

PROPAGANDA AND THE LEGITIMATION OF POWER IN NAPOLEONIC FRANCE

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Abstract—Throughout his career Napoleon made careful use of a wide range of media to project the political images he wished to convey. The genius for self-publicity which had served him so well in the Army of Italy—the image of Bonaparte as hero and saviour which Philip Dwyer analyses in this issue—did not desert him after Brumaire. As First Consul and as Emperor, Napoleon continued to demonstrate an unparalleled concern for the construction and projection of particular images of his rule. The power he wielded meant that he enjoyed unrivalled control of a wide range of media—art, music, theatre and popular festivals, as well as the printed word. He used propaganda as those in need of legitimation always do, seeking constant reassurance that his power, and the institutions he had created, basked in the approval of the nation. Much remained constant across this period, including the prestige attached to a victorious general, but, this article argues, the image he chose to present of himself did evolve as he became older, more statesmanlike, more concerned with the governance of his Empire.

Given Napoleon's success in constructing a heroic self-image that impressed both his contemporaries and generations to come, it is curious how little scholarly attention has been devoted to his mastery of propaganda. Indeed, the last major study of the subject was published in 1950, at a time when state propaganda was associated in the popular mind with the totalitarian regimes of the mid-twentieth century.¹ More recently, interest has concentrated on the role played by propaganda in the creation of a Napoleonic myth, where Napoleon is presented as *l'homme providentiel* whose destiny was to guide the French people out of the instability of the Revolution, to save his country in its hour of need in the manner of Charlemagne or Joan of Arc.² But there has been little attempt to assess Napoleon's skill in this domain, or to analyse the changing use he made of the media across time.³ In recent years, historians and art historians have given increasing attention to the public consumption of art and literature during the Napoleonic era, acknowledging that Napoleon used culture for propagandist ends with every bit as much deliberation as had the Revolutionaries

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¹ R.B. Holtman, *Napoleonic propaganda* (Baton Rouge, LA, 1950).

² J. Tulard, *Napoléon ou le mythe du Sauveur* (1977) and idem, *Le mythe de Napoléon* (1971). The most recent discussion of the power of this theme in the France of the nineteenth century is S. Hazareesingh, *The Legend of Napoleon* (2004).

³ Recent works that discuss Napoleon's use of the arts, in particular, are A. Jourdan, *Napoléon, héros, impérateur, mécène* (1998), and N. Petiteau, *Napoléon, de la mythologie à l'histoire* (1999).

before him.⁴ And since the history of images and representations is highly popular at present, it seems likely that—as with the French Revolution in the years following 1989—this approach will be further developed in some of the numerous *colloques* that will commemorate the Bicentenary of the Empire.⁵

I

A significant focus for scholarship has been the role of censorship and coercion during the Consulate and Empire, seen by some as the most direct and effective of the many forms of artistic control to which the regime turned in order to silence its critics. Napoleon had never shied away from exercising such control. While he was still with the army in Italy, he showed how well he understood the power of the press, both for rallying his troops and—more crucially—for influencing public opinion back in France. That appreciation never left him, and once he had seized political power, he showed an inflexible instinct to regulate publication and to censor any expression of opposition. His instinct to regulate was, of course, strongest when it concerned polemical pamphlets and the Paris press: he would never, he declared in an unguarded moment, ‘allow the papers to say or do anything contrary to my interests’.⁶ This perception was not particularly startling: he had seen the operation of censorship in the revolutionary armies, worked alongside *commissaires des guerres* and *représentants en mission*, and led politically sensitive missions against the federalists of Toulon and the Parisian crowd after Thermidor. Even before the fall of Robespierre he had looked on as others, like Carnot and Dugommier, had created a military press to help politicize the soldiers and cement their loyalty to the republican cause.⁷ As a republican officer he had a keen grasp of the importance of propaganda and the power of the printed word, a perception that he was to retain throughout his military and political career.

Censorship was progressively increased, and police controls authorized. In 1803, for instance, in response to press criticism of his desire to renew hostilities after the Peace of Amiens, Napoleon set up a *commission de censure* to suppress expressions of dissent, and he went on to close those papers whose editors proved uncooperative. Nor was repression restricted to the press alone. Paris theatres were closed down, artists were sanctioned and the subjects of *concours* closely supervised, while severe controls were imposed on the book trade, only recently liberated from the restrictions of the eighteenth-century guild monopoly. In 1810 the General Direction of the Book Trade was given

⁴ See, notably, J.-C. Bonnet (ed.), *L'empire des muses. Napoléon, les arts et les lettres* (2004).

⁵ It is possible to see the history of representations as the most distinctive theme of the Bicentenary of the French Revolution. See, notably, the proceedings of the International Congress held at the Sorbonne in 1989, and published as M. Vovelle (ed.), *L'image de la Révolution française*, 4 vols (1989).

⁶ Cited in Holtman, *Napoleonic propaganda*, p. 44.

⁷ An excellent discussion of the role of the military press during the French Revolution is to be found in M. Martin, ‘Journaux d’armées au temps de la Convention’, *Ann Hist Rév Fran*, 44 (1972), 567–605.

the authority to monitor not only every publisher, printer and bookseller in France and throughout the Empire, but also to approve every piece of printed matter. All new works that did receive state approval were listed in the *Journal de l'imprimerie et de la librairie*, and until such time as a book appeared on the official list it could not be distributed legally—a system which Carla Hesse rightly describes as less one of censorship than of ceaseless policing and surveillance.⁸ Specifically, it gave the state the power to redouble the role already ascribed to the police, particularly in Paris, where police officers were authorized to seize stocks, confiscate pages in proof, and destroy any printed material they perceived as seditious. The law was savage, like many of Napoleon's laws on the control of opinion, and potentially destructive of artistic creativity. The police took their duties seriously, examining books and articles in painstaking detail, including even new editions of classical texts. But how great was the damage they did to the publishing industry? In 1811, it is true, the police took to their new duties with apparent zeal, so that large numbers of publications were banned or suffered cuts. But within a year, it was a very different story. In 1812, of 720 books examined, only thirty were refused and forty-three subjected to minor cuts or corrections. By 1813 these figures had fallen still further: of the 585 books submitted, fourteen were rejected by the censors and two others accepted corrections before they were allowed to proceed to publication.⁹ Authors had adjusted to the system of controls, and the censor's pencil could be used more sparingly.

