

Meteors that Enlighten the Earth

Meteors that Enlighten the Earth:
Napoleon and the Cult of Great Men

By

Matthew D. Zarzeczny

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Dedicated in memory of my ever faithful companion
Josephine Marie Zarzeczny (16 May 1999–27 May 2010)

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PREFACE

Napoleon promoted and honored great men throughout his reign. In addition to comparing himself to various great men, he famously established a Legion of Honor on 19 May 1802 to honor both civilians and soldiers, including non-ethnically French men. Napoleon not only created an Irish Legion in 1803 and later awarded William Lawless and John Tennent the Legion of Honour, he also gave them an Eagle with the inscription “L’Indépendance d’Irlande.” Napoleon awarded twenty-six of his generals the marshal’s baton from 1804 through 1815 and in 1806, he further memorialized his soldiers by deciding to erect a Temple to the Glory of the Great Army modeled on ancient designs. From 1806 through 1815, Napoleon had more men interred in the Panthéon in Paris than any other French leader before or after him. In works of art depicting himself, Napoleon had his artists allude to Caesar, Charlemagne, and even Moses. Although the Romans had their legions, Pantheon, and temples in ancient times and the French monarchy had their marshals since at least 1190, Napoleon blended both Roman and French traditions to compare himself to great men who lived in ancient and medieval times and to recognize the achievements of those who lived alongside him in the nineteenth century.

Analyzing Napoleon’s ever-changing personal cult of “great men,” and his recognition of contemporary “great men” who contributed to European or even human civilization and not just French civilization, is original. While work does exist on the French cults of Greco-Roman antiquity and of “great men” prior to 1800, Napoleon appears only fleetingly in David Bell, Jean-Claude Bonnet, and George Armstrong Kelly’s discussions of the cult of great men. None of the burgeoning historiography adequately takes Napoleon’s place in the story of this cult into perspective. This book serves as a further exploration of the cult of great men, including its place in Napoleonic and European history and the alleged efforts to enlighten the earth.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

On 19 May 2006 for my doctoral exam on The Roman Empire, Dr. Nathan Rosenstein asked me to answer the following question:

It is the year 1805 and the recently crowned Emperor Napoleon is traveling on a long journey by carriage. As he is mulling over the challenges that face him in governing his new empire, Napoleon falls into a doze, and the Emperor Trajan appears to him in a dream. Describe what the two Emperors say to each other about the arts and techniques of governing empires, bearing in mind that while Napoleon may know something about Imperial Rome, Trajan has no information about early 19th century Europe. (You may cast their discussion in dialogue form.)

I answered as follows:

Napoleon's plans to launch a Franco-Spanish invasion of Great Britain now seemed unrealistic. Like Philip II's Spanish Armada before him, Napoleon's international, continental fleet proved unable to overcome the sea forces of the large island nation to Europe's north. So, he turned his attention eastward, sending his Grand Army from its positions on the English Channel through Germany towards the Austrian Empire, the largest member of the decaying Holy Roman Empire of the German Nation. The stress of the impending decisive battle against the forces of Kaiser Francis and Tsar Alexander wears heavily on the newly crowned French Emperor as his carriage passed through the lands of a disunited empire that claimed to succeed the once mighty Roman Empire of antiquity. With thoughts of past and future glory in his mind and considerations of his own role in history ever present, Napoleon drifted into sleep . . .

Napoleon found himself surrounded by darkness. Everywhere around him there was no light. Yet, in the distance he noticed a figure sitting upon a golden throne. Napoleon approached rapidly. Having bravely carried the flag across the bridge at Arcole during the French Revolution as Austrian soldiers failed to shoot him down, he was fearless in this darkness. But he wondered: had he died? Is this a God seated before him? Napoleon stood courageously as the seated man, dressed in ancient armor, studied Napoleon. A few minutes passed before at last Napoleon spoke.

NAPOLEON: "I am the Emperor Napoleon of the French. Who is it that sits before me?"

TRAJAN (Roman emperor from 97 through 117 A.D.): “I am Trajan, known as the Best to the senate and the people of Rome. I am the successor of the emperor Nerva, who reigned after the chaotic rule of Domitian.”

NAPOLEON: “Yes, I know you; although I’m not sure how it is that we seem to miraculously understand each other’s language . . . No matter. I have studied much on Roman history and have to a large extent modeled my own government on the precedents established by yourself and your fellow Roman emperors. I even held a consulate like your gods, Julius Caesar, and Augustus, did over a century before you. I am now on my way to fight against a man who calls himself Roman Emperor, but he is not worthy of the title. It is I who will carry on your traditions; when my reign is over Paris shall be resplendent with triumphal arches and my statue will rest on top of a column at the Place Vendôme in direct imitation of your column in Rome that celebrates you great victorious over Decebalus in the Dacian Wars before you marched eastward like Alexander the Great to defeat the Parthians, something that Caesar had hoped to accomplish had not those vile assassins, Cassius and Brutus, deprived your empire of that great man. I once spoke to my forces as though we were following in Alexander and Caesar’s footsteps during our campaign in Egypt and Syria. If not for that damned British admiral Nelson, we would have marched over the same fields of battle on which your own armies triumphed so many centuries ago.”

