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REX ROMAE RECENS NATUS. CLASSICAL MOTIFS IN THE OCCASIONAL POETRY CELEBRATING THE BIRTH OF NAPOLEON'S SON[1]

ABSTRACT. Fulińska Agnieszka. *Rex Romae Recens Natus. Classical Motifs in the Occasional Poetry Celebrating the Birth of Napoleon's Son.*

The birth in 1811 of the long-awaited heir to the French Empire resulted in literary creativity of both accomplished writers of the period and amateurs who took part in several poetic competitions or self-published their works. Due to the predominant classical model of education and symbolic language of the period, these works abounded in ancient allusions, motifs and themes, covering a broad range of mythological and historical figures and places. This paper seeks to assess the spectrum of the authors' knowledge and versatility with classical topics by presenting both an approximation of the frequency of mythological personages, and a survey of the roles they played in the imaginarium of the authors, who rarely were professional teachers of ancient literature or history. The compiled material gives insight not only into the ways in which the birth of the imperial prince was represented in literature, but also into the knowledge of classics among ordinary educated people of the period.

Keywords: classical reception; Napoleonic legend; French poetry; occasional poetry; digital humanities

On 20 March 1811, a child was born in the palace of the Tuileries in Paris, who received upon his birth the title of the King of Rome. The symbolic and political ramifications of such choice were manifold, but the old term *translatio imperii* epitomises them perfectly. The Napoleonic Empire claimed hegemony in modern Europe, and in this claim, it styled itself as the heir of the recently dissolved Holy Roman Empire in the first place, but also of the empire of Charlemagne, together with its sense of continuation of classical Roman imperial ideas. Subsequently, the title of the heir to the throne, who bore the names Napoléon François Charles

[1] This paper was written within the research grant of the Polish National Science Centre (NCN), OPUS 2018/29/B/HS3/01913: "The legend of Aiglon – cultural image of Napoleon's son in the 19th century and its later echoes", realized in the Institute of History of the Jagiellonian University, Krakow. The title cites the Latin poem of a student from Caen: *Rex Romae recens natus, carmen quod ingenuus adolescens, Alexius Lamache de La Benardière, Cadomoeus, rhetorices et politioris litteraturae alumnus, memoriter pronunciavit die nonâ junii* (1811).

Joseph, alluded to the German emperors' tradition of being styled kings of the Romans before imperial coronation. At the same time, it emphasized the recent French occupation and annexation of Rome and the Papal States to the Empire.

The birth of the imperial prince provided an occasion for a number of celebrations: on the political and social level, these included all kinds of festivities, military parades and charities; in the cultural sphere, they involved, apart from official portraiture, a number of both state sponsored and spontaneous "calls for" literary commemorations of the event, to which persons from every walk of life responded, as long as they were literate. Their works, the vast majority of which were mediocre and sometimes naïve, abounded in ancient allusions and themes, in reaction to the little prince's title, on the one hand, and in the vein of the still dominating cultural model of the period on the other. Education at the turn of the 18th and 19th centuries was based on the classics: knowledge of Latin and the readings of ancient authors; moreover, classical motifs were omnipresent in the public sphere, political symbolism and in arts. Since those who participated in the competitions and spontaneous creativity were predominantly amateurs, this literary ensemble offers insight into both the influence of the official image on people's imagination and the actual knowledge that average people had on the matter of classics. Knowledge that we can call "active", since it served a person's expression, was used in order to construct poetical images, i.e. must have somehow resonated with the author, and not only with the way such elements functioned officially. Of little consequence from the present point of view is the sincerity of these poetical homages, although this ought not to be diminished: even in our times we witness mediatised outbursts of popular enthusiasm towards "royal babies", for instance.

The material used for the present analysis was published and digitalised: two large anthologies–one resulting from the state sponsored competition and the other from a private editorial initiative–and several separate literary pamphlets[2],

[2] J.-J. Lucet, J. Eckard, *Hommages poétiques à Leurs Majestés impériales et royales sur la naissance de S. M. le roi de Rome*, vol. 1–2 and *Appendice*, Paris (Prudhomme fils) 1811; *L'Hymen et la Naissance ou Poésies en l'honneur de leurs majestés impériales et royales*, Paris (Firmin Didot) 1812. Yet another short anthology, containing occasional song lyrics to known tunes, *Hommage du Caveau moderne au roi de Rome*, Paris 1811, was published by the Bacchic society Le Caveau modern. The production was much more ample: many submissions were judged by the jury of the official competition to be mediocre or bad, and while some were apparently published at the cost of their authors, despite the rejection; several were not preserved, and many more remain in manuscripts in the archives. The published texts cover a wide range of languages apart from French: Italian, German, Dutch, Spanish, Portuguese, English, as well as Latin and classical Greek. In this paper, I focus on the "vernacular" works, even though Latin poems are quoted, because those in the classical languages require reflection on versification, vocabulary, let alone a command of these languages. Therefore, I intend to follow this topic with another paper. For Latin poetry written on the occasion by Polish authors in the Duchy of Warsaw, and preserved in Polish libraries or archives, see Wójcicki 1998.

together comprising ca. 300 poems, or short prose written on the occasion of the birth of the King of Rome in 1811, and ca. 25 related to the marriage of Napoleon and Marie-Louise Habsburg-Lorraine in 1810, as well as to the pregnancy of the empress. Both the minutes of the official competition and the publications themselves contain basic information on the authors: usually their occupation and dwelling-place or origin, sometimes age. The social spectrum is wide: from members of the Institute de France and *lycée* teachers of classical languages, rhetoric or history, to artisans and army veterans; from secondary education student aged sixteen to the anonymous author who introduces himself as *Un Septuagénaire*; from persons living in Paris to inhabitants of provincial towns and citizens of the Empire's satellite states. The vast majority of the authors are male, although several poems are marked as having been written by a *madame* or *mademoiselle*. Some works are supplemented by notes or commentaries from the authors. The earnestness of the official competition, whose jury comprised members of various academic institutions, is testified not only by the preserved minutes of the jury[3], but also by the fact that the first prize was awarded to an eighteen-year-old lycée student, Casimir Delavigne[4], who went on to enjoy a major and well-deserved literary career. Nonetheless, like the sincerity or lack thereof, the literary value of the whole ensemble is not of major concern from the present point of view either. It ought to be noted, though, that even if among the most erudite poems we often see those by professors of rhetoric or ancient history, this is not a rule, since "L'Apocalypse de Pierre", for instance, written by a civil engineer, testifies to the fact that in-depth knowledge of the classics was not alien to those not involved professionally with these subjects.[5]

It should be assumed that the participants received at least a basic education, with the majority having frequented secondary schools. In the case of the classics, French schools in the period when the authors received their education (from the mid-18th century on, given the age scope) would base their teaching on two monumental publications by Charles Rollin: the *Histoire ancienne des Égyptiens, des Carthaginois, des Assyriens, des Babyloniens, des Mèdes et des Perses, des Macédoniens, des Grecs* (published 1730–1738), and the *Histoire romaine depuis la fondation de Rome jusqu'à la bataille d'Actium* (1748), which

[3] Archives Nationales de France AF/IV/1453.

