Between Memory and History: Political Uses of the Napoleonic Past in France, 1815-1840

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A dissertation submitted to the faculty of the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in the Department of History.

Chapel Hill
2011

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ABSTRACT

NATASHA S. NAUJOKS: Between Memory and History: Political Uses of the Napoleonic Past in France, 1815-1840
(Under the direction of Dr. Jay M. Smith)

This dissertation examines the political uses of historical memory in France between 1815 and 1848 through the lens of the Napoleonic myth. Reflections on the recent Napoleonic past permeated opposition discourse throughout the Restoration despite the regime’s attempts to enforce collective amnesia, while Louis-Philippe’s more favorable attitudes towards the Napoleonic legacy secured it a vital role in the July Monarchy’s political culture as well. Whereas historians have long accepted the thesis that the myth originated in Napoleon’s efforts to impose a carefully constructed public image through propaganda, this dissertation argues that it is better understood as part of the nineteenth-century obsession with the past as a mode of explanation. Long recognized in studies of Romanticism, this dissertation attempts to locate the same historicism in popular political discourse and examines the work of largely unknown or anonymous writers who flooded the increasingly popular market for literary novelties in early-nineteenth-century France. Drawing on published sources such as political pamphlets, poems, songs, and other ephemera, as well as police and judicial records, this study analyzes how this community of politically engaged writers fashioned multiple and
often contradictory narratives of the Napoleonic past in order to make arguments about France’s present and future.

This dissertation argues that the Napoleonic myth exemplified the power of the past to both divide and unite the post-Revolutionary nation. The myth took shape as a political discourse against the Restoration regime, and carefully woven narratives of Napoleonic history gave liberal opposition writers a potent means of condemning the Bourbon regime as anti-national for undermining its commitment to “unite and forget,” succumbing to political factionalism, and perpetuating fractures in the French polity. Napoleon’s death in 1821 made it even easier for liberals and republicans to make use of the myth for their own purposes, while also freeing his apologists to reframe their narratives as a path towards reconciliation. The ultimate act of national reconciliation with the past came with the triumphant return of Napoleon’s ashes to France in 1840, and the attendant celebrations of a spectacular military legacy formed a useful proxy for reasserting French importance in international diplomacy.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This project would not have been possible without the intellectual, moral, and financial support of teachers, colleagues, friends, and family. It has been a great privilege for me to study with an extraordinary number of brilliant and highly supportive faculty over the years, who deserve all of the credit for any merits this project may have. At Fordham University, Bryant Ragan and Rosemary Wakeman graciously agreed to supervise me in a senior honors thesis that would eventually lay much of the groundwork for my master’s research. The History faculty at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill have provided invaluable professional training in both teaching and research, and I’d like to extend special thanks to Melissa Bullard, Jacqueline Hall, Barbara Harris, and Peter Filene for their insights. I am also particularly indebted to Karen Hagemann and Daniel Sherman for agreeing to serve as readers on my dissertation committee and offering such helpful advice on refining the project.

I owe a special debt of gratitude to the three professors of French history who have guided me every step of the way throughout my graduate career. Don Reid has consistently encouraged me to push my conceptual boundaries and consider the broader ramifications of my arguments, and I am especially grateful to him for introducing me to Flaubert, Proust, and the intricate rules of the jeu de furet. Lloyd Kramer has left an indelible stamp on my work with his uncanny ability to deconstruct and repackage my
ideas in a far more pithy and brilliant way than I could ever hope to do myself. I am also forever indebted to Lloyd for helping me discover my love of teaching and providing me with endless opportunities to hone my skills in that direction. I owe the biggest debt of all to my advisor, Jay Smith, for providing an admirable and unparalleled model of intellectual rigor. I am eternally grateful to him for his patience and unflagging faith in my abilities, which sustained me through repeated and prolonged periods of self-doubt and propelled this project to its completion.

This project would not have been possible without generous financial support from the History Department at UNC-CH in the form of numerous teaching assistantships and a Mowry Fellowship. The UNC-CH Graduate School also awarded me an Off-Campus Research Fellowship that, along with a Gilbert Chinard Fellowship from the Institut Français de Washington, enabled me to carry out my dissertation research in Paris in 2008. I would be entirely remiss if I did not also thank the many librarians, archivists, and staff members at the Davis and Wilson Libraries at UNC-CH, and the Archives Nationales and Bibliothèque Nationale de France in Paris for their guidance and assistance in locating source material.

My graduate student colleagues have been an inestimable source of support over the years and I benefited enormously from their feedback and advice, whether given in the formal space of graduate seminars or more casual exchanges over coffee at the Daily Grind. My fellow Frenchies in the History department at UNC-CH – Sarah Shurts, Jennifer Heath, Christina Hansen, Bethany Keenan, and Max Owre – welcomed me into the program in 2003 and spared me from many a first-year disaster. I likely would have given up long ago were it not for the kindness and generosity of Tim Williams and Dean
Mundy, who graciously opened up their home to me on so many occasions with an
unfailing attitude of good cheer. Tim also patiently read drafts of my work and provided
the critical perspective of a non-specialist, and I am eternally grateful to him for his noble
spirit of intellectual camaraderie. I had the good fortune to spend the spring of 2008 in
Paris with a merry band of fellow researchers – Robin Bates, Micah Alpaugh, Jennifer
Ferng, Michael Finch, and Julia Osman – who regularly helped assuage occasional pangs
of homesickness. Michael Mulvey deserves a special nod of thanks, as he regularly
exceeded the duties imposed by friendship by helping me navigate the impenetrable
mysteries of the AN, BnF, and the 11th arrondissement. I quickly recognized kindred
spirits in Amy McKnight, Mary-Elizabeth O’Neill, and Meghan Roberts, whose
friendship I prize more highly than anything else I found in Paris that year.

Finally, I am especially grateful to my parents, Martha von der Gathen and Erhard
Naujoks, who encouraged my inclination towards history from a young age and never for
a moment doubted my vocation for the profession. My oldest and dearest friend,
Suzanne Francis, provided much-needed doses of laughter and joy throughout the
process, keeping me anchored in the present when the past threatened to carry me away.
My greatest thanks of all go to Joel Maul, not least because he has cheerfully
accommodated the persistent and at times uncomfortable presence of the Napoleonic
myth in our lives for fifteen years. This project would never have come to fruition
without his heroic patience and seemingly inexhaustible store of support, both moral and
material, and it is with inexpressible gratitude that I humbly dedicate this dissertation to
him.
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Introduction

In *Present Past: Modernity and the Memory Crisis*, Richard Terdiman argues that “the ‘long nineteenth-century’ became a present whose self-conception was framed by a disciplined obsession with the past.”¹ Nowhere was this more evident than in France, where the momentous upheavals of 1789-1815 produced a profound sense of temporal dislocation and intensified the uncertainty of the nation’s relationship with its past. The revolutionaries of 1789 self-consciously identified their mission as one of national regeneration by explicitly positing a radical break with the past, which contributed heavily to this sense of dislocation. By 1815, it seemed clear to many in France and across Europe that the great revolutionary experiment had failed, and questions raised by the largely new and unfamiliar terrain of constitutional monarchy further encouraged people to seek answers and an often illusory security in the safe refuge of History. Thus, the period of 1815 to 1848 in particular was deeply impressed by the presence of the past. For republicans, liberals, and socialists alike, it was necessary to construct both a new national history and a new political system that accounted for the principles of 1789.² As the era’s chief cultural and intellectual paradigm, Romanticism also fueled this obsession with the past. Born of the revolutionary disruption of 1789-1815, it was a movement that


was heavily shaped by the search for “bearings in a world that had lost its ‘fixities’ and ‘definities.’”3 History was the medium through which French Romantics articulated their sense of alienation from contemporary society, and the aesthetics of Romantic historicism viewed the past, deliberately embellished by tragedy, as a way of understanding the fractured and uncertain nature of present society.4 History thus became inseparable from political concerns, and a willingness to confront the contentious legacy of the recent past in contemporary life came to saturate the political culture of the Restoration and the July Monarchy.

This dissertation situates the Napoleonic myth squarely within this nineteenth-century enterprise of attempting to understand the present through the lens of the past. Nostalgia for the golden age of the Empire was especially appealing to the French Romantics, dubbed by the poet Lamartine as the “bored” generation. Their particular brand of mal du siècle – the fashionable and at times genuine sense of melancholy and despair that characterized the Romantic sensibility – was partly derived from a sense of having been cheated out of their rightful share of glory and excitement by the collapse of the Empire, which coincided with their coming of age. Napoleon became their perfect hero, a Romantic poet turned man of action, transcending the limits of ordinary human action through a fierce and superhuman assertion of his individual will.5 But above all,


the Napoleonic myth emerged during this period because it provided a space for working out pressing problems facing the French polity under the Restoration and July Monarchy. As one of the first truly modern myths, the Napoleonic myth was an expression of the political culture in which it formed. Unlike classical myths, understood as timeless and universal forms whose value rested in their connection to a largely ancient past, modern myths derive their legitimacy from their ability to express the social and political realities of the contemporary world. Largely oriented towards the future, modern myths look to the past not as a source of authority in and of itself, but for its ability to inform their understanding of cultural changes in the present.

The obsession with the past that permeated French consciousness after 1815 has long been recognized as a defining feature of the Romantic movement, manifest not only in art and literature but also in the burgeoning popularity of historical writing. Nonetheless, it has yet to be fully explored in the political discourse of the early nineteenth century, especially with regard to the popular press. The singular exception is of course Stanley Mellon’s classic analysis of the Restoration, which he characterizes as a

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6 This definition of modern myth informs the essays in “Myth and Modernity,” *Yale French Studies* no. 111 (June 2007).

period in which “history was the language of politics.” However, Mellon largely defines the genre as that practiced by the more or less “professional” historians long recognized as part of the Romantic canon – Thierry, Guizot, and the like – leaving unanswered questions about how lesser known political writers and journalists, for the most part without a formal part to play in government, similarly appropriated the past in their efforts to carve out a space for themselves in the sphere of public opinion. In part, this neglect of the role of the past in political discourse stems from the fact that, as Sheryl Kroen has noted, the methodological shift towards an understanding of politics as political culture that transformed historical approaches to the Old Regime and the Revolution of 1789 has largely passed over the era of the Restoration. To a large extent, this observation can be applied to the July Monarchy as well, and with a few notable exceptions, historical studies of both periods continue to focus almost exclusively on political theory and institutional politics. This dissertation thus attempts to address a critical lacuna in the history of nineteenth-century French political culture during a crucial period in the development of constitutional government and parliamentary politics.

The Napoleonic myth or legend, on the other hand, has enjoyed considerable attention from historians, and there is a vast historiography on the subject covering the

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various political, literary, and artistic aspects of its creation both in France and abroad over the course of more than two centuries. One of the first critical studies was Philippe Gonnard’s *Origins of the Napoleonic Legend*, which established the main terms on which historians would debate the origins and form taken by the myth throughout the twentieth century. According to Gonnard, the legend was born of the memoirs produced by Napoleon and his fellow exiles at St. Helena between 1815 and 1821, through which the fallen emperor represented himself as the true ‘Son of the Revolution,’ committed to the revolutionary principles of 1789 and the self-appointed protector of the principle of national self-determination against the rest of Europe’s monarchs.\(^\text{10}\) The first substantial challenge to Gonnard’s argument concerning the legend’s origins was put forth by Jules Deschamps, who defined the legend as the sentimental effects produced by Napoleon’s history. Deschamps located the roots of the legend not in the St. Helena memoirs, but in the official propaganda methods that Napoleon developed during the Italian campaign of 1796 and perfected over the course of his reign as emperor.\(^\text{11}\) Throughout the first half of the twentieth century, these two competing interpretations of the legend’s origins remained influential in historical interpretations of Napoleon’s legacy.\(^\text{12}\)

The bicentennial of Napoleon’s birth in 1969 occasioned a spate of new biographical, political, social, economic, military, and diplomatic studies of the First Empire in the 1960s and 70s, and the legend formed a focal point both for


\(^{12}\) See, for example the articles in issues no. 107 and 109 of *Miroir de l’histoire* (1957, 1959), which echo to varying degrees Gonnard’s and Deschamps’ arguments concerning the legend’s origins.
commemorative celebrations of the event in France and for historical reappraisals of Napoleon’s legacy. Jean Lucas-Dubreton rekindled the debate regarding the myth’s origins in *Le Culte de Napoléon, 1815-1848*, arguing that it emerged principally in accounts of Napoleon’s defeat at Waterloo. According to Lucas-Dubreton, the *Mémorial de Sainte-Hélène* did not invent the legend, but simply served to establish it more concretely. But by far the most influential studies of the Napoleonic myth/legend dating from this period are those by Jean Tulard, who established his central thesis in *Le mythe de Napoléon*. Like Deschamps, Tulard argued that the legend’s defining characteristics took shape in Napoleon’s strategic use of propaganda, beginning with the artfully-crafted bulletins of the first Italian campaign in 1796, to present himself as the savior of France, forming the basis of an “imperial catechism” that he could usefully employ during various crises throughout his reign to win the support of different elements of French society. In Tulard’s estimation, then, the legend is best defined as Napoleon’s deliberate promotion of a particular self-image, which continued to fascinate the French national consciousness well after his death. By 1914, he argued, the legend

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was transformed into myth, insofar as it had become both international and universal, proving itself adaptable to different interpretations.

Despite the vast amount of ink spilled on the subject, there has been a marked revival of historical interest in the Napoleonic myth/legend over the past few years. Sudhir Hazareesingh’s *The Legend of Napoleon* surveys its evolution in nineteenth-century France, with a particular emphasis on its popular manifestations. Proceeding from categories drawn by Frédéric Bluche in his classic analysis of Bonapartist political ideology, Hazareesingh draws a distinction between the Napoleonic myth and the Napoleonic legend, defining the former as the emperor’s deliberate attempt to control his public image during his lifetime, while the latter refers to the more spontaneous and popular ways in which Napoleon was remembered and idealized after he lost power in 1815. Rejecting the distinction between Bonapartism as a political ideology on the one hand and “Napoleonism,” understood as a more sentimental attachment to the Napoleonic cult on the other, he argues that politics and mythology are inextricably linked. In emphasizing the popular roots of the Napoleonic legend, especially in the period after

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19 In this, Hazareesingh’s approach is diametrically opposed to that taken by Bernard Ménager in *Les Napoléon du peuple* (Paris: Aubier, 1988).
1815, Hazareesingh challenges Tulard’s thesis that it was largely a product of Napoleon’s manipulative use of propaganda to shape his public image.\(^{20}\)

Historical debate on the Napoleonic myth has thus been shaped by two main questions. The first concerns the historical origins of the myth/legend, and whether they are more accurately ascribed to the engines of propaganda developed by Napoleon as early as 1796, to the “evangelists” of the St. Helena period, or to the popular politics of post-1815 France. The second point of contention, or more precisely, ambiguity, stems partly from the first, and concerns the meanings of the terms ‘myth’ and ‘legend.’ While often used interchangeably, few historians would disagree with the basic distinction, recapitulated most recently by Hazareesingh, between an official myth propagated by Napoleon and his missionaries, which informed but did not control the popular legend, which took on a life of its own as the nineteenth century unfolded. There is, moreover, a persistently pejorative sense attached to the word “myth;” despite scholarly sensitivity to anthropological and literary understandings of myth, the appellation is still plagued by its more colloquial usage and conveys a certain sense of falsehood, or at least willfully deceitful manipulation, concerning the narratives propagated by Napoleon and cultural elites. (Described as “an object lesson in the reinterpretation of a career to deceive future generations,” this description of the St. Helena memoirs gives a pretty clear indication of how the myth has been perceived by many historians.\(^{21}\))


This dissertation intervenes in these debates in two key respects. Eschewing the traditional distinctions between ‘myth’ and ‘legend,’ I instead choose to define the myth by the terms established by the myth-makers themselves. Whereas modern scholarship has often been criticized of late for maintaining a too-rigid dichotomy between memory and history, both those who constructed the myth and those who tried to repress it saw the myth as occupying a tense space between the two.\(^ {22}\) Far from viewing memory in the way that many modern scholars do, as a sort of organic and spontaneous process as opposed to the more consciously constructed nature of historicizing the past, the myth-makers viewed memory as conscious acts of recall, designed to keep Napoleon from becoming falling prey to the oblivion imposed by History. Those responsible for enforcing the Restoration’s injunctions against remembering the revolutionary and Napoleonic past, on the other hand, defined the crime as one of recalling to memory someone who should be left alone to become “une personnage historique.” The relationship that they suggested as existing between memory and history is something akin to the distinction that Pierre Nora draws between milieux de mémoire, the “settings in which memory is a real part of everyday experience,” and lieux de mémoire, the sites of reconstructed history that render the past “not quite alive but not yet entirely dead.”\(^ {23}\) They believed that history had the power to sweep away memory, draining it of its relevance or power to inform and shape social, cultural, and political discourse. Thus,


they constantly invoked their memories of the Napoleonic past in order to inject it into the present.

Secondly, this dissertation locates the myth’s origins in the years 1814-15 for several reasons. First, because I view the myth as an expression of memory, I begin with the period when Napoleon began his transition from an immediate to a remembered presence in French national consciousness. Secondly, whereas the St. Helena memoirs are still often viewed as the source of nineteenth-century ideas about Napoleon, the mythic narrative laid out in those memoirs, which didn’t see print until 1823, was to a large extent an echo of the same narrative that had been steadily evolving in ephemeral literature since the end of the Empire. While indeed shaped in large part by the image that Napoleon disseminated of himself through deft use of propaganda, I argue that this narrative should be considered a distinct phenomenon precisely because of its ability to refer not only to past events but to respond to contemporary concerns. Thus, this dissertation locates the origins of the Napoleonic myth not in propaganda or memoirs, but in the post-revolutionary, Romantic obsession with the past as a mode of explanation.

The role played by the literary and artistic giants of the Romantic age in forming the Napoleonic myth has long been acknowledged by scholars.24 This dissertation looks

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instead to the largely unknown or anonymous writers who flooded the increasingly popular market for literary novelties in early-nineteenth-century France with mythic texts ranging in form from classical elegies to heroic poems to political essays. These *oeuvres de circonstance* have rarely merited attention as a coherent body of historical source material for the study of the Napoleonic myth, in part because they are overshadowed by the Romantic lights of greater reputation (and admittedly greater literary talent). With an average length of under twenty pages and, for the most part, extremely limited press runs of between a few hundred and one thousand copies, they arguably played only a modest and short-lived role in disseminating the myth.\(^2^5\) Nonetheless, written with more consciously utilitarian objectives in terms of politics, these works are essential to understanding how the myth functioned during the Restoration and July Monarchy periods.

Romanticism contributed heavily to the creation of the Napoleonic myth, not only because of its intellectual and aesthetic preoccupations with the past and human heroics, but also because its role in transforming the nineteenth-century literary market. Its development corresponded with decreasing productions costs, rising literacy rates, and the politicization of the reading public, all of which combined to both increase and diversify the audience for these texts.\(^2^6\) Considered a radically new movement largely

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\(^2^5\) Keeping these texts brief helped to ensure a broader appeal among popular audiences, while smaller press runs were thought less likely to arouse suspicion on the part of censors.

because of its innovations in form rather than content – ranging from the rejection of alexandrine meter to a mania for “local color” – it freed writers, and readers, from the shackles of classical conventions and constraints. Romanticism thus opened the market to new genres, from songs to melodramas to gothic romances to popular history, producing the age of the literary nouveauté. In an age for which few reliable statistics exist, it is notoriously difficult to characterize this market with any amount of precision or detail, but it is nonetheless reasonable to conclude that literary novelties attracted a significant segment of the reading public, at least in the capital. According to the best estimates for the early Restoration period, roughly 85% of men and 60% of women in Paris could at least sign their name, a skill that literacy scholars argue indicated a reasonable level of reading competency. Coupled with a significant population expansion and increased government expenditure on public instruction, these changes translated into a significant increase in the number of potential readers. Moreover, the growth of cabinets de lecture, along with the ever popular figure of the provincial colporteur, ensured that newspapers, journals, and literary nouveautés reached a much larger audience. By 1830 there were 460 reading rooms in Paris alone, with admission as low as 10 centimes. Finally, the nineteenth century also witnessed the

27 In fact, argues Allen, Romanticism owed its success to innovations in form rather than its values or themes, insofar as its iconoclasm in this regard was more suited to the general public than formalist neoclassicist conventions. Ibid., 46.

28 Ibid., 154-63.

commercialization of the literary market. The erosion of pre-revolutionary patronage systems meant that more and more writers wrote for the market, in response to popular demand. What proved to be in popular demand was Napoleon, reflecting the politicization of the nineteenth-century reading public.

The authors of these ephemera are somewhat more difficult to characterize, having left little mark on the immediately recognizable literary culture of nineteenth-century France. Moreover, because of the seditious nature of their subject matter, at least under the Restoration, many of them chose to publish either anonymously or under pseudonyms. Nonetheless, it is possible to offer a few general remarks about their collective socio-professional profile. While almost all of them dabbled in the literary arts, whether poetry, drama, or journalism, few of them relied on writing alone to make a living and ranged in profession from lawyers and professors to administrators and *hommes politiques*. A remarkable number of *militaires* also took up the pen after the conclusion of the Napoleonic Wars, seeing themselves as uniquely situated to narrate the momentous events in which they took part. In so doing, they participated in the genre of popular Romanticism that viewed history less as a literary exercise than as an intervention in time. As two soldiers who fled France for the Americas in the wake of the Second Restoration royalist reaction put it, “We are not so pretentious as to place ourselves among the ranks of writers; simple actors in all that has passed, we are thus loyal historians.”

For another, writing was simply another way of serving Napoleon,

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now that the opportunity to take up arms had passed: “Poète j’ai chanté, soldat j’ai combattu.”

Generational patterns, which have sparked much historical interest among historians of nineteenth-century France, especially with regard to the great culture war initiated by the rise of Romanticism, also reveal themselves in this corpus of texts. The oldest generation of myth-makers, born within a few years of the emperor and, in the case of militaires, rose up through much the same ranks, dominated the production of the Napoleonic myth in the first few years. The revolutionary generation, aged forty-five and older in 1815, had become by that time a largely cynical and wary group, having witnessed three major regime changes in the past twenty-five years. Most were willing to offer only conditional support to Napoleon during the Hundred Days, remembering his transgressions against the revolutionary heritage but still preferring a “liberal” emperor to a resurrection of the old regime. Their immediate juniors, aged twenty to forty-four at the time of the Second Restoration, came of age amidst the turbulent events of the Revolution and the glorious campaigns of the Empire. Authors falling into this middle generation, most of whom had directly benefited from the Empire’s prosperity and contributed to its glory, were usually more unqualified in their devotion to the Napoleon’s memory. Musset’s famous remark about the “bored generation” was echoed by the nameless authors of this ephemeral literature. “Still too young, I couldn’t follow

31 Auguste Gondeville de Mont-Riché, À l’Empereur, à l’armée, aux amis de la patrie et de la gloire, March 1815), 11.

him on the field of victory. All that is left for me is to shed a tear over his ashes, to
*donner un souvenir à sa mémoire.*"  

Finally, *les jeunes gens,* many of whom jumped on the Napoleonic bandwagon in or after 1830, true to their independent spirit, claimed the virtues of impartiality in their assessments of Napoleon and the imperial era. The true “children” of the nineteenth century, the generation of 1830 was marked by a profound skepticism and seriousness, rejecting received wisdom in favor of their own judgments.\(^{34}\)

Finally, the myth-making enterprise and popular press furnished these writers (and their audiences) with a crucial method of participation in the political life of the nation in a period of restricted franchise, which under both regimes was limited to the very wealthiest landowners. Before the passage of the Law of the Double Vote in 1820, the Restoration’s electoral law restricted voting to men over the age of thirty who paid at least 300 francs in taxes each year. The qualifications to stand for election were more stringent still, restricted to men over the age of forty who paid more than 1000 francs a year in taxes. Out of a total population of around 30 million, this equated to roughly 16,000 eligible candidates and 90-110,000 potential voters. Even with the liberalization that accompanied the transition to the “bourgeois” regime of Louis-Philippe, which lowered tax requirements for voters to 200 francs and those for deputies to 500 francs, the electorate expanded only modestly to roughly 200,000 out of the 32.5 million population figure returned by the census of 1831. (By comparison, 429,000 had the right to vote in

\(^{33}\) [Amédée Vibaille], *Il n’est pas mort!!! Par un citoyen, ami de la patrie* (Paris: 1821), 7-8.

1791, out of a much smaller total population.) Much like the more elite world of letters, which remained intimate throughout the nineteenth century despite the expansion and commercialization of the reading market, many of these writers can be said to have formed something of definable reading and writing community. Most of them were exceptionally well-informed as to what was going on in the Chambers, as it was reported to them in the periodical press, and they peppered their texts with excerpts from speeches and debates as well as references to one another’s writings. Especially for those writers who would go on to become *hommes politiques* after 1848, elected as deputies or appointed to office under the Second Republic or Napoleon III’s empire, myth-making provided an important apprenticeship in political participation.

The dissertation proceeds chronologically in order to effectively trace changes in both the mythic narrative and the function of the past in French political culture. Chapter 1, “A Revolution Unfinished,” explores the emergence of the Napoleonic myth around the period of the Hundred Days. Despite the relatively moderate nature of the First Restoration, guided by Louis XVIII’s commitment to privileging the pursuit of national reconciliation over retribution for the Revolution, the return of the Bourbons signaled to many on both sides of the spectrum a return to 1789 and generated the revival of a revolutionary rhetoric in which the reactionary émigré and the foreigner again took center stage as puppet-masters of the Restoration regime. Held almost solely responsible for the humiliating experience of foreign occupation and the sacrifice of France’s “natural

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frontiers,” the Bourbons were branded as “anti-national” for subordinating France’s best interests to those of her enemies and reintroducing old regime divisions in French society. Coupled with Napoleon’s self-conscious posture as a reformed despot during the Hundred Days, this discourse laid the groundwork for the Napoleonic myth by draping the “liberal” emperor in revolutionary clothing. The chapter concludes by exploring Napoleon’s ability to speak the language of “nation-talk” as the basis for his reconciliation with the *vieux républicains* during the Hundred Days.

By convincing many royalists that Louis XVIII’s moderation was to blame for the ease with which Napoleon was able to oust the Bourbons in March 1815, the Hundred Days severely hampered the king’s pursuit of national reconciliation through forgiving and forgetting past transgressions. The ultraroyalists, who enjoyed an overwhelming majority in the *Chambre Introuvable* as well as considerable influence at court, succeeded in making the Second Restoration of the Bourbons far more reactionary in character than the first. The impetus to punish those responsible for the Hundred Days manifested itself not only in proscription orders and purges of the administration and military, but also in the popular royalist violence that raged across the south of France in the summer of 1815, which revealed desires to settle much older scores dating back to 1789. The result was a widespread sense that Restoration France was irreparably divided by the revolutionary experience. Chapter 2, “King of Two Peoples,” explores this sense of division by focusing on the “diaspora” of Napoleonic war veterans in the Americas and the failed experiment to found “une nouvelle patrie” in the Champ d’Asile. I argue that idealized stories about Napoleonic veterans in the American wilderness appealed to the French public, and to the liberal opposition in particular, primarily because they
starkly represented the consequences of factionalism and *esprit de parti* that undermined national unity, for which they held the ultraroyalists responsible.

Chapter 3, “Bonaparte n’est plus,” focuses on the year 1821 as a watershed moment in the evolution of the Napoleonic myth. The emperor’s death prompted many writers to engage in the quest for impartial judgment of the Napoleonic past, resulting in the evolution of a meta-narrative defined around multiple and often competing images of Napoleon as a liberal and nationalist revolutionary, a benevolent but fearsome conqueror, a savior, and a martyr. This narrative proved to be easily adapted to many items on the liberal opposition’s agenda, from impassioned protests against the erosion of constitutional liberties to support for the Greek War of Independence. In furnishing a list of Napoleonic *bienfaits* for which the nation ought to give thanks, the meta-narrative also prompted demands to reclaim Napoleon’s mortal remains from the English and give it a fitting burial on French soil. While predicated on the idea of remembering as an act of *reconnaissance* and proposed as a means of reconciling the nation to its past, the more wily political writers also deftly used these demands to criticize Louis XVIII for giving in to the reactionary impulses of the extreme right and abandoning the regime’s policy of *union et oublie*.

The Revolution of 1830 and early years of the July Monarchy marked another crucial turning point in the evolution of the Napoleonic myth. Louis-Philippe’s accession introduced a remarkable change in the relationship between the “official memory” of the French state and the revolutionary past, which the king actively but selectively appropriated as part of his efforts to distance himself from his discredited Bourbon predecessors and establish new foundations for his reign. Chapter 4, “Reconciliation and
a New National Past,” explores the ambiguities present in his tentative approach to the Napoleonic past. The challenge in appropriating the Napoleonic myth, as Louis-Philippe saw it, was how to keep memory separate from ideology, or, how to keep the past from reincarnating itself in the present. He responded to this challenge by encouraging remembering of one specific aspect of the Napoleonic legacy, that of military glory, in order to depoliticize Napoleonic memory and insulate himself from the threat of Bonapartist political machinations. Moreover, the new regime’s favorable attitudes towards the Napoleonic past also produced an optimistic public discourse about the potential of the past as an avenue towards national reconciliation, reviving demands for the return of Napoleon’s ashes. While Louis-Philippe managed to consistently dodge the question of repatriating Napoleon’s remains throughout the first decade of his reign, his commitment to reconciliation was tested by proxy in the campaign for the posthumous rehabilitation of Marshal Ney, victim of the White Terror and martyr to the Napoleonic cause.

The fifth and final chapter focuses on the year 1840, one in which the Napoleonic past was again most emphatically rendered present by two distinct but related incidents. Provoked by the pretensions of the Egyptian pasha Mehmet Ali, the Eastern Question prompted the most dramatic foreign policy crisis France had yet faced since her humiliation in 1815. Formed in the summer of 1840, the Quadruple Alliance pitted Great Britain, Austria, Prussia, and Russia in support of the Ottomans against France and Mehmet Ali, raising specters of coalitions past that had ranged themselves against France during the Revolutionary and Napoleonic Wars. Thwarted in its foreign policy objectives with regard to the East, the French left, egged on by Thiers, demanded compensation in
the form of the left bank of the Rhine and nearly reignited war on the continent. Thus, the return of Napoleon’s ashes in December 1840, originally intended by the Orléans regime as a measure that might help heal the breach both between the nation and its past and between France and England, assumed unforeseen significance as a symbolic act of defiance against France’s foreign enemies. Meanwhile, Louis-Napoleon, Bonapartist pretender since the death of l’Aiglon in 1832, tested the potential of Napoleonic memories, which arguably enjoyed the height of their popularity with the impending return of the ashes, to drum up support for a coup d’état. His efforts were unsuccessful until 1848, the reasons for which are briefly reconsidered in the conclusion.
Chapter 1 – A Revolution Unfinished

On the night of 13 February 1820, the duc and duchesse de Berry celebrated the end of the pre-Lenten season by attending a performance at the Paris Opéra. The duchesse, probably fatigued by the unremitting demands of their crowded social calendar, decided to take an early leave. Near 11:00, Berry escorted his wife to her carriage, stationed outside the royal entrance to the Opéra on the rue Rameau. He bid her farewell, and, promising to return home after the final act, turned to reenter the building. Suddenly, a stranger darted in between the duke and his companions, grabbed Berry by the shoulder, and plunged a dagger into his back. Unaware at first that he had been stabbed, Berry and his entourage mistook the assassin for merely “un curieux indiscrèt.” The comte de Choiseul, the duke’s aide-de-camp, pushed the man away, giving him an opportunity to flee the scene. Within seconds, Berry discovered the dagger in his back and cried out, “I’ve been murdered!” Berry’s entourage carried the duke back into the Opéra and installed him in an office upstairs, where doctors and members of the royal family gathered anxiously by his side over the next several hours. In his final agony, he heroically pleaded with the king to pardon his assassin, remarking how cruel it was “to die at the hand of a Frenchman.”

The assassin, meanwhile, was pursued and apprehended within minutes of the attack near the arcade Colbert, about four blocks away from the Opéra, tackled by an employee of a nearby café. The duke’s guards conducted him to the police, where he was interrogated for nearly twenty-four hours. Louis-Pierre Louvel, a thirty-six-year-old saddler in the royal stables, freely confessed to his crime. He prided himself on having planned the assassination since 1814, when he resolved to rid France of her “cruelest enemies,” the royal family. Louvel held the Bourbons guilty of conspiring with foreigners against their own country, having returned to power under Allied protection and consenting to peace terms that humiliated France by shrinking her borders. Moreover, Louvel reasoned that the Bourbons were really to blame for the shocking French defeat at Waterloo; by sowing the seeds of discontent among the army and aiding and abetting the coalition against Napoleon, they ensured the triumph of France’s enemies.

Louvel had chosen his target well. The youngest son of the comte d’Artois, the forty-two-year-old duc de Berry was the only hope for the family’s future. Neither his uncle, Louis XVIII, nor his elder brother, the duc d’Angoulême, had any male heirs of

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38 The official report of the attack and Louvel’s arrest can be found in the *acte d’accusation* pronounced at his trial on June 5-6, 1820. *Archives parlementaires de 1787 à 1860, 2e série* (Paris: Librairie administrative de Paul Dupont, 1874), 28: 23-24. Accounts are also given in Nicolas-François Bellart, *Réquisitoire définitif de M. le procureur-général près la Cour des Pairs dans l'affaire Louvel* (Paris: Imprimerie de J.G. Dentu, 1820), and Dominique-François-Marie de Bastard d’Estang, *Rapport fait à la Cour des Pairs dans le procès suivi contre Louis-Pierre Louvel* (Lyon: Imprimerie de la Cour Royale, 1820).


their own, and it seemed unlikely that his father, now in his sixties, would father any more children. It was thus up to Berry and his wife, Marie-Caroline of Naples, to perpetuate the Bourbon dynasty, but after four years of marriage, the couple had only one child who survived infancy, a daughter. By murdering the only Bourbon capable of producing heirs to the throne and extinguishing the dynasty, Louvel sought to precipitate the demise of a regime he despised. Fate, however, decreed otherwise. On his deathbed, the duc de Berry revealed the real reason for his wife’s fatigue that evening – she was pregnant. The news stunned both the royal family and the French public, and many suspected that it was a ruse to rally the royalists in the wake of Berry’s death.\textsuperscript{41} Seven months after her husband’s death, the duchesse de Berry gave birth to a son, Henri, duc de Bordeaux, and the birth of the “miracle child” renewed hope in the future of the Bourbon dynasty.

Throughout his interrogation and trial, Louvel refused to name any accomplices, insisting that he acted alone and on behalf of France’s “national interest.” The prosecution went to great lengths to prove his “fanaticism for Buonaparte,” diligently retracing Louvel’s every movement and interviewing anyone he may have been in contact with in an effort to establish the existence of a grand conspiratorial network, but he repeatedly denied these charges. Relentlessly questioned about his motives, Louvel reiterated that he was inspired solely by “an abstract sentiment: national honor.”\textsuperscript{42}

Ignoring the counsel of his lawyer, who argued that his client was insane and thus could


\textsuperscript{42} Bellart, Réquisitoire définitif, 44-45.
not be convicted of having the intention to commit treason, Louvel insisted on justifying his crime as an act of patriotism: “I am but a Frenchman willing to sacrifice myself in order to destroy a party of men who took up arms against their patrie.” Arguing that the “national interest excuses all [crimes],” Louvel defended his actions as a service to his country. The Chamber of Peers preferred to interpret his crime as the violent act of fanatic, and he was guillotined on 7 June 1820.

Louvel’s protests to the contrary notwithstanding, many people were willing to believe that he was simply the tool of a “Berry conspiracy,” orchestrated by a vast European network of liberals and republicans. His crime was widely interpreted as the product of dangerous liberal ideas unleashed by the Revolution of 1789. In the opinion of Bellart, the procureur-général who prosecuted the case, Louvel’s errors could be traced back to the revolutionary catechism of 1793. For Louvel was a member of the revolutionary generation, “children formed by the school of atheism, by contempt for laws and religious beliefs…taught that crime is virtue and virtue is crime.” Nourished on the Rights of Man and Jacobin morality, he was the inevitable fruit of a poisoned tree. Even more alarming was Louvel’s evident admiration for Napoleon, especially in the troubled years of 1814-15, when he followed the exiled emperor to Elba. Images of

43 Méjan, Histoire du Procès de Louvel, 258.


45 David Skuy discusses at length the role that conspiracy theories played in Restoration political culture. See Assassination, Politics, and Miracles, chapter 2.

46 J. Lucas-Dubreton, The Restoration and the July Monarchy, 70.

47 Bellart, Réquisitoire définitif, 30-31.
Louvel as a fanatic fed on dangerous revolutionary and Bonapartist ideas furnished the political right with powerful ammunition against their opponents. Charles Nodier, editor of the royalist newspaper *Le Drapeau blanc*, blamed the electoral reform ordinance of September 5, 1817, which had abolished the system of indirect elections and resulted in parliamentary gains for the left. “I have seen the dagger that killed the duc de Berry,” he famously declared, “it was a liberal idea.”

Although few were willing to go so far as Louvel, his resentment against the Bourbons was shared by a great many members of the politically engaged French public. As Bellart argued, it was no wonder that Louvel developed his *idée fixe*, exposed as he was to the ceaseless flow of seditious ideas spread by the liberal opposition. The prosecutor saw him as a dupe of the regime’s numerous enemies, who succeeded in implanting in his feeble brain the misguided conviction “that the time of France’s glory has passed, that liberty is under threat, that the Bourbon government has betrayed the interests of the patrie.”

These charges against Louis XVIII’s regime dated back to the First Restoration, when the euphoria that greeted the return of the Bourbons in April 1814 quickly dissipated as old tensions resurfaced and France confronted her much reduced status in the international arena. Complicating the relationship between France and her king was the unresolved legacy of the French Revolution, itself a legacy bequeathed by the Empire.

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49 Bellart, *Réquisitoire définitif*, 91.
The image of Napoleon as *l’homme de la Révolution* became a commonplace after his fall from power, being useful not only to Napoleon himself and his supporters but also to his detractors. Throughout his reign, however, Napoleon maintained a more complicated relationship with the revolutionary heritage. He was able to catapult himself to power largely by posing as the Revolution’s savior at the time of 18 Brumaire, cloaking the coup as an attempt to rescue the Republic from a corrupt, weak, and inefficacious Directory government that was incapable of containing factional threats from both the right and left. As First Consul, he quickly made peace with the Republic’s enemies – a peace that proved no more than a truce in the case of France’s foreign enemies, but more durable in the case of the émigrés, counter-revolutionaries in the Vendée, and the Catholic Church. But although as emperor he would continue to style himself as the “crowned representative of the Revolution triumphant,” his need for legitimacy in the eyes of his fellow European sovereigns demanded that he distance himself from the revolutionary heritage. The eclipse signaled itself in a variety of ways –

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social hierarchy was restored, albeit in a modified form that accommodated the new post-revolutionary elite, essential public liberties such as freedom of the press were drastically curtailed, and the pursuit of liberty, equality, and fraternity was displaced by an emphasis on order and unity. There were mutations in revolutionary symbolism, too; the *Marseillaise* was banned in 1805, while the *tricolor* came to represent France’s triumphant militarism as much as, and even more than, the spirit of 1789. On the other hand, Napoleon could legitimately claim to have consolidated many of the Revolution’s gains, most notably through the Civil Code, which confirmed civil equality and property rights. All of this allowed Napoleon to declare, as he often did, that “the Revolution is over.”

In 1814, the Empire’s collapse undermined the validity of this assertion and reopened the revolutionary wound. Although modern historians have revised the image of the Restoration as entirely reactionary, emphasizing Louis XVIII’s willingness to concede many of the changes wrought by the Revolution and Napoleon, the fact remains that his best efforts at reconciliation were continually undermined by ultraroyalist extremism. Critics then and ever since have characterized the Restoration as an attempt to turn the clock back to 1789 and restore the Old Regime. The return of the Bourbons introduced a sort of wrinkle in time, and the history of the past twenty-five years was suddenly and radically destabilized, bringing the revolutionary legacy back to the center.

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of political discourse. Two issues in particular that were clearly rooted in revolutionary memories – the return of the émigrés, and the sacrifice of France’s “natural frontiers” – fueled anti-Bourbon invective and surfaced in the political press during the Hundred Days. This discourse also articulated a post-revolutionary model of political legitimacy in which the exercise of power depended on fluency in what Steven Englund calls “nation-talk” – the language of national sovereignty, of national independence, and of a trampled but still proud national glory.⁵² Above all, it was Napoleon’s ability to speak this language that facilitated his return to power in March 1815, and earned him the support of his once staunchest opponents.

**Louis XVIII: the Anti-National King**

Perhaps the most obvious sign of renascent revolutionary memories was the revival of anti-noble and anti-clerical sentiment prompted by the return of the émigrés, a phenomenon that was much exaggerated in the contemporary consciousness. The political discourse of the Hundred Days reveals that the revolutionary exodus, largely royalist, was every bit as divisive as it had been in the 1790s, despite Napoleon’s efforts to heal the rift. In fact, most of the roughly 150,000 émigrés who fled during the Revolution had returned to France by the fall of 1800.⁵³ Napoleon’s general amnesty of April 26, 1802, which removed all but 1,000 names from the list of proscription, tempted back moderate royalists, *constitutionnels*, and others of politically center-right leanings

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who found the Consular regime tolerable. Those who returned were by and large reintegrated into imperial society; many became public officials and some were even able to reacquire properties nationalized under the Revolution. Only a few thousand who were intractably committed to the ancien régime – the Bourbon princes and their exile court, clerics who refused to accept the Concordat, and a handful of royalist political journalists centered in London – remained in exile until the fall of the Empire in 1814.54

Nonetheless, the perception that Restoration politics were orchestrated by hordes of reactionary émigrés persisted throughout the regime, in part because most of those who returned with the Bourbons in 1814 did represent the upper crust of the Old Regime aristocracy. They formed the heart of the ultraroyalist party that coalesced around the comte d’Artois, “more royalist than the king,” and made no attempt to hide their intentions to turn the clock back to 1789. Thus, a small but vociferous minority of reactionaries colored the public’s perception of émigrés as a whole, stirring up decades-old resentment against “enemies of the Revolution.” Despite Louis’ moderation, many believed that the regime was intent on restoring a feudal order. The purchasers of biens nationaux were especially anxious, fearing that their rights to those properties, confirmed by Napoleon, would be revoked in favor of old nobles seeking to reclaim their patrimony.

The most conspicuous émigrés of all were, of course, the members of the royal family. It has often been said that the Bourbons were forgotten in France at the time of their restoration, a claim that is difficult to validate given the vagaries of public opinion

as reported by contemporaries. Nonetheless, the fact remains that the royal family appeared tainted by all things foreign upon their return in 1814. The comte d’Artois fled France in 1789, followed by the comte de Provence in 1791; neither had set foot in their native land in roughly a quarter of a century. The younger generation – the duc d’Angoulême and his wife Marie-Thérèse, daughter of Louis XVI and Marie-Antoinette, and his younger brother the duc de Berry – had all come of age while living abroad.

Worse still, they had long enjoyed the hospitality of France’s mortal enemy, England, which had become the nexus of the French expatriate community after 1792 as more and more émigrés found it prudent to leave their continental boltholes at Koblenz, Hamburg, and Turin to avoid the advancing armies of the First Republic. But even more injurious to their public image than their many years in exile was the manner in which they returned. In 1814, and again in 1815, the Bourbons were given safe conduct by the Allied armies, earning themselves eternal shame for returning “in the baggage carts of foreigners” and cementing a disastrous association between the Restoration regime and French defeat.

Louis XVIII’s close personal ties with England did nothing to alleviate suspicions that the nation’s enemies were heavily directing French affairs. Louis, like many

55 Philip Mansel has been the most vociferous critic of this assertion. Mansel argues that not only did Napoleon himself keep the Bourbon legacy alive by encouraging popular memory of Henri IV and Louis XIV, royalism remained a potent political force and benefited from the increasingly fragile nature of the Empire. Louis XVIII (London: Blond & Briggs, 1981), 157-60; “How Forgotten were the Bourbons in France between 1812 and 1814?,” European History Quarterly 13 (1983), 13-37. Nonetheless, even committed royalists like Chateaubriand shared the belief that France in 1814 knew little of her former masters. De Bonaparte, des Bourbons, et de la nécessité de se rallier à nos princes légitimes, pour le bonheur de la France et celui de l’Europe (Paris: Mame Frères, 1814), 6.

56 Carpenter, Refugees of the French Revolution, 2.
émigrés, doubtless had good reason to feel gratitude towards those who hosted him during his time in exile. But it was certainly tactless to publicly declare that he owed his restoration, “after Providence,” to the Prince Regent, personally inviting him to Paris for the peace celebrations. Louis committed an even more egregious public relations blunder by his open fondness for the Duke of Wellington, going so far as to congratulate him on his victory at Waterloo. According to the peculiar logic of the royalists, this solicitude accorded to a victorious enemy constituted no breach of honor because the Allies had fought and defeated not France but Napoleon alone. For most French citizens, however, Wellington was the most conspicuous representative of the Allied coalition whose recent victory left a humiliating stain on French national honor. Louis rubbed salt in the wound by lavishing extremely valuable gifts on Wellington, including priceless Sevrès plate and a plaque of the Order of St. Louis set in diamonds and worth over 600,000 francs. To those who were willing to believe that England was the puppet-master of the Bourbon regime, such gifts could easily be seen as tribute rendered to a lord by his obedient vassal.

The Bourbons also suffered for their willingness to sacrifice the territorial gains won by the revolutionary and imperial armies. In public opinion, the relinquishment of France’s “natural frontiers,” formed by the Rhine, the Alps, and the Pyrenees, an ideology consecrated by the Revolution, was tantamount to treason. The doctrine of natural frontiers, although it had antecedents in the administrative rationalization of the Old Regime, was rarely invoked until the First Republic’s declaration of war against the “despots” of Europe in April 1792. The Rhine frontier in particular first assumed its momentous importance during the Revolution, suiting both the more aggressively

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expansionist aims of the Girondins and their Montagnard opponents, who assimilated the idea of the Rhine as a defensive barrier against foreign aggressors within the totalizing rhetoric of “la patrie en danger.” The doctrine of natural frontiers provided a crucial ideological justification for annexation under the First Republic, although it was frequently subordinated rhetorically to the more benign mission of promoting a universal revolution to liberate neighboring peoples from the shackles of tyranny.

The Treaty of Campo-Formio, signed in October 1797, confirmed the First Republic’s territorial acquisitions of Belgium, the left bank of the Rhine, Nice, and Savoy, amounting to a tacit recognition of France’s right to her natural frontiers. Although the idea of natural limits was largely obviated by the creation of the Empire, it once again assumed paramount importance after the crushing defeat inflicted by the Allies at the Battle of Leipzig. In fact, the sanctity attached to France’s natural frontiers played a critical role in prolonging the Empire’s collapse, for Napoleon’s intransigence on this matter precluded peace with the Allies and precipitated the ill-fated Campaign of France. On 19 January 1814, Napoleon wrote to Caulaincourt, his representative at the Congress of Châtillon:

The point on which the Emperor most urgently insists is the necessity of France retaining her natural limits: this is my *sine qua non*… France, if reduced to her old limits, would not now possess two thirds of the relative power that she had twenty years ago. The territory she has acquired in the direction of the Rhine does not balance what Russia, Prussia, and Austria, have acquired merely by the dismemberment of Poland; all these states have increased in magnitude. To restore France to her old limits would be to humble and degrade her. France, without the departments of the Rhine, without Belgium, Ostend, and Antwerp,

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would be nothing….Neither the Emperor nor the Republic (should revolution again restore it), would ever subscribe to such a condition. As far as regards his Majesty, his determination is irrevocably fixed; he will not leave France less than he found her.59

Faced with the reality of his increasingly hopeless position, the emperor gave way to the revolutionary general. Willing to concede defeat in the Iberian peninsula, the loss of Italy and Germany, and the failure of the Continental System, he insisted only on the foreign policy aims of the First Republic, which was to achieve a more favorable balance of power with its European rivals by extending France’s territorial boundaries to her natural frontiers.