TRAJAN: “Your admiration of my achievements is certainly warranted, but I have no knowledge of “the French” or even what befell my empire after my death during my unfinished war in Mesopotamia. I have remained in this darkness, alone, for I do not know how long, but perhaps it is indeed to pass on my knowledge to you who claim to succeed us. You *do* have a Roman look about you. You are also right in your admiration of the Macedonian Alexander. A secretary of mine named Suetonius had access to our imperial archives and as you may know documented the lives of my predecessors, the twelve Caesars before me. He wrote on what my predecessors thought about this heroic figure, but there is something foremost I must tell you before I return to this matter. You frown! Well, do you doubt the objectivity of our histories? Some may say that his accounts are biased and meant to detract from these emperors in order to improve my own image, but if I am the Best, why would this be necessary?”

“Anyway, my first suggestion for you would be to adopt your successor. Nerva was wise in choosing me and I am confident that my own chosen successor Hadrian will continue my great work.”

NAPOLEON: “But he didn’t! Hadrian abandoned your conquests east of the Euphrates and built a wall in Britain rather than push northward to conquer the whole of that island. Rather than conquer new territory, Hadrian only consolidated the empire, just traveling around its provinces more so than practically any other emperor. His adopted son, Antoninus

Pius, would resume Rome's glory by extending Roman rule in Britain to a new wall that spanned an even shorter distance which perhaps some historian two centuries from now might refer to as "more scientific." Antoninus' adopted heir, Marcus Aurelius the Philosopher, attempted to re-conquer the Mesopotamian province, but the plague ravaged his army and prevented this project from realization. Near the end of his life, he attempted to defeat the Quadi and Marcommani north of the Danube in Germania, perhaps to annex their territory as Augustus planned to do before Varus's defeat by Arminius at the Teutoburg Forest in A.D. 9. Marcus' victories here as well were negated by a successor. Just as Hadrian abandoned your conquests in the Middle East, that psychopath Commodus, Marcus' natural son, concluded a peace with the Germanic tribes."

TRAJAN: "While it pains me to learn that Hadrian did not apparently live up to my expectations, your final statement is further proof of why adoptive succession is better. One of my admirers wrote a convincing argument for this conviction and you would be wise to read it. For as much as you know about our history, you should consider why the twelve Caesars before me erred. The Divine Gaius Julius Caesar the Liberator and Father of the Fatherland did not have a son to succeed him, regardless of what Antony might have hoped to accomplish with Caesarion, the bastard son of that serpent of the Nile, Cleopatra. No, Caesar adopted the best of his kinsmen Augustus the Father of the Fatherland and of the Entire Human Race. Later murders and usurpations in the Julia-Claudian Family prevented the stability in the empire. Caligula and Nero's madness tarnished our imperial office. Even Claudius, under whose reign Britain finally became Roman, met with assassination. After Nero killed himself Galba, Otho, and Vitellius each sought to usurp control of the empire before Vespasian's victory in this two year period of civil war. As you should know, Vespasian did not follow adoptive succession. Instead, his family's reign ended in a bloodbath comparable to that of the Julio-Claudians."

NAPOLEON: "Yes, but you came from a republican tradition in which the ideal was for the leading man to hold such top offices as consul or to be recognized as an emperor. Although my empire also has a senate, my neighbors do not agree with republican traditions. I am surrounded by kings and emperors who believe that they rule by divine right, that their bloodline is superior to all others. I have adopted my wife's son by her first marriage, Eugene, to succeed me if necessary, as Josephine has yet to give me my heir, but for the other kings and emperors of Europe to accept me, I must have a son of my own. Besides, the decade that preceded my reign was one of opportunists and many forms of government. If I do not have a son behind which my subjects might rally in the event of my death, who knows who or what might replace me?!"

TRAJAN: "Divine right? We Romans deify the best of our rulers after their deaths, as Caesar did with Pompey after the Egyptians murdered this

former consul of Rome, and as we subsequently did with Caesar, Augustus, Claudius, Vespasian, and Titus. Caligula may have thought himself a god, but he was not so.”

NAPOLEON: “Then, you need not worry about this particular Christian concept.”

TRAJAN: “Christian, eh? I think I recall having a correspondence about these liar Jews with one of my provincial administrators. I’ve had many engaging dialogues, especially with Pliny.”

NAPOLEON: “Well, much has changed in Europe since your reign. Despite the persecutions of the Christians under Diocletian, who established a system of Roman government alien to your own, a dominate rather than a principate, and a tetrarchy of four emperors (two superior Augusti and two junior Caesars) that divided the empire, Constantine the Great would restore the imperial unity and with his Edict of Milan following his victory at the Milvian Bridge over Maxentius, Constantine recognized Christianity as a religion that should not be persecuted. He only became a Christian on his deathbed and Theodosius roughly fifty years later ultimately made Christianity the official religion and as some have argued, so began the decline of Rome . . . Christianity, although itself divided, remains the dominant religion in Europe and the notion of proclaiming ourselves or our predecessors as gods would be unacceptable to our people.”