Partly because of his clear wish to control publication and quell any criticism of his rule, Napoleon's relationship with the literary establishment was notoriously difficult. He became involved in public and bitterly acrimonious disputes with many of the greatest authors of the day—in turn with Chateaubriand, the Ideologues and Madame de Staël, all of whom resented Napoleon's attempts to stifle their freedom, a resentment exacerbated, in Germaine de Staël's case, by her lingering suspicion that Bonaparte had gone out of his way to snub her father.¹⁰ Therein lay the fundamental tension between artists and ruler. What was Napoleon's interest in artistic masterpieces? It was clear that he wished to surround himself with the greatest works of his age, and dreamed of presiding over a literary renaissance in France that would mirror his own claim to greatness. He appreciated the importance of artistic display at Louis XIV's Versailles, and took a far more personal interest in art and literature than either Louis XV or Louis XVI; indeed, he declared to the members of the Institut in 1808 that it was his mission to see French artists make Paris the capital of the civilized world and 'effacer la gloire d'Athènes et de l'Italie'.¹¹ In the Louvre and at Rambouillet he did what he could to realise that dream, pillaging the treasures of Europe and urging French artists to celebrate with him the glory of the

⁸ C. Hesse, *Publishing and cultural politics in revolutionary peris 1789-1810* (Berkeley, California, 1991), p. 236.

⁹ T. Lentz, *Savary, le séide de Napoléon* (2001), p. 275.

¹⁰ L. Chatel de Brancion (ed.), *Cambacérés. Mémoires inédits*, 2 vols (1999), i. 505-6.

¹¹ J.-C. Bonnet, 'Introduction', in idem (ed.), *L'empire des muses*, p. 7.

Empire. But that grandiose ambition was always liable to be undermined by the mutual distrust that persisted between the Emperor and his artists. Liberal authors in particular were subjected to tight and intrusive policing by the state. In 1810, for instance, there were regular police reports on Madame de Staël in the *bulletins de police* coming in to the Minister, Savary. After the publication of her most recent work (*Sur l'Allemagne*), readings were attended by police spies, she was ordered to leave France within forty-eight hours, her routing was closely circumscribed, and Savary finally ordered that all copies of the work be seized and destroyed.¹² A police report describes the process:

On a commencé aujourd'hui à mettre au pilon les 145 ballots de feuilles imprimées de l'ouvrage de Mme de Staël; les planches et formes en ont été rompues, le 11, chez l'imprimeur, en présence de l'inspecteur général et d'un commissaire de police qui sont préposés à l'opération de pilonnage. Les mesures sont prises pour qu'il n'en reste pas une seule feuille.¹³

Artists were entitled to ask whether any vestige of artistic freedom could survive in such an environment.

But if policing turned to persecution for some, Napoleon could console himself with the thought that many others—dramatists, writers and artists—were prepared to work with the regime, including many who were attracted to imperial service by the generous bounties that were on offer. Like the Bourbons before him, Napoleon understood the value of their support, and he was prepared to pay for it. In the well-tested tradition of French kings from François I to Louis XIV, he sought to ensure that the great events of his reign—like a royal marriage, or the birth of an heir, or an outstanding triumph on the battlefield—were communicated to posterity by the finest artists of the day. He therefore made available sizable sums of money to be distributed to the deserving, those who accepted to write or paint in support of the regime. His marriage to Marie-Louise, for instance, saw the distribution of over 88,000 francs to poets, dramatists and other authors, while the birth of the King of Rome was deemed worth a further 30,000 francs. Significantly, the allocation of the money was left in the capable hands of the Minister of Police, in both cases Savary.¹⁴

II

If censorship played its part in Napoleon's control of opinion, it was only one part of a multi-faceted and highly sophisticated propaganda offensive, and one which could jeopardize Napoleon's rapport with the artistic and literary community on whom he depended. More important, and certainly more creative, was the

¹² N. Gotteri (ed.), *La police secrète du Premier Empire. Bulletins quotidiens adressés par Savary à l'Empereur*, 4 vols (1997-2000), i. 414, 464, 489.

¹³ *Ibid.*, i. 477.

¹⁴ Lentz, *Savary*, pp. 277-8.

use made by him, consistently from his time as a general in the Army of Italy through to his exile on Saint Helena, of words and representations to persuade the French people of his ability to bring them the peace and stability they craved, and of his outstanding achievements as soldier and statesman. Indeed, it is arguable that Napoleon's talents as a propagandist were as important in preparing his legacy to the nineteenth century as were his gifts of political or military leadership. He used words sparingly and incisively, and had a gift for coining a telling phrase. But he was not inventive, in the sense of using innovative media or techniques. Napoleon's use of language and representation was traditional in that it drew on the habits of monarchs during the *ancien régime* and, more consistently, on what he had learned from the French Revolution. Even as he sought to end the Revolution and bring stability to the polity, Napoleon leaned heavily on the images and rhetoric of the Revolutionary era, of a regime which, like his own, had needed the power of propaganda to enlist the support of the population and establish its legitimacy. This was especially true of his early years, those of a young general eager to identify himself with the Republic, whose rhetoric was full of the abstractions so beloved of the revolutionaries—'liberté', 'peuple', 'patrie'—but who already, as Nada Tomiche points out, had learned to discard the long, indigestible adjectives of revolutionary prose—like 'incorruptible' or 'inaltérable'—in favour of shorter, crisper, more direct terms of his own ('grand', 'sage', 'sévère').¹⁵ There were times when pithy sobriety served the orator better than wild and whirling abstraction.

The tone of early Napoleonic propaganda was, perhaps inevitably, that of the military, his values those of glory and patriotism, borrowed from the culture which he knew and shared. That culture was closely tied to the classical ideal of the hero, the ideal clearly presented in the history painting of much of the later eighteenth century and especially popular in the Paris of the early Revolution, the years before 1791 when the Academy was still dominated by classical images and when forms followed closely the precepts established by Winckelmann.¹⁶ These had been given a new political resonance during the more radical, Jacobin phase of the Revolution, which, in Alex Potts' phrase, 'reconnects with Winckelmann's attempt to represent the beauty of the Greek ideal as the embodiment of political freedom'.¹⁷ For Napoleon it was but a short step to present himself as just such a classical hero. He was, after all, a soldier, in the eyes of many the greatest soldier of his age. He had attained power through the army, the same army which stood by him in Italy and Egypt before helping to launch his political career at Brumaire, the success of which was dependent on an overwhelming display of military force.¹⁸ So in 1804 the army made an all-important contribution to the birth of the Empire, since it was

¹⁵ N. Tomiche, *Napoléon écrivain* (1952), p. 210.

¹⁶ P. Bordes and R. Michel (eds.), *Aux armes et aux arts! Les arts de la Révolution, 1789–1799* (1988), pp. 10–16.

¹⁷ A. Potts, *Flesh and the Ideal. Winckelmann and the origins of art history* (New Haven, Conn., 1994), p. 223.

