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ANCIENT TOPICS IN NAPOLEON'S PROCLAMATIONS TO THE ARMY

τῶν δὲ κατὰ τὴν παράκλησιν λόγων ἅμα μὲν ἀπολογισμοῖς ἀκριβέσι μεμιγμένων, ἅμα δ᾽ ἐπαγγελίαις χρυσῶν στεφάνων, ἐπὶ δὲ πᾶσι τούτοις θεοῦ προνοίᾳ, τελέως μεγάλην ὁρμὴν καὶ προθυμίαν παρίστασθαι συνέβαινε τοῖς νεανίσκοις.
Polybius 10.11.8

Sois toujours un héros, sois plus, sois citoyen.
Voltaire, *Brutus*, Acte IV, Scène VI

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SUMMARY: The present paper analyses the ancient topics and elements of rhetoric in Napoleon Bonaparte's proclamations to the army, as they come down to our times in his correspondence and memoirs. The main focus is on the exhortations issued during the early campaigns in Italy and Egypt, since they employ this kind of imagery to the greatest extent. The aim of the paper is to show that the content of these short proclamations, which had obvious propagandistic meaning, was deeply rooted in the Classical education, as well as in the French republican imagery, and also art and literature of the period, all together which shaped the early years of the prospective Emperor.

It would be trivial to say that Napoleon was a genius of propaganda; the extant material and pertinent scholarship go hand in hand in corroborating this thesis. And, as Wayne Hanley (2005: 22) rightly put forward, the prospective Emperor's propagandistic career began very early, with the first major command in Italy in the years 1796-1797, when "through conscious manipulation of dispatches, correspondence, medallions, and, especially, of the press, Napoleon created for himself the image of the Revolutionary hero – a creation that enabled this once-unknown Corsican to become a household name, and, ultimately, a power to be reckoned with in France." Throughout his career Bonaparte would masterfully use the words and images to promote his person and rule, but also his ideas and reforms.

Both the revolutionary Republic and the Empire drew amply upon the ancient vocabulary and imagery: from the political nomenclature and elaborate allegories of the modern virtues and achievements to the naming of children,[1] and the Neo-Classical, as well as early Romantic literary and artistic fascination with the ancient ideas and motifs, only helped to further such fashions. Also the prevalent model of education, which still depended in a large part on ancient texts, whether in original or translation, as well as values, added to the omnipresence of antiquity in the world of first of all the enlightened elites of the late 18th and early 19th centuries, but also of those whose education ended at the basic level in both church and state ran schools (Ettlinger 1967: 107; Waquet 2002: 2 and 7-15 for details of France in the period in question; Ghorbel 2011).

The young Napoleon Bonaparte was no exception; his early, pre-military education in Brienne included the study of ancient texts, among which Plutarch occupied a prominent place, as well as Caesar,

[1] The most in-depth analysis of the ancient Roman connotations of first names in the period 1789-1815, is given by Billy 2000.

Livy, Cicero and Horace.[2] Later, at the École Militaire in Paris, the literary curriculum consisted mostly of French texts, but many of these were retellings of ancient biographies and stories (Healey 1959: 21-23). Even if biographers are correctly assessing that young Napoleon was not a keen student of Classical languages, they admit that from his earliest years he was an avid reader of the ancient texts (26 school manuscripts of commentaries on ancient authors are preserved), and most certainly in his later career and writings he often made references to a number of ancient events and anecdotes and commented on the ancient authors, as well as on facts from ancient history (Gallo 2004: 325; Casanova 2008: 49-54). Historical books made up a large part of the movable campaign libraries, and a large body of ancient authors was included in the library that Napoleon took with him to the exile on Elba (see Martinelli 2009: 25-42), he is also known to have written/dictated commentaries on Classical texts on St. Helena.[3] In the political writings ancient examples served mostly as models or bases for historiosophical reflections, but the great men of antiquity also became objects of emulation and comparison for the contemporaries.

