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PRIMITIVISM AND THE POLITICS OF IDENTITY:  
THE ART OF ANNE-LOUIS GIRODET-TRIOSON

By

GAYLE RODDA KURTZ

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  
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## Abstract

PRIMITIVISM AND THE POLITICS OF IDENTITY:  
THE ART OF ANNE-LOUIS GIRODET-TRIOSON

By

Gayle Rodda Kurtz

Adviser: Professor Diane Kelder

The term primitivism has traditionally been associated with European art from the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. However, art historical texts recognize that interest in other cultures considered primitive derived from ideas disseminated in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. In this dissertation, I look closely at these notions, particularly in the writings of Jean-Jacques Rousseau. During the French Revolution, Rousseau's political and social theories were used as models for the new republic and its citizens. Girodet started his artistic career during this crucial period. Studied within its historical and theoretical context, Girodet's work reveals many aspects of the multiple facets of primitivism. Rousseau made extensive reference to the human body as a metaphor for his concepts. The dissertation focuses on Girodet's depiction of the body and the ways in which desire is figured as a means to correlate

these two bodies of work. The central thesis of this dissertation is that the obsession with primitivism is more enlightening about modern Western culture than about any so-called "primitive peoples." I argue that primitivism is a term that describes a particular mindset of the modern subject and is integral to the social theory of individualism.

Girodet's painting Hippocrates Refusing the Gifts of Artaxerxes of 1792 is described in Chapter One as presenting an archetype of the new republican citizen--virtuous and without desire--namely, the Rousseauist paradigm of primitive man. The Scene from a Deluge of 1806 is considered for its depiction of a family in light of revolutionary doctrine. Ossian Receiving the Shades of the French Heroes of 1802 and its relationship to the fabrication of nationalism based on myths of origin are studied in Chapter Two. In Chapter Three I examine Girodet's oeuvre of non-Western subjects, including Jean-Baptiste Belley of 1797, Entombment of Atala of 1808, and The Revolt of Cairo of 1810, in contrast to his portraits of the French bourgeoisie. The similarities between the Sleep of Endymion of 1791 and Pygmalion and Galatea of 1819 are explored in Chapter Four as exemplars of the notion of a golden age.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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Finally, the debt I owe my family is without measure. My initial inspiration came from my parents: my mother, Laurena Scott Rodda, first introduced me to the wondrous world of art; and my father, Richard Holliway Rodda, instilled in me the firm belief that politics matter. The involvement of my daughters, Kathryn Sarah and Susannah Lauren Kurtz, has been all encompassing from the reading of my text to the cooking of meals. But, most important of all, they never doubted that I could realize this work.

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## INTRODUCTION

One cannot reflect on morals without delighting in the recollection of the simplicity of the earliest times. It is a lovely shore, adorned by the hands of nature alone, toward which one incessantly turns one's eyes and from which one regretfully feels oneself moving away.<sup>1</sup>

--Jean-Jacques Rousseau, 1750

As the archaeology of our thought easily shows, man is an invention of recent date. And one perhaps nearing its end.<sup>2</sup>

--Michel Foucault, 1966

To complete the illusion of that lovely shore in the bosom of nature, Jean-Jacques Rousseau (1712-1778) invented primitive man. Writing his first discourse during the early stages of the industrial revolution and in the midst of the Enlightenment, Rousseau lamented the loss of simple life and the purity of nature. As part of his nostalgia for the past, he mused about what early man might have been like. His most important writings thereafter are infused with his reflections about primitive life and his

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<sup>1</sup> Jean-Jacques Rousseau, Discourse on the Sciences and Arts (First Discourse) in The First and Second Discourses, trans. Roger D. and Judith R. Masters (New York: St. Martins' Press, 1964), 53-54.

<sup>2</sup> Michel Foucault, The Order of Things: An Archaeology of the Human Sciences (New York: Vintage Books, 1973), 387.

conviction of its superiority. He unfolded a story of man's first languages, his daily habits, and his environment--the state of nature, a nature without conflict. Rousseau's manifold influence on modern political and philosophical theories is relevant to this day especially in light of the scholarship devoted to his work since the late 1960s. His ideas about primitives and primitivism have had their effect on modern art and its history as well.

Art historical texts recognize that concepts of primitivism derive from ideas generated in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries; however, little art of this period has been studied within a framework of primitivism as a theoretical object.<sup>3</sup> Scholarship on art of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries acknowledges primitivism primarily for its stylistic appeal rather than for its conceptual relation to images, e.g., the line drawings of John Flaxman and the concerns of the Barbus.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> Frances S. Connelly in The Sleep of Reason: Primitivism in Modern European Art and Aesthetics, 1725-1907 (University Park: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 1995) analyzed primitivism in this period from an aesthetic, stylistic point of view similar to the materialistic interpretations of primitivism in modern art and its adherence to non-Western objects.

<sup>4</sup> On John Flaxman, see Robert Rosenblum, Transformations in Late Eighteenth Century Art (Princeton University Press, 1967): 156-161. On the Barbus, see George Levitine, The Dawn of

This dissertation looks at the art of Anne-Louis Girodet-Trioson (1767-1824) in the theoretical context of primitivism to examine this fertile discourse and its multiple facets: the fabrication of identity, myths of national origins, constructed contrasts between Europeans and other peoples, and the belief in a past golden age. While the art of Girodet is not considered modern in the traditional sense, it was produced during a transitional phase that established certain principles of modern art-- artistic originality and the search for origins in nature.

Girodet was born into the ordered world of the ancien régime. His career started during the period of Revolution when he won the Prix de Rome in 1789. His mature work was produced during the Napoleonic regime and the Restoration. Thus, he began his career when the security of official royal patronage under the guidance of Director-General of Buildings comte d'Angiviller, who was actively committed to support art influenced by the enlightened philosophes, was overturned. Subsequently, his career oscillated between governmental commissions for Napoleonic propagandistic paintings, portraits for private patrons, illustrations for literary publications, and noncommissioned personal work.

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Bohemianism: The 'Barbu' Rebellion and Primitivism in Neoclassical France (University Park: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 1978).

The purpose of this dissertation is to consider notions of primitivism at the time of the French Revolution, an event of great importance for Girodet and crucial in the formation of modern subjectivity. The discourse of primitivism was central to the conceptualization of representation following the disintegration of governmental authority and official institutions and the collapse of social order after the Revolution. Along with the demise of absolute monarchical government, the authority of the Catholic Church was undermined and fundamental religious beliefs went no longer unquestioned. Girodet's oeuvre reflects all aspects of the concept of primitivism and it is my intention to demonstrate that they are an integral part of his response to the unstable conditions after the Revolution. He has been described as proto-romantic by most major texts. While not contradicting this portrayal, I hope to address the theoretical and psychological implications of romanticism's affinity to primitivism as it evolved in the early nineteenth century. The concept of primitivism--in some sense a secular and historical interpretation of previously held biblical beliefs about the origin of man and the evolution of the human condition--became of primary

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importance in the new secular public space. At the same time, it was in many ways a reemergence and reconfiguration of ideas long-held in European thought.

Most art historical texts concerning primitivism are centered on work of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The art of Paul Gauguin (1848-1903), for instance, with its inclusion of subjects and art motifs from non-Western cultures, became paradigmatic of the modern primitive style. Primitivism as conceived by European artists at this time was defined by The Museum of Modern Art's exhibition "Primitivism" in Twentieth Century Art of 1984 as the admiration expressed for the imagined, virtuous purity of simpler, childlike, and less developed societies.<sup>5</sup> This is a restatement of the definition of primitivism originally put forth by Robert Goldwater in 1938 in one of the first major studies of primitivism in art history, Primitivism in Modern Art.<sup>6</sup>

The word primitivism, while referring to specific stylistic intentions of modern artists, was also superimposed onto people and works of art of non-Western

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<sup>5</sup> Kirk Varnedoe, "Gauguin," in "Primitivism" in Twentieth Century Art, vol. 1, ed. William Rubin (New York: The Museum of Modern Art, 1984): 179-209.

<sup>6</sup> Robert Goldwater, Primitivism in Modern Art (Cambridge: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1966). Originally published in 1938.

origin by Goldwater. It subsequently became a label to be mapped spatially and temporally in the history of art onto work produced primarily in Africa, Oceania, and the Americas. After the exhibition at The Museum of Modern Art, Thomas McEvelley debated the hierarchical use of the term primitivism and the nature of that enterprise with William Rubin and Kirk Varnedoe.<sup>7</sup> Rosalind Krauss opposed the historical use of the term by Varnedoe with a theoretical conception of primitivism that cannot be mapped and contained into a neat category but rather opens onto the collapse of difference, the dispersion of boundaries.<sup>8</sup>

There have been many other critical views of primitivism since the 1980s. Essays by Abigail Solomon-Godeau, Griselda Pollock, and Fred Orton criticized the practices of nineteenth artists who trafficked in the culture of other peoples and their artifacts, replicating the relationship between the colonizer and the colonized. Linda Nochlin critically explored similar practices by artists from the early nineteenth century under the heading

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<sup>7</sup> Thomas McEvelley, William Rubin and Kirk Varnedoe, "Doctor Lawyer Indian Chief: 'Primitivism' in Twentieth Century Art," in Discourses: Conversations in Postmodern Art and Culture, ed. Russell Ferguson, William Olander, Marcia Tucker and Karen Fiss, (New York: The New Museum of Contemporary Art, 1990), 339-405, reprinted from Artforum, November 1984, February and May 1985.

of Orientalism.<sup>9</sup> Hal Foster articulated a different, more ambivalent view of the dichotomy between the civilized male artist and the "primitive" other with whom he identifies in psychoanalytic terms. From this point of view the relationship is not one of admiration but of anxiety based on desire for the power of sexual freedom and fear of submission to the dark, feminine, and licentious. Thus, this discourse also opens up issues of gender and race.<sup>10</sup>

The objective of this dissertation is to identify primitivism after the French Revolution as a collection of potent ideas with great emotional and psychological appeal—as a palliative to the revolutionary chaos. By shifting the focus of the discourse on primitivism to a European framework, I intend to demonstrate that primitivism reveals much about modern Western culture and nothing about so-called "primitive" peoples. My thesis is that primitivism is a term that describes a particular mindset of the modern

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<sup>8</sup> Rosalind E. Krauss, "Preying on 'Primitivism,'" in Art and Text 17 (April 1985).

<sup>9</sup> Abigail Solomon-Godeau's essay "Going Native" in Art in American (July 1989): 119-128, 161. Griselda Pollock and Fred Orton, "Les Données Bretonnantes: La Prairie de Représentation," in Art History 3(1980): 314-344, and Pollock's Avant-Garde Gambits 1888-1893: Gender and the Color of Art History (New York: Thames and Hudson, 1992). Linda Nochlin, "The Imaginary Orient," in The Politics of Vision: Essays on Nineteenth-Century Art and Society (New York: Harper & Row, Publishers, 1989), 33-59, originally published in 1982.

subject that is integral to the social theory of individualism.

The potent ideas of primitivism are manifest in the work of Girodet. From the beginning of his journey to Rome to continue his artistic education and realize the promise of his prize, he encountered hazards along the way due to the destabilizing effects of the Revolution. His years in Rome were no different--revolutionary events in Paris affected the administration of the French Academy and uncertainty often interrupted Girodet's ability to work. By January 1793 he and his fellow pensionnaires had to flee the Academy when it was attacked by members of the Italian populace who objected to the official display of the republican emblem in defiance of a papal order.<sup>11</sup> Girodet produced two major paintings during these turbulent years in Rome--The Sleep of Endymion of 1791 and Hippocrates

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<sup>10</sup> Hal Foster, "'Primitive' Scenes," Critical Inquiry (Autumn 1993): 69-102.

<sup>11</sup> See Thomas Crow, Emulation: Making Artists for Revolutionary France (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1995), 149-155, for a detailed account of the attack on the Academy and the assassination of Nicolas-Jean Hugou de Bassville, sent to Naples from Paris as secretary to the French legation. Bassville assumed an active role in promoting the revolutionary cause in Rome and made the French Academy his headquarters and encouraged revolutionary zeal among the students. Girodet drafted a letter, pledging loyalty to the country, from the students to the National Convention. Also in Stephanie Nevison Brown, "Girodet: A Contradictory Career" (Ph.D. diss., Courtauld Institute of Art, University of London 1980), 118-121.

Refusing the Gifts of Artaxerxes of 1792. The subjects of both illustrate certain aspects of primitivism. The dissertation will show that these ideas resonate in the work of his subsequent years as well.

Scholars have characterized Girodet's mature career from the time of his return to Paris, especially after the acclaim accorded his paintings from Rome, as inconsistent and unfulfilled. Even at Girodet's funeral on December 14, 1824, these were the prevailing sentiments about his career and the cause of an immense outpouring of regret over his death.<sup>12</sup> A comprehensive examination of this portrayal of his career has been lacking in the major works on Girodet. George Levitine's groundbreaking iconographical study of 1952 is invaluable for its identification and interpretation of erudite sources and allusions in the work. Stephanie Nevison Brown's complete monograph of 1980 provided essential historical information in a chronological framework. The recent study of Girodet undertaken by Thomas Crow in 1995 integrated his work into the social and historical context of the artistic community to which he belonged and considered his work in relationship to that of his mentor Jacques-Louis David, his

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peers, and rivals.<sup>13</sup> I propose that by framing Girodet's oeuvre in the discourse of primitivism, far from being inconsistent, there is coherence in its ties to the many threads of primitivism. I suggest that this aspect of his work is compelling and, more than any historical relationship to the Napoleonic wars, etc., assures its importance on the cusp of romanticism and the beginning formulation of modernist themes.

The texts of Rousseau will be referred to extensively in the dissertation alongside a close reading of Girodet's work. As a philosopher, Rousseau embodied the aspirations, violence, and contradictions acted out in the Revolution of 1789. The effect of Rousseau's texts on the Revolutionary rhetoric is incalculable, as is evidenced by the fact that two days before his arrest and death, Robespierre journeyed to Rousseau's old home at l'Ermitage to meditate in silence for hours.<sup>14</sup> More than any other writer, Rousseau

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<sup>12</sup> George Levitine, "Girodet-Trioson: An Iconographical Study," Ph.D. diss., Harvard University, 1952 (New York: Garland Publishing, Inc., 1978), 398-406.

<sup>13</sup> In his Introduction to Emulation, Crow described the historical period as one of "missing fathers" in the larger context of the revolution and the personal lives of the artists Jean-Germain Drouais and Girodet, 1.

<sup>14</sup> Linda Orr, Headless History: Nineteenth-Century French Historiography of the Revolution (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1990), 162-163. According to Orr, language of the mid-nineteenth century was also steeped in Rousseau and the Jacobins, an example is the ghost of Rousseau in Baudelaire's solitary flaneur, 30.

formulated the discourse of revolution in France. His was also the first voice of romanticism against the Enlightenment and his texts were the major reference for linguistic and theoretical understandings of primitivism at the end of the eighteenth century.<sup>15</sup> Rousseau's work elucidates a theory of subjectivity intricately engaged with his fictionalized notions of primitivism. It is my contention that both aspects of Rousseau's texts were part of the discursive matrix in which Girodet's work should be located.<sup>16</sup>

Rousseau's name has become synonymous with notions of primitivism and romanticism and is often invoked to convey certain stereotypical meanings in art historical texts. For instance, "the state of nature" and "the cult of virtue" are key connotations of the word "Rousseauian." Like all clichés, it is overused and hardly adequate. A keener, more nuanced, and complex definition of Rousseauian

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<sup>15</sup> Robert J. Morrissey, "Introduction: Jean Starobinski and Otherness," in Jean Starobinski's Jean-Jacques Rousseau: Transparency and Obstruction, trans. Arthur Goldhammer (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1988, originally published 1971), xiv.

<sup>16</sup> See Neil Flax, "Fiction Wars of Art," Representations 7 (Summer 1984), 2. Flax argued that a work of art must be understood within the context of a "prior structure of a field of understanding. . . . the specific dependence of pictures on an external, disparate language of interpretation should serve as

primitivism is needed for art historical purposes. While scholarship on Rousseau's writings has been ongoing, the critical analysis of Jean Starobinski of 1971 was a significant contribution and has been followed by other important scholarly works. Starobinski's approach to Rousseau has been the most influential to my understanding of relevant notions of primitivism. However, other critical readings will be referenced in the dissertation. Starobinski found that Rousseau, in seeking a state of tranquility that would free him from emotional disturbance and anxiety, was actually looking for a means to efface difference, which was the underlying problem, or anything opposed to himself. He articulated two interdependent modes with which to overcome difference: unity and autonomy. Unity, whether collective or religiously transcendent, overcomes difference just as autonomy achieves freedom from difference.<sup>17</sup> In the work of Girodet, various manifestations of these tropes are interwoven into the surface strategies of his narrative painting. Rousseau's most frequently used form to express his ideas about unity and autonomy was the human body. This dissertation focuses on Girodet's depiction of the body

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the conceptual starting points for the critical study of the discourse on art."

and, in particular, the ways in which desire is figured as a means to correlate the paintings of Girodet and the texts of Rousseau, two seemingly disparate bodies of work.

Chapter One of the dissertation presents biographical information about Girodet primarily from his own letters, which were written during his years in Italy between 1790 and 1795, and examines its bearing on his painting Hippocrates Refusing the Gifts of Artaxerxes of 1792. Both for its style and subject matter, this painting may be seen as a conservative move by Girodet to demonstrate his mastery of the techniques of the Davidian school. Besides stylistic considerations, I argue that by modeling Hippocrates after his adoptive father, Doctor Benoit-François Trioson, Girodet offered an archetype for the new republican citizen--virtuous and without desires--namely, the Rousseauist paradigm of primitive man. By constructing the relationship between Hippocrates and the Persians as bipolar, Girodet updated the ancient dichotomy of the civilized Greeks versus the barbarians to illustrate the revolutionary definition of virtue. The new citizen was conceived as autonomous, self-reliant, and Stoic. The heroic, stern, self-denying Hippocrates is also devoid of compassion, which was relegated to the feminine sphere

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<sup>17</sup> Morrissey, xxiii.

after the Revolution, a deviation from Rousseau's model of the primitive.<sup>18</sup> Chapter One concludes with a discussion of Girodet's Scene from a Deluge of 1806, which won the Prix décennaux of 1810 as a result of political intrigue between the Napoleonic regime and the Beaux-Arts de l'Institut de France and its promotion in the press by Girodet's friends, who were royalist sympathizers.<sup>19</sup> This painting is considered for its depiction of a family. The family was, in terms of revolutionary doctrine, the foundation of the new republic yet Girodet painted a family in grave circumstances that suggest underlying divisions and anxieties. The appeal of the rigid portrayal of Hippocrates and the overly dramatic plight of a family point to a troubled audience--on the one hand, in need of assurance and, on the other, anxious for the distraction of a sublime spectacle.

Girodet's best known painting, Ossian Receiving the Shades of the French Heroes of 1802, is the subject of Chapter Two. George Levitine's iconographical study of

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<sup>18</sup> See Dorinda Outram, The Body and The French Revolution: Sex, Class and Political Culture (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1989), 68-89.

<sup>19</sup> See Darcy Grimaldo Grigsby, "Classicism, Nationalism and History: The 'Prix Décennaux' of 1810 and the Politics of Art under Post-Revolutionary Empire" (Ph.D. diss., The University of Michigan, 1995).

this painting remains the classic interpretation of its obscure political references to peace treaties and Napoleonic ambitions. More important than particular events, I argue in this chapter, is Ossian's relationship to nationalism. In the early nineteenth century, nationalism was integral to the formation of the new republic and subsequently Napoleon's Empire. As an appeal to French citizens for their allegiance and service (particularly military), nationalism superseded absolute monarchy. Myths of origin became part of the apparatus to fabricate unified national cultural identities. The French interest in James Macpherson's The Poems of Ossian was related to their notions of origin, a complex issue in France. The aristocracy identified with their Teutonic neighbors while the bourgeoisie accepted Celtic origins, in addition to their philosophical ties to the Roman Gauls. In Ossian Macpherson presented a confluence of Northern origins. While early French history proved too complicated to designate a single original race, characteristics of the early Germanic conquerors and aspects of the Celts were romanticized and embraced as part of the French mythology of origins. Girodet's painting of Ossian sheds light on the misguided romantic and heroic appeal of these mythologies, which have been neglected in previous readings

of the painting. As a history painting, Ossian also illustrates the challenge to the artist to serve the purposes of Napoleon and the ephemeral nature of that enterprise.

Girodet painted many portraits of non-Westerners and a few history paintings of non-Western subjects. Chapter Three juxtaposes Girodet's portraits of important republican citizens, members of the bourgeoisie, with non-Western subjects such as his Portrait of Jean-Baptiste Belley of 1797 to delineate pointed differences. His paintings Entombment of Atala of 1808 and The Revolt of Cairo of 1810 are considered in terms of prevailing sentiments toward the noble savages of the New World and the Arabs of the Near East and in terms of sexual desire and how it is displaced onto both in different ways. The texts of Diderot, Montesquieu, and Chateaubriand are referred to extensively for the light they shed on prevailing attitudes toward non-Western peoples--flexible in the mid-eighteenth century but rigid and intolerant by the early nineteenth century.

The concluding Chapter explores similarities between Girodet's first important painting, The Sleep of Endymion of 1791, his last Pygmalion and Galatea of 1819, and his illustrations for classical poetry, especially Loves of the

Gods, lithographed by his students and published in 1826.

I argue that, beyond their stylistic similarities, there is a consistency in the thematic nature of these works that has been overlooked. His interest in the classics and his underlying emphasis on ideal unity and the concomitant cessation of desire is discussed in the context of renewed interest in a golden age of the past transformed into modern utopias for the future. The golden age and modern utopias share the desire for impossible unified perfection that denies the instability and conflicts that are part of living in the world. By the end of the nineteenth century, this aspect had been disassociated from the discourse of primitivism as the term was displaced onto other peoples and their artifacts outside Western culture. I argue that the formation of modern subjectivity internalized concepts of the golden age, or state of nature--a trope fully materialized by Girodet's incessant repetition of the themes from The Sleep of Endymion and Pygmalion and Galatea in the early nineteenth century. With this reading of the paintings and their various transformations in his oeuvre, one may make a claim for their correspondence to Matisse's The Joy of Life--a modern iconic image of idyllic unity--and affirm Girodet's role in the developing stages of modernism.

## CHAPTER ONE

## IN THE ABSENCE OF THE FATHER

. . . the social order is a sacred right that serves as a basis for all the others. However, this right does not come from nature; it is therefore based on conventions.<sup>1</sup>

--Jean-Jacques Rousseau, 1762

Anne-Louis Girodet won the Prix de Rome in 1789, the year in which the French Revolution began with the fall of the Bastille. Remarkable drawings (figs. 1, 2) by Jacques-Louis David (1748-1825) and Girodet suggest the artists witnessed this historic event.<sup>2</sup> Both drew the head of the Marquis Delaunay, governor of the Bastille who was murdered and decapitated during the siege of the Bastille on July 14. His head, impaled on a pitchfork, was paraded in the streets.<sup>3</sup> David's page includes the head of Major de Losme Salbrai, murdered the very day he defended the governor.

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<sup>1</sup> Jean-Jacques Rousseau, On The Social Contract in On The Social Contract, with Geneva Manuscript and Political Economy, ed. Roger D. Masters, trans. Judith R. Masters (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1978), 47. On the Social Contract was originally published in 1762 and, along with Emile published the same year, was condemned in Paris. Rousseau fled to Switzerland to avoid arrest.

<sup>2</sup> Brown, 43-44.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid., 45.

While David's drawings were sketched during the events and then gone over with ink afterward, Girodet's drawings appear to have been carefully redrawn from his sketches and arranged schematically as if to contain, organize, and make sense out of the violence inherent in the images. The victims, represented on Girodet's page by four severed heads and a heart, met their fates on different days.<sup>4</sup> Girodet's arrangement of heads and heart begins in the upper left corner with the complete head in profile of the Marquis Delaunay. The position of Delaunay's eyes and mouth express gaping horror. The next two heads are the back view and profile of Foulon, the finance minister accused of hoarding grain. He was reviled for his suggestion that the people could eat hay. Below these heads are the fragmented head, face sliced off by a bayonet, and heart of Berthier, son-in-law of Foulon and the Intendant of Paris.<sup>5</sup> Foulon and Berthier were executed on July 22 and 23 respectively.<sup>6</sup>

Girodet's drawings are carefully organized by the alignment of the fork and pikes. The composition is centered by the backview of Foulon's bald head. This head and its pike stabilize the page of parts. The fork on the right side with the head of Delaunay and the pike on the left with the profile view of Foulon lean in toward the

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<sup>4</sup> Ibid., 46.

<sup>5</sup> Thomas Crow, Emulation, 119.

<sup>6</sup> Brown, 45-46.

center to encompass the fragments below of the half-head and heart. Reading across the page, the viewer is presented first with the profile of Delaunay, drawn with hatching lines along the neck, cheek, and eye socket to render a fully three-dimensional face whose look is suspended in the act of reacting to his own dismemberment. The eye of Delaunay stares off the page as if the scene of cruelty were taking place beyond the edge of paper. The next image of Foulon's head is also drawn with the hatching lines of three-dimensionality. This central image presents the blank, empty space of Foulon's bald head. It has strange whisker-like protrusions that appear below the ears from the opposite or face-side of the head. The next image, the profile of Foulon, reveals the protrusions as hay, the food of animals, stuffed in his mouth. This was an attempt on the part of the people responsible for his death to reverse the order he had prescribed for them; he is now the primitive animal. The profiled eye is mercifully closed but, with careful ingenuity and in an almost cartoonish fashion, Girodet has turned the profile above the nose slightly forward to reveal the eye behind, open as if fully aware of the indignity performed on his being.

The last two images of body parts are shown on pointed pikes that lean in the same diagonal as Foulon's profile toward the pitchforked head of Delaunay and reinforce the starting point--the sight of horror. Berthier's fragmented head--its face, his public mask, brutally sliced off by

bayonets, is drawn with flame-like tongues of hanging flesh as if it had been torn, ripped from the body--is turned in the direction of Foulon's profile. Within this placement, Foulon's eye views the grotesque mutilation of his son-in-law Berthier in addition to his own. The last body part, the heart of Berthier, reduces the horror of heads to a piece of flesh--the muscle of heart with its main arteries and veins now dangling useless, severed from their connections to the body as a whole. Carefully inscribed above each image is the name and official title of each man, a last vestige of dignity, order, and identification.

With this depiction of slaughtered human heads and heart from the recognizable to the faceless, to the mutilated, to the piece of meat, Girodet has drawn a sign for one of the Revolution's effects. The trauma of disintegration--here seen as acts of violence to particular human bodies and the erasure of their identities, specifically their official masks--destablized the public body and its sense of wholeness. The public body's subsequent reconstitution would have to be within a new political sphere, a body without its traditional head, the monarchy.<sup>7</sup> Thus the effect of disintegration remained, a

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<sup>7</sup> Lynn Hunt, The Family Romance of the French Revolution (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992), 5. Hunt described the political model of France during the monarchy as one based on the family analogous to the king and his subjects and the subsequent problems after the Revolution for the leaders in their attempt to devise a new model based on fraternity.

residual of revolutionary trauma. The dissolution was twofold and required the creation of a new public body constituted by a reconfigured citizen for the republic. According to Lynn Hunt, "The attack on absolutism brought in its turbulent wake a necessary reevaluation of the shape of the individual self."<sup>8</sup> As witness to the troubling events of the Revolution at the moment when his career as a successful artist within the ancien régime was practically assured, Girodet was confronted with a future no longer certain. As a result of his own personal trauma, his subsequent uneven career attests to the difficulty of participating in this period of unrest and necessary renewal. Nevertheless, his work, if considered within the context of this revolutionary tumult and the subsequent efforts to reevaluate the shape of the new citizen of the republic, is consistent with prevailing political and philosophical ideas of the time.

Rousseau, in the Social Contract, used the human body as an analogy for the people united into a political state, each forming one part of the whole. Rousseau's extended use of the body as metaphor for the state carries with it anxiety--a body in constant threat of dismemberment--and is

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<sup>8</sup> Ibid.

strangely prophetic of the collective trauma of the Revolution.<sup>9</sup>

As soon as this multitude is thus united in a body, one cannot harm one of the members without attacking the body, and it is even less possible to harm the body without the members feeling the effects.<sup>10</sup>

In "Discourse on Political Economy" a preliminary essay for the Social Contract, written for the fifth volume of Diderot's Encyclopédie published in 1755, Rousseau described in detail this political body as a human body:

The body politic, taken individually, can be considered to be like a body that is organized, living, and similar to that of a man. The sovereign power represents the head; the laws and customs are the brain, source of the nerves and seat of the understanding, will, and senses, of which the judges and magistrates are the organs; commerce, industry, and agriculture are the mouth and stomach that prepare the common subsistence; public finances are the blood that a wise economy, performing the functions of the heart, sends out to distribute nourishment and life throughout the body; the citizens are the body and members that make the machine move, live, and work, and that cannot be harmed in any part without promptly sending a painful response to the brain if the animal is in a state of health.<sup>11</sup>

When this "collective being" of individuals is headed by a monarch, the form of government is that of an individual

<sup>9</sup> See Carol A. Mossman, Politics and Narratives of Birth: Gynocolonization from Rousseau to Zola (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 164-167.

<sup>10</sup> Rousseau, On the Social Contract, 55.

<sup>11</sup> Jean-Jacques Rousseau, Discourse on Political Economy, in On the Social Contract with Geneva Manuscript and Political Economy, ed. Roger D. Masters, trans. Judith R. Masters (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1978), 211-212.

representing the "collective being."<sup>12</sup> In either case, Rousseau envisioned the people not as separate individuals but as parts of one whole body. For the "collective being" to function equitably, the interests of each must be in agreement so that the whole forms a homogeneous body.<sup>13</sup> In Rousseau's terms, the sovereignty of this body rules by general will of the whole and is not divisible. If the sovereignty is divided in purpose, Rousseau imagined a body constructed haphazardly like a "fantastic being":

They turn the sovereign into a fantastic being formed of bits and pieces. It is as though they constructed a man out of several bodies, one of which would have eyes, another arms, another feet, and nothing more.<sup>14</sup>

These dismembered body parts do not constitute unity or wholeness for Rousseau. As the fragments of a mosaic remain separate entities within the compositional frame, the diversity of wills within a body resists a seamless unification of that body. The diversity of wills, or particular wills, undermines the sacred unity he imagined, a unity built on the agreement of people with the same self-interests.

This civil unity is only achieved after man has passed from the primitive state or the state of nature to the civil state, which is analogous in Rousseau's writings to the

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<sup>12</sup> Rousseau, On the Social Contract, 87.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid, 63.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid, 60.

passage of an infant from childhood to adulthood. For Rousseau man must relinquish his natural liberties--his desire for everything that tempts him--for the benefits of civil liberty. Civil liberty prescribes the mastery of physical appetites in order for man to obtain the rightful ownership of what he possesses through civil law.<sup>15</sup> The plenitude of nature and physical pleasure are sacrificed for material possessions. The alienation of one's liberty that is necessary to enter the social contract, to be part of the whole, is at the heart of the contract. At the same time Rousseau claimed that this alienation was inconceivable; herein lies the "the mystery of the Social Contract" and the paradox in his writing.<sup>16</sup> The distinction for Rousseau was in the nature of the "free total alienation" a citizen gives to the state in order to obtain his release from the "forced total alienation" he experienced living with the vicissitudes of disunity.<sup>17</sup> The alternative of living with the illusion of being free and unconnected to the interests of others allows and fosters destabilization that leads to war and forced alienation. The conditions prescribed by Rousseau require that man freely alienate himself from his natural state, relinquish his physical desires, substitute

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<sup>15</sup> Ibid, 55-56.

<sup>16</sup> Louis Althusser, "The Social Contract (The Discrepancies)," in Jean-Jacques Rousseau, ed. Harold Bloom (New York: Chelsea House Publishers, 1988), 92.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid., 94.

his self-interests for the common interests of the state in order to enter into another form of total alienation. Only then can the state present itself as one homogeneous body.

Rousseau argued that the state must confine its jurisdiction to agreements and laws made by the citizens directly within the simple whole of the body and not by a system of mediation through representation. A system of representation, Rousseau concluded, alienates the citizens and leads to fragmentation. The general will must be expressed by the body as a whole. If it is represented, it becomes something other than itself.<sup>18</sup> The essence of Rousseau's dream that the sovereign and the people are the same rests on a discrepancy: his equating the general will with the particular interest of each individual as a mirror image. This discrepancy reveals the general will to be a myth and enables Rousseau to deny the existence of the interests of different social groups.<sup>19</sup> Educating citizens in a civil religion of moral and political ideology was Rousseau's solution in attempting to maintain the sovereignty of the general will against the contagion of difference within the community.<sup>20</sup>

This "sacralization of the idealized forms of political life" by Rousseau gave life to the hope of change possible

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<sup>18</sup> Rousseau, On the Social Contract, 100-102.

<sup>19</sup> Althusser, 107-112.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid., 115.

through the social and political spheres.<sup>21</sup> However, the only solution suggested by Rousseau was through human change without any recourse to God or chance.<sup>22</sup> By indicting society for the ebb and flow of difficulties in the human condition, Rousseau mobilized his audience. According to Jean Starobinski, he appealed to its dissatisfactions with an offer of salvation from the social order itself--"hence the hangover on the morning after the [French] Revolution for those who expected a totally new life; . . ."<sup>23</sup>

The French Revolution was perceived in terms opposite those of the ideal unified body outlined in the Social Contract. In 1790 Edmund Burke, the astute foreign observer, compared the political body that assembled during the Revolution to a carnival that inverted traditional order.<sup>24</sup> The unruly mob, the vulgar uneducated populace, had taken over and was so threatening to Burke that he warned against its spread as if it were a plague.<sup>25</sup> In France, the mob was not seen so much as a dangerous

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<sup>21</sup> Jean Starobinski, "The Accuser and the Accused," Jean-Jacques Rousseau, ed. Harold Bloom (New York: Chelsea House Publishers, 1988), 179-180.

<sup>22</sup> Althusser, 90.

<sup>23</sup> Starobinski, "The Accuser and the Accused," 180.

<sup>24</sup> Edmund Burke, Reflections on the Revolution in France, ed. with an Introduction by Thomas H. D. Mahoney (Indianapolis: The Bobbs-Merrill Company, Inc., 1955), 77-79.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, 101.

political force but as evidence of the moral and social corruption of Paris. In 1798 Sébastien Mercier, in Le Nouveau Paris, described the influence of the popular crowd as having had a degenerating effect on the city. Paris became associated by Mercier with the mob's invasion of the public sphere and this perception was held by European travellers as well. For instance, the sight of the guillotine with its intimations of imminent explosions of popular violence became a tourist spectacle in the 1790s.<sup>26</sup>

Loss of stability--a dramatic break with the past was felt in France as a double loss. The encroaching industrial revolution brought with it the shock of change similar to the effects of the political revolution. The aftermath of both revolutions has been written about by Linda Nochlin as having been experienced as a loss of wholeness. For Nochlin, the fragment replaced the whole and became a metaphor in art of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries for the pain of that loss.<sup>27</sup> Or one might say a model for the construction of the mosaic body that was so abhorrent to Rousseau. For Rousseau the mosaic body was like the assembled body parts used to create Frankenstein, a fantastic but monstrous being.

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<sup>26</sup> As quoted in Susan L. Siegfried, The Art of Louis-Léopold Boilly: Modern Life in Napoleonic France (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1995), 58.

<sup>27</sup> Linda Nochlin, The Body in Pieces: The Fragment as a Metaphor of Modernity (New York: Thames and Hudson, 1994), 7-8, 59.

The disrupting effects of the Revolution also destabilized identity in a previously structured class system. David's painting Intervention of the Sabine Women of 1799, with its evocation of antiquity, a style not associated with the Jacobin republic, was intended to address the Directory's objective of closure and reconciliation by depicting an imaginary resolution to conflict. In her discussion of this painting, Ewa Lajer-Burcharth points out that the painting's unusual mode of exhibition demonstrated the spectators's need to feel continuity with the past. A psyché mirror, a novelty of the Directory, was placed opposite the painting. Viewers, most likely members of the propertied bourgeoisie, could see the image of their entire body reflected in the mirror and superimposed on the image of David's painting. The spectators entered into an imaginary field of stability and became part of a historical event. "Their comportment could be seen, then, as a symptom of a crisis of the self, of a collective uncertainty about identity, brought about by the Revolution. This was a question of post-Terrorist loss of confidence in the image of the body, brought about by the spectacle of the radical, serial fragmentation of the body under the guillotine."<sup>28</sup>

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<sup>28</sup> Ewa Lajer-Burcharth, "David's Sabine Women: Body, Gender and Republican Culture under the Directory" Art History 14 (September 1991): 409.

Girodet's page of body parts, fragments of heads and heart--the traditional symbolic references to reason and passion now disconnected from that symbolic history and reduced to the stark materiality of pure flesh--signify the initial events that set into motion this complicated history of rupture, trauma, and loss centered on the image of the body. Concurrent with historical events of disorder and violence was the ideal of enacting the social contract in the form of an indivisible social unit desired by revolutionaries as a replacement for the illusion of unity once provided by the body of the king. This unattainable desire was inspired, in part, by the writings of Rousseau. Girodet's sketches of the bodily deformations produced by revolutionary violence attest to disturbing results of this idealistic belief. It is my contention that this myth of the unified social order did not die with the Revolution. The desire to belong to a totality, the social contract, would be displaced or transformed into other aspects of life in the nineteenth century and represented in multiple facets.

In 1774 at the age of seven Girodet was sent from his family home near Montargis, the château du Verger, to Paris to begin a classical education under the tutorial direction of M. Watrin. He was carefully supervised by a family friend, Doctor Benoit-François Trioson. His family intended that he become either an architect or an officer in the Army; by 1780 his studies were preparing him for

architectural training. In 1782 he became a pupil of the architect Étienne-Louis Boullée. However, Girodet was determined to pursue his interest in painting and it was Boullée who introduced him to David. In 1784 Girodet entered David's studio at the age of seventeen.<sup>29</sup>

After winning the Prix de Rome in 1789, Girodet started his journey to Rome in 1790 and experienced the first of many adventures related to the events of the Revolution. His biography of this period has engaged several writers and received ample documentation in the past twenty-five years.<sup>30</sup> His exploits originally were documented by himself in letters sent to his childhood guardian and later adoptive father, Doctor Trioson, and published after his death.<sup>31</sup> The letters to Trioson are those that cover the period from his journey to Rome in 1790 to his return in 1795. These are remarkable for their shifts between insecure frantic pleas for attention and finances from Trioson and impersonal if-dramatically-detailed descriptions of dangers he encountered. Clearly his absorption in the effects of the Revolution never ceased during this period when he was

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<sup>29</sup> Brown, "Girodet: A Contradictory Career," 17-19,

<sup>30</sup> See George Bernier, Anne-Louis Girodet, Prix de Rome 1789 (Paris: Jacques Damase, 1975); Stephanie Nevison Brown, "Girodet: A Contradictory Career"; and Thomas Crow, Emulation.

<sup>31</sup> Girodet-Trioson, Anne-Louis, Oeuvres posthumes de Girodet-Trioson, peintre d'histoire, suivies de sa correspondance, précédée d'une notice historique, vol. 2, ed. Pierre-Alexandre Coupin, (Paris, 1829), 357-460.

supposed to be studying the art of antiquity and perfecting his skills at the Academy in Rome. Some years later--after 1815--in a letter to a patron, he still felt a need to explain that his limited production of two paintings while he studied in Rome was due to circumstances of the Revolution.<sup>32</sup> His awareness of the historic nature of his experiences is indicated by the obsessive way he recorded them. In the letter describing his brush with death and dramatic escape from Rome he shifted from the French informal verb form to a literary one:

My friend, I do not doubt that until the moment when you will receive this letter, you will feel a great concern for my regard. In order to cease that concern I hurry to write to you. I am living and I am feeling well, after having seen death several times near. I arrived here absolutely stripped of everything: without linen, without clothes, without money. . . . Here, in a few words, is what happened. On the refusal of the pope to allow the arms of the republic placed on the house of the French consul, Basseville, its [the republic's] agent to the court of Rome, advised us all to leave for Naples; ten of my comrades left on the spot. Having more affairs to finish, I remained two more days; if I had departed, I would have run no risk; but at the same time, the Major of the Latouche Division arrived in Rome, charged by Mackau, Minister in Naples, to display the arms. I was asked to make those that would serve for the Academy, . . . I believed it my duty to remain to make them. . . . I was helped by three of my comrades. We were only the four of us in the Academy, and we still had brush in hand when the furious crowd charged it, and in an instant reduced to powder the windows, panes of glass, doors, as well as the statues from the stairs and apartments.

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<sup>32</sup> Ibid., 341.

They had only twenty steps to climb to assassinate us: we spared them by leaving before them.<sup>33</sup>

While traveling to Rome and during his stay of two and a half years, Girodet's appearance caused confusion about his identity. At the start of his trip as he sketched in the picturesque countryside near Lyon, he was thought to be a spy for the aristocracy and barely escaped with his life.<sup>34</sup> In Rome, during February 1791, he fired his wigmaker for lack of funds, abolished the powder and the pomade, and decided to wear his hair short, "like the antique. In this new outfit, I resemble, they say, an antique bust that is in the Capitole."<sup>35</sup> His constant

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<sup>33</sup> Ibid., 423-425. Lettre 52, written from Naples on January 19, 1793: "Mon ami, Je ne doute point que, jusqu'au moment où vous recevrez cette lettre, vous ne soyez dans une grande inquiétude à mon égard. C'est pour la faire cesser que je m'empresse de vous écrire. Je vis et je me porte bien, après avoir vu plusieurs fois la mort d'assez près. Je suis arrivé ici absolument dénué de tout: sans linge, sans habits, sans argent. . . . Voici, en peu de mots, ce qui s'est passé. Sur le refus du pape de laisser placer à la maison du consul de France les armes de la république, Basseville, son agent à court de Rome, nous engagea à partir tous pour Naples; dix de mes camarades partirent sur-le-champ. Ayant plus d'affaires à terminer, je restai deux jours de plus; si je fusse parti, je n'eusse couru aucun risque; mais, à cet instant même, le major de la division Latouche arrive à Rome, chargé par Mackau, ministre à Naples, de faire placer les armes. J'avais demandé à faire celles qui devaient servir pour l'académie, . . je crus de mon devoir de rester pour les faire; . . . J'étais aidé par trois de mes camarades. Nous n'étions que nous quatre à l'académie, et nous avions encore le pinceau à la main, quand le peuple furieux s'y porta, et en un instant réduisit en poudre les fenêtres, vitres, portes, ainsi que les statues des escaliers et des appartemens. Ils n'avaient que vingt marches à monter pour nous assassiner: nous les leur épargnâmes en allant au-devant d'eux."

<sup>34</sup> Girodet, Oeuvres posthumes, vol. 2, 360-361.

<sup>35</sup> "à l'antique. Dans ce nouveau costume, Je ressemble, dit-on, à un buste antique qui est au Capitole." Ibid., 384.

complaint of having no funds is related to the devaluation of French money after the Revolution and the ongoing economic crises. The new hairstyle made him look like a Jacobin in the eyes of the Italians by March 1792, not the antique statue as he might have preferred. Ménageot, director of the French Academy in Rome, advised him to return to his original hair style with powder. "As soon as I will be able to wear the smallest possible ponytail, it will be an anchor and protection for me . . ." <sup>36</sup>

On a personal level, Girodet had to be diplomatic about his political sentiments as his family and Doctor Trioson were connected to the aristocracy. Girodet's own father, who died in 1784, had managed the estates of the house of Orléans, and Trioson was official doctor to the king's aunts. <sup>37</sup> The king's aunts subsequently escaped to the safety of Rome in April 1791 and Girodet described their triumphant reception by Ménageot, among others. <sup>38</sup> Rarely did Girodet write to Trioson about his own feelings with regard to the revolutionary situation in France. When he

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<sup>36</sup> "Aussitôt que je pourrai avoir la plus petite queue possible, ce sera, pour moi, une ancre et une protection . . ." Ibid., 413.

