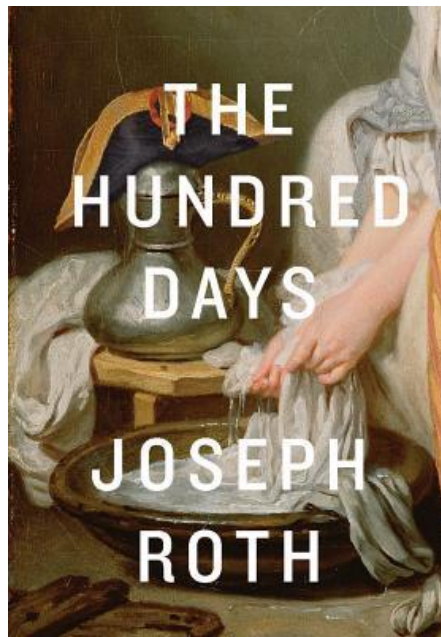




The Hundred Days

Joseph Roth

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The incomparable Joseph Roth imagines Emperor Napoleon's last grab at glory, the hundred days spanning his escape from Elba to his final defeat at Waterloo. This particularly poignant work, set in the first half of 1815 and largely in Paris, is told from two perspectives, that of Napoleon himself and that of the lowly, devoted palace laundress Angelica—an unlucky creature who deeply loves him. In *The Hundred Days*, Roth refracts the deep sorrow of their intertwined fates.

Roth's signature lyrical elegance and haunting atmospheric details sing in *The Hundred Days*. "There may be," as James Wood has stated, "no modern writer more able to combine the novelistic and the poetic, to blend lusty, undamaged realism with sparkling powers of metaphor and simile."

The Hundred Days Details

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From Reader Review The Hundred Days for online ebook

Siti says

Ecco l'ennesimo Roth, per me.

In quale dimensione siamo stavolta?

Il romanzo, apparso nel 1935, viene catalogato come romanzo storico e il titolo richiama subito l'epilogo della parabola napoleonica. Siamo lì, apparentemente, ma non dentro quel periodo storico, no, non totalmente. Dietro lo schermo del resoconto degli ultimi giorni da imperatore di Napoleone, dall'Elba a Waterloo, con focalizzazione quasi assoluta sull'uomo solo e vinto e debole alla quale fa da contraltare la vicenda parallela di un umile stiratrice della sua corte, Angelina Pietri, corsa come lui, si cela in realtà, netto, il fantasma di un altro imperatore, di un'altra guerra, di un altro soldato, di un altro periodo storico e per finire di un altro straniero dentro i confini di un impero che si sta dissolvendo.

Insomma, insieme ai suoi più noti "La marcia di Radetzky" e "La cripta dei cappuccini", anche questo è, a suo modo, un libro sul finis Austriae e ci riporta a quella prosa nostalgica, necessaria per rendere il senso di smarrimento che accompagnò nei sudditi la fine dell'impero asburgico. Le atmosfere sono le stesse, cambiano i personaggi, Napoleone è come Francesco Giuseppe, smarrito e piccolo e ancora acclamato mentre abdica, Waterloo segna la fine di un mito fatto uomo come la resa austriaca la morte dell'impero austroungarico, il suolo della patria francese trema per il polacco Wokurka, ex soldato ora calzolaio che protegge Angelina quando durante il ritorno del re è estromessa dalla corte, come tremò per un povero galiziano con la disgregazione del mito asburgico e per ogni povero reduce della Grande Guerra.

Per chi conosce i temi più importanti della produzione dello scrittore i paralleli sorgono spontanei, e piacevolmente si gode di questa trasposizione della vicenda napoleonica; qui l'imperatore è restituito nella sua dimensione umana, sia nei momenti di gloria, come quest'ultimo colpo di coda, sia nel momento della sua caduta. Ad essa in particolare è dedicata la terza delle quattro sezioni di cui si compone il romanzo, Tramonto, la più intensa, la più bella, la più accorata, scandita dalla Preghiera alla morte, dalla caratterizzazione dell'imperatore sulla stregua del Giobbe biblico (e qui vi consiglio uno dei suoi romanzi più belli, Giobbe, appunto), dal ridimensionamento del delirio di onnipotenza che ci presenta ora un essere umano stanco e più conciliante, più vicino alla dimensione minima dell'esistenza, capace di far tramontare la sua stella, dopo aver dominato il mondo, a quarantasei anni appena. Votato infine ad un altruismo che gli consente di consolare gli altri: "Non curatevi di me, il mio destino si compie da solo", per consegnarsi prigioniero al nemico.