TRAJAN: “Absolutely astonishing! Our empire was one of many beliefs and many gods. The peoples of empire worshipped gods from Greece, Egypt, and Judea, in addition to those of our Eternal City. In fact, our network of roads and trade routes and our efforts to build temples in the provinces allowed for a great exchange of religions across Our Sea (*Mare Nostrum*). Our empire had imperial cults, just as much of Isis and others.”

NAPOLEON: “We have a religion of the majority, but really only three others that I recognize as significant enough to respect. Personally, I have no religion, although I have often wished that our system was a bit more as yours and more as that empire which you and your fellow imperators admired most. I always admired Alexander for declaring himself a god.”

TRAJAN: “There is much that we learned from that great conqueror, who did, after all, correctly continue the Persian tradition of satrapies and treated Darius III’s family with respect, even marrying the Great King’s daughter Stateira as Alexander’s second wife. We inherited his system when we annexed Hellenistic kingdoms in the East and treated many of these states as client kingdoms, allowing the descendents of Alexander’s commanders to govern until they disobeyed us and annexation became necessary. Incidentally, we even used Alexander’s campaigns as our sources for information on Parthia! My contemporary, Pliny, understood Caesar as greater than Pompey Magnus whose triumphs equaled “the brilliance of the exploits” of Alexander the Great. Comparisons of both

Pompey and Augustus with Alexander appeared in word and art within their lifetimes. True Romans like me appreciate glory and many flattered Pompey for following Alexander's path of eastern conquest, Caesar for serving as an heir to Alexander, and Augustus for striving to conquer the world as Alexander aspired to do."

NAPOLEON: "Well, maybe the world as you understood it."

TRAJAN: "Whatever you mean by that, but anyway, just as Alexander the Great, was sometimes called *philokyros* or 'friend of Cyrus' the Great of Persia in part because of Alexander's understanding of Persian history, so too did Caesar read Xenophon's *Boyhood of Cyrus* and parts of Alexander's history. You look young, Emperor Napoleon, and so you must have begun your reign perhaps not long ago. Alexander, as you know, was one of the most youthful of conquerors. Caesar by contrast did not have age on his side when he became dictator. While campaigning in Spain, Caesar actually cried to his friends that he failed to achieve greatness at as young an age as Alexander. Caesar like Crassus before him and Antony after hoped to emulate Alexander in the East, but alas, those assassins ended these dreams, at least until Octavian seemed to revive some hope that he would follow in their divine footsteps. Augustus showed respect for Alexander's mummy by crowning it with a golden diadem, a worthy gesture, unlike when Caligula stole Alexander's breastplate from his tomb in Alexandria. What I want you to understand from these examples, Napoleon, is that the heroes of the late republic/early empire presented themselves in a manner reminiscent of an earlier hero, someone whom the people recognized and admired. Much of our system was based on fear and respect. Our enemies had to understand us as god-like, invincible, so that they knew any affront against the Romans would equal at least a beating if not worse. You want your subjects and adversaries alike to know that any time they rise against you, they face the punishment of a foe or master worthy of legend."

NAPOLEON: "Oh, I have long linked my name to those of many individuals who shaped history before and after your reign."

TRAJAN: "But you must go beyond even their achievements if you want to be really effective. We chide Caligula for not continuing the conquest of Germania as he led some to believe and Domitian for not defeating the Dacians as decisively as I did. I outshined Domitian. Had I lived longer, I might have taken Roman arms even farther than Alexander took Macedonian arms and annexed more than just Arabia, Armenia, Assyria, Dacia, and Mesopotamia. Consider the goals of Alexander versus those of Caesar and Augustus. Before Alexander's death, he planned campaigns against the Arabians and Carthaginians. Had Caesar avoided death on the Ides of March, he intended to expel the Dacians from the Black Sea area and Thrace before launching an attack on Parthia by way of Lesser Armenia. Just three days after his death, this great campaign would have begun! Perhaps Caesar's genius would have succeeded where Crassus' lack of failed. Regardless, *I* realized Caesar's plans! I conquered

both Dacia and part of Parthia in a fashion that as you even admit no other Roman did. Augustus' acquisition of the upper Sava valley was regarded as a potential base for operations against the Dacians, but even this great man did not achieve what I accomplished in that part of our empire. Much has been made by Horace of Augustus' never realized, but planned expeditions to Brittania—something that we thought Caligula might accomplish, but that Claudius finally carried out decades later. Horace also expected that eventually Augustus would add the Persians to our empire. Like Caesar, Augustus planned to consolidate his hold on Europe before attacking Parthia, but the defeat in Germania prevented such consolidation and so Augustus neither conquered Brittania nor Parthia. And to think that he even hoped to go beyond the Rhine to China!"

NAPOLEON: "If only he understood how far away that really was . . ."