<sup>37</sup> Pierre-Alexandre Coupin, "Notice historique sur la vie et les ouvrages de Girodet," in Oeuvre posthumes de Girodet-Trioson, ed. Pierre-Alexandre Coupin, vol. 1, i-vii, and Levitine, "Girodet-Trioson: An Iconographical Study," 4-5.

<sup>38</sup> Girodet, Oeuvres posthumes, vol. 2, 387.

did, it was with caution. To Trioson he wrote in February 1791:

I am very sensitive to the losses that the new order of things caused you to feel; but I believe that the only wise option is to try to forget about the past, and try to see the particular privations as a necessary sequence in the system of general improvement.<sup>39</sup>

Girodet remained concerned chiefly about the progress of his own work in Rome. The two major paintings he completed, The Sleep of Endymion of 1791 and Hippocrates Refusing the Gifts of Artaxerxes of 1792 (Fig. 3), are considered among the best work of his career.<sup>40</sup>

Endymion was the prerequisite figure académique for the Academy in Paris. But it was Hippocrates which preoccupied Girodet's thoughts from the beginning of his stay in Rome as it was planned for Trioson. I will discuss Endymion in the concluding chapter of my dissertation as its theme recurs throughout Girodet's oeuvre, particularly at the end of his career as exemplified by Pygmalion and Galatea, his last history painting. It is my argument that both paintings

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<sup>39</sup> "Je suis fort sensible aux pertes que le nouvel ordre de choses vous a fait éprouver; mais je crois que le seul parti sage est de s'étourdir là-dessus, et de tâcher de voir les privations particulières comme une suite nécessaire du système d'amélioration générale." Ibid., 381.

<sup>40</sup> Hippocrates is not as well-known as Endymion because of the circumstances of its making (which I take up in this chapter) and the fact that it is not in a public collection, but its importance cannot be overestimated in my opinion. It resides today in the office of the president of the Faculté de Médecine in Paris. It was given to the University by Girodet's adoptive father.

produced in Rome reflect important and conflicting reactions to the destabilizing crisis produced by the Revolution--the crisis experienced personally by Girodet through actual physical danger and the constant shifting of his identity. According to Stephanie Brown, the only consistency in Girodet's career is inconsistency, for her a sign of his originality and proto-Romantic nature. Contrary to her assertion that Endymion and Hippocrates have little in common except their "adherence to the sculptural standard of Davidianism," I will argue that these paintings reflect two very different but consistent responses to the trauma of revolutionary instability.<sup>41</sup> Endymion represents a personal or private bodily reaction to that crisis, a seductive response attractive to Girodet again at the end of his career. Hippocrates participated, socially and politically, in the reconfiguration of the new republican citizen and became for Girodet a vital attempt to restore that body to solidity--a confirmation of certain aspects of the Social Contract with unforeseen contradictions. It was appropriate that Girodet would portray a doctor as an avatar for the new social body, since the painting was intended for his mentor and guardian, Doctor Trioson. Just as important, however, the choice of subject matter coincided with the Enlightenment's emphasis on science and the practice of

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<sup>41</sup> Brown, 116.

medicine and demonstrated Girodet's interest in the new status of medicine.<sup>42</sup>

By May 30, 1790 Girodet had arrived in Rome with ideas about a painting for Trioson. There is a sense of urgency in his correspondence that the painting stand as a meaningful testament to Trioson of his friendship. As early as July 20 of that year, he wrote Trioson to inquire if he had decided on measurements of the painting for Bourgoin and to ask him to send information on the subject.<sup>43</sup> By September 28, 1790 in another letter from Girodet, the painting is referred to as "our subject of 'Hippocrates and the Ambassadors of the King of Persia' . . . ."<sup>44</sup> On the death of his mother in 1787, Girodet had acquired his family property, the château du Verger nearby the château de

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<sup>42</sup> An example of the new importance of medicine is exemplified by the career of Philippe Pinel (1745-1826), founder of scientific psychiatry. He characterized the ancien régime as a diseased body in contrast with the promise of a new healthy social body administered to by new empirical sciences and civic unity, Crow, Emulation, 142-144. He viewed the Revolution as a storm that stirred up corresponding tempests in the passions of men and overwhelmed many in total ruin--separated from their birthright as rational beings. Pinel stands out as one of the best practitioners of new scientific endeavors. He sought to secure for mentally ill patients the acknowledgment that their suffering was caused by disease and not possession or witchcraft. He treated the mentally ill with medical care not punishment and accorded them the status of citizens and human beings, see also Walther Riese, The Legacy of Philippe Pinel: An Inquiry into Thought on Mental Alienation (New York: Springer Publishing Company, Inc., 1969), 1, 124.

<sup>43</sup> Girodet, Oeuvres posthumes, vol. 2, 369.

<sup>44</sup> "nôtre sujet d'Hippocrate et des Ambassadeurs du roi de Perse' . . . ." Ibid., 373.

Bourgoin, occupied by Trioson and his family.<sup>45</sup> According to Crow, Hippocrates was a gift to Trioson, but Brown maintained that the work was commissioned by Trioson.<sup>46</sup> Trioson's painting is a constant theme in Girodet's letters from Rome. A careful reading of these letters to Trioson, and a few to Madame Trioson, reveals no reference to the painting as a straight commission. If the painting was intended as a gift, which seems the most logical reading of the letters, it was a complicated one that caused Girodet anxiety over its reception. Girodet desired to endear himself with Trioson as his mentor/father and, at the same time, repay him for the attention he paid to Girodet's affairs in France. His letters to Trioson display a consistent pattern of references to the painting. After complaining about feeling neglected by Trioson or responding to reports of Trioson's preoccupation with his management of Girodet's estate, Girodet would write about his exhaustive work on Hippocrates. In January 1793, when it was no longer safe for the pensionnaires of the French Academy to remain in Rome, Girodet fled to Naples. His overriding concern in subsequent letters to Trioson is to reassure him that his painting is safe. The following, written November 3, 1793, is an example of his pairing of his recognition of Trioson's work on his behalf with "votre tableau":

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<sup>45</sup> Brown, 70.

<sup>46</sup> Crow, Emulation, 139, and Brown, 70.

I do not renew for you, my good friend, the assurance of my recognition for all the trouble that my affairs give you without cease. I care more about your health and your rest than about my interest: I love my friends better than money.

I have always guarded your painting here in the hope that some occasion would finally happen to enable it to reach you safely . . .<sup>47</sup>

In the same letter Girodet referred to an arrest endured by Trioson, no doubt because of his association with the ancien régime:

The adventure of your arrest, my good friend, came to an end as your conduct and your sentiments ought to have made you hope it would. It is probable that the obvious justice that forced your return will silence the slander, and from now on will prevent it from troubling the tranquility of which every good citizen must enjoy under the protection of the law.<sup>48</sup>

Coupled with his desire to please Trioson and insure his friendship, Girodet must have also felt a compelling obligation to represent Trioson as the noble doctor of antiquity, a model of virtue, to counter the backlash from his professional association with the ancien régime. It is

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<sup>47</sup> "Je ne vous renouvelle pas, mon bon ami, l'assurance de ma reconnaissance pour toutes les peines que mes affaires vous donnent sans cesse. Je tiens plus à votre santé et à votre repos qu'à mon intérêt: j'aime mieux mes amis que l'argent.

J'ai toujours gardé ici votre tableau l'espérance qu'il se trouverait enfin quelque occasion de vous le faire parvenir sûrement . . ." Girodet, Oeuvres posthumes, vol. 2, 442-443.

<sup>48</sup> "L'aventure de votre arrestation, mon bon ami, s'est terminée comme votre conduite et vos sentimens devaient vous le faire espérer. Il es probable que la justice éclatante qu'on a été forcé de vous rendre fera taire la calomnie, et l'empêchera dorénavant de troubler la tranquillité dont tout bon citoyen doit jouir sous la protection de la loi." Ibid., 439-440.

not surprising that Hippocrates would become one of the most admired paintings of Girodet's career.<sup>49</sup> The painting had to address a multiplicity of needs earnestly felt by Girodet. Not only was it an expression of devotion and fealty to a man who had tutored and mentored him for twenty-five years and at the same time an awkward payment for the management of his affairs, but it now carried the added weight of reflecting Trioson's character. Girodet, the loyal friend and future son, would reconstruct the identity of the doctor as a bon citoyen of the new republic, a project he had already started in 1789.

Hippocrates was the second work dedicated to Trioson with a "refusal theme." The drawing Bayard Refusing the Gifts of His Hostess at Brescia, 1789 (Fig. 4), is signed, "Dédié et présenté à Monsieur Trioson, Docteur en médecine, par son dévoué serviteur, et ami, G.D.R" (Girodet de Roucy) and was, perhaps, a gift before his departure for Rome.<sup>50</sup> The knight Pierre Terrail, Seigneur de Bayard (1476-1524)

<sup>49</sup> Writing about the Salon of 1819, Charles-Paul Landon recalled that the Hippocrates of Girodet and The Death of Socrates by David were the only two good history paintings of average proportion; Hippocrates was singled out for the elegance of its drawing and the purity of its style. See Landon, Annales du Musée et de l'école moderne des Beaux-Arts. Salon de 1819 (Paris: Imprimerie Royale, 1820), vol. 2, 115.

<sup>50</sup> "Dedicated and presented to M. Trioson, Doctor of Medicine, by his devoted servant and friend," from "French Nineteenth Century Paintings, Drawings, Pastels, Watercolors and Oil Sketches," Winter Exhibition 1985 (New York: Shepherd Gallery), n.p.

was a French hero known for his courage and chivalry after an anonymous biography published in 1527 signed Loyal Servant; other biographies honoring Bayard appeared in the 1760s and revived interest in him.<sup>51</sup> The narrative depicted in Girodet's drawing had become a legendary example of Bayard's virtuous character. When his soldiers defeated the town of Brescia, Bayard, severely but not mortally wounded, was taken to the stateliest palace and cared for by the hostess and her two daughters (the husband and father had abandoned them for the safety of a monastery). While Bayard convalesced, his men looted, burned, and raped their way through the town as was the custom of victors. On the morning of Bayard's departure, the hostess offered him a year's income and hoped that he would not take the rest of their property as it now rightfully belonged to him. Bayard refused the offer with the statement, as quoted by Loyal Servant: "I have always loved people much better than gold, . . . ," the same words Girodet directed to Trioson.<sup>52</sup> Bayard returned the gold to the woman's daughters to be used as part of their dowries. The daughters, now fond of Bayard, presented him with hand-made gifts--two gold and

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<sup>51</sup> Samuel Shellabarger, The Chivalier Bayard: A Study in Fading Chivalry (New York: The Century Co., 1928), 5.

<sup>52</sup> Ibid., 223.

silver bracelets and a purse of red satin. The offering of gifts is the subject of Girodet's scene.<sup>53</sup> In the story of Bayard, a distinction is clearly made between the unacceptable payment of money versus the hand-made gifts, sincerely offered--not unlike the gesture Girodet intended to offer Trioson with his painting.

The drawing of Bayard presents an intimate familial scene in an interior bedroom setting with Bayard, the daughters, a young man, and the father. The central figures interact with soft, graceful gestures of offering and modest acceptance. No hierarchy between the two parties is implied. The bedroom setting reinforces the familiarity among the figures. The young man to the left of Bayard reappears in a similar position in Hippocrates, the only resemblance between the two works besides a shared theme.

With the impact of increased instability in the political sphere on the social and economic world of Trioson, Girodet must have felt that a stronger portrayal of the bon citoyen was in order, one directly analogous to the doctor. Girodet's sources for the bon citoyen of the new republic were impeccable. For Hippocrates, he turned from French history to draw on ancient history for his moralizing narrative, like the pre-revolutionary paintings of David. A

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<sup>53</sup> The scene drawn by Girodet is not the actual refusal but the offering of gifts. Coupin identified the drawing in 1829 by its present title. See Coupin, "Notice Historique," vol. 1, lxxvj.

return to the classics was a confirmation of the aesthetic tenets set forth by Winckelmann, and subsequently upheld by Quatremère de Quincy. Quatremère advocated a return to the ancient Greeks as a model for an ideal society and reaffirmed Winckelmann's association of Greek masterpieces with political liberty, the necessary environment for artistic creativity.<sup>54</sup> As Hunt has pointed out, the revolutionaries turned to Greek and Roman models also and discarded French history and Christian references to demonstrate their break with the past. Leaders like Robespierre found in classical history archetypes for their new ideal republic.<sup>55</sup> The Bayard story was no longer appropriate. The style of Hippocrates was in direct correlation with the story--both based on antique models that looked back to David's work of the 1780s, the period in which Girodet matured as an artist. Now he had the opportunity to reinvest this model with renewed resonance--the prototype of the bon citoyen.

Girodet went to extraordinary lengths to paint Hippocrates accurately, and wrote extensively about these

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<sup>54</sup> See Susan Houghton Libby, "Originality, Imitation and Genius: A.-L. Girodet-Trioson and French Art Theory and Criticism 1785-1824" (Ph.D. diss., University of Maryland at College Park, 1996), 65, 72, 86.

<sup>55</sup> Lynn Hunt, Politics, Culture, and Class in the French Revolution (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984), 27-28.

efforts to Trioson (and did so again in later letters about his work). While working on the painting, he wrote to Trioson:

I have not put down the brush for almost five months, . . . . I do not know how it [Hippocrates] will succeed, but, as for the trouble that I have put into it, you can relate to my vanity in it as well as to my friendship for you. I have had, at the museum of the Capitole, the true head of Hippocrates cast, and it was necessary that I take steps to obtain permission, because the Italian officials place, in all that, an importance as ridiculous as inconvenient for the people who need it. This head agrees perfectly with that of the medals representing him: it is very beautiful.<sup>56</sup>

Writing to Marquis de Pastoret after 1815, in a letter recapitulating his career, Girodet described his research to accurately portray the Persians:

I risked, what presented another great difficulty, representing all the Persians in white, all occurring in the same motif; white, moreover, being generally the indicator of mourning with the ancients. The details of the costume have been faithfully studied, after the monuments and engravings of ruins from Persepolis, published by travelers to Persia.<sup>57</sup>

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<sup>56</sup> "Je quitte le pinceau que, depuis près de cinq mois, . . . . Je ne sais comment il [Hippocrates] réussira, mais, quant aux soins que j'y mets, vous pouvez vous en rapporter à mon petit amour-propre autant qu'à mon amitié pour vous. J'ai fait mouler, au muséum du Capitole, la véritable tête d'Hippocrate, et il a fallu que je fisse des démarches pour en obtenir la permission; car messieurs les Italiens mettent, à tout cela, une importance aussi ridicule que gênante pour les personnes qui en ont besoin. Cette tête se rapporte parfaitement avec celle que les médailles représentent: elle est fort belle." Girodet, Oeuvres posthumes, vol. 2, 414-415.

<sup>57</sup> "J'ai hasarde, ce qui présentait une assez grande difficulté, de représenter tous les Perses en blanc, tous venant pour le même motif; le blanc, d'ailleurs, étant généralement chez les anciens l'indice du deuil. Les détails du costume ont été fidèlement étudiés, d'après les monumens et les gravures des ruines de Persépolis, publiés par les voyageurs en Perse." Ibid., 340-341.

Girodet acknowledged abbé Barthélemy's history, after Plutarch, The Voyage of Young Anacharsis, as his source for the story of the Greek physician.<sup>58</sup> Following the example of David and his creation of a scene that had never appeared in texts for The Oath of the Horatii, Girodet invented a scene that differed from the written text.<sup>59</sup> In the same letter to Pastoret he made a point of this:

I have put the narrative of history into action, because the king of Persia did not send, as you know, either ambassador or presents to Hippocrates; he was content to have one of his governors write to him, to let him make the most magnificent promises. If I had been stopped by the difficulty of following in the step of true history, you see that I would have been deprived of rendering<sup>60</sup> this trait of patriotism of the prince of medicine.

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See Ferdinand Boyer, "Quelques écrits de Girodet (1789-1799)," Bulletin de la Société de l'histoire de l'art français (Paris, 1967): 250. Boyer confirmed the recipient of this letter and the date, omitted by Coupin in Oeuvres posthumes.

<sup>58</sup> Crow, Emulation, 140. According to Crow, the original story is from a few lines in Plutarch's life of the elder Cato, then expanded by Barthélemy. Crow interprets the painting of Hippocrates as a response to the success of Drouais's Marius at Minturnae of 1786, an attempt by Girodet to replace the bond enjoyed by Drouais with David and unavailable to Girodet because of his relationship with Trioison. The figure of Hippocrates can be seen as a reverse form of Marius.

<sup>59</sup> Thomas E. Crow, Painters and Public Life in Eighteenth-Century Paris (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1985), 213.

<sup>60</sup> "J'ai mis le récit de l'histoire en action, car le roi de Perse n'envoya, comme vous le savez, ni ambassadeur ni présents à Hippocrate; il se contenta de lui faire écrire par un de ses satrapes, en lui faisant faire les promesses les plus magnifiques. Si j'avais été arrêté par la difficulté de suivre pied à la vérité historique, vous voyez que j'aurais été privé de rendre ce trait de patriotisme du prince de la médecine." Girodet, Oeuvres posthumes, vol. 2, 340.

The trait of patriotism he refers to is, of course, Hippocrates's refusal of wealth proffered by the Persians. Girodet emphasized the moral intent of Hippocrates's refusal in the letter to Pastoret, and in another to Bernardin de Saint-Pierre, he wrote:

The great man responds to the great king that he will never help the enemies of his country, and that he is without need, as well as desires.<sup>61</sup>

Girodet's insistence on representing the refusal as a declaration of the absence of needs and desires introduced another source for the painting--Rousseau's concept of the virtuous citizen drawn from the most appealing characteristics he imagined primitive man possessed. This was an idea that would have been understood by Bernardin de Saint-Pierre (1737-1814) who wrote the Rousseauian novel, Paul and Virginie, in 1788. He was a disciple and intimate friend of Rousseau in his later years and wrote a memoir about the philosopher's domestic life.<sup>62</sup>

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<sup>61</sup> "Le grand homme répond au grand roi qu'il n'ira jamais secourir les ennemis de sa patrie, et qu'il est sans besoin, ainsi que sans desirs." Ibid., 276. The other reference to Hippocrates in the letter to Pastoret appears on p. 340: "Le grand homme, dit Barthélemy, répondit au grand roi qu'il était sans besoin comme sans desirs, et que l'honneur lui défendait d'aller secourir les ennemis de la Grèce."

<sup>62</sup> Maurice Cranston, Jean-Jacques: The Early Life and Work of Jean-Jacques Rousseau, 1712-1754 (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1982), 238.

In the painting Hippocrates is represented in sharp contrast to the Persians. His only clothing is a simple tunic of coarse brown cloth barely reaching his knees. His hair and beard are cropped short and unadorned. The Persians are wrapped in silken white togas over equally shimmering undergarments; both fall in luxurious folds to the ground. Their hair is long and exquisitely curled, plaited, and tied with cords. Their beards, too, are decoratively abundant and on several figures the hair and beards are delicately curled and gracefully fall over their garments. The center of the composition is marked by a sensuously rich red mantle, draped to display the gifts of the Persians--gold piled at Hippocrates's feet, statuary, a sword, and tiara. According to George Levitine, these objects were also meant as allusions to the rank and power promised to Hippocrates by Artaxerxes in the letter at his feet.<sup>63</sup> The Persians and their abundant wealth represent the embodiment of the barbarous characteristics referred to by Rousseau when he described the decadence of civilized man. Hippocrates represents the natural, primitive man for he lacks nothing; lack is at the heart of need and desire.<sup>64</sup>

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<sup>63</sup> Levitine, "Girodet-Trioson: An Iconographical Study," 22.

<sup>64</sup> Jean Starobinski, Jean-Jacques Rousseau: Transparency and Obstruction, trans. by Arthur Goldhammer with an Introduction by Robert J. Morrissey (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1988. Originally published in Paris by Editions Gallimard, 1971), 308.

Hippocrates is steadfast, whole, and complete within himself.

A master image of the body presents a body that is complete and whole--essential characteristics in the vocabulary of power. Any recognition of bodily pain in the self and others is met with resistance and indifference.<sup>65</sup> The solemn Hippocrates, eyes downcast, arm extended in gesture of firm denial to the outstretched hands of offering, is impervious to the plight of the Persians, sent by Emperor Artaxerxes to seek his aid with a plague epidemic in Persia. The master body images in Hippocrates and also in David's Horatii concern sacrifice for moral principles. In the case of the Horatii brothers, their sacrifice is their own bodies and is unflinching in the face of certain pain. Hippocrates's sacrifice turns on the rejection of material wealth and sensuality. His act of refusal subjugates others and condemns them to bodily pain. But his particular act of subjugation carries with it conflicts of repression. To read the sentiments of this painting as patriotic and admirable at the time required knowledge of Rousseau's theories about the virtues of natural, primitive man. The new republican would be modeled after selected

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<sup>65</sup> See Richard Sennett, Flesh and Stone: The Body and the City in Western Civilization (New York: W. W. Norton and Company, 1994), 25.

attributes of Rousseau's natural man and compassion, a prerequisite for Rousseau, would be selectively eliminated. The Jacobins would use Rousseau's ideas for their own ends.

In his first Discourse, which won the competition prize at the Academy of Dijon in 1750, Rousseau addressed the question: Has the restoration of the arts and sciences had a purifying effect upon morals? Rousseau's argument that the arts and sciences had had a demoralizing effect on civilization was based on the polarity he set up between civilized people versus those living close to nature and his assertion that excessive riches produced by the arts and sciences had deceptively hidden the chains of civilization. It is the body that Rousseau used as site of signification:

Richness of attire may announce a wealthy man, and elegance a man of taste; the healthy, robust man is known by other signs. It is in the rustic clothes of a farmer and not beneath the gilt of a courtier that strength and vigor of the body will be found.<sup>66</sup>

The image of Hippocrates corresponds to this description--a doctor whose vigorous body is covered by the humble coarse cloth of a laborer. Rousseau wrote his most vehement criticisms against luxuries, associated in the painting with the Persians. Luxury, he wrote, comes from indolence and vanity and usually accompanies the arts and sciences. For the duration of nations or empires, Rousseau favored the rectitude of morals. He pleaded, "And what will become of

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<sup>66</sup> Jean-Jacques Rousseau, Discourse on the Sciences and Arts, 37.

virtue if riches are to be acquired at any cost?"<sup>67</sup> Luxury has its equivalent correspondence in language with what Rousseau called the "false veil of politeness," which is like the material riches that cover and disguise the body.<sup>68</sup> Security resided for Rousseau in the ability to communicate directly through vision, or to live in a world without the symbolic order, a mythic state in which the destabilizing gaze cannot penetrate.<sup>69</sup>

In the second Discourse, submitted to the Academy of Dijon competition in 1755 (this time he failed to win), Rousseau undertook the study of man and how he progressed from his natural state to the present with its inherent inequality so damaging to human life.<sup>70</sup> In this essay Rousseau continued the polarization of civil man and natural or savage man found in the first Discourse. Man's problems all began when he gave up the simple solitary life he was meant to live in nature.<sup>71</sup> In nature, man's "desires do not

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<sup>67</sup> Ibid., 50-51.

<sup>68</sup> Ibid., 36, 38.

<sup>69</sup> Ibid., 37.

<sup>70</sup> Jean-Jacques Rousseau, Discourse on the Origin and Foundations of Inequality, in The First and Second Discourses, ed. Roger D. Masters, trans. Judith R. Masters (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1964), 91.

<sup>71</sup> Ibid. , 110-113.

exceed his physical needs."<sup>72</sup> Savage man is at peace with nature. Civil man, whose desires, particularly excessive sensuality and luxury, exceed his physical needs, is subject to violent passions that drain and distress him.<sup>73</sup> Civilization with its production of excess goods brought with it man's insatiable desires and needs beyond the plenitude once enjoyed in nature.

Language created the difference between civil man and natural man, according to Rousseau. In his description of the stages of the development of language, he favored the second stage when the cry of nature (first stage) was combined with the movement and gestures of the body and resulted in a system of signs that were directly expressed in the body and readable through vision.<sup>74</sup> For Rousseau these were natural signs that expressed feelings as if one could read the body with its gestures and movements of self-evident meanings, independent of the conventional signs of verbal language. These are the signs Rousseau dreamed of for a utopia with no necessity for other means of communication.<sup>75</sup> These gestures were then combined with

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<sup>72</sup> Ibid., 116.

<sup>73</sup> Ibid., 196.

<sup>74</sup> Ibid., 122-123.

<sup>75</sup> Starobinski, Jean-Jacques Rousseau: Transparency and Obstruction, 149-150.

what he referred to as the first language--poetry, a form in which feelings are spoken. The use of reason and reflection led to the third stage of vocal, arbitrary, and conventional signs and the possibility of their use for the artifice of dissemblance and propaganda.<sup>76</sup>

Levitine wrote about Girodet's interest in Lavater's Essays on Physiognomy, particularly evident in the painting of Hippocrates. Johann Caspar Lavater (1741-1801) believed that man's true nature was inescapably written on his countenance and could be read at moments when he relaxed the art and practice of dissimulation.<sup>77</sup> According to Dorothy Johnson, it was Diderot who changed the emphasis from the face in the theories of Le Brun and Lavater to a careful reading of the whole body and its gestures as the site of meaning. A system of corporal signs in which the entire body radiates meaning, with the face just one of many signifiers, was incorporated into David's Horatii. David thus shifted the emphasis in French painting in the eighteenth century from the face to the whole body by

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<sup>76</sup> See also Jean-Jacques Rousseau, Essay on the Origin of Languages in On the Origin of Language, Jean-Jacques Rousseau and Johann Gottfried Herder, trans. by John H. Moran and Alexander Gode (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1966). Rousseau repeated and amplified his ideas on language in this essay.

<sup>77</sup> George Levitine, "The Influence of Lavater and Girodet's 'Espression des sentiments de l'âme,'" The Art Bulletin 36 (March 1954): 34-40.

incorporating Diderot's theories of gesture with the physiognomic theories of Le Brun and Lavater. The aesthetics of facial and corporeal communication was used by Girodet to great advantage in his Hippocrates.<sup>78</sup> There is a correlation between this insistence on the possibility of visually reading a person's character through facial expressions along with bodily gestures and Rousseau's preference for a language of visual gestures only accompanied, he imagined, by the poetry of the soul. The newly theorized aesthetic of the body was an attempt to communicate directly, avoid uncertainty, like the poetic language Rousseau admired in his imaginary, primitive past. Lavater even compared the correspondence of human and animal types, an idea still influential in the late eighteenth century exemplified by Le Brun's work, Series of drawings representing the rapport of human physiognomy with that of diverse animals, exhibited in 1797.<sup>79</sup> In painting Hippocrates Girodet made a conscious choice to forgo the beau idéal of Winckelmann for the exaggeration of facial and bodily characteristics.<sup>80</sup>

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<sup>78</sup> See Dorothy Johnson, "Corporality and Communication: The Gestural Revolution of Diderot, David, and 'The Oath of the Horatii,'" The Art Bulletin 71 (March 1989): 92-113.

<sup>79</sup> Levitine, "The Influence of Lavater," 38.

<sup>80</sup> See Brown, 110-114.

Hippocrates's whole body is mobilized in a gesture of refusal that dominates the painting. Both leg and arm are thrust out toward the Persians in a triangular wedge of denial, division, and difference. The entire composition reinforces this gesture. The diagonal of the leg is repeated by the shadow on the wall; the semicircle of Persians, their treasures, and Hippocrates's head are encompassed between leg and shadow. The horizontal of the arm is echoed by a classic isocephalic line of heads, in the continuous frieze at the top (a narrative depicting the Persian's invasion and destruction of Athens and its citizens), the horizontal band of figures, and the overall horizontal shape of the canvas.

As noted by Levitine, the sharp contrast between the Greeks and the Persians in Hippocrates does not only rest on a contrast between costumes, but also a contrast of ethnicity through facial features and skin color.<sup>81</sup> Facial expressions are divided along racial lines with the most extreme reserved for the Persians, from the elegantly servile image at Hippocrates's immediate right to the brutish threatening posture of the one whose back is turned toward the viewer on the far right. This value-laden contrast between the two parties is dramatically absent in the Bayard drawing; the two parties in that scene are

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<sup>81</sup> Levitine, "The Influence of Lavater," 41.

presented as equals and stand facing each other as if in a comfortable circle of congeniality.

By shifting to Greek history, Girodet chose one of the first models in Western culture of self-definition through the contrast with those perceived as inherently different. The years of Hippocrates (460-380 B.C.), the Greek physician known as the father of medicine, coincide with the period during the fifth century B.C. when the Greeks united in major military efforts against the Persians. From her analysis of the almost three hundred Greek tragedies (now known from an original one thousand) produced during the fifth century, Edith Hall found a distinction between these plays and the Homeric poems. The poems present a world divided by gulfs such as order versus chaos, but not conceived in terms of Greek order versus non-Greek or barbarian chaos. This later ethnocentric reinterpretation of the myths occurred during the fifth century. The historical revision of the archaic myths as the typology for the virtuous Hellenes versus the Persians as barbarian primitives was an essential component of that culture's search for identity--its claiming of a mythic past prior to the evolution of civilization.<sup>82</sup> Significantly, the statues of Asclepius, son of Apollo and a principal healing deity,

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<sup>82</sup> Edith Hall, Inventing the Barbarian: Greek Self-Definition through Tragedy (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1989), 51-54.

and Hygeia, daughter of Asclepius and a goddess of health, appear in Girodet's painting behind Hippocrates. The most important distinction used by the Greeks to define themselves as civilized was political--the Athenians were democratic and, thus, superior to the barbarians who lived under a regime of tyranny.<sup>83</sup> The Homeric kings who fought as equals, the first among men by virtue of their superior strength, were not distinguished by political differences. In the fifth century, against the Athenian ideal virtues of intelligence, courage, and self-restraint, the Persians were described as luxurious, emotionally excessive, cruel, and lawless primitives living outside the boundaries of a democratic system of justice.<sup>84</sup>

The Hippocratic model used by Girodet from the period of Greek history first defined as democratic was the perfect precursor for the citizen of the new French republic. The irrefutability of Hippocrates's virtue is emphasized by Girodet's portrayal of two Greeks looking on with hesitation and dismay at his action. The two tempted Greeks stand between Hippocrates and the poised, calm head of a young man at the left edge, a remnant of the beau idéal. The young man is standing in support of Hippocrates--a position taken

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<sup>83</sup> Ibid., 1.

<sup>84</sup> Ibid., 14, 99, 198.

up actively by the young man next to Bayard. This figure in Hippocrates has been identified as a portrait of Girodet.<sup>85</sup> The noble doctor and his young admirer, father and son, present and future, are meant as exemplars of virtue for the new republic--modeled after the virtues of Rousseau's primitive man who lived alone in nature in perfect equilibrium, his needs and desires satisfied by the plenitude of nature. Rousseau's state of nature is a hypothesis that took on almost concrete reality with his ability to make the imaginary seem real. According to Starobinski, Rousseau created this necessary hypothesis, knowing that it may have never existed, as the starting point from which to measure historical development. Rousseau did not intend it as a moral imperative to which man should conform.<sup>86</sup> In his letters Girodet's repeated description of Hippocrates as a man without need and desires suggests that he meant to imply a connection to Rousseau's concepts. The portrayal of Hippocrates has since been interpreted as representing those theories. Crow referred

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<sup>85</sup> Brown, 98.

<sup>86</sup> See Starobinski, "The Discourse on Inequality," in Jean-Jacques Rousseau: Transparency and Obstruction, 293-294.

to the painting's expression of civic responsibility as "Rousseau's ascetic and self-denying cult of virtue, . . ." <sup>87</sup>

The Hippocrates/Persian dichotomy of virtue versus barbarism used by Girodet follows the Greek bipolar model but with the contradictory connotations of Rousseau's dichotomy that now exalts the virtue of the primitive (now as Hippocrates) opposed to the overly indulgent artifice of the civilized (now the Persians) and significantly departs from the model for good government set up by Rousseau in the Social Contract. The image of Hippocrates depends upon the inclusion of the Persians to substantiate his virtuous identity; the bipolarization of moral characteristics thus forms an essential unit. Rousseau never intended his ideal social structure to be a unity based on dichotomous parts. The citizens of his state were to be like-minded and the collective or artificial body was to be self-sustaining precisely to maintain its wholeness through transparent relations, rather than the mosaic body that encompasses difference. Rousseau's civil state was modeled after the state of nature and the only distinction between the civil state and that of nature was the imposition of law to protect the rights of individuals within the state. Those who did not depend on this community for their survival and did not share its interests were to be kept beyond its

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<sup>87</sup> Crow, Emulation, 144.

borders. The authority of the collective being is simple in Rousseau's doctrine and cannot be divided without being destroyed--like the body of a human, it is singular.<sup>88</sup> The concluding chapter of my dissertation will return to this concept in Rousseau's work. If Hippocrates is a model of virtue, the sentiments expressed do not coincide with Rousseau's definition of virtue for civilized men. When Rousseau looked for any residual natural virtue left in civil man, pity was the only attribute he found.

I do not believe I have any contradiction to fear in granting to man the sole natural virtue that the most excessive detractor [Hobbes] of human virtues was forced to recognize. I speak of pity, a disposition that is appropriate to beings as weak and subject to as many ills as we are; a virtue all the more universal and useful to man because it precedes in him the use of all reflection; and so natural that the beasts themselves sometimes give perceptible signs of it. . .

Such is the pure movement of nature, prior to all reflection. Such is the force of natural pity, which the most depraved morals still have difficulty destroying, . . .

It is certain, therefore, that pity is a natural sentiment which, moderating in each individual the activity of love of oneself, contributes to the mutual preservation of the entire species.<sup>89</sup>

It would seem, then, that for Rousseau, to be without needs and desires but lacking pity or compassion would be an incomplete model of virtue. It is this point that

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<sup>88</sup> See Rousseau, On the Social Contract, 96-100.

<sup>89</sup> Rousseau, Discourse on Inequality, 130-133.

illuminates the partial use of Rousseau's ideal by zealous revolutionaries in constructing their new paternal model. The virtue of Hippocrates rests on his rejection of luxury, his repression of desire, and his lack of compassion.<sup>90</sup> It is through his repression that the withdrawal of compassion can be reconciled.

The Persians, with shimmering robes, elegant coiffures, and abundant riches, represent the polar opposite of the ascetic Hippocrates and a threat to his authority as the model of virtue; therefore, they must be suppressed. By using the Greek historical model for his narrative, Girodet has placed Hippocrates in the position of paternal authority, the noble father who articulates ethical and moral values. This position was institutionalized in Western culture by Aristotelian logic, according to Robert Con Davis:

Paternal 'power' lies in the economy of positioning as Aristotle defines that scheme, . . . in the institutionalization of the speaking subject's position 'as a male position'. . . . The authority of the paternal romance derives from a fundamentally discursive practice: from privileging the father and father surrogates as ideal knowers and the ones who speak of and 'for' knowledge--for form as instituted in their own bodies.<sup>91</sup>

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<sup>90</sup> Rousseau, On the Social Contract, 85. Rousseau's emphasis on the importance of virtue is in the section on democracy in the social contract. Rousseau claimed that virtue was the principal of the republic and the precondition for the state to obtain equality of ranks and fortunes.

<sup>91</sup> Robert Con Davis, The Paternal Romance: Reading God-the-Father in Early Western Culture (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1993), 96. In antiquity, Hippocrates's theories

The hierarchy of positions, with its privileging of the father, is oppositional only within the circumscribed order of the law. Those who do not fall under the power of the law are contingent or irrational and take up no position--or simply do not exist in the eyes of the law. But the presence of such a radical suppression remains to haunt and diminish the authority of the privileged father. At the same time, as has been noted in the example of Greek self-definition in the fifth century B.C., the suppressed are essential to define that authority by what it is not.<sup>92</sup> Hippocrates is speaker of the law; the other Greeks are those reluctantly opposed as well as his surrogate, the young man. The Persians must be rejected but, paradoxically, by their presence and extreme difference from the Greeks they help determine what exactly constitutes the virtuous character of Hippocrates.

In the painting, Hippocrates does not even look at the Persians--they do not register in his consciousness; they are shut out of his visual field. By contrast, in the Bayard drawing the eyes of Bayard gently gaze at the young women. Hippocrates's rejection, communicated through his

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of gender, developed earlier by the Egyptians and perhaps the Sumerians, were based on a fundamental hierarchy of male over female; men possessed warm, muscular bodies, while women were perceived to have too little body heat and weak muscles. This hierarchic order was accepted by Aristotle, 85. See also Sennet, Flesh and Stone, 42-43.

<sup>92</sup> Ibid., 116-117.

body, is a physical response to a bodily threat, to the form of his authority, and not a considered, temperate reply to the real plight of the Persians. Compassion is only for those within the circumference of the law.

It is ironic that Rousseau's concept of virtue based on self-esteem (as opposed to self-love, the artificial sentiment of society)--"a natural sentiment that inclines every animal to watch over its own preservation, and that, directed in man by reason and modified by pity, produces humanity and virtue"<sup>93</sup>--combined with his desire for a state of homogeneous agreement, unity, and wholeness as in the imagined original state of nature would become integral in the framing of the suppression of others. Clearly, this was not his intent. By setting up a binary system, in the second Discourse--nature/civilization, animal/man, acts/words--even though relatively free of value judgments--Rousseau, nevertheless, allowed those judgments to be made by the reader. By refusing to distinguish between the conceptual metaphor "state of nature" and the reality of civil society, the text is confusing and has led to misinterpretation.<sup>94</sup>

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<sup>93</sup> Rousseau, Discourse on Inequality, 222.

<sup>94</sup> Paul de Man, "Metaphor (Second Discourse)," Jean-Jacques Rousseau, ed. Harold Bloom (New York: Chelsea House Publishers, 1988), 203-204.

As a model for the master image of the republic's new citizen, Hippocrates perfectly conveys the philosophy of the bourgeois as defined in Dialectic of Enlightenment.

"Apathy (in the form of rigor)," says Kant, "is a necessary presupposition of virtue". . . . Calmness and decisiveness constitute the strength of virtue. . . . Stoicism (which is the bourgeois philosophy) makes it easier for the privileged, confronted with the suffering of others, to steel themselves . . . .<sup>95</sup>

This is a master image that exalts domination and oppression as virtue and finds compassion a threat to the necessary rigor and discipline required for the new state. Human pleasures, spontaneity, and desires are relegated to the bourgeois private sphere while virtue takes on the cloak of apathy.<sup>96</sup> Luxury, condemned by Rousseau as making men soft and self-indulgent and, when viewed as surplus in a society, the root cause of their inequality, was conjoined with compassion and denied in the Hippocrates model.

Girodet's return to Paris was delayed because of a series of debilitating illnesses he suffered along the way. However, his careful attention to the safety and shipping of Hippocrates in spite of the turmoil of his quick departure from Rome assured its safe arrival in Paris prior to his own and it reached Trioson without mishap. With Trioson's approval of the painting, Girodet was satisfied as that was

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<sup>95</sup> Max Horkheimer and Theodor W. Adorno, Dialectic of Enlightenment, trans. John Cumming (New York: Continuum, 1994. Originally published in 1944), 96.

<sup>96</sup> Ibid., 96-103.

his only declared ambition. "I will never make any painting with as much pleasure as for you."<sup>97</sup> Before Girodet arrived in Paris he had been informed that an anonymous person had arranged for him to have an apartment and studio in the Louvre. He suspected that it was "citizen Noël," (François Noël, Inspector General of Public Instruction).<sup>98</sup> As David's most important student when he arrived in Paris, anticipation was high for the work Girodet was expected to produce. But he did not fulfill those expectations and he never again attained the critical success he had enjoyed with Endymion. He did become a well-respected teacher and eventually maintained two studios, one for men and one for women. He continued to write his own poetry and illustrate and translate the classics. In the intervening years before he embarked on his noncommissioned work Scene of a Deluge in 1806 (fig. 5), he had weathered a rough storm of his own making over the scandal created by his satiric painting, The New Danaë of 1799.<sup>99</sup> And in 1802, the reception of his Ossian painting for Napoleon was a major disappointment. It seems reasonable to speculate that as a noncommissioned work begun in 1802 Deluge was, at least peripherally, related to his own experience of frustration in a world that no longer

<sup>97</sup> "Je ne ferai jamais de peinture avec autant de plaisir que pour vous." Girodet, Oeuvres posthumes, vol. 2, 458.

<sup>98</sup> Ibid., 459.

<sup>99</sup> The New Danaë is discussed in passing in Chapter Two, devoted to the Ossian painting.

offered one of the most brilliant artists any assurance of a stable career.

If the rigidity of Girodet's fabricated bon citoyen was necessary to dispel the trauma of revolutionary disintegration, experienced first-hand by Trioson and Girodet himself, it would have its counterpart--the anxiety that remained as an aftermath of that revolutionary chaos.<sup>100</sup> Anxiety was experienced by the new bon citoyen as his position of power within the new political and economic fields and most particularly in the family was being redefined. Girodet represented that anxiety in his painting Scene of a Deluge, as a scene of aporia. The father figure and young man in Bayard and Hippocrates are depicted as father and son within the confines of a family unit in Deluge.

According to Rousseau, the coming together of the family ended the simple and solitary life of primitive man. In his discussion on the formation of the family as the first stage of civilization in the second Discourse, he pointed out its advantages and potential cause of strife.

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<sup>100</sup> Girodet, Oeuvres posthumes, vol. 2, 329. On his deathbed in 1815, Trioson asked about those from his past who had been harmed by the revolution: "He searched, even in his last days, to obtain news of those that he had lost sight of for many years, and that he thought our revolutions had caused damage in their dearest attachments and in their fortunes." "Il cherchait, même dans ses derniers jours, à se procurer des nouvelles de ceux d'entre eux qu'il avait perdus de vue depuis longues années, et qu'il pensait que nos révolutions avaient pu froisser dan leurs attachemens les plus chers et dans leurs fortunes."

Husbands and wives could enjoy conjugal and paternal love, but the family introduced property, the origin of disagreements.

This was the epoch of a first revolution, which produced the establishment and differentiation of families, and which introduced a sort of property--from which perhaps many quarrels and fights already arose. .

. .  
The habit of living together gave rise to the sweetest sentiments known to men: conjugal love and paternal love. . . . The two sexes also began, by their slightly softer life, to lose something of their ferocity and vigor.<sup>101</sup>

In the Social Contract, he took up the issue of the family again and referred to it as a natural society within the social order and the oldest one of all. But even the family must contend with agreements not derived from nature. The children remain bound to their father only as long as they need him and any commitment to maintain the family into adulthood is based on agreements.<sup>102</sup> The father described by Rousseau appears to have limited power. The family, for Rousseau, is, "the prototype of political societies. The leader is like the father, the people are like the children; and since all are born equal and free, they only alienate their freedom for their utility."<sup>103</sup> Rousseau asserted the importance of the family as the only natural social unit, and at the same time he anticipated the ambiguous position

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<sup>101</sup> Rousseau, Discourse on Inequality, 146-147.

<sup>102</sup> Rousseau, On the Social Contract, 46-47.

<sup>103</sup> Ibid, 47.

of paternal authority experienced with the onset of the Revolution. And glaringly absent from his description is the mother--in the ordinary scene of the private sphere, model for political forms, there is a void.<sup>104</sup>

Another aspect of the family was considered by Rousseau when he described the primitive family in his Essay on the Origin of Languages. Primitive men are barbarous because they are without the ability of reflection, they had only, "the concept of a father, a son, a brother, but not that of a man. Their hut contained all of their fellow men. . . . Apart from themselves and their family, the whole universe would count as nothing to them." This narrow experience confined them to the range of childhood, according to Rousseau.<sup>105</sup> This conflation by Rousseau between the primitive state and that of childhood, a nostalgic notion, occurred at a time when interest in the condition of children had become an issue.

Shift in power within the family structure after the Revolution is the subject of Hunt's The Family Romance of the French Revolution. It is her argument that absolutism and familial paternal power had been ideologically equated under the ancien régime. With the substitution of the state for the monarchy, which had represented the father of absolute authority, a less tyrannical father was required

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<sup>104</sup> Mossman, 171.

