

Monarchy to Empire: Comparing Men's High Court Fashion 1785-1792 and 1799-1814

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Open any book on the history of fashion and design. One will quickly see that according to the popular narrative, men's fashion became simpler after the French Revolution and never turned back to the opulence of the Versailles courts. However, if one examines the court of Napoleon Bonaparte one sees that during his reign, not only did men's court attire return, it was more elaborate than during the reign of Louis XVI. Despite his revolutionary origins, when Napoleon set out to establish the formal dress for his new imperial court, he looked not to the styles which became dominant during the French Revolution, but instead to the habit à la française, which was last worn in the courts of the now-deposed French kings. Comparing aristocratic men's dress in the Court of Louis XVI during the latter half of his reign from 1785-1792 to men's court dress in the court of Napoleon from 1799-1814, shows a surprising lack of change. However, the years of Napoleon's reign did not simply see the styles of Louis XVI repeated without change. The pre-revolution fashion trends continued evolving as if the revolution had never occurred. In addition the new styles were adapted to suit the needs of Napoleon's regime—and the personal preferences of the Emperor.

Louis XVI – last era of the old French Kings 1785-1792

Louis XVI's ascension to the throne in 1774 to the abolition of the monarchy in 1792 saw great economic, political, and social change in France. The era saw the rise of an increasingly powerful and politically

active middle class, considerable economic development, and a great increase in the French population. It also featured a series of major crises in the French government as well as mismanagement of the government's finances. All of these trends came to a head between 1785-1792, when a major debt crisis, a major famine resulting from harsh winters, and an increasing agitation from the aristocracy middle classes led to the French Revolution.¹

Although influenced by external events, the fashions worn within the French court represented a continuation of previous trends rather than a sharp break with the past, largely due to Louis XVI's general lack of interest in attire and fashion. In addition, it is important to note that fashion belonged to a tiny percentage of the population during this era. According to Jean Tulard, up to 85% of the population was composed of peasants who had little to no participation in the fashion economy.²

Due the disinterest of Louis XVI in fashion, there was very little development in the standard court attire during the first half of his reign. Composing of the habit à la française, fashion during the early years of Louis XVI reign was virtually indistinguishable from the reign of his father Louis XV. The habit à la française consisted of a coat, a waistcoat, tight breeches, worn with silk stockings, and a lace jabot and cravat. Yet by 1785, formal court attire had moved away from light pastels with fine, delicately placed embroidery, and consisted of "clothes of gold and silver stuff, with embroidery and precious or semi-precious stones on the coat and waistcoat."³ Prominent embroidery became the rule rather than the exception. A darker color pallet was preferred and clothes were typically cut to emphasize a slender figure.

As Louis XVI's reign continued, court fashions grew increasingly obsolete in polite society due to the rise of a more casual English style known as dress à l'anglaise, which appealed to a much larger demographic. Dress à l'anglaise could be worn outside in increasingly casual settings, and soon the habit à la française was worn only at the most formal of occasions.⁴

Acceptance of dress à l'anglaise accelerated rapidly after the outbreak of the French Revolution in 1789. However, court dress did not

¹ Lefebvre, Georges, and R. R. Palmer. *The Coming of the French Revolution, 1789* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1947); Doyle, William. *The Oxford History of the French Revolution*. Oxford (England: Clarendon Press; 1989).

² Zieseniss, Charles, & Katell Bourhis. *The Age of Napoleon: Costume from Revolution to Empire, 1789-1815* (New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1989), xii.

³ Aileen Ribeiro, *Dress in Eighteenth-Century Europe, 1715-1789* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2002), 185.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 207.

fully disappear until 1792, Without a court, there was no longer the need for the elaborate system and economy built around court dress. In fact, anyone seen wearing the highly fanciful embroidered and lace costumes of four years earlier would have been denounced as “counter-revolutionary,” and probably executed. Entire industries that had once supported the court fashion disappeared. Many artisans fled the country, were imprisoned, or worse.

Another contributor to the decline in elaborate men’s court dress was the state of the economy in the final years of Louis XVI’s reign. The economic decline was exacerbated by the harsh winters of 1787-88, that adversely affected raw materials necessary for the production of silk. All of these trends are encapsulated in the fate of the fashion magazine *Journal de la Mode et du Goût*, which closed its doors in 1793.

