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Katherine B. Aaslestad

New Military History and The Napoleonic Wars

Karen Hagemann, Tod für das Vaterland: Der patriotisch-nationale Heldenkult zur Zeit der Freiheitskriege

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In 2001 the »Militär-geschichtliche Zeitschrift« (MGZ) published Karen Hagemann's essay »Tod für das Vaterland. Der patriotisch-nationale Heldenkult zur Zeit der Freiheitskriege« that presented a new approach to studying the Napoleonic Wars.¹ In a journal that traditionally featured mostly 20th-century military history, Hagemann's article addresses Prussia's role in the Napoleonic Wars by drawing on the methodologies of cultural and gender history to analyze new modes of warfare and their afterlife. This essay and others published in the MGZ's first thematic issue focus on the cultural, social and »everyday life« aspects of warfare in articles on soldiers, veterans, and civilians, illustrating exciting directions of contemporary military history.² Of all the modern wars, the Napoleonic Wars remained the undisputed realm of »drums and trumpet« military historians, as new military and cultural historians concentrated their energies on the twentieth-century wars. Military historians continue to publish important

1 This essay represented part of Hagemann's findings in her Habilitationsschrift (2000) from the Technische Universität Berlin and appeared in print in 2002 as »Männlicher Muth und Teutsche Ehre«: Nation, Militär und Geschlecht zur Zeit der Antinapoleonischen Kriege Preußens, Paderborn 2002. Her most recent monograph on the subject: *Revisiting Prussia's Wars Against Napoleon: History, Culture, and Memory*, New York 2015, is the winner of the Hans Rosenberg Prize for the best book in Central European history in 2016.

2 See for example also the articles by Jakob Vogel, Sabine Kienitz, Robert G. Moeller, and Jörg Echternkamp in this issue entitled »Nach – Kriegs – Helden«, MGZ, 60 (2001), 2.

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studies on Napoleonic warfare, but Hagemann's article heralds an expansion of the field to include the role of civilians, noncombatant experiences, gender, and the intersection between military and commemorative culture.³

My brief overview outlines some of the key themes in Hagemann's essay from 2001 and draws on it as a point of reference to illustrate the transformation in Napoleonic military history in the last fifteen years.⁴ Like studies on the Prussian Reforms after 1806, Hagemann emphasizes the importance of the military reforms, in particular conscription and the volunteer movement.⁵ In fact, Prussia fielded an army of 280 720 men in 1813, mobilizing twice as many men as in 1806 (p. 315). An army this size also generated high numbers of war casualties, and Hagemann focuses on the war wounded, the dead, and the veterans in this essay. She also points out that the Reformers understood long before 1813 that »Wehrbereitschaft« and »Opferwilligkeit« needed to be cultivated in Prussian society to support the war with valorous and eager volunteers, higher taxes, and systematic care for the war wounded, crippled, and war widows (p. 313). Propaganda in the form of print media, lyric poetry, sermons and communal rituals prepared Prussian society for the deep cost of war: the patriotic sacrifice of their sons, brothers, husbands and fathers. She argues that publicists succeeded in styling the wars of 1813 to 1815 as a »heilige Kriege«, and the war dead as a »Blutopfer« on the »Altar des Vaterlandes« (p. 321). Furthermore, the image of the soldier and war hero, as Hagemann discusses, shaped enduring popular understandings of masculinity. Thanksgiving festivals and post-war memorial commemorations demonstrated cooperation between the state, church and military in celebrating the war dead as martyrs and creating a »patriotisch-nationalen Heldenkult«. The rhetoric, festivals, rituals, symbols and practices celebrating the »gefallene Krieger« had an enduring influence on nationalist and military culture throughout the nineteenth century.⁶

3 Frederick C. Schneid, *Napoleon's conquest of Europe: the War of the Third Coalition*, Westport, CN 2005 (= Studies in military history and international affairs); Charles Esdaile, *Napoleon's Wars: An International History, 1803–1815*, London 2007; Michael V. Leggiere, *The Fall of Napoleon*, Cambridge 2007; Michael V. Leggiere, *Napoleon and the struggle for Germany: The Franco-Prussian War of 1813*, Cambridge 2015; Martin Rink, *The German wars of liberation 1807–1815: The restrained insurgency*. In: *Small Wars and Insurgencies*, Vol. 25, Issue 4 (2014), pp. 828–842; John H. Gill, *With Eagles to Glory: Napoleon and His German Allies in the 1809 Campaign*, Barnsley 2010.

