

VISIONING THE NATION: CLASSICAL IMAGES AS
ALLEGORY DURING THE FRENCH REVOLUTION

by

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A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment for the requirements
for the degree Master of Arts
in the Department of History
in the College of Arts and Humanities
at the University of Central Florida
Orlando, Florida

Fall Term
2007

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ABSTRACT

In the latter half of the Eighteenth Century, France experienced a seismic shift in the nature of political culture. The king gave way to the nation at the center of political life as the location of sovereignty transferred to the people. While the French Revolution changed the structure of France's government, it also changed the allegorical representations of the nation. At the Revolution's onset, the monarchy embodied both the state and nation as equated ideas. During the Revolutionary Decade and through the reign of Napoleon different governments experienced the need to reorient these symbols away from the person of the king to the national community. Following the king's execution, the Committee government invented connections to the ancient past in order to build legitimacy for their rule in addition to extricating the monarchy's symbols from political life. During the rule of Napoleon, he used classical symbols to associate himself with Roman Emperors to embody the nation in his person. Through an examination of the different types of classical symbols that each government illustrates the different ways that attempted to symbolically document this important shift in the location of sovereignty away from the body of the king to the nation.

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CHAPTER ONE: VISUALIZING POWER DURING THE FRENCH REVOLUTION

Soldiers of my Old Guard: I bid you farewell. For twenty years I have constantly accompanied you on the road to honor and glory. In these latter times, as in the days of our prosperity, you have invariably been models of courage and fidelity.¹

-Napoleon Bonaparte, *Farewell to the Old Guard*

In 1814, Jacques Lois David completed one of his many masterworks, *Leonidas at Thermopylae*. Like many of David's previous works, it explored contemporary virtues in a classical setting. The work depicts the heroic stand of the 300 Spartans at Thermopylae and the painting closely parallels the collapse of Napoleon's once enormous empire. A generation before, David unveiled the *Oath of the Horatii*, a painting that presented Characters bound by oath, acting out of self-sacrifice, patriotism and duty to the state rather than obligation to hierarchy.² While many historians consider David a political artist, his work does illustrate the ways that classical imagery replaced various Old Regime symbols as allegorical representations of political virtues in a national community. While these paintings attempt to frame contemporary events within the context of the classical world, they also illustrate the growing belief that the classical past could be a guidepost for France's future.³ Between 1785 and 1815, the symbolic construct of the French state shifted from allegories of the monarchy towards symbols from antiquity associated with the nation. Understanding the ways that

¹ Napoleon Bonaparte, *Farewell to the Old Guard*

² Gillian Perry, ed. and Michael Rossington, ed. *Femininity and Masculinity in Eighteenth-century Art and Culture*, Manchester, Manchester University Press, 1994, p. 8

³ David Bell, *The First Total War: Napoleon's Europe and the Birth of Warfare as We Know It*, New York, Houghton-Mifflin, 2007.

monarchy and various governments during the French Revolution employed allegorical representations of the nation is vital to understanding not only the French Revolution, but also the process of shifting sovereignty from the monarchy to the nation.

While these paintings exemplify a particular political agenda, they do reflect the wider interest in antiquity that existed during the Eighteenth Century. Writers such as Voltaire, Rousseau and Montesquieu touched on various ancient references in their work and the works of these writers heavily influenced the Revolutionary generation, often serving as a basis for their actions. The writings of Rousseau were of particular importance in this case because so many Revolutionaries read his work. His endorsement of Greece and Rome as the highest points of Western Civilization, led many to attempt the creation of modern descendant of these civilizations that obtained legitimacy from its connection to this ancient past.⁴ Nearly all Eighteenth Century educations involved a close examination of a large number of Classical texts, complete with Latin and Greek language training.⁵ In many ways, antiquity seemed like a natural choice for many Revolutionaries to obtain allegorical representations because much of antiquity's symbolic construct was easily recognizable to a wide range of people within France.⁶ Furthermore, antiquity was the birthplace of the West's republican tradition and attempting to build mythological connections to this period represented an attempt

⁴ Jean-Jacques Rousseau, "Discourse on the Arts and Sciences" in J. J. Rousseau, *The Social Contract and the Discourses*, New York, David Campbell Publishers, 1992, pp. 4-5.

⁵ Harold T. Parker, *The Cult of Antiquity and the French Revolutionaries: A study in the Development of the Revolutionary Spirit*, Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1937, pp. 44-45.

⁶ *Ibid.*

to build legitimacy. Coupled with the political agendas of the Revolutionaries, allegories from the past provided an excellent foundation on which to build a New France.

Towards the end of the Eighteenth Century, the growth of scientific knowledge and the French Enlightenment began to erode traditional explanations and justifications for existing political and social institutions. Before the Eighteenth Century, the Bourbon Monarchy, Catholic Church, Nobility and even Parlements enjoyed a dominant voice in this discussion about public life. Beginning in the latter half of the Eighteenth Century though, growing public participation in discourse about public life led to growing demands for actual participation in political life.⁷ Within this emerging environment, the traditional justifications of social rank and hierarchy did not quell these new demands for involvement and coupled with France's external pressures, the monarchy to called the first Estates General in nearly two centuries. This attempt at solving France's national problems through reform quickly provided the Third Estate delegates an opportunity to raise questions about national representation that characterized much of the French Revolution. Eventually, the French monarchy, an instrumental part of the modern nation state's development and the creation of national sentiment, became an enemy of the Revolution and a larger conflict ensued between the monarchy and Revolution's visions of who spoke for the nation.⁸

⁷ Jurgen Habermas, Thomas Burger (trans.), *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere: An Inquiry into a Category of Bourgeois Society*, Cambridge, Massachusetts, MIT Press, 1991, pp. 14-27

⁸ David Bell, *The Cult of the Nation in Eighteenth Century France: Inventing nationalism 1680-1800*, Cambridge, Massachusetts, Harvard University Press, 2003. In this work, Bell discusses the monarchy's instrumental role in developing national sentiment in France during the Eighteenth Century.

The first section of Chapter Two examines the ways that the Bourbon Monarchy embarked on a program of political centralization that culminated with the West's first absolutist state. Religious conflict, increased administrative capability, noble infighting and capable kings all contributed to the success of the French monarchy occupying a central place in national political life. As the monarchy imposed higher levels of direct rule by Royal administrators throughout France, the monarchy increasingly represented the nation in the person of the king. This rise in national sentiment, embodied in the monarch provided the first initial allegory of the nation because the king came to symbolize France and the two became intertwined metaphors.⁹ During the Seven Years War, the monarchy equated its own success in the war with the success of France. This important turn marked the end of purely dynastic interests and the beginning of the national.¹⁰ Within this important crucible of the late Eighteenth Century, the French monarchy produced propaganda further associating the king with the nation.¹¹ As France moved towards the end of the Eighteenth Century, the Enlightenment, fiscal debt crisis, and political problems all conspired to erode the monarchy's ability to rule. A desperate Louis XVI called the Estates General and the French Revolution began.

The second section of Chapter Two examines the questions that arose during the French Revolution's initial stage about which groups ought to speak for the nation and where legitimacy originated. Conflict and tension quickly rose about the king's position in the new political arrangement, the rights of elected legislative assemblies

⁹ *Ibid*, 22-50.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 78-107.

¹¹ *Ibid.*

and the privileges of the nobility.¹² The battle over who would speak for the nation politically quickly led to conflicts about which visual allegories would represent the nation in the future.¹³ As the National Assembly drafted legislation defining the rights of French Citizens, abolishing feudalism and writing a constitution, they also implemented new symbols like the goddess Liberty that reflected the liberal values of the early Revolution. The conflict over the nature of these allegorical symbols that represented the nation led to an uneasy accommodation between the hierarchical values of the monarchy and the egalitarian values of the National Assembly.¹⁴ In the midst of this tension, the king attempted to flee the country in order to return in a more advantageous position and renegotiate the terms of the Revolution. This crisis led to the rise of radicals that effectively made the king an enemy of the nation.¹⁵

The Third Chapter examines the events that followed the king's flight and execution. During this period, the French Revolution quickly and suddenly transformed from a liberal attempt to reform the political system into an effort to remake society from the ground up. While the government declared itself a republic six months before, the

¹² Emmanuel Joseph Siéyès, "What is the Third Estate?" This famous pamphlet that appeared in early 1789 positions the nobility and clergy not as members of the nation, but enemies of the nation: "The noble order is not less estranged from the generality of us by its civil and political prerogatives...The Third Estate embraces then all that which belongs to the nation; and all that which is not the Third Estate, cannot be regarded as being of the nation."

¹³ Lynn Hunt, *Politics, Culture and Class in the French Revolution*, Berkeley, University of California Press, 1982.

¹⁴ David Jordan, *The King's Trial: Louis XVI vs. the French Revolution*, Berkeley, University of California Press, 1979. pp. 11-12.

¹⁵ Timothy Tackett, *When the King Took Flight*, Cambridge, Massachusetts, Harvard University Press, 2003, pp. 90-92. In this work, Tackett discusses the ways that French society radicalized during the Revolution, particularly following the king's flight to Varennes.

king's execution caused outrage throughout parts of France and much of Europe. The new government, headed by the Committee for Public Safety, held emergency powers and faced a myriad of challenges both within France and with other European states. The Committee also possessed a number of unique opportunities as well as the will to remake French political culture.¹⁶ Lynn Hunt discusses this situation in her work, *Politics, Culture and Class in the French Revolution*:

They (the Bourbon monarchy) had also succeeded in making power virtually coterminous with the symbolic apparatus of monarchy, especially the body of the king. To regain their own political responsibilities as citizens, to take power for themselves, the French had to eliminate all of those symbolic connections to the monarchy and the king's body. Eventually this took the form of putting the king on trial and executing him in public... Thus the revolutionaries' passion for the allegorical, the theatrical, and the stylized was not simply a bizarre aberration, but rather an essential element in their effort to mold free men. In the long run, moreover, symbolic forms lent the revolutionary experience psycho-political continuity. Its symbols and rituals gave the Revolution a *longue duree*, they were the tangible reminders of the secular tradition of republicanism and revolution.¹⁷

In addition to their program to crush royalist revolts in the southern and western parts of the country, the Committee also began to remake the allegorical symbols of the nation, replacing both Liberty and the monarchy with the powerful Hercules. This point is critical in understanding republicanism during the Revolution because of the government's need to create meaning and continuity that would underlie their political platform as well

¹⁶ Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origins and Spread of Nationalism*, New York, Verso, 1983, p. 11. Here, Anderson brings out a fundamental paradox of nationalism that French republicans found themselves faced with during the First Republic: "nation-states are widely conceded to be 'new' and 'historical,' the nations to which they give political expression always loom out of an immemorial past."

¹⁷ Hunt, *Politics Culture and Class*, p. 57.

as create historical legitimacy for their new agenda. The allegory of Hercules presented many opportunities for the new government because he projected images of both strength and unity. When the crises of 1793-1794 eventually passed and the Committee government fell, the images of Hercules began to change from a vigorous, active hero carrying the club of popular violence into a Roman patrician, standing calmly with Liberty. While the Committee failed to institute Hercules permanently, it did remake much of France's political culture because of its attempt to place the nation at the allegorical center of political life and this aspect of their program formed the basis for future government's legitimacy.

Chapter Four examines the ways that subsequent governments attempted to accommodate and symbolically represent the nation at the center of political life. In the period following the arrest and execution of Robespierre and his allies in the summer of 1794, the Directory governed France for five years with mixed results, leading to the Coup d'état of Napoleon Bonaparte. Beginning with his first government and constitution, the Consulate, Bonaparte regularly imported symbols, images and vocabulary from Rome's republic in an effort to both solidify his Revolutionary credentials as well as secure his own political legitimacy.¹⁸ Where previous governments during the Revolution struggled to move the symbolic representations of the state away from abstract virtues like freedom, strength and equality, Bonaparte created allegorical images that positioned himself as the new Caesar, rescuing France from the previous decade of instability and civil war. Positioning himself as a new

¹⁸ Robert Holtman, *The Napoleonic Revolution*, Baton Rouge, Louisiana State University Press, 1982.

Caesar had many advantages for the young general: he would allay fears of further violence and civil wars and at the same time, send a signal to the French population that he would usher in a glorious era of peace and prosperity, similar to his ancient Roman counterpart.¹⁹ For these reasons and others, Bonaparte's reign saw the symbols of modern France take shape and more importantly, the ways that Bonaparte used classical, particularly Roman symbols to maintain and enhance his personal standing as representative of the nation is a principle tactic that dictators employ through the modern era.