Although Napoleon was much blamed for exposing France to the horrors of a foreign invasion by his intransigence, his dogged insistence on preserving the territorial gains of the First Republic later worked to his advantage. Throughout Louis XVIII’s reign, French foreign policy was guided by his pacifist intentions. In stark contrast to the attitudes of Napoleon and his revolutionary predecessors, Louis and his ministers renounced territorial ambitions and subordinated nationalist aims to the general interests of the “Concert of Europe.” At first this policy appeared to accord with the overwhelming desire for peace that characterized French public opinion during the final act of the imperial drama. Historians and contemporaries alike have remarked upon the widespread lack of patriotic response to the invasion of 1814; the French by and large exhibited a general sense of war-weariness and apathy, and popular uprisings were mostly confined to the eastern provinces where the advance of the Allied armies took its

toll on local populations. But the Bourbons’ policy of moderation and conciliation in foreign affairs soon rankled national pride, fueling a spirit of resentment and a desire for revenge, and paving the way for Napoleon’s return to power.

The locus of this resentment was the First Treaty of Paris, signed on 30 May 1814. Its terms were comparatively lenient; astonishingly, the Allies neither demanded an indemnity nor imposed an occupation, but did insist on fixing French borders as they existed in January 1792. In acquiescing to the loss of France’s “natural frontiers” along the Rhine and the Alps, the Bourbons sacrificed a point of national honor in the eyes of many. Napoleon owed much of his popularity during the Hundred Days to a widespread desire to repudiate the humiliating peace signed by the Bourbons; ironically, having himself pushed the Allies towards an uncompromising position by his diplomatic equivocation, he managed to avoid blame for France’s loss of territory by simple virtue of the fact that he was forced to abdicate before the peace negotiations were concluded.

His decision to pursue hostilities in 1814, once seen as the product of his unbridled ambition and myopic self-interest, was later recast as an act of supreme patriotism. The war-weariness and desire for peace that impelled French public opinion towards the

60 Michael V. Leggiere, The Fall of Napoleon (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 67-78.


62 There were some concessions along the northern border – 4 cantons in the department of Jemappes, and four in Sambre-et-Meuse. To the northeast, France kept the crucial fortresses of Saarlouis, Philippeville, Marienbourg, and Landau. The Allies also agreed to recognize the 1791 annexations of Avignon and Comtat-Venaissin.
Bourbon cause in 1814 seems to have rapidly evaporated in the wake of the settlements, and Napoleon appeared to be the only one who could restore national dignity. As one anonymous commentator put it, “We had peace under the Bourbons, and we will have it all the same under Napoleon; but under the Bourbons we were degraded and despised, while under the Emperor we will be honored and feared.”63

The émigré and the foreigner, familiar bogeymen since the time of the Revolution, thus resurfaced in Restoration political culture and informed much of the anti-Bourbon literature published during the Hundred Days. Napoleon, still adept at measuring which way the winds of public opinion were blowing, himself recognized the revival of anti-noble and anti-clerical sentiment upon his return from Elba in March 1815. “Nothing has surprised me more on returning to France than this hatred of priests and the nobility which I find as universal and as violent as it was at the beginning of the Revolution. The Bourbons have restored their lost force to their ideas of the Revolution.”64 Although wary of inciting popular violence, Napoleon decided to tap into this recrudescence of revolutionary passions and harness it to his own purposes. In the proclamations issued immediately after landing at Golfe Juan on 1 March, he appealed to popular resentment of privilège in order to underscore the ideological gulf existing not only between the royal family and the French people, but between the Old Regime past and the post-revolutionary present. “Seated upon my throne by the force of the same armies who ravaged our territories, seeking in vain to shore up the principles of feudal rights, [Louis XVIII] can only assure the honor and rights of small number of individuals,

63 Réponse à un libelle, par l’auteur de deux Ouvrages, ayant pour titres: L’homme du siècle et l’empire est dans l’empereur (Paris: Imprimerie de Hocquet, 16 April 1815), 22.
64 Napoleon to comte Molé, quoted in Tulard, Myth of the Saviour, 333.
enemies of the people.” The Bourbons represented not the French nation, but a handful of elites who for twenty-five years had fomented public opinion in Europe against their homeland, and took up arms with foreigners against their own compatriots. In contrast to this anti-national regime, Napoleon himself was motivated only by the “interests of the patrie;” “his interests, honor, and glory are nothing but your interests, honor, and glory.” The very same Bourbon king to whom Napoleon encouraged obedience in his farewell at Fontainebleau in April 1814, he now exhort the French to repudiate in the name of national honor: “Every nation, no matter how small, has rights, and need not subject itself to the dishonor of obeying a prince imposed by a victorious enemy.” Napoleon, by contrast, was France’s truly legitimate sovereign because he was established on the imperial throne by the will of the nation.

In an essay published in May 1815, C.-F. Réal echoed the emperor’s own rhetoric in posing the question, “who is to blame for the Bourbons’ reverse of fortune?” The answer was simple: themselves. They isolated themselves by defining as “vrai Français” all those who followed them into exile, reestablishing the rights of the “privilégiés,” who, in taking up arms against their own country, had relinquished their rights as French citizens and been rightfully condemned to civil death by the revolutionary government.


The vast majority of French citizens, by contrast, were consigned to the category of rebels. Restored by the force of bayonets rather than by the will of the nation, the Bourbons had to flatter the pride of the Allied powers at the expense of their own subjects in order to maintain their authority. In Réal’s view, the Bourbons could not possibly claim to defend “our interests and our glory” with any amount of dignity, having placed themselves in the debt of, and France at the mercy of, foreign enemies.68

Louis XVIII had trusted his promises of peace to cement his popularity among a population wearied by war and Napoleon’s incessant demands on the nation’s resources. But to many observing the situation at the beginning of 1815, the Bourbon regime made peace impossible. Victor Verger, a product of Napoleon’s imperial university system and later a prolific bibliographer and translator at the Bibliothèque de Paris, raised the specter of a foreign menace in an essay published in March 1815. He presented his argument as the “duty of a true Frenchman,” for whom national glory is dearer than life itself. Under the circumstances of the Restoration, he argued, war with one or more of France’s foreign enemies was inevitable because the weak and abject nature of the Bourbon regime allowed the Allies to run roughshod over France. Verger reproached the Bourbons for promoting foreign interests over those of their own country. Instead of encouraging French manufacture and commerce, he said, the Bourbons created unfavorable legislation that forced the French to buy imported goods at exorbitant prices. But above all they were guilty of disguising France’s humiliation under the guise of peace, “in sacrificing all that territory that became French by right of conquest, in sacrificing those lands bought by our courage and our blood, and which together formed the greatest empire in the

world, in sacrificing too a piece of l’ancienne France, this sacred soil never before defiled by the stain of foreign domination.” For Verger, this was too high a price to pay for peace. 69

Only a “noble and generous effort” was capable of restoring France to her rightful place in the political equilibrium of Europe. For Verger, the choice between Napoleon and Louis XVIII thus boiled down to a choice between “taking up arms, or bending beneath the yoke of the foreigner. Since this latter option is revolting to every true Frenchman, there isn’t a single person in France who doesn’t prefer war to ignominy.” Napoleon alone was capable of inspiring the pride and courage necessary to reclaim France’s rightful place through resounding victories on the battlefield, and he alone was capable of instilling fear in the hearts of their enemies and dashing their well-laid plans to crush France once and for all. “France has been like a body without a soul. Now more than ever we sense the truth of this maxim: Napoleon can do without France, but France cannot do without Napoleon.” 70

Verger, then, welcomed Napoleon’s return in 1815 and with the prospect for renewed hostilities against the Allies, this time not a war of conquest but war of honor.

Auguste Gondeville de Mont-Riché was another commentator for whom peace was not worth the price of national honor. Assistant to the Minister of War under the Empire, he distinguished himself by his bravery as lieutenant of the 10th legion of the National Guard in a skirmish with Allied troops during the siege of Paris on 30 March


70 Ibid., 6-7, 13.
1814. A year later he proved himself to be one of Napoleon’s most zealous partisans in a poem dedicated “to the Emperor, to the Army, to the Friends of the Patrie and Glory.” Casting patriotism in the mold of religious piety, he called upon his compatriots, for whom France is the “cherished idol of a generous cult,” to consecrate the alliance of patrie and honneur “in the sacred name of this avenging hero.” Napoleon, having played the role of savior in the past, now assumed the mantle of avenger and protector. Who else, he asked, could restore the balance of power in Europe? (By balance of power, Gondeville, like others accustomed to more than a decade of French ascendancy in international affairs, meant restoring French dominance on the continent.) Gondeville argued that the humiliation France suffered in 1814 would never have happened had the French remained united and loyal to the emperor. Those who were cowardly enough to buy peace at the price of honor, “although born among us, are not French at all.” Fate was granting France a chance to atone for that treason and once again put its faith in Napoleon, whose triumphant return would erase the tragic errors of the previous year. After all, the French people should be dictating the terms of peace, not suffering the shame of having those terms imposed upon them: “Victorious, the lion pardons those who attack him; vanquished, he seeks revenge for his wounds.”

Thus, Louis XVIII was held responsible for the revenge exacted by Napoleon’s enemies. His conciliatory attitudes towards the Allies, coupled with the reactionary sentiments of the ultra-royalist émigrés who returned to France with him, eroded his popularity and earned him the label of an “anti-national” monarch. When Napoleon returned to France in March 1815, he met little resistance from a populace that demanded

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71 Gondeville de Mont-Riché, À l’Empereur, 4-9.
an end to the vestiges of feudalism once and for all and a resounding victory on the battlefield to restore France to both her proper dimensions and her proper place within the ranks of nations. But the revival of revolutionary passions that helped dislodge Louis from his throne were not confined to resentment against reactionary feudal lords and vengeful foreign masters. Behind the charge of “anti-national” lay more substantial questions about the definition of political legitimacy in post-revolutionary France.

The Liberal Emperor

Jean-Antoine Lebrun-Tossa, a career bureaucrat in the imperial administration who also dabbled in the literary arts, was another commentator who took the Hundred Days as an opportunity to criticize the fallen Bourbon regime as “anti-national.” He began by offering what was by now a familiar argument. Europe was once again prepared to invade France, he argued, and France had to choose between either the Bourbons or Napoleon to lead them in the impending crisis. To be fair, he conceded, Napoleon himself put France in this difficult position, for if he had never abused his power, the Bourbons would never have had the opportunity to regain the throne. Nonetheless, in choosing to rally around the emperor, France could assure itself of “unanimous resistance” to further degradations, while the Bourbon way could only lead to further shame and humiliation in the eyes of Europe. But the real substance of his argument against the Restoration regime lay in his long denunciation of the king’s pretensions to reign as a constitutional monarch. One need only look to the preamble of the Charter, he suggested, couched in the language of royal prerogative, for proof that Louis never intended to suffer circumscriptions upon his authority. Subjects, civilians
and soldiers alike, he reasoned, are considered guilty of treason when they violate that bilateral contract that exists between them and their king. Inversely, when the king reneges on his promises, it is he who is guilty of treason; “a contract cannot be obligatory for only one of the contracting parties.” Thus, he argued, the army’s defection in March 1815 was not treason but a just reprisal for countless violations of the Charter committed by an “anti-French monarch.”

Napoleon’s cause, by contrast, was a worthy one because it was the cause of the entire French nation. “What does Napoleon mean to me? It’s not him we have to defend but France, ourselves, our wives, our children. In preferring him to all others, I am motivated by nothing but the common interest of all. Our interests are his, our cause is his. Born of our ranks, son of liberty, he can no longer exist except by her leave. Who cares if he is not descended from Henri IV? His victories, his service to the nation – those are his ancestors; our choice, our confidence in him – those are his titles.” In making a case for Napoleon, Lebrun-Tossa went far beyond mere resentment over the revolutionary past and France’s recent humiliation at the hands of the Allies. His argument underscored the radical inconsistency between the Bourbons’ insistence on dynastic legitimacy and a post-revolutionary political culture that defined legitimacy in terms of national sovereignty and patriotic action. Many doubted the sincerity of Louis’ commitment to a constitutional regime because he failed to court public opinion by at


73 Ibid., 33.
least paying lip-service to the revolutionary notion that “thrones are made for nations, and not nations for thrones.”

The prospect of renewed hostilities against the crowned heads of Europe actually prompted a few voices to advocate the return of full-blown Napoleonic despotism. The Bourbons, argued one anonymous Breton pamphleteer, unable to execute their plan of subduing the nation by fomenting civil war, were now intent on inciting foreigners to war against France. They were, he warned, fully prepared to “reestablish their throne on the bodies of dead Frenchmen.” Should France once again find victory on the battlefield, its honor and independence will be assured; otherwise, “we will become slaves, feed for the émigrés and monks, and the laughingstock of all Europe.” Paris and the more prosperous departments will be spared for the sake for the Bourbons, “but the rest of France will suffer the sad fate of Poland,” dismembered at will by the great powers. The only way to avoid this fate, he suggested, was to invest Napoleon with a sort of limited dictatorship modeled on examples furnished by ancient history. When the Roman Republic was threatened, its citizens recognized the necessity of naming a dictator wielding unique and absolute power to govern the state in the name of his own authority, but solely for the duration of the crisis. “Napoleon,” he optimistically predicted, “after having saved France, will divest himself of this unlimited power.” The pamphlet’s title, *The People and a Dictator Will Save Honor and the Patrie; The Constitution Can Wait*, implied yet another example from ancient history, that of the Athenians, who sealed their own fate by occupying themselves with fruitless political abstractions instead of defending their city against the Spartans. For readers well-versed in a cultural lexicon saturated with classical

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74 This axiom, first publicly stated by Napoleon at Lyons in March 1815, was often repeated and became a sort of slogan for the Hundred Days.
referents, the lesson would have been clear. Only after establishing peace abroad and at home should the nation turn its attention to “these constitutional systems that we have tried to achieve for twenty-five years without success.”

Yet even this rosy view of the future was accompanied by a grave warning to the Emperor: should he fail to relinquish his dictatorial license after the crisis had passed, he would instantly render himself an “enemy of the patrie.” By and large, political discourse during the Hundred Days was characterized by this sort of conditional acceptance of the imperial restoration, challenging Napoleon to either accept a constitution or “the irrevocable order for his downfall.” Although the charter granted by Louis XVIII in 1814 was hardly liberal enough for many citizens, they were understandably concerned about the fate of even these limited concessions to constitutional monarchy now that Napoleon had returned to power. Napoleon, for his part, appreciated the utility of posing in liberal clothing and went to great lengths to portray himself as a reformed despot during the Hundred Days. Despite his misgivings about the wisdom of feeding the revolutionary fire, he fully recognized he could not hope to reclaim the unbridled exercise of power he had enjoyed in the past. Upon his return from Elba, he announced his intention to reign, in the manner of Caesar Augustus, “less as the sovereign of France than its first citizen.” Napoleon hoped to convince France

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76 Ibid., 13.

77 Lebrun-Tossa, La patrie avant tout, 37.

78 Quoted in Henry Houssaye, 1815, 482.
and the rest of Europe that he would henceforth rule as a liberal and constitutional monarch. For all that contemporaries and historians alike have doubted the sincerity of his intentions, the fact remains that the Napoleonic regime in 1815 looked very different from its predecessor – the Additional Act substantially curtailed his executive authority, established a more powerful and more independent legislature, and abolished press censorship. Political writers, taking full advantage of this considerably more tolerant publishing culture while also capitalizing on Napoleon’s need to court public opinion, inserted themselves into these efforts to redefine the limits of imperial power during the Hundred Days. In the process, they restored revolutionary principles of national sovereignty and unity to the center of political discourse.

As one anonymous essayist boldly reminded Napoleon, he owed his legitimacy to his revolutionary heritage: “You are the child of the patrie, and a man of the Revolution.” The pamphlet was laced with not-so-subtle reminders to Napoleon that his power derived from the will and consent of the nation, a consent that could easily be withdrawn should he fail to honor his promises to reform his despotic abuses of imperial power. “Rest assured on that throne that you established on the ruins of revolutionary anarchy,” but remember that it is a throne on which “the recognition of a nation placed you.” Napoleon could not hope to rest on his laurels as he had in the past; this time he would have to prove himself worthy by concessions to the national will – namely, a constitution proposed by representatives of the people. “All French citizens want to see you on your throne again, Sire, but in a manner which, by guaranteeing their rights, banishes all fear of falling again into that abyss in which you found them upon both your first and second accession to power.” As the author perceptively remarked, the immediate threat of
renewed hostilities against Europe provided the centripetal force impelling public opinion towards Napoleon; “at the moment, you are the center around everything revolves.” But at the very moment when that danger ceases to exist, those bonds will surely disintegrate unless the emperor is able to effect a union between his interests and those of the nation, cemented by a common spirit of patriotism. Only such a harmony of interests, suggested the author, will prevent national unity from again disintegrating into a mass of anti-egalitarian distinctions.\textsuperscript{79}

Other writers adopted a more optimistic tone, whether out of genuine faith or in order to curry favor: “Of somber despotism/he abjures his error,/Felicitous patriotism/Alone reigns in his heart.”\textsuperscript{80} They interpreted Napoleon’s promises of reform as the dawning of a new era in France’s political history, one that would finally cement the gains of the Revolution by establishing the esprit public as the guiding principle of French politics. One anonymous writer flattered Napoleon with “a genius too vast not to appreciate both our needs and his own; he saw that for our happiness and his security, he must return to us that esprit public that the Revolution gave us, and which waned during the last years of his reign.” The essayist seemed to suggest that the Empire was something of an aberration, a deviation from the natural development of a free and patriotic nation set in motion by the Revolution. Having learned from his past errors, he implied, Napoleon would now return to his revolutionary roots. Upon returning to France in March 1815, “his first order of business was to return to our ideals, to bind us


\textsuperscript{80} Honneur et patrie; point de guerre (Paris: Chez les marchands de nouveautés, April 1815), 1.
to the *patrie*, and thus to himself. These institutions are no longer vain promises, since we enjoyed them before, and gave up some of our rights for them. Henceforth, we will be invincible, and foreigners will never again violate the sacred soil of our cherished *patrie*.”

Writers during the Hundred Days thus also resurrected the revolutionary principle of fraternity, predicating France’s ability to defend itself against the foreign menace on the strength of national unity. They attributed the Bourbon regime’s weakness vis-à-vis the rest of Europe above all on its divisiveness, its tendency to fracture the nation by representing the interests of only a small minority of the French people. A “chant national” circulating in March 1815 triumphantly bid the Bourbons farewell, declaring France’s independence from their double yoke of feudalism and foreign influence.

Taking as its refrain, “Napoleon is with us,” the song’s lyrics celebrated his return as a renaissance of revolutionary fraternity and patriotism:

Napoleon is with us!
We embrace each other like fools:
We are brothers, you see!
’89 shines!
The great family
*Finally pure*, marches to the rendezvous.
Napoleon is with us!

Another songwriter put it more simply: “Forget parties,/We are invincible/When we are united.”

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On the surface, this “nation-talk” that permeated so much political commentary during the Hundred Days appears to be empty rhetoric, an instinctual repetition of hackneyed ideas and phrases drawn from the revolutionary catechism. What did it really mean to be a “national” monarch? Napoleon might take a lesson from the Bourbons, suggested Réal, who cared only for the profit and aggrandizement of themselves and the parasitic class of Old Regime aristocrats. “Since their return, public works have everywhere ceased. Laborers find themselves without resources. Domestic commerce is less active than ever before, and foodstuffs are at such a low price that farmers are entirely unable to meet their requisite production levels while tending to their own needs. Such is the happy state of affairs produced by the return of the Bourbons.” In fact, he argued, Napoleon need only look to his own history for instruction as to the importance of aligning himself with the national will. For Réal attributed the triumph of the Bourbons and their foreign Allies not to their own strength but to an error on the part of Napoleon, who, intoxicated by his own victories and prosperity, “in imprudently separating his interests from ours, himself extinguished the sacred fire of patriotism.” This discord polarized opinion in France; the army, although it remained loyal, was too devastated by recent losses to be of much use. The people, on the other hand, remained largely indifferent; “but if in 1814, he had been the man of the patrie, as he is in 1815,” they would doubtless have rallied to his cause and spared him a humiliating defeat. Nonetheless, suggested Réal, all that is behind us now. Now the issue is not the security of one man but the rights of the people; “it is a purely constitutional power that the government claims today; in a word, Napoleon’s cause is that of all Frenchmen.”

83 Honneur et patrie, 1.
France needs is not a family who have proven themselves opposed to the national will, but a leader who, “convinced of the imprescriptible right of peoples, in allying his interests to ours, also attaches his fortunes to ours. We need a leader who sees no greater grandeur than the glory and prosperity of those who have placed him at their head.”

Réal also eloquently underscored the fundamental anachronism that was the Bourbon Restoration. “The Frenchman of today is not a man of the twelfth century,” he wrote; “he has other mores and requires different laws.” To Réal and other political commentators in 1815, the Bourbons represented an ancient French past that was irreconcilable with the post-revolutionary reality. “Offended by a glorious past in which they had taken no part, they banished everything that could recall that past to memory. Guided by this odious motive, they relinquished all of our conquests and tried to destroy those noble sentiments that placed us with pride at the head of all nations. Unable to raise themselves up to the level of the French people, they sought to debase them in order to erase the humiliating contrast between the nation’s glory and their own baseness.”

Thus, Réal seemed to imply, the conflict between the Bourbons and their opponents was really a contest over memory and the rewriting of French history, a contest that ended with Napoleon’s return to power. By publicly abandoning his former reluctance to embrace his revolutionary heritage, Napoleon resolved the tension between a “glorious past” and the present. In sanctioning the revival of revolutionary rhetoric, he may have also paved the way for a reconciliation with some of those men who had most vociferously opposed the creation of the Empire.

84 Réal, À qui les Bourbons doivent-ils imputer leurs revers, 29-30, 57-59, 66.
85 Ibid., 29-33.
“A Harmony of Interests”

The unlikely alliance between liberals, republicans, and Bonapartists that developed after 1814 and persisted up through the Revolution of 1830 has been much remarked upon by historians, and it remains a matter of debate whether this alliance was simply a pragmatic measure or based on a more substantial common ideology. What is certain, however, is that the Hundred Days was the crucial moment in forging this alliance. One of its earliest manifestations was the federative movement, formed in the spring of 1815 in response to the growing threat of both foreign invasion and royalist uprisings. Seeking to unite all enemies of the Bourbons under a common banner by finding the lowest common denominator among discontents from various political and social milieux, the fédérés created what R.S. Alexander calls “Revolutionary Bonapartism,” a fusion ideology that emphasized continuity between the principles of 1789 and the Empire.86 Napoleon enjoyed the support of many different political groups, among whom anti-Bourbon sentiment was coupled with a shared commitment to the principle of national sovereignty, a rejection of social privileges and distinctions, and French independence from foreign influence.87 This fusion ideology permeated the political discourse of the Hundred Days, and owed much of its architecture to men of republican leanings.

The personal history of Pierre-François Giraud, a man with a considerable revolutionary pedigree, illustrates one path that led former republicans down the

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87 Alexander, Re-Writing the French Revolutionary Tradition, 64.
Napoleonic road in March 1815. Born at Baequeville in Normandy in 1764, Giraud was originally intended for an ecclesiastical career and joined the Cistercians at a young age. After the suppression of religious orders in 1790, Giraud threw himself into the revolutionary fray and allied himself with the Montagnards, employed in the offices of the Committee of General Security and later as a government censor under the Directory. He vigorously opposed the coup of 18 Brumaire, for which he was sentenced to deportation along with roughly seventy former Terrorists and other Jacobin stalwarts who resisted Napoleon’s seizure of power. Although the order was later revoked, Giraud now found his employment prospects in civil service rather dim and turned instead to the literary arts for a career. By 1811, he appears to have come to some sort of terms with the imperial regime, using the birth of Napoleon II as an occasion to advertise his literary talents in a sugary ode to the King of Rome. But it wasn’t until 1815 that Giraud seems to have fully embraced Napoleon’s cause, less because of any evident Bonapartism, but rather because of his persistent faith in the revolutionary principle of representative government. Specifically, he questioned the validity of the Senate’s actions during the first week of April 1814, when it arbitrarily deposed the emperor, established a Provisional Government, and refused to accept Napoleon’s abdication in favor of his son, instead restoring Louis XVIII to the throne. These actions, argued Giraud, lacked national consent, for “no other segment of the French people, constitutionally assembled – neither the legislative corps, which was incomplete and whose representative prerogatives were too obscure and too restricted by the imperial constitutions anyway, nor still less the army and the national guard mobilized in defense of the patrie – none of

these parties who are integral to the nation assented to either the deposition of Napoleon and his descendants or the new social pact by which the French people were supposed to have given the throne to the Bourbon family.” 89 Sharing the opinions of both his contemporaries and later historians, Giraud appeared to believe that the Senate, long accustomed to being told what to do, was simply carrying out the wishes of its new puppet-master, Talleyrand.

Giraud also marshaled the well-worn argument that the Restoration regime served only the interests of the émigrés. Not only was this an odious resurrection of feudal privileges, but it also threatened to excise the vast majority of French citizens from their place within the nation. “One minister, M. Ferrand, declared before the nation’s representatives that the émigrés were the only ones who had followed the right path. By these words alone, 20 million Frenchmen became nothing more than rebels. The entire nation is reduced to nothing but a factional party, and 20 or 30,000 émigrés have taken their place.” Intent on erasing the revolutionary past, the Bourbons delivered over to France’s enemies the very soil paid for by French blood. The same regime that stripped France’s proud soldiers of both their pensions and their decorations had the audacity to publicly commemorate those royalist rebels who had tried to overthrow the revolutionary government in 1795. “A pyramid, erected on the lugubrious beach at Quiberon, will become the pillory where France will eternally hang the memory of what they dare call their rebellion, those who promised to forget everything.” Thus did the Bourbons make use of memory to divide the nation. Napoleon, by contrast, constituted a rallying point

for “the friends of liberty,” and thus guaranteed France’s safety against her foreign enemies.⁹⁰

Louis Dubroca was a self-identified “vieux Républicain” who lent his support to Napoleon during the Hundred Days. Born in the Aquitainian town of Saint-Séver in 1757, Dubroca played no conspicuous role in the Revolution of 1789 and quietly pursued a life dedicated to various literary arts. A professor of elocution and diction in Paris, Dubroca was also a bookseller and authored on a wide variety of subjects, including pedagogy and history, as well as minor verse and drama. His work took a marked political turn in 1814 and especially in 1815; during the Hundred Days alone he published a series of five “discourses” that vehemently condemned the “anti-national” Restoration regime and welcomed the emperor’s return to power in the guise of a reformed despot.⁹¹ Claiming a sort of disinterested patriotism, Dubroca announced his impartiality: “I am neither the instrument of any party nor the blind partisan of any individual. I support anyone who sincerely grants liberty to my country.” He argued vigorously that the ease with which Napoleon was able to regain the throne in March 1815 should not be mistaken for evidence of the nation’s blind faith in him. “France

⁹⁰ Ibid., 37-38, 45.

would have opposed Napoleon with a bronze barrier in favor of the Bourbons” if they had been willing to accept the “new order of things.” Discouraged and abused by the reign of this “degenerate family,” France put its faith in Napoleon and his promises to respect personal liberties, to maintain national honor, and to guarantee their rights by force of law. To those who doubted Napoleon’s good intentions, Dubroca suggested that the emperor must surely have been humbled by his fall in 1814, recognizing that there was little more to be gained from abuse of power. “We believe him because the fortunes of his throne and of his dynasty are essentially linked to the maintenance of our liberties…he is no stranger to our institutions, our mores, our civilization.”

Acknowledging the apparent incongruity of simultaneously laying claim to both republican and Napoleonic allegiances, Dubroca explained how he was able to reconcile the two, proving himself capable of the sort of ideological flexibility that this alliance demanded. For he defined republicanism rather expansively as “the courageous profession of virtue,” pledging its adherents to uphold “invariable principles of justice, devotion and fidelity to the patrie, hatred towards all forms of oppression, and the courage to defend liberty against despotism” while maintaining a healthy respect for the lawful exercise of a justly constituted power. Although he had hoped to one day see a republic reestablished in France, he recognized that it was far too soon to attempt such a thing, since the vast majority of French people believed that form of government to be incompatible with the national temperament. But for Dubroca, Napoleon’s promises of reform during the Hundred Days constituted an acceptable alternative. “I believed in the

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92 Dubroca, Troisième discours, 8-10, 23.
wedding between republican principles and institutions of monarchy, and I feared not to call myself the Old Republican.  

The Old Republican sketched his project for a constitutional Napoleonic regime in a “political catechism,” which echoed both the spirit of 1789 in its impetus to reform abuses of power as well as the more aggressively nationalist stance of the Revolution’s later years. Drawing heavily on the Constitution of 1791 and cloaking his propositions in the familiar language of national sovereignty and the general will, Dubroca envisioned a system in which legislative power would be exercised by duly elected representatives of the people – “the most noble, most honorable, and most holy that man can possibly hope to be” – under the benevolent aegis of Napoleon as the nation’s “premier magistrate.” The Restoration’s attempt at constitutional monarchy was a failure, he implied, because its tripartite division of legislative power, a system “which took root in England when feudalism still existed in force,” reversed the natural order. Laws in and of themselves being insufficient to guarantee France’s prosperity and security, Dubroca called on his compatriots in good Jacobin fashion to sacrifice their self-interests and banish “l’esprit de parti” in favor of national unity, which alone could render the patrie formidable in the face of both foreign invasion and civil dissensions.

Dubroca also wedded this “nation-talk” to the defensive reflex gripping the French nation in fear of an imminent invasion, transforming the war to defend France’s natural frontiers to one for independence. “Should war begin again, it will be terrible and decisive because it will be national; no force in the world can break the resistance of a

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93 Dubroca, Cinquième discours, 3-4.
94 Ibid., 6-54.
people who fight on their own ground for their independence and their liberty.”

Attempting to justify what many perceived to be France’s shameful lack of patriotic resistance to the invasion of 1814, he made recourse to the common and convenient explanation that France had been “sold” by traitors. Napoleon, so often victorious in battle, found no one he could depend on; “the nation was unaware that in defending its borders it was also defending its liberty, and this incertitude froze our hearts. Today all this has changed…certain of fighting at one and the same time for its honor and its rights, the French nation is deploying all of its might.” Dubroca strategically appealed to those who had reason to feel themselves wronged by the Restoration regime – to soldiers who saw their forced inactivity and degradations in rank and pay as a deliberate affront to the their honor; to the purchasers of biens nationaux, who saw their property rights threatened by returning émigrés intent on recovering their ancestral lands; to the “friends of liberal ideas,” who feared the revival of religious fanaticism; to peasants and agricultural laborers whose livelihood was threatened not only by the “passage of the barbarian hordes from the North” but by the feudal impulses of old nobles.96

Dubroca elaborated on the theme of independence in his *Fourth Discourse*. To be sure, he, like many others, demanded first and foremost a violent revenge for France’s humiliation. “If the battle to which you have been so imprudently provoked should come to pass, the first thing the patrie asks of you is to wash clean our national honor in the blood of your aggressors.” But the impending war was not just about exacting vengeance for the outrages committed against French honor, he warned. Rather, it promised to be a

95 Dubroca, *Quatrième discours*, 22.

fight for France’s very existence. For France faced a grand conspiracy hatched by her enemies, both domestic and foreign, to wipe her from the ranks of sovereign nations, a plot dating back more than twenty years to the time when France first declared itself free from the chains of Old Regime tyranny. The émigrés were, in fact, the instigators of the conspiracy, dispatching their agents throughout Europe and exhorting the crowned representatives of the old order to arm themselves against the French Republic. The First Restoration, with its attendant fanaticism, was the rotten fruit of this “odious system.”

By fanning the flames of old hatreds and reinstituting a feudal regime of privilege, the Bourbons sought to weaken France by instigating civil war and thus prepare her for the final blow, which would be dealt by the Allies. The Congress of Vienna, where French interests were deliberately ignored, furnished proof of these nefarious intentions. But Napoleon’s miraculous return from Elba, “applauded by all friends of the patrie and of liberty,” threw a wrench into their plans to strip France of her status as an independent nation. Above all, they feared that a renascent France would awaken the desire for liberty across all of Europe.  

Dubroca thus also revived the idea of a universal struggle against despotism, an idea that became especially pronounced in revolutionary discourse after the French Republic embarked on a more aggressively expansionist policy vis-à-vis its neighbors. Although Napoleon had also made use of this rhetoric in his early campaigns, it became more muted as he distanced himself publicly more and more from his revolutionary heritage. But the Hundred Days provided him the opportunity and the incentive to pose on the right side of history and assume the mantle of liberator of peoples. For as Dubroca

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suggested, the settlements reached at the Congress of Vienna threatened to set the clock back by a half century and restore the Old Regime.

Look at the whole of Europe, and everywhere you see the seeds of national dissension, spread by these same kings who seem to have wanted to halt Napoleon’s encroachments upon the peoples of the continent only in order to exercise all the more freely their resurgent personal ambitions. These great reformers of Europe, who, in their congress, should have established the basis for a universal peace and reestablished equilibrium, have instead sacrificed their commitments and their promises to the aggrandizement of their own respective states and personal power. They have divided up peoples like beasts of burden, counting them by head…Colossal powers have erected themselves upon this debris left by the rights of peoples, and threaten Europe with inevitable servitude.  

Europe is a volcano, he announced; already in Italy, Spain, Norway, Saxony, Poland, Belgium, and elsewhere one can hear the rumblings that herald future political revolutions. Everywhere people who suffer the shame of partition and foreign domination are awaiting France’s example. “All oppressed nations are auxiliaries of one another, a secret league unites them against tyrants, and victory will surely crown their efforts sooner or later.” Dubroca thus linked France’s struggle against Bourbon tyranny with liberal and nationalist stirrings throughout Europe, ignoring the obvious paradox that it was the depredations of Napoleonic conquest that had unleashed those very movements.

While Dubroca peppered his rhetoric with implicit references to the revolutionary past, another “old liberal,” Marc-Antoine Jullien, explicitly marshaled the force of history to build his case for Napoleon. Jullien secured a bureaucratic position in the service of the Commissioner of War in 1792 at the tender age of seventeen, thanks to his excellent


performance in school and the influence of his father, a deputy to the National
Convention. Later appointed a commissioner of the Committee of Public Safety, he
distinguished himself by his great revolutionary fervor, frequently arguing that it was
necessary to “make the Revolution loveable in order to make people love it.” He had the
courage to protest the atrocities committed at Nantes during the Reign of Terror by
Carrier, who returned the favor by denouncing Jullien as Robespierre’s protégé in the
aftermath of Thermidor. Jullien again found himself in hot water with the powers-that-be
when Napoleon asked him to author a piece justifying the Brumaire coup. The result,
*Political Inquiry into the Views and Interests of the New Government*, in which he
advised the First Consul to conserve liberal institutions, displeased Napoleon and Jullien
was forced to remove himself from Paris. Nonetheless, he continued to find employment
in the Department of War under the imperial regime. Denounced by the restored
Bourbon regime as a Bonapartist, he retired to Switzerland in 1814 and later failed to get
himself elected to the legislative chamber during the Hundred Days. The beginning of
the Second Restoration marked the end of his political career, and the beginning of a
prolific journalistic career. He went on to become a founder of the influential liberal
opposition journal *l’Indépendent*, the *Constitutionnel*, as well as the *Revue
encylopédique*.

In May 1815, Jullien authored a pamphlet entitled, *The Conciliator, or, the
Seventh Epoch; call to Frenchmen. Impartial considerations on the political situation
and the true interests of France*, choosing to remain anonymous and identifying himself
only as “a Frenchman, friend of the patrie and of peace, member of an electoral college.”
Claiming absolute impartiality, he wrote, “I find it superfluous to place my name at the
head of this text; I represent no party and no man, but France and all of humanity.”

Jullien recapitulated the familiar idiom of a nation united before a common enemy.

There is at present, he wrote, a single goal that unites all French citizens, and that is “to finish the Revolution once and for all, to escape this vicious cycle in which anarchy and despotism seek to enclose us. Above all else to defend the sacred soil of the patrie, to repulse those foreign bayonets that spell death for all Frenchmen, regardless of political opinion or party.”

Jullien’s treatise was permeated by a cyclical view of history and the sense of a revolution unfinished. Jullien divided the history of the French Revolution into “six great failed epochs.” The hopes raised by the First Epoch, from the convocation of the Estates General to the National Convention, so full of promise and patriotic fervor, were promptly dashed by the chaos of the Second Epoch of 1793-94, when factionalism and tyrannical impulses unleashed the desire for vengeance among all quarters. The Third Epoch, marked by the Constitution of Year V, “offered a rallying point and safe harbor.” But the Directory proved itself weak and corrupt, prompting the failure of yet another revolutionary epoch. Then, “a man of genius appeared, preceded by an immense military glory. He anchored the confidence of the people and army, and the phantom of the Directory disappeared before him.” How can we account for this historical phenomenon, asked Jullien; how did this general achieve such a meteoric rise to power in 1799, virtually uncontested and with what appeared to be the unanimous consent of the nation?

In order to fully appreciate the historical circumstances surrounding the coup of 18

Brumaire, he said, we might well imagine the following dialogue between Napoleon and the French people:

1. “Have we not been ill-governed?” And all France responded, “Yes.”
2. “Is it not necessary then to change the government?” An affirmative response was the general cry.
3. “Given the factional struggles and vicissitudes of the Revolution, isn’t a sort of dictatorship indispensable to reassure the destinies of France, and provide a stable foundation for public liberty? All Frenchmen, republicans and the more austere alike, responded, “That is true.”
4. “This dictatorship, of which you grasp the necessity, shouldn’t it be entrusted to a man of great character, of French and republican ranks, who has already given proof of his talents and his genius, who enjoys great confidence in French public opinion as well as a great reputation among foreign nations, who has given positive guarantees of defending with honor the flags of the Republic, who, even if he is not entirely a stranger to these internal crises, only by virtue of his glory and brilliant triumphs over our enemies abroad?” A unanimous assent served as response.

Buried in a footnote to this dialogue lies the force of Jullien’s rhetoric. These same four questions, he explained, if posed to the French people in March 1815, would garner the exact same responses. Therein lies the explanation for Napoleon’s seemingly miraculous return to power, which was only accomplished with the help of the French people, “who need a dynasty resolved to sanction in good faith all the principal results of the Revolution. The same national will demands in 1815, as it did in 1789 and in 1800, a free constitution, a constitutional leader, a representative government, liberty, security, and tranquility, guaranteed by force of law.” In essence, then, the Hundred Days provided Napoleon with a unique opportunity to do it all over again, and get it right.

Returning to his analysis of the Revolution’s history, Jullien characterized the Fourth Epoch, ushered in by the Consulate and the Constitution of Year VIII, as almost perfect. But revolutionary passions, as yet inextinguished, still threatened to undermine

101 Ibid., 7-10.
the government’s authority, leading to demands for an even more stable regime in place of this “precarious and absolute dictatorship.” Thus, the Fourth Epoch gave way to the Fifth, that of the Empire, which could have been a “decisive and reparative” era. The prolonged unrest of the Revolution had succeeded in uniting disparate elements of the French polity, convincing everyone of their common and unanimous need for peace and repose. Napoleon had the best intentions of guaranteeing this security, but provoked to war constantly by foreign enemies, especially by perfidious Albion, and led astray by vile flatterers, he fell prey to self-interested and despotic impulses. He tragically allowed himself to forget the inimitable truth that “power is but a means, never an end, in the hands of the head of state: the end is the prosperity of the patrie,” thus himself depriving his regime of its raison d’etre. Recognizing that his reign could only prolong a war in which the odds were heavily stacked against France, Napoleon abdicated, ushering in the Sixth Epoch, “the recall of Louis XVIII, reinstalled by England,” not, Jullien implied, by the will of the French people.¹⁰²

The reasons for Sixth Epoch’s failure were so numerous that Jullien felt compelled to devote an entire chapter, nearly thirty pages, to the “numerous faults” of the Bourbons and their “ephemeral reign.” The Restoration, in Jullien’s opinion, might very well have succeeded. If Louis XVIII had devoted himself to serving the needs of the majority of the French people, instead of sacrificing their interests to those of a “feeble faction, composed of old nobles, priests, émigrés, Vendéens, and Chouans, protected exclusively by his family and his ministers,” he could have established a stable and enduring regime on the basis of a “national pact, debated and consented to by two

¹⁰² Ibid., 11-13.
legislative chambers legally constituted.” Instead, he issued his “pretend charter” in the guise of a royal ordinance, making a mockery of constitutional principles, respected, moreover, by neither the king nor his ministers. Jullien went on to enumerate the regime’s violations of specific articles of the Charter and other mistakes, most of which, in his mind, betrayed the government’s intention to launch a full-fledged Counter-Revolution. Jullien, like many of his contemporaries who prided themselves on the Revolution’s achievements in the realm of national sovereignty, was outraged by Louis’ insistence on dating 1814 as the nineteenth year of his reign and styling himself King of France and Navarre rather than of the French. The regime proved itself reactionary by trampling freedom of the press and of religion, restoring clerical influence in public instruction, and refusing to guarantee the rights of purchasers of biens nationaux. The spirit of Counter-Revolution also revealed itself in the purges conducted in bureaucratic and military personnel, which appeared to privilege émigrés and old nobles.103

But above all, Louis XVIII was guilty of rendering France a vassal to foreign powers by signing a humiliating treaty that sacrificed France’s “natural and necessary frontiers” of the Rhine and the Alps. In so doing, he “foreswore the conquests made in his absence as null and void; he wanted nothing but ancient France, which he believed himself to be re-entering, like a landlord in his domain. The Bourbons returned chez eux, and not chez nous: that is the true cause for their expulsion. All Frenchmen, soldiers and civilians alike, viewed with profound humiliation and an indignation they could scarce contain this abandonment of provinces conquered with the price of their blood, obtained with the greatest sacrifices, and necessary to counter-balance to expansion of so many

103 Ibid., 13-14, 18-35. On purges in bureaucratic and military personnel, see Chapter 2 below.
In perpetuating so many injuries against French honor and self-esteem, the Bourbons proved themselves enemies of the people and precipitated their own downfall.

Jullien was confident that the Seventh Epoch, initiated by Napoleon’s return to power in March 1815, would profit from the lessons provided by the previous “six great failed epochs.” Unlike the First Epoch, failed because of an imperfect union between the king and his people, “today, the Nation and its leader have the same goal and the same view: the independence and prosperity of the patrie.” Whereas freedom of opinion was brutally repressed under the Reign of Terror, a reformed Napoleon will henceforth temper his own prerogatives with “sage moderation,” and “leave opinion to its own free development.” In contrast to the feeble and vacillating government of the Directory, the new imperial politics will find strength in national unity that transcends factional differences. The Consulate was brought low by the persistence of revolutionary passions and hatreds; today we are wiser, Jullien suggested, the protracted revolutionary troubles have instructed us in the need for unanimity and mutual confidence. Similarly, “the errors and misfortunes of [the Empire] are a guarantee against their return.” The political principles of the Seventh Epoch are to renounce wars of conquest, defend French territory, respect the independence of other nations, “if they respect ours,” and to refrain from meddling in the affairs of foreign governments. In short, Jullien renounced, on behalf of Napoleon, the whole of the imperial enterprise.¹⁰⁵

¹⁰⁴ Ibid., 17-18.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid., 44-48.
Jullien viewed the present as a unique historical moment. The Seventh Epoch, in essence, had the potential to both bring to a close and transcend the “vicious circle” of the Revolution’s history by reclaiming its “primitive direction, to reform the abuses of the old regime.” The Revolution could only come to an end by achieving its grand aim of establishing a national and constitutional government, which is precisely how Jullien characterized Napoleon’s reformed regime. In the penultimate chapter, titled “Of the Revolution’s Definitive Result. Common View of Good Frenchmen,” Jullien argued that France needed someone who could finish the Revolution by healing the rift produced in 1789. On one side of the rift were those citizens who “took an active and direct part in the Revolution and War of Liberation,” anxious to preserve their hard-fought rights and glory. On the other were those who remembered the Revolution as a period of suffering, and who feared the renewal of proscription and dispossession unleashed twice by revolutionary terror and royalist reaction. The first group of citizens tended towards ideas grounded in political liberty and equality and the fundamental principle of national sovereignty, the second towards ideas, “no less necessary,” of proprietary rights, security, and centralized government. Thus, a reconciliation could be achieved by fusing together two apparently contradictory principles – Order and Liberty – an idea that would become central to the Bonapartist creed by the time of the Second Empire.  

Later that same year, after Louis XVIII was reinstalled on his throne for a second time, another piece by Jullien appeared in print, throwing into question his enthusiastic response to the Hundred Days as the “Seventh Epoch” of the Revolution. Penned in October 1813 and titled The Conservator of Europe, it was intended for Tsar Alexander

106 Ibid., 49, 90-93.
and “a grand prince, his ally, whom the author of this memoir long predicted would be
the liberators of France and of Europe.” Suspected of spreading sedition against the
emperor, Jullien was interrogated by the police and his treatise never reached its intended
destination. If only the author had succeeded in making his ideas known in October
1813, the editor lamented, Europe would have been spared “the convulsive agony
prolonged by the tyrannical reign of Buonaparte [sic].” Now, from the perspective of the
Second Restoration, the memoir served as “a sort of historic monument,” proof of the
desire of the vast majority of French people for peace in 1813.

The Conciliator thus appears at first glance as a dramatic volte-face from the opinions that Jullien espoused in
the waning years of the Empire, and presumably still held after Napoleon’s final fall at
Waterloo. But there was a common thread in Jullien’s political thought, from the
Brumaire coup to the Hundred Days, and that was his insistence on national sovereignty
and representative government. He was willing to accept Napoleon’s authority in May
1815 precisely because he believed, or wanted to believe, Napoleon’s promises to uphold
those principles.

Giraud, Dubroca, and Jullien might all well have been just another handful of the
many girouettes who populated the political landscape during the turbulent years of
1789-1815, men of malleable opinions who were able to mold their allegiances in
accordance with the ever-shifting winds of public opinion and political power.

107 Jullien, Le Conservateur de l’Europe, ou Considérations sur la situation actuelle de
l’Europe, ed. A. de Clendi, (n.d.), 3-4. Edited by de Clendi, and published along with
several other pieces of anti-Napoleonic literature, Jullien’s name does not appear
anywhere in the 1815 printing.

108 Giraud’s other titles are especially telling in this regard, and certainly indicate a more
hostile attitude towards Napoleon while the Bourbons were in power. Campagne de
Paris en 1814, précédée d’un coup d’œil sur celle de 1813, ou Précis historique et
Nonetheless, their rhetoric demonstrates the profound influence that “nation-talk”
exercised in forging alliances among unlikely bedfellows. Thus, in the words of Jullien’s
editor, their work might also be seen as “a sort of historic monument” to the Hundred
Days, to the period in which liberals, republicans, and Bonapartists first learned to
collaborate with one another. Their discourse testifies to the flexibility of political
ideology, especially in times of crisis; united by their opposition to what was perceived as
a common enemy – the Bourbons, they found creative ways to reconcile their republican
and revolutionary heritage with the prospect of a restored, and reformed, Empire.