TRAJAN: "I just hope that you understand how such emperors as Claudius and I achieved our fame. We accomplished what other even great men could not accomplish. I am not truly representative of any other Roman emperor or of their policies. I did what they did not do. That is why I am called Trajanus Optimus. If you really want glory, you must achieve what even your idols did not. Darius III referred to himself as 'king of the world,' and some have called Alexander 'King of the Universe.' Neither title is better than 'best.'"

NAPOLEON: "My star will guide me to great victories."

TRAJAN: "Perhaps, but many a conqueror's star has faded somewhere along the way. And so, perhaps my last bit of advice for governing an empire is to remember that while you want to conquer for the sake of personal glory as well as that of your people, you want your enemies to know that *they* forced the conquest on themselves. The vanquished or subjugated must understand that you are not a tyrant, because you will need some of their support and it is best that you use the occasional decisive victory to remind your enemies that any challenge, whether internal or external, will meet with determined and brutal consequences. Remember that we in command are the ones with real honor. Honor is an important concept for us, especially in order to maintain the loyalty of the soldiers, which is naturally necessary if you want to frighten your external foes into submission. Similarly, never underestimate the power of patronage. Treat your people as clients."

NAPOLEON: "I'm already ahead of you on that point. I've created an award called the Legion of Honor to recognize worthy individuals who will owe their public recognition to me."

TRAJAN: "'Legion of Honor,'" an excellent and Roman-sounding title, indeed."

NAPOLEON: "The award is a bit more merit-based, but I can be considered a patron of sorts in other ways, even in the cultural sense by contracting artists to produce great works, which bring them a nice revenue, while glorifying me. And I have been sure to reward my best generals with a special title, "marshal," my family with imperial titles, and

my loyal collaborators, or I mean supporters with other significant imperial offices, while allowing even my political opponents senatorial offices in order to placate them. I have done much to keep my people on my side so that they follow me in my campaigns across Europe and the Mediterranean.”

TRAJAN: “Good, but remember, that we Romans only conquered where and when we had to and we did so over many centuries, which allowed us to Romanize the various provinces in a much more progressive than forced fashion. We could have annexed Illyria, Greece, Spain, Africa, and Egypt well before we actually did so. We could have taken Carthage after the Second Punic War. There’s a way to gain a certain respect from the world for seeming the victim initially. One might see us in at the end of the Republic as taking only so much unruliness from our neighbors until during our imperial period when we finally showed the world that we had enough already. If you want to see a *real* bully, well . . . Anyway, our conquests were necessary for the stability of the world as much as personal glory and even our transformation from Republic to Empire began maybe as far back as Marius and continued throughout the entire century that ended in Augustus’ reign.’

“Now heed my advice of the arts and techniques of governing empires: 1) remember that adoptive succession is better than dynastic; 2) connect your name with that of other great men of history; 3) use military conquests for obtaining personal glory; 4) try to outdo your heroes; 5) if possible, have a religious element associated with your imperial position, which can be advantageous, as people are less likely to challenge someone if it means risking divine wrath; 6) maintain a sense of honor for yourself and your proponents; and 7) use patronage to gain devotion and a sense of duty from your clients. And that is all. Wake up now!!”

As Trajan thundered his final command, Napoleon awoke. He would indeed follow much of Trajan’s advice and over the next seven years, Napoleon’s empire would stretch from Spain to Russia. Great victories at Austerlitz in 1805 and Wagram in 1809 catapulted Napoleon into the pantheon of legendary rulers that included Alexander, Caesar, Augustus, and Trajan, but Trajan’s advice was that of someone from another age in human history. The second century A.D. was not the nineteenth. Moreover, Trajan’s wars of conquest, while “glorious” and romantic, may not have been all that wise. Perhaps, Hadrian’s notion of consolidation had more benefits to the actual empire than wars of glory, as even before Trajan died the newly conquered Mesopotamian province exploded in rebellion. Thus, like Trajan, Napoleon’s empire attempted to go farther than it could and within ten years of that fateful dream, Napoleon’s empire crumbled much faster than either that of Alexander or the Caesars so many centuries earlier.¹

¹ Below is a list of some sources pertaining to the Ancient aspects of my essay that contained evidence used above: Pierre Briant, *From Cyrus to Alexander: A History*

One may wonder if such a hypothetical dialogue has any basis in reality. While Napoleon may not have imagined such a discussion with Trajan specifically, he certainly considered Trajan among the great men admired by Napoleon and certainly knew enough of Roman history to sustain many of the historical comments indicated in the dialogue above. In 1808, Napoleon requested that a librarian and geographer work together to collect for Napoleon “memoirs about the campaigns which have taken place on the Euphrates and against the Parthians, beginning with that of Crassus up to the eighth century, and including those of Antonius, Trajan, Julian, etc.; he is to mark upon maps of suitable size the route which each army followed, together with the ancient and modern names of the countries and principal towns, and add notes on the geographical features and historical descriptions of each enterprise, taking these from the original authors.”² Around the same time, Madame de Rémusat reports that Napoleon