While the French Revolution caused tremendous turmoil in the closing decade of the Eighteenth Century, the Revolution's legacy inspires perhaps as much conflict in the more than two centuries since. General disagreement still exists among historians about the Revolution's cause and their effects on subsequent European history. Alexis de Tocqueville viewed the Revolution as a natural progression of state centralization begun under the monarchy and completed during the Revolution.²⁰ Marx viewed the Revolution as a class conflict event that created national political structures that mimicked economic realities that already existed. In modern history classrooms, the French Revolution often marks the division between the Early Modern and Modern periods of Western History. In each instance though, the Revolution's meaning remains a subject of frequent dispute because scholars disagree about the positive or negative implication of Revolutionary events. In many ways, an approach to examining the Revolution says as much about the politics of the scholar as it does about the nature of

¹⁹ *Ibid.*

²⁰ Alexis de Tocqueville, Alan Kahan (trans.), *The Old Regime and the French Revolution*, New York, Doubleday, 1955.

their scholarship. At the beginning of the Twentieth Century, scholars began to examine the different ways that French Revolutionaries changed political culture in the West and revived many classical images to do so.

Many of these early scholars frequently framed the Revolution within a Classical context. The writings of F. A. Aulard at the turn of the Twentieth Century and Harold Parker in the middle part of the Century, two historians often forgotten, have proved useful to my analysis because they particularly stand out because of the different ways they examine the Classical world's influence on the French Revolution. While Aulard's primary work was in the translation of Revolutionary documents, he did contribute dramatically to the field with his studies on the underlying political reasons underlying the Revolution itself.²¹ Most importantly though, Aulard was among the first historians of the Revolution to connect antiquity with the ideas and actions of the French Revolutionaries. Through his work cataloguing the proceedings of the Estates General and National Convention, he noted repeated instances of Revolutionaries referencing republican rhetoric from the Ancient world.²² Aulard went on to argue that many of the Revolutionary generation must have incorporated this symbolism and political rhetoric as a means to separate themselves from other politicians during this tumultuous decade where differences in political stances often meant the difference between life and death.

Harold Parker on the other hand did not simply suggest that the French Revolution incorporated some aspects of the classical world; he argued that this

²¹ F. A. Aulard, Bernard Miall (trans.) *The French Revolution: A Political History, 1789-1804*, New York, Scribner, 1910. A good translation of Aulard's seminal text that discusses the Revolutionary process, the actors and their motivations.

²² *Ibid.* Or, for another example of Aulard's work, see F. A. Aulard, *Christianity and the French Revolution*

connection to the classical world was central to the Revolution itself. In Parker's book, *The Cult of Antiquity in the French Revolution*, he describes an almost religious belief in the virtues of the classical past that many of the radical Revolutionaries shared. In this work, Parker develops the argument that classical themes, symbols and rhetoric peppered the Revolutionary experience because of three factors, education, the Enlightenment and the need to develop a political ideology that did not revolve around the monarchy.²³ An aspect of Parker's work that raises some important questions lies in his work on republican pamphlets. During the early stages of the Revolution, monarchists wrote most of the pamphlets about republicanism (or at least, the most of this group survive in the sources) and they argued that France was far too large a country for a republic.²⁴ Instead of using the ancient past a model for France's future, these pamphleteers used the Classical world as a warning about how republicanism can destroy a society due to its instability. Furthermore, the pamphlets he uses as examples of pro-republican rhetoric draw a definite parallel to the Classical world because they discuss the greatness of the ancients and how if France created a republic, it would exceed the ancient's accomplishments many times over.

In the more recent past, many Marxist historians ignore developments in political culture especially symbolic representations of the nation and their reluctance to discuss

²³ Parker, *The Cult of Antiquity and the French Revolution*, pp. 55-57.

²⁴ Parker's book includes an almost endless stream of pamphlets from the Revolutionary era. Often he includes full texts and translations of pamphlets, both pro and anti-Revolution. Perhaps most importantly, Parker illustrates, long before Darnton that a literate public hungrily consumed these pamphlets and the need to convince this reading public was a central aspect of the revolutionary process. See also, Robert Darnton, *The Literary Underground of the Old Regime*, Cambridge, Massachusetts, Harvard University Press, 1985.

political culture lies in their complete focus on class conflict as the engine of historical change. To the Marxists, the bourgeoisies' imperatives to create a state that promoted a capitalist rather than feudal mode of production and this economic factor trumps all other historical consideration. Contestation over political symbols following the monarchy represents only a small footnote in this larger process of political development.²⁵ These early Marxist historians examined the historical processes at work in the large picture of the Revolution, how the bourgeoisies formed connections with the sans-culottes because it needed to in order to defeat the monarchy and nobility in the central conflict of the Revolution.²⁶ All of the Revolution's events, the Declaration of the Rights of Man and Citizen, the execution of Louis XVI, Enragés, radical newspapers, international war and conflict, even the rise of Napoleon Bonaparte all fit into the frame of class and economic relations. Put simply, within the Marxist context, class was the central organizing principle of the Revolution because the outcome benefited the bourgeoisies class, it was ultimately their revolution, the feudal mode of production and the state architecture that reflected it collapsed in the face of modern capitalism.

²⁵ Albert Soboul and Georges Lefebvre are two noted historians that formulated the Marxist, class analysis of the French Revolution that much of the subsequent work either supported or reacted to. See, Georges Lefebvre, *The Coming of the French Revolution*, Princeton, Princeton University Press, 2005 (reprint). The classic Marxist interpretation of the French Revolution was originally published before World War II. See also, Albert Soboul, *A Short History of the French Revolution, 1789-1799*, Berkeley, University of California Press, 1977.

²⁶ Albert Soboul, Allan Forrest and Colin Jones (trans.), *The French Revolution, 1787-1799: From the Storming of the Bastille to Napoleon*, New York, Random House, 1977.

George Rudé's work, *The Crowd in the French Revolution* examines the role that popular action played in the Revolutionary process. Rudé ultimately concludes that this popular action was the defining feature of the French Revolution from its onset through 1795 and that this popular intervention shaped the Revolution's course.²⁷ He examines the different groups that participated in politics, police records and psychological tensions between different classes. Rude ultimately argues that the Revolution was successful because the *sans-culottes* were able to assimilate the liberal ideas of their leaders²⁸. The true value in Rudé's work though lies in the comparisons he draws between popular involvement during the French Revolution and other mass movements throughout Western history. From Britain to Germany, Rudé argues that the idea of popular participation begun during the French Revolution transformed from a French novelty into a cornerstone of Western radical politics. While Rudé believes that class was an important component in this transformation, he also begins to examine culture, ideas and individual motivation as key components in understanding the Revolutionary process between 1789 and 1795.

Beginning in the 1960's though, Scholarship of the French Revolution began to move away from the Marxists as a new generation of historians examined other issues such as existing institutions, culture and the role of political discourse in the revolutionary process.²⁹ Historians like Furet and Cobbin began to critique the work of

²⁷ George Rudé, *The Crowd in the French Revolution*, New York, Oxford University Press, 1967, pp. 8-9.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 232.

²⁹ Francois Furet, Elborg Forster (trans), *Interpreting the French Revolution*, Cambridge, England, Cambridge University Press, 1981. In this work, Furet issues more of a historiography than history, examining the different interpretations of the

Marxist historians arguing that something as complex and cataclysmic as the French Revolution cannot be explained in terms of a mere conflict between modalities of production, but rather it is a product of a specific set of social, political, economic and historical circumstances.³⁰ These revisionists do not view the French Revolution as an inevitable historical event; rather they see the Revolution as a process of consolidation, of bringing together disparate economic, geographic and political groups and forming a more unified society. Viewed through this lens, the French Revolution was more about a homogenization brought on by increased urbanism and literacy, all of which ran aground the existing political structures.

Lynn Hunt took many important aspects of these revisionist historians and focused on national symbols and the important role they played in the development of modern political culture. In Hunt's interpretation, national symbols provide a central focus that unifies society around a single center and the French Revolution essentially shifted this center from the monarchy to the nation.³¹ In her work, *Politics, Culture and Class*, Hunt lays out this argument about the effects of changing the central aspect of political culture.³² She ultimately concludes that the execution of the king was an important moment because it marked the break point in the transition between the monarchy-centered Old Regime and the nation centered republic. In her analysis, Hunt

French Revolution and postulating the various problems with the Marxist interpretation. Furet remains important in the historiography not because he was the first revisionist historian to challenge Marxist orthodoxy, but rather because of his skill at effectively summarizing the revisionist position within the historiography.

³⁰ Alfred Cobban, *The Social Interpretation of the French Revolution*, Cambridge, England, Cambridge University Press, 1999 (reprint), pp. 8-10.

³¹ Hunt, *Politics, Culture and Class*, pp. 52-57.

³² *Ibid.*

also examines the various undercurrents of Revolutionary culture and argues that the Revolutionaries changed culture and that this change dramatically affected the nation's political life. This interpretation stands in contrast to much of the previous scholarship because it posits culture as a preeminent factor in the Revolutionary process rather than politics or economics. Hunt's work remains influential among historians that examine the ways that French cultural changes that emerged during the Enlightenment institutionalized during the French Revolution.

Cultural/Gender historians like Joan Landes, recently took on issues of political symbols and their role in the French Revolution head on, examining the particular ways that the Revolution both included and excluded women from political life. Landes concludes that the masculine language of the Enlightenment translated into a masculine, patriarchal state that ultimately relegated women to a domestic position.³³ The development of a rational, public sphere necessitated the exclusion of women because of the Enlightenment's gender sensibilities of complimentary virtues.³⁴ Unlike previous interpretive frameworks, gender historians analyze the ways that the Revolution used both masculine and feminine symbols in positive and negative ways because these national symbols often reinforced popular conceptions of natural gender roles for men and women. A picture of Hercules taking action, or the image of an eagle denoted male dominance of the political realm because both of these symbols reflect

³³ Joan Landes, *Women and the Public Sphere in the Age of the French Revolution*, Ithaca, Cornell University Press, 1988. In this work, Landes argues that the Enlightenment created a cultural environment where masculine language replaced feminine relationships. See also, Joan Landes, *Visualizing the Nation: Gender, Representation and Revolution in Eighteenth Century France*, Ithaca, Cornell University Press, 2001.

³⁴ Landes, *Women and the Public Sphere*, pp. 170-172.

masculine qualities. Conversely, symbols of the goddess liberty, passively standing by while others perform the action, or a liberty tree fertilizing the ground denotes feminine qualities of distance and inactivity.³⁵ Taken together, the new symbols did not merely present a different way of interpreting the nation, but also the place of gender within this new nation and the ways that decisions about gender unfolded during this unique period had a tremendous effect on the social/gender order that would follow the Revolution.

As the Revolution moved from a liberal attempt at restructuring the state into a full-blown restructuring of society to a military dictatorship, the ways that various governments employed allegorical representations from the ancient world was an integral part of the platform of each incarnation. While textual and even musical sources exist that governments used to incite nationalist sentiment, images were (and very much still do) represent the principle ways that governments allegorically represent the people they govern. While many historians examine the historical context, political outcomes and cultural changes the Revolution brought about, they often ignore the types of symbols each government employed and how each of these symbols signaled a conflict over how to represent the nation. The following chapters will examine the different ways that various symbols reflected each government's values regarding the nation. In the early Revolution, following the king's execution and through Bonaparte's reign, shifts took place that called into question the fundamentals of political society. At the Revolution's conclusion, France was irrevocably changed, despite the efforts of Europe's victorious powers to reinstall the Bourbons, the nation remained at the center of political life until the current day. The Revolution and its construction of nationalism

³⁵ Landes, *Visualizing the Nation* p. 74.

fundamentally altered France, transforming it from a society embodied by an absolute monarch into a state embodied in every member of society.

CHAPTER TWO: INVENTING THE NATION

These principles, universally acknowledged by the entire kingdom, are that the King alone must possess the sovereign power in his kingdom; that He is answerable only to God in the exercise of his power; that the tie which binds the King to the Nation is by nature indissoluble; that the interests and reciprocal obligations between the King and his subjects serve only to reassure that union.¹

-Lamoignon, "The Principles of the French Monarchy"

Beginning in the Seventeenth Century, Louis XIV actively began to centralize the French state. During his rule, he established direct rule over much of France, built a large central bureaucracy, transferred power to royal ministers and built the palace of Versailles. While historians debate the efficacy of this program and many of Louis XIV's efforts met with mixed results at best, the precedent of political centralization had begun. Gradually, the monarchy transformed from an institution of nobility, dependant on private holdings and personal fealty into an institution that sat at the center of a kingdom with several transnational holdings and a vast overseas empire. A century after Louis XIV took the throne, the monarchy, nobility and Parelements operated within a system of privileges, rights and obligations that governed much of this central state. In the middle of the Eighteenth Century, Enlightenment ideas spread throughout Europe and the traditions of monarchical rule began to erode. During this period between 1750 and 1789, this decline in the monarchy's legitimacy coupled with the rise of Enlightenment values shifted the center of political sovereignty from the king to the

¹ Lamoignon, "The Principles of the French Monarchy" (1787), in, Lynn Hunt, Jack Censor, *Liberty, Equality, Fraternity, State College, Pennsylvania State University, 1998, CD-ROM*

nation and a large number of visual representations of the state illustrate this change from monarchy to representative government.