¹⁸ I. Woloch, *Napoleon and his collaborators. The making of a dictatorship* (New York, 2001), p. 14.

the insistent demands of the officers and the men they led which helped to quell any resistance in Paris. Petitions flowed in to the capital from the battalions demanding the greater order and stability which only a hereditary ruler could guarantee, the petition of General Berthier providing the ultimate case for Napoleon's coronation. 'French armies will march to victory only under a Bonaparte', he wrote; adding, rhetorically: 'The title of Emperor that Charlemagne carried, does it not belong by right to the man who recalls it to our eyes as a legislator and warrior?'¹⁹ The mutual trust that had built up between Napoleon and his army remained largely intact. Even Berthier's imagery—most notably the reference to Charlemagne with its connotations of a new Holy Roman Empire—recalled Napoleon's own language of political hegemony and cultural imperialism.²⁰

Though much of his subsequent insistence that he was concerned for the welfare of his men and shared their sufferings in the field was crudely propagandist, there is no doubting either Napoleon's understanding of the army, or his ability to identify with the troops. He was a military leader, a soldier's soldier, and he played to this image without scruple, not just when he was on campaign but also as Emperor. When he talked of his military approach, whether to government or decision-making or foreign ambitions, he continued to speak as a soldier, and this was a quality that endeared him to the military, who believed that he continued to understand their needs and to view the world through a military lens. The language he used did change over time, the heroic military images of the Italian campaign giving way to a spirit of paternal concern. But he continued to address the men directly, through bulletins and proclamations, galvanizing them into added effort, sympathizing with their sufferings, holding out the promise of victory and, what they hoped for most, of peace.²¹ 'Soldats', he characteristically intoned, 'il n'est aucun de vous qui veuille retourner en France par un autre chemin que par celui de l'honneur. Nous ne devons y rentrer que sous des arcs de triomphe'.²² And when, in 1814, the great adventure was over, he still addressed the troops directly, though now with a touch of regret and nostalgia: 'Adieu mes enfants!', he wrote; 'Mes vœux vous accompagneront toujours; conservez mon souvenir!'²³ Many of them did just that.

Even at the height of his imperial glory Napoleon never forgot that his roots lay with the army, nor how much he remained dependent on the military for support. An important part of his propaganda campaign continued to be targeted at the army, both the officer class, whom he rewarded generously for their loyalty, and the men in the ranks whom he sought to persuade that he was one

¹⁹ Ibid, p. 112.

²⁰ M. Broers, 'Cultural imperialism in a European context? Political culture and cultural politics in Napoleonic Italy', *Past Pres*, 160 (2001), 152–80.

²¹ This sentiment comes across repeatedly in the correspondence of soldiers to their families. See A. Forrest, *Napoleon's men. The soldiers of the Revolution and Empire* (2002), pp. 198–9.

²² Tomiche, *Napoléon écrivain*, pp. 191–2.

²³ N. Bonaparte, *Proclamations, ordres du jour, Bulletins de la Grande Armée* (1964), p. 6.

of their own. His reward came during the Hundred Days when so many imperial soldiers risked their lives by returning their emperor's trust and loyalty. It came, too, in the support shown among army veterans for Bonapartism in the nineteenth century, among those young officers like Bertrand who remained dedicated to his memory and for whom the exile of Napoleon to Saint Helena only strengthened their resolve. 'L'Empereur', wrote Bertrand—a loyal lieutenant who, as a serving officer, had been compelled to take an oath of loyalty to the restored monarchy—'restait notre Drapeau, notre point de ralliement. Le souvenir de notre passé glorieux nous faisait oublier un moment les malheurs de la patrie, et nous sentions que notre coeur, avec toute notre âme, allait vers lui, bien que la discipline nous fit obéir au Drapeau blanc'.²⁴ The army remained Napoleon's power base and the audience to whom he spoke most easily. He never tried to hide the fact that he was a soldier, that this was the 'special faculty' he had been born with, a way of life to which he felt a deep commitment.²⁵

III

Though Napoleon never forgot his debt to the military, the full weight of his rhetoric was reserved for a civilian audience. Even under the Directory, when he was in command of armies in Italy and Egypt, he was careful to tend his image with opinion at home, and his writings from abroad — whether in the military press he created in the armies or in the contributions he sent to the *Moniteur* and other newspapers back in Paris—were directed primarily at voters back in France.²⁶ From 1796 he placed letters in the Paris press, and, often through the good offices of Berthier, turned to friendly journalists at papers like the *Rédacteur* to parade his successes before the French people.²⁷ Like his great rival Hoche, he sought to have a press at his command, a press he could rely on in moments of crisis, to relay his views and announce his victories. In a series of military bulletins, a staple of any modern war, he presented an image of the army under his command as being brave and dedicated, while he himself was the 'pacificateur', the bearer of the peace that was so ardently prayed for, as well as the invincible hero risking all in a series of bold and incisive strikes against the enemy. And if there was any doubt about the efficacy of his press campaign, he supplemented it from Italy with his own papers, alternative organs of opinion which he organized and funded from within the army: in this case the *Courrier de l'Armée d'Italie* and *La France vue de l'Armée d'Italie*, a military press to which in 1797 he added the highly partisan *Journal de Bonaparte et des Hommes Vertueux*. He was the *patron* of these

²⁴ N. Petiteau, *Lendemain d'empire: les soldats de Napoléon dans la France du dix-neuvième siècle* (2003), p. 131.

²⁵ P.G. Tsouras, 'Napoleon and his words', in P.J. Haythornthwaite (ed.), *Napoleon. The final verdict* (1996), p. 285.

²⁶ This point is well illustrated by Philip Dwyer in his article in this issue of *French History*.

²⁷ J.-Y. Leclercq, 'Le mythe de Bonaparte sous le Directoire, 1796-1799' (Mémoire de maîtrise, Université de Paris-I, 1991), p. 33.

papers, paying their costs and appointing their editors; for the most part he selected men with experience both of journalism and of revolutionary politics, the ex-Jacobin Marc-Antoine Jullien for the *Courrier*, the more moderate Regnault de Saint-Jean-d'Angély for *La France*.²⁸ Each paper had its own style, and appealed to its own readership. But in the *Courrier*, in particular, we can see the development of a cult of personality, as the role of the Directory is diminished, leaving Bonaparte and his soldiers to occupy the centre stage. This was equally true of the military festivals that were organized in the Army of Italy and fulsomely described in the pages of the *Courrier*. Here, in Jean-Paul Bertaud's words, the paper was carrying out Napoleon's political commands and had an important psychological purpose: 'le journal prépare psychologiquement la troupe au césarisme'.²⁹ The extent of that preparation became clear in the months before Brumaire, when these papers were softening up French public opinion, and preaching the cult of the hero whenever political circumstances demanded it.³⁰

Circumstances, of course, changed, and with them came new demands on the Napoleonic propaganda machine. Whereas in Italy he liked to be presented as a dashing and impetuous general, inspired by republican ideals—'Bonaparte vole comme l'éclair et frappe comme le foudre'³¹, or again, 'Hannibal dormit à Capoue; mais Bonaparte actif ne dort pas dans Mantoue'³²—coverage of the Egyptian Campaign was subtly different. In a campaign where only understatement or outright distortion could turn engagements into victories—the damaging naval defeat at Aboukir Bay, for instance, became 'un malheureux succès anglais obtenu au prix de douloureuses pertes'³³—glory had to be created in other spheres. According to his *Courrier d'Égypte*, Napoleon was at once soldier, diplomat, religious and cultural leader, the representative of civilization in a foreign land. He represented the Grande Nation by the banks of the Nile, surrounded by Mamelukes, sphinxes and pyramids, standing for French republican values while taking a scientific and cultural interest in the great civilization he uncovered; in Islam, in ancient ruins, in the exoticism of the Orient. Napoleon, his supporters claimed, 'worked miracles in Egypt', where 'he was close to being talked of as a successor to Mahomet'.³⁴

The content of the message Napoleon wished to communicate evolved over time. Images of his role changed as he passed from military to civil leader, from general to emperor. He recognized that too great an emphasis on the army might have become counter-productive once the great triumphs of Ulm and Austerlitz had given way to the campaign of attrition in Spain or to the senseless bloodletting of the Moscow Campaign. Instead, he emphasized the security

²⁸ J.-P. Bertaud, *La presse et le pouvoir de Louis XIII à Napoléon I* (2000), p. 204.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 206.