Per me, bellissimo. Vi lascio però alle suggestioni infinite prodotte da questo uomo nella letteratura e sapientemente ripercorse da Giuseppe Scaraffia nell'articolo di cui vi offro il link:

<http://www.repubblica.it/venerdi/arti...>

Pat says

L'uomo comprende. L'imperatore abdica.

20 marzo – 8 luglio 1815. Cento giorni. La fuga dall'Elba per riconquistare il trono, la disfatta di Waterloo, l'esilio a Sant'Elena. Cento giorni. Tanto durò. "Viva l'imperatore!" è il grido del popolo. Ha promesso libertà e dignità a tutti. Ma chi è entrato al suo servizio ha messo la propria libertà, la propria dignità e la propria vita nelle sue mani. Lui "il padre della viola" come lo hanno chiamato per la sua predilezione verso

quel fiore umile e valoroso non stima il suo popolo ma ne ambisce il favore. Allo stesso modo non apprezza l'amore ma vuole possedere le donne. Non crede nella fedeltà e nell'amicizia, ma ne è continuamente alla ricerca. Disprezza il mondo, e lo vuole conquistare. Si fida degli uomini solo dopo che son morti per lui. La morte, ecco il prezzo da pagare per la fiducia dell'imperatore. "Viva l'imperatore!". Anche Angelina Pietri c'è in quei cento giorni. Lei non è imperatrice. Non è nobile. Angelina è una servetta, una delle tante entrate a corte. È innamorata del suo imperatore come tutte le donne di Francia. Ha persino rubato un fazzoletto che gli appartiene. Di notte, quando le compagne di stanza dormono, lo posa sul cuscino e vi immerge il viso. Suo figlio perderà la vita in battaglia. Piccolo e gracile tamburino. Napoleone si ricorderà di lui e di sua madre. Un momento di umano sentimento, di compassione verso due creature quasi sconosciute. Poi il comando secco. L'ordine di seppellirlo. In fretta. Sguaina la spada, l'abbassa sul povero sepolcro. "Per tutti, per tutti!", mormora. Angelina ora sa. Le sue parole: «Era mio figlio. Ha amato l'imperatore. Come io lo amo...». Lo piange con occhi aridi e cuore pesante. Quasi lo invidia. Suo figlio è morto, a seppellirlo sono state le mani dell'imperatore. "Viva l'imperatore!". L'imperatore è grande, l'uomo è piccolo. L'imperatore è forte. L'uomo, debole. L'imperatore è ardito. L'uomo, timoroso. L'imperatore è determinato. L'uomo, pieno di dubbi. Ed è l'uomo, non l'imperatore a comprendere che non si può riporre la propria fede nella violenza, nel potere e nel successo. "Viva l'imperatore!". L'uomo comprende. L'imperatore abdica. La donna ama. "Viva l'imperatore!". Nulla conta più.

Ho provato una pena infinita per Angelina e per quel popolo che hanno riposto le proprie vite nelle mani di un solo uomo.

Marita says

"He wished to bring happiness to the world, and he became its plague."

The words "**Long live the Emperor**" reverberate through the pages of this most unusual novel. "*Long live the Emperor*" is thundered by thousands of voices with the arrival in Paris, March 1815, of the charismatic Napoleon after his escape from exile on the island of Elba. "*Long live the Emperor*" is what he hears when he wakes, goes to war and when he is finally defeated at Waterloo and has to abdicate and leave once again. "*Long live the Emperor*" is on the lips of Angelina, a laundress who adores and worships him from afar.

"The Emperor was unapproachable. But she dreamed of him. His portrait hung in all the rooms, the same portrait she had seen in rooms all across Corsica. It depicted the Emperor after a victorious battle, seated on a snow-white steed while reviewing the decimated ranks. His horse shimmered and his red eyes gleamed. He held his right hand outstretched, pointing somewhere into the inscrutable distance. He looked magnificent: both near and remote, kindly and at the same time terrible."

We experience the **Hundred Days** of the Emperor's return through the eyes of Napoleon himself, and through those of little Angelina Pietri who loves him devotedly and obsessively. Don't expect a historical novel which sticks to facts and figures. This is about beautiful writing which reads like a fable. Napoleon is larger than life, mythical, legendary.