The question of when the nation emerged as an entity that moved to the center of the political system emerged in the last fifty years within the scholarship of nationalism. This debate began to attack many preconceptions about the nation as an ancient institution, revealing its modern origins, commensurate with the rise of a centralized state and language. In his highly influential work, *Peasants into Frenchman*, Eugen Weber argues that this process began in the middle of the Nineteenth Century and culminated on the eve of World War One.² In Weber's mind, the cultural Enlightenment of the Eighteenth Century, the tumultuous events of the French Revolution and rising living standards were, in fact, strictly an urban phenomenon and that despite these wide-ranging changes, life in France's rural areas changed little from the previous centuries. To Weber, the notion of France is not a natural evolution, but rather a social construction of the Nineteenth Century. Benedict Anderson on the other hand, believes that this invention of the nation occurred much earlier, perhaps in the mid-Eighteenth Century and was the result of a widespread expansion of the published word that began at the same time. Driven by capitalist imperatives, printers began producing material in vernacular languages because of the vastly larger population that would be target through such business practices.³ While Weber believes that the idea of a national community did not appear until the late Nineteenth Century, Anderson

² Eugen Weber, *Peasants into Frenchman: The Modernization of Rural France, 1870-1914*, Stanford, Stanford University Press, 1976, pp. 5-7.

³ Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities, Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, New York, Verso Press, 2006 (reprint), pp. 37-39.

argues that the national community, particularly in France developed in the middle Eighteenth Century because of the emphasis placed on national language and culture. Eric Hobsbawm falls chronologically in the middle of these two scholars, arguing that the nation was essentially a creation of the period that immediately followed the Age of Revolutions. Like Weber, Hobsbawm believes that the nation largely emerged as a product of state power as a new means of gaining popular legitimacy and the more that European states democratized, the more important the nation became as a political entity.⁴

David Bell has recently emerged in this discussion about the origins of nationalism, arguing that it happened far earlier in France than the previous literature suggests. In his work, *The Cult of the Nation*, Bell argues that the myths surrounding the *patrie* were a unique creation of Eighteenth Century France and that nationalism grew out of this peculiar sense of country.⁵ Bell also examines the role that external circumstances played in the process, most notably the Century's protracted military conflicts. The many wars that France participated in necessitated a more centralized government and an several programs intended to build morale among the population laid a cornerstone of France's national community.⁶ Taken together, these historians argue that the nation's emergence coincided with the growth in state power and the emergence of centralized governments. Each scholar attempts to point out the ways

⁴ Eric J. Hobsbawm, "The Invention of Tradition," in, Eric J. Hobsbawm, Terrence Ranger (ed.), *The Invention of Tradition*, Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1992, pp. 1-2.

⁵ David Bell, *The Cult of the Nation on France: Inventing Nationalism, 1680-1800*, Cambridge, Massachusetts, Harvard University Press, 2003, pp. 6-7.

⁶ *Ibid.*

that the nation was human choice, not natural evolution and examining this shift from kingdom to nation in France illustrates how the new sovereignty of the population replaced that of the king.

In the final century of the Early Modern period, French monarchs engaged in this program to centralize state power around the king and this effort began the gradual process of the development of national sentiment.⁷ Throughout history, monarchs have relied on particular groups of political symbols that reinforce the status of the king to maintain their aura of legitimacy and the Bourbon monarchs of France were certainly no different.⁸ During this approximately one hundred year period though, the nature and perception of these symbols would change due to a concerted effort on the part of the various interests within the monarchy itself to build a national consensus and justification for the king's policies.⁹ The writings of Jacques Bossuet illustrate this transition because he provided a powerful intellectual underpinning for absolutism. His argument for the patriarchal, familial state placed the king squarely at the head of the

⁷ James B. Collins, *The State in Early Modern France*, Cambridge, England, Cambridge University Press, 1995. Collins examines a wide range of issues in the book, but his central contention, that France was not an absolute monarchy as previously imagined, but rather a collection of rules, institutions and financial systems that served that benefited the clique of elite. He further argues that the growth in royal power was more the result of expedient financial considerations rather than the belief of creating a divine right kingship.

⁸ *Ibid.*

⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 173-174. Here, Collins makes the argument that Louis XIV “did more than any other king to undermine the sacral nature of the French Kingship” than any other French monarch. Collins continues, ultimately making the argument that the monarch's claims to absolute authority as a tactic to solve contemporary problems created a set of long term problems that would eventually overwhelm the monarchy itself.

government, as a father would be head of a household.¹⁰ In Bossuet's mind, the king was the head and representative of society, not a member of it. The visual imagery of French monarchs in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Century reflect this idea because they show the monarchs awash in symbols of power and divinity. This system of representation always showed the king's entire body because it was the source of sovereignty.¹¹ Portraits rarely included only the king's face and this illustration of the king's body drew connections to his position as the nation's paternal figure. This intellectual theory of absolutism and visual representation of the monarchy began the process of moving the king to the center of national political life.

At the beginning of the Eighteenth Century, the growing literacy of France's urban classes combined with the Enlightenment to create a set of challenges to the monarchy itself, often from within the existing political structure.¹² This widespread literacy was an important concurrent development to the growth of national sentiment because it intensified the debates about the relationship between the monarchy and society. Various factions within political society that possessed privileges such as the Parlements or various nobles often questioned the king's actions and often times openly defied them with elaborate explanations to a newly literate public.¹³ While the

¹⁰ Jacques Bossuet, Patrick Riley (trans.), *Politics Drawn from the Very Holy Words of Scripture*, New York, Cambridge University Press, 1999, pp. 62-63.

¹¹ Ernst Kantorowitz, *The King's Two Bodies*, Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1957, p. 8-10.

¹² Marina Valensise, "The French Constitution in Prerevolutionary Debate," *The Journal of Modern History*, Vol. 60, 1988, Supplement: Rethinking French Politics in 1788, p. s36

¹³ Jurgen Habermas, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere: an Inquiry into a Category of Bourgeoisie Society*, Thomas Burger and Frederick Lawrence, trans, Cambridge, Massachusetts, MIT Press, 1989

monarchy on the one hand attempted to consolidate power through the effective use of royal administrators, the French political structure cracked along different lines because of increased public discourse in political life.

In this milieu, the nature of the king's power began to change because of the changes in the society that he ruled. Before and during much of the Eighteenth Century, the monarchy consolidated its position at the center of government rule and politics focused on the king's body. In this system, all political attention turned towards the monarch and all those subject to his rule existed as members of the kingdom.¹⁴

Marina Valensise describes this idea of the monarchy in her article "The French Constitution in Prerevolutionary Debate:"

The sovereign authority of the monarch: he was to have full, entire and independent power. Of divine origin, this authority made the king the supreme legislator of the kingdom, excluding, by means of metaphysical representation of power, any legislative vocation on the part of the nation. As both law-giver and law-wielder the king of France had no superior authority but God. The king's actions were inscribed in an ancient conception of justice considered as the source of law, of which he was not merely the repository but also the interpreter.¹⁵

This description clearly illustrates a conception of the monarchy as an institution in the Aristotelian chain of being between man and God. At some point in the Eighteenth Century, this shifted and political life reoriented away from the hierarchical model of

¹⁴ Kantorowitz, *The King's Two Bodies*. In this section, Kantorowitz elucidates the basic theory of absolute monarchies, that the king had a physical body that occupied the throne, but also, he possessed a spiritual body that connected the country to God in a great chain of being.

¹⁵ Valensise, p. s36. In this passage, Valensise discusses an ongoing debate about the concept of a constitution in France before the Revolution. She ultimately settles on this excellent description of absolutism.

kingship towards a more horizontal model of politics.¹⁶ As political culture moved away from a vertical model and the public enjoyed a greater role in political life, the king's centrality to the political began to diminish as well. In the previous model, all of France's political life centered on the king, in the developing new model, the people sat at the center of political life and determining where the people lived on a map established a geographic area that the government should rule, a key component of national sentiment with the king as supreme national representative.¹⁷

The Seven Years War represents an example of this growing conflagration between the monarchy and the nation because of the clear connections between the king and national interest. The war created a series of crises that afforded the monarchy an opportunity to exert dominance over national affairs because of the financial needs associated with the war's increased costs.¹⁸ While the Seven Years War remains an important event in Western History because of its realignment of Europe's political and economic power relationships, it also marked an important shift in the ways that the French monarchy associated itself with the national body politic.¹⁹ As the war progressed and French prospects for a favorable outcome to the fighting

¹⁶ Dena Goodman, *The Republic of Letters, A Cultural History of the French Enlightenment*, Ithaca, Cornell University Press, 1994. In this work, Goodman examines the ways that the Enlightenment changed the nature of political life because it created a public intellectual community that discussed the political issues of the day.

¹⁷ Anderson, *Imagined Communities*.

¹⁸ Charles Tilly, "State and Counterrevolution in France," in Ferenc Feher, ed., *The French Revolution and the Birth of Modernity*, Berkeley, University of California Press, 1990, p. 51

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, Tilly remarks "War made the greatest difference because it expanded not only armies and navies but also fiscal administration, supply services, support for veterans, and national debt; those expansions, in turn inflated the state's demands on its subject populations."

diminished, the level of propaganda increased dramatically in an effort to gain public support for the faltering war effort.²⁰ The increasing financial and political stake of the French Monarchy in the war necessitated new strategies to raise public support for the war and these strategies often included broad and direct appeals to popular opinion to shore up the war effort.²¹ Both written and visual propaganda encouraged contributions to the war, both financial and physical and often times drew lines between the French and English, emphasizing the civilized nature of the former and the brutishness of the latter.²² Following the Treaty of Paris in 1763, the tone of this material retreated significantly, regarding England as a “rival nation” rather than a state comprised of barbarians.²³ The importance of this shift lies in the ways that the monarchy began to speak for France and in many ways became the embodiment of the French people, drawing connections between the monarchy’s and France’s fortunes.

While the historiography of the French Revolution discusses the ways that the Revolution reoriented politics away from the monarchy towards the nation in order to bolster their own legitimacy as representatives of the nation, it often ignores the ways that the French monarchy engaged in the same activities before the Revolution.

²⁰ Bell, *Cult of the Nation*. In this section, Bell discusses the ways that Royal propagandists drew lines between the French and English, who were framed as “barbarians.” He argues here that during this war, appeals were made on a patriotic level and they frequently equated the king’s interest to the nation’s interest.

²¹ Theda Skocpol and Meyer Kestnbaum, “Mars Unshackled: The French Revolution in World-Historical Perspective,” in *The French Revolution and the Birth of Modernity*, pp. 17-18.

²² Bell, *Cult of the Nation*, 78-84. Bell notes here quite effectively that the differences were political and national rather than religious, despite the religious differences. In other words, the monarchy was more closely associated with the nation on its own terms rather than the divine terms of the Church. By comparison, in England much of the war propaganda contains anti-Catholic diatribes against France.

²³ *Ibid.*

Through referencing a supposed long line of French Kings that ruled since the time of Clovis in an unbroken line, the monarchy attempted to invent myths about its own past as a means of creating legitimacy in the present. On each occasion of a public display of royal power, a wide array of symbols, rituals and language asserted the ancient nature of the monarchy.²⁴ It was only because of the recent centralization of power that the monarchy more effectively ruled France, but these ancient assertions illustrate an important way the monarchy itself changed because the engagement of the public for support during the war exemplifies the subtle ways that sovereignty was shifting towards the nation.²⁵ In David Bell's work, *The Cult of the Nation*, he discusses the ways that the tumult of the wars led every king to be a patriot. He cites an anonymous speech given to the Academy of Lyon in 1762: "The King and the *patrie* are two objects that are united, incorporated together... in the hearts of the nation, as in the national constitution."²⁶ One of Bell's key assertions in this work has to do with the ways that French nationalism, or that is to say, the sense of a national community in France with connections between members of the national body was not a product of the Revolution as much of the historiography suggests. Bell argues that it was under the absolute monarchs of the Old Regime that this process began and that associating the king with the state and the citizenry is where nationalism's identity lies. The speaker asserts here that a mythical-historical connection exists between the king, the nation and the national constitution and that this connection is somehow rooted in a long arc of history, as though it were part of a natural evolution of political affairs rather than a consequence

²⁴ *Ibid.*

²⁵ *Ibid.*

²⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 63.

of contemporary events. What this passage illustrates though is the emergence of the idea of France as a nation and the king as its representative.

