

Ode on the Occasion of the Peace of Lunéville

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When Napoleon became First Consul in late 1799, he wanted to concentrate on making improvements to various aspects of French life, especially its economy. But first he had to deal with what is known as the Second Coalition against the French republic, led by Austria, Russia and Britain. In 1800, he sent General Jean Moreau to fight Coalition forces in Germany, while he led an army across the Great Saint Bernard Pass to surprise the Austrians in Italy. There, on 18 June, he defeated the Austrians, thanks in large measure to the actions of General Louis Desaix, who lost his life in the engagement. The Treaty of Lunéville, signed on 9 February 1801, was the immediate result of these actions, and it effectively left only Britain at war with France. That ended, briefly, with the Treaty of Amiens in 1802.

As can be imagined, the people of France (and, indeed, most of Europe) were delighted with the coming of peace. There were celebrations, commemorative medallions (such as the one from my collection included here), engravings and any number of other decorative arts celebrating Marengo and peace. The ode presented here is one of the best I have seen, with its frequent

references to ancient history and mythology. Of course it lavishes praise on First Consul Bonaparte, but also manages to give credit to Moreau and Desaix as well. It even describes a bit of the result of the treaty, mentioning the establishment of the so-called ‘natural borders’ of mountains, rivers and oceans. And, of course, it lays all blame for continued war on England. The translation and excellent annotation are by our friend and colleague, Dr. Bill Chew III.



O D E
A L'OCCASION DE LA PAIX

SIGNÉE A LUNÉVILLE

Le 20 Pluviôse an 9 de la République
Française,

AU PREMIER CONSUL.

Teque adeo, decus hoc ævi, te consule, inibit.,
VIRG.



A PARIS,
DE L'IMPRIMERIE DE DIDOT JEUNE.
AN IX. -- 1801.

O D E

AU PREMIER CONSUL.

DES vallons sacrés d'Aonie
Quittez le fortuné séjour ,
Immortels enfants du Génie ,
Nos vœux hâtent votre retour.
Quand sur le char de l'Abondance
La Paix en triomphe s'avance ,
Au sein de nos heureux climats ,
Pour éterniser son trophée ,
Prenez et la lyre d'Orphée ,
Et le ciseau de Phidias.

(4)

Par une ligue formidable ,
Je vois nos états ravagés.
L'Ambition insatiable
D'avance les a partagés.
Mille cohortes meurtrières
De nos impuissantes frontières,
S'avancent aux murs de Paris.
Mais que dis-je ? à l'effort sublime
De tout un peuple magnanime
Cèdent ces soldats aguerris.

Quelle carrière d'héroïsme
Présentent nos premiers exploits !
Cet élan du patriotisme
D'épouvante glace les Rois.
Déjà le Rhin, l'Escaut et l'Ebre ,
Par leur résistance célèbre ,
N'arrêtent plus nos défenseurs.
A leur gloire unissant la sienne ,
Bonaparte , aux portes de Vienne ,
Conduit ces rapides vainqueurs.

(5)

Mais quelle époque désastreuse
Vient à mes regards effrayés
Offrir l'image douloureuse
De nos destins humiliés !
France , aux tristes bords de la Seine ,
Dans ce trouble , quel dieu ramène
Des rives du Nil , ton héros ?
Sa tête féconde en miracles ,
En moyens change les obstacles ,
Pour te retirer du chaos.

En désarmant l'Intolérance ,
Ce héros rapprocha les cœurs.
Peuple , au fond de ta conscience ,
Il alla rechercher les mœurs.
Avec quel art , ses mains habiles ,
De nos dissensions civiles
Ont détruit le germe fatal !
Dans nos régions désolées ,
Les vertus longtemps exilées ,
Reparaissent à son signal.

(6)

Mais sur un mont inaccessible ,
Dont mon œil est épouvanté ,
Quel est ce passage impossible ,
Par les Français exécuté ?
Alpes, au milieu des abîmes ,
Bonaparte franchit vos cîmes ,
Suivi de nos braves soldats.
Le Piémont voit dans ses campagnes ,
Ce torrent tomber des montagnes
Sur les bataillons de Mélas.

Marengo ! la France éplorée ,
Au milieu de tant de succès ,
A vu , dans ta plaine illustrée ,
Succomber le jeune Desaix.
Son dévouement comble sa gloire.
De nos rangs fuyait la Victoire ;
Sa mort la fixe sur nos pas.
Ainsi , Grecs , aux bords du Scamandre ,
Le fils de Thétis vit dépendre
Vos triomphes de son trépas.