Napoleon and his Empire – 1799-1814

Following the dissolution of the court, the habit à la française essentially disappeared. The years that followed saw radical changes. Constant war, revolutionary turmoil, and limited foreign trade created an unstable environment where individuals had little reason to spend excess money on status symbols and personal enjoyment. The result was little development of high French men’s fashion and what high French fashion existed did not display unified trends. Instead, during the Revolution, men’s fashion tilted the English styles. There were a few attempts to get away from anything that resembled the old forms of dress and create an entirely new concept, focusing on neoclassical forms and shapes; but none were successful.⁵

Napoleon’s rise to power provided the sense of stability necessary to restart the fashion economy. On November 9th 1799, better known as 18th Brumaire, General Napoleon Bonaparte overthrew the government and declared himself First Consul. Surprisingly, one of his first decrees was to mandate splendid costumes for himself and the other principle members of his government.⁶ Seeing changes, André-François Miot de Melito, the former Foreign Affairs Commissioner to Florence, commented on his return to Paris in 1802, “What little had remained of austere Republican forms at the time of my departure from the capital

⁵ Aileen Ribeiro, *Dress in Eighteenth-Century Europe, 1715-1789* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2002), 103.

⁶ Paul de Rémusat, *Memoirs of Madame de Rémusat: 1802-1808* (New York: D. Appleton and Co., 1880), 47.

had now disappeared...no more boots, sabers or cockades, these were replaced by tights and silk stockings.”⁷

In the following years as Napoleon's empire grew, he emphasized a return to styles strongly reminiscent of those last seen in the latter years of Louis XVI's reign. Politically he took many actions to evoke the ancient-regime, such as marrying an Austrian Archduchess, and installed family members as heads of state in the various conquered countries. As Napoleon's court grew to reflect the level of pomp and splendor he felt was fitting for his high station, it was as if the Revolution had never occurred, and the English influence in fashion sidelined.

Despite Napoleon's dreams that his reign would span generations, his Empire only survived 15 years. In 1812 he led a disastrous campaign into Russia. The rest of Europe saw that it was possible for Napoleon to be defeated, and they attacked. Two years later he was forced to abdicate his throne and the House of Bourbon was restored to power. While Napoleon returned from exile in Elba in 1815 to reclaim the throne for 100 days, the splendor of the Empire did not return with him. Once again, the climate was far too unsettling for people to spend money on luxuries such as fashion, and many of the fabric providers and designers feared repercussions from Napoleon, because they had provided services for the restored monarchy.⁸ Under the restoration men's costume was increasingly somber, and like the attire during the Revolution, English styles became predominate, eventually winning out. The days of the elaborate habit à la française were over.

Similarities and Differences between Court Attire of Napoleon and Louis XVI

Despite the disruption of the French Revolution, the form of the habit à la française returned under Napoleon. However, there were many distinct, if not small differences between the habit à la française as worn in the latter years of the reign of Louis XVI, and the habit à la française as worn in Napoleon's court. Previous trends in changes in the habit à la française were exacerbated, continuing as if the revolution never occurred. Most significant was the change in cut, and increased surface embellishment. Both time periods also faced striking differences in fashion leadership, and an increased undercurrent of English fashion influence, which ultimately prevailed in both time periods.

⁷ André François Melito, *Memoirs of Count Miot de Melito, Minister, Ambassador, Councilor of State and Member of the Institute of France, between the years of 1788 and 1815* (New York: Scribner, 1881), 49.

⁸ Charles Zieseniss and Katell Bourhis. *The Age of Napoleon: Costume from Revolution to Empire, 1789-1815*, 213.

Cut

While the habit à la française worn in the court of Louis XVI featured a sharp fit, as seen in Figure 1, in Napoleon's court, it featured an even sharper cut.⁹ In particular, Napoleonic court dress tended to feature a higher collar, snugger fit, and taller cravat than was typically previously worn, which can be seen in Figure 2.¹⁰

The waistcoats worn during the Napoleonic era changed slightly from those worn from 1785-1792. During the latter portion of Louis XVI's reign, waistcoats were typically highly tailored to emphasize the waist and create a snugger, more feminine fit, as can be seen in Figure 3.¹¹ In contrast, waistcoats were typically boxier from 1799-1814, with a more masculine shape, which can be seen in Figure 4.¹² The boxier, more assertive cut illustrates the increased military influence on men's fashion, a holdover from the revolution, as seen during Napoleon's reign.

Still, the cut of clothing in the two time periods does show strong similarities. The Napoleonic era attire continued to maintain the sleekness of cut which first came into fashion during the latter part of the Louis XVI's reign. The svelte look favored the young, an increasingly large demographic during the late 1700s in France. That form also took advantage of the predominantly young, economically-active and politically-minded middle class. However, this style was also well suited to Napoleon's court, which favored clothing styles with a military influence, another form which favored young, athletic men.