³⁰ Leclercq, 'Le mythe de Bonaparte', p. 83.

³¹ F. Monnier, 'Propagande', in J. Tulard (ed.), *Dictionnaire Napoléon* (1989), p. 1407.

³² This slogan appeared on every issue of the *Journal de Bonaparte et des Hommes Vertueux*, appearing almost as a subtitle to the newspaper.

³³ Bertaud, *La presse et le pouvoir*, p. 210.

³⁴ F. Régent, 'L'expédition d'Égypte de Bonaparte vue par la presse parisienne, 1798-1799' (Mémoire de maîtrise, Université de Paris-I, 1992), p. 40.

and stability of the Empire, his role as the fount of justice for the people, and the sumptuous pomp of the court. He had less interest, too, in recalling his debt to the French Revolution, since legitimacy no longer lay in the people but in the institutions of the new order and—in increasingly—in the dynastic character of the Empire. In his studies of Napoleon's use of language, first in his military *proclamations* and *ordres du jour*, and more recently in the *Mémorial de Sainte-Hélène*, Didier Le Gall compares the themes and the imagery which he used, and while Napoleon continued to discuss many of the same ideas, the words he used to express them are fascinatingly different.³⁵ In particular, he shows the subtlety of an evolving Napoleonic discourse on France itself and of his appeals to national sentiment. For his coronation in 1804, he quite specifically dropped all reference to the 'patrie', with its revolutionary resonances of popular sovereignty, in favour of the less populist 'nation'. And when he did use 'patrie', he did so in a new and well-defined sense, of a France reconstituted on the basis of order and imposed discipline, a France that had been pacified with the guarantee of security for everyone.³⁶ Like Bossuet, notes Le Gall, 'Napoleon envisaged the *patrie* as a place where order reigned, and where one person, over and above the people, made sure that it was respected'.³⁷ In contrast, when he used the word 'nation', he was talking of an elite, an aristocracy, or, more especially, the new service elite trained in the *lycées* and the universities who were to help define the *nation-Etat*.³⁸

If Napoleonic propaganda systematically preached the virtues of stability at home, and of the value of the institutions of the Consulate and Empire, so it relentlessly pitted itself against France's enemies, contrasting the benefits bestowed on the French people with the cruelty and treachery of others. This is, of course, a classic device of a country at war, a means of constructing identity in opposition to the supposed defects of those aligned against the people, and it had been developed to new lengths during the French Revolution. During the Terror, the Jacobins had abandoned that generous ideal of the early revolutionaries, revolutionary cosmopolitanism, in favour of a xenophobic patriotism which declared that only Frenchmen could lay claim to the precepts of the Revolution.³⁹ The result had been a targeted campaign against foreigners of unbridled ferocity, especially against Pitt and the British government, who, it was believed, were financing counter-revolution across the Continent and speculating against the *assignat*. This allowed the Jacobins to treat the war with Britain as different in kind from other wars, as, in Norman Hampson's phrase, 'a kind of moral Armageddon in which the morality of the cause

³⁵ D. Le Gall, 'Étude lexicométrique de la prose napoléonienne—proclamations, allocutions, ordres du jour' (Mémoire de maîtrise, Université de Paris-I, 1991), and idem, *Napoléon et le Mémorial de Sainte-Hélène: analyse d'un discours* (2003).

³⁶ H.G. Brown, 'The search for stability', in idem and J.A. Miller (eds), *Taking liberties. Problems of a new order from the French Revolution to Napoleon* (Manchester, 2002), pp. 28–31.

³⁷ Le Gall, *Napoléon et le Mémorial de Sainte-Hélène*, p. 132.

³⁸ Ibid, p. 166.

³⁹ M. Rapport, *Nationality and citizenship in Revolutionary France: The treatment of foreigners, 1789–1799* (Oxford, 2000), pp. 191–2.

dispensed them to comply with the restraints that eighteenth-century conventions imposed on belligerents'.⁴⁰ Napoleon inherited the revolutionaries' anglophobia and made it one of the cornerstones of his appeal to the French people, pointing to the cupidity and avarice of the English, their love of commerce and disdain for the land, their hatred of the French people and all that France had achieved, a hatred that had led them to turn away from the peace Napoleon had granted at Amiens and sink the whole of Europe once more in the miseries of war. Pamphlets and caricatures competed to denounce John Bull and supported Napoleon's call for a blockade of British ports and a boycott of British goods, seen as the only means of exposing the 'fragility' of the 'new Carthage' across the Channel.⁴¹ They served a double purpose: to popularize the war by painting Napoleon's enemies in the darkest colours, and to provide justification for greater censorship, harsher policing and repressive measures at home.

I V

Once in power, Napoleonic propaganda was no longer solely concerned with promoting his person and his claims to public consideration; Napoleon was equally conscious of the power of words and images in legitimating the Empire. The construction of a new nobility, and of a society based on meritocracy and honour, the strengthening of family bonds through the new law codes, the priority given to the army and to military service, all were conscious reflections in everyday life of the social bases of the new order.⁴² All, in their different ways, can be seen as propaganda, as means of obliterating what remained of the republican civil order. And the regime made sure that they were prominently publicized. Napoleon followed the revolutionaries in staging popular festivals and ceremonies where honours were distributed and merit celebrated. His festivals celebrated the great achievements of his reign—his military victories, of course, with all the colours and pageantry that these invoked, but also his great civil reforms like the Civil Code and the Concordat, and dynastic events like his marriage to Marie-Louise, celebrated with all the pomp of the former monarchy. Again, he built on the work of past regimes. Already under the Directory the emphasis of revolutionary *fêtes* had changed, moving away from questions of ideology to honour specific groups in society—different trades, for instance, or the armies, or—most strikingly—the various age groups that make up society.⁴³ They encouraged pedagogy rather than enthusiasm or popular participation; the onlookers were supposed to watch and be impressed, but were not expected to show initiative. But they were, in consequence, rather

⁴⁰ N. Hampson, *The perfidy of Albion. French perceptions of England during the French Revolution* (Basingstoke, 1998), p. xiii.