(7)

Moreau d'une invincible armée
Digne à jamais par ses vertus,
Poursuit de l'Autriche alarmée
Les nombreux bataillons vaincus.
Le Danube, à cet autre Alcide,
Oppose en vain son cours rapide ;
Ses flots sont aussitôt soumis.
Dans votre course triomphale,
Français, il n'est plus d'intervalle
Entre vous et vos ennemis.

En ce jour, Bonaparte achève
D'immortaliser ses destins :
La balance succède au glaive
Dans ses victorieuses mains.
A ses premiers traités fidelle,
Sa Sagesse les renouvelle ;
Le succès ne les change pas.
La Paix, au nom d'un Peuple libre,
Assied le nouvel équilibre
Que la Victoire offre aux Etats.

En rétablissant la barrière
Des monts , des fleuves et des mers,
La France avec la terre entière,
Fixe ses intérêts divers.
O Rhin ! éternelle limite
Que la nature avait prescrite
Au vaste empire des Gaulois ,
Enorgueilli de nous défendre ,
Avec pompe , tu vas étendre
Ton cours affranchi sous nos lois.

Egypte ! au Croissant asservie ,
Tu renaîs à la liberté ;
Des arts dont tu fus la patrie .
Le feu sacré t'est rapporté :
Ses étincelles électriques,
Des plus anciens corps politiques,
Iront ranimer les débris.
Ciel , réalise ce présage !
Pour ces peuples , rends à notre âge
Les jours fortunés d'Osiris.

(9)

Quand la Paix console la Terre
Et met un terme à nos tourments,
L'Anglais, pour prolonger la Guerre,
Ebranle tous les éléments;
Son attente sera trompée :
Au piège, sa proie échappée,
Désormais brave son pouvoir ;
Pour reprendre un injuste empire,
Contre l'Europe, son délire
Tente l'effort du désespoir.

Angleterre ! par tes subsides,
Nos climats furent embrasés,
Sur l'objet de ces dons perfides,
Les Rois ne sont plus abusés.
L'or corrupteur que ta main verse,
Des communs bienfaits du Commerce
Sans partage, enrichit ton sein ;
Et, pour en fixer la balance,
Tu calcules, comme une chance,
L'effusion du sang humain.

(10)

L'Europe, pendant dix années,
Immense arène de forfaits,
Contre ses propres destinées,
Elle-même servit l'Anglais.
De ses flottes couvrant les Ondes,
Bientôt, sans retour, aux deux Mondes
Il alloit imposer des fers.
Mais du despotisme insulaire
L'Orgueil a trahi le mystère
Et soulevé tout l'univers.

Aux dons du sol, de l'industrie,
Pour réunir tous les trésors,
De son Héros notre Patrie
Exige de nouveaux efforts.
O Dieux, veillez sur Bonaparte !
Que de ses heureux jours s'écarte
Le fatal ciseau d'Atropos !
Au sort d'une tête si chère,
S'attachent, du double hémisphère,
L'indépendance et le repos.

Par le C.^{en} CAILLE.

ODE

on the Occasion of the Peace

Signed at Lunéville,

On 20 Pluviôse Year 9 of the French Republic,

For the First Consul

“It is in your consulship that this glorious age shall begin”
(Virgil)¹

Paris,
at the Printing House of Didot Jeune.
Year IX – 1801.

ODE

TO THE FIRST CONSUL

From the sacred valley of Aonia
Leave the happy sojourn,
Oh immortal children of the Genius!
Our ardent wishes hasten your return.
When on the chariot of Plenty
Triumphant Peace makes its way
To the bosom of our happy climes,
To render her trophy eternal,
Take up the lyre of Orpheus!
And the chisel of Phidias!

¹ The quote comes from the Eclogues, IV, lauding Gaius Asinius Pollio (Roman consul 40 BC), and not coincidentally a patron of Virgil, the author! It is not coincidental that the present author (of the Odes) chooses such an opening quote from Virgil, the ultimate Latin epic author ... At this stage in Napoléon’s career, an implicit comparison to Augustus would not only have been inappropriate, but politically dangerous. Indeed, Pollio was a Republican!

By a formidable league,
I find our states ravaged.
Insatiable ambition
Had already divided the spoils of our lands.
A thousand murderous cohorts
From our powerless frontiers
Advance on the walls of Paris.
But what am I saying? To the sublime effort
Of a united and magnanimous people
Those hardened soldiers must give way.

What a tale of heroism
Is told by our first exploits!
See how our invincible patriotism
Freezes the Kings with dread?
Already the Rhine, Scheldt and Ebro,
Famed as insurmountable ramparts
Can no longer stop the advance of our valiant defenders.
Uniting his glory with theirs,
Bonaparte, at the gates of Vienna,
Leads these swift victors.

