In this novel approach to law and literature, Robert Barsky delves into the canon of so-called Great Books, and discovers that many beloved characters therein encounter obstacles similar to those faced by contemporary refugees and undocumented persons.

The struggles of Odysseus, Moses, Aeneas, Dante, Satan, Dracula and Alice in Wonderland, among many others, provide surprising insights into current discussions about those who have left untenable situations in their home countries in search of legal protection.
The Napoleons: I&3

- Napoleon Bonaparte

Napoleon III
NAPOLÉON
BONAPARTE
MEMOIRS
OF
NAPOLEON BONAPARTE,
BY M. DE BESSONIENNE,
MINISTER TO RUSSIA.

In Four Volumes.

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1816.
'Tis done – but yesterday a King!  
And armed with Kings to strive – 
And now thou art a nameless thing:  
So abject – yet alive!
Is this the Man of thousand thrones,  
Who strewed our earth with hostile bones,  
And can he thus survive?
Since he, miscalled the Morning Star,¹⁴  
Nor man nor fiend hath fallen so far. –

2.

Ill-minded man! why scourge thy kind  
Who bowed so low the knee?
By gazing on thyself grown blind,  
Thou taught’st the rest to see;
With might unquestioned – power to save –  
Thine only gift hath been the grave  
To those that worshipped thee;  
Nor till thy fall could mortals guess
Thanks for that lesson – it will teach
   To after-warriors more
Than high Philosophy can preach,
   And vainly preached before.
That spell upon the minds of men
Breaks, never to unite again,
   That led them to adore
Those Pagod things of sabre-sway,
With fronts of brass, and feet of clay.

4.

The triumph, and the vanity,
   The rapture of the strife *
The earthquake-voice of Victory,
   To thee the breath of Life;
The sword, the sceptre, and that sway
Which Man seemed made but to obey,
   Wherewith Renown was rife –
All quelled! – Dark Spirit! what must be
The Madness of thy Memory!
And Earth hath spilt her blood for him,
    Who thus can hoard his own!
And Monarchs bowed the trembling limb,
    And thanked him for a throne!  
Fair Freedom! we may hold thee dear,
When thus thy mightiest foes their fear
    In humblest guise have shown.
Oh! ne’er may tyrant leave behind
A brighter name to lure mankind!

11.

Thine evil deeds are writ in gore,
    Nor written thus in vain –
Thy triumphs tell of fame no more,
    Or deepen every stain:
If thou hadst died as Honour dies.
Some new Napoleon might arise,
    To shame the world again –
But who would soar the solar height,
To set in such a starless night?
The French Revolution as It Appeared to Enthusiasts at Its Commencement
BY WILLIAM WORDSWORTH

Oh! pleasant exercise of hope and joy!
For mighty were the auxiliars which then stood
Upon our side, we who were strong in love!
Bliss was it in that dawn to be alive,
But to be young was very heaven!—Oh! times,
In which the meagre, stale, forbidding ways
Of custom, law, and statute, took at once
The attraction of a country in romance!
When Reason seemed the most to assert her rights,
When most intent on making of herself
A prime Enchantress—to assist the work
Which then was going forward in her name!
Not favoured spots alone, but the whole earth,
The beauty wore of promise, that which sets
(As at some moment might not be unfelt
Among the bowers of paradise itself )
The budding rose above the rose full blown.
What temper at the prospect did not wake
To happiness unthought of? The inert
Were roused, and lively natures rapt away!
They who had fed their childhood upon dreams,
The playfellows of fancy, who had made
All powers of swiftness, subtilty, and strength
Their ministers,—who in lordly wise had stirred
Among the grandest objects of the sense,
And dealt with whatsoever they found there
As if they had within some lurking right
To wield it;—they, too, who, of gentle mood,
Had watched all gentle motions, and to these
Had fitted their own thoughts, schemers more wild,
And in the region of their peaceful selves;—
Now was it that both found, the meek and lofty
Did both find, helpers to their heart’s desire,
And stuff at hand, plastic as they could wish;
Were called upon to exercise their skill,
Not in Utopia, subterranean fields,
Or some secreted island, Heaven knows where!
But in the very world, which is the world
Of all of us,—the place where in the end
We find our happiness, or not at all!
Unease vis-à-vis his former political faith transpires in the lines of The Prelude nowhere more clearly than in the lines concerning the death of l'Incorruptible.

I paused,
      Unwilling to proceed, the scene appeared
So gay and cheerful—when a traveller
Chancing to pass, I carelessly inquired
If any news were stirring, he replied
In the familiar language of the day
That, Robespierre was dead. Nor was a doubt,
On further question, left within my mind
But that the tidings were substantial truth—
That he and his supporters all were fallen.
Great was my glee of spirit, great my joy
In vengeance, and eternal justice, thus
Made manifest. “Come now, ye golden times”,
Said I, forth-breathing on those open sands
A hymn of triumph, “as the morning comes
Out of the bosom of the night come ye…”
[...]
Thus, interrupted by uneasy bursts
Of exultation, I pursued my way
Along that very shore which I had skimmed
In former times, when, spurring from the Vale
Of Nightshade, and St. Mary’s mouldering fane,
And the stone abbot, after circuit made
In wantonness of heart, a joyous crew
Of schoolboys, hastening to their distant home,
Along the margin of the moonlight sea,
We beat with thundering hoofs the level sand. (X, I. 529-566)
CONTRAST
1 AND 3!