[4] To the Polish reader he is primarily known for his 1830 *La Varsovienne*, which also resonated strongly in France. However, his major debut was the first *Messéniennes* (1815).

[5] "L'Apocalypse de Pierre", in *Hommages poetiques* 2, 366–370, signed by "M. Labretonnière, Ingénieur en chef du Corps impérial des Ponts-et Chaussées, à la Rochelle", who can be traced on the lists of the members of the Société de Littérature, Sciences et Arts de la ville de Rochefort sur Charente as civil engineer in various cities of the department of Charente-Maritime. His first name is never given, so without further archival research it can only be assumed that the Pierre from the poem's title can be the author himself. The title is misleading, because the poem is loaded with mythological allusions and not with the Christian imagery.

were educational bestsellers in that period and into the 19th century. The year 1793 saw the publication of the richly illustrated mythological compendium *La mythologie mise à la portée de tout le monde*, probably compiled by Aubin Louis Millin, who in 1811 published *Galerie mythologique, recueil de monuments pour servir à l'étude de la mythologie, de l'histoire de l'art, de l'antiquité figurée et du langage allégorique des anciens*, and authored numerous works on classical archaeology and literature, as well as on French antiquities. To the authors writing in 1811 *Lycée ou Cours de littérature ancienne et moderne* by Jean-François de La Harpe, first published in the years 1798–1804, was also available; at least students as well as teachers would already have been acquainted with it. Obviously, the curricula also included readings from the ancient authors in the original languages and in translations, with particular emphasis on Roman historians, but not exclusively.[6]

What makes this material attractive for assessing the popularity of motifs is that the poems were written in a short period of time, by authors from varied backgrounds, and shared a common subject, which imposed some limitations on the imagery and motifs employed, though at the same time invited varied associations. Even at first glance, it is clear that the classical themes surpass any others that are present in the poetry in question, e.g. taken from Nordic and Celtic mythologies, including Ossianic elements, Biblical subjects, modern comparisons and topics; frequency analysis only confirms this impression.

This, in turn, prompts a set of questions: What were the most common and the most atypical mythological and ancient historical elements?; Did the classical motifs only have a decorative function, one of easy association, and were they used "mechanically" as elements of the symbolic language of the time?; Did the popular, even if educated, imagination conform with the themes and motifs present in official public image of authority of the time? There is also the issue of how the Roman universe functioned in the amateur poetic imagination, since "Rome" denoted the actual city, with its ancient and modern materiality and the emulated history, but it also functioned as an abstract cultural construct, related to both the materiality and the symbolic sphere and significances. Last but not least, there is the question of how all this combined into the image of the heir of the Empire. It is not possible to answer all these questions in a short paper but let us at least signal the most important issues. In particular, the subject of the classical reception in Napoleonic propaganda, public image of power and popular culture related to the political sphere of the period, despite its apparent obviousness, is still neglected and deserves closer investigation.[7]

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[6] The presence of classical authors in the pre-Revolutionary schools is discussed e.g. in Lebrun et al., 2003, esp. 517–518.

[7] I have published several papers on topics related to this broader theme, and two major ones are cited in this paper; the recent Boudon 2021 provides a general survey of the subject but is

The digital tools allow for a relatively quick and easy approximation of the frequency to which proper names occur, as well as for the assessment of their role in the context.[8] Such a basic viewing of the material brings no major surprises as far as the recurrent historical and mythological figures evoked in the more or less direct context of the topic are concerned. On the general level, also unsurprisingly, the mythological references fall into two categories: representatives of general ideas and immediate, actual identifications. Thus, in the first group Jupiter usually represents the Supreme Being, even the Christian God, otherwise evoked by simple periphrases such as "the Eternal", "King of the World", etc., but also as *Tonante*[9], i.e. Jupiter's epithet used to denote the Roman god, too. In a lesser number of instances, it is the Emperor who is being compared to the Olympian, analogically to the allegorical fresco by Andrea Appiani, who portrayed Napoleon in an imitation of the Capitoline Jupiter for the Palazzo Reale in Milan[10], but also in the cases when it is the King of Rome who takes on the role of one of the heroes, the sons of Zeus/Jupiter.

Among the major gods popular with the authors, both Apollo and Minerva are primarily depicted as the protectors and teachers of the prince, and the divinities who endow him with talents, wisdom and all kinds of intellectual gifts [Fig. 1]; Apollo's frequency, however, includes invocations to the god of poetry and inspiration. Nonetheless, Apollo is also at times the figure of Napoleon as protector of arts or as the solar, i.e. royal divinity, which, moreover, evokes one of the great Bourbon kings, who are important historical figures and intermediaries for classical reception in these poems, namely, Louis XIV, the *Roi Soleil*. Interestingly, Apollo's destructive power was apparently not valorised negatively in the period, since it is evoked–and this would be confirmed by a much later literary piece–the *Comme quoi Napoléon n'a jamais existé* by Jean-Baptiste Pérès, published anonymously in 1827, being a solar allegory of

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rather chaotic as far as the choice of sources and the general narrative concept are concerned; moreover, in methodological terms, it does not truly belong to the classical reception studies.

[8] Since this is not an in-depth study in statistics, and a "quantitative" approach serves other aims, the method chosen was very simple: compiling the list of ancient proper names together with periphrases from reading the texts and then counting the occurrences with tools provided by a simple pdf reader equipped with a multi-file search machine. The compiled statistical data are wider than what is presented at the end in this paper (apart from presented mythology, they include ancient and modern place names and historical persons, etc.) and they may be used in further research, for instance, focusing to a greater extent on educational or social patterns etc., with the reservation that in case of the data not used for this paper, even if the lists of names are complete, the numbers are raw data, not taking into consideration context or semantic differences, and their employment for other research would require adjustments.

[9] G. Crocco, "Ode LXXVI" (Italian), in *Hommages poétiques* 2, 278, uses this epithet apparently to denote the Christian God, not Jupiter. The author is presented as the "secretary general of the Prefecture of Genova".

[10] The fresco was partly destroyed during the WW2 and is now in the Villa Carlotta in Tremezzo.

