

LANDSCAPE AESTHETICS AND THE SUBLIME IN FRANCE: 1748-1830

By

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A dissertation submitted to the Graduate Faculty in Art History in partial fulfillment of  
the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

The City University of New York

2013

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This manuscript has been read and accepted for the Graduate Faculty in Art History in satisfaction of the dissertation requirement for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

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Abstract

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This dissertation examines the expression of the sublime in French painting between the years 1748 and 1830, a period spanning ancien régime, Revolution, Terror, Directory, First French Empire, and Bourbon Restoration. It reveals the existence and persistence of a grand classical strain of the sublime derived from Longinus's first century *On the Sublime* that was passed into the eighteenth century by Nicolas Boileau-Despréaux's 1674 French translation, *Traité du sublime* [Treatise on the Sublime]. These works stress noble greatness and elevation more than the fear and terror more commonly associated during this period with the sublime as articulated by Edmund Burke in his 1757 *A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful*.

In addition to establishing the existence and examining the articulation of the sublime in eighteenth-century France that is primarily based on the conveyance of noble elevation and greatness, this dissertation also suggests that the French sublime is unique in that it incorporates the influence of the Burkean sublime of fear and terror. Thus, the sublime in France is what I call multivalent; it can express both greatness and fear, elevation and terror. This complex admixture is significant for its rich and varied range of meanings particularly in the context of landscape painting, a relatively unimportant category of painting at the beginning of the eighteenth century, but which became a

major genre in France between 1740 and 1790. This time period that forms the core of this dissertation, not incidentally, also saw the emergence of an intense focus on the subject of aesthetics, including the aesthetic category of the sublime.

In his commentary on work submitted to the Paris Salon, the French critic Denis Diderot devotes roughly a quarter of his *Salon of 1767* to the work of Claude-Joseph Vernet (1714-1789) and Hubert Robert (1733-1808). In his elaborate discussion of these artists, one who had a penchant for painting wild seascapes and shipwrecks and the other who had a proclivity for painting ruins, Diderot lent critical weight not only to the genre of landscape but also to the connection between their work and the sublime. This is significant in that unlike England with its well-documented sublime landscape tradition, eighteenth-century France has been viewed as virtually bereft of a sublime tradition due to its close ties to the Classical landscape tradition.

The sublime is a powerful and nuanced concept that expressed a cultural and political ideology tied to the grandness and continuity of France. More than an inert aesthetic category, the sublime is also an incredibly flexible and powerful conduit of a wide range of ideas. It can be seen expressed in Vernet's emphasis on the heroic individual in his paintings of shipwrecks, Pierre-Jacques Volaire's (1729-1799) emphasis on the natural power of volcanic eruption as a vital new way of viewing the natural world, and in Robert's painting of the Louvre in ruins that attests to the cultural monumentalization of France projected into the future. Finally, the elevation, or apotheosis, of the cultural and political—sublime greatness—of Restoration France was inscribed on the ceiling of the 1826 Musée Charles X in the institutionalization of that sublime ideology.

## PREFACE AND ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This project began to germinate while teaching the sublime as part of an architectural history course at Hunter College in 2008. As I lectured that semester, I began to question some of my fundamental assumptions not only about the sublime but about some of the landscape paintings I was using to supplement the course material. I will never forget the moment, perhaps one verging on sublime, when I was struck with what I thought might be the impetus for the experience of the sublime that I was familiar with from Edmund Burke, famously recorded in his 1757 *A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful*. In trying to convey to students the experience of the 1748 discovery of Pompeii on the eighteenth-century imagination—the astonishment at the discovery of a buried ancient city frozen in time, the horror of lives stopped instantly—I was struck with what I thought might have propelled eighteenth-century interest in the sublime. Later research disproved my first hypothesis, but a new project was born.

French landscape paintings kept turning up in my investigations and yet the sublime aspect of these works was largely overlooked. Painters such as Claude-Joseph Vernet and Hubert Robert, artists who enjoyed spectacular careers in the eighteenth century, were suffering in recent scholarship from critical neglect, as was the subject of landscape painting produced during in the late eighteenth century. Moreover, and contrary to scholarship that found the picturesque as the great, game-changing idea, one that divorced classical symmetry from beauty in favor of rough irregularity, it seemed to

me that this paradigm-shifting sublime was one that echoed most strongly throughout the rest of the century and into the next.

Many factors have gone into my ability to write this dissertation. I want to extend a warm thank you to The Graduate Center of the City University of New York not only for their generous Chancellor's Fellowship that funded the bulk of my research and writing, but for the teaching experiences that have helped me to refine my thought process and to share it with others in the classroom.

This dissertation would not have been possible without the resources and staff of numerous research institutions, of which I will mention only a few: City University of New York library system and interlibrary loan staff, Avery Library of Columbia University, Watson Library at the Metropolitan Museum of Art, the Frick Collection Library, the documentation departments of the Musée du Louvre, the Bibliothèque nationale de France, the many excellent university libraries in Paris (especially the Sorbonne), the Bibliothèque de la ville de Paris, the Musée de Carnavalet, the Institut national de l'histoire de l'art (Paris). Special recognition is due to the New York Public Library, especially to the staffs of the Art and Architecture Division and of interlibrary loan and to Jay Barksdale, who coordinates the Wertheim Study Room where I had the privilege to be a scholar in residence during much of my research and writing process.

I am also very grateful for the many opportunities I had to present portions of this research at scholarly conferences and symposia, where I received excellent feedback and observations from organizers and audience members: the Association of Historians of Nineteenth-Century Art and the Dahesh Museum of Art (2005), the Popular Culture Association and American Culture Association (2008), the Consortium on the

Revolutionary Era, 1750-1850 (2009 and 2012), The Mid-Atlantic Popular and American Culture Association (2009), and College Art Association (2010).

I also want to thank my readers whose generosity of time and wisdom have left an indelible stamp on this project and have allowed me to refine it considerably: Professor James Saslow; Professor Rachel Kousser; Professor Laura Auricchio. Again, thank you for your criticisms and support. And I feel I would be remiss if I did not acknowledge Professor Colin Eisler and the late Professor Robert Rosenblum, who each gave me an example to follow as I was learning what it meant to be a teacher and a scholar. Professor Leonard Barkan once pointed out to me that it was easier to show why something was there than why it was not, which has been a much needed guiding principle for my work since then.

I want to thank, in alphabetical order, those professors at the Graduate Center who have helped me to develop as an academic: Professor Rosemarie Haag Bletter; Professor Emily Braun; Professor George Corbin; Professor Rose-Carol Washton Long; Professor Kevin Murphy; Professor Judy Sund; Professor Sally Webster. I would also like to thank Andrea Appel, Carol Lees, and Sandy Wakefield who have all extended a helping hand on many occasions.

At Hunter College, I would like to give a special thank you to the members of the Art History Department, who took me under their wings and helped me to develop a love and faculty for teaching. Professor Richard Stapleford, particularly, taught me how to communicate with students and to inspire. And while at Hunter, I had the opportunity to work with the wonderful Dennis Paoli and Professor Trudy Smoke as part of the CUNY Writing Fellow program. I will always be grateful for that experience. It not only helped

fund the last years of writing my dissertation, but it helped me learn how to teach writing to students, perhaps the most critical of all skills and one I wish I could do much better myself.

A very special thank you goes to my classmates Katie Hanson and Mitra Monir Abbaspour, who have been with me during every step of this process since we came together in a class in late August of 2004. It seems like only yesterday we were stressed about the Qualifying Exam. I love you both!

While I have a list of people to thank that may be longer than this manuscript, I feel that my biggest debt of gratitude goes to my advisor Professor Patricia Mainardi, without whose brilliance, patience, and generosity this project would not have been possible.

And I owe a very, very, very special thank you to my mother who, to borrow a turn of phrase from a preface written by Pierre Rosenberg that I have never forgotten, “has read my manuscript with her usual sharpness.” I also want to thank my brother, Chris, and sister, Liana, for bearing with me through it all. And the same goes for all of my friends. You know who you are.

Thank you all!

This dissertation is dedicated in loving memory to my grandmother who would have been absolutely thrilled to have seen it done. And it is.

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## INTRODUCTION

Spanning the period from 1748 until 1830, one that contained a rapid and radical change in political structure from ancient régime—Revolution, Terror, Directory, Consulate, First French Empire—to the Bourbon Restoration, this dissertation examines the arc traced by the sublime in French painting. It suggests that not only was there a grand tradition of the sublime in France that predated Edmund Burke’s well-known 1757 *A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of Our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful* (French trans. 1765) in which the sublime is conceived as an aesthetic category connected to an emotionally based experience of fear or terror, but that the primary ideas of greatness and elevation that underlie the French articulation of the sublime derived largely from Longinus’s first century Greek text *Peri Hypsous* [*On the Sublime, or On Elevation*].<sup>1</sup> In 1674, Longinus’s text was translated into French by the poet and critic Nicolas Boileau-Despréaux as *Traité du sublime* [*Treatise on the Sublime*], a work that disseminated the idea of the sublime in France and influenced the French scholar Louis de Jaucourt’s 1765 entry “Sublime” in Denis Diderot and Jean le Rond d’Alembert’s *Encyclopédie, ou Dictionnaire raisonné des sciences, des arts et des métiers*

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<sup>1</sup> All translations are my own throughout this dissertation unless otherwise noted. Edmund Burke, *A Philosophical Enquiry into the Sublime and Beautiful*, ed. James T. Boulton (London: Routledge and Paul, 2008); Longinus, *On Great Writing (On the Sublime)*, trans. G. M. A. Grube (New York: Liberal Arts Press, 1957). The title of Longinus’s text is *Peri Hypsous*, which translates literally as “On Elevation.” “Sublime” is a Latin translation of the Greek *hypsos*, literally meaning “elevation.” For a good discussion of the etymological roots of Longinus’s title, particularly in terms of the concept of elevation, see Robert Doran, “The Sublime and Modern Subjectivity: The Discourse of Elevation from Neo-Classicism to French Romanticism” (PhD diss., Stanford University, 2004), 5, 6, 28-44.

[*Encyclopaedia, or Reasoned Dictionary of Sciences, Arts and Crafts*].<sup>2</sup> In addition to establishing the existence and examining the articulation of the sublime in eighteenth-century France that is primarily based on the conveyance of noble elevation and greatness, this dissertation also suggests that the French sublime is unique in that it incorporates the influence of the Burkean sublime of fear and terror. Thus, the sublime in France is what I call multivalent; it can express both greatness and fear, elevation and terror.

And while greatness is the aspect that generally dominates in the French expression of the sublime, this complex admixture is significant for its rich and varied range of meanings, particularly in the context of landscape painting, which had traditionally fallen toward the bottom of the hierarchy of genres. This hierarchy is a classificatory scheme that ranked artwork on prestige and cultural value. It was strongly promulgated by the Académie royale de peinture et de sculpture [The French Academy] founded in 1648 under Louis XIV and outlined in a treatise by André Félibien published in 1699.<sup>3</sup> Significantly, however, in a collection of essays from 1925, *French Landscape Painting from Poussin to Corot*, the art historian Georges Wildenstein wrote, “Between the years 1730 and approximately the late eighteenth century lies one of the most fruitful

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<sup>2</sup> Nicolas Boileau-Despréaux, *Traité du sublime*, in *Oeuvres complètes de Boileau* (1674; Paris: Philippe, 1942), 1:19-87.; Louis de Jaucourt, “Sublime,” in *Encyclopédie, ou Dictionnaire raisonné des sciences, des arts et des métiers*, eds. Denis Diderot and Jean le Rond d’Alembert (Paris, 1751-1765), 15:566, 567.

<sup>3</sup> André Félibien, preface to *Conférences de l’Académie royale de peinture et de sculpture, pendant l’année 1667* (Paris, 1669). Falling far below the highest tier of *peinture d’histoire* [or narrative painting], which took its allegorical or narrative stories generally from antique sources, mythology, or the Bible, the work of the landscapist was accorded a position just above those who painted fruit or seafood.

periods of landscape painting in France.”<sup>4</sup> Building on Wildenstein’s comment, the art historian Ian Lochhead writes, “in one of the most striking transformations in the history of art, landscape rose during the eighteenth century from an inferior place within the hierarchy of genres to a position of major importance, second only to history painting.”<sup>5</sup> Landscape, a relatively unimportant category of painting at the beginning of the eighteenth century became a major genre in France between 1740 and 1790, the time period that forms the core of this dissertation.<sup>6</sup> This time span, perhaps not incidentally, also saw the emergence of an intense focus on the subject of aesthetics, including the aesthetic category of the sublime.

In his criticism and commentary on work submitted to the Paris Salon, the French *philosophe* and art critic Denis Diderot (1713-1784) devotes approximately a quarter of his *Salon of 1767* to the work of two landscapists, Claude-Joseph Vernet (1714-1789) and Hubert Robert (1733-1808). In his elaborate discussion of these artists, one who had a predilection for painting wild seascapes and shipwrecks and the other who had a propensity for painting ruins, Diderot lent critical weight to the genre of landscape.<sup>7</sup> And just as importantly, Diderot also discussed Vernet’s and Robert’s works in connection

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<sup>4</sup> “Entre l’année 1730 environ et la fin du XVIIIe siècle s’étend l’une des périodes les plus fécondes de la peinture de la paysage en France.” George Wildenstein, in *Le Paysage français de Poussin à Corot*, by Louis Hourticq and others, exh. cat. (Paris: Éditions de la Gazette des beaux-arts, 1926), 51.

<sup>5</sup> Ian Lochhead, *The Spectator and the Landscape in the Art Criticism of Diderot and His Contemporaries* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Research Press), 1981, xi.

<sup>6</sup> For the place of landscape during the seventeenth century see Michael Kitson, “The Seventeenth Century: Claude to Francisque Millet,” in *Claude to Corot: The Development of Landscape Painting in France*, ed. Alan Wintermute, exh. cat. (New York: Colnaghi, 1990), 11-26; For a good summary of landscape painting during the eighteenth century, see Philip Conisbee, “The Eighteenth Century: Watteau to Valenciennes,” in *Claude to Corot: The Development of Landscape Painting in France*, ed. Alan Wintermute, exh. cat. (New York: Colnaghi, 1990), 85-97; esp. 85.

<sup>7</sup> Denis Diderot, *Salons*, edited by Jean Seznec and Jean Adhémar, vol. 3, 2nd ed. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1963), 129-167 (Vernet); 221-249 (Robert).

with the sublime. This is significant in that unlike England with its well-documented sublime landscape tradition, eighteenth-century France has been viewed as virtually bereft of a sublime tradition due to its close ties to the Classical landscape.<sup>8</sup> In his 1708 *Cours de peinture par principes*, Roger de Piles classified two landscape types, *le style héroïque* [the heroic style] and *le style champêtre* [the pastoral style].<sup>9</sup> Piles's ideas were carried into the nineteenth century by Pierre-Henri de Valenciennes's influential *Éléments de perspective* (1800).<sup>10</sup> This classification of landscape painting shaped interpretation for several centuries, strongly linking France to the historical and classical modes, not to the sublime.<sup>11</sup> Given the long-ranging influence of Piles and Valenciennes on how eighteenth-century French landscape was conceived, as well as the overwhelming scholarly penchant for considering the nineteenth century as the critical one for the examination of landscape painting, the idea that a sublime landscape tradition emerged in late-eighteenth-century France has been largely overlooked, despite Diderot's extensive commentary. Moreover, if a sublime tradition in France is even acknowledged, which is

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<sup>8</sup> For a good general discussion of the case of England, see Walter J. Hipple, *The Beautiful, the Sublime, and the Picturesque in Eighteenth-Century British Aesthetic Theory* (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1957); D. G. Charlton, *New Image of the Natural in France: A Study in European Cultural History, 1750-1800* (Cambridge: University Press, 1984), 41. Charlton begins his third chapter, "Wild Sublimity," with "This book centrally concerns France and how far in France appraisals of nature and the natural were modified during the later-eighteenth century. Yet in this chapter the French will be largely absent as compared with the British, the Germans, and the French-speaking Swiss."

<sup>9</sup> Roger de Piles, *Cours de peinture par principes* (Paris, 1708), 201-202; Thomas Puttfarcken, *Roger de Piles' Theory of Art* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1985).

<sup>10</sup> Pierre-Henri de Valenciennes, *Éléments de perspective pratique à l'usage des artistes, suivis de réflexions et conseils à un élève sur la peinture, et particulièrement sur le genre du paysage* (Paris: 1820).

<sup>11</sup> Valenciennes devotes only four pages to characteristics of landscape that could be considered sublime in his *Éléments de perspective pratique*. Rather, his aim was to elevate *paysage historique* [historical landscape] to the status of *peinture d'histoire* [history painting]. Thus, the nineteenth-century debate in France followed a trajectory that pitted observation directly from nature, which can be seen in the Dutch School, Barbizon, and the Impressionists, against the more academic modes of classicism indebted to Claude and Nicolas Poussin.

rare, it is generally linked to the sublime articulated by Burke, rather than to a French conception of the subject tied to greatness and elevation found in Longinus's treatise, a work that set the stage not only for the French conception of the subject but for Burke as well. This is a lacuna my dissertation aspires to correct. Thus, this dissertation makes a case not only for the significance of a unique articulation of the sublime in France, but for the significance of the range of meaning carried by sublime landscape painting and prints as well.

Any study of the sublime in the eighteenth century must begin with the disclaimer that its history and use are complex, if not almost irretrievably twisted. This is especially true in the case of France where, unlike England, the sublime has been virtually ignored, particularly in the discipline of art history. Perhaps owing to a scarcity of written primary sources, the discussion of the French sublime landscape in the eighteenth century has been very limited in the discipline of art history, with the exception of Diderot's treatment of the subject in his 1767 Paris Salon criticism of Vernet's and Robert's submissions.

The sublime began to be discussed in European intellectual circles, including those of the British and the Germans, only after Boileau's *Traité du sublime* was published in 1674, as noted previously.<sup>12</sup> While this fact is almost universally acknowledged in the history of the sublime, Boileau's contribution, unfortunately, is often discussed as little more than a simple (at the time described as "primitive") translation of Longinus's work and not as a critical exegesis of the concept of the

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<sup>12</sup> While there tends to be slight confusion in the matter, most scholars follow William Rhys Roberts and agree that *Peri Hypsous* was first published by Francesco Robortello in Basel in 1554 and then by Niccolò da Falgano in 1560 and attributed to "Dionysius Longinus." William Rhys Roberts, trans. *Longinus on the Sublime: The Greek Text* (New York: AMS Press, 1979).

sublime, even though it served as the entry point into critical discourse on the subject.<sup>13</sup> Robert Doran writes: “But it was only after Boileau had argued for the centrality of the term ‘sublime’ in understanding Longinus that the English felt obliged to adopt it.”<sup>14</sup> The critical positioning, however, is left to the English strain of aestheticians, beginning with John Dennis, Joseph Addison, and the third earl of Shaftsbury (Anthony Earl Cooper), who would construct a piecemeal theory (largely based on Longinus’s treatise) on which Burke would later build his *Enquiry*. It is significant to recognize this process as privileging theory over practice and to note its limitations and biases, particularly in thus locating the sublime tradition more solidly in England than in France. As suggested by this dissertation, while the English and Germans may have written about the sublime, the French painted it.

Thus, while the subject of the sublime has received ample consideration by scholars focusing on its development during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries in the United Kingdom and in Germany, an examination of the development of the sublime in France has been cursory and incomplete at best. Part of the reason for this is due to the accessibility and popularity of Edmund Burke’s *Enquiry* of 1757 and the respect accorded to the German philosopher Immanuel Kant and his discussion of the sublime in works such as his *Observations on the Feeling of the Beautiful and the Sublime* (1764)

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<sup>13</sup> For a good discussion of the influence of Longinus’s treatise on Boileau and on Boileau’s *Traité du sublime* see Doran, “Sublime and Modern Subjectivity,” 68-95. Boileau was the first to emphasize the notion of the sublime due to the critical attention he devoted to it. This can be seen in his title, which includes an important subtitle, as the term “sublime” would not have been well understood at the time. The full title of Boileau’s work is *Le Sublime ou le merveilleux qui frappe dans le discours (That Which Strikes in Discourse: The Sublime or the Marvelous)*, which has been shortened and translated as *Treatise on the Sublime*. It is significant that Boileau chose to use the word *sublime* in his title and to use a subtitle, *merveilleux*, thus tying the sublime to the concept of *merveilleux*, or the marvelous, which had important literary ramifications in the seventeenth century; it is through this connection that Boileau was able to define the term, 87-88.

<sup>14</sup> Doran, “Sublime and Modern Subjectivity,” 69.

and *Critique of Judgment* (1790).<sup>15</sup> More specifically, however, the articulation of the sublime during the eighteenth century had been developed among aestheticians, or more recently, literary theorists, not art historians. This leads the scholar Rémy G. Saisselin to suggest:

The French come out rather badly in the history of eighteenth century aesthetics, even though Du Bos, Batteaux, Father André, and Diderot are mentioned. The French *philosophes* have fallen into disrepute. They are considered liberals, journalists, propagandists, but not philosophers worthy of being considered as possible rivals of the classical British philosophers such as Locke and Hume.<sup>16</sup>

Given this fact, it is easy to see how the subject of the sublime in France has been sidestepped, even though there is a significant visual and literary development of it that has yet to be fully fleshed out. This is not to say that the subject of the sublime in France has been completely ignored. The literature scholar Théodore Litman's *Le sublime en France, 1660-1714* [*The Sublime in France, 1660-1714*] (1971) has stood out, until recently, as the sole significant treatment of the subject, and even so it does not reach far enough into the eighteenth century, nor does it take the visual arts as a focus.<sup>17</sup> Moreover, it had little influence in an intellectual climate still affected by the literature scholar Samuel H. Monk's extremely influential *The Sublime: A Study of Critical Theories in*

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<sup>15</sup> Immanuel Kant, *Observations on the Feeling of the Beautiful and the Sublime* (1764), trans. John T. Goldthwaith (University of California Press, 1991). The original German title is *Beobachtungen über das Gefühl des Schönen und Erhabenen*; Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Judgment* (1790), trans. James Creed Meredith (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1952). The original German title is *Kritik der Urteilskraft*.

<sup>16</sup> Rémy G. Saisselin, *Taste in Eighteenth Century France: Critical Reflections on the Origins of Aesthetics; Or, An Apology for Amateurs* (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 1965), 3.

<sup>17</sup> Théodore A. Litman, *Le Sublime en France, 1660-1714* (Paris: A. G. Nizet, 1971).

*XVIII-Century England* (1935), which focuses most sharply on English developments.<sup>18</sup>

Monk's work influenced succeeding generations of scholars, such as Peter De Bolla, Theodore Wood, and Thomas Weiskel, to name only a few, who focused on the contributions of aestheticians, mainly English and German, in the construct of the sublime.<sup>19</sup>

Specific to France, the French literature scholar Lawrence Kerslake's *Essays on the Sublime: Analyses of French Writings on the Sublime from Boileau to La Harpe* (2000) has been a significant departure from the fairly standard historiography of the sublime. Such a historiography generally developed a teleology of the sublime that barely acknowledges Longinus; dismisses Boileau as a simple translation; heralds John Dennis, Joseph Addison, and the third earl of Shaftesbury (Anthony Earl Cooper) for their late seventeenth- and early eighteenth-century contributions that Burke would develop; emphasizes Burke's contribution, and ends resoundingly with Kant having the final word on the subject.<sup>20</sup> Rather, Kerslake focuses on the considerable French tradition of the sublime. Robert Doran insightfully suggests, in a 2004 comparative literature dissertation written under Hayden White at Stanford, "The Sublime and Modern Subjectivity: The Discourse of Elevation from Neo-Classicism to French Romanticism," that the French

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<sup>18</sup> Samuel Holt Monk, *The Sublime: A Study of Critical Theories in XVIII Century England* (1935; repr., Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1960).

<sup>19</sup> The scholarship on British sublime is extensive see Andrew Ashfield and Peter De Bolla, eds. *The Sublime: A Reader in British Eighteenth-Century Aesthetic Theory* (Cambridge: University Press, 1996); Theodore E. B. Wood, *The Word "Sublime" and its Context, 1650-1760* (The Hague: Mouton, 1972); Thomas Weiskel, *The Romantic Sublime: Studies in the Structure and Psychology of Transcendence* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins, 1976); Hipple, *The Beautiful, the Sublime, and the Picturesque*; and Sanford Budick, *The Western Theory of Tradition: Terms and Paradigms of the Cultural Sublime* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2000).

<sup>20</sup> Lawrence Kerslake, *Essays on the Sublime: Analyses of French Writings on the Sublime from Boileau to La Harpe* (Bern: Lang, 2000).

“notion of sublimity referred back to Neo-Classicism and to Boileau. There was a great gulf between the French understanding of the sublime and the English and German notion.”<sup>21</sup> In the French sublime tradition, the idea of greatness is more important than fear or terror. As Doran points out, the French tradition is indebted to a notion of positivity that is lacking in the English or German lineage that trace back to negativity, or absence.<sup>22</sup> English and German thought represents a break from the French, who, significantly, were the first since Longinus to begin to discuss the sublime.

Fortunately, the subject of the sublime in France has not been wholly ignored, as it has been scrutinized in the fields of French literature and comparative literature.<sup>23</sup> From within these disciplines, the French sublime has been examined as it emerged in the seventeenth century with Boileau. Working to help clarify what he calls the “oddly elusive” concept of “French classicism,” literary scholar of eighteenth-century France Nicholas Cronk’s 2002 *The Classical Sublime: French Neoclassicism and the Language of Literature* builds on René Bray’s foundational text *The Formation of Classicism in France* (1927) as well as on Jules Brody’s *Boileau and Longinus* (1958) to loosen the “supposed rigidities of classicism,” particularly in regard to French poetic theory. This ambition was first established generally and not in regard to poetic theory in *The Freedom of French Classicism* (1950) by E. B. O. Bergerhoff.<sup>24</sup> Cronk wrote that “to describe the poetic theory of French classicism without discussion of *le sublime* no longer

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<sup>21</sup> Doran, “Sublime and Modern Subjectivity,” 232.

<sup>22</sup> Doran, “Sublime and Modern Subjectivity,” 240.

<sup>23</sup> Sophie Hache, *La Langue du ciel: Le Sublime en France au XVII<sup>e</sup> siècle* (Paris: H. Champion, 2000); Litman, *Le Sublime en France*.

<sup>24</sup> Nicholas Cronk, *The Classical Sublime: French Neoclassicism and the Language of Literature* (Charlottesville, VA: Rookwood Press, 2002), 1.

seems possible.”<sup>25</sup> Cronk’s efforts are directed toward fleshing out the precise context in which Boileau established the concept of the sublime in the *Traité du sublime* through his translation of Longinus, particularly in relation to the poetic theory of the 1670s and as a counterpoint to his own *Art poétique* [*The Art of Poetry*] as part of a powerful critical diptych, always published and read together in Boileau’s lifetime. These two works, like pendant paintings, take as their subjects the sublime and the beautiful.

Only recently has the concept of the sublime been discussed in contemporary literature on eighteenth-century French landscape painting, perhaps largely due to art historian and museum curator Philip Conisbee’s 1990 essay “La Nature et le sublime dans l’art de Claude-Joseph Vernet” [Nature and the Sublime in the Art of Claude-Joseph Vernet].<sup>26</sup> Diderot’s admiration for Vernet’s paintings was discussed by art historian Else Marie Bukdahl in her 1995 essay “Diderot entre le ‘modèle idéal’ et le ‘sublime’” [Diderot Between the Ideal and the Sublime] in which she examines Diderot’s acceptance of the new aesthetic ideas of the (Burkean) sublime implicit in his analyses of the work of Vernet and Robert in the Salon of 1767.<sup>27</sup> A 1997 French exhibition *Paysage et la question du sublime* [*Landscape and the Question of the Sublime*] examines different aspects of the sublime in landscape painting between the sixteenth and nineteenth centuries.<sup>28</sup> The art historian Marianne Roland Michel’s essay in the accompanying

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<sup>25</sup> Cronk, *The Classical Sublime*, 1.

<sup>26</sup> Philip Conisbee, “La Nature et le sublime dans l’art de Claude-Joseph Vernet,” in *Autour de Claude-Joseph Vernet: La Marine à voile, de 1650 à 1890*, exh. cat. (Rouen: Musée des beaux-arts, 1999), 27-43.

<sup>27</sup> Conisbee, “The Eighteenth Century: Watteau to Valenciennes,” 85-98; Else Marie Bukdahl, “Diderot entre le ‘modèle idéal’ et le ‘sublime’” in *Ruines et paysages: Salons de 1767*, by Denis Diderot, ed. Else Marie Bukdahl, Michel Delon, and Annette Lorenceau (Paris: Hermann, 1995), 3-18.

<sup>28</sup> *Le Paysage et la question du sublime*, exh. cat. (Paris: Réunion des musées nationaux; Lyon: Association Rhône-Alpes des conservateurs; Paris: Diffusion, Seuil; Valence: Musée de Valence, 1997), 248-255.

catalog, “Entre théorie et pratique. Le Paysage français au XVIIIe siècle” [Between Theory and Practice. French Landscape Painting of the Eighteenth Century], is the most complete, albeit brief, survey to date on the sublime landscape tradition in eighteenth-century France.<sup>29</sup> Indebted to Bukdahl’s 1995 essay, Roland Michel’s work provides a good point from which to elaborate on the theme of the eighteenth-century French sublime landscape as her discussion touches on the work of Claude-Joseph Vernet, Hubert Robert, and Pierre-Jacques Volaire (1729-1799). Three other works should be mentioned in the context of art-historical scholarship that touches on the topic of the sublime in France in connection with artists examined in this dissertation. The art historian Paula Rea Radisich’s 1998 *Hubert Robert: Painted Spaces of the Enlightenment* briefly discusses several of Robert’s paintings of ruins in the context of the sublime but is very heavily informed by Burke’s articulation of the subject.<sup>30</sup> Similarly, the art historian Nina Dubin’s 2010 *Futures and Ruins: Eighteenth Century Paris and the Art of Hubert Robert* also reads Robert’s work through the lens of the Burkean sublime.<sup>31</sup> And finally, the art historian Emile Beck-Saiello’s 2010 catalogue raisonné *Pierre-Jacques Volaire, 1729-1799: Dit le chevalier Volaire* [*Pierre-Jacques Volaire, 1729-1799: Known as the Knight Volaire*] presents a much needed compilation of Volaire’s work, which has been so far lacking on this important eighteenth-century landscapist.<sup>32</sup> Unfortunately, Beck-

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<sup>29</sup> Marianne Roland Michel, “Entre théorie et pratique: Le Paysage français au XVIII<sup>e</sup> siècle,” in *Le Paysage et la question du sublime*, exh. cat. (Paris: Réunion des musées nationaux; Lyon: Association Rhône-Alpes des conservateurs; Paris: Diffusion, Seuil; Valence: Musée de Valence, 1997), 177-186.

<sup>30</sup> Paula Rea Radisich, *Hubert Robert: Painted Spaces of the Enlightenment*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998.

<sup>31</sup> Nina Lenore Dubin, *Futures and Ruins: Eighteenth-Century Paris and the Art of Hubert Robert*. Los Angeles: CA: Getty Research Institute, 2010.

<sup>32</sup> Émile Beck-Saiello, *Pierre-Jacques Volaire, 1729-1799: Dit le chevalier Volaire*. Paris: Arthéna, 2010.

Saiello's discussion of Voltaire's works in connection to the sublime is limited to the Burkean sublime considered as little more than a popular aesthetic category.

A brief synopsis of each chapter will convey the scope of my dissertation. In chapter one, "Great Heroism, Transcendent Virtue, and Terrible Loss: The Sublime Shipwreck in France, 1748-1789," I establish the foundation for the articulation of the sublime in eighteenth-century French landscape painting. This can be seen in the seascape and shipwreck paintings Claude-Joseph Vernet began to paint in the 1740s. This work is related to the concepts of greatness and elevation found in Longinus's formulation of the sublime that can be seen in the emphasis on the heroic action of the individuals Vernet stresses in his sublime seascapes. While these works can also be read through Burkean sublime of fear or terror, Vernet's work is an important indicator of what I call the multivalent sublime that will be examined throughout the remaining chapters. While the sublime in France virtually always privileges the grand elevation of the Longinian sublime, it is unique in that it is a complex admixture. This multivalence allows the sublime in France to carry a wide range of meanings, at times simultaneously.

In chapter two, "The Late Eighteenth-Century Landscape of Volcanic Eruption and The Sublime: Spectacle, Power, and Natural History," I examine more fully the connection between the Burkean and Longinian sublime in France in the context of images, both paintings and prints, of volcanic eruption. Images of Vesuvius in eruption such as landscape paintings produced by Pierre-Jacque Volaire during the 1770s or prints by Philibert-Benoît de La Rue used to illustrate the subject of volcanoes for the natural history section of the *Encyclopédie* reveal how the representation of sublime phenomena was connected to natural power, political power, and the development of natural history.

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Chapter three, “Sublime Ruins,” begins with an examination of Diderot’s writings on ruins and the sublime in the context of the paintings of Hubert Robert for the Paris Salon of 1767. Ruins, like the sublime, carry a multivalence of meanings for Diderot. This characteristic is examined in the context of Charles-Louis Clérissseau’s (1721-1820) ca. 1766 *Ruin Room*, an illusionistic *trompe l’oeil* painted room in a convent in Rome that shows the structure as ready to collapse, and in Robert’s painting shown at the Paris Salon of 1796, *Imaginary View of the Grand Gallery of the Louvre in Ruins*. Through these works it can be seen that ruins and the sublime both convey multiple meanings, but it is the grand idea that can be connected to the laws that underlie the physical world and the greatness of France that is most vigorously expressed.

Chapter four, “Sublimity Restored: Apotheosis and Expansion in the Musée Charles X, 1815-1830,” is an expansion of chapter three in that the grand idea of the continuity of French greatness expressed in Robert’s 1796 painting of the monumental Louvre in ruins as a projection of future greatness was challenged in 1815 with the punitive Second Treaty of Paris. With the creation of the Musée Charles X in 1826, the restored Bourbons inscribe a political and cultural ideology linked to a sublime of greatness into the ceiling and galleries of the Louvre. This chapter establishes a reading of the Musée Charles X connected to the grand tradition of the classical French sublime derived from Longinus and Boileau to argue for the reification of the Louvre as a powerful cultural institution and political instrument.

In my conclusion, I summarize the arguments made in the first four chapters and suggest directions for future research, particularly into the nineteenth century. I have included an epilogue in order to consider more fully the larger significance of the

Burkean sublime in an international context, since this aspect is mostly missing from this dissertation, given its intended limitations and focus.

It must be at least acknowledged that the period of the French Revolution (particularly that time span from the summer of 1789 until the end of the Terror in June 1794) is mostly absent from this dissertation. There are two important reasons for this. The first has to do with my interpretation of the French Revolution more as an interruption than as the critical event that bifurcates the period. This reading is not new; it was established in the 1980s by the historian Arno J. Mayer, whose *The Persistence of the Old Regime: Europe to the Great War* has become a classic text.<sup>33</sup> As shown by this dissertation, even though the sublime in France conveyed a multitude of associations, it is the idea of greatness that is emphasized in France, and more specifically, it is the idea of a continuity of greatness. An example of this can be found in the significance of the opening of the Louvre as a public museum that has been tied so strongly to Revolutionary aims when, in fact, this transformation was already underway before 1789, during the ancient régime. Thus, there is a certain continuity that can be traced more clearly by not focusing on the Revolutionary period. This is not to say that the Revolution has been disregarded entirely. As it falls within the time span of this dissertation, it would be irresponsible to do so. Tracing the trajectory of the sublime in late eighteenth-century France reveals the continuity of an emphasis on a sublime of greatness that stretched from 1796, as can be seen in Hubert Robert's painting of the monumental Louvre as a ruin, to 1826 with the creation of the Musée Charles X within the Louvre; thus, the goals of 1796 and 1826 are one and the same, the difference being that the rather vague

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<sup>33</sup>Arno J. Mayer, *The Persistence of the Old Regime: Europe to the Great War* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1981).

elevation of French greatness became institutionalized, monumentalized, and publicly memorialized in 1826 as state ideology.

The second reason the Revolution has been deemphasized in this dissertation is quite simply because a discussion about the multivalent sublime in France during the French Revolution, 1789-1794, or between the years 1789 and 1815 when Napoleon's loss at Waterloo concretized the Bourbon return to power, would be an entirely separate project and not simply another chapter.<sup>34</sup> Thus, while an examination of a multivalent sublime that swings back and forth from greatness to fear during the most turbulent part of the Revolution (between 1789 and 1794 when the Terror ends) would be a fascinating place to focus future scholarship on the sublime, it would obscure the sense of continuity suggested by the larger historical context of the grand tradition of the French sublime traced in this dissertation.

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<sup>34</sup> As the art historian Mary Ashburn Miller has shown in her 2010 book, *A Natural History of Revolution: Violence and Nature in the French Revolutionary Imagination, 1789-1794*, even a single topic this dissertation approaches as sublime, such as volcanic eruption as discussed in chapter two, went through a rapid and complex accumulation and evisceration of meaning in a very short period of time. Mary Ashburn Miller, *A Natural History of Revolution: Violence and Nature in the French Revolutionary Imagination, 1789-1794* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2011).

## CHAPTER ONE

### **Great Heroism, Transcendent Virtue, and Terrible Loss: The Sublime Shipwreck in France, 1748-1789**

There is little doubt that the aesthetic category of the sublime articulated in Edmund Burke's *Enquiry into Our Ideas of the Sublime and the Beautiful*, first published in English in 1757, impacted French sublime landscape painting by the late 1760s. This influence, however, must be tempered by an understanding of the sublime that already existed in France. As discussed in the introduction, the foundation for the French sublime tradition that predates the contribution to the subject found in Burke's treatise is derived primarily from Longinus's *On the Sublime*, a fragmentary Greek treatise translated into French in 1674 by Nicolas Boileau as *Traité du sublime*. This important rhetorical tradition formed the basis for the subsequent elaborations on the sublime in the eighteenth century, including that of Burke. It defined the sublime as an *idea* connected to astonishment, awe, noble elevation, transcendence, and greatness, rather than being limited to an emotional response triggered by fear or terror, as suggested by Burke. Particularly after the translation of his treatise into French in 1765, the Burkean sublime influenced the concept of the sublime in France in the second half of the eighteenth century, but it was not a starting point. While the powerful lineage of the earlier French tradition of the sublime was eventually supplemented by the work of both Burke and Immanuel Kant during the second half of the eighteenth century, it never lost its grip on the positive notion of the sublime that emphasized transcendent elevation and greatness.

An expanded consideration of the history of the sublime in French landscape painting can be clearly seen through an examination of Claude-Joseph Vernet's paintings of seascapes and shipwrecks, particularly *Seascape with a Shipwreck* (1743-48) (Figure 1) now at the Uffizi and *Death of Virginia* (1789) (Figure 2) now at the Hermitage. These two works, one of which predates the publishing of Burke's treatise by more than a decade, form an arc that traces the meaning of the sublime in France. This arc reveals the presence of a significant strain of French sublime landscape painting that runs counter to the widely held classically based rationalism that permeated French art, as reinforced by the institution of the French Academy. Roger de Piles further reinforced this classically based rationalism in his 1708 *Painting Course by Principles* and Pierre-Henri de Valenciennes carried it into the nineteenth century with his influential *Elements of Perspective* (1800).<sup>1</sup> As revealed by Vernet's sublime paintings of seascapes and shipwrecks, the sublime derived from Longinus and Boileau mingles with the Burkean sublime in an admixture of elevation and greatness tied to the heroic virtue of the individual and the state that oscillates with a terrifying fear of loss.

While *Seascape with a Shipwreck* and the numerous sublime seascapes of Vernet, such as *Storm* (1759) (Figure 3), can be read through the French sublime tradition of Longinus and Boileau to reflect the elevation and heroism of the individual, and perhaps the nation, *Death of Virginia* reveals a sublime that combines the Longinian and Boileauian strain with the Burkean sublime. *Death of Virginia* reveals the sense of noble elevation tied to virtue derived from Longinus and Boileau that influenced Kant's

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<sup>1</sup> Roger de Piles, *Cours de peinture par principes* (Paris: Jacques Estienne, 1708), 201-202; Thomas Puttfarcken, *Roger de Piles' Theory of Art* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1985); Pierre-Henri de Valenciennes, *Éléments de perspective pratique à l'usage des artistes, suivis de réflexions et conseils à un élève sur la peinture, et particulièrement sur le genre du paysage* (Paris: Aimé Payen, 1820).

articulation of the sublime in his 1764 *Sense of the Beautiful and the Sublime*, which was then refined substantially in the first two books of his 1791 *Critique of Judgement*. Vernet's painting also conveys a Burkean sense of fear, or terror, connected to personal loss that may be read as a moving portent of the suffering of the individual and families during the tumultuous years of change leading up to and including the Revolution. Steeped in sentiment and morality, the meaning in *Death of Virginia* also reflects the interest in melodrama that was gaining popularity during the last quarter of the eighteenth century. As the last painting Vernet completed before his death on 3 December 1789, it was likely completed during the difficult spring and summer months of 1789 and was shown at the Paris Salon of that year, which opened after the beginning of the French Revolution and the storming of the Bastille on 14 July.

Thus, the arc traced in this chapter through the examination of Vernet's paintings suggests strongly that the sublime in France is a flexible, adaptable, and malleable construct that can attract, absorb, and reflect multiple meanings that may simultaneously intermix and coexist. This multivalence of meaning is a significant and unique aspect of the sublime in France during the second half of the eighteenth century, as will be discussed in subsequent chapters of this dissertation. Those chapters examine the subjects of volcanic eruption, ruins, and the ceiling program of the Musée Charles X to reveal a sublime that oscillates between the influences of Longinus and Boileau and that of Burke to convey a multivalence of specific meanings. This chapter on Vernet's sublime seascapes and shipwrecks, however, provides the critical foundation for establishing the visual tradition of the sublime in France linked to Longinus and Boileau that then interacted with the Burkean sublime. As argued in the remainder of this chapter, Vernet's

seascapes and shipwreck paintings of the sublime signal the elevation of the heroic individual and the greatness of France; a notion of secular transcendence linked to the ability of the individual to take action; and a melodramatic oscillation between virtue and loss, both for the individual and for the state as a whole.

Additionally, this chapter provides an enlarged reading of some of Vernet's key paintings and attempts to grant critical attention to him as one of the more important painters of the eighteenth century. The art historian George Levitine makes a compelling argument for Vernet's significance not only in the eighteenth but also in the nineteenth century in his 1967 essay "*Vernet Tied to a Mast in a Storm: The Evolution of an Episode of Art Historical Romantic Folklore.*"<sup>2</sup> As a painter who enjoyed a virtually epic career in the eighteenth century with a host of international commissions, such as the massive and important *Ports of France* series commissioned by Louis XV in 1753, and the critical support of intellectuals such as Denis Diderot, who wrote extensively of his work in his 1767 Paris Salon review, it is surprising that Vernet has not yet been rescued from the historical morass by contemporary art-historical scholarship, as have many other eighteenth-century painters of genre and landscape. The museum curator Colin Bailey's crystalline analysis of Jean-Baptiste Greuze through the examination of *The Laundress* (1761), the art historian Julie Ann Plax's recasting of the significance of Jean-Antoine Watteau in terms of cultural politics, and Paula Radisich's examination of the work of Hubert Robert in terms of a set of ideologies shared by artist and patron are all attempts

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<sup>2</sup> George Levitine, "*Vernet Tied to a Mast in a Storm: The Evolution of an Episode of Art Historical Romantic Folklore,*" *Art Bulletin* 49, no. 2 (June 1967): 93-100.

to reexamine and reinterpret eighteenth-century genre painting.<sup>3</sup> This effort has not been given to Vernet and his sublime seascapes, even though his work enjoyed a momentary vogue in the late 1970s, largely due to Philip Conisbee's 1976 exhibition and its accompanying catalog, *Claude-Joseph Vernet 1714-1789*.<sup>4</sup> But this was not enough to catalyze sufficient interest among scholars of eighteenth-century art to bring to Vernet's sublime seascapes the kind of critical attention they deserve, although his work has not been entirely overlooked in recent scholarship.

Fortunately, the scholarship mentioned above in combination with the interdisciplinary approach of the historian of visual culture W. J. T. Mitchell's 1994 *Landscape and Power* has begun to set the stage for a more penetrating analysis of eighteenth-century landscape painting. Mitchell's approach is particularly important for understanding Vernet's sublime seascapes.<sup>5</sup> His project involves expanding the concept of landscape and interpreting it as a process that constructs social and cultural identities. Mitchell writes in his introduction:

The aim of this book is to change "landscape" from a noun to a verb. It asks that we think of landscape, not as an object to be seen or a text to be read, but as a process by which social and subjective identities are formed... that would ask not just what landscape "is" or "means" but what it *does*, how it works as a cultural practice. Landscape, we suggest, doesn't merely signify or symbolize power relations; it is an instrument of cultural power, perhaps

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<sup>3</sup> Colin B. Bailey, *Jean-Baptiste Greuze: The Laundress* (Los Angeles: Getty Museum Studies on Art, 2000); Julie Anne Plax, *Watteau and the Cultural Politics of Eighteenth-Century France* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000); Paula Rea Radisich, *Hubert Robert: Painted Spaces of the Enlightenment* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998).

<sup>4</sup> Philip Conisbee, *Claude-Joseph Vernet 1714-1789*, exh. cat. (London: Greater London Council, 1976), 4.

<sup>5</sup> W. J. T. Mitchell, ed., *Landscape and Power* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994).

even an agent of power that is (or frequently represents itself as) independent of human intentions.<sup>6</sup>

The past decade has produced two art historical doctoral dissertations indebted to Mitchell's work, one by Benedict Michel Leca and the other by Heather MacDonald. Heavily focused on landscape as a cultural practice, each stresses the socio-political importance of Vernet's *Ports of France*, the largest and most important royal commission during the almost fifty-nine year reign of Louis XV that stretched from 1715 until 1774.<sup>7</sup> Still, Vernet's sublime seascapes have yet to be thoroughly examined. This is a lacuna this dissertation chapter hopes to correct. Read through Mitchell's expanded definition of landscape, the trajectory of Vernet's sublime seascapes reveals the shifting social, political, economic, and cultural conditions of France between 1748 and 1789. It conveys an idealized and reassuring image of the heroic and virtuous individual and state around midcentury—despite a weakening monarchy, financial insecurity, food shortages, and fears of loss of hegemony—that began to destabilize and unravel terribly as the Revolution drew near. Of particular interest is the ideological shift whereby early sublime in France was “picturesque” and served, at least in part, as a way of alleviating an undercurrent of anxiety, as can be seen expressed in *Seascape with Shipwreck* (Figure 1). Later sublime, as can be seen in *Death of Virginia* (Figure 3), had to meet head-on the post-1789 historical situation that rent the socio-political fabric of the family and the

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<sup>6</sup> Mitchell, “Imperial Landscape,” in *Landscape and Power*, 5-34; Mitchell, *Landscape and Power*, introduction, 2-3.

<sup>7</sup> Michel Benedict Leca, “Patriotic Art for ‘The Public’: Joseph Vernet’s *Ports of France* and Their Interpretive Prints” (PhD diss., Brown University, 2004); Heather MacDonald, “Landscapes of Ambition: Painting and Political Culture in Joseph Vernet’s *Ports de France*” (PhD diss., University of California, Berkeley, 2004).

nation as France lived through the reification of the main aspect of the sublime (i.e., “The Terror” of 1794), which Burke identified as the emotion of terror.

### **Sublime Shipwreck: Visual Evidence of the French Sublime Tradition**

Conisbee was the first contemporary scholar to discuss Vernet’s paintings of turbulent seas and shipwrecks in relation to the sublime in his 1976 exhibition catalog *Claude-Joseph Vernet 1714-1789*. He initially dismissed a connection between such works and the sublime to support their appeal to the *personne de sentiment* [person of feeling], identified by the critic La Font de Saint-Yenne in 1747 as the important aspect of these works. Conisbee wrote, “Vernet painted such subjects steadily throughout his career from the late 1730s, and they do not represent some convenient progression towards the Sublime. Rather, it is important to remember that the storms and wrecks most often formed pendants within groups of two or four works.”<sup>8</sup> Conisbee would change his position less than a year later when he suggested a direct resonance between Vernet’s storm-tossed boats and the ideas on the sublime promulgated by Burke in his 1757 *Enquiry*.<sup>9</sup> In a 1977 article, “The *Storm* by Claude-Joseph Vernet,” Conisbee contends that Vernet’s shipwreck paintings such as *Storm* (1759) (Figure 3), now in Manchester, and its pendant *Calm* (Figure 4) (1759) are not only typical of the kind of work for which the artist is famous, but moreover, that they exemplify elements of Burke’s treatise on the sublime *and* beautiful.<sup>10</sup> This association was then strengthened considerably in an essay

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<sup>8</sup> Conisbee, *Claude-Joseph Vernet*, introduction.

<sup>9</sup> For a discussion of the storm-tossed boat, particularly in nineteenth-century Romanticism, see Lorenz Eitner, “The Open Window and the Storm-Tossed Boat: An Essay in the Iconography of Romanticism,” *Art Bulletin* 37, no. 4 (December 1955): 281-290.

<sup>10</sup> Philip Conisbee, “The *Storm* by Claude-Joseph Vernet,” *Currier Gallery of Art Bulletin* (1977): 14-26.

“Nature and the Sublime in the Art of Claude-Joseph Vernet” written for a 1999 French exhibition catalog.<sup>11</sup>

Thus, one of the most significant eighteenth-century French painters whose work can be discussed in terms of the sublime was tied to a British tradition of the sublime and, at least provisionally, was subsumed under its influence. Conisbee’s interpretation of Vernet’s shipwrecks through the language of Burke’s sublime may owe much to the fact that they were created around the same time, Burke’s *Enquiry* in 1757 and Vernet’s *Storm* in 1759, but it is also indebted to Denis Diderot.<sup>12</sup> In his detailed 1767 Paris Salon review of Vernet’s paintings, Diderot used terminology of the “sublime” to describe some of the elements of Vernet’s landscapes.<sup>13</sup> As Burke’s *Enquiry* was translated into French in 1765, as previously noted, there is a good indication that Diderot was at least aware of this popular articulation of the sublime by the time he wrote his review of Vernet’s work two years later. But although Diderot invoked a language of terror, or fear, that can be read through the Burkean articulation of the sublime, he did so more significantly within a context that stressed the idea of astonishment derived from the Longinian strain of the sublime that was articulated and disseminated by Boileau. For example, in his 1767 Paris Salon review of Vernet’s landscape paintings, which he referred to as “sites,” Diderot wrote on the Sixth Site: “Here is a surprising mystery because without considering specific ideas or summoning a particular image, in the end, I

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<sup>11</sup> Philip Conisbee, “La Nature et le sublime dans l’art de Claude-Joseph Vernet,” in *Autour de Claude-Joseph Vernet: La Marine à voile, de 1650 à 1890*, exh. cat. (Rouen: Musée des beaux-arts, 1999), 27-43.

<sup>12</sup> Conisbee, *Claude-Joseph Vernet*, introduction.

<sup>13</sup> Denis Diderot, *Salons*, ed. Jean Sez nec and Jean Adhémar, 2nd ed., vol. 3 (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1963). For Diderot’s discussion of Vernet’s Paris Salon submissions, see 3:129-167.

was left with a vivid impression of this terrifying and sublime passage.”<sup>14</sup> While the words “terrifying” and “sublime” may seem to tie Diderot’s reading of Vernet’s work very specifically to the language of the Burkean sublime articulated in the *Enquiry*, this sentence follows almost immediately a quotation from Homer’s *Iliad* (XX, vv. 61-5) cited by Longinus in chapter VII of *On the Sublime* that Diderot took from Boileau’s 1674 translation, *Traité du sublime*.

The close connection between the date of the French translation of Burke’s *Enquiry* and Diderot’s use of the concept of the sublime in his 1767 Paris Salon review has led scholars such as Conisbee and others to infer what may be too strong a connection between Diderot and Burke.<sup>15</sup> In her 1960 essay, “Diderot and Burke—A Study in Aesthetic Affinity,” Gita May, for example, compares passages from Burke’s *Enquiry* with Diderot’s 1767 Paris Salon review of Vernet’s work. She concludes that while Burke’s words did impact Diderot’s thoughts on the subject of the sublime, they expressed ideas that Diderot had already been formulating.<sup>16</sup> Similarly, Else Marie Bukdahl, in her 1995 essay “Diderot Between the Ideal and the Sublime,” examines Diderot’s acceptance of the new aesthetic ideas of the Burkean sublime implicit in his analyses of the work of Vernet and Robert in the Paris Salon review of 1767 but finds

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<sup>14</sup> “Voilà un mystère bien surprenant, car enfin, sans me rappeler d’idées, sans me peindre d’images j’ai pourtant éprouvé toute l’impression de ce terrible et sublime morceau.” Diderot, *Salons*, 3:155.

<sup>15</sup> Gita May, “Diderot and Burke—A Study in Aesthetic Affinity,” *PMLA* 75, no. 5 (December 1960): 538-539. According to May, Wladyslaw Folkierski was the first to call attention to certain correspondences between the two works; Wladyslaw Folkierski, *Entre le classicisme et le romantisme* (Paris, 1925), 509-510; His observations have been repeated by Jean Jacques Mayoux, “Diderot and the Technique of Modern Literature,” *MLR* 31 (1936), 528-529; Dixon Wecter, “Burke’s Theory Concerning Words, Images, and Emotion,” *PMLA* 55 (March 1940), 177; and James T. Boulton’s critical edition of Burke’s *Enquiry* (London: Routledge, 2008), cxx-cxxii.

<sup>16</sup> May, “Diderot and Burke,” 538-539.

that Diderot's position cannot quite be aligned with that of Burke.<sup>17</sup> These studies find adequate ground for asserting the impact of the Burkean sublime on Diderot, but they also find lacking a wholesale influence of Burke on Diderot. While Conisbee is rather vague in his articulation of this connection, May is more precise in her discussion when she writes:

It should be evident by now that although the *Enquiry* did not change Diderot's basic attitudes or set him thinking in entirely new directions, it helped him view important issues in a new light and afforded him a wealth of arguments and examples confirming critical intuitions to which he had not yet given adequate expression. In Burke's observations of the psychological and aesthetic workings of the "sublime" of natural scenery connoting power, vastness, mystery, magnificence, in his apt delimitation between painting and poetry, as well as in his general preoccupation with those perceptions that lie beyond the ken of reason, Diderot found a lucid formulation of ideas singularly consonant with his own orientation.<sup>18</sup>

May's conclusion is illuminating. In Burke's sublime, May argues that Diderot had found a textual expression, or an equivalent, to what he had already been thinking. Burke's treatise merely helped Diderot to articulate and perhaps clarify the position he already held on the subject. May lists several areas where this occurred: natural scenery connoting power, vastness, mystery, magnificence, etc.<sup>19</sup>

Through her analysis, May places her finger precisely on what is at stake in terms of finding out why the Burkean sublime found such rich soil in France, but she does not

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<sup>17</sup> Philip Conisbee, "The Eighteenth Century: Watteau to Valenciennes," in *Claude to Corot: The Development of Landscape Painting in France*, ed. Alan Wintermute, exh. cat. (New York: Colnaghi, 1990), 85-98; Else Marie Bukdahl, "Diderot entre le 'modèle idéal' et le 'sublime,'" in Denis Diderot, *Ruines et paysages: Salons de 1767*, ed. Else Marie Bukdahl, Michel Delon, and Annette Lorenceau (Paris: Hermann, 1995), 3-18.

<sup>18</sup> May, "Diderot and Burke," 538-539.

<sup>19</sup> May, "Diderot and Burke," 533-535.

probe further. In other words, May attributes to Diderot's conception of the sublime—those ideas he already had before Burke concretized them in words—what should be located in the larger corpus of French thought on the sublime. To reiterate, influenced by Longinus, this chronology began in earnest in France with Boileau, developed, and became further solidified by the French aesthetician François Silvain in his 1732 *Traité du sublime* [*Treatise on the Sublime*]. Composed in 1708 and addressed to Boileau, Silvain's text helped disseminate Boileau's work to an eighteenth-century audience and, significantly, was the first French treatise on the sublime to show a move away from rhetoric to aesthetics.<sup>20</sup> The oversight common in the work of Conisbee, May, and Bukdahl is the existence of a specifically French strain of the sublime.

While Diderot's language of the sublime in his 1767 Paris Salon review of Vernet's paintings may take on clear Burkean overtones, it is more substantially informed by a tradition that had previously been at play in France. This tradition was not specifically identified with landscape painting for most of the eighteenth century, however, until Diderot discussed the sublime in relation to paintings by Vernet and Hubert Robert.<sup>21</sup> As noted in the introduction to this dissertation, scholarly emphasis on theory over practice in accounting for the trajectory of the sublime in France is troubling (i.e., privileging the philosophic contributions to the subject by British and German thinkers).<sup>22</sup> This is particularly so because of the strong tradition of French images

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<sup>20</sup> Lawrence Kerslake, *Essays on the Sublime: Analyses of French Writings on the Sublime from Boileau to La Harpe* (Bern: Lang, 2000), 185-212; Jane Ellen Howard, "The Sublime and the Beautiful in the Works of Claude-Joseph Vernet" (master's thesis, University of North Texas, 1994), 19.

<sup>21</sup> Diderot, *Salons*, 3:129-167; 3:221-249. For Diderot's discussion of Vernet's Paris Salon submissions, see 3:129-167; for his discussion of Robert's submissions of the same year, see 3:221-249.

<sup>22</sup> Unlike the case for the sublime in France, the literature on the eighteenth-century sublime in England is extensive. See Walter J. Hipple, *The Beautiful, the Sublime, and the Picturesque in Eighteenth-Century*

(paintings and prints) that were already being produced beginning in the second half of the seventeenth century and can be discussed in the context of the sublime.<sup>23</sup> Perhaps not coincidentally, this sublime tradition of representation emerged in the late seventeenth century around the same time as Boileau translated Longinus into French and formed the foundation for most, if not all, of the critical discourse on the sublime in the eighteenth century, not only in France but also in Britain and Germany.<sup>24</sup> With few exceptions throughout the eighteenth century after the articulation of the sublime by Boileau, the French approach favored the practice of painting the sublime, while the British and German approach favored the practice of writing about it.

No discussion of the visual record of French sublime painting is complete without at least a mention of Nicolas Poussin's 1664 *Deluge* (Figure 5) from the *Four Seasons* cycle in the Louvre. It is a painting often considered on its own merit, without reference to the other three, and it has a considerable copy and print history throughout the

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*British Aesthetic Theory* (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1957); Samuel Holt Monk, *The Sublime: A Study of Critical Theories in XVIII Century England* (1935, repr., Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1960); Morton D. Paley, *The Apocalyptic Sublime* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1986); D. G. Charlton, *New Images of the Natural in France: A Study in European Cultural History 1750-1800* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984), 41. Charlton begins his third chapter, "Wild Sublimity," with "This book centrally concerns France and how far in France appraisals of nature and the natural were modified during the later-eighteenth century. Yet in this chapter the French will be largely absent as compared with the British, the Germans, and the French-speaking Swiss."

<sup>23</sup> For a discussion of this type of imagery, see discussion of seventeenth-century prints of feu d'artifice in chapter two of this dissertation, "The Late Eighteenth-Century Landscape of Volcanic Eruption and the Sublime: Spectacle, Power, and Natural History."

<sup>24</sup> It must be at least acknowledged that the French tradition derived from Longinus and passed through Boileau was based on rhetoric, while the English strain emphasized aesthetics more strongly. It was Burke's major contribution to tie the sublime to an aesthetic category, something the French struggled to do effectively in the eighteenth century. And it is perhaps this failure that allowed the British and German theoreticians to take full responsibility for the linkage. Silvain's 1732 treatise (*Traité du sublime*) showed a move from rhetoric to aesthetics in terms of the sublime, but it was not forceful enough. In his 1732 *Réflexions critiques sur la poésie et sur la peinture*, Jean-Baptiste Dubos was one of the first thinkers in France to address aesthetics in a systematic way but failed to do so in terms of the sublime. Jean-Baptiste Dubos, *Réflexions critiques sur la poésie et sur la peinture*, trans. Thomas Nugent (1732; repr., Paris: Ecole nationale supérieure des beaux-arts, 1993).

eighteenth century.<sup>25</sup> Without evaluating the art historian Richard Verdi's claim in his 1981 essay "Poussin's *Deluge*: The Aftermath" that this work accorded Poussin an eminent place in the history of Romantic painting, it is significant as a landscape painting of a deluge and was a subject of much conversation throughout the eighteenth century. It was shown at the exhibition of Louis XV's pictures that opened in Luxembourg in 1750 to much acclaim, not only from French admirers, such as C. A. Coypel, but from Irish and English ones as well, such as James Barry and Horace Walpole.<sup>26</sup> Walpole wrote in 1774, "The *Deluge* is the first picture in the world of its kind."<sup>27</sup> Exactly what he meant by this claim is difficult to say, but given the date of the comment and the bent of Walpole's sensibilities, as can be read through his 1764 gothic novel *Castle of Otranto* or the creation of his fantastical home Strawberry Hill (1749-1776), it is likely one filtered through the Burkean sublime.<sup>28</sup> Such a possible reading of Poussin's painting (or the sublime in French painting) through Burke is an example of the divide between practice and theory that separated France from England or Germany in terms of understanding the sublime in the mid-eighteenth century.<sup>29</sup> It is a division between artistic practice that can be seen in French paintings, such as those by Poussin and Vernet (as well as those by

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<sup>25</sup> For a bibliography pertaining to this picture, see Anthony Blunt, *The Paintings of Nicolas Poussin, A Critical Catalogue* (London: Phaidon, 1966), 9n; Walter F. Friedlaender, *Nicolas Poussin: A New Approach* (New York: Harry N. Abrams, 1966), 87, 178, 193, 196; Jacques Thuillier, *Tout l'oeuvre peint de Poussin* (Paris: Flammarion, 1974), 10, 111; Christopher Wright, *Poussin Paintings: A Catalogue Raisonné* (New York: Alpine Fine Arts Collection, 1984).