The employment of ancient motifs in the specific class of semi-official documents, which are the proclamations to the army, is of particular interest, because it certainly shows how the historical knowledge and examples could be turned into a propagandistic tool, but also how the Classical tradition was ingrained in the culture and rhetoric of the period. It is also worth mentioning that the very genre of such exhortations is rooted in both ancient rhetoric and historiography, and

[2] These ancient authors are listed in the curriculum of the Brienne school from Napoleon's years, preserved in the local museum, and they are accompanied by French classics such as La Fontaine and Voltaire, as well as the history of the Knights of Malta. Even though Brienne was not evaluated very high among the twelve preparatory schools by the military inspectors from the École Militaire, its pride lay in the adherence to traditional education in Classics, and in particular Latin (Healey 1959: 16-18; Parker 1989: 7).

[3] See for instance the detailed commentary on the life of Caesar based both on his own writings and his biographies, *Précis des Guerres de Jules César*, published in *Correspondance de Napoléon Ier*, t. XXXII : *Oeuvres de Napoléon Ier à Sainte-Hélène*, Paris 1859; see also E. de las Cases, *Le Mémorial de Sainte-Hélène*, Nov. 14, 1816.

the Classical influence on the rhetorical language of the whole collection should require a separate study.

These short documents were formally designed to be read by the assembled troops, but since they were usually later published in bulletins or press, or otherwise circulated (in several cases their texts are known to us from later redactions in various memoirs), it is clear that their aim was much broader: they were supposed to reach the general public and pass the desired image beyond the army.[4] It appears, moreover, that at least part of the rhetoric employed was indeed intended for the educated reader, since the allusions included go beyond the education that ordinary soldiers could have attained prior to joining the army.

Of these the ones that refer to the antiquity stand out as particularly learned and also masterfully employed. Their distribution shows that they were most commonly used in the Italian campaign of 1796-1797, which seems quite natural, given the historical background of the lands in which the military operations took place (similarly for instance in Poznań, on Dec. 2, 1806, the Polish king Sobieski and his victorious army is evoked), but they appear also during the Egyptian campaign of 1798-1799 and occasionally later.

Let us list here the instances in which Classical antiquity is referred to:[5]

- Cherasco, headquarters of the army, Apr. 26, 1796[6] (Italian campaign): "Mais, soldats, vous n'avez rien fait puisqu'il vous reste encore à faire. Ni Turin, ni Milan ne sont à vous; les ceindres des vainqueurs de Tarquin sont encore foulées par les assasins de Basseville."
- Milan, headquarters of the army, May 20, 1796 (Italian campaign): "Oui, soldats, vous avez beaucoup fait; mais ne vous reste-t-il donc plus rien à faire? Dira-t-on de nous que nous avons su vaincre, puis

[4] Hanley (2005: 2.33) approximates literacy in France at the end of the 18th century for ca. 50% of male population and close to 40% for women throughout the country but unevenly distributed; in 1789 in Paris literacy reached 90% of men, and 80% of women, which makes the probable readership a true mass of people, even if the fact that newspapers were not available to everyone is taken into account.

[5] All quotations from the proclamations after recent collective edition: Napoléon Bonaparte, *Discours de Guerre*, ed. J.-O. Boudon, Paris 2011.

[6] Until the end of 1805 the original dates are given according to the revolutionary Republican calendar which was abolished by the imperial decree in 1806.

que nous n'avons pas su profiter de la victoire? La postérité nous reprochera-t-elle d'avoir trouvé Capoue dans la Lombardie?", and further: "Mais que les peoples soient sans inquiétude: nous sommes amis de tous les peuples, et plus particulièrement des descendants des Brutus, des Scipions et des grands hommes que nous avons pris pour modèles. Rétablir le Capitole, y placer avec honneur les statues des héros qui se rendirent célèbres, réveiller le peuple romain engourdi par plusieurs siècles d'esclavage, tel sera le fruit de vos victories."