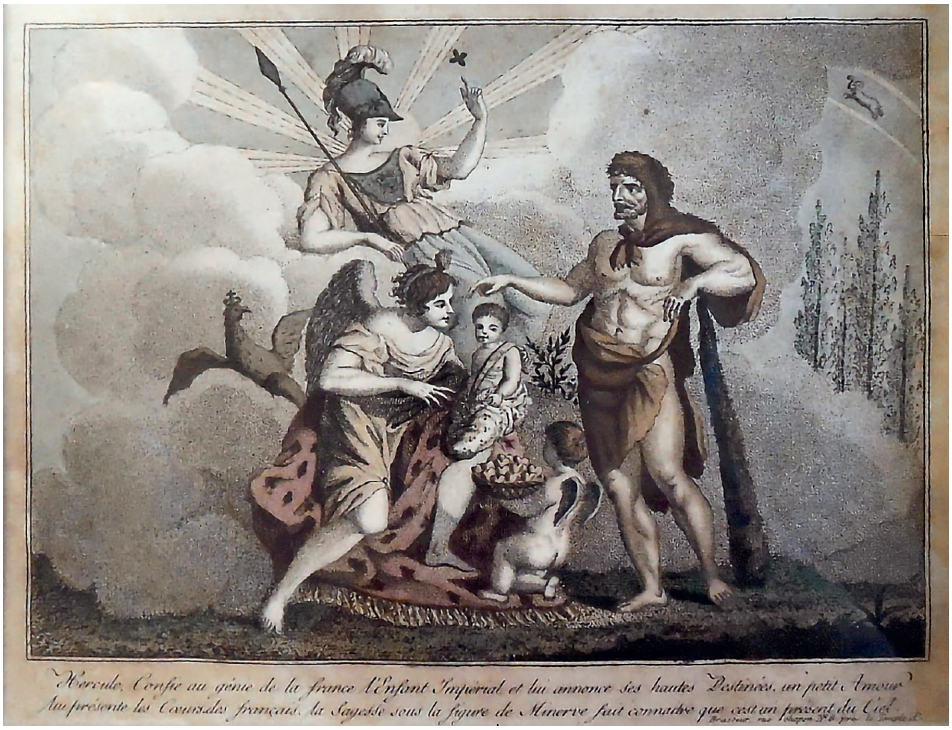

Fig. 1. Anonymous, allegory of the birth of the King of Rome, protected by Hercules, Minerva and the genius of France, 1811; author's collection

Napoleon's reign, where Apollo as the apocalyptic destroyer Apolyon represents the victorious Mars without negative connotations.[11]

The Graces and Muses usually represent the ideas of beauty, arts or sciences, and even the omnipresent Hymen is in majority of cases a personification, not a person: the marriage itself rather than the god of marriage, an evocative term rather than an active character. Unlike Hymen, Lucina, the protectress of labour, is often presented as the driving force who can influence the destiny of France by giving her a heir to the throne; she is, moreover, separate from Juno, with whom she had been traditionally identified, because Juno usually appears as the ambiguous character from the Aeneid–in poems that evoke the story of Aeneas–rather than as the benign goddess of marriage and family. Themis in turn, who

[11] This work, reprinted in the 1830s, and later translated into English with a commentary (J.-B. Pérès, *The Non-Existence of Napoleon Proved*, English translation included in: Ridgely Evans 1905), was largely misunderstood by the publishers and scholars, who see in it a rhetorical game for amusement and a parody of the pre-Renan rational explanations of religions, while the whole mythological costume serves an entirely different purpose, which I am going to show in another publication.

is naturally frequently evoked in the images of Napoleon as lawgiver, is the borderline case between the goddess and the abstract idea of justice; similarly, Astraea, who apart from recalling the IV Eclogue and its age of gold, is also presented as the goddess of justice and peace on earth.

The same applies to several figures from the "background", mostly the divinities or half-divinities of nature. The nymphs either evoke the generic idyllic landscape, or, being specifically nymphs of the rivers, they represent not only these rivers but rather the cities or even states. Thus, the nymph of the Seine can be the metaphor for Paris or France, while the nymph of the Thames personifies Britain in general, not the city of London. We will return to the metaphors of Britain and their meaning later. The popularity of Zephyrs can be explained by the presence of the personified breezes in the artworks of the period, including the representations of the infant King of Rome, whose sleep is guarded by the gentle spirits of fresh air, "caressing Zephyrs", the breezes of spring–a motif used due to the birth date corresponding to the beginning of spring.[12] [Fig. 2]

Divinities and heroes whose affinity to actual and current persons and issues is closer, or who function as their figures or costumes, are more "active". In the case of Mars, for instance, the proportions of Jupiter's presence are reversed: he appears far more frequently either as the persona or sobriquet of Napoleon, or as the acting god of war intervening in the world of the mortals, than as an allegory of war: this role is generally reserved for Bellona. Mars *is* Napoleon or Napoleon is Mars also because apart from the obvious associations this identification allowed the authors to express the hopes for lasting peace, brought by the Austrian marriage, by comparing it to the union of Mars and Venus and the disarming of the god of war by love. This ages-long theme in art and literature received immediate visual counterparts in the medallic production celebrating the wedding, for instance, the Italian medal with the legend SAEVUM PROCUL MARTEM FELIX TEDA [sic!] RELEGAT, illustrated literally by the appropriate image.[13] The less common version has Marie Louise in the guise of Minerva, vanquishing the bellicose Mars. This comparison finds an analogy in the French art of the period, specifically in the 1771 painting by Jacques-Louis David, Napoleon's court painter, *The Combat of Mars and Minerva*[14].

[12] E.g. "Couplets extraits de la Bonne Nouvelle, vaudeville de M. Gentil, représenté sur le théâtre des Variétés le 20 mars", in *Hommage du Caveau moderne*, 33.

[13] Bramsen 961.

[14] For all the references to works of art, it is impossible to assess the level of knowledge of particular paintings or sculptures among the authors, but it ought to be remembered that the art of reproduction flourished in the period and famous paintings and statues from all ages were known from engravings, while the official images of the Emperor and his family were also copied in minor techniques. Even Canova's Mars Pacificator, which came to Paris in 1811 and was not put on display, was known from earlier graphic representations of the sculpture. (The reasons for its rejection are not clear, but here is no place to discuss them in detail; I subscribe to the hypothesis that this was due to the changes of taste and the slow decline of the classical domination, which

Fig. 2. Anonymous, Allegory of the birth of the King of Rome, 1811; author's collection

It must be noted, though, that the high frequency of Mars is partly due to the fact that many texts allude to the broader contexts and the French victories, and then the god appears outside the nuptial context, regardless of whether he represents war as such or Napoleon in particular. The very frequent presence of Apollo/Phoebus in turn is related to the popular solar associations for kings and emperors, ancient and modern. A more interesting case is presented by Hercules, who holds second place among the gods and heroes identified with or representing particular persons.