took care to encourage talent, especially when his own glory was the aim of its efforts. The ‘Triomphe de Trajan’ was given at the Paris Opera. The poem was by Esménard, and both he and the composer received presents....Trajan was represented burning papers that contained the secret of a conspiracy with his own hand. This recalled what Bonaparte had done at Berlin. The triumph of Trajan was represented with magnificent pomp. The decorations were superb; the conqueror appeared in a chariot drawn by four white horses. All Paris flocked to the spectacle; the applause was unstinted, and charmed the Emperor.³

of the Persian Empire, trans. Peter T. Daniels; David Cherry, Yann Le Bohec, Marcel Le Glay, and Jean-Louis Voisin, *A History of Rome*; Karl Galinsky, *Augustan Culture: An Interpretive Introduction*; Peter Garnsey, and Richard Saller, *The Roman Empire: Economy, Society and Culture*; Werner Hilgemann and Hermann Kinder, *The Anchor Atlas of World History, Volume I*; J. E. Lendon, *Empire of Honour: The Art of Government in the Roman World*; Edward N. Luttwak, *The Grand Strategy of the Roman Empire From the First Century AD to the Third*; Susan P. Mattern, *Rome and the Enemy: Imperial Strategy in the Principate*; Pliny, “The Glorious Record of Pompey the Great,” *Aspects of Western Civilization: Problems and Sources in History, Volume I*, ed. by Perry M. Rogers; M. J. Cohen and John Major, eds., *History in Quotations*; Richard P. Saller, *Personal Patronage under the Early Empire*; Ronald Syme, *The Roman Revolution*; Arnold Joseph Toynbee, “Caesar, Julius,” *Encyclopedia Britannica*; Gaius Suetonius Tranquillus, *The Twelve Caesars*; and Colin Wells, *The Roman Empire*.

² As quoted in Count Maximilian Yorck von Wartenburg, *Napoleon as a General*, Vol. II (London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trübner & Co. Ltd., 1902), 104.

³ Claire Elisabeth Jeanne Gravier de Vergennes Rémusat, *Memoirs of Madame de*

Moreover, Louis Antoine Fauvelet de Bourrienne references churchmen who during the imperial phase declared that Napoleon “was more fortunate than Augustus” and “more virtuous than Trajan.”⁴ In October 1810, while in Paris, Napoleon discussed artistic depictions of great men with Antonio Canova (1 November 1757 – 13 October 1822). Napoleon spoke unfavorably of such popes as Gregory VII before declaring, “What a great people were the Romans! Cæsar, Cæsar, was the great man; not only Cæsar, but some of the succeeding Emperors, such as Titus, Trajan, Marcus Aurelius. . . . The Romans were always great till the time of Constantine.”⁵ Thus, as Napoleon in effect concluded that the papacy detracted from the greatness of subsequent Roman emperors, it is perhaps ironic that he received such praise from churchmen as that noted by Bourrienne.

Napoleon also certainly read and wrote on Plato who is famous for the use of the dialogue and actually did fantasize similar fictional discussions among great men. For example, in the late 1780s, Napoleon wrote “an imaginary correspondence between King Theodore of Corsica” (1694-1756) and Horace Walpole (1717-1797).⁶ In 1793, Napoleon wrote another fictional dialogue, “The Supper at Beaucaire” in which a manufacturer of Montpellier, a Marseillais, a Nîmois, and a soldier in Carteaux’s army (believed to be Napoleon) discuss recent events.⁷ This soldier turns to discuss and defend some of the specific leading revolutionary figures: “Dubois-Crancé, and Albitte are constant friends of the people who have never deviated from the straight path. Condorcet, Brissot, Barbaroux were always considered villains when they were pure; it is the privilege of the good always to have a bad reputation in the eyes of the bad. You call Carteaux an assassin when he has done his utmost to preserve order and discipline...”⁸ The soldier goes on to denounce Napoleon’s former hero Paoli for deceiving the people and crushing “the true friends of liberty.”⁹ The soldier also alludes to antiquity, saying, “it is more easy to praise

Rémusat, 1802-1808, Vol. I (New York: D. Appleton and Company, 1880), 575-576.

⁴ As quoted in Louis Antoine Fauvelet de Bourrienne, *Private memoirs of Napoleon Bonaparte during the Periods of the Directory, the Consulate, and the Empire*, Vol. II (Philadelphia: Carey & Lea, 1831), 290.

⁵ Louis Antoine Fauvelet de Bourrienne, *Memoirs of Napoleon Bonaparte*, Volume 4 (London: R. Bentley, 1836), 373-374.

⁶ Oscar Browning, *The Boyhood and Youth of Napoleon: Some Chapters on the Life of Bonaparte, 1769-1793* (London: John Lane, 1906), 320.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 230-231.

⁸ As quoted in *Ibid.*, 233.

⁹ As quoted in *Ibid.*, 234.

Decius than to imitate him.”¹⁰

The massive volume of writings produced by Napoleon and that still exist contain many discussions and commentaries on the great men of history. Paoli, Trajan, and many others appear throughout Napoleon's letters, imagined dialogues, and in various other mediums at times in a hagiographic and at other times in a critical manner. This book tells the story of Napoleon's cult of great men and how it evolved and changed throughout his remarkable life.