⁴¹ J.-P. Bertaud, 'Le regard des Français sur les Anglais', in A. Forrest and A. Jourdan, *Napoléon, le monde et les Anglais* (2004), pp. 90–101.

⁴² L. Bergeron, *France under Napoleon* (Princeton, NJ, 1981), pp. 52–72.

⁴³ M. Ozouf, *La fête révolutionnaire* (1976), pp. 223–4.

dull, and people stayed away. Napoleon sought to make his *fêtes* more spectacular, a grandiose mixture of parade and spectacle, fun and fireworks that encouraged the populace to identify with the great events of the day. They began to have a modern feel to them, more akin to the festivals of Louis-Philippe or Napoleon III than the staidly educative affairs favoured by the Revolution.⁴⁴ They were also widely publicized, in Paris and throughout France, with accounts of major festivals reported in the press and relayed to the provinces.⁴⁵

No festival created greater interest than Napoleon's coronation ceremony on 2 December 1804 in Notre-Dame, when the Emperor presented to the French people a glorious tableau of state and personal power. The ceremony was sumptuous, held in the French capital rather than in Reims, where French kings had traditionally been crowned. For it was not to the Bourbons that Napoleon looked for inspiration and precedent; it was much further back, to Charlemagne and the Holy Roman Empire. The fact that the Pope was present at the *sacre* did not escape unremarked, for it was rare for popes to travel to France, and still rarer for them to deign to attend a coronation. But there was a precedent, as Napoleon was eager to emphasize: Pope Stephen III had come to France to crown Pepin King of the Franks in the eighth century, while Leo III had attended the coronation of his son, Charlemagne, in 800 in Rome.⁴⁶ Napoleon was deeply aware of the power of such symbolism, and the effect was not lost on those present. Marshal Marmont recorded the ceremony in these terms:

Rien de plus majestueux, de plus imposant: cette réunion des grands corps de l'état, cette assemblée de tout ce que la France possédait d'illustre et de puissant... présentait le spectacle le plus auguste qui fût jamais. Rien ne manquait à la cérémonie... La gloire des armes, le triomphe de la civilisation, et l'intérêt de l'humanité en faisaient à la fois l'éclat et l'ornement.⁴⁷

This grandeur in turn contributed to construct Napoleon's image, just as in a previous age the splendour of Versailles had helped secure the reputation of Louis XIV.⁴⁸

Napoleon had read widely in European history, and this affected not just his vision of empire in France itself but also his use of ceremonial in the lands he conquered, where he was even more keenly aware of the need to establish his legitimacy with the local notables. A good instance is that of his second coronation, as King of Italy, in 1805. In many ways this did not start auspiciously. Napoleon had refused a liberal constitution for the Italian kingdom, and the birth of the kingdom had been marred by a series of conflicts with the service nobility, whom the patrician Melzi d'Eril failed to recruit for the Napoleonic

⁴⁴ For a discussion of the modernity see S. Hazareesingh, 'Bonapartist memory and republican nation-building: revisiting the civic festivities of the Second Empire', *Mod Cont Fr*, 11 (2003), 349-50.

⁴⁵ Holtman, *Napoleonic propaganda*, p. 111.

⁴⁶ T. Wilson-Smith, *Napoleon, man of war, man of peace* (2002), pp. 161-2.

⁴⁷ J. Tulard (ed.), *Napoléon—le sacre* (1993), p. xxxix.

⁴⁸ P. Burke, *The fabrication of Louis XIV* (New Haven, Conn., 1992).

cause. Napoleon's brother Joseph had then refused the Italian crown before Napoleon resolved the problem by himself taking the title King of Italy and leaving effective authority with a viceroy, his stepson Eugène de Beauharnais.⁴⁹ This did not, of course, prevent the Emperor from organizing a colourful coronation ceremony in Milan, or from being crowned with the Iron Crown that had traditionally been worn in Lombardy by Holy Roman Emperors since Frederick Barbarossa.⁵⁰ Once again the significance of the gesture was not lost on his audience. Napoleon was asserting the legitimacy of his claims to Italy and those of his future dynasty.

That legitimacy could only be strengthened by associating the Empire with religion, and from the moment the Concordat was published—in France in 1802, in Italy the following year—Napoleon was keen to emphasize the support of the Papacy for his imperial regime. This in turn led to a powerful surge of propaganda, not least through the agency of the new bishops who were appointed to administer the Church, the *épiscopat concordataire*. Napoleon took a personal interest in the appointments—even before the Concordat was signed he drew up lists of likely candidates—and those chosen were in practice selected not by the Pope but by the Emperor and his religious adviser, Portalis.⁵¹ This gave Napoleon unprecedented influence over the upper clergy, whose episcopal circulars and pastoral letters provided him with access to the pulpit in every village in France. Most bishops were only too happy to demonstrate their loyalty to the Emperor, offering active cooperation on issues that had little to do with their religious calling. In 1803, for instance, the Bishop of Saint-Flour reminded the priests of his diocese of the duty of all those conscripted to present themselves for the army ('Nous nous devons à la patrie; c'est une vérité que la raison a reconnue et que la religion consacre'); while the Bishop of Besançon wrote pastoral letters that were embarrassing in their unctious ('Il en est de notre Empereur comme du soleil. Sa présence échauffe, anime tout dans son empire').⁵² They called for prayers to be said for the success of French arms and for thanksgiving after the birth of the King of Rome.⁵³ They openly supported imperial policies and saw no conflict between their spiritual calling and service to the Napoleonic state.

But the most curious innovation in Catholic practice was probably the Festival of Saint-Napoléon, announced in 1806.⁵⁴ The festival was intended to serve a dual function, to celebrate the personal achievements of the Emperor and to mark the return of Catholic worship to lands dechristianized by the Jacobin

⁴⁹ M. Broers, *Europe under Napoleon* (1996), pp. 131–4.

⁵⁰ R. Conti, *Il Tesoro. Guida alla conoscenza del Tesoro del Duomo di Monza* (Monza, 1983), pp. 5–8, 102–4.

⁵¹ The selection process is discussed in J.-O. Boudon, *L'épiscopat français à l'époque concordataire, 1802–1905* (1996), pp. 285–92.

⁵² A. Forrest, *Conscripts and deserters. The army and French society during the Revolution and Empire* (Oxford, 1989), p. 198.

⁵³ Holtman, *Napoleonic propaganda*, p. 139.

⁵⁴ See S. Hazareesingh, *The Saint-Napoléon. Celebrations of sovereignty in nineteenth-century France* (Cambridge, Mass., 2004).