Conclusion

Throughout Napoleon’s reign, his opponents on both the right and the left
challenged his political legitimacy by virtue of his Corsican heritage. Despite the fact
that Napoleon was indeed born a French citizen, Genoa having ceded Corsica to France
in 1768, his detractors found a means of invalidating his qualité de Français in
eighteenth-century ideas about the relationship between national character and political
institutions. Philosophical interest in the phenomenon of national “genius” or “character”
figured prominently in Enlightenment thought, Shaftesbury, Bolingbroke, and

impartial des événements, depuis l'invasion de la France par les armées étrangères
jusques à la capitulation de Paris, la déchéance et l'abdication de Buonaparte
inclusivement (Paris: A. Eymery, 1814); Histoire générale des prisons sous le règne de
Buonaparte, avec des anecdotes curieuses et intéressantes (Paris: A. Eymery, 1814);
Précis des journées des 15, 16, 17 et 18 juin 1815, ou Fin de la vie politique de Napoléon

109 This rhetoric also resurfaced in anti-Napoleonic historiography of the later nineteenth
libraires, 1865); Edgar Quinet, La Révolution (Paris: Lacroix, 1865); Pierre Lanfrey,
Histoire de Napoléon Ier (Paris: Charpentier, 1867-1875); and Hippolyte Taine, Les
origines de la France contemporaine (Paris: Hachette, 1876-1894).
Montesquieu being among the earliest to devote their attention to this issue. But the
voices of the *philosophes*, although the most audible, were not the only ones to be heard
contributing to the discussion; concern with national character generated a remarkable
quantity of writing in the eighteenth century, from treatises to travelogues.\textsuperscript{110} The eager
investigation of national character led to the articulation of national differences, the
identification of unique cultural or ethnic characteristics that were believed to be unique
to each national culture.\textsuperscript{111} Influenced first and foremost by Montesquieu, conventional
eighteenth-century wisdom viewed the inhabitants of each nation as stamped with an
indelible character shaped by the climate and geography of the land they inhabit.

But it was Rousseau who fully politicized the notion of national character, by
making it central to the political life of a community and using it as the basis of programs
for national regeneration.\textsuperscript{112} Unlike some of his more cosmopolitan-minded
contemporaries, Rousseau insisted on the cultivation of unique national, rather than
European, characters. In both the *Constitutional Project for Corsica* (1765) and the
*Considerations on the Government of Poland* (1772), Rousseau emphasized the
importance of national individuality as the first rule of nation-building. He viewed
cosmopolitanism as profoundly flawed, insofar as it attempted to sublimate national

\textsuperscript{110} David A. Bell, *The Cult of the Nation in France: Inventing Nationalism, 1680-1800*

\textsuperscript{111} Such stereotypes were pervasive enough to merit inclusion in the *Encyclopédie*. In the
article on *nation* (1765), Jaucourt listed the following examples: “frivolous like a
Frenchman, jealous like an Italian, grave like a Spaniard, nasty like an Englishman,
shrewd like a Scot, drunk like a German, lazy like an Irishman, deceitful like a Greek.”
Jacques Godechot, “Nation, patrie, nationalisme et patriotisme en France au XVIIIe

\textsuperscript{112} Anthony Smith, *National Identity: Ethnonationalism in Comparative Perspective*
differences into a uniform European culture.\textsuperscript{113} Thus, Peter the Great’s fundamental error was that “he wanted to make Germans and Englishmen, when he should have made Russians.”\textsuperscript{114} Instead, the ideal legislator ought to create national laws and institutions that not only reflect national character, but also have the power to reinforce and mold the “genius, the character, the tastes and manners of a people.”\textsuperscript{115} This criticism of imitation as artificial and unnatural was also a crucial element in the nationalist philosophy of the German post-Kantian writers, including Herder and Fichte, who argued that the existence of nations was predicated on the maintenance of unique, original, and inviolable national character, or Volksgeist.\textsuperscript{116}

Germaine de Staël, for many years one of Napoleon’s most implacable foes, frequently made recourse to this rhetoric in Ten Years of Exile. Ostensibly a memoir, it was in reality an impassioned protest against her proscription and one of the most eloquent and informed pieces of contemporary anti-Napoleonic propaganda. She argued that her forced exile was unjust because it was decreed “by order of a man less French than I, for I was born on the banks of the Seine where he is naturalized by his tyranny alone. He saw the light of day on the isle of Corsica, where the brutal temperature of Africa already makes itself felt… the air of [France] is not his native air.” For Staël, Napoleon was a foreigner not only by virtue of his heritage, but in his character as well.


\textsuperscript{114} Rousseau, On the Social Contract, Book II, Chapter VIII, in Basic Political Writings (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing, 1987), 166

\textsuperscript{115} Rousseau, “Government of Poland,” 168.

“You might have thought that Providence, to punish the French for misusing their splendid qualities, was subjecting the nation most remarkable for its grace and sense of chivalry to the man most alien to that charm and that quality.”

Chateaubriand likewise denounced Napoleon as a foreigner in his 1814 diatribe, *De Buonaparte, des Bourbons, et de la nécessité de se rallier à nos princes légitimes*. Chateaubriand devoted the bulk of this polemic to arguments that Napoleon, falsely credited with enhancing the glory and prestige of France, actually did nothing but harm. Time and again Napoleon proved himself to be of a nature antithetical to that of the nation by exhibiting the vices of treason and ingratitude, which were unknown to a true Frenchman. “The time has come, I hope, for free Frenchmen declare by a solemn act that they took no part in these crimes of tyranny; that the murder of the duc d’Enghien, the captivity of the pope, and the war in Spain were impious, sacrilegious, odious, and above all anti-French acts, the shame of which falls on the head of that foreigner alone.” His “Oriental” style of despotism was wholly unsuited to the government of a free people. Moreover, Napoleon was French in neither his character nor his manners; his accent, his name, and even his “visage” betrayed his foreign origins. Chateaubriand demanded that the French renounce their foolish loyalty to this foreigner, and recognize the legitimacy of Louis XVIII, a prince “born of our blood, raised among us, who we know and who knows us, who shares our manners, tastes, and habits.”

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118 François-René de Chateaubriand, *De Buonaparte, des Bourbons*, 11-13, 67-68, 71. Chateaubriand falsified, either deliberately or accidentally, the date of Napoleon’s birth as 5 February 1768, thus rendering it anterior to France’s acquisition of Corsica.
Opposition literature of the early Restoration period turned these rhetorical tables against the Bourbons themselves. Even before Louis XVIII and his court made their second return to Paris “in the baggage train of foreigners,” anti-Bourbon invective vehemently condemned the regime as anti-French and anti-national. By concluding a humiliating peace with the Allies and pursuing a policy of peace with Europe, the Bourbons were excoriated in France as pawns of the nation’s foreign enemies. The small but vocal minority of ultra-royalist émigrés who loudly demanded retribution for the wrongs did to them during the Revolution did nothing to help Louis XVIII’s popularity. But perhaps most detrimental of all was his failure to convincingly speak in the language of “nation-talk.” For all his attempts at reconciliation with the great mass of French people alienated from the Bourbons by the great revolutionary divide, Louis frustrated his own efforts by persisting in cloaking his authority in the pre-revolutionary trappings of dynastic legitimacy and royal prerogative.

The discourse of the Hundred Days established the main terms of pro-Napoleonic literature for the next several decades. The sacred doctrine of France’s natural frontiers would remain a central tenet of the Napoleonic creed, and in fact gained a great deal of momentum in the aftermath of the debacle at Waterloo. The Second Treaty of Paris, signed on November 20, 1815, was far more exacting than the 1814 settlement. French territorial boundaries were reduced to those of January 1790, and a war indemnity of 700 million francs was imposed, to be paid over the next five years. Moreover, France would bear the cost of supporting 150,000 foreign troops that were to occupy territory along the northern and eastern frontiers for up to five years. By the beginning of September 1815, there were already over 1,200,000 foreign troops occupying French territory in nearly
sixty departments, at a cost estimated by Castlereaugh at 1,750,000 francs per day.\textsuperscript{119} Although most of these troops would leave France by the end of 1815, billeting had already taken its toll on the population. For the first time, France was subjected to the pillage and destruction that her own armies had regularly practiced with impunity under the Empire. Allied troops went above and beyond the sanctioned requisitions of food and clothing, destroying crops, robbing and burning private property, and assaulting women. Resentment was particularly acute along the eastern borders of France, areas that bore the full brunt of occupying forces; in Alsace alone, 40,000 troops were stationed between 1815 and 1818.\textsuperscript{120} Moreover, France now found herself hemmed in by a \textit{cordon sanitaire} of buffer states along her borders. To the north, Belgium was incorporated with Holland into the Kingdom of the United Netherlands. Most of the Italian peninsula was placed firmly under Austrian control, while the Piedmontese-Sardinian kingdom was enlarged to include Genoa, Nice, and Savoy, measures that were intended to prevent further French interference in Italy. To the east, the Allies hoped to contain France by confirming Swiss neutrality and giving Prussia control of the Rhineland from the Dutch frontier south to Koblenz.

France also found itself isolated diplomatically by the 1815 settlements. On the same day that the Second Peace of Paris was signed, the four major powers concluded the Treaty of Defensive Alliance. The Quadruple Alliance, as it came to be known, effectively renewed the terms of the 1814 Treaty of Chaumont, by which Austria, Russia, Prussia, and Britain pledged mutual resistance against French aggression. But it was the


\textsuperscript{120} Jardin and Tudesq, \textit{Restoration and Reaction}, 304.
formation of the Holy Alliance among Austria, Russia, and Prussia that became the real target of French vitriol. Inspired by the pronounced mysticism of Tsar Alexander, the Holy Alliance ostensibly bound its signatories to frame their diplomatic policies in accordance with Christian ethical principles. In reality, the Alliance became under Metternich’s deft direction a tool for securing monarchical interests against revolutionary impulses throughout Europe. A stark representation of the forces of reaction, the Holy Alliance made it even easier for Napoleon’s liberal apologists to pose him by contrast as the legitimate heir to the principles of 1789.  

As a result of the duc de Richelieu’s skillful negotiations, the number of occupation troops was reduced from 150,000 to 120,000 in April 1817, and they were withdrawn entirely after the minimum period of three years by the Treaty of Aix-la-Chapelle of October 1818. France also managed to pay the indemnity in full by 1820. Nonetheless, the settlements remained a poignant symbol of defeat, humiliation, and wounded national pride for decades to come. Even though Richelieu was successful in obtaining more lenient terms, he was nonetheless deeply shamed by the whole affair, remarking sadly, “As a Frenchman, I deserve to put my head on the scaffold for putting my name to such a treaty.”  

Vehement protests against the treaty, seen as the product of concerted efforts among the Allied powers to hinder French recovery, became a yardstick for measuring patriotism on both ends of the political spectrum. Memories of the

121 J. Lucas-Dubreton, Restoration and the July Monarchy, 14.

122 Quoted in Waresquiel and Yvert, Histoire de la Restauration, 167.

hummiliation suffered because of this treaty would recur periodically over the next several decades, usually at times when France felt itself threatened by foreign enemies of old, entrenching the doctrine of natural frontiers in political discourse. While throughout the Restoration the discourse tended to be a divisive one, determined by those who accepted the boundaries of 1789 and those who didn’t, over time the idea of natural frontiers as France’s ineluctable destiny was accepted on both the right and left and established as a guiding principle of French foreign policy by many of the Revolution’s early historians of the July Monarchy and Third Republic.\textsuperscript{124}

Finally, the image of Napoleon as a liberal emperor and heir to the Revolution, originating in the Hundred Days, would become central to the Napoleonic myth as it developed over the next several decades. The ideological imperative of a “harmony of interests” in particular foreshadowed what would become a primary preoccupation in Restoration political discourse – the emergence of parties. The Restoration period, the crucible of French parliamentary politics, paradoxically witnessed a growing discomfort with the notion of politics itself, an uneasiness that also harkened back to the Revolution and especially to the dark days of the Terror. \textit{Esprit de parti} had no place in what Colin Jones calls the “glacial logic of republican unity,” in which the overblown moral rhetoric of the general will and \textit{amour de la patrie} was supposed to transcend the sectionalism and self-interest associated with political passions.\textsuperscript{125} Throughout the Restoration, whether from the floor of the Chamber of Deputies or across the pages of daily journals and pamphlets, politicians and journalists on both the right and left accused their

\textsuperscript{124} Sahlins, “Natural Frontiers Revisited,” 1448.

opponents of fracturing the national unity by pursuing factional interests. Bitterly
divisive memories of the emigration also persisted throughout the Restoration,
culminating in the acrimonious debates over the Indemnity Bill of 1825. The Empire,
characterized by members of the liberal opposition as a period in which France enjoyed
this “harmony of interests,” would thus become a useful foil to the Second Restoration.
Chapter 2 – “King of two peoples”

Following the first Restoration of the Bourbon monarchy in 1814, Louis XVIII attempted to strengthen the fragile consensus of post-revolutionary France by promoting a spirit of national reconciliation. Article 11 of the Constitutional Charter instituted a policy of oubli by expressly forbidding the investigation of political opinions held prior to the Restoration, in effect legislating collective French amnesia concerning the turbulent events of the preceding twenty-five years. Unlike the more extreme members of the royalist party, the king appeared genuinely committed to a policy of national reconciliation. In a letter to his far more reactionary brother, the comte d’Artois, Louis defended his policies of moderation, promising to reign according to the “maxim that I must not be king of two peoples, and all the efforts of my government are directed towards forming these two peoples into one.”¹²⁶ Nonetheless, reconciliation would be achieved at the price of memory, as suggested by the slogan union et oubli.¹²⁷ The first was contingent upon the second, and reconciliation, it was believed, could only be

¹²⁶ Quoted in Waresquiel and Yvert, Histoire de la Restauration, 229.

¹²⁷ There is some disagreement among Restoration historians about what precisely was meant by the term oubli. For Sheryl Kroen, the Hundred Days rendered any attempt at conciliation impossible. Thus, oubli ultimately came to mean “compulsory forgetting” after 1815. Politics and Theater, 41. For Alan Skuy, union et oubli remained a policy of conciliation from 1814 until the royalist reaction of 1820-21, when the assassination of the duc de Berri made further cooperation between moderate royalists and liberals untenable. Assassination, Politics, and Miracles, 68.
achieved by forgetting, or at least ceasing to acknowledge publicly, the recent revolutionary and imperial past.

Despite Louis XVIII’s pious wish not to be the “king of two peoples,” it soon became clear that France was no longer one and indivisible. It was the entrenchment of divisive memories, perhaps even more than differences in political principles, which precluded true reconciliation under the Restoration. The policy of pursuing reconciliation through forgetting had the opposite effect of reifying divisions in the French polity. These ruptures revealed themselves not only in factional politics, but also in more dramatic fashion in the departure of hundreds of Bonapartist exiles, most of whom found their way to the United States and points further south in the Americas. Rather than trying to fade into the woodworks of American society, most of them maintained a highly conspicuous presence there. In so doing, they proved a useful tool for the liberal opposition, who publicized the exiles’ activities in France as a means of criticizing the reactionary policies of the Second Restoration.

The Politics of Forgetting

In keeping with the original spirit of *union et oubli*, the First Restoration witnessed little in the way of a counter-revolution. Notables of the imperial elite were welcomed at court, if not by the *ancienne noblesse* and the snobs of the faubourg Saint-Germain, at least by the king himself. Despite demands from émigrés that their former properties, sequestered by the revolutionary government, be returned to them, purchasers of *biens nationaux* saw no concerted efforts to infringe upon their rights legally. There were also no widespread purges in the administrative bureaucracy. All members of the
imperial Legislative Corps were automatically granted membership in the Chamber of Deputies. The Chamber of Peers included ten of Napoleon’s marshals and ninety-three imperial Senators, the rest of whom were granted life pensions. According to statistics compiled by Napoleon during the Hundred Days, the Bourbons had replaced only thirty-five percent of the imperial prefectoral personnel in 1814. Former imperial officials comprised sixty percent of the Conseil d’État, ninety-five percent of the Cour des Comptes, and one hundred percent of the Cour de Cassation.

The army was a rather different story. Reduced from 531,675 in April 1814 to 220,000 in December, 300,000 men were demobilized and sent home with pensions. The reorganization left 11-12,000 officers unassigned, all of whom were put on inactive duty on half-pay, thus earning themselves the sobriquet of demi-soldes. Moreover, the budgets for the Legion of Honor and Les Invalides were drastically reduced, while the military schools of Saint-Cyr, Saint-Germain, and La Flèche were closed. Although returning émigrés and other royalist officers did not gain overwhelming advantages in staff changes, these measures convinced Napoleonic veterans that the Old Regime vanguard was benefiting at their expense. However, the markedly Napoleonic character of the army would prove itself under the Hundred Days when it defected from the Bourbons en masse, ensuring the success of Napoleon’s coup d’état.

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130 Bertier de Sauvigny, *The Bourbon Restoration*, 74-75.

131 One of the more costly errors committed by Louis XVIII was failing to convert Napoleon’s notoriously and fiercely loyal Imperial Guard into a Royal Guard. Instead, these regiments remained largely intact and were sent to provincial garrisons.
For the most part, the First Restoration witnessed attempts to implement *oubli* by reviving Old Regime practices and symbolism without directly confronting those of the revolutionary and imperial periods. But the ease with which Napoleon recaptured the French throne in March 1815 convinced many royalists that the policy of *union et oubli* was a dangerous approach, and they demanded far more extreme measures under the Second Restoration as a deterrent against further assaults on Bourbon authority. The White Terror began even before Louis XVIII reentered the country. A largely spontaneous and popular royalist reactionary movement directed at exacting vengeance against the “traitors” responsible for the Hundred Days, it was also fueled by the desire to settle even older scores dating back to the Revolution. Violence was especially acute in the south of France, where unusually high conscription quotas and economic decline

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132 There were two notable exceptions. In replacing the tricolor with the white flag of the Bourbon dynasty, the Restoration government gravely insulted national pride in the colors of the Revolution and symbol of France’s recent military glory. Louis XVIII further outraged a large segment of public opinion by dating royal acts, including the Charter, “in the nineteenth year of his reign,” in essence denying the legitimacy of any public authority between the death of the dauphin in 1795 (unofficially Louis XVII) and the Restoration.

133 Kroen, *Politics and Theater*, 41.

caused by the Continental System rendered the population largely hostile to Napoleon. Marseilles was the first major city to fall to the Allies, shortly after the defeat of Waterloo became known. On 24 June, General Verdier evacuated imperial troops from the city, opening the door for popular royalist retribution against supporters of Napoleon and former Revolutionaries. About 50 were killed, 200 wounded, and another 200 arrested and imprisoned, often without benefit of due process.

Now under the control of a royalist committee, Marseilles became a staging ground for further attacks in neighboring areas. On 24 July, Marshal Brune was forced to evacuate Toulon, where the weakness of local administration allowed royalist bands to carry out reactionary violence over several weeks. As many as 850 were arrested and another 1,000 fled the city, the main targets being purchasers of biens nationaux and those who held public office during the Hundred Days. Brune himself was tracked down and brutally murdered at Avignon, his body dragged through the streets and dumped in the Rhône. In Toulouse, royalist operations were aided considerably by Bertier de Sauvigny’s secret society, the Chevaliers de la Foi, which had been operating secretly to undermine Napoleon’s popularity in the region since 1810. In late July 1815, royalist battalions, known as verdets for their green uniforms, were given leave to arrest hundreds of enemies of the regime – Jacobins, regicides, and Bonapartists, anyone with the slightest whisper of a revolutionary past. On 15 August, the Feast of the Assumption and, until recently, a national holiday in honor of the emperor’s birthday, the verdets violently attacked and dismembered General Ramel, former commander of the imperial garrison and president of the electoral college during the Hundred Days. The White

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Terror assumed a particularly insidious form in the department of the Gard, where political passions combined with centuries-old religious conflicts to fuel violence against Protestants, who had enjoyed greater tolerance since the Revolution and by and large supported Napoleon during the Hundred Days. Between July and October of 1815, about 2,500 Protestants, threatened with imprisonment, destruction of property, and even lynching, fled the region.

The Second Restoration was also accompanied by legal forms of reaction that were far more extreme than those of 1814. The regime’s first priority was to punish those most responsible for aiding and abetting Napoleon’s return to power in March 1815. Returning to Paris from his bolthole at Ghent in June, Louis XVIII issued a declaration from Cateau-Cambrésis attempting to appease the royalists by promising to punish all those who had rallied to Napoleon during the Hundred Days. But a second declaration, issued from Cambrai on 28 June, was more in line with the king’s conciliatory instincts, modifying his initial pledge by granting pardon to all “misled Frenchmen,” with the exception of “the instigators and the authors” of the Hundred Days.136 Louis turned to his Minister of Police, Fouché, who, like his fellow seasoned girouette Talleyrand, managed to weather successive regime changes by convincing those in power that his services were indispensable. Thus, he found himself charged with the unpleasant task of rounding up his fellow accomplices in the Hundred Days to serve as official scapegoats.137 He and perhaps even the king would have preferred to avoid the

136 Ibid., 66-67.

137 Ever to be relied upon for a witty remark, Talleyrand observed, “In justice to himself we must allow that he omitted none of his friends.” Quoted in Sir John Richard Hall, The Bourbon Restoration (London: Alston Rivers, 1909), 136. In a similar vein, Lamartine, in his Histoire de la Révolution Française, remarked that “Fouché had not shown any
issue altogether in favor of a total amnesty, but they faced significant pressure from both the royalists and the Allies to make an example of Napoleon’s boldest supporters. To satisfy these demands for vengeance, the Amnesty Decree of 24 July 1815 named a total of fifty-seven people exempted from the general pardon. Article 1 identified those “who betrayed the king before the 23 of March [the day on which Louis XVIII crossed the border into Belgium], or who attacked France and its government by force of arms, and who seized power for themselves by violent means.” Among the nineteen officers named were Ney, Labédoyère, Charles and Henri Lallemand, Grouchy, Clausel, Cambronne, and Lavallette, who were ordered to face trial by court-martial. Article 2 named an additional thirty-eight individuals, both civilians and militaires, charged with making public statements favoring Napoleon’s return. Essentially condemned to domestic exile, they were ordered to leave Paris within three days and placed under police surveillance while the Chambers debated their fate.

The government also implemented a series of measures intended to purge the military of Bonapartists, as Napoleon’s success in March 1815 was blamed first and foremost on his command of the army’s loyalty. Discharges were liberally granted to those who wanted them, even those who had recently deserted, while those who had personal weakness” towards his friends and colleagues. “He had sacrificed himself liberally; only his name was lacking” from the list of conspirators. Quoted in Jesse S. Reeves, *The Napoleonic Exiles in America: A Study in American Diplomatic History, 1815-1819* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1905), 22. In reality, Fouché did what he could to minimize the scale of retaliation by submitting a large and ill-assorted list of names in the hopes of discrediting the whole endeavor. He also supported the idea of publishing the list in the *Moniteur* on 25 July, possibly to give those named time to escape, which he further facilitated by handing out passports and money to suspects.

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served eight years, were married, or unable to serve effectively were obliged to leave as well. All officers were placed on inactive duty at half-pay, just as they had been in 1814. Moreover, forced retirement was ordered for senior officers who were fifty-five years of age or with thirty years of service, and for junior officers over fifty years of age or with twenty-five years of service. While awaiting the recall to active duty (which for most would never materialize), demi-soldes were required to reside in the department where they had first enrolled. Moreover, they were forbidden to marry without permission or if the prospective spouse had a dowry of less than 12,000 francs, and were not legally permitted to seek other employment in order to supplement their income. In essence, their reintegration into civil society was suspended until they attained sufficient seniority to retire.139 Such measures demonstrated the government’s determination not only to excise Napoleon’s former soldiers from the army, but to restrict their financial resources and their movement within the country, thereby preventing potential uprisings against the regime.

Ultraroyalists blamed the Hundred Days on continuity not only in the army but in the government bureaucracy as well, especially at the departmental and prefectoral level. The Second Restoration thus also witnessed a rigorous purge of lingering traitors from the administrative ranks, replacing them with individuals who had never wavered in their commitment to the royalist cause. The Amnesty Decree of 24 July, for example, had removed 29 peers from the Chamber convened during the Hundred Days, and a second ordinance of 17 August appointed 94 new hereditary members. All were staunch royalists and military men who had refused to rally to Napoleon upon his return from

Elba. Altogether, as many 80,000 individuals, or one-third of the administrative corps, were removed from office at the beginning of the Second Restoration.\footnote{Bertier de Sauvigny, \textit{The Bourbon Restoration}, 135.} Another purge, this one waged against the insidious philosophies that had launched the Revolution, took place in intellectual circles. As many as 200 university rectors and professors lost their positions as the regime attempted to undo the secularizing educational reforms instituted by the revolutionary governments and Napoleon. Over thirty academicians were ejected from the Institut de France, including the mathematician Gaspard Monge, who had joined the corps of scientists that Napoleon took along on the Egyptian campaign, and Jacques-Louis David, the father of French Neoclassicism, whose canvases immortalized the principal events of the past twenty-five years.\footnote{Doher, \textit{Proscrits et exilés}, 24.}

Having obtained an overwhelming majority in the first Chamber of Deputies of the Second Restoration, the so-called \textit{Chambre Introuvable}, the ultraroyalists used their legislative prerogatives to seek further revenge for past transgressions. November 1815 witnessed initiatives in the Chamber of Deputies to create additional exemptions to the Amnesty Decree of 24 July, despite the king’s promise that no names would be added to the list of individuals to be punished. Although moderate deputies succeeded in taming some of the ultras’ more extreme demands for revenge, the Law of Proscription enacted on 12 January 1816 enlarged on the original cadre of forced exiles considerably. The thirty-eight individuals initially sentenced to domestic exile by the decree of 24 July were banished from France, as were the so-called regicides (former deputies to the National Convention who had voted for the execution of Louis XVI in January 1793) who had
openly supported Napoleon during the Hundred Days. All members of the Bonaparte family and their descendants were banished from France in perpetuity.

The Chambre Introuvable also set about protecting the Bourbon regime with a series of laws expanding the state’s powers to police sedition. The Law of General Security, enacted on 29 October 1815, in effect suspended individual liberty, permitting authorities to arrest and detain without trial or place under surveillance anyone suspected of plotting against the royal family or otherwise constituting a threat to the security of the state. The Sedition Law of 9 November expanded the range of acts punishable by law. The concept of sedition, defined in the imperial penal code as written or verbal discourse intended to provoke rebellion, was widened to include any speech or writings that threatened the person or authority of the king or the royal family. A number of seditious acts were re-classified as crimes rather than misdemeanors, entailing harsher penalties, including deportation and fines as high as 3,000 francs.\footnote{Resnick, \textit{The White Terror}, 79-81.} In order to effectively prosecute such cases, the Chamber also voted to revive the old regime \textit{cours prévôtales}, abolished during the Revolution and succeeded by the special courts of the Empire, which would allow for trial without jury or right of appeal. According to the law of 20 December 1815, each department was to have one provost court, each with five civil magistrates chosen by the Minister of Justice and presided over by a military provost, appointed by the Ministry of War. Their jurisdiction over political offenses was determined by the nature of the offense; seditious acts entailing direct threats to the security of the king or state (such as a public cry of “À bas le Roi!”) were sent to the
provost courts, while threats of an indirect nature (e.g., “Vive l’Empereur!”) were tried in the courts of first instance.¹⁴³

The policy of enforced amnesia manifested itself in the most pronounced fashion through the sedition laws, which took aim at symbols and practices that perpetuated the memory of the preceding twenty-five years. By rendering it illegal to hoist a tricolor, sing revolutionary songs, or display imperial emblems, these laws attempted to obscure a past in which many French citizens took pride. Not surprisingly, repression made these objects and symbols all the more valuable, and police and judicial records provide a wealth of evidence of an illicit trade in signes prohibés. In July 1819, for example, police in Bordeaux investigated reports that engravings representing Napoleon’s landing at Cannes in March 1815 were being sold publicly by local booksellers.¹⁴⁴ At Toulouse in October 1819, a writing teacher by the name of Malbec was found in possession of some drawings of Napoleon and imperial emblems that, when folded in the right way, were cleverly concealed as innocuous fleur-de-lys. One caricature depicted Louis XVIII climbing a pole, supported on the shoulders of Wellington, Tsar Alexander, and the King of Prussia, in order to reach the French crown at the top, while Napoleon looks on, saying


¹⁴⁴ AN, F 7 6704, d. 5906, Prefect of the Gironde to the Ministry of the Interior (Toulouse, 10/5/1819).
“I climbed up there all by myself without your help.”\footnote{AN, F7 6704, d. 5906, Prefect of the Haute-Garonne to the Ministry of the Interior (Toulouse, 10/5/1819).} Seemingly petty offenses, the vigilance with which the authorities enforced the sedition laws underscores the power that contemporaries ascribed to memory.

Altogether, as a consequence of this legislation and through the combined activity of the provost and ordinary courts, approximately 6,000 individuals were sentenced while more than 3,000 were subject to police action of some kind. Even counting the victims of popular violence in the Vendée and the Midi, the magnitude of the royalist reaction fell far short of the Red Terror, which sent roughly 17,000 to the guillotine in 1793-94.\footnote{Resnick, The White Terror, 114-115, 118. Resnick concludes that liberal critics of the Restoration have greatly exaggerated the scale of the reaction, inflating the numbers of those imprisoned and condemned by tens of thousands. They were especially mistaken with regard to the efficacy of the provost courts, whose reestablishment was widely feared would institute a new Reign of Terror. In reality, says Resnick, the provost courts were greatly hampered by administrative inefficiencies. Moreover, the vast majority of political offenses were tried by the ordinary courts. Ibid., 95-96.}

Nonetheless, the White Terror had significant long-term consequences, especially on the organization of opposition politics. By indiscriminately exacting revenge on Bonapartists and ex-Revolutionaries alike, the royalist organizers of the White Terror unwittingly reinforced a sense of common purpose among their various enemies. The shared experience of being victims of the royalist reaction of 1815 would go a long way in fostering their continued cooperation in organized opposition to the Restoration regime over the next fifteen years.

The legacy of the Hundred Days was a serious obstacle to attempts on the part of Louis XVIII and moderate royalists to construct a compromise regime. In the words of one historian, the Hundred Days represented an “historical trauma” that permanently
stamped Restoration politics with old divisive memories of the revolutionary past.\footnote{Alan Spitzer argues that there was sufficient consensus among the aristocrats of the Old Regime and the notables of the Empire to make a peaceful and stable regime entirely possible, had these divisive memories not gotten in the way. “The Ambiguous Heritage of the French Restoration: The Distant Consequences of the Revolution and the Daily Realities of the Empire,” in \textit{The American and European Revolutions, 1776-1848: Sociopolitical and Ideological Aspects} (Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 1980), 222. On the other hand, as Jean-Claude Caron argues, the Hundred Days were not all bad for the Restoration regime. By sanctioning an uncompromising attitude towards revolutionaries, it allowed France to appease the rest of Europe by demonstrating a definitive rupture with its troubled past. \textit{La France de 1815 à 1848}, 7-8.} For ultraroyalists and even some moderates, the fact that many who rallied to Napoleon upon his return were breaking oaths of loyalty taken to the Bourbon regime only a few months earlier meant that any future cooperation with ex-revolutionaries and Bonapartists was out of the question (witness the violent backlash against the election of the regicide abbé Grégoire to the Chamber of Deputies in 1819). Despite their unwillingness to forgive those responsible for bringing down the monarchy, whether in 1792 or in 1815, the ultras nonetheless persisted in the politics of forgetting in another sense. By attempting to erase all traces of the period 1789-1815 in everything from legislation to institutions to public monuments, the reactionaries of the Second Restoration essentially wanted to pretend that the Revolution had never happened. This assault on memory was the common thread running through all of the various aspects of the royalist reaction that occurred with the Second Restoration, whether they attempted to purge remnants of the revolutionary past in the form of symbols or individuals. Paradoxically, the latter actually perpetuated one of the most divisive legacies of the Revolution – that of the emigration – by producing a new class of exiles who fled France, some by force and some by volition, in order to escape the Restoration regime’s proscription of the past.
Chapter Five of Honoré de Balzac’s *La Rabouilleuse* opens as an American mail boat docks at Le Havre in October 1819. A young man disembarks and is greeted at the docks by his anxious mother. She is brought to near despair by the state of destitution in which she finds her son, who bore visible signs of physical suffering and pecuniary hardship. Her late husband had been a career bureaucrat in Napoleon’s Interior ministry, whose untimely death in 1809 was deeply mourned by both his family and the emperor. Inheriting his father’s fanatical devotion to Napoleon, Philippe resolved to serve the same master but in a military capacity. Aged eighteen by the time of the disastrous retreat from Moscow, he wrote directly to Napoleon begging for a commission. He acquitted himself well during the campaign of France in 1814, earning rapid promotions and the cross of a knight of the Legion of Honor, and was wounded at Waterloo.

Like many of Napoleon’s devotees, Philippe refused to seek service in the Bourbon army after the fall of the Empire. After the saga of the Hundred Days played out, he cheerfully took up the life an urban *demi-solde*, frittering away his time and meager half-pay in Parisian cafés known to attract Bonapartists and liberal discontents. Implicated in one of many abortive conspiracies against the Restoration regime, he was arrested, and although released for lack of evidence, it seemed only a matter of time before the police would find cause to detain him again. It was at this time that Mme Bridau, on the counsel of her late husband’s trusted friends, began beseeching her son to seek military service abroad, where his valuable experience as a veteran of the Napoleonic wars would earn him favor. Philippe found the idea abhorrent. As his younger brother Joseph perceptively remarked, “Frenchmen are too proud of the column
in the Place Vendôme to go and enlist in some foreign army. Besides, perhaps Napoleon will come back a second time!"\textsuperscript{148} However, to assuage his mother’s fears, Philippe resolved instead to join General Charles Lallemand’s Champ d’Asile, a short-lived effort on the part of imperial veterans to settle a colony in the Texas borderlands in 1818.

By the time he returned to France nearly two years later, Philippe had gained little and lost much. Up until this point in his life, Philippe’s flaws were of a rather ordinary sort for an imperial cavalry officer. Brash, brazen, and given to pompous displays of martial courage, he now compounded these venial faults with more serious sins stemming from total self-absorption. His sojourn in America indelibly stained his character; “his misfortunes in Texas, his stay in New York, a place where speculation and individualism are carried to the very highest level, where the brutality of self-interest reaches the point of cynicism and where a man, fundamentally isolated from rest of mankind, finds himself compelled to rely upon his own strength and at every instant to become to be the self-appointed judge of his own actions, a city in which politeness does not exist.”\textsuperscript{149}

However inadequate his moral compass was before he left for America, Philippe appeared to have dispensed with scruples entirely as a result of his experiences in Texas. Former acquaintances who once admired the dashing young officer now took offense at his coarse manners, his vulgarity, and the noxious smell of smoke and drink emanating from his person at all times of the day. Worst of all, Philippe became a chronic gambler. The rest of the novel charts the downward spiral of this shiftless demi-solde into a life of


\textsuperscript{149} Ibid., 62.
deceit and criminal behavior, to the great detriment of his family’s fortune and his mother’s sorrow.

Though hardly a sympathetic portrayal of a *demi-solde*, the figuration of Philippe Bridau in *La Comédie humaine* testifies to a genuine social concern in the early years of the Restoration. As was the case with so many of Balzac’s characters, Bridau was invented to represent an historical type and an historical problem – the anomalous existence of Napoleonic war veterans in post-Napoleonic France. The *demi-soldes* occupied a liminal space in Restoration society. Determined on pursuing a policy of peace and rebuilding diplomatic relations with the rest of Europe, the Bourbon regime had little use for their military services. Moreover, their imperial past rendered even those who took no part in various Bonapartist conspiracies as objects of suspicion in the eyes of the Restoration government. Career soldiers for the most part, many knew no other profitable occupation, and they faced further barriers to reintegration in civil society by the terms of the army’s reorganization. Charles Lallemand’s disastrous venture in the Texas borderlands was, in part, a response to this problem.

The Champ d’Asile was itself an ill-fated and short episode in a much longer story of French exiles in America during the early nineteenth century. The White Terror, in both its legal and extralegal forms, sent hundreds of soldiers and civilians into exile, many of whom found refuge in the United States. Some, like Marshal Grouchy, General Clausel, and former commissioner of police Pierre-François Réal, were among those named in the laws of proscription, who had little choice but to leave France or face trial and possibly execution. These *bannis* were joined by many more who found it prudent to
emigrate in order to escape ostracism (or worse) because of their political sympathies, especially those who had followed Napoleon to Elba or facilitated in one way or another his return to power during the Hundred Days. Upon arriving in the United States, they gravitated towards the substantial French communities that already existed in cities like Philadelphia and New Orleans, formed in the 1790s by refugees fleeing the slave revolts in Saint Domingue and other French possessions in the Caribbean, as well as a handful of revolutionary émigrés who had never returned to France. Men like the diplomat and industrialist Dupont de Nemours and the wealthy banker Stephen Girard, already well-respected and established in their communities, provided introductions for high-ranking exiles and facilitated their reception in American society.

But for most exiles, whether soldiers or civilians, French or Domingan, making a living in the United States posed a thorny problem. Out of necessity was born the idea of a permanent and independent Francophone settlement where these exiles could live according to their own customs. The project was assiduously promoted in *L’Abeille américaine*, a Philadelphia-based French-language newspaper run by Jean-Simon Chaudron, former editor of the Bonapartist Parisian journal, *Le Nain Jaune*. The Colonial Society of French Emigrants formed in the fall of 1816 with the purpose of founding an agricultural community, either in the Ohio or Mississippi River valleys, devoted to the cultivation of two profitable agricultural crops – grapes and olives. Over the next several months, the society lobbied members of Congress and other politicians for a grant of land in one of the newly acquired and developing territories of the U.S. On 3 March 1817, President James Madison signed an act authorizing the society to settle four townships totaling 92,000 acres from lands recently taken from the Creek Indians,
bordering the Tombigbee River in the Alabama Territory, under exceedingly generous terms. Thus was born the Vine and Olive Colony.

Under the direction of Generals Clausel and Lefebvre-Desnouettes, the society began preparations in the spring of 1817, sending advance survey teams to scout a suitable location for the townships, purchasing supplies, obtaining vine cuttings and olive seedlings from Europe, and arranging transportation for the colonists. The main contingent set sail from Philadelphia in August. After enjoying a warm welcome in Mobile, they proceeded upland to a point of land overlooking the junction of the

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150 The Society was given first pick of these highly valuable lands before they were made available to the general public at auction. Moreover, the lands were taken out of the public domain and thus exempted the grant from general laws on public lands. At a cost of $2.00 per acre, the whole sum of $184,000 to be paid over a period of fourteen years, the grant was a bargain for the French shareholders. In return, they agreed to the following conditions: at least one settler for each half-section in the four townships, 288 in total, with no individual holding more than 640 acres. Finally, a certain percentage of the land was to be devoted to the cultivation of grapes and other profitable crops.

Tombigbee and Black Warrior Rivers known as White Bluff, where they settled their first town called Demopolis. When “the city of the people” had to be abandoned because it was found to be outside the boundaries of their grant, they were discouraged but undeterred, moving farther inland and starting again. Whereas the name Demopolis was a clear nod to their revolutionary heritage, subsequent settlements were given distinctly Napoleonic monikers – the principal town of Aigleville paid homage to the imperial eagle, and a second smaller town was named Arcola after a battle in the first Italian campaign. The county in which they were located was later called Marengo, named for a decisive French victory during the second Italian campaign. By 1822, nearly 70 of the 347 original shareholders had arrived and spent at least some time in the colony.\textsuperscript{152}

But by mid-decade many had abandoned the enterprise, discouraged by labor shortages, lack of infrastructure, squatters, and an unforgiving natural environment. Moreover, the climate and terrain proved unsuitable to the cultivation of grapes and olives, making it impossible to fulfill the conditions of the land grant. Over the course of the 1820s, land in the Vine and Olive Colony became increasingly concentrated in the hands of a few families; between 1817 and 1834, the number of landholders had been reduced by nearly half. For those who remained, the key to their success was the shrewd recognition that cotton, not grapes or olives, was king in Alabama. The demographic character of the colony also changed. More and more Anglo-Americans settlers bought in, replacing as majority owners the French landholders, who by and large removed to cities like Mobile and New Orleans.\textsuperscript{153} By the mid-1830s, the colony was unrecognizable

\textsuperscript{152} Blaufarb, \textit{Bonapartists in the Borderlands}, 117.

\textsuperscript{153} Ibid., 131-43.
from the agricultural utopia first envisioned by Colonial Society of French Emigrants; rather than a Francophone society dedicated to collective agricultural enterprise, it had devolved into privately held, large scale plantations owned by a small number of French and American elites.

In what is by far the most well documented study of the Vine and Olive colony, Rafe Blaufarb demonstrates that it was in fact refugees from Saint-Domingue who comprised the majority of the French agricultural settlement in Alabama. Although sixty-five of the Vine and Olive shareholders were Napoleonic war veterans, only twelve of them ever set foot on the colony. Most of the exiles who left France in the wake of the 1815 reaction had no intention of settling permanently in the United States, and directed most of their energies towards negotiating pardons from the Restoration government. The Domingans remained in Alabama long after the others returned to France, creating successful cotton plantations and insinuating themselves into the elite antebellum Southern planter class. Nonetheless, their role in the Vine and Olive Colony was overshadowed, both in contemporary accounts and in historical memory, by the smaller but far more high-profile contingent of Bonapartist exiles, whose fleeting presence has conditioned romanticized versions of the Vine and Olive history ever since.154

The alarms raised among the diplomatic community were partially responsible for focusing the spotlight on the exiles of 1815. European governments followed their movements closely, and with good reason. These French refugees were, by and large, accorded an enthusiastic reception in the United States because of shared ideological sympathies rooted in the revolutions of the late eighteenth century. The recent Vienna

154 Ibid., xi-xii, 117-18.
settlements having restored the pre-revolutionary status quo in Europe, the U.S. found itself an increasingly isolated republic in a monarchical Atlantic world. Many Americans viewed the French exiles, more or less revolutionaries who were persecuted by a reactionary regime, as natural allies in the global revolutionary struggle for liberty. Moreover, even while Napoleon’s popularity in the United States had waned as his rule became increasingly despotic, he still earned some favor in American eyes for of his implacable hatred of “perfidious Albion.” 155 This mutual accord between the French exiles and their American hosts fueled conservative Europe’s fears of further revolutionary disturbances. More terrifying still was the possibility that they might use their new home in America as a staging ground for plots to rescue Napoleon from his island prison in the South Atlantic.

These fears coalesced in the maelstrom of revolutionary fervor raging in Latin America, in itself an indirect result of the Napoleonic saga. When Napoleon installed his brother Joseph on the Spanish throne in 1808, the colonies of Latin America refused to recognize his authority. Establishing juntas in the name of the deposed King Ferdinand VII, they took advantage of the weakness of the Bonapartist regime, securing a large measure of autonomy while Joseph’s energies were otherwise engaged in fighting Spanish nationalists and Wellington’s troops. After his restoration in 1815, Ferdinand embarked on a brutal campaign to restore Spanish control over the Latin American colonies, providing further impetus to independence movements. For thousands of career soldiers put out of work by the end of the Napoleonic Wars and the War of 1812, the prospect of military service in foreign armies proved an attractive option for mercenary

155 Ibid., 33-34.
work, and revolution in the Spanish colonies provided lucrative opportunities for the pursuit of glory. To the defenders of the old order, it was alarming enough that these experienced veterans might now put their talents to good use in the service of revolutionary movements. European diplomats, especially Richelieu, also feared that these rogue soldiers might take advantage of the collapse of colonial governments in Latin America to establish Bonapartist regimes, possibly even under Napoleon himself. Although the Allied powers had redoubled their vigilance after Napoleon’s escape from Elba, making it highly unlikely that he would attempt yet another triumphant return to Europe, they were unable to similarly secure the coasts of the Americas. The collapse of colonial governments and ensuing administrative chaos in the Spanish colonies in particular seemed ripe for clandestine activities.

Rumors, ranging from the credible to the paranoid, abounded of operations to rescue Napoleon from St. Helena. Considerable alarms were raised, for example, over Napoleon’s former aide-de-camp, General Dirk van Hogendorp, now living in Brazil. A Dutch nobleman who became attached to Napoleon after Holland was annexed to the Empire in 1810, Hogendorp was welcome in neither his homeland nor in France after 1815. Dubbed the “hermit of Corcovado,” he tried to maintain a solitary and quiet existence on a mountain overlooking Rio de Janeiro, but the relative proximity of the Brazilian coast to the island of St. Helena (just over 2,000 miles) rendered any one connected with Napoleon living in that country an object of suspicion. Another

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156 Ibid., 5.

157 There was, in fact, some evidence of correspondence between Hogendorp and the exiles on St. Helena. Napoleon left Hogendorp 100,000 francs in his will, as he did for other exiles in the Americas rumored to be plotting his escape, including Generals Brayer, Rigau, and Charles Lallemand. Inès Murat, *Napoleon and the American Dream*,
Bonapartist exile and future Vine and Olive landholder, Colonel Paul-Albert Latapie, was also rumored to be orchestrating a rescue operation from Pernambuco.\textsuperscript{158}

The most obvious object of suspicion was Joseph Bonaparte, undoubtedly the most conspicuous of all the French exiles in America. After unsuccessfually trying to persuade Napoleon to attempt an escape from English custody by disguising himself as Joseph and boarding a ship for America, Joseph himself set sail for the U.S. and arrived in New York on 28 August 1815. After various peregrinations along the Eastern seaboard, he settled on the estate of Point Breeze near Bordentown, New Jersey, having received assurance that he would be allowed to live undisturbed in the U.S. from President Madison (who nonetheless refused Joseph’s request for an audience). Situated on the Delaware River, Point Breeze lay on the main road from New York to Philadelphia. There he adopted his favored posture of a gentleman farmer, playing host to frequent visitors, both curious Americans and fellow exiles, showing off his extensive art collections and collecting news of European affairs.\textsuperscript{159} Despite his efforts to remain aloof from conspiracies (or at least to maintain the appearance of disinterestedness), adventurers and authors of various Bonapartist plots naturally sought Joseph out for support.

\textsuperscript{158} Blaufarb, \textit{Bonapartists in the Borderlands}, 40, 78-80.

\textsuperscript{159} Joseph also opened his home to various members of the imperial family over the years, including his daughters Charlotte, who would later marry her cousin Napoléon Louis, son of Louis Bonaparte and Hortense de Beauharnais and brother of the future Napoleon III, and Zenaïde, along with her husband Charles, one of Lucien Bonaparte’s numerous sons. He was also visited by two of Caroline and Joachim Murat’s sons, Lucien and Achille, both of whom married and settled in the United States.
Hyde de Neuville, the French ambassador at Washington and an ultraroyalist *avant la lettre*, was especially troubled by rumors of efforts to place Joseph at the head of a Mexican insurgency. The most credible (if improbable) reports came in August 1817, when Neuville received concrete evidence of a plot to establish a “Napoleonic Confederation” devised by Joseph Lakanal. A defrocked priest and former *conventionnel* who had voted for the death of Louis XVI, Lakanal was also an able administrator who was instrumental in reforming national education during the Revolution. Ejected from the Institut and banished by the Proscription law of 1816, he took refuge in the U.S., where he corresponded warmly with Jefferson on his farming efforts in Kentucky and eventually served as president of what is today Tulane University. But in 1817 he came under suspicion because when one of Neuville’s agents intercepted a packet of documents in which Lakanal beseeched Joseph Bonaparte to reassert his claims to the Spanish throne and thus to Spanish colonies in the Americas. He asked Joseph for 65,000 francs to fund a harebrained scheme for the conquest of Mexico with a small force of 900 men recruited in the western and southern U.S. territories, as well as a Spanish distinction of some sort for himself. As proof of his elaborate plans, Lakanal also provided a vocabulary for negotiating with Native American tribes, as well as a cipher for constructing secret messages disguised as Latin prayers. Nothing ever came of this or any other plot, for Joseph, as the debacle in Spain proved, had never been inclined to take up the family business of ruling nations, much preferring the comfort of his country estates to the exercise of royal power. Nonetheless, the credence lent to rumors of this

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160 Napoleon appears to have finally come to terms with this fact on St. Helena. Apprised of plots to make Joseph king of Mexico, he remarked, “If I were in his place, I’d weld all the Spanish Americas into a great empire. But Joseph – you’ll see – will make himself
nature reflects the extent to which European diplomacy was dominated by a single objective between 1815 and 1821 – to prevent at all costs another Napoleonic restoration.\footnote{Blaufarb, \textit{Bonapartists in the Borderlands}, 81.}

Such was the immediate context for the Champ d’Asile, the brainchild of General Charles Lallemand. Born at Metz in 1774, Lallemand enlisted in the revolutionary army at the age of seventeen and quickly rose up the ranks, distinguishing himself in the major campaigns of the Empire. Although he initially retained his commission under the First Restoration, he fell from Bourbon favor after conspiring to lead a military uprising in Napoleon’s favor in March 1815. Accompanying Napoleon in his retreat to Rochefort after the second abdication, he unsuccessfully tried to persuade the emperor to attempt an escape to America. Lallemand was denied permission to follow Napoleon into exile on St. Helena, ostensibly because he was named in the Amnesty Decree of 24 July 1815. He and seven other French officers were transferred to the island of Malta, where he remained in English custody until April 1816.

