

REPUBLICANISM WITHOUT A REPUBLIC: POLITICAL CULTURE IN
CONSULAR FRANCE, 1799-1804

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ABSTRACT

GREG MOLE: Republicanism without a Republic: Political Culture in Consular France,
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This thesis examines Napoleon's engagement with the ideology, language, and practices of the French Revolution to explain social and political developments that ultimately contradicted the period's republican ideals. Revolutionary republicanism provided Napoleon with a compelling ideological basis upon which to construct the consular regime, one that could command popular support and mask his administration's repressive tendencies. As I demonstrate, however, his continued usage of republican practices and concepts in many ways changed the meaning of revolutionary republicanism. In effect, the idioms and rituals of a laicized, republican past were recast to suit the needs of a Gallican, tutelary present. By exploring this dynamic, my work highlights both the significance of the revolutionary tradition within consular politics, and the fundamental malleability of its political ideals.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

Historians have relied upon a language of rupture to describe the relationship between the French Revolution and the Napoleonic period. In part, this trend stems from the scholarly emphasis on discontinuity among the different revolutionary stages. François Furet, for instance, argued that the Directory constituted a repudiation of the Revolution's earlier political themes—a recrudescence of social interests that had been markedly absent in the politics prior to Thermidor.¹ Where more recent scholarship has questioned the timing of this disjuncture, few have challenged its existence. Instead, the point of rupture has moved farther along the timeline of revolutionary events, focusing increasingly on 18 *Brumaire*, and making the distance between the Revolution and Consulate seem even more pronounced.² This idea of a conceptual gap—a break in the political imaginary in 1799—diminishes the complexities of Napoleon's relationship with the revolutionary past, obscuring key ideological, political, and cultural continuities. It also places revolutionary republicanism in a state of stasis by drawing attention away from the ways in which it was reproduced and changed through later developments.

¹ François Furet, *Penser la Révolution Française* (Paris: Gallimard, 1978), 100-101.

² See, for example, Andrew Jainchill, *Reimagining Politics after the Terror: The Republican Origins of French Liberalism* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2008), 237-241. Jainchill challenges the idea of a rupture between the political practices of the Convention and the Directory. He also downplays the disruptive role of the series of reactionary coups launched during the directorial period. Yet for all this emphasis on continuity, he argues that Brumaire constituted a point of disjuncture, one in which a “liberal-authoritarian” political order restructured the political imaginary. See also Pierre Serna, *La République des girouettes: 1789-1815 et au-delà: une anomalie politique: la France de l'extrême centre* (Paris: Champ Vallon, 2005). Serna understands revolutionary and early Napoleonic history as a palinodal string of radical and conservative governments followed by centrist regimes that repudiated earlier political developments.

Methodological considerations have heightened this sense of discontinuity. The historiography of the French Revolution centers on the study of political culture, placing an emphasis on the discursive and normative developments undergirding, and resulting from, the Revolution.³ Conversely, works on the Napoleonic period have generally eschewed historical lexicography and studies of political symbolism in favor of biography and traditional political narrative. Where the former has sought to establish links between the ideals and political symbolism of the Old Regime and Revolution—debunking revolutionary claims of historical exceptionalism by pointing to the significant overlap between the two periods—the ongoing social and institutional focus of Napoleonic scholarship has made it difficult to uncover similar connections between the Revolution and the Consulate. This lacuna, in turn, has served to elevate Napoleon’s superficial engagement with the revolutionary tradition through propaganda above other instances of symbolic and ideological continuity. Although recent scholarship has begun to shed light on some of the connections between these two periods, the methodological gap obscuring these links nonetheless remains pronounced.⁴

³ For one of the foundational works on revolutionary political culture, see Keith Michael Baker, *Inventing the French Revolution* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990); for a compilation of studies defining the political culture paradigm, see Keith Michael Baker, ed., *The Political Culture of the Old Regime* (Oxford: Pergamon, 1987), Colin Lucas, *The Political Culture of the French Revolution* (Oxford: Pergamon, 1988), François Furet and Mona Ozouf, eds., *The Transformation of Political Culture 1789-1848* (Oxford: Pergamon, 1989), and Keith Michael Baker, ed., *The Terror* (Oxford: Pergamon, 1994); for a more concise and workable definition see Lynn Hunt, *Politics, Culture, and Class in the French Revolution* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004); for earlier incarnations of political culture theory see Mona Ozouf, *Festivals and the French Revolution* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1988) and Maurice Agulhon, *Marianne au Combat: L’Imagerie et la Symbolique Républicaines de 1789 à 1880* (Paris: Flammarion, 1979).

⁴ See Howard Brown, *Ending the French Revolution: Violence, Justice, and Repression from the Terror to Napoleon* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2006). Brown traces the development of violence under the Revolution, arguing that new responses to domestic conflict played an important role in shaping the sociopolitical order under Napoleon. See also Philip Dwyer, ed., *Napoleon and Europe* (Harlow, UK: Longman, 2001) and Natalie Petiteau, *Voies nouvelles pour l’histoire du Premier Empire: Territoires. Pouvoirs. Identités* (Paris: La Boutique de l’Histoire, 2003). Both volumes develop new approaches to the Consulate and Empire, emphasizing in particular the incorporation of regional and departmental

This work seeks to bridge this gap by combining approaches to political culture with the social and institutional perspectives prevalent within Napoleonic scholarship. In particular, it attempts to shed light on the recurring use of republican ideals and practices to explain and understand political developments during the Napoleonic period. I argue that Napoleon constructed his authority around a symbolic relationship with the Revolution, developing power and legitimacy through various claims of continuity and discontinuity. In reproducing and repackaging the ideology and political symbolism of the Revolution, however, his regime fundamentally changed the meaning of revolutionary republicanism. The Revolution that the Consulate made for itself was a hybrid product that repackaged a laicized, republican past to suit the designs of a Gallican, authoritarian present. Such a transformation required a selective identification with the revolutionary tradition—an engagement with some of its symbolic and ideological aspects counterpoised with the neglect of others—and the recovery of Old Regime discourse. This study, then, seeks not only to show the mechanisms of power through which Napoleon made himself into the center of the post-*Brumairian* state, but also the recurring political and cultural negotiations undergirding this transition.

In examining the ways in which Napoleon operated within the revolutionary past, it is necessary to understand what this past encompassed. Featuring frequent purges, coups, and reactionary revolts, the Revolution offered a fragmented administrative legacy. Ideologically, however, the revolutionaries of the 1790s remained consistent in their attachment to republican ideals. This republicanism itself was an imprecise category, broad in both theoretical scope and its patterns of implementation.

perspectives to the study of these administrations, and thus expanding upon the traditional social and institutional narratives that predominate within Napoleonic historiography. Neither work, however, devotes significant attention to the cultural links between the Revolution and the Napoleonic periods.

Nonetheless, important consistencies manifested themselves. Revolutionary republicanism was fundamentally participatory, offering a broad, if not universal, male franchise, an expansive understanding of citizenship, and a number of civic prerogatives.⁵ Republicans, moreover, remained consistent in their desire not only to reform the state, but also to reshape behavioral patterns and social norms, which were understood collectively by the French term *mœurs*. The early *conventionnels* and Jacobins operated in absolutes, demanding vigilant policing to achieve moral regeneration and develop passion for the common weal.⁶ Along the same lines, the more conservative Directory sought to retrain citizens through a variety of civic projects meant to inculcate the values of commercial republicanism and restore social stability.⁷ These competing currents of republican thought and practice meant that the Napoleonic regime was able to define itself through republicanism even when its policies proved incompatible with certain aspects of this ideology, particularly its broader cultural themes. Moreover, by providing a broad conceptual landscape upon which revolutionary republicanism could be disaggregated, repackaged, and reformulated, this assortment of republican modalities

⁵ Revolutionary republicanism drew upon a variety of ideologies. Inspiration came from such diverse sources as classical models from Greece and Rome, natural law theory, and works of political economy. The Revolution did not so much systematize these different modalities of republican thought as transform them from theory into practice. For useful surveys of eighteenth-century and revolutionary republican discourse, see Richard Whatmore, *Republicanism and the French Revolution: An Intellectual History of Jean-Baptiste Say's Political Economy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000) and Johnson Wright, *A Classical Republican in Eighteenth-Century France: The Political Thought of Mably* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1997). For the actualization of republican principles by revolutionary politics see Keith Michael Baker, "Transformations of Classical Republicanism in Eighteenth-Century France," *Journal of Modern History* 73 (March 2001): 32-53.

⁶ Charles Walton, *Policing Public Opinion in the French Revolution: The Culture of Calumny and the Problem of Free Speech* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 33.

⁷ James Livesey, *Making Democracy in the French Revolution* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2001), 113.

made possible the transformation of the Revolution's political ideals during the consular period.

In analyzing this process, I employ a model of structural change pioneered by Marshall Sahlins and refined by William Sewell.⁸ In particular, this approach sheds light on how attempts to understand disruptive events through a particular cultural framework ultimately results in the transformation of that framework. It is useful because it allows for the in-depth study of a period's norms, values, and ideologies—an essentially synchronic narrative—while also accounting for change over time.⁹ Sahlins employed this system to explore the impact of European contact on Hawaiian religious and cultural practices; I use it to observe how the Napoleonic deployment of revolutionary practices and discourse changed republican ideology. 18 Brumaire, the *senatus consulta* of 1802 and 1804 (senatorial decrees that respectively declared Napoleon Consul for life and emperor), Napoleon's imperial coronation—not to mention daily political practice—each constituted challenges to republican principles that had to be explained away. Rather than destabilizing disturbances, however, these developments represented new loci of contestation and negotiation, functioning to modify gradually the nature of revolutionary republicanism. This perspective allows for an understanding of Napoleonic history that

⁸ Sewell works off the model that Sahlins developed in *Islands of History* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1985), but makes several key adjustments. His primary alteration is in theorizing the existence of multiple cultural frameworks at any given time: where Sahlins imagined cultural schemas that were generally coterminous with national boundaries, Sewell posited that schemas existed on a number of different levels of social organization, presenting often conflicting influences on individual action. This perspective provides a clearer understanding of how a specific cultural structure can be transformed by showing how actors choose from within a range of possible schemas when coming to terms with disruptive developments—privileging certain systems over others and thereby causing structural change.