Hercules is very rarely called by this name (less than 1/10 occurrences), while his main denomination is *Alcide*, i.e. the latinized turned French version of the hero's original name Ἀλκείδης, commonly used by imperial Latin authors, including Virgil, widely read at the time, and popularized in 17th-century France, e.g. by the Lully and Marais operas. Even when the "pillars" are mentioned, they are pillars of Alcides, not of Hercules. The hero stands for both the father and

resulted in the feeling of impropriety of the concept of "heroic nudity", valid in the period as an aesthetic category of the ancients, and applied to the statue commissioned ten years earlier in the heyday of classicism).

the son, both are named "new Alcides"; in the latter case, Napoleon is naturally equated with Jupiter. The Alcides of this poetry is the cultural hero rather than simply a monster slayer, which is a tradition rooted in such areas as French cultural history, especially in the iconography and imagery related to Henri IV (the "Gallican Hercules")[15], i.e. the good king par excellence, who tops the list of modern personages evoked as comparisons for Napoleon's reign, surpassed only by Charlemagne, who, nonetheless, partly belongs to legendary history and not to the tangible past. The connection between Henri's golden legend and the ancient themes is another pertinent example of intermediated reception, where the modern appropriation of certain themes dominates the direct links with antiquity. In the case in question, these intermediaries are not numerous, but Henri IV is the most important aspect of the popularity of Hercules/Alcides in France.

As far as the primary hero of this collection is concerned, the natural main association for Napoleon's son should be Romulus, both as the original *King of Rome* and as the son of Mars. Indeed, this is the most popular identification, in the context of which the most surprising absence is that of the Capitoline Wolf, even though she is one of the main motifs in iconography related to the King of Rome: in sculpture, on medals and in engravings [Fig. 3]. The next closest in terms of popularity is the far less obvious (and historical instead of mythological) Marcellus, son of Octavia.

Fig. 3. P.-P. Prud'hon (design), B. Roger (engraving), portrait of the the King of Rome with allegorical elements, 1811; author's collection

Marcellus' popularity is an interesting case, since it prompts the question of whether the authors were aware of the sad fate of Augustus's favourite heir. Judging by contextual works of art, it appears that the stories, stereotypes or myths centred on certain ancient personages were at times treated selectively; for instance, that of the birth of the King of Rome medals features Marie-Louise with the infant in her arms on its reverse, the group being a copy of the Roman statue of Messalina with

[15] Interestingly, the major propagandistic oeuvre of Henri's reign, including the proliferation of portraits *à l'antique*, is related to his marriage to Marie de Médicis; for a survey of mythological and other inspirations, see Nativel 2016.

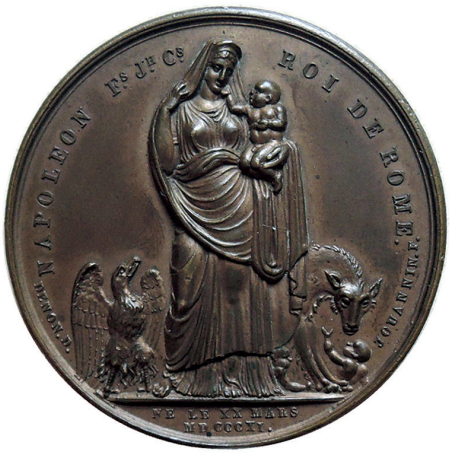

Fig. 4. B. Andrieu & J.-M. Jouannin (design), D.-V. Denon (direction), medal NAPOLEON Fs. Jh. Cs. ROI DE ROME, 1811, reverse; Bramsen 1098; author's collection

little Britannicus from the Louvre[16] [Fig. 4]. Obviously, what mattered for Bertrand Andrieu, who designed the medal, was the composition, not the identification of the subject, which in this case was ambiguous, due to the black legend of the mother and golden of her son. Thus, Marcellus could have undercome a similar process of selective appropriation of the figure: be perceived in the given context as a good candidate for the throne (the image strengthened by the black legend of Tiberius), even if in the pictorial tradition of the period he was primarily associated with the anecdotic episode from Aelius Donatus (*Vita Vergilii* 13), of Virgil reading the *Aeneid* to Augustus and his family, with Octavia fainting at the mention of her late son in the underworld.[17] Virgil's eulogy of Marcellus is of consequence in this case, hence we may assume that the comparison is pointed at the King of Rome as the Marcellus whose fate would be reversed, and he would reign. The little Napoleon is, therefore, the young Marcellus from 6.863–865:

> Quis, pater, ille, virum qui sic comitatur euntem?
> Filius, anne aliquis magna de stirpe nepotum?
> Quis strepitus circa comitum! Quantum instar in ipso!

and not from the following passage, ending with the mysterious, *Tu Marcellus eris!*, quoted by the same Latin poem (written in surprisingly correct hexameter by a Parisian teacher under the name Monsieur Bouvet), devoid of Virgil's conditionality:

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[16] Bramsen 1098 (version with the eagle and the Capitoline wolf) and 1099 does not note this striking similarity, describing the reverse as "Marie-Louise, standing, dressed as a Roman matron, holding her son in her arms", while the inspiration is obvious for both the general composition and details such as the gestures.

[17] Cf. the paintings by such artists as Antonio Zucchi (1767; Nostell Priory, Wakefield), Angelica Kaufmann (1788; The Hermitage, St. Petersburg) and Jean-Joseph Taillasson (1787; National Gallery, London), Jean-Auguste-Dominique Ingres (1812; Musée des Augustins, Toulouse), and eventually Jean-Baptiste Wicar (1818/19; Lille, Palais des Beaux Arts and Villa Carlotta, Tremezzo), whose Agrippa in the scene has the features of Napoleon.

Hoc erat in fatis te FORTEM FORTE CREATUM
Venturum auxilio, et, si mens præsaga futuri est,
Tu Marcellus eris!, tu GALLIS SIDUS amicum !
Non tantùm Terris te ostendent Fata, sed ultra
Esse sinent, dignus sis ut Patris Æmulus olim.[18]

History showed that this comparison turned out to be tragically prophetic, since Napoleon's son died of tuberculosis at the age of 21, being a *de facto* prisoner of the golden cage of the Viennese court, and just like Marcellus, was celebrated in art and literature despite the lack of major achievements during his lifetime. However, in the collection, another aspect appears to dominate Marcellus's sad fate as predicted by Anchises: that of the company in which the young man is shown in this procession of prospective Roman heroes, i.e. his ancestor, the 3rd-century BCE Marcus Claudius Marcellus, four-time consul and commander in the Gallic and Punic wars, hailed in the *Aeneid* as one of the greatest heroes of Rome, who fits the image of Napoleon perfectly.