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¹⁰ As quoted in *Ibid.*, 236-237.

¹¹ As quoted on the entry for May 6 of *Page-A-Day: The Busy Office Notepad + Calendar 2011* (New York: Workman Publishing Company, Inc., 2010).

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Yet, if any companion was there for me throughout the process of writing my dissertation and converting it to a book, it was my basset hound.

Below is my favorite photograph of her as a puppy taken in August 1999, eleven years ago.



Figure 1. Photograph of Josephine Marie Zarzeczny taken by Matthew Zarzeczny in Parma, Ohio in August 1999.

In December 1815, Napoleon thought not of his glorious moments in Italy immortalized in Gros's painting, but rather when he walked among the carcasses of a battlefield and came upon a dog still licking the hand of his master, protecting his dead body from Napoleon and his comrades in arms, and howling mournfully. Napoleon thought this "man...perhaps, has friends in the camp or in his company; and here he lies forsaken by all except his dog!" The feelings of Napoleon, usually "tearless" and "without emotion" during battles, "were roused by the...dog!"¹² On another

¹² As quoted in Emmanuel-Auguste-Dieudonné Las Cases, *Mémorial de Sainte*

occasion in September 1816, when Madame de Montholon chased away an approaching dog, Napoleon asked, "You do not like dogs, Madam?" "No, Sire," she replied. "If you do not like dogs," said Napoleon, "you do not like fidelity; you do not like those who are attached to you; and, therefore, you are not faithful."¹³ More recently, the final scene of ABC's *Lost* showed the show's protagonist Jack Shepherd lying and dying from a stab wound in the same place where the series began six seasons ago, the actor's dog in real life lay beside him, and no one else.¹⁴

Thus, what made Napoleon and his heroes great is not that they dominated others through violence. We should not after all admire actions that resulted in death and destruction. No, their determination against difficult odds and their moments of compassion despite their reputations as soldiers is what we should praise and admire. Napoleon recognized that moments of real greatness, of real humanity, can be found not just in people. After all, an 1850 lithograph entitled *Napoleon the Great Rebuking His Officers at Bassano*: "There, Gentlemen, that dog teaches us a lesson in humanity" depicted the story of the barbet-dog or spaniel after the battle of Castiglione in September 1796.¹⁵

Finally, if anything else in particular sustained my resolve in triumphing over all the many hurdles faced in accomplishing this project, it is the words of a great woman, Madame Marie-Claude Thomas, who once told me, "We try until we succeed."

Hélène: Journal of the Private Life and Conversations of the Emperor Napoleon at Saint Helena, Vol. I, Part the Second (London: H. Colburn and co., 1823), 4.

¹³ «Chemin faisant, Mme Montholon chassait un chien qui l'avait approchée. — Vous n'aimez pas les chiens, Madame? — Non Sire. — Si vous n'aimez pas les chiens, vous n'aimez pas la fidélité, vous n'aimez pas qu'on vous soit fidèle, donc vous n'êtes pas fidèle. — Mais , mais , disait-elle. — Mais , mais, disait l'Empereur , quel est le vice de ma logique?» Comte Emmanuel-Auguste-Dieudonné de Las Cases, *Journal de la vie privée et des conversations de l'Empereur Napoléon à Saint Hélène, Volume 3* (Henri Colburn et co., 1823), 159.

¹⁴ Jeff "Doc" Jensen, "Decoding the *Lost* Finale: What worked? What didn't? And what does it all mean? Here's how we see it," *Entertainment Weekly* 1105/1106 (June 4/11, 2010): 106.

¹⁵ Caroline Bland, Waltraud Maierhofer, and Gertrud M. Roeschd, *Women Against Napoleon: Historical and Fictional Responses to his Rise and Legacy* (Frankfurt/Main: Campus Verlag GmbH, 2007), 41.

INTRODUCTION

Napoleon once declared: “Great men are like meteors; they shine and consume their light in order to enlighten the earth.”¹ He promoted and honored great men throughout his reign. In art and literature, he presented himself as a modern example of “the world’s great leaders: Alexander, who conquered the East and dreamed of conquering the world; Caesar, Augustus, Charlemagne—the creators and the restorers of the Roman Empire whose very names were synonymous with the idea of a universal civilization.”² In addition to comparing himself to various great men, he established a Legion of Honor on 19 May 1802 to honor both civilians and soldiers, including non-ethnically French men.³ Napoleon not only created an Irish Legion in 1803 and later awarded William Lawless and John Tennent the Legion of Honour, he also gave them an Eagle with the inscription “L’Indépendance d’Irlande.”⁴ Napoleon awarded twenty-six of his generals the marshal’s baton from 1804 through 1815 and, in 1806, he further memorialized his soldiers by deciding to erect a Temple to the Glory of the Great Army modeled on Ancient designs.⁵ From 1806 through 1815, Napoleon had more men interred in the Panthéon in Paris than any other French leader before or after him. In works of art depicting

¹ Napoleon Bonaparte, *The Napoleon Calendar: A Quotation from the Works and Sayings of Napoleon for Every Day in the Year*, ed. John McErlean (Mississauga: Poniard Publishing, 1996), April 1.