⁹ William Sewell, Jr. *Logics of History: Social Theory and Social Transformation* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005), 219.

highlights Napoleon's continued reliance on the revolutionary past while also demonstrating the changes caused by this relationship.

This study employs a wide variety of sources. In examining administrative goals, I use government documents from both the revolutionary and Napoleonic periods, paying particular attention to legislative records and *senatus consulta* of the consular senate. I also look at a wide range of unofficial pamphlets and memoranda, which were disseminated amongst the revolutionary and Napoleonic bureaucracies and detailed various government projects and agendas. Complementing this material are articles from the *Journal de Paris* and *Le Moniteur Universel*, two of the seven Parisian newspapers permitted to publish during Napoleon's reign. Both of these publications provide extensive information on public events. Of final interest are several memoirs and journals written during the period of Napoleonic rule. These works come from a variety of people—including opponents and supporters of the regime, and top-ranking officials. For all of these documents, I am concerned not only with what they describe, but also with the tone they convey and the language they deploy.

I begin this work by examining evidence of political continuity between the Revolution and Napoleonic period. The first section explores this dynamic by looking at the links between Napoleonic and revolutionary property legislation, using these connections to explore broader ideological overlap. The second delves into the political language of the Napoleonic era, particularly the legislative debates over whether or not to turn the Consulate into an empire. The discussions here provide key insights into how Napoleon's authority was conceptualized, and how discourse was translated into new understandings of power. The third section analyzes Napoleonic festivals, examining

how images of authority were projected within a distinctly public setting. The period of focus for this work is the Consulate (1799 to 1804). Coming immediately after the Revolution, the Consulship dealt with many of the same concerns as the late Directory, and thus easily reproduced its familiar ideals and practices. Moreover, as a transitional phase between republic and empire, it encompassed a variety of interests and agendas. As the temporal and ideological distance between the Revolution and Napoleonic rule grew more pronounced, and as conquest made Napoleon's regime increasingly transnational in scope, this connection to the revolutionary past became increasingly attenuated. Under the Consulate, however, it remained strong. Thus this work explores the issue of revolutionary continuity when it played its most important role in structuring the political imaginary.

Chapter 2: Political Continuity

From the beginning of his reign, Napoleon clearly asserted his ties to the Revolution. To the troops he assembled for the coup of the 18 *Brumaire* he claimed that he had the best intentions of the Republic in mind, declaring that “liberty, victory, and peace would return (replaceront) the French Republic to the rank it had occupied in Europe.”¹⁰ As first consul, he continued to advertise this idea through public displays that broadcasted his connection to the ideology of the Revolution. His advisors aided in this process. Joseph Fouché, the minister of the police, prodded Napoleon to make “exterior demonstrations favorable to republican ideas,” and noted proudly in his memoirs when he ended a banquet on 14 July 1800 with a toast to “The French people; our sovereign.”¹¹ Later, Napoleon was even more direct. During the 1804 execution of the Duc d’Enghien, for example, he proclaimed assuredly, “I am the French Revolution. I say it again and stick by it.”¹² At times, Napoleon remained deliberately vague about his political intentions, embracing a number of agendas in order to appeal to as large a constituency as possible.¹³ Publicly, though, he was unambiguously a revolutionary.

¹⁰ “Aux Soldats,” *Journal de Paris*, 10 November 1799.

¹¹ Joseph Fouché, *The Duke of Otranto, Minister of the General Police of France* (Boston: Wells and Lilly, 1825), 121.

¹² David Bell, *The First Total War: Napoleon’s Europe and the Birth of Warfare as we Know It* (Boston and New York: Houghton Mifflin, 2007), 228.

¹³ Hunt, *Politics, Culture, and Class in the French Revolution* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004), 226.

What were the political realities behind this posturing? For Napoleon, security of the state trumped revolutionary designs to rejuvenate society through the inculcation of republican values, and the creation of an efficient administrative apparatus limited opportunities for popular politicking. As James Livesey claims, “Those who thought that modern liberal values would be secured under authoritarian rule were soon disabused of their illusions.”¹⁴ Still, important continuities with revolutionary republicanism existed during the Consulate. Napoleon’s government engaged explicitly with the social and legal doctrines of the Assembly and early Convention, reproducing aspects of this policy through legislation meant to encourage centralization and stability. The Napoleonic regime, in this sense, represented the next step in the revolutionary progression—a move away from post-Thermidorian strife toward greater control and safety. In the process, Napoleon supplanted republican *moeurs* as a unifying force within the French state. Thus Republicanism was stripped of its far-reaching implications, becoming less a program of comprehensive social, political, and cultural reform than an administrative foundation upon which the policies of the Consulate were affixed.

A useful example of this continuity, and the ways in which republican policies changed even as they were reproduced, comes from Napoleon’s use of revolutionary property law. The Revolution’s legislation on proprietorship combined republican ideals with the real political concern of encouraging stability through rational social policy. The 1789 Declaration of the Rights of Man and Citizen abolished privilege, releasing property from its particularist and seigniorial fetters and redefining it along simple lines of ownership. The seizing of church lands accompanied this process, and the sale of this confiscated property, known as *biens nationaux*, helped underwrite the new French

¹⁴ Livesey, *Making Democracy in the French Revolution*, 235.

currency. Proprietary restructuring, then, not only raised funds for the Republic, but also gave buyers a material incentive for supporting the state.¹⁵ The dissolution of privilege, moreover, helped rationalize the Assembly government by removing corporate impediments. Thus the dual aims of revising property law and creating a concerned republican citizenry became increasingly intertwined.¹⁶ Growing disorder would reduce the impact of these social, political, and financial reforms, but throughout the 1790s, this reworked property legislation played an integral role in the attempt by various revolutionary regimes to construct stable and efficient administrations.

The prospect of fiscal and social stability retained its appeal well beyond *Brumaire*, even though mob violence, recurring insolvency, and arbitrary confiscations of noble and ecclesiastical properties militated against the security that property law was supposed to provide. Indeed, for Napoleon's government, property represented "a social anchor that was lost but has been rediscovered"¹⁷—that is, an administrative achievement obscured, but not destroyed, by the chaos of the 1790s. Napoleonic policy thus defended and reapplied much of this earlier legislation, reproducing aspects of it with remarkable consistency. The Constitution of the Year VIII (24 December 1799), for instance, firmly defended the *biens nationaux*: neither reconciliation with the church nor the 1802 amnesty granted to the émigrés resulted in the return of confiscated property.¹⁸ Later

¹⁵ Donald Sutherland, *France 1789-1815: Revolution and Counterrevolution* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986), 105.

¹⁶ William Sewell, Jr., *Work and Revolution in France: The Language of Labor from the Old Regime to 1848* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press), 136.

¹⁷ Nicolas François de Neufchâteau, Discours pour l'ouverture du collège électoral du département des Vosges (1 Floréal an XI), BNF: 4-LE47-7, 21 April 1803.

¹⁸ Sutherland, *France 1789-1815*, 358.

iterations of the French constitution under Napoleon further guaranteed these exchanges, ensuring, as one member of the Tribunate termed it, their “irrevocability.”¹⁹ Finally, the *biens nationaux* were tied into developments in consular military culture, with Napoleon allocating shares of them to each cohort of recipients of the newly established *Légion d’Honneur*.²⁰ Using revolutionary property policy as a model, Napoleon thus made land ownership, and the defense of proprietary rights, a fundamental component of his new political order.

Still, for the Napoleonic regime, property was a tool of governance, not a means of inculcating republican values. The centralizing and stabilizing principles behind the defense of property remained consistent into the Consulate; the explicit connection with participatory politics did not. With the law of 18 *Pluviôse an VIII* (7 February 1800), *biens nationaux*—once a means of encouraging popular concern for the financial health of the state—fell under the administration of departmental prefects, replacing inefficient local managers with a professional bureaucracy, but also reducing civilian influence in this area.²¹ Property ownership, furthermore, came to determine voter eligibility, such that only the 600 wealthiest citizens of each department enjoyed full franchise rights.²² In this sense, proprietorship became a measure of exclusivity, playing an important role in the creation of a new set of fiscal and social prerogatives meant to ensure loyalty to the

¹⁹ “Motion d’ordre du tribun curée, sur l’émission d’un vœu tendant à ce que Napoléon Bonaparte, actuellement premier consul, soit déclaré Empereur des Français, et à ce que la dignité impériale soit déclarée héréditaire dans sa famille, 10 Floréal an XII, 30 avril 1804,” BNF: L 1.8-M4-38496, *La proclamation du Premier Empire ou Recueil des pièces et actes relatifs à l’établissement du gouvernement impérial héréditaire, imprimé par ordre du Sénat conservateur*.

²⁰ « *L’événement le plus important de la Révolution* » : La vente des biens nationaux en France et dans les territoires annexés (Paris: Société des études robespierristes et Éditions du CTHS, 2000), 31.

²¹ Sutherland, *France 1789-1815*, 344.