<sup>105</sup> Rousseau, The Origin of Languages, 32-32.

within the family. The new father had to rely on affection and concern in his relations with his family.<sup>106</sup> Emphasis on the importance of children was the concomitant project of the redefinition of paternal power. Measures to limit the father's authority, particularly with control over children, were placed into law after 1789 by revolutionary legislators. Their project was to remove the despotic characteristics of the father while still leaving the family in place as the basis of society, much like Rousseau's concepts. For example, the age of an adult's attaining independence from the father was declared to be twenty-one in August 1792. Compulsory national education was another principle established.<sup>107</sup>

Similar to his claim that human knowledge had not extended to the study of man in his second Discourse, Rousseau stated the same about childhood in Emile. The subject of the child became his project in Emile and his purpose was to outline specific educational methods to produce a virtuous natural man who would be able to live comfortably in civilization without being consumed by it. Rousseau wrote that man from birth was split between acting upon his natural instincts and remaining true to himself as opposed to the role he was forced to assume in society to act according to its rules and values. Rousseau aimed to

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<sup>106</sup> Hunt, The Family Romance, 25.

<sup>107</sup> Ibid., 40-41.

reconcile this division through an educational method that would produce a man who could live without self-contradictions, whole and dependent only on himself.<sup>108</sup> Three charming paintings by Girodet of Trioson and his children, Portrait of Virginie Trioson, Salon of 1798; Portrait of Romainville Trioson of 1800; and Dr. Trioson Giving a Lesson of Geography to his Son of 1803-4, are exemplars of this new attention given to the development of children (figs. 6, 7, and 8). The paintings express a melancholic wistfulness about the loss of childhood freedom with the constraints of a formal education, illustrated by the open books and globe. Similar depictions were frequent in the Salons of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries and were directly attributed by Pierre Chaussard in 1798 to the influence of Rousseau's Emile.<sup>109</sup>

The shifting role of the father, and often the loss of the father, coupled with the emergence of the importance of children in the late eighteenth century provided the subject matter for novels. An example of this genre is Bernadin de Saint-Pierre's Paul and Virginie, the popular success of 1788. Paul and Virginie are raised by their mothers in an island setting without fathers. According to Hunt, this novel "was reprinted more often than any novel published

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<sup>108</sup> Jean-Jacques Rousseau, Emile, or On Education Introduction, Translation, and Notes by Allan Bloom (Basic Books, 1979), 39-41.

<sup>109</sup> Levitine, "Girodet-Trioson: An Iconographical Study," 332-333.

during the revolutionary decade . . ." with thirty editions between 1789 and 1799.<sup>110</sup> An illustrated edition was published in 1806. Girodet, along with Gérard, Lafitte, Moreau, Prud'hon, and Isabey père contributed engravings for this limited edition of five hundred copies, published by Pierre Firmin Didot, whose daughter was married to Saint-Pierre. Girodet's illustrated scene The Passage of the Torrent (fig. 9) shows Paul carrying Virginie on his back across a turbulent river of water, a vapid and sentimental depiction compared to the drama of the similar theme in Deluge.<sup>111</sup>

As Hunt has pointed out, emphasis on the family and its rehabilitation as the model for the new political body involved enormous changes in the cultural and ideological spheres. The restored fathers as heads of their families had to take on a new role as nurturers and guides. As changes were implemented, sources of anxiety were inevitably uncovered. The new forms of social organization produced-- "a fragile, unstable, constantly shifting equilibrium between the individual and the family. There remained the vivid memory of the father's cut-off head."<sup>112</sup>

The form and content of Deluge had numerous precedents. However, Girodet insisted that his deluge was not derived

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<sup>110</sup> Hunt, The Family Romance, 31.

<sup>111</sup> Brown, 230.

<sup>112</sup> Hunt, The Family Romance, 190-191.

from any literary references, that it was simply about an act of nature—a disaster that might befall any family at any time. Darcy Grigsby cites the scientific treatise of post-revolutionary physiologist Pierre-Jean George Cabanis as Girodet's source for his stated intention. Cabanis and Girodet were close friends. As past social hierarchies had proved unstable, science looked to human biology to justify new social hierarchies based upon nature. In Cabanis's terms, natural events would elicit natural responses and man would demonstrate his moral and physical superiority or inferiority, of which he is naturally endowed, by his reaction to disaster. Girodet wished to sever his deluge from historic references by insisting on a universal meaning that was rooted in the new synchronic science of man and its medical model of prediction.<sup>113</sup> Girodet chose a subject familiar to his audience who might recognize his act of reinvention and claim of independence.

According to Levitine, the last years of the eighteenth century witnessed eight paintings based on the biblical theme, including Jean-Baptiste Regnault's The Deluge of 1789 (fig. 10), the one closest to Girodet's in figural representation.<sup>114</sup> Appearing in the Salon of 1789, Regnault's painting was a sensation and was compared to Poussin's painting of the same title (fig. 11) from 1660-64.

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<sup>113</sup> Grigsby, 373-374.

<sup>114</sup> Levitine, "Girodet-Trioson: An Iconographical Study," 237.

With its promotion by D'Angiviller, the work of Poussin had become increasingly important since the 1780s. In 1789 Regnault's The Deluge was seen to unite two traditions: the theoretical concepts of Poussin and popular interest in storms, shipwrecks, and drownings as new themes that mixed terror with hope of salvation.<sup>115</sup> Regnault pared down Poussin's painting to the central figures representing the four ages of life and stressed realism and the terror of the tragedy by displaying the mother hopelessly holding up the baby to escape the waters.<sup>116</sup> In Poussin's painting this episode is the only fragment of hope--the light catches the mother raising her baby to the outstretched arms of a man.

During the eighteenth century, ambivalent feelings toward absolute patriarchal authority had been exposed by paintings at the Salon, for example the various versions of the Belisarius story and, of course, the paintings by Greuze, The Father's Curse of 1778 and The Son Punished of 1779, which Diderot found impressive.<sup>117</sup> Regnault's painting directly expresses this ambivalence by making reference to a well-known episode from Virgil's Aeneid and altering the meaning. Aeneas Carrying Anchises from the Ruins of Troy

<sup>115</sup> Régis Michel, "L'Art des Salons," in Aux Armes et aux arts! Les Arts de la Révolution 1789-1799, ed. Philippe Bordes and Régis Michel (Paris: Adam Biro, 1989), 18.

<sup>116</sup> Ibid., 19.

<sup>117</sup> Carol Duncan, "Fallen Fathers: Images of Authority in Pre-Revolutionary French Art," in The Aesthetics of Power (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 33-36.

was illustrated by François Gérard for Pierre Didot's publication of the works of Virgil in 1798 (fig. 12). In Gérard's drawing of the flight of Aeneas, the figure of Aeneas's wife Creusa--who in the narrative falls behind the male group of elderly father, son, and her child Iulus, and is lost--is left out. Aeneas, with the other male survivors of the family, will become the founder of Rome; thus, the paternal chain of authority, past, present, and future remained intact. Regnault's painting changes the circumstances and suggests that the loss of the wife and child caused by the burden of the past places the future in jeopardy. Girodet's painting is even more explicit in its quoting of the Aeneid source; he had also contributed to Didot's publication. And the connection to the Aeneid was mentioned by several critics with regard to Girodet's Deluge. Didot's publication included six drawings for the text of Aeneid by Girodet as well as the frontispiece for the edition. (Gérard also contributed six drawings for this edition of Aeneid.)<sup>118</sup> In the scene from the Aeneid and as illustrated by Gérard, the figure of Anchises carries the family's ritual gods in their flight; whereas Girodet secularized the theme in Deluge by substituting a purse

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<sup>118</sup> Henri Boucher, "Girodet Illustrateur à propos des dessins inédits sur l'Énéide," Gazette des Beaux Arts, 6 (November 1930): 306. Girodet, over the course of his career, would base 160 compositions on the work of Virgil, for the Aeneid and the Georgics. See also Dessiner l'Énéide, Exhibition catalogue (Montargis: Musée Girodet, 1997).

clutched by the old man containing the family's wealth. Many writers criticized the inclusion of the purse, which they understood as a symbol of avarice, inconsistent with the tragic scene. In response to this criticism, Girodet wrote that the family was only worried about their future and that it should be seen as a sign of foresight.<sup>119</sup>

According to James Rubin, the work of Fuseli, particularly his illustrations for the 1802 edition of Milton's Paradise Lost, was an important influence for Girodet's Deluge, an image of exaggerated terror.<sup>120</sup> Girodet was introduced to his work while in Rome; he completed a few sketches for Scene of a Deluge and several compositions based on The Poems of Ossian before leaving Italy.<sup>121</sup> In two sketches most likely executed in 1795 Girodet experimented with the composition of the group and began with a scene reminiscent of Poussin's before arriving at his final group (figs. 13, 14).<sup>122</sup> There were two famous depictions of the son and father that Girodet must have seen in Rome: Raphael's image in Fire in the Borgo for the Stanza dell'Incendio at the Vatican and Bernini's first commission

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<sup>119</sup> Levitine, "Girodet-Trioson: An Iconographical Study," 248-249.

<sup>120</sup> James H. Rubin, "An Early Romantic Polemic: Girodet and Milton," Art Quarterly 35 (Autumn 1972): 212.

<sup>121</sup> James H. Rubin, "Shorter Notices: Gros and Girodet," Burlington Magazine 121 (November 1979): 720.

<sup>122</sup> Levitine, "Girodet-Trioson: An Iconographical Study," 245.

for Cardinal Borghese, Aeneas and Anchises (Gérard's compositional model). Another frequently quoted source for Girodet's Deluge is Michelangelo. While in Rome, Girodet obtained permission to study and copy Michelangelo's work in the Sistine Chapel and spent three months on this project. According to Brown, the Deluge is the best confirmation of this study in his work.<sup>123</sup> Girodet's painting retains key elements of Michelangelo's and Poussin's scenes of the biblical flood--the rocky barren cliff and leafless trees surrounded by water.

Girodet adapted Regnault's close-up figural composition but placed the figures in a verticle order of descent, similar to Poussin's mother holding her child up to the man and safety, but reversed the intent implied by Poussin. Like Regnault, he condensed the actions of the figures, the strong carrying the weak and children clinging to mothers into singular examples of those actions; thereby transposing a community to its basic unit--the family. It has been suggested that by changing the scene to a vertical configuration, Girodet was alluding to Michelangelo's Last Judgment besides his biblical flood. However, the inclusion of the seemingly out-of-place, inexplicably dry drapery that frames the two figural groups points to another formal source for the composition--Michelangelo's The Creation of Adam. Just as in the The Creation the two figures, here the

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<sup>123</sup> Brown, 72.

mother and father, are connected by their outstretched arms. The composition of the figures, reconfigured vertically, juxtaposes the father/son as the patriarchal equivalent of God reaching down to the mother and children, who are signs of procreation. The weight of the father on his back and the weakness of the branch to which he clings converge to condemn the young father and his family to the waters below.

The figure of the young father, referred to as the new Aeneas by Chaussard, is represented at the moment before his fall. His body is articulated, like that of Laocoön, in all its plenitude of muscle, bone, and flesh, so admired by Chaussard:

It was only he [Girodet] who could develop this male energy in composition, this purity in drawing, this admirable precision, this firmness in contours, this grandiosity in forms, this anatomical science . . . <sup>124</sup>

His toes grip the rocky cliff, his body strains to remain in a verticle position, the posture associated with power, maturity, and civilization. The mother's body is already lost to the horizontal pull of gravity by her child's weight as he grasps her hair and shoulder. Her head bent backward is echoed in the waters below by the floating head and shoulders of a dead woman. In the center of the composition

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<sup>124</sup> "Il n'y avait que lui qui pût développer dans la composition cette mâle énergie, dans le dessin cette pureté, cette précision admirable, cette fermeté dans les contours, ce grandiose dans les formes, cette science anatomique . . ." Pierre-Jean-Baptiste Chaussard, Le Pausanias français, État des arts du dessin en France, à l'ouverture du XIX siècle. Salon de 1806 (Paris, 1806): 120.

dividing the space between the bodies of the young father and mother, the legs of the aging patriarch hang vertically like dead weight.

The melodramatic nature of the painting was the cause of great concern. David accused Girodet of subverting the genre of history painting by resorting to melodrama instead of adhering to the principles of the beau idéal.<sup>125</sup> And Chaussard feared that melodrama, already in the theater, was threatening the arts, "This disastrous system resembles a gothic invasion; all the limits of the arts seem weakened, and the temple itself is staggering on its foundations."<sup>126</sup> Worse, for Chaussard, the people, not knowing how to judge the skill of the artist's execution, would only see on the canvas "a spectacle. That is where abuse of the dramatic effects in painting would lead."<sup>127</sup> In his review, Chaussard described the very subject of the painting--anxiety over the loss of structure.

The two faces that reflect the melodramatic and emotional intensity in the painting and recall Girodet's interest in physiognomical theories of facial expressions, are those of the young father and of the baby at the

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<sup>125</sup> Brown, 242 and Crow, Emulation, 257.

<sup>126</sup> "Ce système désastreux ressemble à une invasion gothique; toutes les limites des Arts semblent ébranlées, et le temple lui-même chancelle sur ses fondemens." Chaussard, "Salon de 1806," 119.

<sup>127</sup> "un spectacle. Voilà pourtant où conduirait l'abus des effets dramatiques en Peinture." Ibid., 120.

mother's breast. The father's look of horror is directed at the mother and children and the engulfing water as a response to his inability to save his family and avert his own imminent fall into the abyss, the horizontal field of undifferentiated space, occupied in the painting by a floating dead female body. The dreaded space that the taut male body resists with every muscle flexed is associated with women. The mother's body seems already to have given itself up to this space as her face reflects no emotion or fear. Critics assumed she had fainted.

Light and dark provide a stark contrast between the two groups of figures, achieved by Girodet after the device used by Poussin.<sup>128</sup> In Poussin's painting a flash of lightning highlights the father, mother, and child. Girodet has placed the paternal group in shadow, while the lightning illuminates the faces, breast, and bodily contours of the baby, its mother, and the floating woman. Clutching at the breast of its mother, the baby's face is distorted by its open and devouring mouth in its desperate attempt to suck the breast. One critic assumed the baby was crying out of fear over the situation and wondered how such a young baby

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<sup>128</sup> According to J.J.L. Whiteley, the use of chiaroscuro had become fashionable in the first decades of the nineteenth century. Spectators viewed sculptures by torchlight for a dramatic contrast and it was known that Girodet preferred to paint at night with artificial studio lights. See "Light and Shade in French Neo-classicism," Burlington Magazine 117 (December 1975): 768-773.

could comprehend it.<sup>129</sup> Others complained that the child should have been rendered asleep and unaware of danger.<sup>130</sup> Chaussard confined his comments on the mother-children group to the "horrible spectacle, unprecedented, immoral," act of the child grasping the mother's hair; he found that the figure of the woman "appears too strong, which diminishes interest . . ." <sup>131</sup> I would argue that the response of the critics, particularly Chaussard, is at variance with the painting itself. The primitive instinct of the baby, repressed in the readings of the painting, implies despair at the denial of the bodily pleasures of breast-feeding, an inference that coincides with the nature of renewed interest in breast-feeding. The denial can be read as two-fold--the actual physical loss experienced by the baby and the loss of warmth and pleasure under the rigorous and disciplined nature of breast-feeding imposed by Rousseau's advocacy. The highlighted passage in the painting was either misunderstood or ignored.

Rousseau began his discourse on education in Emile with the infant. The swaddling of infants at birth for him was a form of cruel bondage and the beginning of man's being

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<sup>129</sup> Anon, La Lorgnette du Salon de 1806 (Paris, 1806), as quoted in Dale G. Cleaver, "Girodet's 'Déluge,' a Case Study in Art Criticism," Art Journal 38, no. 2 (Winter 1978-79): 97.

<sup>130</sup> Levitine, "Girodet-Trioson: An Iconographical Study," 248-249.

<sup>131</sup> "spectacle horrible, inoui, immoral," "paraît trop forte, ce qui diminue l'interêt, . . ." Chaussard, "Salon de 1806," 126.

chained to society. According to Rousseau, this first instance of restraint was necessitated when mothers turned away from their "first duty," breast-feeding, and delegated this responsibility to hired wet nurses who turned to swaddling in order to leave infants unattended but safe.<sup>132</sup> To restore men to their primal, natural duties, for Rousseau, one must begin with the mothers, who like Eve committed the first sin:

Everything follows successively from this first depravity [refusal to nurse]. The whole moral order degenerates; naturalness is extinguished in all hearts;  
 . . .

But let mothers deign to nurse their children, morals will reform themselves, nature's sentiments will be awakened in every heart, the state will be re peopled. .  
<sup>133</sup>  
 . .

In order to keep the family intact as the primary source of indoctrination for the state, the infant had to be kept within the bounds of the family. Rousseau compared the administration of the family, which he termed the "domestic economy," with that of the state, termed the "political economy," in Discourse on Political Economy, implying that governing of the family was the interest of the state.<sup>134</sup> According to Nicole Fermon, this essay by Rousseau described a powerful relationship at birth between the infant as a

<sup>132</sup> Rousseau, Emile, 43.

<sup>133</sup> Ibid., 14-15.

<sup>134</sup> Jean-Jacques Rousseau, Discourse on Political Economy, 209-210.

citizen and as a member of humanity. The experience of patriotism begins with the imprinting of a woman's body. This intimate relationship, in Fermon's terms, implies that the body of the mother is not a constant object of pleasure but could also be experienced as an means of indoctrination:

Woman and women . . . play a vital role in the production of citizen-children, and that particular initial contact is the way in which a powerful antidote to corruption and decay is transmitted. Because the citizen is imagined and constructed as an infant whose physical boundaries are liquid and vulnerable, Rousseau's political program takes into account the "real" and material stuff our lives are made of. This political program respects or judiciously exploits the ground on which patriotism must grow--the love of physical bodies.<sup>135</sup>

Forming virtuous citizens for the new republic became an imperative after 1789 and was widely debated by new leaders. Education, advised Saint-Just, one of the radical revolutionaries, should begin with the "institutionalization" of breast-feeding linked to the virtue of the family since Rousseau's promotion of it. If a woman refused to breast-feed, she would cease to be a mother in the eyes of the fatherland.<sup>136</sup> According to Joan Copjec, the advocacy of breast-feeding in the eighteenth century was a phenomenon emblematic of Enlightenment thought. For

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<sup>135</sup> Nicole Fermon, "The Female Fulcrum: Rousseau and the Birth of Nationalism," The Philosophical Forum 28, nos. 1-2 (Fall-Winter 1996-97): 23.

<sup>136</sup> Carol Blum, Rousseau and the Republic of Virtue: The Language of Politics in the French Revolution (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1986), 190.

Copjec, the importance of the phenomenon is not its external meaning or causes but "its most essential aspect: 'the aura of anxiety that surrounds it.'"<sup>137</sup> Anxiety, according to Copjec, is "the most primitive of phenomena."<sup>138</sup> It signals danger, a gap, but without the work of any signifiers that could be negated. It is not caused by any object; it is an affect and cannot be interpreted. The proper response to anxiety is flight--a return to the known world of the symbolic and signification.<sup>139</sup>

I would like to return to Chaussard and his reaction to Girodet's Deluge and what I believe are expressions of his anxiety and literal flight from it because of the most problematic portion of the painting--the baby at the mother's breast. In a footnote Chaussard wrote that Girodet had promised to send a description of the painting but instead referred Chaussard to an explanation he had sanctioned in another journal. This description precedes Chaussard's own critique: "The subject is a scene of Deluge, which here must be taken to mean only of one considerable flood, and not, as some have believed it, of the universal [Biblical] Deluge. . . ." <sup>140</sup> In fact, as Chaussard

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<sup>137</sup> Joan Copjec, "Vampires, Breast-Feeding, and Anxiety," October 58 (Fall 1991): 27-28.

<sup>138</sup> *Ibid.*, 26.

<sup>139</sup> *Ibid.*, 26-27.

<sup>140</sup> "Le sujet est une scène 'de Déluge,' ce qui doit s'entendre ici seulement d'une inondation considerable, et non point, comme

proceeded to reveal in his review, the livret had listed the title incorrectly as Scène du Déluge. After the lengthy description of a particular family caught suddenly by torrential rain near a mountain lake, Chaussard printed his own comments that ignore the clarification of the title provided by Girodet. The review begins with his warning about the state of the arts and the dangers of melodrama of which Girodet's Deluge is a dangerous symptom. Chaussard then returned in the essay to his initial confrontation with Deluge when he thought it was a scene of disaster and admired the great skill of the artist. Then, he wrote, he opened the livret and read the [mistaken] title Scène du Déluge, "to my great regret, because these little words by changing the order of my sensations and my ideas, destroyed a part of my illusion."<sup>141</sup> As a scene of disaster, he was able to appreciate the danger inspired by nature. The contradiction between the description and Chaussard's reaction that ignores it cannot be reconciled by the reader except to read them independently as if Chaussard wrote his review before reading the explanation and then never rewrote it. He continued that he feared he might deceive himself by these reflections and needed time to meditate:

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quelques-uns l'ont cru, du Déluge universel. . . ." Chaussard, "Salon de 1806," 116.

<sup>141</sup> "à mon grand regret, parce que ce peu de mots, en changeant l'ordre de mes sensations et de mes idées, détruisit une partie de mon illusion." Ibid., 121.

I withdrew myself from the crowd; I went to breathe in the gallery and to contemplate the Deluge of Poussin, this great tragedy.

In place of the terror and of the painful sentiment that I had felt in view of the scene that had made my hair stand up, here I felt only a melancholy and profound emotion, mixed with compassion and sadness: my tears started to flow, gloomy and thoughtful, I perceived nothing more around me; my thoughts plunged in some manner into this abyss of universal loss.<sup>142</sup>

He must withdraw; he needs to breathe; his hair stands on end. He leaves the gallery to find relief in front of the Poussin. The Deluge of Poussin, Rousseau had confessed, was the only painting that had ever affected him:

There is only one picture that has ever affected me in my life. . . . It is Poussin's painting of the Great Flood. I looked at it for a whole hour and could not leave it even though it filled my soul with the most intense bitterness. I could feel the whole of nature suffering there.<sup>143</sup>

Both Rousseau and then Chaussard in 1806 were able to contemplate "the whole of nature" engulfed by the flood in the Poussin Deluge. Girodet had removed the context of landscape from his Deluge and left only minimal notations of nature. Chaussard admired the Poussin because he saw it

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<sup>142</sup> "Je me tirai de la foule; j'allai respirer dans la galerie et contempler le Déluge du Poussin, cette grande Tragédie.

Au lieu de la terreur et du sentiment pénible que j'avais éprouvés à la vue de la scène qui abait fait dresser mes cheveux, ici je ne sentis qu'une émotion mélancolique et profonde, mêlée de compassion et de tristesse: mes larmes étaient prêtes à couler; morne et pensif, je n'apercevais plus rien autour de moi; me pensée plongeait en quelque sorte dans cet abîme de deuil universel." Ibid., 121-122. See Girodet, "Aux rédacteurs du journal," Journal de Paris (September 21, 1806).

<sup>143</sup> As quoted in Maurice Cranston, Jean-Jacques, 344.

primarily as a landscape. Like a pastoral of Virgil, the figures in the background are accessories and do not dominate or interrupt the somber desolation of the scene.

It is the deluge; what one regards as "a magnificent landscape" is the theatre in it: these "accessory figures" are the actors; but the scene being complete and grand, the figures have not been able, should not have occupied all the painting.<sup>144</sup>

Even when Chaussard learned that his first reaction was valid, as indicated in the description at the beginning of his essay, he left his review based on his mistaken reaction. This gap in the text leaves the reader confused. When he returned in the essay to describe Girodet's composition, at one point he must lower his eyes. "This horrible episode makes one shudder, . . . grips the heart and makes the eyes lower."<sup>145</sup> He contemplated the drama of the mother, who is already lost because of the precarious balance of her position, "One must confess, the head turns and is led astray, if one continues to fix one's eyes on this drama."<sup>146</sup> Drawn to the body of the husband, he found it to be a model study of anatomical science, a masterpiece.

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<sup>144</sup> "C'est le déluge; ce qu'on regarde comme 'un paysage magnifique' en est le théâtre: ces 'figures accessoires' sont les acteurs; mais la scène étant entière et grande, les figures n'ont pas pu, n'ont pas dû occuper tout le Tableau." Chaussard, "Salon de 1806," 122-123.

<sup>145</sup> "Cet horrible épisode fait frémir, . . . serre le coeur et fait baisser les regards." Ibid., 123.

<sup>146</sup> "Il faut avouer, la tête tourne et s'égaré, si l'on continue de fixer les yeux sur ce Drame." Ibid., 124.

But what bothered Chaussard about the painting was the isolation and singularity of the figures; Michelangelo, he wrote, offers, "More examples of the same groups; but they were not isolated, they were never unique, they were not transferred to the middle of the convulsions of nature itself . . . ." <sup>147</sup> Without once mentioning the baby at the mother's breast, his final criticism is that the light emitted from the flash of lightning, highlighting this scene, is too bright: "All the figures are in shadow, and the contours are lit by a strike of lightning; but these lights should be paler, and to partake of the tone of grey and weight of the clouds." <sup>148</sup> What Chaussard could not write about he preferred not to see, the all-too-isolated and singular confrontation between baby and breast. And he signaled his distress to the reader by leaving in his essay the gap between Girodet's insistence that Deluge was not the biblical one and his mistaken belief that it was.

The trauma of Deluge is doubled by the scene within the painting of the baby at the mother's breast. This is a scene that is independent of meaning, or exterior to the narrative of the doomed family. Contrary to those critics

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<sup>147</sup> "Plusieurs exemples de pareils groupes [The Last Judgment]; mais ils n'étaient point isolés, ils n'étaient point uniques; ils n'étaient point déplacés au milieu des convulsions de la nature elle-même. . . ." Ibid., 125-126.

<sup>148</sup> "Tout les personnages sont dans l'ombre, et les contours en sont éclairés par un coup de foudre; mais ces lumières devraient être plus pâles, et participer du ton gris et plombé des nuages." Ibid., 126.

who suggested that the baby's facial expression is fear in reaction to the terrifying disaster about to occur, a closer look indicates that the facial expression is furious anger at the breast itself as it is withdrawn from the baby by the falling mother. A study (fig. 15) of the mother and baby by Girodet for this painting makes this clear. In the study the baby's head is closer to the breast, its hand grasps it tightly, and its eyes focus on the nipple. The position of the head and breast in the painting are the next step, like the segments of a movie cartoon, in the movement of the fall--the baby's head is farther from the object of its desire and its grasp is starting to slip. In its own world of objects desired, separate from the environment of others, the infant has no sense of experiencing the mother's body as whole. Its desire is for the breast as a separate object on which it performs bodily functions. The baby's face in the painting, a kind of subtle echo of the father's look of horror, is in reaction to the fantasized destructive effects of its own aggression in the act of biting and introjecting what it wants. The loss of the breast is its only narcissistic concern--its frustration and frenzied fury are focused on the threatened deprivation of the desired object and its fantasy that its own actions are implicated.<sup>149</sup>

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<sup>149</sup> My description is based on Melanie Klein's psychoanalytic theory of the atemporal field of infantile experience. According to Klein, the infant experiences its world only as part-objects connected to it through fantasy produced by bodily operations. See for a summary of Klein's theory, Mignon Nixon, "Bad Enough Mother," October 71 (Winter 1995): 73. See also Juliet Mitchell,

Rousseau's terms for the advocacy of breast-feeding were not framed in words of tenderness and love associated with traditional motherhood but anxiety over excesses of motherly devotion.<sup>150</sup> In Rousseau's words, the relationship between mother and child is a matter of "duties" and "oughts": "No mother, no child. Between them the duties are reciprocal, and if they are ill fulfilled on one side, they will be neglected on the other. The child ought to love his mother before knowing that he ought to."<sup>151</sup> Also, in Emile, he wrote that the infant is a tyrant who must be taught to obey; the cruel mother is the one who plunges her child into "softness."<sup>152</sup> Deprivation was the motivation for the advocacy of breast-feeding, according to Copjec. Breast-feeding was the duty of disciplined mothers as opposed to wet nurses who freely offered the breast to the baby in order to keep it quiet. Dutiful mothers sacrificed gratification of the baby and their pleasure in breast-feeding by controlling or removing easy access to the breast, no longer an object of desire, as they submitted the child to social law in the production of new citizens.<sup>153</sup>

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ed., The Selected Melanie Klein (New York: The Free Press, 1986), "Introduction," 20, and "Notes on Some Schizoid Mechanisms," 180-183.

<sup>150</sup> Copjec, "Vampires, Breast-Feeding, and Anxiety," 26, 33.

<sup>151</sup> Rousseau, Emile, 46.

<sup>152</sup> Ibid., 47.

<sup>153</sup> Copjec, "Vampires, Breast-Feeding, and Anxiety," 33-35.

This was precisely the experience Madame Roland recorded in her Mémoires.<sup>154</sup> As an avowed follower of Rousseau, she breast-fed her daughter and took on the role of primary nurturer, an uncommon position for women of her class in 1781. The relationship with her daughter became a drama for control and emotional domination, which she described in minute detail. Torn between conflicts of bodily sensuality and virtuous chastity, Madame Roland undertook breast-feeding not for her daughter's benefit but for her own self-justification. By suffering as a mother, she hoped to gain emotional power and moral immunity.<sup>155</sup>

Girodet's Deluge undermined the concept that the family, in Rousseauian terms a natural society and the oldest in the social order, was the new solid foundation of the state; the figures corresponded to those associated with Aeneas's flight from the burning of Troy to Rome and his subsequent laying the foundations of a new civilization vividly made this point. In spite of its mixed reception and disturbing treatment of the subject, Girodet's painting won the Prix décennaux of 1810 over David's Sabine Women. In the Report on the progress of the visual arts since 1789

<sup>154</sup> Outram, 127. Madame Roland was executed on November 8, 1793 by the Jacobins for allegedly being a dangerous influence on her husband, Jean-Marie Roland, Minister of the Interior in 1792-93, and on members of the group called Girondins.

<sup>155</sup> Ibid., 143-145. Ironically, Madame Roland's subsequent relationship with her daughter deteriorated and her efforts to tutor as a moral duty became increasingly grim and enforced.

issued by the Beaux-Arts de l'Institut de France in 1808, the complicated political and professional rivalries under Napoleon's reorganization of the Institut surfaced. The Report renounced the regime's celebration of David as First Painter and an astute reader would have been able to predict the unfortunate outcome of the Prix décennaux. Girodet's Deluge was given special praise for the beauty of its drawing and the power of its execution. Most significant, the Report established priority to traditional over contemporary history paintings or those representative of national character.<sup>156</sup> However, Girodet had audaciously challenged traditional assumptions about history painting when he insisted that Deluge was not related to biblical or literary sources. He claimed it was just a flood similar to a recent one in the Swiss Alps, a subject typically executed as a genre painting. In effect, he disassociated his work from the premise of history painting but expected it to be considered as such by virtue of its heroic nude figures with references to Michelangelo and its monumental scale.<sup>157</sup>

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<sup>156</sup> See Grigsby for her discussion of the complicated warring factions that determined the results of the Prix décennaux, 52-99.

<sup>157</sup> *Ibid.*, 368. At his funeral, Quatremère de Quincy attributed Girodet's inclination to flaunt his ability to draw perfect anatomical specimens as a fault of a culture that no longer commissioned meaningful art. The only purpose he found for Girodet's art was a demonstration of the artist's knowledge and virtuosity with a brush, 372-373.

In the heated debate about history painting and its relationship to history that preceded the Prix décennaux, Girodet's Deluge was supported by the well known art critic Jean-Baptiste-Bon Boutard who wrote for the Journal des Débats (renamed Journal de l'Empire during Napoleon's reign) and its owners Louis-François Bertin, or Bertin l'aîné, and his younger brother Bertin de Veaux, all considered Royalists. The Deluge was celebrated by Boutard for its neutrality against the classicism of David that was now seen as overly refined and lacking emotional expression.<sup>158</sup> The award for traditional history painting to Girodet's Deluge, a natural disaster, separated history painting from the past and offered only universal expressivity. David's Coronation of 1807 won the prize for national history painting instead of Antoine-Jean Gros's Bonaparte among the Plague-stricken at Jaffa of 1804, and reduced that category to one of official subservience to political power. The results had the effect of severing the two categories and depleted them of the tensions and complexities commensurate with antique history of the past and historical events of the recent past--each with an implied metaphorical function.<sup>159</sup>

Deluge was predominately read as a painting that displayed Girodet's artistic ingenuity and depicted a

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<sup>158</sup> Ibid., 428.

<sup>159</sup> Ibid., 469-471. The Napoleonic regime had sponsored David's Sabine Women and Gros's Jaffa for the prizes.

dramatic event with no antecedent in past history and no particular precedent in the immediate past. By these terms references to its contemporary context, specifically post-revolutionary instability, could be elided. I would argue that the painting of Deluge can be read on several levels-- as a painting of sublime terror, popular at the time, and as a painting that subliminally expressed ambivalence toward revolutionary rhetoric and anxiety in the aftermath of the Revolution, particularly with regard to the reformulation and importance placed on the family. If wholeness, the unity of a homogeneous nature, was desired to offset the fear of the fragmenting instability unleashed by the Terror, the family could not produce this effect. Although conceived of as a unit, the family is the site of difference of the most fundamental kind--male in opposition to female, primitive infant in opposition to adult.

Girodet lived most of his life outside the confines of a family, but his writings indicate that he had very strong feelings about the importance of family and reveal his consistent desire to be involved in family matters, whether his own or others. In letters to his friends, his comments reveal his intimate knowledge of their families and he never failed to express his concern for them. He treated his students as if they were family, perhaps in replication of the atmosphere in David's studio. To Bernardin de Saint-Pierre, he expressed pleasure at being received as part of his circle: "I have felt a true delight to see myself

welcomed with friendship and kindness by a respectable father, celebrated writer, who, surrounded by his young and interesting family, in the middle of success that he enjoys and of which he is worthy . . . has willingly received me by the title of friend, and permitted me to sometimes mix my hollow dreams with his instructive conversations."<sup>160</sup>

It was Saint-Pierre, the disciple of Rousseau and the père respectable, who had written the popular novel about two families without fathers. But it was Rousseau himself, the advocate of family virtues based on the authority of the father, who wrote the novel, Julie, or the New Eloise published in 1761, that can be interpreted as an equivocation about his very own concepts.<sup>161</sup> The family depicted in Girodet's Deluge is closer to the underlying content of Julie than Rousseau's political treatises. According to Hunt, in Rousseau's novel the father vacillates between the authoritarian patriarch and the caring, loving father when he forbids Julie to marry her tutor and lover,

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<sup>160</sup> "J'ai éprouvé un véritable délice de me voir accueillir avec amitié et bonté par un père respectable, écrivain célèbre, qui, entouré de sa jeune et intéressante famille, au milieu du bonheur don't il jouit et don't il est digne, . . . a bien voulu me recevoir à titre d'ami, et me permettre de mêler quelquefois mes songes creux à ses conversations instructives." Girodet, Oeuvres posthumes, vol. 2, 272.

<sup>161</sup> Rousseau, Discourse on Political Economy, 210. For Rousseau the authority of the father is necessary for a few reasons, but most particularly he thought it was natural. First, women are periodically indisposed and unavailable and, second, a father must have the right to control the conduct of his wife to insure that the children he is forced to support and raise belong to him and no other.

Saint-Preux.<sup>162</sup> In Tony Tanner's analysis of Julie, the book reveals not only a sense of "imminent crisis in the particular family structure on which Western society was based, but carries within it a sense of doom concerning the very emotions and institutions that the book strives to celebrate."<sup>163</sup> When Julie cannot marry her lover, she attempts to establish a community of total harmony within her father's house at Clarens. The demise of the house of Clarens occurs when Julie falls into a lake to save her son and later dies from exposure. The "family" was built on a dream of unity to overcome Julie's secret desire, subverted by her father. As has already been noted, the word and power of the father were being questioned during the mid-eighteenth century at about the time of Rousseau's novel. For novels of the period the question raised was just what did the word of the father hold together.<sup>164</sup>

Julie portends the deficiencies of the bourgeois family and the demise of la maison paternelle. In retrospect, with Rousseau's Confessions as witness to his lifetime search for transparency in relationships that always seemed to elude him, it seems strange and almost transgressive that he denied himself the opportunity to invent a successful

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<sup>162</sup> Hunt, The Family Romance, 24.

<sup>163</sup> Tony Tanner, "Julie and 'La Maison paternelle': Another look at Rousseau's La Nouvelle Héloïse," in Jean-Jacques Rousseau, ed. Harold Bloom (New York: Chelsea House Publishers, 1988), 120.

<sup>164</sup> Ibid., 135.

idyllic union in his novel to further his political polemics. In the same vein, Girodet's decision to paint a doomed family in the aftermath of the Revolution and in the midst of the Empire appears to be a similar kind of perverse act. Chaussard's warning about the dangerous appeal of melodrama was not far off the mark. The carefully planned self-inflicted wound may be a melodramatic act, but it is also a sign of deep ambivalence and anxiety.

By 1805, Girodet had been adopted by Doctor Trioson. It has been conjectured that Trioson made this gesture after his own children died, in order to insure that Girodet would inherit his estate. Delécluze stated soon after Girodet's death that he was Trioson's natural son. However, this has never been substantiated.<sup>165</sup> With Girodet's penchant for self-promotion, as already noted in his letters from Rome

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<sup>165</sup> "Girodet was the natural son of M. Trioson and of a kept woman whose name our painter guarded. I have heard that one spoken about formerly, but at the moment of the Girodet's death, I have been diverted from this idea by the niece who has appeared all at once and who must inherit a great deal from this poor Girodet. One is assured that he was very far from having any tenderness for this woman whom he saw only one time. But, with all that, how does it happen that Girodet, natural child, has a niece who inherits all his goods, as if those relatives were legitimate?" "Girodet était fils naturel de M. Trioson et d'une femme entretenue dont notre peintre a conservé le nom. J'avais entendu parler de cela vaguement autrefois; mais, au moment de la mort de Girodet, j'ai été détourné de cette idée par la nièce qui est apparue tout à coup et qui doit hériter du bien de ce pauvre Girodet. On assure qu'il était fort loin d'avoir de la tendresse pour cette femme qu'il n'a vue qu'une fois. Mais, avec tout, cela, comment se fait-il que Girodet, enfant naturel, a une nièce qui hériter de tout son bien, comme si toute cette parenté était légitime?" Etienne Jean Delécluze, Journal de Delécluze 1824-1828 (Paris: Editions Bernard Grasset, 1948), 65.

and subsequently his articles in journals and his autobiographical epic poem Le Peintre, it seems logical to imagine that Girodet himself perpetuated these rumors to amplify the melodrama of his life as the misunderstood artist of genius.<sup>166</sup>

The substitute or naturalized father, the one Girodet wanted and desired to please with a painting that reconstituted him as the good citizen and man of virtue, died in 1815. In a letter to his old friend and student, Pannetier, Girodet described Trioson during his last days as stoic, noble, and brave. He sketched him on his deathbed (fig. 16) and when Trioson died, Girodet wrote to Pannetier that he had sent for a sculptor. "I await him with the utmost impatience. My intention is to have executed the bust of my father in marble, which will not leave Bourgoin, and which I will place in his apartment."<sup>167</sup> Finally, the image of the father would be secured, arrested and stabilized in death. The substitute for the absent father would now be fully formed as a three-dimensional representation of the deceased, not a mere sketch on paper or painting on canvas, but still a fragment of a body part.

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<sup>166</sup> See Libby, 258-261, for a discussion about Girodet's efforts to "write" his life, carried on after his death by Coupin.

<sup>167</sup> "Je l'attends avec la dernière impatience. Mon intention est de faire exécuter en marbre le buste de mon père, qui ne quittera pas le Bourgoin, et que je placerai dans son appartement." Girodet, Oeuvres posthumes, vol. 2, 333.

The head, severed in the sculptural process, would be restored and immobilized.<sup>168</sup>

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<sup>168</sup> Girodet moved into the château de Bourgoin in 1815. Jacqueline Pruvost-Auzas, "Musée Girodet à Montargis," La Revue du Louvre 18 (1968): 356.

CHAPTER TWO  
IN DEFENSE OF THE MOTHERLAND

Ah, but he is mad, Girodet? he is mad or I no longer understand anything about the art of painting; those are crystalline figures he has made for us. With his beautiful talent he will never do anything but foolish things, he has no common sense.<sup>1</sup>

--Jacques-Louis David, 1802

. . . Girodet's deliriously congested confrontation of ectoplasmic figures from Macpherson's Ossian with an assembly of specifically identifiable Napoleonic military heroes, a painting that . . . immediately proves inadequate any simple-minded distinction between the so-called neo-classic and romantic. . . . the ambiance is one of a moon-struck irrationality that defies Davidian laws of gravity and perspective.<sup>2</sup>

--Robert Rosenblum, 1975

"Personnages de cristal," "ectoplasmic figures"--the language to describe the painting of Girodet's Ossian Receiving the Shades of the French Heroes, Salon of 1802 (fig. 17), has changed very little since David pronounced

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<sup>1</sup> "Ah, ça! mais il est fou, Girodet? il est fou, ou je n'entends plus rien à l'art de la peinture; ce sont des personnages de cristal qu'il nous a faits là. Avec son beau talent il ne fera jamais que des sottises, il n'a pas le sens commun." Étienne-Jean Delécluze, Journal de Delécluze 1824-1828 (Paris: Éditions Bernard Grasset, 1948), 67.

<sup>2</sup> Robert Rosenblum, "Painting Under Napoleon 1800-1814," French Painting 1774-1830: The Age of Revolution (The Detroit Institute of Arts, 1975), 162-163.

his famous judgment to Delécluze. David's rejection of Girodet's work was one incentive for art historians to reconsider his placement within the style of neoclassicism as indicated by Rosenblum. Art historians, in order to make a case for the importance of Girodet's work, have taken this cue from David as their rationale to proclaim Girodet the quintessential proto-romantic artist. Girodet is, thus, in a position of anticipating the work of Géricault and his reputation is recovered by his insertion within the canon of romantic art.<sup>3</sup> This tendency to associate Girodet with romanticism was augmented by his association with the Ossian poems, based on which, as mentioned in Chapter One, Girodet had already made some compositions before leaving Italy. His interest in the poems was not confined to his work for Napoleon; seventeen of his ossianic drawings not linked to the Napoleonic commission were exhibited at the Musée

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<sup>3</sup> See Brown, 365-368. Brown concluded that Girodet was closer to the Romantics, particularly Géricault, than the Davidians Gros and Gérard because he was a pioneer of individuality and innovation. See also George Levitine, "L'Ossian de Girodet et l'actualité politique sous le Consulat," Gazette des Beaux Arts 48 (October 1956): 39. Levitine wrote that Ossian was a manifesto of pre-Romanticism. Another writer who has made similar claims for his work is James H. Rubin, "An Early Romantic Polemic: Girodet and Milton," in Art Quarterly 35 (Autumn 1972): 210-238. This also was the intent of French art historians Jacqueline Pruvost-Auzas and Daniel Ternois in "Dessins de Girodet, à sujets ossianiques," La Revue du Louvre 23 (1973): 270. Thomas Crow's writing on Girodet is an exception as well as Susan Houghton Libby's dissertation which analyses Girodet's claim of originality.

Girodet in 1989.<sup>4</sup> Interest in Ossian on the part of Girodet and other artists in the early nineteenth century has been interpreted as a romantic impulse in art historical texts.<sup>5</sup> But, as Rosenblum pointed out, distinctions between neoclassicism and romanticism are not that simple.<sup>6</sup> Stylistic considerations of the Ossian phenomenon have removed the subject from its original historical context--the latter half of the eighteenth century. I would argue that the strange juxtaposition of Napoleon's dead military officers with the ghosts from The Works of Ossian by James Macpherson (1736-1796) reveals more about the conceptualization of modern nationalism and the myth of primitive origins than stylistic definitions during this period of transformation after the Revolution. The revolutionary concept of modern nationalism was born in 1789 with the Declaration of the Rights of Man and Citizens; this document transferred sovereignty from the King to the general will of "the people," essentially the French nation. The constitutional monarchy the Declaration envisioned was not one based on a democratic society so much as a secular state that guaranteed private property and maintained a

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<sup>4</sup> La Legende d'Ossian illustrée par Girodet, ed. Sylvain Bellenger and Jean-Michel Pianelli (Montargis: Musée Girodet, 1989).

