' film produced by Alexander Korda – and *The Young Mr Pitt* (1942) both make explicit statements against appeasement in drawing on the lessons of the past as propaganda for the present.