The Punic wars introduce the third major theme, which is represented by a concise set of classical associations: Britain. 1810 marked the second period of peace in Europe: the crushing French victory over Austria in 1809 prompted the minister Metternich to propose the marriage of Napoleon (who had just divorced Josephine for her inability to bear the heir to the imperial throne and was searching for a new bride) with the archduchess Marie Louise, eldest daughter of the emperor Francis I, in order to stop the ruler of Austria from declaring consecutive ruining wars on France. Thus, with the still-working peace with Russia, with the German states either allied or at peace, with most of Italy under the French sceptres, with the newly forged alliance with Austria, France's only major enemy remained Britain, who fought the Napoleonic rule in Spain, thus defending her own economic interests on the Iberian Peninsula.

In the classical imagination of the authors, the ensemble of enemies is usually represented by the class of Titans, threatening, powerful and dangerous, but vanquished and subdued by Jupiter. The most indomitable enemy, however, receives her own set of associations, and is primarily identified as the "ruler of the waves", hence her main representation is Neptune holding his trident (the attribute is frequently evoked as the metonymy of this god and of Britain). Furthermore, this enemy is also identified with "modern, other or new Carthage", or the perfidious Carthage, like *perfidious Albion* and like *fides punica*[19], which gave birth to this adage referencing Britain. She is, therefore, presented as the trouble-monger and enemy of peace, to be vanquished by the new Rome: "Ton berceau fait trembler la perfide Carthage."[20] Eventually,

[18] Bouvet, "Poème XVIII" in the Latin section of *Hommages poétiques* 2, 205.
[19] Cf. Val. Max. 9.6.4, De perfidia.
[20] J. J. Lucet, "Stances III", in *Hommages poétiques* 2, 236.

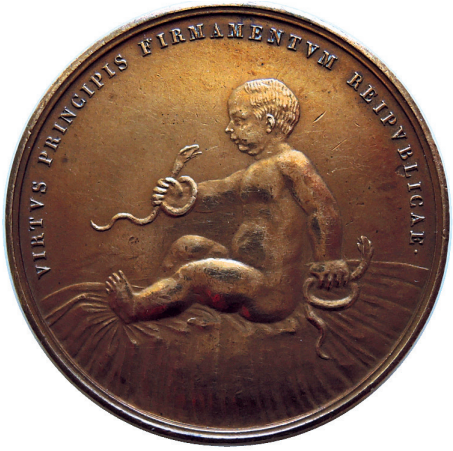

Fig. 5. I. Schmidt (design), medal VIRTVS PRINCIPIS FIRMAMENTVM REIPUBLICAE, 1811, reverse; Bramsen 1108; author's collection.

according to a certain Monsieur de Frétat de Chirac, signed as landlord (*propriétaire*), Fortune is supposed to give the prince the trident of Neptune, i.e. victory over Britain.[21]

Less obvious, even if having visual, medallic analogy, is the identification of Britain with the Hydra. Hercules battling the monster of Lerna was present on the reverse of republican medals, where it initially signified the fight against tyranny in general. In 1804, upon the resumption of hostilities, a medal was struck with the legend AU NOM DU PLUS GRAND DES HÉROS FRÉMIT L'HYDRE BRITANNIQUE.[22] Within the poetic imagery of the King of Rome, the British hydra also trembles at the birth of the son of her slayer, and it is incidentally merged with Hera's snakes, sent against the little Herakliskos in his cradle: an image again present in the medallic production related to the birth of the prince [Fig. 5]. However, the more frequent meaning of the Hydra in the collection in question is that of internal factions and squabbles, and in this case, both the father and the son are presented as the guarantees of national reconciliation, which was one of the major issues and achievements of Bonaparte's consular rule before 1804. The heir was also expected to reunite the factions around the throne.

Easily comprehensible and even banal metaphors, comparisons and identifications make the background for more elaborate, and at times curious, concepts or evocations. Among these, the historical motifs–generally in much smaller number than the mythological ones–are less obvious than one could expect either due to their atypical character, or to their little popularity in the period. To begin with, the relatively frequent evocations of Alexander go against his meagre presence in the Napoleonic imagery.[23] The interesting aspect of this particular presence is that even though Alexander is the conqueror par excellence, it is usually not Napoleon who is equalled with him, but his son, with Napoleon taking the role of the new Philip of Macedon, the half-barbarian king and *homo novus*: Philip might have had the Argeads behind him, but he

[21] "Ode XIV", in *Hommages poétiques* 1, 77.
[22] Essling 685, 937 and Bramsen 333 resp.
[23] Fulińska 2018.

did intrude on the Greek world from the country regarded as barbarian by the Hellenes.[24] Napoleon is therefore Philip, the first great king and conqueror in his line, but also the one who prepares the world for the reign of his son, expected to surpass him in education and virtues. This notion actually echoes the grandiose designs for the King of Rome, his education and preparation for ruling the vast empire.[25]

Within the imagery of the period much more typical is the very high frequency of Titus, who alone equates with the evocations of all five "good emperors" and is surpassed only by Caesar and Augustus.[26] In that period, Titus, to an even greater extent than Scipio, was the embodiment of clemency, due in a large part to the theatrical and operatic adaptations of his story. This is exactly the role that is ascribed to him in the occasional poetry in question: the new Titus is possibly the most desired and popular "title" given to the Emperor of the French. Here again, the authors follow an important aspect of the public image: the scenes of clemency shown by General Bonaparte to the rebels in Cairo, or by Napoleon as emperor to various persons accused either of spying or of plotting against him, in particular, the numerous versions of the scene with Madame von Hatzfeld and the letter denouncing her husband thrown into the fire by Napoleon, were popular motifs of prints and engravings even more than of monumental paintings[27], which is most likely one of the reasons why this virtue was so frequently praised by amateur poets.

Unusual ideas can also be quite elaborate and propose interesting (re-) interpretations of well-known motifs. For instance, in the erudite *Treizième chant de l'Énéide* by Joseph-François Michaud, one of the few authors with literary experience to publish in the occasional anthologies, peace and harmony are obtained in part by the reconciliation of Jupiter and Juno, who unite in the

[24] It ought to be noted that the knowledge of the history of ancient Macedon, let alone its culture or archaeology, was meagre before Heuzey's discoveries in mid-19th century, and the main known sources were Herodotus for his 5th-century BCE anecdotes of the Persian wars, and the equally partly anecdotical material in the historians of Alexander and of the Hellenistic kingdoms, not to mention the largely romanticized later lives of Alexander. Thus, his descent from Heracles on the father's side and Achilles on the mother's, as well as the direct heroic paternity of Zeus were better-known versions of his ancestry than the Macedonian or Epirote dynasties.