²² Jennifer Heuer, *The Family and the Nation: Gender and Citizenship in Revolutionary France, 1789-1830* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2005), 129-130.

state. Rather than inhibiting centralized administration through particularism, though, it became a cornerstone of efficient governance. Determined to build his regime upon “masses of granite,” Napoleon established a category of notables drawn from property holders whose lands produced an annual income of at least 150 to 200 francs—rewarding this group with wealth and the opportunity for continued social mobility, and earmarking its most competent members for service in the bureaucracy.²³ By tying property together with the opportunity for state-sponsored privilege, Napoleon created a professional and dedicated aristocratic corps capable of staffing administrative posts at all levels of the government.

In one sense, this development entailed the recovery of an Old Regime understanding of proprietorship—one in which privilege was considered a form of private property.²⁴ Yet Napoleon’s incipient notability was rooted more explicitly in revolutionary rather than Old Regime ideology. As opposed to the social prerogatives of the pre-revolutionary church and nobility, which ranged from tax exemptions to special judicial treatment, Napoleonic privilege was tied directly to political service.²⁵ In this way, its reinstatement was perfectly in line with a Directorial tradition that sought to bolster republicanism through the construction of a specialized, technocratic elite.²⁶

²³ Louis Bergeron and Guy Chaussinaud-Nogaret, *Les « masses de granit »: Cent milles notables du Premier Empire* (Paris : Éditions de l’École des hautes études en sciences sociales, 1979), 23.

²⁴ Sewell, *Work and Revolution in France*, 119-120.

²⁵ The debate over the de-politicized nature of Old Regime privilege has its origins in Tocqueville, who contrasted privilege with real political power. Recent scholarship has revisited this issue to argue that the defense of tax exemptions and corporate prerogatives by the nobility and guilds provided catalyzed revolutionary political developments. See Gail Bossenga, *The Politics of Privilege: Old Regime and Revolution in Lille* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991) and Michael Kwass, *Privilege and the Politics of Taxation in Eighteenth-Century France: Liberté, Égalité, Fiscalité* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000).

²⁶ Michael Broers, *Europe Under Napoleon, 1799-1815* (London: Arnold, 1996), 17.

Napoleon's use of privilege also shared important continuities with the efforts of the early Assembly government. The revolutionary campaign against corporate prerogatives was foremost a project of state rationalization—a removal of aristocratic, ecclesiastical, and guild impediments to effective administration. Shorn of the Revolution's vision of social and moral rehabilitation, Napoleon's reestablishment of privilege through proprietorship nonetheless achieved a similar political goal. The Consulship might have sought, in the words of senator Pierre Rœderer, to “sprout in the middle of the Republic a redoubtable and indestructible aristocracy,”²⁷ but it was an aristocracy that facilitated, rather than hindered, domestic stability and administrative centralization.

This reproduction of proprietary legislation was part of a broader trend toward the simplification of revolutionary ideology—a distillation of republican principles meant to ensure security and an end to instability. After all, the legacy of the 1790s was problematic. Revolution had given rise to instability and civil war. It had taken France to the brink of economic ruin—striking, as one delegate of the Legislative corps claimed, a “fatal blow to our commercial balance, our manufacturing, our shipping.”²⁸ If the political vision of the Revolution remained appealing, the chaos of the period did not. Indeed, Napoleon was at first so attractive because he seemed to offer a corrective to the many incidences of revolutionary misrule. Factionalism characterized the *politique de bascule* (see-saw politics) of the Directory; Bonaparte, by contrast, claimed that he was

²⁷ *Discours prononcé par Rœderer, conseiller d'état, orateur du gouvernement, dans la séance du corps législatif du 13 ventôse an 9, concernant le projet de loi présenté par le Gouvernement pour la formation des listes de notabilité*, BNF: 8-LE50-50, 4 March 1801.

²⁸ *Discours Prononcé par Tarteiron, Président du Corps Législatif, en annonçant la fin de la session* (10 germinal an 8), BNF: 8-LE50-50, 31 March 1800.

above party politics and moved to resolve this divisiveness.²⁹ In addition, his regime succeeded at eliminating the culture of violence that characterized the later years of the Directory. The Concordat of 1801 helped reduce sectarian conflict in the French countryside, and the conclusion of domestic strife led to a reduced military presence within France's interior.³⁰ Napoleonic rule, then, came to embody not only stability, but also an end to unsanctioned bloodshed.

Others, however, expected his reign to guarantee a wider range of republican principles. Indeed, by sweeping away disorder, Napoleon seemed to promise new life to revolutionary republicanism. Thus, to ardent republicans like J.B. Say, who would eventually become an outspoken critic of the Napoleonic regime, the Consulate was an attempt to navigate between the twin evils of monarchism and Terror in search of a republican middle ground.³¹ For others, such as the Lorrainais soldier Jean-Nicolas-Auguste Noël, Napoleon was a protector of the Republic who drew France "back from anarchy, and gave...[it] order and distinction."³² The consul's military accomplishments, furthermore, held the promise of greater glory for the French nation. The Tribune celebrated Napoleon's prowess as a revolutionary general, commending "the first magistrate of the Republic" and predicting that, "animated by his presence, our soldiers march to certain victory."³³ Many believed that the Napoleonic regime would bring about republican rejuvenation, that tutelary rule would provide the needed stability

²⁹ Hunt, *Politics, Culture, and Class in the French Revolution*, 229.

³⁰ Bell, *The First Total War*, 229.

³¹ Whatmore, *Republicanism and the French Revolution*, 139.

³² Jean Noël, *With Napoleon's Guns* (London: Greenhill, 2005), 38.

³³ de Boulay (de la Meurthe), BNF: 8-LE50-50, 1800.

to reconstruct the state around liberal principles. Though this vision proved increasingly difficult to maintain as Napoleon's authoritarian tendencies became more pronounced,³⁴ it nonetheless remained a central thrust of his propaganda campaign. Napoleon's allure as a leader lay not only in the stability and peace that his regime provided, but also in the benefits to republicanism that this newfound security seemed to offer.

Yet Napoleon was not to be constrained by the idealized visions of theorists such as Say, or even the more pragmatic aims of leader such as the abbé Sieyès, the architect of the *Brumaire* plot.³⁵ Indeed, under Napoleon, republicanism slowly but surely changed. His regime simplified, perhaps even bowdlerized, the ideology—removing the ambiguities that had plagued revolutionary administrations and refocusing republican ideals around material interests and concerns. This effort was far from new, having its roots in Directorial attempts to reshape the French economy and eliminate destabilizing elements from legislative politics. The Directory, however, lacked the domestic support to make this vision a reality and, as a result, had to resort to periodic purges and byzantine politicking to maintain a semblance of political authority.³⁶ Napoleon, by contrast, could draw on deep-seated public support—popular backing that he encouraged through the performance of a carefully contrived public persona. Through this process, he emerged as the new symbolic center of the French state, replacing broader currents of republican thought as the essential component of revolutionary patriotism and political culture.

³⁴ Livesey, *Making Democracy in the French Revolution*, 235-236.

³⁵ Broers, *Europe under Napoleon*, 19.

³⁶ Livesey, *Making Democracy in the French Revolution*, 238-239.

To the public at large, this effort proved wildly successful. Napoleon had achieved celebrity status well before *Brumaire*. While professing his admiration for “the great deeds performed by Bonaparte,” Jean Noël noted in criticism of the growing cult of Napoleon that his own “fanaticism did not go to the length of concerning myself with what he drank and ate, still less with whether he went to bed with a hairnet or silk nightcap.”³⁷ With his seizure of power, however, Napoleon grew from a charismatic military leader into the apparent savior of the republic—a reputation that convinced, or at least was accepted without protest by, all but the most ardent supporters of democratic republicanism.³⁸ Moreover, Napoleon promulgated this image with an air of pomp and theatricality, such that, as Fouché observed: “republicanism was observed to lose every day some portion of its gloomy austerity, and conversions in favor of unity of power were seen to multiply.”³⁹ Articulating its designs within the political language of the Revolution, the Napoleonic regime maintained affective ties to a republican past at the same time as it modified it to make it less unpredictable.

It is here that the cultural and symbolic facets of revolutionary republicanism are especially important to consider. Disaggregated from the policies of Napoleon’s regime, they nonetheless endured through both political language and ritual. People relied upon republican vocabulary and ideology to conceptualize and describe Napoleonic rule. Unanchored in political reality, however, their meaning gradually changed. This transition stemmed from more than just the co-option of revolutionary symbolism. Napoleon pushed his symbolic links with the sacred icons of revolutionary

³⁷ Noël, *With Napoleon’s Guns*, 33.

³⁸ Hunt, *Politics, Culture, and Class in the French Revolution*, 232.

³⁹ Fouché, *The Duke of Otranto*, 106.

republicanism,⁴⁰ but the transformation of republican ideals and language resulted primarily from their continued utility in making sense of new political developments.

⁴⁰ Ibid, 229.

Chapter Three: Defining Napoleon

The Revolution, in the eyes of its leaders, represented a clean break from the French past. With history neither anchoring revolutionary thought nor offering a model for emulation, the rhetoric of the period played a significant role in defining its conceptual dimensions. Even seemingly banal linguistic concerns were considered significant and, as a result of this development, discursive practices became highly regulated. In this way, the rhetoric of the Revolution imposed itself on everyday life. To reinforce secularism, for instance, revolutionaries removed the prefix “*Saint*” or “*Sainte*” from place names such as the Faubourg Saint-Antoine and the Rue Saint-Nicaise.⁴¹ To encourage social leveling, they toyed with the idea of discarding “*vous*,” the formal “you.”⁴² This wrangling over discursive minutiae occurred because revolutionaries believed that language, severed from a corrupting past, could effect real political and social change. The fervently nationalist verses of songs such as the Marseillaise infused the citizenry with patriotic spirit and helped provide willing volunteers for the defense of the Revolution. The authority of Louis XVI, by contrast, was not fully divested until the Convention stripped him of his royal title. As the Revolution gave new emphasis to the transformative power of words, command over language assumed a new urgency.