<sup>26</sup> Jacques Bailly, *Catalogue des tableaux du cabinet du roy au Luxembourg* (Paris, 1750).

<sup>27</sup> Richard Verdi, "Poussin's *Deluge*: The Aftermath," *Burlington Magazine* 123, no. 940 (July 1981): 388-401.

<sup>28</sup> For a postmodern reading of the sublime in the work of Poussin, see Louis Marin, *Sublime Poussin*, trans. Catherine Porter (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1999).

<sup>29</sup> See introduction of this dissertation for a discussion of the divide between theory and practice.

Pierre-Jacques Volaire and Hubert Robert discussed in chapters two and three, respectively), versus philosophical/text-based exegesis, with the philosophic positioning holding more sway.

While it is clear that Vernet's sublime and beautiful pendants such as *Storm* (Figure 3) and *Calm* (Figure 4) can be read through the prism of Burke's discussion of the sublime and beautiful promulgated in his *Enquiry*, perhaps more importantly they show that these ideas had been a part of French landscape painting long before Burke began to synthesize and expound on them. To find the Burkean sublime at the root of any visual representation or reference to the sublime in France from the late 1750s overlooks the earlier tradition of the sublime established by Longinus that was disseminated by Boileau and Silvain in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries. More significantly, it ignores the important fact that Vernet was producing works similar to *Storm* (and *Calm*) as early as 1743, long before Burke had published or had even begun to formulate his treatise (1747).<sup>30</sup> One has only to glance at Vernet's 1743-1748 *Seascape with a Shipwreck* (Figure 1), likely part of a pendant pair expressive of the sublime and beautiful, to observe a formula similar to the one in the 1759 *Storm* (the painting Conisbee links most forcefully to the Burkean sublime). This is clear proof that Vernet's seascapes that are often too cursorily treated as examples of the Burkean sublime need to be more carefully examined.

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<sup>30</sup> Florence Ingersoll-Smouse, *Joseph Vernet: Peintre de marine 1714-1789*, 2 vols. (Paris: Étienne Bignou 1926), I:40. Ingersoll-Smouse mentions a tempest and a view of Vesuvius by Vernet from as early as 1738; James T. Boulton, ed., *A Philosophical Enquiry into the Sublime and Beautiful*, by Edmund Burke (London: Routledge, 2008), xiv. Burke's book was originally published in 1757. Boulton suggests there is evidence that Burke began to think about writing on the sublime in 1747.

There is a precedent in French landscape painting for work such as Vernet's showing two vast extremes of nature that can be traced to the seventeenth century. Although the *Deluge* was the best known of Poussin's paintings that can be discussed from the vantage point of the French sublime tradition as it developed later throughout the eighteenth century, a set of pendants he painted for patron Jean Pointel in 1651, *Landscape with a Storm* (Figure 6) and *Landscape with a Calm* (Figure 7), provoke thought.<sup>31</sup> The art historian Pierre Rosenberg suggests the former was somewhat widely known through an engraving.<sup>32</sup> The significance of these works illustrating two extremes, or reflections of nature, indeed two extremes of emotion or circumstance, is clear when considered next to the numerous pendants by Vernet depicting calm and tempestuous seas. While it is not possible to ascertain whether Vernet was familiar with these works, as we can assume he was with the *Deluge*, it seems as though the pendants by Poussin and those by Vernet belong, at least at first glance, to the same constellation of meaning.<sup>33</sup> They represent opposite poles that in the eighteenth century can be discussed in terms of the sublime and the beautiful, like Boileau's *Traité du sublime* and its counterpoint *Art poétique*, works that were originally published in tandem in 1674 and intended to be read together. It is important to point out that the two concepts are shown in pendants that are paired, and not presented separately, just as the *Deluge* was part of a larger cycle representing the four seasons, expressing a pre-Hegelian conception of history tied not to a teleological end but to repetitive natural rhythms. This cyclical

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<sup>31</sup> Pierre Rosenberg and Keith Christiansen, eds., *Poussin and Nature: Arcadian Visions*, exh. cat. (New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art, 2008), 260-263.

<sup>32</sup> "Unlike the *Landscape with a Storm*, for unexplained reasons, the painting [*Landscape with a Calm*] was never engraved." Rosenberg and Christiansen, *Poussin and Nature: Arcadian Visions*, 263.

<sup>33</sup> Verdi, "Poussin's *Deluge*," 392.

conception of history would be exemplified in Giambattista Vico's *Scienza Nuovo* [*New Science*] of 1725 in which a theory of civilization (and nationhood) is proposed as a thing that is born, matures, grows old, and decays.<sup>34</sup>

French interest in the dichotomous pairing of the sublime and beautiful as subjects for landscape painting can be seen in the continued popularity of Vernet's pendants beginning in the 1740s and continuing throughout the 1780s. Again, this suggests that the sublime did not just emerge in France in conjunction with or as a result of Burke's *Enquiry*. Rather, the sublime was a meaningful aspect of late seventeenth- and eighteenth-century French landscape painting as suggested by the examples from Poussin and the fact that Vernet was producing sublime and beautiful pendants that significantly predate the publishing of Burke's *Enquiry* (1757) and its translation into French (1765). As Jane Ellen Howard has shown in a master's thesis investigating the type of paintings expressive of the sublime and beautiful that Vernet sold and to whom, the paintings of the 1740s that fall into this category were popular amongst both French and English patrons. French patrons had either commissioned or purchased ten out of twenty-seven sets of sublime and beautiful pendants in the 1740s, or 37 percent; the British six out of twenty-seven sets, or 22 percent; and the Italians one set, or 3.7 percent.<sup>35</sup> Howard found that French interest in Vernet's sublime and beautiful pendants remained consistent throughout the 1740s, 50s, 60s, and 70s before peaking in the 1780s at 61.5 percent, with

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<sup>34</sup> While this aspect will not be discussed here, it is important to note that this cyclical idea of history linked to birth, life, and death is also an important reading of Vernet's pendants, as well as his numerous times of day series. It is a cycle tied in the eighteenth century to ruins, as can be seen in the work of Hubert Robert discussed in chapter three of this dissertation, "Sublime Ruins."

<sup>35</sup> For these figures I am heavily indebted to the work of Jane Ellen Howard, who assembled the numbers from a careful and painstaking collation of Ingersoll-Smouse's catalogue raisonné, *Joseph Vernet: Peintre de marine*; Jane Ellen Howard, "The Sublime and the Beautiful in the Works," 68, 73, 74, 78; Léon Lagrange, *Joseph Vernet et la peinture au XVIIIe siècle* (Paris, 1864).

thirty-five works commissioned. British interest, however, peaked in the 1760s, shortly after Burke's treatise was published, with patronage at a high point of 28.5 percent before declining. Howard's valuable work suggests that the popularity of dichotomous sublime and beautiful subject matter in France, as least in the case of Vernet, was virtually independent of Burke's influence. In Britain, however, its popularity appears directly tied to Burke's *Enquiry*, as made clear by the upsurge in British interest in the 1760s, the years immediately following its publication. Howard's study also shows that sublime and beautiful pendants were a popular painting type for Vernet, representing almost one-third of his total output. Out of approximately 452 paintings commissioned over the span of Vernet's career, 127 of them, or 28 percent, involved the dichotomous subjects of the sublime and beautiful, either in pendants or as part of four painting cycles. Of those 127, French patrons claimed fifty-nine works, or 46 percent, and the British twenty, or 16 percent.

Conclusions drawn from Howard's study must be taken with reservation, like those from any statistical analysis, particularly since much of the information was extracted from the only catalogue raisonné of Vernet's oeuvre, a massive two-volume work done by the art historian Florence Ingersoll-Smouse in 1926. This work owes heavily to the first important study of Vernet published in 1864 by Léon Lagrange, the biographer of Vernet's grandson Horace Vernet.<sup>36</sup> Lagrange's study is a vital source for virtually 90 percent of the basic information available today on Vernet. It includes many excerpts from Vernet's journals and from his *Livre de raison* [*Record Book*], a document modeled on Claude's *Liber Veritatis* [*Book of Truth*] in which the artist listed and

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<sup>36</sup> Ingersoll-Smouse, *Joseph Vernet: Peintre de marine*; Lagrange, *Joseph Vernet et la peinture*.

described his commissions in great detail as a record of authentic works. Vernet's meticulous record lends strength and credibility to Howard's analysis which, if condensed into a single idea, would be that the international popularity of Vernet's paintings of the sublime and beautiful was longstanding, particularly in France but also in Britain. Such popularity may attest to the flexible nature of the sublime in French landscape painting that allowed it to convey a multitude of meanings or associations throughout the second half of the eighteenth century.

### **The Heroic Sublime and the Seven Years' War**

As a testament to the multitude of associations that have been connected to the Burkean sublime since it emerged in the late 1750s, contemporary scholars such as Peter De Bolla have drawn a connection between it and the Seven Years' War that lasted from 1756 to 1763 and involved all of the major European powers of the time.<sup>37</sup> The war compounded France's financial problems after the country fell heavily into debt, largely because of the War of Austrian Succession that lasted from 1740-1748. It also caused France to lose its foothold in North America and the West Indies and effectively ended France's position as a major colonial power in the Americas. Significantly, the war left the French Navy crippled. The event provides a lens through which to view the plethora of Vernet's midcentury sublime seascapes, many of which take as their main subject matter the battle between man and nature in all of its sublime force. A major trope in these paintings is shipwreck.

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<sup>37</sup> Peter De Bolla, *The Discourse of the Sublime: Readings in History, Aesthetics, and the Subject* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1989), 105-109.

It is tempting to view Vernet's paintings of shipwrecks as a means of expressing through the sublime a latent fear, or terror, at the prospect of losing territory, financial stability, or political clout during tumultuous times. But this view has to be tempered by an aspect of most of these paintings that has gone largely overlooked, that of heroic human action and forbearance in the face of danger. A quick comparison of Poussin's 1651 *Landscape with a Storm* (Figure 6) to Vernet's 1759 *Storm* (Figure 3), a painting that falls chronologically at the ideal time for the arguments of the influence of the Burkean sublime and of fears connected perhaps to the Seven Years' War, is illuminating. Hitherto, examination of Vernet's sublime seascapes by scholars such as Conisbee has focused on the overwhelming terror of the event depicted—a rough sea and a ship listing helplessly in a storm. One can easily find the terror Burke discussed in his treatment of the sublime when he claimed, "Indeed terror is in all cases whatsoever, either more openly or latently the ruling principle of the sublime."<sup>38</sup> But there is another important element at work, one that attests to the elevation of humanity in the struggle with nature. In Poussin's painting the human figures are at the complete mercy of nature. They drop to the ground and hide their heads in a gesture of helplessness in the face of danger. Observe particularly the oxcart driver, whose job it is to convey his charge safely, hunkered down with the oxen, waiting, praying desperately for relief from the storm. What a contrast to Vernet's active figures who strive valiantly against the wind, rain, and sea to take care of one another and to triumph in the face of adversity!<sup>39</sup>

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<sup>38</sup> Burke, *A Philosophical Enquiry*, 58. Ironically, Burke then argues for the affinity for this condition of terror with the quality of astonishment, which is, of course, indebted to Longinus.

<sup>39</sup> While it may be tempting to suggest that Vernet is simply reiterating a form he found in his mentor Adrien Manglard (French, 1695-1760) in terms of men on shore pulling, there is a major difference in that Manglard's figures are very static, while Vernet's show an incredible amount of effort.

To perceive Vernet's sublime seascapes as the fear of loss experienced by France during the Seven Years' War is to rely too heavily on a Burkean notion of fear or terror, rather than the idea of elevation or heroic greatness that comes from Longinus via Boileau. Consider the *Ports of France* series executed by Vernet. Heather MacDonald argues that it was a means of providing a sense of stability during trying political and economic times by recasting the image of the king as *Bien-Aimé* [beloved] in the topography of the French landscape, or ports, those critical economic engines that were suffering in the 1750s.<sup>40</sup> Could it be said that rather than expressing fear of loss, Vernet's sublime seascapes, when viewed from the perspective of a sublime that expresses greatness and the heroic ability to overcome hardship, attest to the elevated soul and spirit of the French individual? If the *Ports of France* show a didactic topography of what makes France great in terms of resources, perhaps Vernet's sublime shipwrecks map a mentality of the capacity of each individual, like that of the nation, for greatness.<sup>41</sup> In this way, Vernet links the idea of heroic action to the sublime.

This connection between the heroic and the sublime is intriguing to consider in the context of a lecture by Giambattista Vico titled "*De mente heroica*" [On the Heroic Mind], given on 20 October 1732 at the Royal Academy of Naples. This lecture was never published in Vico's lifetime and thus would not have been directly available to

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<sup>40</sup> MacDonald, "Landscapes of Ambition," 106, 224-254. See this work for a discussion specific to the Seven Years' War.

<sup>41</sup> As a corollary, it must be noted that some scholars such as Conisbee have mentioned that the popularity of shipwrecks has to do with the great fear and their common occurrence in the eighteenth century. See Conisbee, "Eighteenth Century: Watteau to Valenciennes," 85-98; In a very interesting study, the historian Jacques Ducoin analyzes ship traffic between Nantes, France, and the Colonies, finding how many shipwrecks there actually were; the highest percentage was in 1753 with 13 percent and in 1772 with 11 percent. Also, Ducoin finds that meteorological conditions were responsible for at most 20 percent of the shipwrecks that occurred in some years, while navigational (or human error) consistently hovered around 41 percent. See Jacques Ducoin, *Naufages, conditions de navigation et assurances dans la marine de commerce du XVIIIe siècle: Le Cas de Nantes*, 2 vols. (Paris: Librairie de l'Inde, 1993).

Vernet when he visited Naples in 1737. However, the philosophy scholar Donald Phillip Verene discovered that the conception of the hero Vico articulated in “On the Heroic Mind” had been published four years earlier by Vico in his 1728 autobiography *Vita di Giambattista Vico scritti da se medesimo* [*The Life of Giambattista Vico Written by Himself*].<sup>42</sup> Not only would Vico’s autobiography have been available to Vernet, but in it Vico created a heroic fable of his own life, an aspect that is particularly interesting in the context of Vernet’s own self-mythologization that will be discussed shortly. It is fascinating to consider how Vico and Vernet approached the sublime from a similar standpoint. Vico’s lecture reflects a similar link between the heroic individual and the sublime that Vernet expresses in many of his sublime seascape and shipwreck paintings. Robert Doran writes, “By ‘heroic mind’ Vico meant the celebration of human spirit, its intrinsic possibility of self-transcendence, and its desire to achieve greatness as a consequence of its striving toward the divine. Vico expresses a humanistic conception of sublimity, connecting human grandeur and transcendence with man’s place in civil society.”<sup>43</sup> Significantly, Vico’s discussion of the sublime reflects the French tradition indebted to Longinus and Boileau and is a testament to a similar pre-Burkean interest in the subject that has been connected to Vernet’s work. Directed to students, Vico stated,

“Hero” is defined by philosophers as one who seeks ever the sublime. Sublimity is, according to these same philosophers the following, of the utmost greatness and worth: first, above nature, God himself; next within nature, this whole frame of marvels spread out before us, in which nothing exceeds man in greatness and nothing of more

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<sup>42</sup> Donald Phillip Verene, *The New Art of Autobiography: An Essay on the Life of Giambattista Vico Written by Himself* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1991), vii, 174-195.

<sup>43</sup> Doran, “Sublime and Modern Subjectivity,” 15.

worth than man's well-being, to which single goal each and every hero presses on, in singleness of heart.<sup>44</sup>

Vico's language of the sublime connecting it to both heroism and greatness is revealing, particularly in the context of a painter who as a young man had purportedly sought the grand experience of the sublime power of a storm by lashing himself to a mast on his 1734 voyage from France to Italy to begin his artistic career.<sup>45</sup> Such heroic mythologization, George Levitine argues, was also heavily indebted to the popularity of Horace Vernet's emotionally charged sublime seascape *Joseph Vernet Tied to a Mast in a Storm* (1822) (Figure 8), a tumultuous painting that shows his grandfather tied to the mast of a ship being tossed mercilessly by a rough sea. Levitine writes, "Vernet during the nineteenth century continued to stimulate a surprising degree of interest, partly because of his still remembered reputation as a painter, but especially because of the place he came to occupy in art historical folklore."<sup>46</sup> He continues, "His sea episode offered one of the rare and welcome examples of every-day behavior transcended *by a well-known artist, in a spectacular manner related to the subject for which he was to become famous* [Levitine emphasis].... It raised an anecdote of the life of an eighteenth century predecessor to the level of legend—and apocryphally adorned a painter of the Rococo

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<sup>44</sup> Giambattista Vico, "On the Heroic Mind," trans. Elizabeth Sewell and Anthony C. Sirignano, in *Vico and Contemporary Thought*, ed. Giorgio Tagliacozzo, Michael Mooney, and Donald Philip Verene (Atlantic Highlands, NJ: Humanities Press, 1979), 230. A Conference at New School for Social Research, New York, 1976.

<sup>45</sup> For an alternate interpretation on the idea of hero in France, see Allan H. Pasco, *Sick Heroes: French Society and Literature in the Romantic Age, 1750-1850* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 2005).

<sup>46</sup> Levitine, "Vernet Tied to a Mast in a Storm: The Evolution," 93; Léon Lagrange, *Joseph Vernet: Sa vie, sa famille, son siècle* (Brussels, 1858), 15.

age with the mantle of the romantic hero.”<sup>47</sup> Doran expands on the significance of the hero in the context of the Longinian sublime:

What the figure of the hero offered was an ideal image of the self-transcending individual. The notion of the sublime operated as an emblem of heroic values, particularly the concept of nobility of mind inherited from Longinus.... Longinus’ notion of sublimity effectively linked aesthetic experience and the creative disposition to heroic values and sentiments. On several occasions Longinus calls great writers “heroes” (*heroes* in Greek). Longinus also locates the principle source—and effect—of *hypsos* [elevation] in heroic character: grandeur of conception and nobility of mind. Addressing the modern desire to formulate a notion of the heroic bourgeois or citizen, the sublime was used to emblemize of figure heroic values. Through the sublime, modern individualism seeks to appropriate an idea of human grandeur.<sup>48</sup>

The elevation of the human spirit or of the soul or of the grandeur of gesture is at the heart of the concept of the sublime as expressed by Longinus, and this is reflected in Vernet’s sublime seascape and shipwreck paintings that emphasize the heroic actions of individuals. Longinus stated, “Our soul is naturally uplifted by the truly great.”<sup>49</sup>

### **The Thunderbolt: Longinus, Boileau, and the Iconography of the Sublime**

The emphasis so far in pointing to the articulation of the sublime in Vernet’s work has been on the grand, heroic efforts of the individual linked to the classical French sublime tradition inherited from Longinus. This can be seen specifically in the artist’s

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<sup>47</sup> Levitine, “*Vernet Tied to a Mast in a Storm: The Evolution*,” 100. In the nineteenth century, Joseph Vernet, as the grandfather of the painter Horace Vernet, was looked to as a powerful example. George Levitine discusses the mythologization of Vernet that occurred throughout the nineteenth century in the drive to find an eighteenth-century hero.

<sup>48</sup> Doran, “Sublime and Modern Subjectivity,” 13, 14.

<sup>49</sup> Longinus, *On Great Writing (On the Sublime)*, trans. G. M. A. Grube (New York: Liberal Arts Press, 1957), 10.

shipwreck paintings where individuals in the foreground work to save themselves and others. But there is another important element that serves to connect Vernet's sublime seascapes to the French sublime tradition indebted to Longinus and Boileau. The image of the thunderbolt can be seen in paintings of storms by Poussin, such as *Landscape with a Storm* (Figure 6), and by Vernet, such as *Storm* (Figure 3), to name only two examples.

The thunderbolt links the sublime rhetorical tradition that began in seventeenth-century France, most importantly with Boileau, to the development of the sublime in the visual arts, as can be seen in the paintings of Poussin and Vernet. Thus, the lineage of the sublime in France can be refocused to emphasize the connection between rhetorical theory and the visual arts.<sup>50</sup> As an iconographical glyph, the thunderbolt forcefully introduces the concept of the sublime into the visual language of paint and canvas. It signals the sublime, or that *moment* of greatness that has maintained its presence in the French articulation of the sublime, most notably within the rhetorical tradition established by Longinus. Its expression in visual form, such as in a painting, cannot be overstated. As a natural phenomenon, the thunderbolt ties the world of nature to the world of humankind, but it also acts as a signifier of the awesome and immediate presence of the sublime. Longinus wrote, "But greatness appears suddenly; like a thunderbolt it carries all before it and reveals the writer's full power in a flash."<sup>51</sup> The inclusion of the detail of the thunderbolt in late seventeenth- and eighteenth-century depictions of storms may be superficially glossed over as part of a mimetic representation of a storm in paint. But the

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<sup>50</sup> The connection of the sublime to the visual arts has often and too readily been attributed, for the most part, to Burke's treatise, which is not to diminish his contribution. He connected the sublime to the visual arts with a precise and thorough articulation and spread his ideas widely to an international audience. The publishing history of *Enquiry* consists of seventeen editions in several languages during Burke's lifetime alone. It was translated into French in 1765 and into German in 1773.

<sup>51</sup> Longinus, *On Great Writing*, 4.

presence of the thunderbolt when viewed in line with a history of representations of rhetoric points to something more particular in the form of the sublime.

The thunderbolt has been invoked as a symbol of rhetorical power since antiquity, not confined only to Longinus's description of the rhetorical greatness of Demosthenes. It is a symbol that has been invoked in both Greek and Roman criticism, as well as during the Renaissance in emblem books by authors such as Cesare Ripa and Giovanni Pierio Valeriano. Nicholas Cronk makes a convincing visual-based argument about the representation of the thunderbolt in his book *The Classical Sublime: French Neoclassicism and the Language of Literature* (2002).<sup>52</sup> He shows how the motif of the thunderbolt present in the Renaissance was elided from later representations of eloquence in the seventeenth century, such as in the image of eloquence by artist Michel Dorigny (Figure 9), until Boileau chose to reintroduce it shown in the right hand of Demosthenes in the frontispiece for his 1674 *Traité du sublime*, engraved by Antoine Paillet and Guillaume Vallet (Figure 10).<sup>53</sup> Cronk provides an extremely powerful argument for the relationship between the rhetorical tradition of the poetic sublime and the visual representation of the sublime. Thus, the thunderbolt, with the rise in the rhetorical tradition of the sublime in the late seventeenth century, gained a new sense of currency and became reattached to the sublime.

Boileau's commission and use of the Paillet engraving is significant. It reinforces his debt to Longinus through the evocation of the power of the rhetorical sublime. To place that power represented as a thunderbolt in the hands of Demosthenes, the orator, is

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<sup>52</sup> Nicholas Cronk, *The Classical Sublime: French Neoclassicism and the Language of Literature* (Charlottesville, VA: Rookwood Press, 2002), 159-169.

<sup>53</sup> Cronk, *The Classical Sublime*, 167.

telling. Demosthenes is the figure Longinus relied on more than any other, with perhaps the exception of Homer, to provide an example of a man who achieves the sublime. Longinus wrote in reference to Demosthenes and his ability to awe: “He outthunders and outshines the orators of all the ages. His hearers can no more resist the successive outbursts of passion unmoved than gaze with open eyes at a falling thunderbolt.”<sup>54</sup> For Longinus, it is in his ability to strike awe that makes Demosthenes a great figure, capable of great language that elevates and moves. In short, he is capable of the sublime. The ability to elevate, to move, to transport, to convince immediately with no rational intermediary or space of time—to spur to sensation or action or feeling or frenzy or emotion—is at the heart of the sublime for Longinus as it is absorbed by Boileau and then carried into the eighteenth century. Doran confirms this in his discussion of Boileau’s treatment of Longinus: “Like the lightning flash, the ‘sublime’ comes from above, indicating transcendence. Its power is revealed in the instant of illumination, which could be thought analogously to the moment of conversion or enlightenment.”<sup>55</sup> This can be seen in the sublime shipwreck paintings of Vernet, with humans hard at work to save a ship or themselves, when there is no time for thought or contemplation, but only action, heroism, and greatness.<sup>56</sup>

The aspect of the power of the sublime to move an audience suddenly and forcefully is expressed in Paillet’s image of Demosthenes moving his audience to an emotional frenzy with highly expressive gestures. Some of these gestures are quotations

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<sup>54</sup> Longinus, *On Great Writing*, 47.

<sup>55</sup> Doran, “Sublime and Modern Subjectivity,” 85.

<sup>56</sup> This important aspect of the Longinian sublime will emerge in Burke, particularly in the section devoted to self-preservation. Burke, *A Philosophical Enquiry*, 39.

from Leonardo da Vinci's *Last Supper* (1495-8) (Figure 11), a work that supremely captures an immediate, emotionally charged moment when the son of God speaks the words that reveal that one of his followers will betray him, filling the room with astonishment. Leonardo used this sublime moment as an opportunity to represent the expression of a full range of powerful feelings. Jesus's words, like those of Demosthenes, strike like a thunderbolt to move his disciples to action, as can be read in their sudden gestures. This sudden action of individuals connected to the sublime moment seen in both Paillet's print and Leonardo's painting is echoed in Vernet's sublime seascapes, where individuals are immediately driven to react to extreme circumstance, their actions illuminated by the sublime flash of a falling thunderbolt.

Indeed, what is more sublime than the voice or presence of God, perhaps also symbolized by the thunderbolt?<sup>57</sup> This argument concerning the sublime aspect of the voice of God as the ultimate moment of sublimity can be found in the *fiat lux* [let there be light] reference by Longinus in *On the Sublime*, where it is used to emphasize the ability of an individual to rise to heroic greatness through the sublime.<sup>58</sup> Doran writes, "The association of the writer's power with the lightning bolt conjures up a heroic image of the writer (whom, as we observed, Longinus refers to on many occasions as *heroes*). Great writers are god-like in their ability to shock and awe, producing wonder and admiration."<sup>59</sup> The *fiat lux* argument is also found used to a similar effect by Boileau in his *Traité du sublime* where he, unlike Longinus, contextualized it in a religious context

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<sup>57</sup> It is likely that the thunderbolt would have also been recognized by an eighteenth-century French audience as an attribute of Zeus, the father of the gods in Greek mythology.

<sup>58</sup> Longinus, *On Great Writing*, 14.

<sup>59</sup> Doran, "Sublime and Modern Subjectivity," 86.

as related in Genesis 1:3 (God said, “let there be light,” and there was light).<sup>60</sup> Boileau’s emphasis on *fiat lux* also made its way into Burke’s conception of the sublime.<sup>61</sup> It is a critical component for the philosophy scholar Baldine Saint Girons in her 1993 monograph *Fiat Lux: A Philosophy of the Sublime*, an encyclopedic attempt to treat the sublime in terms of philosophical concepts.<sup>62</sup> Significantly, the idea of *fiat lux* can also be found in Diderot’s discussion of Vernet’s abilities as a painter in a passage where he also discusses the sublime. Diderot wrote, “What’s astonishing is... that he paints with incredible speed; that he [Vernet] says ‘Let there be light,’ and the light appears.”<sup>63</sup> Although Diderot’s comment is made primarily to emphasize Vernet’s naturalistic abilities, it is compelling that he makes a comparison between the work of the artist—evidenced by speed of brush and ability for creation—and God.

### **The Sublime and Secular Transcendence**

In the eighteenth century, the sublime became significant as a vehicle of secular transcendence.<sup>64</sup> A quick comparison of Poussin’s *Landscape with a Storm* (Figure 6) to one of Vernet’s shipwrecks such as *Seascape with a Shipwreck* (Figure 1) shows, as argued earlier, how Vernet’s works place a greater emphasis on human agency, or upon

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<sup>60</sup> Nicolas Boileau-Despréaux, *Traité du sublime* (1674; repr., Paris: Philippe, 1942), 1:45-46.

<sup>61</sup> Burke, *A Philosophical Enquiry*, 68-70.

<sup>62</sup> Baldine Saint Girons, *Fiat lux: Une Philosophie du sublime* (Paris: Quai Voltaire, 1993).

<sup>63</sup> “Ce qu’il y a d’étonnant... c’est qu’il peint avec une vitesse incroyable; c’est qu’il dit: Que la lumière se fasse, et la lumière est faite.” Diderot, *Salons*, 3:160.

<sup>64</sup> Thomas Weiskel, *The Romantic Sublime: Studies in the Structure and Psychology of Transcendence* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins, 1976); Doran, “Sublime and Modern Subjectivity,” 1-24, 25-67. In particular, see introduction and chapter one, “The Language of Transcendence: Longinus and Boileau.”

the act of individual heroism. There may be a Lamentation quotation or a figure shown imploring God's help that adds visual interest and drama to the works, but the emphasis is on the strength of human will and power, as opposed to that of God and nature. This is a characteristic of the sublime as it emerged from Longinus and reached eighteenth-century France through Boileau. Doran argues, "It [sublime] offered a subjective model for aesthetic experience, but more particularly, it provided a model for the kind of experience that had previously been the province of religion."<sup>65</sup> Doran's observation reveals how Vernet's sublime seascapes and storms from the second half of the eighteenth century function differently from the works of Poussin from the second half of the seventeenth century. In Poussin's paintings where a sense of the sublime is evoked, such as *Landscape with a Storm*, religion is still viewed as the mode par excellence of transcendence, and the individuals hiding their heads, like animals, are shown still wholly reliant on God for mercy and not on their own actions for salvation. Doran articulately summarizes the connection between the sublime and secular transcendence, and it is worth quoting at length:

Thus to understand the sublime is to understand the fundamental importance of religious structures in the modern world. For what all modern theories of the sublime share is a commitment to a discourse of human elevation. Whether we are speaking of grandeur in Longinus, primitive passion in Dennis and Vico, terror in Burke, the supersensible vocation in Kant, enthusiasm in Staël, *amour-passion* in Stendhal, or transfiguration in Hugo, we are speaking of a specifically modern need to exalt the human being and to find an analogy for religious transcendence. The sublime takes over, as it were, the delicate task of reintroducing transcendence in a way that does not compromise individual freedom and self-sufficiency (and in Kant's case even affirms it). In the

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<sup>65</sup> Doran, "Sublime and Modern Subjectivity," 7.

movement toward secularization, the notion of the sublime proved to be of crucial importance; for it promised, in a single concept, the reconciliation between autonomy and transcendence that the moderns found so elusive. Autonomy required the emancipation from religion, but by itself it was unable to provide the necessary ground for human thought and action. If transcendence without autonomy was dogmatic, autonomy without transcendence meant anarchy. The sublime combined an aesthetic discourse of autonomy with a secular discourse of transcendence, thereby connecting the two antagonistic poles of thought.<sup>66</sup>

As of the 1740s and 1750s, Enlightenment emphasis on the individual, as opposed to religion or God, had not yet reached the apogee it would attain later in the century. Thus, Vernet's work expressive of the sublime inherited from Longinus and Boileau may be viewed as an important yet relatively early stage that indicates, and may perhaps even trace, the progression toward the transcendence or even heroization of the autonomy of the individual.<sup>67</sup> Doran continues,

Longinus' theory of *hypsos* (sublimity/elevation) was the impetus for the modern, secular discussions of human elevation, providing a model of subjectivity that included elements traditionally associated with religious discourse, e.g. reverential awe, ecstasy, grandeur, exaltation and nobility of soul. The sublime as Longinus had conceived it also provides a non-religious (aesthetic) foundation for notions of human dignity and moral worth.<sup>68</sup>

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<sup>66</sup> Doran, "Sublime and Modern Subjectivity," 11.

<sup>67</sup> For a detailed analysis see Jean A. Perkins, *The Concept of the Self in the French Enlightenment* (Paris: Honoré Champion, 1997).

<sup>68</sup> Doran, "Sublime and Modern Subjectivity," 11.

The focus on the agency of the individual would be a large part of the writings of Jean-Jacques Rousseau, such as the *Social Contract* (1762), and would begin to culminate in the French Revolution before finding its full expression in Romanticism.<sup>69</sup>

This idea of transcendence is also an aspect found in the Burkean sublime derived from Longinus, which is why Burke's sublime may have found such easy favor in France. Burke's sublime that emphasizes fear and terror has too often been the focus of what makes his articulation of the sublime different from the one derived from the lineage of Longinus and Boileau. What constitutes the truly sublime for Burke is the idea of *overcoming* fear or terror, despite its nearness or proximity. This is the heroism that can be seen in Vernet's sublime shipwreck paintings that communicated to the viewer the overcoming, or transcendence, of fear and terror, those human emotions that strike most acutely to the very core of human emotional response and desire for survival. The philosopher Ernst Cassirer elegantly cuts to the heart of the issue in his brief discussion of the Burkean sublime:

We are never more powerfully moved than by this incomprehensible element of experience; never do we feel the power of nature and of art so much as when we are confronted with the terrible. That we do not succumb to the terrible, but that we maintain ourselves against it and that we actually feel exaltation and intensification of our powers in its presence—these are the elements of the phenomenon of the sublime and the basis of its deepest aesthetic effect.<sup>70</sup>

In its first part, Cassirer's summary of the sublime follows Burke's most famous and articulate definition. The element of fear or terror has been extracted to form the basis of

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<sup>69</sup> The original French title of Rousseau's book is *Du Contract social, ou, principes du droit politique*.

<sup>70</sup> Ernst Cassirer, *The Philosophy of the Enlightenment*, trans. Fritz C. A. Koelln and James P. Pettegrove (Princeton: University Press, 1951), 329. Originally published in German as *Die Philosophie der Aufklärung*.

his discussion. It is a definition that seems, at first glance, to be almost impossibly far from the French articulation of the concept grounded in elevation and greatness. Burke wrote,

Whatever is fitted in any sort to excite ideas of pain, and danger, that is to say, whatever is in any sort terrible, or is conversant about terrible objects, or operates in a manner analogous to terror, is a source of the *sublime*; that is, it is productive of the strongest emotion the mind is capable of feeling.<sup>71</sup>

It is in the second part of Cassirer's statement where the chink occurs through which it is possible to examine the Burkean sublime in the context of the Longinian tradition that has made its impact felt so forcefully, so greatly, upon French thought on the sublime. Cassirer recognizes that it is not that which is *terrible* that is sublime, but that which is overcome. And further, the greater the obstacle there is to overcome or transcend, the greater the feeling of the sublime.

In line with a sublime of noble elevation and greatness derived from Longinus and Boileau, the heroism of individual effort so prominent in Vernet's sublime seascapes reflects the mental and physical determination to overcome adversity in humankind's epic struggle with elemental nature. Like the sublime developed by Longinus and Boileau, Burke's sublime can also be understood as an elevation. But Burke was far more focused on fear and terror, specifically as a means of providing that capacity for feeling greatness through the threat and awe of being overpowered. Burke's sublime underscores a greatness connected to the overwhelming force of danger. For Burke, there was no greater experience of the sublime than danger, or even death, narrowly averted. It is a

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<sup>71</sup> Burke, *A Philosophical Enquiry*, 40.

logical extension that the greater the degree of terror, the greater the experience of the sublime. Burke wrote,

Now whatever either on good or upon bad grounds tends to raise a man in his own opinion, produces a sort of swelling and triumph that is extremely grateful to the human mind; and this swelling is never more perceived, nor operates with more force, than without danger we are conversant with terrible objects, the mind always claiming to itself some part of the dignity and importance of the things which it contemplates. Hence proceeds what Longinus has observed of that glorying and sense of inward greatness, that always fills the reader of such passages in poets and orators as are sublime; it is what every man must have felt in himself upon such occasions.<sup>72</sup>

Thus, Burke transmutes the effect of the sublime from that which is read or heard textually or verbally as elevating the mind—as claimed by the Longinian tradition—to an event that man himself experiences emotionally. In a sense, Burke focuses on a visceral reaction caused by the sublime, while the Longinian tradition focuses on a mental one. Often this occurs in front of a great force of nature, but, not incidentally, it can also be found in front of a representation (i.e., in a painting).<sup>73</sup>

For Denis Diderot, a sublime experience, and perhaps an equally powerful one, can be found in a painting and not just in nature. In his well-known description of the landscapes of Vernet shown at the Paris Salon in 1767, Diderot used an extended *ekphrasis*, or a literary description of a work of art, to lead the reader on a vivid promenade through the works, revealing only toward the end of the passage that Diderot

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<sup>72</sup> Burke, *A Philosophical Enquiry*, 50.

<sup>73</sup> Of course the idea of finding the sublime in the natural world, a concept Burke elaborates almost typologically in his treatise, can also be found mentioned by Longinus when he compares great oration to a thunderbolt, a sublime aspect of nature. See Longinus, *On Great Writing*, 4, 46-47; Burke, *A Philosophical Enquiry*, 58, 64, 65.

was describing paintings and not actual sites that he himself had visited.<sup>74</sup> Diderot's use of such a promenade is an effective means of illustrating the naturalism of Vernet's landscapes to the reader to the point where it is difficult to separate what is experienced in life from what is experienced in paint. While this aspect of Diderot's discussion of Vernet's work has been examined and commented upon by art historians such as Michael Fried and Ian Lohead, the connection between the *ekphrastic* technique that heightens a reader's experience and the sublime has been neglected.<sup>75</sup> Diderot connects the vastness of the ocean in a Vernet painting to that which astonishes man by the sublime force of its magnitude and immensity, not to mention its violent, terrible power. Diderot wrote, "The spectator standing by the seashore unmoved and left cold by the view is rapt with wonder and astonishment by [Vernet's] canvas; the effect of his composition preached the grandeur, power, and majesty of nature more compellingly than nature herself."<sup>76</sup> While Diderot may be exaggerating in saying that Vernet's paintings may be more compelling than nature, the idea that Vernet can convey a sublime experience with his work is significant.

To return to Vernet's paintings of sublime shipwrecks such as *Seascape with a Shipwreck* (Figure 1), the heroism of the individuals depicted pulling a lifeboat to safety is an emotional, nay a sublime, experience for the viewers of the work who can imagine

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<sup>74</sup> Diderot, *Salons*, 3:129-167.

<sup>75</sup> Ian J. Lochhead, *The Spectator and the Landscape in the Art Criticism of Diderot and His Contemporaries* (Ann Arbor, MI: University Research Press, 1982). Lochhead is a good example of this. His works have been influenced by Michael Fried's analysis of the idea of spectatorship in eighteenth-century art and rely heavily on the criticism of Diderot; Michael Fried, *Absorption and Theatricality: Painting and Beholder in the Age of Diderot* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1980).

<sup>76</sup> "C'est qu'elles sont tells que celui qui en fut spectateur tranquille et froid au bord de la mer en est émerveillé sur la toile, c'est qu'en effet ses compositions prêchent plus fortement la grandeur, lapuissance, la majesté de Nature, que la Nature même." Diderot, *Salons*, 3:160.

themselves in the line of heaving bodies. With the figures lined up along the bottom of the canvas, the composition almost prompts the viewer to step in and lend a hand. The viewer, like Diderot in his *ekphrastic* journey through Vernet's canvases, identifies with the courageous physical and emotional struggle against the furious elements of nature, relishing the greatness of such a battle and the magnificent pleasure of a hard-won accomplishment. Throughout his oeuvre, Vernet consistently promotes this experience for the viewers of his sublime seascapes. He provides an entry to the painting that gives them a safe vantage point from which to see and identify with the action. This is unlike earlier examples of Dutch shipwrecks and storms at sea such as those by Jean Porcellis, whose paintings, like *Dutch Ships in a Gale* (c. 1620) (Figure 12), do not give the viewers a safe entry to the picture. This limits the ability of the viewers to imagine themselves as a part of the work. They remain only as distant observers watching nature, perhaps as Divine Providence, have its way, despite the efforts of the individual or community. Instead of emphasizing the greatness of humankind, the unsteady or distant vantage point in Dutch pictures functions as a way of "characterizing man's precarious place in the world," as the art historian Lawrence Otto Goedde argues.<sup>77</sup> Vernet's sublime seascapes confirm, however, that man is the critical, active player in the world, as an individual and as part of something larger.

The Dutch works of Porcellis and other painters of seascapes, such as Simon de Vlieger, form part of a tradition that undoubtedly influenced Vernet, but they stand outside of a sublime reading both temporally and geographically. They provide, according to Goedde, "a pictorial vocabulary whose intrinsic expressive power is evident

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<sup>77</sup> Lawrence Otto Goedde, *Tempest and Shipwreck in Dutch and Flemish Art: Convention, Rhetoric, and Interpretation* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1989), 88.

in the fact that it needed only modest alterations to evoke sublimity when painted and viewed with another set of expectations and conventions in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.”<sup>78</sup> Goedde further elaborates on the difference between seventeenth-century Dutch marine painting and the work of later artists who take the sea and man’s relationship with it as a subject:

While the vastness of the sea, the danger of the storm, and its surpassing violence formed the common ground of the pictorial responses of Porcellis, Vernet, and Turner, the value placed on man’s role in relation to these natural phenomena shifted decisively between 1600 and 1800. In the seventeenth century, the storm far from being a means of affirming our capacity for imaginative control of nature and deeply felt kinship with it, was wholly negative. It was cosmic disorder, manifesting discord in the basic structure of the elements. It was a ruthless enemy of individual and group, a token of all lawlessness and of all destructive forces in nature, in society, and in every man. Thus both seventeenth-century and eighteenth-century viewers of tempest pictures would have found in the sea a majesty and vastness dwarfing human attempts at encompassment, but a statement such as Diderot’s in meditating on a tempest by Vernet is virtually unthinkable for a contemporary of Porcellis or Van de Velde: “All that astonishes the soul, all that terrifies is sublime. A vast plain does not amaze like the ocean, nor does a calm ocean amaze like a restless one.”<sup>79</sup>

The quotation Goedde takes from Diderot is one that resonates with a reading of Burke’s definition of the sublime, which is in line with what Gita May argues in her article.<sup>80</sup>

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<sup>78</sup> Goedde, *Tempest and Shipwreck*, 92.

<sup>79</sup> Goedde, *Tempest and Shipwreck*, 4. Goedde’s quotation of Diderot appeared in its original French. “Tout ce qui étonne l’âme, tout ce qui imprime un sentiment de terreur conduit au sublime. Une vaste plaine n’étonne pas comme l’Océan, ni l’Océan tranquille comme l’Océan Agité.” Diderot, *Salons*, 3:167. Goedde also makes reference to Marie Antoinette Tippetts, *Les Marines des peintres vues par les littérateurs de Diderot aux Goncourt* (Paris, 1966), 42-52, 75-77.

<sup>80</sup> May, “Diderot and Burke,” 533-535.

## **A Sublime of Great Virtue and Terrible Loss**

The question of how Burke's definition with its emphasis on terror and emotional impact found such ready soil in French intellectual thought on the subject of the sublime, which had (until Diderot) focused so intensely on the idea of greatness or elevation, is one that can be addressed by examining Vernet's *Death of Virginia* (Figure 2). This painting shows precisely how the strain of the sublime derived from Longinus and Boileau mingles with the Burkean sublime. To find the notion of sublime terror connected to nature in French thought, as in Diderot, and the emergence of terror tied to the sublime in France, is not to say that the trope of greatness and elevation drawn from Longinus and Boileau recedes. Rather, it is supplemented by Burke's articulation of the concept. At almost the opposite end of the spectrum of Vernet's paintings that expand on the greatness of humanity to transcend overwhelming obstacles, such as his 1743-1748 *Seascape with a Shipwreck* (Figure 1), stands a painting executed during the last year of Vernet's life, *Death of Virginia* (1789), which emphasizes more directly and intimately the element of fear or terror that Burke associates with the sublime. Within this work can be seen a conception of the sublime bound to both great virtue (morality) and great loss. *Death of Virginia* cannot be read wholly as a landscape painting but more as a history painting. This change is noteworthy, because the painting is built on the previous sublime seascape and storm tropes perfected by Vernet over his almost sixty-year career as a professional painter. The basis of this work is a scene from *Paul et Virginie* [*Paul and Virginia*], a 1788 novel written by Jacques Henri Bernardin de Saint-Pierre, an author with whom Vernet was friendly. The story is set mostly on Mauritius, an island under French rule, then called *Île de France*.

According to Léon Lagrange, after receiving several copies of the book from the author, Vernet decided to paint what he felt was the most moving moment, when Paul and the native islander Domingo find Virginia, Paul's beloved, washed ashore, dead, and clutching to her breast a picture of Paul.<sup>81</sup> Raised as brother and sister since birth, Paul and Virginia had fallen in love before she was relegated to France for two years at the beckon of a rich relative to be educated as a "civilized" lady. Upon her return trip to the island after refusing to marry a wealthy suitor, her ship, the *Saint-Géran*, capsized in a storm just off shore. Rather than removing her clothing to jump into the water with a sailor who offered to help save her, Virginia held tightly onto her virtue, heroically, and stayed on the ship at the cost of her life and the promise of a future with Paul. Heartbroken, Paul died shortly thereafter. As Philip Conisbee notes, "Such a moral, lacrimose tale, combined with an exotic natural setting, could hardly fail to find success in the late eighteenth century."<sup>82</sup>

The moment Vernet chose to portray, surprisingly, was not the one that occurs when the ship wrecks in a storm with all of the heroic activity of people trying to save lives against a swelling sea and gale force winds, as was common in his oeuvre and can be seen in a work such as *Storm* (Figure 3). Nor was it the moment when Virginia chooses to stay on the ship, that moment also pregnant with dramatic tension. Instead, Vernet showed the moment after the storm, when the violence of nature had mostly passed. This focused the image more intently on the human drama on the shore. It emphasized the heightened psychological state of fear and terror that Paul must have felt

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<sup>81</sup> Lagrange, *Joseph Vernet et la peinture*, 292-294.

<sup>82</sup> Conisbee, *Claude-Joseph Vernet*, cat. entry 48.

upon finding his beloved dead on the shore still clutching to her virtuous breast his picture, the tangible reminder of their love during the years spent apart and the representation of the man to whom she was finally returning at the time of the tragedy.<sup>83</sup> It was a moment to which the eighteenth-century viewer could relate.

Florence Ingersoll-Smouse has compared *Death of Virginia* and those other sublime seascapes and shipwrecks for which Vernet is well-known to the moralizing paintings of Jean-Baptiste Greuze, such as *Village Contract* (1761) (Figure 13).<sup>84</sup> She observes, “This is the shipwreck of Vernet par excellence, and at the same time, a work as significant as *Village Contract* or other moralizing painting of Greuze.”<sup>85</sup> That Ingersoll-Smouse should make this comparison is particularly apt in light of art historian Emma Barker’s analysis of Greuze’s *Village Contract* in her 2005 book *Greuze and the Painting of Sentiment*.<sup>86</sup> Barker extends her analysis of Greuze’s painting past the context of the “literary phenomenon of *sensibilité* [sensitivity or moral didacticism], which had reached new heights a few months previously with the publication of [Jean-Jacques

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<sup>83</sup> For a discussion of the heightened psychological drama of the sublime during the second half of the eighteenth century, see Eik Kahang, “L’Affaire Greuze and the Sublime of History Painting,” *Art Bulletin* 86, no. 1 (March 2004): 96-113.

<sup>84</sup> For a good discussion of the moralizing aspects of Greuze’s *L’Accordée de village*, see Emma Barker, “Painting and Reform in Eighteenth-Century France: Greuze’s *L’Accordée de village*,” *Oxford Art Journal* 20, no. 2 (1997): 42-52. The French title of the work could be translated as either “The Marriage Contract” or “The Village Contract.”

<sup>85</sup> “C’est le *Naufrage* de Vernet par excellence, et par là même, une oeuvre aussi significative que *L’Accordée de village* ou tel autre tableau moralisant de Greuze.” Ingersoll-Smouse, *Joseph Vernet: Peintre de marine*, 1:32.

<sup>86</sup> Given the nuance of the title of Greuze’s *L’Accordée de village* in its original French, Emma Barker and most other scholars do not translate the title. The translation is mine of *L’Accordée de village* as “The Village Contract” in quotations of Barker or as used in her title to chapter two of her book.

Rousseau's] *Julie, or the New Héloïse* [1761].”<sup>87</sup> She continues, “The crucial point, however, as I shall argue here, is the way that Greuze’s painting parallels Rousseau’s novel by fostering identification and desire on the part of the viewer and thereby staging a seduction into virtue.”<sup>88</sup>

Barker’s focus on the aspect of virtue that an eighteenth-century viewer could identify with in Greuze’s work can also be found in Vernet’s painting tied to the concept of morality and the idea of greatness, or elevation, derived from the Longinian sublime that stresses nobleness of mind. It is this sublime nobleness of mind that cost Virginia her life. This aspect found its expression in Immanuel Kant’s treatment of the subject in his 1764 *Observation on the Feeling of the Beautiful and the Sublime*.<sup>89</sup> Robert Doran elaborates,

Kant does not *introduce* a moral dimension to sublimity, but simply *revitalizes* the Longinian idea of the sublime as intrinsically tied to the idea of “nobility of mind” (*megalophrosyne*).... The spirit of the Longinian conception of sublimity, having been diverted to discussions of primitive passion in the first part of the eighteenth century (Dennis, Vico, Burke), will find its culmination in an unlikely source: the critical philosophy of Immanuel Kant. For it is by way of Kant’s emphasis on the noetic aspect of the sublime, displacing or subordinating the pathetic, that the Longinian nexus between elevation and morality is restored.<sup>90</sup>

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<sup>87</sup> Emma Barker, *Greuze and the Painting of Sentiment* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 46. Barker uses the original French title for Rousseau’s work, *Julie, ou la nouvelle Héloïse*, which I have translated in the body of the text.

<sup>88</sup> Barker, *Greuze and the Painting*, 46.

<sup>89</sup> For a good discussion of the sentimental novel in France see David J. Denby, *Sentimental Narrative and the Social Order in France, 1760-1820* (Cambridge: University Press, 1994); Longinus, *On Great Writing*, 11-12.

<sup>90</sup> Doran, “Sublime and Modern Subjectivity,” 190.

In *Death of Virginia*, this Longinian nexus between elevation and morality is disrupted, however, by the powerful Burkean sublime of terror that can be found in the figure of Paul in his experience of loss that finds its parallel in France, particularly during the unstable years leading up to and including those of the Revolution.

In line with Barker's observation on Greuze, both Vernet's *Death of Virginia* and Greuze's *Village Contract* are reflective of the melodramatic *sensibilité* of the relatively new genre of the sentimental novel. Indeed, there is certainly an influence of Rousseau's *Julie, or the New Héloïse* (1761) on Vernet, Greuze, and Bernardin de Saint-Pierre, not to mention on the cultural climate of Paris and the critics and intellectuals, such as Diderot. Where they differ, however, is in their relationship to this influence. Barker writes, "I shall argue here that, through its formal structure as well as its subject matter, *Village Contract* offers, in microcosm, a utopian vision of an enlightened social order. Its sensational success was bound up with the perceived need for reform at a time when France's hegemony in Europe was under threat."<sup>91</sup> If Greuze's *Village Contract* offers a utopian microcosm, Vernet's *Death of Virginia* suggests almost precisely the opposite in underlining the threat to such a social order in its representation of the terrible power of nature to subvert the solidification of the union represented by Greuze. The Burkean sublime can be found in *Death of Virginia* as a sublime of loss that extends from individuals (such as Paul and Virginia who will never marry and have children) to the state, or social order. The Burkean sublime of terror and loss, however, mixes in *Death of Virginia* with the sublime of elevation and heroic virtue derived from the tradition of Longinus and Boileau. The dichotomy of the sublime, between noble greatness of virtue

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<sup>91</sup> Barker, *Greuze and the Painting*, 46, 47.

represented by the figure of Virginia and terror of loss communicated through the figure of Paul, illustrates the oscillation in the character of the sublime in France in the second half of the eighteenth century; this oscillation alternately, or even simultaneously, evokes the tradition of Longinus and Boileau and that of Burke.

To reiterate, it is uncharacteristic for Vernet, a painter whose previous work shows a heavy, if not exclusive predilection for showing storm-tossed boats, to have selected the aftermath of a storm to portray and not the storm itself. The question then is why? As it is taken from a literary source, Philip Conisbee suggests this painting falls within the general scope of the growing interest in *paysage historique* [historical landscape painting] that gained strength in the 1780s and into the nineteenth century.<sup>92</sup> This explanation, though true in part, like the idea of *sensibilité* and the popularity of melodrama, does not seem to fully explain this dramatic turn from landscape to literary source, nor does it explain the shift of focus from storm to aftermath. Vernet's painting represents a turning inward. In a sense, it represents a sublime emotional storm, one so great that Paul's face, that supreme carrier of expression of emotion, is not only hidden but has been replaced by a gaping black void. Perhaps in channeling the type of emotional impact the *rückenfigur* [literally back figure, or figure shown from behind] will have in Romanticism in the early nineteenth century, Vernet shows Paul from the rear, slightly bent over his dead Virginia, his hand to his face in an unknown gesture, the wind billowing out his jacket behind his back. Similarly, Domingo expresses a curious gesture. He faces away from Paul. His body is parallel to the picture plane; one hand is to his heart and the other is outstretched as if to stop an onlooker from intruding on the

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<sup>92</sup> Conisbee, *Claude-Joseph Vernet*, cat. entry 48.

moment. That the gestures are odd and somewhat unclear is another aspect of this painting that differs from Vernet's earlier works where the gestures, like those commonly used to carry narrative in history paintings, are as clear and distinct as those of Poussin.<sup>93</sup> This gestural clarity can be seen in a comparison of Poussin's *Landscape with a Storm* (Figure 6) with Vernet's *Storm* (Figure 3). Or to compare *Storm* to *Death of Virginia* (Figure 2), clearly defined groups of people take definitive action in *Storm*, while in *Death of Virginia* everything seems to have stopped, been suspended, or to have lost clarity. The ship lists on its side. The waves seem to have frozen. The only other figures in *Death of Virginia* consist of two women and a man on a rocky outcropping on the left-hand side of the painting, and their activity is indistinct.

Perhaps the key to understanding this work is in the figure of dead Virginia. She lies on the shore with a small, framed picture of Paul in her hand. Vernet has positioned it to allow the viewer of the painting to see a clear likeness, a clarity that is subverted by the view of Paul himself from the back, bending over his lost love. Virginia is clearly dead. Modestly clothed in pink and white, she is a vision of purity and virtue. Vernet juxtaposes the image of Paul held by Virginia with the image of Paul standing on the beach. Finding his love dead, his face is obscured by his dark hat. His face is literally obliterated by grief.

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<sup>93</sup> Conisbee, *Claude-Joseph Vernet*, introduction. Conisbee, for example, cites a well-known quotation in which Diderot compares Vernet's seascapes to Nicolas Poussin's *Seven Sacraments*: "The *Marines* of Vernet, which show all sorts of incidents and scenes, are as much history paintings to me as the *Seven Sacraments* of Poussin." This can be found in its original French in Denis Diderot, *Oeuvres esthétiques*, ed. Paul Vernière (Paris: Garnier frères, 1965), 726. This quotation is used by Conisbee in his discussion of Vernet's painting to add the weight, legitimacy, and narrative complexity of history painting via the authority of Diderot to the study of genre or landscape and to acknowledge the limitations of placing too much emphasis on the hierarchy of genres in the evaluation of Vernet's talent.

The distance between the picture of Paul held by his dead and virtuous love in the painting and the inability of the viewer to see Paul's face upon finding Virginia dead seem to capture within a few inches on canvas a similarly infinite space between life and death represented by Rembrandt van Rijn in *The Anatomy Lesson of Dr. Tulp* (1632) (Figure 14). The distance between the cadaver's face and that of the living viewer of the dissection immediately above cannot be explained in any mechanistic or causal way as the doctor tries to show how the manipulation of a tendon causes a movement of the fingers. Instead, this vast, inexplicable gulf between life and death, between Virginia's image of Paul from when she was alive and his current state of grief is infinite. It is sublime.<sup>94</sup>

Vernet has effectively transferred the Burkean terror of external nature to the almost quiet terror of the emotional or psychological interior. This goes far beyond any rational or causally based explanation or understanding. As opposed to Vernet's many paintings of storms in which the individual is heroic and active, this image is curiously inactive, frozen, or suspended. In the corpus of Vernet's work, *Death of Virginia* finds its closest analogue with *Shipwreck* (1763) (Figure 15). This image is curious. Unlike virtually every other shipwreck painting by Vernet, this one does not provide the viewer with a clear, safe place from which to view the picture; the position of the viewer must be in the water with those being rescued. The picture has a particularly morbid cast. It shows a woman who appears dead being pulled out of the sea and into a lifeboat, an almost singular rarity in Vernet's body of work, which tends to concentrate on the action of saving. While the division of weather depicted in the painting, storm on the left and blue

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<sup>94</sup> Burke, *A Philosophical Enquiry*, 73. Burke emphasizes the quality of the infinite as an aspect of the sublime. This area needs to be examined more closely in French thought on the sublime.

sky on the right, may suggest that she will live, the posture of her body, limp and virtually lifeless, is contrasted with a woman raising her arms in terror or grief yet safe on a rocky outcropping in the lower left quarter of the painting where the storm has not quite passed. The emotional tautness is heightened through the contradiction of the juxtaposition of the living woman under stormy skies and the seemingly dead, or dying, woman under a clear sky. This tension, between active and passive female figures in virtually the same dress, blue sky and storm-darkened sky, solid ground and unstable water, human being and nature, safety and uncertainty, is what gives dynamism and excitement to this work.

The dynamism found in *Shipwreck* is wholly lacking in *Death of Virginia*. There is no uncertainty in the moment when Paul finds his love dead. There is no potential for hope or triumph. If there is a hero, it is not found in a masculine display of physical strength and stamina but in the virtuous, lifeless female figure of Virginia, who has sacrificed herself and the potential of being a loving wife and a good mother.<sup>95</sup>

Comparing the distance between the emotionally distraught, active figure of the woman on the left throwing up her hands and the passive, limp one on the right being pulled into a lifeboat in the 1763 *Shipwreck* painting is to see a gulf where there may still be a sliver of hope. Separated by a centrally placed wave about to break, it is unclear whether or not the wave's path will change the status of the rescue of the individual still in the water. It is a sublime moment mediated by the great intransigencies of nature and humanity's (or society's) ability to transcend, or attempt to transcend, what it believes are its limits in the face of it. It is the Burkean sublime of terror clearly expressed in this instant.

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<sup>95</sup> For a good discussion of the significance of the impact of this type of tragic loss, see Carol Duncan, "Happy Mothers and Other New Ideas in French Art," *Art Bulletin* 55, no. 4 (December 1973): 570-583.

The notion of the transfer of the idea of a sublime of terror from one outside of the individual and found in nature, as in *Shipwreck*, to one which is more psychologically based and interiorizing, as in *Death of Virginia*, is an important concept, particularly as Romanticism gained momentum into the nineteenth century. Briefly, it can be seen in a work by Jean-François Hue, a student of Vernet's, shown at the Paris Salon of 1802, also titled *Shipwreck* (Figure 16). While the finished work has been lost, a print exists. What is most compelling about this image is that it relies upon human figures only, in this case a man and what may be his dead wife and child, to convey a pathos of the sublime, one which is located not in the external world but within the human mind. This work can be read in line with the replacement of the depiction of the happy mother and child theme in French art that art historian Carol Duncan identifies as a significant pre-revolutionary one, with the dead mother and child theme in post-revolutionary art that Gal Ventura characterizes in her 2008 dissertation, "Breastfeeding Depictions in Nineteenth-Century French Art," as an obvious sign of pessimism about the future—with dead children there is no future.<sup>96</sup> Hue's work is a landscape without land, or perhaps more correctly it is a seascape without sea. It is a tracing of the contours of the psyche as revealed by the limits of the sublime in that space between real terror and its aestheticization. This little group of figures sits on a rock in the middle of a vast expanse, alone in the world and cut off from any hope. It is a scenario with which viewers may identify in one way or another in their own lives, having lived and struggled through the years leading up to and including 1789, when events began to dramatically destabilize France and its people. Hue was the artist chosen to complete, under the Republic, the *Ports of France* series begun by Vernet

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<sup>96</sup> On depictions of nursing mothers, see Gal Ventura, "Breastfeeding Depictions in Nineteenth-Century French Art" (PhD diss., Hebrew University, Jerusalem, 2008); Duncan, "Happy Mothers," 570-583.

and abandoned in 1765, in part due to lack of funds. More importantly, however, Hue took from his master a lesson that would find its disturbing psychological parallel in his own and other works as well. Those paintings that powerfully map the peaks and valleys of an inner state, such as Antoine-Jean Gros's *Sappho at Leucadia* (1800), Anne-Louis Girodet's *Scene from the Deluge* (1806), and Théodore Géricault's *Raft of the Medusa* (1819) trace a psychology of terror dependent upon the landscape of disaster.

## Conclusion

While Vernet's sublime seascapes focus most strongly on the idea of the elevation of the heroic individual connected to the Longinian sublime, it is not surprising to find the notion of sublime terror connected to nature and human emotion in late eighteenth-century France. This is not to say that the trope of greatness as elevation from Longinus and Boileau disappears, but rather that it is a thread supplemented by, and sometimes interwoven with, Burke's ideas. Thus, the sublime in eighteenth-century France becomes almost Janus head-like. It both looks back toward the greatness of elevation outlined by Longinus and Boileau and forward to a proto-Romantic, if not entirely Romantic, emotionally based sensibility. This sensibility is cloaked in a Burkean obsession with infinite obscurity, darkness, and magnitude, with an oblique emphasis on individual experience and genius that becomes more fully expressed toward the end of the century in the wake of the storm that was the French Revolution that began in 1789.<sup>97</sup> In the late

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<sup>97</sup> Burke, *A Philosophical Enquiry*, 57-87. Burke lists characteristics of his articulation of the sublime that make it possible to define such a concept in contrast to the beautiful; the list reads like gothic horror, emphasizing darkness, obscurity, magnitude, roughness, irregularity, etc.

eighteenth century, as can be seen in French landscape painting, greatness of spirit, or heroism, and terror twist, combine, and separate in a complex dance.