- Toulon, headquarters of the army, May 10, 1798 (before embarking for Egypt): "Les légions romaines, que vous avez quelquefois imitées, mais pas encore égalées, combattaient Carthage tour à tour sur cette même mer et aux plaines de Zama. La victoire ne les abandonna jamais, parce que constamment elles furent braves, patientes à supporter les fatigues, disciplinées et unies entre elles." And in conclusion of the text: "Habituez-vous aux manoeuvres de bord; devenez la terreur de vos ennemis de terre et de mer: imitez en cela les soldats romains, qui surent à la fois batter Carthage en plaine et les Carthaginois sur leurs flottes."
- On board of *L'Orient*, June 22, 1798 (en route to Egypt): "Les légions romaines protégeaient toutes les religions. Vous trouverez ici des usages different de ceux de l'Europe: il faut vous y accoutumer." And in conclusion: "La première ville que nous allons rencontrer a été bâtie par Alexandre. Nous trouverons à chaque pas des souvenirs dignes d'exciter l'émulation des Français."
- Saint-Cloud, Sept. 11, 1808 (before the invasion of Spain): "Soldats, vous avez surpassé la renommée des armées modernes; mais avez-vous égalé la gloire des armées de Rome, qui, dans une même campagne, triomphaient sur le Rhin et sur l'Euphrate, en Illyrie et sur le Tage?"
- Regensburg, imperial headquarters, Apr. 24, 1809 (after the battle of Regensburg): "Soldats, vous avez justifié mon attente! Vous avez suppléé au nombre par votre bravoure. Vous avez glorieusement marqué la différence qui existe entre les soldats de César et les colonnes armées de Xerxès."

- Schoenbrunn, imperial headquarters, May 13, 1809: "Les princes de cette Maison [de Lorraine[7]] ont abandonné leur capital, non comme les soldats d'honneur qui cèdent aux circonstances et aux revers de la guerre, mais comme les perjures que poursuivent leurs propres remords. En fuyant de Vienne, leurs adieux à ses habitants ont été le meurtre et l'incendie: comme Médée, ils ont de leurs propres mains égorgé leurs enfants."

Two more instances when the ancient topics appear are of geographical nature: "les couleurs françaises flottent pour la première fois sur les bords de l'Adriatique, en face et à vingt-quatre heures de navigation de l'ancienne Macédoine" (Bassano, headquarters of the army, Mar. 10, 1797; after the capitulation of Mantua), and "Portons nos aigles triomphantes jusqu'aux colonnes d'Hercule: là aussi nous avons des outrages à venger" (Saint-Cloud, date as above).

The general mood of these allusions is the emulation of the ancient heroes, first and foremost on the level of leaders (the mentions of Alexander and Caesar, well known to the general public from popular readings), but also on the level of the whole army. The latter should follow the examples of discipline, intrepidity and courage of the Roman legions, and also, like the Romans during the Punic wars, master the seas and move to Africa (allusion to Zama) in order to threaten the enemy, i.e. the British – a feat, as we know, unaccomplished. This emulation, however, is not limited to military virtues; the passage about religious tolerance includes among the desired traits of the French legions the respect for other cultures and their beliefs – a concept, together with a number of warnings against pillaging in other exhortations, very much in the spirit of the Enlightenment – most likely reinterpreting in a modern way the well known attitude of the Romans towards the gods of the conquered peoples.

The latest of the appearances of ancient topics in the exhortations is the most atypical, and at the same time quite sophisticated; it clearly serves to build a black legend around the Habsburgs, not just as

[7] That is the house Habsburg-Lorraine, which is the proper name for the line of the rulers of Austria beginning with the marriage of Maria Theresa Habsburg to Francis of Lorraine (and the dynastic union of the two houses), following the Pragmatic Sanction of 1713.

cowards who fled their capital, but also as those who put their own children (i.e. subjects, a metaphor very common in Napoleon's writings for both the soldiers and the citizens in general) to death, betraying them in the most horrible way.