4 This essay provides examples of recent literature but is in no way comprehensive.

5 Dierk Walter, *Preußische Heeresreformen 1807–1870. Militärische Innovation und der Mythos der »Roonschen Reform«*, Paderborn 2003 (= *Krieg in der Geschichte*, 16).

6 René Schilling, »Kriegshelden«: *Deutungsmuster heroischer Männlichkeit in Deutschland 1813–1945*, Paderborn 2002 (= *Krieg in der Geschichte*, 15).

Hagemann's emphasis on wartime mobilization contributes to a broader understanding of the Prussian Reformers, but it especially highlights the experiences of civilians. The mass armies and broad mobilization of the Napoleonic Wars put new strains on civil society as well as provided opportunities for civilians to engage in new ways with the state. Hagemann's essay underscores the role of the Church, the press, and women – as patriotic war supporters and mourners. Other recent studies on civilian experiences compliment her work and reveal the fate of ordinary people negotiating the wartime economy, life under military occupation, and the mobilization of non-combatants.⁷ Recovering the often overlooked experience and voices of civilians during the Napoleonic Wars, these works explore civil-military relations and provide a holistic understanding of the war experience.⁸ They examine how society reacted to the dramatic challenges of the wars and the unprecedented expansion of the state as it pursued »total war«.⁹ This scholarship reveals that the wars generated conditions that blurred the boundaries between civilians and soldiers, and fostered integration between civil society and the military. Historians still seem to disagree if these decades of war presented transformative ruptures in the way people lived or if patterns of continuity helped society face new challenges.¹⁰ Despite these scholarly debates, the experience of non-combatants has become part of the narrative of the Napoleonic Wars in ways it was not fifteen years ago; even books written for Anglo-American students now address civilian wartime experi-

7 For example Ute Planert, *Der Mythos vom Befreiungskrieg. Frankreichs Kriege und der deutsche Süden. Alltag, Wahrnehmung, Deutung 1792–1841*, Paderborn 2007 (= *Krieg in der Geschichte*, 33); *Krieg und Umbruch in Mitteleuropa um 1800. Erfahrungsgeschichte(n) auf dem Weg in eine neue Zeit*. Hrsg. von Ute Planert, Paderborn 2009 (= *Krieg in der Geschichte*, 44), and *Revisiting Napoleon's Continental System: Local, Regional and European Experiences*. Ed. by Katherine B. Aaslestad and Johan Joor, London 2014.

8 See the chapters by Michael Rowe and Michael Broers in *Daily lives of civilians in wartime Europe, 1618–1900*. Ed. by Linda S. Frey and Marsha L. Frey, Westport, CT 2007; *War in an Age of Revolution, 1775–1815*. Ed. by Roger Chickering and Stig Förster, Cambridge 2010; Marie-Cécile Thorat, *From Valmy to Waterloo: France at war, 1792–1815*. Transl. by Godfrey Rogers, Basingstoke 2011; Catriona Kennedy, *Narratives of the Revolutionary and Napoleonic Wars: Military and Civilian Experience in Britain and Ireland*, New York 2013.

9 David Bell pursues this argument in *The First Total War: Napoleon's Europe and the Birth of Warfare as We Know It*, Boston, MA, New York 2007, see also Mark Hewitson, *Absolute War, Violence and Mass Warfare in the German Lands, 1792–1820*, Oxford 2017.

10 *Soldiers, Citizens and Civilians: experiences and perceptions of the Revolutionary and Napoleonic Wars, 1790–1820*. Ed. by Alan Forrest, Karen Hagemann and Jane Rendall, Basingstoke, New York 2009, and Leighton James, *Witnessing the Revolutionary and Napoleonic Wars in German Central Europe*, New York 2013.

ences.¹¹ One area of civilian life identified in Hagemann's essay that remains underexplored, however, is the wartime role of the Church.¹²

The gendering of the Napoleonic Wars is key to Hagemann's work.¹³ In her essay she argues that the construction of a dominating masculinity associated with valiant soldiering, state loyalty and patriotic sacrifice emerged during the wars. The qualities that constitute soldiers often seem obvious, but Hagemann convincingly points out that contemporary publicists articulated a virile and martial masculinity that resonated among men and women during the extended conflict. Other studies have likewise identified the importance of the war in shaping the gender order and the emergence of the gendered citizen soldier.¹⁴ As in France, the brotherhood of soldiers formed the basis of citizenship rights. The gendered meaning of political citizenship, therefore, emphasizes the importance of military service with expanding political rights and representation from the revolutionary era throughout the nineteenth century.¹⁵ In addition to the growing literature on masculinity, the emphasis on gender reveals women's opportunities to participate in public life as patriotic supporters of the war and state, even as they are denied formal citizenship.¹⁶

11 Rafe Blaufarb and Claudia Liebeskind, *Napoleonic Foot Soldiers and Civilians: A Brief History with Documents*, Boston, MA 2011, and Mike Rapport, *The Napoleonic Wars: a very short introduction*, Oxford 2013.