Republic. It was fixed for 15 August, a date that also served a dual purpose in that it was both a Christian feast-day (Assumption) and Napoleon's birthday. It was, by any standards, a rather odd religious ceremony, in which the Virgin Mary shared centre stage with Bonaparte on one of the High Days of the Church calendar in what often seemed to be a celebration of his victories in war. The centrepiece was a solemn *Te Deum* to be sung in a church decorated with flowers before an altar where the faithful were called on to pray to the new saint. But, although Portalis had insisted that the clergy celebrate the feast-day with due dignity, there are contrasting reports of how seriously it was taken by the faithful. Individual bishops did respond with enthusiasm. At Versailles, Charrier de la Roche wrote a pastoral letter to all the priests of his diocese singing the praises of the Emperor; he was, said the Bishop, 'l'homme de la droite du Seigneur, le ministre extraordinaire de la divinité, le héros incomparable que le Ciel nous réservait dans sa clémence'.⁵⁵ Or again, at Rueil a bust of Napoleon was solemnly elevated on a pedestal in front of the parish church before which the congregation passed in procession. Written on a board beside the pedestal were words praising not his piety or Christian faith, but rather his glorious achievements in war and peace and the services he had rendered to France as general, First Consul and Emperor:

Hommage et gloire soient rendus
 Au vainqueur d'Austerlitz
 Napoléon le Grand,
 Pacificateur universel,
 Et à son auguste et glorieuse épouse qui partage
 Ses vertus et sa gloire, l'impératrice Joséphine,
 Puissent-ils vivre à jamais
 Pour le bonheur des Français.⁵⁶

The ceremony, it was reported, was enthusiastically attended. But these were not typical reactions. Rueil was close to the Empress's palace at Malmaison, while Versailles and its hinterland contained an atypically large military presence, which may help to explain the high turnout. In other parts of France, to say nothing of Catholic Europe, the Saint-Napoléon was often ignored on a day that remained dedicated to the Virgin. In northern Italy, for instance, Michael Broers concludes that the festival 'represents one of the worst in a whole series of miscalculations made by the government in its quest for a legitimate place in the Church calendar'.⁵⁷ To many Catholics the image of the Emperor as a Christian saint seemed mildly ridiculous. State propaganda could also fail.

⁵⁵ H. Lemoine, 'Saint-Napoléon en Seine-et-Oise', *Rev Hist Versailles*, 53 (1959), 100.

⁵⁶ L. Bigard, 'Le Saint-Napoléon à Rueil et les événements de 1814', *Rev Hist Versailles*, 27 (1925), 153.

⁵⁷ M. Broers, *The politics of religion in Napoleonic Italy. The war against God, 1801-1814* (2002), p. 82.

V

If Napoleon took pride in his image as a powerful monarch, so, too, he took care to present himself as a man of culture, a patron of the arts, 'un nouveau Médicis'.⁵⁸ Art and music furnished him with powerful vectors of propaganda, and he understood the force of visual representation both in painting and sculpture. Napoleon developed a clear artistic policy, visiting the Paris salons, helping to select the themes for their biennial *concours*—here again he was building on the experience of the 1790s—and providing patronage for artists.⁵⁹ Just as kings had their portraits painted by the finest artists—it was not simple chance that led Louis XIV to entrust his image to Velazquez⁶⁰—Napoleon turned to the leading portraitists and history painters of his day to present his image and thus help legitimate his power. Among others, Ingres, David and Gros were called upon to work in the imperial cause, whether by painting triumphal battle-scenes from Marengo and Austerlitz, images of compassion and fellow-feeling like the famous canvas of Napoleon treating the plague victims of Jaffa, wild romantic scenes like the wholly fictional image of the young Bonaparte crossing the Alps on a rearing white horse, or depictions of sumptuous grandeur or dedication to the cause of the people. Napoleon liked to appeal to a sense of the heroic and of personal sacrifice, and unlike the revolutionaries who had gone before, he preferred realism to allegory or appeals to classical antiquity. He saw no case for obfuscation.

How far should the works he patronized be characterized as propaganda? Was Napoleon in any way different from other patrons and paymasters? It is certainly true that he saw the role of the artists he patronized in unambiguous terms: they were to serve him and his regime, to the extent that their inspiration was guided, directed and often commissioned by the state. Napoleon left little to chance, and in Dominique-Vivant Denon, Director of the Musée Napoléon from 1802 until 1815, he had a loyal and effective lieutenant. Denon managed the Emperor's artistic and cultural policy, rather as Colbert had served Louis XIV, building up the collections in the Louvre and at Versailles, taking pride in displaying the 'glorieux trophées' resulting from Napoleon's conquests, arranging salons and helping struggling artists.⁶¹ He was, suggests Timothy Wilson-Smith, 'the nearest Napoleon ever had to a minister of the arts', a loyal servant of the Emperor who acted as intermediary between the artists and the state.⁶² But did the degree of control contrive to undermine the status of these paintings as art? It did get in the way of artistic freedom: as Delécluze, one of David's pupils, complained, 'chaque exposition fut encombrée d'une foule de cadres, grands, moyens et petits, où les moindres circonstances de la

⁵⁸ Jourdan, *Napoléon, héros, imperator, mécène*, p. 225.

⁵⁹ J.-F. Heim, C. Béraud and P. Heim, *Les salons de peinture de la Révolution française, 1789-1799* (1989), pp. 20-2.

⁶⁰ C. Prendergast, *Napoleon and history painting. Antoine-Jean Gros's La bataille d'Eylau* (Oxford, 1997), p. 181.

⁶¹ P. Bordes, 'Le Musée Napoléon', in Bonnet (ed.), *L'empire des muses*, p. 84.

⁶² T. Wilson-Smith, *Napoleon and his artists* (1996), p. 248.

vie de l'empereur Napoléon sont reproduites. Ce qui se fit de mauvais tableaux de ce genre [...] est innombrable'.⁶³ But this did not guarantee that the works in question would be received with public acclaim. Rather it risked placing a barrier between the artist and his public. Or, as David O'Brien has expressed it,

Under Napoleon artists struggled to reconcile their function as propagandists with the expectation that they would work autonomously or respond freely to the public's demands. In general, the more history painting assumed the dutiful role Napoleon assigned it the less it generated critical interest.⁶⁴

Art could be manipulated as propaganda, but it could not always suspend disbelief.

Artists were not restricted, of course, to the medium of painting. Medals were struck to commemorate the greatest moments of Napoleon's reign, while the Parisian art market saw a booming trade in etchings, caricatures and popular prints. At a more popular level, the imagists of Epinal were beginning by the end of the Empire to turn their hand to the reproduction of battle scenes and brightly coloured prints of soldiers, images that would be their stock-in-trade during the 1820s. The emphasis was on the troops who served the Empire, their victories, their uniforms; Jean-Charles Pellerin's 1814 catalogue provides a taste of the patriotic images on offer, listing pictures of 'musique française, garde impériale, chasseurs de la garde impériale, grenadiers de la garde impériale, chasseurs français, cavaliers français', and many more, and including some exotic reminders of Bonaparte's earlier campaigns—'cavalerie turque, mamelukes et tartares'.⁶⁵ Napoleon welcomed compelling images of his power and authority, from whatever source they came. On a more heroic scale he looked to monumental sculpture and architecture to reflect the glory of his reign, as a glance at the topography of Paris demonstrates, from the Invalides to the Madeleine, the Vendôme Column to the Arc de Triomphe. The theme here is clearly military, reflecting his glory and that of his armies. Yet, in contrast to the monuments erected by kings, it is striking how seldom Napoleon commissioned sculptors to reproduce his likeness or to erect statues in public places in his honour. He was aware of the fate that had overtaken the great equestrian statues of the Bourbons during the Revolution and conscious that future generations might treat his image with comparable contempt, but that may not offer a complete explanation. There was the question of how best he could be represented—in a spirit of realism or as a classical ideal—and of public reaction to such a representation. Napoleon did accept, reluctantly, to allow a bronze statue on top of the Vendôme Column—which would be destroyed not once

⁶³ B. Foucart, 'La grande alliance de Napoléon et des peintres de son histoire', in *Napoléon, images et histoire: peintures du Châteaude Versailles, 1789-1815* (2001), p. 14.