In the meantime, a court-martial had sentenced Lallemand to death in absentia, and thus a return to France was out of the question. Like Balzac’s Philippe Bridau and thousands of real career soldiers put out of work by the European peace settlements, he looked abroad for employment. After being released from English custody, he traveled to Smyrna and then to Constantinople, where he applied to the sultan for a post as an instructor in the Turkish army. The French ambassador was quick to warn the sultan of the deleterious effect this would have on diplomatic relations with the Bourbon regime.

\footnote{Murat, \textit{Napoleon and the American Dream}, 28.}
Lallemand then traveled to Tehran, where he was similarly rebuffed by the shah of Persia. Having exhausted his options in the east, he joined his younger brother, Henri, also a veteran of the Napoleonic wars, in the U.S. in May 1817.

Napoleon, adept at measuring the character of those close to him, spoke highly of Lallemand as a man of action on St. Helena, crediting him possessing with the “sacred fire.” True to this assessment, Charles wasted no time in organizing a Bonapartist mission upon his arrival in the U.S., and in the fall of 1817 hatched a plan to establish a colony of Napoleonic war veterans in the Texas borderlands between the U.S. and Spanish Mexico. In a letter to his brother he confessed, “I have more ambition than can be satisfied by that colony on the Tombigbee.”162 Lallemand was determined to organize a military expedition to Spanish America, and began recruiting participants among the exile communities along the East Coast, in the French Caribbean, and even among the ranks of disaffected Bonapartists back in Europe. Hampered in his efforts by skepticism and a shortage of funds (Joseph Bonaparte and other wealthy exiles disapproved of the venture and refused to lend financial backing), the general turned to the Society for the Cultivation of the Vine and Olive as a tool for achieving his ends. Taking advantage of divisive rifts in the rudderless society between civilian and military factions and disputes over land grant allotments, Lallemand managed to have himself named president and concocted a scheme for funding his side project by selling off the landshares owned by his followers to the Domingan merchants.

The first contingent of Lallemand’s recruits set sail from Philadelphia on 17 December 1817 under the command of General Antoine Rigau. The group included

162 Quoted in Murat, *Napoleon and the American Dream*, 110.
fifteen colonels, fifteen staff officers, seven doctors, and roughly 100 others, as many as one-third of whom hailed from Napoleon’s satellite kingdoms – Poland, Belgium, Holland, Italy, Spain, and the German states – and were now regarded as traitors by their compatriots for having served the imperial regime. Ostensibly bound for the port of Mobile, the recruits learned of their real destination en route – the island of Galveston, off the coast of Texas. Located along the disputed boundary between the United States and Spanish Mexico, Galveston had already lured other adventurers as a potential base of insurgent operations. In 1816, Louis-Michel Aury, former quartermaster of the French navy, occupied the island in the name of the revolutionary Mexican Congress, using it as a base for harassing Spanish merchant ships in the Gulf and for mounting expeditions against royal troops in Mexico. Aury abandoned the island the following year to join up with the Scottish adventurer Gregor MacGregor at Amelia Island, helping the U.S. to seize Florida from Spain. But when Rigau’s contingent arrived at Galveston in January 1818, they found the island in the possession of yet another mercenary, the notorious privateer Jean Lafitte. For the next two months, the two groups lived in uneasy coexistence on the island while Rigau and his men awaited the arrival of Lallemand, who had remained in New York to pursue negotiations with potential backers.

Survivors later described their sojourn on Galveston as a most frightful experience.

What we did not suffer on this island. Hunger, thirst (for there is no drinking water), rains and tropical downpours, wet clothes, vermin, and the stings of myriad mosquitoes that attacked us. But bodily pains were nothing in comparison with those of the soul, for it was difficult for some of us to live mixed in with a horde of real brigands. Disunity was the rule between the leaders and their subordinates. Every day there were duels; one of my friends was assassinated. The ill-conduct and the misunderstanding of the superior officers had given rise to
the most complete lack of discipline, so we were more than once at the point of cutting each other’s throats.\textsuperscript{163}

Plagued by the harsh conditions and dwindling supplies, Rigau had great difficulty maintaining discipline among the tense and impatient recruits in Lallemand’s absence. The general finally arrived in March with another contingent, and after re-establishing order, he quickly organized a departure for the site of their permanent settlement. Located on the Trinity River, Cayo de Gallardo occupied a strategic position, outside the jurisdiction of Mexican officials at San Antonio, and west of the Neutral Strip, a zone that the U.S. had pledged in 1806 not to cross.\textsuperscript{164}

After a treacherous journey through wetlands and thick vegetation, losing six men when one of their ships sank in a violent wind, the veterans finally reached their destination. Lallemand immediately set to work organizing the settlement according to military principles. The colonists were divided into three cohorts – infantry, cavalry, and artillery – who were woken each day at 4 a.m. with a bugle call. Every man had to render six hours of common labor building fortifications and producing munitions, with minimal free time for hunting, fishing, and building dwellings. Each colonist was allotted twenty acres of land, with an additional five if he married.\textsuperscript{165} Beggary, gambling, and


\textsuperscript{165}According to contemporary accounts, only four women were present on the settlement.
slaveholding were expressly forbidden, and Lallemand stationed twenty men around the encampment every night with orders to shoot deserters.

Challenged by lack of experience and an unfamiliar climate, the veterans were unsuccessful in their haphazard efforts at farming and remained dependant on Lafitte for supplies throughout the duration of their stay in Texas. Even had the colony flourished, it was clear that neither the United States nor Spain, both of whom laid claims to the region, would tolerate the presence of armed foreigners in these disputed borderlands. Moreover, there was a great deal of concern in the diplomatic community that the United States would use the Bonapartist presence as a pretext for invading and occupying the area, employing the same tactic that had enabled the U.S. to seize Florida from Spain after it chased MacGregor out of Amelia Island.\textsuperscript{166} Thus, in the summer of 1818, the Mexican viceroy began mobilizing troops to eject the French from Texas. Warned by Lafitte, who, recently become a secret agent for Spain, was also conspiring to get rid of them, Lallemand and his followers quit Cayo de Gallardo on 23 July and took refuge on Galveston. When President Adams’ emissary George Graham arrived at the end of August to determine their intentions, Lallemand abandoned command to Rigau and set sail for New Orleans, still hoping to negotiate some terms of service with the U.S.

Rigau’s efforts to maintain discipline again proved inadequate, leading to quarrels and desertion. Some of the wealthier and more enterprising members profited from the lack of supplies, selling meager rations to their fellows at exorbitant rates. A hurricane

\textsuperscript{166} In fact many contemporaries, including some of Lallemand’s recruits, believed that the U.S. had secretly sanctioned the mission. Moreover, French and Spanish diplomatic records corroborate a secret mission by Major George Graham to enlist the help of both Lallemand and Lafitte in seizing Texas from Spain. Harris Gaylord Warren, \textit{The Sword Was Their Passport: A History of American Filibustering in the Mexican Revolution} (Baton Rouge, LA: Louisiana State University Press, 1943), 217-21.
flooded the island in mid-September, compounding their physical hardships. The arrival of the Spanish commander the following month with orders for the French to withdraw provoked a schism between pro-Lallemand (still absent) and pro-Rigau factions, and bloodshed was only narrowly averted. Demoralized by privation and disillusioned by Lallemand’s departure, Rigau and most of the remaining refugees straggled back to New Orleans at the end of October with the help of Lafitte. The Champ d’Asile was no more.

Lallemand’s true intentions in founding the Champ d’Asile were somewhat hazy and more than a little mercenary. He was deliberately vague in his recruiting efforts, revealing little about the expedition’s goals or even its destination to prospective participants. While he hinted that the project had something to do with revolutionary movements in Latin America, its real purpose was rumored to be a mission to rescue Napoleon from St. Helena. In addition to his negotiations with Mexican insurgents and fellow adventurers, Lallemand vigorously sought the backing of both the U.S. and Spain, apparently willing to serve either side so long as he rendered himself indispensable in the conflict by occupying a strategic territory.167 Lallemand’s ideological promiscuity notwithstanding, it is clear that most of the veterans who joined the Champ d’Asile did so for other reasons. It was above all an effort to recreate the life they had known for twenty-five years as soldiers of the Revolution and Empire, a life that was now impossible in post-Napoleonic France. Their early enthusiasm for agricultural labors having quickly petered out, the veterans took to whiling away their time reminiscing about the imperial campaigns. Nicknaming their campfire the “Palais-Royal,” they

167 Blaufarb, Bonapartists in the Borderlands, 89, 94-99, 115-16.
gathered there in the evenings to tell tales of former glories and to dream of new adventures in Latin America. “We resumed practicing the use of our weapons, we recalled battlefield maneuvers and celebrated the anniversaries of our triumphs; the solitude of America echoed our patriotic songs.”\textsuperscript{168} Hanging from a tree at the center of the settlement, the tricolor symbolized the Champ d’Asile’s true character, and served as a daily reminder of a cherished past.\textsuperscript{169}

\textit{Une nouvelle patrie}

For diplomats of the period as for modern historians, the principal significance of Lallemand’s project lay in its relationship to revolutionary movements in the Atlantic world.\textsuperscript{170} But the Champ d’Asile, and the French diaspora in the Americas more broadly, exercised a different sort of attraction for the French public. The project was eagerly reported on in the liberal press and quickly permeated the popular \textit{nouveauté} market. Engravings and lithographs depicting Lallemand’s soldier-farmers were hawked by peddlers and merchants brave enough to risk distributing Napoleonic imagery, and even turned into wallpaper. Béranger’s musical refrain – “We are Frenchmen! Take pity on our glory” – echoed in the cafés, where Bonapartists and their sympathizers drank

\textsuperscript{168} Quoted in Murat, \textit{Napoleon and the American} 139.

\textsuperscript{169} Quoted in Murat, \textit{Napoleon and the American Dream}, 139. Perhaps the same tree on which a French traveler to the town of Liberty, Texas found carved the words \textit{Honneur et Patrie} in 1837.

\textsuperscript{170} Blaufarb views the Vine and Olive colony and the Champ d’Asile as a proxy in the conflict between Spain and the United States over their contested borderlands and resolution of the “Western question,” highlighting the international significance of the Latin American independence movements. See also Warren, \textit{The Sword Was Their Passport}, 189-232.
“liqueur de Champ d’Asile.” On one level, fascination with the agricultural experiments in the American hinterlands, especially among those of liberal persuasion, owed much to their Rousseauian nature. Shareholders in the Society for the Cultivation of Vine and Olive hoped to find in the Alabama wilderness a land uncorrupted by man where they could govern themselves according to an ideal social contract, even appealing to the “sage of Monticello” to play the role of legislator and outline a basis for their constitution. Moreover, bucolic images of the soldier-farmer and the cultivation of grapes and olives raised echoes of ancient Rome, particularly appealing to those of a republican bent. Pursuing a life of agricultural simplicity in the New World, these refugees were cast in the mold of George Washington, the “American Cincinnatus” who laid down his arms and returned to the plow, and who remained a popular figure in France throughout the revolutionary and imperial periods. But above all, publicity about the Champ d’Asile was uniquely poised to stimulate French interest because it starkly represented the forces of reaction and division that had been tearing France apart since June 1815. There was no image better suited to elicit French sympathy in the immediate aftermath of the Napoleonic saga than that of a soldier, his face scarred by battle, excised from the nation by hostile factions, forced into an ignominious exile, trying to eke out a bare existence in the inhospitable wilderness of the New World.

The French public’s perception of the Champ d’Asile was shaped in large measure by Lallemand himself. In true Napoleonic fashion, he issued a proclamation,

171 Jefferson, not surprisingly, respectfully declined the offer, not least because he had no wish to encourage the establishment of a quasi-autonomous colony that would violate the rules and regulations of state formation set forth by the U.S. Congress. Blaufarb, Bonapartists in the Borderlands, 46-47.
widely reprinted in both English- and French-language newspapers, calculated to win sympathy and ease suspicions by convincing his readers of his pacific intentions. The chief purpose of the colony, Lallemand announced, was agriculture and trade; military preparations were solely for defense and preservation. In a vaguely Rousseauian echo, Lallemand laid claims to “the first right that the Author of nature gave to man. That is, we are settling on this land in order to cultivate it with the work of our own hands.” The same dogged perseverance that had formerly swept them from victory to victory across the European continent would now serve these soldiers-turned-farmers in a different capacity, allowing them to reap the rewards of their labors in bountiful harvests. Harboring no hostile intentions, they pledged to live in harmony both with neighboring Native American tribes and with citizens of “civilized” countries. But they would not hesitate to defend themselves against any attempts to eject them from the land. Soldiers to the end, “we shall live in freedom and honor or else find a grave that just men will remember and honor.” Likewise, they would never forget the course of events that brought them to the New World in the first place. “We shall call the site of our colony Field of Refuge. This name, while recalling our reverses, will also remind us of the necessity of creating a future, of settling our household gods – in a word, of finding a new patrie.”

In painting a pathetic portrait of these beleaguered veterans shunned by their homeland and forced to seek refuge in a foreign country, Lallemand’s propaganda proved useful to French liberals in their opposition to the Bourbon regime. His themes were quickly taken up by the editors of La Minerve Français, the leading liberal journal of the

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172 Quoted in Murat, Napoleon and the American Dream, 133-34.
day run by Benjamin Constant. Since its first incarnation as the Mercure in January 1817, the journal’s editors had peppered its pages with proud remembrances of imperial military glories and manifested a distinct sympathy towards Napoleon’s soldiers, even if their attitudes towards Napoleon himself were more ambiguous.\textsuperscript{173} The Minerve first reported on the Texas colony in August 1818, reprinting excerpts from Lallemand’s proclamation, and kept its readers apprised of the expedition’s progress in subsequent issues. The Champ d’Asile also provided fertile ground for chansonniers like Béraud and the irrepressible Béranger, both of whom were granted space in the pages of the Minerve.

Unaware that Lallemand and his followers had been chased out of the Champ d’Asile, the editors issued calls for recruits and in the fall of 1818 proposed a donation campaign to raise funds on behalf of the struggling settlement. The number of donors swelled from the hundreds to the thousands over the next several months, and the campaign succeeded in raising just over 95,000 by July 1819.\textsuperscript{174} Contributions continued to flow in well after

\textsuperscript{173} Philippe Gonnard, “La Légende napoléonienne et la presse libérale: La Minerve,” Revue des études napoléoniennes 3 (1914), 28-49. The journal manifested two distinct attitudes towards Napoleon. The official line was to show respect for the fallen emperor while remaining detached from the Bonapartist cause, an ideological neutrality belied, Gonnard argues, by marked tones of sympathy and muted criticisms of Napoleon’s despotic excesses. Like many authors of the Napoleonic myth during this period, the editors of Minerve were quick to use memory as a tool in their opposition to the Bourbon regime, although in the case of the Champ d’Asile subscription campaign, says Gonnard, they were probably motivated by genuine pity rather than political calculation.

\textsuperscript{174} These funds were eventually disbursed to some of the surviving members of the Champ d’Asile. Using the wealthy Louisiana planter J. Noël Destréhan as a liaison, the editors of Minerve sent the money to New Orleans, where a committee was formed to oversee its distribution. The committee sought out Charles Lallemand, who, since fleeing Galveston, had become a U.S. citizen and settled in New Orleans. Hesitant at first to respond, Lallemand was goaded by Rigau’s public criticisms of his behavior into producing the names of the refugees so that the funds could be disbursed. To repair the damage that had been done to his reputation, Lallemand refused his share and the money was donated to the parish of St. Louis to help the poor. Kent Gardien, “Take Pity on Our
it was known that the Champ d’Asile had failed, suggesting that at least one of the subscribers’ motivations was to send a highly publicized message to the Bourbons protesting the reactionary measures of 1815 that had sent these men into exile.\textsuperscript{175} The journal regularly published lists of donors organized by department and city, providing a veritable map of political opposition.

The national subscription campaign was the object of the most contemptuous denunciations on the part of Balzac, who in \textit{La Rabouilleuse} charged the liberal party with masterminding the whole disastrous enterprise of the Champ d’Asile as a “confidence trick” for their own political gain. “This incident in the history of Liberalism at the time of the Restoration is decisive proof that its interests were entirely self-centered and in no way patriotic, and only concerned with power.” The proposed conquest of Texas had every chance of success if only material support had been forthcoming, for “today,” as Balzac noted, “Texas is a republic with a bright future ahead of it.” The attempt to raise money on the veterans’ behalf was ultimate proof of the liberals’ hypocrisy, designed to mask the fact that they gave up none of their own. “The Liberal leaders were quick to realize that they were doing Louis XVIII’s work for him by sending forth from France the glorious remains of the imperial army, and they abandoned the most loyal, keen and enthusiastic of the men, those who came forward first into the venture.”\textsuperscript{176}

\textit{Glory: Men of Champ d’Asile,” Southwestern Historical Quarterly} 87 (January 1984), 258-60.

\textsuperscript{175} Blaufarb, \textit{Bonapartists in the Borderlands}, 173-74.

\textsuperscript{176} Balzac, \textit{The Black Sheep}, 59, 63-64. It should be noted that despite Balzac’s unqualified hostility towards the liberal opposition, he was likewise critical of the ultra-royalist reaction. In his opinion, Bridau and his fellow members of the Champ d’Asile
While there is little evidence that French liberals had anything to do with instigating Lallemand’s project, they certainly did not hesitate to make use of its publicity as a means of opposing the more reactionary policies of the Restoration. The subscription campaign, suggested Antoine Jay, was an opportunity to set aside hatred and factionalism in the spirit of humanity and a common national interest. Far from their native soil as they may be, the refugees in Texas are still French, attached to their homeland and their fellow citizens by the common bonds of a shared religion, language, and manners. As such, they deserve the pity of their compatriots, regardless of differences in class or political opinions. Should these tales of privation and hardship not suffice to stir pity in the hearts of Frenchmen, it is up to hommes libres, such as himself and his fellow editors at the Minerve, to set an example. Such generosity of spirit was an “homage to the virtues of the monarch and the farsighted wisdom of the government,” and only those who wanted to protect their “fragile despotism” could possibly take it otherwise, said Jay, aiming a subtle dig at the ultraroyalists.177

Early in 1819, Jay penned another article refuting accusations from the political right that the donation drive was motivated purely by political interests. Even while insisting on the purely humanitarian nature of the subscription campaign, Jay nonetheless at the same time proved its utility as a political weapon against the ultras. He skillfully framed his rhetoric with reminders of the dark days of 1815, a time when “a simple friendly goodbye could be construed as a sign of malevolent intentions and a symptom of conspiracy.” Many citizens lived in fear of arbitrary surveillance, the loss of their were victims of both “the Liberals’ double-dealing and the Bourbons’ relentless harassment of the Bonapartists.”

177 La Minerve Française (Paris: August-October 1818), 348-49.
livelihoods, and even physical violence. Among them were the brave soldiers of the Empire, who received nothing in return for their sacrifices but insults and suspicion. Eager to drive an ideological wedge between Louis XVIII and the ultraroyalists, Jay praised the king in his wisdom and moderation for putting an end to the worst of their reactionary excesses. The ordinance of 5 September 1816, which dissolved the Chambre Introuvable and prompted fresh elections that greatly reduced the number of ultraroyalist seats in the Chamber of Deputies, “saved France from falling in the revolutionary abyss.” Public liberty was restored, and citizens no longer feared arbitrary persecutions. But memories of the White Terror were vividly resurrected in 1818 when the French public learned of the Champ d’Asile, provoking sympathy for these veterans who remained in exile out of fear and alienation. Their departure in 1815 had hardly been noticed amidst the anarchy and confusion that reigned during the White Terror, wrote Jay. Now that the truth of their distress has become known, patriotism and goodwill has prompted citizens “whose imagination became enflamed at the very mention of the words glory and liberty” to come forth with contributions for their aid.178

By contrast, the ultras rejoiced in the exiles’ misfortunes; “the men of 1815 hound their victims to the very ends of the earth; nothing is sacred to them, even misfortune, and they slander those Frenchmen who have been deprived of their patrie…the exile of their fellow citizens excites their gaiety, they joke about the proscription, and the distress of the unfortunate makes them cry out for joy.” Jay heaped opprobrium on his opponents, singling out the editors of the right-wing journal, Le Conservateur. If those responsible for the reaction of 1815 weren’t so blinded by factionalism, he charged, they would

178 *La Minerve Française* (Paris: February–April 1819), 92-94.
recognize that it better served their interests to demonstrate generosity on this occasion. It was their responsibility to prove “that a rapprochement was possible between themselves and the French people,” instead of blaming others for their isolation while repulsing all efforts at reconciliation. Jay implied that the *ultras* displayed the most outrageous hypocrisy by stirring up memories of the Terror of ’93 and its persecution of émigrés, while at the same time seeking to employ the exact same tactics against Bonapartists and former revolutionaries in 1815. “Under a government whose strength lies in its constitutionality, we shall henceforth fear neither the Terror of 1793 nor of 1815. You insult [the king’s] authority with such odious comparisons, while we honor it with our confidence in his respect for laws and for humanity.”

Paradoxically, suggested another of the *Minerve*’s regular contributors, Charles-Guillaume Étienne, the ultras should have had the most sympathy for the refugees of the Champ d’Asile, having themselves suffered the torture of exile and the subsequent joy of being reunited with their native land. But unlike the vast majority of the French people, whose generosity and pity has been aroused by the plight of the refugees, the ultras remained implacable in their demands for vengeance. As a consequence, they “malign the very government they profess themselves loyal to.” By contrast, those who inscribed their names on the lists of donors rendered proof of “the most honorable confidence in [the king’s] authority…that they do not confuse constitutional government with those ephemeral authorities who, when they reigned in France, guarded her borders through terror and death.”

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179 *La Minerve Française* (Paris: February-April 1819), 94-96.

The rhetoric employed by both Jay and Étienne reflected the liberal opposition’s primary strategy during Louis XVIII’s reign, which was to discredit their opponents on the right as dangerous reactionaries, while courting the king with repeated professions of loyalty to the constitutional regime.¹⁸¹ Throughout the early years of the Restoration, the liberal opposition, sensing Louis XVIII’s inclination towards moderation, consistently sought to exploit divisions between the king and center-right royalists from the more extreme members of the party for their own gain. Thus, the appeal for aid for the Champ d’Asile was publicized as an act of patriotic virtue rather than of subversion, enabling them to cast critics of the campaign as self-interested enemies of the nation.

In publicizing the Champ d’Asile in France, Lallemand’s sympathizers, whether journalists or poets or painters, did not rely solely on fanning the flames of political passions. They also employed language and imagery calculated to arouse an emotional response over the issue of proscription. The pity accorded to the exiles of 1815 stands in sharp contrast to the vilification of the royalist émigrés of the Revolution, a contrast that cannot be explained by differences in political opinion alone. Semantic clues signaled this distinction. The Bonapartists who left France in the wake of the 1815 reaction were referred to as *proscrits, bannis* or the more neutral *exilés*, never as *émigrés*, which implied a willingness to leave the *patrie*. In emphasizing the involuntary nature of their exile, the Bonapartists and their sympathizers turned them into martyrs, victims of implacable and hostile forces, and thus worthy of the nation’s pity.

In an intellectual climate dominated by ideas about the innate qualities of national character and the powerfully emotive bonds that existed between individuals and their

native soil, exile was widely considered as akin to a state of living death. The ancients, wrote Jay in *La Minerve*, considered courage in the face of adversity as the noblest of qualities. For them, exile was the worst misfortune that could befall citizens, bound as they were to their native land by patriotism and the most intimate relationships. Should circumstances force them from their homeland and sever all civil ties between them, they nonetheless maintained the most profound affection for their patrie. This very same spirit of patriotism in exile revered by the ancients, announced Jay, may be found among the inhabitants of the Champ d’Asile. Men of less character and less elevated sentiments would doubtless have retaliated against their enemies by slandering France’s reputation while begging their daily bread from foreigners. But Lallemand and his followers, recognizing the dishonor implicit in such conduct, have remained noble and loyal even in their exile.  

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They had, moreover the noble example of the founders of the American republic to follow. The first English settlers, fleeing religious intolerance in their native land, by dint of hard work and perseverance, built flourishing and industrious cities and established a new society “where liberty reigns without license…No injurious privilege threatens to randomly reward birth rather than merit or virtue; all citizens enjoy the same rights and protection of the law; never are private interests elevated over that of the common good.” Likewise, the veterans of the Champ d’Asile are guided by the idea of founding a new patrie where they can live in freedom, a principle that sustains them in the face of adversity, exhaustion, and boredom. “You have before you an image of the

182 *La Minerve Française* (Paris: August-October 1818), 345-46.
Seine, and a new *patrie* that is of your own making. Pray may she be luckier than the other, and never have to suffer the fury of foreign enemies.”

These sentiments were echoed in a letter written by one of the Champ d’Asile refugees upon his arrival in Texas to his mother in Paris, excerpts of which were reprinted in the *Minerve*. In it, he described the Champ d’Asile as a reprieve from exile, a happy end to three years of lonely wanderings across Europe that brought him to the depths of despair. Among compatriots, he no longer had to rely on the support of foreigners, “the most insufferable torment to my soul.” Together he and his fellow exiles were going to create a new *patrie* in a land of their choosing, open to all Frenchmen “recommended by their probity, their courage, and misfortune.” There they would “live freely, industriously, and peacefully; that is our only ambition.”

In June 1819, two exiles recently returned to France, L. Hartmann and Jean-Baptiste-Auguste Millard, published together the journals they recorded on their journey to Texas. Both men were soldiers who, bored by the inactivity of civilian life, left France in 1817 seeking adventure in America. They both saw the Champ d’Asile as an

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184 The author, whose name is listed only as Charles N...., was possibly apocryphal, although according to the list compiled by Kent Gardien, he might have been Normann of the first cohort. “Take Pity on Our Glory,” 267.


187 Millard was later arrested, along with Champ d’Asile member Androphile Mauvais, in connection with the assassination of the Duc de Berry in February 1820. He was found guilty of conspiring to assassinate the royal family and was sentenced to ten years of
escape from idleness, and neither spoke of any overarching Bonapartist plot. Millard shrewdly swore that he was not discontent with the Bourbon regime, “for it was with pleasure that I saw the French government consolidate its power amidst the confidence and the love of the French people.” He regarded his voluntary act of exile not as a breach of patriotic faith but as a protest against France’s humiliation and submission before the Allies, who for twenty-five years had been their most implacable enemies. Fate having doomed their efforts in Texas, they advanced a touching plea for reconciliation between the bannis and their native land, appealing to the king to revoke the order of proscription. “The paternal heart is an inexhaustible source of the most mild and tender affections, and this thought is for us our only consolation.” Must France be forever divided? The authors exhorted individuals of all political leanings and loyalties to forget the past and be reunited with the bannis, “as if we have just come from a long and painful journey.” It is time, they declared, for all French people to reunite under a single leader as a family, and to sanction “the return of Frenchmen who have never ceased to be French, for death alone, as involuntary as birth, can efface that distinction which no living man could willingly renounce.”

Borrowing from Lallamand’s own propaganda, these authors also celebrated the idealized image of the Champ d’Asile as a bucolic colony of soldier-farmers who have beaten their swords into ploughshares. The concept of the soldat-laboreur, so familiar to ancient writers like Cato and Pliny, became commonplace in French thought during the exile. In the course of the investigation, he revealed that although he had intended to join the Champ d’Asile colony, he only made it as far as New Orleans. Gardien, “Take Pity on Our Glory,” 246, 264.

188 Millard and Hartmann, Le Texas, v-vi, 11-12, 113, 127, 132.
Enlightenment. Diderot, d’Holbach, Rousseau and others reprised the classical notion that peasants, by virtue of their attachment to the petite patrie and daily experience of hard labor, were best equipped to withstand the hardships of military service and to faithfully defend the fatherland.\textsuperscript{189} The classical archetype of the soldat-laboreur was influential throughout the revolutionary and imperial periods, inspiring various efforts by Saint-Just, Jourdan, and Napoleon to create a ready supply of virtuous male citizens willing to sacrifice their lives for the patrie. The idea of the soldat-laboreur gained new currency after 1815, when it became widely used as an emblematic reference to the Napoleonic war veteran in peacetime. Tranquil imagery of soldiers tilling the soil found in paintings by Vernet and Charlet or songs by Debraux and Béranger intersected with liberal efforts to rehabilitate the reputation of the demi-solde by portraying veterans as exemplars of civic virtue, unfairly reviled as a threat to the security of the state when they should be seen as France’s natural protectors.\textsuperscript{190} Their historical ideal was Cincinnatus, the legendary Roman general who resigned his dictatorship and humbly returned to his plow after leading his army to victory against the Aequians, demonstrating his selfless devotion to the Republic and lack of personal ambition.

Friends rather than rivals, “Cincinnatus marches with Achilles.”\textsuperscript{191} The farmer and the soldier represented two sides of the same civic coin, the one nurturing the

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\textsuperscript{191} Pierre Colau, “Le Champ d’Asile” (1818), in \textit{Chansons et poésies nationales de Pierre Colau} (Paris: Levavasseur, 1830), 75. The idea that farming was a worthy and honorable alternative to soldiering was a theme also in Virgil’s \textit{Georgics}. Athanassoglou-Kallmyer, “Sad Cincinnatus,” 65.
\end{flushright}
homeland while the other defends it, both equally worthy of glory and dignity. The colonists of the Champ d’Asile, too, translated their agricultural enterprises into the more familiar idiom of battle. They found comfort and strength in their memories of past glories, finding in the crossing of the Alps or the Danube parallels to their present trials and models of courageous behavior. “[Even] if we here do not have to fight the enemies of our country, we shall nonetheless triumph over the elements that wage war upon us, and we shall say with pride that for a Frenchman, everything is possible.” Denied the right to serve the patrie on the battlefield, the veterans of the Champ d’Asile sought civic virtue in a different kind of labor. “Our imagination carried us back to our own country, and we said with a certain pride that when France learns that her children have settled on unknown shores, where, one might say, no man’s footprint has yet been left, she will be proud of our efforts to overcome adversity and conquer the rigors of destiny; she will recognize that no species of glory is foreign to us, and that these same men who have distinguished themselves on the field of battle, gathering innumerable crowns of laurel, can also distinguish themselves by their industry.”

By the end of the decade, the Bourbon regime had relaxed its intransigent stance against the “traitors” of the Hundred Days and granted clemency to many individuals on the proscription lists, with the exception of the regicides. General Clausel, for example, sentenced to death by a court-martial in 1815, was pardoned in 1820. He immediately left the U.S. and returned to France, where he was reinstated in the army and later enjoyed prominence under the July Monarchy. Praising these acts of royal clemency and

192 Millard and Hartmann, Le Texas, 58-9, 98.
justice, the poet Maffre took the occasion to revisit and condemn the climate of reactionary vengeance that reigned during the “fatal epoch of 1815.” What deadly calamity could have possibly merited such extreme measures, to wrench citizens from their homeland, “to separate France from her bravest defenders, from the arts their most illustrious friends, from the Muses their most celebrated infants, and from glory its most cherished favorites?” Like Teucer, Aeneas, and Idomeneus, and other heroes of antiquity banished from their homelands, these brave souls set off to found a new kingdom in foreign lands. Menaced by the “executioner’s ax,” they have gone abroad to “seek a new France.” Maffre cast Lallemand in the role of a modern Neleus, exhorting his companions in exile to forget their misfortunes and reclaim their liberty in a foreign land.

See these people whom traitors,
Relentless tyrants, ignominious aggressors
Have enslaved; long have they suffered themselves to be mastered;
But now they have broken the iron chains of their oppressors.
Time, which destroys all, destroys tyranny.
Liberty is reborn in this happy climate,
And their masculine virtue is no longer blighted
By an odious yoke.

193 C.F. Maffre, Les exilés du Champ-d’Asile, poème lyrique (Paris: Imprimerie d’Ant. Bailleul, 1820), iv-vi. Teucer (Teukros) was the son of King Telamon of Salamis and nephew to Priam who fought against his cousins in the Trojan War. His father blamed him for the death of his half-brother, Ajax, and disowned him, whereafter he fled to Cyprus and founded the city of Salamis. Idomeneus led the Cretan armies in the Trojan War, and was later exiled after he sacrificed his own son to Poseidon, who ordered Idomeneus to kill the first person he met upon returning home. He fled to Calabria and then to Colophon in Asia Minor. They figure, along with Aeneas, the mythological founder of Rome, in the Iliad.

194 Ibid., 11-12.

195 Neleus was the mythological founder of Pylos in Messenia, having been cast out of his homeland after quarreling with his brother Pelias over succession to the throne of Iolcus.

196 Ibid., 18.
Even in the face of adversity, they “maintained that grandeur of spirit that rendered them worthy to tread the native soil” of France. By remaining faithful to the character of bons Français, they merited the rewards of royal justice and were able to return home.

**Conclusion**

The Champ d’Asile became a symbol of the factionalism that divided the French nation under the Second Restoration, a factionalism driven as much by resentment and bitterness over the past as it was by differences in principles. While the administrative purges and other measures of the “legal” White Terror could be considered largely as pragmatic attempts to ensure loyalty to the regime among the ranks of its civil servants, the extralegal reactionary violence in the provinces was clearly motivated by vengeance and retribution for the revolutionary past. The liberal opposition in turn exploited more recent memories of imperial military glories and the White Terror of 1815 to portray the proscrits as exemplars of patriotic virtue, unfairly persecuted by reactionaries who were the real enemies of the state. The discourse on both sides appeared bound by the terms of the past; liberals ridiculed the ultraroyalists for trying to turn the clock back to 1789, while Lallemand and his veterans, for their part, were unwilling to accept that the Napoleonic saga was over.

In October 1819, police in Lons-le-Saunier in the Jura seized copies of Béranger’s popular song about the Champ d’Asile from a couple of itinerant merchants, one of whom was identified as a former soldier. According to the local prefect, “the government’s mild attitudes favoring freedom of the press are not incompatible with wise supervision. I believed it necessary to stop the clandestine distribution of a song that is
doubtless of little danger, but which seems to me capable of making a certain impression on the multitude – attracting a crowd, recalling memories weakened by the passage of time, and which reason makes it imperative to forget…” ¹⁹⁷ The prefect’s opinions testify to the spirit of the sedition laws, which aimed at restraining the pervasive power of collective memories to sow the seeds of political discontent. In policing the distribution and display of *signes prohibés*, Restoration authorities seem to have been troubled less by the actual messages conveyed by seditious speech and symbols than by their power to revive the memories of what, in their opinion, should be safely confined to the realm of history, or *oubli*. When news of Napoleon’s death reached France in July 1821, the government appeared at first to breathe a proverbial sigh of relief, believing that fate would finally achieve what six years of vigilant policing of public opinion could not. Their hopes proved in vain, for the myth-makers, refusing to let Napoleon become “un personnage historique,” sought and found ever new and inventive ways to insert the past into the present.

¹⁹⁷ AN, F⁷ 6704, d. 5906, Prefect of the Jura to the Ministry of the Interior (Lons-le-Saunier, 10/13/1819).
Chapter 3 – “Bonaparte n’est plus”

Napoleon’s death on 5 May 1821 furnished the final, requisite elements of tragedy and pathos in the making of the Romantic hero. In stark contrast to the resolute and infallible demi-god created by the Neoclassicists, Romantic sensibilities preferred more wretched and ultimately more accessible representations of the man after his fall. The image that came to dominate the nineteenth-century imagination was that of Napoleon alone on St. Helena, shoulders slumped, brooding, gazing out at the empty ocean around him, condemned to inaction and endless contemplation of the consequences of his own audacity. In their quest to plumb the extremes of human emotion, Romantic artists and writers delighted in exciting pity by embellishing the loneliness of his final years and the unceremonious nature of his death – humiliated in his subjection to the watchful eyes of his English jailers, deprived of the solace of wife and child, tended to only by the handful of faithful friends who had the fortitude to share his exile to the end. Chained to his rocky island in the South Atlantic like a modern Prometheus, his captivity was seen as the poetic end to a life that had trespassed the normal boundaries of human action.198

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198 As Keith Wren notes, Prometheus was a favored figure among the Romantics, “the arch-representative of the values and dignity of the individual against a hostile and uncomprehending society.” “Victor Hugo and the Napoleonic Myth,” European Studies Review 10 (1980), 431.
But the full-blown elaboration of the Romantic myth was far in the future, awaiting the deft touch of writers and artists like Stendhal, Hugo, and Vernet. In fact, the news appeared to have little immediate effect in France; royalists and the fashionable denizens of the Faubourg-Saint-Germain affected an attitude of studied indifference, while the attention of the political press was fixed squarely on the vicissitudes of the Richelieu ministry, which was caught in the crossfire between liberal and ultraroyalist deputies and enjoyed the support of neither. On 7 July, following a report published in the London *Courier* three days earlier, the *Journal des débats* announced simply, “Bonaparte n’est plus.” Over the next several days, the *Débats* continued to reprint excerpts from the London papers with relatively dry accounts of Napoleon’s last days, but they were largely overshadowed by the more substantial coverage of a particularly contentious debate in the Chamber of Deputies over the extension of press censorship. But what at first appeared to be an apathetic response was soon belied by the spate of funeral odes, elegies and panegyrics that flooded the *nouveauté* reading market in the second half of 1821. While the self-appointed arbiter of public opinion Talleyrand might smugly dismiss Napoleon’s death as a non-event, these writers of these texts invested it with great significance in the fevered climate of the royalist reaction that followed in the wake of the duc de Berry’s assassination in February 1820. Taking the occasion to form a more or less coherent narrative of the Napoleonic past, they kept that narrative fluid and malleable by shaping it to fit various items on the liberal political agenda, be it the philhellenist campaign on behalf of Greek nationalists or protests against perceived attacks on the sanctity of the constitutional charter. This narrative also furnished much of the evidence for the unsuccessful but nonetheless passionate arguments for reclaiming
Napoleon’s body and giving it a proper burial on French soil, arguments which stressed the conscious aspects of remembering as a national act of *reconnaissance*.

**In search of “inexorable but impassive truth”**

Despite the Restoration regime’s vigorous policing of public opinion through censorship and anti-sedition measures, the second half of the year 1821 witnessed a veritable flood of printers’ ink spilled on Napoleon’s life and death, ranging in form from the academic-style *éloges* and *oraisons funèbres* to epic poems to *dialogues des morts*. In large measure, this impulse to actively remember and honor the dead belongs to the long-standing practice of cultivating a cult of “*grands hommes,*” a tradition of encouraging virtue through emulation that accelerated in the final decades of the old regime and reached a new pitch during the Revolution with the construction of the Panthéon.\(^{199}\) On the whole, however, the writers of these texts aimed not only to celebrate Napoleon’s memory, but to evaluate his character and actions, both good and bad, in order to determine his place in French history. In this respect, the corpus of texts written in the months immediately after Napoleon’s death shared more in common with the particularly republican idea popularized during and after the Terror that citizens had a moral responsibility to judge and rank their dead compatriots, *grands hommes* and *anonymes* alike, on the basis of their civic virtues as a means of promoting social

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morality. Viewing historical narratives as “a critical discourse of truth” in much the same way that Napoleon and Las Cases did in the *Mémorial de Sainte-Hélène*, they manifested a touching faith in the impartiality of History.

Napoleon’s death and the subsequent demands for impartial judgments of his character and actions provided an opportunity for political writers to excoriate the bête noir of Restoration political culture – *esprit de parti*, framing their arguments as a palliative to the highly polarized climate of opinion regarding France’s recent past that perpetuated so many fractures in Restoration politics. Many writers expressed concern that the normal course of postmortem judgment was complicated in the case of Napoleon because his physical death had been preceded by his *mort civile*: “It is not always death that finishes the life of great men, and long before 5 May 1821, Napoleon’s destinies came to an end on the plains of Waterloo.” But an excess of political passions on both sides, coupled with the rhetorical shackles imposed by the sedition laws and other, more covert, means of repressing Napoleonic memories, had hitherto made any sort of attempts at objective judgment impossible in the intervening years. Even now, that excess of passions made it impossible to hear “the language of inexorable but impassive truth,” warned the poet Louis Belmontet. Nonetheless, many writers were optimistic that his

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natural death would bring an end to the interminable bickering over the past and pave the way for a balanced and honest assessment of the Napoleonic era.

At times this search for “inexorable but impassive truth” took some imaginative detours. His eulogizers often adopted the trope of apotheosis, painting fanciful depictions of some Elysian realm where he was called upon by some celestial court to recount his merits before being obsequiously received into an illustrious pantheon of immortals. The result was a series of dialogues between the dead so inventive they bordered on the risible. In one version of Napoleon’s welcome to the Elysian Fields, Napoleon encountered Alexander, Caesar, Pompey, Augustus, Charlemagne, Charles XII, Peter the Great, and Frederick of Prussia, in the midst of a heated debate as to which of them was the greatest warrior. Upon seeing the newcomer, they exclaimed in unison, “this one did more than all of us put together!” This device was useful for several reasons. First, it removed the potentially contentious task of judging the dead and turned it over to some immortal whose capacity for impartiality was unimpeachable, whether the denizens of Olympus, the illustrious souls of those long dead, or the muse Clio herself. Secondly, it was a means of anticipating the “jugement de l’histoire” by elevating him to the status of already recognized grands hommes, and thus forestalling any argument on the matter.

For one anonymous writer, impartiality was a means of asserting personal control over the impersonal forces of history; “it is we who should prepare the judgment of history, and the different faces under which we envisage it will one day illuminate the final truth.” But this demand for impartiality can also be traced, in part, to a subtle


204 *Jugement de l’histoire sur Napoléon*, 6-8.
generational shift in the construction of the Napoleonic myth that manifested itself in the discourse of 1821. Many of these writers were members of what Alan Spitzer has called the “generation of 1820,” the children of the Revolution. Born between 1792 and 1803, their “collective trauma” and defining moment was not the fall of the Bourbon monarchy or the Terror but the defeat at Waterloo and collapse of the Empire in 1815. Neither bohemians nor dandies, they distinguished themselves by their grave demeanor and high moral tone, shaped by a distinct sense of collective responsibility for shaping the nation’s future. 205 They claimed impartiality in their attitudes towards Napoleon, not on the basis of their past politics like the vieux républicains of the Hundred Days, but by virtue of their relative youth: “Free from partiality, because I was too young to have served he whom every good Frenchman should pity and mourn, I will state my thoughts frankly. I seek the truth that one almost always finds among the general opinion.”206

Albin Thourel manifested this hankering for impartiality among the younger generation. Born at Montpellier in 1800, Thourel was a lawyer by profession and a writer by inclination. In the mid-1820’s, he expatriated to Brussels where he worked for a local journal, Manneken, and later relocated to Geneva, where he was inspired to publish a two-volume work celebrating the historical progress of the city’s civil, political, and religious institutions. 207 By the 1840’s, Thourel had returned to France and settled in

205 Alan B. Spitzer, French Generation of 1820, 4-10. See also Robert Gildea, Children of the Revolution, 6-8.


207 Albin Thourel, Histoire de Genève, depuis son origine jusqu’à nos jours; suivie de la Vie des hommes illustres qui y ont pris naissance, ou s’y sont rendus célèbres (Geneva: L. Collin et cie., 1832).
Marseilles, where he was elected to the Academy of Sciences, Letters, and Arts under the Second Empire. In 1821, while still a law student, Thourel published a short essay titled, *Les accens de la liberté au tombeau de Napoléon*, which illustrates the rationale by which young men of a liberal persuasion under the Restoration were able to accommodate the Napoleonic myth. Yes, we who were “educated at the school of Liberty” lament Napoleon’s death, said Thourel, because the passing of an unhappy hero merits our tears. But, he cautioned, we should not forget that Napoleon also betrayed the Revolution by pardoning the émigrés and reestablishing the nobility as a distinct social caste, extinguishing political liberties, and institutionalizing despotism. It was only as a general that Napoleon merited the designation of “grand,” for under his reign, France triumphed over all her adversaries, courage was rewarded, and the brave defenders of the *patrie*, honor, and glory were never reduced to beggary. Thus, Frenchmen should “weep for the proscribed, dying in a foreign land; [weep] for an exiled hero, banished from the land he defended for twenty years. But brand the tyrant, who never shed a single tear over the tomb of Liberty, with the crime of parricide.” Napoleon’s soldiers could mourn his passing without shame, provided they recognized “that it was to satisfy the ambition of a single man, and not for the interests of France, that they marched into combat so many times.”

André-François de Carrion-Nisas proposed an even more concrete distinction in a pamphlet titled, *Bonaparte et Napoléon, parallèle*. His father was a cavalry officer who had attended military school at Brienne with the young Napoleon, supported his rise to

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power and took part in numerous campaigns, giving final proof of his devotion by rallying to the emperor during the Hundred Days. Born in 1794, Carrion-Nisas fils was far more left-leaning than his father and adopted republican principles from a young age, which he warmly espoused in a prolific body of writings during the Restoration.

Disappointed by the outcome of the July Revolution, he sought election to the Chamber of Deputies as a radical candidate several times under the Orléans monarchy without success. The Revolution of 1848 and short-lived Second Republic finally secured him a place in the National Assembly, where he took his place on the extreme left and maintained staunch opposition against the prince-president, Louis-Napoleon.

Like many of his fellow political writers, Carrion-Nisas took Napoleon’s death as an occasion to advance his version of history’s judgment of the grand homme. Two men, he announced, died on 5 May 1821 – Bonaparte and Napoleon, the former having given way to the latter on 2 December 1804, the day of the imperial coronation. Bonaparte, as First Consul of the French Republic, delivered his country from anarchy and governed by rule of law. Napoleon, on the other hand, found it necessary to deprive the country of liberty in order to restore monarchy. Bonaparte respected his revolutionary heritage and all of its principles, and equality above all, while Napoleon himself unleashed the forces of Counter-Revolution by resurrecting the noble class with its attendant privileges. The Concordat with the papacy was Bonaparte’s sole mistake; Napoleon compounded the error by allowing his reign to be sanctified by the pope and delivering education back into the hands of the Jesuits. Both, he admitted, were the greatest military commanders of all ages and reveled in the art of war. Bonaparte, however, went to war only in defense of France and the Revolution against their common enemies. Napoleon, on the
other hand, often (but not always) the aggressor, compromised both the Revolution and France by going to war solely in the interests of glory. The former, moreover, contented himself with overthrowing the decrepit monarchies of the Old Regime and establishing republics in their stead; the latter flattered himself by allying himself with the old aristocracies and fancied himself a kingmaker. The ultimate proof, argued Carrion-Nisas, that Bonaparte was greater than Napoleon lay in the fate of France against her enemies—Bonaparte, in defense of liberty, was invincible and no single coalition could defeat him. Napoleon, by contrast, reigning over an enslaved people, met his end in ignominious defeat and left France at the mercy of invading hordes of foreign armies. Thus, he concluded, that while one might admire Napoleon, one could admire and mourn only Bonaparte. The name Napoleon was destined for great renown, but only Bonaparte could truly be considered a great man, for he was a patriot, while Napoleon was only a sovereign.\footnote{André-François-Victoire-Henri, marquis de Carrion-Nisas, \textit{Bonaparte et Napoléon, parallèle} (Paris: Chez Bosquet, 1821), 3-7.}

Just as fears of another allied invasion caused even the most skeptical “vieux républicains” during and after the Hundred Days to forgive Napoleon his past transgressions, so his death in 1821, which served as a guarantee against another return to imperial despotism, freed these liberals of a new generation to absolve him of his sins. One writer summed up the prevailing sentiment succinctly: “without a doubt he had faults…but these faults were entirely erased by the good that he did and by his glory.” Napoleon’s achievements covered a multitude of sins; ambitious though he was, the indisputable fact remained that “France under his reign assumed the first rank among all nations on earth, whereas now…” Leaving the thought unfinished, the writer poignantly
alluded to the sad contrast afforded by France’s much diminished prestige under the Restoration.\textsuperscript{210} Another writer, who identified himself only as an officer in the imperial armies, freely reproached Napoleon, “audacious conqueror of our liberty,” for destroying the republic. “But misfortune crowns his head, and spreads a touching charm upon its glory. I become his friend, I will be his poet; he has ceased to be powerful.”\textsuperscript{211} Having been finally stripped of his power by the great equalizer, Napoleon ceased to be a threat, paving a path towards reconciliation and acceptance of a divisive national past.