"As those who watched the Emperor ride by heard the patter of the horse's hooves, they had the feeling they were listening to the hypnotic, measured call of threatening war drums. They remained still, removed their hats and shouted 'Long live the Emperor!' moved, unsettled and

also certainly shocked at the sight of him. They knew this image from the thousands of portraits that hung in their rooms and the rooms of their friends, decorated the edges of the plates from which they ate each day, the cups from which they drank and the metallic handles of the knives with which they sliced their bread. It was an intimate, familiar, yes, quite familiar picture of the great Emperor in his grey cloak and his black hat on his white horse. That was the reason they were often startled when they saw it come to life – the living Emperor, the living horse, the genuine cloak, the actual hat.”

“He approached the crowd. Their adoration hit him with their every breath, it shone from their faces as brightly as the sun from the heavens, and he suddenly felt that he had always been one of them. At that moment the Emperor saw himself as his devotees saw him, on thousands of pictures on plates, knives and walls; already a legend, yet still living.”

It is only to his proud mother that he remains “Nabulio” the boy from Corsica.

Napoleon at the Battle of Wagram (1809) by Horace Vernet (Wikipedia)

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Quotes

“Lies fluttered over the towns and villages on false, colourful little magic wings, rising in droves from the newspapers, coming from the mouths of the hypocrites, the eavesdroppers, the gossips and the omniscient. They even circled above the heads of the soldiers marching towards the capital from all directions and were marching out of the capital further to the north-west.”

“His spurs jingled, his black boots gleamed in the dark-red room despite the dusk, and his snow-white breeches were loud in their dazzling brightness.”

“All across the land and the world, women loved the Emperor. But to Angelina it seemed that to love the Emperor was a special and mysterious art; she felt betrothed to him, the most exalted lord of all time. He lived within her always.”

“In his presence one could be insignificant and proud. His shadow was golden and more radiant than the light of any others. One served him but he was unaware. To be in his service was pride itself.”

“Then – oh, he remembered very clearly – it was an ominous evening, a cold and spiteful drizzle fell from the heavens, but the people of France, the people of the Emperor, warmed the city with their very breath. They cried: ‘Long live the Emperor!’”

“But against his will all the miserable sounds forced themselves upon him from both sides, and it was as if his army’s weapons were whimpering pitifully, as if the fine, strong, defeated, ashamed and humiliated weapons were weeping. He knew that even if he had a hundred more years to live he would never forget this sobbing of the weapons and horses or the whining and moaning of the wagons. He could avert his gaze from the retreating soldiers. The clinking whimper of the weapons, however, pierced his heart.”

“When the coach stopped, there were no cheering cries – only a hatefully peaceful, a terrifyingly peaceful

summer night. The Emperor heard the shriek of a screech owl coming from deep within the palace park.”
[On arrival from the battle of Waterloo]

”The Emperor believed that God too was an Emperor but a wiser, more cautious and therefore more lasting one. He, however, the Emperor Napoleon, had been foolish through arrogance; he had lost power through arrogance. Without that arrogance, he too could have been God, created the blue dome of the heavens, regulated the brilliance and position of the stars and orchestrated the direction of the wind, the drifting of the clouds, the passage of the birds and the destiny of man. But he, the Emperor, was more modest than God, carelessly generous and thoughtlessly magnanimous.”

“This is the last day, thought the Emperor, that I will still be the Emperor of France. Yes, that was already definite. The morning itself seemed to say so; the birds were celebrating in all too spiteful and shrill voices and even the sun, which had now emerged above the thick and lush greenery, bore a malevolent yellowish-red face.”

“The wheels crunched with a soft melancholy and the axles moaned with human-like voices.”

Jorge says

No cabe duda que Joseph Roth fue uno de los más grandes escritores de habla alemana del siglo XX y uno de tantos intelectuales que tuvieron que salir de Alemania debido al ascenso del Nazismo. Vigoroso narrador de talentos excelsos y prosa elocuente y a la vez sencilla y concisa, Roth utiliza una técnica narrativa tradicional sin mayores pretensiones que la de comunicar lo que él veía en el mundo desde su particular perspectiva.

La narración que ahora nos trae Joseph Roth se aleja de su temática tradicional que ha sido novelar la debacle del Imperio Austro-Húngaro y con ello la desaparición de un mundo sereno, tranquilo y armónico constituido por la Europa de antes de la Primera Guerra Mundial. Otro tema recurrente en él ha sido el surgimiento del nacionalismo a ultranza que derrumbaba a aquel cosmopolita pero protector y casi sagrado Imperio Austro-Húngaro donde tenían cabida un sinnúmero de nacionalidades y credos.