<sup>5</sup> See Ossian, exhibition catalogue organized by Hanna Hohl and Hélène Toussaint (Paris: Editions des Musée Nationaux, 1974).

<sup>6</sup> Rosenblum, "Painting Under Napoleon," 162. See also Rosenblum's Transformations in Late Eighteenth Century Art.

propertied oligarchy. It was the identification of "the people" with "the nation" that was revolutionary.<sup>7</sup>

According to Levitine, Girodet's Ossian suffered from indifference and was forgotten.<sup>8</sup> One reason for the dismissal of the painting in the mid-nineteenth century was the judgement accepted by then that Macpherson's poems were forgeries. The Highlands Society of Edinburgh, in an attempt to resolve the controversy over Macpherson's poems, reported in 1805 that an oral tradition of poetry existed in the Highlands but that nothing was found that corresponded to Macpherson's story or text. In a more definitive study that compared Gaelic poetry to Macpherson's, stylistically and ethnologically, made from 1850 to 1870, it was established that his poetry was his own invention.<sup>9</sup> Thus, paintings based on ossianic themes signified an embarrassing association with a forgery and received little attention until recently. The painting's ultimate failure--in its own time Napoleon was unenthusiastic, the critics dismayed, and today it is mainly viewed as a strange artifact from a troubling historical period--is also indicative of the decline of history painting and its official sponsorship as a vehicle to communicate philosophical and moral values

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<sup>7</sup> Eric Hobsbawm, The Age of Revolution, 1789-1848 (New York: Vintage Books, 1996. Originally published in 1962), 59-60.

<sup>8</sup> Levitine, "L'Ossian de Girodet," 39.

<sup>9</sup> Henry Okun, "Ossian in Painting," Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes 30 (1967): 329-330.

embodied in the subjects of ancient themes to a broad audience.<sup>10</sup>

Since Girodet painted Hippocrates in 1792, the debate over the proper subject of history painting had undergone a dramatic change. Academic control over the Salon ended in 1791. The same year the Salon was open to all works of art at the recommendation of the Commune des arts to the National Assembly. By 1796 the Salon was changed at the request of Pierre Bénézech, minister of interior, from its biennial status to an annual Salon to accommodate the increased number of artists. To the dismay of academicians who complained bitterly, the result was a deterioration in quality of work particularly in the category of history painting. The outcome of the reformed Salon was the inclusion of additional works that were small in scale and stylistically varied to accommodate the burgeoning bourgeois market.<sup>11</sup> An eclectic display of conflicting ideologies characterized the Salon, but the dominant theme supported by the Directory was contemporary history.<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> See Diane Kelder, "Aspects of 'Official' Painting and Philosophic Art 1789-1799," (Ph.D. diss., Bryn Mawr College, 1966. New York: Garland Publishing, Inc., 1976), 157-158.

<sup>11</sup> Patricia Mainardi, The End of the Salon: Art and the State in the Early Third Republic (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 16-17.

<sup>12</sup> William Olander, "Pour Transmettre à la postérité: French Painting and Revolution 1774-1795," (Ph.D. diss., New York University, 1983), 339.

In 1800 Girodet and Gérard received commissions from the architects Charles Percier and his partner Pierre-Louis Fontaine, who were in charge of the decoration of Napoleon's country house at Malmaison, for paintings to be placed in the great reception hall.<sup>13</sup> Girodet's first composition for this project was the depiction of Napoleon as Hercules with a club in the act of defeating a fire breathing monster, a reference to the attempt on the life of the First Consul December 24, 1800, with the machine infernale, an explosive device. Percier advised Girodet to abandon this idea.<sup>14</sup> The profusion of symbols during the early years of revolution was indicative of the importance placed on visual representation of the new order. With the revolution of 1792 the state, obligated to change the official seal and image of the republic, officially adopted the female allegory of Liberty.<sup>15</sup> At the same time Hercules had vied with the female allegorical figure to represent the new republic and was associated with the Terror of 1793-94. Specifically, the emergence of Hercules coincided with a reaction against women actively participating in

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<sup>13</sup> Brown, 183.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid., 183-184.

<sup>15</sup> Maurice Agulhon, Marianne into Battle: Republican Imagery and Symbolism in France, 1789-1880 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981), 17-18.

revolutionary events beginning with the assassination of Marat by Charlotte Corday on July 13, 1793. In October 1793 the queen was guillotined; in November Olympe de Gouges and Madame Roland, who were found guilty of political activism, followed the queen to the guillotine. All three women were accused of being unnatural for neglecting the virtuous duties of their sex.<sup>16</sup> In the meantime, the Convention had outlawed all women's clubs in October 1793 to save the republic from the danger of disorder, supposedly caused by female hysteria. For the radical government Hercules, a giant colossal power, symbolized an alliance between the deputies and the popular classes of Paris. At the same time, the figure of Hercules made it perfectly clear that men were the active participants and women were secondary and dependent. After 1799 the image of Hercules slowly faded only to be revived in 1848 on French coins.<sup>17</sup> Girodet's first choice of Hercules as the personification of Napoleon reveals his awareness of the importance of new visual symbolic representations created after the Revolution.

According to Coupin, Girodet visited Gérard and discovered that his painting for the Napoleonic commission

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<sup>16</sup> Hunt, The Family Romance, 120.

<sup>17</sup> Hunt, Politics, Culture, and Class, 104-115.

was a scene depicting the poems of Ossian. Coupin speculated that due to the rivalry between the two for public attention, Girodet was determined to compete and chose the same subject.<sup>18</sup> This has been one of the accepted rationales for Girodet's use of Ossian. The other often stated reason for the interest of both artists in Ossian was the well-known fact that the poems were favorites of Napoleon. Macpherson's first volume entitled Fragments of ancient poetry, collected in the Highlands of Scotland, and translated from the Gaelic or Erse language was published in Edinburgh in June 1760. Fingal, an ancient epic poem, in six books followed in 1761; Temora, an ancient epic poem in eight books appeared in 1763. The complete works were published in 1765 as The Works of Ossian.<sup>19</sup> With its exaltation of nature and strong emotions, Ossian perfectly reflected Rousseau's imagined first stage of language and of nations when poetry was the language of savages, who expressed their feelings directly without the hindrance of reason. Rousseau favored this stage and it fascinated Europeans in the mid-eighteenth century as they consumed travel reports from far-away places.<sup>20</sup> Poems from Ossian

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<sup>18</sup> Pierre-Alexandre Coupin, "Notice historique," vol. 1, xv.

<sup>19</sup> Okun, 327.

<sup>20</sup> Rousseau, Essay on the Origin of Languages, 12-17.

were first translated in France as early as 1760 when Anne-Robert-Jacques Turgot published the Fragments taken from the London Chronicle in the Journal Étranger. Denis Diderot (1713-1784) was enthusiastic about the new poetry and translated several pieces published by Friedrich Melchior Grimm in his Correspondence littéraire. In 1761 the Journal Étranger published the volume of Fingal. Between 1776 and 1848, fourteen separate editions were published in France. The most significant was Pierre Le Tourneur's translation of 1777, the first to include the complete works. But it was the translations in Italian by Abbé Melchior Cesarotti, starting in 1762 with Fingal, that captured the attention of a young Napoleon who was already enamored of stories about French chivalry. Cesarotti's translations were reprinted seven times from 1763 to 1795; eight editions appeared from 1801 to 1829.<sup>21</sup>

Gérard and Girodet were not the first French artists drawn to the work of Macpherson. The characteristics of Ossian's world appeared to coincide with those described and admired by Rousseau in his search for primitive origins to find a model for man when he lived close to a natural state. The impulse to look toward the past for primitive models had

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<sup>21</sup> Paul Van Tieghem, Le Prémantisme: Études d'histoire littéraire Européenne (Geneva: Slatkine Reprints, 1973. Reprint of Paris editions 1924-1947), 224-226. see also Paul J.

widespread appeal around 1800 in aesthetic circles; thus, the ideas that for Rousseau were theoretical ruminations became transferred to the material world of artifacts. In France, Jean-Baptiste Seroux d'Agincourt (1730-1814) was the first antiquarian to record nonclassical art and revived an interest in Romanesque ruins. His student Jacques Nicolas Paillot de Montabert (1771-1849) became the theoretician of the first group of artists, known as the Méditateurs or Barbus, to rebel from David's studio around 1799 after their attack on the Sabines painting.<sup>22</sup> De Montabert developed quasi-mystical beliefs about art's evolution from sacred seeds originating in a primitive world. He saw ancient forms of art as repositories of simplicity and greatness without the technical artifice he associated with human vanity.<sup>23</sup> The Méditateurs in their search for inspiration embraced the poems of Ossian because they were supposedly more primitive than those of Homer. The first French painting devoted to Ossian was by David's student, Paul Duqueylar ((1771-1845), who shared the ideas of the rebellious sect but was probably not a member. His painting

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deGategno, James Macpherson (Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1989), 119-123.

<sup>22</sup> James H. Rubin, "New Documents on the 'Méditateurs': Baron Gérard, Mantegna, and French Romanticism circa 1800," Burlington Magazine 117 (December 1975): 785-787.

<sup>23</sup> Levitine, The Dawn of Bohemianism, 100-105.

Ossian Singing the Funeral Hymn of a Maiden was exhibited in the Salon of 1800 and received the enthusiastic support of the Méditateurs while critics disapproved of its primitivistic style, which they compared to medieval art.<sup>24</sup>

The range of ideas about primitivism in the early nineteenth century is demonstrated by those of Humbert de Superville (1770-1849), who lived in Paris from 1800-1802, before his association with the Royal Institute of the Netherlands in 1809. Superville's Essay on Absolute Signs in Art set forth a system for a universal graphic language of linear and colored signs--linked to his theory that myths and cosmologies resulted from primitive man's primordial encounter with the universe. According to him all cultural myths started from these same premises.<sup>25</sup> Superville became preoccupied with earlier forms of art: Persian, Greek, Egyptian, trecento Italian, and art from the Pacific. He believed that the early primal experiences of man were more clearly recognizable in older artifacts.<sup>26</sup> Just as Rousseau imagined a universal language of gestures and poetry, de Superville imagined a universal vocabulary of signs in art

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<sup>24</sup> Ibid., 111-113.

<sup>25</sup> Barbara Maria Stafford, Symbol and Myth: Humbert de Superville's Essay on Absolute Signs in Art (Cranbury, New Jersey: Associated University Presses, Inc., 1979), 22.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid., 124.

for the collective unconscious, the spiritual physiognomy of man.<sup>27</sup>

This obsession with notions that the past presented a purer, simpler life expressed general anxieties about progress associated with industrialization. The sentiments in Ossian paralleled sentiments of the mid-eighteenth century about change and loss. Ossian is the last of his family to survive and he laments the passing heroic age; the poems are about the idealization of a lost past.

Macpherson, himself, experienced the change first-hand. He grew up in the Highlands--site of Ossian, considered home to uncouth, uncivilized, and uncultured savages--and his education at the University of Aberdeen reflected the conflicting attitudes toward this period of transition. His society felt threatened by the corrupt civilization of Britain; he was alternately taught by those who exalted the purity of the Gaelic language and those who preferred the refinement of art and the morality of civilization.<sup>28</sup>

Macpherson's misguided project reflects these currents of conflict. He conflated the two tendencies by converting oral ballads from vulgar sources--for most no original manuscripts were found--into a highly literary epic form

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<sup>27</sup> Ibid., 176.

replete with the refined language of an eighteenth century sensibility.<sup>29</sup> Was he a fabricator? The history of literature considered him one for passing off his own work as that of Ossian, an ancient bard. The truth is now viewed as more complicated. Essentially, Macpherson approached the work of translating oral material into literary texts with great freedom, as he had no models to follow.<sup>30</sup>

The poems are revealing for reasons other than questions of their authenticity. They participated in a unique period when traditions were perceived as disappearing. The lost past had become a by-product of progress. One of the intellectual debates of the eighteenth century centered on the relationship between history and fiction. Macpherson's work might have been acceptable if presented as historical fiction--a concept in its infancy. At this time ancient literature was of greater historical value than modern reconstructions of the past.<sup>31</sup> A

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<sup>28</sup> Fiona J. Stafford, The Sublime Savage (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1988), 36.

<sup>29</sup> David Hill Radcliffe, "Ossian and the Genres of Culture," Studies in Romanticism 31 (Summer 1992): 219-221

<sup>30</sup> Anja Gunderloch, "18th Century Literary Fraud and Oral Tradition: The 'Real' Ossian," in Orality, Literacy, and Modern Media, ed. Dietrich Scheunemann (Columbia, So. Carolina: Camden House, Inc., 1996), 45.

<sup>31</sup> Ian Haywood, The Making of History: A Study of the Literary Forgeries of James Macpherson and Thomas Chatterton in Relation

fascination with cultural extinction was felt prior to the appearance of Ossian. In this light, Macpherson's "forgery" could be seen as an "imaginative making of history by the past itself, a recuperation of the 'first original.'"<sup>32</sup> The project of recuperating the past before it was lost had another purpose--it was essential in the formation of modern nationalism.

Notions of primitive origins were not only influential in aesthetic considerations of art and literature from the past and of the art of non-European peoples, but were utilized in the mid-eighteenth and early nineteenth century to promote myths of origin to bring large geographic areas of disparate peoples together--to unify them into a seemingly seamless whole. Rousseau's social contract anticipated the theory of the nation as a totality--as an objective entity based on historical conditions that ostensibly would make the contract of shared manners, morals, and religion possible.<sup>33</sup> Another perspective on Macpherson's Ossian is its participation in the invention of a tradition as part of the paraphernalia associated with the historical innovation of the concept of the nation. The

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to Eighteenth-Century Ideas of History and Fiction (Rutherford: Fairleigh Dickenson University Press, 1986), 11.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid., 71-72.

<sup>33</sup> Althusser, 98.

paradox of modern nations is their claim to have roots in remote antiquity.<sup>34</sup> For a time Macpherson succeeded in giving Scotland its own national epic, something that was perceived as lacking in Scottish literature.<sup>35</sup> The discrepancy inherent in primitive origins of modern nations is exemplified by the creation of Ossian itself. What had been designated as a people with a distinct Highland culture was in fact an overflow of people from Ireland in the fifth century. The imposition of an independent Highland tradition based on literature stolen from the Irish onto the whole Scottish nation was accomplished in the later eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries.<sup>36</sup> There was another reason for this transfer.

The appearance of Macpherson's works coincided with the forced decline of Highland culture from 1745. The Highlanders with their own language, Gaelic, which had no connection with what was designated "Scottish," were always a feared entity, occasionally preying on the Lowlanders. A

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<sup>34</sup> Hobsbawm, Eric, "Introduction: Inventing Traditions," in The Invention of Tradition, ed. Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), 13-14.

<sup>35</sup> Gunderloch, 45.

<sup>36</sup> Hugh Trevor-Roper, "The Invention of Tradition: The Highland Tradition of Scotland," The Invention of Tradition, ed. Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1983), 15-17. It was claimed by Macpherson and the Rev. John Macpherson (unrelated), who wrote the historical context for the poems of Ossian, that the invaders from Ireland were the

decision was made by the mid-eighteenth century to destroy their culture by ending their isolation and mixing their culture with the rest of Britain. Gaelic was legally suppressed--indeed, an entire way of life was destroyed.<sup>37</sup> Macpherson might be accused of a kind of fraud other than literary: allowing the erasure of the Highlanders to seem poetically painless.

Macpherson's activity stands as an emblem for the movement of his culture into Britain, and his picture is one of ease and humility, of handing the dark past to the present, the mountain people to the Lowlanders, with one easy gesture. . . . His fraud is in his ease. He substitutes simplicity for nakedness, and in doing so he makes it seem that the mixing of the Highlander with the rest of Britain, the whisking away of the tartan, is painless, or even joyful (the joy of grief).<sup>38</sup>

With a few substitutions of proper nouns, this statement might serve to describe the way in which Girodet's painting commemorates Napoleon's military forays. This is indeed a strange continuum--first Macpherson handed over the Highlanders to Britain; then, Girodet graciously offered them to Napoleon's warriors in a feast of peace and

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Caledonians who had an ancient history in Scotland and had resisted Roman armies.

<sup>37</sup> Peter T. Murphy, "Fool's Gold: The Highland Treasures of Macpherson's Ossian," *ELH* 53 (Fall 1986): 568-569. According to Murphy, the Highlands were also vulnerable internally to the loss of their culture by their leaders' attraction to the economic and social benefits of exchanges with the Lowlands, Edinburgh, and London.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*, 587-588.

friendship. Girodet wrote the following description of his painting for the livret of the Salon:

Exposition of the subject: The ghosts of French heroes, who died for their country, led by Victory, come to inhabit the aerial Elysee where the ghosts of Ossian and of his courageous warriors make haste to offer them, in this immortal and glorious sojourn, the Festival of Peace and Friendship.<sup>39</sup>

Girodet's painting appeared after Napoleon's military expedition into Egypt in 1798-99. This expedition is now seen as a transition in Europe's relationship with the non-European world. Egypt was clearly seen as barbaric by the scientific community that accompanied Napoleon, and justification was ample for its conquest and exploitation in the name of progress.<sup>40</sup> One connection between Macpherson's Ossian and Girodet's depiction of Ossian with Napoleonic officers is the parallel between England's and France's attitudes towards other people--their one most closely shared experience. The modern nation state of France was created during the Napoleonic years through military prowess and administrative organizational techniques, not because of

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<sup>39</sup> "Exposition du sujet: Les ombres des héros français, morts pour la Patrie, conduites par la Victoire, viennent habiter l'Élysée aérien où les ombres d'Ossian et de ses valeureux guerriers s'empressent de leur donner dans ce séjour d'immortalité et de gloire, la fête de la Paix et de l'Amitié." Hohl and Toussaint, 83.

<sup>40</sup> Stuart Woolf, "The Construction of a European World-view in the Revolutionary Napoleonic Years," Past & Present 137 (November 1992): 85-87.

any popular consensus regarding nationalism.<sup>41</sup> Girodet's depiction of Napoleon's officers and Ossian's warriors carries with it the double signification of an erasure--the original one of Highland culture and the harsh reality of the Napoleonic wars. As Rosenblum noted, Girodet's painting with its "ambiance of moonstruck irrationality" served Napoleon well by glamorizing "these brutal military truths with an aura of remoteness and adventure."<sup>42</sup>

Prior to his expedition in Egypt, Napoleon's armies had triumphantly passed through Italy and at Napoleon's insistence, forced contract-treaties on the vanquished "Pope or Duke, specifying the cession of works of art."<sup>43</sup> In July of 1798 the procession of the Fête de la Liberté paraded Napoleon's art loot from Italy in the streets of Paris.<sup>44</sup> Napoleon's interest in looting Rome was, as Patricia Mainardi has pointed out, as much political as cultural.

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<sup>41</sup> Ibid., 98-101. Woolf's thesis is that the nation state of the Napoleonic years based on "liberalism and standardizing administrative reforms as the method to forge a unified state identity" was exported to the rest of Europe. The purpose of administrative uniformity, linguistic imposition, and pressure for social integration was to eliminate disruptive local identities, 101.

<sup>42</sup> Rosenblum, "Painting under Napoleon," 163. See also Albert Boime, Art in an Age of Bonapartism 1800-1815 (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1990), 64. Boime wrote that the Ossianic theme, "functioned to lend an air of mystery and enchantment to the sordid realities of Napoleon's imperialism."

<sup>43</sup> Patricia Mainardi, "Assuring the Empire of the Future: The 1798 Fête de la Liberté," Art Journal 48 (Summer 1989): 156.

<sup>44</sup> Ibid., 155.

Napoleon desired to take on the mantle of the historical Roman Empire of world conquest. The Fête as a cultural enterprise demonstrated that France was worthy of its leading role. Turning to the arts of France, Napoleon informed the Fine Arts Section of the Institute in 1803 that he was determined to support the arts in order to surpass and efface, "La gloire d'Athenes et de l'Italie."<sup>45</sup> This desire to replace the cultural and political hegemony of the Mediterranean south might be one reason why Napoleon turned to the poems of Ossian for inspiration. The language of classicism had resonated with the themes of the ancien régime. With the loss of the king's sacred status a new cultural frame or "master fiction" was needed to define France.<sup>46</sup> If the nation were to replace the monarchy, what would be its heritage, its "master fiction" of primitive origins?

In Edmund Burke's condemnation of the French for allowing their revolution to destroy the old order, as if the latter were a model or pattern derived from nature, he suggested that if they had just looked to their earlier ancestors they would have preserved nature's method in the conduct of their state and avoided revolution.<sup>47</sup> But who

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<sup>45</sup> Martin Rosenberg, "Raphael's 'Transfiguration' and Napoleon's Cultural Politics," Eighteenth Century Studies 19 (Winter 1985/86): 204.

<sup>46</sup> Hunt, Politics, Culture, and Class, 87-89.

<sup>47</sup> Burke, 37-41.

were the ancestors of the French? In the eighteenth century this question had been addressed by Henri comte de Boulainvilliers (1658-1722) who interpreted the history of France as the history of two different peoples. He identified the conquering Franks of Germanic origin from the north as French nobility and the defeated but older inhabitants, the Gauls, as commoners.<sup>48</sup> The people known as the Gauls were originally Celtic invaders who settled in France, then referred to as Gaul, in the 3rd century B.C at the height of Celtic expansion from the shores of the Black Sea to the British Isles. By 52 B.C., when the Roman army under Caesar defeated the Celts in Gaul, the demise of Celtic Europe began. The vanquished Celtic peoples eventually retreated with their ancient culture to Britain and Ireland.<sup>49</sup> But it was the later invaders--the Franks living around the Rhine and Elbe rivers--who interested Boulainvilliers. Because of the rigor of their climate and the harshness of the land, they were naturally inclined toward war and often successfully attacked the Romans.<sup>50</sup>

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<sup>48</sup> Hannah Arendt, The Origins of Totalitarianism (New York: Harcourt Brace and Company, 1979), 162.

<sup>49</sup> See the recent contribution to the literature on the other invaders from the north, The Celts, Conquerors of Ancient Europe, written by Christiane Eluère, chief curator of the French national museums, translated by Daphne Briggs (New York: Harry N. Abrams, Inc., 1992), 79 and 133.

<sup>50</sup> Henri Comte de Boulainvilliers, Histoire de l'ancien gouvernement de la France contenant une dissertation sur son origine et abaissement, vol. 1 (Amsterdam: La Haye, 1727), 1-2.

According to Boulainvilliers in Histoire de l'Ancien Gouvernement de la France, the Franks were the heirs to the French monarchy--thus, the ancestors of the aristocracy by right of conquest:

The French monarchy ought not to take the period of its establishment in the time of the Gauls, to be precise, it can only be in the reign of 'Clovis' in the year 481.

Clovis was an ambitious young man, ferocious, hardy, cruel, and very cunning; that is to say, he possessed all the qualities of a barbaric hero.<sup>51</sup>

Frenchmen were those descended from the conquerors of the North and the original inhabitants of France were their subjects.

According to François Furet,

The theme of Clovis and the Frankish invasions was of burning interest in the eighteenth century because the historians of that era saw it as the key to the social structure of their own time. They thought that the Frankish invasions were the origin of the division between nobility and commoners. . . .

The fact is that beginning in 1789 the obsession with origins, the underlying thread of all national history, came to be centered precisely on the Revolutionary break.<sup>52</sup>

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<sup>51</sup> "La Monarchie François ne doit prendre l'époque de son établissement dans les Gaules, à prendre ce terme à la rigueur de la lettre, qu'au regne de 'Clovis' en l'année 481.

Clovis étoit un jeune homme ambitieux, féroce, hardi, cruel, et très rusé; c'est-à-dire, qu'il possédoit toutes les qualitez d'un Héros barbare." Ibid., 17-19.

<sup>52</sup> François Furet, Interpreting the French Revolution, trans. Elborg Forster (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981), 2.

The birth of equality became the new myth after 1789. But the French fascination with their Teutonic aristocratic ancestors did not fade with the Revolution. The barbaric exploits of the northern invaders provided rich material for tales of passion and violence that continued to captivate the French imagination. A member of the ancien régime briefly exiled during the Revolution, François René de Chateaubriand (1768-1848) published The Martyrs in 1809. In 1810 its stories of confrontations between the barbaric warriors from the north against the Imperial Roman forces left the young Jacques-Nicolas-Augustin Thierry (1795-1856) "absolutely spellbound" and inspired him to become a historian.<sup>53</sup> His Tales of the Early Franks, published in 1840 and still available to the general public in France in a 1965 paperback edition, holds to the same class and racial distinctions outlined by Boulainvilliers.<sup>54</sup> However, in his Lettres sur l'histoire de France, Thierry clarified the

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<sup>53</sup> Augustin Thierry, Tales of the Early Franks: Episodes from Merovingian History, trans. M.F.O. Jenkins (Alabama: The University of Alabama Press, 1977), 4-5.

<sup>54</sup> Interestingly, Thierry's work suffered a similar attack from critics as Macpherson's because, like Macpherson, he adopted a similar tactic and wrote in narrative style appealing to the general reader of his time. His historical methodology was discredited during his lifetime. See M.F.O. Jenkins, "Introduction," in Augustin Thierry's Tales of the Early Franks, viii. According to Beth S. Wright, Thierry, influenced also by Sir Walter Scott's Ivanhoe determined to write history about the actions of the people as opposed to biographical history about leaders, to touch the souls of his readers and inspire them to action, Painting and History during the French Restoration: Abandoned by the Past (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 133-140.

impossibility for the French to establish their own myth of primitive origin; he wrote that the history of France from the fifth to the eighteenth century was not of a people with one common origin, "Il n'en est rien . . ."<sup>55</sup> Franks were not a single Germanic tribe; there were the Visigoths, the Burgondes, the Normands, the Saliens, and their rivals the Saxons and the Alamans. But if the Franks were not identifiable as a single ethnic group, they were unified in stories of their adventures by being characterized as barbaric in opposition to the civilized Gauls with their Roman manners. Thierry's tales are organized around his preoccupation with an extreme polarization of Teutonic and Gallic manners of behavior. Thierry conceded, however, the importance of the Gauls who had virtue on their side.<sup>56</sup>

Macpherson's manipulation of the Gaelic ballads combined similar tales of virtuous people, the warriors of Morven, who were juxtaposed with their enemies the warriors of Lochlin, barbarous in nature like the Teutonic ancestors of the French aristocracy. The enemies of the Celtic Caledonians from the Highlands of Scotland were Germano-Scandinavian and, thus, linked to the Franks. Macpherson

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<sup>55</sup> "It is not anything like that . . . ." Augustin Thierry, Lettres sur l'histoire de France (Paris: Just Tessier, Libraire, 1836), 31.

<sup>56</sup> See Augustin Thierry, Essai sur l'histoire de la formation et des progrès du tiers état (Paris: Furne et Ce, Libraires-Editeurs, 1853), 3. Thierry found the origins of modern French civilization that triumphed in 1789 in the Gallo-Roman society.

attempted to fabricate a logical connection between the warriors of Lochlin and the Franks through references to Norse mythology. The character of Ossian, a warrior of Morven, is the personification of the eighteenth century value of virtue contrasted to the savagery of the warriors from Lochlin. Two cultural, ethical domains were intricately woven together--the language of virtue cloaked in a refined code of politeness coexisted with a masculine realm of active, fierce warriors. And both participated in the manners of the savage state as imagined and reified by Rousseau before, he claimed, civilization introduced the corrupting artifices of culture and languages of deceit.<sup>57</sup> In this context, barbarism assumed a veneer of acceptability through fascination with origins of primitive people and, in particular, origins of the French aristocracy now safely distanced by the Revolution.

The enthusiasm of the French and particularly of Napoleon for The Works of Ossian would seem to be logical. It satisfied their need for a new myth of origins to legitimize the republic and its valorization of virtue and natural passions. It combined in one work stories of two ancestors, those of the Celtic bourgeoisie and those of the Frankish aristocracy. Interest in the Celts during the Napoleonic period brought about the formation of the Celtic

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<sup>57</sup> See John Dwyer, "The Melancholy Savage," Ossian Revisited, ed. Howard Gaskill (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1991), 169.

Academy (1805-1813). For propagandistic political purposes, the Academy set out to find material evidence of Celtic settlements on French soil to verify the precedence of the Celts over Greco-Roman civilization and assert the continuity of French civilization.<sup>58</sup> In any case, a myth about northern Europeans that could be perceived as integral to the French origins of both the aristocracy and the bourgeoisie must have appealed to Napoleon, who desired to surpass the glories of ancient Rome. Now that the ancien régime was safely part of the past, what better mythology than one that glamorized the barbarism of French aristocratic origins, portrayed in Ossian as the brutish warriors of Lochlin. At the same time, the hero Ossian and the warriors of Morven served the cultural and political interests of the new regime by honoring the virtues of courageous Celts, ancestors of the bourgeoisie.

The ancient Scottish or Caledonians, and the inhabitants of a great part of Northern Europe, regarded bravery as the first and almost only virtue: for them the most valiant warriors were the most honored. . . .

These people, in spite of the excess of their bravery which sometimes degenerated into ferocity, were naturally good, generous and sympathetic. They regarded it as cowardly to mistreat a vanquished enemy. They honored good faith, practiced hospitality toward strangers and protected with all their power their oppressed friends. It is thus that they are represented in the songs attributed to Ossian, bard of

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<sup>58</sup> Stuart Woolf, "French Civilization and Ethnicity in the Napoleonic Empire," Past and Present 124 (August 1989): 103.

the third century, and son of Fingal, king of Morven, in ancient Caledonia.<sup>59</sup>

This is the introduction in Girodet's description of his painting found in his manuscripts by Coupin, possibly intended to be included in a letter to the First Consul; some of it appeared in the livret of the Salon. He emphasized the salient points to impress the general--the warrior nature of the people, at times ferocious, coupled with their virtuous behavior toward friends and enemies alike--a virtual compendium of Rousseauian attributes.

In Girodet's painting of Ossian, the warriors of Lochlin are inciting the warriors of Morven to attack the French instead of greeting them with peace. Levitine's iconographical study asserts that the painting refers to the political context of the paix continentale, celebrated on July 14, 1801, after the treaty of Lunéville was signed on February 9, 1801. This treaty consecrated peace between France and Austria while hostilities with the English continued. Conforming to Levitine's study, the warriors of

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<sup>59</sup> "Les anciens Ecosais ou Calédoniens, et les habitans d'une grande partie du nord de l'Europe, regardaient la bravoure comme la première et presque la seule vertu: chez les guerriers les plus vaillans étaient les plus honorés. . . .

"Ces peuples, malgré l'excès de leur bravoure qui dégénérait quelquefois en férocité, étaient naturellement bons, généreux et compatissans. Ils regardaient comme une lâcheté de maltraiter un ennemi vaincu. Ils honoraient la bonne foi, pratiquaient l'hospitalité envers les étrangers, et protégeaient de tout leur pouvoir leurs amis opprimés. C'est ainsi qu'ils sont représentés dans les chants attribués à Ossian, barde du troisième siècle, et fils de Fingal, roi de Morven, dans l'ancienne Calédonie." Girodet, Oeuvres posthumes, vol. 2, 289-291.

Lochlin represent the English and the Austrians the warriors of Morven.<sup>60</sup> In terms of the myth, these designations are problematic. Austrians would have a greater affinity to the warriors of Lochlin than the English. And the English are associated with the Celtic myth, source of their Arthurian legends.<sup>61</sup> It must be questioned whether Girodet would have made such a definitive overlay of associations confusing the already complicated connotations of the myth. While revealing of contemporary political events and attesting to the supposed ingenious nature of the work, a political iconographical study fails to take into consideration the obsession with myths of origin. I would suggest that both aspects of the painting were relevant at the time of its inception--the political context and the importance of Ossian as a myth of primitive origins for the French under Napoleon.

A mysteriously small, but well executed oil on wood painting titled Ossian and the French Generals, 1801 (fig. 18) surfaced after Girodet died; it was subsequently auctioned with the bulk of his work in 1825 and is now in the collection of the Louvre. This work confirms the importance of the myth in Girodet's conception of the final painting. Because of the satirical nature of the oil

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<sup>60</sup> See Levitine, "L'Ossian de Girodet," 49-51.

<sup>61</sup> Brown, also, commented on this curious reversal of roles in the painting, 195.

sketch, it has tempted some writers to consider it a transgressive response by the artist to the unenthusiastic reviews of his painting--like his vengeful gesture at the critical reception of his portrait of the actress Anne-Françoise-Elisabeth Lange (1772-1825), The New Danaë, in the Salon of 1799.<sup>62</sup> However, Brown argued that on every point the Ossian sketch fits the pattern of Girodet's working methods and is not an act of revenge. She identified the work as a preliminary composition, similar to others that Girodet did for major works, and suggested that the oil sketch was probably a study for the distribution of light and shade. Since Girodet was not a painterly painter, his extremely detailed paintings were worked out with many carefully finished drawings. Also of significance, a small detail in the upper-right corner is a leftover image from the originally conceived Hercules allegory.<sup>63</sup>

The emphasis in the sketch is on the barbaric nature of the warriors--the very characteristics that so fascinated Boulainvilliers, Chateaubriand, and later Thierry when they contemplated the Franks as their ancestral heroes. The mise

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<sup>62</sup> Girodet created a scandal which he later regretted by substituting the portrait in the Salon with a highly venomous symbolic portrait of the actress as Danaë insinuating that she was a prostitute. For a description of the iconography of the painting see George Levitine, "Girodet's 'New Danaë': The Iconography of a Scandal," Minneapolis Institute of Arts Bulletin 58/59 (1969-1970): 69-77. See also in the same publication Mario Praz, "Girodet's 'Mlle Lange as Danaë,'" 64-77.

<sup>63</sup> Brown, 207-208.

en scène--the welcome of the war heroes to a feast--has its counterpart in Norse myth--the myth of the Teutonic peoples associated with the poems of Ossian by Macpherson himself, and by Girodet's contemporaries. Walhalla is Odin's hall for heroic dead warriors. According to Levitine, Girodet's friend, the poet Jacques Delille (1738-1813), wrote a poem about Odin welcoming the French warriors to his paradise, another source for the theme of the Ossian painting.<sup>64</sup> In fact it is this myth that, for Thierry, justified and explained the bellicose nature of the Franks: "One knows that ferocity was not regarded as a stain on the character of the German warriors; this remark could apply to the Franks in a special way; because it appears that, from the formation of their league, affiliated with the cult of Odin, they shared the warlike frenzy of this religion. . . . It was a society of resolute braves who faced the enemy without fear and mercy."<sup>65</sup> In the Norse tales, single-eyed Odin, the all-father, is the god of war who watched over the battlefield with his Valkyries and provoked his warriors into states of rage and fury. The Valkyries chose who would

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<sup>64</sup> Levitine, "Girodet-Trioson: An Iconographical Study," 184.

<sup>65</sup> "L'on sait que la férocité n'était point regardée comme une tache dans le caractère des guerriers germains; et cette remarque peut s'appliquer aux Franks d'une manière spéciale; car il paraît que, dès la formation de leur ligue, affiliés au culte d'Odin; ils partageaient la frénésie belliqueuse de cette religion. . . . Elle était une société de braves résolus à se montrer devant l'ennemi sans peur et sans miséricorde." Thierry, Lettres sur l'histoire de France, 89-90.

die in battle and become one of Odin's heroes in Walhalla where they would live in glory and continue their riotous behavior while waited on by Valkyries. The Valkyries were romanticized as virgins with golden hair and pale arms; they flew over battlefields as swan-maidens or mounted Amazons. In the tales the warriors, even though dead, remained in a life-like state in preparation for Odin's final battle. This was one of the justifications Girodet made for the presence of the materialized shades in his painting: "The Calidonians believed these ghosts material; they remained the perfect resemblance. . . ." <sup>66</sup>

The conflation in the painting of Ossian, with its host of characters clearly taken from Norse and Celtic myth, is explicable on two levels. The well-known Arthurian legends are derived from Welsh poems of the Celtic myth and their identification with the English might have made the joining of Ossian with the Norse myth inevitable. <sup>67</sup> Also, Macpherson attempted to fabricate a connection between the myth of Odin and the warriors of Lochlin. According to Paul van Tieghem, the interest in primitive humanity in the eighteenth century inspired Paul Henri Mallet (1730-1807) to write the Histoire de Danemark, which appeared first in

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<sup>66</sup> "Les Caledoniens croyaient ces ombres matérielles; elles conservaient la parfaite ressemblance . . . ." Girodet, Oeuvres posthumes, 290.

<sup>67</sup> Information on the myths is from Arthur Cotterell's The Encyclopedia of Mythology (London: Anness Publishing Limited, 1996), *passim*.

1755, the completed version in 1763. He wrote a history not just of Denmark but of Europe and the invasions of the people of the North, who, rather than the Greeks and the Romans, determined the modern form of Europe. One of the epochs he described was the age belonging to Odin. By the eighteenth century there was confusion over identification of the Celts and Mallet used the term Celts to refer to Germans, Gaulois, and Scandinavians. In the last third of the eighteenth century, Ossian and the work of Mallet were essentially conceived together as the poetry and literature of the North. The principal characters share the same savage grandeur and daring courage. Mallet wrote also of Scottish-Gaelic poetry. For van Tieghem, this was evidence that Macpherson found in Mallet references for Scandinavian mythology; however, there is no confirmation that Macpherson read Mallet. But Ossian and the works of Mallet are in fundamental ways alike.<sup>68</sup> Macpherson named the deity of the Lochlin warriors Loda and in his notes directly connected Loda to Odin of the Scandinavians. There are references to the "hall of Loda"--like the Walhalla of Odin--and to "the tree of Loda." According to Macpherson's notes the word Lodā means a place of worship for Scandinavians. Whether factual or not, Macpherson's notes to his poems indicate

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<sup>68</sup> Paul van Tieghem, 107-130.

that he desired his works to be associated with the myth of Odin.<sup>69</sup>

Mallet was the first to present the ancient literature of Scandinavia, its myths, its heroes, and its morals--a different world from the Greco-Roman one known up to that time. Scholarly interest in the literary poetry of the Scandinavians coincided with the appearance of Ossian. According to van Tieghem, the Scandinavian myth was more barbaric than the ossianic poetry of Macpherson because it was authentic. The mythology of Scandinavia was opposed (more successfully) than Ossian to the mythology of the Greco-Roman world and the Germans adopted it as their national poetry--the myth of the founders of Germany. At the end of the eighteenth century this mythology was artificially recreated with an emphasis on fierce naïveté that appealed to the nobility as the history of their ancestors and, in the end, it was of more interest to the Germans than to the French.<sup>70</sup>

Attributes of the two myths share certain common threads. For instance, the otherworld of Celtic myth is a paradise where souls rested before their rebirth into the

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<sup>69</sup> James Macpherson, The Poems of Ossian, with notes by Malcolm Laing (Edinburgh: Archibald Constable and Co., 1805), vol. 1, 295-307. According to Laing, Macpherson claimed that a circle of stones or a place of worship near Drontheim was called Loden, thus connecting the two names Loda with Odin. But this is a misquote by Macpherson from Mallet; the name Loden was never applied to a circle of stones, 151-152.

<sup>70</sup> Ibid., 192-193.

world. Warrior-poet Oisín, son of Finn MacCool, spent three hundred years there before returning to Ireland. On the way he fell off his magic horse and changed into a blind old man. Walhalla, the enormous hall of Odin, is specifically for dead warriors to enjoy all the pleasures of life while continuing their warlike behavior. Both myths have a symbolic eagle. In the Norse myth the eagle sits as guardian atop Odin's cosmic tree of knowledge flapping its wings and is visited daily by a squirrel; another bird in the branches is a cock. The eagle in the Celtic myth is identified with wisdom and prophecies and accompanies shamans on their spirit-flights to the otherworld. Levitine suggested that the birds in Ossian provided evidence of its political meaning: the eagle as a stand-in for Austria and the cock for France. They could also be identified as symbols from the Norse and Celtic myths. Girodet displayed a thorough understanding of mythology in his written description of Ossian, which he contributed to the 1803 edition of François Noël's Dictionnaire mythologique, a compendium of mythologies from around the world, under Celtic mythology. In addition, Girodet provided an illustration for the frontispiece.<sup>71</sup>

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<sup>71</sup> See François Noël, Dictionnaire de la Fable, ou Mythologie Grecque, Latine, Egyptienne, Celtique, Persane, Syriaque, Indienne, Chinoise, Mahométane, Rabbinique, Slavonne, Scandinave, Africaine, Américaine, Iconologique, etc. (Paris: Chez Le Normant, Imprimeur-Librairie, 1803).

If the oil sketch is a preliminary composition, it seems clear that Girodet's initial conception for the painting placed overall importance on certain elements of the myths. The warriors of Lochlin, modeled after Odin's fierce warriors, enemies of the people of Morven, are part of the welcoming party and are ready to engage in battle with the French just as they would in Walhalla. Their eyes glower from the shadows; their faces show the spasmodic distortion of caricature--dark visages with bushy mustaches, flaring teeth, and bulbous noses (fig. 19). Included in the sketch but missing from the painting is an animal identified as a rabbit, but could it be the squirrel from Odin's tree?<sup>72</sup> It joins the flapping-winged eagle and a cock in the sky (fig. 20). The scene recalls Starno's preparation of a "feast of shells" for the Caledonians in the poem Fingal; some women play the "harps of joy,"<sup>73</sup> others with pale outstretched hands offer laurel wreaths and drinks, fulfilling the promise of all the glories and pleasures expected by warriors entering Walhalla. Girodet painted the oil sketch with an unusually exuberant, facile display of brushstrokes--the kind of looseness only seen in his

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<sup>72</sup> The most complete description of this sketch appears in Hohl and Toussaint, 87-88. However, the authors concluded that the sketch was done after the painting and demonstrates Girodet's anti-bonapartist sentiments. They cited this as another display of his vindictive nature similar to his mocking representation of Mlle Lange as The New Danaë.

<sup>73</sup> Macpherson, vol. 1, 91.

sketches. The brushstrokes seem as volatile and expressive as the effervescent and buoyant scene of pleasure mixed with impending violence and disorder.

With a commission that was meant to be decorative, Girodet attempted to revitalize history painting and in the process further his own cause in the service of Napoleon. The pre-eminence of contemporary history and in particular military scenes was the criteria set forth by the Directory for history painting and one that was well-disposed to the interests of Napoleon. For twenty-three years, starting in 1792 with the threat of a Prussian invasion, the French had waged war. The government responded by calling for art to celebrate military victories and sacrifices.<sup>74</sup> To raise history painting to the grandeur of its past, Girodet needed a symbolic program to elevate Napoleon's military incursions to the level of myth. With history painting now a more open-ended category, the non-classical poems of Ossian, already utilized by Gérard, must have seemed appropriate for his own purpose. He admitted his disingenuous project in a letter to Napoleon: "In this painting, the fruit of a long and painful effort, the importance of my subject made me

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<sup>74</sup> See Olander, 274, and Susan L. Siegfried, "Naked History: The Rhetoric of Military Painting in Postrevolutionary France," The Art Bulletin 75 (June 1993): 235. According to Siegfried, it was not until 1800 that battle paintings fully emerged to match the new ideology of war. The Salon of 1801 witnessed two important contributions to this ideology: Battle of Marengo by Louis-François Lejeune and Battle of Nazareth by Antoine-Jean Gros.

forget that I was only charged to paint a decorative painting for Malmaison."<sup>75</sup>

With such careful planning on the part of Girodet, how did his calculations to conceive a new contemporary form of history painting fall short of the enthusiastic response he desired? In a letter to the First Consul, Girodet repeated Napoleon's reaction to the work: "You said to me, general, that my idea was fortunate; that you recognized the generals, and that I had expressed the real shades."<sup>76</sup> In the same letter Girodet lamented that his enemies had sought to slander him and bring disgrace upon his work. To perpetuate his painting as the national monument—"cette apothéose de l'héroïsme français"--he believed it to be, he begged the First Consul to give him permission to have it engraved.<sup>77</sup>

The Neoclassical painter and art critic (later official Salon commentator for the Restoration monarchy) who advocated the classical formal beauty of history painting,<sup>78</sup>

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<sup>75</sup> "Dans cet ouvrage, fruit d'un travail long et pénible, l'importance de mon sujet m'a fait oublier que je n'étais chargé de peindre pour la Malmaison qu'un tableau d'agrément." Girodet, Oeuvres posthumes, vol. 2, 287-288.