\textit{“Quel roman que ma vie!”}\textsuperscript{212}

These impulses to actively remember and judge the dead produced a sort of meta-narrative of Napoleonic history that coalesced in the months immediately following his death in May 1821. Whereas the needs of oppositional politics had created numerous occasions for remembering specific aspects of the Napoleonic past at various times since the emperor’s first abdication – the rise of the myth of the liberal emperor in 1815, for example, or the glorification of imperial military service in response to the White Terror – Napoleon’s death provided the first real impetus to put it all together in one totalizing narrative, to impose order and coherence on those memories as a meaningful story about France’s recent past. The highly formulaic nature of that narrative, moreover, suggests that these writers constituted something of a definable literary community, actively

\textsuperscript{210} M.D.F, \textit{Mon hommage à Napoléon} (Paris: Imprimerie de Brasseur aîné, August 1821), 5.

\textsuperscript{211} \textit{Ode sur la mort de Napoléon, par un officier de l’ancienne armée} (Paris: Lithographie de G. Engelmann, 11 August 1821), 1, 4-5.

\textsuperscript{212} An exclamation famously attributed to Napoleon in exile on St. Helena.
engaged in reading each other’s works and borrowing freely from one another.\textsuperscript{213} The result was a series of recurring and sometimes contradictory images of Napoleon, seen alternately as a legislator and a warrior, a conqueror and a champion of liberty and national self-determination, the son of the Revolution and a mediator between the Old Regime past and the post-revolutionary present, the savior of France and finally, a martyr.

Despite Napoleon’s efforts to erase his revolutionary heritage from the minds of his contemporaries in order to legitimize the founding of the empire, the myth-makers preferred an alternate myth of origin that more firmly rooted his origins in the revolutionary élan of 1789. Whereas opponents like Chateaubriand and de Staël questioned his right to rule France because of his foreign birth, these writers, on the contrary, celebrated his Corsican heritage because it identified him with the universal struggle for liberty that defined the second half of the eighteenth century. (The cause of Corsican independence, after all, had merited the attention of Rousseau himself, rendering Napoleon’s revolutionary credentials unimpeachable.) Turning his humble origins to his advantage, they narrated his meteoric rise to power as a foil to the reactionary regime of privilege resurrected by the Restoration. Rising through the ranks by virtue of merit rather than birthright, his early career as an artillery officer also exemplified the meritocratic ideals of the Revolution. Baptized by fire amidst the sacred

\textsuperscript{213} Further evidence that these writers clearly saw themselves in dialogue with one another can be found in the sort of annotated bibliographies they published, in which they reviewed one another’s contributions to the Napoleonic myth. See for example, [Alexandre Goujon], \textit{Examen analytique et raisonné des principales brochures qui ont paru depuis la mort de Napoléon} (Paris: Imprimerie de Chanson, 1821), and Constant Taillard, \textit{Revue des brochures publiées sur Napoléon} (Paris: Imprimerie de Doublet, n.d.).
combats of the republican armies, he assured himself of the loyalty of his soldiers and
shielded himself from jealousy on the part of his fellow officers, who were proud to serve
someone born of their own ranks.\textsuperscript{214}

The year 1799 marked the first truly pivotal moment in this narrative, when
Napoleon miraculously emerged from the depths of Egypt to restore order in France.
France was seen as poised on the edge of an abyss, threatening to engulf the entire nation
in the horrors of full-fledged civil war. The Directory government was widely reviled as
corrupt and ineffectual, unable to fend off assaults on its authority from either the
royalists or the Jacobins and utterly discredited by its reliance on military strongmen.
“France was plunged in the chaos of anarchy; no religion, no order in administration.
Worse still, no finances – its coffers were denuded by the depredations of various heads
of state who so rapidly succeeded one another.”\textsuperscript{215} Domestic instability, in turn,
threatened to undermine the hard-fought victories won by the armies of the First
Republic. Taking advantage of France’s turmoil at home, coalition forces launched a
concerted effort to reverse the revolutionary tide and recapture lost ground in the
Rhineland and Italy. Their success made an invasion of France itself appear imminent,
and the failure of so many French commanders to contain the threat reinforced popular
beliefs that only General Bonaparte could save the Revolution from its enemies, both at
home and abroad.\textsuperscript{216} In this context, Napoleon’s unexpected return from Egypt in

\textsuperscript{214} \textit{Panégyrique d’un Mort. Par un homme sans titre.} (Paris: Imprimerie de J.-B. Imbert,
1821), 4.

\textsuperscript{215} \textit{M.D.F, Mon hommage à Napoléon}, 4.

\textsuperscript{216} \textit{Léonard-Charles-André-Gustave Gallois, Éloge funèbre de Napoléon, prononcé à sa
tombe, le 9 mai 1821, par le Grand Maréchal Bertrand} (Paris: Chez les marchands de
nouveautés, 1821), 7.
October 1799 seemed like a miracle; braving both the forces of nature and the watchful eye of the English navy that patrolled the Mediterranean, Napoleon slipped away in the dead of night, and, guided by destiny, was safely deposited on the shores of his native land so that he might rescue the nation from the threat of counter-revolution. Thus was born the myth of the Savior, which was strong enough to insulate his reputation from the potentially damaging effects of the disastrous defeat at Aboukir Bay, the fact that he had just abandoned his command, even the rather embarrassing rumors circulating about his marriage – all of which paled in comparison with the evils from which he was expected to deliver the French nation.

The years immediately following the coup d’état of 18 Brumaire helped to create an image of Napoleon as a mediator between France’s past and present, an image that he deliberately encouraged by pursuing policies of moderation and reconciliation during the Consulate. Having saved France from the threat of counter-revolution posed by the Republic’s enemies both within and abroad, his task was now to ensure that those threats never reared their heads again, not by radicalizing the Revolution in the manner of his Jacobin predecessors, but, intuitively responding to the wishes of a nation exhausted by ten years of bloodshed and turmoil, by healing France’s breach with its pre-revolutionary past. These writers, having to contend with the parallel image of Napoleon as the Revolution’s ideological heir, worked diligently to establish how he was able to do so without fundamentally violating the principles of 1789. For example, the narrative

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217 Panégyrique d’un Mort, 5.

218 From the title of Jean Tulard’s landmark study, which locates the origins of this myth in the coup of 18 Brumaire, when the principal beneficiaries of the Revolution – the acquéreurs of biens nationaux – stamped Napoleon with their seal of approval as the man who could guarantee the triumph of the bourgeoisie. Napoléon: ou, Le mythe du sauveur.
praised him for resurrecting two of the Revolution’s heaviest casualties – religion and the social order – while modifying them to suit the post-revolutionary order. The genius of the Concordat of 1801 was that it satisfied the wishes of the French people in re-legitimatizing an “exiled religion,” while securing the papacy’s recognition of the sale of church lands and state-sponsored salaries for clergy. Likewise, the Napoleonic system of social distinction, first introduced in the Legion of Honor and later the imperial nobility, proved palatable because it was based, theoretically at least, on the principle of merit. The general amnesty of 1802 also figured prominently if implicitly in this narrative, for Napoleon’s gestures of rapprochement towards the émigrés, who were welcomed back to the “pays natal” without fear of further retribution, earned specific praise.219

Meanwhile, Napoleon induced the Republic’s enemies one by one to conclude a favorable peace, and the treaties that ended the Second Coalition freed him to turn his attention to France’s internal organization. Consequently, “he reestablished financial order, purged the administration of all its vices, and drafted those immortal codes upon which the welfare of peoples are founded.”220 Napoleon’s accession to power marked the return of domestic peace and general prosperity, and, as a mark of their gratitude, the French “bestowed” upon him the title of Emperor.221 Thus commenced the golden age of the Empire. “The perfect tranquility which France enjoyed abroad allowed domestic commerce to flourish. The banks of the Seine became the patrie of the sciences and


220 Gallois, Éloge funèbre, 8.

221 Ibid., 8; Panégyrique d’un Mort, 5-6.
beaux-arts, and agriculture doubled its production. Everywhere new ports, roads, and canals rendered communication and exchange easier and more active. Industry achieved such a degree of perfection that France had no rival in any sector.” Finances naturally benefited from the “subsidies” that subdued nations willingly relinquished to France. “Never was France greater, richer, or happier than during this memorable period.”222 These writers celebrated his commitment to public works, ranging from the utilitarian to the ornamental, making Paris “the modern Athens/Under this modern Pericles.”223 Contrary to much historical opinion, which characterizes the imperial era as a particularly sterile one in terms of cultural and intellectual activity, the myth-makers vigorously maintained that both the arts and sciences flourished under his benefaction. Himself a member of the Institut de France, they argued, he was motivated by both a natural inclination and a desire to restore France to her rightful place as the center of European civilization.

Not surprisingly, Napoleon’s audacity, strategic genius, and unparalleled exploits on the battlefield formed the centerpiece of this narrative. The past 2,500 years of human history, opined one anonymous writer, boasted only perhaps fifty memorable battles fought by forty memorable names; Napoleon accomplished far more in the space of only sixteen years.224 “Every day of his life was a whole century’s worth of glory.”225 Even after raising himself to the highest ranks on the basis of his own merits, Napoleon

222 Gallois, Éloge funèbre, 9-10.
224 Panégyrique d’un Mort, 12.
225 Belmontet, Les Funérailles de Napoléon, 9.
retained the virtues of a simple soldier: “He was valiant and never feared death, hoping always to expire on the field on battle.”

He thus secured for himself the undying loyalty of his troops, while also wringing admiration, however grudging, from his vanquished foes, to whom he was always generous and noble in his conduct. But the authors of this narrative were equally disposed to celebrate his civil legacy, although in this respect, their enthusiasm tended to be tempered by acknowledgments of the emperor’s more despotic qualities. Ultimately, however, the ends justified the means for most of these writers. For example, the poet Belmontet argued that although the penal code was unjust, the Empire’s body of civil legislation was nonetheless an indisputably commendable achievement. Napoleon may have wielded and even abused an absolute power, but France thereby reaped the benefits of a public administration that improved infrastructure and public works. Despite the errors of the Continental System, Napoleon did much to encourage domestic commerce and industry.

He was praised for balancing the sword with scepter, patiently attending to the most minute details of statecraft and administration with the same penetrating eye with which he surveyed the field of battle.

Branding him a modern Justinian, they viewed the Code Napoléon as his crowning achievement in the civil sphere, a testament to his genius so certain that it outlasted the empire itself.

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228 *Panégyrique d’un Mort*, 6.

229 *Ode sur la mort de Napoléon*, 8.
As proof of their impartiality, many of his apologists conceded that great as he was, Napoleon was still only human, and as such, imperfect.\textsuperscript{230} Stubbornly adhering to the argument that those who owed him most deserted him first, they reserved the right to absolve him of final responsibility for France’s humiliation by attributing his reversals in fortune to betrayal and intrigue on the part of his officers, bureaucrats, and even his family. Nonetheless, they were willing to admit, at the very least, that he rendered himself vulnerable to these machinations by a few crucial errors. Unanimously they agreed that the execution of the duc d’Enghien was a singular stain upon his honor. (Nonetheless, hinted one author, the murder of Clitus didn’t prevent Montesquieu from praising Alexander.\textsuperscript{231}) Even more disastrous in terms of consequences were the ill-timed and ill-conceived invasion of Spain, which proved ruinous to France’s finances as well as her armies, and, of course, the cataclysmic Russian campaign.\textsuperscript{232} Above all, however, Napoleon was guilty of “forgetting that a free people always knows how to defend its rights, but the enslaved have nothing to defend,” which proved to be his most costly mistake of all.\textsuperscript{233} With the Allies at the gates of Paris, he found himself unable to rekindle the sacred fires of patriotism in the French people that he had himself extinguished by arrogating for himself increasingly dictatorial powers as the imperial era progressed, depriving himself of the support necessary to wage a successful campaign for the defense of France in 1814.

\textsuperscript{230} Gallois, \textit{Éloge funèbre}, 10.

\textsuperscript{231} M. de Lows..., \textit{Napoléon Bonaparte envisagé comme vainqueur des nations}, 14.

\textsuperscript{232} \textit{Panégyrique d’un Mort}, 9.

\textsuperscript{233} Belmontet, \textit{Les Funérailles de Napoléon}, 7.
Nonetheless, the myth-makers were able to transform Napoleon’s first abdication in April 1814 into the second pivotal moment in the making of a savior, who chose to sacrifice himself for the good of the nation rather than continue to prosecute a war simply to save his own throne. To those who charged Napoleon with incessant warmongering to satisfy his own ambition and self-aggrandizement, his apologists insisted instead on his innate pacifism. Provoked by the agents of counter-revolution, they argued, he went to war only to secure an honorable peace that would ensure the welfare of France.234 Thus, in 1814, Napoleon chose to risk it all on the field of battle and ultimately to abdicate rather than sign a treaty that would shame France by truncating her borders and besmirch the memory of those brave soldiers who sacrificed their lives in her defense.235 The love of country that motivated Napoleon’s military exploits thus elevated even his most dismal defeats into glorious moments unparalleled in the annals of history. France had no cause to reproach the emperor for her recent misfortunes, for he “raised her to the highest degree of glory and splendor, made all of Europe fear and revere the name French, and when he could no more good for her sake, immolated himself for her happiness and tranquility.”236 Hidden between the lines of this didactic tale of the patriotic sovereign was an implicit rebuke to the Bourbons for having consented to France’s humiliation in the treaties of 1814-15 in order to regain the throne.


236 Serruot, *Dialogue militaire*, 9, 12.
In March 1815 commenced the final, albeit miscarried, moment in the making of a savior. From his exile’s roost on the island of Elba, Napoleon “observed this same Europe that his abdication was supposed to have rendered tranquil and, judging by the proceedings of the Congress of Vienna, concluded that this tranquility was an illusion. He saw France divided, torn to pieces by her own children.” Believing that he might be of service to the nation, he embarked on a daring act of escape, without thinking of the possible dangers to himself. Thus, the “flight of the Eagle” was narrated as an act of disinterested heroism, rather than a desperate attempt to escape oblivion and boredom. He returned from Elba, moreover, a changed man; having learned the error of his ways, he renounced his former autocratic tendencies and committed himself wholeheartedly to the project of liberal reform. Hunted relentlessly by a vengeful coalition of reactionary kings, Napoleon waged one final battle not for conquest but as a bid for France’s independence, to force Europe to cease meddling in France’s domestic affairs. “A single battle would have changed the face of Europe again, but a single battle destroyed all his projects and hopes.” Denied an honorable death on the field of battle, Napoleon “bid France goodbye forever,” and placed his fate in the hands of his enemies.

The six-year drama that played out on the island of St. Helena furnished the final and pathetic image of Napoleon as a martyr. The myth-makers employed the face-saving tactic of attributing his final defeat to betrayals rather than any misstep on his part – betrayed by those whom he had showered with gifts and rewards, betrayed, too, by perfidious Albion, on whose mercy he had thrown himself. Gradually abandoned even

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237 Gallois, Éloge funèbre, 12.

238 Ibid., 13-14.
by those who elected to share his exile, who one by one found pretext to return to Europe, his English “gaoler,” Sir Hudson Lowe, compounded his isolation by ruthlessly censoring Napoleon’s contact with the outside world. Among the little band of exiles who accompanied Napoleon to St. Helena, comte Henri-Gratien Bertrand cut the most sympathetic figure, the faithful friend and brother-in-arms who tended to the emperor until the bitter end.\textsuperscript{239} The myth-makers recreated what they imagined to be his simple existence on the island, making much of his intellectual labors in dictating his memoirs, which offered a welcome distraction from the pains of separation from a beloved wife and child. Although he had lost an empire, he remained hard-working and diligent to the end, applying himself to the chronicles of his history with the same rigor he had deployed in making it.\textsuperscript{240} His last words – “France…the army…head of the army…Josephine” – were often repeated, although seldom accurately, embellished and elaborated to create the impression of a selfless patriotism unabated even in his final anguish.

Napoleon’s martyrdom on St. Helena also reinforced the most tenuous of mythic claims, which posed the emperor in the role of liberator of oppressed peoples and early champion of nationalism. This image proved to be of great political utility as the nineteenth century progressed, exploited first by various political groups in opposition to the foreign policies of the Restoration and July Monarchy, and later by Napoleon III. Imagined as a fellow victim of the Holy Alliance and the forces of counter-revolution,

\textsuperscript{239} In fact, the personal memoirs written by Napoleon’s fellow exiles suggest that the emperor, wounded by Bertrand’s decision to live not at Longwood but in a separate residence with his wife and children, increasingly distanced himself from his old friend and relied more and more on the company of the comte de Montholon in the final months of his life. Ben Weider and David Hapgood, \textit{The Murder of Napoleon} (New York: Berkley Books, 1982), 213-251.

\textsuperscript{240} \textit{Panégyrique d’un Mort}, 14-15.
Napoleon was recast in the mold of friend and ally to the very people he had conquered. The Italian campaigns of 1796-99 were of enormous significance in this regard; not only did they give him occasion to prove his strategic genius, but as endeavors to free the descendants of the Romans from the jackboot of Austria they also cemented his revolutionary credentials.²⁴¹ Often at pains to plausibly interpret his subsequent campaigns as wars of liberation rather than conquest (although they certainly tried, especially in the case of the Rhineland and Spain), these writers nonetheless found ample justification for their arguments in the later years of his history, when the tide turned against him and the vanquished became the victors. The campaign of France in 1814, the disastrous defeat at Waterloo, and his subsequent persecution on St. Helena all reinforced Napoleon’s mythic image as defender of universal revolution against the reactionary despots of old Europe, and this image, more than anything else, was responsible for ensuring Napoleon’s continued relevance in political culture as the nineteenth century progressed.

Thus the ur-myth of Napoleonic history assumed its conventional form in the months immediately following his death in 1821. Rendered familiar and even hackneyed by endless repetition ever since, there are nonetheless two salient points about its evolution that are often overlooked, the first being the timing of its development. All too often, the Mémorial de Sainte-Hélène is given the lion’s share of the credit for creating this meta-narrative of Napoleonic history, especially by scholars who prefer to view the myth as something that was imposed by Napoleon and his faithful scribes upon a largely

²⁴¹ Gallois, Éloge funèbre, 6.
passive and naïve audience. While the Mémorial certainly proved to be of much more far-reaching and long-lasting influence than these ephemeral and often anonymous oeuvres de circonstance, the latter provide evidence that this narrative developed at least parallel to Napoleon’s own attempts to narrate his past, and figured prominently in French political discourse well before the first publication of Las Cases’ text in 1823. Secondly, developing out of the impulse to impose order on the flood of memories occasioned by Napoleon’s death, this narrative was sustained by its proven utility in the political sphere as a potent weapon in the liberal opposition’s arsenal.

“Victims of tyrants”

In his Mémoires d’outre-tombe, Chateaubriand perceptively observed that Napoleon posed a greater danger dead than he had while still alive: “The world belongs to Bonaparte. What the destroyer could not manage to conquer, his fame has succeeded in usurping. Living, he lost the world; dead, he possesses it.” Those who hoped that his death would sap Napoleonic memories of their vitality and finally assure the security of the Bourbon regime were sadly disappointed. On the contrary, members of the liberal opposition could henceforth exploit the Napoleonic past for political purposes


without any real danger of precipitating another imperial restoration, for l’Aiglon was as yet a boy of ten and a virtual prisoner at the court of his maternal grandfather, while Louis-Napoleon could not present himself as a serious candidate for imperial pretender while Napoleon’s son still lived. His death thus eased the conscience of those liberals and republicans who collaborated with Bonapartists in opposing the Bourbon regime, facilitating further cooperation among the three groups.\footnote{Alexander, \textit{Bonapartism and the Revolutionary Tradition}, 18.} In fact, the ephemeral literature published in the second half of 1821 suggests that Napoleon was even more useful to the liberals now that he was deceased; no longer an active participant in the creation of the Napoleonic myth, he was more easily molded to their particular political needs. The Napoleonic past proved itself especially adaptable to two of the most pressing issues on the liberal agenda in the early 1820s – the Greek struggle for independence from the Ottoman Empire and the urgent need for an opposition revanche in the wake of the royalist reaction of 1820.

The mythic account of Napoleon as a liberator of oppressed peoples was a cornerstone of the narrative woven by the emperor himself in the memoirs penned in exile on St. Helena. Appropriating for himself the role of prophet of liberty, Napoleon reversed his previous ambivalence towards his revolutionary heritage and enthusiastically posed as heir to the principles of 1789, who resorted to despotic measures only in order to prevent France from falling into the abyss of anarchy and civil war. The Napoleonic Wars were refashioned into an act of self-defense against reactionary impulses rather than unbridled imperial ambition – Napoleon’s ultimate design, in this version of the myth, was a federated Europe composed of free and independent states governed according to
liberal principles. Yet even before the *Memorial of Saint-Helena* appeared in print for the first time in 1823, a similar narrative of Napoleonic history was developing in French political discourse, first surfacing during the Hundred Days and crystallizing in the months following his death in 1821. The return of the Bourbons and the triumph of the old order cast Napoleon in a new light; his despotic excesses seemed to pale in comparison with what was seen as the revival of pre-revolutionary feudalism, while the Restoration’s passivity in foreign affairs gave the French cause to re-evaluate and appreciate the Empire’s militant attitudes. In his captivity he became a martyr at the hands of the Holy Alliance, and Napoleon’s aggressive and belligerent foreign policy, from Italy to Spain to Poland, was re-translated as a crusade against old regime tyranny. In short, the Holy Alliance having become the bogeyman of French liberals, Napoleon’s numerous campaigns against the crowned heads of Europe gave him impeccable credentials as a symbol of nationalist revolutionary fervor.

This image of Napoleon gained fresh impetus in the 1820s and early 30s, as liberal movements and nationalist aspirations reared their heads throughout Europe and provoked a swift response from the great powers. The Troppau Protocol of 1820 left no doubt as to the reactionary character of the Holy Alliance: drawn up by Austria, Prussia, and Russia, it pledged their collective intervention by armed force in the internal affairs of any state which dared to threaten the peace of Europe (or the monarchical status quo) by revolutionary activity. Liberal and nationalist movements in Naples, Spain, and elsewhere appealed to the sympathies of the French left, for whom the nation’s revolutionary heritage made it the natural standard-bearer of any struggle against tyranny. Roughly coinciding with these events, Napoleon’s death prompted reflections on his
revolutionary heritage, encouraging opposition political writers to wield his name as a battle call in the crusade against the resurgent forces of old regime despotism. The crowned heads of Europe might profit from this lesson, suggested one anonymous writer; “Let the oppressors of peoples tremble in considering the fall of the great Napoleon, he who was always a friend and father to his own people, and never their master!” The members of the Holy Alliance had long held both Napoleon and the people of Europe in bondage, but “death freed the emperor from his chains, and our grief will free us from ours!”\textsuperscript{246}

The year 1821 also witnessed the opening salvos in the Greek War of Independence. In February of that year, the Danubian prince Alexander Ypsilantis coordinated the first revolts against Turkish rule, precipitating a major uprising in the Morea. News of the insurrection and subsequent Ottoman retaliation rocked the congress of European powers meeting at Laibach and accentuated the growing rift within the Alliance over the Troppau Protocol, which had been issued without the formal assent of either Great Britain or France. But more pressing concerns such as the resolution of Neapolitan affairs and the escalating conflict in Spain diverted foreign policy away from Greece for the time being, and France did not formally engage in the war until 1827. Nonetheless, philhellenism remained conspicuous in French political discourse, transcending to some degree the usual partisan divisions between right and left. Greek antiquity exerted a strong grip on the French imagination, and allusions to the proud heroes of the Persian Wars or the Athenian golden age elicited strong sympathies on

\textsuperscript{246} [Vibaille], \textit{Il n’est pas mort!!}, 5.
behalf of the “classical land of liberty and the arts.” Moreover, Christian sensibilities were outraged by the idea that this cradle of European civilization should be held in bondage by the heretical Turks, and the struggle was easily cast as a holy war that demanded the support of the whole of Christendom. But as a nationalist revolution against despotic foreign rule, the Greek war was especially calculated to win sympathy among liberals. They constituted a majority in the nominally apolitical Philhellenic Committee, formed in 1824, whose philanthropic activities eventually ceded importance to the political objectives of advocating revolutionary tactics among the Greeks and a more aggressive foreign policy for France. Its membership boasted some of the most recognizable names of the day, including Chateaubriand, Constant, the duc de Broglie, the banker Lafitte, and even Napoleon’s faithful amanuensis, Emmanuel de Las Cases. For the liberals, eviscerated in the elections of 1824, the committee provided a vital outlet for public organization as well as potent means of opposition against the right-wing Villèle ministry.

Frustrated with the government’s unwillingness to commit itself to the Greek cause, liberal writers tried to shame the deputies into action by appealing to their pride in the revolutionary past:

“Oh France! what have you done with your brave soldiers?
When your heart is bound, your arms are immobile;


248 R.S. Alexander views the Philhellenic Committee and other such organizations as evidence that the liberals increasingly relied on legal rather than conspiratorial or insurrectionary methods of political opposition after 1824. Re-Writing the French Revolutionary Tradition, 208. See also Marie-Pascale Macia-Widemann, “Le Comité Philhellénique et la politique intérieure française (1824-1829),” Revue de la Société d’histoire de la Restauration et de la monarchie constitutionnelle 5 (1991), 27-41.
You want to see Greece free, but you do nothing to avenge her!
When the sons of Tyrtaeus and Leonidas,
Lay dying upon the smoldering remains of a patrie in ashes,
And sigh out a touching appeal to magnanimous hearts,
You fly not to their aid,
You offer them nothing but tears!²⁴⁹

Some of the more inventive liberal political writers were also quick to harness the Napoleonic past, which the emperor’s recent death had returned to the forefront of political discourse, to this cause célèbre, once again proving the extraordinary plasticity of the Napoleonic myth. At first glance, the association appears highly unlikely, having little basis in historical events. Although Napoleon’s seizure of the Ionian Islands from Venice in 1797 fostered hopes that the French Republic might do for Greece what she had done for Belgium and Italy, these hopes were largely extinguished after the Egyptian expedition ended in failure, becoming ever more remote as the Napoleonic saga assumed its increasingly imperialist character. Nonetheless, liberal political writers found ample justification in the mythic narrative of Napoleonic history that celebrated the late emperor as the son of revolution and a champion of nationalist revolt against the reactionary forces of the old regime.

This paradoxical relationship between the imperial conqueror and Greek nationalism articulated itself in a curious and anonymous piece titled L’apparition de Napoléon, ou le songe d’Ypsilanti, in which the would-be hero of the Greek war was counseled by the benign ghost of the recently deceased emperor. Notwithstanding Ypsilantis’ service in the Russian cavalry, where he fought against Napoleon’s armies in the campaigns of 1812 and 1813, the author of this fantasy imagined the prince to be full

of admiration for his former foe: “the image of Napoleon accompanied him everywhere, whether he was asleep or in the midst of combat.” Invoking Napoleon’s name as a god of war, a providential dream finally transported him to the island of St. Helena. Hinting at parallels between Ypsilantis’ nationalist fervor and the revolutionary spirit that had fired a young General Bonaparte twenty-five years earlier, the writer cast Napoleon as full of sympathy for “the unfortunate descendants of Miltiades and Pericles, who, shaking the chains of a most frightful despotism, denuded of all resources and sustained only by their love of liberty, appreciated the importance of an able general.” Sounding a distinctly Napoleonic note, much of the advice offered by Ypsilantis’ spirit sage concerned strictly military matters – the placement of troops, conduct towards prisoners of war, and the necessity of establishing an “absolute empire.” But Napoleon also charged the cabinets of Europe with duplicity in their overtures of support for the independence movement and set out to unmask their pretensions. None of the great powers really wanted to see the Greek nationalists succeed, he observed; on the contrary, the commercial interests of both France and England were wholly antithetical to the establishment of an independent Greece. Cautioning Ypsilantis against placing his hopes for success on the aid and intervention of foreign armies, he ought to instead kindle the “spirit of independence” native to the people of the Peloponnesian peninsula, for “unfortunate are the peoples who require the mediation of foreigners!”

This unlikely union between the Napoleonic Myth and Greek nationalism is indicative of the process by which political writers shaped and reshaped the past into historical narratives that served present objectives. In and of itself, the language of

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250 L’apparition de Napoléon, ou le songe d’Ypsilanti (Paris: 1821), 4-7.
national independence and patriotic self-reliance in *le songe d’Ypsilanti* could be read as a challenge to the paternalist attitudes enshrined in the Troppau Protocol, formulated in response to the revolutionary uprisings in Naples the previous year and which philhellenists justly feared might be invoked again to extinguish nationalist hopes in Greece. But issuing from the spirit of the recently deceased Napoleon, it was also meant to remind readers who still bristled with resentment over the treaties of 1814-15 of the humiliation suffered by France at the end of the imperial era, and in particular of the loss of her “natural frontiers.” Those treaties were, moreover, directly responsible for France’s much-deteriorated diplomatic clout, evidenced in the very public snub France had recently received during the Troppau negotiations. Taking the form of a dialogue between the son of the French Revolution and a revolutionary hero in the making, this sacred language of national autonomy was thus a means of extending the revolutionary lineage both temporally, from 1792 through 1815 up through 1821, and spatially, from France to Greece, in the hopes of making a strong argument for French intervention on the Greeks’ behalf.

*Le songe d’Ypsilanti* was one of many mythic texts published in the second half of 1821 that employed the rhetorical device of a dialogue between the dead and the living. This device proved useful to members of the liberal opposition, who could fashion the imagined, and hence more pliant, figure of Napoleon into a mouthpiece for their own political views. For the journalist Pierre Barthélemy, Napoleon’s spirit was an especially effective weapon against Richelieu’s center-right ministry formed in February 1821. In *L’ombre de Napoléon au conseil des ministres*, Barthélemy used Napoleon to vilify the cabinet members one by one with scathing attacks on both their deeds and character,
accusing them of hypocritical posturing as devoted servants of the public good. Setting the scene at midnight, Barthélemy described the council as busy with designs for “oppressive legislation, keeping up taxes, preparing snares, fixing the price of certain consciences, bribing vile persons; in a word, marking their zeal by great useless acts and grand phrases. By such devotion they produce nothing, and by such noble disinterestedness the ministers’ fortunes increase.” Suddenly, the ghost of Napoleon appeared among them, not in the feeble state of a man on his deathbed, but as he was at the height of his glory and power. Barthélemy charged the council with a long list of crimes designed, he suggested, to perpetuate France’s state of debasement vis-à-vis the rest of Europe. First and foremost, the ministers were guilty of squandering the benefits France had reaped in the realms of commerce and agriculture under the Empire. “The navy is destroyed, the army lacking in discipline and patriotism, public administration abandoned to a generation of men for whom it has become their inheritance, the courts subordinated to the government, and the spirit of factionalism has taken the place of love of country and of national glory.” He reserved his especial contempt for Richelieu, whose long exile and service to the court at St. Petersburg rendered him a stranger in his own native land and, in the journalist’s opinion, unfit to occupy the high office with which he had been favored.  

Published in August 1821, Barthélemy’s pamphlet was less about the death of Napoleon than it was about the current crisis of the liberal opposition. Louvel’s assassination of the duc de Berry in February 1820 had sparked widespread fears of a vast continental liberal conspiracy and precipitated a period of royalist reaction. Decazes,  

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the prime minister and the king’s favorite, a moderate royalist but long suspected by the ultras of liberal sympathies, made a convenient scapegoat. Long the bête noir of the right, they now accused him of facilitating the plot and finally succeeded in forcing his resignation. A new ministry formed under Richelieu, who swiftly proposed a number of legislative measures, known as the “exceptional laws,” intended to insulate the Bourbon regime from further attacks on its authority. Passed on 30 March, a stringent press censorship law, introduced by Decazes himself in a last-ditch effort to deflect charges of complicity in Louvel’s crime, effectively muzzled the opposition press. Journals and periodicals of a political nature, whether they appeared regularly or not, were now subject to the authorization of both the king and a censorship committee before each issue could be printed. Penalties for unauthorized publication ranged from fines and imprisonment to suppression of the journal. Despite the Parisian committee’s attempts at impartiality, it was the liberal journals and provincial press that suffered most heavily, with La Minerve and the Bibliothèque historique ceasing publication entirely.\textsuperscript{252} Paired with the second exceptional law that expanded police powers to arrest and detain without trial anyone suspected of threatening the security of the state or royal family for up to three months, these measures testified to the regime’s continued willingness to maintain public order by policing opinion.

These infringements on freedom of the press generated a furious debate that would only be rivaled by the even more contentious electoral reform law introduced in May 1820, and continued well into the summer of 1821 when the deputies were asked to consider extending the term of the law. To members of the liberal opposition, the

reintroduction of press censorship was but the latest proof that their hard-fought constitutional guarantees were being steadily eroded by the regime’s inevitable drift towards the absolutist creed of its pre-revolutionary ancestors. According to one writer’s calculations, “in the seven years since the Charter’s inauguration, France has enjoyed only 10 months of liberty of the press, without which exists neither public liberty nor constitutional government.”

News of Napoleon’s death opportunely coincided with this debate, and some of its most impassioned speeches appeared right alongside reports on the emperor’s demise in the *Journal des débats*. The coincidence suggested parallels in some liberal minds between these two victims of absolutism – freedom of the press and the martyr of St. Helena, despite the fact that Napoleon had done more to destroy that freedom than the Bourbons.

The left also suffered heavy electoral losses in November 1820 following passage of the much reviled Law of Double Vote, and they were to lose even more seats in partial elections the following autumn. Stripped of any real parliamentary power, the liberal opposition increasingly turned towards sedition and conspiracy as means of achieving its goals. Although liberals and republicans had found common ground with Bonapartists before, having rubbed elbows with one another in the federative movement of 1815, Napoleon’s death considerably eased the conscience of the first two groups by making the likelihood of an imperial restoration less likely in the event of a successful revolution against the Bourbons. Evidence of this fusion can be seen in the flurry of conspiratorial activity organized in the year 1821 by the Charbonnerie, a highly organized network of discontents modeled on the Carbonari movement that had orchestrated the Neapolitan

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253 La charte constitutionelle, en 1821 (Paris: Imprimerie de Doublet, 1821), 25.
uprisings of 1820. Aimed vaguely towards a violent overthrow of the Bourbon monarchy, the association appealed to a diverse range of would-be revolutionaries, united only by their desire to see the hated reactionary regime replaced, be it by the duc d’Orléans, Napoleon II, or a republic. With as many as 60,000 members throughout 60 departments, the Charbonnerie boasted among its ranks prominent politicians like Lafayette and Manuel in addition to soldiers, students, and members of the commercial and professional classes. The Carbonari strategy hinged on military revolt, and the leadership counted on Bonapartism in particular for its ability to secure support among the army as well as its broad popular appeal. Plots to foment insurrections in Thouars, Belfort, Saumur, and various other garrisons throughout the winter of 1821-22 all failed miserably, however, as sloppy attempts at secrecy tipped off authorities. Nonetheless, the Charbonnerie did succeed in confirming the pragmatic character of the liberal opposition, which proved willing to co-opt Bonapartist sentiments in the hopes of achieving its broader objectives.²⁵⁴

Napoleon’s death was thus something of a happy accident for Barthélemy and other political opposition writers, allowing them to tap into the great public demand for all things Napoleonic while fashioning his memory to meet their own needs for a highly publicized discourse against the government. Throughout Barthélemy’s phantasmagoria, the shade of Napoleon recited certain articles of liberal faith in the form of advice to the council on how to repair the wrongs they have done to France. Using historical examples that surely would have made the real Napoleon chuckle, he counseled the ministers to emulate not the conquering Romans but the industrious Tyrians, for commerce was the

²⁵⁴ Alexander, Re-Writing the French Revolutionary Tradition, 276.
surest route to a beneficent glory. In a maxim more clearly liberal than Napoleonic, he reminded the ministers that it is great to govern a France that is both free and educated, but humiliating to reign over a “nation of Helots.” Barthélemy concluded the piece in his own voice by demanding a reorganization of the cabinet, with new ministers “devoted to the interests of the patrie,” men like Marshal Soult and comte Daru (both of whom, not coincidentally, had been well trusted by Napoleon). In a not-so-subtle dig at Richelieu, Barthélemy demanded that the portfolio of foreign affairs go to “a man who, having never been obliged to foreigners, could act independently in his ministry.” Such an appointment, he hoped, would ensure a more militant foreign policy and bring about an alliance with Russia aimed towards securing Greek independence.²⁵⁵

The year 1821 assumed apocalyptic proportions in the mind of Barthélemy’s fellow opposition journalist and jack of all literary trades, Alexandre Barginet. For Barginet, Napoleon’s death was only one of a series of disastrous portents for a grim future, a harbinger of the grand assault being waged against the liberty of peoples, Christian virtue, and, in short, the whole of European civilization. He went so far as to accuse the great powers of assassinating both Napoleon and Queen Caroline of England, also deceased in 1821. The recent turns of the diplomatic tables were clearly very much on Barginet’s mind; it was at the very least highly suspicious, he implied, that Great Britain, which up until now had staunchly opposed the Troppau Protocol of allied intervention against “revolutionaries and enemies of peace,” should suddenly cease to actively oppose the “ambitious designs” of the tsar. Soon, he warned, France being too weak and Great Britain too cowardly to resist, Alexander would establish himself upon

the throne at Constantinople and subordinate the whole of Europe to his will. Coy in his reasoning, Barginet suggested that Napoleon, who even in exile was able to inspire fear in the hearts of Europe’s sovereigns, was sacrificed to the political interests of the Holy Alliance, which, by pledging itself to ruthlessly repress revolutionary activity anywhere in Europe, proved itself more of an enemy to political liberties than Napoleon had ever been. Paradoxically, then “liberty descends into the grave” at the very same time as the man who was charged with oppressing it, both of them “victims of tyrants.”  

The mythic narrative of Napoleonic history that developed in the second half of 1821 provided the liberal opposition with useful fodder in their struggle against the forces of counter-revolution both on the domestic front and on a wider European scale. Seen variously as the Son of the Revolution, the liberal emperor of the Hundred Days, and the liberator of oppressed peoples, Napoleon made for a useful foil against the reactionary Concert of Europe. Capitalizing on persistent resentment of France’s diplomatic subordination that began with the treaties of 1815 and evident still in the congresses at Carlsbad, Troppau, and Laibach, liberal writers alluded to the Napoleonic past in order to draw lines in the sand between France and her historic role as the harbinger of nationalist and liberal revolution throughout Europe on the one hand, and the Holy Alliance with its retrograde intentions on the other. The seemingly natural alliance between the Napoleonic past and oppositional politics would continue to characterize public political discourse throughout the second half of 1821, even when the message was ostensibly one of reconciliation.

The Politics of *Reconnaissance*

Many writers expressed hope that Napoleon’s death would extinguish the fires of “esprit de parti” excited by his legacy, allowing his opponents to make peace with a divisive past now that the immediate threat of another imperial restoration had passed. The ultimate act of national reconciliation with the Napoleonic past would not come until his ashes were laid to rest at Les Invalides in December 1840. But already in 1821, a vigorous argument ensued among politicians, journalists, and other writers concerning the fate of his mortal remains. These writers predicated their demands for the repatriation of Napoleon’s body on the idea of *reconnaissance*, in the sense of recognition of, and gratitude for, services rendered to France. Almost unanimously, they concluded that the Vendôme Column, that triumphant monument constructed out of melted-down enemy cannon and dedicated to the exploits of the Grand Army, was the most suitable resting place for France’s greatest military hero. Despite the fact that these demands were almost always framed as appeals for reconciliation, the more inventive and experienced opposition writers also wielded them as protests against what they saw as the erosion of constitutional liberties in the wake of the royalist reaction of 1820.

Efforts to reclaim Napoleon’s remains from the island of St. Helena began shortly after news of his death reached Europe early in July of 1821. Letters written by members of the imperial family to the British government and sovereign members of the Holy Alliance went unanswered. England’s official position was equivocal; General

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257 Napoleon’s mother and sister Pauline made several attempts to have their claims recognized by the British government, even soliciting the assistance of Lord Holland, well known to be a partisan of the emperor’s cause throughout his exile. There was also
Bertrand and the comte de Montholon, having petitioned George IV personally upon their return from St. Helena, were informed that the British government considered itself guardian of Napoleon’s remains until such time as the French government manifested its desire to have them. The Restoration regime showing little inclination to do so, deputies and political writers initiated a campaign to pressure the French government into action. The idea that the body of France’s greatest warrior should remain in the hands of her mortal enemy was an irritant to wounded national pride, still smarting from the defeat at Waterloo and the humiliating treaties of 1814-15. On 14 July 1821, a petition was advanced to the Chamber of Deputies by no less a personage than the Marquis de Lafayette, who laid aside his former opposition to the emperor for the sake of French dignity. In the name of national honor, the signatories demanded the return of Napoleon’s body to prevent it from becoming a trophy of war for the insolent English.

According to the polemicist Barthélemy, the repatriation of Napoleon’s remains would

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allow the “partisans of glory and national prosperity” to deliver a parting shot to the
English by declaring, “Napoleon’s ashes are here, for the French didn’t want to leave to
the English the mortal remains of a man who was the honor of the patrie and the eternal
shame of England.”

But wounded pride and bellicose sentiments were not the only motivations for
reclaiming Napoleon’s body from the island of St. Helena. At their core, these arguments
revolved around the role of collective memory as an act of reconnaissance, defined as
“the most beautiful and most sublime price of great deeds, enthusiasm, and genius.” Recalling to memory the benefits that Napoleon had bestowed upon France was a way of
rendering thanks to “the hope, the foundation, the regenerator of France.” In
constructing their rhetoric, these authors availed themselves of the mythical meta-
narrative of Napoleonic history – having saved France from the terrors of a civil war,
Napoleon established the stability and order necessary for commerce, the sciences, and
the arts to flourish, while French flags floated victoriously on the fields of battle across
all of Europe. The duties imposed by reconnaissance rendered it imperative for the
sake of French dignity to reclaim his body and lay it to rest on native soil, lest they be
branded as a nation of ingrates. Moreover, Napoleon had a right to expect
reconnaissance from every class of French society – from the pious, for reestablishing

260 Barthélemy, Demande de la translation, 15-16.
261 Ibid., 16.
262 Panégyrique d’un Mort, 4.
263 Sentiment d’un jeune Français sur la sépulture de Napoléon (Paris: Imprimerie de
264 Beaujour, Encore une larme, 9; Picquot, Encore un mot, 8.
the Christian faith. from the disciples of the “nine sisters,” for protecting the arts and sciences, and from “honest artisans,” for endeavoring to create works of utility and embellishment in even the smallest hamlet.265

But naturally, the army owed him the greatest debt of gratitude of all for the simple glory of having served him, and veterans of the imperial wars not surprisingly formed the vanguard of the campaign to return Napoleon’s body to France. One of the earliest pamphlets to appear in print was penned by a former artillery officer, Alexandre Goujon, who took up a literary career after defeat in 1815 brought an end to more than fifteen years of service in the revolutionary and imperial campaigns. In the name of “martial piety” and French national honor, he implored the government to allow the few brave men who remained faithful to Napoleon’s memory to build a tomb for him. All they asked for was “a simple stone…provided that stone rests on French soil.”266 For Goujon, the Vendôme Column was the only suitable resting place for the emperor’s ashes; Napoleon, pondering his own mortality even during his days of prosperity, had already ordained his own funerary monument. While the Bourbons may have succeeded in toppling the statue atop the column, “providence seemed by design to have spared the pedestal” so that it might serve its intended purpose.267 Moreover, as a commemorative monument, the Vendôme Column was meant to appease royalist and other anti-Bonapartist opinions by defining Napoleon’s role in French history almost solely by his military exploits. “If the title of emperor irritates or offends you, do you no longer

265 Serrurot, Dialogue militaire, 10-11.


267 Ibid., 7.
remember General Bonaparte,” victor of Arcola, the Pyramids, and countless other battles?²⁶⁸ Recognizing the divisive nature of the Empire’s political legacy, Goujon sought to make Napoleon’s memory more palatable by distilling the history of the entire epoch into one of glory and prestige, a legacy that belonged to the entire nation rather than of any one party or faction.

Perhaps the most curious characteristic of this discourse surrounding the fate of Napoleon’s remains was the tendency to address these demands directly to Louis XVIII. Some appealed to the king’s sense of honor; a former law student named Giraud almost tried to shame Louis XVIII into making a show of courage against the arrogant sovereigns of the Holy Alliance by reclaiming the body of their enemy: “tell them, enjoying the amity of your people, you have nothing to fear from them.”²⁶⁹ Others adopted a more flattering tone, appealing to Louis’ sense of clemency and justice. Surely, gushed one anonymous author, Louis in his magnanimity and patriotism could not fail to admire and feel pity for a warrior like Napoleon, thorn in the Bourbons’ side though he may have been.²⁷⁰ History, moreover, both ancient and modern, furnished instructive examples of such noble behavior; did the Romans refuse the body of

²⁶⁸ Ibid., 4-5. Goujon’s arguments were often quoted and cited by other proponents of repatriation efforts, nearly all of whom echoed his opinion that Napoleon’s ashes should be deposited beneath the Vendôme Column. Pierre Barthélemy was one of the few dissenting voices, arguing that a trophy to military victories was not a fitting venue for a funeral monument. Instead, Barthélemy proposed constructing a pyramid-shaped monument across from the Champ du Mars, in accordance with Napoleon’s request that he be laid to rest on the banks of the Seine. Demande de la translation, 13.


²⁷⁰ Panégyrique d’un Mort, 5-6.
Germanicus, asked Barthélemy?²⁷¹ No, for “when the Great Man is no more…his glory is the property of the patrie, and an entire people have no less right than that of a single citizen to reclaim the remains of a friend who died in a foreign land.”²⁷² Did France, who had so often in the past granted asylum to dethroned kings, not have “a small plot of earth” for one of her own?²⁷³

The duties imposed by reconnaissance also involved a certain amount of quid pro quo. After all, as Goujon pointedly reminded his audience, Napoleon honored the memory of the Bourbons for the sake of the common patrimony, going so far as to reconsecrate the ancient resting place of French kings at Saint-Denis. In carrying off Frederick the Great’s sword amidst the spoils of war, he vindicated the veterans of Rossbach; could the Bourbons not likewise offer a sop to the wounded pride of imperial veterans?²⁷⁴ Furthermore, Napoleon manifested disinterested clemency when, upon taking leave of his loyal guard at Fontainebleau in April 1814, he admonished them to remain as faithful in their defense of the Bourbons as they had for his own.²⁷⁵ It was only

²⁷¹ Already in March 1817, the life of the Roman general chronicled by Tacitus had invited parallels with that of Napoleon when the staging of Antoine Arnault’s Germanicus, starring Napoleon’s favorite tragedian, Talma, sparked a veritable uproar at the Comédie Française. Widely interpreted as a Bonapartist commentary on contemporary politics, not least because of the author’s well-known fidelity to his former patron, the play was ultimately banned at the ultraroyalists’ vociferous demand.

²⁷² Barthélemy, Demande de la translation, 6.

²⁷³ Sentiment d’un jeune Français, 4.