Nonetheless, out of all these allusions to Classical antiquity the most interesting ones, and at the same time those most firmly set within the contemporary imagery and mind frame are the more complex images of the Republican heroes, Brutus and Scipio, therefore we will concentrate on these two allusions and their intellectual background of the period, as well as on their possible meaning in Bonaparte's creation of his own image.

The figure of Lucius Iunius Brutus[8] and the story of the liberation of Rome from the tyrants, as well as the establishment of the Republic (the evocation of Brutus *explicite* but also *implicite* under the name of the victors over Tarquinius; the allusions to the Carthaginian wars), is particularly important in the early years, i.e. first of all the first Italian campaign. That the story of Brutus and the fall of monarchic tyranny was of particular importance for revolutionary France, and also a theme well known to a relatively broad public, is corroborated by two cultural facts. First and foremost, one of the works of art that became the symbol of the revolutionary movement of 1789 was the painting by Jacques-Louis David *The Lictors Bring to Brutus the Bodies of His Sons*. It was executed for the Salon of 1789 (opened in August, a mere couple of days before the proclamation of the first *Declaration of the Rights of Man and the Citizen*), and subsequently banned from the exposition by the royal censorship in the face of the revolutionary events (together with the same painter's portrait of Lavoisier who at that time was a prominent member of the Jacobin club), but returned after ardent protestations from the public. Its monumental, narrative quality earned the critical opinion that "this seems more the production of a great poet than of a painter" (Bordes 2005: 12).

[8] The "second" Brutus, Marcus Iunius, is not entirely absent from revolutionary imagery (and in some cases it is impossible to distinguish with all certainty which one of the two is evoked), but since Caesar was one of the hallowed heroes, despite his monarchical tendencies, his assassin was for many a controversial figure.

A couple of months later its impact was augmented by the fact that the revolutionary theatre revived Voltaire's tragedy *Brutus* (premiered but short-lived in 1730-1731), which reflected perfectly the Republican sympathies and virtues; actually, the actors became reluctant to continue with the performances in early 1790, fearing that it would add to the social unrest, but the public demand was so great that the play was revived in November 1790. Kenneth M. McKee (1941: 101-102) describes the "tumultuous performance" of the first reprise of the play, which served as the source of political manifestations for both royalists and republicans; the end of this performance saw the merging of the two works of art: in the finale the actors re-enacted David's painting (Chua 2013: 107).

Even though the popularity of Voltaire's *Brutus* decreased after the Reign of Terror and the fall of Robespierre, and even if indeed Napoleon did not like the play (McKee 1941: 105-106; Keyzers 1970: 109),[9] its impact, together with David's painting, was enormous, and still not outdated in the late 1790s. It is, therefore, very likely that in his proclamation general Bonaparte was using this image not only in the direct connection with the overthrowing of the Austrian rule in northern Italy, which might possibly appeal to the local reader, but also to remind the people in Paris of his commitment to the Republican cause, of which Brutus was one of the symbolic figures. Much later, in the St. Helena years, Napoleon remarked on his once ally and supporter or even patron in political career, Paul Barras, that "all he knew about history was the name and fame of Brutus; and that name he made sound like

[9] McKee's subjective conclusion is based on the fact that there were no performances after 1804, but Keyzers seems to be closer when he remarks that "given that Napoleon was to censor the theatre shortly afterwards, his dislike for *Brutus* comes as no surprise; the liberal and democratic form of government proposed in Brutus did not fit into Napoleon's political system." One must, however, bear in mind that there is a huge difference between 1796 and 1804, the latter being the year of the establishment of the Empire, and the former the time when Bonaparte still promoted avidly the Republican ideals. As for young Napoleon's sentiments towards Brutus, cf. his remarks in the untitled text, known as *J'ai à peine attaint l'âge de l'aurore des passions…* (published in *La Corse du jeune Bonaparte. Manuscrits de jeunesse*, ed. A. Casanova, Ajaccio 2009: 118). See also Herbert (1972: 116-121) for the fates of sculpted and painted images of Brutus during the late Republic.

a trumpet call in the Convention",[10] which is a tell-tale commentary to the exploitation of the legend by the avid Republicans, and also probably to Napoleon's abandonment of that model.