But woe! Which disastrous epoch
Now passes before my frightened gaze
Presenting the painful image
Of our humiliated destiny!
Oh France! On the sad banks of the Seine,
In such troubled times, which god shall bring back,
From the banks of the Nile, your hero?
His head brimming with miracles,
And armed with the means to surmount all obstacles
And bring you back from chaos.

Disarming the bane of Intolerance,
This hero joins hearts in concord.
People of France! Into the depths of your conscience,
He will penetrate and seek out the moral core.
Behold with which skill his able hands,

Of our civil dissensions,
Have eradicated the fatal seed!
See how, in our desolated regions,
The long-exiled virtues,
Reappear at his clarion call.

Now raise your gaze, to an inaccessible mountain,
Terrifying to behold.
What do I see? A passage impossible
Conducted by the French?
Ye Alps, in the midst of your chasms,
Bonaparte crosses your peaks,
Followed by our brave soldiers.
And Piedmont witnesses, in his campaigns,
This military torrent gushing from the mountains,
Submerging the battalions of M^élas.

Oh Marengo! Where weeping France,
In the midst of success,
Witnessed, in your illustrious plain,
The death of young Desaix.
His devotion rendered his glory complete.
Victory was already deserting our ranks;
When his death fixed her in our midst.
As did the Greeks, on the banks of the Scamander,
When the son of Thetis saw how
Their triumphs depended on his death.

Moreau, with an invincible army
Rendered forever worthy through its virtues,
Pursues the numerous defeated battalions
Of an Austria alarmed.
The Danube, of this other Alcidas,
In vain opposes his rapid advance.
And her currents are at once overcome.
Ye Frenchmen! In your triumphant race,
Hot on their heels, you leave no space
Between yourselves and your enemies.

On this day then, Bonaparte rendered
His destiny ever immortal!
Scales of justice now replace the sword
In his victorious hands.
And always true to his first treaties,
In his wisdom, he has confirmed them;
His victories do not change them.
And Peace, in the name of a free people
Firmly anchors the new equilibrium
That Victory has presented to the States.

By re-establishing the barrier
Of mountains, rivers and oceans,
France, with the whole world,
Its various interests establishes.
Oh Rhine! eternal limit
That nature had prescribed
For the vast empire of the Gauls,
Proud to defend us,
You will extend, with pomp,
Your course, liberated under our laws.

Egypt! enslaved by the Crescent,
You are reborn to liberty;
The sacred fire of the arts, of which
You were the fatherland, are returned to you:
Its electric sparks,
Shall revive the debris
Of the most ancient bodies politic.
Heaven, let this omen come true!
For these peoples, give back to our age
The happy days of Osiris.

When Peace consoles the Earth
And puts an end to our torments,
The Englishman, so as to prolong the War,
Unsettles all the elements;
His hope will be disappointed:
His prey, escaped from the trap,

Henceforth defies his might;
To regain an unjust empire;
Against Europe, his madness
Attempts the effort of desperation.

England! with your subsidies,
You set our climes ablaze.
As for the object of these perfidious gifts,
The Kings no longer are abused.
The corrupting gold that your hand gives out,
Of the common benefits of Commerce,
Without sharing, enriches your bosom;
And, to firmly establish that balance,
You calculate, like a gamble,
The spilling of human blood.

Europe, for ten years,
An immense arena of serious crimes,
Contrary to her own destinies,
She, herself served the Englishman.
With his fleets covering the Waves,
Soon, forever, on both Worlds
He would impose chains of iron.
Yet the mystery of this insular despotism
Arrogance has betrayed
And roused the whole universe.

To the gifts of the soil and of industry,
To unify all treasures,
Of our Hero our Fatherland
Demands new efforts.
Oh Gods, watch over Bonaparte!
May the fatal scissors of Atropos,
Turn away from his happy days!
And the independence and repose
Of the double hemisphere
Be linked to the destiny of a head so dear.