⁴¹ Poumiès de la Siboutie, *Recollections of a Parisian, Under Six Sovereigns, Two Revolutions, and a Republic (1789-1863)* (London: John Murray, 1911), 49.

⁴² Denise Davidson, *France after Revolution: Urban Life, Gender, and the New Social Order* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2007), 2.

This urgency remained under Napoleon. The challenges, however, were different than they were during the Revolution. Revolutionaries in the 1790s sought to convert ideology into political practice, privileging language by disowning the policies and customs of France's monarchical past. The Napoleonic administration, by contrast, retained a strong connection to the recent past, both through its policies and its pronouncements. As a result, the political language of the Revolution, its vocabulary, idioms, and tropes, remained in common usage, even after the political realities to which they referred had changed. Used to make sense of Napoleonic rule—to describe consular policy and, most significantly, to understand Napoleon's place within the French state—their meaning gradually shifted. Republican ideology and language became conflated with tutelary, and eventually hereditary, rule, and thoroughly embedded in the figure of Napoleon. This trend was part of a more general conceptual shift, one in which Napoleon became France's new symbolic center: a figure with cultural, social, and political significance, and around whom new understandings of patriotism and service to the state coalesced.

Untroubled by public resistance to the irregularities within its claims, the Napoleonic regime could concentrate on creating an appealing political message without worrying about precision of meaning or the compatibility of its assertions.⁴³ Taking advantage of the fungible nature of revolutionary republicanism, it at once drew upon political symbols from the Old Regime and Revolution, creating a hybrid political language that broadcast Napoleon's links to a reimagined French cultural tradition. Removed from the threat of political opposition, this language became a way of

⁴³ Walton, *Policing Public Opinion in the French Revolution*, 203.

conceptualizing a new synthesis within this history, one that elided seemingly incongruent images of the Revolution and Old Regime. A useful example of this shifting nature of republican political language comes from the changing nature of the classical republican idiom—the recurring reference to the political practices of ancient Greece and Rome, which varied dramatically in form and meaning throughout the Old Regime, Revolution, and Napoleonic period.

Polemicists, political economists, and *philosophes* made frequent reference to antiquity in the political debates that preceded and followed 1789, drawing heavily on classical history and literature to define and contextualize contemporary political developments. The Bordelais lawyer Joseph Saige exemplified this trend in his work *Caton, ou Entretien sur la liberté et les vertus politiques* (1770), a political tract that used an imagined discussion between the philosophers Cato, Cicero, and Favonius as a vehicle for challenging monarchical despotism.⁴⁴ The abbé de Mably, another influential critic of the Old Regime, evoked Sparta and republican Rome as utopian models and argued for reforms based on the civic virtues of these ancient city-states.⁴⁵ Offering a window into political alternatives, these references to antiquity provided the starting point for an academic discourse concerning the applicability of classical republican paradigms to the administration of a modern European state. With the notable exception of Mably, most political theorists found the Spartan and Roman examples unsuited for the management of a large, commercial nation; instead, classical allusions helped frame debates about the

⁴⁴ Baker, *Inventing the French Revolution*, 132.

⁴⁵ Wright, *A Classical Republican in Eighteenth-Century France*, 16.

merits of representative government.⁴⁶ During the Revolution, however, examples from antiquity acquired greater significance: in eschewing the French past, revolutionaries turned to antiquity for a sense of historical precedence.⁴⁷ In this instance, classical republicanism served as a model for change.

In the Old Regime, critics packaged this idiom with discussions of Rousseau's General Will to create a language that opposed absolutist rule.⁴⁸ Revolutionaries retained this rhetoric, but they also radicalized it. In part, this process was the outcome of an extreme interpretation of the Enlightenment ideal, rooted in both Lockean epistemology and Spartan and Roman models of civic virtue, that society could shape human nature.⁴⁹ During the Old Regime, Rousseau's claim that social order "takes away man's own forces in order to give him new ones which are alien to him" formed the basis of debates concerning the responsibility of the state;⁵⁰ during the Revolution, this idea was a call for action. The oppositional rhetoric of Rousseau, Mably, and others, articulated through references to the classical republican idiom, became a language of crisis: a need for social transformation that eventually gave way to a need for Terror.⁵¹ Once these critical threads were combined with an opportunity for political change, the problem of a perpetual Revolution—a self-renewing cycle of violence meant to strip away obstacles to

⁴⁶ Whatmore, *Republicanism and the French Revolution*, 77.

⁴⁷ Annie Jourdan, "Napoleon and History," *French History* 10, no. 3 (1996): 342-344.

⁴⁸ Baker, "Transformations of Classical Republicanism in Eighteenth-Century France," 36.

⁴⁹ Norman Hampson, *Will and Circumstance: Montesquieu, Rousseau, and the French Revolution* (London: Duckworth, 1983), 30.

⁵⁰ Jean-Jacques Rousseau, "On Social Contract," *Rousseau's Political Writings: Discourse on Inequality; Discourse on Political Economy; On Social Contract*, eds. Alan Ritter and Julia Conaway Bondanella (New York: W.W. Norton, 1988), 109.

⁵¹ Baker, *Inventing the French Revolution*, 305.

the expression of virtue and the General Will—became apparent.⁵² Carrying with it an expectation of moral regeneration, revolutionary classical republicanism merged with broader political and social developments to set the stage for the violence and instability of 1793 and 1794.

In each of its various iterations, the classical republican idiom fixated on concerns of civic pride and service. Carried to the extreme, this focus assumed destructive dimensions, but many of the general themes that it represented—patriotism, camaraderie, and discipline—were not in themselves deleterious to the social order. Indeed, bereft of the critical agenda, classical republicanism could serve as a source of stability, providing a model for public education, the celebration of national festivals, and love of the *patrie*. It also became more pervasive, emerging from academic discourse to become increasingly enmeshed in material and symbolic culture, with clothing, statuary, and architecture designed to reflect and inculcate ancient republican and democratic themes.⁵³ Under the Napoleonic regime, which retained the rationalizing and centralizing aims of revolutionary policy but abandoned its regenerative goals, classical republicanism served as the basis for a new understanding of patriotism and state security, one that centered on images of Napoleon and strong executive rule.

The Consulate couched itself in the classical symbols of the revolutionary period—the fasces, togaed legislators, Greek and Roman names—using them to address new political developments. At Napoleon’s prodding, Sieyès dropped his vision of Napoleon as a “Great Elector,” a ceremonial political figure, during the debates preceding the creation of the Constitution of the Year VIII, labeling him instead with the

⁵² Baker, “Transformations of Classical Republicanism in Eighteenth-Century France,” 45-47.

⁵³ Hunt, *Politics, Culture and Class in the French Revolution*, 76-79.

classically-inspired title of First Consul. What emerged, then, was a powerful executive office that, as it broke with an ancient republican tradition of balanced, representative government,⁵⁴ redefined virtue and civic pride along new lines of sovereignty. Indeed, classical republicanism helped frame understandings of the consular state. An address by Senate president François de Neufchâteau two days before Napoleon's coronation as emperor relied upon classical republican symbolism to adumbrate Napoleonic authority, claiming that "the unity of the Empire is the fasces of his [Napoleon's] power." Conflating this symbol—an emblem of popular authority during the Revolution—with hereditary monarchy, Neufchâteau continued by predicting a recurrence of violent factionalism unless Napoleon secured his line through "the inheritance of the fasces."⁵⁵

The classical idiom therefore disguised Napoleon's accumulation of personal power. It also reaffirmed his political standing by providing examples of his service to the state. Drafting a pamphlet in 1800 entitled, *A Parallel among Caesar, Cromwell, Monck, and Bonaparte*, Lucien—Napoleon's brother—conflated Caesar's achievements with those of his sibling, all the while taking care to show that while the latter restored stability and representative government by relying upon the support of notables and *rentiers*, the former had ultimately succumbed to demagoguery.⁵⁶ During the Revolution, classical republicanism served a variety of agendas: criticizing monarchy and constructing representative authority, modeling virtue and articulating crisis. After *Brumaire*, allusions to antiquity served to support the state, demonstrating its benefits for

⁵⁴ Jainchill, *Reimagining Politics after the Terror*, 237-241.

⁵⁵ "Senat, M. François (de Neufchâteau) president," *Le Moniteur Universel*, 2 December 1804.

⁵⁶ Stephen Englund, *Napoleon: A Political Life* (New York: Scribner, 2004), 214-215.

the common weal. In the same speech as above, for example, Neufchâteau drew upon the example of Rome to justify the creation of an Empire. Proclaiming that “all of the celebrated republics in history were concentrated upon either sterile mountains or within a single city,” and that “beyond them, the subject provinces were in constant despair and ruin,” he ended by noting that France extended beyond the immediate concerns of Paris—using this point to argue that the key to efficient and fair administration lay in Napoleon’s accrual of additional executive powers.⁵⁷

In this way, Neufchateau reproduced an earlier discourse concerning the inapplicability of classical republican models to the management of a large commercial nation. Instead of searching for republican alternatives, however, he used references to Rome to validate current state policy. Allusions to antiquity thus served to explain and justify the transition to empire, demonstrating the limitations of republican government and thus drawing attention to the benefits of Napoleonic rule. Detractors of the state also drew upon antiquity in their criticisms of Napoleon, merging classical republicanism with a language of modern liberalism to illuminate the Consulate’s flaws.⁵⁸ With censorship limiting opportunities for opposition, however, this hostile discourse was increasingly marginalized. Instead, more mainstream usage of the classical idiom identified the Consulate as a seat of stability and authority, pointing to Napoleonic rule as France’s only viable political option.