Apart from Brutus, the most prominent ancient topic in the proclamations are the Punic wars, with obvious allusions being made to Britain as the new Carthage, but the ideas underlying the use of this motif seem more complex than such allegorical use.

The mention of Scipio Africanus the Elder and the victory of Zama, as well as the warning about Capua, reflect the legend of the Roman general, who for the modern writers and thinkers became the model of stoic virtues apart from military genius.[11] Among the topics frequently recalled by the early modern artists was Scipio's continence and clemency, and one of the most famous paintings on this subject was executed in 1640 by Nicolas Poussin, whose art became inspiration for the French Neo-Classicists of the late 18th and early 19th centuries.[12] When in Milan (1796) Bonaparte speaks of the ancients taken for models by the revolutionary French, and lists the "Scipions" among them, it is quite obvious that this particular model is appropriated by himself, which he stresses by evoking the battle of Zama on the way to Egypt (1798). Paradoxically, in 1800 Napoleon would follow in the footsteps of Hannibal, Scipio's greatest enemy (one, however, allegedly held by the Roman general in great reverence), by crossing the Alps with his army to continue the war in Italy – an endeavour that would be

[10] Quoted in Gaspard, baron Gourgaud, *Talks of Napoleon at St. Helena*, trad. E. Wormeley Latimer, London 1904: 57. A note-worthy fact is that Napoleon's brother Lucien used the nickname Brutus during his Jacobin years.

[11] Despite the fact that Scipio's biography by Plutarch was lost, numerous authors beginning with Petrarch elaborated on his life, anecdotic material and military proficiency. However, a topic related to the Punic wars that gained the greatest popularity in literature, and especially drama, was the romantic story of Sophonisba, Syphax and Massinissa, loosely based on the accounts of Polybius, Livy, Diodorus and Appian, where Scipio appears in the background of the story. For the French culture the most important was the version by Pierre Corneille (1663).

[12] The topic was also undertaken by Giovanni Bellini in the early 16th century, Giovanni Tiepolo in 1751, a number of lesser painters of the 17th and 18th centuries, and also by Joshua Reynolds in 1789.

immortalized a year later by David in the famous painting in which the name of Bonaparte succeeds those of Hannibal and Charlemagne.[13]

The knowledge of Hannibal's story and its textual sources may be present in the rhetoric of Napoleon Bonaparte even earlier, in the exhortation to his troops presented to the Army of Italy just before leaving France for the 1796/7 campaign (Nice, Mar. 27, 1796). As John W. Spaeth (1929: 291) pointed out, the famous exhortation – "Soldats, vous êtes nus, mal nourris […] Je veux vous conduire dans les plus fertiles plaines du monde" – is reminiscent of the words of Hannibal upon the crossing of the Alps, as put down by Livy (21.30).[14] The very case discussed in the cited work by Spaeth may seem slightly too far-fetched, as the following passage shows, pointing out the similarity in composition, while the premise is different: "Hannibal, according to Livy's account, touched his soldiers' sense of pride by dwelling on what they had already accomplished as well as on what they still might achieve, viz., the capture of Rome […] the French commander contrasted with the present miserable state of his men the rich rewards that awaited them at the end of their journey." The particular technique of Livy's speech of Hannibal, i.e. touching on past achievements in order to rekindle enthusiasm is, however, very often present in other exhortations (e.g. the reminiscence of Austerlitz in Poznań, Dec. 2, 1806), which may indeed point at the influence of the passage in question on the general rhetoric of Napoleon's proclamations, but such analysis lies beyond the scope of the present paper.