## CHAPTER TWO

### **The Late Eighteenth-Century Landscape of Volcanic Eruption and The Sublime: Spectacle, Power, and Natural History**

While not entirely discounting the influence of the Burkean sublime to which they had been previously linked, chapter one connected Claude-Joseph Vernet's sublime seascapes more strongly to a classical French sublime tradition that can be traced to Longinus's first century Greek text *On the Sublime*. With their emphasis on the sublimely heroic actions of individuals pitted against a relentless, wild nature, Vernet's seascapes stress the concepts of noble elevation and greatness present in Longinus's exposition of the sublime, which, as previously noted, was disseminated by Nicolas Boileau in his 1674 French translation *Traité du sublime*.

This chapter, however, examines the remarkable impact of the Burkean sublime as it began to gain international importance in the 1770s and 1780s with the spread of Edmund Burke's *A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of Our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful* (1757; French trans. 1765, German trans. 1773). Conceptualizing and promoting a popular and widely applied aesthetic theory connected to an appreciation for powerful emotional experience, one often initiated by extreme natural phenomena, the Burkean sublime articulated a new way of viewing the natural world that went far beyond the purview of aesthetics. Burke provided a language for understanding extreme natural phenomena as "sublime." It is a state of astonishment so great that reason, that great leitmotif of the Enlightenment, is blotted out. He identified fear (and terror, or horror), the "passion that most effectively robs the mind of acting and reasoning," as an aspect of

human experience powerfully connected to nature.<sup>1</sup> This is why phenomena such as volcanic eruptions or storms at sea are prime examples expressive of the Burkean sublime. Burke asserted,

The passion caused by the great and sublime in nature, when those causes operate most powerfully, is Astonishment; and astonishment is that state of the soul, in which all its motions are suspended, with some degree of horror. In this case the mind is so entirely filled with its object, that it cannot entertain any other, not by consequence reason on that object that employs it. Hence arises the great power of the sublime, that far from being produced by them, it anticipates our reasonings, and hurries us on by an irresistible force.<sup>2</sup>

My argument in this chapter is that representations of volcanic eruption from the second half of the eighteenth century, as can be seen in Pierre-Jacque Voltaire's painting *Vesuvius in Eruption* (1771) (Figure 17) or Philibert-Benoît de La Rue's (1718-1780) engraving *Eruption of Vesuvius in 1754* (ca. 1768) (Figure 18), and the emergence of the Burkean sublime with which they so well coincided, must be considered in the larger cultural context of the period. The critical subtext of this chapter is that the Burkean sublime was more than an inert aesthetic category. It was more than simply a fashionable novelty expressing an appreciation for emotionally terrifying aesthetic spectacle that can be seen expressed in landscape painting or prints. Combined with volcanic eruption, the sublime was an important indicator of natural and political power and a catalyst for an increased inquiry into the natural world.

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<sup>1</sup> Edmund Burke, *A Philosophical Enquiry into the Sublime and Beautiful*, ed. James T. Boulton (London: Routledge and Paul, 2008), 57.

<sup>2</sup> Burke, *A Philosophical Enquiry*, 57.

This chapter is divided into two parts. The first part examines how the critical element of sublime spectacularity, or astonishment, seen in the images of Vesuvius by Voltaire and La Rue can very clearly be read through the aesthetic category of the sublime as described by Burke, but argues that this does not entirely account for their visual form or meaning. Rather, they appear to have been strongly influenced by print representations of *feu d'artifice* [firework displays] from the late seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, such as Jean Le Pautre's 1676 *Fifth Day of "The Amusements of Versailles": Fireworks on the Canal at Versailles* (Figure 19). The motive of such spectacles was to display political power. Due to the close correspondence between feu d'artifice and volcanic eruption in the eighteenth century, as can be seen in Jean-Michael Moreau's *Fireworks on the Place de Grève, Paris, 21 January 1782, on the Occasion of the Birth of the Dauphin* (1782) (Figure 20), which shows a display of feu d'artifice as a volcanic eruption, connotations of political power implicit in images of feu d'artifice were grafted onto the erupting volcano. In addition to the mere theatrical spectacle or the thrilling aesthetic pique of danger or fear suggested by the Burkean sublime, there was an echo of underlying political power associated with the natural world implied by sublime landscapes of erupting volcanoes. In its emphasis on power and greatness, this political aspect, I argue, can be traced to the Longinian tradition of the classical French sublime, which coexisted alongside the powerful Burkean strain, even in the 1770s. Again, as suggested by the last chapter, the sublime has a multivalence of meaning in France.

The second part of this chapter examines how sublime representations of volcanic eruption not only reflected, but catalyzed the increasingly prolific taste for natural history, as can be seen in La Rue's *Eruption of Vesuvius in 1754* (Figure 18), which was used to

illustrate the subject of volcanoes for the natural history section in the 1768 supplement to Denis Diderot and Jean le Rond d'Alembert's *Encyclopédie*.<sup>3</sup> The taste for aestheticized, sublime theatrical spectacle coincided with the emergence of a passion for the power of the natural world, cataloged and classified under the encyclopedic impulse of the times. Interest in volcanic activity as an area of study accelerated in step with the increasing popularity of Burke's sublime *and* the repeated eruptions of Vesuvius in 1754, 1767, 1771 and 1779. This is evidenced in the Basalt Controversy connected to the work of the French naturalist/geologist Nicolas Desmarest (1725-1815), at the core of which was the issue of the role of the volcano in the formation of the earth, which gave birth to geology in the 1770s; and it is also evidenced in the incidents of volcanic eruption of Vesuvius observed and recorded by the English ambassador to Naples William Hamilton (1731-1803), which gave rise to volcanology also in the 1770s. By this time, with the language provided by the Burkean sublime, there was a means for conceptualizing natural phenomena in a valuable new way. In short, astonishing or sublime phenomena greatly incited a passion for empirical study.

### **Sublime Feu d'artifice, Sublime Power**

A comparison of La Rue's ca. 1768 engraving *Eruption of Vesuvius in 1754* (Figure 18) to Voltaire's 1771 sublime landscape painting *Eruption of Vesuvius* (Figure 17) is telling. Both images focus on the spectacular eruption of Vesuvius with spectators observing the magnificent display of nature from a very close vantage point. There is a

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<sup>3</sup> Denis Diderot and Jean le Rond d'Alembert, eds., *Encyclopédie, ou Dictionnaire raisonné des sciences, des arts et des métiers*, 17 vols. (Paris, 1751-1765).

striking model for Voltaire's representation of volcanic eruption in those drawn by La Rue and engraved by Jacque-François Benard, *Eruption of Vesuvius in 1754* and *Lava Flowing Down Slopes of Vesuvius after the Eruption of 1754* (ca. 1768) (Figure 21).<sup>4</sup> La Rue's prints of Vesuvius can be accurately dated prior to 1768, as they can be found in an illustrated volume of the *Encyclopédie* published in Paris in that year by André-François Le Breton, Claude Briasson, and Michel-Antoine David.<sup>5</sup>

La Rue's prints of Vesuvius, published and disseminated in the *Encyclopédie*, predate any significant work done by Voltaire on the subject of Vesuvius by several years, as Voltaire occupied himself in Rome between 1764 and 1769 painting landscapes and seascapes, much in the style of his mentor, Vernet, before moving to Naples in 1769. In her 2010 book, *Pierre-Jacques Voltaire, 1729-1799*, the art historian Émile Beck-Saiello points directly to the influence of Vernet on the first of La Rue's three prints in her attribution, "Philibert-Benoît La Rue after Joseph Vernet, *General View of Vesuvius in 1757*."<sup>6</sup> Florence Ingersoll-Smouse's exhaustive 1926 catalogue raisonné, *Joseph Vernet, Marine Painter, 1714-1789* lists two lost paintings of Vesuvius by Vernet, *Caravan to Mount Vesuvius* and *The Interior of This Mountain* from the period 1733-39.<sup>7</sup> It is impossible, however, to describe these paintings or to know whether or not they show

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<sup>4</sup> For identification of Philibert-Benoît de La Rue as draughtsman, see Émile Beck-Saiello, *Pierre-Jacques Voltaire, 1729-1799: Dit le chevalier Voltaire* (Paris: Arthéna, 2010), 108.

<sup>5</sup> Denis Diderot and Jean le Rond d'Alembert, eds., *Recueil de planches, sur les sciences, les arts libéraux et les arts mécaniques, avec leur explication*, vol. 6 (Paris, 1768); Kathleen Hardesty, *The Supplément to the Encyclopédie* (The Hague: M. Nijhoff, 1977); Nicolas Ordinaire, *Histoire naturelle des volcans* (Paris: 1801).

<sup>6</sup> "Philibert-Benoist La Rue d'après Joseph Vernet, *Vue générale du Vésuve en 1757*." Beck-Saiello, *Pierre-Jacques Voltaire*, 108.

<sup>7</sup> Florence Ingersoll-Smouse, *Joseph Vernet: Peintre de marine, 1714-1789: Étude critique suivie d'un catalogue raisonné de son œuvre peint*, 2 vols. (Paris: Étienne Bignou, 1926), 1:41, 42.

Vesuvius in eruption or even as the focus of the composition.<sup>8</sup> Thus, it is unclear whether Vernet's work showing Vesuvius could have influenced those representations by La Rue or Volaire showing Vesuvius in eruption.<sup>9</sup>

It is likely, then, that La Rue's prints, also done in a style reminiscent of Vernet, particularly in the rendering of the figures, may have been a significant influence in the formation of Volaire's vocabulary in depicting Vesuvius in eruption. It is understandable how Volaire may have recognized in La Rue's prints an invaluable and fashionable model on which to base his work, such as his painting *Eruption of Vesuvius*, for an international market of wealthy potential clients looking for souvenirs from their Grand Tour at a time when Naples was an essential stop on their itinerary. This is particularly true if we consider the international popularity of the Burkean sublime in the 1770s, a time when Burke's treatise on the subject was at its zenith of popularity.

La Rue's prints emphasize the spectacular sublimity of volcanic eruption, an aspect that is missing in virtually all previous representations of Vesuvius. Neither the impetus nor the form of these prints can be convincingly linked to representations of Vesuvius that came before, such as *Procession to Invoke St. Januarius during the Eruption of Vesuvius in 1631* (1631) (Figure 22) by the Neapolitan Micco Spadaro or *Eruption of Mount Vesuvius in 1631* (1635-40) (Figure 23) by Scipione Compagno. These paintings emphasize the widespread panic, disorder, and fear under the threat of destruction by the erupting volcano and focus on the tragedy of the 1631 eruption and its effect upon the people of Naples, unlike the prints by La Rue and Volaire's painting of

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<sup>8</sup> Ingersoll-Smouse, *Joseph Vernet: Peintre de marine*, 1:41, 42.

<sup>9</sup> Ingersoll-Smouse does, however, list numerous other paintings in which Vesuvius is present in the distant background, such as *View of Naples* from 1742, one of a pendant pair, but as the volcano is part of the landscape around Naples, this fact is insignificant without knowing if Vernet showed Vesuvius erupting.

Vesuvius in eruption, which focus on the sublime, theatrical spectacle of natural phenomena.

Very clearly, there has been a remarkable transformation that can be seen in eighteenth-century French landscape painting. By the last decades of the century, the sheer power of nature would be depicted in an awe-inspiring and spectacular way, unlike anything that had been seen previously. To compare Jean-Antoine Watteau's 1717 *Embarkation for Cythera* (Figure 24) to Voltaire's 1771 *Eruption of Vesuvius* (Figure 17) is to see a dramatically different presentation of nature. The natural setting as the calm, lush, peaceful, and redolent island of Cythera in Watteau's painting, with its range of gentle greens and pinks in the waning light of a summer afternoon, has been replaced in Voltaire's work with a spectacularly lit nightscape of fiery reds and oranges that backlight the figures silhouetted against the most dramatic spectacle of natural theater imaginable—a volcanic eruption. Very clearly, there has been a sea change in how nature can be represented and appreciated.

This shift in the representation of the natural world and of human response to extreme natural phenomena can be attributed mostly to the influence of the Burkean sublime, an aesthetic category in which the pique of danger or terror is appreciated for its incitement of aesthetic pleasure. As cited previously in chapter one in Burke's famous definition of the sublime,

Whatever is fitted in any sort to excite the ideas of pain, and danger, that is to say, whatever is in any sort terrible... or operates in a manner analogous to terror, is a source of the sublime; that is, it is productive of the strongest emotion which the mind is capable of feeling.... When danger or pain press too nearly, they are incapable of giving any delight, and are simply terrible; but at certain

distances, and with certain modifications, they may be, and they are delightful.<sup>10</sup>

### **The Spectacle of Feu d'artifice, Volcanic Eruption, and the Burkean Sublime**

The association of volcanic eruption with feu d'artifice can be found clearly stated in a 1766 letter written to the Royal Society in London by William Hamilton, who served as British Ambassador to the Kingdom of Naples from 1764 to 1800; he compared the two in his description of the 1767 eruption of Vesuvius that he personally observed at close hand. Hamilton underscored the sublime theatrical spectacle of nature itself in comparison to feu d'artifice: "It is impossible to describe the beautiful appearance of these Girandoles of red hot stones far surpassing the most astonishing artificial firework."<sup>11</sup> The sublime spectacle provided by Vesuvius's volcanic activity during the late eighteenth century, like a display of feu d'artifice, was also put into the context of entertainment in a comment by the musicologist Dr. Charles Burney. He summarized his evening as a guest of Hamilton at the Villa Angelica on Friday, 26 October 1770:

After dinner we had music and chat until supper.... As soon as it was dark our musical entertainment was mixed with the sights and observations of Mount Vesuvius, then very busy. Mr. H. has glasses of all sorts and every convenience of situation etc. for these observations with which he is very much occupied.... The sight was very awful and beautiful, resembling in great the most ingenious and fine fireworks I ever saw.<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> Edmund Burke, *A Philosophical Enquiry*, 39-40; Kevin Salatino, *Incendiary Art: The Representation of Fireworks in Early Modern Europe* (Los Angeles: Getty Research Institute, 1997), 47.

<sup>11</sup> William Hamilton, *Campi Phlegraei: Observations on the Volcanoes of the Two Sicilies* (Naples, 1776), 17.

<sup>12</sup> Benedict Nicolson, *Joseph Wright of Derby: Painter of Light* (London: Paul Mellon Foundation for British Art, 1968), 75.

Burney's comparison can be seen in the pendants created by Joseph Wright of Derby of Vesuvius erupting, such as *Vesuvius* (ca. 1774-75) (Figure 25) and *Firework Display at the Castel Sant'Angelo* (ca. 1774-75) (Figure 26). For Burney, viewing Vesuvius erupting was part of a larger evening of entertainment that also involved music and visual delight, similar to the theater or opera. Moreover, in Burney's descriptive comment—awful and beautiful—there is no mistaking the latent, if not direct, influence of the Burkean sublime.

Burney's textual description of his evening spent at the villa of Hamilton bears some resemblance to the theatrical presence of a sublime experience enjoyed by the spectators in both of La Rue's prints so far discussed (Figures 18 and 21) and in Voltaire's 1771 *Eruption of Vesuvius* (Figure 17). Perhaps, then, it is no wonder that there is a similarity between representations of feu d'artifice and representations of natural volcanic eruptions such as those by La Rue and Voltaire that can be apprehended as sublime. The idea of aesthetic enjoyment connected to astonishing spectacle as aspects of the Burkean sublime is important to recognize. Burke contended that "*magnificence* is likewise a source of the sublime.... There are... a sort of fireworks... that in this way succeed well, and are truly grand."<sup>13</sup> The crowd in Voltaire's 1771 *Eruption*, like that in La Rue's prints, is shown enjoying the nighttime spectacle. In Voltaire's painting, one of the figures in the central group doffs his hat in appreciation of the erupting volcano, much as he might for a "sublime" theatrical performance, while another looks prepared to drop a handkerchief in a gesture demonstrating a similar appreciation. In addition to sight, Burke identifies sound as evocative of the sublime, an aspect that can be found expressed in both volcanic eruption and feu d'artifice. Burke wrote on this connection:

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<sup>13</sup> Burke, *A Philosophical Enquiry*, 77, 78.

The eye is not the only organ of sensation, by which a sublime passion may be produced. Sounds have a great power in these as in most other passions.... Excessive loudness alone is sufficient to overpower the soul, to suspend its action, and to fill it with terror. The noise of vast cataracts, raging storms, thunder, or artillery, awakes a great and awful sensation in the mind, though we can observe no nicety or artifice in those sorts of music.<sup>14</sup>

Similarly, images such as an engraving drafted by Luigi Grattagrassi, *Fireworks Machine Representing Mount Vesuvius, Erected in Bologna for the Visit of Ferdinand, King Of Naples and Sicily, 2 June 1785* (1785) (Figure 27), and the pendants by Wright mentioned above, conflate the eruptions of nature in the form of Vesuvius with the idea of a sublime theatrical spectacle apparent in displays of feu d'artifice. Wright wrote on 15 January 1776 about these works: "the one is the greatest effect of Nature the other of Art that I suppose can be."<sup>15</sup> In fact, a reviewer of the Royal Academy exhibition of 1778 called another set of Wright's pendants of the exact same subject (he executed four pairs of this subject in total), "wonderful examples of sublimity."<sup>16</sup> As such a comment was made in 1778, over twenty years after Burke's *Enquiry* was published, the meaning of sublimity mentioned by the anonymous critic was likely one that took Burke's contribution into consideration. The Italian printmaker Francesco Giambattista Piranesi, who combined his talents with the French painter, architect, and watercolorist Louis-Jean Desprez, created pendants with a similar theme, significance, and meaning. They equate the erupting Vesuvius with the annual fireworks display over the Castel Sant'Angelo in

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<sup>14</sup> Burke, *A Philosophical Enquiry*, 82.

<sup>15</sup> Judith Egerton, *Wright of Derby*, exh. cat. (London: Tate Gallery, 1990), 172, 175.

<sup>16</sup> Egerton, *Wright of Derby*, 172, 175.

Rome. This pairing can be seen in *The Eruption of Vesuvius* (1783) (Figure 28) and *The Girandola over Castel Sant'Angelo* (1783) (Figure 29).

Clearly, both La Rue's prints for the *Encyclopédie* as well as Voltaire's many paintings of erupting volcanoes may be read in the context of the Burkean sublime. And indeed, this interpretation of such images as expressive of the parameters of Burke's aesthetic category of the sublime is hardly novel.<sup>17</sup> The erupting volcano as a symbol of destruction had been transformed into a sublime aesthetic spectacle by the late eighteenth century. As noted previously, scholars attribute this shift to the emergence of the Burkean sublime with its emphasis on the aesthetic pleasure or pique of danger. This reading is generally accurate, but it must be tempered and expanded by a consideration of the context of displays of feu d'artifice and their print representations. While there exists a history of images in which volcanic eruption is represented, as can be seen in Compagno's 1635-40 *Eruption of Mount Vesuvius in 1631* (Figure 23) or Spadaro's 1631 *Procession to Invoke St. Januarius during the Eruption of Vesuvius in 1631* (Figure 22), it is relatively meager. And, crucially, it does not provide a convincing model for those sublime images by La Rue (Figures 18 and 21) and Voltaire (Figure 17) that emphasize the astonishing spectacle of an erupting volcano being leisurely enjoyed by a relaxed audience. As an aesthetic category, neither does the Burkean sublime provide the form for images of eruption that can be seen in the works by La Rue and Voltaire, which predate the feu d'artifice imagery by Wright, Grattagrassi, and Desprez. From where, then, does such a representational tradition arise? It is critical to consider the

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<sup>17</sup> Salatino, *Incendiary Art*, 47-98; Beck-Saiello, *Pierre-Jacque Voltaire*, 130-145.

representational tradition of feu d'artifice to be able to better interpret the sublime landscape of volcanic eruption.

### **A Spectacular Display of Political Power: Feu d'artifice and the Classical French Sublime Tradition of Longinus and Boileau**

What may be perceived as pure aesthetic spectacle connected to the Burkean sublime may also evoke an association of power typically associated with displays of feu d'artifice. In their sublimity of subject matter, notably that of political power and their emotionally evocative spectacularity of representation, feu d'artifice provided the critical model for the sublime representations of Vesuvius erupting by La Rue and Volaire. There is a strong correlation in both form and idea (composition and meaning) between prints of feu d'artifice from the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries and La Rue's prints of Vesuvius erupting that bear an uncanny resemblance to those paintings produced by Volaire in the 1770 and 1780s, such as his 1771 *Eruption of Vesuvius*, to identify one example.

In the second half of his book *Incendiary Art: The Representations of Fireworks*, published to accompany the 1997 exhibition by the same name, Kevin Salatino, print curator at the Getty Institute, reads images of feu d'artifice through the lens of the Burkean sublime.<sup>18</sup> This reading, I feel, may be expanded to encompass the Longinian strain of the classical sublime as well, which is a sublime that connects the great spectacle of nature to political power.

The very basis of the Longinian sublime was rhetoric, which carried political implications. In his argument in support of the Burkean sublime as the basis for images of

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<sup>18</sup> Salatino, *Incendiary Art*, 47-98.

feu d'artifice, Salatino quotes Jean-Louis de Cahusac, who wrote the entry "Feux d'artifice" [Fireworks] for the *Encyclopédie*. Cahusac compared feu d'artifice—in terms of art-making as imagination, drawing, and painting—to the battle between the archangels of good and evil in the English poet John Milton's 1667 epic *Paradise Lost*. As quoted and translated by Salatino, Cahusac mused,

Has there ever been anything as important to the art of fireworks as the battle between the archangels of good and evil? Is it not the action itself supposed to take place in the sky? The sublime Milton provided the details. Following your imagination, excited by this great image, draw the attack, the battle, the fall. Paint the magnificent spectacle of the good angels' moment of triumph. Carefully measure the spectacular effects to which such a great subject gives rise in abundance.<sup>19</sup>

It is difficult, if not impossible, however, to find the Burkean sublime of fear and terror in Cahusac's entry, which seems to emphasize the sublime moment of triumph of the good. It is a point that can be found in Longinus's discussion of the sublime as quoted in chapter one: "Our soul is naturally uplifted by the truly great."<sup>20</sup>

The emphasis on great political power and its relationship to nature is underscored in images of feu d'artifice that accompany fête spectacles at Versailles held by Louis XIV (r. 1643-1715) in the late seventeenth century. (This was almost the same time as Boileau translated Longinus's text *On the Sublime* into French in 1674 as *Traité du sublime*, as previously noted.) An example can be seen in the program and the accompanying feu

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<sup>19</sup> Salatino, *Incendiary Art*, 47; Cahusac, "Feux d'artifice," in *Encyclopédie*, 6:639. "Y a-t-il eu encore rien d'aussi imposant en feu d'artifice, que le seroit le combat des bons anges contre les méchants? Les airs sont le lieu de la scene, indiqué par l'action même? Les détails sont offerts par le sublime Milton. Dessinez à votre imagination, échauffée par cette grande image, l'attaque, le combat, la chute; peignez-vous le spectacle magnifique de ce moment de triomphe des; calculez les coups d'un effet sûr, qui naissent en foule de ce grand sujet."

<sup>20</sup> Longinus, *On Great Writing (On the Sublime)*, trans. G.M.A. Grube (New York: Liberal Arts Press, 1957), 10.

d’artifice display of a 1674 fête that emphasized the power and the authority of the king over nature. Jean Le Pautre’s engraving and etching *Fifth Day of “Amusements of Versailles”*: *Fireworks on the Canal at Versailles* (1676) (Figure 19) appears in André Félibien’s 1676 book *Divertissemens [Amusements]*. It shows a compositional arrangement similar to La Rue’s *Eruption of Vesuvius in 1754* (Figure 18) with a relaxed audience assembled along the bottom edge of the image. A central, 78-foot-tall obelisk supported by a pair of golden griffons and topped by a radiant orb of light is flanked on either side by two smaller pyramidal structures, one bearing a bas-relief of a lion in submission and the other of an eagle unable to take flight. Félibien observed that “the entire decoration had a symbolic and mysterious meaning. In the obelisk and sun it was claimed that the king’s glory was etched in the striking light and solidly affirmed above that of his enemies.”<sup>21</sup> In other words, the burning orb at the top of the obelisk represented not only the sun but the king himself. Importantly, it is the same position the erupting Vesuvius occupies in the La Rue print. Historian Orest Ranum interprets the moment the display of feu d’artifice revealed the king as a burning orb of fire:

The triumph of the sun and the king was thus complete. All the forces in nature and the lords of each kingdom of inhabitants were subdued. The crossing of the Rhine, an event that had actually happened in the spring of 1672, was depicted spatially at just the correct spot to confirm order and hierarchy. The sun—as it descended first upon royal head, then upon his troops, and finally upon the animal kingdoms below, is the great chain of being. Order had come out of chaos again, as Louis crossed the Rhine, just as Julius Caesar had done before him. The Sun King’s actions were godly, and he occupied those islands in nature which gods were known to frequent.<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>21</sup> Orest Ranum, “Islands and the Self,” in *Sun King: The Ascendancy of French Culture During the Reign of Louis XIV*, ed. David Lee Rubin (Washington: Folger Shakespeare Library, 1992), 30.

<sup>22</sup> Ranum, “Islands and the Self,” 31.

Political power as the impetus for such a spectacle was an important element of French feu d'artifice fête imagery from the late seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, as seen in Le Pautre's print.<sup>23</sup> Such displays were far from inert spectacles simply for the enjoyment of the populace. Rather, they were politically charged events in which power was both elaborately displayed and reified.

This can be seen particularly well in another fête held by Louis XIV at Versailles in 1664, designed to highlight the Sun King's infinite reach of power and uncontested dominion over nature, his land, and his people. Israel Silvestre's print *Third Day of "Pleasures of the Enchanted Island": Destruction of the Palace of Alcine* (1674) (Figure 30) shows the fireworks display that occurred on the third evening of a seven-day cotillion-style ball called *Plaisirs de l'Île enchantée* [Pleasures of the Enchanted Island] in reference to Louis XIV and his court. The fête was held from the 7th to the 13th of May 1664 to celebrate the first of four building campaigns (1664-1668) undertaken by Louis XIV for the expansion of the Château de Versailles and its gardens. As a single print, this image and its subject cannot be interpreted outside of the context of the program of the other days and their spectacular displays of feu d'artifice, all recorded in prints by Silvestre and included in Félibien's 1674 book commemorating the event, *Plaisirs de l'Île enchantée*.

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<sup>23</sup> Salatino, *Incendiary Art*, 3. It is important to mention, however, that prints of feu d'artifice may deviate from the spectacle they record because they were often officially commissioned before an event actually took place. As Salatino indicates, such prints were often based on drawings provided to printmakers, which were not always produced on site. While Salatino suggests an excess of caution in reading prints of feu d'artifice due to their highly mediated nature, which may separate the representation from how the event actually occurred, this must be tempered by the clarity of program such an approach may reveal. What may be lost in accuracy may be gained in an understanding of goal or intent.

The theme for the 1664 fête was an adaptation of Aristo's *Orlando Furiso* [*The Frenzy of Orlando*], an Italian romantic epic poem composed of forty-six cantos. It was first published in 1516 as a continuation of Matteo Maria Boiardo's unfinished *Orlando Innamorato* [Orlando in Love], a work published posthumously in 1495. Roger, the hero of the epic, represented Louis XIV, while eleven other courtiers were to be his knightly companions, as suggested by the Duke of Saint-Aignan who had been responsible for selecting the theme. According to Ranum, the fête

marked the joining of chivalric games, ballet, and transcendent moments in the darkness around reflecting pools and flowing fountains. It also signaled a shift toward transcendent moments as the principal feature of the Ludovician fête. The 1664 Enchanted Isle, for the first and the last time, contained all of the elements of the great court entertainments of the Valois days.<sup>24</sup>

Such transcendent moments emphasized by Ranum came to a head on the third evening, when the court made its way to the reflecting pool at the bottom of the garden where violinists appeared on one of three islands constructed in the pool. On the second island were trumpeters and drummers. On the third, central island, the enchantress Alcine appeared on the back of a terrible sea monster. A ballet, represented in Silvestre's etching *Third Day of "Pleasures of the Enchanted Island": Palace of Alcine* (1674) (Figure 31), was performed expressive of Alcine's fears that the knights she had imprisoned might break free. The knights were freed with a magnificent clap of thunder through the divine efforts of Roger (the king) who was the only one able to break the magic spell. The massive feu d'artifice finale visible in Silvestre's print *Destruction of the Palace of Alcine* highlights this moment, showing the enchanted island engulfed in fire and

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<sup>24</sup> Ranum, "Islands and the Self," 21, 17-34.

destroyed. It was a sublime moment reminiscent of the thunderclap that for Longinus signals the sublime. Ranum writes, “The moment of liberation was accompanied by the great force of nature, expressed in order to destroy what was a magical power. The program of the 1664 fête was one of chivalry and love triumphant, a synthesis of themes not fundamentally different from the Valois fête held a century earlier.”<sup>25</sup>

Ranum’s interpretation is compelling, particularly when one considers the emphasis on transcendence or the transcendent experience of the sublime connected to the great force of nature. Longinus also employs an experience of nature in his discussion of the sublime as a transcendent moment. As noted in chapter one, Longinus wrote in reference to Demosthenes and his ability to awe: “He outthunders and outshines the orators of all the ages. His hearers can no more resist the successive outbursts of passion unmoved than gaze with open eyes at a falling thunderbolt.”<sup>26</sup> In his example of Demosthenes, Longinus uses an analogy with a powerful experience of nature to make the point that his powers of speech are so great, so sublime, that they blot out the efforts of all past orators or competitors. It is a fitting context in which to read the power of Louis XIV, the Sun King, which was without equal.

Thus, the sublime power of nature and of the king were linked in this display of feu d’artifice. The feu d’artifice, which translates literally as artificial fire, acted as a simulacrum of sublime natural phenomena, such as thunder, lightening, and by extension, volcanic eruption. The moment of transcendence, or liberation, underscored by a display of the great force of nature represented by the great spectacle (finale) of feu d’artifice is

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<sup>25</sup> Ranum, “Islands and the Self,” 22.

<sup>26</sup> Longinus, *On Great Writing*, 47.

remarkably similar to the sublime moment in oration described by Longinus. He wrote, “But greatness appears suddenly; like a thunderbolt it carries all before it and reveals the writer’s full power in a flash.”<sup>27</sup> Given the subject of Silvestre’s print as the revelation of the sublime power of the king, Louis XIV, it is easy to substitute Longinus’s reference to the sublime power of the “writer” in the quotation with the “king,” or royal power.

The iconographic element of the thunderbolt, or the sublime flash inherited from Longinus, has maintained its presence in the French articulation of the sublime, most notably within the rhetorical tradition. The thunderbolt ties the world of nature to that of humankind in terms of a sublime act or moment signified by the awesome and immediate presence of the great sublime flash. It links the sublime rhetorical tradition that began in seventeenth-century France, most importantly with Nicolas Boileau, to the development of the sublime in the visual arts, as can be seen in the landscape painting of Nicolas Poussin and Claude-Joseph Vernet, as discussed in chapter one. Thus, the lineage of the sublime in France can be refocused to emphasize the connection between politics, rhetorical theory, and the visual arts. The message is clear: the power of the king is sublime.

This sublime moment, when humans are frozen in the face of a transcendent power comparable to an overwhelming experience of nature, is reminiscent of Poussin’s *Landscape with Storm* (1651) (Figure 6). Philosopher Louis Marin writes about this picture:

In an instant, in a flash, everything at stake in the work of painting, in the work of presentation and representation... had found itself presented-represented at the chance event of an inscription, a scription, a (de)scription, at the very

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<sup>27</sup> Longinus, *On Great Writing*, 4.

instant when a lightening bolt flashed in the stormy sky...  
at the very instant when the sublime burst out dazzling,  
blinding in a yellow streak of paint.<sup>28</sup>

The feu d'artifice finale in the 1664 fête, like a thunderbolt, was a sublime signifier of the power of nature and the king. It both revealed and obscured the destruction of the island and freeing of the maiden through the sublime intervention of the king as a quasi-divine being. After the literal and symbolic destruction of the island and its enchantress in the feu d'artifice display that first blocked the view of the château of Versailles, the royal residence could once again be seen in the distance, its authority reinvigorated; the position of the king in the print lined up perfectly with the *chambre du roi* [royal bedroom], the symbolic seat of ultimate power of the king as progenitor.

Salatino confirms this interpretation:

The fireworks are both revelation and apotheosis. The king, centered and elevated beneath a stately canopy, sits along a direct axis with the *chambre du roi* of the chateau. Since visual axes determined meaning at Versailles, which functioned as a grand outdoor theater, the importance of Louis's physical place cannot be exaggerated. It defined his place, his courtiers' place, and by extension, the position of the whole society. The fireworks, which served to restore order (the view of Versailles, the reestablished sight lines) through chaos (the confusion of rockets), are a powerful symbol of Louis's fundamental role as a bringer of harmony in a world eternally subject to harmony's obverse.<sup>29</sup>

Moreover, the thunderbolt has an iconographic connection to Zeus, the father of gods in Greek mythology. A seventeenth- and eighteenth-century French audience would have likely recognized such a connection that further underscored the sublime power and

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<sup>28</sup> Louis Marin, *Sublime Poussin*, trans. Catherine Porter (Stanford, CA: University Press, 1999), 69.

<sup>29</sup> Salatino, *Incendiary Art*, 12.

patrimony of Louis XIV. This link between a god and a king signaled by the thunderbolt will be seen expressed more directly in the context of the 1826 ceiling program of the Musée Charles X (treated in chapter four of this dissertation) where Jupiter, the Roman equivalent of Zeus, is linked to Charles X to suggest the Restored Bourbon monarch was heir to the sublime power of Jupiter, as well as that of Louis XIV.

An important comparison can be made between prints representing feu d'artifice spectacles held under the reign of Louis XIV, such as Silvestre's *Destruction of the Palace of Alcine* (Figure 30) or Le Pautre's *Fifth Day* (Figure 19), and La Rue's print *Eruption of Vesuvius in 1754* (Figure 18) where a spectacularly erupting Vesuvius is substituted for a display of feu d'artifice at Versailles. The political power of the king experienced through the display of feu d'artifice is transformed into the sublime experience of the power of nature embodied in the erupting volcano. Silvestre's print for the 1664 fête and Le Pautre's print for the 1674 fête were vital models for La Rue's print with its relaxed audience enjoying a spectacular display of natural pyrotechnics. There seems also to be a certain continuity of meaning, a display of power that extended from the seventeenth through the eighteenth century. This display of power had shifted, however, from one representing an absolute monarch submitting the natural world to restore order to society to one associated with the natural world, specifically the display of power associated with an erupting volcano.

The association of political power with the eruptive force of the volcano can be seen expressed as early as 1637 in a series of feu d'artifice displays commissioned by the cardinal of Savoy and held in Rome over a succession of three days to commemorate the visit to the Eternal City of the newly elected Emperor Ferdinand III. The politically

topical theme was threefold: the victory of the Holy Roman Empire over the German Protestant princes then currently at war with the Catholic Hapsburgs; victory over Protestantism, or heresy; and victory over the Ottoman Empire, the enemies of Hapsburg Austria. This complicated program was executed in the visual language of a fireworks machine simulating Mount Etna, which underwent a series of transformations over the three evenings. It was immortalized in a series of engravings by Luca Ciamberlano, such as *Fireworks Machine Representing the Victory of the Empire over the Ottoman Turks, for the Visit to Rome of Emperor Ferdinand III, February 1637* (1637) (Figure 32), published in Luigi Manzinati's 1637 *Applausi festivi fatti in Roma per l'elezione di Ferdinando III* [*Festival Celebration in Rome for the Election of Ferdinand III*], the book in which the complex program and its meaning were intricately described. Perhaps more interesting than a somewhat common theme underscoring the ephemeral nature of feu d'artifice displays and the intermingling of the four elements (earth, water, fire, and air), which was also emphasized in Louis XIV's 1664 and 1674 fêtes, is the idea that the emperor is identified with Etna's flames.<sup>30</sup> Salatino writes, "The festival will end, the flames dissolve into air. The noblest element, fire, is a fitting symbol for Ferdinand's high office. It defeats the baser elements, with which it wars, and though chaos is inevitable, it is, under Ferdinand, a 'joyful and prodigious' and, more importantly, a 'regulated' chaos."<sup>31</sup>

Thus, the idea that there is a correspondence between political power and the power of an erupting volcano was hardly new by the 1760s and 1770 when La Rue's and

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<sup>30</sup> Salatino, *Incendiary Art*, 54.

<sup>31</sup> Salatino, *Incendiary Art*, 55.

Voltaire's images of an erupting Vesuvius were produced. This can be seen illustrated in the mid-eighteenth century in a hand colored etching titled *Fireworks Machine Representing Mount Vesuvius with Pliny the Elder, for the Festival of the Chinaea, Rome 1750* (1750) (Figure 33). Drawn by Francisco Preciado de la Vega, it was intended to preserve the memory of the spectacle designed for the second day of the Festival of the Chinaea of 1750, an event held annually in Rome. It is highly inaccurate, as it depicts a quite naturalistic rendition of the eruption of Vesuvius in 79 CE, replete with the figure of Pliny the Elder who was famously killed by the volcanic gases emitted from the volcano in his attempt to make empirical observations of the eruption. The print bears the caption: "Today this terrible marvel has become peaceful enough under the happy dominion of His Majesty, the King of the Two Sicilies... demonstrating that even inanimate objects are inclined to imitate the great placability of His Royal Clemency."<sup>32</sup> The message is clear. The king has dominion over nature. The event portrayed, the infamous eruption of Vesuvius in 79 CE, which covered the cities of Herculaneum and Pompeii, snuffing out all human life in those towns, could not be repeated under his rule. The volcano, as part of his kingdom, reflects the king's pacific character. Salatino writes,

Here, nature kneels before the civilizing forces of a properly governed dominion, and, like an obedient subject, Vesuvius acquiesces to the superior force of royal placability. Such a view, while befitting an absolutist monarch, was fast becoming an anachronism, and would soon be tested in both the cultural and political arenas leading up and during the French Revolution.<sup>33</sup>

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<sup>32</sup> Salatino, *Incendiary Art*, 56.

<sup>33</sup> Salatino, *Incendiary Art*, 56.

With the destabilization of the absolute monarchy, which began to occur with the death of Louis XIV and the transition of court life from Versailles to the urban city of Paris, spectacles of feu d'artifice in the eighteenth century continued to express the political power of the king, but by the last half of the eighteenth century, the image of an erupting volcano became a much needed prop to display such power.<sup>34</sup> Rather than the king submitting the natural world to his dominion, as could be seen in the prints from the 1664 and 1674 fêtes by Silvestre and Le Pautre (Figures 19 and 31) and the 1750 Festival of the China, the erupting volcano became appropriated to lend power and authority to a weakening monarch as the century progressed.

### **Harnessing the Sublime Power of the Volcano**

The message—the power of a king to defeat nature—could not possibly be as easily maintained after the destruction caused by the Lisbon earthquake of 1755, or in light of the subsequent eruptions of Vesuvius later in the century (1754, 1767, 1771, 1779, 1794). Nor could it be maintained with the increasing political instability of France during the last half of the eighteenth century. This era saw intermittent food shortages, a weakening, cash-strapped French monarchy led by an increasingly absent monarch, Louis XV, and the economic and psychological toll of international conflict, such as the War of

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<sup>34</sup> As Noah Heringman suggests, Jean Baudrillard “understands catastrophic agency in political terms, through an analogy of government agencies to simulate natural catastrophes and ‘generalize terror at all levels.’” Noah Heringman, “The Style of Natural Catastrophes,” *Huntington Library Quarterly* 66, no. 1/2 (2003): 98, 98n6. Heringman continues, “Baudrillard... understands the agency of earthquake and eruption at Pompeii as the ‘sadistic irony of catastrophe’ it is secretly waiting for things, even ruins to assume their beauty and their relevance again, to be able to destroy them again.” Heringman, “Style of Natural Catastrophes,” 98, 97-133. Heringman references Jean Baudrillard, “Paroxysm: The Seismic Order,” accessed 10 September 2011, <http://www.uta.edu/english/apt/collab/texts/seismic.html>; Jean Baudrillard, “La forme sismique,” *Cahiers Confrontation* 7 (1982), 11-14.

the Austrian Secession (1740-1748) and The Seven Years' War (1756-1763).<sup>35</sup> This was precisely the time when the Burkean sublime, with its emphasis on the emotional pique of fear and terror, began to gain a more widespread international currency with the 1757 publication of his *Enquiry* and its many international translations.

This idea—the defeat of nature—presented in displays and prints of feu d'artifice from 1637, 1664, 1674, and 1750 is almost in direct opposition to the role I will argue for the merging of the image of the volcano and feu d'artifice that started to become more common in the second half of the eighteenth century. Perhaps this can best be seen, for example, in Jean-Michel Moreau's 1782 etching *Fireworks on the Place de Grève, Paris, 21 January 1782, on the Occasion of the Birth of the Dauphin* (Figure 20). This print and the event it represents carries the political message of feu d'artifice but joins it to the image of the erupting volcano in a celebration staged in the heart of Paris at a time when the Royal treasury could hardly afford such extravagance. Very significantly, the sublime power of the erupting volcano lends authority to the king. Moreover, as a celebration of the birth of the Dauphin, the royal heir, such an event signals a lineage of power that extends back in time, recalling Louis XIV and other great French kings. The image of an erupting volcano becomes the symbol of the power of the king. The power of volcanic eruption, a sublime natural force, replaces the king.

Perhaps the image of the volcano as a stand-in for the political power of an increasingly unpopular king and a weakening French state acted as a crucial buttress for a country undergoing hardship in a way that is reminiscent of Louis XV's 1753

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<sup>35</sup> Peter De Bolla, *The Discourse of the Sublime: Readings in History, Aesthetics, and the Subject* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1989), 105-109. De Bolla discusses the sublime and the Seven Years' War in the context of Britain.

commission of the *Ports of France* series from Claude-Joseph Vernet, who painted fifteen French ports between 1753 and 1765, assisted by Pierre-Jacques Volaire between 1754 and 1762, discussed in chapter one.<sup>36</sup> The *Ports of France* can be read, as Heather MacDonald argues, as a way of displaying the strength of France at a time when it was actually weakening and in turmoil. According to MacDonald, the series was a means of providing a sense of stability during trying political and economic times by recasting the image of the king in the topography of the French landscape, or ports, those critical economic engines that were suffering in the 1750s.<sup>37</sup>

If a topography of France's great ports could replace the image of the king, then could not the volcano be used as a powerful evocation of his political virility and lineage of power as progenitor? It seems no small coincidence, then, that the image of the volcano, as a symbol of immense, fiery natural power, when combined with *feu d'artifice* at an unstable time in French history, could provide a display of force and strength that may have been lacking in Louis XV and the French economy.<sup>38</sup> The sublime landscape was a magnificent source of power that could be associated with France and the king to reinforce a notion of political power. To put it succinctly, the image of the volcano as a symbol of the force of the natural world recalled the *degré* of power previously held by Louis XIV. MacDonald argues,

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<sup>36</sup> An important difference, however, should be acknowledged. While the *Ports of France* series was the largest royal commission of the reign of Louis XV and was intended for public display, landscapes of volcanic eruption such as those by Volaire were not created under any royal patronage. In fact, Volaire was unable to sell a painting to the king, who was generally dismissive of the landscape genre.

<sup>37</sup> Heather MacDonald, "Landscapes of Ambition: Painting and Political Culture in Joseph Vernet's *Ports de France*" (PhD diss., University of California, Berkeley, 2004), 89-106. For discussion specific to Seven Years' War, see 224-254.

<sup>38</sup> Nina Lenore Dubin, "Futures and Ruins: The Painting of Hubert Robert" (PhD diss., University of California, Berkeley, 2006), 208-228. Dubin discusses the sublime during this period in terms of economic fears.

It was only at the end of the war [1763] that Louis XV's monarchy reached what Peter Burke has defined as a "representational crisis." Peter Burke's phrase, derived from Habermas's notion of a legitimation crisis, describes not a loss of political legitimacy, but rather the loss of efficacy of a *mode* of legitimation. The representational crisis that Burke describes occurred in the mid-seventeenth century, due to a decline of antiquity as a cultural model and the undermining of the language of allegory by the intellectual revolution of the seventeenth century. In the middle of the eighteenth century, I would argue a similar crisis of representation occurred. . . . At the same moment that the monarchy found itself in need of a new and more effective visual language, the political situation that entangled the nation demanded a new presentation of the king.<sup>39</sup>

At the same time, volcanic eruption could also hint at those fears, that pique of danger conveyed by the Burkean sublime, about the instability of government. Political power, it is important to note, is also an aspect Burke discussed in his articulation of the sublime: "Thus we are affected by strength, which is *natural* power. The power which arises from institution in kings and commanders, has the same connection with terror."<sup>40</sup>

### **The Image of the Volcano Transformed**

An important subtext to a reading of imagery of volcanic eruption, particularly in the eighteenth century, is that the volcano as an eruptive force or in its potential to erupt came to be understood in many different ways. The progression of its transformation from a malicious, destructive force by the late 1760s can be understood through its connection to a spectacular sublime event and as a focus of an interest in natural history,

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<sup>39</sup> MacDonald, "Landscapes of Ambition," 89-90.

<sup>40</sup> Burke, *A Philosophical Enquiry*, 64-70. Burke identifies "power" as an aspect of the sublime and discusses it in connection with political power, or the power of a king.

particularly in regard to geology and volcanology, as will be discussed in detail in the second part of this chapter. There is, however, a rapid and specific transformation of this symbol of fiery power during the French Revolution that should at least be acknowledged.

In her 2011 book, *A Natural History of Revolution: Violence and Nature in the French Revolutionary Imagination, 1789-1794*, the art historian Mary Ashburn Miller examines the relationship between “the language used by revolutionaries and the metaphors with which they conceptualized the work they were undertaking [which] helped to structure citizens’ understanding of the Revolution.”<sup>41</sup> Her focus is on metaphors underscoring the “important role that knowledge of the natural world had in the process known as ‘enlightenment.’”<sup>42</sup> As such, Miller identifies natural imagery evoked for revolutionary purpose, which includes lightning bolts, thunder, earthquakes, swamps, mountains, and volcanoes. Such an analysis of how natural history was invoked for political means is significant. The historian of philosophy of science Simon Schaffer underscores the uneasy connection between natural philosophy and social control and suggests that “the crisis of social control in the eighteenth century was thus intimately connected with the cosmology of natural philosophy.... The problem before natural philosophy, for example, was to describe the powers in nature without unleashing the powers of society.”<sup>43</sup> As Miller’s analysis reveals, metaphors from the natural world were compelling in creating revolutionary imagery, rhetoric, and meaning.

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<sup>41</sup> Mary Ashburn Miller, *A Natural History of Revolution: Violence and Nature in the French Revolutionary Imagination, 1789-1794* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2011), 3. Such a methodology is indebted to historian Keith Baker’s approach to the French Revolution.

<sup>42</sup> Miller, *A Natural History of Revolution*, 5.

<sup>43</sup> Simon Schaffer, “Natural Philosophy and Public Spectacle in the Eighteenth Century,” *History of Science* 21, no. 1 (1983): 11.

Miller traces the image of the volcano as it changes during the revolutionary years. She begins her discussion with an examination of a play by Sylvain Maréchal that opened to great acclaim at the Théâtre de la République [Theater of the Republic] on 18 October 1793 (Vendémiaire of Year II), *Le Jugement dernier des rois* [*The Last Judgment of Kings*]. A spectacular volcanic eruption concluded the play, subtitled by Maréchal as “a prophecy in one act,” marking the overthrow of Europe’s kings and returning them to an “uncivilized” state.<sup>44</sup> The political aspect of the play at this particular historical moment, which opened after the 21 January 1793 execution of France’s King Louis XVI and the 16 October 1793 execution of Queen Marie Antoinette, was compelling.

It was the image of the volcanic eruption that acted not as a destructive force but as a cleansing one for the *citoyen* of France and, more generally, for anyone living under monarchical rule. Miller states,

And the volcano, symbol of revolutionary fervor and destruction, became the ultimate demonstrator of nature’s justice, annihilating the monarchs in a single, terrifying, and glorious moment described in the play’s liner notes: “The explosion takes place: the fire attacks the kings from all sides; they fall, consumed in the innards of the opened earth.” The quite literal fall of the monarchs, although enabled by the Revolution itself, was portrayed as the work of natural forces.<sup>45</sup>

Miller continues, addressing the changing symbolism of the volcano during the revolutionary years:

The image of the volcano, so dramatically evoked by Maréchal, provides an illuminating case study for the fusion of the language of natural history with the rhetoric of political transformation, revealing the simultaneous politicization of the natural world, and the naturalization of

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<sup>44</sup> Miller, *A Natural History of Revolution*, 139-40.

<sup>45</sup> Miller, *A Natural History of Revolution*, 139-40.

political rhetoric. Like the images of lightning and mountains, revolutionaries drew on the symbolic language of volcanoes in ways that demonstrated shifting ideas about authority, justice and political virtue; in even more striking ways than the previous images, the volcano's connotations transformed with changes in the political realm. During the early years of the Revolution, it symbolized the potential for unbridled force and destruction; it represented volatility, and a fear of cataclysm, playing a crucial role in the revolutionary language of watchfulness and surveillance. Yet, for a brief period that began with the call for terror as the order of the day, the volcano became a *positive* symbol of revolutionary transformation, emblematic of patriotic passion and republican virtue. The image of the volcano was deployed as a symbol of constructive and purgative change at the very moment at which "terror" itself became a positive and regenerative concept.<sup>46</sup>

### **The Emperor Evokes the Power of the Volcano**

Displays of feu d'artifice and representations of erupting volcanoes both assert a magnificent image of power, one associated with royal politics, the other with nature. But the two ideas, the sublime power of political ascendancy, such as Napoleon's consecration as emperor, and of nature, the fiery power of an erupting volcano, intermix. They reinforce each other, as seen in an etching and aquatint designed and printed by Louis Le Coeur, *Fête du sacre et couronnement de leurs majestés impariales* [Coronation Celebration of Their Imperial Majesties] (Figure 34), depicting the celebration held 16 December 1804 to commemorate the consecration of Napoleon as Emperor of France on 2 December (11 Frimaire XIII) of that year. This image is particularly compelling because, unlike the political message of power associated with the display of feu d'artifice in the prints for the 1664 and 1674 fêtes by Israel Silvestre (Figure 30) and Jean Le Pautre (Figure 19), it is directly connected to the power of the erupting volcano. In Le

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<sup>46</sup> Miller, *A Natural History of Revolution*, 140.

Coeur's print there is no intermediary, or "if-then" chain of logic where the erupting volcano is used as a synecdoche for political power. As we have seen in previous images, a feu d'artifice display was crafted around political power, which could then be connected to the image of a volcano, as demonstrated in the prints of Francisco Preciado de la Vega for the 1750 Festival of the China (Figure 33) or by Luigi Grattagrassi for the visit of Ferdinand, King of Naples and Sicily (Figure 27). In Le Coeur's work the message is crystal clear. Feu d'artifice and volcano conspire to leave no question about the political power of Napoleon, who is to be crowned not as king but even more grandiosely as Imperial Majesty in an unmistakable evocation of the sublime power and greatness of Imperial Rome, the Eternal City. Power is consolidated in this image in the spectacular display of feu d'artifice. It explodes from the top of a volcano with an illuminated three-mast ship in the mid-ground and an audience of standing spectators reaching from the left to the right side of the print in the foreground. Formally, the image has been constructed along the lines of the feu d'artifice tradition so far discussed, with spectators arranged along the bottom edge of the print border enjoying the show as they do in Le Pautre's *Fifth Day*, La Rue's *Eruption of Vesuvius in 1754*, and Volaire's *Eruption of Vesuvius*. The celebration was held in Paris at almost the same location as the display of feu d'artifice held at the Place de Grève in 1782 to celebrate the birth of the Dauphin, which was recorded in Moreau's *Fireworks on the Place de Grève, Paris, 21 January 1782, on the Occasion of the Birth of the Dauphin* (Figure 20).

Knowing the location is Paris, it is easy to see that the ship is in the Seine and the public on a *quai*. More fascinating is the image of the volcano, which is a recreation of Mont Saint Bernard, according to Salatino. Such a reference is strategic propaganda that

ties Napoleon to a sublime lineage of great military leaders, as can be seen in the famous image by Jacques-Louis David from 1800 *Napoleon Crossing the Alps* (Figure 35). As is well known, David presented Napoleon on a rearing stallion, as opposed to the donkey he actually rode up the pass, in response to Napoleon's direction to David that he be depicted as "calm, mounted on a fiery steed." David inscribed the names Napoleon, Hannibal, and Charlemagne in the rock beneath the raised front hooves of Napoleon's grand, fiery-tempered mount, tenuously balanced on its rear legs and yet under perfect control of the magnificent, calm leader with his red cape billowing in the wind. His gaze is directed solidly at the viewer, and his right arm points confidently forward and up on a diagonal across the Saint Bernard Pass, the place where both Charlemagne and Hannibal crossed the Valais before him. The link to David's portrait of 1800 is further solidified by an illuminated image of Napoleon on a rearing steed that appeared suddenly during the celebration and which can be seen placed above the leftmost lip of the erupting volcano in Le Coeur's print (Figure 34).

By presenting Mont Saint Bernard as the backdrop to his coronation fête, Napoleon, as emperor, effectively encompasses the sublime military strength and prowess to direct the ship of state, presumably symbolized by the ship represented in the mid-ground, after the tumultuous times that began in earnest in 1789; although, to be sure, a weak Royal treasury, food shortages, and displays of aristocratic indulgence recorded and disseminated in broadsheets helped contribute to civil unrest during the late 1770s and 1780s.<sup>47</sup> This sublime presentation of strength and power derives its effect not only

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<sup>47</sup> Catherine Betty Abigail Behrens, *The Ancien Régime* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1967); Alfred Cobban, *The Eighteenth Century: Europe in the Age of Enlightenment* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1969).

from the display of feu d'artifice, which traditionally references kingly (political) power, but also from the powerful image of an erupting volcano, as seen in the prints by Silvestre and Le Pautre celebrating the Sun King's strength. The image of the volcano in Le Coeur's print was not of Mont Saint Bernard, which was not an active volcano.<sup>48</sup> The image of the volcano in Le Coeur's print is Vesuvius. Moreover, it is an image taken from the La Rue print in the *Encyclopédie*. It is a direct quotation of *Eruption of Vesuvius in 1754* (Figure 18).

To be sure, the image of volcanic eruption would be transformed again in the nineteenth century in a variety of ways, but its connection to political power would remain a major aspect of its allure. In 1815, George Cruikshank commented prophetically on the Battle of Waterloo, using an erupting Vesuvius as an example in his hand-colored etching *An Eruption of Mount Vesuvius: And the Anticipated Effects of the Waterloo Storm* (Figure 36). And as late as 1833, Auguste Desperret, in a lithograph published in *La Caricature*, would again tie the eruption of the volcano to revolutionary rhetoric and change. His *Third Eruption of the Volcano of 1789* (Figure 37) alludes to a series of eruptions that emerged out of the French Revolution of 1789, linking them to the "European Revolution of 1848-49." As scholars Rolf Reichardt and Hubertus Kohle write on Desperret's lithograph in their 2008 book *Visualizing the Revolution*:

The significance of the picture goes far further [than the July 1830 Revolution], heralding the final redemptive and most noble of all revolutions; a revolution in which the number of volcanic eruptions would conclude with a triumvirate of unity; or, as the subheading expressed it in a visionary, even eschatological way: "Which must take place before the end of the world, will cause all thrones to

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<sup>48</sup> Mont Saint Bernard is not associated with volcanic activity in any manner except, perhaps, provisionally, as the Alps were formed volcanically.

tremble and will overthrow a host of monarchies.” The new political understanding of the age, which developed after 1789 out of the experience of the progression of the Revolution, the effects of which extended far beyond the boundaries of time and geography, the “Revolution” of the modern age, can seldom have been portrayed more suggestively or incisively.<sup>49</sup>

And it is the image of a volcano in eruption that provides the sublime motif.

### **Sublime Natural History**

This chapter has so far examined the representation of volcanic eruption as a sublime phenomenon related to both aestheticized (theatrical) spectacle and to political power and authority connected to a long-standing, significant, and partly public tradition of displays of *feu d’artifice* and their representation in print. But this is not the only light in which volcanic phenomena were viewed in the last half of the eighteenth century, nor may it ultimately be the most important. Specifically, volcanic eruption as a sublime phenomenon, when it was viewed through the lens of an emerging scientific community, was connected to the sublime aesthetic as a new way of viewing the world.<sup>50</sup> A comment made by the scholar Noah Heringman in his analysis of the public lectures given in 1805 by the celebrated young natural philosopher Humphry Davy can be applied more generally to the influence of the volcano on natural history. Heringman writes, “Davy concentrates on volcanism in his last two lectures because it is central to his larger theory

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<sup>49</sup> Rolf Reichardt and Hubertus Kohle, *Visualizing the Revolution: Politics and the Pictorial Arts in Late Eighteenth-Century France* (London: Reaktion, 2008), 238-239.

<sup>50</sup> For a good examination of the many contacts between landscape depiction and the sciences, see Barbara Stafford, *Voyage into Substance: Art, Science, Nature Illustrated and Travel Account, 1760-1830* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1984).

of earth. Just as the theory of volcanoes sets the agenda for his geological theory, the aesthetics of volcanoes sets the agenda for geological representation.”<sup>51</sup>

“Science,” or more correctly in eighteenth-century terms “natural history,” provided an increasingly secular way of seeing the world as a miraculous space. This can be seen in the “Histoire naturelle. volcans. règne minérale, sixième collection.” [Natural History. Volcanoes. Mineral Kingdom. Sixth Collection] section of the 1768 illustrated supplement to the *Encyclopédie*.<sup>52</sup> It was communicated through a close-up view of nature via the process of scientific observation, as seen in the mineral specimens included as plates, such as *Metallic Crystallization* (ca. 1768) (Figure 38). It could be seen in a much wider scope in empirical studies of volcanoes, such as Plate IV *Summit of Vesuvius; Another Summit of Vesuvius during a Small Eruption* (ca. 1768) (Figure 39), which shows the cone of Vesuvius before and during a small eruption. It was also transmitted through prints of Vesuvius by La Rue included in the same section, such as *Eruption of Vesuvius in 1754* (Figure 18) and *Lava Flowing Down the Slopes of Vesuvius after the Eruption of 1754* (Figure 21), and through sublime landscape paintings, such as *Eruption of Vesuvius* (Figure 17) by Voltaire. An erupting volcano was not a popular subject simply because it was theatrically entertaining, spectacular, or indicative of political or natural power. It was a popular subject because it revealed nature in a new, powerful way. At the same time, with the emergence of observationally based scientific empiricism, it revealed the ability of humankind as a secular entity to rationally understand the natural world. The sublime as an emotionally based aesthetic category

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<sup>51</sup> Heringman, “The Style of Natural Catastrophes,” 106-107.

<sup>52</sup> Diderot and d’Alembert, *Encyclopédie, Recueil des planches*, vol. 6.

prompted rational inquiry through the desire to understand the overwhelming experience of the natural world.

### **The Volcano as a Creative Force: Vulcanists, Neptunists, and the Debate over the History of the Earth**

Volcanoes and volcanic eruption were of great interest during the last half of the eighteenth century. This can be attributed, in part, to the discovery and excavation of the ruins of Herculaneum and Pompeii; the publication of the archaeological discoveries excavated from these sites that coincided with the emergence of neoclassicism in books, such as the eight volume *Le Antichità di Ercolano esposte* [*Antiquities of Herculaneum Exposed*] (1755-92); and the fact that Vesuvius and Etna were volcanically active throughout the last half of the eighteenth century.<sup>53</sup> Just as significantly, in the 1750s volcanoes and volcanic eruption began to take center stage in a debate about the origin of the earth, which had important ramifications. This prompted a shift in the understanding of volcanoes and volcanic eruption from a destructive to a creative force that helped form the earth. The implications of this discovery contradicted the Biblical timeline of the history of the earth, accelerating a secularized concept of geological time and chipping

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<sup>53</sup> The archaeological discoveries of Herculaneum and Pompeii corresponded roughly with the neoclassical impulse in the eighteenth century, and a number of important books recorded the findings and spread them throughout Europe. In 1755, Charles-Nicolas Cochin and Jérôme-Charles Bellicard published drawings made from their visit to the museum at Portici at the foot of Mount Vesuvius, where Charles III of Spain, King of Naples and Sicily, between 1738 and 1748, built a royal palace: *Observations sur les antiquités d'Herculanum avec quelques réflexions sur la peinture et la sculpture des anciens; et une courte description de plusieurs antiquités des environs de Naples* (*Observations Upon the Antiquities of the Town of Herculaneum Discovered at the Foot of Mount Vesuvius*) (London, 1753). This book was an international sensation. Also in 1755, Charles VII, King of Naples, established the *Accademia Ercolanese*, a society of fifteen scholars known as *ercolanesi*, whose task it was to explain the ancient monuments discovered. Their findings were recorded in a lavishly illustrated book, *Le Antichità di Ercolano esposte* (Napoli, 1755-92), published under the sponsorship of the Bourbon monarchs. The first of eight volumes was published in 1755 and took as its focus the wall paintings discovered at Pompeii. The last volume was published in 1792 and focused on Roman lamps and candelabra.

away at the foundations of Creationism.<sup>54</sup> Geology and volcanology emerged as subjects of study.