Surface Embellishment

While both 1785-1792 and 1799-1814 saw use of lavish embroidery as well as heavy silks, the subject matter of those decorations greatly varied. During the reign of Louis XVI, increased foreign trade provided inspiration for a wide variety of new "exotic" patterns of embroidery. This can be seen most strongly in the "Oriental" fruit branches in Figure 3, dated from 1785-1789.¹³ These styles were drawn from fanciful accounts of Japan and China that came to France by way of the French East India Company and other travels. The focus on small

⁹ Habit à la Française. French. ca 1774-1792. The Metropolitan Museum of Art.

¹⁰ Habit à la Française. French. c. 1810. The Metropolitan Museum of Art.

¹¹ Waistcoat. French. ca 1780-1790. Metropolitan Museum of Art.

¹² Waistcoat. French. ca 1800-1815. Metropolitan Museum of Art.

¹³ Waistcoat. French. ca 1780-1790. Metropolitan Museum of Art.

delicate shapes contrasted with the heavy neoclassical designs and large floral motifs common during the Napoleonic era, as seen in Figure 4.¹⁴

The amount of embroidery present on the habit à la française increased during its revival in 1799. The overall space covered in embroidery expanded, as can be seen by comparing Figure 5 from 1810, to Figure 6 from the reign of Louis XVI.¹⁵

It is important to note that although lavish embroidery enjoyed great popularity during Napoleon's reign, lace did not. First, lace required a large population of highly skilled, specialized workers, which because of the French Revolution, France no longer had. Lace was strongly connected with the nobility of the former French monarchy, and therefore inherently suspicious. As a result, lace was not included in an official public exhibition of the arts created by French Industry until 1806.¹⁶ Notwithstanding Napoleon's attempts to encourage lace production, it never returned to the levels seen under Louis XVI.

Just like the increased svelteness of the habit à la française, the reduced use of lace during the Napoleonic era continued a trend that had already slowly begun during the latter years of Louis XVI's reign. The reduction continued during the French Revolution, and accordingly by 1799, lace was only worn at the throat, and never at the cuffs, as had been the style previously: “[Bonaparte] would wear a black cravat, a lace frill to his shirt, but no sleeve ruffles.”¹⁷ In comparison, under Louis XVI, lace was so commonly worn at court, even by the pages of the state stable.¹⁸

¹⁴ Waistcoat. French. ca 1800-15. Metropolitan Museum of Art.

¹⁵ Back of Habit à la Française. French. c. 1810. The Metropolitan Museum of Art; Back of Habit à la Française. French. ca 1774-1792. The Metropolitan Museum of Art.

¹⁶ Zieseniss and Bourhis, *The Age of Napoleon: Costume from Revolution to Empire, 1789-1815*, 105.

¹⁷ Rémusat, *Memoirs of Madame de Rémusat: 1802-1808*, 47.

¹⁸ Félix Hézecques and Charlotte M. Yonge, *Recollections of Page at the Court of Louis XVI* (London: Hurst and Blackett, 1873), 117.



Figure 1 – Habit à la Française. French. ca. 1774-1792. The Metropolitan Museum of Art.



Figure 2 - Habit à la Française. French. c. 1810. The Metropolitan Museum of Art.



Figure 3 – Waistcoat. French. ca 1780-1790. Metropolitan Museum of Art.



Figure 4 – Waistcoat. French. ca 1800-1815. Metropolitan Museum of Art.



Figure 5 – Back of Habit à la Française. French. c. 1810. The Metropolitan Museum of Art.



Figure 6 – Back of Habit à la Française. French. ca 1774-1792. The Metropolitan Museum of Art.