12 See chapters in Planert, *Krieg und Umbruch* (annot. 7), and Liubov Melnikova, *Orthodox Russia against »godless« France: the Russian church and the »holy war« of 1812*. In: *Russia and the Napoleonic Wars*. Ed. by Janet M. Hartley, Paul Keenan and Dominic Lieven, Houndmills [et al.] 2015.

13 Karen Hagemann, *Heldenmütter, Kriegerbräute und Amazonen. Entwürfe »patriotischer« Weiblichkeit zur Zeit der Freiheitskriege*. In: *Militär und Gesellschaft im 19. und 20. Jahrhundert*. Hrsg. von Ute Frevert, Stuttgart 1997, pp. 174–200, and *Landsknechte, Soldatenfrauen und Nationalkrieger. Militär, Krieg und Geschlechterordnung im historischen Wandel*. Hrsg. von Karen Hagemann und Ralf Pröve, Frankfurt a.M. 1998.

14 Karen Baumgartner, *Valorous Masculinities and Patriotism in the Texts of Early Nineteenth-Century German Women Writers*. In: *German Studies Review*, Vol. 31, Issue 2 (May 2008), pp. 325–344; *Gender, War and Politics: Transatlantic Perspectives, 1775–1830*. Ed. by Karen Hagemann, Gisela Mettele and Jane Rendall, Basingstoke 2010; Michael J. Hughes, *Forging Napoleon's Grande Armée: Motivation, Military Culture, and Masculinity in the French Army, 1800–1808*, New York 2012; Kevin Linch and Matthew McCormack, *Defining Soldiers: Britain's Military, c. 1740–1815*, *War in History*, 2013, Vol. 20 Issue 2, pp. 144–159.

15 Ute Frevert, *Die kasernierte Nation. Militärdienst und Zivilgesellschaft in Deutschland*, München 2001; *Der Bürger als Soldat. Die Militarisierung europäischer Gesellschaften im langen 19. Jahrhundert: ein internationaler Vergleich*. Hrsg. von Christian Jansen, Essen 2004; and *Representing masculinity: male citizenship in modern Western culture*. Ed. by Stefan Dudink, Karen Hagemann, and Anna Clark, New York 2012.

16 Some of Hagemann's contributions include *Female Patriots: Women, War and the Nation in the Period of the Prussian-German Anti-Napoleonic Wars*. In: *Gender & History*, 16, no. 3 (2004),

Hagemann's analysis of the gendered political and military cultures that emerged during the Napoleonic Wars stresses the importance of a versatile and gendered wartime rhetoric located in the public sphere – in the press, sermons and popular song. In print media Hagemann identifies a »national-patriotic« discourse that employed vague but emotional concepts of »Volk« and »Vaterland« and called for sacrifice and honor as central to the enduring Prussian cult of heroism. Self-sacrificing patriotism from men and women was central to a »Volkskrieg«, and therefore mobilization of public sentiments in civil society through print media is central to understanding the nature of the war (p. 316). My own study of Hamburg – a republic unlike monarchical Prussia – argues that the crisis of war fractured traditional notions of communal patriotism and provided men and women with new martial patriotic roles for themselves to defend their city-state.¹⁷ Despite differences between the two polities, print culture played a key role in articulating new visions of patriotic action. Publicists, therefore, played a key role in social mobilization and militarization during the wars, and they perpetuated wartime mythologies and hero cults after the conflict. In France the creation of the myth of the citizen soldier of the Year II – the ideologically committed republican warrior – resonated in Napoleon's armies and persisted into the twentieth century.¹⁸ Post-war commemorative ceremonies, veteran autobiographies, and communicative memory fostered a long legacy of heroic wartime ideals, symbols and practices, another area that scholars have recently explored in a proliferating literature on the public memorialization of these wars.¹⁹ In the

pp. 396–42; Guest editor with Katherine B. Aaslestad and Judith Miller, *Gender, War and the Nation in the Period of the Revolutionary and Napoleonic Wars – European Perspectives*. Special Issue: *European History Quarterly* 37, no. 4 (2007); Thomas Cardoza, *Intrepid women: Cantinières and Vivandières of the French Army*, Bloomington 2010; Dirk Alexander Reder, *Frauenbewegung und Nation. Patriotische Frauenvereine in Deutschland im frühen 19. Jahrhundert (1813–1830)*, Köln 1998.