A tug-of-war occurred in the last half of the eighteenth century between *neptunisme*, the theory held by those who believed the earth's topography was determined by water (and thus corresponded with the Great Flood outlined in the Bible), and *vulcanisme*, the theory held by those who believed the earth's topography was determined by fire and due to volcanic eruption. The issue was of particular interest in France, where botanist and writer Jacques Henri Bernardin de Saint-Pierre argued for a "neptunist" explanation. It allowed him to align his geological findings, published in his 1784 *Études de la nature* [*Studies of Nature*], with the Biblical Flood. He argued that the eruptive potential of volcanoes was due to the detritus (the remains of forests and fossilized animal bones left by the flood) within their interior.<sup>55</sup> On the other hand, the discovery of basalt columns by the French naturalist Nicolas Desmarest in the Auvergne region of France provided powerful evidence for the "vulcanist" position, one which scientists still today consider largely valid. The well-ordered columns of basalt found in the Auvergne that were formed by the cooling of volcanic pyroclastic flow suggested that there was an internal, inextinguishable fire within volcanoes that proved the formation of the region was due to volcanic activity, a point that would be extended to the earth as a

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<sup>54</sup> The French natural historian Georges Louis Leclerc comte de Buffon, in his 1749 *Histoire naturelle*, inferred from his research using cooling globes that the earth was approximately 75,000 years old as opposed to the 4,500-5,000 year age claimed by Christians, such as English theologian, historian, and mathematician William Whiston, who deduced the age of the earth from the Bible and the dating of the flood in his *A New Theory of the Earth from its Original to the Consummation of All Things* (London, 1696).

<sup>55</sup> Miller, *A Natural History of Revolution*, 142; Jacques Henri Bernardin de Saint-Pierre, *Études de la nature*, 3 vols. (Paris, 1784-1792), 1:306-307.

whole.<sup>56</sup> Thus, the role of the volcano was at the center of the debate as to the age of the earth, and it provided an important piece of evidence for supporting the possibility of understanding the earth from an empirical perspective of natural history, rather than just a religious one.<sup>57</sup> Vesuvius was of particular importance in this debate, because it was very much in the public eye with its spectacular eruptions in 1754, 1767, 1771, 1779, and 1794.

By the mid-eighteenth century, both naturalists and connoisseurs were taking the Grand Tour.<sup>58</sup> It is critical to recognize that it was an experience of Vesuvius, perhaps a sublime one, that helped to form, or at least confirm, Desmarest's interest in geology and thus helped to shape the Basalt Controversy. Desmarest visited Vesuvius after presenting a preliminary report in Paris to the Académie des sciences [The French Academy of Sciences] of a survey of the extinct volcanoes in the region of the Auvergne. This report came about as the result of the naturalist Jean Étienne Guettard's mineral survey of France in which he reported there were volcanoes in the Auvergne that were, according to the historian of science Martin J. Rudwick, "so fresh that they looked as if they were

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<sup>56</sup> Martin J. S. Rudwick, *Bursting the Limits of Time: The Reconstruction of Geohistory in the Age of Revolution* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005), 204-205.

<sup>57</sup> The debate between the formation of the earth resulting from a devastating event such as the flood, as argued by neptunists, and the idea that the earth was formed in some ordered way by volcanic activity in the distant past, as conceived by the vulcanists, was often tempered by an in-between position or a change in position, such as that which came to be held by the French natural historian Georges Louis Leclerc comte de Buffon, who argued for the importance of water in forming the earth in his 1749 *Histoire naturelle*, but in 1778 changed his position to accommodate the existence of a central heat within the surface of the earth; See Miller, *A Natural History*, 142n13. Miller states that Kenneth Taylor suggests that most naturalists and nascent geologists in the eighteenth century were able to accommodate both fire and water in their theories of the earth; See Kenneth Taylor, "Nicolas Desmarest and Geology in the Eighteenth Century," in *Towards a History of Geology*, ed. Cecil J. Schneer (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1969), 339-356.

<sup>58</sup> Rudwick, *Bursting the Limits of Time*, 204.

merely dormant and might still menace the region.”<sup>59</sup> Rudwick writes on Desmarest’s experience of Vesuvius,

Acting as guide and tutor to Alexandre, duke de la Rochefoucaud, a young nobleman making the Grand Tour, Desmarest had embarked on travels that greatly enlarged his experience of physical geography. Like many others, he and his companion were astonished at their first sight of Mont Blanc and other high mountains and glaciers, while they were crossing the Alps. But an even more decisive experience, when they reached Naples, was that Desmarest saw Vesuvius for himself. It was the only active volcano he ever visited, but it gave him a crucial point of reference for all his later studies of extinct volcanoes.<sup>60</sup>

Upon his return to France, Desmarest then directed his attention with greater focus to the problem of basalt, which he thought, quite correctly as it turned out, was the key to understanding not only the volcanic-based (vulcanist) formation of the earth but extinct volcanoes and lava flows as well. In 1768 he drew widespread public attention to these phenomena—basalt and volcanoes—when he published illustrations of the basalt columns in the Auvergne in the *Encyclopédie*.<sup>61</sup> Desmarest illustrated his findings in Plate VII *Basalt Columns in the Auvergne* (ca. 1768) (Figure 40) of the same “Natural History. Volcanoes. Mineral Kingdom. Sixth Collection” section of the illustrated supplement of the *Encyclopédie* in which can be found La Rue’s prints that have been discussed at length, as well as the *Metallic Crystallization* and *Summit of Vesuvius* prints mentioned above. Rudwick notes that “the accompanying explanation of the engravings had first made public his claim that prismatic basalt was volcanic rock. If valid, this implied that volcanic action had been far more widespread in the distant past than it was

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<sup>59</sup> Rudwick, *Bursting the Limits of Time*, 204.

<sup>60</sup> Rudwick, *Bursting the Limits of Time*, 204.

<sup>61</sup> Rudwick, *Bursting the Limits of Time*, 204-205.

in the present world.”<sup>62</sup> Elected as a member of the French Academy of Sciences in 1771, Desmarest published his findings in a 1774 paper, “On the Origin and Nature of Large Polygon Basalt Columns Determined by the Natural History of this Stone Found in the Auvergne.”<sup>63</sup>

Desmarest’s work played a critical role in the development of the view that volcanoes were a rational and creative force and not simply a destructive one that endangered human life and civilization. It was a point made visually clear in his print in the *Encyclopédie*. The unique, rationally-ordered rock formations of the Auvergne problematized the idea of the chaotic, destructive potential of volcanic eruption and help transformed it from being perceived as simply a terrible event that caused human tragedy, as can be seen in Scipione Compagno’s *Eruption of Mount Vesuvius in 1631* (Figure 23), to a creative and miraculous phenomenon of nature deserving serious study. The strength of Desmarest’s argument was extended past the borders of France. A print showing well-ordered, naturally occurring basalt columns discovered at the Giant’s Causeway in Ireland was also included in the same section of the *Encyclopédie* as prints by La Rue (Figures 18 and 21) and Desmarest. Thus, the perception of volcanic eruption as a disruptive, disorderly force was being tempered by volcanic evidence of a well-ordered

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<sup>62</sup> Rudwick, *Bursting the Limits of Time*, 204, 205. Desmarest’s paper was not only identified with a project in earth physics but as a solution to the causal puzzle that had been determined by the natural history of the rock observed in the Auvergne and the descriptive study of basalt, the distribution of which Desmarest and François Pasumot had plotted across the region with the methods of physical geography (i.e., fieldwork and observation) and then plotted in a map. The process was one involving the identification of a logical, cause and effect, problem/hypothesis approach through empirical observation and data analysis. It is a method heavily indebted to both John Locke and Isaac Newton. This method of the identification of a hypothesis, the collection of empirical data, and its analysis to determine whether or not it supports the hypothesis to form a thesis is still the very basis of scientific method today.

<sup>63</sup> Nicolas Desmarest, “Mémoire sur l’origine et la nature du basalte à grandes colonnes polygones, déterminées par l’histoire naturelle de cette pierre, observée en Auvergne” (Paris, 1774).

geological record, despite the overwhelming power of destruction that was suggested by the discoveries of Herculaneum (1738) and Pompeii (1748).<sup>64</sup>

An emphasis on the creative force of the volcano is a point that was also made by William Hamilton, whose study of Vesuvius beginning in 1767 and continuing until his departure from Naples in 1800 did much to establish the discipline of volcanology and to bring attention to the volcanic activity of the region.<sup>65</sup> In a letter translated into French in 1773, Hamilton discussed his observations of Mount Etna, an active volcano in Sicily that he studied after becoming interested in Vesuvius. He attributed the fertile soil there to the admixture of ash and earth that contributed to the healthy grapes and strong vines and rhetorically asked: “May not subterraneous fire be considered as the great plough... which Nature makes use of to turn up the bowels of the earth, and afford us fresh fields?”<sup>66</sup> Louis de Jaucourt, who wrote the entry “Vesuvius” for the *Encyclopédie*, also made this point about the benefits of volcanic activity. He suggested the volcanic ash of Vesuvius enriched the earth and that “physicists [scientists] claim that the species of ash that Vesuvius throws into the plain dissolve slightly, little by little, to be incorporated with the soil and contribute greatly to its fertility.”<sup>67</sup> It is now recognized that potash (one source of which is volcanic ash) is essential to agriculture.

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<sup>64</sup> For an excellent discussion of the discovery of Pompeii, see Goran Blix, “Neoclassical Pompeii,” in *From Paris to Pompeii: French Romanticism and the Cultural Politics of Archaeology* (Philadelphia: University Press, 2008), 9-15.

<sup>65</sup> Haraldur Sigurdsson, *Melting the Earth: The History of Ideas on Volcanic Eruptions* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 126.

<sup>66</sup> William Hamilton, “Letter to Mathew Maty, M.D., Secretary to the Royal Society: An Account of a Journey to Mount Etna” and “Remarks upon the Nature of the Soil of Naples,” in Hamilton, *Observations on Mount Vesuvius, Mount Etna, and Other Volcanoes: In a Series of Letters, Addressed to the Royal Society, from the Honourable Sir W. Hamilton* (London, 1772), 57, 161.

<sup>67</sup> “Les physiciens prétendent que les especes de cendres que jette le Vésuve dans la plaine venant à se dissoudre peu-à-peu, et à s’incorporer avec le terroir, l’engraissent et contribuent beaucoup à sa fertilité; les

This idea can be seen in a wall painting excavated from the House of the Centaur at Pompeii, *Bacchus on Mount Vesuvius* (first century CE) (Figure 41). A sleeping Vesuvius is presented centrally, surrounded by humans, wildlife (snakes), and grapes, suggesting that the volcano is at the center of a rich, balanced ecosystem. The image stands as a testament to Vesuvius's life-giving, or creative power, specifically in its role of enriching nature's bounty through the nutrient-rich loam surrounding Naples that provided grape crops and wine production, as suggested by Hamilton and Jaucourt and later confirmed by agronomists.

La Rue's two prints for the illustrated natural history section of the *Encyclopédie* that show the sublime spectacle of an erupting Vesuvius are joined by a third *General View of Vesuvius in 1757* (ca. 1768) (Figure 42) that emphasizes the bounty present in the bay of Naples. It shows a gently eruptive Vesuvius in the distant background while fishermen go about the quotidian task of unloading a bountiful catch. As Vesuvius smolders, the message is clear—Neapolitans live and work constantly under the watchful eye of the sleeping mountain, one that could awake at any moment and turn deadly. Vesuvius is part of a cycle of life that exists in the Bay of Naples and perhaps even more universally. Thus, on a macro-level in regard to the formation of the earth, and on a micro level of providing for the sustenance of human life, volcanic eruption is a central, creative force. While Vesuvius may erupt and take life, it also sustains it. This message is confirmed by the image of the fishermen returning from the sea with their bounty. Such images are often used to signal dusk, as seen in Vernet's series showing the times of day. Thus, in the *Encyclopédie*, the volcano and volcanic eruption figures into a quotidian

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souterrains de cette contrée élaborent les suc de la terre, et l'air dont elle est environnée dans un heureux degré de chaleur, la défend du froid des hivers." Louis de Jaucourt, "Vésuve," in *Encyclopédie*, 17:219.

rhythm of life, like day and night, like creation and destruction. In the illustrations by La Rue, the spectacular theatrical power of the sublime volcanic eruption is combined with its creative potential, although there is always an element of danger alluded to by the smoke curling up from Vesuvius's cone and the titles of the prints that refer specifically to the eruption of 1754.

### **Sublime Science: The Interpenetration of the Sublime and Natural History**

At first glance, neither of the images by La Rue—*Eruption of Vesuvius in 1754* (Figure 18) and *Lava Flowing Down Slopes of Vesuvius after the Eruption of 1754* (Figure 21)—that served as an important precedent for the paintings by Volaire, such as *Eruption of Vesuvius* (Figure 17), would today be considered a reflection of natural history, or “science.” They seem very much unlike prints showing the cone of Vesuvius before and during a small eruption, as can be seen in the previously mentioned *Summit of Vesuvius; Another Summit of Vesuvius during a Small Eruption* (Figure 39) from the illustrated supplement to the *Encyclopédie*. Nor do they seem similar to *Plans of the Top of Mount Vesuvius 1767* (ca. 1776) (Figure 43), an illustration commissioned from artist Pietro Fabris by William Hamilton for his 1776 book, *Campi Phlegraei: Observations on the Volcanoes of the Two Sicilies*, in which Hamilton recorded his observations of volcanic phenomena of the region around Naples in text and image. These images, very clearly, are indebted to a tradition of empirical observation seen in prints, such as Theresa del Po's engraving *Eruption of Vesuvius in 1694* (1694) (Figure 44), that show lettering systems, inset details, and the extensive captions that one might expect from “scientific” illustration. They do not portray the sense of sublime spectacularity that would emerge

with La Rue's prints. Importantly, however, as previously mentioned, La Rue's prints are included in the same "Natural History. Volcanoes. Mineral Kingdom. Sixth Collection" section of the *Encyclopédie* that takes natural history as its subject and are contextualized by other prints, such as *Metallic Crystallization* (Figure 38), Desmarest's *Basalt Columns in the Auvergne* (Figure 40), and *Summit of Vesuvius; Another Summit of Vesuvius during a Small Eruption* (Figure 39). Thus, perhaps a conception of what constituted natural history in the eighteenth century must be tempered by an understanding that it was far less divided along lines of specialization than it would be in the nineteenth century.

In fact, it is the specialization of nineteenth-century science that retroactively created categories out of natural history that did not exist in the eighteenth century. In other words, while geology and volcanology began to emerge in the late eighteenth century as discrete fields, in part due to the impact of sublime phenomena such as volcanic eruption that helped ignite widespread interest, what was considered natural history at the time did not strongly differentiate between fields of study or modes of representation. Thus, La Rue's prints showing Vesuvius in eruption were shown in the same section of the *Encyclopédie* as more "scientific" illustrations. The inclusion of both of these types of views of Vesuvius (compare Figures 18 and 39, for example) reveals how an aesthetic mode and a natural history mode of understanding were entirely compatible with one another. In fact, both were essential for a complete picture of volcanic activity to emerge.

It is important to dwell for a moment, then, on a comparison between the print by Desmarest, *Basalt Columns in the Auvergne* (Figure 40), and those by La Rue, such as *Eruption of Vesuvius in 1754* (Figure 18) or *Lava Flowing Down Slopes of Vesuvius after*

*the Eruption of 1754* (Figure 21), showing the spectacle of Vesuvius in eruption. Such a comparison shows, quite literally, the proximity between natural history and spectacular (sublime) modes of display, which, I argue, is a powerful testament to their deep connection in the last decades of the eighteenth century. Desmarest's print reveals the empirically observed evidence of widespread volcanic activity. The prints of Vesuvius in eruption by La Rue, in contrast, have their emphasis on theatrically derived spectacle and the politically driven notion of power emerging from a tradition of feu d'artifice, as previously discussed

The structure of the *Encyclopédie* (i.e., the intermingling of illustrations by La Rue of Vesuvius with mineralogic specimens and basalt studies of Desmarest) makes sense if natural history in the eighteenth century was considered as part of, or indistinct from, other disciplines, such as aesthetics. As the natural history section of the *Encyclopédie* combines images of spectacle and specimen, the language of aesthetics, such as the sublime, was adapted to the field of natural history before it separated into specialized "disciplines." Noah Heringman argues that a shared language of aesthetics was an aspect that helped shape the field of natural history until its specialization into "scientific" disciplines.<sup>68</sup> In other words, a phenomenon such as a volcanic eruption could not be understood in terms of natural history because there was no language for it, particularly as an emotionally overwhelming event. Instead, such an experience had to be understood through the language of aesthetics provided by the Burkean sublime, which provided the language for investigation and understanding.

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<sup>68</sup> Heringman, "Style of Natural Catastrophes," 99, 102, 128, 130.

The historian Emma C. Spary makes the vital point that eighteenth-century natural history needs to be considered within the wide-ranging matrix of eighteenth-century thought and not as something to be considered separately or apart from other concerns such as aesthetics or connoisseurship. Nor can it be approached simply as a history of science. Spary's observations are worth quoting at length:

It is curious that although natural history was the discipline to which almost everyone who wished to comment on nature appealed, and which captured a range of individuals, professional writers, institutional botanists, curators of collections, and the wealthy curious, it has barely formed a part of writings on the relationship between nature and enlightenment. Even in the histories of nature it has been largely absent, being replaced by a mythical science of biology. It is particularly revealing that natural history should be thus edited, cropped, divided, or annihilated, for it of all disciplines formed the common ground for relating claims about enlightenment to claims about nature. Such revisions indicate the great difficulty modern readers have in coming to terms with the meanings of nature and enlightenment for eighteenth-century practitioners. In eighteenth-century French natural history, "science" and "sentiment" were not distinct; the division that manifests itself in Daniel Mornet's two classics, *Le Sentiment de la nature en France de Jean-Jacques Rousseau à Bernadin de Saint-Pierre* and *Les Sciences de la nature en France, au XVIIIe siècle*, is of a nineteenth-century origin. Only by creating such distinctions have historians been consistently able to affirm the marginality of studies of the social world for an understanding of intellectual practices. Even in social histories of the eighteenth century, writers have felt obliged to treat the sciences as somehow demanding special historiographical tools, separate chapters, a particular "specialist" language: in other words, the conceptual isolation of the sciences is reinforced by a methodological, linguistic, and physical isolation. Since the end of the eighteenth century, the links that existed in natural history between taste and reason, connoisseurship and utility, sensibility and scientificity were progressively cut to fit subsequent categories; and conforming to these nineteenth-

century concerns, historians have paid little attention to natural history as a whole.<sup>69</sup>

A separate, distinct account of eighteenth-century natural history, or “science,” does not entirely make sense. In fact, the scientist did not emerge as a professional until the early nineteenth century, and the process of scientific discovery during the eighteenth century was rarely one divorced from other interests of the practitioners involved, as will be discussed shortly in the context of William Hamilton.<sup>70</sup> But, as the historian of science James E. McClellan mentions in the introduction to his 1985 book, *Science Reorganized: Scientific Societies in the Eighteenth Century*,

scientific societies are by no means the only indicators of this process of “socialization” of science in the eighteenth century. Analysis of the Enlightenment’s fascination with Newton or Bacon, or of the number and kinds of books published, or of public concern for science evidenced in fads for “botonizing,” ballooning, or for Mesmer, for example, show as well the increasing and unprecedented penetration of science into society and culture in the eighteenth century.<sup>71</sup>

To this fascination with Newton, Bacon, ballooning, or Mesmer I would add volcanoes and volcanic eruption; the discoveries of Herculaneum and Pompeii and the resultant popularity of Naples on the Grand Tour; the lasting reverberations of the Lisbon earthquake in 1755 on philosophical issues of God’s role in good and evil; the inclusion of the prints of Desmarest and La Rue of volcanic phenomena in the *Encyclopédie*; the paintings of volcanic eruption by Voltaire; the work on volcanic activity by Hamilton in

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<sup>69</sup> Emma C. Spary, “The ‘Nature’ of Enlightenment,” in *The Sciences of Enlightened Europe*, eds. William Clark, Jan Golinski, and Simon Schaffer (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1999), 272-304.

<sup>70</sup> James E. McClellan, *Science Reorganized: Scientific Societies in the Eighteenth Century* (New York: Columbia University, 1985), preface.

<sup>71</sup> McClellan, *Science Reorganized*, xxiii.

Naples; and the development of the language of the sublime by Burke in his *Enquiry*, which was particularly critical to understanding, or at least aestheticizing, all of the previous elements.

In short, erupting volcanoes and the sublime language of astonishment, terror, and the greatness they conferred through the magnitude of the power of the natural world they spectacularly displayed were popular subjects. Volcanoes were considered sublime not only for their spectacular pyrotechnic displays that could be aesthetically appreciated but for the grand ideas they conveyed. Volcanoes were intricately connected to the existence of a growing passion for science that investigated grand ideas, such as the origins of the earth. Science, that sublime arbiter of the marvelous, examined fundamental premises, such as gravitation, the paths of planets, or other astonishing phenomena, as can be seen illuminated in Wright's *A Philosopher Giving a Lecture on the Orrery in which a Lamp is Put in Place of the Sun* (1766) (Figure 45) and *An Experiment on a Bird in an Air Pump* (1764) (Figure 46). Science was astonishing. Science was marvelous. Science was sublime. In the conclusion to his book, *Mesmerism and the End of the Enlightenment in France*, the social historian Robert Darnton uses the term "marvelous" to describe the passion for science in late eighteenth century France, although a proper substitution for his terminology may just as well have been "sublime":

Curiosity and the stronger passion for the "marvelous" consumed the Parisians of the 1780's and spirited a number of fads that provide valuable information about the attitudes of the reading public at the time. Worthy of study in themselves, these attitudes are especially important for understanding how radical ideas circulated in prerevolutionary France. From the elite who applauded Lavoisier's experiments in the Academy of Sciences to the Sunday strollers who paid 12 livres for a half-hour balloon ride above the Moulin de Javelle in Paris, Frenchmen

burned with enthusiasm for the greatest fashion of the decade before 1787—science.<sup>72</sup>

### **Art and Science: Sublime Vesuvius**

The spectacular, marvelous, miraculous, sublime experience of Vesuvius that helped shape Nicolas Desmarest's interest in geology also helped define William Hamilton's interest in volcanology as natural history, or science. While the focus of this dissertation is on French sublime landscape painting, it is fruitful to consider the work of an Englishman who went to Naples from the other side of the channel in order to provide a more complete picture of how volcanic eruption, the sublime, and natural history, or the "sciences," intersect in the late eighteenth century. The passion for science burned brightly not only in France but throughout Europe, including Great Britain.

As was the case with Desmarest, it is highly significant that a direct viewing of Vesuvius acted as an impetus for Hamilton's sustained interest in volcanoes and volcanic phenomena. Hamilton first visited Naples with the eye of a connoisseur. Only after the experience of a direct viewing of Vesuvius in eruption in 1765 did he turn toward an attempt at understanding volcanic phenomena using the empirical strategies of natural history, such as observation and data collection, which began to transform natural history into a more "scientific" and professionalized endeavor.

Once in Naples, Hamilton wrote in a letter of 1766 to the Royal Society: "This phaenomenon [volcanic eruption] is well worth a curious enquiry, which might give

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<sup>72</sup> Robert Darnton, *Mesmerism and the End of the Enlightenment in France* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1968), 161; For a discussion on the connection between *merveilleux* [marvelous or miraculous] and the sublime in the late seventeenth century see Robert Doran, "The Sublime and Modern Subjectivity: The Discourse of Elevation from Neo-Classicism to French Romanticism" (PhD diss., Stanford University, 2004), 88-94.

some light into the theory of the earth, of which, I believe, we are very ignorant.”<sup>73</sup>

Hamilton did not go to Naples originally to study volcanoes, but to amass a collection of antiquities, which eventually found their way to the British Museum. Between 1766 and 1767, together with the French art dealer Pierre d’Hancarville, Hamilton published a four-volume, lavishly illustrated book on his collection, *Collection of Etruscan, Greek, and Roman Antiquities*, which had a significant impact on the dissemination of neoclassical taste that coincided with the archaeological excavations of Herculaneum and Pompeii. Moreover, its publication predates those books Hamilton published on volcanic activity, such as his collection of letters to the Royal Society, which were gathered into his meagerly illustrated 1772 text, *Observations*, or his self-published, lavishly illustrated two-volume 1776 *Campi Phlegraei*—that took much of its text from the 1772 work—with its well-illustrated supplement produced to cover the massive 1779 eruption of Vesuvius.

Horace Walpole wrote disapprovingly of what he identified as a shift in Hamilton’s interest from antiquities to natural history, especially volcanoes, and began to refer to Hamilton as “Professor of Volcanoes” after the publication of *Campi Phlegraei* in 1776.<sup>74</sup> He scoffed, “I shall desire to be a subscriber to your Vesuvius, but I wish you had not exchanged your taste in painting and Antiquity for Phenomenon.”<sup>75</sup> This

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<sup>73</sup> Richard Hamblyn, “Private Cabinets and Popular Geology: The British Audiences for Volcanoes in the Eighteenth Century,” in *Transports: Travel, Pleasure, and Imaginative Geography, 1600-1830*, eds. Chloe Chard and Helen Langdon (New Haven, CT: Paul Mellon Centre for Studies in British Art, Yale University Press, 1996), 179n2; Hamblyn references Hamilton, *Campi Phlegraei*, 8.

<sup>74</sup> Mark A. Cheetham, “The Taste for Phenomena: Mount Vesuvius and Transformations in Late 18th Century European Landscape Depiction,” *Wallraf-Richartz-Jahrbuch* 45 (1984): 131.

<sup>75</sup> Cheetham, “The Taste for Phenomena,” 131n2. Cheetham references a letter from Walpole to Hamilton, 18 February 1776; See Alfred Morrison, ed., *The Hamilton and Nelson Papers, 1756-1797*, vol. 1 (Great Britain: Printed for Private Circulation, 1893), letter no. 70.

comment assumes a shift from aesthetic to “scientific” concerns inferred from the difference between the focus of Hamilton’s 1766-1767 *Collection*—antiquities—and his 1776 *Campi*—volcanoes. But as art historian Mark Cheetham argues, in line with Spary’s position on the inclusiveness of the field of natural history, the two interests, art and science, were not as mutually exclusive in the eighteenth century as Walpole suggests. Rather, Cheetham advocates for the combined importance of aesthetic and natural history in its impact on landscape painting.

While Cheetham’s focus is on German landscape painting, the focus of his essay can be extended. His argument is built around the influence of Hamilton’s *Campi* on a trend (sublime) in German landscape painting, which was particularly concerned with science and extended into the nineteenth century, most notably in the work of the German landscape painter Joseph Anton Koch. Cheetham’s point about the combined concern of art and science, which he makes using Hamilton as an example, may be taken more generally and not restricted to only German landscape painters or the work of Koch. He contends,

Hamilton never “exchanged” his love of antiquities for scientific pursuits. He collected artistic objects and scientific information with equal assiduity throughout his lengthy stay in the Naples area (1764-1800). In fact, the “Campi Phlegraei” exemplified a radically new integration of scientific and artistic concerns. This coordination was, I believe, as crucial to the landscape genre—which was gaining importance in the late 18<sup>th</sup> century—as was the interest in the antique to history painting and sculpture. Landscape painters within the fine art tradition became increasingly knowledgeable about natural “phenomenon” at this time.<sup>76</sup>

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<sup>76</sup> Cheetham, “The Taste for Phenomena,” 131.

Hamilton's interest in both art and science can be read in the structure of his *Campi*, particularly in the 1779 supplement. It parallels the proximity between the scientific and aesthetic landscape seen in the comparison discussed earlier between the prints in the *Encyclopédie* of Desmarest of the basalt in the Auvergne region (Figure 40) and those of La Rue of the spectacular eruptions of Vesuvius (Figures 18 and 21).

Such a position, the entwinement of natural history and art, or other modes of inquiry, was part of the idea of natural history in the eighteenth century, as Emma Spary suggests. It is also what James E. McClellan refers to as the "Eighteenth Century Problem," or "the search for a convincing description of the variety of sciences at this period," borrowing the terminology of the historian of science Geoffrey Cantor.<sup>77</sup> Understanding, appreciating, or at least attributing importance to "science" in the eighteenth century has been a particularly thorny issue, not only because there was an interpenetration or lack of clear boundaries between disciplines, as Spary suggests, but because the period stands between the great discoveries of the Scientific Revolution of the seventeenth century, such as those by Newton and Bacon, and the great discoveries of the nineteenth century, particularly in physics.<sup>78</sup>

Yet this interpenetration or entwinement between science and art, as Cheetham suggests, is perhaps a great strength of eighteenth-century scientific and artistic engagement (empirical observation and sudden discovery), both of which may be responsible for a new way of seeing the world that was catalyzed by the concept of the

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<sup>77</sup> McClellan, *Science Reorganized*, xxvi; Schaffer, "Natural Philosophy and Public Spectacle," 2.

<sup>78</sup> Hamblyn, "Private Cabinets and Popular Geology," 185; McClellan, *Science Reorganized*, xxvi.

Burkean sublime.<sup>79</sup> In fact, the focus on phenomenon that Walpole so quickly dismissed as an invalid area of interest can be linked to a new appreciation for such events based on the sublime in nature, aesthetically and scientifically, and represented in prints, paintings, and books.

Cheetham suggests that “a dramatic change in Vesuvius depiction occurred when artists in the 18<sup>th</sup> century became aware of the scientific aspects of volcanic activity,” but the situation may actually be the opposite.<sup>80</sup> The interest in the sublime that coincided with the eruptions of Vesuvius beginning in the 1750s and the spectacular representation of such a natural event, as seen in the prints of La Rue and the paintings of Volaire, may have provided the great impulse for scientific investigation. This can be seen in the case of Hamilton who became interested in the scientific aspects of volcanic eruption not only because of the *neptunisme* and *vulcanisme* debates but through the actual, sublime experience of Vesuvius erupting when he was in Naples. As Heringman writes, “Aesthetic discourse about natural catastrophes was not simply one representational strategy among others, but the medium of a ‘cultural salience [that] made these objects visible,’ as Lorraine Daston puts it in her broad account of the ‘coming into being of scientific objects.’”<sup>81</sup> Such use of aesthetic discourse, argues Heringman, is a strategy of

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<sup>79</sup> It is interesting to note that several of the illustrations in *Campi* as well as several paintings by Volaire show an individual with a sketchbook. It is unclear as to whether the sketch being made is for artistic purposes or for “scientific” recording.

<sup>80</sup> Cheetham, “The Taste for Phenomena,” 131.

<sup>81</sup> Heringman, “Style of Natural Catastrophes,” 100; Lorraine Daston, *Biographies of Scientific Objects* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 9.

late Enlightenment science in “its appropriation of the sublime to frame and subordinate natural phenomena.”<sup>82</sup> Heringman continues,

Aesthetic response remains a necessary precondition of scientific inquiry to the extent that measurements and objective description cannot contain or exhaust its phenomena.... In the absence of a disciplinary paradigm for geology, all manner of reports made their way into nominally specialized treatises on the earth, and the aesthetics proper to natural catastrophes, as worked out in numerous poems and literary forms, pervaded public discourse on the subject.<sup>83</sup>

Thus, the change in representation of Vesuvius seen in the contrast between an image such as Teresa’s Del Po’s *The Eruption of Vesuvius in 1694* (Figure 44) and Voltaire’s paintings, such as *Eruption of Vesuvius* (Figure 17), or La Rue’s prints for the *Encyclopédie*, such as *Eruption of Vesuvius in 1754* (Figure 18), combined with an appreciation for eruption codified by the aesthetic category of the sublime and propelled empirical or “scientific” (natural history) enquiry, not the other way around.

## **Conclusion**

Like Vesuvius and the image of the erupting volcano upon which Voltaire built a career, the Burkean sublime changed—spectacularly—the landscape of late eighteenth-century Enlightenment era thought. Volcanoes and the sublime became linked through a visual language of landscape aesthetics that contextualized the theatrical spectacle of nature, evoked the greatness or magnitude of political power, and incited an increased thirst for inquiry in natural history. By the last quarter of the eighteenth century, when

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<sup>82</sup> Heringman, “Style of Natural Catastrophes,” 97.

<sup>83</sup> Heringman, “Style of Natural Catastrophes,” 102.

viewed through the aesthetic category of the sublime, the marvelous spectacle of the erupting volcano became not something just to be feared, but something to be appreciated for its power of destruction, transformation, and renewal. It revealed a fundamentally new way of seeing nature connected to the rising importance of empirical observation, a hallmark of the transformation of natural history into the more rigorously based discipline of science and scientific method, which would come to dominate the nineteenth century and catalyze the rapid development of the industrial revolution.

The Burkean sublime was an aesthetic language applicable to understanding the emergence of a new shift toward secular knowledge embodied in an understanding of the earth that can be seen reflected in sublime landscape painting, specifically in those of volcanic eruption. Also, it was applicable in the field of a natural history that was beginning to transform and separate into “scientific” disciplines, such as archeology, geology, and volcanology. With its revolutionary introduction of an aesthetic category not based on a sensuous appreciation of Beauty but on an emotional reaction to fear and terror, the Burkean sublime provided for a spectacular transformation of aesthetics that could be applied to a shift in the spheres of political power, as well as natural history. The Burkean sublime was the catalyst of a profound change, one embodied by the phenomenon of volcanic eruption.

## CHAPTER THREE

### Sublime Ruins

Ruins were popular for artists, writers, travelers, and tastemakers throughout Europe during the latter part of the eighteenth century. The scholar Ingrid G. Daemmrich suggests this wide popularity was due to a confluence of interests that coalesced at the time: archaeology, travel, and the picturesque.<sup>1</sup> These elements were critical, but to them I would add two more that can be connected to ruins: natural philosophy (science and mathematics) and the sublime, as a grand and awe-inspiring transcendent idea. This chapter considers the range of connections between ruins and the sublime in the second half of the eighteenth century. It focuses primarily on Charles-Louis Clérisseau's *Ruin Room* (1766) (Figure 47) and Hubert Robert's pendant paintings shown at the 1796 Paris Salon, *Project for the Transformation of the Grand Gallery of the Louvre* (Figure 48) and *Imaginary View of the Grand Gallery of the Louvre in Ruins* (Figure 49). These works reveal a concept of ruins that goes far beyond the traditional *vanitas* [futility of material existence] reading in which the transience of life or earthly existence is emphasized.<sup>2</sup> They suggest an enlarged reading of ruins—scientific, cultural, political—when examined from the standpoint of the sublime.<sup>3</sup> Moreover, they indicate that neither the

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<sup>1</sup> Ingrid G. Daemmrich, "The Ruins Motif as Artistic Device in French Literature," *Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 30, no. 4 (Summer 1972), 1:450.

<sup>2</sup> "*Vanitas*" is a term that refers to the passing of time linked to the futility of material or earthly pursuits due to the brevity of life and the inevitability of death. The term is derived from the book of Ecclesiastes I:2, "Vanity of vanities; all is vanity."

<sup>3</sup> Although the term "science" or "scientist" did not come into common use until the first decades of the nineteenth century, I am choosing to use it throughout this chapter, rather than the term "natural history," as

idea of ruins nor of the sublime in the late eighteenth century is entirely fixed, but rather their meaning is fluid, moving between multiple interpretations and implications. I refer to this characteristic of ruins and the sublime in which meaning oscillates between several poles as “multivalence.”

This oscillation between multiple meanings, or multivalence, is a feature that binds the two concepts—ruins and the sublime—during this time period. There seems to be a strong correlation between how ruins and the sublime operate on several levels of meaning. These various meanings coexist and may even be in tension, or contradict one another. By their very nature, ruins evoke greatness, although physically collapsing and decaying. As articulated in the two preceding chapters, the sublime evokes a similar dichotomy: the greatness of elevation derived from the Longinian tradition of the sublime that passed into the eighteenth century through Nicolas Boileau’s *Traité du sublime* (1674) and the fear and terror of Edmund Burke’s articulation of the sublime elaborated in his *A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of Our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful* (1757).<sup>4</sup>

The close relationship between ruins and the sublime that can be seen in late eighteenth-century French landscape painting is an idea almost enigmatically alluded to by Denis Diderot in his 1767 Paris Salon criticism of Robert’s landscape submissions of

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part of my argument is that the sublime helped usher in the professionalization and specialization of natural history in the late eighteenth century, well before the terms “science” or “scientist” emerged with their modern meaning.

<sup>4</sup> Edmund Burke, *A Philosophical Enquiry into the Sublime and Beautiful*, ed. James T. Boulton (London: Routledge, 2008); Boileau’s 1674 *Traité du sublime* is a translation of Longinus’s fragmented and incomplete text; Burke’s 1757 work was translated into French in 1765.

that year.<sup>5</sup> This commentary stands as one of the eighteenth century's most expansive and nuanced discussions of ruins. In one of his richest veins of musings on the subject, Diderot rhapsodized, "What beautiful, sublime ruins," in reference to Robert's now lost painting *Large Gallery Lit from Its Far End* (1760).<sup>6</sup> This is a significant statement because it identifies ruins as sublime, and it connects the two concepts. Following Diderot, ruins have been recognized, as one scholar wrote, "as the eighteenth century's sublime subject par excellence."<sup>7</sup> The precise connections between ruins and the sublime, however, have yet to be fleshed out with thoroughness in scholarship. It is a lacuna this chapter seeks to remedy.

This chapter is divided into two parts. The first examines Diderot's multivalent formulation of ruins in the context of Robert's Paris Salon submissions of 1767 and offers an interpretation of Clérisseau's Ruin Room that situates it and the concept of ruins in the context of Newton's Universal Law of Gravitation. The second part argues for the cultural and political significance of ruins in the 1790s through their connection to the sublime idea of the greatness of France. This idea will be examined using the pendants Robert showed at the Paris Salon of 1796 with the Louvre as their subject: *Project for the Transformation of the Grand Gallery of the Louvre* shows how the Grand Gallery might appear upon its completion, while *Imaginary View of the Grand Gallery of the Louvre in Ruins* shows it as a future ruin. Robert's pendants present a multivalent reading of ruins,

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<sup>5</sup> Denis Diderot, *Salons*, ed. Jean Seznec and Jean Adhémar, 2nd ed., vol. 3 (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1963), 3:221-249. For Diderot's discussion of Robert's submissions, see 3:221-249; Also see Denis Diderot, *Diderot on Art*, ed. and trans. John Goodman, vol. 2 (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1995), 2:190-220.

<sup>6</sup> "Ô les belles, les sublimes ruines!" Diderot, *Salons*, 3:227.

<sup>7</sup> Nina Dubin, "Robert des Ruines: Speculating in the Market for Ruins," *Cabinet Magazine*, no. 20, "Ruins" (Winter 2005/06), accessed 23 August 2012, <http://cabinetmagazine.org/issues/20/dubin.php>.

but they promote less a *vanitas* interpretation informed by the Burkean sublime of fear, than a sublime conception of French cultural and political superiority informed by a Longinian sublime of elevation and greatness.

### **The Multivalence of Ruins and the Sublime**

While ruins by their very nature are dualistic, acting as sites of memory and erasure, sites of presence and transience, evocative of grand ideas while falling physically to dust, they began to acquire an expanded meaning in the mid-eighteenth century. This meaning, or multiple meanings, goes beyond the traditional *vanitas* interpretation that had persisted until that time as a living reminder of what had passed and what would come to pass. The multivalence of meaning in ruins is something that is almost inherent in their form. They rise from the ground as a physical testament to the grandeur and existence of the past and yet are in the process of falling down, decaying, dying. This duality is the essence of what Diderot calls the *poétique des ruines* [poetics of ruins] in his 1767 Paris Salon criticism when viewing the submissions of Robert that year, a painter Diderot aptly nicknamed *Robert des ruines* [Robert of ruins] for his propensity to paint that particular subject matter.<sup>8</sup> This poetics of ruins surpasses an idea of transience inherent in the *vanitas* reading of ruins. It emphasizes the transcendent spirit of great *ideas* embodied by ruins, ones that stand against the downward dragging gravitational pull of time that takes its toll on the material world. Diderot wrote on Robert's 1767 painting *Ruin of a Triumphal Arch and Other Monuments*:

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<sup>8</sup> For Diderot's use of *poétique des ruines*, see Diderot, *Salons*, 3:227; For a further discussion of Diderot's use of this term, see Roland Mortier, *La Poétique des ruines en France: Ses origines, ses variations de la Renaissance à Victor Hugo* (Geneva: Droz, 1974), 88-97.

We let our gaze wander over the ruins of a triumphal arch, a portico, a pyramid, a temple, a palace, and we retreat into ourselves, we anticipate the ravages of time, and in our imagination we scatter over the ground the rubble of the very buildings we still inhabit; in that moment, solitude and silence around us, we are sole survivors of an entire nation that is no more, and that is the first line of the poetics of ruins.<sup>9</sup>

Within his review of Robert's 1767 Paris Salon landscape painting submissions, Diderot's treatment of ruins, a topic he had mentioned only in passing since 1758, is exhaustive.<sup>10</sup> Here he begins to expand on his ideas, from ruins that represent mere transience in the *vanitas* tradition to the recognition of a multivalence in their symbolism, namely a full range of poetic emotions that stand as part of and in addition to *vanitas*: melancholia, peacefulness, nostalgia, humbleness, grandeur.

Before delving more fully and explicitly into a discussion of ruins, Diderot writes a somewhat enigmatic introduction to his commentary on Robert's salon submissions in which he considers at length the idea of a voyager.<sup>11</sup> This section has been largely ignored in the scholarly analysis of Diderot's writings on ruins as a mere "digression"

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<sup>9</sup> "Nous attachons nos regards sur les débris d'un arc de triomphe, d'un portique, d'une pyramide, d'un temple, d'un palais, et nous revenons sur nous mêmes; nous anticipons sur les ravages du temps, et notre imagination disperse sur la terre les édifices mêmes que nous habitons; à l'instant la solitude et le silence règnent autour de nous, nous restons seuls de toute une nation qui n'est plus; et voilà la première ligne de la poétique des ruines." Diderot, *Salons*, 3:227.

<sup>10</sup> For a discussion of Diderot's pre-1767 conception of ruins, see George Poulet, *Studies in Human Time* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins Press, 1956), 185-189; For a discussion of Diderot's 1767 conception of ruins from his Paris Salon criticism of that year, see Anne Layton Schroder, "Diderot's 1767 Salon Essays on the Ruin Paintings of Hubert Robert" (master's thesis, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, 1983), 31; For an introduction to the debate of the role Robert's paintings played in establishing Diderot's thoughts on ruins, see Else Marie Bukdahl, *Diderot, Critique d'art* (Copenhagen: Rosenkilde et Bagger, 1980), 1:302-320. Bukdahl, for example, first attributes the impetus for Diderot's inspired meditation on ruins to Robert's paintings, since he saw them for the first time at the Salon of 1767; Also see Anne Betty Weinschenker, "Diderot's Use of the Ruin Image," *Diderot Studies* 16 (1973), 314. Weinschenker, somewhat mistakenly, finds Diderot's imaginative discussions of the work as improvements that he would make in the painting itself.

<sup>11</sup> Diderot, *Salons*, 3:221-224.

from the substance of his thoughts on the subject contained in his discussion of specific paintings and drawings.<sup>12</sup> But the concept of the voyager is a vital aspect of his conception of ruins. Far from being a minor, unrelated aspect of Diderot's elucidation of ruins, beginning with the subject of the voyager provides an important clue for an enlivened, expanded, and precise view of ruins as something that cannot be experienced passively, but rather as something that literally moves or transports the viewer.

The voyager and the idea of movement are critical to understanding Diderot's conception of ruins. As an analogy, the voyager constantly moves between different geographical places, just as Diderot's conception of ruins is that they are multivalent, evoking oscillation—or movement—among meanings. The travel Diderot proposes is not the one reflected upon in “The Journey,” chapter one of Constantin François de Volney's renowned 1793 *Les Ruines, ou méditation sur les révolutions des empires* [*The Ruins of Empires*] in which the author travels to the Valley of Sepulchers to visit the celebrated ruins of a mighty empire and to dream (or meditate) in the ruins of its lost presence.<sup>13</sup> Nor is it the wandering that takes place in the *Italian Journey* (1766) of Abbé Richard, whose name and work Diderot criticized and to whom he directed, in part, the first “digression” in his commentary on ruins.<sup>14</sup> Such excursions are unnecessary for Diderot, who never traveled to Syria or Italy.

Contemplation in front of images of ruins, such as those found in the paintings and drawings of Robert at the Salon of 1767, is enough to stimulate the imagination and

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<sup>12</sup> Layton Schroder, “Diderot's 1767 Salon,” 11.

<sup>13</sup> C. F. Volney, *The Ruins, or, Meditation on the Revolutions of Empires: And The Law of Nature* (Baltimore, MD: Black Classic Press, 1991), 5-8.

<sup>14</sup> Diderot, *Salons*, 3:223.

to almost literally transport Diderot (or a viewer) to those sites and to catalyze the panoply of ideas that ruins evoke. To cause the mind itself to wander is sufficient. The physical act itself is unnecessary. And it is this idea of moving or transporting the viewer—beyond something that merely collapses or decays—that is critically important in understanding the idea of ruins as symbolic and evocative of multivalent meanings. Again, for Diderot, ruins inspire us to have many different types of intense ideas, thoughts and feelings—grand, sublime, noble, humble, melancholic, nostalgic, fearful, romantic. But the important quality is that they move us. Like the voyager, we are not allowed to settle down (in our thoughts, emotionally or physically) in one place for long. Ruins take us away to some distant place, either within ourselves and our memories or to another time or space. Ruins allow us to travel.

In writing about Robert's *Large Gallery Lit from its Far End*, Diderot ruminates on ruins as a space that not only contains but evokes and acts as a condenser for his feelings and memories of love. What is important here is the connection between his emotions, or memories, and the physical space of ruins, even though those ruins may only exist as a representation in a landscape painting by Robert. Ruins, for Diderot, real or representational, bridge interior and exterior space and allow for movement between these spaces. Diderot assumed a voice that spoke to his long-lost beloved:

If absence should separate us, I would come here in search of the same intoxication that had so completely and deliciously possessed our senses.... Oh censor residing in the depths of my heart, you pursue me still. I was trying to evade your reproaches, yet it's here that you speak out most forcefully. Let us flee this place. Is it a sojourn of innocence? Of remorse? It is either, depending upon the soul one brings here.<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> Diderot, *Diderot on Art*, trans. John Goodman, 2:200; Diderot, *Salons*, 3:229-230. "Si l'absence nous tient éloignés, j'y viendrai rechercher la même ivresse qui avait si entièrement, si délicieusement disposé de

Not only are ruins a place to contemplate love and experience, but Diderot identified them as a place that contains and evokes whatever is brought of himself—whatever is imagined, “whatever the soul brings here”—as a projection of the inner space of the psyche onto the space of ruins.

For Diderot, ruins, as part of their very nature, are spaces intimately connected to the psychic interior of the human individual. Thus, melancholic or nostalgic associations can stand next to great, sublime ones in Diderot’s *poétique des ruines*. Dreams, emotions, and imagination are connected to ruins as much as ruins are connected to the rise or fall of a society or civilization. What historian and philosopher Michel Foucault has to say about the work of the phenomenologist Gaston Bachelard in regard to the interior space of the psyche is significant when considering Diderot’s reverie. Foucault contends,

Bachelard’s monumental work and the descriptions of phenomenologists have taught us that we do not live in a homogeneous and empty space, but on the contrary in a space thoroughly imbued with quantities and perhaps thoroughly fantasmatic as well. The space of our primary perception, the space of our dreams and that of our passions hold within themselves qualities that seem intrinsic: there is a light, ethereal, transparent space, or again a dark, rough, encumbered space; a space from above, of summits, or on the contrary a space from below of mud; or again a space that can be flowing like sparkling water, or space that is fixed, congealed, like stone or crystal.<sup>16</sup>

Diderot’s multivalent ruins, then, can be understood as Bachelard’s combination of spaces—the space of primary perception, the space of dreams, the space of passions. This

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nos sens.... Ô censeur qui réside au fond de mon cœur, tu m’as suivi jusqu’ici. Je cherchais à me distraire de ton reproche, et c’est ici que je t’entends plus fortement. Fuyons ces lieux. Est-ce le séjour de l’innocence? Est-ce celui du remords? C’est l’un et l’autre, selon l’âme qu’on y porte.”

<sup>16</sup> Michel Foucault, “Des Espace Autres” (Heterotopias), “Of Other Spaces,” trans. Jay Miskowiec, *Diacritics* 16, no. 1 (Spring 1986): 23. <http://foucault.info/documents/heteroTopia/foucault.heteroTopia.en.html>.

multivalence is the aspect that is so special about ruins and their relationship with the inner psyche. To use Bachelard's words, ruins are dark, light, encumbered; they are a space above or below; they evoke ideas or dreams that flow like water, or they are a congealed space, condensing memories like crystal or stone.

Ruins, as they reflect and can be projected upon, as they contain and evoke, as they are and as they can be imagined to have been (or are imagined yet to be), function very much as *heterotopic* space, as Foucault defines it in a 1967 lecture "Of Other Spaces."<sup>17</sup> And while he lists some examples of heterotopias and defines a series of six principles of heterotopic space, his general categorization is through the analogy of a mirror:

There are also, probably in every culture, in every civilization, real places—places that do exist and that are formed in the very founding of society—which are something like counter-sites, a kind of effectively enacted utopia in which the real sites, all the other real sites that can be found within the culture, are simultaneously represented, contested, and inverted. Places of this kind are outside of all places, even though it may be possible to indicate their location in reality. Because these places are absolutely different from all the sites that they reflect and speak about, I shall call them, by way of contrast to utopias, heterotopias. I believe that between utopias and these quite other sites, these heterotopias, there might be a sort of mixed, joint experience, which would be the mirror. The mirror is, after all, a utopia, since it is a placeless place. In the mirror, I see myself there where I am not, in an unreal, virtual space that opens up behind the surface; I am over there, there where I am not, a sort of shadow that gives my own visibility to myself, that enables me to see myself there where I am absent: such is the utopia of the mirror. But it is also a heterotopia in so far as the mirror does exist in reality, where it exerts a sort of counteraction on the position that I occupy. From the standpoint of the mirror I discover my absence from the place where I am since I see myself over

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<sup>17</sup> Foucault, "Of Other Spaces," 23.

there. Starting from this gaze that is, as it were, directed toward me, from the ground of this virtual space that is on the other side of the glass, I come back toward myself; I begin again to direct my eyes toward myself and to reconstitute myself there where I am. The mirror functions as a heterotopia in this respect: it makes this place that I occupy at the moment when I look at myself in the glass at once absolutely real, connected with all the space that surrounds it, and absolutely unreal, since in order to be perceived it has to pass through this virtual point which is over there.<sup>18</sup>

While Foucault does not specifically mention ruins as an external heterotopic space, they fulfill his conditions as such. His articulation of heterotopias, although far more abstract, bears an uncanny resemblance to the very personal experience of ruins Diderot elucidated in his 1767 Salon writings while standing in front of Robert's paintings. In Diderot's musings on the paintings of Robert, ruins—like a garden, a museum, a colony, or a ship for Foucault—are a heterotopic space.<sup>19</sup> Diderot wrote,

If the site of the ruin seems perilous, I shudder. If I feel safe and secure there, I'm freer, more alone, more myself, closer to myself. It's there that I call out to my friend, it's there that I miss my friend; it's there that we'd enjoy ourselves without anxiety, without witnesses, without intruders, without those jealous of us. It's there that I probe my own heart; it's there that I interrogate his, that I take alarm and reassure myself. Between this place and the abodes of the city, the native ground of tumult, the seat of interest,

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<sup>18</sup> Foucault, "Of Other Spaces," 22-27. Foucault lists the six principles of *heterotopia* throughout his lecture, providing examples of each to establish each principle: "Its first principle is that there is probably not a single culture in the world that fails to constitute heterotopias.... The second principle of this description of heterotopias is that a society, as its history unfolds, can make an existing heterotopia function in a very different fashion; for each heterotopia has a precise and determined function within a society and the same heterotopia can, according to the synchrony of the culture in which it occurs, have one function or another.... Third principle. The heterotopia is capable of juxtaposing in a single real place several spaces, several sites that are in themselves incompatible.... Fourth principle. Heterotopias are most often linked to slices in time—which is to say that they open onto what might be termed, for the sake of symmetry, heterochronies.... Fifth principle. Heterotopias always presuppose a system of opening and closing that both isolates them and makes them penetrable.... Sixth principle. The last trait of heterotopias is that they have a function in relation to all the space that remains. This function unfolds between two extreme poles."

<sup>19</sup> Foucault, "Of Other Spaces," 27.

passion, vice, crime prejudice, and error, the distance is great.<sup>20</sup>

Speaking from the standpoint of his own experience, Diderot reiterates the multivalent nature of ruins and how what they evoke oscillates between himself and another. His statement is rich, and despite using different language it contains the essence of Foucault's discussion of the mirror as a heterotopia, "From the standpoint of the mirror I discover my absence from the place where I am since I see myself over there."<sup>21</sup> Diderot qualifies why ruins can evoke sublime feelings of fear and grandness at one and the same time; this multivalence of meaning is an inherent quality of ruins. Diderot identifies how his full range of emotions can be found in the solitary presence of ruins. Many of his emotions or feelings are binary or oppositional, like the essential nature of ruins that evoke grand ideas while in the process of falling down. In solitude, amongst ancient stones, he can be himself; it is a self that can be allowed to vacillate between opposite poles of emotional states or spaces—"From this place [ruins] to the abodes of the city, the space is great," according to Diderot.<sup>22</sup>

Ruins are a special place—a heterotopic space—because it is there that Diderot can experience a complex series of often opposite parallel associations: peril and safety; to call to a friend (who may be there) and to miss a friend (who is probably not there); to interrogate his own heart and his friend's; to experience alarm and reassurance. For

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<sup>20</sup> Diderot, *Diderot on Art*, trans. John Goodman, 2:199; Diderot, *Salons*, 3:229. "Si le lieu d'une ruine est périlleux, je frémis. Si je m'y promets le secret et la sécurité, je suis plus libre, plus seul, plus à moi, plus près de moi. C'est là que j'appelle mon ami, c'est là que je regrette mon amie; c'est là que nous jouirons de nous sans trouble, sans témoins, sans importuns, sans jaloux. C'est là que je sonde mon cœur; c'est là que j'interroge le sien, que je m'alarme et me rassure. De ce lieu jusqu'aux habitations des villes, jusqu'aux demeures du tumulte, au séjour de l'intérêt, des passions, des vices, des crimes, des préjugés, des erreurs, il y a loin."

<sup>21</sup> Foucault, "Of Other Spaces," 23.

<sup>22</sup> "De ce lieu jusqu'aux habitations des villes, il y a loin." Diderot, *Salons*, 3:229.

Diderot, ruins are a vessel—one that literally contains and transports—for (imagined) experience and discovery. This experience and discovery are non-specific, and perhaps this accounts for the longstanding popularity of ruins. They are a screen upon which anything can be projected or reexperienced: antiquarian interest; evocation of the antique; political or cultural legitimization tied to the classical past; or very personal nostalgia, dreams, memories, or experiences. Foucault confirms Diderot’s conception of the multivalent nature of ruins and notes the extreme oscillation of meaning in writing on the sixth principle of heterotopic space:

The last trait of heterotopias is that they have a function in relation to all the space that remains. This function unfolds between two extreme poles. Either their role is to create a space of illusion that exposes every real space, all the sites inside of which human life is partitioned, as still more illusory... Or else, on the contrary, their role is to create a space that is other, another real space, as perfect, as meticulous, as well arranged as ours is messy, ill constructed, and jumbled.<sup>23</sup>

While ruins may also be considered within the context of the grand idea of transience, represented in the *vanitas* tradition of fall or decay, they also represent the opposite pole as the active struggle between nature *in situ* and the inspired nature of the sublime aspirations of humanity for greatness or to overcome or to transcend.

### **The Oscillation in Ruins and the Sublime**

The critical concept in understanding ruins and the sublime in the late eighteenth century is not only that they have a multitude of associations, but that these associations vibrate. They oscillate among one another, just as the voyager travels between places in

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<sup>23</sup> Foucault, “Of Other Spaces,” 24.

Diderot's 1767 opening discussion on ruins in his salon criticism of Robert's paintings. They oscillate, like Foucault's poles of the heterotopia, between psychic interior and architectural exterior. The *idea* of ruins is always in motion, like ruins themselves; it is always on the move. This is a fact embodied in the materiality of ruins themselves as they move toward immateriality in terms of the grand ideas they evoke, while being pulled down by their own weight and the force of gravity.

Thus in 1767, Diderot states that ruins are grand and sublime. And yet he also discusses them at the same time with reference to fear.<sup>24</sup> Diderot presents a multivalent reading of ruins that oscillates, like a sublime that reflects both Longinian elevation and Burkean fear. They are at once more than one thing. They are multivalent. And meaning shifts; it oscillates. As previously mentioned, Diderot wrote at the beginning of his 1767 Salon discussion of Robert's *Large Gallery Lit from Its Far End*, "What beautiful, sublime ruins!... What grandeur! What nobility!"<sup>25</sup> Yet halfway through his discussion of Robert's work he shifts to write on death, in order to reflect a substantial element of fear: "A torrent pulls each and every nation into the depths of a common abyss."<sup>26</sup> It is a statement in which the abyss can be read as a code, or stand-in, for the Burkean sublime. Diderot completed this dialectic of ruins:

The ideas that ruins awake in me are great. Everything comes to nothing, everything perishes, everything passes; only the world remains, only time endures. It is old this world! I walk between two eternities. Wherever I look, the objects around me announce the end and I resign myself to

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<sup>24</sup> For a discussion of how Diderot may have been influenced by Burke, see Gita May, "Diderot and Burke – A Study in Aesthetic Affinity," *PMLA* 75, no. 5 (Dec 1960): 527-539.

<sup>25</sup> "Ô les belles, les sublimes ruines!... Quelle grandeur! Quelle noblesse!" Diderot, *Salons*, 3:227.

<sup>26</sup> "Un torrent entraîne les nations les unes sur les autres au fond d'un abîme commun." Diderot, *Salons*, 3:229.

that which awaits me [death]. What is my ephemeral existence in comparison with that of the rock being worn, of a valley being formed, of a dying forest, of those quaking masses suspended above my head? ? I see the marble tombs crumble to dust, and I do not want to die! And I resent the effect of a general law on weak tissue of fibers and flesh that even bronze cannot resist! A torrent pulls each and every nation into the depths of a common abyss; me, myself, I resolve to make a *solitary stand* [emphasis mine] at the edge and resist the currents flowing past my side.<sup>27</sup>

Diderot's passage is extremely revealing of the later-eighteenth-century symbolism of ruins. It includes the idea of transience, greatness, the idea of the evocation of imagination, the idea of absolute time, and the certainty of the finite timeline of human mortality. The certainty of time in regard to the monument of great civilizations is contrasted with the eternity of time.

Diderot's passage also contains two additional ideas that are extremely important. The first is that there is a force, a general law, like gravity, that cannot be resisted. This is always an important element of what ruins represent—things fall down—and does not need to be elaborated on more. And second, more importantly, that a great man with great ideas—or at least a great man, like Diderot (or Isaac Newton), whose ideas are not made of material subject to the laws of nature, like buildings and stone—can, perhaps, heroically survive the passage of time. It is this concept, the transcendence of the human spirit, or of the great idea, that is critical to examine. This transcendence, or eternalness,

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<sup>27</sup> “Les idées que les ruines réveillent en moi sont grandes. Tout s’anéantit, tout périt, tout passe, il n’y a que le monde qui reste, il n’y a que le temps qui dure. Qu’il est vieux, ce monde! Je marche entre deux éternités. De quelque part que je jette les yeux, les objets qui m’entourent m’annoncent une fin et me résignent à celle qui m’attend. Qu’est-ce que mon existence éphémère en comparaison de celle de ce rocher qui s’affaisse, de ce vallon qui se creuse, de cette forêt qui chancelle, de ces masses suspendues au-dessus de ma tête et qui s’ébranlent? Je vois le marbre des tombeaux tomber en poussière; et je ne veux pas mourir! et j’envie un faible tissu de fibres et de chair à une loi générale qui s’exécute sur le bronze! Un torrent entraîne les nations les unes sur les autres au fond d’un abîme commun; moi, moi seul je prétends m’arrêter sur le bord et fender le flot qui coule à mes côtés!” Diderot, *Salons*, 3:228-229.

can be understood in the idea of the solitary stand Diderot resolves to make in the above quotation.<sup>28</sup> He refuses to become a victim of the ravages of time, even though he realizes that his body—like bronze, or the dying forests—will pass from this earth like the powder of marble tombs. Through his words, particularly his writing, Diderot stands against the destructive force of time. The grand idea—the sublime idea—lives on.