Annotation of Historical Terms and References

1. *Pierre Didot* (1761-1853), likely author of the *Ode*, was a French printer, typesetter and poet, with printing offices established, by order of the French government, in the Louvre, where they remained, under the Consulate. He was already famous contemporaneously for his impeccably printed and lavishly illustrated editions of Virgil, Racine, Horace, and La Fontaine, for which work he was decorated by Napoleon with the *Ordre de la Réunion* (Tulard 1: 650 and 2: 586-92; Rudy).
2. *Aonia* is the historically somewhat debated but nevertheless highly likely literary synonym for the Greek region of Boeotia, including Mt Helicon, sacred to the Muses and birthplace of the poet Hesiod (*Kleiner Pauly* 1: 418, 920-21 and 2: 994).
3. *Triumphant Peace* refers to the Peace of Lunéville (9 February 1801), between France and the Holy Roman Emperor Francis II, signed by Joseph Bonaparte for France and Count Ludwig von Cobenzl, the Austrian Foreign Minister, for Francis II. The main terms included the confirmation of the Treaty of Campo Formio (17 October 1797, between France and Austria), which Austria is required to enforce; France gains control of the left bank of the Rhine but renounces any claims to territories to its East; and acquires the Grand Duchy of Tuscany, with compensation in Germany promised the Grand Duke. The independence of the Batavian, Cisalpine, Helvetic and Ligurian Republics, and Austria's possession of Venetia and the Dalmatian coast are confirmed. The peace held until 1805, when Austria resumed war with France (*Encyclopedia of the French Revolutionary and Napoleonic Wars*, 1: 205 and 2: 585).
4. *Orpheus* was, in Greek mythology, the most famed poet, prophet and above all paramount musician in the ancient and later Western tradition. His powers of composition and delivery were deemed able to charm all living beings. Orpheus is typically depicted with a lyre and surrounded by wild beasts, tamed by his divine music (*Kleiner Pauly* 4: 351-56).
5. *Phidias* was doubtless the most renowned ancient Greek sculptor, painter, and architect (fl. c. 460 – 430 BC), best known for his Olympian statue of Zeus (one of the Seven Wonders of Antiquity), and for his Athena Parthenos on the Athenian Acropolis (*Kleiner Pauly* 4: 722-24).
6. The *Rhine*, *Scheldt* and *Ebro* were three key strategic rivers already historically significant since antiquity as a boundary between the Roman Empire and the German tribes, as a key commercial waterway of the Roman province *Belgica*, and as an early boundary between Roman and Carthaginian Spain. In Napoleonic times they constituted natural barriers dividing France from Germany and Spain and, in the case of the Scheldt, since the Thirty Years' War a much-disputed waterway connecting the North Sea with the Belgian interior via the port of Antwerp (*Kleiner Pauly* 4: 1330,

1394-95; *Encyclopedia of the French Revolutionary and Napoleonic Wars*, 3: 815-18; Tulard 2: 645-46).

7. *Bonaparte at the gates of Vienna*. In 1797, during the Northern Italian Campaign, after the Battle of Tarvis, Napoleon advanced to Leoben, hardly 100km from Vienna, prompting the Austrians to sue for peace, first in the (preliminary) Treaty of Leoben, itself followed by the conclusive Treaty of Campo Formio, whereby Austria relinquished most of Northern Italy and the Low Countries to the French. (*Encyclopedia of the French Revolutionary and Napoleonic Wars*, 1: 205, 2: 488-91, 567)
8. *From the banks of the Nile* makes reference to Bonaparte's Egyptian and Syrian campaign, 1798-1801, whence he returned to France on 7 Oct 1799, just a month before his coup of 18th Brumaire (10 November 1799) (*Encyclopedia of the French Revolutionary and Napoleonic Wars*, 2: 634-37).
9. *This hero joins hearts in concord* alludes to the *Concordat* between France and the Papacy, signed on 15 July 1801 in Paris. Designed to reconcile deep divisions in France between secularized revolutionaries and Catholics provoked by the Civil Constitution of the Clergy of 12 July 1790, and to re-establish good terms with the Vatican, it did not however restore church lands secularized during the early Revolution. On balance, while restoring religious peace, it accorded much power to Napoleon, who henceforth appointed bishops and oversaw church finances (Tulard 1: 474-80).
10. *A passage impossible* alludes to Napoleon's famous (and fabled and propagandized in David's painting, *Bonaparte franchissant le Grand-Saint-Bernard*, painted 1800-1803) May 1800 crossing of the Alps, during the Italian Campaign of 1799-1800, in which the Frenchman famously emulated Hannibal's crossing in 218 BC during the Second Punic War. The "passage impossible" ushered in the conquest of Northern Italy from the Austrians (*Kleiner Pauly* 2: 934-37; *Encyclopedia of the French Revolutionary and Napoleonic Wars*, 2: 491-93).
11. *Piedmont ... battalions of M elas* makes reference to the forces of Michael Friedrich Benedikt, Baron von Melas (1729–1806) and field marshal of the Austrian Empire, who narrowly missed a great victory against Napoleon at Marengo, foiled by a successful counter-attack by the French General Louis Desaix. Marengo is near the north Italian town of Alessandria, in Piedmont (*Encyclopedia of the French Revolutionary and Napoleonic Wars*, 2: 605-09, 627-28).
12. *Marengo*. Battle of Marengo, 14 June 1800, between France and Austria, won decisively by the French in a last-minute victory through the tactically brilliant intervention of Desaix. (*Encyclopedia of the French Revolutionary and Napoleonic Wars*, 2: 605-09)
13. Louis Charles Antoine *Desaix* (1768–1800) was the valiant French Napoleonic general who clinched the French victory at Marengo in the face of imminent defeat by the Austrians, himself being killed by musket fire at the moment of victory (*Encyclopedia of the French Revolutionary and Napoleonic Wars*, 2: 605-09).