⁶⁴ D. O'Brien, 'Propaganda and the republic of the arts in Antoine-Jean Gros's *Napoleon visiting the battlefield of Eylau the morning after the battle*', *Fr Hist Stud*, 26 (2003), 282.

⁶⁵ J.-M. Dumont, *La vie et l'œuvre de Jean-Charles Pellerin, 1756-1836* (Epinal, 1956), pp. 50-1.

but twice, at the Restoration and again during the Paris Commune⁶⁶—but when the question of further statues was raised with him, he always refused. On his return from the Russian Campaign, he expressed the view to Caulaincourt that it was for future generations to erect such statues as they saw fit; the idea that statues might be made in his lifetime was one that he found absurd and mildly repugnant.⁶⁷

VI

If art was placed at the service of the state so, too, was theatre, an art form much appreciated for the directness of its language and its political message. Theatre was, in any case, an established focus for political expression, and had figured prominently in the activity of the *jeunesse dorée* after Thermidor, when the theatre audience as much as the actors had placed itself centre-stage.⁶⁸ Napoleon fully understood the power of drama, especially among the lower classes of society, and appreciated its appeal to the emotions of popular patriotism and of a male-centred code of honour.⁶⁹ And he did not hesitate to turn to the censor, both to police the troupes of actors and to prevent the theatre from becoming a prey to neo-Jacobin sentiment. Significantly, two themes were especially prominent in the plays performed during the Consulate and Empire—the theme of military prowess, and the role of Napoleon himself. The two themes frequently merged. Plays like Dubelley's *Gaston et Bayard* presented an idealized vision of a soldier's motivation: it was, according to a review in the *Moniteur*:

une tragédie toute française; c'est l'école des guerriers. Ils y trouvent le modèle de la vertu militaire dans son plus beau jour, un exemple sublime de modération et de sagesse, une haute leçon de discipline, et à chaque vers tout ce que la fidélité pour son prince, l'amour de sa patrie, l'héroïsme et l'honneur peuvent enfanter de sentimens généreux, de pensées nobles et de traits propres à éveiller les âmes, enflammer le courage et soutenir la vertu.⁷⁰

If there was an official ideology of the imperial theatre, that was it, and substantial payments were made to some of the larger Paris theatres to ensure that they complied; at the same time, many smaller theatres were forced to close, making

⁶⁶ R. Gildea, *The Past in French history* (New Haven, Conn., 1994), p. 92 and A. Boime, *Art and the French commune. Imagining Paris after war and revolution* (Princeton, NJ, 1995), pp. 22–3.

⁶⁷ Jourdan, *Napoléon, héros, imperator, mécène*, p. 183.

⁶⁸ F. Gendron, *La jeunesse dorée. Episodes de la Révolution française* (Québec, 1979), pp. 110–20.

⁶⁹ This idea is explored for the nineteenth century by W.M. Reddy, *The invisible code. Honor and sentiment in postrevolutionary France, 1814–1848* (Berkeley, California, 1997), esp. pp. 18–24.

⁷⁰ R. Feret, 'Le militaire à travers le théâtre du Consulat et de l'Empire' (Mémoire de maîtrise, Université de Paris-I, 1988), p. 29.

the Paris theatre easier to control. Playwrights, too, received inducements to write the sorts of plays of which the Emperor would approve—tragedies hailing the heroic qualities of sacrifice, or celebrations of the accomplishments of the regime. Many of the productions staged in these years were somewhat ephemeral reactions to current events, and it follows that their tone changed dramatically according to the demands of the moment. In 1801, for example, spurred by the prospect of an end to hostilities, plays all over France sang the praises of peace: ‘La paix’ was staged in Paris, ‘Le triomphe de la paix’ in Marseille, ‘La paix, ou le triomphe de Mars’ in Bordeaux, ‘La paix, ou le mariage de Rosine’ in Grenoble, and ‘Mars au Parnasse, ou la paix partout’ in Lyon. Yet just two years later, once the Peace of Amiens was breached, the mood of the theatre once more reflected the bellicose aspirations of the Empire. In Paris alone, the theatre audience was treated to plays with such titles as ‘Les volontaires anglais, ou la démission forcée’, ‘Le départ des élèves de Saint-Cyr pour l’armée’, and ‘La flotille’.⁷¹

No stage appealed to Napoleon more than the Paris Opera, where, once again, his interest was more political than musical. As the recent book by David Chaillou makes clear, the Emperor took a personal interest in the writing and performance of each new work, to the point where, between 1810 and 1815, it would be legitimate to talk of a *politique de la scène* on the stage of the Opera, and more especially in the context of the Académie Impériale de Musique. Once again, as in his dealings with artists and sculptors, we find Napoleon in the role he enjoyed most, that of a son of the Enlightenment, seeking to recreate something of the artistic glamour of Versailles in the age of the Sun King, while, like Louis, keeping firm control of what was performed. Through the institution of the *surintendant des spectacles*, the comte de Rémusat, he intervened directly in the choice of operas to be performed on the Paris stage and in the selection of prize-winners in the annual musical *concours*.⁷² The result was a system whereby new performances had to pass through a series of hurdles, from the *jury de sélection* to the Ministry of Police, and where only those performances that had already been approved for showing in Paris could be staged in provincial cities. The Emperor involved himself in the Opera, often attending performances when he was in Paris and insisting on playing a personal role in the selection of the programme for the coming season. That was especially true during his years of victory and conquest, when the theatre often staged plays reflecting his personal glory. After 1812, when the defeats suffered in Spain and Russia undermined any attempt to present a triumphal vision of the Empire, the stage became less personalized, less specifically Napoleonic. This was a necessary change of tone in an age when the theatre routinely emphasized the heroic, and when it was difficult to adapt to the concept of a ‘fragile hero’.⁷³

⁷¹ L.-H. Lecomte, *Napoléon et l'Empire racontés par le théâtre, 1797-1899* (1900), pp. 82–6.

⁷² David Chaillou, *Napoléon et l'Opéra: la politique sur la scène, 1810-1815* (2004), p. 43.

⁷³ *Ibid.*, p. 316.