Economic Revitalization via Fabric

While both the Napoleonic period and the entirety of Louis XVI's reign, silk was the predominate choice for court attire, the choice of silk took on a heightened significance in Napoleon's court due to his desire to reverse trends that started under Louis XVI. In the latter years of Louis XVI's reign, the gradual decline of the French silk industry, centered in Lyons, turned into a crisis. Increased imports of cotton prints from England and India reduced the demand for French silks, which in 1786 led to riots among the workers.¹ Although the following year an unusually harsh winter resulted in a severely reduced supply of raw materials, it did not match the fall in demand, causing customers that would have purchased silk to purchase other materials. Even with

¹ David Longfellow, "Silk Weavers and the Social Struggle in Lyons during the French Revolution 1789-94," *French Historical Studies* 12 (1981): 11.

declining production, by 1788 more than 15 million pieces of finished cloth remained unsold in warehouses.² The oversupply and lack of demand resulted in large amounts of unemployment, disastrous for a city where around a third of the population depended directly on fabric production.³ While the habit à la française required silk for its creation, insuring a stable consumer base, the number of necessary occasions where the habit à la française could be appropriately worn shrank. An increasing number of the elite turned towards the habit à la anglaise, which could be fashioned out of a variety of materials.⁴

Under Napoleon, one of the express purposes of the habit à la française became the revitalization of Lyons, whose suffering had only worsened during the years since the fall of Louis XVI. Indeed the habit à la française, crafted from rich dark velvet or silk fabric from Lyons, became a patriotic sign of support for the beleaguered region. As Zieseniss and Bouhis describe, “every year [Napoleon] ordered hangings and furniture for the various palaces from Lyons. This was with a view to encourage the manufacturing of that city.”⁵ As the Revolution destroyed much of Lyons, it created even more of an incentive for Napoleon to attempt to rebuild the city from its ashes. The destruction is best shown through how many looms were operational. In 1786 there had been 15,000 operational looms in Lyons, but by 1800 there were only 3,500 looms operational.⁶ Stringent laws were enacted to encourage the purchase of French fabrics. Protectionism was taken to an extreme. While under Louis XVI fabric had come from Lyons and overseas, by 1804 under Napoleon, it was mandatory to only wear French fabrics to court.⁷

Influence of English Styles

Both time periods faced a growing encroachment of English styles on high French fashion. Fashions in England were more relaxed

² David Longfellow, “Silk Weavers and the Social Struggle in Lyons during the French Revolution 1789-94,” 11.

³ *Ibid.*, 10.

⁴ Zieseniss and Bourhis, *The Age of Napoleon: Costume from Revolution to Empire, 1789-1815*, 35.

⁵ Rémusat, *Memoirs of Madame de Rémusat: 1802-1808*, 369.

⁶ “The Silk Trade of England and Continental Europe” *Agricultural and Industrial Magazine of the Society for the Encouragement of Domestic Industry, and for Promoting Effectual Relief from the General Distress Vol. 1* (London: James Cochrane and Co., 1836), 57.

⁷ Zieseniss and Bourhis, *The Age of Napoleon: Costume from Revolution to Empire, 1789-1815*, 100.

than in France due to the lack of a highly centralized court like Versailles. Instead of court life, the life of an English nobleman centered upon hunting and the country estate. As a result, English attire was more practical than French attire, making the dress à l'anglaise more appealing to the French bourgeoisie.⁸

The “anglomania” influenced choices of design in the habit à la française, such as in the changing color palette. The color palette of English fashions trended towards somber colors such as the eponymous black suit, the trademark of the middle-class merchant and professional. At the start of Louis XVI's reign the popular fashion and society magazine *Gentleman's and London Magazine* observed that “an entire suit of cloth [was] hardly ever seen except upon old people, physicians, apothecaries and lawyers.”⁹ Yet by 1787, Arthur Young, a British agriculturalist and economist observed, “all persons of small or moderate fortune are forced to dress in black, with black stockings.”¹⁰ In turn, it was reflected in the gradual shift in the habit à la française from pastels in the early part of Louis XVI's reign to the more somber tones seen from 1785-1792.¹¹

During both eras, clothing drawn from English designs became a way for men to illustrate their criticisms of the government without publically stating their opinions. By 1786 *Fashionable Magazine* found that the habit à la française was only suitable for court and suggested that everywhere else a new French version of the English frock coat be worn.¹² The coat was more slimly cut and more embellished than the plain English frock coat, but still more casual than the habit à la française and can be seen in Figure 7 on the next page.¹³ In contrast, under Napoleon the resurgence of dress à l'anglaise had largely to do with influx of émigré's returning from overseas, where they had fled during the Revolution, bringing back fashions with them.¹⁴

⁸ Zieseniss and Bourhis, *The Age of Napoleon: Costume from Revolution to Empire, 1789-1815*, x.

⁹ Ribeiro, *Dress in Eighteenth-Century Europe, 1715-1789*, 213.

¹⁰ Arthur Young and Matilda Edwards, *Travels in France* (London: G. Bell and Sons, 1906), 375.