²⁷⁴ Goujon, Pensée d’un soldat, 5.

just that Louis reciprocate by honoring the memory of the man who did so much to embellish the throne which the Bourbons now occupied.\textsuperscript{276}

At first glance, this confidence in Louis XVIII’s magnanimity appears naïve at best. The Restoration government, particularly after the Hundred Days, went to great lengths in its attempts to erase the usurper’s presence from the national consciousness by vigorously prosecuting the least suspicion of Bonapartist sedition. Although Napoleon’s death put an end to fears that he would escape and return to terrorize the crowned heads of Europe yet again, the government had little reason to relax its vigilance, as Bonapartist hopes were kept alive in the person of Napoleon II. Furthermore, given France’s precarious diplomatic position, the government had little reason to antagonize England with importunate demands for Napoleon’s body. But considered within the context of the Restoration’s failure to “unite and forget,” the shrewdness of this tactic becomes clearer. Enshrined in Article 11 of the Charter, which ordained a policy of “forgetfulness” by forbidding investigation into individuals’ political opinions held prior to the Restoration, this attempt to enforce collective amnesia represented the regime’s desire to forge national unity by burying the proverbial hatchet. It was doomed to fail, not least because of the resilience of collective memory. As Sheryl Kroen has argued, the highly public and ceremonial destruction of revolutionary and imperial symbols tended to encourage the process of remembering rather than forgetting.\textsuperscript{277} Furthermore, the assassination of the duc de Berry in 1820 by Louvel sounded a death knell for the “unite and forget” principle, unleashing the royalist reaction that precipitated the demise of the liberal

\textsuperscript{276} Delaclape, \textit{Remercimens d’un ex-étudiant}, 4-5.
\textsuperscript{277} Kroen, \textit{Politics and Theater}, 59-62.
majority in the Chamber of Deputies and rendered further cooperation between the king and the left untenable.

By appealing to Louis’ sense of justice and reconnaissance, these writers were in effect challenging him to make good on his promise to forget the bitter past for the sake of national reconciliation. Proponents of repatriation claimed that their motives transcended the pettiness of party spirit and partisan divisions. In a polemical pamphlet directed at ultra-royalist and “counter-revolutionary” writers, Barginet blamed his opponents on the right for injecting “party spirit” into the debate. In an effort to cover up their own insidious machinations against the government, he charged, the ultras had raised a false cry of alarm over the seditious nature of public mourning for Napoleon, attempting to turn the king against the nation. None of the “petits oeuvres” occasioned by Napoleon’s death contained even the faintest whisper of a threat against the Bourbon family, yet the ultras foresaw the end of the monarchy itself, “as if Napoleon’s coffin could open and let loose again the triumphant victor of Europe!”278 Was it not possible, he asked, to mourn Napoleon without insulting “a lawfully-reigning king?” Was it an insult to the memory of Henri IV to honor the unhappy courage and glory of an exiled hero? As one anonymous author put it, “I love my king, my country, and my honor!/But I also mourn a hero who was my emperor.”279

No partisan observer, Barginet admitted that he often denounced Napoleon’s power, but that this did not preclude him from honoring his memory.280 He conceded

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278 Barginet, Sur Napoléon, 6.

279 Sentiment d’un jeune Français, 6.

that Napoleon was indeed guilty of despotic excesses, which had alienated “the friends of constitutional liberty.” But to those who accused him and other liberals of hypocrisy, having opposed Napoleon in life and mourned him in death, he insisted that it was important to distinguish between the two aspects of Napoleon’s character – “the conqueror and the Great Man.” To honor the latter was not the same thing as forgiving the former. For Barginet, Bonapartism was less a political doctrine and more of a willingness to recall “the great acts of a beneficent and glorious Revolution,” and thus reconcilable with liberalism.281

Nonpartisan claims notwithstanding, liberals were quick to make use of the repatriation project as a proxy in their protest against the erosion of constitutional liberties. The arguments of Barginet and others contained subtle warnings to the king that he could count on the support of the nation only so long as he reigned in accordance with the Charter. They implored Louis to make a show of good faith by uniting himself with the majority of the French people and concede to their desires to reclaim Napoleon’s body.282 Pierre Grand, a student and later a lawyer at the royal court, was even more explicit in linking the repatriation project to the liberal cause. In a pamphlet entitled Le Cri de la France, Grand lamented the death of the Charter, “no more than a phantom, a vain simulacrum of illusory liberty!”283 Having satisfied the wishes of the French nation in 1814 with a constitutional guarantee of their political liberties, Louis XVIII caved into the hysteria of the Jesuits and the ultras, who held the liberals responsible for Berry’s

281 Barginet, Sur Napoléon, 7-15.

282 Ibid., 19; Delaclape, Remercimens d’un ex-étudiant, 5,

assassination and seized the event as a pretext for violating the Charter.\textsuperscript{284} For Grand, the perpetual exile of Napoleon’s body was as much a symptom of liberty annihilated as arbitrary censorship and the suspension of habeas corpus; “today France demands in vain that the lifeless remains of this Great Man, over which even Caesar would have mourned, be deposited beneath the [Vendôme] Column.” In a nation where such a thing is possible, suggested Grand, “perhaps it is dangerous to even hope to obtain a new constitutional charter.”\textsuperscript{285}

The campaign to repatriate Napoleon’s remains was thus insinuated into the wider context of parliamentary politics that pitted the liberal opposition against the ultra-royalists. Support for the repatriation of Napoleon’s remains became a sort of litmus test for loyalty to France and to the constitutional regime. Contrary to the wishes of the national majority, enemy factions had conspired to banish Napoleon from France, and now compounded their perfidy by attempting to consign his memory to oblivion.\textsuperscript{286} They were castigated as “French only in name,” for whom “the sacred title of patrie was nothing but a vain and empty word.”\textsuperscript{287} By contrast, every “good Frenchman,” including the king himself, was called upon to defend national honor by joining in the demands to reclaim the ashes of France’s greatest warrior from her eternal enemy. By offering Napoleon a resting place beneath the Vendôme Column, a testament to the glory that

\textsuperscript{284} As Charles Nodier famously declared in the royalist journal, \textit{Le Drapeau blanc}, “I have seen the dagger that killed the duc de Berry,” he said, “it was a liberal idea.” Quoted in Waresquiel and Yvert, \textit{Histoire de la Restauration}, 290.

\textsuperscript{285} Grand, \textit{Le Cri de la France}, 6.

\textsuperscript{286} Barthélemy, \textit{Demande de la translation}, 6-7.

\textsuperscript{287} Beaujour, \textit{Encore une larme}, 7; Grand, \textit{Cri de la France}, 2.
France enjoyed under his reign, French citizens could fulfill the sacred duties of
reconnaissance and prove their patriotism by manifesting their willingness to remember.

**Conclusion**

The year 1821 has long been recognized as a particularly fertile moment in the
creation of the Napoleonic myth. Public mourning over Napoleon’s death prompted an
unprecedented flood of texts in the form of funerary odes, elegies, and essays, all of
which betrayed a conscious desire to remember the past, whether it be simply to honor
the dead, to judge the man and his actions, or as an act of gratitude for his services to the
French nation. All of this attention given to a hostile past alarmed the Restoration regime
and much of the political right, who feared that it would encourage seditious activity. For
a brief moment, it did seem that those fears would bear fruit, facilitating the cooperation
of liberals, republicans, and Bonapartists in their various efforts to undermine the regime,
both through parliamentary and more covert, conspiratorial means. Ultimately, however,
the event failed to send profound shockwaves through the French political landscape, and
at first glance even the tenor of the discourse itself seemed to indicate a desire to consign
Napoleon to the realm of History and thus remove him from the contentious realm of
political passions. Many of these writers framed their narratives as a palliative to the
fractures that the Napoleonic past still caused in the French political landscape, and the
demands to give Napoleon’s mortal remains a resting place on native soil were presented
in part as a symbolic act of reconciliation between the Restoration regime and a legacy
that had lost its divisive potency.
Yet despite the ostensible calls for reconciliation over the past, the fact remains that memories of Napoleon continued to lend themselves to opposition and division. For one thing, public expressions of mourning over Napoleon’s death were intrinsically “frondeuse,” given the injunctions imposed by the Restoration regime. Thus, as one writer suggested, remembering was an act of defiance: “Together the force of circumstance and the law may prevent us from publicly celebrating a cult that we used to consider valorous. One may repress and restrain the noble spirit of French hearts, but in vain does man hope to arrest the thoughts of another.” Doubtless, some of this literature was the product of short-lived nostalgia for the Napoleonic golden age, inspired by a perfectly natural and largely reflexive emotional impulse to mourn a national hero. But this discourse also featured a small but highly vocal clique of politically engaged writers who continued to appropriate the myth for their own ends, fashioning a narrative of Napoleonic history that cast him as a friend of oppressed peoples and champion of liberty against the tyranny of reactionary Europe.

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289 *Panégyrique d’un Mort*, 2.
July 1830 marked a turning point in the fate of the Napoleonic myth and its relationship to the official memory of the French state. In attempting to solidify his legitimacy in the aftermath of the July Revolution, Louis-Philippe had good reason to distance himself from Restoration precedents, including the Bourbons’ hostile attitudes towards the revolutionary and Napoleonic past. The new king undoubtedly recognized the potential benefits to be gained from exploiting the popularity of Napoleonic memories, for he and his ministers faced considerable challenges in attempting to reestablish political stability and consensus in the aftermath of the July Revolution. The Restoration bequeathed its divisive legacy of political factionalism and bitter wrangling over the past, while also issuing a spate of new scores to settle, as evidenced in the public furor surrounding the trial of the Polignac ministry that plagued the very early days of the Orléans regime. Although many members of the liberal opposition had welcomed the fall of the Bourbons at any price, others were disappointed by the failure of Les Trois Glorieuses to reestablish a republic, while French citizens of all political stripes were still deeply embittered by the humiliating defeat at Waterloo and loss of international prestige under the Restoration. France, moreover, was experiencing the ever-increasing polarization of socio-economic classes that accompanied industrialization, and the long-standing antagonisms between the Old Regime nobility and ascendant bourgeoisie was compounded by grievances among the peasantry and working classes.
Napoleon was a powerful symbol of France’s past grandeur around which the July Monarchy would attempt to construct some sort of national unity. Long viewed as a hostile and seditious political force by the Bourbon government throughout the Restoration period, memories of Napoleon and the First Empire were largely incorporated into the “official memory” of the French state under the July Monarchy. Such a move was calculated to win support for the new regime not only by appealing to popular nostalgia for the Empire, but also by clearly distinguishing the Orléans monarchy from its discredited Bourbon predecessor. This is not to suggest, however, that Louis-Philippe embraced the Napoleonic past without reservation, and his attitudes towards it were undeniably characterized by a certain ambivalence throughout the first decade of his reign, directed by the potentially contradictory aims of maintaining control over a potentially subversive force while securing his own popularity. On the one hand, he moved quickly to crush popular agitation likely to encourage Bonapartist aspirations, such as that which broke out on the occasion of General Lamarque’s funeral on June 5, 1832. That same year, the government deemed the threat of a coup on behalf of a Bonaparte pretender strong enough to warrant strengthening the Law of Proscription against the imperial family and their properties in France. At the same time, however, the Orléans regime demonstrated its favorable attitude towards the Napoleonic past in a number of different ways, including conciliatory gestures towards former imperial officials who had been largely shunned from participation in political life during the Restoration. But perhaps the most visible and unambiguous manifestations of official

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favor towards the Napoleonic past were the new regime’s efforts at commemorating and monumentalizing the First Empire. Over the course of his first decade in power, Louis-Philippe sponsored a number of projects that celebrated the Napoleonic heritage, including the inauguration of the museum at Versailles, dedicated to “all the glories of France” and that featured several galleries dedicated to the Napoleonic period, the restoration of the emperor’s statue to the Vendôme Column in 1833, and the completion of the Arc de Triomphe in 1836. Nonetheless, there were limits to the king’s willingness to consecrate the Napoleonic past, and, until 1840, at least, the prospect of bringing Napoleon’s ashes back to France remained beyond those limits.

This ambivalence suggests that Louis-Philippe feared that the regime’s recognition and celebration of the Napoleonic past might have potentially damaging repercussions for the security of his own reign, especially since that past had figured prominently in the revolutionary discourse of July 1830. Thus, in order to protect the legitimacy of the newly established constitutional monarchy, it was imperative that the Orléans regime separate the officially-sanctioned cult of Napoleon from Bonapartist political principles. The mythic narrative of Napoleonic history that coalesced after the emperor’s death in 1821 furnished many images from which to choose, and over the course of his first decade in power, Louis-Philippe cultivated a benign, universally appealing, and essentially depoliticized memory of the Napoleonic past as an instrument of national reconciliation. By focusing on Napoleon’s legacy as a patriotic warrior who had raised France to the pinnacle of glory and de-emphasizing his civic achievements and role as the political heir to the principles of 1789, Louis-Philippe hoped to harness the popularity of the Napoleonic myth and channel it into support for his own regime.
Napoleon and the Revolution of 1830

The humiliation of 1815 clearly loomed large in the revolutionary consciousness of 1830, and many believed that by toppling the Bourbon dynasty, they were finally avenging the humiliating defeat of Waterloo. The equation was rather simple: having overthrown the “anti-national” and “foreign” government of the Restoration, the revolutionaries were also repudiating the treaties of 1815. The by now iconic image of the Bourbons as cowardly pawns of the Allies had long contrasted against an image of Napoleon as a patriot who fought resolutely to defend French soil from foreign enemies. Thus, the Revolution could also be imagined as vindication of his final defeat. In the words of one poet, the triumph of liberty in July 1830 had resuscitated the “the great man whose ghost alone frightened the anti-national government” of the Bourbons, overthrown by the “children of Lutèce.” Another poem written shortly before the Revolution and dedicated to the most popular chansonnier of the Napoleonic cult, Béranger, predicted the imminent arrival of “the day of independence,” when the emperor’s soldiers would avenge his defeat and France’s subsequent humiliation at the hands of “tyrants.” When the poem was published in late 1830, Thévenot added optimistically that the day of independence had arrived sooner than anyone dared to hope, and although Napoleon didn’t live to see the day of France’s emancipation, he imagined that this “dawn of

291 Pierre Colau, Napoléon au Panthéon de l’histoire; résumé de tout ce que ce grand homme a fait de merveilleux (Paris: Imprimerie de J.L. Bellemain, 1830), 2.
universal regeneration” would have pleased the emperor, seeing in it “the triumph of the principles which he had so long fought for.”

Memories of Napoleon also loomed large in the Revolution of 1830 because the prospect of replacing Charles X with Napoleon II seemed a realistic option, at least for a short time. Bonapartism enjoyed greater popular appeal during the July Revolution than either the republican or Orléanist causes, and the most frequent cries heard in the streets of Paris during the July days were those of “Vive l’Empereur!” Veterans of the Napoleonic wars, with their highly prized knowledge of defense tactics and combat experience, also played a crucial role in the fighting that raged through the Paris streets. The demographic makeup of the combatants, moreover, suggests that the experience of Empire played a greater role in their consciousness than the Revolution of 1789. Fifty-four percent of those dead and wounded in the July Revolution were aged twenty to thirty-five. Born after 1789, these individuals had no personal connection to the first revolution. Conversely, more than half of them were old enough to remember the Empire and to have served in Napoleon’s armies, and numerous contemporary accounts singled out Napoleonic veterans for their patriotic courage and leadership in the events of 1830. The marked presence of Napoleonic veterans both in the regular army and among the revolutionaries also accounts for the furious reaction against Charles X’s

292 André Thévenot (de la Creuse), Hommages poétiques et poésies diverses, dédié à Son Altesse Royale Monseigneur le duc d’Orléans (Paris: Imprimerie et Fonderie de G. Doyen, 1830), 55-56.


appointment of Marshal Marmont to command all troops in the capital. Marmont was widely considered responsible for French defeat and Napoleon’s subsequent abdication in 1814, having surrendered Paris to the Allies in a panic while the emperor was en route from Fontainebleau with his troops. He was subsequently named to the Chamber of Peers and given a commission in the Royal Guard by Louis XVIII. The appointment of this “traitor” to lead the army in July 1830 incensed the revolutionaries further, and resentment amongst veterans of the Napoleonic wars may have contributed to the army’smarkedly half-hearted efforts to defend the Bourbons. For the revolutionaries of July 1830 then, it was 1815, rather than 1789, that served as the most immediate historical referent.

Nonetheless, Bonapartist hopes for a restored imperial regime under Napoleon II failed to constitute a viable option following the fall of Charles X. The Duke of Reichstadt was under virtual house arrest in Vienna, and any attempts to install him as emperor of the French would doubtless have met with heavy opposition from the Holy Alliance. None of the many imperial relics who played a part in the Revolution took any real steps to advance the Bonapartist cause, and the most significant Bonapartist attempt to seize power during the July days was orchestrated by a journalist, Evariste Dumoulin. After distributing a proclamation in the name of the Provisional Government calling for the restoration of Napoleon II as emperor of the French, Dumoulin was promptly arrested by Lafayette and Bonapartist hopes soon lost momentum as the tide turned in favor of Louis-Philippe. Nonetheless, the popular appeal of Napoleon’s memory was eagerly

295 The French verb *raguser*, “to betray,” is derived from Marmont’s imperial title, the duc de Raguse.

appropriated by the liberal opposition and thus remained a potent rallying force in the Revolution of 1830. Most Bonapartists, recognizing the slim chances of success for an imperial restoration, ultimately threw their lot in with the Orléanists, seeing in the new regime the best chance for advancing their careers.

Their hopes did not go unfulfilled. Of the twenty men appointed to ministerial posts within the first seven months of the new regime, eighteen were former imperial officials, and twelve had rallied to Napoleon during the Hundred Days in a highly public manner. The July Monarchy’s departmental administration featured a similar preponderance of imperial civil servants among the prefecture, and imperial notables also formed a majority in the reconstituted Chamber of Peers. Military officers also benefited from the change in regime. Following a rash of desertions during the July Revolution and the preceding months, Louis-Philippe’s first Minister of War and another Napoleonic leftover, General Gérard, made recourse to the vast numbers of demi-soldes to fill these vacancies. An ordinance of August 28, 1830, in fact reserved one-half of all open positions for imperial veterans. Furthermore, although the new regime did not carry out anything like the administrative purges of Napoleonic sympathizers and girouettes that characterized the Second Restoration, the Hundred Days continued to serve as a potent source of contestation. Many public officials who had sided with the Bourbons during that divisive period or who had ranked highly during the Restoration consequently found themselves without employment under the July Monarchy.


Louis-Philippe’s willingness to employ Napoleon’s bureaucrats and military officers led contemporaries and historians alike to brand, often derisively, the July Monarchy as a Bonapartist regime in Orléanist clothing. But it would be facile to conclude that all of these individuals were Bonapartists simply because they had benefited from the employment opportunities afforded by imperial expansion and centralization of power. Except for a handful of individuals who actively sought the restoration of Napoleon II in 1830, the vast majority of these former imperial servants showed little evidence of preference for another imperial regime, even while they may have been favorably disposed to fond memories of the Napoleonic past. The high proportion of former imperial civil servants and militaires in the new regime did not, in fact, translate into a revivified Bonapartist movement among political elites during the Orléans regime. Rather, what the July Monarchy accomplished was to renew hopes and ambitions for many whose careers had been terminated or interrupted by the Second Restoration. By satisfying these ambitions, Louis-Philippe did much to preempt the threat of potential assaults on his sovereignty, at least among politicians and the administrative bureaucracy.

In many ways, Bonapartist hopes launched by the Revolution of 1830 were thwarted by the movement’s own inertia. Disorganized and lacking leadership, partisans of Napoleon II failed to take advantage of the power vacuum created by the overthrow of Charles X, and throughout most of Louis-Philippe’s reign, the principal sources of opposition would come from republican and legitimist rather than Bonapartist camps. Any popular Bonapartist hopes for a restored imperial dynasty remaining in the wake of

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299 Ibid., 291-292.
the July Revolution were dashed on 22 July 1832, when the Duke of Reichstadt died of tuberculosis at the age of twenty-one. His death signaled the loss of “hope, legitimate but illusory,” for an imperial restoration, for Louis-Napoleon had yet to make his name widely known in Europe, and even after the disastrous Strasbourg coup of 1836, few were convinced of his pretensions to inherit the imperial succession. Even before his death, Napoleon II had become an irresistible icon for the sentimental. Languishing in Vienna, where his maternal grandfather, the Emperor Francis, along with Metternich, ensured that he grew up knowing little of his native land, he was cast in the role of a modern Astyanax. It was a parallel first suggested by Napoleon himself, when, in March 1814, as the Allies were closing in on Paris, he issued orders for Marie-Louise to flee the capital with their son upon the first sign of enemy approach. “I would rather see my son drowned than in the hands of the enemies of France. I have always looked upon the fate of Astyanax, the prisoner of the Greeks, as being the most miserable one which history records.” Separated at a young age from his father and his fatherland, denied his claims to the French throne, denied even his name, Napoleon II had already become an object of pity. His death earned him the status of a martyr, encouraging a host of funerary odes that struck a chord of regret for what might have been and testified to the persistent popular appeal of sentimental Bonapartism in the early 1830’s. His

300 Louis Jean, Mes rêveries sur la mort de Napoléon (Marseille: Imprimerie de Feissat aîné, 1832), 5.

301 According to most ancient accounts of the Trojan War, the Greeks killed the infant Astyanax, son of Hector, fearing that he would grow up to avenge his father’s death and rebuild the city. Alternate versions credit him with surviving the ordeal, going on to found settlements in Italy, and even, in some medieval legends, the Merovingian dynasty.

302 Quoted in Houssaye, 1814, 369.
proscription and virtual captivity at the court of his maternal grandfather, the Hapsburg Emperor Francis II, made for obvious parallels with his father’s exile at St. Helena. Rumors and anecdotes abounded of the gravity and sensitivity he displayed even in his youth, which manifested itself in a keen sense of sadness over his separation from France and from his father. But, also like his father, writers insisted that he remained stubbornly attached to his “ungrateful patrie” until the hour of his death.

The death of Napoleon II in 1832 also contributed heavily to the increasing popularity of Napoleon’s mythic image as a paternal figure, which emerged especially in the tragic laments over his death in 1821. His eulogists consistently appealed to their readers’ pathos by underscoring the loneliness of his exile, bereft of the consolation of his wife and child. The image of Napoleon as a paterfamilias was a useful one insofar as it exercised a more universal appeal, especially within the Romantic aesthetic that dominated after 1830, making the superhuman figure who once seemed to hold the world in his grasp more mortal and more familiar. In his final years, Napoleon found that “the world with all its grandeur holds no more appeal for him./So many ingrates!...he is nothing but a father now, such is his life.”

The flexibility that this image gave the myth-makers was evidenced in one of the few texts purportedly penned by a woman,

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304 D.T. Claze, Poésie dédiée à l’éternelle mémoire de Joseph-Charles-François, Duc de Reichstadt (Besançon: Imprimerie de Montarsolo, 1832), 6; Jean, Mes rêveries, 12.

305 Louis Belmontet, Le buste, Napoléonienne, en vers lyriques (Constance: Imprimerie de Veuve Bannhard, 1832), 8.
Mme Bernard, identified as a “widow of a former aide-de-camp” to Napoleon. In contrast to the typical characterization of French women who lived through the imperial era, resentful of Napoleon because of the unremitting demands of conscription that stripped them of their fathers, husbands, and sons, and overwhelmingly enthusiastic in their reception of the Allied invaders and restored Bourbons, Mme Bernard held no grudge against Napoleon, despite the fact that news of Napoleon’s death in 1821 stirred up anew her grief over her husband, who expired “on the field of honor.” On the contrary, she represented herself as the proud widow of a soldier who willingly sacrificed himself for a man who directed “the destinies of the patrie,” and who fought on the defensive against a coalition of kings who were determined to extinguish the nation’s autonomy. Her loss, moreover, gave her a sense of affinity with the Empress Marie-Louise, whom she imagined plunged into deep grief over the death of her husband, all evidence to the contrary notwithstanding. “The widow of a soldier is the widow of a great man,” she reminded the empress, regardless of whether he held the rank of conqueror of the whole world or simply his humble subordinate.

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307 Since the fall of 1814, the ex-Empress had been carrying on an affair with count Adam von Neipperg, a soldier and diplomat reputedly dispatched by Metternich and her father expressly for the purpose of dissuading Marie-Louise from seeking to join her husband in exile. The pair contracted a morganatic marriage shortly after Napoleon’s death released her from her previous vows. Although Marie-Louise managed to conceal the fact that two of their three children had been born before 1821 from both her father and the duc of Reichstadt for many years, the truth was widely known in Viennese society.

The image of Napoleon as an unhappy father and husband assumed even greater significance as a foil against the royalists’ attempt to boost the popularity of the Bourbons through similar means, one of the few ideas upon which Louis XVIII and his ultraroyalist brother could agree. As kings, both men promoted the pre-revolutionary model of monarchy as a benevolent dynastic patriarchy.\(^{309}\) The dramatic saga of the duc de Berry’s assassination in 1820 and the birth of the “miracle child” prompted a temporary rise in popularity for the Bourbon regime, reinforcing the royalist family metaphor. Coming close on the heels of the passage of the Law of Double Vote, the birth of the duc de Bourdeaux on 29 September 1820 coincided with the most intense phase of the royalist reaction and facilitated public acceptance of the radical changes that followed in the wake of Berry’s assassination. The providential and miraculous nature of the duc’s birth – five months after his father’s tragic death and providing a desperately-needed male heir to the nearly extinct Bourbon line – sparked widespread public enthusiasm and demonstrations of affection towards the royal family, lending the regime an air of legitimacy it had not previously enjoyed.\(^{310}\) Moreover, the duchesse de Berry’s image as a “Good Mother” survived and was even strengthened by the disastrous failure of her attempts to lead an insurrection against the Orléans monarchy in 1831-32. Imprisoned at the fortress at Blaye, her captivity leant ammunition to the legitimists, who saw her as the

\(^{309}\) Margadant, “The Duchesse de Berry and Royalist Political Culture,” 35.

\(^{310}\) Skuy, *Assassination, Politics, and Miracles*, 19, 205-06. Philip Mansel argues that this popularity, although short-lived, was so significant as to inaugurate a “Third Restoration” in 1820. *Louis XVIII*, 374.
long-suffering mother whose heroism and sacrifice was motivated solely by a dogged desire to protect her son’s legitimate interests.\footnote{311}

Whether or not Bonapartists and the myth-makers consciously employed these family images as a counter-strategy against the royalists, the pitiable circumstances in which the King of Rome, “child of the whole nation,” found himself after his father’s fall from power made him a significant rival to the duc de Bordeaux as an object of pity.\footnote{312} The sympathies generated by Napoleon II’s death, coupled with a lingering sense of pity for Napoleon and the lonely exile on St. Helena, helped to create a more immediately accessible image of Napoleon as a father that was especially appealing to the Romantic generation. As the myth continued to evolve in the early years of the July Monarchy, the family metaphor coincided with emphasis on Napoleon’s paternal benevolence towards the entire French nation, nourished by counter-memories of the Restoration as a regime that favored the few at the expense of the majority. As the Orléans regime signaled its intent to concentrate its celebration of the Napoleonic past almost exclusively on the Empire’s legacy of glory on the battlefield, the image of Napoleon as a father found even more potent expression in Romantic representations of the highly personal and hierarchical relationships that defined the imperial military culture.

\footnote{311} Such sympathetic portrayals of the duchesse persisted right up through the birth of her second daughter in prison on 10 May 1833. Although she avowed shortly before the birth that she had earlier contracted a secret marriage with count Hector Lucchesi-Palli, a claim later legitimated by the Catholic Church, many people, including her Bourbon relatives, concluded that the child was illegitimate. Margadant, “The Duchesse de Berry and Royalist Political Culture,” 55-57.

\footnote{312} From a remark attributed to Napoleon at Saint-Helena. Belmontet, \textit{Le buste}, frontispiece.
“France, Glory, Battle”

Even before the duc of Reichstadt’s death in 1832, Louis-Philippe signaled his intentions of appropriating Napoleonic memories for his own benefit, and attempts to link the new regime with the military victories of the Napoleonic period were apparent from the very beginning his reign. On 9 August 1830, Louis-Philippe was formally offered the title of “King of the French” in the Chamber of Deputies. It was a very simple ceremony by the standards of previous lavish coronations, and the presence of four Napoleonic veterans – Marshals Macdonald, Oudinot, Mortier, and Molitor – bearing the insignia of kingship (crown, sceptre, sword, and hand of justice) was especially conspicuous. Louis-Philippe’s reliance on old “illustrious swords” of the Napoleonic era was also a defining characteristic of his cabinets, and three of the emperor’s marshals – Soult, Gérard, and Mortier – frequently shared in the many rotations of the post of Prime Minister between 1830 and 1848. Such men were attractive candidates to the king for a number of reasons, not least because they could be relied upon to maintain order, and as military men, they were expected to be tractable in their politics. But perhaps most importantly, their glorious exploits on the battlefield were expected to lend the new regime, lacking any military credits in its own name, some imperial prestige.

These overtures towards imperial war veterans were part of Louis-Philippe’s carefully calculated effort to cultivate one very specific image of Napoleon furnished by

314 Soult (October 11, 1832 – July 18, 1834; May 12, 1839 – March 1, 1840; October 29, 1840 – September 19, 1847), Gérard (July 18, 1834 – November 10, 1834), and Mortier (November 18, 1834 – March 12, 1835). Although promised his marshal’s baton by Napoleon, Gérard did not actually receive it until Louis-Philippe’s accession to the throne.
the mythic lexicon. By focusing commemorative attention on the emperor’s military exploits, the king was essentially offering a depoliticized version of the Napoleonic narrative, one that could be easily integrated into the national past rather than be monopolized by any one political faction. Louis-Philippe could thus hope to capitalize on the popularity of the Napoleonic cult while at the same time insulating himself from the threat of rival claims from a reinvigorated Bonapartism. But it was also another useful way of distancing the new regime from its predecessor. Whether it came in the form of material favors bestowed on Napoleon’s marshals, or more symbolic gestures like the completion of the Arc de Triomphe, official recognition of imperial military glory satisfied a sense of national pride in the past, a pride that had been wounded by the Restoration’s attempts to erase the victorious campaigns of the revolutionary and Napoleonic periods from national consciousness. Napoleonic war veterans arguably suffered the most tangible consequences of the Restoration’s policy of encouraging oubli, ranging from loss of position and unemployment for many to proscription in the most extreme cases. These measures were seen by many as a particularly gross and reactionary injustice on the part of the Bourbons, and episodes like the 1818 subscription campaign on behalf of the Champ d’Asile or the furor caused by the suppression of titles of imperial nobility under Charles X reflected potent popular sympathy for Napoleon’s veterans.

The resentment generated by the Restoration regime’s refusal to recognize and reward military services rendered under the Revolution and Empire showed up starkly in Balzac’s *La Comédie humaine*. What makes Balzac particularly interesting to scholars of the Napoleonic myth is the apparent paradox between his admiration for the emperor and
his legitimist political principles, which crystallized after the Revolution of July 1830. Conservative in his politics, Balzac admired Napoleon for his authoritarian response to the threats posed by both royalist and republican extremism, and for re-establishing order by promoting national unity.\textsuperscript{315} Moreover, like many of his Romantic contemporaries, Honoré de Balzac believed that the novel was an appropriate medium for the interpretation of historical fact, and \textit{La Comédie humaine} was an ambitious attempt to chronicle the life and civilization of France.\textsuperscript{316} In the introduction to the first edition, published in 1842, Balzac described the nature of his project:

\begin{quote}
French society would be the real author; I should only be the secretary. By drawing up an inventory of vices and virtues, by collecting the chief facts of the passions, by depicting characters, by choosing the principal incidents of social life, by composing types out of a combination of homogenous characteristics, I might perhaps succeed in writing the history which so many historians have neglected: that of Manners. By patience and perseverance I might produce for France in the nineteenth century the book which we must all regret that Rome, Athens, Tyre, Memphis, Persia, and India have not bequeathed to us; that history of their social life…\textsuperscript{317}
\end{quote}

Insisting that he was more historian than novelist, his central preoccupation was to make sense of the long-term consequences of the French Revolution, and the imperial era thus assumed an ideological role in \textit{The Human Comedy}.\textsuperscript{318} Balzac’s \textit{grognards} have long been recognized as stock figures in the genesis of the Napoleonic myth, stubbornly clinging to the pale shadows of bygone glories and articulating a naïve and unshakeable

\textsuperscript{315} Ibid., 61, 64.

\textsuperscript{316} Herbert J. Hunt, \textit{Balzac’s Comédie Humaine} (London: Athlone Press, 1964), 11.


faith in their fallen hero. But as historical types, they were also particularly revealing of
the lingering resentments that the Restoration bequeathed to the July Monarchy.

Balzac’s *Colonel Chabert* (1832) is a tragic tale of a Napoleonic war veteran
struggling to redefine his identity in post-imperial France. Seriously wounded at the
battle of Eylau in February 1807, Chabert manages to escape from the mass grave where
he had been left for dead by the retreating French army. His death had been duly
recorded in the official gazette of the French army and the news had spread far and wide
within the Empire. Unable to convince anyone of his true identity, he spends the next
several years as a vagabond, physically and spiritually debilitated, alternately hospitalized
and imprisoned as a madman. When he finally returns to France in 1814, he learns that
his wife has remarried the comte de Ferraud, a Councillor of State and an aristocrat of the
old regime. The former Mme Chabert is anything but delighted to learn that her first
husband has survived; on the contrary, his return jeopardizes the much-elevated social
esteem she has acquired within royalist circles as a member of the pre-revolutionary
nobility. Unwilling to honor Chabert’s claims to his estate that she inherited upon his
supposed death, she denounces him as an imposter. Penniless and isolated, Chabert seeks
the assistance of his wife’s lawyer, M. Derville, to help prove his identity and establish a
legal claim to his estate.

The novel’s pathos hinges on Chabert’s identity crisis. His sense of self was
derived from his military career, and, more specifically, from the hierarchical bonds of
loyalty between himself, his regiment, his fellow officers, and ultimately to Napoleon and
the entire French nation. He thought of this relationship in filial terms. “I am an
orphan,” he says, “a soldier whose inheritance was his courage, whose family was the
whole world, whose fatherland was France, whose only protector was the Good Lord.
No, I am wrong. I did have a father: the emperor!”319 Chabert is deeply wounded to
learn of the emperor’s defeat in Russia, and the sight of foreign soldiers occupying Paris
after Waterloo is a crushing experience for this hardened warrior who had bravely
defended his fatherland in countless battles. Consumed by apathy, Chabert confesses:
“When I think that Napoleon is on St. Helena, nothing on earth matters to me. I can be a
soldier no more – that is my true unhappiness.” By a curiously prescient coincidence,
Balzac ended Chabert’s story in 1840; the old soldier ultimately makes peace with his
past in the same year that Napoleon’s ashes would be returned to France and laid to rest
under the dome of Les Invalides. More than twenty years after Chabert’s unsuccessful
lawsuit against his former wife, Derville finds the veteran living in a hospice for elderly
indigents. Unable to reconcile himself to a world without Napoleon, Chabert takes
refuge in anonymity: “Not Chabert! Not Chabert! My name is Hyacinthe...I’m not a
man, I’m number 164, room 7.”320

Chabert’s rejection of his surname signifies the extent to which his identity was
bound up with his career as a loyal servant of the Empire. The name Chabert is much
more than a patronymic; it designates the man who had been a count of the imperial
nobility, grand officer of the Legion of Honor, and colonel of a cavalry regiment in the
Grande Armée. In renouncing this name, he finally acquiesces in his futile struggle to
claim what was owed to him. He would henceforth be an innocuous private citizen
known as Hyacinthe, a name not expected to inspire recognition. His sense of self is thus

320 Ibid., 95, 98.
inextricably bound to both France and Napoleon, at once national and patrilineal. Having lost his father and the respect of his fatherland (at least, of its government), he finds it impossible to stake out a new role for himself in a society that has no more use for his military services.

While the story of Chabert’s mistaken death and miraculous survival is fictional, his subsequent plight was more typical of Napoleonic war veterans in the decades following the fall of the Empire. At the end of the Napoleonic wars, an estimated 1.1 million soldiers were discharged from active service and returned to their homes. These men occupied a liminal space in French society, for many found it difficult to reintegrate themselves into the communities from which they had been largely absent for fifteen years or more. Having long been accustomed to being fêted and favored by the imperial regime, veterans now found themselves vilified by the Restoration government as an embarrassing relic of the Napoleonic past and a threat to the royalist political order. Prospects remained bleak for both retired and active officers throughout the Restoration; the latter were poorly remunerated and not much better off than those on half-pay. There was little chance for advancement, and Old Regime noblemen were often promoted over commoners in blatant disregard for the 1818 law governing military recruitment and advancement. Although iconic images of the tragic and poverty-stricken demi-solde desperately clinging to his memories of past grandeur may tend towards hyperbole at times, it is not difficult to imagine why Napoleonic war veterans in the Restoration era would feel nostalgic for the good old days of the Empire. Some scholars have cautioned

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against conflating the actions and opinions of a few disgruntled officers with former
Napoleonic soldiers taken as a coherent socio-professional group, in part because they
lacked a public context on a national scale in which collective political action might
coalesce. Nonetheless, as Sudhir Hazareesingh’s extensive research into provincial
administrative reports of the Restoration era suggests, the private lives and local
communities in which these men lived afforded them ample opportunity to “become the
high priests of the Napoleonic cult.” Veterans shared a sense of pride in the successful
military campaigns of the Napoleonic era and loyalty to the memory of Napoleon, as well
as the common experience of precarious material conditions following the Empire’s
collapse. They remained among the most active participants in Bonapartist political
agitation throughout the Restoration, and those who didn’t take part in overt rebellion
nonetheless found ways to demonstrate their hostility to the Bourbons in perpetuating
Napoleon’s memory – by publicly celebrating imperial anniversaries, peddling prints and
objects bearing his image, and a host of other symbolic ways.

Displaced in both the army and in his marriage by the return of the Old Regime,
Chabert’s quest for recognition in post-Napoleonic France thus parallels the experience
of a great many veterans of the revolutionary and imperial wars. These themes were
echoed in Le Médecin de campagne (1833), a novel in which the Restoration regime’s

323 Woloch, The French Veteran, 300-301. Woloch attributes the veterans’ predisposition
towards the Napoleonic myth to “nostalgic regret for more exciting times,” and that it
was not until the Revolution of 1830 that they situated themselves within a Bonapartist
political camp out of sentiment rather than ideology. Woloch largely concurs with Jean
regarding the minor incidence of hostility towards the Bourbon regime among inactive
officers.

324 Hazareesingh, Legend of Napoleon, 37.
refusal to honor patriotic services rendered by Napoleon’s veterans is glaringly contrasted against the favored status that these imperial relics enjoyed within their local communities. Set in a small village near Grenoble in the Alpine province of Dauphiné, the novel opens in 1829 with the arrival of Genestas, a former cavalry officer in the imperial armies who, unlike many of his fellow Napoleonic veterans, has been lucky enough to maintain a military career under the Restoration regime. Genestas and his fellow veterans of the imperial wars, Goguelat and Gondrin, exemplify the sense of filial loyalty that colors Balzac’s representations of Napoleonic veterans and military life. Like Chabert, Genestas “was the child of his company; he was alone in the world, so he had adopted the army for his fatherland, and the regiment for his family.” As an officer, he plays the role of father to his men, “as he always called them,” just as Napoleon represented a father to the entire French army. Nonetheless, Genestas never placed his loyalty to Napoleon above his duties to France as a whole. Like many others who abandoned the Bourbon cause and rallied to Napoleon during the Hundred Days in 1815, he justifies his decision in terms of safeguarding France from the vengeful intentions of the Allies. “France must be defended, and that was all I thought about.”

The third chapter of Médecin de campagne, entitled “The Napoleon of the People,” is one of the most widely recognized examples of Romantic literature’s contributions to the Napoleonic myth. The central event of the chapter is a veillée, a late-night gathering of local peasants in a barn to exchange folktales and other stories. The

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326 Ibid., 4-5.
327 Ibid., 272.
principal storyteller on this evening is Goguelat, the village postman and yet another impoverished veteran of the Napoleonic wars. Yielding to the demands of his audience, he delivers his version of the Napoleonic epic, which may be summed up by the motto of “Long live ‘Napoleon, the father of the soldier, the father of the people!’”328 It is a grandiose tale, in which the familiar image of Napoleon as the father of his soldiers and of the French people is further elaborated through a strong messianic idiom. For Napoleon “was the child of God, created to be the soldier’s father,” and divinely appointed as the Savior of France.329 Goguelat presents Napoleon as the supreme French patriot, a leader whose first priority was the glory of the French nation. In the wars he waged unceasingly on the European continent between 1805 and 1815, Napoleon ensured that “the French nation may be masters everywhere…and France may spit wherever she likes,” which chauvinist prerogative she lost under the Restoration.330

For Goguelat, the relationship between France and her army is a metonymical one. Speaking of the devastating and humiliating retreat from Russia, he recalls that the bravest men among his regiment sought to save the imperial standard from desecration, “for the Eagles…meant France, and all the rest of you.”331 He further elaborates on the gendered nature of this partnership between civilians and militaires. “In France, every man is brave. So the civilian who does gloriously shall be the soldier’s sister, the soldier shall be his brother, and both shall stand together beneath the flag of honor.” It was a

328 Ibid., 201.
329 Ibid., 180, 185.
330 Ibid., 189.
331 Ibid., 196.
sense of honor that motivated Goguelat and his fellow soldiers, a responsibility not only to the army and to Napoleon, but to the entire French nation. “It was the civil and military honor of France that was in our keeping, there must be no spot on the honor of France, and the cold should never make her bow her head. There was no getting warm except around the emperor.” Napoleon’s soldiers were thus entrusted with defending the French patrie not only in its physical dimensions, but its reputation as well.

The veillée testifies to the importance of collective memory in constructing the Napoleonic myth. In the absence of more tangible forms of recognition by the Restoration government, these memories served as badges of honor for former Napoleonic soldiers. As Benassis, the village mayor and physician, says of Gondrin, “He has one great consolation…Napoleon embraced poor Gondrin – perhaps but for that accolade he would have died ere now. This memory and the hope that some day Napoleon will return are all that Gondrin lives by.” But the veillée also implicitly reveals that these memories were a source of deep contestation within the political culture of the Restoration. Goguelat’s tale was precisely the kind of public celebration of Napoleon that the Bourbons feared, and which provincial intendants and police were instructed to investigate and punish under the category of seditious political acts. Thus, the people of Isère are careful to assemble only late at night, and, as Benassis warns Genestas, they will quickly silence themselves if they suspect that they were being

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332 Ibid, 187.


334 Balzac, Country Doctor, 95.
overheard. Genestas implies that these memories are a means of ensuring the survival of those virtues associated with the emperor, even though the official culture of the Restoration was unremittingly hostile to such memories: “[Napoleon] died saying ‘Glory, France, and battle.’ So it had to be, children, he had to die; but his memory – never!”

The geographical setting of *Le Médecin de campagne* is also highly significant. Just as Chabert evoked the circumstances of the *demi-solde* in Restoration France, the popularity of Napoleon’s memory in this fictional village of the Dauphiné evokes the province’s very real history of Bonapartist political loyalties. Grenoble was the first major urban area to rally to the emperor upon his return from Elba. After landing at the small port of Golfe-Juan in southern France on March 1, 1815, Napoleon had deliberately chosen the more difficult and circuitous route to Paris through Dauphiné in order to avoid royalist areas such as Provence. He reached Grenoble on March 7, and the enthusiastic reception he received there was a major turning point in the “flight of the Eagle.” His dramatic and celebrated encounter with French troops, immortalized in a painting by Steuben, took place at Laffrey on the city’s outskirts. Halted by a detachment of royalist troops, Napoleon reportedly stepped forward, bared his breast, and declared, “Soldiers! If there is any one among you who wishes to kill his emperor, here I am.” Royalist officers gave the order to shoot, but the troops responded with cries of “Long live the emperor!” Narratives of this incident, in which Napoleon was able to win back his army without firing a single shot, became standard fare of the Napoleonic myth in the

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335 Ibid., 171.

336 Ibid., 201.

first half of the nineteenth century. Its message was clear: the French army belonged to Napoleon.

After Napoleon’s second abdication in June 1815 and exile to St. Helena, the area around Grenoble continued to manifest its loyalty to the Napoleonic cause through secret societies and rebellion. *L’Union*, a Bonapartist association formed in 1816 by Joseph Rey, was responsible for much of the local political agitation during the first decade of the Restoration. Rey, a lawyer and Freemason, was not himself a Bonapartist, but he recognized that “in the mountains of the Dauphinois the people nurtured enthusiastic memories for the only man they believed capable of bringing back happiness and glory to France.”

Grenoble was also an important center for the underground movement known as the *Carbonari*, an eclectic international alliance of liberals, republicans, and Bonapartists with vaguely-defined aims of overthrowing the monarchies of the Holy Alliance. But perhaps the most famous example of Bonapartist insurrection against the Bourbons in Grenoble was the Didier affair of 1816. Jean-Paul Didier, a former dean of the law school, along with former imperial civil servants and military officers, first planned an abortive attempt to take over the administrative center of the department of Rhône on the night of January 20-21. Didier hoped for better success in Grenoble, particularly counting on the support of former Napoleonic soldiers, and the rebellion took place on May 4. It was quickly dispersed by royalist troops; one hundred and fifty of the insurgents were arrested and fourteen were executed. Didier fled to Savoy, but was

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338 Quoted in Hazareesingh, *Legend of Napoleon*, 105.

339 Ibid., 110.
ultimately tracked down by the authorities and executed in Grenoble on June 10.\textsuperscript{340}

Despite the plot’s failure to spawn a coherent and widespread movement to overthrow the Bourbon monarchy, the Didier affair encouraged further Bonapartist agitation in the provinces. A proclamation circulated in the aftermath hailed the events in Grenoble as a “patriotic insurrection” that would precipitate the proclamation of Napoleon’s son as emperor of the French. The reinstitution of the Bonaparte dynasty would restore “liberty” to France: “Long live the Patrie! Long live Freedom! Long live the emperor!”\textsuperscript{341} Goguelat’s retelling of the Napoleonic saga at the veillée thus would have had particular appeal in this region of France, where memories of the imperial era resonated widely among the population.

The trajectories of Chabert and Genestas, along with other minor characters modeled on the Restoration-era demi-solde, testify to the straightened circumstances of Napoleonic war veterans under the Bourbons that made them the “high priests” of the Napoleonic cult. The reluctance on the part of the comtesse de Ferraud to acknowledge her husband was symptomatic of the hostility towards these veterans on the part of the Restoration government and royalist political circles. Indignant at the manner in which he has been snubbed by both his wife and his government, Chabert is convinced that Napoleon would set things right if he were still in power. “If only he could see \textit{his} Chabert, as he called me, in my present state, he would be furious! But what’s the use? Our sun has set, we are all cold now.”\textsuperscript{342} In stark contrast to the former Mme Chabert

\textsuperscript{340} Jardin and Tudesq, \textit{Restoration and Reaction, 1815-1848}, 288-289

\textsuperscript{341} Hazareesingh, \textit{Legend of Napoleon}, 132.

\textsuperscript{342} Balzac, \textit{Colonel Chabert}, 31.
and the political culture of the Restoration, Derville is the novel’s unromantic hero. The lawyer not only agrees to lodge a suit on Chabert’s behalf but also offers to support the soldier financially until a settlement with his former wife can be reached. Questioned about his unparalleled generosity towards Chabert, Derville admits, “I have already let my patriotism get the better of me.” As a civilian, Derville is able to participate in the military culture of patriotic virtue by aiding the former soldier. In taking it upon himself to reward Chabert’s services to France, the lawyer represents the ideal partnership of the civil and military spheres in promoting the glory of the French nation, an ideal that characterized the Napoleonic ethos and which Louis-Philippe hoped to recover.