What does this example say about the general changes in political language under Napoleon? In one sense, it points to a general de-radicalization of political agendas. The

⁵⁷ “Senat, M. François (de Neufchâteau) president,” *Le Moniteur Universel*, 2 December 1804.

⁵⁸ Jainchill, *Reimagining Politics after the Terror*, 11.

extreme Rousseauian rhetoric of the pre-*Thermidorian* Revolution proved less compelling in the aftermath of the Terror, a trend that continued into the Consulate period. Excluded from government, and finding few literary outlets through which to articulate their beliefs, radicals—and radical language—became increasingly marginalized.⁵⁹ More precisely, though, this transition points to a re-centering of the political order. The Napoleonic regime protected key gains from the Revolution and offered an end to domestic strife. In so doing, however, it effected a fundamental depoliticization of civilian life. In place of participation in the political process were an actual sense of stability and a premise of continuity with the social and political improvements made by the various revolutionary governments. Significantly, these ideas collapsed onto a fixed center: Napoleon. Political language, then, served both to reinforce the Napoleonic regime's control and define the normative contours of this newly-depoliticized order. That is, it expansively defined Napoleon's authority and laid down new expectations for duty and civil obedience.

A useful glimpse at this process comes from the legislative sessions of the Consulate period, in particular the debate behind the 1804 *senatus consultum*,⁶⁰ which ratified the plebiscite declaring Napoleon emperor. These speeches come from the Senate, a plenary assembly that appointed members in the two lower legislatures, the Tribunate, which debated the terms of government bills, but lacked the power to approve them, and the Legislative corps, an intermediate body that could vote through, but not

⁵⁹ Isser Woloch, *Napoleon and his Collaborators: The Making of a Dictatorship* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2001), 67.

⁶⁰ *La proclamation du Premier Empire ou Recueil des pièces et actes relatifs à l'établissement du gouvernement impérial héréditaire, imprimé par ordre du Sénat conservateur*, BNF: L 1.8-M4-38496, 1804.

alter, these bills.⁶¹ Although most accounts proved obsequious and self-serving, they nonetheless shed light on Napoleon's symbolic significance—the numerous ways in which his authority was understood and represented. Moreover, these sources bring attention to the processes behind Napoleon's accumulation of power, particularly in his transition from first consul to hereditary emperor. Discussions of his wide-ranging accomplishments are laced with references to the Revolution and Old Regime, lending further weight to his successes and also justifying his buildup of a number of new prerogatives. Of specific interest is the way in which this very processual vision—Napoleon's rise to emperorship was articulated through a contingent series of events in which his administrative gains were translated into a call for the creation of a new royal line—was counterpoised with a number of symbolic ambiguities. References to the Revolution not only contextualized the First Consul's accomplishments, they also showed the practical inadequacies of revolutionary rule and sounded a call for change. Different in form and content, these various legislative speeches nonetheless converged around a similar goal: stressing Napoleon's centrality to French political life.

The most direct way of portraying the First Consul's contribution to the Republic was through his accomplishments as a general. The tribune Mollevault, for example, called him “a peacemaking conqueror, whose courage and talents strike at our enemies”—a typical reflection on his military prowess.⁶² Discussions of these successes are interesting in their range of attribution. For some, Napoleon represented less an individual figure than a metonym for the Republic or, according to a 10 March 1800

⁶¹ Sutherland, *France 1789-1815*, 338.

⁶² *Discours prononcé par Mollevault* (24 pluviôse an 9), BNF: 8-LE50-50, 12 February 1801.

extract for the Legislative Body, a facilitating “organ” through which peace was proposed and out of which violent punishment was meted.⁶³ For others, Napoleon’s military gains were more personal. Victories glorified both the Republic and French soldiery, but ultimately they were a reflection of the command, élan, and vision of the First Consul. The juxtaposition of peace and war, as evidenced in Mollevault’s speech, also represented an important consideration. Perhaps few would go as far as Tribune Benjamin Constant’s Manichean claim that “there exists on the earth only two classes of people, the friends and the enemies of liberty,”⁶⁴ but for many delegates the strict demarcation of peaceful France from its aggressive neighbors, and, by extension, the depiction of Napoleon as a peace-seeking ruler driven to conflict by the vicissitudes of foreign aggression, remained a recurring theme.

Recognition of Napoleon’s impressive war record, however, was only one part of the effort to understand his considerable success. If military gains had made Napoleon famous, his accomplishments as a politician were equally noteworthy. During the proceedings for the 1804 *Senatus consultum*, for example, the Tribune Curée demanded recognition for Napoleon’s reforms, praising him, above all, as an administrator: “the public treasury and finances, have they [not] been handled with strict regulation and scrupulous accuracy?...the Civil Code, did it not emerge grandly from scholars, and from

⁶³ *Extrait du Procès-Verbal des Séances du Corps Législatif* (19 ventôse an 8), BNF: 8-LE50-50, 10 March 1800.

⁶⁴ *Discours Prononcé par Benjamin Constant, l’un des Orateurs du Tribunat, sur le projet de loi tendant à mettre à la disposition du Gouvernement les citoyens qui on atteint l’âge de 20 ans* (17 ventôse an 8), BNF: 8-LE50-50, 8 March 1800.

the laborious discussions of jurists and officials of the state?”⁶⁵ Neufchâteau, serving as Senate president and thus presiding over this debate, also pointed to Napoleon’s achievements as a reformer, calling him a “superior genius” who “reorganized our social order,”⁶⁶ as did less saccharine accounts highlighting his success in rooting out factionalism, remodeling the legislature, and defending the sale of *biens nationaux*. Both martial and political, Napoleon’s accomplishments were manifested across a broad spectrum, creating room for claims that his meritorious service to France justified greater political power.

Although Napoleon’s achievements were impressive in their own right, they seemed to gain greater meaning from their relationship to the Revolution. François Furet’s argument that Napoleon represented a “revolutionary king” presiding over a “democratic monarchy” points to the continued significance of democratic legitimacy after *Brumaire*; in effect, the popularly-oriented ideology of the Revolution remained a steady, if not unavoidable, influence on post-revolutionary political life.⁶⁷ Contemporaries, though, were less abstract in their praise. During the proclamation of the *Senatus consultum*, Curée highlighted specific continuities linking the Revolution to the Napoleonic era: “In a word, all that the people desired in 1789 has been reestablished; equality is maintained; the law, which alone imposes upon the citizens the responsibility

⁶⁵ Motion d’ordre du tribun Curée, sur l’émission d’un vœu tendant à ce que Napoléon Bonaparte, actuellement premier consul, soit déclaré Empereur des Français, et à ce que la dignité impériale soit déclarée héréditaire dans sa famille (10 floréal an XII), BNF: L 1.8-M4-38496, 30 April 1804.

⁶⁶ Adresse du Sénat Conservateur au Premier Consul de la République (6 Germinal an XII), BNF: L 1.8-M4-38496, 27 March 1804.

⁶⁷ Furet, *Penser la Révolution française*, 108.

for the welfare of the state, is respected.”⁶⁸ The Tribune Jaubert, meanwhile, went even further by declaring in the same hearing that “the Revolution is fixed upon principles that he [Napoleon] originated.”⁶⁹ These references served to make Napoleon’s successes seem even more meaningful. Whether articulating these triumphs as personal accomplishments or state-wide achievements merely facilitated or represented by the First Consul, Napoleon’s efforts as both a general and a political leader were made all the more compelling by their linkage to a still potent revolutionary past.

Napoleonic authority was fluidly defined by Napoleon and his followers within a matrix of centralized governance and revolutionary republicanism, the breadth of which allowed for a wide array of political claims and justifications. It was against this conceptually ambiguous backdrop, for instance, that legislators formulated a call for the creation of a hereditary empire. This process, according to the Tribune Curée, amounted to placing “the inheritance of power in a family distinguished by the Revolution (que la révolution a illustrée), consecrated by equality and liberty... a family whose head was the first soldier of the Republic before becoming its first magistrate.”⁷⁰ James Livesey argues that the continued effort by delegates serving under Napoleon to relate political and social developments back to the Revolution speaks to the degree to which

⁶⁸ Motion d’ordre du tribun Curée, sur l’émission d’un vœu tendant à ce que Napoléon Bonaparte, actuellement premier consul, soit déclaré Empereur des Français, et à ce que la dignité impériale soit déclarée héréditaire dans sa famille (10 floréal an XII), BNF: L 1.8-M4-38496, 30 April 1804.

⁶⁹ Opinion du tribun Jaubert sur la motion relative au gouvernement héréditaire (10 floréal an XII), BNF: L 1.8-M4-38496, 30 April 1804.

⁷⁰ Motion d’ordre du tribun Curée, sur l’émission d’un vœu tendant à ce que Napoléon Bonaparte, actuellement premier consul, soit déclaré Empereur des Français, et à ce que la dignité impériale soit déclarée héréditaire dans sa famille (10 floréal an XII), BNF: L 1.8-M4-38496, 30 April 1804.

revolutionary democracy had become normative.⁷¹ Legislators, in this sense, couched Napoleon's achievements within revolutionary language because it offered a strategy through which to contextualize these successes and validate the transition to empire. Recognizable and appealing, republican discourse helped explain and justify political change.