17 Katherine B. Aaslestad, *Place and Politics: Local Identity, Civic Culture, and German Nationalism in North Germany during the Revolutionary Era*, Leiden 2005 (= *Studies in Central European histories*, 36).

18 Alan Forrest, *The Legacy of the French Revolutionary Wars: The Nation-in-Arms in French Republican Memory*, Cambridge 2009.

19 Katherine B. Aaslestad, »Remembering and Forgetting: The Local and the Nation in Hamburg's Commemorations of the Wars of Liberation«, *Central European History* 38/7, (September 2005), pp. 384–416; Sam A. Mustafa, *The Long Ride of Major von Schill: A Journey through German History and Memory*, Lanham, MD 2008; Philip Dwyer, *Public Remembering, Private Reminiscing: French Military Memoirs and the Revolutionary and Napoleonic Wars*. In: *French Historical Studies*, Vol. 33, Issue 2 (Spring 2010), pp. 231–258; Eveline Bouwers, *Public Pantheons in Revolutionary Europe: Comparing Cultures of Remembrance, c. 1790–1840*, Basingstoke 2011; *War Memories: The Revolutionary and Napoleonic Wars in Modern European Culture*. Ed. by Alan

course of the nineteenth century, these wartime legacies intersected with growing regionalism and nationalism to provide an arsenal of myths for nation-building, demonstrating the long legacy of the Napoleonic Wars.²⁰

In the last two decades projects like Tübingen University's special research program (SFB) »Kriegserfahrungen, Krieg und Gesellschaft in der Neuzeit«, the 10 volume series by the Research Institute for Military History (MGFA) »Germany and the Second World War« and the Free University of Berlin's »Making War, Mapping Europe: Militarized Cultural Encounters, 1792–1920« have contributed new insights and approaches to the study of the new military history. In combination with those boarder projects, Hagemann's work as co-director of the research project on Nations, Borders, and Identities, as editor of many collected volumes, as organizer of numerous international conferences, and as an editor with Rafe Blaufarb and Alan Forrest for the series »War, Culture and Society, 1750–1850« at Palgrave Macmillan, has contributed to foster a new military history for the Napoleonic era. Thus, Karen Hagemann's article »Tod für das Vaterland: Der patriotisch-nationale Heldenkult zur Zeit der Freiheitskriege« signals a shift in the scholarship on the Napoleonic Wars, a shift explored contemporaneously and collaboratively by many scholars, in the study of war beyond the battlefield.

Forrest, Karen Hagemann and Étienne François, Basingstoke 2012; Jasper Heinzen, *Transnational Affinities and Invented Traditions: The Napoleonic Wars in British and Hanoverian Memory, 1815–1915*. In: *English Historical Review*, Vol. 127, Issue 529 (Dec. 2012), pp. 1404–1434, and *War, Demobilization and Memory: The legacy of War in the Era of Atlantic Revolutions*. Ed. by Alan Forrest, Karen Hagemann and Michael Rowe, Basingstoke 2016.

20 Christopher Clark, »The Wars of Liberation in Prussian Memory: Reflections on the Memorialization of War in Early Nineteenth-Century Germany«, *Journal of Modern History*, (1996), pp. 550–576; Ute Planert, *Auf dem Weg zum Befreiungskrieg: Das Jubiläum als Mythenstifter. Die Re-Interpretation der Napoleonischen Zeit in den Rheinbundstaaten*. In: *Das historische Jubiläum*. Hrsg. von Manfried Müller, Münster 2003, pp. 195–217; Dieter Langewiesche, *Krieg im Mythenarsenal europäischer Nationen und der USA. Überlegungen zur Wirkungsmacht politischer Mythen*. In: *Der Krieg in den Gründungsmythen europäischer Nationen und der USA*. Hrsg. von Nikolaus Buschmann und Dieter Langewiesche, Frankfurt a.M. 2003, pp. 13–22.