In a similar vein, Balzac’s veterans also echoed the mythic narrative of Napoleonic history in its emphasis on his purportedly meritocratic principles. Although Napoleon re-established systems of honorific personal and hereditary distinctions believed to be incompatible with revolutionary egalitarianism, such as the Legion of Honor and the imperial nobility, these distinctions were nonetheless believed to be distinct from their Old Regime counterparts insofar as they were designed to reward merit and service rather than lineage or wealth. Thus, Genestas is held in great regard for his military service as a man whose talents merit distinction from his peers. “If he wore at his buttonhole the rosette of an officer of the Legion of Honor, it was because the unanimous voice of his regiment had singled him out as the man who best deserved to receive it after the battle of Borodino.” Genestas’ fellow veteran, Gondrin, on the other hand, despite having accrued twenty years of military service in both the liberal and

343 Ibid., 37.

344 Balzac, Country Doctor, 4.
imperial armies, slipped through the cracks in the chaotic final days of the Empire. Following Napoleon’s first abdication in 1814, the First Restoration government denied Gondrin his salary, his pension, and the Cross of the Legion of Honor that had been promised to him after the battle of Borodino in 1812. Genestas firmly believes that such injustices would never have been tolerated under Napoleon. “If the Little Corporal were alive,” he told Gondrin, “you would have the Cross of the Legion of Honor and a handsome pension besides.”

The paternal metaphor that became so pronounced after Napoleon’s death in 1821, and especially after the death of his son in 1832, was not just empty sentimental rhetoric. As Balzac’s veterans demonstrate, it was intricately connected to the mythic axiom of “everything for the French people.” In its insistence that Napoleon justly encouraged and rewarded evidence of patriotism and civic virtue, whether among the ranks of his armies or the imperial bureaucrats, the mythic narrative was especially appealing to those frustrated by the revival of old hierarchies and privileges under the Restoration, and who harbored hopes for change under the July Monarchy. Echoed on the very opposite end of the literary spectrum from Balzac, in the rough and anonymous language of the cheap popular press, these frustrations manifested themselves loudly in the early days of the new regime as demands for redress: “For far too long, under a Restoration that restored nothing, the French soldier was humiliated by men who never fired a single shot. But times have changed, and honor will be rendered to those grenadiers who, for fifteen years, saw their laurels withered by courtiers, émigrés, and the

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345 Ibid., 97.
escapees of Koblenz and Worms.” The fictional injustices suffered by Chabert and other demi-soldes under the Restoration were thus representative of the many socio-political ills that the July Monarchy was expected to heal, and helps to explain why the quest for an elusive national unity figured so highly on the list of political preoccupations in the early years of the regime.

“Une ère réparatrice”

The July Monarchy was welcomed by many in its early days as the dawning of “une ère réparatrice,” a regime capable of healing the many divisions that existed in the French political landscape as a result of deep contestations over the Revolution of 1789. The political culture of the Restoration was marked by a deep-seated sense that the French public sphere was irreparably divided along the lines of left and right, producing a “polarized nation.” The fractures imposed by so many rapid changes in government over the preceding twenty-five years, coupled with the political factionalism and esprit de parti that was part and parcel of the evolution of parliamentary politics, produced deep-seated concerns about the lack of national unity. Moreover, thanks to the ultraroyalists, whose obstinate refusal to accept the revolutionary and Napoleonic past had compromised Louis XVIII’s hopes for union et oubli and became even more


347 La vérité tout entière sur le procès d’un maréchal de France, ou pétition patriotique adressé à la Chambre des députés pour la translation des cendres du maréchal Ney au Panthéon; discours du général Lamarque, etc. (Paris: Chassa Gnon, Imprimeur-libraire, 1831), 2.

pronounced as a matter of official policy with the accession of Charles X, the Bourbon regime was indelibly stamped with a reactionary character in the eyes of the liberal opposition. In the initial euphoria produced by the *Trois Glorieuses*, there were widespread hopes that bitter wrangling over the national past would come to an end and that the new regime would redress the reactionary injustices committed under the Bourbons.

Indeed, Louis-Philippe’s own rhetorical posturing encouraged these beliefs. From the very beginning of his reign, he posed as an agent of reconciliation by lacing his public discourse with pledges to pursue the politics of a *juste milieu* and unanimity – to chart a middle course between ideological extremes and extinguish the sources of civil dissension. Official acceptance of the nation’s revolutionary past, which proved so divisive under the Restoration, formed an integral part of these efforts, starting with the new king’s very public acknowledgments of his own role in that past. Unlike the Bourbons, who relied upon a discredited dynastic principle to legitimate their authority, Louis-Philippe offered a different sort of credentials in order to pose convincingly as a candidate to assume direction of the July Revolution, from the role played by his father, Philippe Égalité, in the Revolution of 1789 to his own very conspicuous part in the heroic republican victories at Valmy and Jemappes. Moreover, through commemorative fêtes and measures such as the construction of a new national museum at Versailles, the king attempted to prove that he confidently embraced all of France’s past leading up to his reign, without needing to privilege any one antecedent or encourage forgetting of another.

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Having from the outset shown himself willing to embrace to the revolutionary heritage, not only his own but that of the entire nation, Louis-Philippe himself set the precedents for demands that the new regime heal divisions in French society by avenging the slights on Napoleon’s memory inflicted by the Restoration regime.

The moralist and poet Pierre Colau, himself a seasoned survivor of the many regime changes that punctuated the period 1789 to 1830 that had produced such deep divisions within the French nation, was one writer who recognized the challenge immediately facing the newly minted July Monarchy. In a pamphlet titled *Napoléon au Panthéon de l’histoire*, published shortly after the Revolution of 1830, he suggested that he viewed consensus about the past as a potential antidote to the problem of fractured national unity. Thus, he didn’t simply recapitulate the mythic narrative of Napoleonic history, but also attempted to broker a truce between Napoleon’s detractors and his legacy by eliminating points of contention within the narrative. To the republicans, for example, who felt betrayed by the establishment of the empire and Napoleon’s increasingly autocratic methods of rule, Colau argued that he turned to despotism not because of an ideological preference but because this was the only manner of restoring order to France at this time. To the royalists, who charged that Napoleon had usurped legitimate sovereign power, he responded that the revolutionaries had already forced the Bourbons vacate the throne long before Napoleon seized power. Finally, to those who accused Napoleon of ruthlessness in war, Colau reminded his readers that it was the other European sovereigns who betrayed the terms of various treaties and refused to leave France in peace. Finally, he appealed to Louis-Philippe, “friend of national glory,” to effect the final reconciliation between Napoleon and the French nation by returning
Napoleon’s ashes to rest “beneath the [Vendôme] column that retraces our glory and his.”

Such was the fitting reward for a man who, banished from his patrie, never ceased to think of France, even in his last moments.\(^{350}\)

Louis-Philippe’s accession and apparently favorable attitudes towards the Napoleonic past thus rekindled hopes that the government would finally take the initiative to claim the emperor’s ashes and give them a final resting place on French soil. The Vendôme Column had served as a flashpoint for these hopes since Napoleon’s death in 1821, hopes that were further resuscitated when the king made the dramatic gesture of restoring the emperor’s statue, torn down in 1814, to the top of the column in June 1833. Some writers saw in this gesture a promise that the return was forthcoming, or at least some other monument that would form a worthy substitute.\(^ {351}\) For most practitioners of the Napoleonic cult, however, the return of his ashes to native soil remained the sine qua non of reconciliation with the past, a condition that Louis-Philippe continued to evade over the course of his first decade in power. But while the return of Napoleon’s ashes remained the proverbial elephant in the room, the new regime found its willingness to pursue reconciliation tested by proxy in 1831, when it was faced with demands for the posthumous rehabilitation of Marshal Ney. The most conspicuous victim of the White Terror, Ney was convicted of treason and executed by firing squad on 7 December 1815 for his role in the Hundred Days. Promising Louis XVIII to return with the emperor in an “iron cage,” Ney set out with his division to meet and ostensibly stop Napoleon on his

\(^{350}\) Colau, Napoléon au Panthéon, 3-7.

march from Aix in March 1815. After what appears to be much moral struggle, torn between his oath of fidelity to Louis XVIII and his regrets over urging Napoleon to abdicate in 1814, Ney ultimately capitulated to the rising tide in Napoleon’s favor and threw in his lot with his former master at Lons on 14 March.\(^{352}\) Thus, Ney was widely and rather unfairly regarded by royalists as the man most responsible for Napoleon’s unanticipated success in seizing power, and his name was placed at the very top of Fouché’s list of enemies of the state of 24 July 1815. Ney went into hiding with his wife’s relatives in the Auvergne, where he was soon discovered by the local \textit{préfet}. Hoping to avoid the spectacle of a show trial, Louis had the case assigned to a court-martial, which thwarted the king’s best intentions by promptly declaring itself incompetent in favor of the House of Peers since Ney was a titled member of the imperial nobility. Convicted almost unanimously of the crime of high treason (the duc de Broglie cast the sole dissenting vote), he was condemned to death. Because Ney was a native of Sarrelouis, his counsel believed they could obtain his pardon according to article 12 of the capitulation treaty, which granted amnesty to anyone born in a district ceded to the Allies. Ney sealed his own fate by vigorously protesting against any defense that rendered him a foreigner, declaring “I am a Frenchman, and as a Frenchman I shall die!”\(^{353}\)

The legal campaign to overturn Ney’s sentence commenced shortly after the July Revolution, led by the marshal’s eldest son, Joseph Napoleon Ney, who was named to the Chamber of Peers in 1831 but refused to take his seat while his father’s reputation


\(^{353}\) Quoted in Lucas-Dubreton, \textit{The Restoration and the July Monarchy}, 22.
remained besmirched by a guilty verdict. He was aided most energetically by the liberal
deputy André Dupin, who had served as one of Ney’s defense counselors in the 1815
trial, and who now lobbied the Chamber of Deputies, the king, and his cabinet tirelessly
for a revision of Ney’s trial to. In the years following his execution, Ney had become a
highly polarizing figure in the politics of the past, capable of exciting passions in many
different camps of opinion. For those favorably disposed to the victorious legacy of
France’s revolutionary and imperial campaigns, he was warmly remembered as one of
Napoleon’s favorite sons, the “bravest of the brave,” hero of Elchingen, Eylau, and
countless other battles. Ney was also a sacred figure in the rhetorical repertoire not just
of committed Bonapartists but the liberal opposition as a whole, who elevated him to the
status of a martyr in much the same vein as Napoleon himself as a means of criticizing
the Restoration regime for giving free rein to the forces of reaction and demands for
vengeance from both the ultraroyalists and the allies. For royalists and later the
legitimists under the July Monarchy, he remained the most odious traitor to the king’s
cause, held largely responsible for the debacle of the Hundred Days. The campaign for
his rehabilitation thus had enormous ramifications for the potential to forge national unity
by healing the divisions imposed by a contentious national past under the July Monarchy.

On November 12, 1831, a delegation from Ney’s native department of the
Moselle addressed the Chamber of Deputies with a petition demanding the transfer of
Ney’s remains from Père Lachaise cemetery to the Panthéon, “the temple consecrated by
the patrie to all genres of glory and virtue.”354 The delegation’s rapporteur, M.
Charpentier, commenced by noting that the petition was actually dated August 20, 1830,

354 La vérité tout entière sur le procès d’un maréchal de France, 2.
going to great lengths to situate the request in the aftermath of the July Revolution. The petition echoed the widespread hope that this event would repair “the injustices and the crimes committed” during the fifteen years of the Restoration, when France was “bent beneath the humiliating yoke of the foreigner and the anti-national party” of the ultraroyalists.\(^{355}\) Charpentier implored the deputies to render a fitting tribute to a man who refused to renounce his \textit{qualité de Français}, even though doing so might have spared him his life.\(^{356}\)

The petition was vociferously supported by the deputies Dupin, Corcelles, General Lamarque, and Marshal Clauzel. Exhorting his fellow deputies to erase the stain on French national honor left by Ney’s execution, Corcelles appealed directly to the humiliating memories of foreign occupation in 1815. It was treason, he said, cloaked in the Bourbon banner of divine right, which opened the French frontiers to foreigners and allowed Russian, Prussian, and English troops to occupy the streets of Paris. Corcelles evoked the atmosphere of suspicion and retaliation that characterized the first months of the Second Restoration, when “informants, provost courts, dungeons, and exile” awaited any citizen “who dared utter the name of the \textit{patrie}!” In sharp contrast to the Bourbons, pawns of the Allied powers, Ney, “raised in the barracks, accustomed from a young age to fight the foreigner, was motivated by no other impulse than that of a heart devoted without reservations to his country.”\(^{357}\) Elaborating on Corcelles’ argument that the trial

\(^{355}\) Ibid., 2-3.

\(^{356}\) Ibid., 3.

had been compromised by foreign influence, Dupin argued that Ney was a victim of the Allies’ thirst for vengeance and envy of imperial glory because the prosecution was carried out in the name of Europe rather than France.\textsuperscript{358} The deputies demanded an act of reparation, motivated by “generous patriotism,” to prove that the nation “repudiates such an odious judgment, and renders homage to the memory of a marshal who could have escaped his final destiny if only he had agreed to give up his \textit{qualité de Français}.\textsuperscript{359} In this way, Ney’s rehabilitation was linked to the regenerative objectives of the revolution, for it would signal to all that the France of 1830 had broken definitively with the France of 1815.

Soon after the Moselle delegation presented their petition to the Chamber of Deputies, Dupin began in earnest his campaign to have Ney’s sentence overturned. In an ostensibly anonymous pamphlet published the same year, Dupin, after establishing legal precedents and justifications for reconsidering the case, recapitulated his arguments about foreign interference. It was in the nation’s political interest, he said, to overturn Ney’s condemnation because to do so would be to finally put the real enemies of the nation on trial. Ney’s exoneration would be an implicit indictment of the Allied powers, for “they defiled our territory! It was in their name that the accusation was carried out and condemnation requested! It was under their influence that the charges were made!” For Dupin, Ney was simply a lamb sacrificed to the Allied powers, who were thirsty for vengeance because “there wasn’t a single power within the Holy Alliance whose troops and generals Ney hadn’t fought and defeated.” Such was the fundamental principle upon

\textsuperscript{358} Ibid., 16. Dupin was referring to the duc de Richelieu’s address to the Court of Peers on November 11, 1815, demanding Ney’s condemnation “in the name of Europe.”

\textsuperscript{359} Ibid., 11, 15.
which revision rested, Dupin concluded; Ney’s cause was in reality the cause of the entire French nation.\textsuperscript{360} A formal request for a revision of the trial, signed by Ney’s widow and their children, was submitted to the king on November 23, 1831.\textsuperscript{361}

While the Chamber of Deputies proved receptive to the idea of revising the trial, the Chamber of Peers was still populated by many members who had voted for Ney’s death sentence in 1815.\textsuperscript{362} A decision to reconsider the trial would doubtless have met with stiff resistance from the Peers, and should it have ended in upholding the sentence against Ney, there was strong potential for popular Bonapartist agitation in response. The political ramifications of Ney’s rehabilitation were made clear in another pamphlet that appeared in December 1831, at the very same time that public opinion was absorbed by the debates over the law abolishing heredity in the Chamber of Peers. This law, presented to the Deputies by Casimir Périer in August and adopted on December 29, 1831, gave the king the right to nominate an unlimited number of peers. By compiling Dupin’s various speeches and petitions concerning Ney’s case along with the deputy’s ideas concerning the peerage, the pamphlet’s author equated Ney’s rehabilitation with the regeneration of the peerage as an institution that conformed to the principles of 1830. Laumond remarked on the singular coincidence that the peerage was in the process of being doubly judged by the nation, first in the matter of its constitution, and secondly for its condemnation of Ney. For both the peerage and for Ney, “it is a question of honor and


\textsuperscript{361} Roch, \textit{Documents relatifs à la demande en révision du procès du Maréchal Ney}, 34-37.

\textsuperscript{362} Harold Kurtz, \textit{The Trial of Marshal Ney: His Last Years and Death} (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1957), 316-317.
rehabilitation! Their causes are henceforth inseparable.” A revision of Ney’s trial offered the peerage a chance to redeem itself “in the interest of French glory,” to mark its reconstitution as an institution of bourgeois citizenship, based on merit rather than heredity, by separating itself definitively from a “bloody act of reaction.”

Laumond concluded with an appeal to French citizens, “children of the same cradle as the noble victim, to march at the head of patrie’s show of mourning, and give the signal for the sacred task of rehabilitation!”

The campaign for Ney’s posthumous rehabilitation reflected contemporary beliefs in the potential of memory to serve as an instrument of reconciliation. By clearing his record and elevating his name to the pantheon of national heroes, Dupin and others aimed to reintegrate Ney into the larger national collective from which he had been unfairly expelled as a traitor. Dupin’s arguments, which hinged on Ney’s patriotic services to the French nation, also echoed much of the same rhetoric used in the demands for repatriation of Napoleon’s remains that had first developed in 1821 and resurfaced in the aftermath of the Revolution of 1830. The campaign, then, was something of a test of the July Monarchy’s attitudes towards the Napoleonic past and the king’s willingness to truly make reparations for the divisive legacy of the preceding regime. The regime appeared to have failed that test, when in mid-February 1832, the Moniteur announced that the king rejected the request for a revision of Ney’s trial, justified by a lengthy report from


364 Ibid., 71.
the Minister of Justice arguing that such an intervention was not within the government’s legitimate jurisdiction.\textsuperscript{365} Louis-Philippe responded to the problem of Marshal Ney with his characteristically cautious and measured approach to the Napoleonic past. He appeared willing to honor Ney’s memory in a number of symbolic ways—the marshal’s name was restored to the Legion of Honor rolls, his bust was placed in the Panthéon, and Mme Ney, through the tireless efforts of Dupin, finally received a pension of 25,000 francs. But Louis-Philippe stopped short of any measures that were likely to threaten political stability, and his response to the problem of Marshal Ney was representative of his carefully calculated efforts to capitalize on popular memories of Napoleon by promoting a particular reading of the past in order to insulate the regime from potential challenges to its legitimacy.

Conclusion

The first decade of the July Monarchy introduced dramatic changes in the way that Napoleonic memories functioned in French political culture. Criminalized and repressed under the Restoration, those memories were most often used as an instrument of political dissent against the Bourbon monarchy. Louis-Philippe’s willingness to incorporate the revolutionary and Napoleonic past into the foundations of his own regime changed all that, and demands for the repatriation of Napoleon’s remains or the rehabilitation of Marshal Ney testified to an optimistic sense that France might achieve

\textsuperscript{365} Ney’s rehabilitation was not achieved until after the fall of the July Monarchy. Soon after the 1848 Revolution, the Provisional Government overturned Ney’s sentence and commissioned a statue by François Rude to be erected at the site of Ney’s execution behind the Luxembourg gardens. It was unveiled on the thirty-eight anniversary of Ney’s death, 7 December 1853.
national reconciliation and unity by reaching a new consensus about its history. In order to contain the threat of Bonapartist political aspirations, the king promoted a particular reading of the Napoleonic narrative that celebrated the emperor and his veterans for their contributions to French national glory through their exploits on the battlefield as a means of neutralizing the seditious potential of the myth. But while Louis-Philippe hoped that this pride in the military glories of the Napoleonic era would promote a sense of national unity and lend some prestige to the new regime, he also unwittingly sowed the seeds for a potent opposition discourse that would emerge at the end of the decade, when those same memories fueled bellicose reactions to diplomatic crisis and criticism of the July Monarchy’s cautious pacificism in foreign affairs.

The July Monarchy’s highly publicized efforts to accept and commemorate the revolutionary and Napoleonic past has sometimes given a misleading impression of untempered enthusiasm, obscuring what was in reality an ambiguous, tentative, and measured approach. Whereas critics of the July Monarchy often viewed its appropriation of the Napoleonic myth as a craven and reluctant acceptance of something foisted upon it by the popular will, Stanley Mellon argues that to the contrary, this appropriation reflected the regime’s optimism in itself, confident that it could assimilate Napoleon’s memory into the official narrative of its own origins without undermining its own legitimacy or stability. Louis-Philippe’s favorable attitudes towards Napoleon’s memory, argues Mellon, formed part of a larger resolution to honor the French past in its entirety in order to avoid perpetuating the cycle of revolution and counter-revolution that had
punctuated the nation’s history over the past forty years. But in reality, Louis-Philippe’s attitudes betrayed a great deal of concern about the potentially damaging consequences of appropriating Napoleon’s legacy, and he carefully chose those projects least likely to stir the political pot or lead to potential assaults on Orléanist legitimacy. This uncertainty manifested itself most clearly in the king’s reluctance to entertain proposals for the return of Napoleon’s ashes to France, a reluctance he stubbornly maintained until forced to confront the issue in 1840 by an ambitious prime minister in the context of perhaps the biggest diplomatic crisis faced by a French monarch since 1815.

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Chapter 5 – The Return of the Ashes

After the first campaign to bring Napoleon’s ashes back from St. Helena proved unsuccessful in 1821, the cause lay dormant for the remainder of the Restoration period. It resurfaced shortly after the July Revolution of 1830, encouraged by the accession of a regime that, far from being hostile to France’s revolutionary past, actively and selectively appropriated that past as anchors for its own legitimacy. On 7 October, the recently elected Chamber of Deputies accepted and subsequently denied a petition, backed heavily by General Lamarque among others, to request the return of Napoleon’s remains from the British government. The question of repatriation was once again aired in the Chamber the following September, where, oddly enough, it met with stiff resistance from Lafayette, who had nine years earlier signed his name to just such a petition. In denying these petitions, the deputies earned themselves a highly publicized rebuke from a fairly recent convert to the Napoleonic cult, Victor Hugo. In the poem “Ode à la colonne,” written in October 1830, he criticized them for allowing their own political interests and fears of Bonapartist sedition to dissuade them from embarking on what should have been a noble act of unpartisan national *reconnaissance*. “Sleep! we will come looking for you – The day may come! /Because we can have you for a god without having you for a
Hugo thus perceptively went straight to the heart of the ambivalence that characterized the July Monarchy’s attitude towards Napoleon throughout the first decade of the regime. For Hugo, it was entirely possible be a Napoleonist but not a Bonapartist, to commemorate the past without wanting to recreate it. Louis-Philippe was not so sure; he maintained an unrelenting resistance to proposals for reclaiming the emperor’s remains, and nearly a decade would pass before the issue merited serious consideration.

The king’s stubborn refusal to entertain the possibility was incomprehensible to some, especially given his many overtures of symbolic rapprochement towards the Napoleonic past. The restoration of Napoleon’s statue to the top of the Vendôme Column, the completion of the Arc de Triomphe, and even the clemency shown to Louis-Napoleon after the Strasbourg affair in 1836 all suggested that Louis-Philippe saw nothing to fear from the Napoleonic cult. Perhaps, as Janet Ladner has suggested, both he and the Bonapartes in exile believed that repatriation was a step down a slippery slope, leading logically and inevitably to abrogation of the Law of Proscription for the imperial family. Whatever the king’s reasoning, a great many people in France must have been stunned by the announcement that came in May 1840 – the government, in an abrupt volte-face, had recently reached an agreement with Great Britain for the restitution of Napoleon’s mortal remains, which would be fetched from St. Helena posthaste and laid to rest in the church of Les Invalides. While the regime presented its decision as an attempt to reconcile France with both England and the divisive remnants of its own past,

367 This two-stanza poem is often confused with the much longer “À la colonne de la Place Vendôme,” written three years earlier and which had signaled the decisive shift in Hugo’s attitudes towards Napoleon and his myth.

368 Ladner, “Napoleon’s Repatriation,” 498.
the return of the ashes quickly assumed even greater significance in the eyes of French public opinion as a symbolic act of defiance against the Quadruple Alliance formed by Great Britain, Austria, Prussia, and Russia in the summer of 1840. Unfolding against a backdrop of diplomatic crisis and mounting bellicosity sparked by the Eastern Question, the return of the ashes proved that the Napoleonic past was still malleable enough to address contemporary problems, even while the July Monarchy was attempting to fully historicize that past in the funeral ceremonies of December 1840.

“This noble act of restitution”

On 12 May 1840, Minister of the Interior Charles de Rémusat mounted the tribune in the Chamber of Deputies and, with visible emotion, announced that Louis-Philippe was dispatching his son, the Prince de Joinville, to the island of St. Helena in order to claim Napoleon’s body and bring it back to France. The government, “eager to fulfill a national duty,” had already reached an agreement with Great Britain regarding the transfer of the emperor’s mortal remains, and now came to ask the deputies “for means of receiving them on French soil in a dignified manner.”369 The news was greeted with thunderous applause from the deputies, although their reputed unanimity would soon dissipate in debates over funding for the project and the tomb’s proposed location, fractured still further by the few but powerful dissenting voices of men like Lamartine who questioned the wisdom of the undertaking. Journalists and pamphleteers quickly picked up the threads of these debates, and the return of the ashes would occupy a central place in public discourse until the end of the year. In this regard, the text of Rémusat’s

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369 Journal des débats, 13 March 1840.
speech is worth examining at length, for it reveals not only how the July Monarchy hoped to shape the public’s interpretation of the event but also the regime’s own persistently cautious and ambivalent attitudes towards Napoleon’s memory.

Although the British government had scrupulously turned a deaf ear to requests for Napoleon’s body made on behalf of individuals, especially members of the Bonaparte family, it had long signaled its willingness to return the body should the request come directly from France’s legitimate political authority. Nonetheless, the agreement negotiated between Guizot and Palmerston in the spring of 1840 was advertised as a diplomatic coup of the highest order. Quoting the official response crafted by the British cabinet, Rémusat explained the significance of the agreement with regard to foreign relations:

‘Her Majesty’s government hopes that the promptness of its response will be considered in France as proof of its desire to erase every last trace of these national animosities, which, throughout the emperor’s lifetime, armed England and France against one another. Her Majesty’s government would like to think that if any such sentiments still exist, they will be laid to rest along with Napoleon’s remains.’

England is right, Messieurs. This noble act of restitution will strengthen again the bonds that unite us, and make the painful traces of the past disappear. The time has come when these two nations need remember nothing but their glory. Rémusat confidently, if somewhat naively, invested the transfer of Napoleon’s remains with immense symbolic importance as an event that would ameliorate the historic discord between the two nations. To some extent, this kind of hackneyed diplomatic rhetoric was entirely predictable on such an occasion and likely given little credit, even by those who constructed it. Nonetheless, it provided a striking contrast to the way that public discourse about the return of the ashes would develop over the next several months.

370 Ibid.
Rémusat’s faith in the fraternal concord between England and France soon proved to be totally at odds with popular responses to the announcement, characterized by a striking revival of anti-Anglo sentiment that expressed itself both in recrimination for past wrongs and vague threats of future vengeance.

Ever since the first demands for the repatriation of Napoleon’s remains surfaced in 1821, there had been very little debate about where they should be laid to rest. Rémusat’s audience might thus have been surprised to learn that the tomb would not be constructed beneath the Vendôme Column, which, as a testament to the immortal glory of the imperial armies erected by Napoleon himself, appeared to many to be the most appropriate site. But the government had determined that, in keeping with the “majesty” of Napoleon’s memory, “this august sepulcher shall not remain exposed in a public place, amidst loud and distracted crowds.” Rather, what was needed was a site that was both “silent and sacred, where those who wished to recall all his glory and genius, grandeur and misfortune, might visit.”

The subtext beneath this cagey explanation was that the July Monarchy was not about to run the risk of building Napoleon’s tomb in a place where it might become a rallying point for revolt. The Place Vendôme had already proven its capacity in this respect in 1831, when a group of Parisians gathered there to mark the anniversary of Napoleon’s death. The threat of insurrection, heralded by cries of “Vive l’Empereur!” and singing of the *Marseillaise*, was deemed serious enough to warrant arming the National Guard with water hoses in order to disperse the crowds. (In the nearby Hotel de Hollande on the rue de la Paix, Louis-Napoleon lay listening to the commotion while he recovered from the measles, as he and his mother were testing the

\[371\] Ibid.
king’s magnanimity by venturing a fugitive visit to the capital. Their presence had up until that point been tolerated, but shortly thereafter Périer courteously asked them to leave France for fear that their presence might encourage further disturbances.) In June 1832, an even more serious disturbance broke out when the funeral of General Lamarque, a victim of the 1832 cholera epidemic that killed 19,000 of the city’s inhabitants, brought together thousands of the regime’s opponents, from republicans to legitimists. A popular liberal deputy and former imperial officer, Lamarque was widely regarded as a living icon of Napoleonic military glory and patriotic spirit, having refused to accept peace with the Allies after Waterloo, and he had also been a particularly vocal spokesman for the campaign to repatriate the emperor’s remains. Some of the more militant among the procession diverted it towards the Place Vendôme, ostensibly in honor of Lamarque’s military service in the imperial armies. Funeral orations quickly gave way to revolutionary rhetoric and violence, and the government ultimately resorted to martial law in order to deal with the crisis. Louis-Philippe and his ministers thus had good reason to fear that depositing Napoleon’s actual remains beneath the Column could only increase the symbolic power of what was already a recognized touchstone for dissent and opposition.

The church of Les Invalides was deemed the safest alternative by the government, although the king and his ministers were careful to present this choice as the result of a careful evaluation of Napoleon’s place in French history, a recognition of his singular role as both head of state and guerrier. “He was emperor and king, the legitimate sovereign of our country. By virtue of this title, he could be interred at Saint-Denis, but Napoleon deserves more than an ordinary king’s sepulcher. He should reign and
command once more within those walls where the soldiers of the *patrie* go to rest, and where they will always be inspired by those called upon to defend it.”

In reality, Les Invalides was chosen because it assured the government a reasonable measure of security. Located in what was at the time the thinly-populated periphery of the city, it was far less likely to become a rallying point for insurrection than the more centrally located Place Vendôme or the Église de la Madeleine, which had also been proposed as a site for Napoleon’s final resting place. It was, moreover, virtually impregnable, being fronted by the wide, open space of the Esplanade des Invalides on its northern façade and protected by a resident contingent of regular army soldiers. At the same time, however, its great baroque dome, which rivaled those of St. Peter’s in Rome and St. Paul’s in London, was one of the city’s most impressive monuments and capable of furnishing a suitably grandiose setting for Napoleon’s tomb. In short, the church of Les Invalides offered “the best balance of visibility and remove,”

satisfying the demand for the sacred while also firmly delineating the decidedly military character of Napoleon’s place in French history.

Les Invalides had the additional advantage of being largely neutral politically as a site of memory. This was not the case with the basilica of St. Denis, which was too firmly associated with the pre-revolutionary past. Its tombs, containing the remains of French kings and queens stretching back to the Merovingian era, were desecrated in 1793, a macabre manifestation of the revolutionary impulse to “regenerate” the nation, and whatever royal remains that still existed were removed to mass graves where they

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372 Ibid.

were covered with quicklime. An imperial decree of 20 February 1806 reconsecrated the church as the burial place of France’s kings, calling for four chapels to be built within the basilica, one designated for Napoleon and his descendants, and one for each of the three preceding dynasties of French kings.\textsuperscript{374} While some favored Saint-Denis as the site of Napoleon’s tomb for this reason, it was inconceivable to most of the myth-makers that he should be laid to rest among the vestiges of such a hostile and foreign past. Likewise, the regime found objectionable the recently erected Colonne de Juillet at the Place de la Bastille, another of the options being aired in the press, a site too clearly allied with memories of revolution (and which Louis-Philippe would far rather have associated with himself alone). Les Invalides, on the other hand, was a living memorial to the nation’s military heroes, who, ostensibly at least, fought for the glory of France rather than any particular regime or ruler. Napoleon himself had tried to exploit the reconciliatory potential of the site in his efforts to heal the Revolution’s rifts, emphasizing the continuities in France’s illustrious military heritage from Louis XIV to himself.\textsuperscript{375} In choosing Les Invalides as the site of Napoleon’s tomb, then, the regime almost seemed to want to place him outside of history, to somehow unanchor the imperial epoch in historical time by divorcing it from clear referents to any particular point in France’s past. At the same time, however, Louis-Philippe found it expedient to lay definite claim to the Napoleonic past as a means of securing his own legitimacy as heir to 1789:

> Henceforth France and France alone will possess all that remains of Napoleon. His tomb, like his memory, will belong to none but his own country. \textit{The monarchy of 1830 is in effect the unique and legitimate heir to all the memories in}

\textsuperscript{374} Ibid., 52.

which France takes pride [emphasis added]. Without doubt they rightly belong to that monarchy that was the first to rally all the forces and reconcile all the wishes of the French Revolution, to raise and respect without fear the statue and tomb of a popular hero. For there is only one thing that stands up to comparison with glory, and that is liberty.\(^{376}\)

The return of the ashes thus offered Louis-Philippe an opportunity to reaffirm his own ties to France’s revolutionary tradition.\(^ {377}\) By appropriating the Napoleonic legacy, by attempting to define its terms and its parameters, the regime also hoped to insulate itself from the potentially damaging political repercussions of its decision to construct a tomb for Napoleon on French soil.

Ultimately, then, the July Monarchy constructed and marketed an official rhetoric that posed the reclamation of Napoleon’s body as an act of national reconciliation – reconciliation between France and her foreign enemies and between the past and present. The government, conveniently ignoring centuries of conflict and demanding a certain level of naïveté from the French people, presented the discord between England and France as nothing more than a fragile relic of the Napoleonic era, easily dispatched by this symbolic gesture of amity and mutual goodwill. In doing what his Bourbon predecessors refused to do, Louis-Philippe was able to posture as the confident monarch, secure in his authority, who had nothing to fear from the past. This rhetoric was soon put to the test in dramatic fashion. In the months following Rémuèsat’s announcement in the Chamber of Deputies, a crisis in foreign relations unfolded that would reignite animosities between France and the other major European powers. Heavily criticized for

\(^{376}\) *Journal des débats*, 13 March 1840.

\(^{377}\) Tulard, “Retour des Cendres,” 92.
its response to the crisis (or lack thereof), the July Monarchy would find itself challenged by the very past that it tried to appropriate.

The Present Past: 1840 as 1815

Louis-Philippe’s change of heart would likely never have come about had he not been forced to recall Adolphe Thiers, a proud disciple of the Napoleonic cult, to the position of prime minister in March 1840. Born in 1797, Thiers was raised on a steady diet of reports on the brilliant successes of Napoleon’s armies that were standard fare for pupils in the imperial lycées. For Thiers, as for so many of his contemporaries in the “bored generation,” the fall of the empire in 1815 put an end to his dreams of achieving greatness in military service. But rather than wallow in Romantic brooding over a lost golden age, he found an outlet for his energies (and his unbounded admiration for Napoleon) in his career as both a politician and historian. A keen sense that France must recover her past grandeur shaped his approach to both, and already in 1840 he was busy compiling material for a magisterial chronicle of the Consulate and Empire, a project that would occupy his time for most of the next two decades. His firm resolve to achieve the return of the ashes was thus both an offering to the shrine of Napoleonic memory and a means of making his own dramatic stamp on French history. But in his quest to bring the repatriation project to fruition, Thiers hoped to satisfy not only his personal ambitions but his political objectives as well, almost all of which revolved around the goal of restoring France to a position of prominence in international relations. Consistently subordinating domestic concerns and dynastic imperatives to the prerogatives of national autonomy and honor, he energetically undertook to convince his reluctant sovereign of the necessity of a
more aggressive foreign policy. For Thiers, the triumphant return of Napoleon’s ashes was part and parcel of this policy, a dramatic public gesture that would enhance the prestige of the regime both at home and abroad by indicating France’s determination to recover the remnants of a glorious past in service of an even more glorious future.

The “Eastern Question,” which embroiled France and the other major European powers in the power struggle between the Ottoman Sultan and Mohammad Ali Pasha of Egypt, proved to be the perfect storm in which Thiers’ ambitions coalesced with the potency of Napoleonic memories. Despite the fact that Ali had fought in the combined Ottoman-British expedition to force Napoleon out of Egypt, he was an enormously popular figure in France during the 1830’s, being widely regarded as a disciple of the emperor. There were certainly parallels between the two men in their rise to power. Ali began his career as an Albanian commander in the Ottoman army sent to expel Napoleon’s forces from Egypt in 1799. Taking advantage of the power vacuum left after the French occupation ended in 1801, Ali seized power and forced the Sultan Selim III to recognize him as wāli, or governor, of Egypt in 1805. His story doubtless struck a familiar chord amongst audiences of the Napoleonic myth; a military adventurer (or usurper, depending on one’s perspective), Ali, like Napoleon, catapulted himself to a position of extraordinary political power by offering an antidote to the divisive forces of anarchy. Moreover, Ali’s massive industrialization and modernization projects were all directed towards rebuilding his army on Napoleonic principles, and were undertaken with the help of many retired French officers and soldiers, some of whom had converted to Islam and remained in Egypt after the campaign of 1798. Thus, Ali was easily imagined
by many as the heir to Napoleon’s frustrated orientalist ambitions to modernize Egypt for the benefit of France.

Ali likewise resembled Napoleon in his territorial ambitions. Having been denied his request for control of Syria as the price of his assistance rendered to the Ottomans during the Greek War of Independence, Ali invaded the territory in 1831. The sultan conceded to his demands on the condition that he govern Syria under the nominal suzerainty of the Ottoman Empire. Tensions escalated further when Ali made another bid for independence in 1839, and soundly defeated the Ottomans at the battle of Nezib. Whereas previous Ottoman pleas for assistance had largely fallen on deaf ears in Europe, with the exception of Russia, intervention on behalf of the Turks now appeared inevitable. Opinions in France, however, remained divided, and by early 1840 had largely polarized around the positions adopted by Guizot and Thiers. The former, then serving as ambassador to England, counseled against delay and sought to keep French policy in line with that of the other powers, while the latter saw advantages to be gained from helping to establish Ali as a strong independent power in Egypt, hoping that France would be accorded more influence in the region as a reward. Thiers firmly believed that a successful military venture in support of Ali would greatly enhance the strength and prestige of the Orléans regime, and remained obdurate in the attempts to reach a consensus with the other powers concerning the Eastern Question. Invested with the portfolio of Foreign Affairs on 1 March, Thiers ultimately succeeded in imposing his point of view, and France elected to support Ali’s claims to Syria in the face of opposition from the other great powers.
Meanwhile, England, Austria, Russia and Prussia took advantage of France’s hesitation and formed the Quadruple Alliance, in effect excluding France from what was to be Europe’s answer to the Eastern Question. The terms of the London treaty, signed on 15 July 1840 right under Guizot’s nose, promised Ali hereditary control of Egypt provided he accept their terms within ten days and renounce all other territorial claims, pledging military assistance to the Ottomans in the event that Ali did not surrender. France reacted swiftly to this blatant diplomatic snub. While he stopped short of openly provoking war, Thiers had certainly done nothing to prevent it and now appeared to welcome the prospect. The conscript classes of 1836-39 were called up in late July, yielding 480,000 men, while the Chambers voted 8,120,000 francs in war credits. Capitalizing on the war fever mounting in Paris throughout the late summer, Thiers was also successful in accelerating plans for the fortification of Paris. The Allied occupations of 1814-15 had dramatically exposed the capital’s vulnerabilities, but half-hearted commissions for the defense of Paris under both the Restoration and July Monarchy had so far been plagued by inaction and disagreement. The Belgian Revolution had briefly revived a sense of urgency in attending to the city’s fortifications, but it was not until 1840 that the threat of invasion was sufficiently strong for Thiers to secure the support he needed. In this, as with so many of Thiers’ ambitions, the specter of Napoleon loomed large; convinced of the project’s necessity by the Mémorial de Sainte-Hélène, in which Napoleon expressed his regret at having never adequately undertaken the defense of his capital city, Thiers could flatter himself as executing the wishes of his idol.378

Unfortunately, the answer to the Eastern Question resulted in yet another humiliation for France and for Thiers. Louis-Philippe, wary of going to war against England, refused to retaliate on behalf of Ali after the British navy bombarded Beirut in September 1840. The tug-of-war between the king and his foreign minister produced a tepid declaration that France would oppose efforts to forcibly depose Ali, but was vague on territorial stipulations. Ultimately Ali capitulated, and his French partisans were forced to admit they had been wrong “about his moral worth and the material worth of his forces.”

Thiers resigned in late October only to be supplanted as the directing force on the council by Guizot, whose ideas about foreign policy, especially with regard to Great Britain, were far more in line with those of his prudent sovereign.

Thiers’ outraged over the formation of the Quadruple Alliance was shared by a large majority of French public opinion, and this recent diplomatic betrayal vividly conjured up specters of past humiliations. Inviting parallels with the enemy coalitions of yore that had ranged themselves against revolutionary France and especially against Napoleon, the Quadruple Alliance appeared to echo the spirit behind the 1814 Treaty of Chaumont, which had bound the same signatories to prosecute war against France indefinitely until they secured unequivocal victory over the emperor. The July Monarchy’s efforts to distance itself from revolutionary élan throughout the 1830s notwithstanding, France once again saw herself in the allegorical role of Liberty leading the oppressed people of Europe. The public’s reaction was evidenced in part by the flood of bellicose sentiments found in the political press. Not coincidentally, some of the most violent reactions were to be found in those newspapers in which Thiers had a vested

379 Charles de Montalembert to the Chamber of Peers, November 1840; quoted in Leys, *Between Two Empires*, 235.
interest – the liberal stalwart *Le Constitutionnel* suggested that Palmerston’s deceit was tantamount to a declaration of war in Europe, while the more radical *Le National* proposed lining the frontiers with troops and a campaign to incite revolution on the Italian peninsula. Other papers like *Le Siècle* and *Le Temps* revived timeworn revolutionary rhetoric against the northern courts, bulwarks of old regime absolutism and aristocracy. Parisian crowds betrayed their revolutionary fervor by singing the *Marseillaise* in the theaters and cabarets, and even the government, which up until now had been careful to pose as a guarantee against further revolution in Europe, threatened to open the floodgates of insurrection against the members of the Quadruple Alliance.380

What might have been so much hot air had very serious consequences, provoking the so-called Rhine Crisis of 1840. Thwarted in his policy with regards to the Middle East, Thiers redirected his frustrated ambitions into the projected reconquest of France’s “natural eastern boundary.” Of all the consequences of the 1815 treaties, the loss of the left bank of the Rhine was the one that was most palpable still in 1840, and if France’s erstwhile allies proved unwilling to renegotiate the terms of those treaties through diplomacy, then perhaps she might still secure their revision by force. Thiers’ rhetoric was violently echoed by left-leaning journalists, poets, and political writers who bellowed loudly and bellicosely in the direction of Germany, where they were equally matched by volleys of anti-French fury. Although preparations for armed conflict on both sides ultimately proved in vain, the Rhine Crisis of 1840 played out in a sort of proxy “poetic

The opening salvo was fired as early as 1836 by Edgar Quinet, whose early admiration for German philosophy had given way to violent opposition to growing nationalist sentiment on the other side of the Rhine. His poem “Les bords du Rhin,” which appeared in the *Revue des deux mondes*, vehemently reasserted France’s claims to the contested frontier. “It belongs to us, friends, by the blood of our ancestors,/By the borders of bronze torn from the frontiers,/By the solemn oath of twenty kings on their knees.”

Although Quinet’s incendiary verses went unanswered at the time, the prospect of a renewed French offensive on the Rhine in 1840 provoked an outpouring of German nationalism in response. The defiant lines of Nikolaus Becker’s “Rheinlied” – “They will not have it, the free German Rhine,” – prompted Alfred de Musset to tauntingly riposte with allusions to the era of Napoleonic conquest – “We have already had it, your German Rhine.” Max Schneckenburger’s poem “Die Wacht am Rhein,” a powerful manifestation of pan-German sentiment that set to music would become the unofficial anthem of the Franco-Prussian War some thirty years later, also originated in this earlier crisis.

While for some the Quadruple Alliance was simply a painful reminder of past defeat and humiliation, the crisis of 1840 had the effect of actually collapsing time for Edgar Quinet, whose pamphlet *1815 et 1840*, first published in October, proved so popular that it warranted a second edition the following month, even after the immediate threat of war had largely subsided with the fall of the Thiers ministry. For Quinet, the Quadruple Alliance furnished proof that the rest of Europe still considered France in the

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381 Oscar J. Hammen, “The Failure of an Attempted Franco-German Liberal Rapprochement, 1830-1840,” *American Historical Review* 52 (October 1946), 64.

position of a vanquished foe, and the nation “was plunged again in that mute solitude imposed by defeat. She finds herself once again on the day after Waterloo, as if we had fought and lost the battle all over again.”\textsuperscript{383} In his estimation, the Quadruple Alliance was the product of France’s failure to avenge Napoleon’s defeat in 1815 and the debilitating effects of the subsequent peace settlements: “If we submit to treaties written with the blood of Waterloo, we are still legally in the eyes of the world only the vanquished of Waterloo.”\textsuperscript{384} Lulled into a false sense of security by minor victories over her rivals in foreign affairs, France had to confront the rude reality that England, Russia, Austria, and Prussia intended to redraw the world map without her. “What will become of France,” he asked, “on the day when she finds herself excluded from a movement that rejoin the West with Asia? What will remain of this country, deprived at the same time of the Rhine and the Mediterranean?”\textsuperscript{385} What was needed now was an aggressive foreign policy, for the civil liberties secured by the Revolution of 1830 meant nothing without national autonomy. Quinet echoed the popular sentiment that a reconquest of the left bank of the Rhine was the only way for France to repudiate the subordinate role assigned to her by the other powers. His polemic was thus a resounding denunciation of what he saw as Louis-Philippe’s cowardice, evidenced by the king’s refusal to answer Germany’s claims to the left bank of the Rhine. The spirit of Quinet’s highly influential text proved infectious, and in establishing a causal link between the crises of 1815 and 1840 he set the tone for much of the discourse in the political press.

\textsuperscript{383} Edgar Quinet, \textit{1815 et 1840} (Paris: Imprimerie de Schneider et Langrand, 1840), 42.

\textsuperscript{384} Ibid., 28.

\textsuperscript{385} Ibid., 50.
Not surprisingly, public outrage over the Quadruple Alliance was directed first in the direction of Great Britain, supposed to be France’s ally in the diplomatic hornet’s nest created by the Eastern Question. Overall, the period of the July Monarchy witnessed a significant thaw in diplomatic relations between Great Britain and France, a thaw that owed much to the Whigs’ sympathetic stance with regards to France’s revolutions as well as Louis-Philippe’s own benevolent feelings towards a nation that had harbored him in exile. Although Palmerston maintained a cautious attitude while the fate of Belgium was being decided in the early 1830s, relations improved after France withdrew its troops and the fledgling Orléans regime made it clear that it had no wish to fan the flames of European revolution. The next few years brought the two even closer together, impelled towards a pragmatic alliance as a means of blocking Russia’s ambitions in the Mediterranean, an alliance that subsequently deteriorated in the latter half of the decade as conflicts in the Iberian peninsula and the Greek war provided fresh opportunities for rivalry. Relations reached their nadir with the Egyptian crisis in 1840, but improved dramatically in the first half of the 1840s. Succeeding Palmerston and Thiers, Aberdeen and Guizot energetically pursued an “entente cordiale,” hoping to free themselves to concentrate on domestic affairs by avoiding international squabbles. But this mutual accord between the historic rivals was highly fragile, maintained largely through amiable relations between the royal families rather than formal agreements, and was greatly at odds with popular attitudes in both countries. The Napoleonic Wars had conditioned the British to view the French as inherently and aggressively expansionist, the pacifist attitudes of both Louis XVIII and Louis-Philippe having done nothing to allay those suspicions. The French, for their part, continued to see the British as arrogant and
malevolent, conclusions which appeared to be even more justifiable in the wake of
diplomatic crisis provoked by Ali’s adventure in Egypt. Particularly indicative of the
public’s mood in Paris that summer was a popular opera on the life of Charles VI, whose
refrain – “No, no, never in France,/Never will the English reign!” – was greeted with wild
applause and could be heard echoing throughout the streets of the capital.