14. *Greeks, the banks of the Scamander ... the son of Thetis* alludes to Scamander, the legendary Trojan hero who, during the Trojan war, tried to kill Achilles three times, the Greek only being saved by divine intervention. Scamander is seen as the mythological personification of the River Scamander, which flows across the plains before Troy – where the Greeks had, according to Homer, made camp, and where the battles with the Trojans were fought. Thetis was a Greek mythological sea nymph or goddess of the water, and the mother of Achilles, the central Greek hero of the Trojan war, victor over Hector, but felled by Paris' arrow to his vulnerable heel. (*Kleiner Pauly* 5: 220-21, 765-66; Bulfinch 211-27)
15. Jean Victor Marie *Moreau* (1763–1813) was a Napoleonic general and Commander of the Army of the Rhine-and-Moselle, first highly successful against Austrian forces, later famed for his textbook fighting retreat with numerous prisoners, in 1795. The author here conveniently forgets to mention the eventual defeat and retreat. (*Encyclopedia of the French Revolutionary and Napoleonic Wars*, 2: 657-58)
16. *Alcidas* was a Spartan *nauarch* (admiral) during the Peloponnesian War (431–404 BC). (*Kleiner Pauly* 1: 265)
17. *Scales of justice* refers to the monumental legal *Code Civil des Français*, or *Code Napoléon*, not officially promulgated until 21 March 1804, but essentially complete in 1801. Intense work by a commission of four specialists, often chaired by Napoleon himself, had begun soon after 18. Brumaire. The Code completely reformed and modernized French law with vast repercussions throughout Europe and as far away as America. (Tulard 1: 449-51)
18. *He has confirmed them* alludes to the fact that the Peace of Lunéville largely confirmed the previous Treaty of Campo Formio. The author is implying Bonaparte's supposed magnanimity towards his again defeated foe, instead of imposing harsher terms.
19. *By re-establishing the barrier of mountains, rivers and oceans* is an allusion to French foreign policy – since the days of Louis XIV – of establishing and maintaining natural frontiers, again taken up during the French Revolution by the Girondins. The goal was to add, to the Pyrenées and the Atlantic, the Rhine, specifically referenced in this stanza as the *eternal limit*. This goal was achieved by the Treaty of Campo Formio and the Peace of Lunéville and would later be reflected in the redrawing of the map of Germany in the *Reichsdeputationshauptschluss* of 1803.
20. The stanza beginning with *Egypt! enslaved by the Crescent, You are reborn to liberty* is, of course, a somewhat hyperbolic reference to Bonaparte's Egyptian expedition 1798-1801 which, while it ended in failure militarily, did bring to the region the infectious notions of liberalism and nationalism.
21. *The happy days of Osiris*, is a reference to the glorious days of Ancient Egypt, represented by the Egyptian god of the dead, brother and husband of *Isis* and father of *Horus*. (Bulfinch 292-94, 934)

22. *England! with your subsidies* is a clear reference to the British policy, since the 18th century, of subsidizing its Continental ally-of-the-moment (e.g. Austria during the Austrian Succession War, 1740-48) or Prussia during the Seven Years' War, 1756-63). That ally was always the underdog in the on-going contest, which Britain supported to restore the balance of power (ergo "balance-of-power politics") and since Britain, as the premier naval power, lacked strong land forces, subsidies replaced direct military support on land. The balance itself had to be maintained to ensure overseas – and therefore commercial – dominance. The English, as the stanza claims, will *gamble* and *spill human blood* to maintain the commerce that *enriches their bosom*.
23. *Europe, for ten years [...] She, herself served the Englishman*: this stanza continues the theme of the previous and lays the blame for the ten years of war since 1792 firmly at the feet of Britain which, in its arrogance and megalomania would, if permitted, using its fleet, dominate both the Old and the New World.
24. *Atropos* is, in Greek mythology one of the three Fates that determine the life span of a man. *Clotho* spun the thread of life, *Lachesis* measured its length, *Atropos* cut it off. (Bulfinch 180-81, 904)

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