Ahora la mirada de Roth se centra en otro Imperio. En esta ocasión se ocupa de describirnos el regreso de Napoleón al trono para convertirse de nuevo en Emperador tras su destierro en la Isla de Elba. Concretamente se refiere a “Los Cien Días” -- tal y como se llama su libro-- que duró esta aventura. Una vez más la pluma magistral de Roth se desliza de manera maravillosa sobre el papel, como sólo él sabe hacerlo, para descubrirnos las reflexiones y pensamientos finales de ese hombre que puso en jaque al mundo con su genio militar, su astucia y su ambición de poder. Roth nos muestra al dios transformándose en hombre, al imbatible ser humano descendiendo a la tierra de los mortales.

A pesar de la magnífica prosa del autor que por momentos conmueve y maravilla, me parece que a la novela le hizo falta algo de sustancia. Roth nos describe el mundo interior y el entorno que rodea a Napoleón y a una muchacha del servicio de la Corte Imperial llamada Angelina quien admira y ama al Emperador de manera desmedida, pero ambas historias parecen estar desconectadas a pesar de que viven los mismos hechos históricos, en la misma época y en el mismo lugar. Además me hubiera gustado que se relataran hechos históricos que debieron haberse dado en ese entorno y con esa fuerza humana desbordada y jaloneada ante el ocaso del Imperio y el regreso de la Monarquía acompañada de la invasión de los países que apoyaban la reinstauración del Rey Luis XVIII.

Presa del alcoholismo, de delirium tremens, de la esquizofrenia de su esposa, de la ascensión del Nazismo y la persecución de los Judíos (él y su esposa lo eran) pareciera que Joseph Roth pertenece a esa estirpe de escritores malditos que vuelcan su ser en su Literatura. Consumido por el alcohol y sin medios económicos para vivir, Roth a sus escasos 42 años, deja que su pluma vuele casi por sí sola ya que su espíritu exhausto no tiene mucho que aportar ya, es por eso que me lo imagino en una buhardilla de París, a punto de estallar la barbarie de la Segunda Guerra Mundial, luchando con una nueva obra para darla a sus editores ya sin muchas fuerza de espíritu, sin grandes ideas sustanciales pero con un talento que nunca lo abandonó.

Su espíritu cansado y oscuro y con la sensación de que la vida era agobiante y enigmática de un peso descomunal y amenazador, Joseph Roth se esfuerza por brindarnos los últimos días de Napoleón Bonaparte como Emperador.

Ettore1207 says

Un Roth decisamente minore, che presenta Napoleone con un carattere troppo debole, sensibile e poetico, un uomo dotato di un fascino che in realtà non ha mai avuto, e privo di quella forza che non gli è mai mancata. Si toglie a Napoleone il mito del superuomo, ma si rivela al suo posto un essere umano storicamente poco credibile. Anche la storia di Angelina, la lavandaia che lo idolatrò per tutta la vita, è commovente e malinconica ma manca di fascino e pathos reali; la donna sembra quasi chiamata a svolgere un ruolo meccanico, accettando supinamente ciò che il destino le invia. Il romanzo mi è parso una gallerie di belle miniature ad acquerello, di fantasie tranquille, di emozioni spente, in cui due vite, quella di Napoleone e quella di Angelina, sono dolcemente mescolate. Da Roth su Napoleone mi sarei aspettato qualcosa di più potente.

Tuck says

considered one of roth's poorer novels (but written in practically extreme unction, the poor man super desperate, for money, time, air even) where there is even some obvious muddling of plots, sentences and paragraphs from other writings, but still, this is joseph roth, so there is always a level of historical big-pictureness and clear eyed pathos, noting our human folly, cruelty, and hope for the future, even while knowing full well, there is no hope.

see this for back story of this novel and roth's incredible stressful life [Joseph Roth: A Life in Letters](#) and this for one of his masterpieces [The Radetzky March](#)

and btw, this novel is set in 1815, told by napoleon after he escaped alba, and told by a laundress/serf working in at palace.

Sini says

Ooit wil ik alles gelezen hebben van mijn held Joseph Roth, en daarom dook ik ook in "De honderd dagen", zijn historische roman over de laatste honderd dagen van Napoleon als keizer: de periode dus na zijn glorieuze terugtocht na de eerste ballingschap tot en met de nederlaag van Waterloo. Een voor Roth nogal curieus boek, want hij schreef nooit historische romans en al helemaal geen boeken over de groten der aarde.