<sup>76</sup> "Vous m'avez dit, général, que mon idée était heureuse, que vous reconnaissiez les généraux, et que j'avais exprimé de véritables ombres." Ibid., 296.

<sup>77</sup> Ibid., 297.

<sup>78</sup> Wright, 29 and 40.

Charles-Paul Landon summed up the critics' reaction to Girodet's painting in his review:

Some critics of an extreme severity, who do not permit an artist to sometimes indulge the fire of his imagination, have reproached the author of this ingenious composition, for having assembled in it too great a number of people of a varied nature foreign to our customary ideas. Some others, those who only look for the imitation of material objects in painting, wanted to find the purely poetic and ideal more strongly pronounced in this scene.<sup>79</sup>

By stating the various critiques of the work, Landon avoided taking a position but did point out the issue dearest to Girodet--the disagreement over the merits of artistic liberty. Girodet was too important to dismiss and so Landon presented his readers, not with the customary copy of the work in his journal, but with a sketch of Hippocrates, a reminder of Girodet's past success and continued reputation. Landon claimed that the principal merit of Ossian--the resemblance of the French heroes--would be too difficult to reproduce.

The only publication to support the painting consistently was the Journal des Débats, controlled since

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<sup>79</sup> "Des critiques d'une extrême sévérité, qui ne permettent pas qu'un artiste se livre quelquefois à la fougue de son imagination, ont reproché à l'auteur de cette composition ingénieuses, d'y avoir rassemblé un trop grand nombre de personnages d'une nature aussi variée qu'étrangère à nos idées habituelles. Quelques autres, du nombre de ceux qui ne cherchent dans la peinture que l'imitation des objets matériels, eussent voulu la retrouver plus fortement prononcée dans cette scène purement poétique et idéale." Charles-Paul Landon, "Examen des ouvrages exposés au Salon," Nouvelles des Arts, vol. 2 (1802): 65.

1799 by Bertin l'aîné and his brother Bertin de Veaux. In 1801 Bertin l'aîné was exiled by the Consulate for his Royalist leanings. The editorship of the journal was taken over by Bertin de Veaux, a life-long friend of Girodet. Others who contributed to the journal, including Chateaubriand, were royalist sympathizers who hoped for a restoration of the monarchy. Girodet's political position had shifted after his return from Italy.<sup>80</sup> This might explain his insensitivity to the portrayal of Napoleon's dead generals--thirteen were recognizable. Surely this was a reminder of losses Napoleon wanted to forget, particularly that of General Desaix, who had died in the Battle of Marengo in 1800 after rescuing Napoleon from certain defeat, a defeat that would have ended his career.<sup>81</sup> Girodet chose to place Desaix at the center of the painting. Next to Desaix is General Kléber who was left in command of Napoleon's abandoned troops in Egypt. Kléber was assassinated by an Arab in Cairo and died the same day as Desaix, June 14, 1800.<sup>82</sup> Completing the central group of officers is General Caffarelli, Napoleon's irreplaceable chief of engineers, one of the few soldiers for whom he felt great affection. Caffarelli died after a cannonball

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<sup>80</sup> Brown, 190.

<sup>81</sup> See Correlli Barnett, Bonaparte (New York: Hill and Wang, 1978), 77.

<sup>82</sup> See Alan Schom, Napoleon Bonaparte (New York: HarperCollins Publishers, Inc., 1997), 302.

shattered his arm in the doomed Syrian campaign of 1799.<sup>83</sup> Napoleon's lukewarm and sober response to the work seems reasonable in retrospect.

As Levitine pointed out, the confusing iconographical references in the painting may point to its celebration of the Treaty of Lunéville that was a result of the French defeat of the Austrians at Marengo in February 1801. As already noted in Levitine's study the warriors of Lochlin with their aggressive barbaric threats toward the French generals, are an allusion to the English, who had yet to sign a peace treaty with Napoleon at the time of the Treaty of Lunéville. The paix continentale was not yet the paix général. Girodet began his painting in the spring of 1801; the treaty of Amiens, which the English reluctantly signed on March 25, 1802, secured the paix général.<sup>84</sup> Girodet's painting was not exhibited until the summer of 1802, by which time its references to "contemporary history" were no longer relevant, and Napoleon's treaties only achieved an illusory moment of peace. Girodet's painting seemed destined not to have its moment of general recognition.

Girodet's reaction to the criticism of Ossian, a work that took fifteen months to paint and one with which he fully intended to inaugurate a new form of history painting, is included in his letter to Bernardin de Saint-Pierre:

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<sup>83</sup> Ibid., 177.

<sup>84</sup> Levitine, "L'Ossian de Girodet," 51-53.

It is this painting which, in spite of the faults one can reproach it for, of which several are real, has given me, however, the most confidence in my ability, because it is all done by my creativity, in all its parts, without my being inspired by any model, neither for the drawing, nor for the color, nor for the effects, even less for the conception. . . .

Painting which knows how to speak well to the heart under the brush of Raphael and of Poussin could still address the spirit and the imagination; these masters have proved it. Why could it not be allowed to try to extend further still the effects and the limits that these great men have known? But one gets lost in space; one no longer follows certain routes. Oh well, when one fails, it is better to fall from the sky.<sup>85</sup>

Girodet himself established the rationale for the failure of his painting to succeed. "Il est tout-à-fait de ma création, dans toutes ses parties, sans que je me sois inspiré d'aucun modèle . . . ." As the isolated artist who creates from within the reservoir of primitive genius, he has no need of models; there is no precedence. His creation is rootless: "On s'égare dans l'espace . . . des cieux." A total rupture with the past is what he proclaimed. If one is not appreciated like Poussin and Raphael, better to fall

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<sup>85</sup> "C'est ce tableau qui, malgré les défauts qu'on a pu lui reprocher, et dont plusieurs sont réels, m'a cependant le plus donné de confiance dans mon peu de forces, parce qu'il est tout-à-fait de ma création, dans toutes ses parties, sans que je me sois inspiré d'aucun modèle, ni pour le dessin, ni pour la couleur, ni pour les effets, encore moins pour la conception. . . .  
 . "La peinture qui sait si bien parler au coeur sous le pinceau de Raphaël et du Poussin, peut encore s'adresser à l'esprit et à l'imagination; ces maîtres l'ont prouvé. Pourquoi ne serait-il pas permis d'essayer d'étendre plus loin encore les effets et les bornes que ces grands hommes ont connus? Mais on s'égare dans l'espace, on ne suit plus de routes certaines.--Eh bien! quand on échouerait, il est beau de tomber des cieux." Girodet, Oeuvres posthumes, vol. 2, 277-279.

like Icarus. The comparison is his: "Icarus could not sustain it, but he gave his name to the sea Icarienne, and his fall was almost a triumph. I have not risked falling from so high, and I revolve in my clouds with my risks and perils."<sup>86</sup> Girodet preferred isolation in an imagined realm with acceptable models of genius. The paradox inherent in social contract, Rousseau's abstract ideas that demand each citizen submit his will to that of the general will, becomes apparent with the concrete example of Girodet's declaration of artistic freedom. Artistic freedom in Girodet's terms implies no institutional connections--a freedom from attachment to the regulations and conventions of community. At the same time this freedom was associated with the doctrines of the Revolution that celebrated the social contract.

But it is not Poussin and Raphael who are lost in the clouds of his painting; it is the French military with the heroes and villains of Ossian. In spite of Girodet's desire to stand apart, isolated and untouched by outside influences from the past and the present, Levitine identified Peter Paul Rubens's Disembarkment of Marie de' Medici at Marseilles of 1622 as the compositional model for Girodet's painting. Rosenblum also found classical traces of David's training

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<sup>86</sup> "Icare ne put s'y [des cieux] soutenir, mais il donna son nom à la mer Icarienne, et sa chute fut presque un triomphe. Je n'ai point risqué de tomber de si haut, et je revole dans mes nuages à mes risques et périls." Ibid., 279.

along with the "Homeric outlines of Flaxman" discernible.<sup>87</sup> Other influences have been identified with Ossian--David's Oath of Horatii of 1785 (fig. 21), a painting Girodet was entrusted to copy for David<sup>88</sup>, and David's The Oath of the Tennis Court of 1791 (fig. 22), a model for the two central figures and the crowded scene.<sup>89</sup> Not immune from compositional and stylistic models, Ossian was also not immune from participating in the political process of the time--namely nationalism as testified to by the presence of the French generals, grenadiers, sappers, dragoons, and chasseurs in their resplendent uniforms. Girodet's claim of independent, creative freedom is belied by a proposal he sent to Napoleon that advocated the enrichment and glorification of France through a system of artistic competition carefully controlled by the artistic elite for artworks honoring France and Napoleon. To persuade Napoleon to accept his regulations, he argued that art was an important means to advertise the greatness of the new nation and that Napoleon was its leader:

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<sup>87</sup> See Levitine, "L'Ossian de Girodet," 44, and Rosenblum, "Painting under Napoleon," 163. In a letter to Gérard, cited by Brown, 71, Girodet acknowledged his admiration for the Rubens Gallery in the Louvre.

<sup>88</sup> Crow, Emulation, 90.

<sup>89</sup> See the exhibition catalogue French Painting 1774-1830: The Age of Revolution (The Detroit Institute of Arts and The Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1975), 456.

Be their interpreter for the government. With your voice and following your footsteps, our warriors have eclipsed the Greeks and the Romans: with your voice again the arts are reborn, and soon our artists are going to prove to the universe that, in peace as in war, the French nation is "the Grand Nation."<sup>90</sup>

Another revolution took place in France after 1789--a revolution in warfare based not on technological advances but intellectual and political changes. The Revolution connected political rights with civic responsibilities. The citizen was obligated to the state to defend the nation in exchange for legal freedom. The natural rights of man guaranteed by the state came with the price of accepting discipline, danger, and death in defense of the state. What transformed warfare was a revolution in the use of power by the state, now with the ability to act in the name of the general will.<sup>91</sup> At this time Rousseau's Social Contract and its theory of the general will was known by a wide audience--with the revolutionary years it had replaced Julie, or the New Eloise as the most popular work of Rousseau and the bible of revolutionaries, both Jacobin and Thermidorian. One edition was published in pocket-size form for the use of soldiers defending la patrie.<sup>92</sup>

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<sup>90</sup> "Soyez leur interprète auprès du gouvernement. A votre voix et sur vos traces, nos guerriers ont éclipsé les Grecs et les Romains: à votre voix encore les arts renaissent, et bientôt nos artistes vont prouver à l'univers que, dans la paix comme dans la guerre, la nation française est 'la grande nation.'" Girodet, Oeuvres posthumes, vol. 2, 284.

<sup>91</sup> Hew Strachan, "The Nation in Arms," The Permanent Revolution: The French Revolution and Its Legacy: 1789-1989 (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1989), 49-50.

The new ideology of the nation and its power to carry out warfare through propaganda are part of the connotated references in Ossian. Girodet, writing about the painting, made it explicit that the warriors of Ossian were the ancestors of the French--the ones who fought the Romans. "Other Scottish warriors proudly show the French warriors the trophies of their valor; an ensign, an armor and a legionnaire eagle taken from the Romans."<sup>93</sup> A scene of unity, wholeness--an enactment of the new social contract of nationhood--has been attempted by the elimination of the division along gender lines exhibited in Horatii. The male figures take center stage--with the reversal of the male positions. The patriarchal father of primitive origins, Ossian, is now receiving the French heroes on the left as they ascend from the right after taking leave of the familial father. The careful placement of three generals in the front emphasizes the evenly spaced forced extension of their rigidly muscled legs along the frontal plane, a kind of parody of the three Horatii brothers whose bodies, repetitive in form, recede rhythmically into three

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<sup>92</sup> Conor Cruise O'Brien, "Nationalism and the French Revolution," The Permanent Revolution, 29. When Rousseau's body was moved to the Pantheon in 1794, On the Social Contract was carried on a velvet cushion in the processional ceremony.

<sup>93</sup> "D'autres guerriers calédoniens montrent avec orgueil aux guerriers français des trophées de leur valeur, une enseigne, une armure et une aigle légionnaire enlevées aux Romains." Hohl and Toussaint, 84. A detailed description of the painting was supplied by Girodet for the livret of the Salon.

dimensional space. General Desaix in front and the only general whose body is fully shown embraces Ossian and along with General Kléber holds an arms trophy taken from the Mamelukes<sup>94</sup>; his arm extends behind his body similar to the position of the one fully depicted Horatii brother. The last of the three generals, Caffarelli, is holding a broken flag conquered from the Turks--another reminder of Napoleon's Egyptian campaign.

Girodet not only reversed the male positions of David, he also subverted the solid moral ground on which they stand. The figures of the Horatii family are contiguous and extend along the same plane like a narrative frieze, yet divided and differentiated as male/female--active/passive. Girodet recomposed this binary as a hierarchy; the men are now centered and stand on a ground of female bodies--described by Girodet as "a swarm of young girls, half-dressed by their veils of mist, . . . this one offers crowns, that one some flowers that she scatters at their feet; several present them drinks in shells."<sup>95</sup> By depicting the women with elegantly mounted shells as

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<sup>94</sup> Mameluke is a term used for an Islamic military class of rulers, comprised of former slaves, who were dominant in Egypt and the Middle East for seven hundred years. Their favored form of warfare was calvalry with sword and shield. They were defeated by Napoleon in 1798, Columbia Encyclopedia, 1993.

<sup>95</sup> "un essaim de jeunes filles, à demi vêtues de leurs voiles de brouillards, . . . celle-ci leur offre des couronees, celle-là des fleurs qu'elle sème sur leurs pas; plusieurs leur présentent à boire dans des coquilles." Girodet, Oeuvres posthumes, vol. 2, 293.

drinking cups, Girodet has literally interpreted the poem's many references to the hall of Starno, "the hall of his shells;" celebrations in the hall are called "the feast of shells."<sup>96</sup> Girodet made reference to this notion of a luxuriously sensuous architectural setting with walls covered in a mosaic of iridescent pearl-like shells by these exquisitely womb-shaped vessels. Floating overhead as if without bodily substance is a female allegorical personification of an unwinged Victory--almost a duplicate of the flying winged female in David's The Triumph of the French People of 1793 (fig. 23) and in Joseph-Marie Vien's The Triumph of the Republic of 1794 (fig. 24). She carries in one hand a bundle of palms with olive and laurel and in the other the caduceus--in Greek mythology the symbol of peace belonging to Hermes, now the symbol for medicine. By bracketing the men with female bodies Girodet efficiently removed women from the social space, the space of discourse, the space of civilization to establish unity in the political sphere of nationhood based on fraternity. Within the unity of the fraternal space is specificity and identity (illustrating the contradictory nature of the social contract). Girodet made a great effort to depict the thirteen portraits of the generals accurately. They share a common experience of military valor based on the actions of

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<sup>96</sup> Macpherson, vol. 1, 90-91. There are no explanatory notes explaining this term by Macpherson.

individuals. The women share only a generic sameness: profiled and elaborately coiffeured heads and soft, pale outstretched arms eager to embrace the French.

There is another sign of modernity in the painting pointed out by Girodet himself. He made much of the fact that the scene was lit by meteors--another example of his originality.<sup>97</sup> According to Barbara Maria Stafford, the atmospheric effects of Girodet's work include not only stars and shooting stars but also streaks of mist in which the ghosts exist and of which they appear to be made. The opacity of the mist reflected new scientific knowledge of meteorology. A development led by Antoine-Laurent Lavoisier in the late eighteenth century, meteorology is the theory that air is not purely empty but made of gases with weight, full of vapors and particles. The idea of the atmosphere as diffused and opaque liberated artists from sterile perspective. In the plethora of symbolic references, Girodet included a chauvinistic tribute to French men of science.<sup>98</sup> He might have also found this reference in

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<sup>97</sup> From his letter to Bernardin de Saint-Pierre, Girodet, Oeuvres posthumes, vol. 2, 279-280.

<sup>98</sup> Barbara Maria Stafford, "Les 'météores' de Girodet," Revue de l'Art, 46 (1979): 47-50. For another view of contemporary influences for Girodet's interest in atmospheric lighting see Sarah Burns, "Girodet-Trioson's 'Ossian': The Role of Theatrical Illusionism in a Pictorial Evocation of Otherworldly Beings," Gazette des Beaux-Arts 95 (January 1980): 13-24. Burns wrote that late eighteenth century interest in occultism and spiritual exoticism led to special effects in the theater with the use of oil lamps and colored gauze screens, an invention partly attributed to Lavoisier. Particularly popular were the phantasmagoria theatrical events organized by Belgian scientist-

Macpherson's work. Macpherson utilized the modern notion of meteors when describing the eyes of Starno as "meteors of night." A simile not found in ancient poetry, it replaces the Homeric comparison of eyes as "flames of fire."<sup>99</sup>

Nevertheless, Girodet took advantage of atmospheric lighting to destabilize perspective. The figures appear to be lit from behind. The effect of this backlighting projects them forward in a reversal of traditional perspective. This is particularly noticeable with the eagle in the upper left. As it takes flight, the light from behind catches its wings and it appears to fly toward the viewer. To a lesser extent, this theatrical backlighting was repeated in the Deluge.

The accumulated figures circling the central group of Ossian and the three generals, who appear to be piled up and pushed forward on the frontal plane, are in disarray, deprived of perspectival organization. This overabundance of bodies, crowding upward and pressing forward, became the focal point of criticism. Wrapped in veils of mist they are commensurate in telling ways with Macpherson's poems that in turn mimicked the polite language of eighteenth century political manners. Just as Girodet's painting glossed over

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entrepreneur Étienne-Gaspard Robertson in 1800, surely known to Girodet.

<sup>99</sup> Macpherson, vol. 1, 94. "Eyes like meteors of night" was used by William Congreve (1670-1729) and according to Laing is an example of the nature of Macpherson's forgery--a kind of pastiche of borrowings, carefully annotated by Laing in his notes.

Napoleon's brutal warfare, violent scenes of combat in the poems are merely suggested by alliterative words of obfuscation. An ethos of politeness is maintained by disguising violence in a mist of verbiage that conceals rather than describes--a definition for the ideology of manners. In one of the poems, Fingal rebukes Starno for his rude behavior, but allows him to depart in peace. In modern nations this politeness translates into preserving the vanquished from destruction.<sup>100</sup> A good example of this refined language is used to describe Starno's killing of his own daughter because she forewarned her beloved Fingal that Starno intended to kill him:

"Bring hither," he said "Agandecca to her lovely king of Morven! His hand is stained with the blood of my people; her words have not been in vain!" She came with the red eyes of tears. She came with loosely flowing locks. Her white breast heaved with broken sighs, like the foam of the streamy Lubar. Starno pierced her side with steel. She fell, like a wreath of snow, which slides from the rocks of Ronan; when the woods are still, and echo deepens in the vale!<sup>101</sup>

Girodet's style of painting matches Macpherson's poems with its delicacy and refinement--there are no harsh lines, all edges are softened, the surface is smoothed as if polished, colors are balanced with great subtlety. The white of Ossian, further enhanced by being bathed in light, is highlighted with blue-grey that blends with and

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<sup>100</sup> Adam Potkay, "Virtue and Manners in Macpherson's 'Poems of Ossian,'" PMLA 107 (January 1992): 124.

<sup>101</sup> Macpherson, vol. 1, 94-95.

corresponds to the blue jackets of the French and the other shades.<sup>102</sup> The women's pale bodies are touched with pink accents. Elegance is carried to an extreme in the primitive realm of the women, dogs, and madmen at the bottom of the painting. The fingers of the women are like delicate tendrils that match their exquisitely defined curled and braided hair.

The banishment of the women to the periphery where their only role is the offering of bacchanalian pleasure to the French heroes also duplicates the sentiments of the poems; in the world of Ossian women are dead and only revived in the minds of the men they loved, another reflection of the ideology of manners. In Ossian male protagonists take on both gender roles--the fierce warrior conducts affairs with the considered civility associated with the feminine. To be perceived as virtuous feminine politeness is feigned. Fingal, Ossian's father, is an ideal of eighteenth century oppositions--the passionate, fierce citizen-warrior combined with the delicate affections previously aligned with domesticity.<sup>103</sup> In the late eighteenth century a reorganization of the public sphere occurred with the erasure of women. As already mentioned,

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<sup>102</sup> This is an important point because photographic reproductions of the painting usually make it appear yellowish and over-all brighter than it is; the figure of Ossian is more dominant than it appears in reproductions.

<sup>103</sup> Potkay, 127.

in France this shift intensified during the Terror and culminated in 1793 with laws forbidding women's political activism. Subsequently, the Directory did nothing to redress the position of women. Initiated under the Jacobins, the laws were officially formalized by the Napoleonic Civil Code of 1804.<sup>104</sup> David's The Oath of the Tennis Court announces the new male dominated political sphere; women are placed safely behind columns and outside windows to watch the spectacle as passive observers.

As a myth of primitive origins The Works of Ossian provided more than just a memory trace for an aristocratic heritage from the north; it presented the past as a faded romantic version of the present in a myth that celebrated a world of exclusive male activity. Such a myth allows complete unity as a story of origins--a unity that no longer encompasses difference. The world of male warriors who can only interact with women in their memories suggests that Ossian is a myth of autochthony. In the Norse myth the originating gods are not born from heterosexual unions and neither are humans--a man and woman emerge mature from two trees. The tales of the Norse are about male warriors and

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<sup>104</sup> See Abigail Solomon-Godeau, Male Trouble: A Crisis in Representation (London: Thames and Hudson, 1997), 31-32. Carol Blum also wrote about this in her examination of the educational teachings of Rousseau and their application after the revolution--particularly the domestication of women. In addition she discussed institutionalized masculine friendship as a national principle, a natural outcome with the impulsion toward virtue, 191.

their adventures. Autochthony--of the land itself--provides a mythical grounding for unity through the exclusion of difference, especially women. Myths of autochthony unite communities under false unity, but establish an origin in time and place. The community and its public space to be unified must originate in the realm of male warriors who have sprung from the earth. An example of an autochthony myth is the founding myth of Thebes. Out of dragon's teeth spread over the land, a crop of helmeted, armed warriors--fully mature with no need of nurturing mothers or families--grew and five survivors became the ancestors of Theban nobility. By a more circuitous means the origin myths of Athens are suggestive of autochthony. The lower part of the bodies of early Athenian kings, Cecrops, Erichthonius and/or Erechtheus, were either shaped like snakes or associated with snakes as if they arose from the earth.<sup>105</sup> And there is Athena, who sprung from the head of Zeus fully formed, remained a virgin, and was the warrior goddess of masculine not feminine virtues.<sup>106</sup>

During the French revolutionary years, the female allegorical representations of ideals--Liberty, Equality, Justice, and Reason--were draped and sometimes armed like

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<sup>105</sup> Arlene Saxonhouse, Fear of Diversity: The Birth of Political Science in Ancient Greek Thought (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1992), 51-52.

<sup>106</sup> Ibid., 77.

Minerva, the Roman goddess of war.<sup>107</sup> The drapery often exposed a breast as a sign of freedom and thus liberated an erotic zone from eroticism. The allegorical female body either wore armor, sign of its wholeness and impregnability, or abandoned protective clothing as a sign of its virtue. Both the exposed breast and the armored body descend from other classical figures like the ancient Greek virgin goddess "of the slipped chiton" Artemis and the warrior Amazons, who lived freely outside the boundaries of civilization, associated with wildness and difference.<sup>108</sup> While I am not suggesting an analogous relationship between Ossian, ancient Greek and Roman myths, and the new nation of France, there is one important similarity--dominance of men as the active participants in forming the nation and the defenders of the motherland. In France "the revolutionary cult of great men" with its implied exclusion of women became the new secular faith. The transformation of the church of St. Genevieve into the Panthéon, an official monumental tomb to honor heroic virtuous men, literally materialized the new order.<sup>109</sup> Women remained in the public as allegorical figures representing ideal concepts of the

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<sup>107</sup> See Maurice Agulhon, "Esquisse pour une archéologie de la République: l'allegorie civique féminine," Annales, Economies Sociétés, Civilisations 28 (1974): 6-7. Minerva is the Roman counterpart of Athena, the Greek goddess of war.

<sup>108</sup> Marina Warner, Monuments and Maidens: The Allegory of the Female Form (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1985), 277-279.

<sup>109</sup> Kelder, 133.

nation. And modern nations, like the cities of myth, require the defense of land. The land and its association with allegorical female figures is like the originating mother of ancient myths. As the motherland, it is the originating source of unity and wholeness; therefore, it must be fought for and defended. By the end of the nineteenth century the fabrication of a motherland to unify national pride after defeat in the Franco-Prussian War in 1870 was again a necessity and is exemplified in the work of Puvis de Chavannes. Puvis was celebrated because his work evoked "a landscape in which nature and mother are synonymous and man's ritual cultivation of nature is a transformation and elevation of her as well as a form of communion."<sup>110</sup>

Girodet worked on a composition of oath taking, possibly before Ossian, based on the classical play of Aeschylus's Seven Against Thebes and late in his career planned a major painting never completed. The scene depicted by Girodet is titled The Oath of the Seven Chiefs Against Thebes (fig. 25) and was lithographed by Aubrey-Lecomte in 1825 (fig. 26).<sup>111</sup> The ritual oath of self-

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<sup>110</sup> Jennifer L. Shaw, "Imagining the Motherland: Puvis de Chavannes, Modernism, and the Fantasy of France," The Art Bulletin 79 (December 1997): 604.

<sup>111</sup> According to Jacqueline Pruvost-Auzas, Girodet 1767-1824 (Musée de Montargis, 1967), Note 89, n.p., in Girodet's library at the time of his death were lithographed and engraved books on the works of Flaxman. One engraving titled "Sept contre Thèbes" 1795 possibly inspired the work by Girodet.

sacrifice for the new republic during revolutionary years, men pledging their honor in the cause of virtue and reason, is here replaced by oath swearing around the sacrifice of a bull. The primitive, pagan act is a prelude to a battle at the seven gates of Thebes when brother will kill brother for the sake of the motherland--consequences not dissimilar from those of the Horatii story. The unity of Thebes is based on denial of heterosexuality, the need and desire for women. Loyalty to the earth and not the defense of citizens allows fratricide and even the killing of one's own children.<sup>112</sup> In Girodet's Theban scene the shocking horror of blood sacrifice takes place in the dark. The chiefs are revealed by a penetrating streak of lightning, discernible in the lithograph, and react with alarm at their illumination. The oath-taking arms are pointed, not heavenward as in Horatii, but down toward the abject mass of brute flesh in the center--in a tangle of legs and arms converging over a bloody bull.

Light during the Revolution was equated with reason--the triumph of light and the overturning of darkness were key widespread ideas in its mythology. The Enlightenment was to be a new beginning that would leave behind the superstitious pagan acts of false faiths. Life after the Revolution would be lived under the continual light of

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<sup>112</sup> See Saxonhouse, 54-59.

reason.<sup>113</sup> The dark scene of pagan warriors in the act of sacrifice is exposed by lightning that had already been desacralized, no longer the sign of a higher power, by eighteenth century men of science. Now proved to be only a form of electricity, lightning could be harnessed and used by men. Lightning and enlightenment provided convenient metaphors--as a source of barbaric nature lightning could blind one to reason and it was imperative for men to tame it, control it because the whole of nature had to be understood with the light of reason.<sup>114</sup> The scene conjured by Girodet reveals that this sacrificial pagan rite had to be hidden--performed in the dark. Encircling the low altar are the chiefs, their faces exaggerated with grimaces and brutish, barbaric features with references to ethnicity like that of the Persians in Hippocrates.

The same faces are present in his Ossian; cast in shadow they intermingle with the women in the shifting, formless base, as in the oil sketch--the space of passions, sexual pleasure, and violence. Girodet remained faithful to the poems in his depiction of these warriors and the women. For example, Macpherson described Starno and his men with

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<sup>113</sup> Jean Starobinski, 1789: The Emblems of Reason, trans. Barbara Bray (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 1988), 43-51.

<sup>114</sup> Marie-Hélène Huet, "Thunder and Revolution: Franklin, Robespierre, Sade," The French Revolution 1789-1989: Two Hundred Years of Rethinking, ed. Sandy Petrey (Texas Tech University Press, 1989), 13-18. Benjamin Franklin's theories on electricity were given credibility in the 1777 Supplement to the Encyclopedia.

"dark-brown" faces and "dark-brown shields." The women always have "breasts of snow" and "arms as white as the foam of waves."<sup>115</sup> To the right and circling among the women's fluid, shimmering, and overlapping bodies are the warriors of Lochlin. These men, along with the women, coexist in a space excluded from the social order of reason as they personify the opposite, the repressed, dark side of the virtuous warriors. In the painting they are threatening to disrupt the Festival of Peace. In the lower right hand corner is the partial body of Starno, king of Lochlin, placed by Girodet in a position exactly analogous to Neptune among the Nereids in Rubens's work.<sup>116</sup> Girodet's own account suffices:

Further down, we see the king of Lochlin, the ferocious Starno, Fingal's enemy, his body is covered in iron, a dagger is affixed to his belt from which hangs a human head he uses as a cup. He holds, by the hair, Angandecca, his daughter, Fingal's lover, who had joined the beautiful women of Morven to celebrate the arrival of the French. He was about to strike with his sword when a young dragoon flies to her defense; already, the feather and crest of his helmet have been stricken down, without fear he grabs and holds Starno's sword with one hand, with the other, having engaged his iron, he splits and pierces his enemy from side to side [beheads him] with a saber of honor awarded him by the First Consul. The barbarian falls biting, in his rage, the weapon that had poorly served his fury.<sup>117</sup>

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<sup>115</sup> Macpherson, vol. 1, 44, 90-91.

<sup>116</sup> Levitine, "L'Ossian de Girodet," 52.

<sup>117</sup> "Plus bas, on voit le Roi de Lochlin, le féroce Starno, ennemi de Fingal, son corps est couvert de fer, un poignard est fixé à sa ceinture d'où pend un crâne humain qui lui sert de coupe. Il

Already a space of body fragments and a dangling head in a sea of turbulent movement, a narrative within the space introduces another beheading.

The frenzied fury of Starno is mixed with the women's exuberant display of passion. According to Carol Pateman, for Rousseau women had to be separated from the civil life of the nation because of their boundless sexual passion, their disorderliness and, thus, their incapacity to develop any sense of justice.<sup>118</sup> Women's sexual desire cannot be subdued like that of men--specifically in Ossian their nude bodies seem to be driven by nature in a sea of sexual impulses while the Frenchmen are bound up in elaborately constructed military uniforms. This has profound implications for the concept of the family as the foundation of the nation; with women at its core or fulcrum, the family

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a saisi par les cheveux Agandecca, sa fille, amante de Fingal, qui s'était jointe aux belles de Morven pour célébrer l'arrivée des Français. Il était prêt à la frapper de son épée mais un jeune dragon vole pour la défendre; déjà, le panache et le cimier de son casque sont abattus, sans s'effrayer il saisit et arrête d'une main le glaive de Starno, de l'autre, ayant engagé le fer, il le rompt et perce son ennemi d'outre en outre avec un sabre d'honneur que lui a décerné le Premier Consul. Le barbare tombe en mordant de rage l'arme qui a mal servi sa fureur." Hohl and Toussaint, 84.

<sup>118</sup> See Carol Pateman, "'The Disorder of Women': Women, Love, and the Sense of Justice," Ethics 91 (October 1980): 20. Rousseau made this argument in several texts, in particular see Politics and the Arts: Letter to M. d'Alembert on the Theatre, trans. Allan Bloom (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1960), 109, as quoted in Pateman, "Never has a people perished from an excess of wine; all perish from the disorder of women." One of Rousseau's objections to the theatre was that women were prominently displayed in romantic plays and their dangerous passions were given too much credence, Politics and the Arts, 47-49.

is, at the same time, antagonistic to the nation. For Pateman this tension between nature--the notion that women are disorderly at their very centers--and convention is one of the insights into the contradictions in the dialectic between individuals and their social relations in the work of Rousseau (and Freud) that has been suppressed.<sup>119</sup>

The implications of the scene also extend to the concept of the nation itself. What must have been disturbing about Ossian is the intrusion within a space that was supposed to signify the mythic unity of the nation with its past by a secondary scene of rupture, fragmentation, violence, and implied unlicensed sexual pleasure. The boundaries of the symbolic order represented at the center by Ossian and the three generals are threatened with erosion from below by the abject and formless.<sup>120</sup> This space of fluid movement as expansive as the sea itself was also conceived as a signifier of not only disorder and chaos but of potential war. For Rousseau the state is not a whole, stable body; its boundaries are potentially limitless and its capacity for aggressive expansion is, therefore,

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<sup>119</sup> Ibid., 25-30.

<sup>120</sup> On images of the abject see Ewa Lajer-Burcharth, "The Aesthetics of Male Crisis: The Terror in the Republican Imaginary and in Jacques-Louis David's Work from Prison," Femininity and Masculinity in Eighteenth Century Art and Culture, ed. Gillian Perry and Michael Rossington (Manchester and New York: Manchester University Press, 1994): 223. According to Lajer-Burcharth after the fall of Robespierre, scenes of chaos were produced that disrupted the codes of masculinity based on notions of republican identity.

boundless.<sup>121</sup> With an analogy to the human body he made his case for reform to the government of Poland:

Large populations, vast territories! There you have the first and foremost reason for the misfortunes of mankind, above all the countless calamities that weaken and destroy polite peoples. If you wish to reform your government, then, begin by narrowing your frontiers, though perhaps your neighbors intend to do that for you. It would certainly be a great misfortune for the dismembered parts, but a great blessing for the body of the nation.<sup>122</sup>

The danger of vast territories coupled with the fear of unsuppressed passions--the whole of nature--were all the aspects that bourgeois enlightenment had to renounce. The bourgeois ideal of naturalness, modified according to Rousseau's definition, intended not amorphous nature but virtuous moderation.<sup>123</sup> The threat in Girodet's Ossian to bourgeois tenets of enlightened sensibility restrictive of unlimited passionate inclinations did not go unnoticed; at

<sup>121</sup> See Grace G. Roosevelt, Reading Rousseau in the Nuclear Age (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1990), 37. Roosevelt wrote that Rousseau understood that "a secure peacekeeping structure cannot be expected to come about naturally 'without the help of art' but must instead be deliberately and artfully created. . . . As a political educator for the present age, Rousseau's usefulness lies less in providing answers than in clarifying choices." On the other hand Nicole Fermon finds Rousseau's small agrarian democracy not easily comparable to modern large-scale urban democracy, "His prescriptions inevitably become distorted; they simply do not apply . . . ." Her interest in Rousseau is with morality, the family, and the role of women in the state, 22.

<sup>122</sup> Jean-Jacques Rousseau, The Government of Poland, trans. Willmoore Kendall (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, 1985), 25-26.

<sup>123</sup> See Horkheimer and Adorno, 31, 56-57.

least one critic, shocked by the perception that the French were participating in the erotic revels of their counterparts, condemned the burlesque nature of the drinking and the vulgar behavior of the men and the women.<sup>124</sup>

The light of Enlightenment--of meteors and shooting stars--is concentrated on the figure of Ossian whose flowing robe appears translucent as it shimmers in the light from behind. The center of the painting revolves around the social space of recognition between eyes, arms, hands and the noses of two dogs--the smoothly serene greyhound of the French and the mastiff of Ossian. But this is the space of paradox--misrecognition--as Ossian is blind, his eyes are closed and he cannot return the gaze of General Desaix. The only point of recognition is the primitive acknowledgement through smell of their dogs above the eroticized primitive bodies of the women and warriors. At the most obvious level, the blindness of Ossian presented no threat to Napoleon's power. Napoleon was the first leader after the Revolution to establish a personal cult and thus attempt to attain the role of the absent king as the new supreme power.<sup>125</sup> Prior to the Revolution, the figure of the blind

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<sup>124</sup> Quoted from Anon. "Salon de l'an X," Le Publiciste, by Levitine, "Girodet-Trioson: An Iconographical Study," 185. Ossian was removed from public view before the end of the Salon; Brown has suggested that the removal was a result of its perceived unsuitable and insulting features criticized by the author in Le Publiciste, 194.

<sup>125</sup> Hunt, The Family Romance, 70-71.

Belisarius had been used as a trope for various references to abusive royal power based on the novel of Marmontel. Marmontel accepted the rumor--the blinding of Belisarius--as fact and his image of the loyal general who suffered the injustice of royalty became a cult hero to the philosophes and appealed to a sentimental bourgeois audience. David successfully exploited the theme in his painting Belisarius in the Salon of 1781, to secure his agrément for entrance into the Academy.<sup>126</sup> Gérard used the same trope of blindness in 1795 with another version of Belisarius, this time to refer not just to loyal public servants betrayed by the state but also those worthy émigrés who deserved repatriation.<sup>127</sup>

As a metaphor of blindness in 1802, Girodet's painting is a deeply ambivalent image about paternal power and the new ideology of nationalism. Because of Ossian's blindness, his greeting of the French cannot take place through the field of vision. The French are thrown back onto the use of language--the symbolic order that is laden with indeterminacy and its differences of presence and absence, intended and unintended meanings.<sup>128</sup> A new master image of

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<sup>126</sup> Albert Boime, "Marmontel's 'Belisaire' and the Pre-Revolutionary Progressivism of David," Art History 3 (March 1980): 82-83.

<sup>127</sup> See Crow, Emulation, 208.

<sup>128</sup> For Rousseau, speech was fraught with difficulties--he chose to be absent and to write his story, The Confessions, because to be present would run the risk of misunderstanding and the loss of his true value. See Jacques Derrida, ". . . That Dangerous

power presented as "natural" and "true" is not possible precisely because of the instability of the subject in discourse. Indeterminacy and misrecognition are at the heart of the operation of culture as a semiotic and ideological system.<sup>129</sup> The instability of the French generals--the heroic representatives of the new nation--is made all too visible by the ephemeral ground upon which they stand. The shifting ground of the painting is, in a sense, also symbolic of Ossian. As a myth of origins but an invention of culture, its conflation of Celtic and Norse allusions produces only temporal fantasy.

The relationship between nature and civilization after the Enlightenment has been understood through the trope of blindness as well. The subjugation of nature by the Enlightenment forfeited its spirituality and omnipotence and offered instead a nature alienated from itself as if blind and lame.<sup>130</sup> Rousseau imagined it in the reverse--at the beginning of civilization, when he rummaged in the earth practicing metallurgy, man blinded himself:

He scours the entrails of the earth and descends into its depths, risking his life and health, in search of imaginary gains to replace the true blessing which it offered him spontaneously when he was capable of enjoying them. He flees the sun and the light, which

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Supplement . . .," in Jean-Jacques Rousseau, ed. Harold Bloom (New York: Chelsea House Publishers, 1988), 40-41.

<sup>129</sup> Davis, 124.

<sup>130</sup> Horkheimer and Adorno, 39.

he is no longer worthy of seeing, he buries himself alive, and rightly so, since he no longer deserves to live in the light of day.<sup>131</sup>

Blindness is at the origin of society along with the use of language and its endless series of substitutions. The notion that a narrative of mythic origin exists at the beginning of man's loss of the primal state is grounded in a paradoxical condition. The construction of a homeland is opposed to myth. The nation, based on settled property, is the cause of homesickness for and alienation from that primal state. Originary myths as representative of the homeland falsify that relationship.<sup>132</sup> Life lived in the natural world has no fixed boundary, cannot be articulated, cannot be located in space. The paradox in Rousseau's writings is that he attempted to articulate that which was incapable of being articulated; his imaginary musings on the formative stages of man immediately prior to civilization were misrecognized as truth.<sup>133</sup>

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<sup>131</sup> Jean-Jacques Rousseau, Reveries of the Solitary Walker, trans. Peter France (New York: Penguin Books, 1979), 112-113. As quoted in Derrida, ". . . That Dangerous Supplement . . .," 47.

<sup>132</sup> Horkheimer and Adorno, 78.

<sup>133</sup> Robert Wokler pointed out in "Perfectible Apes in Decadent Cultures: Rousseau's Anthropology Revisited," Daedalus 107 no. 3 (Summer 1978) that Rousseau actually made a fundamentally important connection between man and the apes--that his primitive man fit the description of the life of the orangutan (a word used by Europeans at the time to mean all apes)--a portrait that remained accurate for two hundred years with many of his speculations proved correct. Rousseau was the first to conceive this link as others believed there to be an unbridgeable gulf between men and animals. However, Rousseau's reflections were consistent with eighteenth century inquiry into the different relationship between man's nature, the role of language, and the

Girodet's painting might have been acceptable if he had been able to naturalize the French generals with the ghosts of Ossian as part of the mythic form of nationalism propagandized by Napoleon. The painting as a sign of mediation for ideological power was found to be wanting. The politics of Napoleon's nationalism seem all too self-consciously present--so many dead generals and soldiers. Girodet's pastiche of borrowed bits and pieces of artistic compositions from David and Rubens conflated with a myth that is another pastiche bespeaks an enormous sense of anxiety--a kind of desperate attempt to cover-up and paste over the lack of solidity under the new regimes, both political and cultural. As a history painting it is on the cusp of its own disintegration as a vehicle to visualize the high aspirations of a collective audience. Instead it reads

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apes. This study was diverted in the nineteenth century to the study of races--the boundaries and distinctions within our species, away from the philosophical nature of man and the importance of language. According to Wokler, the later direction of anthropology failed to recognize its roots in Enlightenment philosophies of man rather than in the remote societies of peoples that became the focus in nineteenth century studies. For Rousseau man had actually fallen morally from the apes and had become a monster of his own making--proven by the beastly way he treated his forebears. For Rousseau man's liberty and perfectibility, the central distinction between ape and citizen, were indeterminate features to be used for degradation or progress but if used properly could lead to man's improvement, 110-127. On the same subject see also Otis Fellows, "Buffon and Rousseau: Aspects of a Relationship," *PMLA* 75 (June 1960): 184-196. According to Fellows, the work of Georges-Louis Leclerc, comte de Buffon (1707-1788), author of *Histoire naturelle*, 1749-1788, was a major influence on Rousseau and a primary source for the Second Discourse. While Buffon's theories are credited with anticipating those of Darwin, during his lifetime he denied that man had a relationship to the great apes and remained a creationist in his beliefs. His theories both advanced and retracted the connection between man and the apes.

as an attempt to ward off fear and death with its massing of bodies, mostly unintelligible and overlapping into segments, that circulate around the center of blind communication. Girodet, by his insistence on exaggerating and breaking with the traditions of Davidianism, combined a discursive mode of painting with a figural one--the text of Ossian, its story of myth joined to the myth of French nationalism, is lost in the plethora of fragmented parts of the text and resides on the surface as overwhelming abundance.<sup>134</sup> Even Girodet had to admit this failure in his letter to Pastoret, "But, it had perhaps the inconvenience of offering too many objects for the space indicated: the subject overflowed the canvas."<sup>135</sup>

By focusing on the iconographical meaning of Ossian, historians have tried to explain the excess of meaning in the details while, I would suggest, missing what that excess connoted. Girodet's enthusiastic depiction of the barbaric sense of war was one that combined war with pleasure, and sexual pleasure at that. That part of the myth connected to the present by the inclusion of recently dead military heroes made the myth too real. The construction of the virtuous citizen did not allow the intrusion of that

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<sup>134</sup> See Norman Bryson's Word and Image: French Painting of the 'Ancien Régime' (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981), Chapter 1.

<sup>135</sup> "Mais, il avait peut-être l'inconvénient d'offrir trop d'objets pour l'espace indiqué: le sujet débordait la toile." Girodet, Oeuvres posthumes, vol. 2, 341.

reality. Sexual pleasure and the pain of war were coded into the mythic notion of barbaric experience--but had to be distanced from the present and were anathema to the logic of the new era founded on the illusion of virtue. The barbaric lascivious behavior of the warriors of Lochlin gave an imaginary image to the repressed appetites of the bon citoyen--but in Ossian that image overflowed onto the surface. This is one legacy that Girodet passed onto the romantics--an image for the representation of the repressed that links him to the Sardanapalus of Delacroix.