### **Ruins and The Sublime Transcendence of the Grand Idea**

Implicit in their characteristic of movement, ruins always indicate the aspect of decay as part of their architecture of meaning, but they also represent that which sublimely transcends—the human spirit. For Diderot, that human spirit is embodied in the form of the grand idea. In his writing on ruins, the nineteenth-century sociologist Georg Simmel characterized this transcendence of the spirit elegantly, juxtaposing the natural forces at work on the materiality of ruins versus what he terms “upward striving” to conclude that in these two forces, “something lives on”:

The forces which one can designate only by the spatial simile of upward striving are at work continuously in our soul, continuously interrupted, deflected, overcome by other forces which work in us as what is dull, mean, “merely natural.” The manner in which, and the extent to which, these two variously mingle, yield, at every moment, the form of our soul. But neither by the most decisive victory of one of the two these two parties nor by their compromise does it ever arrive at a definitive state. For not only does the restless rhythm of the soul not tolerate such a state, but, more important, behind every single event, every single impulse that comes from one or the other of these two directions, there is something which lives on, and there are claims which the decision just made does not put to rest. This gives the antagonism between the two principles

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<sup>28</sup> Diderot, *Salons*, 3:228-229.

something unfinishable and formless, which breaks every frame.<sup>29</sup>

The varied substance of the imagining or meditation evoked by ruins as more than the idea of transience or falling, typically attached to the traditional *vanitas* interpretation, can be connected to the great idea symbolized by ruins. Simmel elaborated on the psychic impact and physical reality—the essential binary—of architectural ruins:

The moment its decay destroys the unity of the form, nature and spirit separate again and reveal their world-pervading original enmity—as if the artistic formation had only been an act of violence committed by the spirit to which the stone unwillingly submitted; as if it now gradually shook off this yoke and returned once more into the independent, lawful order of its own forces.<sup>30</sup>

On one hand, Simmel's passage may be clearly read as a testament to the idea of transience in the *vanitas* reading in which everything passes. On the other hand, his passage provides an entry into understanding the conception of ruins in the eighteenth century that was connected to the greatness of human spirit or to the capacity of human thought to discover eternal truths that can be triggered by the image of ruins. Nature and spirit separate in the image of falling to ruin. And while nature reclaims the material evidence of spirit in the erosion of the built works of humanity, the spirit itself—or the grand idea—does not fall. It is transcendent. The spirit lives on to perpetuate another act of violence to stone.<sup>31</sup> Diderot acknowledged this transcendence of the spirit when he

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<sup>29</sup> Georg Simmel, "The Ruin," in *Georg Simmel, 1858-1918*, ed. Kurt H. Wolff (Columbus, OH: Ohio State University Press, 1959), 259-266.

<sup>30</sup> Simmel, "The Ruin," 259-266.

<sup>31</sup> Perhaps the greatest and most simple evidence for the persistence of the great idea evoked by ruins is in the fact that Diderot is standing in front of an image of ruins at the Salon. It may be an abstraction, but the very image of ruins itself (paint, print, or architecture site) proves the transcendence (or transcendent idea) of man as he is standing looking at it.

wrote in his discussion of Robert's *Ruin of a Triumphal Arch and Other Monuments*, "we are sole survivors of an entire nation that is no more, and that is the first line of the poetics of ruins."<sup>32</sup> The very image of ruins (in paint, print, or architectural site), such as those shown by Robert at the 1767 Paris Salon (or at the 1796 Paris Salon, as will be discussed later in this chapter), supplies the proof for the transcendence of the spirit, as Diderot himself *stands* in front of Robert's paintings looking at ruins. He has not fallen—yet. And it is within this evocative capacity of transcendence that ruins can be considered sublime.

A sufficiently monumental idea transcends transience, to put it bluntly. Diderot wends his way around this issue in the introduction to his discussion of Robert's paintings in his 1767 Paris Salon criticism when he discusses the voyager. Diderot criticized the "narrow-mindedness" of Abbé Richard, whose work (*Italian Journey*)—like statues, paintings and buildings—will pass:

Dom Richard, do you imagine that the heap of impertinences constituting your mythology [*Italian Journey*] will obtain man's eternal faith? If your book disappears it wasn't worth writing; if it endures, don't you see that you've presented yourself to posterity as an idiot, and when in the course of time the statues have been shattered, the paintings destroyed, and the buildings about which you have held forth reduced to heaps of rock, what reliability will posterity accord the remarks of one so narrow-minded, with a head so encumbered by the most ridiculous notions?<sup>33</sup>

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<sup>32</sup> "nous restons seuls de toute une nation qui n'est plus; et voilà la première ligne de la poétiques des ruines." Diderot, *Salons*, 3:227.

<sup>33</sup> Diderot, *Diderot on Art*, trans. John Goodman, 2:192; Diderot, *Salons*, 3:223. "Dom Richard, est-ce que tu t'imagines que ce tas d'impertinences qui forment ta Mythologie obtiendra des hommes une croyance éternelle? Si ton livre passe, ce n'était pas la peine de l'écrire; s'il dure, ne vois-tu pas que tu te traduis à la postérité comme un sot, et lorsque le temps aura brisé les statues, détruit les peintures, amoncelé les édifices don't tu m'entretiens, quelle confiance l'avenir accordera-t-il aux récits d'une tête rétrécie et embéguinée des notions les plus ridicules?"

In short, neither Dom Richard's work nor his individual spirit is grand enough to resist the stream of time and the downward pull of gravity that takes its toll on the physical body of ruins and humans alike. This very subject, the greatness or sublimity of one's work or legacy, represents the substance of part of Diderot's famous letter exchange with the French sculptor Étienne Maurice Falconnet.<sup>34</sup> The transcendence of the merely futile for the truly great is embodied in Diderot's desire to record his thoughts and is essential for humans to continue to aspire to noble and great thought. In Longinus's terms of the sublime, ruins contain the seed for those great ennobling, elevating ideas that live forever.<sup>35</sup> The sublime is the disembodied transcendent idea. This transcendence of the grand, sublime idea embodied in ruins can be seen expressed very clearly in the connection made between ruins and a sufficiently grand idea such as Newton's Universal Law of Gravitation.

### **Sublime Science in Ruins: Newton and the Transcendent Idea of Gravity**

An example of the expanded cultural significance of ruins can be seen in Charles-Louis Clérisseau's *Ruin Room* (Figure 47), which contains a multivalent reading of ruins that oscillates between *vanitas* and the almost timeless transcendence of a great, sublime idea. In Clérisseau's work, ruins reflect a sublime that stands for a grand, universal idea—Isaac Newton's Universal Law of Gravitation—which, this chapter argues, is part of the fascination, or allure, of ruins that existed in the mid-eighteenth century, along

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<sup>34</sup> Henry Levin, "The Judgement of Posterity," *Arcadia - Internationale Zeitschrift für Literaturwissenschaft/International Journal for Literary Studies* 7, no. 1-3 (January 1972): 1-11.

<sup>35</sup> Longinus, *On Great Writing (On the Sublime)*, trans. and intro. G.M.A. Grube (New York: Liberal Arts Press, 1957), 3, 4, 20, 41, 48, 49.

with their appeal for poetic, antiquarian, picturesque, or archaeological interest.<sup>36</sup>

Through a better understanding of the Ruin Room, it may be possible to add a scientific aspect to the significance of ruins in the eighteenth century to reflect issues evident in natural philosophy and aesthetics such as the sublime.

The Ruin Room is located in a convent between the church of St. Trinità dei Monti and the Villa Medici in Rome. It was built by the French architect and painter Clérisseau in the 1760s for a Jesuit mathematician, Père Le Seur. As a place of habitat, the illusionistic *trompe l'oeil* [tricks the eye] effect of literally “living in ruins” was further underscored by the furnishings in the Ruin Room, now lost, which took the form of architectural fragments *à l'antique* [in the manner of the antique].<sup>37</sup> J. G. Legrand’s contemporaneous description in his biography of Giambattista Piranesi is worth quoting at length:

On entering you think you are seeing the cella of a temple adorned with antique fragments that have escaped the ravages of time; the vault and several parts of the wall have fallen apart and are held up by a rotting scaffolding which seems to allow the sun to shine through. These effects are rendered with skill and truth and create a perfect illusion. This effect is enhanced by the furniture which is in character. The bed was a richly decorated vessel, the fireplace a mixture of diverse fragments, the desk a damaged antique sarcophagus, the table and the chairs a piece of cornice and inverted capital. Even the dog, faithful guardian of this new style of furniture, is shown lodged in the debris of an arched niche.<sup>38</sup>

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<sup>36</sup> Daemmrich, “The Ruins Motif as Artistic Device,” 1:449-457.

<sup>37</sup> Thomas J. McCormick, *Charles-Louis Clérisseau and the Genesis of Neo-Classicism* (New York: Architectural History Foundation, 1990), 103. The exact date of the Ruin Room is not known. McCormick identifies a letter of 1767 from Winckelmann to Clérisseau in which the room is mentioned.

<sup>38</sup> McCormick, *Charles-Louis Clérisseau*, 103, 251n35.

Legrand's description has provided art and architectural historians, such as Thomas J. McCormick, with the most ready and easily digestible interpretation of the space through its formal qualities *à l'antique*. These qualities are indicative of a taste for ruins within a hermit-room tradition as a place of spiritual retreat from the world, and within the general context for ruins connected to the emergence of neoclassicism.<sup>39</sup> Like the taste for ruins in general, it can be viewed in several contexts: the international popularity of Piranesi's prints, as well as those of the many other artists working with subject matter derived from the antique in the eighteenth century; the site of Rome as an important destination for travelers on the Grand Tour; and the interest in archaeological authenticity that can be traced directly to the discoveries of Herculaneum (1738) and Pompeii (1748).<sup>40</sup> Also, it can be interpreted through the widespread perception that the current age was inferior to the great age of antiquity—Giambattista Vico's cycle of birth, maturity and decay.<sup>41</sup>

Moreover, it is reasonable to connect Clérisseau's Ruin Room to a tradition of similar illusionistic spaces that can be traced to Giulio Romano's Sala dei Giganti [Room of Giants] at the Palazzo del Tè (1524-1534), built in Mantua for Federico II Gonzaga, Duke of Mantua. It can also be viewed in line with a tradition of immersive painted environments—the Garden Room at Primaporta (first century CE)—as well as illusionistic ceilings: Andrea Mantegna's *Roundel with Putti and Ladies Looking Down*

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<sup>39</sup> McCormick, *Charles-Louis Clérisseau*, 110.

<sup>40</sup> McCormick, *Charles-Louis Clérisseau*, 117.

<sup>41</sup> Giambattista Vico, *The New Science of Giambattista Vico*, 3rd ed., trans. Thomas Goddard Bergin and Max Harold Fisch (1744; Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1961).

at the Palazzo Ducale in Mantua (1465-1474) and Giovanni Battista Gaulli's *Triumph of the Name of Jesus* (1676-1679) at the Jesuit Church of Il Gesù in Rome (1568-1580).<sup>42</sup>

Executed at approximately the same time as Diderot's 1767 Salon writings on ruins, the four walls and ceiling of the Ruin Room are painted, as previously noted, in a sophisticated *trompe l'oeil* that gives the appearance that the room is in ruins and in the process of falling down; it is a point strongly underscored by the collapsing vault and flimsy wooden slats painted on the ceiling. To look up while in the room is to think the ceiling *will* fall down (Figure 50). This idea provides a shorthand interpretation for one of the very basic ideas discussed earlier, or shall we say tenets of ruins—that they fall down, that they collapse. McCormick rightly identifies the ceiling as a vital element in understanding the program of the space. The ceiling becomes critically significant for an enlarged interpretation of the space that does not just signify a major tenet of ruins, but alludes to the great, universal idea of *why* they must fall down. This becomes clear when viewed in light of a small element that can be seen represented not only in the Ruin Room but also in a portrait commissioned by Père Jacquier, a co-inhabitant of the Ruin Room, from the painter Louis-Gabriel Blanchet after the 1772 death of Jacquier's friend Le Seur (Figure 51).<sup>43</sup> Blanchet's portrait shows the two men seated in front of a globe with a map of the world and an astrolabe. Absorbed in the study of mathematical papers,

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<sup>42</sup> McCormick, *Charles-Louis Clérissseau*, 110.

<sup>43</sup> Derek Gjertsen, *The Newton Handbook* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1986), 307. Gjertsen's entry for Thomas Le Seur (1703-71) is as follows: "A friar of the order of Minims, Le Seur served a Professor of Mathematics at the Collège de la Sapience in Rome. He is best known, however, as editor, with Francis Jacquier, of the inappropriately-named Jesuit edition of *Principia* (1739-42, 3 vols)." Gjertsen's entry for Francis Jacquier (1711-88) is as follows: "A friar of the order of Minims, Jacquier served as Professor of Physics at Rome from 1746, apart from a period in the late 1760s spent in Parma with Condillac supervising the education of the infant Don Ferdinand. As a scientist he worked on the lunar orbit and published a textbook on the integral calculus. He remains best known, however, as the editor with Le Seur of the inappropriately-named Jesuit edition of *Principia* (1739-43, 3 vols.)."

their interest in mathematics, physics, and astronomy—or “science”—is plain. While it does not appear that they are seated in the Ruin Room itself, there is crucial continuity between this portrait and Clérisseau’s commission that bears mention—Newton.<sup>44</sup>

Painted in each is a representation of a book with this great physicist’s name emblazoned on the spine.

As mathematicians, Le Seur and Jacquier were both ardent followers of Newtonian physics. They collaborated on a crucially important Latin version (1733-1739) of Newton’s *Philosophiæ Naturalis Principia Mathematica* [*Mathematical Principles of Natural Philosophy*] (1687), or *Principia* as it is commonly known, the book in which Newton introduced his groundbreaking mathematical proof for the Universal Law of Gravitation—a law that held universally true on the earth and in the celestial planetary sphere.<sup>45</sup> While the idea of gravity had been known (i.e., the attraction the earth had for bodies near its surface), it had not been systematized as a universally valid law until Newton proved it mathematically as indisputable truth, using the integral calculus he developed based on the concept of infinity.<sup>46</sup> Moreover, the idea did not gain widespread acceptance until the middle of the eighteenth century.<sup>47</sup> This acceptance was due, in large part, to the efforts of Le Seur and Jacquier and the dissemination of their

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<sup>44</sup> McCormick, 110. It is a point suggested by McCormick, due to the fact that the ceiling in Blanchet’s image does not resemble that of the room in S. Trinità dei Monti.

<sup>45</sup> Gjertsen, *Newton Handbook*, 383.

<sup>46</sup> Jason Socrates Bardi, *The Calculus Wars: Newton, Leibniz, and the Greatest Mathematical Clash of All Time* (New York: Thunder’s Mouth Press, 2006).

<sup>47</sup> John Bennett Shank, *The Newton Wars and the Beginning of the French Enlightenment* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 2008).

important edition of Newton's book.<sup>48</sup> With this work, the force of nature—gravity—became less abstract and more understandable and predictable. Due to Newton's efforts, it could be mathematically quantified and validated.<sup>49</sup> As such it became less mysterious and perhaps more controllable. It was now classifiable—scientifically—an extremely important idea in an age of nascent empiricism that prepared the soil for the rapid growth of scientific method and technology in the nineteenth century.

Clérisseau's ceiling painting of broken timbers in the Ruin Room embodies the paradigm shift represented in Newton's Universal Law of Gravity—a shift amounting to an epistemological break, to invoke the language of Thomas S. Kuhn, the best-known contemporary writer on the history of science.<sup>50</sup> Perhaps the ceiling stands—always ready to fall—as a reminder to Jacquier and Le Seur of the nature of their work, as part of their belief system as both mathematicians and as men of the cloth. Beyond just being fashionably painted in line with the vogue for ruins or as a place of spiritual retreat, the Ruin Room, particularly the ceiling, was a sublime reminder of the goal toward which they worked, to spread knowledge of Newton's revolutionary theories that helped shape their view of the world.<sup>51</sup>

Because of Newtonian physics, such a certainty of collapse could now be explained and understood precisely, mathematically, and rationally. While it still could be tied to the passage of time in the language of ruins, that language came to have

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<sup>48</sup> “Reissued five times, the Jesuit edition so dominated the market that no new Latin edition of *Principia* appeared between the publication of the third edition in 1726 and the appearance of the *variorum* edition of Koyré and Cohen in 1972.” Gjertsen, *Newton Handbook*, 307

<sup>49</sup> Simmel, “The Ruin,” 259-266.

<sup>50</sup> Thomas S. Kuhn, *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions* (Chicago, IL: Chicago University Press, 1962).

<sup>51</sup> Kuhn, *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*, 10, 52.

indisputable theoretical underpinnings, perhaps for the first time. That things fall was no longer only understood in the abstract as a result of the passing of time. It could now be understood as an eternal, unavoidable, and mathematical truth. Thus, Newton's Universal Law of Gravity stands as a *grand idea*. And as such, it evokes not only the language of ruins but the language of the sublime as well. Ruins (and the sublime) exemplify that which is so grand that it is almost beyond human comprehension.

And fittingly, Newton's Universal Law of Gravitation can be considered in terms of the sublime as a grand idea and as an example of elevated—heroic—thought, especially in the Longinian tradition to which Boileau is heir. In a passage that contains echoes of Boileau's *fiat lux* characterization of the sublime in his 1674 *Traité du sublime*, discussed previously in chapter one of this dissertation, the historian of science Erich von Dietze, in his 2001 book *Paradigms Explained: Rethinking Thomas Kuhn's Philosophy of Science*, explained Kuhn's notion of paradigm shift:

Kuhn likens paradigm choice to a “Gestalt switch” or a “religious conversion” where scientists are said to talk of experiencing the scales falling from their eyes or a flash of light that illuminates a previously veiled solution to a puzzle. The way the scientist sees the world is said to be transformed to the point where Kuhn describes the experience as seeing a different world. As a transition between incommensurables, the transition between competing paradigms cannot be made one step at a time. Like a Gestalt switch, it must occur all at once or not at all.<sup>52</sup>

The critical point at which something becomes sublime is in a moment of revelation that is truly comprehensible only at a certain instant in time, and not before.

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<sup>52</sup> Nicolas Boileau-Despréaux, *Traité du sublime*, in *Oeuvres complètes de Boileau* (1674; Paris: Philippe, 1942), 45-46; Erich von Dietze, *Paradigms Explained: Rethinking Thomas Kuhn's Philosophy of Science* (Westport, CT: Praeger, 2001), 43; and Kuhn, *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*, 111-114.

According to Longinus, Demosthenes proved a point rhetorically and beyond rebuttal, and his respondent stood awestruck, unable to think or respond.<sup>53</sup> The sublime is that epistemological break; it is the break itself. It is the flash, the moment, when lightning strikes and everything around it is illuminated and seared into memory. This sublime moment can also be seen in the illumination of the night in Nicolas Poussin's *Landscape with a Storm* (1651) (Figure 6) and *Deluge* (1664) (Figure 5), both discussed previously in chapter one. It is the opposite of the fear of the dark and its void. It is the moment of light.<sup>54</sup> It is when the apple fell from the tree and hit young Newton on the head, if one is to believe the myth that inspired the passionate search for the Universal Law of Gravity as it was first recorded by Voltaire in his *Essay on Epick Poetry* (1727).<sup>55</sup> The historian of science John Bennett Shank reiterates this, noting that Louis-Sébastien Mercier "used the physicist's [Newton] example to illustrate the mystery of singular inventive brilliance. 'Newton saw an apple drop and after meditating on it conceived the system of universal gravitation. Another lacking the ability to see the ties that bind the planets to their orbits, would simply have grabbed the apple and eaten it.'"<sup>56</sup>

All of a sudden Clérisseau's illusionistic ceiling, which emphasizes the precariousness of the timbered roof, makes sense. That the ceiling appears as if it may

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<sup>53</sup> Longinus, *On Great Writing*, 47; Longinus writes in reference to Demosthenes and his ability to awe, "He outthunders and outshines the orators of all the ages. His hearers can no more resist the successive outbursts of passion unmoved than gaze with open eyes at a falling thunderbolt."

<sup>54</sup> As related in Genesis 1:3, God said, "let there be light" (*fiat lux*), and there was light.

<sup>55</sup> Voltaire's *Essay on Epick Poetry* was first published in 1727 in English as "*An Essay upon the Civil Wars of France, Extracted from Curious Manuscripts and also upon the Epick Poetry of the European Nations, from Homer down to Milton*" while Voltaire was living in England. Actually two distinct pieces of work, the *Essay on Epick Poetry* was translated into French and published in Paris in 1728.

<sup>56</sup> Louis-Sébastien Mercier, *Tableau de Paris* (Amsterdam, 1782-1783), 1:148, as cited in Shank, *The Newton Wars*, 4.

fall at any time does not simply reveal some sort of Burkean sublime fear, although it may signal that at certain times. More significantly, it immediately reveals the grandness of Newton's Universal Law of Gravitation as a sublime, transcendent idea.

Clérisseau's ceiling for the Ruin Room, which shows a sublime faith in the grand and transcendent idea of the Universal Law of Gravity as scientific fact, may find its best analogue not in Giulio Romano's Room of Giants at Tè (Figure 52), showing a world in tumult that can be read through a "Burkean" sublime fear of destabilization—a space with which the Ruin Room has been formally linked—but on the ceiling of the Jesuit church of Il Gesù (Figure 53). This illusionistic baroque ceiling is about the sudden, transformative impact of Catholic faith. It was painted as a testament against the promises of the Protestant faith in the embattled spirit of Counter-Reformation Catholicism. The Gesù ceiling beckons the viewer to believe—not just think—that one can be saved by the church and the triumph of Jesus (represented by the initials IHS) through immediate faith or belief, just as the unstable timbers painted on the ceiling of Clérisseau's Ruin Room are an immediate reminder of the absolute certainty of gravity, as mathematically proven by Newton. If this were a real building it would fall. In fact, eventually, at some time, painted or not, it will fall. Gravity is a universal law that is constantly working on every material item, and perhaps it is an analogy for what is always working on our soul that must be resisted by an ennobling and upward striving—an elevating, sublime spirit.

Read alongside the intellectual interests of Le Seur and Jacquier, the unstable ceiling is not merely a reminder of frailty and death or the passing of nations and time as typically associated with the image of ruins, which coincides with McCormick's reading of the room as a hermit room, or a retreat. Rather, the ceiling is also a constant reminder

of a sublimely grand and transcendent idea. It represents the certainty of the universal law of nature, that of gravity and perhaps, by extension, that of faith. The Universal Law of Gravity, like faith, is eternally valid. Intellect and emotion come together. The roof, like any ruins overall, is a constant reminder that it will fall. But within this notion is the belief, as in the Gesù ceiling, that there will be salvation if there is faith in this certainty, this universal law; if there is faith in the grand idea. While this can be seen within the scope of transcendence, it is also a timeless idea.

Like Diderot standing at the edge, resolving to make a solitary stand against the currents flowing past him, discussed earlier in this chapter, the *idea* of the law of gravity, the law of gravity itself—proven by the great spirit of human intellectual effort—cannot be dragged into the depths of a common abyss, as is the fate of every nation, which is an idea also inherent in ruins (*vanitas*).<sup>57</sup> Similarly, Clérisseau’s Ruin Room illustrates an aspect of ruins that is beyond time, almost beyond measure in the infinite application of the sublime idea contained therein, Newton’s Law of Gravity. Seen in this light, transcendence of the grand, elevated idea, not transience, is the essence of the sublime conveyed by ruins.<sup>58</sup> The sublime, either positive as greatness or negative as fear, ultimately transcends human understanding or experience. In this sense, the two are reconcilable and thereby often difficult to separate easily or clearly. The sublime, like the ruin, in late eighteenth-century France, is multivalent. It oscillates. But in France, with its

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<sup>57</sup> “Je vois le marbre des tombeaux tomber en poussière; et je ne veux pas mourir! et j’envie un faible tissu de fibres et de chair à une loi générale qui s’exécute sur le bronze! Un torrent entraîne les nations les unes sur les autres au fond d’un abîme commun; moi, moi seul je prétends m’arrêter sur le bord et fender le flot qui coule à mes côtés!” Diderot, *Salons*, 3:228-229.

<sup>58</sup> This is true of both Longinus’s and Burke’s conception of the sublime.

persistently strong ties to the classical past, elevation is ultimately more important than fear.

### **Sublime France: Beyond Future Ruins**

At the Paris Salon of 1796, Hubert Robert showed pendant paintings with the Louvre as their subject. *Project for the Transformation of the Grand Gallery of the Louvre* (Figure 48) shows the Grand Gallery in a (perfected) state of completion as a functioning museum at a point in time when the construction details of the space were still being hotly debated, while *Imaginary View of the Grand Gallery of the Louvre in Ruins* (Figure 49) shows a projection into the future. These paintings are significant because they depict the nascent institution as one that is worthy of being shown as a ruin. The sublime elevation of France and of its history can be seen in the connection Robert makes between a monumental cultural institution in future ruin and the antique past that projects and makes possible its continued greatness, particularly as a cultural capitol.

When standing before the pendants at the Salon of 1796, the viewer literally stood between the possible immediate future and a possible distant future. To show the Louvre in ruins was to project an image of sublime monumentality that pointed to the element of astonishment, elevation, and transport not only of the viewer of the work itself but of an entire nation recovering from the pendulous swings of the Terror that lasted from 5 September 1793 until 28 July 1794.

Thus, the greatness of France is the context within which to understand Robert's pendants. The sublime emerges linked not only to the grand efforts of the human

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individual, as argued both in chapter one in the context of the seascapes of Claude-Joseph Vernet and earlier in this chapter in connection to Diderot and the grand idea, but now to the nation as a whole. The elevation of France and its history can be seen in the connection Robert makes between the future ruin of the Louvre and the antique past that makes possible this projected greatness. Again, within the sublime future ruin of Robert's *Imaginary View of the Grand Gallery of the Louvre in Ruins* the sublime oscillates. This can be seen within the painting in the paired sculptures: the *Apollo Belvedere* (ca. 120-140) as representative of transcendence and elevation (Longinian sublime); and Michelangelo's *Dying Slave* (1513-1516) as representative of transience and fear (Burkean sublime).<sup>59</sup> It is crucial to note, however, that the focus of the painting is on the *Apollo Belvedere*, not the *Dying Slave*. It is the *Apollo Belvedere* that provides the model for the young artist shown in the painting to copy, attesting to the continuity of artistic tradition embodied in the institution of the French Academy and the Louvre as museum.

The art historian Andrew McClellan suggests that the ruins in Robert's pendants reflect the dark side of the Enlightenment by pointing to a fear of the loss of art, sparked not only by the deterioration of Old Master paintings and sculpture but by the discoveries at Herculaneum and Pompeii that could be read as a chilling reminder of how much was still not known.<sup>60</sup> As previously discussed, ruins have a multivalence of meaning in the late eighteenth century. Thus, McClellan's dark, Burkean sublime-based reading may be a plausible interpretation of paintings so rich in meaning and nuance, but there is a much

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<sup>59</sup> The *Apollo Belvedere* is a Roman copy of a Greek original (ca. 350-325 BCE) generally attributed to the Greek sculptor Leochares. The *Dying Slave* indicates transience, in that its unfinished state relates to temporal erosion, a point underscored by the title; it can be viewed either as unfinished fragment or falling to ruin.

<sup>60</sup> Andrew McClellan, *Inventing the Louvre* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994), 71.

more significant aspect. More than invoking fear of loss as suggested by McClellan, Robert's pendants, particularly *Imaginary View of the Grand Gallery of the Louvre in Ruins*, underscore the notion of continuity from antiquity, one that is connected not as strongly to the multivalence and oscillation of ruins as to the grand idea of ruins—sublime transcendence. The sublime transcendence of France is the message. This is the Longinian strain of the classical French sublime discussed earlier in the context of the solitary stand Diderot vowed to take against the currents of time through his intellectual efforts—or the grand idea—and in terms of Newton's Universal Law of Gravitation as an example of a sublimely transcendent concept embodied in ruins.

Robert's pendants of the monumental Louvre place the institution within an esteemed lineage of antiquity and evoke comparison with the grandeur of the ancient world, as can be seen in Giovanni Battista Piranesi's etchings such as the *Imaginary View of the Via Appia*, a frontispiece for the second book of the *Vedute di Roma* [*Views of Rome*] (1756) (Figure 54). Or, like Étienne-Louis Boullée's design for a Cenotaph for Newton (1784) or that for the National Library in Paris, France (1785), Robert's *Imaginary View of the Grand Gallery of the Louvre in Ruins* projects a grandeur that even surpasses that of the ancient world. This aspect of the sublimity, or apotheosis of the institution (and thus France) can be seen even more fully expressed in the creation of the Musée Charles X in 1826 during the Bourbon Restoration in the literal inscription of the French heritage and continuity of greatness on the ceiling of the Louvre, as will be examined in chapter four.

## The Sublime Ambition of France and the *Apollo Belvedere*

The cultural riches of Rome were the source from which France drew most heavily in the 1790s in order to buttress its greatness and the sublimity of its cultural and political accomplishments. With the establishment of the Directory in 1795, France's self-esteem as a nation began to climb with every battle won by Napoleon as he and his armies began their sweep through Europe. This fact became associated with the Louvre, as Napoleon began to bring back war booty in the form of artworks pillaged from across Europe. In his 1991 book, *Inventing the Louvre*, McClellan summarizes the museum's importance in connection with national identity, commenting upon its opening as a public institution on 10 August 1793, the same day as the newly established Republican Festival of Unity: "While the passage from royal collection to public museum occurred without fanfare elsewhere in Europe, in France the opening of the Louvre was sensational because it was tied to the birth of a new nation."<sup>61</sup> Such symbolic importance was played upon by Napoleon in the organization of a festival in 1798 to mark the arrival of the third convoy of sculpture and painting looted from Rome and Venice. This can be seen in an engraving by Pierre Gabriel Berthault, *Triumphal Entry of the Monuments of the Arts and Science, 9 and 10 Thermidor Year VI* (Figure 55). It shows the procession of the *Fête de la Liberté* [Festival of Freedom] conveying the spoils to the door of the Louvre and accompanied by a song with a refrain that went, "Rome is no more Rome. It is now in Paris."<sup>62</sup> This transfer of art from Rome to Paris, art historian Patricia Mainardi argues, contains the double authority of a seismic shift in both political and cultural capital. She

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<sup>61</sup> McClellan, *Inventing the Louvre*, 9.

<sup>62</sup> Patricia Mainardi, "Assuring the Empire of the Future: The 1798 Fête de la Liberté," *Art Journal* 48, no. 2 (1989): 155.

writes, “the Fête celebrated this alliance between politics and antique art and that it symbolically marked the transfer of the cultural capital of Europe from eighteenth-century Rome to nineteenth-century Paris.”<sup>63</sup>

Apart from showing the yet to be completed grand cultural monument of the Louvre in ruins, the most significant aspect of Robert’s painting is the inclusion of the *Apollo Belvedere*. It indicates with certainty the cultural ambition of France, not just political, to make Paris the new Rome. The *Apollo Belvedere*, as McClellan mentions, was a “work of art that more than any other symbolized Napoleonic triumph and the new glory of Paris.”<sup>64</sup> Thus, it is significant that in 1796, Robert’s *Imaginary View of the Grand Gallery of the Louvre in Ruins* (Figure 49) showed the *Apollo Belvedere in situ* amongst the fragments of ruins. The sculpture would eventually make its way to France in the series of convoys of pillaged Italian masterpieces that began to leave Rome on 10 April 1797 in the wake of Napoleon’s military victories in Italy. But in 1796, neither was the sculpture in France nor was the Louvre in ruin. In fact, the Grand Gallery was not even completed as an exhibition space until the first decade of the nineteenth century.<sup>65</sup>

So how can Robert’s painting be understood? Is it a fanciful projection, an unattainable

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<sup>63</sup> Mainardi, “Assuring the Empire of the Future,” 155.

<sup>64</sup> McClellan, *Inventing the Louvre*, 174.

<sup>65</sup> The development of the Grand Gallery of the Louvre was planned well before the Revolution. Moreover, Robert was involved in the administration of this project since 1784 as a member of the *Conservatoire*, which supervised the operation of the museum. Robert’s involvement is documented in the Arch. Nat., series O and is discussed in Marie-Catherine Sahut and Nicole Garnier, *Le Louvre d’Hubert Robert*, exh. cat. (Paris: Éditions de la Réunion des Musées Nationaux, 1979), no. 58, 6-10, 28-30. For a discussion of Robert’s paintings of the Louvre, see *Le Louvre d’Hubert Robert*. An excellent chronology of the architectural issues involved in the Grand Gallery project can be found in James L. Connelly, “The Grand Gallery of the Louvre and the Museum Project: Architectural Problems,” *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians* 31, no. 2 (May, 1972): 120-132. Connelly interprets Robert’s Louvre pendants as promoting his desire for a certain skylight solution. The issue of bringing light into the Grand Gallery was perhaps the most significant one in preventing its expedient completion, which finally occurred in the 1820s.

dream, a folly or joke as Marianne Roland Michel understands it?<sup>66</sup> Does it exhibit a deep fear on the part of France or an epic insecurity about its financial future that a Burkean sublime could explain, to follow Nina Dubin's line of thought?<sup>67</sup> I think the answer is far simpler and more powerful than any of these options. In fact, to read the image as a fanciful joke or indicative of a fear or terror is to misunderstand Robert's pendant paintings entirely. To show one of the greatest cultural monuments of the eighteenth century as a ruin before it is even architecturally complete, an edifice tied symbolically and spatially to a long lineage of political and cultural power, is to exalt the greatness of France that places it on par with other great civilizations and their accomplishments, such as Imperial Rome, or as antiquity understood more generally.

To paint the Louvre as a ruin, with the famous *Apollo Belvedere* elevated on a pedestal amongst rubble, perhaps the most enduring signifier of the greatness of classical antiquity transplanted to France from Italy, does not seem to symbolize fear and terror or nostalgia for that which *was* great now lying in ruins. Rather, it projects a sublime image of present and future greatness, one that was solidified with the pendant *Project for the Transformation of the Grand Gallery of the Louvre* (Figure 48) and with the 1798 *Fête* and its convoy of some of the greatest works of antiquity (and the Renaissance) appropriated to France by Napoleon's military conquests that were subsequently installed

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<sup>66</sup> Jean Cailleux and Marianne Roland Michel, "From the 'Museum' to the Musée du Louvre: Schemes and Transformations in Connexion with Two Paintings by Hubert Robert," *Burlington Magazine* 105, no. 720 (March 1963): 1-4.

<sup>67</sup> Nina Lenore Dubin, "Futures and Ruins: The Painting of Hubert Robert" (PhD diss., University of California at Berkeley, 2006), 208-228. Dubin also discusses Robert's *Imaginary View of the Grande Gallery of the Louvre in Ruins* in chapter four, "Posterity," of her 2010 book *Futures and Ruins: Eighteenth-Century Paris and the Art of Hubert Robert* in which, like Paula Radisich's interpretation in *Hubert Robert: Painted Spaces of the Enlightenment*, she reads the image and its pendant partly as a metaphor for Robert's own personal history as an artist. Nina Dubin, *Futures and Ruins: Eighteenth-Century Paris and the Art of Hubert Robert* (Los Angeles: Getty Publications, 2010), 153.

in the Louvre. Significantly, the convoy included the *Apollo Belvedere*, a work that according to art historians Francis Haskell and Nicolas Penny, “reached Paris in the triumphal procession of July 1798, in a garlanded case, and was displayed in the Musée Central des Arts [modern Louvre] when it was inaugurated on 9 November 1800.”<sup>68</sup> Napoleon’s epic military sweep of Europe had its only parallels in the extraordinary achievements of Hannibal and Alexander the Great. And perhaps even more significantly, Napoleon’s cultural appropriation may stand without equal.

The spirit of the sublime accomplishment of Napoleon’s military ambition and victories that brought some of the most important cultural artifacts of the ancient world to France, at least for a time, can be seen in Jacques-Louis David’s painting *Napoleon Crossing the Alps* (1801) (Figure 35). Napoleon is heroically presented at the Saint Bernard Pass on a magnificent steed. His armies are shown—minuscule—trudging uphill, almost beneath his feet. The names of Hannibal and Alexander the Great (Karolus Magnus) are written on rocks at the bottom of the canvas, illustrating how Napoleon fits into a chronology of great conquerors. Moreover, he towers above them, overshadowing their accomplishments. It is almost mundane by now to point out that scholarship has shown this painting to be a masterful piece of Napoleonic propaganda, like Antoine-Jean Gros’s *Pesthouse at Jaffa* (1804), representing Napoleon as a Christ-like figure.<sup>69</sup> It has been decisively proven that Napoleon crossed the Alps not on a steed but upon the back

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<sup>68</sup> Francis Haskell and Nicholas Penny, *Taste and the Antique, The Lure of Classical Sculpture 1500-1900* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1981), 148.

<sup>69</sup> Darcy Grimaldo Grigsby, “Rumor, Contagion, and Colonization in Gros’s *Plague-Stricken of Jaffa* (1804),” *Representations* 51 (Summer 1995): 1-46. Grigsby gives a fascinating reading of *Pesthouse* in which she discusses how the propagandizing aspect of *Pesthouse* is inadequate to understanding the painting.

of a humble, yet reliable, donkey. Perhaps it is fitting, then, to begin to consider Robert's pendants of 1796 as examples of proto-Napoleonic propaganda as well.

Through his acquisition of antique and Renaissance cultural treasures, ultimately best represented by the acquisition of the *Apollo Belvedere*, Napoleon places himself not only within a lineage of great military heroes, as indicated in David's painting, but also within the lineage of the great kings of France who had similar aims in the elevation of the country. This idea of greatness, illustrated in the sublime cultural, political, and militaristic elevation of France over the rest of the European powers (and over the past as well), has a substantial history in the efforts of François I (r. 1515-1547) and Louis XIV (r. 1643-1715) who attempted in their own ways to elevate France over Rome. With the establishment of the revolutionary Louvre and with Napoleon's military victories that can be considered as a sublime storm that swept throughout Europe, a point given visualization by J. M. W. Turner in his painting *Hannibal Crossing the Alps* (1812), France had arrived at a point it had been trying to reach since the halcyon days of these great and popular kings.

François I strove to forge France into the New Rome.<sup>70</sup> After a series of wins and losses throughout what is now considered modern Italy, Milan's greatest artist Leonardo da Vinci was brought to France, which is why the *Mona Lisa* is there. While François I was unable to complete his militaristic goals in the region, a goal finally and breathtakingly achieved by the late 1790s by Napoleon in a series of decisive military victories, he was able to provide France with an enduring symbol of cultural victory in

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<sup>70</sup> Haskell and Penny, *Taste and the Antique*, 1-6. For a comprehensive study of the patronage of François I, see Janet Cox-Rearick, *The Collections of Francis I: Royal Treasures* (Antwerp, Belgium: Fonds Mercator and Harry Abrams, 1995).

what is arguably the most famous painting in the world that still hangs in the Louvre.

François I also brought artists from Italy to increase the cultural capital of France, such as Francesco Primaticcio, who transformed a former hunting lodge into the grand edifice it is today—Fontainebleau—which, Giorgio Vasari referred to as “another Rome.”<sup>71</sup>

Louis XIV continued with the goal set by François I of elevating France as a cultural capital to rival Rome by commissioning replicas of important Italian sculptures for the gardens of Versailles, as can be seen in Robert’s pendant paintings with a collective title, *Two Views of the Gardens of Versailles When the Trees Were Cut*, shown at the Paris Salon of 1777.<sup>72</sup> More important than his littering of Versailles with copies of famous antique statuary, however, Louis XIV in 1648 established the French Academy to elevate French art production to be competitive with the artistic production of Italian Old Masters and the classical past.

### **A Sublime Continuity: The French Academy and Academic Tradition**

The establishment in Paris of the French Academy, modeled on Italian examples, such as the Accademia di San Luca [Academy of Saint Luke] in Rome, looked not just toward Renaissance Italy for inspiration but to the classical world as well. The institution would have a decisive impact on art production during the eighteenth century and most of the nineteenth not only in France but also in the rest of Europe. Academies following the French example were opened in London in 1668 with the founding of the Royal

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<sup>71</sup> Giorgio Vasari, *Lives of the Painters, Sculptors, and Architects*, trans. Gaston du C. de Vere (1568; New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1996), 2:771; Haskell and Penny, *Taste and the Antique*, 5.

<sup>72</sup> Haskell and Penny, *Taste and the Antique*, 37-42; Paula Rea Radisich, “The King Prunes His Garden: Hubert Robert’s Picture of the Versailles Gardens in 1775,” *Eighteenth-Century Studies* 21, no. 4 (Summer 1988): 454; Brigitte Weltman-Aron, *On Other Grounds: Landscape Gardening and Nationalism in Eighteenth-Century England and France* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 2001), 1-13.

Academy and in Berlin in 1696 with the establishment of the *Akademie der Künste* [Academy of Arts], for example.

The importance of the French Academy and academic training as a continuous arc of art education and training cannot be overstated. This is a critical aspect to consider, particularly in the context of Robert's 1796 Salon pendants. As they were hung in 1796, with *Project for the Transformation of the Grand Gallery of the Louvre* (Figure 48) on the left and *Imaginary View of the Grand Gallery of the Louvre in Ruins* (Figure 49) on the right, they formed a continuum from the completed Grand Gallery of the Louvre (which was far from finished in 1796) to its imagined future projected as monumental ruins. In each of the pendants Robert shows artists copying, the very basis of the academic system implemented during the reign of Louis XIV.<sup>73</sup> Thus, in each pendant Robert emphasizes the continuity of the French Academy and of French art production in both the near and distant future. This is a significant point, as the French Academy was toppled in 1793 by decree of the National Convention during the Revolution and was reinstated only in 1795 as part of the Institut de France. Robert may have used these pendants, then, to emphasize the importance of academic training under the Directory for the future well-being of art production in France under the Directory.

In the *Imaginary View of the Grand Gallery of the Louvre in Ruins*, Robert shows an artist copying the *Apollo Belvedere*. The *Apollo Belvedere* is particularly significant, not just because it is a work in keeping with the ideology of the French Academy to imitate the example of the ancients, but because it was understood at the time as perhaps the most exalted (sublime) example of classical sculpture from which young French

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<sup>73</sup> Sahut and Garnier, *Le Louvre d' Hubert Robert*, 28-30. Robert included an image of himself at work in the foreground of the *Imaginary View of the Grand Gallery of the Louvre*.

artists could learn.<sup>74</sup> The image of a young artist copying this sculpture in the scattered rubble of the Grand Gallery of the Louvre projected as a monumental ruin connects the continuity of French art production to “the sole survivors of an entire nation that is no more,” as Diderot wrote in his famous *poétique des ruines* statement in his discussion of Robert’s work in 1767.<sup>75</sup> Robert’s canvas, imaginatively showing the Grand Gallery of the Louvre in ruins, subverts the melancholy of Diderot’s empty, ruined landscape laden with debris. Instead, it emphasizes the continued *action* of French artistic creation and posits France as the heir to antique greatness. Such means of creation based on *imitatio* [imitation in spirit] was not only indebted to the model of the ancient world signaled by the inclusion of the *Apollo Belvedere* and to Italian Renaissance masters, as implied by the inclusion of Michelangelo’s *Dying Slave* and Alessandro Rondoni’s sixteenth-century portrait bust of Raphael. It was also supported by the French Academy, perhaps most notably through the *Prix de Rome* [Rome Prize], the annual prize established in 1663, initially for painters to study in Rome for a period typically ranging from three to five years. And as an academician, one who had spent the significant first part of his career, from 1754 until 1765, honing his skills in Rome, Robert was nurtured by this system.<sup>76</sup> The act of artistic creation, such as drawing from the past, was the very basis of art production institutionalized under Louis XIV and protected and promoted by the French state. With the birth of the public museum at the Louvre, the idea of continuity with the past promoted by the French Academy expanded and was further institutionalized. Even

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<sup>74</sup> Haskell and Penny, *Taste and the Antique*, 148. The *Apollo Belvedere* no longer holds this exalted position.

<sup>75</sup> Diderot, *Salons*, 3:227. “nous restons seuls de toute une nation qui n’est plus; et voilà la première ligne de la poétique des ruines.”

<sup>76</sup> Catherine Gabillot, *Hubert Robert et son temps* (Paris, 1895).

in the future ruin there is greatness. There is sublimity; there is continuity. Art—and French cultural greatness—will outlast even the forces of nature as did the great works of antiquity.

### **A Sublime Continuity: The Louvre in Ruins as Monument**

The idea of continuity, like the ruin or the sublime, is multifaceted. As mentioned earlier, Robert's Louvre pendants of 1796 connect France and the efforts of Napoleon to the elevated tradition of the ancient world and Italy. In effect, they reify the efforts begun by the great French kings, François I and Louis XVI, to establish the glory of France. Robert's pendants underscore the idea of continuity of French artistic production protected and promoted by the French Academy, even though it was closed for a period during the Revolutionary period. But significantly, Robert's pendants can also be read in light of a similar pre-revolutionary program to celebrate the greatness of France—a greatness that formed part and parcel of the most ambitious commission ever undertaken by a French king, Louis XV's 1753 commission of Vernet's *Ports of France*.<sup>77</sup> According to Donna Wiley, a series of antique monuments painted by Robert in the 1780s provoked the richest range of critical response to his work and are necessary to understand how Robert's Louvre in ruins is the apex of a monumental tradition:

including both the 1785 *Les Antiques Ruines à Rome* and *Réunion des plus célèbres monuments antiques de la France...* which make up part of the series of four paintings at the Royal Palace at Pavlovsk... and the well-known

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<sup>77</sup> For a good discussion of the *Ports of France*, see Heather MacDonald, "Landscapes of Ambition: Painting and Political Culture in Joseph Vernet's *Ports de France*" (PhD diss., University of California, Berkeley, 2004), 1-11; Michel Benedict Leca, "Patriotic Art for 'The Public': Joseph Vernet's *Ports of France* and Their Interpretive Prints" (PhD diss., Brown University, 2004); Vernet completed fifteen paintings of the *Ports of France* series between the years of 1753 and 1765 under commission by Louis XV before abandoning the project.

series of antique monuments of France shown at the Salon of 1787 and now located in the Musée du Louvre in Paris (*L'Arc de Triomphe et l'ampithéâtre de la Ville d'Orange, Le Pont du Gard, L'Intérieur du temple de Diane à Nîmes, and La maison Carrée, les Arènes et la Tour Magne de Nîmes.*)<sup>78</sup>

This list reveals a specific interest in Robert's paintings that emphasize the connection between the *terra firma* [solid earth] of French territory and the antique Roman (i.e., French, or Gallo-Roman) monuments on that soil, illustrative of French claims of legitimacy derived from its classical past. In other words, Robert's paintings show precisely how France is connected to the monuments of the grand classical past in a way that is indisputable—the proof is on the map.

Very significantly, Wiley provides a strong rationale for the paintings by Robert of Roman monuments on French soil. This may provide a key to better understand the pendants of the Louvre painted by Robert in 1796, works that may form the final crescendo in the elevation of France that began in the “documentation” of monuments from its classical past. She writes,

The political impetus for these works had been long in development. In 1772, Natoire (the brother of Charles-Joseph Natoire, Director of the French Academy in Rome) writes to Marigny to suggest that a series of paintings of the antique monuments of France, similar to Vernet's 1753-61 series of the Ports of France, be commissioned as a national competition. It is not until 1777, however, when d'Angiviller outlines the competition for the Salon of that year to include six topics from ancient history and two from French national history that an official move is made to highlight and elevate French national achievement to the

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<sup>78</sup> Donna L. Wiley, “‘Le Grand Point est de Plaire’: Essays on and Around the Work of Hubert Robert” (PhD diss., Bryn Mawr College, 1997), 72. The paintings by Robert, mentioned by Wiley, with their original French titles are: *Antique Ruins of Rome, The Most Famous Ancient Monuments of France, Triumphal Arch and the Amphitheater of Orange, The Pont du Gard, The Interior of the Temple of Diana at Nîmes, The Maison Carrée, the Arenas, and the Tour Magne at Nîmes.*

same plane on which classical history rests in the political eye.<sup>79</sup>

In other words, the future Louvre as a museum and monument—both in the relatively immediate future, as in the case of the *Project for the Transformation of the Grand Gallery of the Louvre* (Figure 48), and in the distant future, as in the case of the *Imaginary View of the Grand Gallery of the Louvre in Ruins* (Figure 49)—like the *Pont du Gard* (c. 16 BCE) or the *Maison Carrée* (c. 16 BCE), both in Nîmes, France, is a part, if not the apex, of monumental French cultural achievement. The monumental Louvre, filled with treasure from antiquity and the Renaissance, is the apotheosis of French cultural achievement that is almost inseparable from the lineage of monuments from antiquity on French soil that bind it to its classical heritage.

Robert emphasizes this elevation of the Louvre as a sublime cultural monument in the presentation of the Louvre as a future ruin. Shown as such, it is evocative of the grandeur of the *Imaginary View of the Via Appia* (Figure 54) by Giambattista Piranesi showing the monumental ruins of Rome gathered along one street. The Louvre is shown in ruins because this validates its importance as an institution, one that had come into existence a mere three years earlier, in 1793. On par with, or perhaps even surpassing ancient example, the Louvre is a monument worthy enough to be shown in ruins, even before it is finished. Diderot underscored this point when he wrote what may be his most famous words on the subject of ruin, “A Palace must be in ruin to evoke any interest;

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<sup>79</sup> Wiley, “Le Grand Point,” 74.

without the ideal there can be no beauty.”<sup>80</sup> Only something that is truly great can ever be a ruin.

In his painting of the Louvre in ruins, Robert alludes to both the grandeur of the classical world and that represented by the efforts of France, particularly during the last decade of the eighteenth century, in the building of national institutions. A very similar idea—that of elevating key contemporary institutions through their representation *à l’antique* as ruins—is behind Joseph Gandry’s 1816 painting *Bank of England* (1788-1830) (Figure 56), which presents Sir John Soane’s structure in ruins. While Nina Dubin interprets Gandry’s image as linked to Robert’s *Imaginary View of the Grand Gallery of the Louvre in Ruins*, an image she reads as connected to the concept of the instability of French financial health, Gandry’s image should be read as a testament to the enduring greatness of English finance.<sup>81</sup> Like the Louvre, the Bank of England is so great an institution that it is worthy of being shown in ruin because it is timeless and eternal—it entered the “Pantheon” of buildings by becoming a ruin! As such, it evokes the grandeur of the classical world as represented by great structures, like the Roman Colosseum (72-80 CE) and Pantheon (126 CE).

Robert’s Louvre pendants may represent, then, the final aspect of a program carried over from the pre-revolutionary days of the ancien régime that was based on the elevation of France, much like Vernet’s *Ports of France* attested to the country’s status in terms of economic virility by showing the number and volume of activity at its ports.<sup>82</sup>

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<sup>80</sup> Diderot, *Diderot on Art*, trans. John Goodman, 2:206; Diderot, *Salons*, 3:235. “Il faut ruiner un palais pour en faire un objet d’intérêt; tant il est vrai que quel que soit le faire, point de vraie beauté sans l’idéal.”

<sup>81</sup> Dubin, “Futures and Ruins,” 226.

<sup>82</sup> MacDonald, “Landscapes of Ambition,” 106. As noted in chapter one of this dissertation, MacDonald argues that the *Ports of France* series executed by Vernet was a means of providing a sense of stability

Through Robert's painting of the Louvre in ruins, the Louvre in Paris can be seen projected as the latest in a lineage of great monumental ruins still present on French soil, such as the ones in Orange (triumphal arch and amphitheater) and Nîmes (Pont du Gard, Temple of Diana, Maison Carrée, and the Tour Magne).

### **The Infinite Extension of the Museum as Sublime Ruin**

Robert's 1796 presentation of the yet unfinished Grand Gallery of the Louvre as a finished architectural space and as a future fragment of ruin is fascinating. Through the inclusion within the painting of depictions of artists at work copying from its contents, in keeping with the tenets of the French Academy, it promotes the museum as a living and growing institution. It is an infinitely expanding entity tied to the sublime act of (artistic) creation, not destruction. When a viewer stood in front of the pendants with the *Project for the Transformation of the Grand Gallery of the Louvre* (Figure 48) on the left and the *Imaginary View of the Grand Gallery of the Louvre in Ruin* (Figure 49) on the right, as they were hung at the 1796 Salon, they would see that the corridor of the Grand Gallery recedes to an end point in the former painting, while the same corridor in the latter painting extends to infinity.<sup>83</sup> In other words, viewed this way, the corridors in these pendants indicate a tangible material (cultural) past and an infinite future.

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during trying political and economic times by recasting the image of the king as *Bien-Aimé* in the topography of the French landscape, or ports, those critical economic engines that were suffering in the 1750s.

<sup>83</sup> "The titles in the Salon livret of 1796 clearly indicate that the intact gallery is the originating concept, with the second picture entitled ruins of 'the preceding [canvas].'" Paula Rea Radisich, *Hubert Robert: Painted Spaces of the Enlightenment* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 129-135, 186n36.

This extension into infinity may be part of the reason scholars such as Paula Rea Radisich invoke the Burkean sublime in their discussions of these paintings.<sup>84</sup> The infinite stands as one of Burke's hallmarks of the sublime. For Burke, the infinite, due to its magnitude, overwhelms and causes the sublime emotion of fear.<sup>85</sup> While this formulation of the sublime certainly holds true, I would like to nuance it by suggesting that the infinite is a sublime idea because of the *magnitude* of the concept, like Newton's Universal Law of Gravitation or Longinus's articulation of the greatness of a sublime word, phrase, or argument. Such greatness, I argue, can be tied to the act—the artistic or scientific genius—of human creation.<sup>86</sup> Thus, I propose that the infinite seen in Robert's pendants as they were hung at the 1796 Paris Salon is related less to a Burkean sublime than to humankind's sublime capacity to continually transcend. The belief in transcendence, like Diderot's solitary stand against the destruction of time mentioned earlier, subverts or constitutes a tension with the *vanitas* interpretation, or the certainty of death that ruins also convey in the range of their multivalence of meaning. This idea can be seen not only in the extension of the infinite corridor in the Grand Gallery in Robert's *Imaginary View of the Grand Gallery of the Louvre in Ruin*, but also in the figure

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<sup>84</sup> Radisich, *Hubert Robert: Painted Spaces of the Enlightenment*, 133.

<sup>85</sup> Burke, *A Philosophical Enquiry*, 73.

<sup>86</sup> It took the idea of infinity to construct the integral calculus by Newton, which was necessary to prove mathematically the Universal Law of Gravitation. Thus, the infinite as the essential idea of calculus is on par with the sublime idea of the Universal Law of Gravitation, if not of greater magnitude. For discussion on the infinite in mathematics, see Jason Socrates Bardi, *The Calculus Wars: Newton, Leibniz, and the Greatest Mathematical Clash of All Time* (New York: Thunder's Mouth Press, 2006). For the infinite in terms of the sublime, see Karen Lang, "The Dialectics of Decay: Rereading the Kantian Subject," *Art Bulletin*, 79, no. 3 (September 1997): 413-439; and Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Judgment* (1790), trans. James Creed Meredith (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1952). Originally published in German as *Kritik der Urteilskraft*; Immanuel Kant, *Observations on the Feeling of the Beautiful and the Sublime* (1764), trans. John T. Goldthwait (1960; repr., University of California Press, 1991). Originally published in German as *Beobachtungen über das Gefühl des Schönen und Erhabenen*.

sketching the *Apollo Belvedere*, the only artwork still standing—untouched and perfect—amongst the rubble of ruins. This figure and the act of drawing point to the continuance of a tradition of artistic creation embodied in the institution of the French Academy, as previously discussed. Its preservation is present in the transcendent, sublime *idea* or spirit of the museum itself, and evoked in the ruins of the physical building—the Louvre—and ultimately refers to France itself. Like Georg Simmel’s notion of spirit, the grand idea connected to artistic creation continually confirms its upward striving trajectory, even though nature may reclaim the material evidence (the physical edifice, or ruin) of the spirit.<sup>87</sup> The sublime idea lives on—infinity.

The idea of continuity, or of continuing a tradition stipulated by the standards of academic art, implies that the museum is an expanding institution that inspires and leads to future creation. At first glance, it is a point that would seem to be undermined by the representation of the Louvre in ruins, unless such an image were to stand for the continuity of the grand idea of creation itself or the greatness of cultural ambition or legacy of France. If “falling down” is natural law, then it is not tragic, but normal; so the Louvre in ruins is important as it shows what survives is art and artistic creation. While the body—the architecture—may die, the soul—the art—lives on. Robert’s 1796 pendants of the Louvre are interesting to consider in the context of the emergence of the museum as a growing, almost living institution. This position stands in opposition to the idea put forth by the Frankfurt School sociologist and philosopher Theodor Adorno that the museum, with its root in the word *museal*, or mausoleum, is literally a place of

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<sup>87</sup> Simmel, “The Ruin,” 260.

accumulated dead objects cut off from their original use value.<sup>88</sup> It is true that, in keeping with the multivalent notion of ruins discussed previously, the idea of *vanitas* is still present; it is signaled by Michelangelo's *Dying Slave*. *Vanitas*, however, is overshadowed, almost literally, by the transcendent idea represented by the *Apollo Belvedere* in Robert's painting.

Robert's *Imaginary View of the Grand Gallery in Ruins* (Figure 49) subverts Adorno's idea of the museum as a mausoleum through the inclusion of an artist working from antiquity in the rubble of the future. The message conveyed is that the museum, specifically the Louvre as a monumental institution, and the art that it protects and provides as a didactic model for continued artistic creation, will never die. While the body is the museum as building that is subject to natural laws such as gravity, ruin, and death, the work that it contains—the art and culture it embodies, or its soul—survives. Robert's painting is almost a visual interpretation of what Diderot calls his first tenet of his *poétique des ruines*, written in 1767 on the occasion of Robert's Paris Salon submissions of that year, as previously noted. He wrote, “we scatter over the ground the rubble of the very buildings we still inhabit; in that moment, solitude and silence around us, we are sole survivors of an entire nation that is no more, and that is the first line of the poetics of ruins.”<sup>89</sup>

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<sup>88</sup> Theodor W. Adorno, “The Valéry Proust Museum,” in *Prisms*, trans. Shierry Weber Nicholsen and Samuel Weber (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1992), 175.

<sup>89</sup> “et notre imagination disperse sur la terre les edifices mêmes que nous habitons; à l’instant la solitude et le silence règnent aoutour de nous, nous restons seuls de toute une nation qui n’est plus; et voilà la première ligne de la poétiques des ruines.” Diderot, *Salons*, 3:227.

## The Sublime Aura of the Apollo Belvedere

There was some criticism during the eighteenth century by figures such as Quatremère de Quincy that saw the extraction of art from its original context as causing the dissolution of the *aura* of the work itself, to put it in Walter Benjamin's terms, and thus found reason to disparage the contextual dislodgement and appropriation of cultural artifacts, such as the *Apollo Belvedere* or the obelisk from Luxor erected by Louis-Philippe in 1836 at the *Place du Concorde*. However, this claim is almost the exact opposite of the point that I wish to make about aura.<sup>90</sup> In contrast to Quincy and Benjamin, my interest is not in the loss of aura that an artwork may have when removed from its original context, but in the aura it may give to a new context, such as the Louvre. Not only does an appropriated artwork, such as the *Apollo Belvedere*, imply a certain cultural and political status or aura upon its owner, but an elevation in status as well. This cultural elevation occurred in France at that moment in the late 1790s when the *Apollo Belvedere* touched French soil in one of Napoleon's convoys. This was no trifling matter. In the eighteenth century, no Englishman was able to buy the truly celebrated antiquities of Rome for any price. Sculptures such as the *Laocoön* (c. 200 CE) or the *Apollo Belvedere*, which were part of the most highly esteemed collection in Rome, that of Pope Julius II (Cardinal Giuliano della Rovere) in the most revered spot in Rome, Donato

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<sup>90</sup> Published under the initials A. Q., A. Q. de Quincy's *Lettres à Miranda sur le déplacement des monuments de l'art de l'Italie* were based on criticism he made in 1791 in *Considérations morales sur la destination des ouvrages de l'art*; See Édouard Pommier's introduction to *Lettres à Miranda sur le déplacement des monuments de l'art de l'Italie* (1796) (Paris: Macula, 1989), 7-83; Édouard Pommier, *L'Art de la liberté: Doctrines et débats de la révolution française* (Paris: Gallimard, 1991); Haskell and Penny, *Taste and the Antique*, 110; For a discussion of aura, see Walter Benjamin, "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction," in *Illuminations: Essays and Reflections*, ed. Hannah Arendt (New York: Schocken Books, 1969), 220-221.

Bramante's Belvedere Court, were simply unattainable.<sup>91</sup> England and the rest of Europe had to make do with copies or lesser works.<sup>92</sup> The English, such as the Duke of Northumberland, could own only replicas of the most famed masterpieces of Rome, such as the copy of the *Apollo Belvedere* in the rooms designed by Robert Adam at Syon House in Middlesex.<sup>93</sup>

With the arrival of the *Apollo Belvedere* in Paris in July 1798, Napoleon elevated the level of French greatness far beyond competition. Considered the best, or even the most sublime of all antique sculpture, the *Apollo Belvedere* is significant in the context of Napoleon's personal identification with it as a symbol of his abilities as a military and political leader. This can be seen in an anonymous 1797 engraving in which Napoleon points to the sculpture, boasting to his guests the "price" of the work: "Well, gentlemen, 2,000,000 francs!" (Figure 57).<sup>94</sup> This is an ironic gesture, as the sculpture was one that could not have been purchased at any price. (It was beyond the reach of even the deepest English pockets). It was ceded to the French, however, by Pope Pius VI under the Treaty of Tolentino in February 1797.<sup>95</sup> Thus, money, political power and might, and military and cultural conquest (all the cultural signifiers) come together in the figure of the *Apollo Belvedere*. This is an extraordinarily salient fact to consider in terms of the accumulation of cultural capital that Napoleon gathered at the Louvre, as seen in Pierre Berthault's print, *Triumphal Entry of the Monuments of the Arts and Science, 9 and 10 Thermidor*

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<sup>91</sup> Haskell and Penny, *Taste and the Antique*, 7-15, 67, 148.

<sup>92</sup> Haskell and Penny, *Taste and the Antique*, 31-36, 62-73.

<sup>93</sup> Haskell and Penny, *Taste and the Antique*, 87.

<sup>94</sup> "Eh bien messieurs deux millions."

<sup>95</sup> Haskell and Penny, *Taste and the Antique*, 62-73, 148.