Opmerkelijk bovendien dat hij dit boek in 1936 schreef, in een periode dat de nazi's wel heel dominant werden: juist toen schreef de politiek zo gevoelige Roth dus een boek over een onderwerp dat bijna escapistisch oogt. Een volgens velen onevenwichtig boek ook, en totaal mislukt bovendien.

Maar zelf vermaakte ik weer prima met deze Roth. Wel vond ik het inderdaad een van zijn mindere romans: sommige passages zijn te sentimenteel of te langdradig, sommige plotwendingen al te toevallig of te geforceerd, sommige pointes al te clichématig. Maar ja, die stijl, mensen, die stijl..... Alleen Roth kan achteloos zinnen produceren als "In de tuin van het paleis hieven de lijsters een oorverdovend gejubel aan en uit het park - uit de lucht zelf- kregen ze antwoord van bedwelmende geuren, de stemmen van de acacia's, sering en vlieren". Schijnbaar moeiteloos tovert Roth ons een luisterrijke wereld voor van geur en klank, schijnbaar even moeiteloos tovert hij even later de breekbaarheid van die wereld voor door dan te spreken van "een glimlach van glas" die opgeroepen wordt "in het glazige oog van de soldaat". En Roth is nog veel beter in vorm als hij de weemoedige emoties van zijn personages evoceert. Die van Angelina Pietri met name, de kleine onaanzienlijke dame die hopeloos idolaat is van Napoleon, en aan die vergeefse en hulpeloze idolatrie ook helemaal ten gronde gaat. Maar ook die van Napoleon zelf, die in zijn treurige momenten even klein en onaanzienlijk is als Angelina Pietri, vooral nadat hij zijn Waterloo beleefd heeft. Ruim voor dit Waterloo, iets na zijn glorieuze terugkeer uit zijn eerste ballingschap, voelt hij al "de onverbiddelijke woeste leegte van lichamelijke eenzaamheid" en "de eenzaamheid van de fysiek verlatenen". En snel na zijn Waterloo dringt tot hem door dat iedereen, ook hijzelf, in wezen even naakt en berooid is als Job.

Het boek bestaat uit vier hoofdstukken. In hoofdstuk 1 en 3 volg je de innerlijke reis van Napoleon, in 2 en 4 die van Angelina Pietri. Deze verhaallijnen vormen samen geen overtuigende eenheid, naar mijn smaak. Maar ik vond het wel mooi hoe beide verhaallijnen samen uitgroeien tot een litanie op de weerloosheid van de altijd kleine mens. En dat Napoleon een minstens zo kleine mens blijkt te zijn als Angelina Pietri, en net zo'n groot slachtoffer van de zinsbegoocheling en maskerade van zijn zogenaamde almachtige grootsheid. Wel vraag ik mij af waarom hij nou net in de tijd dat Hitlers wapengekletter zo hinderlijk dominant werd een boek over Napoleon schreef. Voorzag hij dat de kleine luiden zouden worden weggevaagd in bloed en desillusie, net als in de tijd van Napoleon? Wou hij, door Napoleon zo van binnenuit als berooid en van alle illusies beloofde kleine man te schetsen, commentaar geven op de holheid van Hitlers zogenaamde almacht? Was dit historisch verhaal, waarin iedereen een kleine man is die van eenzaamheid en mislukking is doordeesemd, inclusief Napoleon, ook bedoeld als een les voor Roths tijdgenoten die misschien te veel geloofden in macht en grootsheid? Ik weet het niet. Maar ik weet wel dat dit boek, ondanks allerlei tekortkomingen, mij vooral door zijn fraaie stijl behoorlijk heeft geroerd.

julieta says

Joseph Roth es un escritor maravilloso, sobrio, sutil, increíble. Uno de mis favoritos.

Pero este libro en definitiva es el que menos me ha gustado, por no decir que no me gustó.

Es Roth y eso siempre es valioso, porque es siempre una maravilla. Lo amo pues. Pero la grandilocuencia que muestra en este es rara.

Hablar del emperador Napoleón y sus últimos días. Ese no es el problema, el problema es lo acartonado que está el personaje, todo en él es emperador para acá y para allá, y lo ve todo el tiempo desde afuera, supongo que al tratarse de un personaje histórico debe ser difícil e intimidante, yo tampoco es que soy muy conocedora de Napoleón y sus batallas, pero para mí aquí salió perdiendo el personaje, pues se lo comió el personaje real, o por lo menos en la manera como es descrito por Roth.