² Georges Lefebvre, “A Romantic Tempered by Realpolitik,” *Napoleon and His Times: Selected Interpretations*, eds. Frank A. Kafker and James M. Laux (Malabar: Robert E. Krieger Publishing Company, 1989), 43.

³ Pierre-Louis Roederer, “Speech Proposing the Creation of a Legion of Honor, May 9, 1802,” *Napoleon: Symbol for an Age, A Brief History with Documents*, ed. Rafe Blaufarb (New York: Bedford/St. Martin’s, 2008), 101-102.

⁴ R. J. Tennant, “John Tennent of Napoleon’s Irish Legion,” *First Empire: The International Magazine for the Napoleonic Enthusiast, Historian and Gamer* 97 (November/December 2007): 5, 10.

⁵ Napoleon’s interest in ancient precedents persisted well after his departure from Egypt. In addition to the examples pertaining to the cult of great men mentioned in the main text, he also ordered, for example, “a big pyramid on the battlefield of Marengo and an elephant made from the melted-down guns of Spanish rebels.” Robert B. Holtman, *The Napoleonic Revolution* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1967), 171.

himself, Napoleon had his artists allude to “Caesar, Charlemagne, and even Moses.”⁶ In Napoleonic paintings, even when “the desired subjects are national and contemporary, they are also ‘Homeric,’” because they “display the ‘grandeur’ of the heroic virtues...”⁷ A striking relic of Napoleon’s admiration for Alexander the Great “survives in a precious table he commissioned, which ended up in Buckingham Palace. Made of porcelain and gilded bronze, it features the head of Alexander at the center of the tabletop, surrounded by a supporting cast of other military giants of the ancient world.”⁸ Although the Romans had their legions, Pantheon, and temples in ancient times and the French monarchy had their marshals since at least 1190, Napoleon blended both Roman and French traditions to compare himself to great men who lived in ancient and medieval times and to recognize the achievements of those who lived alongside him in the nineteenth century. He also used the cult of great men as essentially an oriflamme out of his belief that the “French are what the Gauls were: fierce and fickle. They have one fetish; honour. They must have distinctions. See how they bow before the stars of strangers!”⁹

In *Napoleon and Europe*, Frederick W. Kagan recently asked, “How important are the ‘great men’ of history compared to their numberless subjects, fellow citizens, and subordinates?”¹⁰ As indicated by the quotation with which I began this Introduction, for Napoleon, great men played a crucial role in molding history’s course. But what makes a great man to Napoleon?¹¹ How did Napoleon define great men? Why are the “heroes”

⁶ Rafe Blaufarb, *Napoleon: Symbol for an Age, A Brief History with Documents* (New York: Bedford/St. Martin’s, 2008), 13.

⁷ Christopher Prendergast, *Napoleon and History Painting: Antoine-Jean Gros’s La Bataille d’Eylau* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1997), 92.

⁸ Mary Beard, “Alexander: How Great?” on *The New York Review of Books* (27 October 2011), <http://www.nybooks.com/articles/archives/2011/oct/27/alexander-how-great/?pagination=false>.

⁹ See the entry for November 21 in Napoleon Bonaparte, *The Napoleon Calendar: A Quotation from the Works and Sayings of Napoleon for Every Day of the Year compiled by Dr. A. S. Rappoport*, ed. John McErlean (Mississauga: Poniard Publishing, 1996).

¹⁰ Frederick W. Kagan, *Napoleon and Europe, Volume I: The End of the Old Order, 1801-1805* (Cambridge: Da Capo Press, 2006), xx.

¹¹ Just as Napoleon’s notions of universal rights did not always extend to slaves and women, so to did his concept of “great” not apply to all aspects of individuals’ characters. As Napoleon hoped, he joined the Cult of Great Men and became a hero for people who lived even centuries after his death. Former California Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger said, “I’d always been impressed by stories of greatness and power. Caesar, Charlemagne, Napoleon were names I knew and

he most chose for comparison “great”? Napoleon once asserted that “Great tragedy is the school of great men.” Did all the men whom Napoleon considered “great” experience “great tragedy”? Are great men therefore also tragic figures? Is great tragedy a necessary experience for one to achieve greatness? Napoleon also said, “The men who have changed the world never did so by winning over the rulers, but always by exciting the masses.”¹² What men does he refer to and how did they and he “change the world...by exciting the masses”?