*Year VI*, depicting the procession of the *Fête de la Liberté* (Figure 55). No European leader, French or otherwise, had been able to wrest a single work from the Pope's great sculpture collection—not even François I or Louis XIV. Napoleon, however, as signaled by Robert's painting, brought to France and installed in the Louvre the greatest and most universally esteemed classical work of antiquity. It was a sublime act, and it must have seemed almost beyond comprehension. Kenneth Clark describes the acquisition of the *Apollo Belvedere* as Napoleon's greatest boast.<sup>96</sup> The sculpture that served as the German art historian and archeologist Johann Joachim Winckelmann's most sublime evocation of the elevation of the classical world was securely in France by 1798, and Paris was the new Rome!<sup>97</sup>

### **Sublime Appropriation**

Robert's Louvre pendants can be viewed as almost direct formal descendants of those that Giovanni Paolo Panini painted for Robert's protector Étienne-François de Choiseul of *Ancient Rome* (1757) (Figure 58) and *Modern Rome* (1757) (Figure 59), copies of which formed a part of Robert's own picture collection and remained with him until he died in 1808.<sup>98</sup> More specifically, paintings such as Panini's tell us about the desire for the souvenir of Rome.<sup>99</sup> Yet this souvenir, like a talisman or a headhunter's token, also speaks to the more menacing idea of cultural appropriation that Quincy so

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<sup>96</sup> Kenneth Clark, *Civilisation: A Personal View* (New York: Harper & Row, 1969), 2.

<sup>97</sup> Winckelmann famously discusses the *Apollo Belvedere* in his *Geschichte der Kunst des Alterthums* [*The History of Art in Antiquity*], 1764.

<sup>98</sup> Gabillot, *Hubert Robert et son temps*.

<sup>99</sup> McClellan, *Inventing the Louvre*, 119.

adamantly condemned. This spirit of appropriation can be viewed in its most extreme form in the removal of important artworks from Rome by Napoleon or at a later date in the removal of the pediment sculpture of the Parthenon by Lord Elgin in 1812. Setting aside for a moment the complications and ethical questions of such acts, they are important for what they say about the aims of a country such as France or England in the construction of their image as powerful nations. In other words, cultural appropriation, especially of Rome, equalled power. It was essential to be in the direct genealogy from Greece to Rome to Paris (or London). This is why Robert's projected image of the *Apollo Belvedere* in an unfinished Louvre museum, already in ruin, is so revealing. It suggests the ascendancy of one culture over another. In this case, it is the "legitimized" appropriation of Rome, wholesale, by France. It is a grand idea. It is a sublime act.

Periodic instability in France combined with a militaristically aggressive drive to conquer and colonize must be acknowledged as part and parcel of the 1790s, and its impact was felt well into the nineteenth century, particularly with colonialism, as will be discussed more fully toward the end of chapter four in the context of the Musée Charles X. Some art historians such as Todd Porterfield, building on the work of the French historian Alexis de Tocqueville, see this militarism, at least in part, as a means of distraction from the difficulties and horrors posed by the Revolution on French soil; in other words, a means of forgetting. But as Porterfield also points out, France was dedicated to both revolutionary and nationalistic passions.<sup>100</sup> Robert's *Imaginary View of the Grand Gallery of the Louvre in Ruins* (Figure 49) suggests this combined interest. Robert's inclusion of the *Apollo Belvedere* in his painting shown at the Paris Salon of

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<sup>100</sup> Todd Porterfield, *The Allure of Empire: Art in the Service of French Imperialism, 1798-1836* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1998), 5.

1796 (but seized by Napoleon only in 1797), as part of the Louvre museum that had not yet been finished, is telling evidence of this. Understood in a context of the sublime as Longinian elevation, as opposed to Burkean fear or terror, Robert's work points to the continued success and greatness of France at home and abroad. It reflects a state of superiority, exaltation, elation, and transcendence, more than a monument to the persistence of fear.

To view Robert's *Imaginary View of the Louvre in Ruins* in line with a Burkean sublime of terror or fear, or as indicative of a potential failure on the part of a revolutionary institution that had not yet fully come into its own, or as a hallmark of the potential failings of France, is to castrate the French state, thus disallowing it any possibility of regeneration or continuation. It is to fear that the ship of state will not be able to right itself, just as it is emerging from the most turbulent part of its voyage—the Terror. Throughout the 1790s, while there was a general atmosphere of uncertainty and instability, France waged war across Europe. It is a particularly salient fact to consider that the Revolution was to spread. To view the 1790s entirely through the lens of the Burkean sublime is to deny the possibility of future greatness, which is to countermand the most forceful message contained in Robert's *Imaginary View of the Grand Gallery of the Louvre in Ruin*. To paint a future ruin alludes not so much to potential failure as to the certainty of future success, one guaranteed, in particular, by the militaristic victories throughout Europe that resulted in the accumulation of vast cultural capital revealing the current and future cultural and militaristic—or ideological—aims of the French state. These ideological aims will be reified on the ceilings of the Musée Charles X in 1826 during the Bourbon Restoration.

## Conclusion

To conclude, the greatness of France, indisputable, like the certainty of ruins falling and the universality of Newton's Law of Gravitation, lives on, sublimely. This is signaled, absolutely, by the projection of the Grand Gallery of one of its greatest monuments, the Louvre, shown as a ruin, before it has even been completed. Charles-Louis Clérisseau's and Robert's works extend our understanding of sublime landscapes of ruins to emphasize considerations of the grand ideas of science, cultural appropriation, and unabashed political ambition. If ruins in the *Ruin Room* signal gravity as a sublime idea in natural philosophy and mathematics representative of a fundamental shift in a scientific paradigm—representative of an epistemological break—then perhaps the far-ranging interest, fascination, and popularity of ruins in the eighteenth century is more complicated than has been hitherto recognized. In other words, ruins may signal a shift, or perhaps an instability or tension, in belief systems in the mid-eighteenth century that were undergoing major reorganization in the wake of the Protestant Reformation, the Counter-Reformation, and the Scientific Revolution—a period widely known as the “Enlightenment.”

## CHAPTER FOUR

### **Sublimity Restored: Apotheosis and Expansion in the Musée Charles X, 1815-1830**

The first three chapters of this dissertation focused on a selection of mostly mid-to-late eighteenth-century French landscape paintings and prints to argue that the articulation of the French sublime during this period was connected primarily to an idea of greatness or elevation indebted to Longinus, thus linking it strongly to the continuity of a classical tradition. This chapter on the Musée Charles X extends that argument into the early nineteenth century to suggest that the concept of the French sublime bound to greatness as its foundational precept became apotheosized in the public space of the museum in order to reify and substantiate the ideological aims of the restored Bourbon monarchy. The Musée Charles X is considered in this chapter as an intricate ideological construction representing a highly mediated view of French history that literally institutionalized the grand tradition of the sublime within the highly charged symbolic cultural and political space of the Louvre.

During the Bourbon Restoration, the grand tradition of the sublime was no longer merely a concept that could be found expressed only in the work of individual artists, but was also something that in a very real sense had become state policy. In the architectural space and painting program of the Musée Charles X, the sublime was used as an effective strategy to express the greatness of France, particularly as heir to the classical world, and to show a plan for its continuity. Such continuity was also projected, in part, through the intensification of imperial expansion in the nineteenth century, which became naturalized

through a complex invocation of a sense of fear associated with the Burkean sublime.

The articulation of the sublime in the Musée Charles X, thus, exhibits the French predilection seen in previous chapters—from the 1760s through the 1790s—that expressed the multivalent sublime as an admixture of Longinian and Burkean traits, with the classical sublime of Longinus, however, always playing the major role.

Founded in 1826 under the second, and last, ruler of the Bourbon Restoration, the eighteen-gallery Musée Charles X still occupies the second floor of the southern wing of the Louvre in what is now known as the Sully Wing (Figure 60). An elaborate painted decorative cycle for the ceilings and *voussoirs* [arch segment] of the galleries was planned in two phases, 1826 and 1828, to contextualize and complement the display of collections acquired by the restored Bourbon monarchy. These collections were assembled to replace over five thousand objects looted during the Napoleonic Wars that were returned to their countries of origin, as stipulated by the 1815 Treaty of Paris after Napoleon's loss at Waterloo. Ceiling and *voussoir* paintings and objects exhibited below were intended to provide an immersive environment for a didactic display of history. It was a message that spoke to the reification and legitimization of a hegemonic lineage of French (Bourbon) power, patrimony, and artistic production based on an undeniably grand lineage derived from Greco-Roman and Egyptian antiquity; it was elevated in and by the triumphal architectural space of the Musée Charles X and the Louvre as a cultural institution.

The acquisition, arrangement, and study of collections; the architectural space; and the program inscribed on the ceilings of the Louvre projected a desire to map, naturalize, and institutionalize the ideological aims of a restored monarchy. This was

connected to the sublime apotheosis of a specific heritage and a plan for its continuity, in part through imperial expansion. And it occurred at a point in history when the Bourbons were restored to power in France after the tumult of Revolution and the indeterminacy of Republic, Directory, Consulate, and the collapse of Empire.

This chapter is divided into three parts. The first examines the Musée Charles X in the context of the reestablishment and elevation of the Louvre as a hegemonic cultural institution in the context of post-Empire French history. The inscription of a continual lineage of French preeminence is reified in the creation of the Musée Charles X with its newly acquired collections and elaborate decorative program. Through the aggrandizement and monumentalization of Bourbon France, this legacy is equated with the great art-producing cultures of Greco-Roman and Egyptian antiquity. The second part of this chapter refines this idea. It considers the sublime continuity of a lineage of power, patronage, and patrimony promoted in the 1826 ceiling program of the Musée Charles X, particularly in the arc traced from Jean-Auguste-Dominique Ingres's *The Apotheosis of Homer* (1827) (Figure 61) to Antoine-Jean Gros's *The King Giving the Musée Charles X to the Arts* (1827) (Figure 62), which may be considered pendants in the context of the overall program.<sup>1</sup> The first two parts of this chapter consider the sublime in the context of the French tradition that derives specifically from Longinus and Boileau consistent with the ideas of grandeur and noble elevation that have been discussed throughout this dissertation.

The third part of this chapter, however, examines the multivalent aspect of the sublime in the Musée Charles X to show how a sublime of elevation and one of fear

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<sup>1</sup> Jean-Auguste-Dominique Ingres (1780-1867); Antoine-Jean Gros (1771-1835).

derived from the Burkean sublime intermix in the ceiling program. This can be seen in ceiling paintings that justify the acquisition of antiquities such as Charles Meynier's *The Nymphs of Parthenope Carry the Penates and Are Driven by Minerva to the Banks of the Seine* (1827) (Figure 63) and François-Joseph Heim's *Vesuvius Receiving Fire from Jupiter that Will Consume Herculaneum, Pompeii, and Stabia* (1827) (Figure 64).<sup>2</sup>

Part three also examines the expression of a multivalent sublime that contrasts the idea of great elevation with the pique of fear or terror to legitimize the co-option of ancient Egypt as an even more durable foundation than Greco-Roman antiquity for a dynastic Bourbon lineage of power and as a justification for imperial expansion. The element of fear conveyed by the Burkean sublime, when combined with the grand, noble didactic goal of empirical study and scientific classification, was a potent formula for the rationalization of imperialistic aims. This can be seen particularly well in Abel de Pujol's *Egypt Saved from Famine by Joseph* (1827) (Figure 65).<sup>3</sup> When read alongside Léon Cogniet's *The Expedition to Egypt in 1798 Under the Orders of Bonaparte* (1834) (Figure 66), the two paintings work in tandem to subtly justify cultural appropriation and imperial expansion into the East. French patrimony is combined with the empiricism of the nascent discipline of archaeology in an ideology of cultural acquisition (appropriation), protection, and preservation.<sup>4</sup> Such a strategy, derived from Napoleon's Egyptian Campaigns in 1798, would be extended in earnest with the French Colonization of Algeria in 1830 and throughout the nineteenth century.

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<sup>2</sup> Charles Meynier (~1763-1832); François-Joseph Heim (1787-1865).

<sup>3</sup> Abel de Pujol (1787-1861).

<sup>4</sup> Léon Cogniet (1794-1880). For the role of archaeology, see Goran Blix, *From Paris to Pompeii: French Romanticism and the Cultural Politics of Archaeology* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2008).

## **The Creation of the Musée Charles X: The Re-Apotheosis of the Louvre**

The acquisition of new collections and the accompanying decorative program of the Musée Charles X may be considered as a reaction by the Restored Bourbons to reestablish, elevate, and institutionalize the status of France under their leadership. This was crucial after the disorderly years following the 1789 Revolution that led to an over twenty-year hiatus of Bourbon rule in France until Louis XVIII was reinstated for the second time in 1815 after Napoleon's devastating loss at Waterloo. As argued in chapter three, Hubert Robert's pendants as a dichotomous presentation of the Grand Gallery of the Louvre in a finished state, *Project for the Transformation of the Grand Gallery of the Louvre* (1796) (Figure 48), and as a ruins, *Imaginary View of the Grand Gallery of the Louvre in Ruins* (1796) (Figure 49), projected sublimely the continual and future greatness of both the Louvre and France. This idea is built upon in this chapter to suggest that collections acquired for the Louvre beginning in 1818 and the establishment of the Musée Charles X in 1826 represented an effort to reestablish the sublime monumentalization of cultural and political continuity and superiority envisioned by Robert in his 1796 pendants that was challenged by the Second Treaty of Paris in 1815. This reestablishment occurred at a crucial point in history, when France was in need of rebuilding itself and its identity.

To understand the significance of the acquisitions of new collections and the inscription of a decorative program that elevated and concretized a grand Bourbon lineage on the ceilings of the Musée Charles X, it is necessary to consider the importance and symbolic significance of the Louvre as an institution. With its opening in 1793 as a

public museum, the Louvre had become embedded in the French national identity as an example of what historian Pierre Nora referred to as “history-memory,” when discussing French attachment to the murky, semi-mythological origins of its past.<sup>5</sup> The symbolic importance of the Louvre was played upon by Napoleon in the organization of the 1798 Fête de la Liberté to mark the arrival in Paris of the third convoy of sculpture and painting looted from Rome and Venice. This can be seen in Pierre Gabriel Berthault’s engraving *Triumphal Entry of the Monuments of the Arts and Science, 9 and 10 Thermidor Year VI* (Figure 55), as discussed in chapter three of this dissertation, following the argument of Patricia Mainardi that Paris replaced Rome as the center of cultural hegemony.<sup>6</sup> The sensationalized procession of booty ending at the doors of the Louvre crystallized its role in the French psyche as a place of national importance and would instigate its transformation into the Musée Napoleon in 1803. Napoleon’s subsequent loss at Waterloo and the resulting Treaties of 1815 humiliated the nation that was in need of reestablishing and reaffirming its identity under the restored Bourbon House. The 1815 Second Treaty of Paris imposed significantly harsher penalties than its predecessor of 1814.<sup>7</sup> It stipulated the reduction of France’s borders to essentially those

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<sup>5</sup> Pierre Nora, introduction to “Conflicts and Divisions,” in *Realms of Memory: Rethinking the French Past*, ed. Lawrence D. Kritzman, trans. Arthur Goldhammer, vol. 1 (New York: Columbia University Press, 1996-98), 21-23.

<sup>6</sup> “It is my theory that the Fête celebrated this alliance between politics and antique art and that it symbolically marked the transfer of the cultural capital of Europe from eighteenth-century Rome to nineteenth-century Paris.” Patricia Mainardi, “Assuring the Empire of the Future: The 1798 Fête de la Liberté,” *Art Journal* 48, no. 2 (1989): 155.

<sup>7</sup> William Fortescue, *Revolution and Counter-Revolution in France 1815-1852* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1990), 14. Fortescue commented that in response to the Second Treaty of Paris, “within France the political task remained to establish a widely accepted national identity.” To this end, the first step lay in removing the Allied troops from France through the payment of the indemnities, a task accomplished by 1818 (two years ahead of schedule) by the king of the newly restored Bourbon monarchy, Louis XVIII.

of 1789 and imposed the occupation of 150,000 Allied troops at France's expense to secure the repayment of over 700 million francs owed the Allies in indemnities.<sup>8</sup>

Perhaps as equal or more destructive to French morale was the order to return over five thousand works of art from the Louvre, looted by Napoleon, to their countries of origin.<sup>9</sup> This repatriation can be regarded as punitive, as it was not in the previous First Treaty of Paris in 1814, enacted during the initial Bourbon Restoration under Louis XVIII before the Hundred Days. Included was the repatriation to the Vatican of the *Apollo Belvedere*, a work considered critical in relation to the triumphal elevation of the projected future greatness of France in Robert's 1796 *Imaginary View of the Grand Gallery of the Louvre in Ruins* (Figure 49), as discussed in chapter three. Although the restored Bourbon House had been working gradually since 1815 to reestablish the Louvre, it was not until the creation of the Musée Charles X that large-scale decorative commissions with a specific iconographic program occurred.<sup>10</sup>

By 1817, the restored Bourbon House looked to the rebuilding of the Louvre to aid in the healing of the nation and to reassert and institutionalize its dynastic claim to power, a claim now supported by cultural patronage and patrimony, rather than military might. Beginning under Louis XVIII, the Bourbons began an extensive campaign to create a museum that would extend and surpass that of Napoleon.<sup>11</sup> From nearly the

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<sup>8</sup> Fortescue, *Revolution and Counter-Revolution*, 12, 14.

<sup>9</sup> Fortescue, *Revolution and Counter-Revolution*, 12.

<sup>10</sup> Marie-Claude Chaudonneret, "Historicism and 'Heritage' in the Louvre, 1820-40: From the Musée Charles X to the Galerie D'Apollon," *Art History* 14, no. 4 (1991): 491.

<sup>11</sup> "In 1814, on the Emperor's command, Denon had decided to decorate the great staircase and the 'two rooms that led to the Musée Napoléon' (the Rotonde d'Apollon and the Salle Duchâtel). On 22 July 1816, Louis XVIII decided to keep the museum in the Louvre, despite its revolutionary origin. Not only was the Louvre's building programme continued by Fontaine (Napoleon's architect, who later worked for Louis-

beginning of the Restoration, the General Director of Museums, Comte Auguste de Forbin, was concerned with filling the gaps left by the return of looted artwork and with acquiring new collections.<sup>12</sup> Of the 140 painted ceilings in the Louvre, twenty-six were commissioned in the 1820s, and twenty-two were created during or as a consequence of Charles X's reign.<sup>13</sup> Its importance as a museum under the Restoration is evidenced by the substantial increase in the number of exhibition galleries in the Louvre from nineteen to forty-four with the completion of the Galerie Campana in 1833.<sup>14</sup> The ordering in 1826 by Charles X of a special museum within the Louvre to display the Tochon, Durand, Drovetti, and Salt collections was a response, at least in part, to the need for space to contain a growing collection of Greek and Egyptian art acquired by museum officials.<sup>15</sup>

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Philippe), but the idea to decorate the museum's entrance was also revived. In 1819 Abel de Pujol completed the ceiling of the great staircase; in 1818 Blondel and Couder were commissioned for various ceiling panels in the Rotonde d'Apollon, followed by Mauzaisse in 1821. Meynier was charged with *Le Triomphe de la peinture française* for the ceiling of the Salle Duchâtel in 1820, while Forbin planned to decorate the rooms of the Conseil d'Etat adjacent to the Salle des séances royales." Chaudonneret, "Historicism and 'Heritage' in the Louvre," 491.

<sup>12</sup> The comte Auguste de Forbin was appointed general director of museums on 16 June 1816 and remained so until his death in 1841.

<sup>13</sup> Katrin Simons, "Die Dekoration des Musée Charles X im Louvre: Offizielle Kunst, Stilwandel und Salonkritik zwischen Restauration und Julimonarchie," *Idea* 9 (1990): 164. Charles X followed his brother Louis XVIII to become King of France on 16 September 1824.

<sup>14</sup> Simons, "Die Dekoration des Musée Charles X," 166.

<sup>15</sup> Christine Aulanier, "Le Musée Charles X et le département des antiquités égyptiennes," in *Histoire du Palais et du Musée du Louvre*, vol. 8 (Paris: Editions des Musées nationaux, 1947-1968), 35, 36; Chaudonneret, "Historicism and 'Heritage' in the Louvre," 491. Before the acquisition in 1818 of the Tochon collection of antique vases, the entire holdings of antique ceramics in the Louvre numbered thirty-eight pieces. By 1824, over three thousand objects had been added with the recent purchase of the Edme-Auguste Durand collection of Etruscan vases, which also included Egyptian antiquities and medieval and Renaissance objects. The lack of adequate space for the newly acquired collections, as evidenced during the Salon of that year, led Forbin to suggest in 1824 the founding of a new museum under the auspices of Charles X. By 1826, the need for exhibition space would become absolutely critical with the acquisition of the Drovetti collection of Egyptian objects that year. The Salt collection combined with the Egyptian objects in the Durand collection totaled almost five thousand objects.

In order to provide an impressive space for the new museum, Pierre-François Fontaine, architect to Napoleon (and a key figure in the creation of the Empire Style), was chosen in 1826 to undertake the transformation of the new galleries. With his architectural treatment, Fontaine connected the Musée Charles X to previous efforts by Napoleon to establish the Louvre as the victorious home of art and to a tradition of monuments stretching back in history to the Roman triumphal arch. Through an arch motif reflected in the two pilasters flanking each doorway leading from gallery to gallery *enfilade* (interconnected rooms formally aligned with one another) and a corresponding bas-relief motif on the walls (Figure 67), Fontaine's design of the galleries directly referenced his design for the Triumphal Arch of the Carrousel (1806) (Figure 68), created to celebrate Napoleon's military victories. Sited at the Place des Tuileries, the juncture where the Louvre meets the Tuileries Gardens, this monument was based on the Arch of Septimius Severus (203 CE) and the Arch of Constantine (315 CE), both in Rome and both commemorating military victories.<sup>16</sup> More significantly, the Arch of the Carrousel was very explicitly tied to the triumphal elevation of the cultural (and political and militaristic) hegemony of France as institutionalized in the Louvre. It was originally crowned by the four bronze horses taken by Napoleon's armies from Saint Mark's in Venice that led the convoy of the fine arts division of spoils paraded to the doors of the Louvre during the 1798 Fête de la Liberté, as can be seen prominently displayed in Berthault's print (Figure 55). Those four horses, likely by Lysippus, Mainardi wrote, "were an ideal symbol of cultural and political authority."<sup>17</sup> Thus, through the very

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<sup>16</sup> As sited, the Triumphal Arch of the Carrousel would have originally mediated between the Louvre and the Tuileries Palace, which was destroyed in 1871 during the suppression of the Paris Commune.

<sup>17</sup> Mainardi, "Assuring the Empire of the Future," 158.

specific triumphal-arch motif that unified the galleries, the Musée Charles X represented a renewed elevation and reification of a lineage of power that can be traced not only to Roman antiquity but to the triumph of Paris, again, as the new Rome, as proclaimed in 1798, as argued in chapter three.<sup>18</sup> Through the didactic subject matter of the painted ceilings and vousoirs, the triumphal-arch theme was transformed from one applauding military victory under Napoleon to a peacefully gained cultural supremacy, primarily through reliance on letters, science, and art under Charles X, as expressed in the halls of the museum.

The collections slated for display in the newly planned galleries of the Musée Charles X were not to remain intact, but rather were to be split up into their respective categories. The effect of this classification scheme resulted in the creation of a museum with two distinct departments. These were divided architecturally by the central Salle des colonnes, originally constructed in 1812 and so named for the use of columns separating it into three volumes; Fontaine organized the galleries of the Musée Charles X around this room (Figure 60). The department of Greek and Roman antiquities under the charge of Charles Clarac occupied the galleries to the west of the Salle des colonnes.<sup>19</sup> The department of Egyptian antiquities under the direction of the preeminent Egyptologist Jean-François Champollion occupied the galleries to the east of the Salle des colonnes.

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<sup>18</sup> Mainardi, "Assuring the Empire of the Future," 155.

<sup>19</sup> As the Durand collection contained a small amount of Medieval and Renaissance works, Clarac was put in charge of these as well. One gallery on the Greek and Roman side would be devoted to these works. Later with the establishment of the Galerie Campana these objects would be moved to the Seine-side galleries, as they were more in keeping with the context of the Révoil collection.

To these departments would be added objects already in the museum's holdings, allowing for an arrangement favorable to artists and scholars.<sup>20</sup>

The 1828 Galerie Campana expansion of the Musée Charles X, completed in 1833, added nine additional galleries to the south that ran parallel to the original galleries of the 1826 program and were accessible from them (Figure 60).<sup>21</sup> These galleries were designed to hold the Révoil collection of French Medieval and Renaissance objects. In a text that forms the foundation for an understanding of the space and program of the Musée Charles X, *History of the Palace and Museum of the Louvre*, art historian Christine Aulanier discovered that the Galerie Campana was a part of the Musée Charles X from its inception, that fact often overlooked due to the significant differences in the style of its decorative program, content of its galleries, and in its naming.<sup>22</sup> Three important museologically oriented studies, two by the art historian Marie-Claude Chaudonneret and the other by the art historian Katrin Simons, have contributed to an

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<sup>20</sup> Marie-Claude Chaudonneret, *L'Etat et les artistes: De la Restauration à la monarchie de juillet, 1815-1833* (Paris: Flammarion, 1999), 50; Chaudonneret, "Historicism and 'Heritage' in the Louvre," 492. Chaudonneret pointed to a report to the king by Sosthène de La Rochefoucauld, chargé du Département des Beaux-Arts de la Maison du Roi, in which he wrote, "la nécessité d'établir dans l'ensemble de ce musée un ordre et une classification favorable aux travaux des artistes et des savants." Chaudonneret further paraphrased La Rochefoucauld's letter in writing, "He [La Rochefoucauld] proposed 'to gather in the same building' those objects newly acquired together with others drawn from its collection, arranged in specific departments." Report by La Rochefoucauld, chargé du Département des Beaux-Arts de la Maison du Roi, to the king, 15 May 1826. A.N. O3 1276.

<sup>21</sup> For a good discussion of the Galerie Campana, see Chaudonneret, *L'Etat et les artistes*, 193-201.

<sup>22</sup> Aulanier, "Le Musée Charles X," 8:56; Archives du Louvre, Comptabilité, 1826. The initial plan of the Musée Charles X was conceived to include the nine galleries on the Cour Carrée side planned in 1826 and completed in time for the Salon of 1827 and the nine galleries facing the Seine that are still today called the Galerie Campana, so named as they were not completed under the reign of Charles X. In order to eliminate any confusion as to the Galerie Campana belonging to the Musée Charles X, Aulanier pointed out that the construction materials for the galleries of the Galerie Campana were obtained and brought in at the same time as the materials for nine galleries of the Cour Carrée side of the Musée Charles X. To further make the point that by 1826 these galleries were considered as a part of the Musée Charles X, Aulanier points to a note from M. de Cailleux, Forbin's secretary to the comte de Tilly. This correspondence of 27 October 1826 outlined a detailed report of the growth of the collections under the auspices of the Musée Charles X addressed to Sosthène de La Rochefoucauld; Aulanier, "Le Musée Charles X," 8:56; Archives du Louvre, T16, 19 janvier 1829.

understanding of the Musée Charles X, linking the themes of the ceiling paintings to the objects on display below and emphasizing the role of the museum's administration in its planning.<sup>23</sup> Chaudonneret's work established the significance of the Musée Charles X, particularly the Galerie Campana, as a precursor to the Musée historique at Versailles, established under Louis-Philippe after the Revolution of 1830 to provide a didactic visual history of all the glories of France.<sup>24</sup> In addition to these works, Louvre curator Sébastien Allard's 2006 *Le Louvre à l'époque romantique: Les Décors du palais (1815-1835)* provides an overview of the Musée Charles X, emphasizing its public role as a gift of Charles X to the people, highlighting its decorative scheme, and discussing its ceiling program as a return to monumental painting in France.<sup>25</sup>

To complement the collections, an elaborate painted decorative cycle was planned in 1826 for the ceilings of the nine new galleries and in 1828 for the galleries of the Galerie Campana. According to the supervisor of the royal department of fine arts, Sosthène de la Rochefoucauld, the decorative program was "related to the objects exhibited; decorations and objects together had to constitute a history of arts and of civilizations."<sup>26</sup> Artists were also responsible for numerous *voussoir* and *grisaille* (painting executed in monochrome, generally gray) paintings, which would extend and refine the themes on the ceilings. Together the ceilings, *voussoirs*, *grisailles*, and objects

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<sup>23</sup> Chaudonneret, *L'Etat et les artistes*, 49-53, 189-203; Chaudonneret, "Historicism and 'Heritage' in the Louvre," 488-520; Simons, "Die Dekoration des Musée Charles X," 161-210.

<sup>24</sup> Chaudonnert, *L'Etat et les artistes*, 193.

<sup>25</sup> Sébastien Allard, *Le Louvre à l'époque romantique: Les Décors du palais, 1815-1835* (Lyon: Fage éditions, 2006). While Allard's overview of the Louvre spans the years 1815 to 1835, his chapter "Le Musée Charles X: Un Cadeau du roi à la nation (Salon de 1827)" focuses on the Musée Charles X, 49-85.

<sup>26</sup> Chaudonneret, *L'Etat et les artistes*, 50

below would reinforce one another to form a highly didactic immersive environment for the display of a history of arts and culture. As Chaudonneret observed,

The transformation of the Louvre from a royal palace into an artistic pantheon dated from the Revolution, but after the Empire the concept behind this pantheon had itself changed. No longer was the aim to gather together humanity's artistic masterpieces; the notion of an ideal and universal museum was replaced by pedagogical aspirations. From 1815, the idea of the museum became inseparable from the progressive conception of history: the works were regarded as witnesses, instruments for exploring the past.<sup>27</sup>

The ideological aim, or message, one made almost undeniable by the authenticity of the objects on display, conveyed the sublime in its articulation and emphasis on the greatness of a continued lineage of Bourbon patrimony and cultural might. This can be seen in the elevation of the Louvre as a cultural institution through its expansion with the Musée Charles X and in the didactic legitimization of Bourbon patrimony in the newly acquired and carefully arranged collections. The message can also be seen in the painted decorative program that emphasized the noble grandeur and apotheosis of Bourbon France drawn from Greco-Roman and Egyptian antiquity and aligned it with the tradition of the sublime of elevation and greatness.

### **The Decorative Program of the Musée Charles X: A Sublime Lineage of Greatness**

The emphasis on the elevation of a continuous cultural legacy shown in the galleries and ceilings of the Musée Charles X, underwritten by Bourbon rule, was best demonstrated in the ceiling Ingres painted for the westmost gallery of the museum, *The*

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<sup>27</sup> Chaudonneret, "Historicism and 'Heritage' in the Louvre," 491.

*Apotheosis of Homer* (Figure 61), and the one Gros painted for the eastmost gallery at the opposite end, *The King Giving the Musée Charles X to the Arts* (Figure 62). These two ceiling paintings by the two most celebrated artists of the time were commissioned for the 1826 program as “book ends,” and are distinguished by their placement in the organizational scheme of the museum (Figure 60). They make a compelling statement of the overall goal of the 1826 program that linked Bourbon France to the epic figure of Homer and to the classical Greco-Roman canon upon which rests the entire western tradition. This canon was extended even farther back in history to connect and legitimize a Bourbon lineage of power with pharaonic Egypt, as Todd Porterfield argued in his 1998 book, *Allure of Empire: Art in the Service of French Imperialism, 1798-1836*.<sup>28</sup>

In keeping with the didactic aim of the museum, Ingres was commissioned in 1826 to paint *The Apotheosis of Homer* for the ceiling of a gallery that contained Greek ceramics.<sup>29</sup> Finished in time for the Salon of 1827, at the height of the *bataille romantique* [battle between classicism and Romanticism], this painting has been widely regarded as a specifically artistic testimony to the dominance of classicism. According to art historian Robert Rosenblum, the painting was “steeped in those French academic traditions, that in the nineteenth century grew more and more inflexible as they were challenged by modern dissenters.”<sup>30</sup> Designed for the ceiling of the Musée Charles X and likely a pendant to Gros’s *The King Giving the Musée Charles X to the Arts*, the

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<sup>28</sup> Todd Porterfield, *Allure of Empire: Art in the Service of French Imperialism, 1798-1836* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1998), 87.

<sup>29</sup> Aulanier, “Le Musée Charles X,” 8:36. Aulanier suggested it was Vicomte Sosthène de La Rochefoucauld who set the theme for this work. The didactic aim would be continued in the voussoirs Ingres designed for the room and in a series of grisailles below that show popularly represented scenes from the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*.

<sup>30</sup> Robert Rosenblum, *Jean-Auguste-Dominique Ingres* (New York: H. N. Abrams, 1990), 100.

meaning of Ingres's painting requires an additional layer of interpretation.<sup>31</sup> This interpretation emphasizes the notion of continuity from an ancient past to the present, placing Homer as the father of a virtually unbroken cultural lineage beginning in Greece and extending to find its teleological end in Restoration France. The elevation and inscription of this lineage projected by Ingres's painting was tied to the architectural space of the new museum to convey a sense of the sublime, tightly connected to a legacy of greatness. *The Apotheosis of Homer* was connected to the sublime elevation of Restoration France and must be construed as a projection of the continuity that the classical tradition embodies.

In the center of his composition, Ingres enthroned Homer on a raised, multi-tiered dais in front of a commanding Ionic hexastyle temple inscribed in the architrave with his name. The blind poet stares straight out of the picture frame. A hovering winged figure of Victory to the right of the poet crowns him with a laurel wreath. Seated at the poet's feet are two women who appear aloof and meditative; to the left is the personification of the *Iliad* with a sword and to the right the personification of the *Odyssey* with an oar. On either side of the poet, a hierarchically arranged pantheon of great men, both ancient and modern, ascend several stairs of the dais to pay homage to Homer. These figures, referred to by Ingres himself as *homérides*, are a veritable "artistic genealogical table," to borrow a phrase from Rosenblum, "representing an officially recognized canon," or lineage.<sup>32</sup>

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<sup>31</sup> Although commissioned in 1826 as a ceiling decoration for the Musée Charles X and completed in 1827, it was removed in 1855 from the ceiling and shown vertically at the Exposition Universelle. Since 1874, it has been on exhibit at the Louvre (shown vertically), while a copy has replaced it on the ceiling.

<sup>32</sup> Rosenblum, *Ingres*, 100; Patricia Condon, *In Pursuit of Perfection: The Art of J.-A.-D. Ingres*, exh. cat. (Louisville, KY: J. B. Speed Art Museum, 1983), 110-114. Condon gives a concise account as to how, and in which drawings related to this painting, the number of figures (*homérides*) grew to reach eighty-five. She also gives a good history of this work, citing the long process of refinement and revision reflected in what would ultimately number 204 drawings done by Ingres on this theme. The classical figures are placed

The work reflected a goal of the entire decorative program of the Musée Charles X that stressed a powerful lineage that was derived from and legitimized by a connection with the ancient world.<sup>33</sup> Ingres himself describes the work as indicative of such a sense of continuity going back to one source—Homer:

With his poetry, Homer was the first to disentangle the beauties of nature, just as God organized life by extracting it from chaos. His teachings are eternal and universal; he codified beauty in immortal precepts and examples. All the great men of Greece—poets, tragedians, historians, artists of every kind, painters, sculptors, architects—owe their paternity to Homer. For as long as Greek civilization lasted and throughout the reign of the Roman Empire and long after, the world continued to put into practice the principals Homer discovered. Later, in the great modern periods, men of genius repeated that which was done before them. Homer and Phidias, Raphaël and Poussin, Gluck and Mozart had, in reality, said the same things.<sup>34</sup>

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higher in this arrangement, closer to the poet. To his immediate left, in descending order of importance, are the full-length classical figures. Herodotus, the father of history, throws incense onto the ashes in a tripod; Aeschylus presents his scroll of tragedies; Apelles with brushes and pallet leads Raphaël by the hand; Virgil accompanies Dante. Raphaël and Dante occupy the middle ground between “moderns” and “ancients” as adopted members of the great classical tradition. Below them are the moderns, represented in half-length: Poussin, Corneille, and La Fontaine. Two non-French figures can be seen to the left of this group at the painting’s outside edge: Shakespeare and Tasso. The figures on the poet’s right provide a counterpoint to figures on the left: Pindar offers his large ivory lyre, Plato converses with Socrates, Phidias presents his mallet, Alexander presents the gold casket in which he keeps the works of the great poet. Again presented in half-length, the modern figures on the right include Boileau, Molière, and Racine. Below these venerated seventeenth-century Frenchmen is the one-eyed Camoëns.

<sup>33</sup> Norman Schlenoff, *Ingres: Ses sources littéraires* (Paris: Presses universitaires de France, 1956), 159-161. Schlenoff cited the similarity of figures in Ingres’s *The Apotheosis of Homer* to the names adorning the scrolls in the illusionistic portrait busts by Gros in the Salle des colonnes, drawing the conclusion that this implies an overall unity in the decorative program.

<sup>34</sup> “Homère a le premier débrouillé par la poésie les beautés naturelles, comme Dieu a organisé la vie en la démêlant du chaos. Il a pour jamais instruit le genre humain, il a mis le beau en precepts et en exemples immortels. Tous les grands hommes de la Grèce, poètes, tragiques, historiens, artistes de tous les genres, peintres, sculpteurs, architectes, tous sont nés de lui: et, tant que la civilisation grecque a duré, tant que Rome, après elle, a régné sur le monde, on continue de mettre en pratique les mêmes principes une fois trouvés. Plus tarde, aux grandes époques modernes, les hommes de génie ont refait ce qu’on avait fait avant eux. Homère et Phidias, Raphaël et Poussin, Gluck et Mozart, ont dit en réalité le mêmes choses.” Henri Delaborde, *Ingres: Sa vie, ses travaux, sa doctrine* (Paris, 1870), 147.

Ingres's description of the idea behind his painting elevates both the "eternal and universal" contribution of Homer and the powerful legacy of that contribution; it is one that Ingres relates to that of God in its significance.

That this legacy is sublime can be qualified by the figure of Jupiter. For *The Apotheosis of Homer*, Ingres took a cue from a neoclassical drawing for the *Iliad* by John Flaxman, *The Council of the Gods* (Figure 69), connecting his depiction of Homer, the poet, to the supreme deity and father of the Gods, Jupiter.<sup>35</sup> The connection between the sublime figure of Jupiter and Homer in *The Apotheosis of Homer* could not be more obvious, particularly in the context of the overall decorative program in which Jupiter is referenced in several galleries of the initial 1826 program. Jupiter is represented in the ceiling paintings of the next two contiguous galleries with displays of Greco-Roman collections: Charles Meynier's *The Nymphs of Parthenope Carry the Penates and Are Driven by Minerva to the Banks of the Seine* (Figure 63) and François-Joseph Heim's *Vesuvius Receiving Fire from Jupiter that Will Consume Herculaneum, Pompeii, and Stabia* (Figure 64). In Meynier's painting, a statuette of Jupiter enthroned is shown elevated by one of Parthenope's nymphs above the rest of the figural group along the central vertical axis of the painting. The statuette closely resembles Ingres's initial sketch (Figure 70) for the figure of Homer that art historian Patricia Condon argues was the *première pensée* [first sketch] that Ingres produced for the *Apotheosis of Homer*, within

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<sup>35</sup> Sarah Symmons, "J. A. D. Ingres: The Apotheosis of Flaxman," *Burlington Magazine* 121, no. 920 (November 1979): 722. A preliminary drawing for the final ceiling shows Homer with an extended right arm holding a staff, identical to Flaxman's drawing. In the final version for the ceiling, Ingres has bent the poet's arm in toward his body. It is interesting, too, that Flaxman superimposed the eagle of Jupiter over a three-quarter profile of a seated Homer for the title page in a drawing for a 1793 illustrated *Iliad*, in effect, merging the two figures.

an hour of his commission.<sup>36</sup> A similar and more prominent Jupiter enthroned floats on a cloud above a personification of Vesuvius in Heim's ceiling painting, where Jupiter is centered in the topmost register and is the focal point of the composition. Jupiter hands a bundle of thunderbolts to Vesuvius, that telling glyph of the Longinian sublime discussed more fully in chapter one of this dissertation in relation to the work of Nicolas Poussin and Joseph-Claude Vernet.

The evidence for a continuous lineage of royal power elevated and inscribed on the ceilings of the Musée Charles X can be clearly seen in the overall program in which there is an enthroned figure in each of the nine ceiling paintings of the galleries. Beginning with the eastmost gallery and continuing to the westmost they are: Charles X, Julius II, the pharaoh, Egypt, Virtue, Cybele, Jupiter, Jupiter, and Homer (Figure 60). Ingres's depiction of Homer, similar to such works as his *Napoleon I on His Imperial Throne* (1806) (Figure 71) and *Jupiter and Thetis* (1811) (Figure 72), places him squarely within a lineage of almost divine royal portraiture stretching from the ancient world to France. Implicit in this connection may be the notion of a sublime legacy that reaches from Jupiter to Homer, to Napoleon, and ultimately to Charles X, thus connecting the restored Bourbon king to a tradition of indisputable eternal significance, permanence, and continuity reflected in the ceilings of the Louvre.

In Gros's painting for the eastmost gallery that may have served as the entrance to the museum, *The King Giving the Musée Charles X to the Arts* (Figures 60 and 62), Charles X points to the new museum, presented as a Corinthian temple.<sup>37</sup> Minerva leads

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<sup>36</sup> Condon, *In Pursuit of Perfection*, 110.

<sup>37</sup> There has been much disagreement in the scholarship upon this point. Simons believes there to be two entrances, the eastmost and westmost galleries. Chaudonneret believes the entrance is the eastmost gallery.

personifications of the arts to the museum, in front of a centrally enthroned Charles X. In comparing the ceiling paintings by Gros and Ingres, certain similarities stand out immediately, such as the prominent classical temples and the figures symbolic of the arts leading one another by the hand. In Ingres's painting Apelles leads Raphael, while in Gros's painting Minerva leads a procession of various personifications. More importantly, there is a striking compositional correspondence between the figure of Homer and that of Charles X, as each is seated frontally and enthroned on a raised dais. Similarly, while Homer is crowned by Victory in Ingres's work and with the personifications of the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* at his feet (Figure 61), Charles X in Gros's painting is enthroned in front of a standing Justitia, and between Virtus, holding a palm tree branch, and Fortuna, holding a cornucopia and an anchor, both seated at his feet. Thus, in each painting there is a triangular, primary, tight-knit group of four figures as the focal point. While these similarities might be insufficient to connect the two works if they were not part of the same decorative program, such a connection here cannot be readily dismissed, particularly in the context of one that centers around the reification of a lineage of sublime greatness and the apotheosis of an unshakable classical heritage.

In addition to *The King Giving the Musée Charles X to the Arts* and three main ceiling paintings in the Salle des colonnes, Gros was responsible for six additional ceiling paintings in this central space that reinforce the emphasis on the peaceful pursuit of the arts and science that was promoted under great rulers.<sup>38</sup> Each work depicts an illusionistic

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Indeed, the issue is complex, as one can physically enter the Musée Charles X from three places (Figure 60): from the Salle des colonnes, from the eastmost gallery containing Ingres's *The Apotheosis of Homer*, or from the westmost gallery containing a painting by Gros, *The King Giving the Musée Charles X to the Arts* (1827), removed under Louis-Philippe in 1830.

<sup>38</sup> Gros executed three main ceiling paintings for this space, commissioned in 1826. The central work, *True Glory Rests on Virtue* (1827), is flanked on the east, toward the entrance to the Egyptian Department by

portrait bust. Scrolls on either side name famous contemporaries: Pericles, Augustus, Leo X, François I, Louis XIV, and finally, Charles X (Figure 73). The busts and scrolls form a compelling chronology of patronage, one joined by Charles X with his museum.<sup>39</sup> This chronology is not limited to Bourbon rule but traces a lineage that goes back to antiquity, further underscoring a general connection between Homer and the classical world and Charles X and the Bourbon Restoration. The inclusion on the scrolls of the names of scientists next to those of artists underscores the significance of a scientific organization of the collections into departments.<sup>40</sup> The art historian Norman Schlenoff observed that many of the figures named on these scrolls are identical to those intellectuals and artists in Ingres's *The Apotheosis of Homer*.<sup>41</sup> Schlenoff's connection between the figures referenced in the Salle de colonnes and Ingres's *homérides* suggests that the decorative program of the Musée Charles X contained a unified theme. It emphasized the great accomplishments of France and was known to all participants.<sup>42</sup> Schlenoff's observation

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*Time Raises Truth to the Steps of the Throne where Wisdom Receives her while a Newborn Spirit Listens* (1827) and on the west, toward the entrance to the Greek and Roman Department, by *Mars Crowned by Victory Listens to Moderation and Stops his Steed and Lowers his Javelin* (1827).

<sup>39</sup> The names on the scrolls in the painting of Pericles are: Themistocles, Plato, Homer, Socrates, Aristides, Phidias. In the painting of Augustus are the following names: Mäcenas, Vergil, Terence, Horace. In the painting of Leo X: Tasso, Raphaël, Aristotle, Michelangelo. In the painting of François I: Montaigne, da Vinci, Amyot, Primaticcio. In the painting of Louis XIV: Lebrun, Boileau, Poussin, Corneille, Molière, Le Sueur, Racine, Lulli, La Fontaine. In the painting of Charles X: the mathematician La Place, the mathematician and philosopher Joseph Louis Lagrange, the naturalist George-Louis Leclerc Buffon, the politician Malesherbes, the architect Antoine Denis Chaudet, the composer Méhul-Gretry, the painter Joseph Marie Vien, and the painter Anne-Louis Girodet.

<sup>40</sup> Buffon, whose name appears on one of the scrolls in the portrait bust of Charles X, was particularly active in establishing a classification of nature based on genus and species. His massive forty-four volume, *Histoire naturelle, générale et particulière* (1749-1804), attempted to systematically classify the whole of the natural world as an evolutionary continuum, as opposed to Linnaeus's system.

<sup>41</sup> Schlenoff, *Ingres: Ses sources littéraires*, 159-161.

<sup>42</sup> Simons, "Die Dekoration des Musée Charles X," 207n102 qtg. Archives du Louvre, T16, Brief des Comte de Forbin of 28 August 1828. Simons makes a similar point that the decorative program was known to all in her analysis of the 1828 program for the Galerie Campana. "M. Steuben qui s'occupe de la

strongly links Gros's work in the Salle de colonnes and in the eastmost gallery to that of Ingres. Thus, a conception of the museum was established by the decorative program of the ceilings that stretched from Homer and his position as father of the arts to Charles X as a Bourbon patriarch, as protector and benefactor of the arts and as heir to the classical canon with the museum. The ceilings attest to the sublimity and permanence of that line of continuous lineage under which the arts are created, nourished, and protected.

Gros's *The King Giving the Musée Charles X to the Arts* (Figure 62) alludes also to the museum's diverse collection of Greco-Roman and Egyptian antiquities, as can be seen by the inclusion of the river goddess at the bottom of the picture and a sphinx surrounded by other Egyptian artifacts. The ceilings and collections of the Musée Charles X show the newly Restored France as the heir not only to classical antiquity but to Egypt as well. As Todd Porterfield argues, "France is the heir and caretaker of civilization in its movement from Egypt to Greece, from Greece to Rome, from ancient Rome to Italy, and, finally, to Restoration France."<sup>43</sup> Through its establishment of a powerful lineage of political and cultural legitimacy that extended from Egypt to the Greco-Roman world and then to France, the Musée Charles X promoted a persuasive message about the elevated and continued greatness of France. In his emphasis on Egypt, Porterfield downplays the significance of the continuity with the Greco-Roman classical world in the Musée Charles X, a lacuna this chapter aims to correct. Porterfield's argument stresses the extension of cultural lineage back to Egypt as a strategy for effectively substantiating the

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décoration de cette salle a traité le sujet de Henry IV après la Bataille d'Ivry, au moment ou le Roi fait cesser le carnage. Cette salle est le pendant de celle No 11." [Steuben decorated this room and has treated the subject of Henry IV after the Battle of Ivry, when King stopped the carnage. This room is the counterpart of No. 11.]

<sup>43</sup> Porterfield, *Allure of Empire*, 87.

legacy of the restored Bourbons. This was particularly connected to the idea of monotheistic rule of pharaonic Egypt as a means of further reinforcing and legitimizing the authority of the dynastic kingship of Bourbon rule and its link to the Catholic Church, a significant theme in painting during this period, as identified by Robert Rosenblum.<sup>44</sup>

Tracing a Bourbon lineage of cultural, political, and religious legitimacy further back in history than the Renaissance or Greco-Roman antiquity to ancient Egypt can be seen explicitly in the first gallery of the Egyptian Department for which François Picot executed the painting *Study and Genius Unveil Ancient Egypt to Greece* (Figure 74). It was particularly well suited to its location, as it provided a clever transition between the collection of Greek and Roman antiquities on one side of the Salle des colonnes and the Egyptian collections on the other (Figure 60).<sup>45</sup> Silhouetted against the rays of the sun emanating from the lower left corner of the composition behind the seated figure of Egypt, Athena, who symbolizes Greece, descends from the right on a bed of clouds against the backdrop of the pyramids. She is flanked on the one side by the Spirit of the Arts and on the other by Study with her torch. Cherubs unveil the figure of Egypt enthroned atop a high vantage point. In the context of the decorative program, such enthronement connects Egypt to the figures of Homer in Ingres's painting, *Jupiter in*

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<sup>44</sup> Porterfield, *Allure of Empire*, 95. Porterfield suggested in his argument that the connection to pharaonic Egypt also reinforced the renewed Bourbon support for the Catholic Church, which is another important aspect of the program of the Musée Charles X; this can be seen in the ceiling paintings of several galleries. Most notably, Horace Vernet extends the theme of arts patronage to the Church with *Julius II Commissions Work on the Vatican and St. Peter's from Bramante, Michaelangelo and Raphaël* (1827). This work serves to reestablish the institution of Church patronage overshadowed in the years after the Revolution and during the reign of Napoleon, a trait of painting during the Restoration in which emphasis was placed upon "the Bourbon dynasty's traditional fusion of Church and State."; Robert Rosenblum, "Painting During the Bourbon Restoration, 1814-1830," in *French Painting 1774-1830: The Age of Revolution* (Detroit: Detroit Institute of Arts, 1975), 235.

<sup>45</sup> Porterfield, *Allure of Empire*, 87.

Meynier's and Heim's paintings, and Charles X in Gros's paintings (Figures 61, 63, 64, 62). Tossed to the side are old weapons of war, symbolizing that it will be a time of peace.

In addition to providing a didactic context for the Egyptian antiquities on display below, Picot's painting emphasizes the connection between Egyptian and Greek art, one made even more explicit in the scenes in the voussoir paintings, particularly in *A Greek Sculptor Copying an Egyptian Isis*. It also underlines the scholarly achievement of Champollion in the deciphering of Egyptian hieroglyphs, an accomplishment that led to a better understanding of Egyptian art and its influence.<sup>46</sup> Although the exploration of Egypt in the nineteenth century was considered to be an indivisible attribute of Napoleon's campaigns, the inclusion of such subject matter in the Musée Charles X under the Restoration does not appear to have been deemed inappropriate as the Bourbons adopted Napoleon's imperialist project.<sup>47</sup>

After the July Revolution that forced Charles X to abdicate the throne, Gros was commissioned in 1830 to replace *The King Giving the Musée Charles X to the Arts* with *The Spirit of France Encourages the Arts and Protects Humanity* (1833) (Figure 75), a painting that communicated a very similar message to that of the original ceiling painting but without a specific reference to the Bourbons. Perhaps this replacement, still in place today, has contributed to the difficulty of reading the overall decorative program as established in 1826. But even with this change, the message that echoes through the halls of the Musée Charles X is of a Bourbon patrimony and cultural lineage that stretches

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<sup>46</sup> Porterfield, *Allure of Empire*, 96-104.

<sup>47</sup> This inclusion belies the complexities inherent during the time period, pointing to a desire on the part of those planning the decorative program to conceive of it as not being limited solely to the accomplishments under the Bourbons. This is in opposition to the type of programmatic propaganda that had occurred during Napoleon's reign.

back and is founded in the legacy of Homer as the father of the Greco-Roman tradition and the immutable dynastic continuity of ancient Egypt. And this message can be extended from the Bourbon Restoration to France more generally via Gros's replacement ceiling. It is a position underscored by François-Joseph Heim's allegorical ceiling sited parallel to the Salle des colonnes in the central gallery of the Galerie Campana extension, *The Renaissance of Art in France* (1833) (Figure 76).

Commissioned in 1828, Heim's work established the theme for the program to elevate the artistic accomplishments under French monarchic rule. The allegory is confirmed in the eight voussoir paintings illustrating the history of France from Charles VIII to Henri II, most comprising a general chronological introduction to the arts in France. This suggests a reading of the decorative program of the Musée Charles X as a whole, including the Galerie Campana extension, which elevated the renaissance of French art evident in the ceilings and in the empirical evidence of the objects from the Révoil collection with those of the great traditions of Egyptian and Greco-Roman art in the original nine galleries completed in 1827. Thus, the legacy of French greatness and its future continuity is monumentalized through the inscription of that ideology on the painted ceilings of its galleries and reinforced by the empirical evidence of the collections on display. Hence, with the Musée Charles X, France joins, as the latest historical addition, a sublime pantheon of great art-producing cultures.

## The Musée Charles X: The Multivalent Sublime and Imperial Expansion

The linkage connecting the ancient world to the Bourbons was evident through the efforts of French scholars to preserve the legacy of antiquity, as can be seen in the collections and in the choice of subjects for the ceiling paintings that reflected how those objects came to be in the museum and their historical context.<sup>48</sup> This general theme is refined in the paintings seen overhead in the Greek and Roman Department to reflect the specific accomplishments of excavation and conservation undertaken at Pompeii, Naples, and Herculaneum, as well as to provide a didactic context for the objects displayed below. Ceilings for the Egyptian Department also perform this didactic function and pay tribute to the important work of French scholars, particularly Jean-François Champollion, during the Egyptian Campaigns of Napoleon in the acquisition and preservation of Egyptian antiquities. These paintings underline the important achievements of Charles Clarac and Champollion in the establishment of their respective departments. Together they serve to emphasize, memorialize, and monumentalize the key contributions of France in the preservation of art from these cultures to suggest a sublime of elevation interwoven with a fear of loss.

For a ceiling in the Greek and Roman Department with its display of antique bronzes, Charles Meynier's 1826 commission, *The Nymphs of Parthenope, Carrying with Them Penates, the Images of Their Gods, Are Led by the Goddess of Fine Arts Far from Their Own Shores to the Banks of the Seine* (Figure 63), speaks to the patrimony of the

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<sup>48</sup> Porterfield, *Allure of Empire*, 101. Porterfield made a similar point with the collections in the Egyptian department, tied as they were to the important work by Champollion in the field of Egyptology. Porterfield argued that French identity was "conflated with Champollion's genius" in the Egyptian galleries of the Musée Charles X.

Bourbons. The painting shows Parthenope, a reference to the original Greek settlement in what became Naples, and his nymphs fleeing their native land and the destruction caused by the eruption of Vesuvius in 79 CE. Driven by Minerva, the Roman Goddess of Wisdom who floats in the upper left-hand register of the painting above the figural group, Parthenope and his nymphs are awaited by the Nymph of the Seine holding an oar and are welcomed by the Spirit of France, who holds a shield with the profile of Charles X and points toward the Louvre. This work alludes not only to the royal bounty of Greek art that enriched the museum, as can be empirically proven by the objects on display beneath Meynier's ceiling painting, but to the circumstances in which such objects arrived there with the protection and support of previous Bourbon rule and Charles X. It can be read as a specific reference to the activity of French scholars in the excavations at Pompeii in which Clarac took part in the early nineteenth century; he then published his research as *Pompeii Excavations Made in the Presence of H. M. the Queen of the Two Sicilies 18 March 1813*.<sup>49</sup> Although this work was undertaken during the reign of Napoleon, it is tied to previous excavations initiated by Charles of Bourbon, King of Naples in 1738 at Herculaneum.<sup>50</sup>

The accompanying four voussoir paintings, composed in a Pompeian style, and the grisaille paintings further refine the didactic mission of the ceiling painting to

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<sup>49</sup> The original French title is: *Fouille faite à Pompeii en présence de S. M. la reine des deux Siciles le 18 mars 1813*.

<sup>50</sup> Charles of Bourbon, King of Naples, began collecting works and sending them to his palace at Portici, and in 1755 he established the Accademia Ercolanese, whose scholars published the discoveries of the excavations in *The Antiquities of Herculaneum Exposed* [*Le antichità di Ercolano esposti*] (1757-1796). This lavishly illustrated, multi-volume work was instrumental in disseminating classical motifs to artists and led to a "Pompeian style," one evident in the decorative scheme of the Greco-Roman part of the Musée Charles X.

contextualize historically the objects on display.<sup>51</sup> Combined, they solidify the connection to the 79 CE eruption of Vesuvius and heightened the reality of its terrible effects, ones that ended the life of Pliny the Elder and covered Pompeii in several meters of ash and lava, uniquely preserving the town in the midst of tragedy. Moreover, the grisaille paintings, such as *Pliny Observes Vesuvius* and *Vesuvius Shrouds the Countryside*, hint at the element of fear and terror that is made explicit in the ceiling painting for the adjoining gallery by Heim, *Vesuvius Receiving Fire from Jupiter to Destroy the Towns of Herculaneum, Pompeii and Stabia* (Figure 64).

A reading of Meynier's *Nymphs of Parthenope* that emphasizes the elevation of France, or greatness, through patrimony and scholarship and the protection of arts and cultures through the institution of the Louvre, becomes absolutely clear in contrast with Heim's painting, which strongly evokes a Burkean sublime of fear and terror. Such a placement of these two ceiling paintings immediately next to one another, or in galleries *enfilade*, is evidence of how the two strains of the sublime easily intermingle and oscillate, even in the context of a unified decorative program.

The theme of Pompeii is taken further in Heim's painting for the ceiling of a gallery in the Greek and Roman Department containing Etruscan vases.<sup>52</sup> In this painting, which accentuates the terror of the 79 CE eruption, a giant standing upon an erupting crater of

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<sup>51</sup> The voussoirs are composed of four paintings in a Pompeian style. Two rectangular compositions show: *The Siren of Parthenope as the Founder of Naples*, and *Pluto and Vulcan With the Sacrifice They Made to Herculaneum*. The two remaining ovals are decorated with groups of children. These paintings are surrounded by images of gods, cities, and philosophers, all executed in a grisaille meant to imitate marble. Auguste Vinchon and Nicolas Gosse executed additional grisaille work beneath the gilt plaster frieze, which again serves an educational and contextual role: *Pliny Observes Vesuvius*, *A Priest Brings the Sacred Instruments*, *Inhabitants are Saved*, *Vesuvius Shrouds the Countryside*, *A Young Girl Consults a Magician*, *A Young Girl Perfumes Herself*, *Anacréon Composes his Odes*, and *A Cynic Philosopher and his Dog*.

<sup>52</sup> Aulanier, "Le Musée Charles X," 8:40.

molten lava personifies Vesuvius. Enthroned in the center of the composition on a floating bed of clouds, Jupiter passes Vesuvius a faggot of lightning bolts, the iconographic glyph of the Longinian sublime, as noted earlier in this chapter, so that the volcano may destroy Herculaneum, Pompeii, and Stabia, represented by three pleading female deities floating in the far lower right. Minerva, to the left of Jupiter, intercedes in vain on their behalf. To the right of Jupiter, Eole frees the wind over which Neptune, at the bottom center of the composition, is powerless. The unchained sea overruns the shore, destroying temples. At the far upper left, the celestial court impassively watches the scene unfold. The four paintings in the voussoirs again extend and contextualize the subject in the ceiling to evoke the desolation and effect of the eruption on the lives of the townsfolk, heightening the terrible, sublime historical reality revealed by Bourbon excavations at Pompeii and Herculaneum that are proven by the objects on display in the gallery below.<sup>53</sup>

Whereas Meynier's painting emphasizes the rescuing of art works by bringing them to the Louvre, specifically to the Musée Charles X, and the elevation of that lineage of patrimony and accompanying scholarship, Heim's painting underscores the tragedy of the event itself, focusing on the aspect of the unavoidable forces of terror and destruction. Thus, Heim's ceiling is an example of the fascination with the macabre identified by art historian Robert Rosenblum as a characteristic of painting during the Bourbon

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<sup>53</sup> The subjects of the four voussoir paintings are: a young man helps his friend to escape; a mother protects her children; a young woman dies of suffocation; a man succumbs while his wife nurses their newborn babe. In addition, a voussoir is dedicated to the writing of history; Pliny the younger writes letters by the glimmer of the flames following the death of Pliny the elder. These compositions alternate with medallions on a gold background in which spirits save objects of art from destruction. In the corners of the voussoirs are grisailles that depicted furniture debris found at Pompeii and at Herculaneum. In the bas-reliefs they represented: *The Triumph of Bacchus and Circe*, *Sacrifice to Bacchus*, *Sacrifice to Circe*, *Agriculture*, *Shepherds and Herd*, *A Young Girl Milking a Goat*, *Selling*, *Hunting*, *Meals*, *Baths*, and *Bacchanalia*.

Restoration.<sup>54</sup> He wrote, “such themes seemed to be increasingly shrouded in an aura of nocturnal mystery that turned substance to shadow.”<sup>55</sup> Such a fascination with the morbid or terrifying in combination with the emphasis on greatness and continuity expressed throughout the program of the Musée Charles X may allude to a complex psychology of anxiety signaled by the Burkean sublime, as discussed in chapter one in the context of Vernet’s *Death of Virginia* (1789) (Figure 2). Thus, perhaps the multivalent sublime displayed in the ceiling paintings of the Musée Charles X, which exhibits a grandiosity that is tempered by an anxiety of fear, is an alternative way to approach, or better understand, the complexities of the *bataille romantique*.<sup>56</sup> This combination can be seen twisted into a slightly more nuanced formula in the Egyptian galleries of the Musée Charles X.