[25] See remarks on the projects of the palace of the King of Rome that would comprise educational institutions as well of the "maison d'éducation des princes" in Meudon, in the modern biographies: Tulard 1992, de Witt 2020.

[26] These two cases are particularly hard to assess, because both names are also used as common nouns or adjectives; moreover, in the case of Caesar, it is at times difficult to decide whether the evocation is of Julius Caesar himself, the general idea of the Roman "Caesar", or the modern title. To complicate things even further, Marie-Louise is often called "daughter of the Caesars" (*fille des Césars*), which includes in this category also her Habsburg ancestry, i.e. the long line of the Holy Roman emperors.

[27] For a survey of this topic, see Foucart et al. 2004.

hieros gamos. This also brings the unity of symbols of love and power, the myrtle and the laurel, the dove and the eagle:

> D'un nuage odorant Jupiter entouré,
> Parmi les doux concerts du ciel et de la terre,
> Dans les bras de Junon oubliant son tonnerre.
> Par Vénus inspiré, d'une touchante voix
> Il célèbre l'hymen des héros et des rois;
> Et dans ses vers chéris des vierges du Parnasse,
> Il peint la majesté qui sourit à la grâce,
> Et le myrte amoureux croissant près du laurier,
> Et la tendre colombe unie à l'aigle altier.[28]

The marital dimension of peace and harmony is also indicated by the presence of Rhea at the side of Saturnus whenever the *Saturnia regna* are evoked, while Saturnus alone is not necessarily that god of the golden age, but also the devourer of his own children from the Greek tradition.

In many cases, the inclusion of an obscure mythological figure apparently served the authors' ambitions to present themselves as learned persons, whose knowledge of classical themes surpassed what was commonly available from school education and popular books. It is difficult to interpret in another way the evocation of such heroes as Anchises's grandfather Assarakos[29], one of the three sons of Tros and ancestor of Aeneas, barely mentioned in the ancient texts, but present in the aforementioned mythological compendium.[30] On the other hand, the evocation of the Aeolian hero Salmoneus, who is the figure of Napoleon as the instrument of Jupiter, holding his thunderbolt, can raise doubts as to either the intentions of the anonymous author from Dijon, who hides behind the sobriquet *Le poète malheureux*, or his actual knowledge or understanding of the hero's hubris story.[31]

One of the most unexpected occurrences is to be found in the group of Alexandran associations. In the extremely erudite *Ode à Napoléon le Grand*, naming a plethora of mythological figures and historical characters, especially those related to the arts and philosophy, Étienne Delrieu, the professor of rhetoric from Versailles, known during the Revolution for his patriotic poetry[32], included a perplexing passage:

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[28] J.-F. Michaud, "Fragment d'un XIIIe livre de l'Énéide", in *Hymen et naissance*, 107–121; the whole poem was published separately.

[29] S. Delauréal, *Chant épique sur la naissance du Roi de Rome*, Rome: de Romanis 1811, intended for distribution in Paris.

[30] *La mythologie mise à la portée de tout le monde*, vol. IX, Paris an VII (1798/1799), second edition, 108–110. Generally, all mythological persons or creatures employed by the authors in question can be found in this multi-volume publication.

[31] "Ode XLVI", in *Hommages poétiques* 1, 184.

[32] Ramé 1987.

Aux vœux du dieu prompt à se rendre,
Fier de hâter cette union,
Soudain du moderne Alexandre
Part le nouvel Ephestion.
Applaudissez, Autriche! France![33]

In his reference book for Alexander in the French Enlightenment[34], Pierre Briant does not propose any clues for such a treatment of Hephaestion, and the most probable explanation is that this was an attempt at an elaborate and sophisticated, albeit slightly misplaced, metaphor of the newly forged Franco-Austrian alliance and the proclaimed friendship of the two emperors.

Obviously, there are also a large number of personages, both mythological and historical, who are named almost randomly or incidentally, either in order to evoke a place, like Parthenope for Naples, to enumerate the wise men of antiquity–poets, philosophers, scientists–who gather around the cradle of the King of new Rome, or to simply construct the metaphorical image of the night sky with Orion hunting among the stars. Interesting roles are given to Virgil: he is the cited poet of the *Aeneid* and the bucolics in general; mottos from his works appear quite often, his name is used as well to denote the genre used by the authors (*chant de Virgile* is the title or subtitle of many poems), yet he, too, serves as a comparison to show the humility of the authors. Phrases like "Pour chanter un Auguste il faut être un Virgile" [in order to praise an Augustus one ought to be a Virgil] are recurrent in the poems, and the author of this particular one, a jeweller from Montargis, apparently did not lack the sense of humour, since he closes his poem with the following stanza:

Cette réflexion trop tardive sans doute,
Me montrant les écueils semés sur cette route,
J'abjure mon erreur et le double côteau,
Pour reprendre, ô mon Roi, la lime et le marteau.[35]

There is also a long string of personifications of more or less abstract ideas, i.e. borderline cases between actual classical reception and everyday use of ancient images, and between ancient divinities and intellectual concepts, like the aforementioned Themis, but also the goddesses of wealth and welfare: Ceres and Kybele. In the latter context, it is worth noting that the most surprisingly underrepresented divinity is Mercury, even though he was not absent from the Napoleonic iconography. Apart from a longish dramatic scene in which he is one

[33] É. Delrieu, "Ode à Napoléon-le-Grand", in *Hymen et naissance*, 73.
[34] Briant 2017.
[35] Colmier, "Épitre à Sa Majesté le Roi de Rome", in *Hommages poétiques* 2, 227.

of the main characters[36], he appears only six times in the texts, i.e. half of the combined occurrences of the aforementioned goddesses, which can be the result of the strong association of Britain with commerce, while both Ceres and Kybele were traditionally associated with the French monarchy, including Henri IV (the Marie de Médicis cycle by Rubens). Yet another uncommon feature of this poetry is the frequent use of the plural of Orpheus (Orphées), i.e. employing the mythical poet's name not only to denote himself, the legendary hero, but generally the class of poets.

The appearances that can be labelled "incidental", with no deeper allegorical or political meaning–the nature divinities and spirits populating the world, the minor gods or heroes not related to the main subject–mostly have a decorative function: they help construct the poetic universe based on classical themes and motifs, which confirms the assumption that classical motifs were commonplace and the common language of the even basically educated persons of the period, and that the readings were broad, even if the deeper understanding of the myths at times escaped the authors.