That Hannibal was an important figure for Napoleon is shown by anecdotic material, according to which in the residence of Bonaparte as First Consul in Saint-Cloud the busts of both Scipio and Hannibal held

[13] A study of documents beyond the scope of this paper could show to what extent the figures of Scipio and Hannibal feature in the documents and press publications of the time of the Consulate and early Empire, and whether the reception of these personages at that time had not perchance anticipated Raymond Marks' (2005) interpretation of the Scipio of Silius Italicus as the model figure for prospective political changes in Rome.

[14] This particular proclamation, as we know it, had never been published before it was redacted in the memoirs dictated at St. Helena, but for the current paper the scholarly discussion on its authenticity (see e.g. Hanley 1999: 72, calling it "entirely fictitious"), is of secondary importance.

prominent place.[15] Also, on St. Helena Napoleon remarked on Hannibal in the following words, after having commented on the lives and deeds of Alexander and Caesar (Las Cases, *Mémorial*, Nov. 14, 1816[16]): "Et cet Annibal […] le plus audacieux de tous, le plus étonnant peut-être, si hardi, si sûr, si large en toutes choses; qui, à vingt-six ans, conçoit ce qui est à peine conceivable, execute ce qu'on devait tenir pour impossible."

The passage is much longer, and elaborates mostly on Hannibal's successes in Italy, but one sentence draws attention, as it is a clear testimony of the familiarity with ancient historians, evoking the scene of the meeting of the two former enemies at the Seleucid court (as recorded in App. *Syr*. 10-11): "Certes, il devait être doué d'une âme de la trempe la plus forte et avoir une bien haute idée de sa science en guerre, celui qui, interpellé par son jeune vainqueur, n'hésite pas à se placer, bien que vaincu, immédiatement après Alexandre et Pyrrhus, qu'il estime les deux premiers du métier."

The phrase "even though vanquished", together with the discourse that follows, and especially in the view of the famous statement given there: "on a attribué à la fortune mes plus grands actes, et on ne manquera pas d'imputer mes revers à mes fautes",[17] clearly shows that throughout his military and political career Napoleon saw himself as

[15] See the letter of Dominique-Vivant Denon as director of the Musée Central des Arts, of July 27, 1803 (Dupuy et al. 1999: 1249 [AN 11]): "J'ai rassemblé divers portraits que je ferai placer dans vos appartemens de Saint-Cloud et qui, j'espère, seront de votre goût. J'y ai joint deux bustes en bronze d'Annibal et de Scipion que j'ai rapportés de Naples et dont je vous prie de me permettre de vous faire l'hommage." The palace of Saint-Cloud was burned by the Prussian troops in 1870 and very little was salvaged of its interiors. The palace of Saint-Cloud was burned by the Prussian troops in 1870 and very little was salvaged of its interiors.

[16] Quotations from the edition: *Le Mémorial de Sainte-Hélène. Propos de l'Empereur recueillis par le Comte Emmanuel de Las Cases. Complété d'extraits des Mémoires de O'Meara et Antommarchi, médecins de l'Empereur à Sainte-Hélène, du Mémorial de "La Belle Poule" par Monsieur Emmanuel de Las Cases fils et de notices biographiques sur Sir Hudson Lowe, geôlier de Napoléon*, vols. I-IV, Paris 1969.

[17] This observation itself seems to reflect the ancient notion of *fortuna* and *virtus*, as presented for instance by Plutarch in his *De Alexandri Magni fortuna aut virtute*. However, cf. the reflection on the role of chance in history noted by Gourgaud, *op. cit*., p. 233: "At Zama Scipio was very near being vanquished. Montesquieu tells us that the greatness of the Romans hung on a broken bridge. If Hannibal had triumphed there, it would have been all over with the Romans – and all for a bridge!"

the emulator of Hannibal, even though in the Republican years the direct evocation of Scipio was a much wiser rhetorical choice. At the end of Napoleon's life, though, Hannibal, the greatest of the conquered heroes, was a suitable model to evoke.