Where did all of these ideas come from? Was it the Enlightenment? After all, in 1807, Napoleon wrote to his brother Jérôme that he should be

remembered.” See Arnold Schwarzenegger, *Arnold: The Education of a Bodybuilder* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1977), 19. In their autobiography, Ben and Joe Weider, founders of the International Federation of Body Building—a member of the International Olympic Committee, address their cult of great men as consisting of not just such famous bodybuilders as Arnold Schwarzenegger, but also Alexander the Great and Napoleon Bonaparte. Both historical leaders appear in the book’s Index! Ben Weider, with whom I have corresponded and who subsequently made me a Fellow of the International Napoleonic Society, has joined the ranks of history’s great men in his own right as he is also president of the International Napoleonic Society, a Knight of the National Order of Quebec, an accomplished author, and a recipient of the Legion of Honor established by Napoleon. Alexander, Caesar, Napoleon, and Schwarzenegger, like most if not all, great men are still flawed. One may be great in one or more aspects, but nevertheless have other characteristics that should not be praised. After all, a moral man could not look upon all of Alexander, Caesar, Napoleon, and Arnold’s romantic and sexual relations as models to follow. Of course, perhaps it is these flaws that make them great *men*, i.e. people whose actions and motivations as fellow humans we may understand and whose footsteps we may realistically be able to follow, rather than gods whom no man can really truly know or whose power men cannot possess. Yet, at the same time, as committing adultery and fathering a child out of wedlock are shameful and inexcusable signs of weakness that reflect poor judgment and lack of self control, perhaps these flaws suggest that such men were not really “great” after all. See Ben and Joe Weider, *Brothers of Iron: How The Weider Brothers Created the Fitness Movement and Built a Business Empire* (Champaign: SportsPublishingLLC.com, 2006), 36, 61, 63, 67, 281, 299. With regards to Schwarzenegger, one final connection with the cult of great men perhaps bears mentioning. Just as Napoleon collected busts and statues of great men, so to did the Austrian immigrant to America centuries later. Schwarzenegger had an “enormous bust of Lenin in” his office and statues of Andropov and Chernenko by his swimming pool. As quoted in “Q+A: Arnold Speaks,” *Entertainment Weekly* 1149 (April 8, 2011): 35.

¹² See the entry for March 10 in *The Napoleon Calendar: A Quotation from the Works and Sayings of Napoleon for Every Day in the Year compiled by A.S. Rappoport*.

convinced by “reason and the enlightenment of your century;”¹³ in 1808, Gioacchino Giuseppe Serangeli painted Napoleon literally “bathed in light” as the “incarnation of enlightenment;”¹⁴ in 1809, Napoleon described his era as “these enlightened days;”¹⁵ and Johann Goethe described Napoleon as “always enlightened by reason ... He was in a permanent state of enlightenment.”¹⁶ How exactly did Napoleon enlighten the earth? Are there any connections between the High Enlightenment idea that certain “literary and political figures...were mainly men whose ‘greatness’ could excuse their failings” and who could be esteemed and admired “despite their vices” and Napoleon’s ideas of great men, including himself, still being great, regardless of imperfections or failures?¹⁷ George Armstrong Kelly writes, for example, that the marquis de Vauvenargues, the High Enlightenment author of the sentiments quoted above, “points toward Napoleon.”¹⁸ Or is the influence of the Enlightenment on Napoleon not as strong as one might think? “After all,” remarked Napoleon, “priests are worth more than all the Cagliostros,¹⁹ all the Kants, and all the dreamers of Germany.”²⁰

¹³ Napoleon Bonaparte, “Letter to Jérôme Bonaparte, King of Westphalia, November 15, 1807,” *Napoleon: Symbol for an Age, A Brief History with Documents*, ed. Rafe Blaufarb (New York: Bedford/St. Martin’s, 2008), 145.

¹⁴ Prendergast, *Napoleon and History Painting: Antoine-Jean Gros’s La Bataille d’Eylau*, 78-79.

¹⁵ Ronald Bruce Meyer, “Napoleon Bonaparte (1769),” *Ronald Bruce Meyer.com: “The Voice Man”* (accessed 27 June 2007): <http://www.ronaldbrucemeyer.com/rants/0815almanac.htm>.

¹⁶ J. David Markham, *Napoleon for Dummies: A Reference for the Rest of Us!* (Hoboken: Wiley Publishing, Inc., 2005), 14.

¹⁷ George Armstrong Kelly, *Moral Politics in Eighteenth-Century France* (Waterloo: Waterloo University Press, 1986), 83.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 137.

¹⁹ Napoleon also refers to the Italian Count Cagliostro on 1 June 1816: “As soon as I had power, I immediately re-established religion. I made it the groundwork and foundation upon which I built. I considered it as the support of sound principles and good morality, both in doctrine and in practice. Besides, such is the restlessness of men, that his mind requires that something undefined and marvelous which religion offers; and it is better for him to find it there, than to seek it of Cagliostro, of Mademoiselle Lenormand, or of the fortune-tellers and impostors.” Thus, Napoleon had a low opinion of Cagliostro, who represents a famous figure *not* considered a great man by Napoleon. Napoleon, “Emperor, 1804-14,” *History in Quotations: Reflecting 5000 Years of World History*, ed. M. J. Cohen and John Major (London: Cassell, 2004), 532.

²⁰ From the entry for July 23 of Napoleon Bonaparte, *The Napoleon Calendar: A Quotation from the Works and Sayings of Napoleon for every Day in the Year*.