Here the Burkean sublime of fear and terror was a strategy to evoke and neutralize the fear of the foreign “Other,” in order to naturalize imperialistic aims.<sup>57</sup> The institutionalization of Egypt (on the ceilings and in the collections on display), with its powerful dynastic and monotheistic implications and as a political and cultural precursor to the Greco-Roman world, further legitimized and reified the restored Bourbon

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<sup>54</sup> Rosenblum, “Painting During the Bourbon Restoration,” 237.

<sup>55</sup> Rosenblum, “Painting During the Bourbon Restoration,” 234.

<sup>56</sup> Simons, “Die Dekoration des Musée Charles X,” 164. Simons was interested in providing a reading of the museum that would explain the discrepancy between the 1826 and the 1828 phases of its development. She read the decorative program within the context of the *bataille romantique*, viewing the initial 1826 phase with its allegorical ceiling paintings as representative of the persistence of classicism within the halls of the museum. This was replaced in 1828 with the Galerie Campana addition and its emphasis on medieval French historical subjects as reflective of a move toward Romanticism.

<sup>57</sup> Edward W. Said, *Orientalism* (New York: Vintage Books, 1979), 25. The “Other” is a largely post-structuralist concept that underwrote the Western perception of the East, as suggested by Edward Said in his foundational text; also see Emmanuel Levinas, “The Trace of the Other,” in *Deconstruction in Context: Literature and Philosophy*, trans. A. Lingis, ed. Mark C. Taylor (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1986), 346.

monarchy. But in addition, it provided a significant justification for the promotion and expansion of a culture of imperialism, one that began in earnest with Napoleon and the Egyptian Campaign in 1798. According to Todd Porterfield, whose argument is focused on the link to Egypt with its tradition of indisputable pharaonic power to underscore Bourbon legitimacy, the rooms devoted to Egypt in the Musée Charles X, or the Musée d’Egypte, would “continue the imperial aims of Napoleon’s Egyptian campaign works and, at the same time, be enlisted to legitimate the restored monarchy.”<sup>58</sup>

To provide a historical context for the contents of a gallery in the Egyptian Department, Abel de Pujol was commissioned to paint *Egypt Saved from Famine by Joseph* (Figure 65). Within the ornamented border of the painting, Egypt is represented allegorically as a semi-nude woman in white sarong and long golden headdress. She falls face down into the arms of Joseph, saved by the prophet who had predicted seven years of dearth and famine, who stands tall in a red tunic wearing a red and gold headdress. To the left of the figure of Egypt are harpies, representing famine, who follow close at her heels. In the background rises a massive palace in the center of which the pharaoh sits motionless; a distant, shadowy figure entrusts the fate of Egypt to the Hebrew dream-interpret. The temple-front architectural motif and the enthroned pharaoh tie this painting generally into the fabric of the overall decorative program that can be seen in the temple fronts and enthroned figures of Homer and Charles X in Ingres’s *The Apotheosis of Homer* (Figure 61) and Gros’s *The King Giving the Musée Charles X to the Arts*

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<sup>58</sup> Porterfield, *Allure of Empire*, 83.

(Figure 62), previously discussed. The voussoir and grisaille paintings complete and extend didactically the allegory begun in the ceiling.<sup>59</sup>

On one level, Pujol's painting can be read as a didactic historical context for the objects on display, or as an allegory that drew a parallel between the saving of Egypt from famine by Joseph and the saving of Egyptian antiquities by the French. This point finds its conceptual equivalent for the Greco-Roman world in Meynier's *The Nymphs of Parthenope* (Figure 63). It may also serve as a latent psychological reminder to the French people of the difficult years of the Revolution, years marked by the sporadic dearth of food and the absence of the strength of Bourbon rule. Like Heim's *Vesuvius Receiving Fire from Jupiter* (Figure 64) discussed earlier, Pujol's painting is highly evocative of a morbid fascination with the suffering and terror at a certain time.<sup>60</sup> This points to an additional reading, more complex and powerful, that relates not only to the elevation of France as a protectorate of arts and cultures but to a very sophisticated evocation of a sublime of fear and terror as a means of aestheticizing and, thus, neutralizing any sense of real fear. This interpretation can be understood best, however, in the context of the last painting completed for the Galerie Campana of the Musée Charles X. It was finished after Louis Philippe was proclaimed king on 13 August 1830 as a result of the July Revolution and after France took occupation of Algeria.

*The Expedition to Egypt in 1798 Under the Orders of Bonaparte* (Figure 66) by Léon Cogniet complicates a reading of the decorative program as more than homage paid

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<sup>59</sup> Four painted bas-reliefs in imitation of bronze represent the four principle stages in the life of Joseph: *Joseph Guarding the Flocks*, *Joseph Sold by his Brothers*, *Joseph Explaining the Dreams of the Pharaoh*, *Joseph Rising in the Egyptian Government*. Pujol also composed and painted the eleven grisailles, recalling scenes of Egyptian daily life.

<sup>60</sup> Rosenblum, "Painting During the Bourbon Restoration," 238.

to the elevation and grandeur of Bourbon rule in one form or another, or to underline the great lineage and ascendancy of French art. It also links the culturally and militarily imperialistic aim to appropriate Egypt as a means of further tracing and underscoring the basis for French power that began with Napoleon's Egyptian Campaign of 1798. That aim was disseminated internationally with the publication of the multi-volume *Description de l'Égypte* [*Description of Egypt*] (1809-1829) and finally institutionalized by the restored Bourbon monarchy in the collections and ceilings of the Egyptian galleries of the Musée Charles X. Cogniet underscored the complexity of the program by subtly constructing a collective memory for the French people that can be read as legitimizing imperialistic objectives under the guise of scientific or archaeological endeavor.

For the eastmost gallery of the Galerie Campana destined to contain Egyptian papyrus, Cogniet created a ceiling dedicated to the memory of the scientific expedition in Egypt. Napoleon is shown in the background under a white shade surrounded by his men, supervising the work of scholars and natives engaged in the task of uncovering a mummy at Karnak, though he never got there.<sup>61</sup> In the foreground stands a military guard staring straight ahead, arms crossed around his musket. Next to him stands his Egyptian counterpart in a white robe, a musket resting against his chest. To the left of this scene, several members of Napoleon's entourage (scientists) appear to be in debate. To the right, two Egyptians and a French soldier raise a mummy from the ground. Champollion stands

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<sup>61</sup> Simons, "Die Dekoration des Musée Charles X," 189n118 qtg. original source, Alvimar, *Salon de 1834*. Although Napoleon is represented at Karnak, he was never there. Simons quoted General Alvimar, who confirmed this in a brochure for the Salon of 1834, lamenting the fact that the painting was not historically accurate.

to the far right upon the stone slab covering the grave. He is speaking to a “native” and appears to be directing him with a gesture of his hand.

Given the shadowy, diminutive figure of Napoleon in the background and the prominence of Champollion, Cogniet successfully moves the focus away from Bonaparte and places it squarely upon the scholar. It is a representational strategy similar to the one that can be seen in Pujol’s *Egypt Saved from Famine by Joseph* (Figure 65). Painted for the 1826 phase, it shows the pharaoh as a dimly lit diminutive figure in the background, while Joseph, who represents the western tradition to which France is heir, or even the strength of French patrimony, is clearly shown in the right foreground catching and saving a fallen Egypt. In Pujol’s painting, this emphasis and heroic elevation of Joseph (France) is put into tension with the terrifying element of the seven harpies of famine in the left foreground who threaten to drag Egypt from salvation by Joseph. In this one painting, we see the strength and power of a heroically sublime France combine with the fear of a barely controllable and terrifying foreign Other; it is a terror signaled by smoke and fire erupting from the mouth of a dog in the leftmost lower corner of the foreground. The added point that associates Joseph with strength and good health is made through the contrast of his bright and rosy complexion with the twisted, emaciated bodies and dark skin tones of the harpies. Despite her similar skin tones, Egypt’s bright skirt disassociates her from the harpies. She has been saved. Further, Joseph’s bright red dress and elaborate headpiece, mimicked in the figure of the pharaoh enthroned in the background, associate him with the same enduring dynastic strength that built monumental Egypt. Yet, the message is clear. While the pharaoh may be a source for power, it is Joseph who has inherited it and will carry it forth.

A similar message can be seen in Cogniet's painting, although it is Napoleon who is relegated to the shadowy past, the echo of the memory of a sublime of terror evident only in the relationship and connection to Pujol's 1827 work. In Cogniet's painting, this shift in focus from Napoleon to Champollion in the foreground (a compositional arrangement that echoed Pujol's positioning of the pharaoh and Joseph) served to emphasize the shift in the role of the acquisition of art objects from a military figure such as Napoleon to the professional museum staff, still in its nascent stage in the early 1830s. Implicit is the understanding that looting may not be the best acquisition policy. Perhaps it is best left to the growing professional rank of museum officials and their scientific (and diplomatic) means. This point is also underscored, possibly, by the memory of the punitive stipulations of the 1815 Second Treaty of Paris, the very document that prompted and necessitated the reacquisitions of antiquities and the creation of the Musée Charles X. This may be seen in Cogniet's painting in the figure of the armed Egyptian soldier standing side-by-side with the French one in the foreground. In essence, both stand guard and bear witness to what has become a shared national heritage in the halls of the Louvre.

As seen in the comparison between the ceiling paintings by Pujol and Cogniet, the Burkean sublime is present in the Musée Charles X not only as a subtle reminder of vague fear, but also as an agent for the naturalization or neutralization of that fear when buttressed by the apotheosis of a grand idea of the strength and continuity of an unbreakable lineage of French power and patrimony. Combined with this foundation of power linked to monarchic rule and justified by empirically based scholarly activity, the Burkean sublime can be viewed as a strategy for legitimizing a culture of imperialism.

While present throughout the eighteenth century after the loss of colonial outposts as a result of the Seven Years' War, this imperialistic drive gained a significant momentum during the Revolution with the Revolutionary Wars. During the Directory it extended east with Bonaparte's August 1797 recommendation to invade Egypt. It expanded with the Empire and the second set of Revolutionary Wars. It was institutionalized during the Restoration, particularly as seen in the founding and program of the Musée Charles X. And this expansion accelerated under the July Monarchy with the colonization of Algeria in 1830, for example.<sup>62</sup> It grew exponentially throughout the rest of the nineteenth century as France continued to pursue a larger colonial presence. Imperial expansion was a critical strategy for France to reestablish its greatness. And France claimed it had a *mission civilisatrice* [mission of civilization] as a rationale or self-justification for colonization.

## **Conclusion**

Reading the Musée Charles X as sublime depends on an understanding of the sublime in France, as argued throughout this dissertation, as an admixture of elevation and greatness derived from Longinus and Boileau and as an aestheticization of fear or terror derived from Burke. The first two parts of this chapter focused on establishing a reading of the Musée Charles X connected to the grand tradition of the classical French sublime to argue for the reification of the Louvre as a powerful cultural institution and political instrument. This tradition was tied to the legacy of French greatness and its

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<sup>62</sup> The second wave of French colonization that occurred between 1830 and 1960 replaced the loss due to the Seven Years' War and the Napoleonic Wars of French colonies such as Guadeloupe and Martinique in the West Indies, French Guiana on the coast of South America, trading posts in Senegal, and France's minor Indian possessions.

future continuity, monumentalized through the inscription of that ideology on the painted ceilings of its galleries, and reinforced by the empirical evidence of the collections on display. The third part of this chapter, however, examined the complex network of multivalent meanings conveyed by the sublime in keeping with the ideological aims of the restored Bourbon monarchy to assert the legitimacy of its power and to promote a plan for its continuity through a combination of scholarly activity, cultural appropriation, and imperial expansion.

In the Musée Charles X, the Burkean sublime served not only as a reminder of a vague fear of loss, certainly tied, at least in part, to the 1815 repatriation of antiquities discussed earlier in this chapter, but also as a means of neutralizing a fear of the foreign Other through its powerful ability to transform that fear into a sublime aesthetic experience. In an extremely sophisticated manner, the Burkean sublime was invoked as part of the ceiling program in the galleries dedicated to Egyptian artifacts to harness the power of dynastic Egypt through an aestheticization and thus, co-option of that culture. With aestheticization of fear as a hallmark of the Burkean sublime, Egypt became demystified and accessible to a Eurocentric appropriation by the French. Through the Burkean sublime, Egypt was objectified for its aesthetic value in the same way as ruins, volcanoes, and natural disasters became spectacularized in the late eighteenth century as phenomena to be appreciated aesthetically and not just feared for their terrible, destructive power. This evocation and neutralization of fear through aestheticization served as a sophisticated vehicle for the legitimization of a culture of imperialism that expanded and accelerated throughout the remainder of the nineteenth century and was justified through empirical scholarly activity.

Through its ability to aestheticize fear, the Burkean sublime provides a powerful means for understanding Orientalism as it developed in the nineteenth century. At the same time that French imperialism expanded east under the July Monarchy, the Second Empire, and the Third Republic, Orientalism expanded on the walls of the Paris Salons. Nineteenth-century Paris became, as projected in the Musée Charles X, not only the new Rome, but the new Imperial Rome. The greatness of France continued and expanded, sublimely.

## CONCLUSION

This dissertation has surveyed the arc traced by the expression of the sublime in France, particularly in landscape painting, between the years 1748 and 1830, a period in French history that spanned the demise of the ancien régime, the Revolution, the Terror, the Directory, First Empire, and the Bourbon Restoration. Such an examination has revealed the existence and persistence of a classical strain of the sublime derived from Longinus's first century *On the Sublime* and Boileau's 1674 French translation, *Traité du sublime*. These works stress noble greatness and elevation more than the fear and terror more commonly associated during this period with the sublime articulated by Edmund Burke in his 1757 *A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of Our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful*. An examination of French landscape paintings and prints executed during the second half of the eighteenth century revealed a unique French sublime that could be read for a rich range of meanings. The sublime was a nuanced concept that could be used to express a cultural and political ideology tied to the grandness and continuity of France.

The idea of a sublime of greatness can be seen expressed in Claude-Joseph Vernet's emphasis on the heroic individual in his paintings of shipwrecks; in Pierre-Jacques Volaire's spectacularization of the power of volcanic eruption that can be read as a new way of viewing the world and as a stand-in for political power; in Hubert Robert's painting of the Louvre in ruins that attests to the cultural monumentalization of France projected into the future. And finally, it can be seen in the elevation, or apotheosis, of the

continuity of cultural and political power—the sublime greatness—of Restoration France that was indelibly inscribed on the ceiling of the 1826 Musée Charles X in the institutionalization of that sublime ideology and as a justification for its imperial expansion.

Additionally, through its multivalent character, combining elements from both Longinus/Boileau and Burke, the French sublime, when read in the context of shipwrecks, volcanic eruption, ruins, and a monumental museum ceiling program, is revealed as more than an inert aesthetic category. Instead, it was an exceptionally flexible conduit of a range of ideas related to heroism, sentimentality, natural power, political power, natural history or science, grand transcendent ideas, laws of the physical world, monumentalization of institutions, continuity of institutions, cultural appropriation, political ideology, and cultural and political expansion/imperialism.

In chapter one, I showed that the Longinian strain of the sublime could be seen in the seascape and shipwreck paintings Vernet painted over the duration of his entire career beginning in the 1740s, such as *Seascape with Shipwreck* (1743-48) (Figure 1), at least a decade before Burke's treatise was published in English (1757) and almost a quarter century before it was published in French (1765). Through the Longinian sublime, we saw how Vernet's seascape and shipwrecks emphasize the power of human agency and heroic effort during extreme events of nature. Denis Diderot stressed the human focus of Vernet's seascapes, in addition to promoting their significance as closer to history painting than genre, when he suggested that to him the seascapes of Vernet, which show a rich array of incidents and scenes, are as much history paintings as Nicolas

Poussin's *Seven Sacraments*.<sup>1</sup> This focus on the human figure is a significant aspect of eighteenth-century French painting that cannot be ignored to focus only on the sublimity of the weather or the storm, which has led scholars to read Vernet's work primarily through the Burkean sublime.

This is not to say that the Burkean sublime was an aspect entirely missing from Vernet's seascapes beginning in the 1760s, but that it existed in addition to the Longinian strain of the sublime; it did not replace it. This coexistence of Longinus and Burke, greatness and fear, is a unique aspect of the French sublime. It is an aspect of the sublime that I call multivalence. Its expression could often be found oscillating between two poles in a single work, or in the multiple meanings the sublime carried in France. Such multivalence, for example, can be seen in Vernet's 1789 *Death of Virginia* (Figure 2), where great heroic virtue and terrifying loss combine and serve not only as a moving portrait of individual sentiment but as a telling portent of the extremes France would face as a nation during the Revolution that was just around the corner.

While chapter one emphasized the significance of the grand tradition of the sublime indebted to Longinus and set the foundation for viewing it in France as multivalent, an important aspect found in each of the chapters of this dissertation, chapter two looked at the significance of the Burkean sublime in the 1770s in the context of volcanic eruption and showed that it was more than an inert aesthetic category. It was more than simply a fashionable novelty expressing an appreciation for emotionally terrifying aesthetic spectacle. Sublime landscapes of volcanic eruption, such as those of

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<sup>1</sup> Philip Conisbee, *Claude-Joseph Vernet 1714-1789*, exh. cat. (London: Greater London Council, 1976), introduction.

Vesuvius seen in the engraving by Philibert-Benoît La Rue for the *Encyclopédie*, *Eruption of Vesuvius in 1754* (ca. 1768) (Figure 18), and paintings by Volaire in the 1770s and 1780s, such as *Eruption of Vesuvius* (1771) (Figure 17), seem to convey not only a sublime aesthetic experience, but one that connects the power of nature to a general feeling associated with political power, either elevating its greatness in the classical tradition of Longinus or piquing a sense of fear about its terrifying potential for failure if read through the lens of the Burkean sublime. Significantly, these two elements—greatness and fear—coexist in the genre of French sublime landscapes of the 1770s and 1780s. Combined with volcanic eruption, the sublime was an important indicator of both natural and political power. In fact, the Burkean sublime itself was not merely a concept reflecting a new category of aesthetic experience, one which *happened* to resonate formally with images of erupting volcanoes and feu d’artifice through a controlled pique of terror or fear. Far more importantly, the Burkean sublime was a key concept in understanding the increasingly secular eighteenth-century mindset in which the natural world was examined and understood in a new way.

Like the transformative effects of volcanic eruption on the surrounding landscape, Burke’s formulation of the sublime amounted to a fundamental rupture in episteme, in the structure, of not only how aesthetics were conceived, but in how aesthetics could stand in for other concepts. Empirical scientific inquiry in the 1770s, for example, which was in the process of separating itself into disciplines distinct from natural history, had not yet fully developed its own identity and relied on the language of aesthetics, such as the sublime, to comprehend or communicate its discoveries. A sublime aesthetic experience of nature—astonishment, fear, terror—helped to catalyze scientific investigation of the

natural world and to accelerate its transition into specialized, discipline-specific professionalizations, such as geology and volcanology.

With the language provided by the Burkean sublime, there was a means for conceptualizing natural phenomena in a valuable new way. In short, astonishing or sublime phenomena greatly incited a passion for empirical study. There was a break in episteme in how nature was perceived, which corresponded or was strongly linked to the Burkean sublime and the growing strength of Lockean empiricism. This new way of looking, or viewing, I contend, was prompted by the Burkean sublime and the growing importance of landscape painting in France that would fully flower in the nineteenth century.<sup>2</sup> As will be examined more fully in the epilogue to this dissertation, classical Beauty and its intellectual, rational precepts as a means of viewing the natural world were challenged with the emergence of the Burkean sublime and were to be gradually supplanted by an empirical, unmediated view of nature based on the privileging of first-hand experience. This direct observation would not only underwrite scientific method as it was refined in the nineteenth century, but it would also inform the process of looking that can be seen in the landscape painting of the School of 1830, or Barbizon. The ideas behind naturalism can be found in the writing of Èmile Zola and in the mostly empirically based process of painting by the Impressionists.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> For a study of landscape painting's new importance in France, see especially Ian J. Lochhead, *The Spectator and the Landscape in the Art Criticism of Diderot and his Contemporaries* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Research Press, 1982).

<sup>3</sup> It is for this reason that landscape came to be the dominant genre in the Paris Salons of the nineteenth century, along with the efforts in Barbizon, supplemented with the strong lineage of scientific empiricism and the naturalism of the midcentury, culminating in Impressionism. There was a shift from idealized nature buoyed by neoclassicism to actual, observed nature that was closely tied to the practice of scientific observation and recording that became firmly established in the 1770s with the rise of archaeology, geology, and volcanism, not to mention the practice of sketching from nature as promoted by Pierre-Henri

In chapter three, beginning with Diderot's musing on ruins in his 1767 Paris Salon criticism of the paintings of Hubert Robert, ruins were examined in connection with the sublime as a multivalent construct that acknowledges the idea of transience they embody, but emphasizes their projection of greatness in keeping with the classical formulation of the sublime derived from Longinus and Boileau. The greatness of ruins was connected to the idea of sublime transcendence that they communicate. Thus, the argument established in chapter two in regard to the sublime as an idea connected to a new way of seeing the world was contextualized, or expanded, through an examination of Charles-Louis's Clérissieu's 1766 *Ruin Room*, to suggest that mathematics and physics may also be linked to the interpretation and significance of ruins and to the concept of the sublime in the mid to late eighteenth century. The *Ruin Room* was read in the context of the scientific laws of physics that explain why things inevitably fall down, in contrast to the *vanitas* idea previously embodied by ruins that attributes this decay simply to the passage of time. Newton's Universal Law of Gravitation, first published in his 1687 *Principia* to great and controversial acclaim, spread throughout eighteenth-century Europe. Through a better understanding of the *Ruin Room*, a scientific aspect could be added to the multivalent significance of ruins in the eighteenth century to reflect issues evident in natural philosophy and aesthetics, such as the sublime. Significantly, the linkage of mathematics and physics with ruins and the sublime occurred at around the same time as geology and volcanology were emerging as distinct fields of scientific inquiry, further confirming the role of the sublime in the rupture of episteme.

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de Valenciennes in his 1800 *Éléments de perspective pratique à l'usage des artistes, suivis de réflexions et conseils à un élève sur la peinture, et particulièrement sur le genre du paysage*.

Chapter three also examined a set of painting pendants by Robert, shown at the Paris Salon of 1796, to suggest that the greatness of sublime transcendence signaled by monumental ruins was an aspect of French cultural and political ascendancy, as could be seen in *Project for the Transformation of the Grand Gallery of the Louvre* (Figure 48) showing the Grand Gallery in a state of perfect completion as a functioning museum and *Imaginary View of the Grand Gallery of the Louvre in Ruins* (Figure 49) showing it as a projection into the future.

It is astonishing that *Imaginary View of the Grand Gallery of the Louvre in Ruins* shows the yet to be finished gallery projected into the future as a (broken) shell. This emerging monumental public institution represented in a state of ruin encapsulates—sublimely—the range of ideas projected upon and evoked by ruins in the latter half of the eighteenth century in France, from *vanitas* to greatness. Robert’s deft inclusion of the *Apollo Belvedere*, a work not yet on French soil in 1796 when this painting was exhibited at the Paris Salon, and Michelangelo’s *Slave*, acquired by the Louvre in 1794, was read as a precise indicator of the multivalence of meaning inherent in both ruins and the sublime. In these two sculptures, the multiple meanings of both ruins and the sublime oscillate—the exaltation of greatness and the fear of destruction—literally meet face-to-face.

Importantly, the museum as a new institution, as seen in Robert’s pendants *Project for the Transformation of the Grand Gallery of the Louvre* and *Imaginary View of the Grand Gallery of the Louvre*, stands as testament to a revolutionary paradigm shift in the organization of institutions. The epistemological break signaled in the move from private to public access to knowledge, or from absolute monarchy to republic, can be seen in the extraordinary emergence in 1793 of the public museum—the Louvre—as a

new institution.<sup>4</sup> Moreover, as sociologist Pierre Bourdieu points out in *Distinction*, new institutions themselves oscillate, as they are not yet formulated.<sup>5</sup>

While Robert's pendants present a multivalent reading of ruins, they promote less a *vanitas* interpretation informed by the Burkean sublime of fear than a sublime conception of French cultural and political superiority informed by a Longinian sublime of elevation that was strongly asserted in the wake of the Terror. Robert's monumental Louvre painting can be viewed as the extension of Vernet's elevation of the heroic individual, discussed in chapter one, projected onto the cultural institutions of the state. This sublime superiority, or greatness, emerged in the late 1790s, I argued, in connection with the establishment of the Louvre as a public museum and the filling of it with important cultural artifacts, such as the *Apollo Belvedere*. This was made possible under the Directory by the military victories of Napoleon and the cultural appropriation that went hand-in-hand with the Napoleonic Wars.

In addition to elevating France as the cultural center of Europe, Robert's pendants exhibit the academic tradition of painting and the role of the public art museum in training artists. Continuity and elevation are victorious even within the wreckage of the great museum! Transcendence, like gravity, is the pole with more pull. While the notion of oscillation, or movement, must be acknowledged in Robert's image, particularly within the context of the multivalent meaning of ruins, it is sublime transcendence—the current and future greatness of France—that is emphasized. And this position of French

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<sup>4</sup> For a discussion of the emergence of the public in the eighteenth century and its relationship to the Enlightenment, see Thomas E. Crow, *Painters and Public Life in Eighteenth-Century Paris* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1985); and Jürgen Habermas, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere: An Inquiry into a Category of Bourgeois Society* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1989).

<sup>5</sup> Pierre Bourdieu, *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste*, trans. Richard Nice (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1984).

greatness promoted by the sublime could be seen taken even further in chapter four when the restored Bourbons literally inscribed the great French sublime onto the ceiling of the Louvre in the Musée Charles X. In that moment, the sublime became a highly effective public message elevating and legitimizing the return of Bourbon power. It is no coincidence that the opening of the Musée Charles X coincided with the opening of the Paris Salon of 1827.

The continuity from the monumental Louvre, which Robert represented as a ruin in order to underscore the greatness of France and its future as such, was extended to a special museum created within the Louvre in 1826 during the Bourbon Restoration. This served to apotheosize France after the devastating events of 1815 when France was forced to cede, under the stipulation of the Second Treaty of Paris, many of the artworks seized in Napoleon's spectacular sweep of Europe, including the Apollo Belvedere. Hence, by 1815, that monumental Louvre as a future ruin as projected by Robert was in danger of falling prey to the ravages of time and becoming truly lost. Humiliated by both a reduction of borders and the return of artwork that eviscerated the Louvre, the restored Bourbons set about filling it with new collections and projecting an ideology of continuity, permanence, and expansion on the ceilings of the Musée Charles X. The Musée Charles X became connected to the grand tradition of the classical French sublime derived from Longinus and Boileau to reify the Louvre as a powerful cultural institution and political instrument.

An examination of the Musée Charles X also revealed a sublime that conveyed a multivalence of meanings in keeping with the complex ideological aims of the restored Bourbon monarchy, which wanted both to assert the legitimacy of its power and to create

a plan for its continuity, in part through preservation and in part through imperial expansion. The Burkean sublime functioned not only as a reminder of a vague fear of loss, perhaps tied to the 1815 repatriation of antiquities, but also as a way of defanging fear of the foreign Other through its ability to neutralize fear as an aesthetic experience. This is the same process that was discussed in chapter two in the context of the work of Pierre-Jacque Voltaire; the terrible fear of destruction and annihilation linked with volcanic eruption was transformed into an aesthetic appreciation for the sublime spectacle of eruption during the last half of the eighteenth century, due to the influence of the Burkean sublime.

In a subtle and sophisticated way, the Burkean sublime was invoked as part of the program of the Musée Charles X to demystify Egypt and to make it accessible to a Eurocentric appropriation by the French, in part through the application of scientific scholarly study on the part of the curator of the Egyptian galleries, Jean-François Champollion. In fact, Marie-Claude Chaudonneret cites scientific work as a major principle of the 1826 founding ordinance of the museum by Charles X that would “Assure the success of historical work that creates for all time the glory of France.”<sup>6</sup> When combined with the justification of empirically based scientific study, the Burkean evocation and neutralization of fear of other cultures, through the process of their aestheticization seen in the ceilings of the Egyptian galleries of the Musée Charles X, served as a sophisticated vehicle for the legitimization of a mission of imperialism that had begun with Napoleon’s 1798 Egyptian Campaign; this mission expanded and accelerated throughout the remainder of the nineteenth century.

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<sup>6</sup> “Voulant assurer le success des recherches historiques qui ont fait, de tous les temps, la gloire de la France.” Marie-Claude Chaudonneret, *L’Etat et les artistes: De la Restauration à la monarchie de juillet, 1815-1833* (Paris: Flammarion, 1999), 49.

In closing, I would like to suggest that there are many fascinating areas that would benefit from a more nuanced understating of the grand tradition of the multivalent French sublime. The link between the oscillation of the multivalent sublime and emotion in the sentimental novel in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries as expressed in history or historical genre painting would be interesting to pursue. The relationship between the experience of the sublime and the display of science in nineteenth-century museums of natural history or World's Fairs would be as well, particularly as science increasingly solidified its disciplines and professionalization. It would be revealing to reexamine nineteenth-century sublime landscape painting from the standpoint of the multivalent sublime. Perhaps there is a significant range of meanings that have been obscured by too close a focus on the aesthetic experience of fear or terror. The question may need to be expanded: To what is fear or terror or greatness linked? The approach taken by art historian Barbara Novak in connection with American painting in her 1980 book *Nature and Culture: American Landscape and Painting 1825-1875* might benefit both French and English landscape painting during the mid- to late-nineteenth century with a more enlarged understanding of the sublime, as offered by this dissertation.<sup>7</sup>

One topic in particular stands out as an exceptionally interesting one to pursue. As a follow-up to the conclusions reached in chapter four in connection with the ability of the sublime to aestheticize and thus neutralize the experience of fear, the sublime emerges as a possible way to approach the topic of Orientalism in nineteenth-century France, particularly as this genre of painting grew in popularity from the July Monarchy onward. There is a potential for future art-historical scholarship to contribute greatly to

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<sup>7</sup> Barbara Novak, *Nature and Culture: American Landscape and Painting 1825-1875* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1980).

the subject, particularly as Orientalism collided in the nineteenth century with the “science” of ethnography. Ethnography, as a science of categorization and control of the sublime Other, benefits from the connection between the miraculous idea of “scientific” discovery embodied by the sublime’s catalyzation of empirical observation in the 1770s. This was addressed in chapter two in the discussion of the role of the volcano in geology and volcanology or in chapter three in the context of ruins and Newton’s Universal Law of Gravitation. Thus, to approach Orientalism and ethnography from the standpoint of the multivalent sublime is fascinating, particularly given the context of Freidrich von Schiller’s 1801 essay, “Über das Erhabene” [On the Sublime], largely influenced by Immanuel Kant, in which Schiller seeks to connect the sublime not with the terror of natural phenomena, but with a confrontation with the Other. The English literature scholar Charles H. Hinnant wrote on this aspect of Shiller’s sublime:

Terror is the passion that drives human beings to posit the Other and to achieve security through this Other—not by suppressing or fleeing it but by anticipating it.... Schiller’s ideas contain the germ of what is developed in philosophical rather than historical terms by Emmanuel Levinas when he describes the habitual mode of Western philosophical discourse as a “horror” of the Other that remains other.<sup>8</sup>

Through the process of the sublime aestheticization of the fear of the “Other,” as can be seen in the genre of Orientalist painting in the nineteenth century, the “horror” of the Other that remains other is eviscerated and open to appropriation, as was shown in the Egyptian ceilings of the Musée Charles X. This process, however, was just beginning, and thus it is only fitting that it should be examined as it continued throughout the rest of

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<sup>8</sup> Charles H. Hinnant, “Schiller and the Political Sublime: Two Perspectives,” *Criticism* 44, no. 2 (Spring 2002): 126-127.

the nineteenth century in the context of a multivalent sublime of greatness and fear. As I have argued in this dissertation, the flexible nature of the sublime seen in Vernet's seascapes, Volaire's volcanoes, Robert's ruins, and Bourbon ceilings, like water, fire, earth and sky, effectively communicated a range of meanings as vast as the landscape of French painting itself.

## EPILOGUE

### **A Visionary Shift in Viewpoint: The Burkean Sublime, William Hogarth's *Bathos* (1764), and The End of Beauty**

This dissertation has treated the complex articulation of the sublime in Enlightenment France and has concluded that the French sublime was unique in its emphasis on greatness and elevation. It has also shown how the classical sublime that formed the basis for the concept in eighteenth-century France was impacted by the Burkean sublime. Thus, perhaps one of the aspects of the French sublime is how these two almost dichotomous influences contributed to the expression of a sublime that combined greatness and elevation with fear and terror. I have suggested that this confluence of influences was the multivalent aspect of the French sublime. While this aspect is essential to an understanding of the expression of the sublime, it, as well as the emphasis on greatness, obscures, or makes it difficult to clearly understand the larger, far-reaching cultural impact catalyzed by the Burkean sublime.

And so, perhaps it is fitting as an epilogue to this dissertation to consider this far-reaching influence of the sublime. Unlike this dissertation as a whole, which examined the sublime in one country, this epilogue will look at its larger cultural ramifications and will thus cross the channel to examine an engraving from 1764 by the English painter and printmaker William Hogarth, *The Bathos, or Manner of Sinking in Sublime Paintings Inscribed to the Dealers in Dark Pictures* (Figure 77). This print is vitally important as a critical lens through which the impact of the Burkean sublime may be viewed, far beyond its creation in the 1760s, into the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. At almost one and

the same time, Hogarth showed how the sublime must be viewed as both a trivial subject matter and as a serious concept. As a subject matter, Hogarth mocked how quickly the sublime became exhausted and almost trite less than a decade after it was introduced by Burke. As a concept, he recognized in it the ramifications of an extremely powerful and revolutionary new aesthetic category that broke with previous standards of Beauty.<sup>1</sup> The international sea-change initiated by the Burkean sublime, through its break with the previous model of aesthetics, or Beauty, as a reading of Hogarth's print suggests, may be a perspective from which to begin to think about some of the larger themes that developed in the nineteenth century, such as Romanticism and the rise of empirical science. Perhaps almost ironically, the larger cultural shift initiated by the Burkean sublime had a particular impact in nineteenth-century France, as it is the country often most strongly linked to the most powerful strains of Romanticism, the emergence and development of which was very much indebted to the legacy of Burke's sublime.

The philosophical framework, this new aesthetic category of the sublime that Edmund Burke refined and elaborated on in his groundbreaking 1757 treatise, *A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of Our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful*, was much more than just a shift in an aesthetic of taste. It was a shift in how the world was viewed, in how it was conceived. It was an eruption, a quake, a deluge. Its force, or impact, on aesthetic theory in the eighteenth century was tremendous. What the sublime represented was a revolutionary epistemological break in aesthetics that transformed humankind's perception of the natural world and its relationship to it.

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<sup>1</sup> Beauty is capitalized as an ideal.

As previously mentioned, the sublime represented a critical epistemological break, to put it in the language of historian of science Thomas S. Kuhn, who examined the way knowledge was acquired in his *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*.<sup>2</sup> To see this shift clearly is to see the difference between paintings such as the Neapolitan painter Scipione Compagno's *Eruption of Vesuvius in 1631* (1635-40) (Figure 23) and the French painter Pierre-Jacques Volaire's *Eruption of Vesuvius* (1771) (Figure 17), discussed in chapter two of this dissertation, in which the destructive force of volcanic eruption emphasized in Compagno's painting was transformed by the Burkean sublime into an aesthetic appreciation for the spectacle of volcanic eruption that can be seen in Volaire's painting. In this sense, the sublime ushered in modernity with a shift in vision, a shift in perspective on how the natural world was seen and understood.

Just as the art historian Erwin Panofsky distinguished the Renaissance through the particularities and spread of linear perspective as an epistemology, modernity was characterized by the sublime through a break with an objective standard of Beauty that embodied a radical shift in how the world was perceived.<sup>3</sup> As the catalyst for such a profound change, the Burkean sublime was the epistemological rupture that led the French philosopher and literary theorist Jean-François Lyotard to write, "The sublime is perhaps the only mode of artistic sensibility to characterize the modern."<sup>4</sup>

When Burke introduced an emotional sublime of fear or terror as an aesthetic language, he divorced aesthetics from the rational concept of Beauty that had been

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<sup>2</sup> Thomas S. Kuhn, *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1962).

<sup>3</sup> Erwin Panofsky, *Perspective as Symbolic Form*, trans. Christopher S. Wood (1970s, repr. New York: Zone Books, 1994).

<sup>4</sup> Jean-François Lyotard, "The Sublime and the Avant-Garde" in *The Sublime*, ed. Simon Morley (1988, repr. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2010), 27.

developing in the western tradition since antiquity. The architectural historian Rudolf Wittkower explained:

He [Burke] does not see that the Beauty of the classical theory has its roots in the all-pervading harmony, which was regarded as an absolute and mathematical truth, and he is therefore unable to grasp that, for instance, ratios of parts of a body remote from each other may be compared. Nor can he understand the relation between the human body and architecture, which was, as will be remembered, at the very basis of Renaissance thought on proportion. What he says on this point reveals most clearly the complete break with the past which, also for the perception of proportion, the age of empiricism and emotionalism had brought about.<sup>5</sup>

To be sure, Wittkower made his point about the epistemological break represented by the Burkean sublime in terms of architectural theory, but his point is valid for all fields affected by aesthetic theory in the eighteenth century, including painting, drawing, sculpture, and natural history. In fact, the harmonious concept of Beauty developed by the classical Greek mind in the fifth century BCE and passed into the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries via the Italian Renaissance was based on the mathematical connection between the human body and architecture. Or to put it in the words of Samuel Holt Monk, the scholar whose widely influential 1935 book, *The Sublime: A Study of Critical Theories in XVIII-Century England*, is the bedrock for almost any contemporary introduction to the sublime, “Once it was seen that the sublime is a state of mind evoked by objects and ideas, the objective criteria of rules were gradually invalidated and the

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<sup>5</sup> Rudolf Wittkower, *Architectural Principles in the Age of Humanism*, 3rd ed. (1962, repr. New York: W. W. Norton, 1971), 150-154, esp. 151-152.

perceptions of individuals, together with their personal emotions and their independent imaginative interpretation of experience could usurp the older truth to nature.”<sup>6</sup>

Indeed, this break from the Western canon’s objective truth of nature, or Beauty, indicated a larger issue, one that reflected an actual and possibly quite terrifying cultural shift. It was one ushered in by a Burkean sublime that amounted to a revolution not only of aesthetic taste, but of how the natural world was understood and its relationship to humanity. This can be seen clearly in the vast distance between Jean-Antoine Watteau’s 1717 *Embarkation for Cythera* (Figure 24) and Voltaire’s 1771 *Eruption of Vesuvius* (Figure 17). While in Watteau’s work the individual was part of a well-ordered universe, part of a “natural” landscape, in Voltaire’s painting the individual was part of a detached audience of spectacular, wild phenomenon, or an empirical observer.

Monk was even more specific in his discussion of the sublime in terms of those qualities that separate it from Beauty. He wrote,

Thus, from the very outset in England, the sublime tended to become the all-inclusive category for those objects and those emotions which the strict neo-classic doctrine could not admit as beautiful, but which Englishmen were traditionally and constitutionally ready to accept as of aesthetic value, until finally, in Burke’s *Enquiry*, the ugly itself came to play its part in aesthetic. In respect to natural objects, as in theory, the sublime is found aligned on the side of the more romantic element in eighteenth-century taste.<sup>7</sup>

Monk’s comment is crucial, and it seems to be two-tiered. On one tier the sublime can be considered as an all-inclusive category for whatever cannot be understood through a

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<sup>6</sup> Samuel Holt Monk, *The Sublime: A Study of Critical Theories in XVIII Century England* (1935, repr. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1960), 236.

<sup>7</sup> Monk, *The Sublime*, 208.

classically derived standard of Beauty. The elements that underpin Monk's position echo those Burke outlined in his *Enquiry* that cannot be encapsulated neatly in a neoclassical conception of Beauty—the terrifying, highly emotional experiences, darkness, obscurity, irregularity, the colossal. As Monk suggested, after Burke the sublime could no longer be considered as simply a catchall aesthetic category for what did not neatly fit into a neoclassical standard of Beauty, but as the rupture in aesthetic thought that provided the grounds for the critical positioning of the ugly, or the not beautiful.

This rupture is the second and more significant tier on which the sublime may be interpreted in the context of Monk's comment. It is the revolutionary shift catalyzed by the Burkean sublime, the full weight of which needs to be considered more deeply. If Monk is correct and the ugly (or more precisely, any alternative to an objective standard of Beauty) comes to find a place in aesthetics—that field which is concerned primarily with the determination of what is beautiful—via the Burkean sublime, then it would seem that the world has turned upside-down. This inversion, or disruption in episteme based in aesthetic theory, was the main point brilliantly identified and built on by Hogarth in his *Bathos* (Figure 77). The engraving was created as the tail-piece for a complete set of his engraved works and the last image he would set his hand to, adding finishing touches to it until a few days before his death on 26 October 1764.<sup>8</sup> While much valuable consideration has been applied to this image, such as the work of art historians Joseph Burke and Ronald Paulson who characterize it as a *memento mori* [remember your mortality] or as an indicator of Hogarth's negative feelings toward the sublime as an

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<sup>8</sup> Joseph Burke and Colin Caldwell, *Hogarth: The Complete Engravings* (New York: Harry N. Abrams, 1968), note to plate 267.

aesthetic category, I suggest a more global reading in relation to the fate of the Ideal, as connected to the far-ranging impact of the Burkean sublime as an epistemological break.

Given the dark subject matter of the print showing the allegorical figure of Time expiring against a broken column, its intended use as a tail-piece for the corpus of his engraved work, and its position at the end of his career as his last image, it is clear why *The Bathos, or Manner of Sinking in Sublime Paintings Inscribed to the Dealers in Dark Pictures* has been interpreted as a sort of *memento mori*. As Joseph Burke noted, “Hogarth ended his career as he had begun it, with a satire on the connoisseurs, but this time he proclaims the enduring value of art and the aesthetic values on which it is based.”<sup>9</sup> This interpretation, especially the part about the “enduring value of art and the aesthetic values on which it is based,” is difficult to reconcile with the shift in aesthetics suggested here that was induced by the Burkean sublime.

Rather, I argue that in the last print of his career, Hogarth points to the end of the exclusive hold Beauty had on aesthetics with the eruption of the Burkean sublime. Like Vesuvius, or other powerful sublime phenomena, the Burkean sublime literally erupted into the stream of organized, rational Enlightenment thought. But rather than being diverted by a powerful stream of rationality, the sublime became a major tributary. The strength of the Burkean sublime was in its disruption of modes of thought or seeing; in short, it was an epistemological break, or rupture, as previously suggested. It was a perfect subject matter for an irascible and polemical artist who had made a career thumbing his nose at hypocritical institutional structure and strictures, as most of his work makes clear, such as the *Marriage A-La-Mode* series (1743-1745). Given its

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<sup>9</sup> Burke and Caldwell, *Hogarth: The Complete Engravings*, note to plate 267.

emphasis on exhaustion, death, and the end of the world, and its place as the final work in Hogarth's oeuvre, *Bathos* can indeed be read as a *memento mori*, but not as much for himself as for the classically derived standard of Beauty.

In this important work Hogarth did two things, which may at first seem to be at odds. First he portended the fall of fashionably trite sublime subject matter. He represented and ridiculed as exhausted or dying all of the "sublime" typology of "dark" emotional tropes. These themes, which can be considered within the context of Monk's delineation of the ugly, had become popular after Burke's 1757 *Enquiry*. They would continue into Romanticism toward the end of the eighteenth century and in the first decades of the nineteenth, as can be seen perhaps in Francisco Goya's etching *The Sleep of Reason Produces Monsters* (1797-99) (Figure 78) and in an anonymous nineteenth-century lithograph that identifies romantic subject matter and feeling, *Le Romantique* [*The Romantic*] (1825) (Figure 79). Second, and far more significantly, Hogarth indicated that Burke's sublime represented a cataclysmic disruptive shift in episteme away from an objective notion of Beauty, as the *Bathos* print not only lampooned popular sublime subjects, but signified that it represented the end of the world. This point is made clear in the print by a centrally placed sign hanging from a broken post with "The World's End" written under a representation of a cracked earth spewing fire (Figure 77), rather like a volcano, enabling Hogarth to simultaneously dismiss the sublime as a trite and already passé typology of tropes and to reify its importance as an epistemological break. In his print, Hogarth showed that the reorientation of aesthetic values brought about by the emergence of the sublime was the death of Beauty and the end of the world.

This reading coincides with Paulson's interpretation of Hogarth's *modus operandi*, or manner of working; Hogarth draws attention to an important issue only to subvert it.<sup>10</sup> There is an uneasy tension in the mocking of a major shift in aesthetic theory represented by the title of the print, *The Bathos, or the Manner of Sinking in Sublime Paintings Inscribed to Dealers in Dark Pictures*, which is a reference to Alexander Pope's *Peri Bathous, or the Art of Sinking in Poetry* (1727). Pope's text, in which the term *Bathos* was first introduced, parodied Longinus's *Peri Hypsous* [*On the Sublime, or On Elevation*], the text that introduced the rhetorical concept of the sublime. Hogarth carried Pope's parody of sublime poetry into the visual field in a manner that is very similar to what Burke did with the sublime when he tied it to the visual arts. Paulson wrote, "As Pope did before him, he [Hogarth] uses the very images he is attacking as images to express his pessimistic statement about the condition of England and the world governed by such values."<sup>11</sup>

The implication of the term "bathos" is the absurd mixing of the serious and the trivial. It is the antonym for Longinus's term for the sublime, *hypsos*, height or elevation. *Bathos*, or depth, is the antithesis of the sublime; it is the anticlimax, the inability to transcend, a ridiculous failure. It is the inability to achieve the sublime. It is to sink, as Hogarth's title makes doubly clear in its use of both "Bathos" and "Sinking." For Hogarth, at least on the surface, the sublime was a truly ridiculous notion, a point made by Pope in the absurd elevation of "depth," or *Bathous*. Pope wrote, "The taste of the

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<sup>10</sup> Ronald Paulson, *Breaking and Remaking: Aesthetic Practice in England, 1700-1820* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1989), 160.

<sup>11</sup> Ronald Paulson, *Hogarth's Graphic Works*, vol. 1 (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1965), 260. All references are to vol. 1.

*Bathos* is implanted by Nature itself in the soul of man; till perverted by custom or example he is taught, or rather compelled, to relish the *Sublime*.”<sup>12</sup> Hogarth’s print was almost an ode—and perhaps only partially comical—to the evocation of the sublime inventoried by Burke in his *Enquiry*; everything is dark, obscured, ruined, broken, dying, exhausted, *finis* [finished; over].

Hogarth mocked the sublime as perverted. Through his absurd inclusion of almost every imaginable iconographical element in his *Bathos* that could possibly meet Burke’s criteria as sublime, Hogarth categorically derided and dismissed the Burkean sublime and its current fashionability in the 1760s. Paulson recognized this mockery, “But the Tailpiece is at the same time, as Hogarth suggests in his caption, a parody of a certain kind of painting and aesthetic theory,” which is, of course, a reference to sublime painting and to the aesthetic theory of the Burkean sublime.<sup>13</sup> Of all of the scholars who have described this image, Paulson is the most succinct and articulate and best captured its tone; he is quoted at length:

Near the sign of “The Worlds End” Time expires. He has collapsed against a broken column, with his scythe and hourglass broken, his pipe snapped, and his last whiff of breath labeled “FINIS.” His last will and testament reads: *all and every Atom thereof to* [name crossed out; beneficiary changed to] *Chaos whom I appoint my sole Executor. Witness Clotho. Lachesis. Atropos.*” (the three fates, with their seals). Behind him lies a statue of bankruptcy with a pendant seal (a pale horse and pale rider, probably Death, on it), labeled “H. Nature Bankrupt”; and an empty purse. A playbook open to its last page and “*Exeunt Omnes.*” A shoemaker’s “waxed end” twisted around his wooden last (see *Biog. Anecd.*, 1785, p. 403 n.; *J. Ireland*, 2, 377). A broken bow unstrung, a worn out wig-

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<sup>12</sup> Alexander Pope, *The Major Works*, ed. Pat Rogers (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 197.

<sup>13</sup> Paulson, *Hogarth’s Graphic Works*, 260.

brush and a piece of crown, a cracked palette and “THE TIMES [Pl. 1]” being consumed by a candle end. A rope end, the broken butt-end of a musket, and the worn stump of a broom. At the left and right, in the middle distance, are a church tower and a tavern, both ruins, paralleled in the cracked bell and broken gin bottle in the foreground. The clock on the face of the tower is without hands, and below it are a clipped yew and tombstone with a death’s head ensign. In front of “The Worlds End” Tavern is its crooked signpost with a flaming globe (as in *The Times*, Pl. 1) and a broken capital from a column. Behind it are two dead trees. In the far distance is a sea with a sinking ship and a gallows on the shore (for hanging pirates). Above in the sky is Apollo and his horses dead, his chariot wheel broken, a limp parody of the group in Poussin’s *The Kingdom of Flora* (Dresden); and to the right is a waning moon.<sup>14</sup>

Through such imagery, Hogarth not only mocked a typology of “sublime” subject matter, but he dismissed it as broken, exhausted, dying. In doing so, he suggested that the sublime itself had already been exhausted by 1764; that is, it amounted to nothing more than a trite collection of motifs derived from many sources that could be included by any painters to make their work sublime and thus, readily marketable.

This aspect of marketability, however, is another fascinating feature of Hogarth’s print because while he parodies and derides the sublime, he also gains from its popularity by addressing it in his work. Burke’s *Enquiry* was highly successful internationally and was reprinted in seventeen editions in several different languages during his lifetime alone. The sublime, it must be said, was good business. With *Bathos*, Hogarth may have been critiquing the typology of the sublime as a means of capitalizing on the popularity of a fashionable topic of the day. While he dismissed the sublime, he may have sought to profit from it in subscriptions to his complete engravings. This capitalization on sublime subject matter or phenomenon can also be seen in the market created by Vesuvius for

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<sup>14</sup> Paulson, *Hogarth’s Graphic Works*, 259-260.

artists like Voltaire, who was able to sustain a successful career with virtually one type of painting—sublime volcanic eruptions. Or like Hubert Robert, an artist nicknamed *Robert des ruines*, who made a very successful career painting ruins.

Yet, as is the case with virtually all of Hogarth's work, a singular reading is not enough. Through his acknowledgement of the absurdist taste of the commercial market for the sublime through his subtitle, "Dealers in Dark Pictures," Hogarth suggested yet another "dark" category connected to the proliferation of the sublime—dealers who served to profit from such trivial subject matter. This can be equated with his derision of connoisseurs, which was a hallmark of much of his artistic production.<sup>15</sup>

I argue that due to his major involvement with aesthetic theory, including the production of the two prints (Figures 80 and 81) specific to the subject that accompanied his 1753 book *Analysis of Beauty*, Hogarth recognized the significance of the Burkean sublime as a major epistemological break. It is for this reason that everything in the *Bathos* print is either dying or broken. Hogarth seemed to recognize the death of a notion of Beauty that he clung to, painted, wrote about avidly, and parodied. While the print may have been a *memento mori* of sorts for Hogarth because it was his last work, more significantly, I argue, it was a *memento mori* for Beauty itself.

And there is perhaps a certain sadness—or melancholy—over the perceived loss, or death, of a familiar standard of Beauty not embodied in the sublime that caused Hogarth, at least in part, to base his *Bathos* on Albrecht Dürer's *Melencolia I* (1514) (Figure 83). If it is considered a *memento mori*, then Hogarth's fitting last image to his career reverberates in its reference to the Dürer as a sort of "spiritual self-portrait," much

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<sup>15</sup> Paulson, *Hogarth's Graphic Works*, 241-243.

like Panofsky's reading of *Melencolia I*, as articulated in his *Life and Art of Albrecht Dürer*.<sup>16</sup> It is compelling that Hogarth's famous "Line of Beauty," the symbol that replaces the Tetragrammaton (the four Hebrew letters that form the name of God) in the triangle of the Holy Unity shown on the title page of his *Analysis of Beauty* (Figure 83), is also inscribed on a painter's palette in the foreground of Hogarth's self-portrait, *Gulielmus Hogarth* (1749) (Figure 84). Such inclusion indicated the primacy of the Line of Beauty to Hogarth. It was a motif that literally replaced God in the title page of his treatise on aesthetics and as a value inscribed in both form and word upon a representation of his palette (placed next to his beloved dog Trump and a stack of books emblazoned with the names Shakespeare, Milton, and Swift).<sup>17</sup> Further, its presence in a self-portrait provided a tentative connection between Hogarth's conception of himself and his conception of aesthetics, particularly given Panofsky's interpretation of *Melencolia I* as a sort of spiritual self-portrait of Dürer. As such in the *Bathos* print, Hogarth may point not only to a loss of the Line of Beauty, but to a loss of self; it represents not only the death of the flesh, but of an idea and ideal.<sup>18</sup>

In considering Dürer as a source for the *Bathos* print, Paulson wrote, "Hogarth appropriately takes his general composition, the configuration of objects and some of the

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<sup>16</sup> Erwin Panofsky, *The Life and Art of Albrecht Dürer* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1955), 171.

<sup>17</sup> Ronald Paulson, introduction to *Analysis of Beauty*, by William Hogarth (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1997), xxi. In emphasizing the significance of the Line of Beauty for Hogarth, Paulson identified the importance of its appearance on the title page of the *Analysis* in comparison with its presence on the palette in Hogarth's self-portrait: "It extends the Line from a tool of the artist to a principle of aesthetic response, the *succedaneum* (one of his favorite words) of religion."

<sup>18</sup> Paulson discussed Hogarth's Line of Beauty in his introduction (xxxviii) to Hogarth's *The Analysis of Beauty* in relation to the proportional system of Beauty, "the model into which he [Hogarth] fit this Line: the "proportions" of a body and its parts."

particular items, from Dürer's engraving, *Melancholy*.”<sup>19</sup> These quotations are particularly significant in the context of an important reading by art historian Patrick Doorly. In his 2004 article “Dürer's *Melencolia I*—Plato's Abandoned Search for the Beautiful” Doorly added an important layer of interpretation specific to aesthetics—that of Beauty. Doorly did not discard the interpretation of Dürer's famous image by art historian Karl Giehlow, which had then been built on by Panofsky and art historian Fritz Saxl, which argued that certain individuals, namely artists, were prone to melancholy due to their (artistic or intellectual) temperament—in other words, their personalities were governed by Saturn.<sup>20</sup> But he suggested an important reading tied to beauty that is worth quoting at length:

This paper will argue that *Melencolia I*, like *Nemesis*, is based on a text. Our reading of Dürer's masterpiece will be simpler than the one promoted by Giehlow and Panofsky and will more closely reflect Dürer's interests and practice, particularly in 1514. It will argue that Dürer's subject is not melancholy but beauty, and that his label “*Melencolia I*” in the background represents the end of a story unfolded before our eyes in the foreground. It rejects a link between the image and the ideas of Marsilio Ficino, or Florentine Neoplatonism, in favor of a close association with Plato himself. For *Melencolia I* is based on Plato's longer dialogue between Socrates and the sophist Hippias, the Greater Hippias, or Hippias Major (Hippias Meizon). In this dialogue, Socrates repeatedly asks Hippias, “What is the beautiful?” Hippias offers a number of answers, all of which Socrates is able to discredit. Socrates then presents his own answers, each of which Hippias initially concedes, until he is forced to discard them when Socrates points out their inadequacy. Dürer has scattered emblems of these abandoned solutions throughout his print. The dialogue

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<sup>19</sup> Paulson, *Hogarth's Graphic Works*, 260.

<sup>20</sup> For a discussion of *Melancholy*, see Ernst Kris and Otto Kurz, *Legend, Myth, and Magic in the Image of the Artist: A Historical Experiment* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1979); and Rudolf Wittkower and Margot Wittkower, *Born Under Saturn: The Character and Conduct of Artists, a Documented History from Antiquity to the French Revolution* (New York: Norton, 1969).

ends with both men accepting their ignorance, a state for which Dürer needed a visual metaphor. Only then did he draw on the imagery of melancholy.<sup>21</sup>

Significantly, Doorly's argument allows for a more focused interpretation of Hogarth's *Bathos* in regard to the subject of aesthetic theory. For Hogarth, Dürer's engraving, then, was a fitting reference not only because it reflected the idea of aesthetic debate such as the one between Socrates and the sophist Hippias, as Doorly contends, but also because of the irresolution of such a thorny issue and the feelings evoked by the inability to achieve a resolution—melancholy. This state of indeterminacy, the inability to find resolution, particularly as regards aesthetic theory linked to melancholy and sadness, may reflect most accurately Hogarth's position on the sublime and what he correctly viewed as the dismal, broken future of Beauty as an idea and as an ideal.

In light of the discussion of change, or the epistemological shift represented by the Burkean sublime that I argue Hogarth addressed in the *Bathos* print, it is significant that the figure Hogarth used to depict an expiring Time was presented with a prominent forelock. As suggested by Panofsky, such a forelock points not to the representation of Time but of *Occasio*, representing “the brief, decisive moment which marks the turning point of human beings or in the development of the universe.”<sup>22</sup> The idea of an abrupt break, signaled by both the depiction of Time not actually as Time but as *Occasio* and the prominent scythe in the *Bathos* print as symbolic of death, emphasizes a decisive turning

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<sup>21</sup> Patrick Doorly, “Dürer's *Melencolia I*—Plato's Abandoned Search for the Beautiful,” *Art Bulletin* 86, no. 2 (June 2004): 255.

<sup>22</sup> Erwin Panofsky, *Studies in Iconology: Humanistic Themes in the Art of the Renaissance* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1939), 71; Paulson, *Hogarth's Graphic Works*, 242.

point.<sup>23</sup> It is indicative of an extreme moment tied to immediate destruction or change, such as that of an earthquake or volcanic eruption—or the emergence of the Burkean sublime.

In what may be considered a truly perceptive and revolutionary image, Hogarth seems to have recognized the “terrible” significance and likely, at least in his mind, destructive repercussions on Beauty of the epistemological shift signaled by the Burkean sublime. That shift brought with it the ugly (or not beautiful) face of modernity and initiated a profound change in how the world was viewed. This dramatic upending of the world is the critical component of the *Bathos* print. It can be seen summarized in the center of his print in the image of the cracked globe on the sign inscribed with the words, “The End of the World” (Figure 77). Broken like the shell of an egg, the earth spews fire like a gargantuan volcanic eruption.

The representation of the earth echoing a broken egg is a fascinating analogy when placed within the context of another Hogarth print, one prepared as a subscription ticket (usually bound as a frontispiece) for his book *Analysis of Beauty, Columbus Breaking the Egg* (April 1752) (Figure 85).<sup>24</sup> In this print, Hogarth referenced the infamous story attributed to the Italian historian Girolamo Benzoni, who wrote an anecdote about Christopher Columbus in his 1565 book *The New World*. While dining

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<sup>23</sup> Paulson, *Hogarth's Graphic Works*, 242. This very peculiar figure of Time, as Paulson pointed out, was incorrectly used by Joseph Addison in the *Spectator*, no. 83 of June 5, 1711, where Time was shown moving up and down galleries touching paintings. Previous to the peculiar figure of “Time” represented in the *Bathos* print, it appeared in another print by Hogarth from March 1761 titled *Time Smoking a Picture*. According to Paulson, this print was “originally intended as a subscription ticket for an engraving of Hogarth’s ill-fated painting *Sigismunda*.” In this engraving and mezzotint, Hogarth took up the subject of connoisseurship and the effect of time on pictures in reaction to the publication by Addison, previously mentioned, which may explain why Hogarth intentionally misrepresented Time as *Occasio*. Paulson wrote, “Addison intends the larger idea of temporal passage; and so Hogarth takes it at its accepted meaning and makes it a moment of active destruction.”

<sup>24</sup> Paulson, *Hogarth's Graphic Works*, 219.

with a group of Spanish nobles and confronted with the statement that if he had not discovered the Indies then some other Spaniard would have done so, Columbus asked for an egg and wagered all present to make it stand on end. After they all failed, Columbus took the egg, cracked it on the side of the table, and placed it on end, thus winning the bet. The story was linked to the concept of a new way of seeing and solving a problem. Ultimately it was probably related to the earlier story of the Gordian Knot, most commonly associated with Alexander the Great, which is about the swift, decisive, and creative solution to a seemingly intractable problem.

There is, however, another story Hogarth may have also referenced in the image of the broken earth in his *Bathos* print, although perhaps more indirectly. In his *Lives of the Artists* (1550), Giorgio Vasari wrote about the young architect Filippo Brunelleschi, who in 1419 proposed a solution to the over-a-century-old problem of how to raise a large dome over the foundation of Santa Maria del Fiore. The Duomo [cathedral] in Florence, Italy, designed in 1294 by Arnolfo di Cambio, had been disintegrating and collecting rainwater since construction was halted in 1380. According to Giorgio Vasari, during a competition held in 1419 by the *Arte della Lana* [the wool merchants' guild] to choose an architect to solve the problem of how to raise a dome over such a large span, Brunelleschi refused to display his model for a dome solution but suggested that anyone who could make an egg stand on end on a slab of marble should be selected to perform the work. After no one could do this, Brunelleschi cracked an egg and made it stand on end, thus winning the commission. Moreover, his solution embodied a mathematical reference to the shape of the dome as a parabolic curve, which is mimicked in the natural shape of an egg. Brunelleschi did not just reveal the ability to solve a problem creatively.