No lo recomiendo como una primera lectura de Roth, tiene tantos libros lindos que para mí este hay que

dejarlo para cuando ya te los acabaste todos.

Jonathan says

The Hundred Days was originally published in 1935 as *Die Hundert Tage* and the title refers to the famous period when Napoleon Bonaparte returned to Paris from his exile on the Mediterranean island of Elba to once again rule as Emperor of France. He arrived in Paris on 20th March 1815, whilst the Congress of Vienna was in full swing, and reigned as Emperor until he surrendered a little while after his defeat at the Battle of Waterloo.

The novel is split into four parts: the first and third parts are close-ups of Napoleon when he's arriving in Paris in March and following his defeat at Waterloo respectively. The second and fourth parts concern the life of a laundress who is employed within the Emperor's household and who idolises him.

At first this seems like a strange structure for a short novel about this period and I was a little dubious of whether it was going to work but by the end of the novel I was convinced - it's just that it wasn't quite what I was expecting.

Book One opens in Paris - the King has fled and the Emperor has arrived to a rapturous reception. Roth explains why the populace loved him:

They loved him because he seemed to be one of them - and because he was none the less greater than them. He was an encouraging example to them.

Roth also gives us a quick summary of Napoleon's character:

He promised the people liberty and dignity - but whoever entered into his service surrendered their freedom and gave themselves completely to him. He held the people and the nations in low regard, yet none the less he courted their favour. He despised those who were born kings but desired their friendship and recognition. He believed in God yet did not fear Him. He was familiar with death but did not want to die. He placed little value upon life yet wished to enjoy it. He had no use for love but wanted to have women. He did not believe in loyalty and friendship yet searched tirelessly for friends. He scorned the world but wanted to conquer it anyway.

Back in his imperial palace Napoleon sets about forming a new cabinet, he sees his family, especially his mother, sees a fortune teller, he inspects his army and prepares for war against the expected Allied attack.

He envied his enemy, the lethargic old King who had fled with his arrival. The King had ruled in God's name and through the strength of his ancestors alone had kept the peace. He, however, the Emperor, had to make war. He was only the general of his soldiers.

We get to see the Emperor, quite often, when he is alone and so one time, whilst walking in a park he hears someone nearby and becomes fearful of an assassination. But it is only a laundress, who can barely answer his questions; we do discover that her name is Angelina Pietri and that she is originally from Corsica, as is the Emperor, and he takes a note of her name. In the following days he studies maps, reviews his troops and prepares for war. When he's reviewing his troops he notices a drummer boy, calls him over and discovers

that the boy is called Pascal Pietri. He remembers Angelina's surname and confirms that she is Pascal's mother. Pascal corrects Napoleon when he assumes that Pascal's father has the surname Pietri, instead it is Levadour. We see the human side of Napoleon here.

He remembered Angelina Pietri, the little housemaid whom he had seen in the darkness of the park. The memory cheered him, and the name Angelina, her little son who beat the drum in his army, and the brave freshness with which the boy had corrected him about his father's name nearly moved him. Yes, these were his people, these were his soldiers!

Book One ends with Napoleon going off to battle.

Book Two is titled 'The Life of Angelina Pietri' and so we learn how Angelina moved to Paris, how she got a position as a servant in the Imperial household through her aunt, Véronique Casimir. As she cleans, the Emperor is often present, though always in another room. There's one curious passage where Angelina is asked to a room, given a drink and asked to wait. She waits, drinks some wine, inspects some paintings, waits and then falls asleep. She's woken in the morning when the Emperor enters the room brusquely and she is dismissed. The reason for her being there is not explained though we can probably guess. Anyway it's a mix up as the Emperor calls his servant an 'idiot'.

In Book Two we also learn about Angelina's relationship with the Sergeant-Major Sosthène Levadour. Angelina discovers that she is pregnant but wants nothing to do with the father, she certainly doesn't want to marry him. Angelina doesn't love Levadour, she loves the Emperor.

All across the land and the world, women loved the Emperor. But to Angelina it seemed that to love the Emperor was a special and mysterious art; she felt betrothed to him, the most exalted lord of all time.

Her son is, of course, Pascal. From this point on the tale of Angelina becomes more interesting, at least it did for me, as Book Two covers the period up to Napoleon's abdication and the reinstatement of the monarchy under Louis XVIII.

