

NAPOLEON'S PARIS

ROWELL (D.) *Paris: the 'New Rome' of Napoleon I*. Pp. x + 237, ills, maps. London and New York: Bloomsbury Academic, 2012. Cased, £65. ISBN: 978-1-4411-3518-6.

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The last decade has proved especially rich in works devoted to the cultural history of Napoleon's empire, including several studies lavished on individual artists, on propaganda and on the press. Architecture and the development of urban space, in contrast, have suffered from relative neglect, despite the significance of the imprint left by the Napoleonic regime. This imprint is especially apparent in Paris, the subject of R.'s book. Napoleon intended Paris to be the 'new Rome', a city that would not only surpass the classical original, but also more recent attempts to recreate Rome in Paris including especially the efforts of Louis XIV. Indeed, Louis XIV figures almost as prominently as Napoleon in R.'s study, on the grounds that he set the standard that his Corsican successor strove to surpass. Napoleon did not create the lure of the classical world, as this was already well developed when he came to power. This book therefore looks not so much at the two-way relationship between Napoleon and the classical Roman past, but rather a three-way relationship that also includes pre-Napoleonic (and especially seventeenth-century) reinventions of classical Rome. It does so, using a variety of sources, including the monuments and cityscape of Paris itself, and contemporary guidebooks, newspapers and other literature.

Within these parameters, R. focuses on areas that one would expect to see in such a study, including especially the Napoleonic reinvention of classical Rome's triumphal architecture. Unsurprisingly, Napoleon, like Louis XIV, found the custom of the Roman triumph politically appealing. The intended stage for the Napoleonic reinvention of this ancient form was a planned triumphal axis, running from the west to east, across Paris. R. analyses this processional route in some detail in the second chapter. Its western anchor was provided by the Arc de Triomphe, perhaps the most famous Napoleonic monument in Paris. As such, R. gives it particular attention. This structure illustrates well how the architects of Napoleon, like those of Louis XIV previously, reinvented classical Roman monuments to fit modern circumstances. They were inspired in this case by the Arch of Titus in Rome, but they took no interest in the fact that this classical monument was located in the centre of Rome, and not positioned as a boundary marker to the city as was the case with the larger Napoleonic copy. In this context and in others, R. provides the reader with a good sense of the limited state of knowledge about classical Roman architecture available to the planners and architects of the Napoleonic era.

The Arc de Triomphe opened on to the Champs-Élysées, which in turn culminated in the Louvre-Tuileries complex. Adjacent to this space was the Place Vendôme, with the Vendôme Column in the centre. This monument was inspired by Trajan's Column, though the reader will be unsurprised to learn that the Napoleonic copy was slightly taller than the original, demonstrating Napoleon's superiority to even the best of Roman emperors. Beyond this, R. argues that the Vendôme Column also represented one-upmanship over Louis XIV, whose equestrian statue had previously occupied the site, and the French Republic, whose agents had wrecked the statue thereby clearing the way for the Napoleonic column. The impression made by the column on a pedestrian or rider moving along the adjacent processional route is provided by one of the more important illustrations included in the book. Heading further east along the axis, the reader ends up at the site previously occupied by the Bastille, and for which Napoleon's architects planned a bizarre fountain in the form of an elephant, a structure immortalised in Victor Hugo's *Les Misérables*.

R. demonstrates how Augustan Rome in particular provided Napoleon with a useful combination of monarchical and republican forms that reflected his regime's own ambiguous constitutional character. More broadly, association with the classical past allowed Napoleon to leapfrog his Bourbon predecessors, thereby ramming home the point that his regime's achievements were of a kind that might be seen only once in a millennium, and not only once in a century or two. R. might have noted that Napoleon's presentation of himself as a second Moses, on account of his reordering of Jewish affairs, was comparable in having this objective. As R. reminds us, Napoleon, unlike Louis XIV, needed to engage to a far greater extent with public opinion. Louis XIV's reign might have got off to a shaky start, but the Sun King none the less stood at the apex of an institution that had endured for centuries. Napoleon, in contrast, could not so easily present himself as simply the most recent representative of a long line of monarchs. Appealing to the democratic underpinnings of his regime promised to diminish the legitimacy deficit, and this necessitated incorporating a popular component into public festivities. A triumphal procession by its nature promised this, not least through the expanse of the processional route that allowed for maximum public exposure.

In many respects, R. whets the appetite without satisfying it. There are various areas that deserve to be expanded upon. One is greater consideration of the location and accommodation of key Napoleonic institutions in Paris, including, for example, the various legislative bodies (Tribunate, Senate, *Corps législatif*), Council of State, foreign ministry and superior courts. What did their location, and notably that of the *Corps législatif* in the *palais Bourbon*, whose pairing with Napoleon's *Temple de la Gloire de la Grande Armée* (today, the Church *la Madeleine*) bisected the triumphal axis, reveal of their importance in the Napoleonic scheme of things? To what extent, if at all, did Roman and subsequent examples—for example, the location of the Curia Julia—come into discussions over Napoleonic arrangements? With reference to the Louvre-Tuileries complex – a veritable ‘Napoleonic forum’ at the core of Napoleon's vision for Paris – to what extent did the clearing of private properties in this area contribute to the association of Napoleon with Emperor Nero? To be fair, R. does refer to this unflattering comparison made by those hostile to the regime, including most famously by Chateaubriand in 1807. However, to what extent do the sources – one assumes, most obviously, police reports – suggest that ordinary Parisians facing eviction from their homes and businesses share this sentiment? R. provides some indication as to how the Napoleonic reordering of Paris was perceived, with reference to the leaflets that were produced explaining to the populace the iconography of official monuments. However, it would none the less have been informative to learn more about the counter-narratives that might have developed. Also, though R. writes much of the importance of the ‘sub-codes’ bequeathed by Louis XIV in shaping Napoleon's plans for Paris, it would have been interesting to learn more about the importance of developments that occurred in the intervening century. After all, both the reigns of Louis XV and Louis XVI witnessed ambitious urban renewal projects no doubt planned by individuals aware of both classical Roman and seventeenth-century precedents. Finally, whilst R. refers to Napoleon's aborted plan for a large palace on the heights of Chaillot, she neglects the north–south axis of which this plan was part. Finally, to what extent were Napoleonic plans not only informed by Louis XIV's reinvention of the classical past, but also reinventions in Paris's foreign rivals, including Saint Petersburg, Vienna, Berlin and London? The fact that this study gives rise to these supplementary questions is both a sign of its limitations and of the interest that it inspires in an area that is surprisingly under-researched.

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