Along with Masaccio, he was one of the first artists to use vanishing-point linear perspective, one of the defining characteristics of the mathematically rational Renaissance. Just as rational vanishing-point linear perspective was an epistemological break tied to a new way of seeing the world, so was the Burkean sublime.

What may be most significant in Hogarth's rather oblique reference to the idea of discovery related to Columbus and that of marvel or miracle related to the engineering and technological feat of Brunelleschi's sublime dome was contained in the analogy of the breaking of an egg as the *birth* of a new way of looking or seeing. This new way of seeing the world—as can also be seen embodied by a reorientation of episteme in keeping with the advent of linear perspective in the early fifteenth century—was implicit in both Columbus's approach when he discovered the new world and in Brunelleschi's when he solved the dome problem. Through the representation of fire spewing from the earth—itsself evocative of a broken egg—on the central “End of the World” sign in the *Bathos* print (Figure 77), Hogarth ties the birth of a new way of looking to both the spectacularity of the sublime associated with volcanic eruption, as we have seen in paintings such as Voltaire's 1771 *Eruption of Vesuvius* (Figure 17), as well as to the destruction brought about by the broken planet on fire; the end of the world is the end of Beauty. The destruction that permeates the *Bathos* print is indicative of the moment of an immediate and decisive break, or change, of great magnitude. It is sublime.

The Burkean sublime, like linear perspective, Brunelleschi's dome solution, and Columbus's discovery of the New World, was tied to a new way of seeing, or at least categorizing what was seen. Beauty, as Hogarth recognized as early as 1764, was no longer the only valid object of aesthetic enquiry; now there was also the fear-inducing,

the terrible, the ugly, the marvelous, and the sublime natural world. This idea of being a detached observer—to no longer have the human body attached mathematically to nature through a proportional system that defined Beauty—was the critical criterion not only for a reorientation in aesthetics that stressed the uniqueness of the individual, but for an empirically-based scientific method to take root and develop in the late eighteenth and nineteenth century. It was a viewpoint made possible by the epistemological break that resulted from the absorption and spread of the Burkean sublime. The sublime amounted to a revolutionary new way of *seeing* oneself and one's changing world. And it is the development of this new way of seeing that this dissertation has traced during the critical period of its transformation between the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.

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Figure 1. Claude-Joseph Vernet, *Seascape with a Shipwreck*, 1743-48.  
Oil on canvas.



Figure 2. Claude-Joseph Vernet, *Death of Virginia*, 1789. Oil on canvas.



Figure 3. Claude-Joseph Vernet, *Storm*, 1759. Oil on canvas.



Figure 4. Claude-Joseph Vernet, *Calm*, 1759. Oil on canvas.



Figure 5. Nicolas Poussin, *Deluge (Winter)*, 1664. Oil on canvas.



Figure 6. Nicolas Poussin, *Landscape with a Storm*, 1651. Oil on canvas.



Figure 7. Nicolas Poussin, *Landscape with a Calm*, 1651. Oil on canvas.



Figure 8. Horace Vernet, *Joseph Vernet Tied to a Mast in a Storm*, 1822. Oil on canvas.



Figure 9. Michel Dorigny, Polymnie, *Muse of Eloquence*, c. 1650. Oil on canvas.



Figure 10. Antoine Paillet and Guillaume Vallet, Frontispiece to *Traité du sublime*, in Nicolas Boileau-Despréaux's *Oeuvres diverses* (Paris 1674). Engraving.

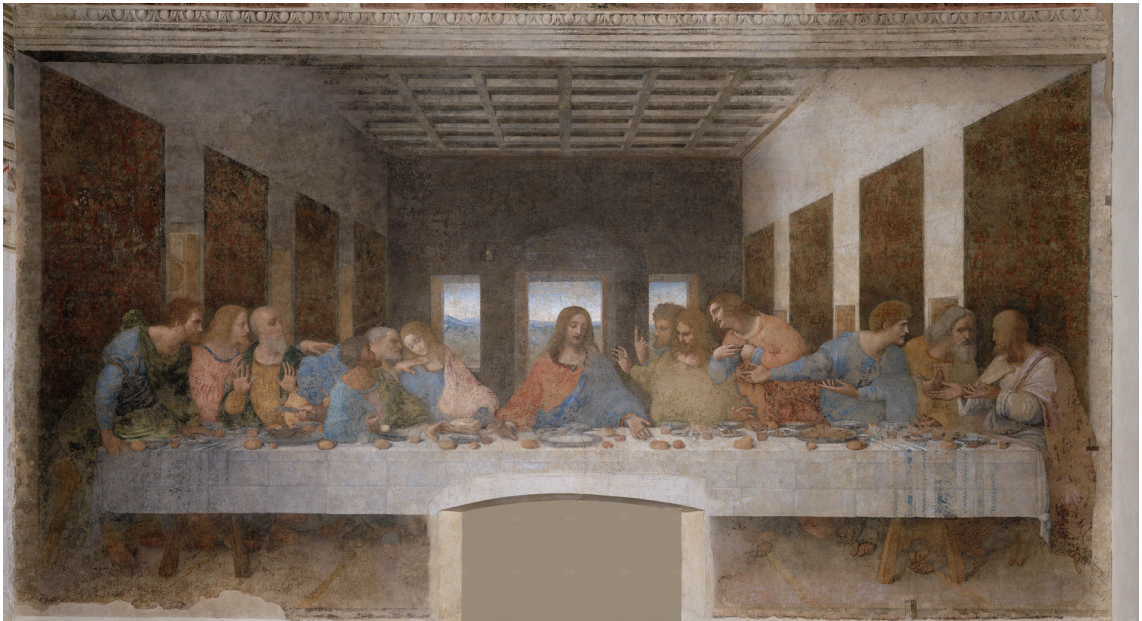


Figure 11. Leonardo da Vinci, *Last Supper*, 1495-8.  
Tempera on gesso, pitch, and mastic.



Figure 12. Jean Porcellis, *Dutch Ships in a Gale*, c. 1620. Oil on canvas.



Figure 13. Jean-Baptiste Greuze, *Village Contract*, 1761. Oil on canvas.



Figure 14. Rembrandt van Rijn, *The Anatomy Lesson of Dr. Tulp*, 1632. Oil on canvas.



Figure 15. Claude-Joseph Vernet, *Shipwreck*, 1763. Oil on canvas.



Figure 16. Jean-François Hue, *Shipwreck*, 1802. Engraving.



Figure 17. Pierre-Jacques Volaire, *Eruption of Vesuvius*, 1771. Oil on canvas.



Figure 18. Philibert-Benoît de La Rue, *Eruption of Vesuvius in 1754*, ca. 1768. Engraving.

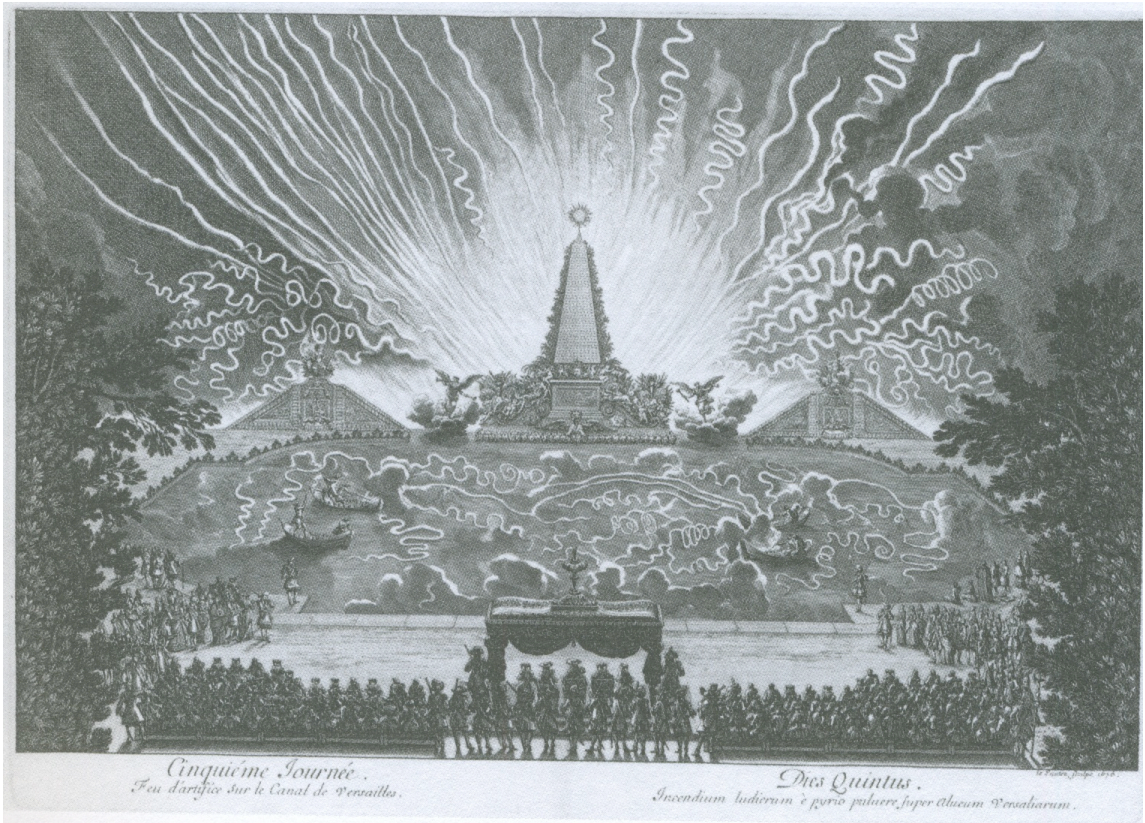


Figure 19. Jean Le Pautre, *Fifth Day of “Amusements of Versailles”*: Fireworks on the Canal at Versailles, 1676. Engraving and etching.

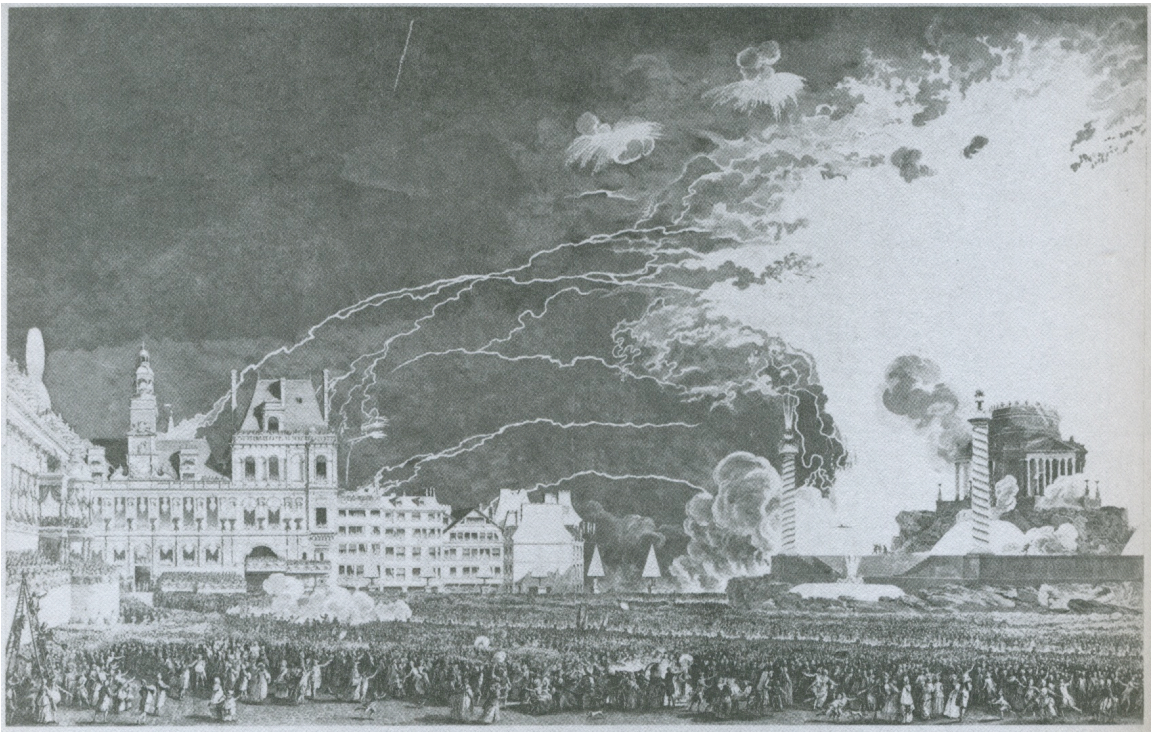


Figure 20. Jean-Michel Moreau, *Fireworks on the Place de Grève, Paris, 21 January 1782, on the Occasion of the Birth of the Dauphin, 1782*. Etching.

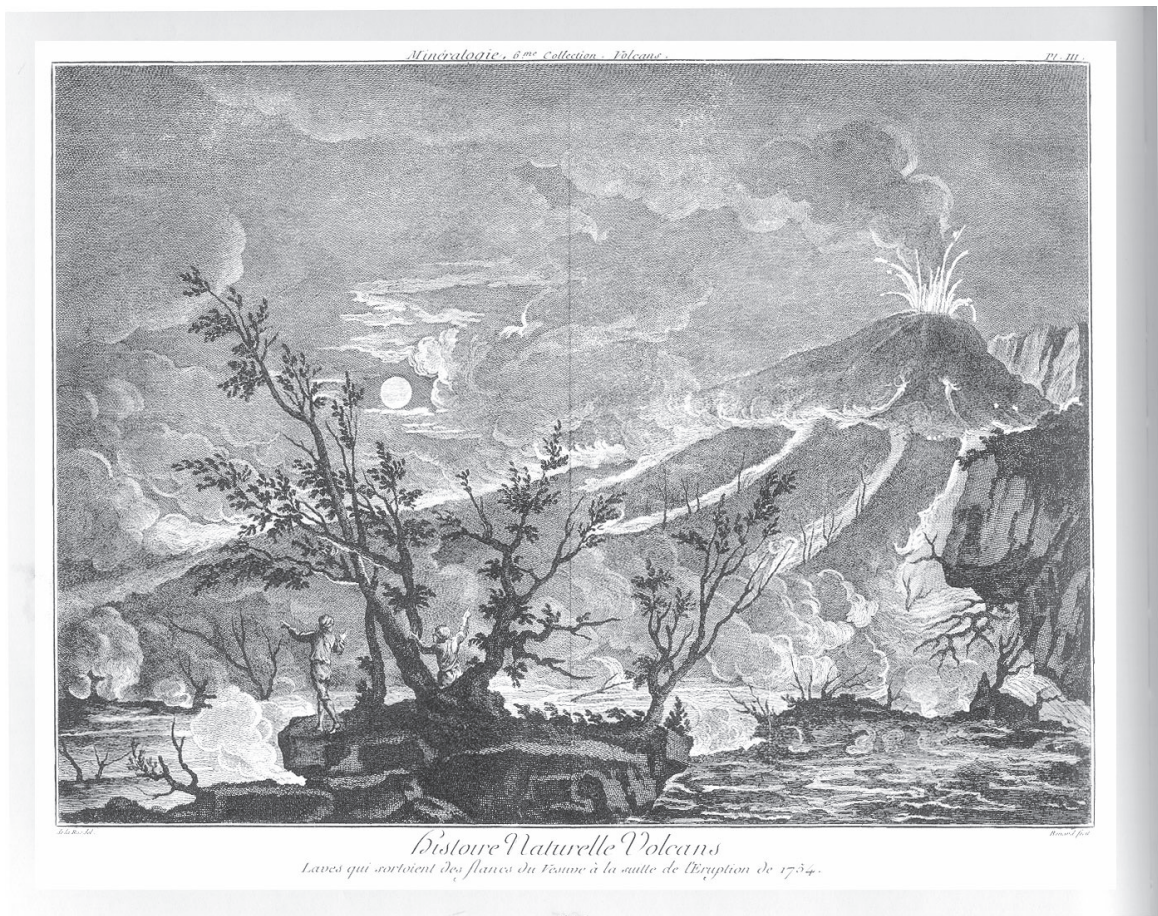


Figure 21. Philibert-Benoît de La Rue, *Lava Flowing Down Slopes of Vesuvius after the Eruption of 1754*, ca. 1768. Engraving.



Figure 22. Micco Spadaro, *Procession to Invoke St. Januarius during the Eruption of Vesuvius in 1631*, 1631. Oil on canvas.



Figure 23. Scipione Compagno, *Eruption of Mount Vesuvius in 1631*, 1635-40. Oil on canvas.

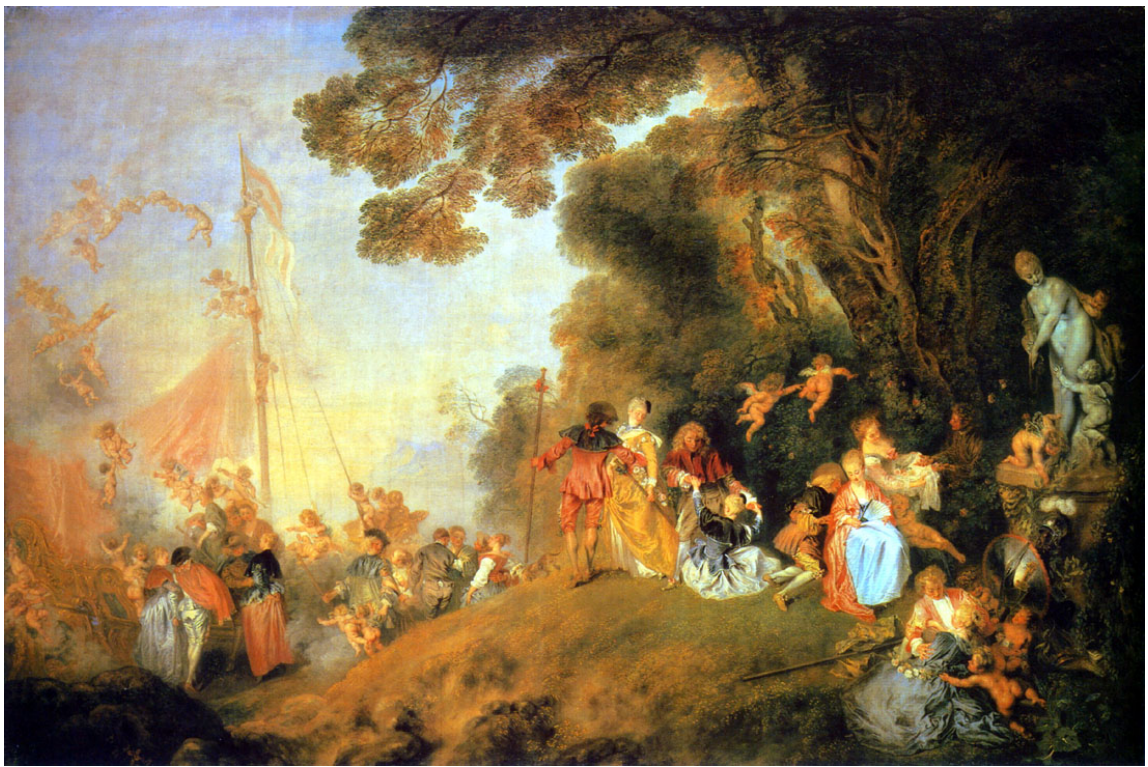


Figure 24. Jean-Antoine Watteau, *The Embarkation for Cythera*, 1717. Oil on canvas.



Figure 25. Joseph Wright of Derby, *Vesuvius*, ca. 1774-75. Oil on canvas.



Figure 26. Joseph Wright of Derby, *Firework Display at the Castel Sant'Angelo*, ca. 1774-75. Oil on canvas.



Figure 27. Luigi Grattagrassi, *Fireworks Machine Representing Mount Vesuvius, Erected in Bologna for the Visit of Ferdinand, King of Naples and Sicily, 2 June 1785, 1785. Engraving.*



Figure 28. Francesco Giambattista Piranesi and Louis-Jean Desprez, *The Eruption of Vesuvius*, 1783. Hand-colored (watercolor and gouache) etching.



Figure 29. Francesco Giambattista Piranesi and Louis-Jean Desprez, *The Girandola over Castel Sant'Angelo*, 1783. Hand-colored (watercolor and gouache) etching.

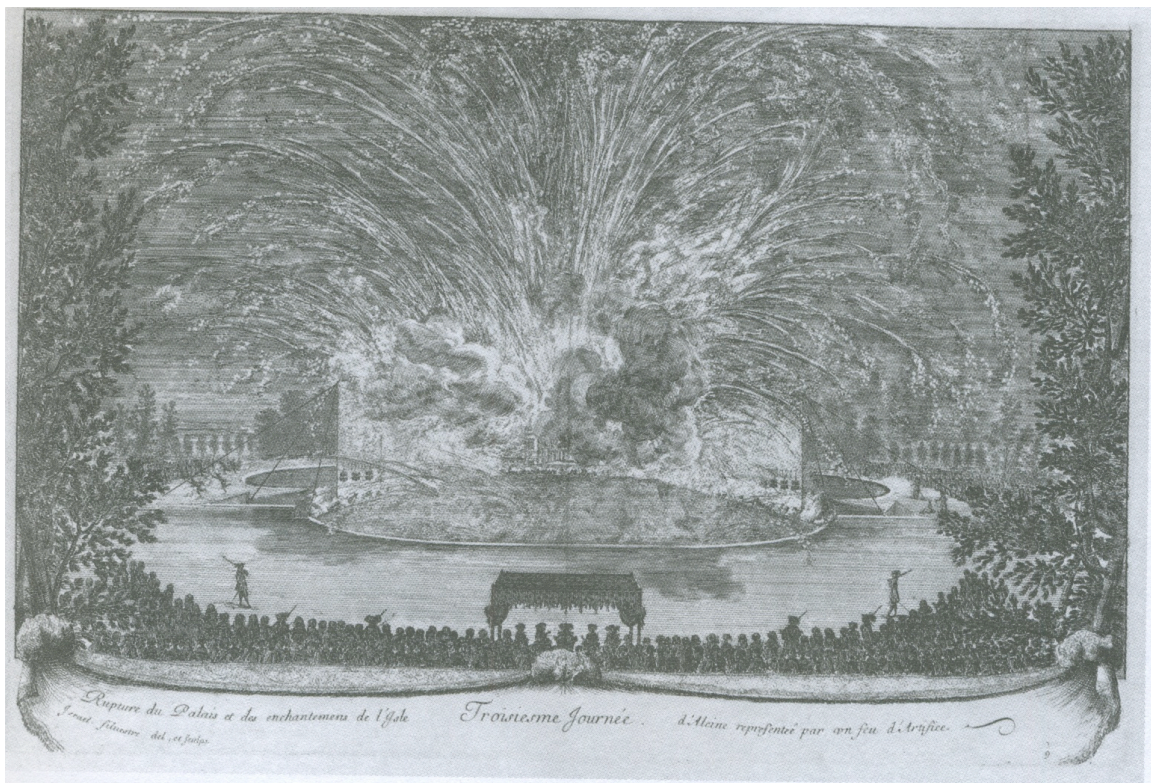


Figure 30. Israel Silvestre, *Third Day of "Pleasure of the Enchanted Island": Destruction of the Palace of Alcine*, 1674. Etching.

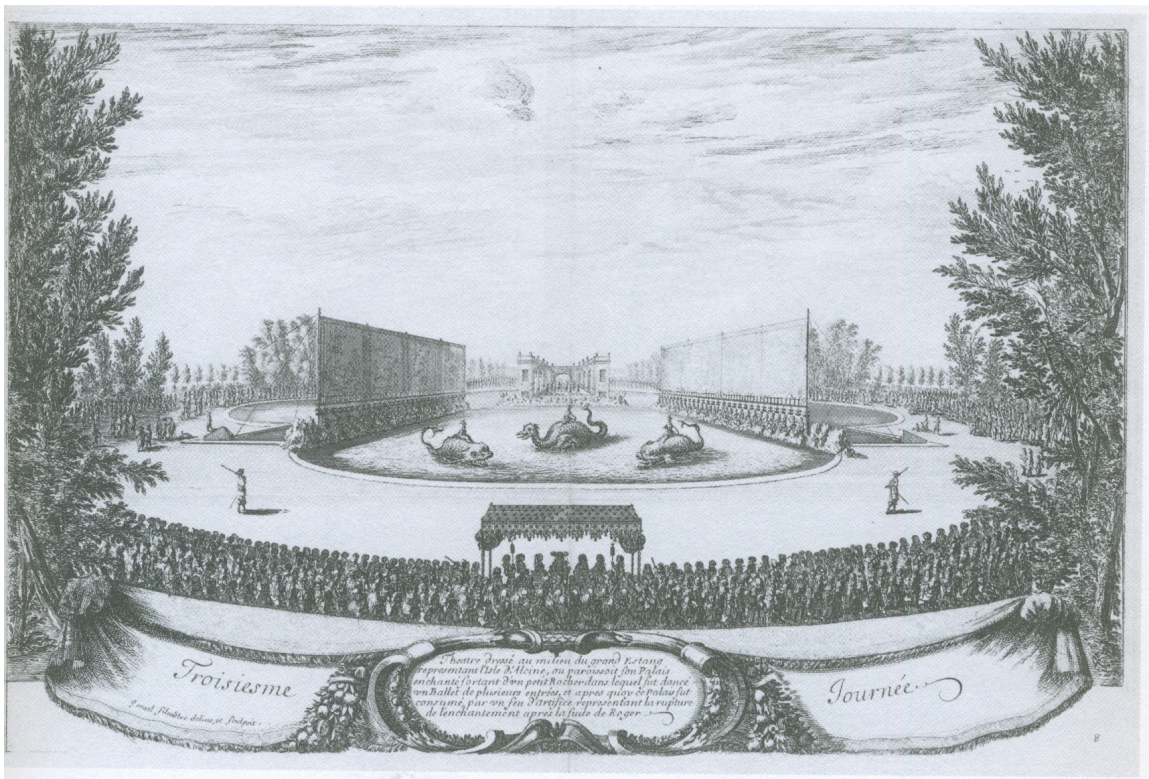


Figure 31. Israel Silvestre, *Third Day of “Pleasure of the Enchanted Island”*: *Palace of Alcine*, 1674. Etching



Figure 32. Luca Ciamberlano, *Fireworks Machine Representing the Victory of the Empire over the Ottoman Turks, for the Visit to Rome of Emperor Ferdinand III, February 1637, 1637*. Engraving.



Figure 33. Francisco Preciado de la Vega, *Fireworks Machine Representing Mount Vesuvius with Pliny the Elder, for the Festival of the Chinae, Rome, 1750, 1750.* Hand-colored (watercolor) etching.



Figure 34. Louis Le Coeur, *Coronation Celebration of Their Imperial Majesties*, 1804. Etching and aquatint, bistre, and color.



Figure 35. Jacques-Louis David, *Napoleon Crossing the Alps at the Saint-Bernard Pass*, 1800. Oil on canvas.



Figure 36. George Cruikshank after George Humphrey, *An Eruption of Mount Vesuvius: And the Anticipated Effect of the Waterloo Storm*, 17 June 1815. Colored etching.



Figure 37. Auguste Desperret, *The Third Eruption of the Volcano of 1789*, 1833.  
Lithograph.

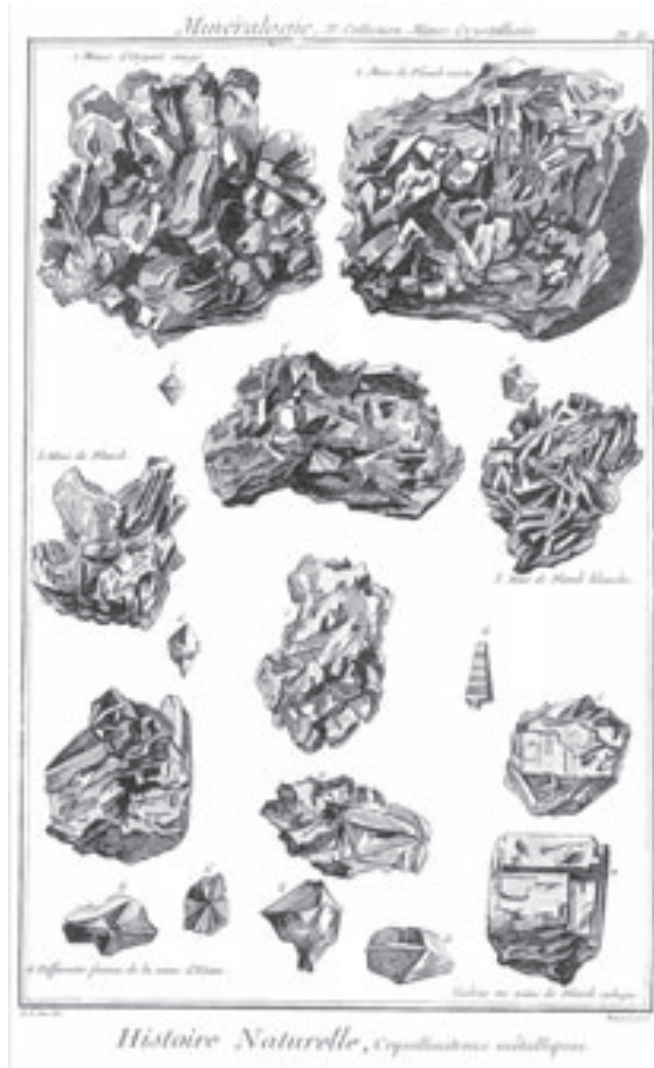
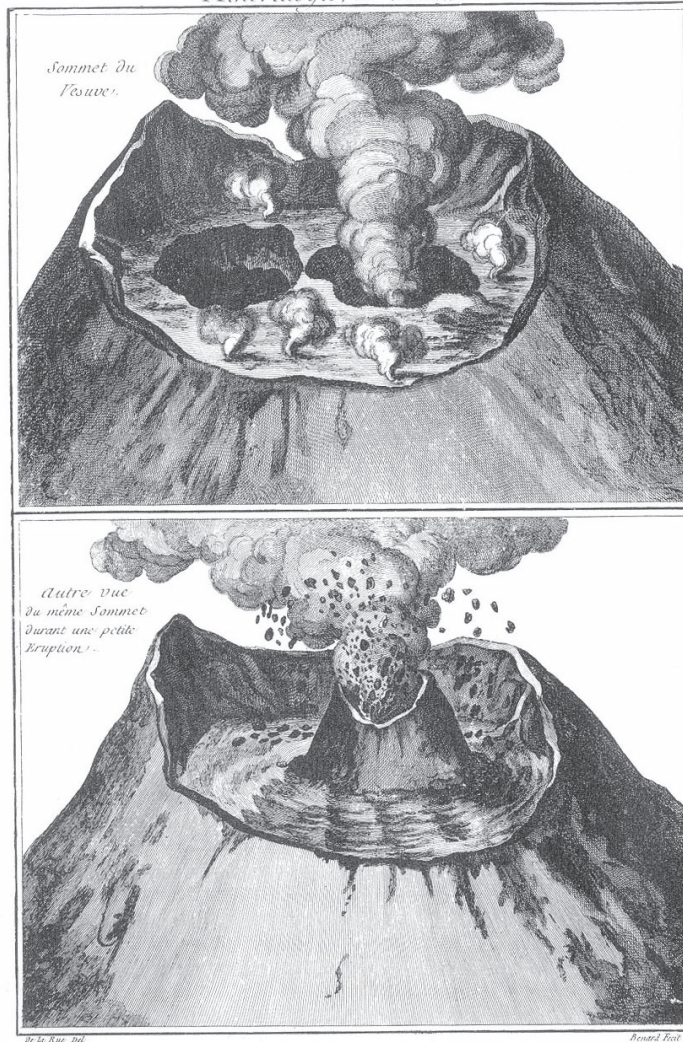
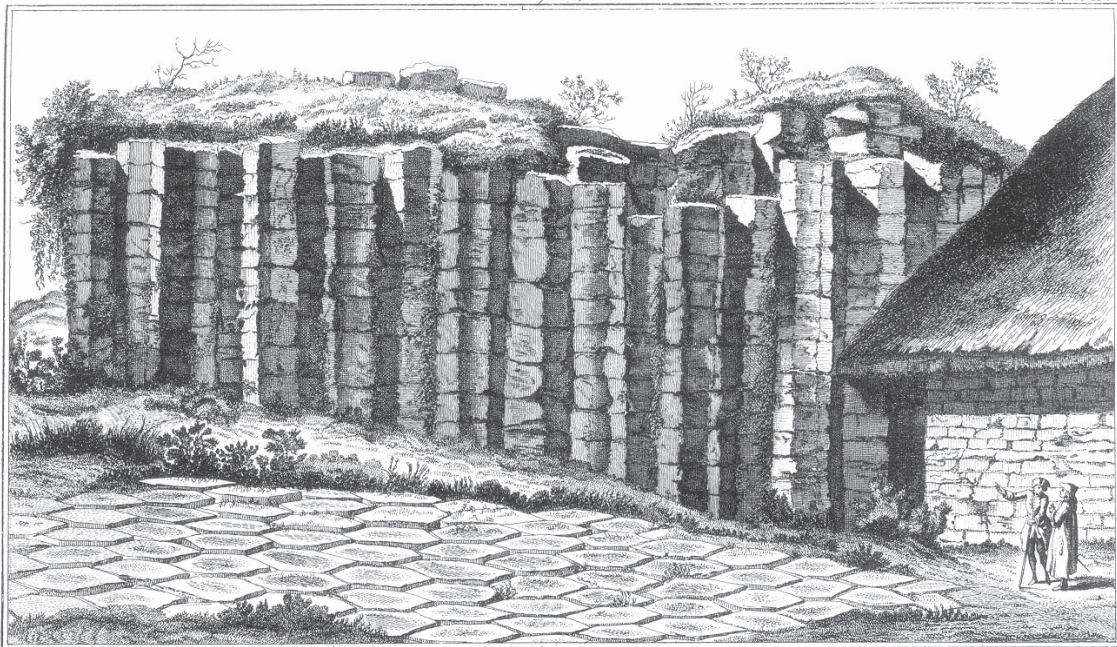


Figure 38. *Metallic Crystallization*, ca. 1768. Engraving.



*Histoire Naturelle, Volcans.*

Figure 39. *Summit of Vesuvius; Another Summit of Vesuvius during a Small Eruption*, ca. 1768. Engraving.



*Histoire Naturelle*, Face d'une Butte toute composée de Prismes articulés, sur laquelle étoit-située l'ancien château de la Tour d'Auvergne, à côté de laquelle on a ajouté le Vûc du Pavé naturel qui recouvre une grande plate forme où se tiennent les Cours de cette petite Ville.

Figure 40. Nicolas Desmarest, *Basalt Columns in the Auvergne*, ca. 1768. Engraving.



Figure 41. *Bacchus on Mount Vesuvius from House of the Centaur, Pompeii, first century CE. Fresco.*



*Histoire Naturelle, Volcans. Vue Générale du Vésuve. en 1757.*

Figure 42. Philibert-Benoît de La Rue, *General View of Vesuvius in 1757*, ca. 1768. Engraving.



Figure 43. Pietro Fabris, *Plans of the Top of Mount Vesuvius 1767*, Plate II, from William Hamilton, *Campi Phlegraei*, vol. II, 1776. Hand colored engraving from gouache painting.





Figure 45. Joseph Wright of Derby, *A Philosopher Giving a Lecture on the Orrery, in which a Lamp is Put in Place of the Sun*, ca. 1764-66. Oil on canvas.



Figure 46. Joseph Wright of Derby, *An Experiment on a Bird in the Air Pump*, 1768.  
Oil on canvas.



Figure 47. Charles-Louis Clérissieu, *Ruin Room*, side wall as executed, Convent of S. Trinità dei Monti, Rome, ca. 1766. Fresco.



Figure 48. Hubert Robert, *Project for the Transformation of the Grand Gallery of the Louvre*, 1796. Oil on canvas.



Figure 49. Hubert Robert, *Imaginary View of the Grand Gallery of the Louvre in Ruins*, 1796. Oil on canvas.



Figure 50. Charles-Louis Clérisseau, Ruin Room, ceiling detail, Convent of S. Trinità dei Monti, Rome, ca. 1766. Fresco.



Figure 51. Louis-Gabriel Blanchet, *Portrait of Père Le Seur and Père Jacquier*, 1772. Oil on canvas.



Figure 52. Giulio Romano, Room of Giants, Palazzo del Tè, Mantua, Italy, 1524-1534. Fresco.



Figure 53. Giovanni Battista Gaulli, *Triumph in the Name of Jesus*, ceiling, Il Gesù, Rome, Italy, 1676-1679. Fresco.

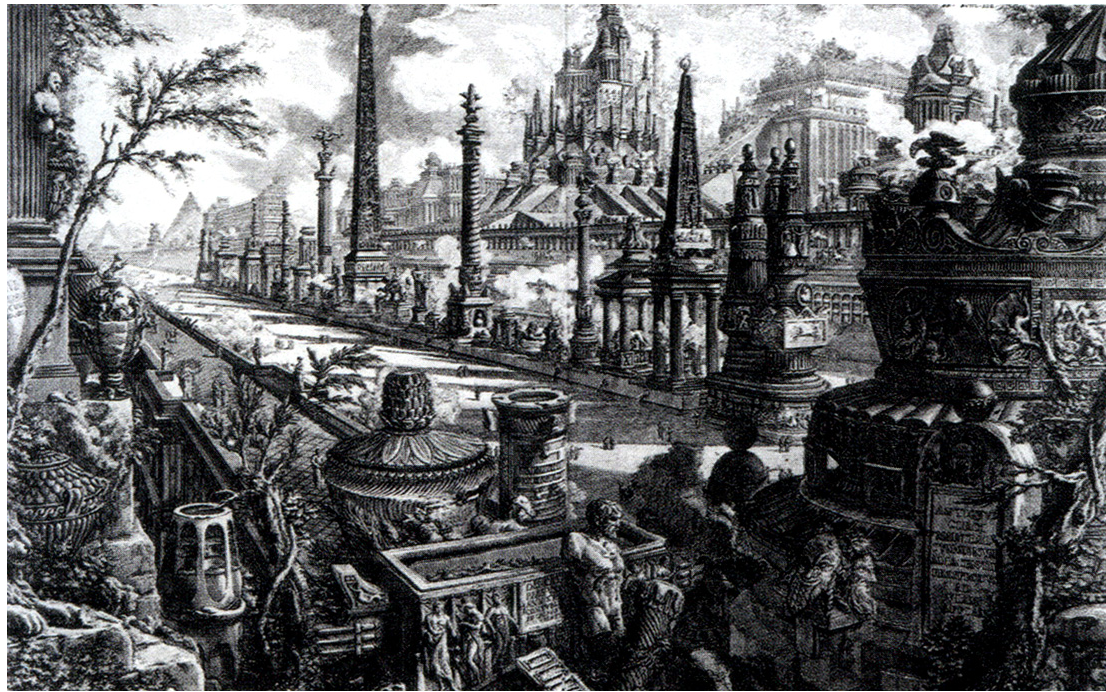


Figure 54. Giambattista Piranesi, *Imaginary View of the Via Appia*, frontispiece to *Vedute di Roma*, 1756. Etching.



Figure 55. Pierre-Gabriel Berthault, *Triumphal Entry of the Monuments of the Arts and Science, 9 and 10 Thermidor Year VI, 1798*. Engraving.



Figure 56. Joseph Gandry, *Bank of England*, 1816. Oil on canvas.

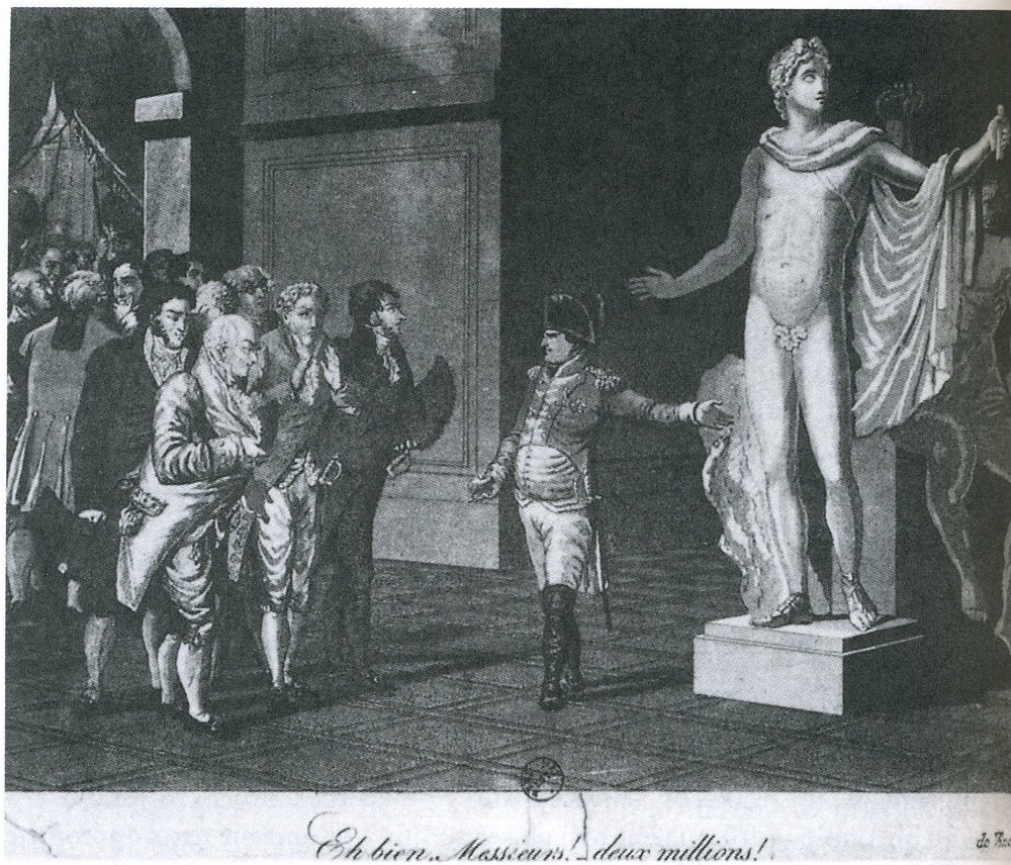


Figure 57. Anonymous, *Napoleon Bonaparte Showing the Apollo Belvedere to his Deputies*, 1797. Etching with aquatint.



Figure 58. Giovanni Paolo Panini, *Ancient Rome*, 1757. Oil on canvas.



Figure 59. Giovanni Paolo Panini, *Modern Rome*, 1757. Oil on canvas.

**Phase One, 1826**

**Musée Charles X**

Galleries facing Cour Carrée

Ingres, <i>Apotheosis of Homer</i> , 1827	Heim, <i>Vesuvius</i> , 1827	Meynier, <i>Nymphs of Parth.</i> , 1827	Fragonard <i>François I and Prim.</i> , 1827	Gros, <i>Glory Rests...</i> , 1827 <i>Time Lifts...</i> , 1827 <i>Mars Stops...</i> , 1827 <b>Salle des colonnes</b>	Picot, <i>Egypt Revealed</i> , 1827	Pujol, <i>Egypt Saved by Joseph</i> , 1827	Vernet, <i>Julius II</i> , 1827	Gros, <i>Charles X</i> , 1827

**Phase Two, 1828**

**Musée Charles X**

Galleries facing Seine

Ingres, <i>Apotheosis of Homer</i> , 1827	Heim, <i>Vesuvius</i> , 1827	Meynier, <i>Nymphs of Parth.</i> , 1827	Fragonard <i>François I and Prim.</i> , 1827	Gros, <i>Glory Rests...</i> , 1827 <i>Time Lifts...</i> , 1827 <i>Mars Stops...</i> , 1827 <b>Salle des colonnes</b>	Picot, <i>Egypt Revealed</i> , 1827	Pujol, <i>Egypt Saved by Joseph</i> , 1827	Vernet, <i>Julius II</i> , 1827	Gros, <i>Charles X</i> , 1827
Alaux, <i>Poussin</i> , 1832	Steuben, <i>Henry IV</i> , 1833	Deveria, <i>Puget</i> , 1832	Fragonard <i>François I and Prim.</i> , 1827	Heim, <i>The Renaissance of the Arts in France</i> , 1833	Fragonard, <i>François I Knighted by Bayard</i> , 1819	Schnetz, <i>Charlemagne</i> , 1830-33/35?	Drolling, <i>Louis XII</i> , 1828	Cogniet, <i>Bonaparte in Egypt</i> , 1834

west

**Galerie Campana**

east

Figure 60. Plan of the Musée Charles X.



Figure 61. Jean-Auguste-Dominique Ingres, *The Apotheosis of Homer*, 1827.  
Oil on canvas.



Figure 62. Baron Antoine-Jean Gros, *The King Giving the Musée Charles X to the Arts*, 1827. Oil on canvas.



Figure 63. Charles Meynier, *The Nymphs of Parthenope Carry the Penates and Are Driven by Minerva to the Banks of the Seine*, 1827. Oil on canvas.



Figure 64. François-Joseph Heim, *Vesuvius Receiving Fire from Jupiter that Will Consume Herculaneum, Pompeii, and Stabia*, 1827. Oil on canvas.



Figure 65. Abel de Pujol, *Egypt Saved from Famine by Joseph*, 1827. Oil on canvas.



Figure 66. Léon Cogniet, *The Expedition to Egypt in 1798 Under the Orders of Bonaparte*, 1834. Oil on canvas.



Figure 67. Musée Charles X, Gallery 28 (Vernet), view toward Salle des colonnes, ca. 2004. Photograph.



Figure 68. Pierre Fontaine and Charles Percier, Triumphal Arch of the Carrousel, Paris, France, 1806-1808.

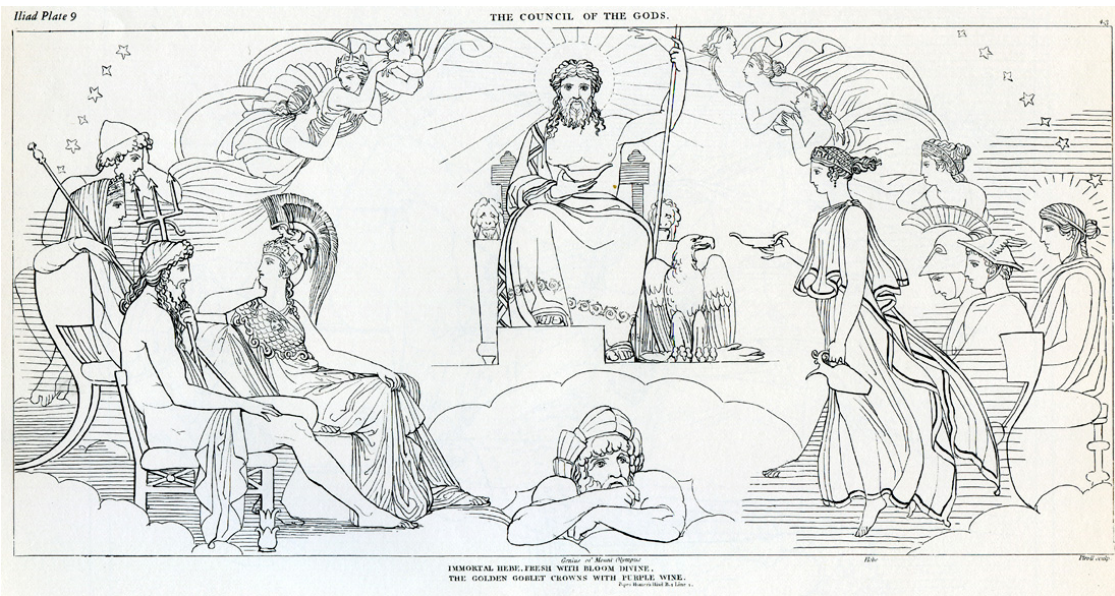


Figure 69. John Flaxman, *The Iliad: The Council of the Gods*, 1793. Engraving.

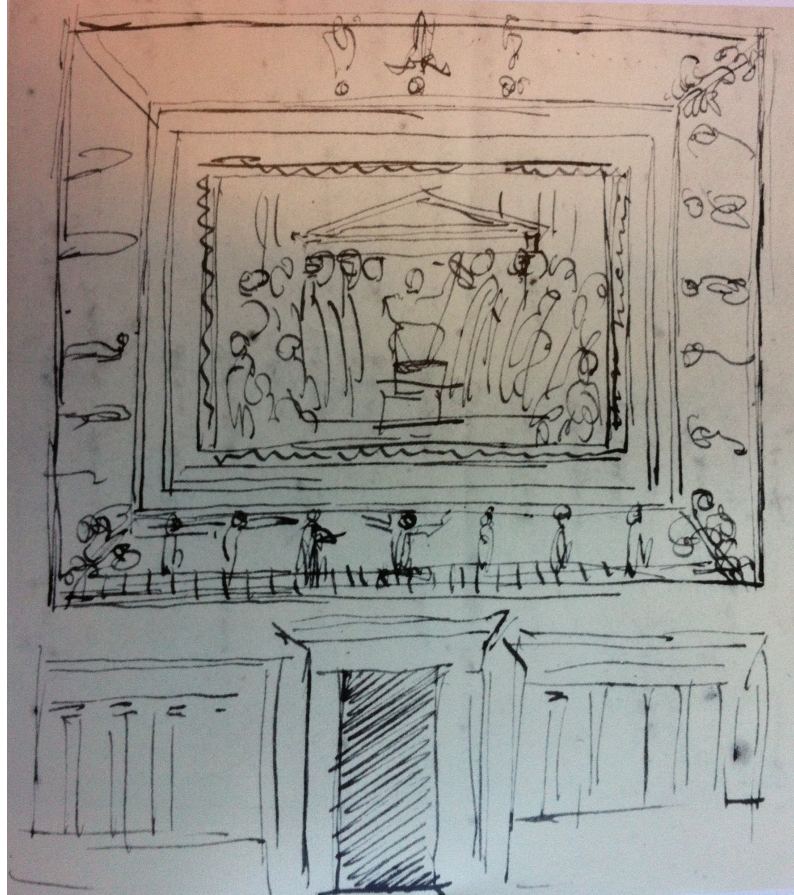


Figure 70. Jean-Auguste-Dominique Ingres, *The Apotheosis of Homer*, ca. 1827.  
Pen and black ink on paper.



Figure 71. Jean-Auguste-Dominique Ingres, *Napoleon I on his Royal Throne*, 1806. Oil on canvas.



Figure 72. Jean-Auguste-Dominique Ingres, *Jupiter and Thetis*, 1811.  
Oil on canvas.



Figure 73. Baron Antoine-Jean Gros, *Charles X*, 1827. Oil on canvas.



Figure 74. François Picot, *Study and Genius Unveil Ancient Egypt to Greece*, 1827. Oil on canvas.



Figure 75. Baron Antoine-Jean Gros, *The Spirit of France Encourages the Arts and Protects Humanity*, 1833. Oil on canvas.



Figure 76. François-Joseph Heim, *The Renaissance of the Arts in France*, 1833.  
Oil on canvas.

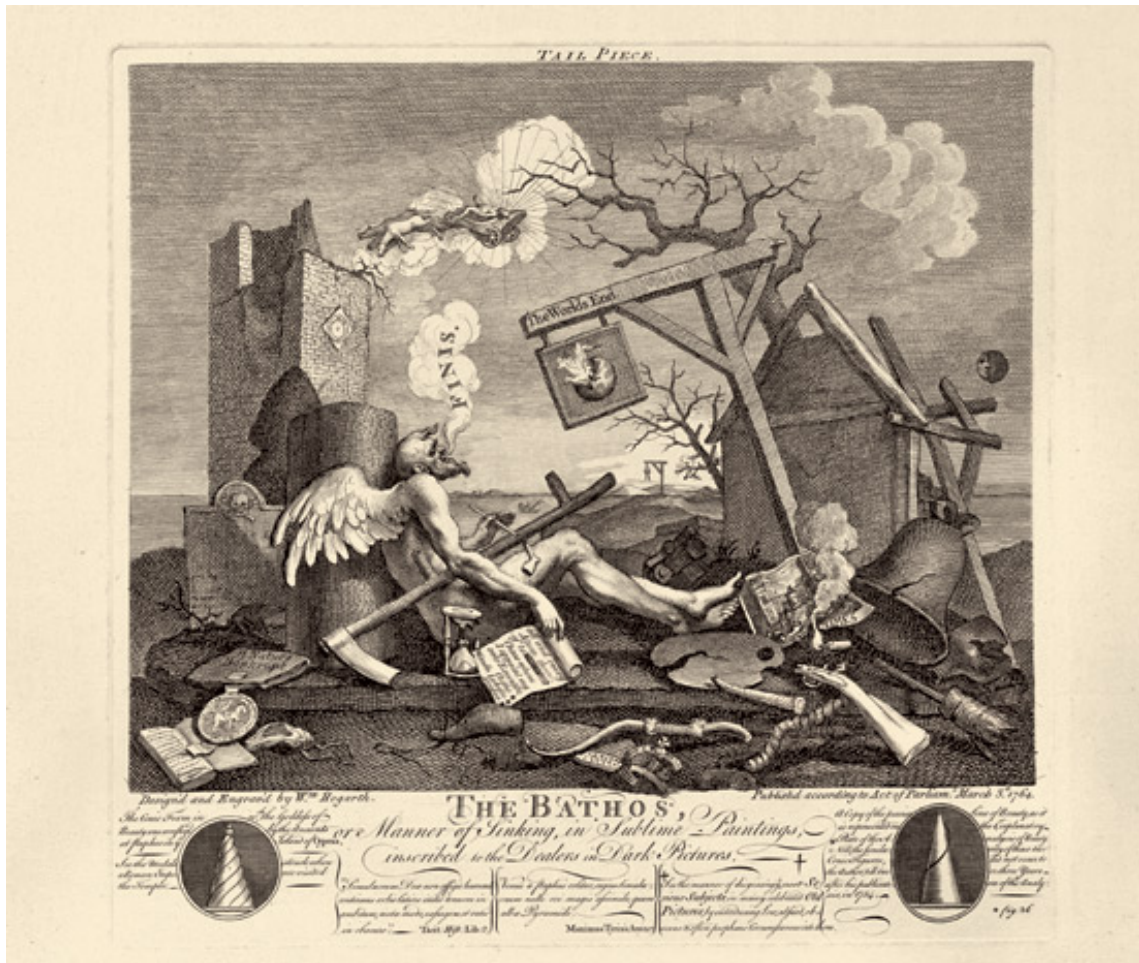


Figure 77. William Hogarth, *The Bathos, or Manner of Sinking in Sublime Paintings Inscribed to the Dealers in Dark Pictures*, 1764. Engraving.

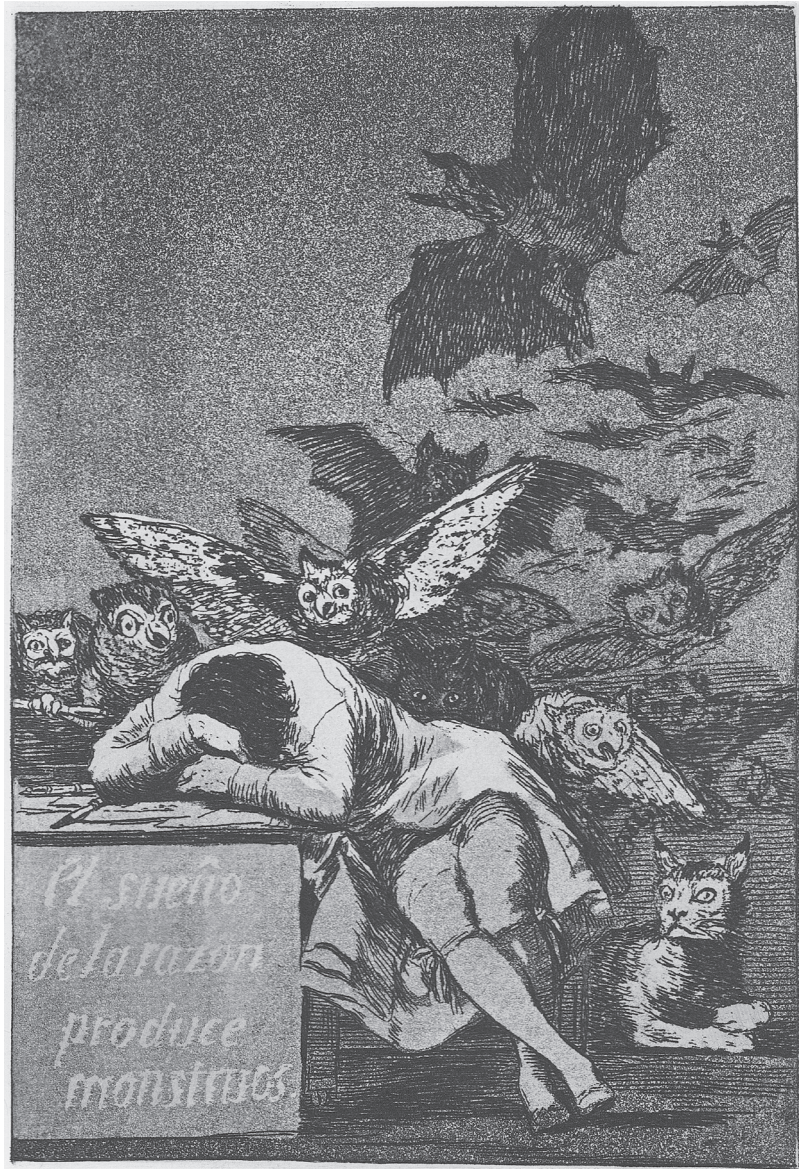


Figure 78. Francisco de Goya, *The Sleep of Reason Produces Monsters*, 1797-99. Etching, aquatint, drypoint.



Figure 79. Anonymous, *The Romantic*, 1825. Lithograph.

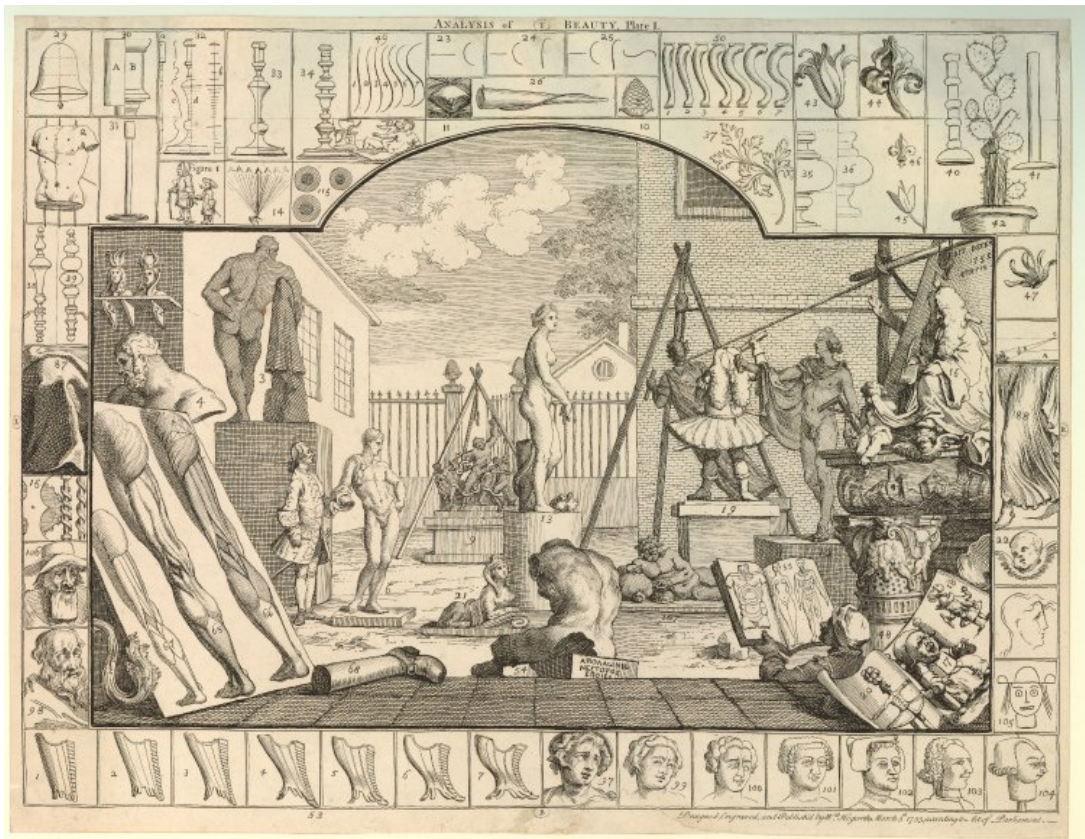


Figure 80. William Hogarth, *The Analysis of Beauty*, Plate I, 1753.  
Etching and engraving.



Figure 81. William Hogarth, *The Analysis of Beauty*, Plate II, 1753.  
Etching and engraving.



Figure 82. Albrecht Dürer, *Melencolia I*, 1514. Engraving.

THE  
ANALYSIS  
OF  
BEAUTY.

Written with a view of fixing the fluctuating IDEAS of  
TASTE.

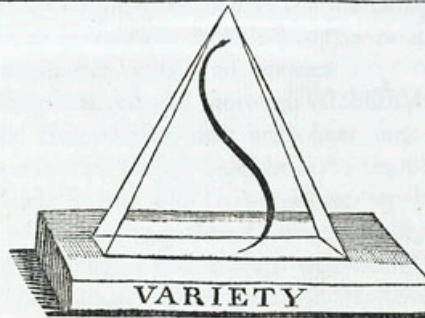
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BY WILLIAM HOGARTH.

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*So vary'd be, and of his tortuous train  
Curl'd many a wanton wreath, in sight of Eve,  
To lure her eye.----- Milton.*

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L O N D O N :

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Figure 83. William Hogarth, Title page of *Analysis of Beauty*, 1753.  
Engraving.



Figure 84. William Hogarth, *Gulielmus Hogarth*, 1749. Engraving.



Figure 85. William Hogarth, *Columbus Breaking the Egg*, 1752. Engraving.