I've probably revealed more of the plot than I'd originally intended so I'll just say that we're also introduced to one of the more loveable characters in the novel, Jan Wokurka. Books One and Two cover about two thirds of the novel. In Book Three we see the events following Waterloo from Napoleon's perspective. There's a wonderful scene in this section that takes place on the battlefield but I won't reveal any more. Napoleon appears weaker, less sure of himself, and often just wants to give up - he's truly defeated. With the final book we're back with Angelina and we follow her fate during Napoleon's defeat at Waterloo. Be warned there's an unexpected ending.

This was read as part of German Literature Month IV.

Dana says

When I saw Napoleon's tomb in the heart of Paris, I couldn't comprehend how this small and controversial man earned such a prominent burial site. I've always wondered what occurred after his escape from Elba that began one hundred days of Napoleon attempting to reclaim the French throne and achieve world domination. I picked up Roth's *The Hundred Days*, to get the answers, and the lyrical language made this book fun to read. The crisp descriptions of the sun's reflection, the white of Napoleon's horse, and the fickle attitudes of

the French created the setting for this tumultuous point in history.

The omnipresent narration of the book allowed the author to provide a global view of the political unrest and showcase both the Emperor and the young woman who was completely enamored with him, Angelina. The first part of the book focused on Napoleon's return to the city, and the fanfare and adoration of the public. Through Napoleon's inner thoughts, he was presented as a walking contradiction, both confident and insecure, unsettled and at ease, adored and hated, and kind and cruel. Then, the author skipped the entire Waterloo debacle to focus on Angelina and her affair with Napoleon that resulted in a son. Their relationship was a bit boring and Angelina was not a strong enough character to carry such a large portion of the story. I would have preferred that the entire book focus on Napoleon, especially since I was dying to read about his fall from grace. In the third section, Napoleon became a lost and wandering man but that seemed disjointed since the reasons why the French no longer supported him were glossed over too quickly.

This book was a little frustrating for me, but did provide some interesting perspectives on Napoleon's last hurrah.

I won this book on Goodreads.

Wilde Sky says

Napoleon attempts to regain power.

I found this an interesting work and the contrast between Napoleon's proclamations and his inner thoughts was clever / rang true. The contrast between his life and the dedicated washerwoman was well handled.

Laurent says

★★★½

Malacorda says

Quando, per parlare di Napoleone e ricostruire l'atmosfera che lo circonda, l'autore cerca di essere solenne, finisce per essere ripetitivo proprio come le solenni formule di certe cerimonie. D'altro canto, per parlare dei suoi ultimi cento giorni da imperatore e dunque di una delle fasi più dense e convulse di tutta la Storia, le alternative erano due: o scrivere una decina di tomi da oltre mille pagine l'uno, oppure puntare tutto sulla sintesi e sulla ricostruzione basata solo su atmosfere e sensazioni, tralasciando nomi e date. Roth sceglie ovviamente questa ultima soluzione, e l'atmosfera che ricrea è quella cupa e lugubre che precede e preannuncia la disfatta, attraverso i tramonti nei cieli su Parigi che vanno addensandosi di nubi plumbee. Per tramite della storia umile e semplice della fantesca di corte Angelina Pietri, e dell'epopea del più che emblematico Bonaparte, l'autore e il lettore riflettono sul rapporto che intercorre tra i grandi - coloro che sono ricordati nei libri di storia e nei monumenti - e i piccoli, i personaggi umili e semplici che non sono stati prescelti da nessuna divinità per compiere i propri disegni. Questi ultimi della Storia ci rimettono sempre, e più si asservono e affezionano al potente di turno, più ci rimettono. Si riflette anche sull'umanità, sull'aspetto umano e per così dire "mortale" di quei grandi personaggi che, consapevoli di aver compiuto grandi imprese,

si sentono già di per sé immortali, e invece quando devono scontrarsi con il proprio essere terrestri mortali, finiscono per sentirsi anche un po' umiliati di fronte a sé stessi.

La storia di Angelina diventa così una fiaba triste e malinconica, la sua vita ripetitiva raccontata con poche formule ripetitive, sotto questi cieli che al crepuscolo vanno addensandosi di ombre e nubi, mi ha fatto pensare alla poesia di Garcia Lorca con la ragazza che coglie le olive.