Towards the End of the Eighteenth Century, the foundations of the French monarchy that began to crack decades earlier started to collapse. Financial difficulties, a string of military defeats, and the Enlightenment's constant literary attack on the institutions of the monarchy and nobility created a situation where questions constantly arose questioning the king's ability to lead. The economic crisis of the latter 1780's proved to be an obstacle the monarchy was unable to overcome and this crisis prompted Louis XVI to call for an Estates General to deal with France's mounting problems. The Estates General quickly transformed from a body to build a national consensus on how to address France's political and financial problems into a legislative assembly that claimed authority from the nation to speak on behalf of France. In this important moment, the monarchy still symbolically sat at the center of the French state, but it now faced competition from the nation for control of that state. This early phase of the French Revolution attempted to create national, representative institutions that would give voice to this new source of political sovereignty under the monarchy. Before the upheaval, civil strife and foreign wars that mark much of the Revolutionary decade, the French Revolution was a movement to reform the government in an attempt to modernize its institutions.²⁷ The Declaration of the Rights of Man, abolition of privilege and the creation of the National Assembly all represent reformist attempts rather than a

²⁷ William Doyle, *The Oxford History of the French Revolution*, New York, Oxford University Press, 1989.

complete recasting of society.²⁸ While considerable friction existed between the Revolutionary government and the monarchy, many members of the National Assembly wanted to maintain the monarchy as an institution because of their desire to maintain a link with France's cultural traditions as well as maintain a practical sense of political stability.²⁹ A symbolic conflict also existed within this milieu because the symbols of monarchy required an emphasis on the king as the source of sovereignty while the new government attempted to constitute symbols that positioned the population as the source of legitimate government and this conflict lies at the heart of these dramatically different visions of the state's symbolic structure.³⁰ In this struggle, symbols representing legitimacy from above and legitimacy from below vied for centrality in the new discourse of politics.

During this initial conflict, the different representations of the nation, the monarchy and power all changed rapidly as the National Assembly attempted to legitimize its actions. This new arrangement immediately created conflict between those clamoring for reform and those insisting on the maintenance of privilege. David Jordan describes the situation in his acclaimed book, *The King's Trial*:

The king was a problem for the Revolution from the beginning... For 175 years, the kings of France had ruled under the legal maxim 'the king can do no wrong'; they had said, as Louis XVI said when a subject challenged the legality of his actions, 'it is legal because I wish it.' This view of government and society could not live in harmony with its antithesis, a representative national assembly elected by manhood suffrage."³¹

²⁸ *Ibid.*

²⁹ Timothy Tackett, *When the King Took Flight*, Cambridge, Massachusetts, Harvard University Press, 2003. pp. 108-109.

³⁰ Bell, *The Cult of the Nation*, pp. 154-155.

³¹ David Jordan, *The King's Trial: Louis XVI vs. The French Revolution*, Berkeley, University of California Press, 1979, p. 11.

Here, Jordan lays out one of the Revolution's most pressing issues, how to reconcile the monarchy with the values of Revolutionaries, two seemingly opposite conceptions of power coexisting under the new government. While the monarchy embraced the nation as a means of gaining political support, the king was certainly hesitant about allowing the nation a prominent voice in political life. Symbolically this also presented a problem because it necessitated a juxtaposition of symbols that represented the nation alongside symbols that represented the monarchy.

When the Estates General gave way to the formation of the National Assembly, visual images of the nation changed a well and this shift moved France from a monarch centered representation of the nation towards a public centered representation. One of the National Assembly's first actions was to pass the "Declaration of the Rights of Man and Citizen" in the summer of 1789.³² While this action symbolically guaranteed the rights of all Frenchmen, it also firmly established the rule of law as the guiding principle of the new government. Through the codification of rights, the National Assembly essentially placed members of the nation above all other political consideration. Louis XVI's refusal to sign the Declaration illustrates the challenge it posted because of its explicit rejection of the monarchy as the source of political authority.³³ Pictures of the Declaration needed to contain a symbolic architecture that demonstrated this shift in sovereignty from the king to the nation. The following image of the Declaration shows

³² Doyle, *The Oxford History of the French Revolution*, pp. 112-115.

³³ *Ibid.*

the different ways that the National Assembly attempted to gain legitimacy for themselves.



Figure 1: Declaration of the Rights of Man and Citizen³⁴

Several aspects of this representation demonstrate this attempt to shift the symbols of state power towards the nation. First, the text of the Declaration appears on two tablets similar to the Ten Commandments, emphasizing the need for a supreme law that would bind the nation together. The use of a two-tablet motif also helped build a historical

³⁴ Lynn Hunt and Jack Censor, "Declaration of the Rights of Man and Citizen, Liberty, Equality, Fraternity."

connection that the National Assembly lacked, allowing it to claim a reconstitution of ancient traditions rather than the invention of new ones. Secondly, the placement of the fasces between the two tablets also lends it authority because of the fasces' ancient roots as a symbol of rightful, legitimate authority. While the National Assembly agreed that the king would still be instrumental in the construction of a new political society built around representative institutions, the placement of the fasces on the Declaration of the Rights of Man places the rule of law above all existing institutions. Thirdly, the placement of a Phrygian cap above the fasces associates the Declaration and the power of law with the Revolution itself. In the Roman world, freed slaves donned the Phrygian cap as a way of identifying their status and during the French Revolution, many revolutionaries used the cap as a means of identifying those sympathetic to the Revolution.³⁵ The cap quickly came to symbolize the Revolution itself and its positioning above the fasces highlights the belief among the National Assembly members that they now represented the nation and that ultimate sovereignty rested with the nation as well. Taken together, the symbolic structure of this incarnation of the Declaration illustrate the different ways that the newly formed National Assembly attempted to visually represent this shift to the nation at the center of politics.

In the wake of the August Decrees and the Declaration of the Rights of man, the National Assembly went about consolidating power despite strong resistance from the king. Before the National Assembly began their program of reforms, the Louis XVI issued his own vision for the Revolution, called the *séance royale*, Louis insisted on the

³⁵ J. David Harden, "Liberty Caps and Liberty Trees," *Past and Present*, No. 146, Feb., 1995, pp. 66-102.

maintenance of property and privilege as the Revolution moved forward.³⁶ The failure of the Third Estate and later National Assembly to consider or implement any of Louis' suggestions led to increased conflict because it in many ways convinced Louis that the Revolution was his enemy. Between 1789 and 1790, the Assembly took drastic steps regarding the Catholic Church; seizing all church property, eliminating their ability to collect tithe taxes and eventually, the Civil Constitution of the Clergy that nationalized all church employees.³⁷ While Louis publicly signed these measures, he vigorously opposed their enactment. Radical clubs began to appear in Paris and the increasing atmosphere of uncertainty led Louis to flee the country in an attempt to renegotiate the terms of the French Revolution.³⁸

Following the king's failed flight from France and subsequent return to Paris, his position as monarch held a tenuous balance with the government. Before his attempted escape, Louis still held an important position within the French government under the Constitution. He was Chief Executive, able to veto laws and Commander in Chief of France's armed forces. Many within the legislature wanted to keep the king as a means of balancing or dividing power among these branches of government.³⁹ The Revolutionaries did not want to abolish the monarchy initially; they simply wanted the king to be the leader of the nation rather than a person above the nation.⁴⁰ Following his flight though, his support among both the population and in the government

³⁶ *séance royale*, in *The French Revolution Sourcebook*, John Hardman, ed., New York, Hodder Arnold Publication, 1998.

³⁷ Doyle, *The Oxford History of the French Revolution*, pp. 136-140.

³⁸ Jordan, *The King's Trial*, pp. 17-20.

³⁹ Doyle, *The Oxford History of the French Revolution*, pp. 112-115.

⁴⁰ Tackett, *When the King Took Flight*, pp. 36-37.

dwindled severely and left with almost no allies he occupied a precarious political position.⁴¹ In July of 1792, a crowd stormed the Tuileries palace and forced Louis to wear the red Phrygian cap as a sign of his commitment to the Revolution. Louis had little choice but to consent and the following image illustrates this awkward juxtaposition.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 109-110.



Figure 2: Louis XVI, King of the French⁴²

In this portrait, Louis XVI appears wearing the Phrygian cap with the Revolutionary cockade. One of the interesting aspects of this illustration lies in the title that identifies Louis as the king of the French, rather than the king of France. This title places Louis within a model of politics where he is member of the nation and an expression of

⁴² In, Jordan, The King's Trial.

national politics rather than a figure that occupies the center of a hierarchical system where he is the focus of political life. In this portrait, the king does not represent a single source of sovereignty, but rather he serves the nation as a member bound by national law. The symbolic representation of power here has completely turned because the king no longer competes with the Revolution; he is a servant of the Revolution. The shift in the location of sovereignty is complete and many in French society began to ask questions about whether the nation even needs a king to rule.

In her work, *Politics, Culture and Class in the French Revolution*, Lynn Hunt discusses the need to replace the symbols of the nation following the monarchy's collapse. She illustrates an important aspect of the profound changes that occurred in the Eighteenth Century, the ways that the French state and its entire political culture revolved around the monarchy. In an important section of this book, Hunt discusses at length how the abolition of the monarchy generated a need to reorient these symbols to reflect the political realities of the newly declared republic.⁴³ The collapse of the monarchy in August of 1792, not a month after he donned the liberty cap created a vacuum of power and representation that needed addressing. The task of reorienting these symbols would certainly be a difficult one because of the egalitarian, rather than hierarchical structure of the Revolution's ideals and its attending symbolic structure.⁴⁴ As the French Revolution moved from its initial stage and descended into radicalism following the king's execution, it was in the context of popular rule. The last decades of the monarchy and the early phase of the French Revolution built a foundation for

⁴³ Lynn Hunt, *Politics, Culture and Class in the French Revolution*, Berkeley, University of California Press, 1982, pp. 52-55

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*

nationalism that successive governments built on. The centralization of the state, the growing importance of public opinion and the development of national sentiment all established the nation as the central political actor in this new era. In the next two years, this new nation would take up action against its enemies, both foreign and domestic and emerge far stronger and terrifying than anyone could have imagined just a few short years before.

CHAPTER THREE: HERCULES, LIBERTY AND REPUBLICANS, 1793-1794

I speak of the public virtue which worked so many wonders in Greece and Rome and which ought to produce even more astonishing things in republican France.¹

- Robespierre, *Report on Political Morality*

During the summer of 1793, The Committee for Public Safety gained near absolute control over the young French Republic and began a program of political, social and cultural change that would have a lasting impact well beyond the period of Revolutionary turmoil. In place of the recently eliminated monarchy, Robespierre and his associates on the Committee sought to build a new society, based on egalitarian values, where civic virtue was the highest form of political morality. These new ideals would recreate French society, shedding the past hierarchy of royalty and nobility in favor of an enlightened, vigilant citizenry. An important aspect to building this new society was a program that would replace the symbols of monarchy with a group of new symbols that reflected the republican concept of the nation. Under Old Regime, the nation's symbolic architecture revolved entirely around the monarchy, which occupied the center of this system of symbolic representation. As the monarchy gave way to the National Assembly and eventual abolition, representations of the state and the nation began to shift. Eventually, the elimination of the monarchy and eventual execution of Louis XVI meant replacing the entire set of symbols at the core of political life with a

¹ Robespierre, Report on Political Morality, *The Old Regime and the French Revolution, Readings in Western Civilization, vol. 7*, Keith Michael Baker, ed., Chicago: University of Chicago, 1987

new set of symbols that would allegorically represent the nation and reflect the republican values of equality, liberty and virtue.

In every political society, perception of the leadership's legitimacy forms an important cornerstone of state power and the establishment of this legitimacy is often a complex twist of allegories, symbols, violence and ideology that support the rule of current state elites.² Clifford Geertz outlines this process of how different political societies construct legitimacy, particularly in moments of crisis in his article, "Centers Kings and Charisma: Symbolics of Power"

At the political center of any complexly organized society (to narrow our focus now to that) there is both a governing elite and a set of symbolic forms expressing the fact that is truth in governing. No matter how democratically the members of the elite are chosen (usually not very) or how deeply divided among themselves they may be (usually much more than outsiders imagine), they justify their existence and order in terms of a collection of stories, ceremonies, insignia, formalities, and appurtenances that they have either inherited or, in revolutionary situations, invented.³

Geertz here provides a valuable theoretical framework for examining the vacuum that existed in France following the King's execution. The Revolutionary government needed to invent stories, myths and public rituals to give form and legitimacy to the infant republic. The different ways that the government employed the established figures of Hercules and Liberty in new and inventive ways illustrates an important facet of this process of building legitimacy in this particular, revolutionary situation.

² Clifford Geertz, "Center's Kings and Charisma: Symbolics of Power," in Clifford Geertz, *Local Knowledge: Further Essays in Interpretive Anthropology*, New York, Basic Books, 2000, pp. 121-146.