One more aspect of the imagery of the texts in question is worth mentioning in this survey: the impact of antiquity on the poetic "geography". On the one hand, most regions of Europe are denoted by ancient names more frequently than by the modern ones, with the exception of France and Austria. The other characteristic feature, which has already been mentioned, is that countries and regions are evoked in the first place by rivers, then by mountains, and far more rarely by cities, or even states' names. Thus, Britain, apart from the mythological associations described above, is usually either Albion, or Thames. In the case of many rivers, the names used are ancient: Danube becomes Ister, Po is Eridanus. Similarly, Italy is frequently referred to as Ausonia, Spain is Iberia; Russia, and at times the cold North in general, is called "Ourse", the Ursa of the northern constellations rather than the bear as Russia's personification, since this image would become popular after the defeat of 1812. The names of the northern winds' divinities–Aquilo, Boreas–can also evoke the northern regions. Exceptions are made for rivers or places that did not have ancient names, like the northeastern Oder, Niemen, Spree; these, however, occur incidentally, in the narrative historical contexts.

A separate place is given to the material geography of Rome, called often the city of Mars or the eternal city, especially in poems that are directly related to the occasion, i.e. the birth of the King of Rome. Rome is correctly located in Ausonia (Italy) and in Latium, and out of its own physical presence and landscape, two elements enjoyed incomparable popularity: the Capitol and the

[36] P. J. Charrin, J. Dusaulchoy, "Le Rappel des dieux, ou le conseil céleste", *Hommages poetiques* 1, 380–397. One of the authors must be identified with Joseph-François-Nicolas Dusaulchoy de Bergemont (1760–1835), the accomplished playwright of the period.

Tiber, i.e. the river in accordance with the general tendency of naming countries and cities by their main rivers, but also the symbolic rather than mythological "father" of the King of Rome, and the highest place of power, as the symbolic seat of the newborn ruler.

One longish poem, *L'oracle du Janicule* by Joseph Étienne Esménard[37], is almost entirely devoted to Rome in its ruined materiality, torn between its pagan and Christian pasts, seen by the eyes of the modern wanderer, the descendant of Joachim du Bellay, who three centuries earlier had sought Rome in Rome, albeit in vain[38]:

> La place où s'élevait le palais des Césars,
> Attriste encor son âme en frappant ses regards.
> Là, de vingt monuments que vingt siècles noircissent,
> La gloire a disparu, les ruines périssent;
> Et de nouveaux débris sans cesse environnés,
> Les mânes souverains errent abandonnés.
> Le temple d'Antonin ne reçoit plus d'hommages;
> Rome du bon Trajan cherche en vain les images…[39]

Still, the vestiges of the ancient Rome triumph over the new religion and new order: the pilgrim finds Marcus Aurelius on Capitoline Hill, and from there he descends to the Tiber, where he receives the prophecy concerning the young god being born, to become the fortunate new Marcellus, and to breathe new life into the half-dead city. Esménard complements his poem with detailed historical commentaries on several monuments and places mentioned in the poem: Janiculum Hill (which does not play major role in the poem, but is chosen for the prophecy's origin clearly because its association with Numa's tomb mentioned by Livy), the Flavian amphitheatre (whose name Colosseum is, according to the author, vulgar)[40], the arches of Titus and Constantine and their sculptural decoration, the statue of Marcus Aurelius together with Michelangelo's opinions on its artistic value, and the Pantheon, Hadrian's mausoleum. Similar commentaries are found in the authors' notes on several other poems, but the

[37] The author was known in his time for works such as the libretto of the opera *Le Triomphe de Trajan* (1807), believed to be an allegory of Napoleon's rule, set to the music of one of the most celebrated French composers of the period, Jean-François Lesueur.

[38] "Sonnet III" of the 1558 volume *Les Antiquités de Rome*, which made up part of the school curricula. Itself echoing Bocaccio, this particular poem was widely translated or adapted into other languages, from Mikołaj Sęp-Szarzyński in the 16th century to Ezra Pound in the 20th century and was in large part responsible for the topos of the "absence of Rome", which, in a modified form, would also prove popular with the Romantics.

[39] J. Étienne Esménard, "L'oracle du Janicule", in *Hymen et naissance*, 264. This poem was also reprinted in *Hommages poétiques* 2.

[40] In this case, the author even mentions the destruction of the monument due to it being treated as a quarry.

ones by Esménard are most elaborate and show genuine knowledge of Rome's history and topography.

It should be noted that, despite the echoes of du Bellay's lament on the absence of Rome in Rome and the exploitation of the poetic and pictorial melancholic motif of ruined ancient landscapes–of importance for the popular imagination in the period in question were the works of painters such as Hubert Robert (1733–1808)–the authors of the first decade of the 19th century are less pessimistic: they find the city's eternal vestiges everywhere (thus echoing the modern archaeological discoveries and first attempts at a conscious and scientific preservation of ruins from antiquity), and also perceive in the French Empire's rule over the Eternal City the sign of its rebirth. The latter interpretation by extension functions as praise for Napoleon's rule, and his symbolic descendance from the Roman Caesars.

Naturally, it is not surprising that Rome, in its several aspects, is central to the authors' imagery. This is primarily the Rome of the Augustan Age, which is emphasized by the very strong presence of the motifs related to the *Aeneid* and its mythical universe. This is also Rome perceived as the centre of the world, the City. This predominance is hardly incidental, not only because of the title of the heir to the throne and his obvious association with the founders of Rome: Aeneas, Romulus. The story of the exiles from Troy and the ancestors of the Julian family goes further in its analogy to the image of the imagined new dynasty in France.

Napoleon strove to distance himself from symbolic genealogies and project the image of what in modern times would be called a "self-made man". In the commentary on the idea of the Institute de France bestowing upon him the titles of *Augustus* and *Germanicus* after the victorious campaign of 1809, which led to the Austrian marriage, he wrote: "There is nothing to be seen in the memory of the Roman emperors that one could envy. (…) The only man, and he was not an emperor, who distinguished himself by his character and many illustrious actions, was Caesar. If the Emperor wished a title for himself, that would be Caesar. But so many minor princes have already so much dishonoured this title (…) that it is not even close to the memory of great Caesar (…). The title of the Emperor is that of the *Emperor of the French*. He does not want any assimilation, neither the title of *Augustus*, nor that of *Germanicus*, not even that of *Caesar*".[41] Still, while building a new, at first "horizontal" dynasty, by placing his siblings and relatives on the thrones of Europe, he could not escape comparisons and associations, ancient and modern; out of all ancient personages Augustus was the

[41] "Note sur des inscriptions proposées pour l'arc de triomphe", Schönbrunn 3.10.1809*, Correspondance de Napoleon I*er, vol. 19, Paris 1866, 545, No. 15894 (author's translation). These titles were proposed in the wake of the victorious Austrian campaign that eventually led to the marriage with Marie-Louise.

closest to him as model, even if an unaccomplished one. Astraea and the reign of Saturn were present already in the Consular iconography of the victorious Bonaparte and the expected reign of peace after the treaties of Lunéville with Austria (1801) and of Amiens with Britain (1802); the latter, in particular, was celebrated by medals employing the IV Eclogue imagery.[42] First and foremost, however, Napoleon imagined himself as the Augustan cultural hero: the lawgiver, the founder of the state, and last not least the founder of a dynasty, the imagined "fourth dynasty" of France. These dreams were cut short in 1814–15, but the years 1810–11, with the marriage to the "daughter of Caesars", and the birth of the heir to the throne saw the apogee of the Empire. The heir was to seal this fate, and the Bonapartes were supposed to equal or even surpass the *gens Iulia*; the prophetic and imperial etymologies of the title *augustus*[43], in the modern languages synonymous with majestic, illustrious, eminent, etc., served this end very well. The Julian star became a frequent element of imperial iconography, one, incidentally, that would survive Napoleon's fall and his son's exile to Austria, and adorn their portraits even posthumously.