E' giusto seguire il proprio istinto anche quando questo spinge ad aspirare a qualcosa, o ad anelare un qualcuno immensamente più grande di sé. Angelina osserva tra sé che a questo punto grande e piccolo sono la stessa cosa, non v'è differenza. Ma se questo "immensamente più grande" finisce per essere l'impossibile, come si fa a non vedere che una intera vita finisce sprecata? Quando è sprecata una vita e quando invece è ben vissuta anche se non ha raggiunto l'obiettivo? Alla fine della lettura, mi restano riflessioni lugubri come quelle nubi. Ma il libro è molto bello e molto ben scritto, mi ha rinfrescato i bei ricordi che avevo de "La milleduesima notte".

Luc De Coster says

In mijn poging om wat gemiste schrijvers uit de literaire canon af te vinken, heb ik mij wat boeken van Joseph Roth aangeschaft. Eerder las ik al "Radetzky Mars (<https://www.goodreads.com/review/show...>)", nu dus "De Honderd Dagen", alweer een historische roman waar echte en fictieve personages door mekaar lopen. Hier krijgen we Napoleon geserveerd tijdens de korte periode in 1815 tussen zijn terugkeer uit de eerste ballingschap op Elba tot zijn overgave aan de Engelsen na de nederlaag in Waterloo. Twee van de vier hoofdstukken zijn geschreven vanuit het standpunt van Napoleon en gaan meer over de innerlijke beleving van de keizer dan over de historische feiten. Die feiten zijn er wel en ze zijn juist, maar dienen slechts om de overpeinzingen van Napoleon over macht, ideaal, politiek, familie en zelfs liefde en God van een aanleiding te voorzien. Een speculatie dus over de gedachten en gevoelens van l'Empereur bij zijn aankomst in Parijs van Elba (Hoofdstuk 1) en na Waterloo (Hoofdstuk 3). Het is leuk als je wat van de historische Napoleon afweet, omdat je dan figuren als de Parijse politiechef Fouché of Maarschalk Ney herkent maar echt nodig is dat niet voor de lectuur van deze roman. De keizer blijkt een man te zijn die -hoewel zelfbewust van zijn buitenmaatse historische betekenis en zijn onweerstaanbaar charisma- beseft dat hij een soort rol speelt. Als het einde nadert, verbaast hij zichzelf door heen en weer te slingeren tussen de oude machtsrol en de gelatenheid van iemand die beseft dat hij niet langer aan de knoppen zit. De keizer is ook een zoon die node afscheid kan nemen van zijn moeder wanneer hij in Engelse gevangenschap gaat.

Hoofdstukken 2 en 4 zijn dan weer geschreven vanuit het standpunt van Angelina Pietri, een wasvrouw van Corsicaanse afkomst en werkzaam in het keizerlijk paleis, die tijdens haar leven enkele keren enkele minuten in de fysieke aanwezigheid van Napoleon zal vertoeven. Zij is vervuld van een irrationele en grenzeloze liefde voor haar "baas": zij geeft gestalte aan de trouwe aanhang van deze uit het volk opgestane keizer. Haar wereld is die van grenadiers uit de Napoleontische legers, Poolse soldaten in dienst van de keizer en gestrand in Parijs, dienstvolk in de keuken en wasplaatsen van het paleis. Het zijn deze mensen die vaak een veel hogere prijs betalen voor de strijd van Napoleon: sterven op het slagveld of in de straten van Parijs bij de opeenvolgende machtswissels. Een aai over de wang, een minuut aandacht of wat tijd in het keizerlijke bed voor sommige leden van het vrouwelijke personeel is de beloning.

Ik vermoed dat Roth met deze roman een soort analyse wou maken over de interactie tussen de psyche van de charismatische leider en die van de anonieme volgeling. Het soort liefde voor de leider dat mensen kan verblinden, begrijpelijk en onbegrijpbaar tegelijk. Het is natuurlijk een terugkerend thema in zijn werk: het vraagstuk welke politieke orde te verkiezen valt. Het boek verscheen immers in 1936, nadat Roth naar Parijs gevlucht was voor de machtsovername door de Nazi's. De democratie verslagen door de dictatuur.

Historisch en ideologisch erg interessant dus, maar literair niet altijd overtuigend. Na lectuur zie je wel de knappe en originele compositie, maar echt meeslepend proza vond ik het niet. Maar dat kan ook aan de vertaling liggen natuurlijk.

Maurizio Manco says

"Due sole beatitudini esistevano, il grembo della madre e il letto dell'amante - e forse anche una terza, ancora ignota, ma da conoscere prima o poi: l'abbraccio della Morte, la vecchia buona sorella." (p. 194)