³ *Ibid.*

Building this new republic was certainly an endeavor that required an immense amount of ambition and it arose largely because of the unique opportunities that existed following the king's execution. The once powerful monarchy had fallen and in the void left in the wake of its demise, France's new, republican political leaders possessed an empty sandbox to reformulate the underpinnings of political life. In creating symbols for the nation, the Committee for Public Safety and their associates faced an array of problems that largely resulted from the unexpected course of events preceding the Committee's seizure of power. In the spring of 1792, nearly no one in French political society would have expected the collapse of the monarchy, much less the guillotining of Louis XVI one year later. Yet, despite the lack of expectation, these surprises were the facts of the day.⁴ From the dawn of the modern era, the French monarchy occupied the preeminent position in French political society and this unprecedented collapse presented such an exceptional opportunity to remake political culture because of the absence of an established political order. At this moment, the French Revolution transformed itself from a movement to reform the state into a movement that would remake the state and the society it ruled. Understanding the ways that the Committee used classical allegory in this process of political transformation remains central to understanding the Revolution itself.

Many members of the Committee for Public Safety were aware of the need to replace the symbolic structures of monarchy because they were still fresh in the nation's

⁴ Baker, *The Old Regime*, p. 333. In Lacroix's speech, he gives a laundry list of suggestions on how to deal with the present federalist uprisings. He makes several remarks that indicate even his surprise with the speed that events transpired: "in a revolution as fast as our own."

collective memory and many of them agreed that a need existed to carry out a concentrated campaign to reorient the symbols of power. Sarah Maza argues that the new organization of myth and story would prove to be fundamentally different than before. Representations of the nation shifted from the “royal household writ large” to an “all male, representative assembly” and that this transformation shifted the basis of political legitimacy from the iconic to the textual.⁵ These new realities necessitated a reasoned, nation centered allegory of state authority to replace the previous image centered monarchy centered allegory.⁶ In the political arrangement that preceded the Revolution, the king, nobility and church stood above the rest of society in an international hierarchy that connected through family ties across Europe.⁷ Republican Revolutionaries though, particularly those on the Committee of Public Safety were committed to the idea that the nation was the supreme source of law and state institution should reflect this fact.⁸ The allegorical figures Liberty and Hercules provided useful and accessible symbols of legitimacy because much of their meaning was connected to abstract values like strength, courage and freedom from bondage

⁵ Sarah Maza, *Private Lives and Public Affairs: The Causes Célèbres of Prerevolutionary France*, Berkeley, University of California Press, 1995, pp. 313-314.

⁶ *Ibid.*

⁷ Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, New York, Verso, 2006 (reprint), pp. 12-17. Here, Anderson discusses the cosmology of the West prior to the Age of Revolutions. He describes the international hierarchy of kings and religious communities as “taken-for-granted frames of reference, very much as nationality is today” and that the public sphere that developed in the late Eighteenth Century replaced these cultural frames of reference. The importance of Anderson’s work here lies in his insistence that printed language was the vehicle of this change because that meant the public sphere in France was limited to those who spoke French, which necessarily excluded Germans, Italians, etc., making the “imagined community” of those in France paramount over all other cultural connections, especially among the emerging bourgeoisies.

⁸ *Ibid.*

focused on the “imagined” national community. This orientation stood in contrast to the previous emphasis on specific individuals like the king or bishop because sovereignty now originated with the nation.⁹ Employing these allegorical figures as national symbols also established a new connection for the government to the ancient past that would help to create a historical basis and legitimacy for the new government, in a sense, inventing a history for France’s new Republic.¹⁰

Immediately following the King’s arrest and declaration of the republic in August of 1792, the new republican government went about drafting a seal that would visually embody the values of this new government. The deputies faced several pressing issues following the monarchy’s fall concerning the design of this new seal because the defeat of the monarchy brought about an opportunity to reorient national symbols to reflect the values of the newly declared republic. At the beginning of this process, a seal emerged that contained the goddess liberty standing, holding a pike with a liberty cap and the fasces bundle.¹¹ Figure Three represents an early attempt to represent power in a visual fashion independent from the fallen monarchy.

⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁰ Eric J. Hobsbawm, “The Invention of Tradition,” in *The Invention of Tradition*, Eric J. Hobsbawm, Terrence Ranger, ed., Cambridge, England, Cambridge University Press, 1992, p. 4.

¹¹ Hunt, “Hercules and the Radical Image,” *Representations*, 1983, 1(2), 95-117, p. 96



Figure 3: Seal of the Republic¹²

Several important symbols in this seal illustrate an attempt on the part of the new republican government to establish legitimacy through allegory. First, Liberty holds the fasces in one hand and a pike with a liberty cap in the other. The seal clearly connects this authority to the nation, allegorically illustrated by the feminine figure of Liberty. In the other hand, Liberty holds a pike with a liberty cap on top and this symbol connects the nation to the Revolution because the Phrygian cap represented freedom from slavery in the ancient world. In a sense, she becomes the embodiment of the nation and the placement of these two symbols equates the Revolution, the nation and legitimate authority as one in the same. The pike and Phrygian cap were long symbols

¹² “Seal of the Republic,” in Lynn Hunt, “Hercules and that Radical Image,” p. 96

of the Revolution, symbolic of both popular violence and freedom from bondage. They both evoked powerful emotions because both were ideas fundamental to the Revolution itself because of the Revolution's undercurrent of direct violence against the old order in the name of freedom. Secondly, the use of Liberty, a female entity, overturns the masculine person of the king representing the state and replaces it with a feminine allegory for the nation, which further removes the monarchy from political life because liberty associates the state with an abstract allegory rather than a person. Using the feminine, passive Liberty also removes any connection between the seal and a particular political faction, suggesting that the national allegory is above petty politics. This position would stand in stark contrast to the later manifestations of Hercules because of his active, participant personality, which contrasts with Liberty's passivity and serene nature.¹³

In the turmoil that followed the execution of Louis XVI, a host of crises beset France that included a royalist uprising in several provinces, war with much of Europe and intense political divisions in the capital. Almost immediately, the Committee for Public Safety began to produce a propaganda campaign that would marshal public support for their agenda and at the same time, build legitimacy for themselves as France's rightful leadership. While the use of Hercules and Liberty existed in symbology prior to the Revolution, the Committee began to use these two classical figures in new ways, using them as representations of the entire nation, not simply as values to emulate. First, the Committee used Hercules as a symbol of strength and popular action that would bolster public morale during the Terror that engulfed France. After the

¹³ Hunt, "Hercules and the Image of Radicalism," p. 96

successive crises passed, the imagery of Hercules began to shift in both style and theme as active poses gave way to more passive presentations. Eventually, Liberty replaced Hercules entirely, representing a more detached, feminine allegory for the nation that finds its modern incarnation in the iconic figure Marianne. Together, both figures constitute an allegorical shift away from the hierarchical values of a monarchy towards the egalitarian ideals of France's republicans.

In the midst of the emerging chaos that began in 1793, the National Convention appointed a Committee for Public Safety that acted as the de-facto executive branch until the multiple crises had passed. The new republican government faced crises and pressures on nearly every front and engaged in several drastic measures in a fight for survival. Louis XVI's execution rallied most of the Continent against France as the crowned heads of Europe attempted to crush the outrageous Revolutionary government once and for all. The government also faced royalist uprisings in several of the provincial areas of the country following the king's execution (known as the Vendée revolt) in an act of revulsion against actions of the Parisian republicans. The Committee needed to rapidly gain public support and at the same time, build legitimacy for their actions that were unprecedented in scope and largely impossible to enact without public support.

Hercules was among the first symbols of the nation that the Committee decided on following the king's execution largely because of the desire to generate a sense and feeling of strength among the populace in light of the multiple crises facing France. In ancient mythology Hercules was the greatest of all heroes, an archetypal character that embodied strength and accomplishment, overcoming the seemingly impossible labors,

a parallel to the crisis that faced France's government. His mastery over many types of monsters, which represented vice or evil, further added to this symbol's utility for a nation at war. In addition, Hercules possession of a club, which symbolizes overwhelming, popular force, also proved valuable in representing a nation undergoing significant turmoil because it illustrates the ability to solve the crises through the sheer application of force. In addition to helping the new republican government create legitimacy for itself in the absence of the monarchy, Hercules would also address contemporary events in a way that would help the government rally public support.

As the federalist insurrection spread during 1793, the Committee faced the unenviable task of potentially prosecuting a civil war. Hercules presented a symbol that would emphasize national unity and commitment to the nation in the face of this counter-revolutionary/royalist uprising that began to appear throughout much of France's provincial countryside.¹⁴ The Vendee uprising against the central government raised the real possibility of the Revolution's failure and reinstatement of the Old Regime and the government needed to utilize a symbol like Hercules that would illustrate the necessity of national unity in the face of the royalist uprisings.¹⁵

Secondly, France found itself at war with almost all of Europe's great powers, many of whom were aiding the royalist counter-revolutionaries and Hercules would symbolize great strength and masculine power in the face of this external crisis.¹⁶ Similar to the

¹⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁵ J. David Harden, "Liberty Caps and Liberty Trees," *Past and Present*, No. 146, 1995, pp. 66-102, p. 66. Harden deals extensively in this article with the process of replacing the king with other symbols that would represent the nation and help build a national consensus around the Revolution

¹⁶ Hunt, "Hercules and the Radical Image," p. 102.

Vendee Revolt, Hercules establishes an allegory for the revolutionary government to express the nation in such a way that it establishes enemies of the Revolution as enemies of the nation. Taken together, the allegory of Hercules as a centerpiece of the new political center would greatly assist the new government in its efforts to prove its legitimacy because the symbol associated the republic with strength in the face of France's many enemies.

Using Hercules to represent the nation provided the added benefit of being a symbol of masculine action that could replace another masculine figure, the monarch. The advantages of this choice are numerous because Hercules would not require a reorienting of the entire scheme of political and gender power poetics, it would only serve to perfect an existing figure at the center, not the patriarchal nature of that figure.¹⁷ Lynn Hunt argues that the perception of Louis XVI's lack of masculinity made Hercules an excellent choice because of his ability to overcome Louis' shortcomings.¹⁸ The widespread public perception of Louis as a man that lacked the necessary masculine traits to dominate the country and its people greatly impaired his ability to rule effectively over the nation. This inability to exert masculine control conflicted with the widespread perception that the king should be the nation's *Pater Familias*.¹⁹ In the

¹⁷ Hunt, *Politics Culture and Class*. See also, Joan Landes, *Women and the Public Sphere in the Age of the French Revolution*, Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1988, p. 18-19. Landes also discusses this issue in depth in her work on the symbolics of power and how much of the Revolution's outcome would marginalize women due to the masculine nature of the Revolution and its symbols, notably Hercules.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁹ Lynn Hunt, *The Family Romance of the French Revolution*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992, pp. 50, 103-104. Repeatedly throughout this book, Hunt makes light of constant circulation of material suggesting impotence on the king's part and extravagant sexual behavior on the queen's part.

1770's, the widespread knowledge of Louis XVI sexual dysfunction greatly damaged his public image. Later when his marriage to Marie Antoinette did not produce an heir for some years, whispers grew that the king was not fully in control of his household.²⁰ Marie Antoinette's supposed excesses of the 1780's and the scandals that surrounded her lavish spending in the midst of France's apparent fiscal crisis furthered this image of Louis as a weak man that could not effectively control his family and therefore could not effectively control his kingdom.²¹ Replacing the image of this weak king with the image of a strong, vigorous hero provided excellent propaganda opportunities for the Committee, even if many within French society did not understand the mythology of Hercules, they understood the image of strength and power that he represented in artistic presentations.

The Committee's use of Hercules also solved many of the problems associated with the monarch because of Hercules accomplishment of his labors. This parallel could easily fit contemporary events and even though Hercules possessed elite origins, his allegory was easily understood throughout French society. Republicans throughout France viewed Hercules as the classical answer to the king because of his willingness to confront great challenges with courage and strength rather than the weak and cuckolded king that was often too content with compromise and accommodation.²² Furthermore, using Hercules would have an enormously instructive effect on the population, illustrating the need for proper action and this would help legitimize the republic because it associated the government with an active hero that solved

²⁰ *Ibid.*

²¹ *Ibid.*

²² *Ibid.*

problems, rather than a passive king that deferred to his wife.²³ This imagining of a hero who solved problems through action stood in contrast to a monarchy that precipitated the Revolution through the inability to solve any past problems.

The presentation of Hercules as this model of masculine action presented a model of proper gender roles to the population that affected women for years to come. Hercules would not only serve as a symbol that united France during the Revolution, his public persona relegated women to the domestic in the years that followed. Joan Landes addresses this gender division in her book, *Visualizing the Nation* through a discussion about the connections between public symbols and gender realities that existed: “Increasingly, good governance and good morals were associated with domesticity; and domesticity came to mean women’s restriction to the domestic sphere and domestic tasks, in lieu of their full participation in the nation’s public life.”²⁴ Here Landes explains a particular outcome of the choice to associate a male figure with the nation because she argues that it created a division between male and female citizens and their rights to participate in political life. In addition to a masculine gendering of the public sphere, the use of Hercules illustrated an ideal of action that French men could emulate and women could not, thereby excluding them from the public sphere.