¹¹ Zieseniss and Bourhis. *The Age of Napoleon: Costume from Revolution to Empire, 1789-1815*, 38.

¹² Ribeiro, *Dress in Eighteenth-Century Europe, 1715-1789*, 207.

¹³ *Fashion Plate*, 1787, from the *Gallerie des Modes et Costumes*, French.

¹⁴ Zieseniss and Bourhis, *The Age of Napoleon: Costume from Revolution to Empire, 1789-1815*, 105.



Figure 7 – *Fashion Plate*, 1787, from the *Gallerie des Modes et Costumes*. French.

Fashion Leadership

While Napoleon's strong fashion leadership resulted in bringing back the *habit à la française*, Louis XVI's lack of fashion leadership encouraged the incorporation of more casual clothing into aristocratic men's wardrobes. Unlike his predecessors, Louis XVI had no love of clothing. As later recalled by Félix de France d'Hézecques, who was then a page, the master of the wardrobe had to remind the king, "there were occasions when the majesty of the throne required clothes of some kind other than Petersham cloth."¹⁵ The King's instance of dressing in simple heavy wool cloth was in keeping with his preferred hobby, hunting. In fact, the King's main contribution to fashion was through hunting. He adopted clothing styles from England, which were more suited to the active, outdoor country lifestyle. Casual styles such as the frock coat moved away from formal court attire, and created a situation where, "the Monarch's dress was hardly superior to that of his courtiers [and while this] simplicity was in perfect harmony with the taste of Louis XVI...[it] often made it hard to discern him in the midst of the Court."¹⁶ The King's taste encouraged the already popular rise of casual English fashions.

In comparison, Napoleon utilized dress for its symbolic meaning as a ruler. Like much of his Empire, court fashion was highly centrally planned. One of his first actions upon seizing power in 1799 and

¹⁵ Hézecques and Yonge. *Recollections of a Page at the Court of Louis XVI*, 19.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 182.

installing himself First Consul of the Empire was to establish the costume for himself and his colleagues. As Madame de Remusat, a woman married to the first Chamberlain of the Empire and Grand Master of the wardrobe, later wrote in her memoirs, “[Bonaparte] had decreed for himself and his two colleagues, that on all occasions of grand ceremony, each should wear a red coat, made in winter of red velvet, in the summer of some other material, and embroidered in gold.”¹⁷ The elaborate outfit, seen in Figure 8, contrasts with the simple attire worn during the revolution that produced Napoleon.¹⁸ The outfit served to invoke militaristic ideas, with its double-breasted coat, as well as display the splendor of his rule.



Figure 8 – *Premier Consul Bonaparte*, c.1802, Jean-Antoine Gros, Musée de la Légion d'honneur, Paris, France.

Legitimacy was a central issue to Napoleon's goals, thus he made the calculated decision to hearken back to the previous Kings of France in his choices for court fashion. His coronation in 1804 was carefully crafted to display wealth and power to recall the prestige and legitimacy of the former French monarchy. Hiring painters such as Isabey and David to meticulously construct the coronation, the outfits were carefully imbued with deliberate symbolism. One such example is Napoleon's adaptation of the bee motif, carefully embroidered onto the back of the coronations robes (Figure 9).¹⁹ Dating back to the unification of Gaul, as the former symbol of the ancient French Merovingian dynasty, bees are also the symbol of immortality and resurrection.²⁰ Napoleon constantly tried to evoke both of these factors as a leader, painting himself as the legitimate founder of a reborn empire that would span generations.

¹⁷ Rémusat, *Memoirs of Madame de Rémusat: 1802-1808*, 47.

¹⁸ *Premier Consul Bonaparte*, c.1802, Jean-Antoine Gros, Musée de la Légion d'honneur, Paris, France.

¹⁹ *The Coronation of Napoleon*, c. 1805-1807. Jacques-Louis David. Louvre, Paris, France.

²⁰ Ziesenis and Bourhis, *The Age of Napoleon: Costume from Revolution to Empire, 1789-1815*, xii.