It was in this context that the impending return of Napoleon’s remains from St.
Helena acquired new and unforeseen significance. A few voices continued to echo the
tone of the official rhetoric surrounding the return of the ashes, optimistic about its
symbolic power to fashion a new alliance between England and France. The poet
Théodore Villenave, whose verses and literary reviews frequently appeared in the liberal
press, called upon the two nations to recognize that they both faced a more pernicious
enemy in the form of Russia, whose unbridled ambitions with regard to the
Mediterranean could only be checked if the two historic rivals agreed to bury their
discord and animosity:

Your mutual interests in both war and peace
Command you to forget a painful past:
Both of you must renounce this rivalry.
[...] Unite your forces and your glory!
What an unfortunate attack by this imprudent minister;
Would he relinquish England’s trident to the Kremlin?
This sacred tomb of an august victim,
That elicits our remorse for such a crime,
This coffin where a great warrior, king of kings, lies sleeping,
Will it really reawaken the hatreds of the past?
[...] Napoleon himself said, with his eye to the future,
The world is big enough for both of you!
Yes, the world awaits the honest alliance

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386 **Price, The Perilous Crown, 315-16.**

Of Albion’s trident with France’s scepter.\textsuperscript{388}

But for most of the commentators in 1840, the return of the ashes became an opportunity to denounce Albion’s most recent perfidy by recalling England’s past transgressions against the emperor. In a poem titled “France et l’ombre de Napoléon,” Louis Niémy suggested that the July Monarchy had been utterly foolish to place its trust in Great Britain as an ally in negotiations over the Eastern Question. The return of the ashes had fixed France’s attention on her recent past, which furnished numerous proofs that the English were a nation of wily and deceitful characters. Here Niémy alluded to the mythic narrative of the post-Waterloo drama in which Napoleon was cruelly duped by Captain Maitland, commander of the \textit{Bellerophon}, into believing that he would be granted asylum in England. Thus, trusting in the respect accorded to an enemy honorably vanquished on the field of battle, Napoleon rejected advice that he attempt an escape to America and instead, “like Themistocles,” threw himself at the mercy of his captors. (Even if Maitland, perhaps overwhelmed by the immense responsibility of his charge and captivated by the charm and charisma of his illustrious prisoner, did give Napoleon and his entourage reason to believe that their request would be met favorably by the British government, he did so entirely without authority and without a realistic grasp of the political ramifications of such a request. Nonetheless, this version of the story largely sufficed for the myth-makers, not least because it accorded well with long-standing French stereotypes of the English national character.) The Quadruple Alliance was simply the latest example of England’s willingness to renege on promises made when its interests were at stake, for Niémy, among others, believed that England had destroyed the

\textsuperscript{388} Théodore Villenave, \textit{Les Cendres de Napoléon, poème} (Paris: Amable Rigaud, 1840), 4-5.
pact of alliance with France and betrayed her to the other powers in order to colonize Egypt for its sole benefit. The optimistic faith expressed by Rémy, Villenave, and others that the transfer of Napoleon’s ashes would usher in a new era of mutual goodwill between England and France was for Niémy a vain hope, for the former’s apparent magnanimity was nothing but a thin disguise for its “perverse projects/to make France disappear/From the face of the universe/To paralyze the power/Of your influence.”

Niémy ended his poem on a rather pessimistic note, chastising his compatriots for their evident lack of amour-propre and patriotism. In their failure to avenge the insults inflicted by the Quadruple Alliance, they had insulted the memory of a great man, and they ought to leave his remains in peace on St. Helena instead of bringing them back to a France that was undeserving of this singular honor. The poet Louis Belmontet adopted a less resigned air, seeing in the act of the return itself the symbolic potential to raise France from her abject state and repudiate the humiliating treaties of both the past and present eras. Belmontet had a long history of enthusiasm for the Napoleonic cause. After the second restoration of the Bourbons in 1815, he was expelled from the lycée at Toulouse by Louis XVIII for his violent provocations towards royalist students during the Hundred Days. Although his first poetic attempt, a patriotic elegy entitled “Les Mânes de Waterloo” penned at the age of eighteen, was ill-received, Belmontet was undaunted and moved to Paris, where he collaborated with the likes of Victor Hugo, Alfred de Vigny, and Charles Nodier in editing the literary review La Muse française. He participated in the Charbonnérerie movement and became increasingly active in politics after the July Revolution, at one point even arrested on suspicion of Bonapartist conspiracy. Belmontet

also cultivated relationships with several members of the Bonaparte family, including the future Napoleon III, securing himself a position as editor of *Le Capitole*, the Bonapartist newspaper financed by the pretender. Although defeated in his first electoral attempts in 1848, he later served as a deputy and member of the Corps législatif under the Second Empire.

Napoleon’s death in 1821 had moved Belmontet to anticipate the “inexorable but impassive truth” of History’s judgment, and the return of the ashes nearly twenty years later provided him with an occasion to revisit the significance of Napoleonic memories. Cloaking his verses in strong religious language, Belmontet interpreted the return of the ashes as “a deliverance,/The closure of our woes,/The Resurrection of France’s pride,/And the Easter of the three colors!” Ascribing immense symbolic power to Napoleon’s physical remains, he suggested that England had been able to render France powerless by in effect holding the body hostage for nearly two decades. Napoleon’s funeral was thus rightly an occasion for joy rather than grief, for it heralded an end to twenty-five years of mourning for French dignity and autonomy: “The time has come for us to be happy, to let our hearts burst with joy/As they did long ago, when we were the victors.” The ceremonies of December 1840 signaled much more than a burial for the emperor; they were a burial for the metaphorical shackles imposed upon France by the treaties of 1815 and 1840. “The great martyr was no longer bound by the chains of England,” and nor, by implication, was France.390 Thus, whereas for Niémy it was of critical importance for France to repudiate the Quadruple Alliance in order to render itself

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worthy of receiving Napoleon’s remains, for Belmontet, the return of the ashes would in itself effect that repudiation.

The bellicose spirit dominating French public discourse in the summer of 1840 shaped sentiments about the return of Napoleon’s ashes in predictable ways, eliciting fiercely nationalist pride in France’s imperial past. As the clamor for war that was whipped to a fever pitch by Thiers and the left-leaning political press gave way to Louis-Philippe’s pacifism over the course of the year, those who ached to avenge France’s diplomatic reversals over the Eastern Question sought solace in memories of France’s victorious past. Poets and political writers chanted an endless litany of Napoleonic battle names – Austerlitz, Ulm, Jena, Friedland, Wagram – as a reminder to the members of the Quadruple Alliance of the humiliations they had once suffered at the hands of France. But the crisis of 1840 also reinvigorated the mythic enterprise of situating the emperor squarely within France’s revolutionary tradition, as writers continually labored to define the ideological descent of imperial politics from the principles of 1789 and to reinterpret the Napoleonic Wars as wars of liberation from absolutist tyranny rather than of conquest.

The Quadruple Alliance’s united front against France heightened awareness of the nation’s unique historical role as the torchbearer of revolution throughout Europe. For much of the liberal opposition, it was imperative that France resume the mission of spreading revolutionary principles abroad by supporting nationalist liberation movements emerging elsewhere in Europe in the early 1830’s. The Belgian Revolution offered the July Monarchy its first opportunity to reassert French influence in continental affairs, an opportunity that turned out to be wasted in the eyes of the left-wing opposition after the
regime proved unwilling to antagonize the rest of Europe by meddling too heavily in Belgian affairs. Casting their eyes around the continent in 1840, political writers concluded that the universal struggle for emancipation from absolutist tyranny was far from over, and the Orléans regime drew criticism for so quickly divesting itself of the revolutionary mantle that it had so eagerly adopted in July 1830. The repeated failure to achieve Polish independence, a perennial *cause célèbre* of liberals throughout Europe, figured prominently in this discourse. Many of the July Monarchy’s most ardent critics believed that France ought to have taken a more actively interventionist position on Poland’s behalf in 1830, for it was France’s successful struggle against tyranny at the end of the nineteenth century that had inspired the Poles to seek liberation from the predatory impulses of its more powerful neighbors: “Poland arose, and like a second France,/Quickly rose up to reconquer her rights.” The common cause that joined the two revolutions made France’s refusal to aid the Poles appear unconscionable, and Louis-Philippe disgraced himself by turning a deaf ear to their pleas for assistance when his own reign had been baptized by revolutionary fire:

Shame on that deceitful authority, whose hypocritical hand Covered France with disgrace when, Irritated to find herself tied down in cowardly repose, She burned to plant the oriflamme on the banks of the Rhine, And by its noble support bring back to life that flame That made the Belgians a people of heroes!”

For Niémy, French occupation of the left bank of the Rhine assumed a crucial significance not only as the fulfillment of nature’s design for French territory, but as a symbol of the revolutionary march of progress across Europe against the retrograde forces of reaction and absolutism.

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391 Niémy, *La France et l’ombre de Napoléon*, 4-5.
Napoleon, by virtue of the mythic narrative that cast him in the role as heir to the revolutionary principles of 1789 and a friend to the victims of absolutist tyranny, made for a useful foil to Louis-Philippe’s reticence. Laced with strong overtones of Christian socialism, Charles Picard’s 1840 poem, “L’ombra de Napoléon, pour la France, au monde démocratique ou consitutionnel, contre les rois absolu de l’Europe, en guerre, contre Mehmet Ali,” made Napoleon a standard-bearer for constitutional democracy, “the only system of government that is universal, or Catholic.” Picard offered a populist interpretation of the Napoleonic creed that prefigured the full-blown Bonapartist rhetoric of the Second Empire. Napoleon fought for the principles of national sovereignty, fraternity, equality, and, curiously enough, liberty of the press. His true interests were aligned not with the bourgeoisie but with the humble and the poor, to whom he stood as guarantee of peace and prosperity at home (but not necessarily abroad). “I salute you, soldier of enslaved nations, take arms! Go forth and fight to deliver forever nations from slavery, despotism, oppression, and misery. For the day has finally come for the emancipation of peoples – the world is stirring, ready to rise up against despotism and the absolutism of kings.” The timely return of his ashes, so close on the heels of the checkmate inflicted by the Quadruple Alliance, was a reminder to France of her proper role as “the apostle to modern nations of the Gospel of holy liberty.” She need only give the signal and universal revolution would unleash itself from Egypt to Poland to the Rhine valley, spelling annihilation for England, Prussia, Austria, and Russia.

If Napoleon was the chief protagonist of this discourse, Thiers was the understudy. His shrewd appeals to French pride in the Napoleonic past paid off, earning

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392 Charles Picard, L’ombre de Napoléon (Toulouse: Imprimerie de Lagarrigue et Dours, 1840), 4-16.
him the praise of writers who demanded revenge for the nation’s recent humiliations. Louis-Philippe’s pacifism, which had already come under attack earlier in his reign, proved to be especially unpopular in 1840, and Thiers’ belligerent stance towards the Quadruple Alliance contrasted sharply to his benefit with that of France’s “prudent monarch.” His assumption of presidency of the council in March was translated as a message to the “coalition of kings” that “France is no longer that docile slave” who had yielded uncomplainingly to the Allies in 1815. Above all, he reaped the rewards of his assiduous efforts to consecrate the Napoleonic past with official recognition under the July Monarchy.

You, ministers, raise your heads with pride.
The voice of the people called for this coffin,
And you listened…Thiers, with this tribute,
In a word, wrote the finest page in his book.  

By “ministers,” Villenave was quick to specify, he meant those “of 1 March,” whose respect for the Napoleonic past distinguished them sharply from Guizot, “the man who stayed in Ghent [in exile with Louis XVIII] while Napoleon was at Waterloo.” Thiers’ admirers fully recognized that his ambition to reclaim the body of Napoleon, martyred by the Holy Alliance, was perfectly compatible with his intentions to restore the nation to a position of power and influence in Europe, being an act of defiance against a coalition of enemies whose character and aims had changed little between 1815 and 1840.

Thiers’ militancy in foreign affairs and his burning ambition to see Napoleon’s ashes returned to France were thus two sides of the same coin. Entirely aware of the

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political utility of the bellicose pride latent in memories of the Napoleonic past, he actively encouraged those memories not only out of personal inclination but also in order to foster widespread public support for a military endeavor in the summer of 1840, be it in the direction of the Mediterranean or the Rhine. The direction taken by French public opinion over the course of the year proved the shrewdness of his strategy, demonstrating that memories of Waterloo and the humiliating treaties of 1815 still loomed large in national consciousness. Like the Revolution of 1830, the Eastern Crisis was seen as an occasion to revise the lingering consequences of those treaties and restore the nation to a position of importance vis-à-vis the rest of Europe, ultimately another missed opportunity. Unable to impose its will upon the concert of Europe, frustrated in its ambitions to regain the left bank of the Rhine, France had to settle for a more symbolic way of repudiating the disasters of 1815, and in this context the return of the ashes assumed enormous importance.

Thus, the hopes that the return of Napoleon’s remains might facilitate a reconciliation between England and France proved by summer’s end to be chimerical, as faith in the magnanimity of Albion’s gesture quickly evaporated in the wake of Palmerston’s diplomatic coup. But the funeral ceremonies planned for December 1840 still held out hope that the return of Napoleon’s ashes might promote reconciliation on the domestic front. Much more than mere pomp and circumstance, the highly elaborate

Historical opinion on Thiers’ intentions with regard to his espousal of the Napoleonic myth remains contested. Jardin and Tudesq, for example, suggest that it had little to do with the diplomatic crisis and that he later found himself in the role of a “sorcerer’s apprentice,” having unwittingly fomented nationalist agitation by exploiting memories of the Napoleonic past. Restoration and Reaction, 1815-1848, 127. Similarly, Stanley Mellon argues that Thiers, like Guizot, was anxious not to compromise good relations with England “by stirring memories of Imperial ambitions.” “The July Monarchy and the Napoleonic Myth,” 75-76.
and detailed plans for these ceremonies were constructed with one aim in mind – to
demonstrate that the regime no longer had anything to fear from the Napoleonic past, that
it had lost its power as a divisive force in French political culture. To do so, the symbols
and rituals involved in those ceremonies had to clearly articulate the July Monarchy’s
narrative of the French past, and Napoleon’s place in it.

Rituals of Reconciliation

From the moment it was loaded aboard the Belle-Poule in Jamestown harbor on
17 October, the movements of Napoleon’s coffin were carefully choreographed to furnish
the requisite amount of public spectacle. Joinville’s frigate put into harbor at Cherbourg
on the morning of 30 November, where the catafalque remained until 8 December, when
it was transferred to Le Havre and thence up the Seine by a flotilla of smaller vessels.
Spectators swarmed the quays all along the route to witness its passage towards Paris,
and elaborate receptions were thrown at several stops along the way. In Rouen, for
example, the flotilla passed beneath a triumphal arch constructed on the suspension
bridge spanning the river, the banks of which were strewn with trophies bearing the
names of Napoleonic victories. A ceremony of absolution performed by the archbishop
was followed by a hundred-gun salute, while veterans of the Grande Armée showered the
catafalque with laurel branches from the bridge as it passed beneath. For traditionally
royalist Normandy, where economic hardships exacted by Napoleon’s ill-conceived
Continental System and the demands of conscription had long fueled hostility to the
emperor, this popular enthusiasm represented a dramatic departure from attitudes in
1814-15, when the local population demonstrated a marked indifference to news of his
defeat.\textsuperscript{397} Similar scenes were repeated as the flotilla progressed up the Seine in slow stages – at Le Havre, Quillebeuf, Val-de-la-Haye – until it reached its final destination of Courbevoie.\textsuperscript{398}

Like Napoleon’s coronation day some thirty-six years earlier, 15 December 1840 proved to be one of the coldest days on record, but the weather was no deterrent to the hundreds of thousands who would witness the grand spectacle of Napoleon’s funeral. The icy but brilliant December sunshine was taken as a favorable omen, drawing all-too-easy comparisons with the “sun of Austerlitz.” Departing Courbevoie at ten o’clock that morning, the coffin was transferred to an immense funeral car, nearly eleven meters in height and weighing more than thirteen tons, and concealed beneath a cenotaph supported by twelve sculptural figures representing victories and decorated with the symbolic attributes of imperial power. Drawn by sixteen black horses, this unwieldy structure made its way down the Avenue de Neuilly to the Arc de Triomphe, where it was joined with the rest of the funeral cortège, and from there proceeded along the Champs Élysées to the Place de la Concorde and across the river. At the church of Les Invalides, the coffin was depoited by a simple yet eloquent exchange between Joinville and the king: “Sire, I present you with the body of the Emperor Napoleon;” “I receive it in the name of France,” followed by a requiem mass performed by the Archbishop of Paris. Over the next three weeks, more than 100,000 people lined up outside the church, temporarily opened to the public, patiently waiting in the frigid winter air for their turn to file past the


\textsuperscript{398} Théodore Villenave, Relation des funérailles de Napoléon (Paris: Amable Rigaud, 1840), 41-53.
coffin and pay their respects to the body of France’s most illustrious hero, returned to the
patrie after twenty-five years in exile.

The funeral ceremonies of December 1840 shared much in common with that
staple event in the exercise of medieval and early modern kingship, the royal entry into
Paris, another ritual practice that had reconciliatory potential. Examining historical
instances of entries into Paris that followed periods of civil discord – those made by
Charles VII following the Armagnac-Burgundy conflict, by Henri IV at the close of the
Wars of Religion in 1594, by the Bourbons following Napoleon’s first abdication in
1814, and by de Gaulle after the liberation of Paris in August 1944 – Michel de Waele
argues that this event offered “its principal protagonist a unique opportunity to mobilize
the living forces of the state and to unite them in a national communion which facilitates
reconciliation.” Like the “normal” entries made at the beginning of a new reign, the
monarch’s physical presence in his capital city in the aftermath of civil strife manifested
an act of union between the king and his subjects, securing their loyalty to him and their
recognition of his legitimacy. Often more spontaneous than the elaborately planned
entries made by new monarchs, argues de Waele, the reconciliatory entry distinguished
itself from “normal” entries principally by emphasizing unanimity over corporate
divisions and social hierarchies, and continuity over change.

Likewise, Napoleon’s funeral was intended to symbolize an act of reconciliation,
less between warring elements within French society and more between the present
moment and the past. Like participants in the older royal entry ceremonies, witnesses to

399 Michel De Waele, “‘Paris est libre’ Entries as Reconciliations: From Charles VII to

400 Ibid., 429-38.
Napoleon’s funeral attached great importance to the physical presence of Napoleon’s body on French soil, and in particular in that city that bore so many visible traces of his commitment to embellishing the capital with monuments of everlasting beauty and utility. Poets, journalists, and other writers often invoked the phrase from Napoleon’s last will and testament in which he expressed his desire to be laid to rest “on the banks of the Seine, amidst the French people whom I loved so well,” words that were later inscribed above the stairwell leading to the crypt in the church of Les Invalides. They hoped that his remains, returned to France after a long captivity at the hands of a mortal enemy, would become “the palladium of the patrie,” a safeguard against further encroachments on her honor or integrity. Commentators on the day’s events also took great care to document mass public participation in the day’s events, demonstrating both unity of sentiment and unity of purpose: “The streets were deserted, and the shops closed…One had the sense that all of Paris had spilled over to one side of the city, like liquid in a vase that has tipped over.”

Like the royal entry rites of the Renaissance period, Napoleon’s funeral was a means of “dramatizing political concepts.” In this case, it was a way for the July Monarchy to demonstrate reconnaissance and reconciliation by historically situating Napoleon in the French past. In theory, at least, the composition of the funeral cortège and the decorative elements of the procession were designed to promote both the military

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glory and civic virtues of Napoleon’s reign, since he was, after all, acknowledged in Rémusat’s speech of 12 May as both as a military hero and “legitimate sovereign of our country.” Nonetheless, the latter was clearly subordinated to the former on the day of Napoleon’s funeral. Like the processional order of participants in the old royal entry rites, Napoleon’s funeral cortège transmitted a series of visually encoded messages about the importance of each socio-legal unit therein and the abstract virtues it represented; in the former, it provided a crucial representation of the corporate and hierarchical order of late medieval and early modern French society, in the latter, an interpretation of the Napoleonic past and its significance in the longer narrative of French history. The Army and its attendant virtues of courage and patriotic self-sacrifice dominated the procession that wound its way from the Place d’Étoile to the Place des Invalides, taking the various forms of lancers, cuirassiers, infantry battalions, artillery batteries, National Guard squadrons, and students from the écoles militaires, as well as the easily recognizable figures of such Napoleonic relics as Marshals Gérard, Molitor, and Oudinot. Hundreds of veterans of the imperial armies, who were discourteously omitted by the official design but insisted on taking their place at the rear of the cortège nonetheless, furnished the most poignant spectacle in the procession, trailing along in their old threadbare uniforms. (The more sentimental and naïve spectators were also deeply moved by the sight of a horse, tricked out in the First Consul’s old saddle and supposed to be Napoleon’s old battle charger but who was, in fact, borrowed from the Paris undertakers.\textsuperscript{404})

But the State was curiously absent, or, at best, underrepresented. Eighty-seven noncommissioned officers, mounted and carrying flags inscribed with the names of Henri Gaubert, \textit{Le Tombeau de l’Empereur} (Paris: Editions Académie Napoléon, 1951), 137.

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France’s departments (and one for her newest territory, Algeria), might be said to have represented the Nation. Two glaring omissions made themselves resoundingly felt, the first being the royal family, which, with the exception of Joinville, who was given pride of place in the procession along with the Belle-Poule’s sailors, proceeded directly to Les Invalides by an alternate route. The other notable absence was the government itself. Neither the deputies nor the ministry nor any high-ranking administrators, with the exception of those representing the city of Paris, played any part in the procession, but instead massed themselves among the banks of seats that held more than 40,000 people on the Esplanade des Invalides, playing the role of spectators rather than participants in the funeral.

The same favor shown to the military aspects of Napoleon’s legacy in the funeral procession was evident in its decorative aspects as well. Designed principally by the architect Louis Visconti, who was also later awarded the commission to build Napoleon’s tomb, the entire funeral route featured a host of sculptural decoration that visually transmitted the regime’s official message about Napoleon’s historical significance. The abstract virtues of Wisdom, Strength, Justice, and others represented by the allegorical figures ornamenting the Place de la Concorde were rendered all but invisible by the far more prominent military symbols that dominated the rest of decoration. For example, a monument depicting Napoleon’s apotheosis staged on a platform beneath the Arc de Triomphe showed the emperor in his coronation robes, standing in front of his throne on a trophy composed of enemy weapons, supported by two allegorical figures representing Glory and the French patrie, and flanked by two renommées à cheval in the form of Peace and Grandeur. The Champs-Élysées was also transformed into a pageant stage, the
imposing façades of its *maisons particulières* draped with flags of black or *tricolor* to form a suitable background for the sixty-four decorative motifs that lined the sweeping boulevard. Thirty-six statues representing French victories alternated with twenty-eight columns topped by a globe and imperial eagle, each bearing the name and date of a Napoleonic battle. Both the funeral temple constructed outside the entrance to Les Invalides and the pillars of the church nave inside were inscribed with the names of Napoleon’s marshals and the battles in which they earned their eternal fame, while twenty-four banners, each naming a splendid French victory in the Napoleonic Wars, hung below the upper windows of the dome. The Chapel of St. Jerome, where Napoleon’s coffin was installed until construction of the tomb was finally completed in 1861, was decorated with shields inscribed with Marengo, Wagram, Austerlitz, and Jena and the standards taken at Austerlitz.

But perhaps the most significant clues to the July Monarchy’s reading of the Napoleonic past could be found on the Esplanade des Invalides, which was lined on both sides with thirty-two plaster statues, each five meters high, representing famous figures from French history from Clovis to Henri IV to Louis XIV. From a reconciliatory perspective, these statues provided the requisite elements of continuity and affirmation of collective identity by situating the Napoleonic era squarely within the narrative of the nation’s past. At first glance, the strategy behind the selection of these historical figures appears to have been the same that drove Louis-Philippe’s restoration project at Versailles, aimed at constructing a museum dedicated “to all the Glories of France” and encompassing the whole of her history from the Merovingians to the present era. The museum was to be a testament not only to French history but also to the confident
magnanimity of the present regime, which was secure enough in its authority to pay equal homage to its ancestors, even those to which it was ideologically opposed. But the plaster pageant that unfolded on the Esplanade des Invalides also clearly prioritized Napoleon’s military prowess over his role as sovereign as the key to his claims to belonging in this illustrious lineage, for every single personage in this cast of thirty-two immortals was included for his (or her, Jeanne d’Arc being the lone exception) contribution to French national glory on the field of battle. It was, moreover, populated by royals and non-royals alike; Bayard stood side-by-side with François I, while Charlemagne and Louis XII rubbed elbows with Napoleon’s contemporaries, self-made men of the revolutionary and imperial armies like Hoche, Kléber, and Ney. Rather than clarifying Napoleon’s place in French history, this assortment of heroes actually introduced a note of doubt – was the regime, after all, recognizing the Emperor Napoleon or General Bonaparte? Finally, it was perhaps a way of hinting that while on this day Napoleon might enjoy center stage in the affections and gratitude of the French people, ultimately he was taking his place amidst a pantheon of other national heroes with whom he would have to share posterity’s limelight.

Thus, for all the somber grandeur of the gesture, Napoleon’s state funeral betrayed a certain tentativeness on the part of its sponsors. As Victor Hugo caustically pointed out, the decorations hardly concealed their hasty construction and transient purpose – plaster substituted for marble, canvas was disguised as gold cloth, rags masqueraded as wallpaper – and seemed to betray the artifice of the government and its intentions with regard to the day’s events. “The gold was nothing but an illusion; fir

405 Driskel, As Befits a Legend, 29, 32.
wood and cardboard were the reality. I would have liked to see a magnificence more sincere in the emperor’s funeral car.” Hugo proved an unrelenting critic of the whole affair, uncovering the July Monarchy’s persistently ambivalent attitudes towards Napoleon with a characteristically perspicacious and acerbic tone:

The whole ceremony had something of a smoke and mirrors quality about it. The government seemed to fear the very phantom that it evoked, wanting to both show and hide Napoleon at the same time. They left out everything that had been too grand or too touching. They concealed the real and the grandiose in more or less splendid envelopes, hiding the imperial cortege inside the military cortege, the army inside the National Guard, the Chambers inside Les Invalides, and the coffin inside the cenotaph.406

Despite its attempts to pose confident and secure in its embrace of the Napoleonic past, the regime still appeared fearful that its appropriation of the Napoleonic myth might prove a sort of suicide mission by encouraging seditious political schemes of a Bonapartist nature, finding it safer to appropriate certain aspects of the Napoleonic legacy while downplaying others.

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One person who was not in Paris to witness Napoleon’s triumphal return was his nephew. Exiled from France after the Strasbourg affair in 1836, the future Napoleon III spent the first half of 1837 touring the United States before hurrying back across the Atlantic to join his mother, who was dying of cancer, at Arenenberg in August. In 1838, he nearly sparked an international incident when the French government loudly protested his residence in Switzerland, irritating the Swiss with repeated demands for his expulsion according to the 1816 law of proscription against the Bonapartes. Louis-Napoleon prudently removed himself, but not before taking steps to shrewdly advertise his

persecution at the hands of the July Monarchy all across Europe. He settled in London, which proved to be an excellent base from which to orchestrate his next bid for power. Using the proceeds from the sale of his mother’s estate, he financed two newspapers, *Le Capitole* and *Le Journal du Commerce*, ensuring a consistent Bonapartist presence in the Parisian press. In 1839, he published *Les Idées Napoléoniennes*, which was at one and the same time a mythic reading of the Napoleonic past and the first coherent expression of the Bonapartist ideology that would later define Louis-Napoleon’s carefully constructed image of the Second Empire. The first Napoleon’s revolutionary heritage provided the sacred origins for this ideology, with its distinctive blend of Caesarian authoritarianism and an almost mystical, Michelet-like faith in the sovereignty of “le peuple.” Following the now well-worn mythic script, Louis-Napoleon regarded his uncle as the “testamentary executor of the Revolution.” The first Napoleon had “purified” the Revolution by rescuing the principles of 1789 and insulating them from the “passions” that had derailed the struggle for liberty from its essential course in 1793, while at the same time holding at bay the forces of counter-revolution that threatened to consume its “practical results.” As the great mediator between France’s past and present, he succeeded in reviving “ancient forms” (e.g., the principle of hereditary rule) but adapting them to new interests in accordance “with the sentiments and ideas of the majority.”

Napoleon was thus the “messiah of new ideas,” namely, the “reconciliation of Order and Liberty, the rights of the people and the principles of authority.”

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Less than one month after the *Belle-Poule* set sail for St. Helena, Louis-Napoleon embarked on his own surreptitious journey from England to France in the hopes of effecting the second coming. Having learned little, it seemed, from the Strasbourg affair four years earlier, the Bonapartist pretender was still convinced that a successful military putsch would spark a popular uprising against the July Monarchy. Chartering a small steamer to make the Channel crossing, Louis-Napoleon departed London on 4 August 1840 along with some fifty-odd co-conspirators, nine horses, two carriages, weapons, a good supply of food and drink, and a tame eagle to serve as Napoleonic mascot. Their target was Boulogne, whose garrison was deemed ripe for the plucking. (As with nearly everything Louis-Napoleon did, history furnished a requisite symbolic precedent. Boulogne was the staging ground for the first Napoleon’s planned but unexecuted invasion of England, marked since 1831 by the triumphal *Colonne de la Grande Armée*, and figured among the Napoleonic cult’s most important sites of pilgrimage.) In the early morning hours of the 6th, they disembarked on the beach at Wimereux, and, disguised as soldiers of the 40th Regiment stationed at Calais, set out for the garrison at Boulogne some three miles to the south. Arriving at the barracks shortly after dawn, they were met by a defiant captain of the 42nd Regiment, who had been forewarned of their arrival. Forced to beat a hasty retreat, the conspirators made a run for the beach, where the plot met its ignominious end. Pursued into the shallow water by the regiment’s soldiers and the local National Guard company, Louis-Napoleon was taken prisoner along with each of his fellow conspirators. The punishment for his second transgression against the Orléans regime was not nearly so lenient as the first. Unwilling to brave the risk of acquittal by a jury trial in the local courts, the government charged him with an
attack on the security of the state in order to ensure the case was sent to the Chamber of Peers, which sentenced him to life imprisonment (unanimously save for one peer, who voted for a death sentence). Louis-Napoleon was sent to the medieval fortress of Ham, near the Belgian border, where he remained until his escape in 1846.

Thus, Louis-Napoleon’s second attempt to seize power, ill-conceived and hampered by his own lukewarm resolve, was even more hopelessly botched than the first. Nonetheless, despite the almost comically disastrous nature of the fiasco, the plan was not so harebrained as it seemed, considering the circumstances in which France found itself in 1840. The Eastern Crisis and Louis-Philippe’s hesitant response to the gauntlet thrown down in the form of the Quadruple Alliance had brought the July Monarchy to the nadir of its popularity, which had been steadily declining over the past several years. To many, the king’s reluctance to avenge this affront to French honor confirmed the weak character of the regime, which had also shied away from supporting revolution in Poland, refused to turn the Belgian bid for independence to its own advantage, and was appearing to waver in its commitment to the conquest of Algeria. The July Monarchy was plagued also by the persistent threat of social unrest, born of slow economic progress and the miserable conditions of France’s growing industrial working class. Already Fieschi’s attempt to assassinate the king in July 1835 had inspired Louis-Napoleon with the confidence to attempt his first coup at Strasbourg, and subsequent plots on the king’s life suggested a continued desire to see him replaced. Finally, the impending return of Napoleon’s remains and the publicity surrounding the event created an atmosphere of feverish excitement and nostalgia for past imperial splendors, which Louis-Napoleon fully intended to capitalize on and translate it into his own political gain, timing his attack
so that he might be in Louis-Philippe’s place to receive the ashes when they were brought to rest at Les Invalides.

In fact, it seems that Louis-Napoleon, tired of waiting for another opportunity for a coup to present itself, took matters into his hands, attempting to force the issue of reclaiming Napoleon’s ashes in order to profit from the event. At the very same time that Thiers was trying to bring the project to fruition in France, Louis-Napoleon was covertly pursuing the very same goal on the other side of the Channel. In the spring of 1840, he goaded his uncle Joseph into contacting Palmerston to sound out the British government’s willingness to relinquish custody of Napoleon’s remains. Palmerston replied that neither he nor the other ministers would offer any objection should an official request from the July Monarchy be forthcoming, slyly suggesting that England might even forestall France by offering to make restitution without waiting for Louis-Philippe to make up his mind. Not content with these measures, Louis-Napoleon added some fuel to the fire by inducing Daniel O’Connell, an Irish M.P. with whom he had some contact, to threaten Palmerston with bringing the question before the House of Commons. Wishing to preserve diplomatic accord between England and France for the time being, Palmerston then informed Thiers of the potential démarche, giving the latter the ammunition he needed to overcome Louis-Philippe’s reluctance. For England to take the initiative on this matter would have compromised French national honor, an embarrassment that the July Monarchy could ill afford, especially while embroiled in the negotiations over the Eastern Crisis.

Having perhaps played an integral role in precipitating the return of the ashes, Louis-Napoleon was also quick to make use of the intense anticipation leading up to the return of the ashes in his efforts to garner popular support for his bid for power. Schooled in the art of propaganda perfected by the first Napoleon, he had three proclamations printed ahead of his arrival in Boulogne, one addressed to the citizens of Pas-de-Calais, another to the army, and the third intended for the nation at large. In the last, he not-so-subtly hinted that Louis-Philippe’s regime was unworthy to reign over a nation whose prestige would shortly be elevated by the very presence of Napoleon’s mortal remains. “The ashes of the emperor shall not return except to a France regenerated…Glory and Liberty must stand by the side of Napoleon’s coffin.” In failing to adequately defend France’s autonomy and dignity against its foreign rivals, by proving to be an unworthy heir to the revolutionary principles by which his reign had been consecrated, Louis-Napoleon suggested, the king had unwittingly created a vacuum that only another Bonaparte could fill.

Louis-Napoleon’s failure in 1840 suggests that by and large, the July Monarchy appears to have profited from the return of the ashes. The regime succeeded in safely paying a highly theatrical homage to the Napoleonic past, which failed to set off any significant tremors in the French political landscape. True, Bonapartists and other opponents of the regime caused minor disturbances on the day of the funeral, using the highly public nature of the event as an occasion to manifest their discontent. When the sarcophagus disembarked at Courbevoie, for example, several thousand students in the law and medical faculties who had been denied a place in the funeral cortège flocked to

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410 Quoted in Thompson, *Louis Napoleon*, 58.
the quays singing a seditious version of the *Marseillaise* banned by the government.\textsuperscript{411} Cries of “à bas Guizot!” and “à bas les traitres!” were heard echoing throughout Paris along with the familiar refrain of the *Marseillaise*, and the National Guard became especially restless as night settled on the city.\textsuperscript{412} Prudently, the government ordered the police to ignore these pockets of unrest, which quickly lost their momentum as the emotional drama of the day subsided. Whatever his private fears about the potentially seditious power of Napoleonic memories, and the ambiguities in the funeral ceremonies notwithstanding, Louis-Philippe ultimately convinced many that “the Man of the Three [Glorious] Days, greater than Diogenes,/Henceforth no longer has reason to fear that Glory will obscure/His brilliant sun of July.”\textsuperscript{413}

**Conclusion**

While it is perhaps something of an exaggeration to say that the return of the ashes saved the July Monarchy,\textsuperscript{414} the discourse surrounding the event certainly suggests that it offered a much-needed sop to French pride in the wake of her most recent humiliation at the hands of the Quadruple Alliance. Contemporaries actively invited memories of the Napoleonic past as conscious act of recall in order to deal with the painful present. “When we see France, once so powerful/Tremble before kings, like a suppliant/Begging each day for alms of peace;/When we see France held captive by

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\textsuperscript{412} Ibid., v. 2: 32, 50.


\textsuperscript{414} Tulard, “Le Retour des Cendres,” 94.
limits/Imposed by foreigners…*We want to reawaken our memories of the emperor.*”415

The practice of active remembrance was central to the process of France’s rebirth, for “if the memories of a people are life itself,/they will find themselves more alive than ever.”416 In fact, suggested one poet, *oubli* was the problem – France found herself in her present state of subordination and disgrace because in 1815, all it had taken was one single defeat to erase the memory of so much grandeur and to treacherously turn Napoleon over to their mutual enemy. Thus, remembering provided the solution; France must “Resurrect his memory/If we want to resurrect ourselves.”417

The return of the ashes and its attendant celebrations of the Napoleonic past furnished participants and witnesses to the ceremonies an opportunity to atone for their collective sins of betrayal, abandon, and *oubli*:

Oh, the lessons of time! expiatory returns!
Who can help but feel remorse?
Such is the fate of a great man, after so many victories,
To conquer again even in death.

Even his greatest enemies, eloquent phenomenon,
Do him the honor of a pantheon,
And from the ends of the earth it was a Bourbon
Who piloted the funeral procession of Napoleon.418

The poet Belmontet found it highly significant that the king’s own son, a prince of the house of Bourbon and “a citizen of new France,” was charged with the mission to recover Napoleon’s remains from St. Helena. For Joinville, the journey constituted a “rebaptism”

of sorts, cleansing him, and by extension the Orléans regime, of their original sin. Like the expiatory rites and monuments of the Restoration period, ostensibly designed to cleanse the French nation of the collective sin of regicide in order to pursue the policy of union et oubli, the goal was atonement and pardon for misdeeds as a necessary precondition for reconciliation.

A strong sense of active remembrance as a collective devoir on the part of the French nation was reinforced by the editorial commentary that followed the text of Rémusat’s speech in the Journal des débats. In response to Lamartine and others who opposed the return of the ashes, fearing that it amounted to a tacit nod to the legitimacy of Bonapartist claims, they argued that such fears were groundless because “Napoleon’s ideas are no longer those of our time. That forceful and unrestrained authority, the absolute will of a single man, the despotism occasionally blinded by genius, have all disappeared forever. The glory of our guns that he raised so high is no longer something that France aspires to.” Reactions to the announcement, they suggested, were proof positive that these ideas were no longer relevant, and that Napoleon’s memory no longer had the power to excite strong political passions or exacerbate divisions. For hardly had the announcement been made than opposing interests “laid their quarrels to rest, and all parties, merged together by a single sentiment, instantly turned towards those glorious memories that his name recalled.” The commentary also revealed that a profound shift was taking place in attitudes towards the past, which seemed to be losing its importance as a prototype for the present. The profound turmoil of the period 1789-1815 had shaken collective faith in the revolutionary enterprise, which had posited a radical break with the

\[419\] Ibid., 3-4.
French past in an effort to regenerate the nation. This shaken faith manifested itself in the immediate aftermath of the Napoleonic era by a marked impulse to take refuge in the past, whether seeking consolation for present trauma, or explanation, or both, an impulse that was made all the more pressing by the sense that France was embarking on yet another radically new stage in its political evolution. The *Débats* article of 13 May 1840 suggested that a transformation was taking place in this relationship between past and present; France, having suffered the growing pains of her constitutional development and now enjoying a sort of post-revolutionary political and social maturity, looked optimistically to her future. Nonetheless, France would not fail to honor the memory of a man who was not only a great warrior, but who had also rescued France from the perils of anarchy, avenged her humiliation, restored the lawful worship of the Christian faith, and created institutions and legislation that allowed France to survive so much turmoil and instability. For “the cult of memory is the primary duty of nations, the most sure sign of their grandeur, the most efficacious encouragement that they can possibly accord to great political virtues.”

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420 *Journal des débats*, 13 May 1840.
Conclusion

“It is difficult to disengage ourselves entirely from the past; generations, like individuals, are controlled by their antecedents.” No one could say this more truthfully than Louis-Napoleon, who throughout his political career found himself, through no small fault of his own, obscured by the long shadow cast by memories of the first Napoleon. His critics then and now have credited his success entirely to the influence of the Napoleonic myth, dismissing him as a poorly drawn copy of his uncle who catapulted himself to power on the strength of popular affection for the original. Louis-Napoleon, for his part, wasted few opportunities to pander to that nostalgia, first to win electoral support for his candidacy for President of the Republic in 1848, and later to secure an air of consent, *ex post facto*, for the reestablishment of the empire. From the coup d’état of 2 December 1851, carried out on the anniversary of the battle of Austerlitz, to French intervention in the Italian Risorgimento, he consistently patterned his actions on the precedents set by his uncle and cloaked his authority in symbols reminiscent of the First Empire. Thus encouraged, comparisons between the two men were inevitable, and the nephew, dubbed “Napoleon the Little” by Victor Hugo, invariably came out the loser, despite the fact that France arguably enjoyed greater domestic prosperity and stability under the Second Empire than the First. But what the Second Empire lacked was prestige on the battlefield, and in this more than anything else, Napoleon III proved unable to live

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up to the impossible expectations created by his “antecedents.” Seen as an exceptional blot on an otherwise spotless record, the first Napoleon’s reputation survived, and was even enhanced by, the debacle at Waterloo, whereas Napoleon III had nothing to offer in compensation for the humiliating defeat at Sedan.

Such is the conventional view of the Second Empire. But the real nature of the relationship between Napoleon III and the myth is somewhat more complicated. Ever since Napoleon I’s first abdication in April 1814, the ruling classes who succeeded him feared the potential of memory to ignite political opposition and seditious activity, especially in the form of a Bonapartist challenge to the throne. Thus, both the Bourbon and Orléans regimes tried to contain that threat in their own ways, the first by repressing memory and enforcing collective amnesia about the recent past, and the second by selectively appropriating those memories and integrating them into an official narrative of the nation’s history. Whether those efforts were successful in curbing the threat of Bonapartism, or whether the movement suffered more from its own inertia, the fact remains that it failed to constitute a plausible political alternative between 1814 and 1848. While Bonapartism exercised considerable appeal in winning over participants in the various conspiracies of the Restoration period, especially among the army, partisans of Napoleon II had to cooperate with liberals and republicans under the broader rubric of the political opposition, who were not likely to seriously back an imperial restoration in the event of a successful revolution against the Bourbons. When that revolution finally came in July 1830, Bonapartists failed to capitalize on the brief window of opportunity furnished by the power vacuum, despite the conspicuous presence of Napoleonic memories in the revolutionary discourse. Perhaps it was indeed “both too soon and too
late for another Bonaparte,” but whatever the reason, Napoleon II was quickly displaced by Louis-Philippe as the most viable candidate to assume the throne. Even when the Orléans regime had reached the nadir of its popularity in the summer of 1840, and the feverish anticipation of the return of the ashes notwithstanding, Louis-Napoleon’s second attempt to seize power ended in disaster.

In other words, the Napoleonic myth did not inevitably translate into a Bonapartist political triumph, even during the period when the myth enjoyed its greatest dynamism and relevance in French political culture, and Louis-Napoleon was not able to achieve his goals until 1848. Why? Whereas historical opinion has long seen Louis-Napoleon as profiting from the power of Napoleonic memories, one might argue that he achieved his goal only when he was able to free himself of the burden of those memories. The attempted coups of 1836 and 1840 failed, not only because of the clumsy ineptitude with which they were executed, but because the first Napoleon’s past still constituted a vibrant milieu de mémoire in French political culture. It was only with Napoleon’s interment in Les Invalides, when the myth began to assume the aspect of a lieu de mémoire, the narrative becoming static and politically inert, that Louis-Napoleon could hope to establish himself as a viable political option in France. By 1848, the name Napoleon no longer referred to the past alone, but to the present and possibly the future.

Nonetheless, Louis-Napoleon was indisputably indebted to the Napoleonic myth, to which he heavily contributed. The myth-makers’ efforts to impose order on competing memories and make sense of the Napoleonic past provided him with the raw material with which to fashion the Bonapartist ideology of the Second Empire: “The name

Napoleon is a complete program in itself. It stands for order, authority, religion, national prosperity within, and national dignity without. While his idea of the First Empire as one grounded in liberal institutions and popular suffrage may have indeed made, in the words of one historian, “bad history” but “good propaganda,” Louis-Napoleon did not fashion his reading of the past out of his own fancy. Rather, it was shaped and informed by the little known and often anonymous political writers of the Restoration and July Monarchy periods, who constructed a highly plastic meta-narrative of Napoleonic history that could be told in different ways in order to address contemporary political concerns.

This dissertation has argued that the myth was a more or less conscious effort to keep the past present as a means of addressing contemporary political concerns during the Restoration and the July Monarchy, the most pressing of which throughout both regimes was the elusive quest for post-revolutionary national unity. Political discourse on both sides of the spectrum was characterized by a strong, almost anti-Romantic belief that emotions were dangerous because they produced esprit de parti, revealing a profound sense discomfort with one of the most stinging realities of constitutional government – the emergence of factional politics. Reconstituting national unity figured high on their list of rhetorical priorities, and memories of the revolutionary and Napoleonic past played a crucial role in either fracturing or forging that unity, depending on one’s perspective. For moderate royalists during the Restoration, union depended upon selective oubli of a past whose legacy of revolutionary upheaval and violence

423 Louis-Napoleon to the National Assembly, 31 October 1849.

424 Thompson, Louis-Napoleon, 3.
proved an obstacle to national unity. For the liberal opposition, who remembered the Empire as a period in which France enjoyed a “harmony of interests” and unanimity forged through “felicitous patriotism,” remembering the past provided an antidote to the fractures imposed by the Second Restoration’s reactionary policies, from popular violence under the Terror to the proscription of France’s war veterans. Recognizing memory’s potential to serve as an instrument of reconciliation, Louis-Philippe jettisoned the Restoration’s policy of attempting to ignore the revolutionary and Napoleonic past, while maintaining a vigilant eye over how that past was narrated and commemorated in order to promote consensus about the past.

Narrating the Napoleonic past was also a way of criticizing what were seen as the most glaring failures of the Restoration and July Monarchy, which for both regimes came in the sphere of French foreign policy and their inability or unwillingness to restore France to the position of importance in European affairs she lost in 1815. Vilified for the sacrifice of France’s “natural frontiers” and her subordinate role in the Concert of Europe, the Bourbons were confronted with a version of the Napoleonic narrative that emphasized his nearly faultless record of victory on the battlefield and his selfless devotion to the welfare of the patrie, absolving him of guilt for France’s humiliation by displacing responsibility to the heads of “traitors.” Time and again, acts of remembering the Napoleonic past were offered as a way of repudiating the treaties of 1815, most dramatically with the return of the ashes in 1840, which was reinterpreted as an act of defiance against France’s past and present enemies. Critical of the pronounced pacifism of the Bourbon and Orléans monarchs, the political opposition under both regimes shaped and molded Napoleon into the role of the Revolution’s favorite son and a
victim of reactionary tyranny in order to make him a mouthpiece for their foreign policy objectives, which sought opportunities to reassert France’s importance in international affairs and demanded that France reassert her revolutionary character by supporting liberal and nationalist movements throughout Europe.

For over a century, historians have studied the creation of the Napoleonic myth, often committing themselves, wittingly or not, to one side or the other in Peter Geyl’s classic dichotomy of “Napoleon: for and against.” Questions about the internal logic and dynamics of the myth continue to generate fruitful lines of inquiry and debate about its origins and methods of creation. But the Napoleonic myth also merits reevaluation because of what it reveals about how memory and history functioned in post-revolutionary French political culture in the first half of the nineteenth century. The past was highly present in public discourse during the Restoration for a number of reasons, not least of which was the sense of temporal disruption caused by the momentous upheavals of the period 1789-1815. The presence of the past was also magnified because of the effects that the Empire’s collapse in 1814-15 had on people’s perception of historical time, which appeared to have been unanchored by the return of the Bourbons. While the ultraroyalists may have wanted to undo the Revolution, what they really accomplished in the minds of their opponents was to unfinish it. The past continued to haunt the political culture of the July Monarchy, although generally in less subversive ways owing to Louis-Philippe’s attitudes towards the Revolution and First Empire. Incorporated into the official memory of the state, made a lieu de mémoire with the construction of Napoleon’s final resting place at Les Invalides, the myth was stripped of much of its malleability and plasticity and thus lost much of its immediate relevance in
French political culture. But the myth also owed its waning influence to changes in the relationship between the nation and its past that occurred towards the middle of the century. The relative stability and prosperity of the July Monarchy left many feeling that France had survived the experiment in constitutional government. Gaining confidence in their ability to solve the riddles posed by the post-revolutionary order, they no longer needed a present past.
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