While the figure of Hercules corresponded to the ongoing effort to replace the king as the principle symbol of the nation, different representations illustrate the varying ways that the Committee government was able to take this figure and mold common representations to fit contemporary events of 1793 in the midst of the federalist crisis.

²³ Hunt, “Hercules and the Radical Image,” p. 102.

²⁴ Joan Landes, *Visualizing the Nation: Gender, Representation and Revolution in Eighteenth Century France*, Ithaca, Cornell University Press, 2001, p. 6.

Initially, Jacques-Louis David produced a sketch of Hercules [figure 4] that communicated this symbolic form to members of the National Convention and the educated classes.²⁵ An important aspect of this work lies in the high literary qualities this sketch possesses, especially when compared to later Herculean images where the connections to contemporary politics are much less subtle. In this case, Hercules only vaguely mirrors contemporary events and retains many classical motifs. Here, David clearly attempts to connect the overthrow of the monarchy and birth of the new Republic to one of Hercules' most famous tasks, the defeat of the Hydra. In the following image, a nude Hercules stands astride the Hydra as representative of the French people while at the same time, the Hydra resembles Louis XVI.

²⁵ "Hercules and the Radical Image," p.107.



Figure 4: The French People Overwhelming the Hydra of Federalism²⁶

Framing the Vendee uprisings in terms of the Louis XVI and the Hydra clearly illustrates the royalist nature of these uprisings because the image illustrates a defeated Louis lies beneath a triumphant Hercules. The placement of Hercules atop the Hydra and the manner that he fights, using the club of popular violence, rather than a military

²⁶ Jacques-Louis David, "The French People Overwhelming the Hydra of Federalism," in Hunt, "Hercules and the Radical Image in the French Revolution" p. 101.

implement sends important messages about the people and their legitimate role in the Revolution.²⁷ First, the image clearly sends the message that the nation taking protective action against the monarchy and royalist conspirers and remains willing to take such action again in the future. In this case, David clearly intends the more educated members of society as his audience, sending a message to political enemies, those considering a future conspiracy or uprising about the willingness of the nation to protect itself. Members of the uneducated, *sans-culottes* were not intended as recipients because of their limited exposure to classical mythology. Secondly, Hercules grasps the fasces, a classical symbol for unity and rightful authority, from Louis XVI dying hand presents an allegory of a legitimate power transfer to the people. This aspect of the portrait perhaps more than any other illustrates the government's attempt to position themselves as the legitimate representative of the people and the monarchy and their royalist allies as enemies of the people.²⁸ Thirdly, positioning Hercules atop the fallen Louis XVI shows the club of popular violence's effectiveness because the people, incarnated in Hercules used the club to defeat their royalist enemies and claim the allegorical position of dominance.

The Committee often utilized Hercules in a position of strength and power to further its aim of projecting this strength on to the new republic and similar images of Hercules appear in additional presentations of Committee propaganda. Other representations of Hercules associate him much more clearly with the *sans-culottes* rather than mythological settings. The previous Hercules print is a highly stylized

²⁷ Joan Landes, *Visualizing the Nation*.

²⁸ *Ibid.*

allegory that contains multiple layers of meaning due to its complex symbolic structure. In other surviving prints of Hercules during this period, artists cast him as the embodiment of the people and of the republic, wielding the club of popular anger, vanquishing all of his enemies. While previous image cast Hercules in a more classical light through its allegorical use of the Hydra and Hercules labors, the following engraving [Figure 5] takes a more direct approach, showing Hercules directly attacking a the fallen monarch:



Figure 5: Le Peuple Mangeur de Rois²⁹

²⁹ “Le Peuple Mangeur de Rois,” in Hunt, “Hercules and the Radical Image,” p. 103. This image also contains striking references to French military victories that began to happen in the spring and summer of 1793, which eased up the external crisis. Yet,

In this incarnation, Hercules was directly associated with the popular classes. Unlike the previous picture, where David presents Hercules in a nude, classical motif, in this picture, Hercules is dressed like a *sans-culotte*, ready to defeat all of his enemies. This presentation of Hercules contains some particularly important symbolic allegories related to republican government's legitimacy. First, Hercules is directly associated with the *sans-culottes*. In this sense, the Committee is attempting to gain legitimacy through the presentation of an allegory of the government directly representing this particular group. Unlike the previous print, the *sans-culottes* would easily recognize the symbolic form of this picture because it is a clear and direct attempt to marshal their support for the government through the association of the government's actions with their actions. Secondly, this picture contains a terrifying meaning for the Committee's foes because of its illustration of popular violence against the government's enemies. The Hercules here is not fighting a mythological battle with the hydra representing the monarchy; he fights a real battle, acting out violently against an actual caricature of the king once again using the club of popular violence. To many within French society this representation of Hercules as a *sans-culotte*, using the club of popular violence against his enemies must have been terrifying because it illustrates an absolute commitment to vanquish all enemies. This commitment sent a clear message to the remaining aristocracy and middling classes that they too would become targets of this violence if the government perceived them as enemies of the republican cause.

connecting the unity of the people, embodied in Hercules to military victories represented a significant turning point in this line of propaganda because it translated Hercules into literal success, not symbolic success against France's enemies.

While the imagery of Hercules certainly presents compelling clarity of action and meaning, the Committee (and indeed later governments) only utilized Hercules during this approximately twelve-month period between the summer of 1793 and 1794. The year of the Terror and its accompanying anxieties left many within French society exhausted and fearful of further rounds of uncontrollable violence. Following the Thermidor reaction, the active, violent images of Hercules began to retreat in favor of the more passive, serene allegory of Liberty. Joan Landes argues that Liberty satisfied a number of requirements for national representation that Hercules could not fill. Most notable was a clearer separation between the symbols of the Revolutionary government and the Old Regime monarchy.³⁰ Most importantly though, the imagery of Liberty signaled a shift from the specter of swift, masculine, violent state action many members of society found disagreeable and frightening, towards a more feminine, passive allegory for the state. The following image [Figure 6] begins to bridge the gap between the prominence of Hercules to the prominence of Liberty.

³⁰ Joan Landes, "Representing the Body Politic: The Paradox of Gender in the Graphic Politics of the French Revolution," in Sara Melzer and Leslie Rabine ed., *Rebel Daughters: Women and the French Revolution*, New York, Oxford University Press, 1992, p. 28-29. see also, Joan Landes, *Visualizing the Nation*.



Figure 6: Sketch by Dupree for Hercules Coin, 1795³¹

In this image, an original sketch of the new Republic's seal, two Liberty figures in togas, bearing Revolutionary symbols flank Hercules who remains in the center. While in several previous images, Hercules is an active participant, acting out to defeat the monarchy and royalist conspiracies, in this sketch, Hercules stands with the dignity of a Roman patrician, while on either side the Liberty images stand with the nobility of the

³¹ "Sketch by Dupree for Hercules Coin, 1795," in, Lynn Hunt, *Politics, Culture and Class*, p. 114.

vestal virgins. The picture clearly attempts to restore a level of civility to the symbolic allegories of public life that were missing during the Terror. Whereas previous images of Hercules appealed to the *sans-culottes*, this image makes no popular appeals, but rather seeks to restore civil society in the wake of the previous year's violence. In this image, Hercules lacks the club of popular anger that was so prominent in previous illustrations and his serene and calm demeanor give an impression that a national commitment exists to end the tumult. After the Committee's fall, the Constitution of Year III divided power among a five man Directory and the image reflects this shared authority and division of power that the new government instituted.³²

In addition removing the images of popular violence associated with the two previous images, this picture attempts to discuss the emerging gender division brought about during the previous years.³³ The image clearly attempts to illustrate the proper relationship between the masculine and feminine, restoring what the Revolutionaries believed to be the natural gender order restoration following the previous years of chaos. Landes points out the nature of Roman male and female morality: "male virtue required a certain stoical, public self-exaltation, women's virtue was tied to chastity and fidelity within marriage."³⁴ In a sense, while the previous images of Hercules illustrated ideal masculine action, the Liberties in this image present the ideal of feminine virtues. Like Maza's previous argument, this picture illustrates a formalization of the new public domain of rational men because of its suggestion that Hercules is leading the two

³² William Doyle, *The Oxford History of the French Revolution*, New York, Oxford University Press, 1989, pp. 318-320.

³³ Landes, *Visualizing the Nation*.

³⁴ Landes, "Representing the Body Politic," p. 29.

women through the placement of his hands and his head that faces straight.³⁵ Here, Landes articulates the way that the Revolution began to change the political culture towards a model of abstract virtue rather than the Herculean model of masculine, direct action.

Following the Directory's seizure of power, as the foreign and internal threats to the government passed, the new government enjoyed a confidence and legitimacy that previous Revolutionary regimes lacked. Together, the Revolution appeared vastly more secure in 1794 than it had a year earlier and the political symbols reflected this fact. The decisive action and popular violence allegorically represented by Hercules a year before nearly disappeared with the Committee government that created him. By 1799, the year of Bonaparte's coup, the figure of Liberty came to embody the allegorical representations of the republic. While seeking to invent legitimacy for themselves following the king's execution, the leaders of France's infant republic turned to Hercules to gain public support for their radical agenda in the face of multiple crises. Here, the shift happens from Hercules to Liberty, when the Terror subsided, the French Revolution remade the allegory representing the nation. The feminine, abstract virtues of Liberty replaced the masculine action of Hercules and for the next five years, symbols oriented toward Liberty institutionalized and would wait only for Napoleon, who had an allegorical agenda of his own that would once again remake the state.

³⁵ *Ibid.*

CHAPTER FOUR: NAPOLEON AND THE NEW ROME

We have finished the romance of the Revolution, we must now begin its history, only seeking for what is real and practicable in the application of its principles, and not what is speculative and hypothetical."¹

-Napoleon Bonaparte, Speech following the *Coup of 19 Brumaire*

Following the *Coup of 18 Brumaire*, Napoleon Bonaparte, his brother Joseph and their allies began assembling a new government that would concentrate power within Bonaparte's inner circle, consolidate the gains of the Revolution, as well as reconcile the many different Counter-Revolutionary factions to this emerging authoritarian state. Napoleon promoted himself as a national savior and his impressive military resume, widespread public popularity and his perceived commitment to the Revolution's ideals all played key roles in his public persona. When he and his conspirators gained control of the French state, France was a society awash in classical allegories that the preceding decade's governments incorporated into their political platforms. Napoleon was intimately aware of the ways that various factions used symbolism to gain legitimacy. He likewise understood the monarchy's shadow still loomed over French political life. Because of these two factors, Bonaparte embarked on a plan to rebuild the allegorical representations of the nation in a fashion that emphasized both his revolutionary credentials, but also reassured more conservative elements of French society that the Revolution's violence and upheaval were at an end.

During the Revolutionary decade that saw the shift from absolute monarchy to republic, successive governments attempted to build legitimacy through the

¹ Napoleon Bonaparte, Speech following the *Coup of 19 Brumaire*, 1799.

employment of various representations and allegories from the classical world. Liberty and Hercules replaced the monarchy as representatives of the nation in active and passive fashions, sometimes appearing together and sometimes apart illustrating both the virtues and actions of the French people. As the decade wore on and one series of tumultuous events followed another demands grew for an end to the Revolution's crisis model of politics. While Napoleon's decisive victories over Austria delivered the Directory a great deal of latitude in 1797, the following year brought a string of humiliating military defeats as well as a constant barrage of royalist conspiracies. Faced with these crises, Siéyès arranged a coup that would end the uncertainties, prevent a return to radicalism and install him as a virtual dictator.² Siéyès was a Revolutionary survivor if there ever was one. He penned the famous pamphlet, "What is the Third Estate?," initially supported the creation of a National Assembly and survived the Terror. Given his credentials, it appeared to many that he was a natural choice to lead France into a new era but Siéyès proved unable to control the popular Bonaparte as he had imagined. Instead, Bonaparte, not Siéyès emerged as dictator and Napoleon quickly needed to construct an image of himself as an perceived ally of the Revolution.³ This image would have two important effects, first, it would establish Napoleon's rule as a continuation of the Revolutionary process, rather than an interruption of the Revolution. Secondly, Bonaparte could use the existing symbolic allegories of the nation and associate them with himself. Bonaparte relied on these two

² William Doyle, *The Oxford History of the French Revolution*, New York, Oxford University Press, 1989, pp. 370-372.