* * *

To conclude, the survey of the mythological and historical personages from classical antiquity in the occasional poetry published for the birth of Napoleon's son does not bring major surprises as far as the repertoire of such motifs is concerned. With the Augustan model of the empire, it is to be expected that the main reference would be Virgil's *Aeneid* on the one hand, and his *Saturnia regna* on the other. These allusions and employments are at times quite sophisticated; as we have seen, one example reaches the scope of the "thirteenth book" of the *Aeneid*, in which the traditionally fractious Olympians abandon their squabbles, skirmishes, and jealousies, and subsequently gather to celebrate the wedding of the new Aeneas and new Lavinia in order to start the new Roman lineage. Apart from Romulus, the infant heir to the throne is equated with all youthful heroes in their own. These include the child Hercules (in the episode with Hera's snakes), but also Achilles, and Aeneas. The child is also likened to that ancient youth whose fame is related to his father, i.e. Telemachus. Less common are the historical allusions, i.e. the popularity of Marcellus, regardless of his actual tragic fate, and the comparison of Napoleon to Philip of Macedon, who was destined to father Alexander the Great. The latter case is the more interesting because it shows that despite the tradition of Alexander's military conquest in art and literature, he was recast as the new Hercules in the hero's cultural rather than

[42] Bramsen. For detailed analysis of the Augustan motifs in Napoleon's public image, see Fulińska 2022.

[43] Paschalis 1997, 240.

bellicose aspect: as the founder of cities, protector of arts, the ruler was characterised by clemency rather than the insatiable *pothos*. This is the Alexander from the great cycle of Charles Le Brun, created for Louis XIV, another example of intermediated reception: victorious at Granicus and Arbela, entering Babylon in triumph (this painting was adapted in 1801 by Pierre-Paul Prud'hon for his *Le triomphe de Bonaparte ou la Paix*), but even more forgiving Porus and showing clemency to the family of Darius. This is how, during the short period of peace, poets and private persons imagined the future of the French Empire and the reign of the prince whose title of Napoleon II eventually lasted only a few days in June/July 1815, while he himself was already in Vienna, without hopes of returning to France.

These ideas were transmitted with the help of a rich and sophisticated repertoire of classical allusions, whose employment shows that in most cases the authors, regardless of their backgrounds, were aware of the meanings of the figures they evoked, even if some examples show that they also strove to boast their erudition and education with the ancient topics, which did not always have the desired effect. The compilations also show that these authors, most of them amateurs, knew the ancient geographical names of the modern places and were versatile in using them. Even if the most self-aware poems came from the teachers of various levels, those written by representatives of other professions, including ones far removed from the "humanities", like artisans, show clearly that the language of classical motifs and themes was commonly understood, and made up a communicative system of signs and symbols.

This overview could not include a sociologically oriented study of how various walks of life translated into an awareness of both form (many "vernacular" poems imitate classical stanzas, the Latin ones employ ancient metre) and matter. However, such studies would be welcome from scholars interested in classical education in the 18th and 19th centuries, and the popular reception of classics, for instance. Such a project would require both sociological tools and a comparative analyses of school curricula and textbooks in the changing circumstances of education in ancient-régime, revolutionary and post-revolutionary France. This falls beyond the scope of the present reconnaissance. However, the mere presence of varied motifs in the literary homages to the heir to the throne, written more or less spontaneously, shows that antiquity and classical "costume" were not just the domain of official art and dominating aesthetics, but also the common symbolic language of various classes of at least basically educated persons.

STATISTICS

Over 100 occurrences	Mars + periphrases[44]
Over 80 occurrences	Hercules + Alcides + periphrases; Hymen/Hymenaeus
Over 60 occurrences	Apollo + Phoebus + periphrases; Jupiter + periphrases; Minerva + Pallas; Neptune + periphrases
Over 30 occurrences	Achilles; Aurora; Flora; Graces; Muses + periphrases; Nymphs; Romulus
Over 10 occurrences	Astrea; Bellona; Calliope; Juno; Lucina; Numa; Orpheus/Orphei + periphrases; Themis; Saturn; Venus + periphrases; Zephyr
6–9 occurrences	Bacchus; Sybil; Ceres; Clio; Hydra; Parcae; Janus; Kybele; Aeneas; Fortuna; Mercury; Tritons; Naiads; Rhea
2–5 occurrences	Alcestis; Alecto; Alkmene; Amphion; Amphitrite; Andromache; Auster; Boreas; Chiron/old centaur; Daphne; Echo; Egeria; Eolus; Eumenides; Harmonia; Hebe; Hector; Hygeia; Icarus; Ixion/king of the Lapiths; Nestor; Pan; Pegasus; Phaeton; Polyhymnia; Pomona; Pluton; Plutus; Telemachus; Terpsichore; Thetis; Titans; Ulisses; Vesta; Vulcan
Single occurrences	Agamemnon; Agricola; Alphaios; Amalthea; Amazons; Amyntas; Anchises; Anthaeus; Aristaios; Ascanius; Assaracus; Astyanax; Atlas; Calchas; Camenae; Cerberus; Chimera; Cyclopes; Cyrene; Dione; Eos; Erato; Erinyes; Eurystheus; Latona; Maenads; Maia; Mentor; Minos; Mnemosyne; Nereids; Orion; Parthenope; Pentheus; Priam; Proteus; Salmoneus; Sisyphus; Tantalus; Terminus; Thalia; [Hermes] Trismegistos; Typhon; Urania

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[44] These are generally the well-established ones; Mars is evoked as the god of war, Hercules – as Alcmene's son, Jupiter – the Thundering, Venus – queen of Cythera, queen of Paphos, Orpheus – the son of Apollo or the disciple of Apollo/the Muses, the Muses – daughters of Memory/Mnemosyne, etc.

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