VII

Napoleon understood changing moods and fashions and recognized how fickle the public could be. The representation of power was not a constant: across the period of the Empire his image evolved quite tangibly from that of a revolutionary general to that of a benevolent statesman, the father of his people and architect of a Europe-wide polity. Images of victory gave way to symbols of statesmanship, of law-giving, of stability and reassurance. Here Napoleon was both judging the temperature of the moment and preparing his legacy to History, something that particularly consumed his energies during his final Hundred Days, when he desperately needed to rekindle the support of the French people. The pomp and sumptuous grandeur of empire was now brushed aside, and he offered himself to them as a victim and a democrat—the victim of foreign tyrants and British perfidy, of royalists and traitors, a man of the people against whom others had conspired because of his deep-seated commitment to their cause, and to a model of authoritarian democracy that guaranteed civil and political equality.⁷⁴ Imperial grandeur was effaced by popular Bonapartism and by the creation of a cult of Napoleon as a man wronged, a champion of the common people, the little corporal who went on to lead an empire—in short the myth, especially popular in rural areas and in small-town France, of ‘Napoléon le père du peuple et du soldat’.⁷⁵

After 1815, when he was finally condemned to exile on Saint Helena, Napoleon embarked on his last and arguably his greatest propaganda campaign, to win over the hearts and minds of posterity. The image of the writer, of the romantic author struggling with his destiny, gripped him, and from his captivity in Longwood he presented himself to the world as a thwarted genius who was cruelly wronged and misunderstood, bound by the endless petty constraints imposed by Hudson Lowe, whom he liked to portray as a contemptuous gaoler, a ‘clerk’, a ‘Sicilian hangman’, a ‘man who had never commanded or been accustomed to men of honour’.⁷⁶ By then, of course, his power was effaced, and his appeal to posterity, expressed through the writings of his faithful companions in exile—most intimately Las Cases in the *Mémorial*, but also by his loyal generals, Bertrand, Gourgaud and Montholon—consumed the emotions of the romantics and won over the readers of Victor Hugo and Walter Scott.⁷⁷ The most powerful man in Europe had been reduced to the status of a prisoner, at the mercy of the whims of a British government that had sent him to stagnate on a rain-swept

⁷⁴ R.S. Alexander, *Bonapartism and revolutionary tradition in France. The fédérés of 1815* (Cambridge, 1991), pp. 5–6.

⁷⁵ The phrase is from Balzac’s *Médecin de campagne*, cited in B. Ménager, *Les Napoléon du peuple* (1988), p. 7.

⁷⁶ F. Giles, *Napoleon Bonaparte, England’s prisoner. The Emperor in exile, 1816–1821* (2001), p. 65.

⁷⁷ E.D. de Las Cases, *Mémorial de Sainte-Hélène: journal de la vie privée et des conversations de l’Empereur* (1823); H.-G. Bertrand, *Cabiers de Sainte-Hélène*, 3 vols (1949–59); C. de Montholon and G. Gourgaud, *Mémoires pour servir à l’histoire de Napoléon par les généraux qui ont partagé sa captivité* (1822–25).

island at the end of the civilized world. His solitude added a touch of pathos to the Napoleonic legend, a pathos that affected even some of his most bitter enemies, the British. Politicians, it is true, remained largely intransigent, and the conservative press, like the *Times*, continued to denounce him as a tyrant and a criminal. But the caricatures and popular prints of the time, which provide a surer sense of the popular pulse in London, were more forgiving. Caricaturists like Thomas Rowlandson and Isaac Cruickshank might continue to mock the fallen emperor, but the venom of the early years had largely disappeared. Instead, themes of sadness and abandonment recur in their vision of Bonaparte in his years of exile, an exile portrayed as a terrible solitude. An Irish cartoon of 1820, for instance, published in Dublin under the title 'The Sorrows of Boney', shows him alone on a barren rock surveying the ocean, with only seagulls for company, as he ruminates on his past glories and on the depths to which he has fallen. He is no longer an ogre, no longer even an object of fun. Napoleon is presented as a tragic figure, gifted but deeply flawed, a man ostracized by the rest of Europe and condemned to a life of loneliness and isolation. He invites pity rather than condemnation.⁷⁸

Is this, one may ask, so very different from the romanticized representations of the former Emperor that circulated in France itself and around which the Napoleonic legend would be built? Here, too, Napoleon had been heavily criticized after Waterloo. Prints and cartoons made merciless fun of him, portraying him as a new Prometheus nailed to a rock, or showing him inspecting the puny military defences that surrounded his new home.⁷⁹ With the passage of time, however, the mood changed. Napoleonic loyalists stressed the poignancy of his exile; the former emperor was portrayed as the new Robinson on his South Atlantic rock, alone with only a pet eagle for company.⁸⁰ Only the very loyal dreamed of a second return in triumph, and when that return came, it was, of course, posthumous, with the *retour des cendres* in 1840. Napoleon's cult status had been assured by news of his death in 1821, when to heroism was added martyrdom, and by the sudden burgeoning of a publishing industry praising the Emperor and his glory. This new mood was brilliantly captured in 1821 in a painting by Horace Vernet, *Bertrand's Dream*—though it is often referred to as *Napoleon's Apotheosis*—which celebrates the Emperor's passion and transfiguration before he is welcomed into the Imperial Valhalla by a panoply of his dead marshals, Lannes, Desaix and Berthier, the cherished heroes of his greatest campaigns.⁸¹ Posthumously, perhaps, he had achieved what he could not do in life, for Vernet's painting, typifying the new, highly romantic Napoleonic imagery of the 1820s and 1830s, marks a further turning-point in the popular representation of the Emperor. Under the July Monarchy there would be continual reminders of Napoleon's legacy, from the presence of four imperial

⁷⁸ A.M. Broadley, *Napoleon in caricature*, 2 vols (London, 1911), ii. 12.

⁷⁹ C. Clerc, *La caricature contre Napoléon* (1986), pp. 291–3.

⁸⁰ H.P. Mathis (ed.), *Napoleon im Spiegel der Karikatur* (Zurich, 1998), pp. 416–17.

⁸¹ J.-P. Kauffmann, *The dark room at Longwood. A voyage to Saint Helena* (1999), p. 276.

marshals at Louis-Philippe's coronation ceremony to the solemn unveiling of the Arc de Triomphe in 1836. Throughout the 1830s, indeed, Louis-Philippe played on the public's seemingly insatiable appetite for images of the Napoleonic age, particularly that most powerful of Napoleonic icons, the image of *le petit caporal*, of the commander who remained faithful to his roots in the French people. It was this image, above all others, which survived into the nineteenth century, often in defiance of the government's wishes.⁸² It was this image, too, which ensured that Napoleon's reputation remained secure in the hearts and minds of a large section of the population, his legacy safe for posterity.

⁸² M. Marrinan, *Painting politics for Louis-Philippe. Art and ideology in Orleanist France, 1830-1848* (New Haven, Conn., 1988), p. 158.