One more aspect of Hannibal's story requires attention in the context of this paper. It comes as a surprise that the Carthaginian hero is not mentioned in the exhortation to the troops after descending from St. Bernard pass, issued in Milan on June 6, 1800, i.e. shortly after the arrival in Italy on the second campaign, but the text seems to allude in a more subtle way to the legend surrounding Hannibal. It is centred around the liberation of the Italian provinces (the Cisalpine Republic, as the territories were fittingly named after 1797) from the Austrian incursion, in a way reminiscent of Hannibal's rhetoric of liberation as transmitted by Polybius (3.77; trans. E. S. Shuckburgh): "he treated their [Roman] allies with great kindness from the first, and finally called them together and addressed them, alleging, 'that he had not come to fight against them, but against Rome in their behalf; and that, therefore, if they were wise, they would attach themselves to him: because he had come to restore freedom to the Italians, and to assist them to recover their cities and territory which they had severally lost to Rome'," As Andrew Erskine (1993) has pointed out, Hannibal's policy in this episode is based on the topos of the liberation of Greek cities, present in the propaganda of Alexander, the Hellenistic rulers and also the Romans. Napoleon seems to follow in these footsteps, and given his versatility in Classical authors, it is very much possible that the allusion after the descent into Italy from the Alps is considerate, even if implicit.

The immediate impact of the actions of Bonaparte in Italy, and their symbolic meaning, is reflected in the press commentaries of the time, and many of these call the young general "the new Hannibal" among other laudatory epithets and comparisons, e.g. to Caesar (Hanley 2005: 2.44, and notes 46-47 for reference to contemporary sources); the comparison to Hannibal is present in several Italian panegyric poems of the period as well (see Millar 1977: 13-15). We read in the auctorial introduction to the anonymous pamphlet which appeared in Paris at the

latest in mid-1799, but probably even before the Egyptian campaign,[18] entitled *L'entrevue du pape Sixte-Quint avec le général en chef Buonaparte*, that "Ni ce fier Annibal, ni ces Romains eux mêmes ne firent autant de fracas que l'infatigable Buonaparte." Later in the same text, which is a fictional dialogue between Napoleon and the 16th century pope on the topics of revolution, the role of prominent persons, politics and society, *Buonaparte* compares himself to both Caesar and Alexander, but further analysis of this text falls beyond the scope of the present paper.

Another testimony to the impact of the actions and the impression they made are medals struck around the time of the first Italian campaign by private entrepreneurs in Italy and Germany, who supported the French in their endeavours against Austria (i.e. not minted on the direct orders from the French authorities or the general in chief). Among these issues one (Henin 1826: No. 762, Pl. 76) from 1796, probably German (Todd 2009: 72) features the particularly interesting legend "A SON NOM ROME TREMBLE ENCORE, UNE VICTOIRE. D'ANNIBAL DE BRENNUS IL EFFACE LA GLOIRE."

The explicit, and possibly also implicit use of ancient allusions in the compact, "Caesarian" exhortations, together with their broader context of the period and of the writings of Napoleon, as well as with the reception of his actions, attest both the mastery of rhetoric, and also the learning and understanding of the use of proper models for the self-presentation. They show Bonaparte as the man who mastered the art of eloquence, but also during his whole career was close to what he much later confessed to Las Cases: that he would take great pleasure in writing history, had he had the opportunity (*Mémorial*, Sept. 25-27, 1816, on occasion of research on Egypt in ancient authors). Together with the comments made during the exile years they attest one more thing: that he very aptly wrote his own history, turning it into myth.

[18] The front page of the Bibliothéque Nationale features the handwritten "an VII" (i.e. Sept. 1798-Sept. 1799), but the text contains no mentions of Bonaparte's Egyptian expedition (1798-1799), while the last words of the pope read: "On ne pouvoit pas mieux choisir qu'un Italien pour soumettre l'Italie", placing the text within the context of the first Italian campaign.

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