The attempted conflation of different "origins" into myth did not resonate with the French as the story of their primitive northern ancestors because they turned out to be a divided group of multiple peoples descending from the Celts and Franks. They decentered rather than unified--like nationalism itself with its expanding and receding boundaries. But the aspect of the myths that remained buried deep in the fantasy life of the bon citoyen, so freely and liberatingly painted by Girodet in his Ossian sketch, were those awful dark faces enfolded in the shadows of the mist and the pale limbs of female bodies. The rhetoric of virtue, the code of behavior for the bon citoyen, turned on the rejection of the irrational, passionate responses of the barbaric. The barbaric took on a double nature--the denial of its existence within civil society was undermined by the desire to romanticize the barbaric as if it were now safely distanced in the past.

The behavior of the conquering barbarians was glamorized best by Chateaubriand:

But all this apparatus of the Romans, when contrasted with the savage simplicity of the hostile army, served only to render the latter more formidable.

Arrayed in the skins of every animal that is terrible to the eye, the Franks resembled at a distance a herd of savage beasts. A tunic, that scarcely reached the knee, and fitting close to the body, served to heighten the effect of their gigantic stature. The eyes of these barbarians are of a hue that resembles the deep in a storm; their light hair, hanging long and loose on their shoulders, and dyed with a red liquid, appears like fire intermingled with blood. The most part allow their beard to grow on the upper lip only, which gives their countenance all the terror of the wolf, or the mastiff. Some bear in their right hand a long spear, and in their left a buckler, which they whirl round like a rapid wheel; others are armed with a kind of javelin (called angon), with a double barb of iron at its point; but all wear at their girdle the terrible Frankish battle-axe: this instrument has a double edge, the handle is covered with steel, and in the hands of the Frank it has a deadly efficacy; he raises the death-cry, and hurls it at his victim with unerring exactness.<sup>136</sup>

This appeal to the fantasy of unimpeded primitive masculine power--repressed by the pure blinding light of reason and the ideology of virtue and because of its repression all the more potent--would have unforeseen tragic repercussions in the first half of the twentieth century.<sup>137</sup>

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<sup>136</sup> M. de Chateaubriand, The Martyrs, trans. O. W. Wight (New York: Howard Fertig, 1976. Originally published in 1859), 131.

<sup>137</sup> My reading of the fascination with the myths and their representation is influenced by the theory of Klaus Theweleit in Males Fantasies, 2 vols., trans. Erica Carter, Stephen Conway, and Chris Turner (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1987, 1989).

## CHAPTER THREE

## THE ESSENTIAL CITIZEN AND HIS EXTIMATE OTHER

The portrait, a rather insignificant genre in a monarchy, because one man is everything and others are nothing, should acquire a new degree of interest in a Republic: it can then be devoted to virtues, talents, services, memories.

This is a Republic in which one salutes with respect images of the hero, the useful man, the estimable woman: under the relationship of morals and politics, it is fitting to elevate the genre of the portrait.<sup>1</sup>

--P.-J.-B. Chaussard, 1798

To say that desire must be taken literally is to say simultaneously that desire "must be articulated," that we must refrain from imagining something that would not be registered on the single surface of speech, and that desire "is inarticulable." For if it is desire rather than words that we are to take literally, this must mean that desire may register itself "negatively" in speech, that the relation between speech and desire, or social surface and desire, may be a negative one.<sup>2</sup>

--Joan Copjec, 1995

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<sup>1</sup> "Le Portrait, genre assez insignifiant dans une monarchie, parce qu'un seul homme y est tout et que les autres n'y sont rien, doit acquérir dans une République un nouveau degré d'intérêt: il peut consacrer alors des vertus, des talents, des services, des souvenirs.

C'est une République qu'on salue avec respect les images du héros, de l'homme utile, de la femme estimable: sous le rapport moral et politique, il convient d'élever le genre du portrait." Pierre-Jean-Baptiste Chaussard, "Beaux-Arts. Expositions des ouvrages de peinture, sculpture, architecture, gravure, dans les salles du Muséum, premier thermidor an VI [Salon of 1798]," La Décade philosophique 18 (1798): 535.

<sup>2</sup> Joan Copjec, Read My Desire: Lacan against the Historicists (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 1995), 14.

The Portrait of Jean-Baptiste Belley and the Writings  
of Denis Diderot

The Portrait of Jean-Baptiste Belley of 1797 (fig. 27) has inspired a variety of responses. In particular, Girodet has been praised for his unusual representation of a black person. He insisted that the painting be identified with Belley's name in the Salon of 1798 after its designation in the Exposition de l'Elysée in 1797 as Portrait de Nègre--the conventional means of labeling any black person in the eighteenth century.<sup>3</sup> The bust of Abbé Guillaume-Thomas Raynal (1713-1796) is juxtaposed to the figure of Jean-Baptiste Belley (1747-1804); reference to Raynal's Histoire philosophique et politique des établissemens et du commerce des Européens dans les deux Indes (Philosophical and Political History of the Settlements and of Commerce of the Europeans in the Two Indies) as an abolitionist doctrine has dominated most texts about the painting. The question whether the representation of Belley as the overtly sexualized black man compared to the classic rational purity of the Abbé reiterates a Eurocentric point of view has been argued for and against.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> Helen D. Weston, "Representing the right to represent: The Portrait of Citizen Belley, ex-representative of the colonies by A.-L. Girodet," Res 26 (Autumn 1994): 83. Also see Jacqueline Pruvost-Auzas, Girodet 1767-1824, note 20, n.p. Girodet wrote a letter to the minister of the Salon protesting the exclusion of the Belley portrait from the Salon.

<sup>4</sup> Helen Weston's essay is a rebuttal to the description of this comparison as an "invidious" example of a white man's racial prejudice in the image of a black man by, in particular, Richard

Prior to Raynal's history, writers about the New World had been travelers and their works were subjective accounts of their own experiences, e.g., Comte Louis Antoine Bougainville's Voyage autour de monde par la frégate du roi la Boudeuse, et la flûte l'Etoile en 1766, 1767, 1768, et 1769--a book that Diderot satirized in his Supplement to Bougainville's "Voyage," 1773. Raynal's project marks the turn toward empiricism and objective histories, or the writing of the natural history of mankind. Raynal stayed at home and traveled from text to text around the world and disingenuously proclaimed himself the objective, disengaged, truthful witness.<sup>5</sup> Rousseau's texts are in contrast to both these modes of history writing. The many first-hand descriptions of exotic places and peoples eagerly read by a populace fascinated by the idea of "back to nature" were of no interest to Rousseau when he wrote Discourse on the Origin of and Foundations of Inequality, as Ernst Cassirer pointed out. For Rousseau the true knowledge of man was not found in ethnography or ethnology, but was a form of self-knowledge--he looked inside himself for the true archetype.<sup>6</sup>

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Brilliant in Portraiture (London, 1991), see Weston, 97. For Weston the painting represents the two men as equals--a contrast between a man of intellect and a man of nature, both active in the cause of freedom--one in the academic field and the other on the battlefield, 99.

<sup>5</sup> Anthony Pagden, European Encounters with the New World: From Renaissance to Romanticism (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1993), 83-86.

<sup>6</sup> "Let us therefore begin by setting all the facts aside, for they do not affect the question. The researches which can be

Raynal's first edition of 1772, dated 1770, established the narrative structure. For the final edition of 1780, Raynal solicited the work of other writers, principal among them was Diderot. Diderot's additions to Raynal's Histoire have always been acknowledged, but the extent of his contributions has not been known until recently. With the verification of Diderot's writing in the Histoire, his contributions have been determined to be significant enough to change the tone of the work—"inserted in the Histoire, the 'Fragments' would produce a massive effect in it."<sup>7</sup> Diderot's interventions in Raynal's final version of 1780, became the anchor for its philosophical and political content. Raynal's original text, remarkable for its indictment of European colonial empires, was transformed by Diderot's more uncompromising anti-colonial views.<sup>8</sup> Raynal, only a moderate reformer, mistakenly has been credited with

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undertaken concerning this subject must not be taken for historical truths, but only for hypothetical and conditional reasoning better suited to clarify the nature of things than to show their true origin. . . ." Rousseau, Discourse on Inequality, 103. Quoted by Ernst Cassirer, "The Question of Jean-Jacques Rousseau," in Jean-Jacques Rousseau, ed. Harold Bloom (New York: Chelsea House Publishers, 1988), 15.

<sup>7</sup> "insérées dans l'Histoire, les 'Fragments' devaient y produire un effet de masse . . . ." Michèle Duchet, Diderot et l'Histoire des Deux indes ou l'Écriture Fragmentaire (Paris: Éditions A.-G. Nizet, 1978), 199. Duchet compiled a definitive reconstruction of Diderot's contributions.

<sup>8</sup> Anthony Pagden,  Lords of all the World: Ideologies of Empire in Spain, Britain and France c.1500-c.1800 (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1995), 163-164. Raynal was educated by the Jesuits but left the order and, before writing l'Histoire, was editor of the Mercure de France.

writing an abolitionist polemic. Diderot wrote those passages in the Histoire recognized as the "most powerful contributions to the anti-slavery literature of the late eighteenth century."<sup>9</sup> However, the overall importance of the Histoire was its ambitious attempt to write a comparative analysis and theory of imperialism, the first and last of such projects.<sup>10</sup>

For Diderot, the discovery of the Americas was unfortunate. He wrote that prolonged travel decreased the capacity of one's imagination and worst of all increased one's tolerance for the suffering of others as the traveler became disconnected from the moral bonds exerted by a homeland. He believed that the bonds of communal living were required to understand and show compassion for the suffering of others.<sup>11</sup> Diderot shared with other

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<sup>9</sup> Ibid., 169. Raynal, in 1785, to counter the sentiments in the Histoire, wrote with Pierre-Victor Malouet, former Governor of Guyana, Essai sur l'administration de St. Domingue--in which he cautioned against the emancipation of slaves and the abolition of the slave trade, 164.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid., 3. Raynal compared the colonial activities of Spain, Britain, France, Portugal, Holland, Sweden, Prussia, Russia, and Denmark.

<sup>11</sup> Pagden, European Encounters with the New World, 165. In the same vein, Raynal established a competition at the Academy of Lyon in 1781 to address the issue of "les avantages et les inconvénients de la découverte de l'Amérique." The case for commerce was stated by François Jean de Beauvoir, Chevalier de Chastellux: "It is a question of discovery that could have been useful to Europe only in the way that it has stimulated its commerce. In effect, commerce compensates for the inequalities of climate, fertility, population, and organization between nations, it is this that is favorable to their prosperity."

enlightened critics of empire--among them David Hume, marquis Marie Jean Antoine Nicolas de Caritat Condorcet, and Raynal--a fundamental belief in particularities and the essential incommensurability of all differing cultural and political systems. Modern empires were inherently too large and unstable and those peoples subjugated by their activities were always disadvantaged by the ruthless exploitation of the Europeans. Like Rousseau, they believed in a strong sense of place and that communities were only viable when close human contact was possible.<sup>12</sup> According to Diderot, Europeans in the Americas were turned into barbarians--they could not be savages because savages were seen to have access to the virtuous life in nature, which civilized man had renounced. Barbarism, on the other hand, was always a danger--the Europeans who destroyed the cultures of other peoples where they settled were considered barbarians. Slavery was an act of barbarism for Diderot and tragic in its consequences not only for its victims but for

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"La découverte dont il est question ne peut avoir été utile à l'Europe que dans la mesure où elle a stimulé son commerce. En effet, le commerce compense les inégalités de climat, de fertilité, de population et d'organisation entre les nations, ce qui est favorable à leur prospérité." See Hans-Jügen Lüsebrink and Alexandre Mussard, eds., Avantages et désavantages de la découverte de l'Amérique: Chastellus, Raynal et le concours de l'Académie de Lyon (Sainte-Étienne: Publications de l'Université de Sainte-Étienne, 1994), 8.

<sup>12</sup> As early as 1739, Rousseau had written a tragic opera, La Découverte du nouveau monde, about the impact of Europe on America with an evocation of the noble savage. Only the libretto survives, see Cranston, Jean-Jacques, 145-146.

Europeans as well because it destroyed the crucial part of their humanity--compassion.<sup>13</sup>

The terms of the eighteenth century philosophical debate about colonialism and its by-product slavery can judiciously be used to understand Girodet's portrait of Belley. Under those terms I would argue that Girodet's portrait presents a visual acknowledgement of the ways in which the former slave and the eighteenth century philosophe were found to be incommensurable. Belley was born in Senegal and taken as a child to Saint Domingue, one of the richest colonies in the West Indies, to work the plantations as a slave. After enduring the hardships of slavery he managed to purchase his freedom; he joined the French army and rose to the rank of Captain of Infantry. Influenced by revolutionary ideas about liberty and equality of enlightened whites who advocated the abolition of slavery, in part inspired by Raynal's Histoire, the majority of Saint Domingue's mulattos and blacks petitioned for their rights before the National Assembly. The Declaration of the Rights of Man and Citizens was passed in August 1789--the same Declaration that inaugurated modern nationalism. Animosity by the whites in Saint Domingue brought about the first slave uprising by an army led by the slave Toussaint Louverture in August of 1791. In the summer of 1793 the

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<sup>13</sup> Pagden, Lords of all the World, 160-174.

burning of Le Cap on the north coast of Saint Domingue marked the end of white rule in France's most important colony. Inclusion of the black majority was insured in the colony's representation. On February 4, 1794 Belley appeared at the Paris Convention as the first black man to come to France to represent men of color from the colonies. On the same day, following a speech by Belley, the President proclaimed into law the abolition of slavery and French citizenship for all inhabitants of the colonies.<sup>14</sup>

The straightforward three-quarter pose of Belley leaning against a pedestal with a landscape in the distance is not particularly innovative; Van Dyck established the format in the seventeenth century.<sup>15</sup> The inclusion of attributes relating to historical events--the marble bust of Raynal, Belley dressed in an official costume still worn by deputies of the Directory in 1797, and the distanced landscape in the lower right and its reference to the fires at Le Cap--indicate it is a form of portraiture exceeding

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<sup>14</sup> There is some disagreement as to whether it was Belley who actually gave this speech. Hugh Honour suggested that it was probably given by Belley's colleague from Saint Domingue, Louis-Pierre Dufaÿ, a white, in Images of the Black in Western Art (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1989), vol. 4, part 1, 104-106. See also Weston, 86, and Brown, 146-149. According to Brown, Belley's fate is unknown. He returned to Saint Domingue in 1797 and died in 1804. In 1802 Napoleon restored slavery in the colonies. Toussaint died in prison in France, April 1803, after being arrested by Napoleon's men. In December 1803 Napoleon withdrew his troops and one of Toussaint's generals, Dessalines, declared Haiti's independence--the first free black republic.

<sup>15</sup> See Levitine, "Girodet-Trioson: An Iconographical Study," 317.

the bounds of its traditional category. Similar portraits had been introduced in the Salon of 1789. The exhibition of Antoine Vestier's portrait of Jean-Henri Maseres de la Tude was accompanied, like a history painting, with a lengthy description in the livret. Accused of an attempt to poison Madame de Pompadour, Latude had been imprisoned for thirty-five years. On his release in 1784, he published his Mémoires, which were largely responsible for circulating erroneous legends about the Bastille. Painted in front of a scene depicting the demolition of the Bastille with a document testifying to his most famous escape, Latude's portrait included symbolic references to recent history. His portrait was more than just the record of resemblance with personal biographical connotations; it recorded contemporary history as implemented by a public figure with narrative and didactic implications.<sup>16</sup> Another key portrait in the Salon of 1789, Jean-Baptiste Robin's Monsieur le Comte de Lally Tollendal of 1787, participated in this augmentation of portraiture by virtue of timely circumstances. Lally Tollendal's father, a victim of aristocratic intrigue, had been unjustly imprisoned in the Bastille and executed in 1766 by the ancien régime. His son, a liberal noble, vindicated the father's death twelve years later. The portrait of the son is juxtaposed in the painting with a marble bust of the father. This hero/victim

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<sup>16</sup> Olander, 123-126.

pairing also exceeded the traditional limits of portraiture; it blurred the distinctions of that category with its bearing on contemporary historical events.<sup>17</sup>

Is there a hero/victim pairing implied by Girodet's portrait of Raynal/Belley? And if so, who is the hero and who the victim? Certainly, as pointed out by Helen Weston, the leveling of the two heads indicates that Girodet saw each man as having participated equally in abolitionist activities--one through the promulgation of his ideas and the other through his bodily presence in the events that actualized the Raynal's philosophy. But that bodily presence cuts through the center of the painting and marks the real divide between the two men. The constriction of Belley's body, a body that in its plenitude cannot be contained, begins at his neck with the multiple encircled, tied cravat that falls casually in folds to just above his sash, in line with the casually unbuttoned opening of his jacket. The encircling and tying increases with the tricolor sash that cinches his torso above the waist and culminates at his crotch in the folds of his yellow trousers. Exposed by the tension of this crescendo of constricted yet luxurious wrappings is his oversized

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<sup>17</sup> Ibid., 129-132. Commissioned by Lally Tollendal films, the painting had been censored from the Salon of 1787. Its appearance in 1789 was considered a triumph of liberty and proof of new freedom in the arts, according to Olander.

genitalia.<sup>18</sup> The eyes that normally control the spatial orientation of the viewer as well as the figure in portraits are absent. The severe Roman-like particularity of Raynal's face is blind with blank orbs instead of seeing eyes. The solid white of Raynal's eyes matches the whites of Belley's. As Belley looks off to the distance his dark pupils blend into the darkness of his skin and only the whites of his eyes catch the light and face the viewer--who is left to take in only his bodily presence. A rakish earring shines in the light next to his skin. The triangle of white circulates from the eyes to the cravat to the sash, and finally to the cuffs of his shirt that spill out from the partially buttoned jacket sleeves and frame his hands. Belley's hands are the only active bodily indicators in the painting--the fingers of the right hand outline by their curve and placement the enlarged but covert penis. The left hand holds at his side a chapeau adorned with imprudent plumage and a silk scarf finished with gold silken tassels. When the Estates General opened in 1789, instructions for the appropriate apparel were issued. A hat with feathers was reserved for the nobility.<sup>19</sup> As rendered by Girodet,

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<sup>18</sup> Crow's interpretation is similar to Weston's. He views the enlarged genitalia as a sign of liberty including the abundant sexuality of a man of action, see Emulation, 228.

<sup>19</sup> John Harvey, Men in Black (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1995), 126. The members of the Second Estate, the nobility were to wear black coats, silk or cloth breeches, lace cravat, and a feathered hat. The Third Estate were assigned black cloth suits, muslin cravats, and a plain three-cornered

the severity of Raynal's face diagonally opposed to this hat and the rapturously-painted torso of Belley contained within the breadth of that diagonal repudiates any regard for their commensurability.

Chaussard, the eminent republican critic who was so disturbed by Girodet's Deluge in 1806, enjoyed this display of suggested eroticism:

Standing, a man of color, ex-representative of the colonies, supports himself against a pedestal on which rises the bust of Raynal, in white marble. This "pose" is simple and grand; the drawing is sublime. One feels the grand form, the beautiful parts of the nude, even under the clothes. The head is well modeled: one recognizes the touch of a master. The perfection of the hands is admirable. This is one of the paintings the most knowingly painted that I know: I advise several artists to interrogate this painting; it will cause their desperation or their genius. I will go often to dream before this portrait. What sublime subjects! Raynal,<sup>20</sup> the freedom of the Negroes, and the brush of Girodet.

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hat. The wearing of black unified the members as a community--class was determined by accessories.

<sup>20</sup> "Debout, un homme de couleur, ex-représentant des colonies, s'appuye contre un piédestal sur lequel s'élève le buste de Raynal, en marbre blanc. Cette 'pose' est simple et grande; le dessin est sublime. On sent les grands formes, les belles parties du nu, sous l'habit même. La tête est bien modelée: on reconnaît la touche d'un maître. La perfection des mains est admirable. C'est un des tableaux les plus savamment peints que je connaisse: je conseille à plusieurs artistes d'interroger ce tableau; il fera leur désespoir our leur génie. J'irai souvent rêver devant ce portrait. Que d'objets sublimes! Raynal, la liberté des nègres, et le pinceau de Girodet." Pierre-Jean-Baptiste Chaussard, "Beaux-Arts. Exposition des ouvrages de peinture, sculpture, architecture, gravure, dans les salles du Muséum, premier thermidor an VI," La Décade philosophique, 18 (1798), 343-344.

The body of Belley, the "sublime" subject, is a kind of blank slate on which Girodet can figure through the act of painting his own erotic fantasies of the imagined primitive life of a man of color, an act of sublimation of his own desire. For Chaussard, the flamboyantly dressed body is there to contemplate and to dream in front of, and prompted by the perfectly painted hands, to imagine what that body might look like nude. Chaussard found only two subjects in the painting--Raynal, his advocacy of freedom, and the liberated expertise of Girodet's brushwork. As a subject, or non-subject, the presence of Belley becomes reified as Raynal's philosophical idea.

With the absence of Belley as a subject, his presence recuperated by Girodet as a mimetic sign of his own coded attitudes toward Belley's foreign nature, the hero/victim equation is not one of bifurcation between Raynal and Belley. On the surface Raynal and Girodet share the heroic position. Raynal is the hero for promulgating abolitionist rhetoric made successful by the appearance of Belley as a representative of his people in France. Chaussard made it clear that Girodet's brush is another kind of heroic instrument. However, as depicted by Girodet, Raynal is also the victim. The blind Raynal is painted realistically with aging skin and a furrowed brow but he is the color of the pale white stone of a sculptural bust. Next to the

plenitude of Belley's body and colorful uniform, he appears castrated, drained of his life force. Dressed like a deputy of the Directory, Belley presents a disquieting correspondence to the new French citizen of the Revolution except for the color of his skin and his overtly eroticized body. As painted by Girodet, Belley's sexualized body marks him as extimate—he represents that which, although internal to the subject, the new citizen had to reject.<sup>21</sup> All that Raynal is lacking is fully present in the body of Belley. This, in a sense, completion of Raynal by the attributes of Belley reveals any polarization of the two to be false.

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<sup>21</sup> According to Copjec, the term "extimate" is a theoretical concept developed by Jacques-Alain Miller in his unpublished seminar on "Extimité," after the term used by Lacan. The term refers to that which we must throw out, or reject, to constitute ourselves as subjects, "however, . . . this rejection can only be accomplished through the inclusion within ourselves of this negation of what we are not . . . . These Freudian objects are, then, not only rejected from, but also internal to the subject. In brief, they are 'extimate,' which means they are in us that which is not us. . . .

Normally, when we are at some remove from it, the extimate object 'a' appears as a lost part of ourselves, whose absence prevents us from becoming whole; it is then that it functions as the object-cause of our desire. But when our distance from it is reduced, it no longer appears as a partial object, but . . . as a complete body, an almost exact double of our own, except for the fact that this double is endowed with the object which we sacrificed in order to become subjects." "Vampires, Breast-Feeding, and Anxiety," 34-35. I am using the term in this chapter to refer to eroticized bodies that were rejected by the adherence to the term virtue, as the dominant defining characteristic of the new citizen after the Revolution. The attribution of sexuality, as I argue in this chapter, was displaced onto other peoples. In the portrait of Belley, the exaggerated penis under the tightly fitted uniform is an obvious example.

Diderot used the theme of sexuality in his Supplement to Bougainville's "Voyage" to turn the tables on the Europeans who visited Tahiti. Sex, as the one common denominator they shared, would seem a logical meeting ground for two diverse peoples to come together. By exaggerating the stereotypical European notion of the sexually free man of nature, Diderot also disclosed the absurd cultural and behavioral codes that controlled the European's sexual practices. Diderot's story is about a chaplain who travels with Bougainville and on arrival is offered the wife and three daughters of a Tahitian man, Orou. The purpose of sex in Tahiti, according to Diderot's narrative, is strictly for procreation--children are needed to sustain production of food and prized as a sign of wealth and fecundity for women and young girls when they come of age. The idea of parentage restricted to a "husband" is irrelevant. The chaplain pleads that his "religion" and his "calling" forbid him from partaking of Orou's gift of the women. Orou proceeds to demonstrate through the logic of reason how "unnatural" the chaplain's societal codes are.<sup>22</sup>

Diderot's dialogue operates on two levels--the words of the Tahitian Orou are intended to play out the role that Europeans have fantasized for the savage in nature and

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<sup>22</sup> Denis Diderot, "Supplement to Bougainville's 'Voyage,'" This is Not a Story and Other Stories, trans. P. N. Furbank (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1993), 74-78.

reveal through the European's own reasoning devices how sensible the savage's mores are compared to the laws of the European. On another level, the dialogue is a critique against colonization and its inescapable cultural destruction--an argument for the integrity and incommensurability of all cultures.<sup>23</sup> For Diderot cultures that were incommensurable--in particular they lacked a common language--had one mode of understanding and that was sex. In a positive light, Diderot saw sexuality as the only means by which the relationship between the colonized and colonizer might be feasible--through miscegenation--then the colonized might be able to benefit from civilization without being corrupted by it. This was the eighteenth century dream held by Diderot among others of a commercial harmony founded on racial harmony that would bring about a union between peoples of reciprocal needs.<sup>24</sup> Bougainville saw hope for this in Tahiti, which he named "La Nouvelle Cythère."<sup>25</sup> However, in Supplement to Bougainville's "Voyage," Diderot's subjects find no commensurability. The

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<sup>23</sup> Pagden, *European Encounters with the New World*, 142-143.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, 168-169.

<sup>25</sup> Pagden, *Lords of all the World*, 151-152. Charles de Brosses's *Histoire des navigations aux Terres australes*, 1756, expressed these ideas to avoid the cruelty and avarice that had almost destroyed the human race in the Americas.

chaplain succumbs to the pleasures of Orou's daughter, but if the codes of the chaplain's religion are unreasonable-- they cannot be changed in France.

What we must do is to speak against insane laws until they are reformed, but in the meantime to obey them. The man who, on his own authority, breaks a bad law encourages others to break good ones. It is better to be a madman among madmen than sane all on one's own. Let us tell ourselves, let us cry it aloud without cease, that shame, punishment, and ignominy have been attached to actions innocent in themselves; but let us not commit those actions, for shame, punishment, and ignominy are the worst of all evils. Let us imitate the worthy Chaplain and be a monk in France and a savage in Tahiti.<sup>26</sup>

If Diderot, Rousseau, Voltaire, and Bernardin de St. Pierre, were opposed to colonialism and slavery, there was no dispute among them about the fundamental superiority of Western civilization and the white race.<sup>27</sup>

### Entombment of Atala

Girodet's other painting based on a subject intertwined with colonization in the Americas, Entombment of Atala of 1808 (fig. 28), and the novel Atala from which it was derived, addressed the issue of miscegenation and the ultimate superiority of Western culture; both were met with unreserved popularity and acclaim. Discussions of the painting are inextricably tied to the life and political fortunes of the novel's author, François-René de

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<sup>26</sup> Diderot, "Supplement to Bougainville's 'Voyage,'" 111-112.

<sup>27</sup> Edward W. Said, Culture and Imperialism (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1994), 240-241.

Chateaubriand (1768-1848). The philosophical opposite of the Enlightenment philosophers, Chateaubriand spent some years opposing the revolutionary army before he emigrated to England and America. On his return as an impoverished French aristocrat, he brought with him the manuscript of Le Génie du Christianisme that included the novel Atala. Chateaubriand was persuaded by his friends to publish Atala first as a precursor to the more serious work that was meant to restore Catholicism to France; Atala appeared in 1801 and was an instant literary success.<sup>28</sup> The opportune publication of both works coincided with Napoleon's Concordat with the Pope--the official reconciliation of church and state.<sup>29</sup> Atala, like other works by Chateaubriand (René and Les Martyrs, for instance) immediately attracted painters as a resource for popular

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<sup>28</sup> Margaret Waller, "Being René, Buying Atala: Alienated Subjects and Decorative Objects in Postrevolutionary France," in Rebel Daughters: Women and the French Revolution, eds. Sara E. Melzer and Leslie W. Rabine (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992), 158.

<sup>29</sup> See Priscilla P. Clark, "Chateaubriand and Napoleon: History, Poetry or Both?," in Chateaubriand Today, ed. Richard Switzer (Madison: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1970), 162-167. According to Clark, Chateaubriand was awarded by Napoleon with an undersecretaryship at the Holy See, but he considered this an inferior post. His subsequent disappointing political career was a result of Napoleon's offers that did not match in political terms his conception of his grand literary and noble position and his self-imposed estrangement from the Empire in 1804 after the execution of the duc d'Enghien. While Chateaubriand admired Napoleon, he disagreed with his role as the despotic emperor who ignored the freedoms won during the French Revolution; as an aristocrat he defended traditional principles of honor, duty, and his class at the cost of his political career.

subjects as it contains a series of pictorially written passages. Between 1802 and 1848 fifty-one paintings were based on the works of Chateaubriand in the Paris Salons, eighteen from Atala. But Girodet was the first major artist to paint a subject from Chateaubriand.<sup>30</sup>

The success of Atala and its continued fascination for literary critics is partly due to the fact that it lends itself to a multiplicity of interpretations--a veritable inventory of early nineteenth century concerns: the effects of the Revolution on traditions of the past with the autobiographical presence of Chateaubriand implied by the character René, the aristocratic exile; the new role of women; and curiosity about primitive, savage lives in the New World. On the surface it is a simple romantic story about passionate lovers destined for tragedy, narrated in retrospect by a now blind and aged Chactas to René. The trope of the blind, savage poet/narrator is taken from Ossian--this linkage was made by Chateaubriand himself for he compared Chactas, led by a young girl over the hills of the Mississippi, to Ossian led by Malvina over the rocks of Morven.

If Rousseau had made the primitive, savage man a popular sentiment that served the purposes of Chateaubriand, only the romantic notions of men and women living close to

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<sup>30</sup> David Wakefield, "Chateaubriand's 'Atala' as a Source of Inspiration in Nineteenth-century Art," Burlington Magazine 120 (January 1978): 17-19.

nature remained in Chateaubriand's version of Rousseau's ruminations about early man. The primitives of Atala know nothing of Rousseau's natural virtue and their only hope to become civilized with virtue and reason as their guiding moral compasses is through the teachings of Christianity. Rousseau's definition of the primitive savage is worth quoting if only to reaffirm just how greatly it has been altered:

Let us conclude that wandering in the forests, without industry, without speech, without domicile, without war and without liaisons, with no need of his fellow men, likewise with no desire to harm them, perhaps never even recognizing anyone individually, savage man, subject to few passions and self-sufficient, had only the sentiments and intellect suited to that state; he felt only his true needs, saw only what he believed he had an interest to see; and his intelligence made no more progress than his vanity. If by chance he made some discovery, he was all the less able to communicate it because he did not recognize even his children. Art perished with the inventor. There was neither education nor progress; the generations multiplied uselessly; and everyone always starting from the same point, centuries passed in all the crudeness of the first ages; the species was already old, and man remained ever a child.<sup>31</sup>

The complications of social bonds and institutional laws transmitted through language are not part of Rousseau's equation and it is these that constitute the core of the

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<sup>31</sup> Rousseau, Discourse on Inequality, 137. As Jean Starobinski pointed out, Rousseau referred to the accounts of travelers of the "Caribs" and "Hottentots," as directional guides since they were supposedly so far behind us, they led him in the right direction toward naked and solitary man whom he clearly intended as his own hypothetical notion of primitive man. See

story of Atala and her lover Chactas, a Natchez. Atala, brought up as a Christian but conceived out of wedlock, is the daughter of an Indian mother and the Spaniard Lopez who is also the adoptive father of Chactas. Atala is the quintessential example of the eighteenth century dream for racial harmony--the progeny of miscegenation. But in the terms set out by Chateaubriand, miscegenation is no longer a viable solution. Chateaubriand extends the definition of the primitive to encompass the religious and cultural practices of the Indians while maintaining the child-like nature of Rousseau's savage. While comparing the primitive to the civilized, he really compared two different races and cultural practices.

Much has been written about the lushly described landscape, part of the vast North American empire that once belonged to France, that introduces the story. Chateaubriand divided the Louisiana banks of the Mississippi into dramatic extremes of nature's possibilities--described as the new Eden. The western side is a wide expanse of prairies that go on as far as the eye can see, silent and full of repose, except for wandering herds of three to four thousand wild buffaloes--a space of timelessness without boundaries. In contrast, the eastern side is full of diversity in its land formations from rocky mountains to

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Starobinski's "The Discourse on Inequality," in Jean-Jacques

valleys, in its vegetation of varying color and smells with wild vines to begonias, and in its multitude of animals. There are bears, intoxicated from grapes, tripping along the branches of elms; black squirrels; every variety of bird including green parrots and crimson cardinals red as fire. Completing this diverse world are crocodiles and serpent-bird-catchers--suspended in the arches of the trees like creeping vines.<sup>32</sup> The diversity inherent to the eastern side of the river includes the wholeness of nature in all its exuberance of life and particularity of communal interactions. The eastern side of the river has been interpreted as a sign of man's fall from Eden--with the inclusion of deadly serpents and crocodiles. And as a place of exile the landscape has been read as symbolic of the excesses of the French Revolution.<sup>33</sup> Primarily, Chateaubriand's descriptive landscape of an antithetical

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Rousseau, 290-291.

<sup>32</sup> See Chateaubriand, Atala, with notations by Christiane Marcellesi (Paris: Librairie Larousse, 1973), 41-44.

<sup>33</sup> Dennis J. Spinger interpreted the non-paradisiacal landscape as a duality that was symbolic of the savage vs. the civilized--the inner duality experienced by both Chactas and René who joined an Indian tribe and married an Indian woman. For both, according to Spinger, the symbolic landscape is indicative of their final exile and loneliness, in "The Paradise Setting of Chateaubriand's 'Atala,'" PMLA 89 (January 1974): 535. For Mary Anne O'Neil, "Chateaubriand's 'Atala': A Study of the French Revolution," in Nineteenth-Century French Studies 22 (Fall-Winter 1993-94): 7-13, this landscape of exile, in a story that demands adherence to Christian values, is meant as condemnation of the excesses of the French Revolution.

world of nature introduces the reader in the opening paragraphs to the narrative form of the story. The themes of Atala are about oppositions and the consequences of choices--primitive or civilized, past traditions or present change, Christianity or paganism.<sup>34</sup>

Girodet's painting of the Entombment of Atala presents the tragic ending--Atala's death from suicide, a suicide provoked by the pledge of Atala's chastity by her Christian mother who promised her daughter's virginity to save her life at birth. No longer able to control her love and physical desire for Chactas, Atala chooses death to save her mother from damnation. Prior to her death, Atala and Chactas, as the marginalized exiles from their traditional Indian culture, experience a kind of ritual passage through the land leading toward their reincorporation into a community--the Christian mission of Père Aubry. But Père Aubry is himself a marginalized person, described as a hermit who lives apart from his mission in a grotto. After Atala has taken poison, Père Aubry suggests that her mother misunderstood Christianity, her vow was not binding, while

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<sup>34</sup> See Doris Y. Kadish, "Symbolism of Exile: The Opening Description in 'Atala,'" French Review 55 (February 1982): 363. Also see Joyce O. Lowrie, "Motifs of Kingdom and Exile in 'Atala,'" French Review 43 (April 1970): 760-762. For Lowrie there are three possible means of resolution in Atala--religion, nature, and love. In her interpretation, nature is the refuge for man in exile and at the same time symbolic of his instability--the condition of exile.

at the same time assigning her death to an excessive knowledge of passion--not even known in nature.<sup>35</sup>

My daughter . . . you are distraught with grief. This excess of passion to which you abandon yourself is rarely just, it is not even natural; and for that reason it is less culpable in the eyes of God, because it is more an error of the mind, than depravity in the heart. . . . Religion no longer demands any human sacrifice. Its true sentiments and temperate virtues are well above fanatic sentiments and forced virtues of a pretending heroism.<sup>36</sup>

Far from being an apologist for the concepts of primitivism from Rousseau, Chateaubriand was an apologist for Christianity, but principally Christianity ruled by reason. As pointed out by A. Owen Aldridge, Chateaubriand distinguished between two forms of liberty: the liberty of primitive life and the liberty of civilized society based on the light of reason. In Voyage en Amérique, 1827, Chateaubriand justified policies that replaced existing political systems in South America with those of monarchies to advance his notion of liberty. He went out of his way to

<sup>35</sup> See James F. Hamilton, "Ritual Passage in Chateaubriand's 'Atala,'" Nineteenth-Century French Studies 15 (Summer 1987): 386-390. For Hamilton, Chateaubriand's use of ritual passage is a means of reintegrating and regenerating Christianity in its mystical relationship to religious experience through ritual sacrifice. Hamilton, rightly I think, pointed out the role of extreme passion in the death of Atala, however, I disagree with his interpretation.

<sup>36</sup> "Ma fille . . . votre douleur vous égare. Cet excès de passion auquel vous vous livrez, est rarement juste, il n'est pas même dans la nature; et en cela, il est moins coupable aux yeux de Dieu, parce que c'est plutôt quelque chose de faux dans l'esprit, que de vicieux dans le coeur. . . . La religion n'exige point de sacrifice plus qu'humain. Ses sentiments vrais, ses vertus tempérées sont bien au-dessus des sentiments exaltés et des vertus forcées d'un prétendu héroïsme." Chateaubriand, Atala, 94.

distance himself from any notion that he was an admirer of the Noble Savage in the preface to Atala.<sup>37</sup>

I am not like M. Rousseau, an enthusiast of the savages; and although I have perhaps as much to complain about society as this philosopher had to be pleased with it, I do not believe that "pure nature" is the most beautiful thing in the world. I have always found it very unattractive, everywhere that I have had the occasion to witness it. Far from being of the opinion that man who thinks is a "depraved animal," I believe that it is thought that makes man.<sup>38</sup>

Atala's mother may have converted to Christianity and raised Atala as a Christian, but as a primitive, her kind of Christianity was devoid of reason, merely a "savage education;"<sup>39</sup> their actions are ruled by emotions-- fanaticism on the part of Atala's mother, and erotic passion on the part of Atala.

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<sup>37</sup> A. Owen Aldridge, "Chateaubriand, the Idea of Liberty, and Latin America," in Chateaubriand Today, ed. Richard Switzer (Madison: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1970): 203-211.

<sup>38</sup> "Je ne suis point comme M. Rousseau, un enthousiaste des Sauvages; et quoique j'aie peut-être autant à me plaindre de la société que ce philosophe avait à s'en louer, je ne crois point que la 'pure nature' soit la plus belle chose du monde. Je l'aie toujours trouvée fort laide, partout où j'ai eu l'occasion de la voir. Bien loin d'être d'opinion que l'homme qui pense soit un 'animal dépravé, je crois que c'est la pensée qui fait l'homme." Chateaubriand, Atala, 30.

<sup>39</sup> "It is your savage education and the lack of necessary instruction that has ruined you; you did not know that a Christian can take his own life."

"C'est votre éducation sauvage et le manque d'instruction nécessaire qui vous ont perdue; vous ne saviez pas qu'une chrétienne ne peut disposer de sa vie." Ibid., 98.

The body of Atala, in front of the arch of a natural bridge, pale and drained of life, covered only by the thinnest white shroud so that its beautiful nude curves are still apparent, stretches across Girodet's canvas above the already dug grave. Supporting her body are the grave Père Aubry at her head and Chactas at her feet and coiled around her legs in a self-absorbed fetal position of child-like despair, a position contradicted by his mature muscular body. Christian crosses are unmistakably evident--one leaning and framed in the light of the arch, another clutched in Atala's hands, and, in the foreground, an ominous cross shaped by the fallen spade. Faithful to the sentiments of the novel, Girodet has painted the quotation from Job, pronounced by Père Aubry over Atala's funeral bed, on the side of the arch--"J'ai passé comme la fleur; j'ai séché comme l'herbe des champs."<sup>40</sup> The Christian iconography extends to the composition itself, recognized by early critics as a combination of two themes--Christ's lamentation and entombment.<sup>41</sup>

Multiple issues converge on the body of Atala-- religion, gender, and race. Described by Chateaubriand and

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<sup>40</sup> "I passed away like a flower; I have withered like the grass in the fields." Ibid., 108.

<sup>41</sup> George Levitine, "Some Unexplored Aspects of the Illustrations of 'Atala': The 'Surenchères visuelles' of Girodet and Hersent,"

painted by Girodet with skin as white as alabaster with blue veins visible, the body of Atala is ironically Europeanized. The portrayal of her erotic yet passive body--silenced by ignorance and unreasonable passion--has been interpreted by feminist writers as a symptom of women's condition after the Revolution. Women had to be silenced and denied the emotional range of a full life. For Naomi Schor, Girodet gave immediacy to Chateaubriand's text by succinctly removing Atala from the social sphere with Christian symbolism. By allegorizing her presence, he effectively produced a "degree zero of female representation." At the same time he erased issues of racial difference in order to maintain the homosocial order and domination of a bourgeois and imperialist patriarchy.<sup>42</sup> The erasure of racial

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in Chateaubriand Today, ed. Richard Switzer (Madison: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1970): 141.

<sup>42</sup> See Naomi Schor, "'Triste Amérique: Atala' and the Postrevolutionary Construction of Woman," in Rebel Daughters: Women and the French Revolution, eds. Sara E. Melzer and Leslie W. Rabine (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992), 151. For Marie-Claire Vallois, "Exotic Femininity and the Rights of Man: 'Paul et Virginie' and 'Atala', or the Revolution in Stasis," in Rebel Daughters, Atala participates in the repression of the feminine and maternal family as she represents an uncanny reminder of sexual difference in the discourse of the Other and must be allegorized as Mother Nature. The exotic feminine is the equivalent of the subversive woman of the revolution, 186-192. Also in Rebel Daughters, Madelyn Gutwirth compared Atala to Rousseau's doomed heroine Julie--the active, passionate females have to be stripped of their mind, culture, and language. They die in nature while men are saved by culture; they are exalted to the realm of universal personhood, thereby losing their individual power--engulfed, drowned, into the realm of the worshipped sublime beloved. See "The Engulfed Beloved:

distinctions is precisely the issue that circulates around the classical evocation of Atala's body--attitudes about women (in this case French and Indian) and notions of primitivism share the same characteristics of unrestrained sexual passion. If women's desire must be controlled, so too must other cultures--that is the subtext of Chateaubriand's reconfiguration of eighteenth century philosophical ideas about colonialization.

Mixtures of races and cultures, dominant themes in the novel, end in their extermination. Lives lived in the pursuit of virtue over passion and brave deaths in the face of excruciating torture are euphemistically called a triumph of Christianity. Atala, the child of an Indian and a Spaniard, is a bastard. Her practice of Christianity is her doom--she and her mother are only able to practice a primitive form of Christianity--not refined by the virtue of civilization. The cross in Girodet's painting under the arch is not upright--it marks the hybrid cemetery of the Indians of the Mission, the Groves of Death near the natural arched bridge. Père Aubry, referred to as the hermit, permitted his new converts to continue using their traditional place and manner of burial and merely sanctified it with a cross. Incidents that entail the integration of Western culture and Christianity with nature also populate

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Representations of Dead and Dying Women in the Art and Literature

the novel. Père Aubry inscribed verses from Homer and Solomon on the trunks of oak trees--the aged oaks served as his books. But like *Atala*, these picturesque scenes of cultural harmony and integration are doomed. Before *Atala's* burial, Père Aubry wrapped her body in a length of European linen, woven by his mother, "It was the only thing remaining from his country, and he had for a long time intended it for his own tomb."<sup>43</sup> This action forewarns the reader--Père Aubry has severed the last remaining tie to his own culture and completed his integration into nature and the lives of his neophytes. The Epilogue, narrated by a foreign traveler, is about the violent and horrific deaths of Chactas, René, and Père Aubry and the destruction of the Christian mission, related to the traveler by René's granddaughter, another progeny of miscegenation, the last of the Natchez and doomed to extinction.