³ *Ibid.*, pp. 372-375.

factors when creating legitimacy for his new government through connections to the immediate and ancient past

During his rule, Bonaparte took great care to construct legitimacy for his dictatorship that drew connections to the Revolution and antiquity because of his desire to avoid accusations that his new government simply represented a return to the monarchy. Also aware of the public's desire to avoid a return to Jacobin radicalism, Bonaparte positioned himself alongside a group of rulers from the ancient world that brought peace and prosperity following a series of crises. From Pericles, to Julius and Augustus Caesar, Bonaparte found no shortage of examples to draw on and more importantly, illustrate parallels between his rule and their mythic tale of success in the face of social discord and external disorder.⁴

The Committee for Public Safety may have begun the process of constructing new symbols of the nation but it would be under the rule of Bonaparte that at the France reached at least some consensus about the symbolic representation of the nation.⁵ While scholars focus on the ways that he consolidated the central state, influenced the artistic style of the day, and changed the map of Europe, few discuss the important role

⁴ Scholars have produced many fine biographies on Napoleon and they all make mention of his interest in the ancient world and the ways that he studied historical generals, most prominently, Julius Caesar. Alan Schom and Paul Johnson's noted biographies paint a devastating picture of a tyrannical opportunist while Bergeron and Palmer's *France Under Napoleon* paints a much more sympathetic view of Bonaparte and his motivations. All agree though that his study of historical events coupled with his belief in the inevitability of his destiny led him to fashion himself after these ancient rulers. See, Louis Bergeron, see also, Alan Schom, *Napoleon Bonaparte: A Life*, New York, Harper Perennial, 1998.

⁵ Odile Nouvel, *Symbols of Power: Napoleon and the Art of the Empire Style, 1800-1815*, New York: Harry N. Abrams, Inc, 2007.

he played in consolidating a common national mythology and laying the foundations for a process of nationalization that would continue throughout the Nineteenth Century.⁶

Scholars often find Bonaparte's rule a polarizing subject because while he institutionalized many reform ideas of the Revolution, failed to institute other reforms, charted the nation's law code, he achieved these goals through the vehicle of a military dictatorship. Military historians herald Bonaparte's tactical genius, extolling his rule as a breakthrough era in Western history where strategies he developed persist into the contemporary era.⁷ Social historians applaud his emphasis on careers open to talent because of the ways that Napoleon opened the military promotions to merit. At the same time, they find Bonaparte's clear break from the Revolution's ideals of Equality and Democracy troubling because he signaled a return to hierarchy and the authoritarianism.⁸ Legal historians point to the Code Napoleon as a watershed moment in the development of the Western legal tradition due to its simplicity, clarity and universality.⁹ Even romance novelists have cannibalized the story of Napoleon and Josephine into dozens of tales about love, betrayal and loss.¹⁰ While the historiography

⁶ Robert Holtman, *The Napoleonic Revolution*, Baton Rouge, Louisiana State University, 1978, pp., 180-182. see also, Eugen Weber, *Peasants into Frenchman: The Modernization of Rural France*, Palo Alto, Stanford University Press, 1976.

⁷ Many scholars of Napoleon's military strategy and campaigns reference his admiration and study of Julius Caesar. They neglect though, the ways that he publicly compared himself to this and other Roman rulers to obtain both military and political objectives. See, Albert Sidney Britt, *The Wars of Napoleon*, West Point, Square One Publishing, 2003.

⁸ A tremendous amount of contemporary biographical work on Bonaparte focuses on his psychological problems and the ways that they may have affected his actions as ruler.

⁹ Holtman, pp. 88-90

¹⁰ Theo Aronson, *Napoleon and Josephine: A Love Story*, New York, St. Martins Press, 1990.

concerning Napoleon generates nearly as much division and emotion as his legacy within France, when compared to his military or person life, only a small portion deals with his contributions to the development of national symbols.

Unlike much of the historiography, Robert Holtman's work, *The Napoleonic Revolution* provides a survey of Bonaparte's domestic and political policies.¹¹ Holtman discusses the ways that Napoleon accomplished the consolidation of his rule through the construction of modern governmental institutions. The central theme of Holtman's work lies in his examining the various ways that Bonaparte kept certain values of the Revolution when it suited his policies and how discarded other values of the Revolution when they got in his way.¹² For example, before Napoleon's rule, almost all of the Revolutionary governments were committed to representative government and Bonaparte retained these institutions because they granted him legitimacy, but they operated in a limited fashion. Holtman further discusses the ways that Bonaparte's ability to build state institutions within this legislative framework while essentially neutering the nation's avenues of popular participation that were a hallmark of the Revolution. While Holtman does tremendous work examining the Napoleon's legacy in government, his project does not examine the ways that Bonaparte manipulated symbols, particularly classical symbols that previous governments used, to both build his own legitimacy as well as manipulate public opinion to support his agenda.¹³

In many ways, Bonaparte's emphasis on classical symbols represented a tremendously expedient solution to the problem of appearing to be both a dictator and

¹¹ Holtman, *The Napoleonic Revolution*.

¹² *Ibid.*

¹³ *Ibid.*

ally of the Revolution because many members of French society recognized and understood classical pictures and myths. Previous governments heavily utilized classical allegories as a means to build their own legitimacy, especially in the wake of the monarchy's collapse and neo-classical style was an entrenched style of the day. Many members of the Eighteenth Century elite believed that the Classical world represented a high point of Western Civilization par excellence and much of Ancient, particularly Roman history is replete with examples of strong military leaders transforming society from chaos to stability through a program of authoritarian, but enlightened ruler.¹⁴ Often times, Bonaparte fashioned himself a modern version of Augustus, a strong leader that rescued the public polity from the previous chaos of Revolution, Civil War, self-interested plots and the elite's general moral decay. In Harold Parker's book, *The Cult of Antiquity* he describes the almost religious fanaticism that many members of the Revolutionary generation shared for the Revolution, Bonaparte's attempt to use symbols and myths from antiquity drew connections between himself, his actions, and his circumstances illustrate his invention of history.¹⁵ During the Directory period when Napoleon began his rise to power, the ineffectiveness

¹⁴ Philip Ayers, *Classical Culture and the Idea of Rome in Eighteenth Century England*, Cambridge, England, Cambridge University Press, 1997, pp. 86-90. Ayers discusses the ways that the English aristocracy idolized and attempted to replicate what they believed to be the virtues of the Roman aristocracy. Similarly, in France, many members of the Enlightened class, which had rose to power in various ways during the Revolution also viewed the aspects of the classical world as exemplary of superior virtue.

¹⁵ Harold Parker, *The Cult of Antiquity in the French Revolution*, Cambridge, England, Cambridge University Press, 1937. Phillip Dwyer, *Napoleon and Europe*, New York, Longman, 2001. Like Holtman's book, Dwyer focuses the grand themes of Napoleon's rule rather than specific elements. While Dwyer tends to discuss the ways that Bonaparte changed European society, he does discuss domestic politics in France Bonaparte's insistence on his Revolutionary credentials.

of the government, the constant threat of plots and coups led many in French society fear another round of chaos and violence in the name of idealism.¹⁶ Napoleon, through the auspices of the *18 Brumaire Coup* offered an end to these threats, along with a parable from Rome that would connect him allegorically to the past.

While many history books mark Siéyes coup as the beginning of Bonaparte's political power in France, Napoleon still faced obstacles to the consolidation of his rule. While command of a sizable army that endowed him with a considerable amount of prestige for their recent defeat of Austria gave Napoleon a wide-ranging amount of political strength, it was his clever political maneuvering ultimately delivered him unquestioned rule.¹⁷ Following the coup, the French government quickly adopted a new constitution that would vest most power in a Consulate made up of three officers called Counsels along with a legislature called the Senate.¹⁸ Siéyes believed that he would lead this new government but quickly found Bonaparte outmaneuvered him on several occasions.¹⁹ This new arrangement of the government would essentially hand most power to a triumvirate of executives to the exclusion of the legislature because during the Directory's rule, the legislature was seen as an ineffective institution filled with squabblers who lacked the vision and unity of previous Revolutionary governments. Napoleon immediately took steps to ensure the curtailing of legislative power and enhancement of the executive branch that would have the effect of legitimacy due to the

¹⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 32

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, Bonaparte cleverly named these new organs of government to illicit the memory of Rome in his rule.

¹⁹ Doyle, pp. 370-375.

early Revolution's insistence on a national legislative body.²⁰ One of the three Councils would retain the title of First Counsel and would hold more power than the other two because they would be responsible for the day-to-day operations of the state and while Siéyès believed he would be first Counsel, Bonaparte's popularity, political standing and command of the army allowed him to gain the first Counsel title.²¹ What makes this change in government so interesting lies in the ways that Napoleon and his co-conspirators decided to use names and organizational schemes that elicited memories of a glorious past of the *pax romana*. This aspect of Bonaparte's plan especially appealed to a French citizenry exhausted from a decade of civil unrest and war who wanted stability.

Before Rome's *Principate* that saw the rise of Octavian to political primacy, the Roman Republic saw decades of political and social upheaval that saw the rise and fall of such famed names as Julius Caesar, Mark Antony, Cleopatra and ultimately concluded with a final round of plots, conspiracies and civil wars that left Octavian victorious and unchallenged. While Napoleon did not explicitly make comparisons between his seizure of power and Octavian's, he certainly presented himself to the French public as a similar figure that would bring order to chaos. Even his subsequent coronation, which was more a monarchical coronation than an installation possessed a distinct awareness to the Roman past such as the laurel wreath and Roman style.²²

²⁰ *Ibid.*

²¹ *Ibid.*

²² "Caesar the Foe: Roman Conquest and French Resistance in French Popular Culture", Giuseppe Pucci, pp. 190-191, in Maria Wyke, ed., *Julius Caesar in Western Culture*, Malden, MA, Blackwell Press, 2006, pp. 190-243. In this work, Pucci discusses the various ways that Caesar and a particular vision of the past, especially as it related

The Structure of French government, three Counsels appeared strikingly familiar to the Roman republic and Bonaparte because Napoleon encouraged people to compare the new Consulate government with the Republic of Ancient Rome.²³ Like his Roman counterparts, Bonaparte's power rested squarely on his notoriety as a military commander and the presence of his unquestioningly loyal troops added a certain aura to his political status.²⁴ Napoleon's ability to wield the army for his own political agenda helps explain the ways that he was able to shift the focus of national symbols away from abstract virtues like freedom and equality which previous governments used to bolster their legitimacy and more directly to himself and his image which he used to legitimate himself.

In the early years of Napoleon's rule, an important shift took place in the ways that the French political system thought about and conceived of legitimacy. Following the onset of the Revolution, the National Assembly was busy creating a government that would reflect national will through representative institutions. The ways of representing the nation shifted as well during this period, away from the single individual of the king and towards an embodiment of the nation. During the Terror, which followed the king's execution, the Committee government rapidly centralized power and conceptualized itself as the representative of national will.²⁵ Symbols during this period illustrated terrifying portrayals of the nation striking out against its enemies. As the

to Bonaparte. He notes that Bonaparte's self comparisons to Caesar were a point of argument for both his supporters and detractors.

²³ *Ibid.*

²⁴ *Ibid.*

²⁵ Lynn Hunt, *Politics, Culture and Class in the French Revolution*, Berkeley, University of California Press, 1982, p. 55.

terror subsided, the Directory sought to remove the radical images from national politics because the radical political climate retreated. As a new round of conspiracies and uprisings crept into France's political consciousness, Bonaparte and his conspirators sought ways to install themselves as a more conservative alternative to the potential for more radicalism that waited for the right climate.²⁶ Most importantly though, Bonaparte possessed Revolutionary credentials that allowed him to reorient politics towards himself without the accusations of counter-revolution because he claimed a desire to preserve the most valuable elements of the Revolution while eliminating the inherent instability and uncertainty that Revolution's bring.²⁷ The Emulation of Roman emperors allowed Bonaparte to accomplish both of these goals because through building a fictional connection to Rome he could invent continuity with the past that would serve to show a positive historical example of his program and would compare him to system that he believed preserved Rome's values while expelling Rome's civil wars.

With the population exhausted from a decade of Revolutionary turmoil, Bonaparte found it easy to position himself as a national savior and his propaganda efforts reflect this allegory. To this end, he constantly attempted to remind the public that he was a leader that would bring about an end to the factions, uprisings and wars. This idea of Napoleon the guarantor of stability formed the foundation of his early propaganda efforts. In the following image, Bonaparte rescues the allegorical representation of France from the abyss of fanaticism and destruction:

²⁶ Holtman pp. 24-25.

²⁷ *Ibid.*



Figure 7: Napoleon Saves France²⁸

In this image, Napoleon, dressed in his military uniform helps France, embodied in feminine form back from the abyss of chaos. In this work, Bonaparte receives assistance from Liberty, who symbolically clutches the fasces and the appearance of the fasces and liberty together suggests Bonaparte's desire to associate himself with the Revolution. On the other hand, the radical embodiment of the Revolution attempts to pull the feminine allegory of France into the abyss. This aspect of the work illustrates a desire on the part of Napoleon to separate himself from the radical, republican phase

²⁸ Lynn Hunt and Jack Censor, "Napoleon Saves France," *Liberty, Equality, Fraternity* [CD-ROM], State College, Pennsylvania State University, 1998.

of the Revolution. While this image represents an early attempt to build his political credentials, Bonaparte later began to associate his rule with the past glories of Rome.