Delegates, moreover, contrasted the ideological appeal of the Revolution with its pragmatic shortcomings, elucidating a clear need for improvements. Jaubert, a member of the Tribunate, cautioned that "the elective system, as it were, is nothing but a dreadful theory of revolutions. Each transformation brings out particularist ambitions, feeds the spirit of faction."⁷² The tribune Duvidal echoed this warning by claiming that a universal franchise offered few guarantees of effective control, as even the most successful leader could succumb to calumny and the viciousness of electoral politics.⁷³ Hereditary rule, by contrast, was seen as not only a practical solution to these problems, but also as the apotheosis of French political development. Duvidal again: "Heredité is a port where the ship of empire has found refuge for centuries, toward which the course of human affairs, more powerful than our vain projects, is always pointed."⁷⁴ The Revolution, then, served both to add weight to Napoleon's achievements and, through the practical failures of its ideology, indicate a need to establish hereditary imperial rule. Having learned from the

⁷¹ Livesey, *Making Democracy in the French Revolution*, 236.

⁷² Opinion du tribun Jaubert sur la motion relative au gouvernement héréditaire (10 floréal an XII), BNF: L 1.8-M4-38496, 30 April 1804.

⁷³ Discours du Tribun Duvidal sur la motion relative au gouvernement héréditaire (10 floréal an XII), BNF: L 1.8-M4-38496, 30 April 1804.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*

mistakes of the past, legislators sought to guarantee the future of the state through a more centralized system of rulership.

Though the revolutionary idiom was packed with such implications, delegates also cultivated conceptual links with other areas of French history. Curée made clear allusions to Charlemagne, disparaging Louis XVI while drawing ties between Napoleon and France's Carolingian heyday.⁷⁵ *Le Moniteur Universel*, one of the few approved Parisian newspapers, made a similar comparison in an 1804 article, linking Napoleon to famous monarchs such as Charlemagne and Louis XIV.⁷⁶ Napoleon himself made frequent reference to military heroes such as Marshall Turenne, drawing links between the martial culture of the Old Regime and that of his own administration.⁷⁷ Others went back to the Capetian dynasty to legitimize Napoleonic rule. Neufchâteau, for example, compared the First Consul to Philippe Auguste, the medieval king who, after his victory at the Battle of Bouvines, asked of his soldiers if there was anyone more deserving of the French crown—a particularly apt allusion considering Napoleon's military successes.⁷⁸ These references to royal precedence complemented understandings of French patriotism, which the revolutionaries had tried to inculcate through administrative reforms meant to encourage territorial unity and cultural homogeneity,⁷⁹ by drawing attention to a shared past. More importantly, it tied Napoleon more closely to monarchical visions of power.

⁷⁵ Motion d'ordre du tribun Curée, sur l'émission d'un vœu tendant à ce que Napoléon Bonaparte, actuellement premier consul, soit déclaré Empereur des Français, et à ce que la dignité impériale soit déclarée héréditaire dans sa famille (10 floréal an XII), BNF: L 1.8-M4-38496, 30 April 1804.

⁷⁶ "Instruction Publique," *Le Moniteur*, 2 December 1804.

⁷⁷ Jourdan, "Napoleon and History," 343.

⁷⁸ "Senat, M. François (de Neufchâteau) president," *Le Moniteur*, 2 December 1804.

⁷⁹ Heuer, *The Family and the Nation*, 4.

Finally, these developments in political language also laid out new expectations for duty and civil obedience. The allusions to France's monarchical past not only provided a means of conceptualizing Napoleon's power, they also couched his authority in a ready set of disciplinary norms. Eighteenth century understandings of monarchy betrayed considerable ambiguities. The king, for instance, was supposed to be both an individual and the aggregate embodiment of his subjects.⁸⁰ Yet within this indefinite symbolic landscape there existed a clear expectation of subjecthood and submission. Napoleonic rule did not reinstitute the worst abuses of the Old Regime—the letters of cachet, unabashed rule by fiat—but it nonetheless recreated a dynamic of subordination and exclusivity. The reestablishment of ties with the Catholic Church, achieved through the Concordat of 1801, helped to reinforce this culture of obedience by creating space for the use of religious idioms in demands for compliance with the administration.

The 1806 *Cathéchisme Imperial*, a homiletic penned by imperial Minister of religion Jean-Etienne-Marie Portalis and the abbé Etienne Bernier to agitate for the semi-autonomy of the Gallican church, shows how this development continued after the creation of the Empire. Couched in religious imagery, and recited during Sunday services, it provided an unambiguous reminder of the power dynamic in imperial France. For instance, to the question “What are the duties of Christians toward the princes who govern them, and what in particular are our duties towards our emperor, Napoleon I?” the primer answered, “All Christians owe the Princes who govern them, and in particular we owe our emperor, Napoleon I, love, respect, obedience, loyalty, military service, and the taxes ordered for the preservation and the defense of the Empire and his throne. We also

⁸⁰ Lucien Jaume, “Citoyenneté et souveraineté: le poids de l'absolutisme,” in Keith Baker, ed., *The Political Culture of the Old Regime* (Oxford: Pergamon, 1987), 520.

owe him our fervent prayers for the salvation and spiritual and temporal prosperity of the State.” Furthermore, the catechism also laid out extreme penalties for disobedience: “According to the apostle Saint Paul, they [disobedient subjects] would be resisting the order established by God Himself, and would render themselves worthy of eternal damnation.”⁸¹ In short, *lèse-majesté* (or *lèse-Napoleon*) replaced *lèse-nation*, accumulating religiously-charged connotations in the process. By the end of the Consulate period, the political vocabulary had become sufficiently expansive, and its ambiguities adequately tolerated, to encapsulate a wide gamut of possibilities. As such, it paved the way toward imperial rule. Napoleon gave this multi-faceted discourse a sense of symbolic coherence; others—delegates, bureaucrats, and other administrators—in turn reified Napoleon’s figurative centrality by adding the powers and prerogatives to make him the unquestionable epicenter of French political life.

Overall, these efforts proved very successful. Napoleon’s name became a metonym for an administrative apparatus that would eventually span the whole continent. Moreover, he cultivated an emotional attachment by projecting a paternal image of himself.⁸² The *Journal de Paris* and other newspapers helped in this process through the publication of sycophantic passages: “Our emotions were those of the whole world; those of the whole world were ours; and of all that makes up a profound sentiment, indefinable, eminently French—attachment, love, and the recognition of our august sovereign.”⁸³

Some, however, remained unconvinced. Charles Tinsseau, an *émigré* who remained in

⁸¹ André Latreille, *Le Catéchisme Impérial de 1806: Etudes et Documents pour servir à l’histoire des rapports de Napoléon et du clergé concordataire* (Paris: Société d’Édition les belles lettres, 1935), 143.

⁸² Alan Forrest, “Propaganda and the Legitimation of Power in Napoleonic France,” *French History* 18, no. 4 (2004): 431.

⁸³ “Nouvelles de Paris,” *Journal de Paris*, 3 December 1804.

England even after the 1802 amnesty, wondered despondently if France would “discard the successor of Philip Augustus, of St. Louis, of Charles the Wise, of Louis XII, of Henry the Great, and of the virtuous Louis XVI for a vile Corsican, an obscure agent of Robespierre.”⁸⁴ Still, many found the idea that Napoleon represented the heart of a new imperial culture compelling. Songs celebrated his rise; poems celebrated his victories. One follower went so far as to create an etymological study of the name “Napoleon Bonaparte” through the use of Hebrew-language sources.⁸⁵ Even for the skeptical, the sheer volume of these efforts could overwhelm dissension.

For all the successes of these efforts, however, the new political language of the Consulate could only go so far toward defining Napoleon’s authority. Having reoriented ideas of patriotism, civic virtue, and even the *patrie* around Napoleon, it took public displays of power to broadcast these changes across France. To reinforce his claims, Napoleon had to make them visible and popularly appealing. In doing so, he turned once again to the Revolution, latching onto its patterns of public celebration as a way of disseminating his political message. Having defined his symbolic role through republican language, he capitalized upon opportunities to define his authority within a public setting.

⁸⁴ Charles Tinsseau d’Amondans, *A letter to Napoleon Buonaparté styling himself the government of France and the envoy of God; exhibition a complete view of his moral and political conduct. With notes and a sketch of his life*, Chevalier Tinsseau d’Amondans (London: Cox, Son, and Baylis, 1803), 26.

⁸⁵ “Nouvelles de Paris,” *Journal de Paris*, 2 December 1804.

Chapter Three: Celebrating Napoleon

“Immediately before the procession of directors and the ministers will be an enormous fasces, on which will be inscribed the names of all the departments, and which will bear emblems of the rivers and mountains after which the departments are named. Men dressed in the ancient clothing of the peoples who have occupied Gaul will carry the fasces. Before them will be a banner bearing the inscription: ‘The republic has united all. There is only one people.’ Next and parallel to this fasces will be a trophy, formed from the escutcheons of the Batavian, Cisalpine, Ligurian, Helvetic, and Roman republics, and supported by emblematic figures. And before that, a banner bearing the words: ‘Eternal alliance with the French people!’”⁸⁶

Thus wrote François de Neufchâteau, serving at the time as minister of the interior, concerning plans for a 1799 festival commemorating the creation of the National Convention and French Republic. Composed in August of that year, only a few months before the *Brumaire* coup, this itinerary reflected themes common to revolutionary fêtes. The festivals of the Revolution performed a didactic role, with processions, emblems, and music meant to inculcate a sense of unity, patriotism, and civic virtue. Publicly reproducing the symbols of the republic, they were meant to entertain and edify. In a report drafted for the National Convention, delegate Merlin de Thionville laid out the methods for achieving these results. A revolutionary fête, according to him, was one in which attendees “should be occupied.”⁸⁷ More precisely, the crowd at a festival needed to play an active role in the event. According to Thionville, the level of participation represented the difference between a national celebration, which could instruct and

⁸⁶ Nicolas François de Neufchâteau, *La Marche des cérémonies qui se feront le 3e jour complémentaire et le 1er vendémiaire* (9 fructidor an VII), BNF: 8-LB42-1966, 26 August 1799.