According to the critic Charles-Paul Landon, Girodet's painting precisely captured the sentiments of Chateaubriand's novel--so compelling is this comparison that Landon began his observations on Atala with a lengthy quotation from the novel. By 1824, Stendhal (pen name of Marie-Henri Beyle 1783-1842), the self-styled advocate of

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of the Revolutionary Era," 198-227.

<sup>43</sup> "C'était le seul bien qui lui restât de sa patrie, et depuis longtemps il le destinait à son propre tombeau." Chateaubriand, Atala, 107.

Romanticism, still considered Atala one of Girodet's few masterpieces.<sup>44</sup> The same emotion that Landon feels when reading the funeral passage in the novel he feels before the painting. The simplicity of the scene and the grace and beauty of Atala are drawn with the expert facility of antique masterpieces by Girodet; one feels the excellence of the painting and will not be able to forget it, according to Landon. These are easy sentiments that register on the surface--like the European cloth that covers the antique classical beauty of Atala's body, a transparent veil in the painting. The classical rendering of Atala's body disguises her nature as the woman of two distinct races and of irrational passions, conditions that inevitably condemned her to be sacrificed.

The rich fullness of the eastern side of the river in the landscape description that begins Atala's story--a paradigm of nature's complexity--is seductively cynical and ironic. Succumbing to its allure and pleasures that explicitly includes sexual abandon is fatal. Heterogeneity, diversity, belongs in nature, but a nature that has been denuded of its spirit by an allegiance to reason--a key to

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<sup>44</sup> See Charles-Paul Landon, *Annales du Musée et de l'école moderne des beaux-arts. Salon de 1808* (Paris, 1808), vol. 2, 17-19. See also Stendhal, *Oeuvres posthumes de Mélanges d'art et de Littérature* (Paris : 1867), 206.

the blindness of Chactas (as of Ossian).<sup>45</sup> Atala can be safely idealized in death; as a sign of racial harmony and toleration she is no longer a threat to the homogeneity of European male authority and imperialism--concepts glossed over by Chateaubriand with the name of Christianity. Loss of colonial empire and nostalgia and mourning for past life, possibly pre-industrial, have been cited as key themes of Atala.<sup>46</sup> Lost also is an ongoing dialectic within eighteenth century philosophic concepts about the advantages and disadvantages of colonization that produced daring ideas of racial harmony through the acceptance of miscegenation--the welcoming of a world of heterogeneous possibilities. Girodet's painting of a quiet scene of mourning, silent and full of repose, evokes facile responses like those of Landon. Below the surface as a visual equivalent to the discourse of the novel, it operates as a mask for violent imperial power that knows no boundaries--like the expansive boundless western side of the river--and for the loss threads of a dialectic that held out the possibility for the tolerance of diversity.

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<sup>45</sup> For a discussion on the alienation of nature by the enlightenment see Horkheimer and Adorno, 38-39.

<sup>46</sup> See Kadish, 360, and Vallois, 188.

Portraits of "Citoyens" and "Mamelukes"

In 1807 Girodet met Chateaubriand who had just returned from a long journey to the Holy Land and the Mediterranean. In that year Girodet painted what has become the best known portrait (fig. 29) of the writer/statesman and the only one approved by Chateaubriand himself. While Girodet worked on Atala, a non-commissioned work, he supported himself as he had done while painting The Deluge, with portrait painting. Delécluze remarked on the likeness to character of Girodet's painting when he first saw Chateaubriand, talking with the Bertins, father and son, at Girodet's funeral. Delécluze found that Girodet had perfectly captured the qualities of Chateaubriand's urbanity--a model of the Romantic with his slightly disheveled hair, combined with a look of strength and sorrow.<sup>47</sup> The pose is the same as that of Belley's three-quarter-length portrait only in reverse--Chateaubriand is leaning against an ivy-covered stone wall that overlooks the ruins of the Coliseum, a reference to his undersecretaryship in Rome from 1803-1804.<sup>48</sup> But the sexual connotations so palpable in Belley's portrait are missing. Like the portrait of Belley, however, the portrait of

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<sup>47</sup> Delécluze, 58-59.

<sup>48</sup> See Brown, 249-250. Brown dated the portrait of Chateaubriand in 1807, although other sources including Coupin dated it 1808. Brown's date is based on Chateaubriand's writing about the portrait.

Chateaubriand with its expressive content is an exception to the many portraits painted in the early nineteenth century.

The increase in portraits, attributed to the artist's need to paint them as a means of financial support and the concomitant demand by a wealthy component of the bourgeoisie for their painted likenesses, had been decried by the critic Bruun-Neergaard in the Salon of 1800. As examples of the most promising artists of the day, Girodet and Gérard in particular disappointed the critic when they exhibited only portraits and no history paintings in the Salon.<sup>49</sup> There were 250 portraits in the Salon of 1800 out of a total of 380 paintings. Many of the portraits were identified anonymously as Citoyen or Madame, another annoyance to the critics; one of Girodet's portraits was simply titled Citizen B.<sup>50</sup> If Girodet and Gérard had disappointed the critics with only portraits, at least their portraits were considered superior to the vast majority exhibited. The Portrait of Citizen B. (fig. 30), identified as Jean-François de Bourgeon mayor of Boissy-le Sec, in his trim blue jacket with the velvet collar, is typical of the revised look adopted by the bourgeoisie and cultivated in the profusion of their portraits. The mayor's upright

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<sup>49</sup> Tonnes Christian Bruun-Neergaard, "Salon de l'an VIII," Mercure de France, Collection Deloynes 22, no. 633, 730-731.

posture, steady slightly imperious gaze, his holding of Cicero's Concerning Friendship add up to convey his serious and trustworthy nature.

Girodet resorted to a few standard compositional styles for his portraits, endowing this part of his oeuvre with a kind of formulaic methodology. (Around 1800 Boilly, whose sitters were decidedly less well-positioned than Girodet's, standardized his portraits to the bare essentials by using pre-stretched canvases of 8 x 6 inches for portraits that he could paint in a few hours if his clients wanted a cut-rate price. All appeared in three-quarter poses against a blank background.<sup>51</sup>) Commissioned and painted in 1806-1808, Portrait of Raymond de Sèze (fig. 31), a defender of Louis XVI,<sup>52</sup> resembles the Portrait of Citizen B.--there is the same seated position, the inclusion of classical books and statue, and solid conservative clothes including a collar that appears to compress and contain his body up to his chin. Both portraits lack the rakishness and casual spilling-over effect of Belley's and the romantic flare of

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<sup>50</sup> Brown, 176.

<sup>51</sup> Siegfried, *The Art of Louis-Léopold Boilly*, 117-118.

<sup>52</sup> See Bernier, 116. The date on the portrait is in question because Girodet signed it G.T., indicating that Trioson had adopted him, an event that took place in 1809. A lithograph by Aubry-Lecomte is dated 1806, however, Coupin dated the portrait 1808. The portrait of M. de Sèze was not exhibited in the Salon until 1814 because of the sitter's royalist associations. In the

Chateaubriand. Girodet also employed a close-up bust-like compositional format. Portrait of Louis Hector Becquerel (1756-1823) (fig. 32), a famous physicist and mayor of Chatillon who married Girodet's first cousin, is the most effective example of this style. In the same format is also Portrait of Antoine-César Becquerel (1788-1878),<sup>53</sup> a celebrated physician and son of Hector, and a drawing of the world-renown typographer Portrait of Firmon-Didot (1764-1836) (figs. 33, 34).<sup>54</sup> A steady gaze, dark and somber clothes, and standing shirt collar characterize each. The portrait of Hector Becquerel repeats, after the portrait of Chateaubriand, the Napoleonic hand-to-chest gesture--a signal of heartfelt serious intentions. Girodet's inclination to emphasize the importance of his sitters is particularly effective with the Didot portrait. The lofty nature of his work--publishing the great works of

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Salon of 1814, it appeared alongside the one of Chateaubriand, see Brown, 298.

<sup>53</sup> Biographical information from Pruvost-Auzas, Girodet 1767-1824, notes 48 and 49, n.p., see also by the same author "Musée Girodet à Montargis," La Revue du Louvre 18 (1968): 356.

<sup>54</sup> See Albert J. George, The Didot Family and the Progress of Printing (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1961), 5-9. For two hundred years, from the mid-seventeenth century, the Didot family dominated printing in France. Firmin and his brother Pierre published Virgil's Opera with twenty-three plates engraved after designs from Gérard and Girodet. Firmin developed the Didot typeface adopted by most of Europe; by the early nineteenth century he had made the House of Didot the best known printing establishment in the world. Like Girodet, he also translated the classics.

literature--has literally lifted him above the mountains into the clouds in Girodet's portrait. The unkempt, wispy hair gives the impression of a man preoccupied with more important matters than his physical appearance.

Girodet painted many other portraits--including those of his relatives and friends such as Firmin Didot. Most of his male sitters were well-respected and highly successful members of the bourgeoisie. For example he painted portraits of two physician-surgeons: Baron Jean Dominique Larrey (1766-1842), chief surgeon of the army in Egypt, and Doctor François Ribes (1765-1845), who worked with Larrey in the field of battle and became surgeon to the Emperor. Both men enjoyed nearly heroic reputations after their service to Napoleon's army in battle.<sup>55</sup> Implacability, steadiness of gaze, solid stature, and somber nature--all

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<sup>55</sup> As early as 1795 Girodet was corresponding to Dr. Larrey. When he died it was Larrey who tried to save the artist's life by performing an amputation of his gangrenous leg. See Ferdinand Boyer, "Quelques écrits de Girodet (1789-1799)," Bulletin de la Société de l'histoire de l'art français, (1967): 244, and Delécluze, 51. In a letter to Girodet, Larrey compared the devastation in the battle of Eylau to that of Jaffa and asked that Girodet paint it including him in a small part as a pendant to the Jaffa painting of Gros. If Girodet preferred not to, he requested that he make the request to Gros, see Pruvost-Auzas, Girodet 1767-1824, note 31, n.p. Ribes worked with Larrey at the battle of Eylau and received the cross of chevalier of Legion of Honor from the Emperor. The rudimentary conditions under which they aided the wounded were improved by Larrey's invention of a portable ambulance. One of Ribes most intriguing publications is the History of the opening and the embalming of the body of Louis XVIII, an event in which he participated. See Jacqueline Boutet-Loyer, "Un portrait inédit par Girodet: François Ribes chirurgien de l'Empereur," La revue du Louvre 4 (1986): 306-307.

Girodet's sitters share these qualities that signify the essential virtuous, trustworthy citizen. In his early poem about painting, written between 1800 and 1805, Girodet addressed his students about the art of portraiture,

Descend from history to draw portraits; in this subordinate art shine in the first rank; Van Dyck in pursuing his career with honor knew how to almost equal Titian and Raphael, and through his portraits alone he became immortal. The paths are laid out by these famous masters. . . . Know how, sometimes by using a deceptive, unofficial, honest artifice, to soften a defect, palliate ugliness, embellish beauty . . . .

Airs of vanity spoil victory; noble simplicity better frames glory. See then Titian, Van Dyck and Raphael, examples of true, simple and natural beauty; that they always guide you; after these learned models aggrandize your heroes, embellish your beauties.<sup>56</sup>

With the exception of the more eccentric portraits of Belley and Chateaubriand, the sedate bourgeois portraits, following the Davidian tradition of directness and lack of superfluous ornamentation, established a formula for the representation of the new ruling class. The uniformity of their facial expressions coupled with costumes that shore up

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<sup>56</sup> "Descendez de l'histoire et tracez des portraits; Brillez au premier rang dans cet art secondaire; Vandick avec honneur en courut la carrière; Il sut presque égaler Titien, Raphaël, Et par ses portraits seuls il devint immortel. Par ces maîtres fameux les routes sont tracées . . . . Sachez, usant parfois d'un honnête artifice, Menteur officieux, atténuer un vice, Et, sans dissimuler la simple vérité, Pallier la laideur, embellir la beauté . . . . Les airs de vanité déparent la victoire; La simplicité noble encadre mieux la gloire. Voyez donc Titien, Vandick et Raphaël, Exemples du vrai simple et du beau naturel; Qu'ils vous guident toujours; sur ces doctes modèles Grandissez vos héros, embellissez vos belles." Girodet, "Les Veillées," Oeuvres posthumes, vol. 1, 391-392. On Girodet's poetry see Neil MacGregor's "Girodet's 'Le Peintre,'" Oxford Art Journal 4 (July 1981): 27.

their unwavering gazes signify strategies to fortify their republican identity as virtuous citizens. Natural virtue, man's primitive nature, as advocated by Rousseau and his disciple Robespierre was thought to be hidden under the artifice of the social mask and only needed to be exposed in a climate of transparent relations. According to Rousseau, man's identity remained unchanged and immanent within the self; all man had to do was reveal his sincerity, his inward transparency and he would rediscover that all men are essentially alike--like the anonymous, interchangeable portraits that flooded the Salons.<sup>57</sup>

The idea that citizens were universally alike was also aligned with the concept that civilization was identified with uniformity in the early days of the Revolution.

Uniformity was a rational value, conforming to the universality of human nature and of the individual, once he had been freed of corporative or associative ties. Heterogeneity was not the characteristic of the rational individual, but evidence of the historical survival among groups and communities of beliefs and superstitions that belonged to earlier ages. If the purpose of the various enquiries into local customs . . . was to identify this heterogeneity, the deeper ambition was precisely to eliminate such differences through their identification and to achieve a uniform society within the national frontiers.<sup>58</sup>

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<sup>57</sup> See Starobinski's discussion in Jean-Jacques Rousseau: Transparency and Obstruction, 15-19.

<sup>58</sup> Woolf, "French Civilization and Ethnicity in the Napoleonic Empire," 107.

After Brumaire, in the regime of the First Consul, the ideal that the people belonged to a uniform collective, articulated by the Jacobins as a homogeneous collective devoted to virtue, continued under the organization of an enlightened rational bureaucratic structure.<sup>59</sup> A bureaucratic regime of modern technocracy driven by the enlightenment's secular rationalism replaced the patriarchal authority that once resided in the monarchy. This change did not liberate the subject, but remained equally oppressive, if in different ways.<sup>60</sup> The demeanor of the bourgeois subject had to be carefully policed to project a calm, rational confidence--explicit in the steady gazes of Girodet's portraits. Any expression of emotions, passions--code words for sexual desire and thus, social disruption--was unacceptable.<sup>61</sup> At the same time a sincere expression of one's inner, natural virtue was expected to radiate forth and circumvent social mannerisms.

The growth of the design ideology of Functionalism, utilitarianism, paralleled the turn to uniformity in the early nineteenth century. The discarding of unnecessary accessories, stripping away useless ornament--exemplified by the decline in luxurious ornamentation of clothes that were

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<sup>59</sup> Ibid.

<sup>60</sup> Davis, 138.

<sup>61</sup> Stephen Toulmin, Cosmopolis: The Hidden Agenda of Modernity (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1990), 134.

replaced by the plain, black suit--was meant to reveal the true nature of the subject as a functioning useful citizen.<sup>62</sup> To be useful and to acquire things that made life function smoothly--these were the legitimate desires of the new subject and the only respectable means of seeking pleasure. The sitters of Girodet's portraits present themselves as unwavering in their self-assurance. The solid stare that appears to erase the symbolic relation between the viewer and the sitter at the same time betrays a denial of repressed desire whose accompanying guilt is displaced on the outside. One object of threat to bourgeois functionalism was the representation of foreign subjects in their luxurious costumes, richly ornamented.<sup>63</sup>

Concurrent with Girodet's bourgeois portrait practice was his ongoing fascination with painting people from the Near East. It is as if Girodet continued the same practice of representation he began with Hippocrates--only now in the genre of portraits the virtuous citizen and the barbarian are divided. In the auction catalogue organized by M. Pérignon, the most accurate account of works in Girodet's possession at the time of his death, more than thirty of the images listed are of "Turcs," "Mamelukes," "Bédouins," and

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<sup>62</sup> According to John Harvey, the French slowly acquired the fashion of wearing black. In the 1790s it signified political conviction on both sides. Black was the color worn by most, including Robespierre, for the trial of Louis XVI, 127.

<sup>63</sup> For her discussion of functionalism, see Copjec's Read My Desire, 75-106.

"Indiens." Un Indien of 1807 (catalogued as a "portrait of an Indian" while the costume is, in fact, Ottoman, not Indian) and Mustapha Sussen of Tunis of 1810 (figs. 35, 36) are two examples.<sup>64</sup> Some are described as "brilliantly colored" and most are wearing turbans. A few turbaned Odalisques were part of his oeuvre also. Listed among his personal collections of medals, antique objects, marbles, and Oriental weapons and armor are over ninety Turkish and Persian costumes of luxurious fabrics--silks, satins, and taffetas, many embroidered and of bright colors.<sup>65</sup> Delécluze reported that Girodet wore old costumes in his studio to affect the aspect of a savage.<sup>66</sup> Girodet's Oriental collection preceded that of the famous "Monsieur Auguste" (1789-1850) who influenced Delacroix.<sup>67</sup>

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<sup>64</sup> See The Metropolitan Museum of Art Bulletin, 56, no. 2 (Fall 1998): 40. The Metropolitan recently acquired a small oil study for Portrait of an Indian.

<sup>65</sup> M. A.-N. Pérignon, Catalogue des tableaux, esquisses, dessins et croquis de M. Girodet-Trioson (Paris, April 1825). The first entry is "Un officier de Mamelucks, . . . d'une couleur brillante . . .", 8. Jean Adhémar described a picturesque atmosphere in Girodet's studio surrounded by his collections that included lion, zebra, and leopard skins, and skeletons among the others in "L'Enseignement académique en 1820, Girodet et son atelier," Bulletin de la Société de l'histoire de l'art français (1933), 275. Adhémar also mentioned that live models in Girodet's studio included "un nègre étonnant" and "un Turc," 277.

<sup>66</sup> Étienne-Jean Delécluze, Louis David, son école et son temps: souvenirs (Paris, 1855), 270.

<sup>67</sup> Pruvost-Auzas, Girodet 1767-1824, note 81, n.p.

According to Rousseau, these were costumes of non-utilitarian purpose--worn in warm climates, their only function was to adorn the body in a decadent, ostentatious overflow of cloth.<sup>68</sup> Among other statements concerning Arabs, Rousseau discussed notions about their language in contrast to the languages of Europe. He found theirs the one best suited to speech, a language to address the gods and religious crowds because of its eloquent, rhythmic, sonorous, and seductive tone--a language of fanaticism that could inspire martyrdom.<sup>69</sup> Interestingly, his father, Isaac Rousseau, spent six years working as a watchmaker in a sultan's seraglio in Constantinople before Jean-Jacques was born.<sup>70</sup> In contrast to his writings about Near Eastern costumes, Rousseau was famous for wearing Armenian caftans that he had specially made, at first for health reasons and then to express his originality, an impulse adopted by Girodet.<sup>71</sup>

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<sup>68</sup> Rousseau made this distinction in On the Social Contract, 94.

<sup>69</sup> See Rousseau, Essay on the Origin of Languages, 49.

<sup>70</sup> Cranston, Jean-Jacques, 22.

<sup>71</sup> Maurice Cranston, The Noble Savage: Jean-Jacques Rousseau 1754-1762 (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1991), 339. Rousseau started wearing them for a practical reason, to conceal catheters and facilitate their use, but found he relished the comfort they afforded him and the eccentric demeanor. According to Starobinski, late in life, isolated from society, Rousseau gave up his Armenian dress when he no longer needed to express his originality, in Jean-Jacques: Transparency and Obstruction, 203.

Girodet's fascination with the people and culture of the Near East was conflicted. According to Coupin, Girodet surrounded himself with Mamelukes during the time he painted The Revolt at Cairo 1810 (fig. 37), the same period he painted eight small portraits of Turks, of which Mustapha is one. "He was surrounded by Mamelukes who were, so to speak, living with him, and whose beauty electrified him . . ." <sup>72</sup> Coupin noted that the Mamelukes painted by Girodet were brought from Egypt by Napoleon. <sup>73</sup> His writings, however, expressed sentiments diametrically opposed to this admiration. His illustration for his poem Le Peintre (fig. 38), about the painter Zeuxis's imagined voyage to ancient Greece, now occupied, shows Turks resting in the center of ruined temples witnessed by a brooding ancient Greek warrior. The poem makes clear that Girodet's message is the old polarization of barbarism versus civilization: "The Ottoman mutilates the splendid remains of learned Greece in his drunken savageness; . . . Ignorance in the form of a turbaned mob profanes the ground where the steps of Aristophanes were imprinted, . . ." <sup>74</sup>

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<sup>72</sup> "il était entouré de Mameloucks qui étaient, pour ainsi dire, à demeure chez lui, et dont la beauté l'électrisait . . .," Coupin, Vol. 1, xviii.

<sup>73</sup> See Coupin's footnote to Girodet's letter twenty-two to M. Pannetier, in Girodet, Oeuvres posthumes, vol. 2, 326.

<sup>74</sup> "Ces restes des splendeurs de la savants Grèce, L'Ottoman les mutile en sa brutale ivresse; . . . L'ignorance en turban foule d'un pied profane, Le sol où s'imprimaient les pas d'Aristophane, . . ." My translation from quote in Nina M. Athanassoglou-

These ambivalent and antagonistic attitudes toward people from the Near East were part of Western culture since the Greek Classical era as discussed in Chapter One. Napoleon's invasion of Egypt in 1798 brought renewed interest in Islam and, in a sense, updated the polarization of Western civilization versus the barbarism of the Near East. Napoleon's aim to conquer Egypt in order to disrupt the English route to India included the colonization of an Islamic colony. His project was founded upon the disingenuous assertion that he represented the true Muslims and brought equal opportunity for the Egyptians while taking advantage of their enmity toward the Mamelukes. At the same time, with his team of Oriental scholars--members of the Institut d'Egypte, which he founded, dispersed to examine every aspect of Egypt's past and present--he turned Egypt and Egyptians into objects for scrutiny.<sup>75</sup> Chateaubriand also participated in the modern revision of the old dichotomy. After he toured the New World and studied monuments of nature, he headed east in 1805-1806 to complete his education by studying the ancient monuments of knowledge. In his Itinéraire de Paris à Jérusalem, et de Jérusalem à Paris, 1810-1811, he argued that Western

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Kallmyer's, French Images from the Greek War of Independence, 1821-1830 (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1989), 28.

<sup>75</sup> See Edward W. Said, Orientalism (New York: Vintage Books, 1979, 1994), 81-84. The culmination of the Institut was the publication of Description de l'Egypte, twenty-three impressive volumes published between 1809-1828. Everything was recorded--from ancient monuments to all zoological specimens.

conquest of the Orient was necessary to bring liberty and reestablish Christianity for the true chosen people in the Biblical Orient.<sup>76</sup>

But a more potent revision of the Western culture or Greek and Persian polarization appeared in the eighteenth century, in the form of a modest satire, Persian Letters, published in 1721 by Charles-Louis de Secondat Montesquieu (1689-1755). His first book, it became an immediate popular success and set the tone, in terms of moral codes of conduct, for Western fascination and feigned repugnance toward Near Eastern culture in the modern period. If the dichotomy between the civilized West and the barbarism of the Near East had not changed since ancient times, Montesquieu's book focused that dichotomy onto the seraglio as the repository of and access to sexual abandon as opposed to the restraint of rational, civilized behavior. In spite of the delightfully satirical humor about political theory ironically voiced by two rational and enlightened visitors from Persia, tales of the seraglio are interspersed with political passages and provide the narrative drama. The rational traveler Usbek maintains his seraglio in his absence with tyrannical means--guarded by eunuchs the women are allowed to go outside only together and veiled completely. Unbridled sexual pleasure inevitably erupts and his seraglio ends in a state of ruin. Erotic descriptions

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<sup>76</sup> Ibid., 171-174.

of sensuous lovemaking are countered by stories of the sacrifice, physical depravation, and humiliation of castration endured by eunuchs.<sup>77</sup>

Girodet's representations of Arabs encompass both these eighteenth century interests along with the Napoleonic ideology of empiricism. A comparison of his portraits of Hector Becquerel and Mustapha is a study in contrasts. At first color separates them--Becquerel is painted in muted tones of black and soft white plus pale fleshy skin tones. The emphasis is on Becquerel's gesture--hand to chest--and steady, soft-eyed look directed at the viewer, intended to convey transparent sincerity. All signs of sensual pleasure have been elided. In order to be productive, but more importantly to participate in the acts of civilization, particularly "the pursuit of noble deeds, arts, and thoughts," the bodily gratification of the passions must be sublimated.<sup>78</sup> According to Allan Bloom, Rousseau introduced sublimation as the source of a higher mental state in his injunctions for Emile's education.<sup>79</sup>

From where does man's weakness come? From the inequality between his strengths and his desires. It

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<sup>77</sup> Letters Seven and Nine introduce themes of the dramatic subtext. Charles-Louis de Secondat Montesquieu, Persian Letters, trans. Christopher Betts (New York: Penguin Books, 1973, 1993), 46-52.

<sup>78</sup> See Allan Bloom, "The Education of Democratic Man: 'Emile,'" in Jean-Jacques Rousseau, ed. Harold Bloom (New York: Chelsea House Publishers, 1988), 163.

<sup>79</sup> Ibid.

is our passions that make us weak, because to satisfy them we would need more strength than nature gives us. Therefore, diminish desires, and you will increase strength. He who is capable of more than he desires has strength left over; he is certainly a very strong being.<sup>80</sup>

The portrait of Mustapha is more complicated than the pared down presentation of Becquerel. The bright clothing once worn by the nobility now adorns the body of the foreign other. Color meticulously differentiates the details of his costume. The edge of the red top layer of excessive layers of clothing is turned back to reveal its blue lining, then a second blouse of mustard-colored yellow, another of gray, and finally a white undershirt next to his skin provides a contrast and complements the skin's dark sensuous tones. The subtly patterned turban is not only wrapped several times around his head but culminates in knots from which white silken fabric cascades down his back and frames his brooding, bearded face. The puffy, heavy eyelids of lassitude cover Mustapha's eyes, as if he were caught between an unconscious and conscious state. One eye is in shadow; the other stares fixedly at the viewer with a steady gaze of confrontation. Girodet's representation is one of conflict. As an operation of objectification and mastery of detail--a distancing effect--it is compromised by the uncontainable hypersexual challenge of Mustapha's languorous eyes and full-lipped sensual mouth. This unsettling gaze, obstructive rather than transparent, suggests that a kind of

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<sup>80</sup> Rousseau, Emile, 165.

eruption hovers below the surface--erotic and/or violent in nature, a threat to the rational order of the newly defined nobility of the virtuous bourgeois.<sup>81</sup>

### The Revolt of Cairo

Dominique Vivant-Denon, Director-General of Napoleon's museums, commissioned The Revolt at Cairo in 1809. The purpose of the commission, which specified the format, was to glorify Napoleon's military achievements in his Italian and Egyptian campaigns and to promote his legend during his lifetime.<sup>82</sup> Specifically, the Emperor had requested that Bonaparte Pardoning the Rebels in Cairo of 1808 by Pierre-

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<sup>81</sup> In her discussion of David's Woman in a Turban, a pen and ink drawing done in prison, Ewa Lajer-Burcharth suggested that the turban used in David's private work was "an attribute of a male subject in crisis . . . .," in "The Aesthetics of Male Crisis: the Terror in the Republican Imaginary and in Jacques-Louis David's work from prison," in Femininity and Masculinity in Eighteenth Century Art and Culture, ed. Gillian Perry and Michael Rossington (Manchester and New York: Manchester University Press, 1994), 237. Further, she wrote that "the turban seems a product of a compensatory formal logic that betrays, as it seeks to displace, a certain fear about (losing) the head. As such, David's image declares itself as a psychosexual shield spelling out the symbolic danger that produced it in terms of castration (238)." As Lajer-Burcharth pointed out, David's subjects are passive, either dead (Marat) or blinded as the Woman in a Turban-empty shells, signs of the male subject's lack as his self-hood foundered after the reign of Terror. While Girodet's more aggressively confrontational turbaned subjects differentiate his practice from David's, the underlying fears are shared. As will be evident at the end of this chapter, Girodet's engagement with his subjects through his repressed desire constitutes an important distinction that brings the republican male's lack and fear of castration to the surface.

<sup>82</sup> Richard J. Campbell and Victor Carlson, ed. Visions of Antiquity (Los Angeles: Los Angeles County Museum of Art and The Minneapolis Institute of Arts, 1993), 222.

Narcisse Guérin (fig. 39) be replaced by a painting of the revolt itself in the Galerie de Diane at the Tuileries.<sup>83</sup> Both were meant to commemorate and condone the results of an uprising by the Egyptians in French occupied Cairo in October 1798. The paintings also might have been part of an effort by Napoleon to gloss over his ultimately humiliating abandonment of Egypt when the English defeated him at sea and took control of its ports. For Girodet, no longer comfortable with the methodical realism counter to his academic training required for Napoleonic propaganda of temporal interest, the commission was opportune. With the Revolt of Cairo, Girodet could integrate his own interests and familiarity with Arab people and their costumes into a Napoleonic event with nationalistic overtones. According to James H. Rubin, Girodet resisted the tedious execution of realistic propaganda by displaying the brilliance of his draftsmanship, his "aesthetic artifice," on the surface of the painting to oppose reality to art.<sup>84</sup>

The subject of Guérin's painting is the same revolt depicted in Girodet's. Napoleon pardons the rebels in a public square two days after the riot. Barbarian violence is met with magnanimity on the part of Napoleon--France's moral and physical superiority is reaffirmed as the

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<sup>83</sup> Brown, 270.

<sup>84</sup> James H. Rubin, "Aesthetic Subversion of Politics in Girodet's 'Riots at Cairo,'" The Consortium on Revolutionary Europe 1750-1850, Proceedings 2 (1980), 102-103.

outnumbered French control the hordes of Arabs.<sup>85</sup> The historical facts of the confrontation belie the sentiments of Guérin's painting. In October 1798 Islamic leaders in Constantinople declared a holy war against the French in Egypt. Their action was prompted by the news that Napoleon intended to tax all lands belonging to mosques and Islamic brotherhoods in Egypt for the first time. On October 21, 1798, the Muslim community in Cairo began an insurrection against the French who occupied the city. The fighting was concentrated in the al-Azhar Mosque; the largest in Cairo, protected by massive walls, it was used as a fortress for five thousand armed Muslims. Napoleon's troops set up their artillery at the Citadel on high ground, which overlooked the mosque. The following day the bombardment of al-Azhar began. Only after the cannonballs struck the mosque for several hours, did the French attempt to approach and storm their way through the massive doors of the mosque, saber-wielding cavalry first followed by infantry. Everyone left inside was killed; the interior of the mosque and all religious books and artifacts were destroyed. Napoleon ordered the mosque to be razed to the ground. To turn the event into a lesson for the Egyptians, Napoleon allowed his troops to continue slaughtering them in the streets

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<sup>85</sup> See Todd Burke Porterfield's comparison of works in his Ph.D. dissertation, "Art in the Service of French Imperialism in the Near East, 1798-1848: Four Case Studies," Boston University, 1990.

throughout the night. By the next day, troops unloaded sacks full of bloody Arab heads in Esbekia square. The massacre continued as Napoleon ordered all prisoners taken with weapons beheaded and their corpses thrown in the river.<sup>86</sup>

Guérin's painted pardon takes place in a public square and presents a neat and complete reversal of the actual events--a magnanimous pardon in place of the horrific severed heads rolling around the square. Girodet's painting presents a similar reversal of events--but of a different kind. In Girodet's depiction of the battle at the mosque, a fascination with, desire for, and fear of the Arab spills over onto the surface. The French penetration of the walls of al-Azhar Mosque is the subject of The Revolt at Cairo. The multitude of figures in the painting, the French rushing in from the upper left met by a column of Egyptians moving forward from the right, are as compacted and compressed as those in Ossian. Girodet condensed the action into the bodies of two opposing figures in the foreground to organize the composition and simplify the narrative. This time he placed them on a solid ground. He thus avoided the criticism that had accompanied Ossian. The two full-bodied figures, placed on the same diagonal vector, dominate and subordinate the tumult of hand-to-hand battle--fragments of

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<sup>86</sup> Schom, 160-163. Although an official account of the dead was never made, it was suggested that at least 250 French died and the Egyptians suffered 5,000 losses with many thousands wounded.

heads and arms, swords, guns and shields--within the space between them. The diagonal composition articulates the dynamic action, while at the same time the balanced placement of the diagonal figures stabilizes the painting and establishes equality between their positions.

The conflict is dramatized in the contrast between the luxuriant costume of the French officer, a hussar, and the striking heroic nudity of the turbaned Egyptian, whose image repeats the stereotype of Mustapha--full-lipped, sensuously vigorous, fixed gaze--now turned in profile. The play of contrasts is echoed by the beautifully costumed, mortally wounded Arab cradled in the arm of the nude, as if he were his fully dressed counterpart. Together the two Arabs form a unit--split apart yet visualized as complete--and repeat the same kind of completion suggested by the clothed Frenchman and the nude Egyptian. The masculine ideal of physical strength holds a limp body--falling in a graceful pose, draped in a softly fluid dress-uniform, head encircled by snake-like coils of a white turban--associated with the plenitude of feminine beauty and excess. At the feet of the Frenchman is another nude Arab body, now dead, that reflects and repeats, the central pairing, contrasting, and division of identity. There is an additional correspondence between the limp, dying Arab and the French officer, a kind of equivalent likeness in the detail and coloring of their costumes, but distinguished by evocations of gender. Both wear trimmed silken, flowing outer garments and their

uniforms are in the same soft shades of reddish rose and bluish purple. In the background and spilling over into the foreground, massed fragments of uniforms and arms--the leopard-skin trimmed helmets of the French dragoons and their swords alongside turbans and oriental carbines--reinforce the thickly heated lushness of the vibrant, explosive atmosphere of conflict.

The citizen army of Napoleon, no longer consisting of mercenaries, was elaborately uniformed.<sup>87</sup> Only in the military could the citizen respectfully exchange his plain dark suit, as modest as Hippocrates' coarse drab tunic, for bright, luxurious clothing like the costumes once worn by the aristocracy. Infantry and cavalry regiments were given distinctive colors and accessories. The hussars maintained the prerogative of having a distinct uniform for each regiment.<sup>88</sup> The uniforms of the hussar officers sported as many as one hundred fifty buttons of five different types. In Egypt, the original French uniforms proved too hot and, with lack of funds, General Kléber resorted to using cloth from Egypt.<sup>89</sup> In actuality, the French army, attacking the Egyptians at the mosque, might have looked like their mirror

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<sup>87</sup> See also Norman Bryson's "Géricault and 'Masculinity,'" in Visual Culture: Images and Interpretations, Norman Bryson, Michael Ann Holly, and Keith Moxey, eds. (Hanover, New Hampshire: Wesleyan University Press, 1994), 239.

<sup>88</sup> John R. Elting, Swords Around a Throne: Napoleon's "Grande Armée" (New York: The Free Press, 1988), 22.

<sup>89</sup> Ibid., 439-440.

image. Girodet retained the illusion of the elaborately uniformed hussar, down to the multiple rows of buttons on his chest.

Girodet's Revolt was popular at the Salon of 1810; a few criticized it because no one of importance was portrayed.<sup>90</sup> In 1810, Stendhal found Revolt extremely energetic and, like a nest of vipers, hard to follow the action, but remarked that it included "two or three superb heads of fury, the A, B, C of expression. . . ." <sup>91</sup> By 1824, Stendhal recalled with enthusiasm Girodet's depiction of Arabs. Discussing Delacroix's Massacre of Chios of Salon of 1824, he compared it to Girodet's earlier work:

A massacre imperiously demands an executioner and a victim. It needed a fanatic Turk, beautiful as the Turks of M. Girodet. . . .

In his Revolt at Cairo, M. Girodet knew how to paint with great talent, the eye of the man who fights for a cause that he believes sacred.<sup>92</sup>

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<sup>90</sup> Brown, 275-276.

<sup>91</sup> "Les révoltés du Caire, de Girodet, sont extrêmement énergiques. Figure-toi un nid de vipères qu'on découvre en changeant de place un ancien vase; on a peine à suivre le même, si on le regarde longtemps, il fait aller les yeux. Voilà l'effet de La révolte du Caire. Du reste, deux ou trois superbe têtes de fureur. C'est l'A,B,C de l'expression. . . ." Stendhal, Du romantisme dans les arts, ed. Juliusz Starzynski (Paris: Hermann, 1966), 49.

<sup>92</sup> "Un Massacre exige impérieusement un bourreau et une victime. Il fallait un Turc fanatique, beau comme les Turcs de M. Girodet. . . .  
"Dans sa Revolt du Caire, M. Girodet a su peindre avec un grand talent, l'oeil de l'homme qui se bat pour une cause qu'il croit sacrée." Stendhal, 180 and 207.

Beautiful and fanatic Turks inspire a sacred battle--but, in Girodet's Revolt, the Frenchman is undermined by this imagined fanaticism. In the painting it is the feared returned look, the penetrating eye of the nude Egyptian that dominates the French officer and causes him to cast his eyes downward. Girodet produced nearly sixty pastel studies for The Revolt at Cairo, many of which depicted Turks or Arabs. Of those listed by Pérignon, most have since disappeared after their dispersal; approximately eighteen remain.<sup>93</sup> One of the most beautiful of these drawings (fig. 40) homes in on the scene within the space of the two opposing figures. The scene represents an alternative to the dramatic action of the central narrative and provides the cue to its erotic content, the subtext of the painting.<sup>94</sup> A nude dark-skinned and turbaned Arab leans against the leg of the large nude and his body, right arm brandishing a sword overhead, repeats the position of the Egyptian protagonist--straining

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<sup>93</sup> See Brown, 271-272 and Campbell, 224.

<sup>94</sup> This painting and other major works by Girodet including The Sleep of Endymion and portrait of Jean-Baptiste Belley have been described as homoerotic, see "Making Trouble for Art History: The Queer Case of Girodet," by James Smalls in Art Journal, 55 no. 4 (Winter 1996): 20-27. While I do not disagree with this attribution, I do disagree with its use primarily to signify Girodet as a gay artist and thus to place the construction of identity relationships and its consequences within the convoluted painting as secondary. A critique of The Revolt of Cairo as a signifier of desire seems a more fruitful reading than one that signifies the sexual orientation of Girodet and limits the subject of desire to exclusively homosexual relations.

backwards, both are tense and poised for a deadly thrust forward toward the French officer.

In the painting the downcast eyes of the French officer are arrested by the sight of the severed head of another French officer whose decapitated body lies in the foreground, foreshortened and headfirst toward the viewer. The dragoon's helmet decorously covers the stump of a neck. To mythologize Napoleon's exploits in Cairo, Girodet revised events and attributed the primitive act of beheading to the Egyptians--not Napoleon's soldiers who carried out their rampage under his sanctions. The dark-skinned Arab, whose arm embraces the leg of his larger counterpart, clutches the severed head by the hair. This embracing arm and hand hold the severed head next to the leg of the Arab with the penetrating stare. Recognized by the Arab, the French officer deflects his gaze by looking down. He sights the severed head--an image of his fear, fear of succumbing to the swoon of desire's submission. The head, cradled between kneecap and bulge of the calve, rests against the leg, eyes partially closed with the look of a tender caress.<sup>95</sup>

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<sup>95</sup> This secondary scene disturbed at least one critic. In his lengthy discussion of Revolt in "De l'état des beaux-arts en France et du Salon de 1810," Guillaume Guizot objected strenuously to the figure of the "crouching black man . . . . This figure is unnecessary to the action; it breaks its unity and gratuitously heightens the sensation of horror. Why didn't M. Girodet . . . take out this hideous figure?" As quoted in James H. Rubin, "Aesthetic Subversion of Politics in Girodet's 'Riots at Cairo,'" 101.

In the drawing the severed head, with its beautifully plaited hair held by the hand, is repeated to the right of the image in blank space. This face is slightly turned toward the viewer; the eyes, heavily lidded, are partially open as if caught in a state of exhausted repose after the primitive state of sexual release. Girodet used this version of the face in the final composition of the painting. There are no bloody reminders of a beheading--no torn pieces of flesh dangle from the head. Instead the face is finished without any signs of having been attached to a neck and body. Only the finely braided hair and gently flowing loose curls encircle and frame the face. In the drawing, the red of the vest on the decapitated body is the only color; a part of the elaborate uniform stands in for the blood that would have drenched the body.

The accumulation of bodies in Revolt, compacted in the crush of forward movement from left and right, converges in the center in a plethora of excess violent energy that corresponds to the moment of sexual expenditure--the two primitive activities left over from animal functions that rational man had to accommodate or suppress. Sexual union offers a temporary exchange--the discontinuity of the subject, the division of the subject, for the continuity of belonging to a unit of completion, a return to the primitive condition. It has this in common with death, its palliative, but only death accomplishes the transition to a

permanent state of union.<sup>96</sup> Fear and anxiety over the castrating effects of desire, desire unleashed by the violent penetrating stare of the other who offers a plenitude of sensuality--the softness of silken fabrics and fur next to flesh over hardened muscle--adheres to the putative subject, the hand-to-hand battle for the al-Azhar Mosque.

In Revolt anxiety over primitive responses intervenes with the narrative of battle and short circuits its meaning. The unspeakable--outside the social, cultural sphere--disrupts a story of Napoleonic triumph. Girodet's repetitive production of Near Eastern images as stereotypes and fetishes gave him access to an identity predicated on mastery and pleasure, a way of distancing them to at once ward them off and activate them. At the heart of this practice was anxiety and defence against the desire and fear of the actual presence of the imagined primitive other, here figured as the Egyptians.<sup>97</sup> Desire and fear merge in the confrontation represented in Revolt. It is in the interstice between the two bodies, the carriers of narrative, that mastery breaks down and the terror that

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<sup>96</sup> See Georges Bataille's Erotism: Death and Sensuality, trans. Mary Dalwood (San Francisco: City Lights Books, 1986), 94-108.

<sup>97</sup> See Homi K. Bhabha's The Location of Culture (London and New York: Routledge, 1994), 66-84, for his discussion of the construction of the colonial stereotype as fetish and the ambiguous, anxiety-laden relationship it sets up between the colonizer and the colonized.

death is the consequence of overwhelming primitive desire erupts in the center.<sup>98</sup>

Whether as the primitive, noble savage of the New World or the oriental barbaric savages of the Near East--these foreign others were conceived in texts and paintings of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries as representing sexual plenitude--a threatening temptation to a modern functional life founded upon, among other things, the virtue of denial. They functioned as repositories for the displacement of all that had to be relinquished. The admirable sentiments attributed to the noble savage could easily be co-opted and assimilated into the logic of virtue while the people themselves, along with their assumed sexually licentious behavior, could just as easily be silenced and their cultural artifacts could be consumed under the category of Primitivism. The Persians--Arabs, Egyptians, Mamelukes, Turks--all those from the Near Eastern Islamic world--represented a different, dangerous kind of threat. They had been depicted as the barbaric other for

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<sup>98</sup> In his *Confessions*, Rousseau wrote of his fear and anxiety over passionate love, "The needs of love devoured me in the bosom of enjoyment. . . . Enjoyed? Is that fate made for man? Ah if ever a single time in my life I had tasted all the delights of love in their fullness, I do not imagine that my frail existence would have been able to bear it; I would have died in the act." In *The Confessions and Correspondence, Including the Letters to Malesherbes, The Collected Writings of Rousseau*, vol. 5, ed. Christopher Kelly, Roger D. Masters, and Peter G. Stillman,

centuries and yet were seen to be culturally sophisticated; they produced luxury goods of seductive refinement. They were conceived as sexually profligate but also as fierce, violent, and barbaric--all characteristics systematically exploited under the classification of Orientalism.

The Egyptian's penetrating gaze in Revolt exposes an abyss behind the mask of heroic virtue. The painting is a formulation of desire and desire opens onto that which cannot be articulated or acknowledged--lack, need--in the construction of the whole and essentially functional citizen and the fantasy that the republican citizen was armored against fear of the formlessness of primitive bodily responses and the body's dissolution. If desire was disavowed by the rhetoric of reason and virtue, The Revolt of Cairo is a masterfully painted avowal of the inescapable return of its invocation.

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trans. Christopher Kelly (Hanover, Dartmouth College: University Press of New England, 1995), 183-184.