Fashion as a Function of Court Status

Under Napoleon, one of the main purposes of court attire was to signify court status. While fashion was used as a way to project status at Versailles, the closed aristocracy allowed individuals a bit more flexibility in what they wore because an individual's status and family was a known fact.²¹ However, Napoleon's court was created anew from whole cloth. Consisting of entirely new individuals, members whose families had not known each other for generations, additional means were necessary to make status apparent. As a result, dress regulations under Napoleon were more rigid. Napoleon also took advantage of the inherently hierarchical and competitive nature of court systems, encouraging courtiers to spend money and energy on clothing rivalries instead of plotting against him.²² Napoleon's Marshalls of France showed their status and competed with each other through the lavish embroidery on their coats, as can be seen in Figure 10.²³ It was sometimes said that there was more gold on the costume of a marshal of the empire than in the purse in his pocket.²⁴

Indeed, dress in the court of the Emperor was quite similar to the tradition of military uniforms. At a quick glance, one could determine the rank and function of the individual, and their place in the social hierarchy. The system created by Napoleon went as far as to decree different colors for each position. As Madame Remausat observed, "This becoming costume consisted of the French coat, in different colors for



Figure 9 –
The Coronation of Napoleon, c. 1805-1807. Jacques-Louis David. Louvre, Paris, France.

²¹ Ribeiro, *Dress in Eighteenth-Century Europe, 1715-1789*, 173.

²² The construction of Versailles by Louis XIV was largely driven by the same goals.

²³ Marshal of the Empire – Full Dress Uniform. c 1812. Carle Vernet.

²⁴ Zieseniss and Bourhis. *The Age of Napoleon: Costume from Revolution to Empire, 1789-1815*, 93.



Figure 10 – Marshal of the Empire – Full Dress Uniform. c 1812. Carle Vernet.

those who belonged to the department of the Grand Marshal, the Grand Chamberlain, and the Grand Equerry respectively.”²⁵

While Napoleon created laws forcing those around him to dress according to their station and display lavish amounts of wealth, he often dressed casually. Unlike Louis XVI, whose casual dress grew out of disinterest, Napoleon’s casual dress served to send a carefully tailored message. During his time as First Consul, he wore the uniform of his guards. As Madame Remusat wrote, “The two other Consuls, Cambacères, and Lebrun...wore this wore this gorgeous coat, with lace, ruffles, and a sword, after the old fashion of full dress: but Bonaparte, who detested all such adornments, got rid of them as much as possible.”²⁶ Besides giving himself an appearance that connected him to the common

man, he also saw himself as the exception to the rules he had created. On the eve of his coronation Napoleon told Madame Remusat, “It is not everyone who has the right to be so plainly dressed.”²⁷

As historian Orville Murphy wrote, “among the many pieces of baggage Napoleon inherited from the past, probably the most explosive was the enduring and seemingly eternal Franco-English hostility.”²⁸ The hostility against the English was seen in Napoleon’s use of the *habit à la française* to instill a level of patriotism in his court. The *habit à la française* was an inherently “French” design using fabric from Lyons. It

²⁵ Rémusat, *Memoirs of Madame de Rémusat: 1802-1808*, 211.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 47.

²⁷ *Ibid.*

²⁸ Orville T. Murphy, “Napoleon’s International Politics: How Much Did He Owe the Past?” *The Journal of Military History* 54, no. 2 (1990): 170.

took on a patriotic and nationalistic quality, separating France from her enemies, the English and their casual clothing.

In a way, the lavish costumes of the Napoleonic Empire allowed the population to forget the troubles of the Revolution. Madame de Rémusat noted, “This pomp, coming as it did after a period in which the affection of squalor had been combined with that of extravagant civisme, seemed to be an additional guarantee against the return of that fatal regime which was still remembered with dread.”²⁹ When the Aristocracy did finally return in 1814, they surprisingly did not keep the court attire. The heavily embroidered silks and velvets were simultaneously a reminder of the lost days of the old monarchy and of the Revolution.³⁰ Adopting the dark, somber colors associated with the hardworking bourgeoisie of England, the aristocrats avoided criticism of the moral implications of the splendid habit à la française.

When Napoleon told Metternich in 1813 that he had “wished to united the past and the present,” he meant more than his marriage to the Austrian Archduchess Marie-Louise.³¹ Napoleon used fashion to help bolster the legitimacy of his Empire, resulting in court attire that had more in common with the monarchy the revolution had overthrown. Just as the cut of the habit à la française grew more extreme under Napoleon, and the embroidery more lavish, Napoleon took existing elements and refined them. Court dress code became more restrictive, and took on symbolic and even militaristic tones not seen during the reign of the old kings.

²⁹ Rémusat, *Memoirs of Madame de Rémusat: 1802-1808*, 46.

³⁰ Zieseniss and Bourhis, *The Age of Napoleon: Costume from Revolution to Empire, 1789-1815*, 117.

³¹ Felix Markham, *Napoleon* (London: Signet, 1966), 192.

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