⁸⁷ Merlin de Thionville, *Opinion de Merlin (de Thionville) sur les Fêtes Nationales, Prononcée à la Convention nationale* (Paris: L’Imprimerie Nationale, 1794), 2.

inspire, and a mere spectacle, which was meant only to amuse. He therefore suggested methods for encouraging crowd involvement, ultimately fixing on music and drama because of their participatory nature. Thionville hoped that by sharing in these activities, the French populace would learn the lessons of the Revolution more easily. To achieve their didactic goals, revolutionary festivals had to force people to become at once “*spectateur, auteur, et spectacle.*”⁸⁸ For both Neufchâteau and Thionville, these celebrations would put a public face to revolutionary politics, rendering the aims of the state public and explicit.

This basic program of festivities remained the same under Napoleon. National fêtes retained their didactic focus, with pageantry providing a potent means of political symbolism. Activities too remained remarkably consistent: featuring sports, displays of technology (Neufchâteau’s festival boasted a hot air balloon floating over the Champ de Mars),⁸⁹ and numerous other leisure activities and diversions. The nature of participation, however, changed dramatically. Compared to the fêtes of the Revolution, Napoleonic festivals were exclusionary affairs—attendees watched, but contributed little to the actual ceremonies. Reduced to *spectateurs*, they were relegated to the margins of consular fêtes, passively observing as Napoleon replaced the people as the nation’s symbolic core. Even more than the elite political discourse of the Consulate period, Napoleonic festivals elided a number of seemingly incongruent symbols. During the Revolution inconsistencies in representation gave way to confusion and even violence; after *Brumaire*, political and social change helped reduce these ambiguities, even as it

⁸⁸ Ibid, 5-6.

⁸⁹ Nicolas François de Neufchâteau, *La Marche des cérémonies qui se feront le 3e jour complémentaire et le 1er vendémiaire* (9 fructidor an VII), BNF: 8-LB42-1966, 26 August 1799, 4.

created new ones that helped the Napoleonic state to define itself along a broad conceptual register. Engaged at once with the symbols of republicanism and monarchy, Napoleonic festivals blended revolutionary strategy with Old Regime symbolism. The effect was a production that both centered Napoleon in the eyes of his subjects and provided him with sovereign and religious legitimacy.

Tensions in revolutionary symbolism allowed Napoleon to co-opt its images with ease,⁹⁰ and the stable political and social atmosphere of the Consulate meant that incongruities in political symbolism went unchallenged. This development improved upon a revolutionary format of celebration that had proven both sterile and unappealing. The festivals of the Revolution were fraught with tensions: intending to appear unscripted, they were actually the result of careful control and preparation; promoting inclusiveness, they ostracized those members of a community who did not support a republican agenda.⁹¹ Furthermore, in attacking religion, the Revolution robbed itself of a sacred center around which to orient celebrations of the state.⁹² Napoleonic festivals, by contrast, eliminated many of these ambiguities. With the Concordat of 1801 ending the revolutionary injunction against Gallican ceremony, Christian ideology came to play a central role in Napoleonic celebrations. Churches were restored to their original function—reduced no longer to an ambiguous symbolic role—and *te deums* punctuated state celebrations. Political and confessional concerns were perhaps most clearly conflated in the new feast of St. Napoleon. This 15 August holiday, which occurred

⁹⁰ Hunt, *Politics, Culture, and Class in the French Revolution*, 229.

⁹¹ Ozouf, *Festivals and the French Revolution*, 11.

⁹² Joseph Byrnes, “Celebration of the Revolutionary Festivals under the Directory: a Failure of Sacrality,” *Church History* 63, no. 2 (1994): 202.

during the Feast of the Assumption and combined Napoleon's birthday with the celebration of an eponymous Roman saint of dubious hagiography.⁹³ By incorporating pre-Revolutionary ecclesiastical ritual, the Napoleonic regime infused state celebrations with a religious energy that was lacking in revolutionary fêtes.

Napoleonic festivals, in addition, proved more successful than revolutionary celebrations in clarifying their parameters of participation. Although the revolutionaries encouraged active involvement in its festivals, the nature of that participation was also highly circumscribed. Thionville's report emphasized the need for careful planning to make state festivals reflect the ideals of the Revolution. Festivals were meant to inculcate a sense of egalitarianism, of a collective psyche and a common weal.⁹⁴ The result, however, was fractiousness and exclusivity. In his description of a revolutionary commemoration of the fall of the Bastille, for instance, Poumiès de la Siboutie recorded, "It need hardly be said that speeches for the other side would have been very badly received, and were consequently never attempted."⁹⁵ The Revolution encouraged free speech at the same time as it refused to acknowledge dissenting opinions. The Napoleonic administration proved equally unwilling to countenance opposition, but it was less ambiguous in asserting its partisanship. During its festival, there was little uncertainty in terms of what the people could say or do. If Napoleonic celebrations were no more ideologically tolerant than those of the Revolution, they at least resolved some of their tensions by being more openly restrictive.

⁹³ For an in-depth history of this festival, especially its reintroduction during the Second Empire, see Sudhir Hazareesingh, *The Saint-Napoleon: Celebrations of Sovereignty in Nineteenth-Century France* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard, 2004).

⁹⁴ Inge Baxmaan, *Die Feste der Französischen Revolution: Inszenierung von Gesellschaft als Natur* (Weinheim: Beltz Verlag 1984), 31.

⁹⁵ Siboutie, *Recollections of a Parisian*, 30.

Where Napoleonic festivals emulated revolutionary fêtes most clearly was in the military festivals of the Revolution. The army represented one of the first laboratories in an experiment to inculcate France with the ideals of the Revolution; through commissioners, pamphlets, and other instructive efforts, Jacobins attempted to provide soldiers with both an understanding of, and an emotional connection to, revolutionary ideology.⁹⁶ After *Thermidor*, however, this didactic program was scaled back. Without constant reinforcement, celebration of the ideals of the revolution became conflated with the celebration of a specific army's military achievements and élan. The Army of Italy's commemoration ceremony on 14 July 1797, for instance, not only memorialized the fall of the Bastille—it also honored recently fallen comrades.⁹⁷ The death of revolutionary general Lazare Hoche in 1797 was celebrated as a national loss, but with competitions to venerate him in songs and marches—Napoleon offered a medal worth 60 *sequins* (Venetian *zecchino*) to the composer who could craft the best memorial overture⁹⁸—and an elegiac ceremony on the Champ de Mars, the honoring of individual achievement could obscure more general celebrations of the republic. Significantly, this pattern of commemoration added stratification to an event that was ostensibly egalitarian. Charismatic generals like Napoleon, Hoche, and Moreau represented larger-than-life figures in their individual commands, and thus assumed symbolic prominence in revolutionary festivals.

⁹⁶ Hunt, *Politics, Culture, and Class*, 69.

⁹⁷ "Introduction Servant du Prospectus," *Courrier de l'Armée d'Italie*, 14 July 1797, 3.

⁹⁸ Napoleon Bonaparte, *The Confidential Correspondence of Napoleon Bonaparte with His Brother Joseph, Sometime King of Spain* (London: John Murray, 1855), 34-35.

This juxtaposition of the nation and the individual was on clear display during the 1797 state triumph thrown for Napoleon upon his return from the successful Italian campaign. Jeanne Récamier, a young woman who frequented directorial balls and other events of France's newly restored high society, noted the details of the ceremony: "This solemn celebration took place in the great courtyard of the Luxembourg place. At the back of the courtyard was an altar and statue of Liberty; at the foot of this symbol the five directors wore Roman costumes; the ministers, ambassadors, and various functionaries were arranged around the seats of the amphitheatre; behind them, were benches reserved for other invited guests."⁹⁹ On display were the symbols and major officials of the Republic, yet were they all arranged to receive and observe Napoleon; in effect, the collective, faceless *patrie* was reoriented around the Revolution's most successful commander. Jean-Pierre Doguereau, a soldier who fought with Napoleon in Egypt, casts light on a similar dynamic in his record of a 1799 festival that occurred while on campaign: "After various maneuvers and formations, among which firing as a battalion, as a platoon, and by ranks was carried out, all the troops marched past the general, who, in the middle of the ceremony, had addressed the army."¹⁰⁰ Napoleon was the literal and figurative center of both festivals; displayed for his benefit, they gained meaning from him watching them. If, as Denise Davidson claims, "revolutionary festivals focused on the sovereignty of the people" whereas "Napoleonic ones centered on the sovereign himself,"¹⁰¹ this transition nonetheless had its roots in directorial celebrations of military

⁹⁹ Jeanne Récamier, *Souvenirs et Correspondance, Tirés des Papiers de Madame Récamier* (Paris: Michel Lévy Frères, 1860), 20.

¹⁰⁰ Jean-Pierre Doguereau, *Guns in the Desert: General Jean-Pierre Doguereau's Journal of Napoleon's Egyptian Expedition* (London: Praeger, 2002), 26.

¹⁰¹ Davidson, *France after Revolution*, 20.

achievement. It was here that notions of patriotism, civic duty, and loyalty to the Republic became bound up with Napoleon's image—setting the stage for later patterns of celebration during the Consulate period.