One of the most obvious ways that Bonaparte emulated Roman emperors was through the commissioning, and production of statues, paintings and busts in public places that reinforced his popular propaganda as an enlightened leader. Previous Revolutionary leaders emphasized new national symbols in their construction projects, but Bonaparte on the other hand emphasized himself and his accomplishments as well as identifying his images as the embodiment of the “nation.”²⁹ Busts served two very important functions for Napoleon in his new program of self-promotion; first, they emphasized the personal nature of his rule and his government. While his predecessors built statues that emphasized the connections between classical allegories, the nation and sovereignty, Bonaparte built statues and busts that emphasized connections between the state, the nation and his persona. Second, and perhaps most important, commissioning works like these illustrated his understanding of politics because it sent a signal to many in French society, especially among the nobility, that the previous experiences of the Revolution, the violence, the uncertainty and the civil strife were at an end.³⁰ Napoleon’s force of will and his unquestioned command of the military would shut down any action of the Parisian masses that many

²⁹ *Ibid.*, 55-57.

³⁰ An examination of various engravings and paintings from 1799 to 1801 illustrates the propagandistic value of this program. The engraving of Bonaparte re-sheathing his sword illustrates both the interlude of peace at the turn of the century, but also a signal throughout French society that the instability of the previous decade would be over with the commencement of his rule. The Eagle Consular also illustrates his adept political abilities because of its connections to Roman Caesars and the best virtues of these rulers. Secondly, in a letter to the Counsel of Elders Napoleon refers to himself and his soldiers as “friends of the people,” and “friends of the Republic.”

within French society blamed for so many of the previous decade's horrors. Through the symbolic act of institutionalizing himself with the state and connecting these institutions to the Roman past would signal an era of stability and prosperity following nearly a generation of Revolutionary chaos.

While the previous image positions Napoleon as the savior of the Revolution, the following images illustrate the ways that Bonaparte attempted to build connections with Roman Emperors and the political stability that this connection represented. Napoleon commissioned this sculpture to commemorate his coronation as Emperor and the introduction of his law code into French society. A quick examination of the Bust of Napoleon (pictured first) and comparison to a Bust of Julius Caesar (pictured second) yields striking similarities:



Figure 8: Bust of Napoleon the Lawgiver³¹

³¹ Bust of Napoleon located at www.napoleon.org. This site has many excellent image galleries, articles and resources dedicated to the study of Napoleon's career. The site is a collaboration between the Sorbonne and *Louvre*.



Figure 9: Bust of Julius Caesar³²

The thematic and physical similarities between these two busts illustrate Bonaparte's attempts to Romanize his own image and link this to a leader from antiquity that brought

³² Bust of Caesar located at www.athena.cornell.edu Cornell's collection of classical sources in the form of an online archive.

about great victories in the name of Rome.³³ For example, in this bust, Bonaparte sports a Caesar style haircut, close cropped on the sides and short bangs. In these busts, not only are their hairstyles similar, but their facial expressions and general demeanor show similarities as well. Other portraits of Napoleon from the era do not present him in such a fashion, choosing to highlight longer hair that was the style of the day. While Bonaparte wears a Caesar style in the bust, it is also of great significance that he does not wear the liberty cap, distancing himself from the Revolution's horrors. Holtman's book, *The Napoleonic Revolution*, ultimately argues that reconciling elements of the old elite, particularly the nobility, and various Revolutionary factions to his government was his lasting legacy for France, embodied in the *Code Napoleon*.³⁴ Bonaparte's presentation of himself as a ruler that did not desire the establishment of a monarchy in his name, nor return to republic idealism allowed him to consolidate rule by appealing to all factions. The allegorical representations of a Roman Emperor highlight this aspect of his ambition to appear as a moderate.

Like many of his ancient Roman and contemporary European counterparts, Bonaparte embarked on a concerted effort to place images of his likeness into the public consciousness throughout French society and the use of common government instruments like coins and stamps. Throughout history, political leaders, particularly kings and emperors have placed their images on coins because visibility equates into

³³ These two busts, the first commissioned by Bonaparte, called "Bonaparte the Legislator," was finished in 1805. The other bust, a widely anthologized Julius Caesar bear striking similarities in both style and substance.

³⁴ Holtman, p. 195.

power and legitimacy.³⁵ While the use of stamps, coins and government seals as a platform to engage public consciousness about the virtues of a particular set of governing elite is not new, nor unprecedented, the ways that Bonaparte used classical, especially Roman motifs throughout this campaign is peculiarly interesting. Similar to the previous busts, Bonaparte placed images of himself in the public consciousness to associate his person with the state and the nation rather than the allegorical representations of sovereignty of previous Revolutionary governments. The following coin illustrates Bonaparte's efforts to use classical imagery to associate himself with a Roman leader:

³⁵ " O. Hekster and R. Fowler "Imagining Kings: From Persia to Rome," in O. Hekster, R. Fowler, *Imaginary Kings: Royal Images in the Ancient Near East, Greece and Rome*, Stuttgart, Franz Steiner Verlag, 2005, pp. 9-38. In this article, Hekster and Fowler discuss the various ways that monarchs have used similar motifs throughout history to place their images and therefore their authority in the minds of the people they rule. What is interesting in this case lies in the ways that Bonaparte deliberately chooses to mimic a past Emperor as a means to illustrate the continuity of his rule with that of the past.



Figure 10: 5 Franc Coin 1804³⁶

This coin, dated to 1804, presents Napoleon as First Counsel and the Roman motif extends beyond this leadership title.³⁷ In this instance, Napoleon wears an olive leaf garland, symbolic in the ancient world of both victory and peace. The reverse of Napoleon's coin also contains the olive leaf garland that in the contemporary era has come to be recognized and associated with the United Nations and the Olympic games but in the early Nineteenth Century would mostly be associated with Bonaparte's victories over the other powers of Europe and the expansion of French power. Like the earlier bust of Napoleon, this coin shows him with a Caesar style haircut that by 1811 had become a prominent style of the day.

While Bonaparte's authoritarian regime oppressed many within French society, he remained quite popular with the populace throughout much of his rule. Nearly every

³⁶ This 5 Franc coin was issued to commemorate Bonaparte's five years of service as First Counsel.

³⁷ In both cases, the coins illustrate the ways that these public figures placed their image in popular consciousness. Both images are photographs of authenticated coins.

scholar acknowledges that he and his allies often rigged his plebiscites even though his victories were virtually assured without his frequent meddling. What remains though are the various ways that he attempted to connect his personal popularity with allegorical representations of the nation. While earlier Revolutionary governments embodied the nation in allegories of Liberty and Hercules, Bonaparte attempted to embody the nation in his person. The monarchy associated the central state with the king and Louis XVI stood above the nation; he was not a member of it. Napoleon similarly attempted to associate the state with himself and his efforts were on behalf of the nation; Bonaparte was the embodiment of national will, not personal will. Napoleon at once attempted to build a modern, uniform government throughout France that instituted many of the Revolution's gains, left out others and consolidated national allegories, but also instituted the West's first military dictatorship. His frequent references and connections to classical virtues reinforced this idea during Bonaparte's rule. Perhaps his most valuable contribution lay in the combining of the classical allegory of the Revolution with a politically stable bureaucracy, grounding French society in a set of values that persisted long into the future despite the return of monarchs, emperors and other republicans who would all fail to return France to the pre-Revolutionary period.

CHAPTER FIVE: CONCLUSION

After Napoleon's fall, the victorious powers of Europe restored the Bourbon monarchy in France and the new Restoration government immediately set about undoing many of the Revolution's changes. This change would prove difficult though because the French Revolution's changes not only replaced the monarchical institutions of the Old Regime with national institutions, it also replaced the ways that governments established legitimacy because the nation now occupied a central place in political life. When Louis XVIII took the throne with a high level of popularity, he quickly saw that popularity disappear when he attempted to overturn many of the Revolution's changes. This resistance to his attempts to change the political order was largely due to the change in the location of sovereignty that the Revolution brought about. Under the Old Regime, sovereignty rested in the body of the king, but this gradually gave way to the nation in the latter half of the Eighteenth Century. During the Revolution's early phase, the monarchy and National assembly attempted to reach some accommodation about the visual representations of the nation. The king's flight and subsequent execution led to attempts by the Committee government to build an entirely new symbolic architecture that would allegorically represent the nation without the presence of a king. The decade of upheaval and violence culminated in the rule of Napoleon who institutionalized many of the Revolution's symbols as well as adding his own.

Throughout the 1790's and the reign of Napoleon, these different governments attempted to represent this shift through the allegorical representation of the nation's role in politics. In many ways, the French Revolution reflects the larger changes

happening in Western society about the role that the nation should play in political life. The Tennis Court Oath chronicled the formation of the National Assembly and highlighted popular participation of delegates from the Third Estate. Following the king's execution, the Committee government used Hercules to project a powerful, terrifying allegory for the nation protecting itself against its foreign and domestic enemies. Following the Terror's collapse, the new Directory once again shifted the national allegory away from Hercules towards a more serene vision of Liberty, effectively sending a message that the violence was at an end. Napoleon shifted the focus of national representation towards images of himself as an individual that represented the nation and he symbolically represented this fact in the ways he positioned himself as a Roman Emperor. In each of these instances, the nation occupies the center of political life and this shift from monarch to nation forms the basis of the modern nation-state.

The French Revolution and rule of Napoleon saw more than a Revolution in society and political institutions; it made popular sovereignty a cornerstone of Western political life. Conceptions of legitimate rule shifted away from hierarchical connections between man and God, towards a national community choosing leaders to execute their will on their behalf. In this process, successive Revolutionary governments effectively resorted to inventing national allegories and connections to an imagined past where public virtue and reason were the dominant values. These connections to antiquity resulted from, in part, an attempt to establish the government as the embodiment of national will and these allegories clearly illustrated a vision separate from the monarchy. As these allegories representing the nation replaced the monarchy, the need existed to

transform the nation into a historical entity that needed connections to the ancient past in order to demonstrate its continuity, rather than its recent incarnation.

Throughout the Revolution, this process of representing the nation and the construction of national allegory changed at different points to accommodate a particular situation. Towards the end of the Old Regime and during the early, moderate phase of the Revolution, the concepts of king and nation wrapped around each other and the image of the king still dominated much of national representation. These concepts began to unravel though as the National Assembly moved forward with its many reforms and the king began to appear less like the incarnation of the nation, but rather its enemy. Following Louis XVI's flight, the monarchy collapsed and the subsequent declaration of the First Republic forced the new government to look at other ways of Representing the Nation. In this case, Liberty, Hercules and later Liberty again represented the nation and the government intended these allegories to shift public focus away from the individual of the king towards the abstract. The new infant republic needed to project strength and virtue to the public and these allegories met that need. In this case, the crises of 1793-1794 necessitated a particular representation of the nation to fit the circumstance. During the reign of Napoleon, a new set of national allegories arose to assure a weary and exhausted population that the decade of upheaval was behind them to be replaced with a new era of peace and prosperity. On each occasion of symbolic representation, the government chose allegories that would help them further some political agenda, whether it was putting down royalist uprisings or the implementation of a new law code.

The intellectual changes that the Enlightenment brought about heavily impacted many members of the Revolutionary generation and the Enlightenment's belief in many of antiquity's virtues made this choice of symbols a natural fit for the Revolutionaries. In this ironic twist though, the French Revolution took the cosmopolitan beliefs of the Enlightenment and used them to institute a new system of nationalism that would destroy any visions of transnational virtues. Liberty would no longer serve as a symbol of freedom for all, she would become a representation of a particular state and this important change illustrates the ways that the Revolutionary governments changed political culture. Under the politics of the Old Regime, loyalty to the king the privileges of social orders were of paramount political importance. During the Revolution though, as the shift took place towards popular sovereignty, loyalty to the nation became the highest political virtue and the symbols of antiquity that represented the nation drew lines in representation along national lines. The Congress of Vienna found great difficulty implementing many of their goals because the emphasis on the nation had spread far beyond France and the national consciousness of many European states necessitated the Congress focus on the establishment of national borders, rather than a return to the previous international arrangement.

While the French Revolution changed the location of sovereignty from the king's body to the nation, and this thesis examines the different visual manifestations of that shift, the true importance of this change lies in the ways that this process in France influenced the subsequent world. Nationalists that believed in popular sovereignty led the Unification efforts in both Italy and Germany. The United States fought a Civil war that would determine whether the country was truly a nation or a simple collection of

autonomous states. European colonialism in the latter half of the Nineteenth Century created administrative units among different groups that Europeans considered “nations” by their definitions. Following World War II, the decolonization of Africa and Asia led many new leaders there to invent shared national histories in order to legitimize the new central government. The different representations of the nation at the center of political life created a system that effectively changed the ways that different governments thought about the nature of their state. Autocratic increasingly needs justification in the name of a nation asking “who stands for us?”

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