Like Neufchâteau's itinerary for the commemoration of the founding of the Republic, Napoleonic festivals exhibited a high degree of planning and control. Plans for Napoleon's coronation, for instance, reveal a painstakingly defined marching order. At the beginning of the parade, Mamluk bodyguards and other elite units surrounded Napoleon as he departed the Tuileries; by the time of his crowning, dignitaries and high-ranking officials had replaced these troops as the Emperor's entourage.¹⁰² Artillery announced transitions and punctuated important events, while drums and military instruments helped keep time for the many army units involved in the ceremony.¹⁰³ This organization also created a sense of hierarchy. Class factored heavily in determining one's contribution to Napoleonic celebrations,¹⁰⁴ and the careful control of space and time helped differentiate functions and make a clear delineation between spectators and participants. Indeed, for the lower class, participation in a state festival was often a function of an individual's willingness to sacrifice him or herself for the good of the nation. One of the few ways in which working class women could actively participate in these fêtes, for example, was through rural mass marriage ceremonies in which they were wedded to veterans of the French army.¹⁰⁵

¹⁰² "Nouvelles de Paris," *Journal de Paris*, 5 December 1804.

¹⁰³ Ibid.

¹⁰⁴ Davidson, *France after Revolution*, 22-23.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid, 35-38.

This exclusion and demarcation is clearly evident in the festivities surrounding Napoleon's coronation in 1804. Whereas revolutionary festivals typically occurred in a public forum such as the Champ de Mars, Napoleon's crowning ceremony took place in a private session at Notre Dame. Most Parisians, as a result, did not witness the actual coronation. Napoleon's procession to Notre Dame further demonstrates the non-participatory nature of the event. Although he walked along the streets of Paris, viewable by thousands, the participants in the final leg of his parade route included only a limited entourage of ministers, military officers, and other dignitaries who escorted Napoleon and Josephine, as well as helped carry their robes.¹⁰⁶ In many ways, the coronation seemed more in line with Thionville's definition of a spectacle than his understanding of a national fête. For days before the festival, the *Journal de Paris* ran advertisements offering spaces to rent along the procession route.¹⁰⁷ In place of real participation, people settled for the opportunity to see Napoleon and the fireworks, colorful facades, and informal celebrations that accompanied his crowning. Finally, an undercurrent of paternalism further separated Napoleon and his entourage from the people attending this festival. In commemoration of the crowning, a subsidy of three francs was distributed to families on the government bread dole.¹⁰⁸ At the same time, attorney M. Jobert l'ainé used the coronation as an excuse to request the pardon for several prisoners condemned

¹⁰⁶ "Variétés," *Journal de Paris*, 30 November 1804.

¹⁰⁷ "Fêtes du Couronnement," *Journal de Paris*, 29 November 1804.

¹⁰⁸ "Nouvelles de Paris," *Journal de Paris*, 2 December 1804.

during the Revolution.¹⁰⁹ Charity and grace, the traditional domain of Old Regime monarchs, essentially provided further space between Napoleon and his subjects.

Many of the activities of Napoleonic festivals were drawn directly from the republican celebrations of the revolutionary period. Neufchâteau planned to include numerous games and other diversions at his state festival, including a mock naval battle near the Champ de Mars and a variety of exhibits showcasing the recent achievements of French industry.¹¹⁰ Similarly, during the 1806 festival of St. Napoleon's Day, celebrants competed for prize money in games such as bowling and engaged in water sports. Groups of musicians, two of whom were placed around each game, contributed further to the fanfare, as did fireworks and the illumination of the Hôtel-de-Ville at the end of the festivities.¹¹¹ Napoleonic festivals tended to conform to a pattern in which play occupied an increasingly central role the later one got in a specific fête. Events typically began with speeches and parades, moved to gaming and feasting, and ended with dancing and other revelry.¹¹²

Balls and dances, whether as a continuation of earlier celebrations or stand-alone gatherings, constituted an important facet of Napoleonic fêtes, suggesting links to the elite soirées that had reemerged during the directorial period. On the official level, dances helped adorn the state with a sense of fashion and pomp. They performed a political function by placing elite families in close contact with Napoleon and his

¹⁰⁹ "Programme des fêtes et réjouissances publiques à l'occupation du couronnement de l'Empereur des Français," *Journal de Paris*, 3 December 1804.

¹¹⁰ Nicolas François de Neufchâteau, *La Marche des cérémonies qui se feront le 3e jour complémentaire et le 1er vendémiaire*, 26 August 1799, 3.

¹¹¹ *Le Moniteur Universel*, 13 August 1807.

¹¹² Davidson, *France after Revolution*, 25.

officials, establishing ties between the administration and France's reconstituted social elite.¹¹³ Private balls, by contrast, offered people a chance to celebrate national events in style. Though the participation levels were limited in Napoleonic festivals, a surfeit of lanterns, streamers, and other decorations available for private purchase offered people a chance to celebrate Napoleon on their own terms.

As the delineation between festival participants and attendees at these various festivals suggests, Napoleon formed the symbolic and emotional center of consular celebrations. During the coronation ceremony, for instance, regiments marched by the emperor, bowed to him, and received their regimental eagle.¹¹⁴ Other festivals were built around seminal moments in the life of the Emperor. St. Napoleon's Day celebrated his birthday; a national holiday on 4 December commemorated both his coronation and his iconic victory at Austerlitz. His presence, moreover, gave these festivals meaning. A report detailing the celebration of St. Napoleon's Day in 1807 recorded, for instance: "The popular and affable air of the Emperor increased yet again the intoxication that the multitude felt in perceiving his triumphal float."¹¹⁵ Napoleonic festivals, in effect, saw a return of the "sovereign's gaze" that had recognized and affirmed the value of subjects under the old regime. Like the former visibility of the king, which had helped create and validate noble service in an earlier time, Napoleon's public prominence reminded subjects of both his centrality to the state and expectations of obedience.¹¹⁶ Extrapolating

¹¹³ Ibid, 31.

¹¹⁴ Noël, *With Napoleon's Guns*, 45.

¹¹⁵ D'Hauterive, *La Police Secrète du Premier Empire: Bulletins Quotidiens Adressés par Fouché à l'Empereur, 1806-1807*, 333.

¹¹⁶ Jay M. Smith, *The Culture of Merit: Nobility, Royal Service, and the Making of Absolute Monarchy in France, 1600-1789* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1996), 137.

this basic framework to Napoleonic festivals, it was Napoleon's supervision of festivities that invested them with a sense of public significance.

Just as Napoleon's "gaze" provided state festivals with a sense of significance, however, so too did he depend on the esteem of others to legitimize his authority. In effect, Napoleonic celebrations embodied aspects of Habermas's "representative public sphere"—an Old Regime power dynamic in which the authority of nobles and kings existed only "inasmuch as they made it present."¹¹⁷ Still, Napoleonic festivals were more than a return to pre-revolutionary display of authority; rather, they occupied a liminal space between Revolution and Old Regime. Just as these celebrations projected personal power, so too did they contain a functional component that was conspicuously lacking in Old Regime pageantry. Unlike Old Regime monarchs, Napoleon did not possess his authority innately. Festivals during his reign not only validated his sovereignty through public display, they actively constructed it. Entailing the reconceptualization of revolutionary ideology along monarchical lines, they were the reversal of the process described by Habermas, where representational authority gave way to power reflected by productive capacity in a bourgeois economy.¹¹⁸ In non-Marxist terms, these celebrations refocused Napoleon's actual power into representative structures that could provide him with sovereign legitimacy.

Napoleonic festivals thus combined military regimentation and lighthearted revelry in a dynamic that promoted emotional ties to the Emperor. They also reminded attendees of the increasingly royal dimensions of Napoleonic power. The result was a

¹¹⁷ Jürgen Habermas, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere: An Inquiry into a Category of Bourgeois Society* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1989), 13.

¹¹⁸ Ibid.

fixation on Napoleon—a public display that reinforced his place as the state’s symbolic center. This development emerged directly out of the celebratory practices of the revolutionary republic, with the consular regime reproducing both the content of these festivals, and their broader didactic purpose. After *Brumaire*, the French populace still commemorated the nation, but it was a nation bound up inextricably with the image of Napoleon.

Chapter Five: Conclusion

In conceptualizing his power in the present, Napoleon first had to conceptualize the past. The revolutionaries, in creating the Old Regime, desired a simple history against which they could define themselves. Napoleon, on the other hand, favored complexity. To borrow a structuralist metaphor, he was a bricoleur—delving into a diverse history to lay the foundations for a multi-layered present. Downplaying or ignoring potential ambiguities, Napoleon was able to place himself firmly within the revolutionary tradition at the same time as he combined its discourse and practices with Old Regime symbolism to construct the ideological dimensions of a new political order.

Napoleon never repudiated the Revolution as sharply as the revolutionaries did the Old Regime because he was in many ways a product of the Revolution. His advancement, his fame, his success—all of these were borne out of his achievements as a revolutionary general. The Revolution also gave him a framework for understanding the world. The vocabulary, symbolism, and practices of the new political order would have been familiar to both Napoleon and his followers, and if Bonaparte's emphasis on continuity with the revolutionary tradition proved useful to his political agenda, in simpler terms this process was the result of Napoleon defining his political vision through the language and imagery with which he was most familiar. Still, in the later stages of building his regime, Napoleon increasingly cast revolutionary ideology in a dichotomous relationship with the ideals of the Empire. If this process came about slowly, it nevertheless came about eventually.

The creation of a revolutionary and imperial binary might have ultimately helped determine the shape of the Revolution's legacy. To understand the Empire, Napoleon continued to clarify the ideological dimensions of the revolutionary period, a process that became easier as the Revolution grew more distant in time. Such a process packaged the Revolution into a simple, appealing set of beliefs. Even if just for ease of comparison, Napoleon ultimately elided the very serious differences between the various revolutionary regimes to create instead a more palatable idea of the Revolution. If Napoleon thus advertised his connections to a vital and complicated revolutionary past in the early part of his regime, by the latter part of his reign he tended toward simplification. In eventually inventing the Empire, Bonaparte also helped reinvent the Revolution.

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