## CHAPTER FOUR

## THE GOLDEN AGE:

## THE PRIMITIVE DREAM AND THE IDEAL SOLUTION

Paris, December 24, 1778

My dear papa and my dear mama,

I beg you, to accept on this new year, the vows that I make for you all the days of my life. I wish you happiness accompanied with every manner of prosperity. Grant me, I beg you the continuation of your friendship. This is what I desire most fervently. I will try to merit it, more and more, by exactness in performing my duties. . . .<sup>1</sup>

--Girodet de Roussy

Written in beautifully disciplined penmanship, this formal letter by the eleven year-old Girodet de Roussy to his parents fulfilled his obligation to send the conventional social greetings of the New Year. On the same page is a note from his school supervisor M. Watrin, "I am very pleased with the work and character of M. Girodet."<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> "À Paris ce 24 décembre 1778, Mon cher papa et ma chère maman, Je vous prie, d'agrèer à cette nouvelle année, les vœu que je fais pour vous, tous les jours de ma vie. Je vous la souhaite heureuse et accompagnée de toutes sortes de prospérités, accordez moi je vous prie la continuation de votre amitié, c'est ce que je desire le plus ardemment. Je la cherai [sic] de la meriter, de plus en plus, par mon exactitude à remplis mes devoirs. . . ." Girodet de Roussy, "Letters of Correspondence," Book 128 (Montargis: Musée Girodet), n.p.

Writing to Trioson from Rome, January 3, 1792, Girodet dispensed with the conventional greetings of the New Year and wrote instead, "I embrace you my good friend, and as long as I live, every year from the first of January up to the thirty-first of December, I will be your sincere and devoted friend."<sup>3</sup> Reprimanded by Trioson for not observing the correct New Year's formalities, Girodet responded that these were insignificant pretences that should not be necessary between two friends so well known to each other. He made an analogy between these antique phrases and the season of their use: "Moreover, I find that these compliments have been well and ingeniously placed in the month of January, because they have then, for ordinary people, every resemblance possible with the weather: the hearts, letters, and roads are full of ice, and all is in order."<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> "Je suis très content du travail et du caractère de M. Girodet." Ibid.

<sup>3</sup> "Je vous embrasse, mon bon ami, et tant que je vivrai je serai tous les ans, depuis le 1<sup>er</sup> janvier jusqu'au 31 décembre, votre ami sincère et dévoué," Girodet, Oeuvres posthumes, vol. 2, 406.

<sup>4</sup> "Au reste, Je trouve que ces compliments ont été bien ingénieusement placés dans le mois de janvier, car ils ont alors, pour l'ordinaire, toute la ressemblance possible avec le temps: les cœurs, les lettres et les chemins sont remplis de glaces, et tout est dans l'ordre," Ibid., 407-408. In Emile, Rousseau warned against teaching children empty phrases of politeness that are used to gloss over arrogance and commands on the part of the wealthy, 86.

Stendhal recognized a division between two schools of painting in 1824 that in some ways parallels Girodet's contrast between the mechanical repetition of empty phrases and the expression of sentiments from the heart. While Stendhal considered David the greatest painter of the eighteenth century because he discovered a new manner of painting equal to his time and did not imitate his predecessors, he found the work of his followers cold and dry, copies and repetitions.<sup>5</sup> He compared the Davidian style to an exact science like mathematics. He thought the last excess of this tyrannical system was the Scene from a Deluge by Girodet.<sup>6</sup> Stendhal proposed that artists paint scenes of real-life drama to communicate with the public.

Unfortunately for many artists, passions are not an "exact science," of which the most uninformed are able to affect. In order to be able to paint passions, one must have seen them, have felt their devouring flame.

. . .

The school of David is only able to paint bodies; it is decidedly unskillful at painting souls. . . .

I demand a soul of painting and this group of figures, from so many different nations, of so many diverse forms, for the invention of which one has made use of history, fables, the poems of Ossian, the voyages of M. de Forbin, etc., etc. for their

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<sup>5</sup> See the essay on "Stendhal" in Anita Brookner's The Genius of the Future: Essays in French Art Criticism (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1971), 51.

<sup>6</sup> Stendhal, Oeuvres posthumes, 160.

invention, all that, as soon as I look for a soul, is no more to my eyes than a "vast desert of men."<sup>7</sup>

This emphasis on emotions is seemingly at odds with the rhetoric of virtue that disallowed extremes of passion. But, excessive passions as understood by the republican sense of virtue implied a reference to sexuality and, in the schema of Hippocrates, avarice. I would argue that both Girodet and Stendhal were giving voice to the conflict between the ethos of self-control and emotional responses associated with romanticism set into play by the formation of republican virtue.<sup>8</sup> Both longed for the exposure of feelings, an exchange of emotions without the interference of conventions--whether of language or of the art of painting--constructed forms of communication that operate in the symbolic field. That Girodet's work appears to have followed a direction abhorrent to Stendhal is deceptive.

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<sup>7</sup> "C'est que, malheureusement pour beaucoup d'artistes, les passions ne sont pas une 'science exacte,' à laquelle le plus ignorant puisse atteindre. Pour être en état de peindre les passions, il faut les avoir vues, avoir senti leur flamme dévorante. . . .

L'école de David ne peut 'peindre que les corps; elle est décidément inhabile à peindre les âme.' . . .

Je demande une âme à la peinture, et ce peuple de figures, de tant de nations différentes, de tant de formes diverses, pour l'invention desquelles on a mis à contribution l'histoire, la fable, les poèmes d'Ossian, les voyages de M. de Forbin, etc., etc., tout cela, dès que je cherche une âme, n'est plus à mes yeux qu'un 'vaste desert d'hommes,'" Ibid., 161-162.

<sup>8</sup> Outram, 140.

By 1824 paintings derived from a wide range of narrative subjects no longer interested Stendhal. He desired a pure soul that would render the particularity of peoples and their stories futile, as if that soul could stand in for a universal whole of humanity. Stendhal saw this diversity as if it were a collective in which the parts were interchangeable. He would prefer that the particularity of subjects were relegated to the desert--along with the dry, endless copies of Davidian nudes.

As Anita Brookner pointed out, Stendhal continued a method of criticism started by Diderot--the informal reporting of his own reminiscences while discussing works of art. But to this mode of self-reflection Stendhal added the desire for an intensified subjective response to the work of art. He understood the work of art as an extension and reflection of his own life experiences. As a product of the Revolution, he fought in several Napoleonic battles and desired to relive the extremes of that drama in art.<sup>9</sup> He wrote that he searched the Salon for "some painting that expresses with a lively and recognizable manner for the public a passion of the human heart, or some movement of

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<sup>9</sup> According to Brookner, he participated in the second Italian campaign in 1800 as a member of the Sixth Dragoons in Milan; he went with the army to Brunswick in 1807, to Vienna in 1809. The

the soul! It is a fatal experience. . . ." <sup>10</sup> One understands that this experience is fatal for Stendhal--he is the one looking for a direct and soulful communication with art.

The submerging of oneself into the work of art is the theme of Pygmalion and Galatea--the mythological tale told by Ovid in Metamorphoses, revived in 1762 by Rousseau in a one-act play, and painted by Girodet. The tale of Pygmalion, as related by Ovid in Book ten, takes place on Cyprus, home of Venus, in the city of Amathus at a time when the people were considered degenerate and disgraced in the eyes of Venus. The women are whores who, no longer able to blush, are turned to stone. Pygmalion retreats--better to sleep alone--and turns to art. Thus, the premise of Pygmalion is the avoidance of women and their sexually aggressive difference.

Pygmalion and Galatea of 1819 (fig. 41) was Girodet's last history painting to appear in the Salon. A mythological narrative painted in the sterile, rational style of the Davidian school had no interest for Stendhal.

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culmination of his military career was with the Russian campaign in 1812, in which he displayed extreme bravery, 36, 44-45.

<sup>10</sup> "quelque tableau qui exprime d'une manière vive et reconnaissable pour le public une passion du cœur humain, ou quelque mouvement de l'âme! C'est une expérience fatale. . . ," Stendhal, Oeuvres posthumes, 162.

In his discussion of the Salon of 1824, he agreed with another critic who dismissed Girodet's painting of Pygmalion and Galatea as a copy of antique purity, calmness without passion. "If you do not alter the purity of the antique, your painting is only a copy like the 'Galatea' of M. Girodet in the painting of 'Pygmalion.' If you undertake to render passion, the heads of your people will be in perpetual contrast with the bodies, because the first condition of antique statuary was 'profound calm,' without which, for the Greeks, there was no 'beau idéal.'"<sup>11</sup>

Girodet's painting had become a standard example of the depleted style of Neoclassicism for Stendhal.

The painting of Pygmalion and Galatea resulted from the failure of the Italian art collector Giovanni Battista Sommariva to purchase Endymion from Girodet. Instead he commissioned another painting by Girodet in 1812. The subject of Pygmalion was eventually chosen in 1813.<sup>12</sup> There

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<sup>11</sup> "Si vous n'altérez pas la pureté de l'antique, votre tableau n'est qu'une copie comme la 'Galatée' de M. Girodet dans le tableau de 'Pygmalion'. Si vous entreprenez de rendre la passion, les tête de vos personnages seront en contrast perpétuel avec les corps, car la première condition de la statuaire antique était le 'calme profond,' sans lequel, chez les Grecs, il n'y avait point de 'beau idéal.'" Ibid., 210.

<sup>12</sup> See Crow, Emulation, 261-262, for a short biographical sketch of Sommariva who started as a barber's assistant, became Napoleon's representative in Milan, and accumulated a fortune along the way.

has been much speculation about the lapse of time between the commission and the painting's appearance in 1819. The death of Girodet's adoptive father occurred in 1815. The same year the Napoleonic regime was replaced by the restoration of the Bourbon monarchy. This last event, according to Crow, led to a new emphasis on academic subject matter like mythology and unforeseen pressure on Girodet. Added to this pressure was the humiliation caused by the appointment of his rival Gérard as first painter to the king in 1817.<sup>13</sup> However, during this period Girodet had returned to subjects that corresponded to Endymion, and that may account for his reluctance to relinquish his painting of Pygmalion. In this last decade of his life, withdrawal into a hermetic world of classical unity that eliminated difference was the prevailing trope of his work.

Most writers have noted the similarities between Girodet's two paintings, Endymion and Pygmalion and Galatea, based on certain accessories like the garlands around Pygmalion's head and at the base of Galatea, the figure of Amor, a similar artificial luminous effect in lighting, and their sources in mythology.<sup>14</sup> I would argue

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<sup>13</sup> Ibid., 268-269.

<sup>14</sup> See Brown, 316, Levitine, "Girodet-Trioson: An Iconographical Study," 392, and Crow in Emulation, 265. Crow compared the use

that they also share the theme of retreat into the self expressed as a fusion of the body into a kind of universal state of oneness. The self-reflective nature of Girodet's enterprise is indicated by the pamphlet about Pygmalion and Galatea he wrote and published himself before the Salon. The pamphlet contains a flattering description of the painting and recounts the visit to his studio of King Louis XVIII, who wished to see the painting before it was sent to the Salon. The King is quoted as asking Girodet, " 'M. Girodet, were you not yourself, in the presence of your Galatea, in the situation like Pygmalion?' Girodet responded, 'Sir, I believe to have never looked at it but with the eyes of a father . . . .'"<sup>15</sup> According to Levitine, Girodet gave the King verses from Le Peintre, his autobiographical poem in which stories of artistic genius are retold and elaborated.<sup>16</sup> To illustrate Appelles' seduction of Alexander's lover Campaspe by painting the

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of classical mythology to the intercession of a Goddess in both paintings--Endymion was made unconscious but eternally beautiful and Galatea was transformed from marble to flesh--as a reversal of terms: a human into a work of art and a work of art into a human.

<sup>15</sup> "M. Girodet, n'étiez-vous pas vous-même, en présence de votre Galatée, dans la situation de Pygmalion?" "Sire," a répondu M. Girodet, "je crois ne l'avoir jamais regardée qu'avec les yeux d'un père . . . ." Girodet-Trioson, Description, du tableau de Pygmalion et Galatée, exposé au salon (Paris: Chez les Marchands de Nouveautés, 1819), 6.

perfection of her beauty, Girodet repeated the same figures and in almost the same positions as they appear in Pygmalion and Galatea (fig. 42); these figures were compulsively repeated by Girodet like a mechanical response. Girodet also retold the story of Pygmalion in Le Peintre. The theme of these stories is the miraculous transparency of artful illusions--of such perfection they become confused with reality: "In love with his masterpiece, suddenly, Pygmalion, fooled by his own art, abandons his soul to the unknown raptures of his new flame."<sup>17</sup>

As James H. Rubin pointed out, Rousseau's Pygmalion stressed the essential spiritual nature of artistic genius, a "primordial identity," as the point of recognition between Pygmalion and Galatea; it was not the greatness of Pygmalion's physical skill that brought her to life.<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> Levitine, "Girodet-Trioson: An Iconographical Study," 390.

<sup>17</sup> "De son chef-d'œuvre épris, soudain, Pygmalion, Trompé par son art même, abandonne son âme, Aux transports inconnus de sa nouvelle flamme; . . ." Girodet, Oeuvres posthumes, vol. 1, 175. Writing about Le Peintre, Neil MacGregor pointed out that Girodet worked on it from 1820 until his death in 1824 and that it was a revision of the earlier Les Veillées. The first, a didactic poem about art, was replaced by an autobiographical narrative about the artistic process. Thus, Le Peintre may be the first biographical work about an artist in France and owes much to Rousseau's The Confessions, a book Girodet and his circle of friends, liberal and fashionable royalists, admired. See MacGregor, 27-29.

Girodet's painting mirrors this aspect of the story and many contemporary critics recognized Rousseau as the source. In the opening paragraph of his discussion of the painting, Charles-Paul Landon identified the alteration Girodet had made to the customary scene of Pygmalion as artist in his studio.

Nothing is known here of Pygmalion as the author of the statue: the location of the scene does not indicate the studio of a sculptor, but a space of a gallery or of a sanctuary dedicated to Venus, and decorated with as much richness as taste; . . . it is there that Pygmalion has mysteriously enclosed himself with the new masterpiece from his chisel, in order to hide it from unwelcome looks, and deliver himself without restraint to the illusions of a mad love.<sup>19</sup>

This description of the setting and tone of Pygmalion's relationship with the sculpture exactly matches the ambiance of Rousseau's play.<sup>20</sup> In the play Pygmalion hesitates and questions his desires, "What daring desires

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<sup>18</sup> See James H. Rubin, "'Pygmalion and Galatea': Girodet and Rousseau," Burlington Magazine 127 (August 1985): 518.

<sup>19</sup> "Rien ne fait connaître ici Pygmalion pour l'auteur de la statue: le lieu de la scène n'indique pas l'atelier d'un sculpteur, mais une espèce de galerie ou de sanctuaire consacré à Vénus, et décoré avec autant de richesse que de goût; . . . c'est là que Pygmalion s'est enfermé mystérieusement avec le nouveau chef-d'œuvre de son ciseau, pour le dérober aux regards importuns, et se livrer sans contrainte aux illusions d'un fol amour." Charles-Paul Landon, Annales du Musée et de l'école moderne des beaux-arts. Salon de 1819 (Paris, 1819), vol. 2, 10.

<sup>20</sup> See Jean-Jacques Rousseau, Oeuvres complètes, ed. Bernard Gagnebin and Marcel Raymond, vol 2, "Pygmalion, scène lyrique" (Paris: Gallimard, Bibliothèque de la Pléiade, 1959, 1964), 1224-1231.

do I form? What insane wishes! What do I feel? . . . O heaven! The veil of illusion falls, and I dare not see into my heart: I would be shocked by it."<sup>21</sup> But it is precisely the veil of illusion that Rousseau desires to overcome. Pygmalion implores Venus, her "sublime essence" with the "soul of the universe, principal of all existence," to use her "expansive force" to unite him with his work.<sup>22</sup>

Rousseau wrote Pygmalion in 1762; in January of the same year he wrote his four well known letters to M. Chrétien-Guillaume de Lamoignon de Malesherbes, the Director of Publications in France. (Rousseau believed him to be his protector, particularly in relation to the questionable publication Emile; by May of the same year, Malesherbes caved in to pressure and suppressed the publication of Emile in France.) These letters would form the basis of his Confessions. In the letters Rousseau answered Malesherbes's concern that Rousseau, now isolated in the country, must be suffering from loss of social contact. On the contrary, Rousseau insisted the days he

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<sup>21</sup> "Quels desirs osé-je former? Quels vœux insensés! Qu'est-ce que je sens? . . . O ciel! le voile de l'illusion tombe, et je n'ose voir dans mon cœur: j'aurois trop à m'en indigner." Ibid., 1227.

spent in the country were the happiest of his life. With exacting detail, he described his day-to-day existence. Communicating with nature and accompanied by his faithful dog, he experienced total freedom and a rapturous connection with the universe--like the relationship that Pygmalion desired with Galatea:

My imagination did not leave the earth . . . deserted for very long. I soon peopled it with beings in accordance with my heart, and driving opinions, prejudices, all factitious passions very far away, into these refuges of nature I transported men worthy of inhabiting them. From them I formed a charming society for myself of which I did not feel myself to be unworthy. I made myself a golden age at my whim and filling these fine days with all the scenes of my life . . . I became tender to the point of tears over the true pleasures of humanity. . . . Nevertheless, in the midst of all that, I admit, the nothingness of my chimeras sometimes suddenly came to sadden it. If all my dreams had been turned into realities they would not have been enough for me. . . . I found an inexplicable void in myself that nothing could fill. . . . Even that was enjoyment, since from it I was penetrated by a very lively feeling and an attractive sadness that I would not have wanted not to have.

Soon I raised my ideas from the surface of the earth to all the beings of nature, to the universal system of things. . . . I was smothered in the universe, I would have wanted to throw myself into the infinite.<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>22</sup> "sublime essence" . . . "âme de l'univers, principe de toute existence" . . . "force expansive." Ibid., 1228.

<sup>23</sup> Jean-Jacques Rousseau, The Confessions and Correspondence Including the Letters to Malesherbes, vol. 5, ed. Christopher Kelly, Roger D. Masters, and Peter G. Stillman, trans. Christopher Kelly (Hanover, Dartmouth College: University Press of New England, 1995), 578-579.

No longer able to trust social conventions, Rousseau imagined he found unity and a transparent exchange of feelings alone in the infinite expanse of nature itself--a modern golden age--a state in which his experiences are only authentic when he relived them again in his imagination and his writing. The void he felt gave him pleasure, a reminder of his existence.

During his lifetime, Rousseau was accused of treating the myth of the golden age as fact.<sup>24</sup> And Diderot, in exasperation, responded to Rousseau's pessimistic view of society, "I know of only one way to satisfy you: to bring back the golden age."<sup>25</sup> The eminent biographer of Rousseau, Maurice Cranston, maintained that Rousseau never advocated a return to the golden age of the past, a notion of great interest to primitivist theoreticians at the time.<sup>26</sup>

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<sup>24</sup> Cranston, Jean-Jacques, 241-241. Rousseau simply maintained that he was misunderstood and that he had no intention of reducing men to the level of beasts but championed a different kind of ignorance: one that restrains curiosity for the modest and innocent ignorance of the pure, self-sufficient soul.

<sup>25</sup> Denis Diderot, Diderot on Art: The Salon of 1767, vol. 2, ed. and trans. John Goodman (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1995), 78.

<sup>26</sup> Maurice Cranston, The Solitary Self: Jean-Jacques Rousseau in Exile and Adversity (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1997), 198. Humbert de Superville's preoccupation with primitivism included the notion that the golden age belonged to a different world that was destroyed by flood. After that

Rousseau espoused a modern version of the golden age. The golden age of humanity was for Rousseau that period that marked the birth of society when men spoke with transparent gestures that expressed their needs and a language of poetic utterances that conveyed their feelings directly.<sup>27</sup> To recapture a semblance of this period and avoid the corrupting influences of luxuries and decadent cultural institutions associated with cities, his solution was a return to village life close to nature where self-contained groups of people could live according to natural laws.<sup>28</sup>

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disaster, men lived like cannibals (in opposition to Rousseau's theory) and progressed to civilization from a state of savagery. See Barbara Maria Stafford, Symbol and Myth, 124. Levitine argued, in Dawn of Bohemianism, that Maurice Quay and his followers attempted to recreate a utopian-like golden age in their retreat in Chaillot, a half-ruined convent in a Parisian suburb, 76. According to Levitine, the concept of the golden age or primitive world originated in French thinking but had international appeal and advocates included Swedenborg in Sweden, Herder and Novalis in Germany, Burnet and Warburton in England among others. In various forms they believed in the existence of a superior human race that thrived before the great flood. One consequence of this theory was the search for surviving ruins and distant descendants. It was assumed that they existed among ethnic groups of northern Europe, the Scandinavians, Scots, and Germans. Their original language was believed to be closest to Celtic, 97.

<sup>27</sup> According to Starobinski, Rousseau described this period and its language in the Discourse on Inequality as the golden age—a period of equilibrium, true happiness, a moment of plenitude for language as well as feeling. The linguistic ideal of this age was inextricably bound together with music, dance, and poetry. See "Rousseau and the Origin of Languages," in Jean-Jacques Rousseau: Transparency and Obstruction, 315-319.

<sup>28</sup> The concept of the golden age became part of French revolutionary rhetoric. Mona Ozouf's study of revolutionary festivals indicated that a return to a homogenous social unity of

Social Contract is an ideal model of such a community composed of an I/We that mirrors individuals and the general will. As a version of the golden age, it neither replicates the past nor is a contemporary treatise for the future, but remains outside historical time, according to Starobinski.<sup>29</sup> Like other pre-nineteenth century utopias, Rousseau's golden age was designed to be static--universal and constant sameness is the ideal--a transference of the golden age from the past into an ideal political state of mankind for the future.<sup>30</sup> The intimate familial self-sustaining circle formed by Julie at Clarens in The New Eloise illustrates the golden age transformed into modern fiction.<sup>31</sup> The general will of the Social Contract requires

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the celebrated golden age of France's past was part of the festivals's agenda. See Festivals and the French Revolution, trans. Alan Sheridan (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1988), 117-118.

<sup>29</sup> Starobinski, Jean-Jacques Rousseau: Transparency and Obstruction, 30. However, Cranston pointed out that Rousseau considered On the Social Contract a political science essay based on the model of Geneva's constitution and the republics of antiquity, see The Noble Savage, 311.

<sup>30</sup> Modern historians have categorized Rousseau's On the Social Contract as a utopia. See French Utopias: An Anthology of Ideal Societies, ed. and trans. Frank E. Manuel and Fritzie P. Manuel (New York: Schocken Books, 1971, first published 1966), 5-8. See also Ideal Empires and Republics: Rousseau's Social Contract, More's Utopia, Bacon's New Atlantis, Campanella's City of the Sun, ed. Charles M. Andrews (New York: William H. Wise and Co., Publishers, 1901)

<sup>31</sup> In addition to The New Eloise, Rousseau's other unprecedented literary works, Emile and Confessions, can be seen as fictional

openness and transparency among all citizens just as the harvest festival at Clarens produces freedom and equality of masters and servants, however temporarily.<sup>32</sup> The symbolic unity of the general will and the festival require loss of selfhood and the result is a form of alienation or emptiness--with the refusal to accept difference or the realities of the world. According to Starobinski, the transparency of symbolic unity can only feed on itself and lead to extreme abstraction.<sup>33</sup> In the process of shrinking from interactions with the real world, ideal unity can only play itself out in dull repetition.<sup>34</sup> The dark side of open transparent relationships is the facility with which it endows observation--the spectator can become a kind of master of control through surveillance.<sup>35</sup>

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triumphs over the discrepancies in his theory of the Social Contract, according to Althusser, 117.

<sup>32</sup> See Starobinski, Jean-Jacques Rousseau: Transparency and Obstruction, 99-101, for his discussion of the parallels between these two works and the underlying hypocrisy of Rousseau's theory of equality.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid., 262.

<sup>34</sup> See Horkheimer and Adorno, 189-190, for their discussion about a subject whose links to the real world are broken, in the extreme, a state pathological of paranoia results when the ego operates in a groundless vacuum.

<sup>35</sup> This is the role taken on by Wolmar, Julie's husband in The New

In the eighteenth century the publication of History of the Art of Antiquity by Johann Joachim Winckelmann (1717-1768) in 1764 complicated theories of the golden age. Prior to his History, Greek sculpture had been considered, like the golden age, a "long-lost moment in the early development of human culture and a supreme fiction that stood above history."<sup>36</sup> Winckelmann's history placed Greek sculpture into the fabric of early Greek culture; it no longer resided in an ahistorical time of mythical perfection. According to Alex Potts, the interest of Winckelmann's writing lies in the tension between the fact that for Winckelmann Greek sculpture, considered ideal, was produced in human historical time and was thus necessarily incomplete, because of his recognition that an ideal of oneness and perfection was an impossibility. Winckelmann's perspectives informed the Enlightenment view that the classical world and the modern world were equated as ordered and unchanging and later views that modernity was rooted in historical development and different from the past.<sup>37</sup> In any event, Winckelmann's introduction of the

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Eloise. By encouraging transparent social relationships in their household, he could keep track of Julie and Saint Preux.

<sup>36</sup> Alex Potts, Flesh and the Ideal: Winckelmann and the Origins of Art History (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1994), 19.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*, 19-23.

fact that a possible ideal age existed in the historical past contributed to interest in modern utopias as vehicles for progress leading to perfection rather than static entities.

The isolation that Rousseau savored for himself and celebrated in the life of savage man provided another advantage, besides the ease of living without needs and desires, stated at the beginning of the First Discourse and revisited at the end of the Second Discourse:

The savage lives within himself; the sociable man, always outside of himself, knows how to live only in the opinion of others; and it is, so to speak, from their judgment alone that he draws the sentiment of his own existence. It is not part of my subject to show from such a disposition . . . how, everything being reduced to appearances, everything becomes factitious and deceptive . . . we have only a deceitful and frivolous exterior honor without virtue, reason without wisdom, and pleasure without happiness. It is sufficient for me to prove that this is not the original state of man; and that it is the spirit of society alone, and the inequality it engenders, which thus change and alter all our natural inclinations.<sup>38</sup>

Escape from the gaze of others and their destabilizing, indeterminate judgments--the very nature of all social

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<sup>38</sup> Rousseau, Second Discourse, 179-180. In the First Discourse, he wrote: "One no longer dares to appear as he is; and in this perpetual constraint, the men who form this herd called society, placed in the same circumstances, will all do the same things unless stronger motives deter them. . . ."

No more sincere friendships; no more real esteem; no more well-based confidence. Suspicious, offenses, fears, coldness, reserve, hate, betrayal will hide constantly under that uniform

engagement--is the sweet reward of isolation. Rousseau could only imagine wearing masks of deceit as the prerequisite posture for social approbation, by the kind of people he referred to as chimerical beings--like actors divided between the roles they played and their separate selves.<sup>39</sup> Still, even in isolation, Rousseau felt it necessary to explain himself by writing The Confessions in order to control the impression he would make on future readers and their inevitable judgments. To control these uncomfortable judgments, he intended to convey all possible points of view of himself by himself--as if his body enclosed within itself an object/subject of social intercourse. "I would like to be able to render my soul transparent to the eyes of the reader in some fashion, and to do so I seek to show it to him under all points of view, to clarify it by all lights, to act in such a way that no motion occurs in it that he does not perceive so that he might be able to judge by himself about the principle which produces them."<sup>40</sup> To reify the omnipotent subject/object

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and false veil of politeness, under that much vaunted urbanity which we owe to the enlightenment of our century," 38.

<sup>39</sup> Jean-Jacques Rousseau, Politics and the Arts: Letter to M. d'Alembert on the Theatre, trans. Allan Bloom (Ithaca: Cornell University Press 1960), 79-81.

<sup>40</sup> Rousseau, The Confessions and Correspondence, Including the Letters to Malesherbes, vol. 5, 146.

duality in Rousseau, Judge of Jean-Jacques: Dialogues

(1772) Rousseau objectified both positions as if they were legitimately divided and yet the same. The dialogue is between "Rousseau" and an anonymous Frenchman about an encounter with the literary works of "Jean-Jacques."

Rousseau the reader and Jean-Jacques the writer form a symbiotic unit:

Once I recovered from that sweet chimera of friendship . . . I withdrew into myself, and living between myself and nature, I tasted an infinite sweetness in the thought that I was not alone. . . . I never adopted the philosophy of the happy people of the age; it does not suit me. I sought one more appropriate for my heart, . . . I found it in the books of J.J. I drew from them feelings compatible with the ones natural to me. . . . I recognized in his writings the man I found in myself, and meditating on them taught me to find within myself the enjoyment and happiness that all others seek so far from themselves.<sup>41</sup>

The social body, Rousseau's metaphor for sovereign authority, or the general will in Social Contract, is in a state of alienation if it is divided or represented by another. It is singular and unique with each part in total agreement.<sup>42</sup> By the very nature of his definition, only the simple wholeness of a single body could conform to this

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<sup>41</sup> Jean-Jacques Rousseau, Rousseau, Judge of Jean-Jacques: Dialogues, The Collected Writings of Rousseau, vol. 1, ed. Roger D. Masters and Christopher Kelly, trans. Judith R. Bush, Christopher Kelly and Roger d. Masters (Hanover: University Press of New England, 1990), 52.

<sup>42</sup> See Rousseau, On the Social Contract, 100.

ideal state. But if isolation is not an option for the ideal community, homogeneity was its alternative.

Pygmalion and Galatea as painted by Girodet represents the isolated artist in his personal temple of retreat at the moment when his work of art is brought to life after his entreaties to the goddess. The metamorphosis of Galatea is indicated by a subtle use of color that is restricted in the painting to shades of red and gold. The same red of Pygmalion's draped cloak transforms Galatea's cheeks and hands from stone to flesh, a lighter shade of Pygmalion's own pinkish flesh. Her legs and feet are still lifeless stone. Between Pygmalion and Galatea, a miraculous golden burst of light has activated her transformation. The use of light to produce sharp contrasts and as a sign for divinity rehearses similar tactics employed with success in Endymion. The miracle-performing goddess behind Pygmalion has a golden crown to match the luminous atmosphere and the golden hair of Amor, the ubiquitous cupid Girodet added to this narrative.<sup>43</sup> The urn behind Galatea and the pedestal she stands on are of the same golden color. A touch of blue in the sky barely

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<sup>43</sup> As noted by Robert Rosenblum, the ever-present figure of Cupid in several works by Girodet serves an active role in bringing together passive lovers, in "The Origin of Painting: A Problem in

compensates for the predominance of red and gold. At the center of the painting the circular movement of hands, brought together by Amor, unites Pygmalion and Galatea. Pygmalion's right arm is awkwardly bent and his left hand appears as a fragmented part but their arrangement is symmetrical to the arms of Galatea. This doubling of gesture is repeated by the likenesses of their two bodies-- the same color of hair, the same pinkish skin tones, and identical soft fleshy bodies that reveal little or no evidence of bone or muscle. The sameness at the center of the painting marks a kind of visual void that leaves the viewer with unfulfilled expectations. Its indifferent reception at the Salon of 1819 seems more than justified. Charles-Paul Landon criticized Pygmalion's reserved reaction to the marvels of the goddess and objected to the lighting effects that do not translate with enough power in painting and simply divert the viewer's attention. Landon would have preferred the painting's focus to be on the happiness and mutual feelings of Pygmalion and Galatea.<sup>44</sup>

Girodet's artist abandons himself to his work of art in the same way that Rousseau's artist did: "Yes, dear and charming object, yes, worthy masterpiece from my hands, of

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the Iconography of Romantic Classicism," The Art Bulletin 39 (December 1957): 287.

my heart and the gods . . . it is you, it is only you, I have given you all my being; I will only live through you."<sup>45</sup> The work of art is, thus, self-reflexive and presents to the artist his own pure subjectivity.<sup>46</sup> The boundaries that exist between male and female are elided in the case of Pygmalion and Galatea--they exist in a state of pure homogeneity--they are the same and, in the eyes of the artist, Girodet/Pygmalion, ideal.

Rousseau's The New Eloise, written in 1758, presented two lovers as a prototype of Pygmalion and Galatea. A friend, writing to Julie, described her and Saint-Preux together:

I have never seen anything so extraordinary as you and your lover. It is not that either of you have any peculiar characteristic which at first glance can be distinguished, and it could be quite possible that this difficulty in differentiating you might cause a superficial observer to mistake you for ordinary souls. But that it is impossible to differentiate you is actually what distinguishes you, and the features

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<sup>44</sup> Landon, Salon de 1819, vol. 2, 11-13

<sup>45</sup> "Oui, cher et charmant objet: oui, digne chef-d'œuvre de mes mains, de mon cœur et des Dieux . . . c'est toi, c'est toi seule: je t'ai donné tout mon être; je ne vivrai plus que par toi." Rousseau, "Pygmalion," 1231. Also quoted in Rubin, "'Pygmalion and Galatea': Girodet and Rousseau," 518.

<sup>46</sup> Girodet stated his desire to be perceived as "original" in a letter to Trioson about the reception accorded Endymion when it was exhibited upon its completion in Rome, October 1791. He was pleased because no one thought the work resembled the style of David. "Ce qui m'a surtout fait plaisir, c'est qu'il n'y a eu qu'une voix pour dire que je ne ressemblais en rien à M. David." Girodet, Oeuvres posthumes, vol. 2, 396.

of the common model, some of which are always lacking in every individual, are all equally clear in you. In like manner, each print of an engraving has its particular defects which furnish it with character, but if one happens to be perfect, though it may be found beautiful at first glance, it must be considered for a long time for its perfection to be recognized.<sup>47</sup>

In his own life, Rousseau found in Thérèse Levasseur, his servant/mistress, someone with whom he could identify, an extension of his own body that eliminated the problem of differentiation and the boundaries that exist with an "other."<sup>48</sup> After the publication of The New Eloise in 1761, Rousseau remained increasingly entrenched in the self-contained, closed aesthetic world he created. He transcribed complete copies of the long text for two important women and thus extended the imaginary world of the text into his own life.<sup>49</sup>

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<sup>47</sup> Jean-Jacques Rousseau, La Nouvelle Héloïse: Julie, or The New Eloise. Letters of Two Lovers, Inhabitants of a Small Town at the Foot of the Alps, trans. Judith H. McDowell (University Park: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 1968), 166.

<sup>48</sup> See Starobinski, Jean-Jacques Rousseau: Transparency and Obstruction, 179.

<sup>49</sup> The two women were Elisabeth-Sophie-Françoise, Comtesse d'Houdetot, his only proclaimed true love, and Madeleine-Angélique, Maréchale-Duchesse de Luxembourg, one of his patrons. By 1760 Rousseau was collecting documents and letters concerning his past and present and began to copy his own letters. See Huntington Williams's Rousseau and Romantic Autobiography (New York: Oxford University Press, 1983), 72-73. Rousseau thought of Sophie as his imaginary Julie brought to life, just as in the myth of Pygmalion and Galatea. See Cranston, The Noble Savage, 56.

A drawing by Girodet of himself and Julie Candeille (fig. 43), the musician, actress, and writer, with whom he shared an intimate, but evidently platonic relationship, suggests he entertained the same fantasy of their oneness.<sup>50</sup> The matched profiles in silhouette conformed to what was thought to be the primitive view of art's origin derived from a story by Pliny about the preservation of a lover's face by his mistress, a subject depicted by Girodet to illustrate Le Peintre (fig 44).<sup>51</sup> They face the same direction, his features ever so subtly fuller than hers, they have the same short-cropped hairstyle, and project an image of physical correspondence and exact mindedness.<sup>52</sup> In one of his notebooks he also sketched a symbolic portrait of their professional attributes that signifies the same sentiments of a shared persona. He gracefully sketched an

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<sup>50</sup> Julie Candeille was a colleague of Mlle Lange, the subject of Girodet's satirical portrait, The New Danaë 1799, and from 1798 to 1802 was married to her father-in-law, Jean Simons. See Levitine, "Girodet's 'New Danaë: The Iconography of a Scandal,'" 71.

<sup>51</sup> On the conception in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries of the silhouette drawn from a shadow as the first form of painting, see Rosenblum's "The Origin of Painting," 279-290.

<sup>52</sup> According to Crow, over a hundred of Candeille's surviving letters to Girodet reveal the intensity of their relationship in which she assumed the role of "manager" in the affairs of his professional life. She admonished him to cultivate wealthy clients he was of a mind to dismiss and to follow social customs as his career depended upon the opinion of society. Emulation, 257-258.

image, enclosed within the outline of an antique Greek urn, of a violin and palette on either side of a music stand/easel that displays a sheet of music, a notebook, and a painting of a woman on a bed in a vertical arrangement, dated 1806. On the same page he wrote a few lines about the fragility and weakness of friendships.<sup>53</sup>

After the Salon of 1819 and the disappointment surrounding the long awaited Pygmalion and Galatea, Girodet turned his attention to personal projects--the illustration and, in some instances, the translation of ancient literary works along with his continued writing of Le Peintre. Returning to the source of Neoclassical inspiration in antiquity, Girodet employed a technique similar to and most likely inspired by Flaxman. Girodet met Flaxman in Rome when he was working on Endymion. In a later letter written May 17, 1814 to Flaxman, he wrote that Flaxman's work was the most excellent model for young artists.<sup>54</sup> The best known works of this period are his illustrations for Anacreon and Aeneas--subjects he had worked on throughout most of his mature career. As Abigail Solomon-Godeau pointed out, "Anacreontism"--the revival of classical

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<sup>53</sup> Girodet-Trioson, "Notebook 1806-1808," Fondation Jacques Doucet, Bibliothèque d'Art et d'Archéologie, Paris, Ms513, n.p.

literary culture dedicated to pastoral, romantic, and erotic themes--was a preoccupation of pre- and post-revolutionary literary and artistic circles.<sup>55</sup> The fragmentary poems of Anacreon represented the erotic side of classical literature in contrast to themes of republican austerity embodied by Hippocrates and other images of the exemplum virtutis. Solomon-Godeau has noted that Girodet reworked the same figures and poses over and over in his Anacreontic illustrations. Besides his illustrations for Anacreon, Girodet also illustrated remote myths from Ovid and other antique sources. After his death, his students lithographed sixteen of them for a publication titled Les amours des Dieux (Loves of the Gods), edited with an introduction by his biographer, Pierre-Alexandre Coupin, in 1826. The same pattern of repetition and reconfiguration of images that appears in Anacreon is also clear in Loves of the Gods. But it becomes evident in Loves of the Gods that these various repetitions are, in one form or another, simply a reworking of Pygmalion, Galatea, and Amor. What drew him to this motif and sustained his interest even after the unenthusiastic response to Pygmalion and Galatea

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<sup>54</sup> See Ada Shadmi Banks, "Two Letters from Girodet to Flaxman," The Art Bulletin 67 (March 1979): 100.

at the Salon? I would argue that he was returning to his origin as an academically trained and recognized artist, to his first successful appearance in the Salon with his painting of Endymion.<sup>56</sup> This return to origins was, like the return to the golden age, or its revision in the modern utopia, an attempt to preserve an ideal state of imagined purity from the past.

Like Pygmalion and Galatea, the figures illustrating Loves of the Gods are closely aligned in physical appearance--their bodies ever so softly reference gender with smallish penises and modestly curved breasts. They are comparable to the androgynous figures in, among others, Gérard's Cupid and Psyche of 1798 and Guérin's Aurora and Cephalus of 1810.<sup>57</sup> In Death of Adonis (fig. 45) the two profiled heads are conjoined, pressed together along forehead and nose. The dog from Endymion has been

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<sup>55</sup> See Solomon-Godeau, Male Trouble, 109-116. Writers included not only Anacreon but also Bion, Moschus, Ovid, Pausanias, Apollonius, and Longus.

<sup>56</sup> Interestingly, the same pattern of reworking earlier motifs would characterize the career of another student of David, Jean-Auguste-Dominique Ingres (1780-1867). See Rosalind Krauss, "You Irreplaceable You," in Studies in the History of Art, vol. 20, Retaining the Original: Multiple Originals, Copies, and Reproductions (Hanover: University Press of New England, 1989), 151-160.

<sup>57</sup> See Solomon-Godeau, Male Trouble, for her analysis of these androgynous depictions as signs of a predominantly homosocial

transposed to this scene as Adonis's hunting dog and his support along with the ever-present Amor. Girodet added the figure of Diana to his later version of the myth of Diana and Endymion (fig. 46) and repeated the same trilogy of characters. Diana's body is almost a vertical duplication of the sleeping Endymion's. In Girodet's version of Cephalus and Aurora (fig. 47) the same twinned bodies are displayed in the front view of one and the back view of the other; thus suggesting that together they form a complete body ascending into boundless space. But the story of the net of Hephaestus told in the Odyssey, or of Vulcan in the Roman version by Ovid, and illustrated by Girodet in Mars and Venus (fig. 48) is a metaphor for this desire to merge two bodies into a permanent union that dissolves their finite boundaries. Vulcan, husband of Venus, after learning of her adulterous union with Mars, crafts a net at his forge as delicate and transparent as a spider's web. Hung over the bed, the net traps the lovers in their pleasure--in a union that holds out the possibility of blending their bodies permanently along with the cessation of all desire.<sup>58</sup> Girodet drew Mars and Venus

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space after the Revolution with the exclusion of women from public life.

<sup>58</sup> Saxonhouse, 16. See also Krauss, The Optical Unconscious, 12. The modern abstract grid operates in much the same way as the net

with the same arm postures and the same likeness to each other as the other figures after Pygmalion and Galatea. This theme in his work, the desire for ideal union with the elimination of difference, is realized in his depiction of Hermaphroditus and Salmacis (fig. 49). Salmacis, in love with Hermaphroditus but rejected by him, encircles her body tightly around his, draws him into the water and wishes they would never part. Their two bodies blend into one, a new form to be known as the Hermaphrodite.<sup>59</sup> The Hermaphrodite is a composite of male and female and promotes the permanent arrest of desire.

Landon recognized the symptom of Pygmalion and Galatea's failure, its inability to evoke desire or passion:

One would have desired more action, more impulse in the figure of Pygmalion. The painter believed he was able to express at the same time in the attitude, in the gesture and on the traits of the lover of Galatea, the diverse sentiments that one supposes excited him. But, wishing to bring together several nuances in a single figure, of which some evidently are in opposition, he could not miss weakening them all. Less fortunate than the poet, the painter can represent only one action, a determined moment and should know how to offer on the face of the same person only a single sensation, a single passion, at

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of Hephaestus; it throws its net over the external world to contain it in an autonomous field of pure cognitive relationships and in a frame of exclusions.

<sup>59</sup> See Solomon-Godeau, Male Trouble, 154-156, for her discussion of this story and Girodet's image as a depiction of the return to the maternal body and the extinction of the self.

once; it is for this reason that the traits of the lover of Galatea have appeared lacking in warmth and energy.<sup>60</sup>

Like Stendhal, Landon looked for passion and found it lacking and attributed that to Girodet's attempt to produce a narrative in the Neoclassical tradition.

Similar to the formation of the Hermaphrodite, the moment of Galatea's coming to life is accompanied by an arrest of desire. Pygmalion and Galatea are the same; Galatea is a reflection of Pygmalion's subjectivity, now materialized. There is little distinction between their two bodies--boundaries have been eliminated and desire can only exist in the context of limits and acknowledged differences. The instability of a subject/object relationship, the you/me of all social relations, has also been arrested, short circuited, and embraced by the all encompassing I of the isolated primitive body. Stability, stasis, suspended existence, a kind of death, are the

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<sup>60</sup> "On aurait désiré plus d'action, plus d'élan, dans la figure de Pygmalion. Le peintre aura cru pouvoir exprimer à-la-fois dans l'attitude, dans le geste et sur les traits de l'amant de Galatea, les divers sentimens dont il le suppose agité. Mais, en voulant réunir sous un seul aspect plusieurs nuances, dont quelques-unes se trouvent évidemment en opposition, il ne pouvait manquer de les affaiblir. Moins heureux que le poète, le peintre ne peut représenter qu'une action, un moment déterminé, et ne saurait offrir sur la physionomie du même personnage qu'une seule sensation, une seule passion, à-la-fois; c'est pour cette raison que les traits de l'amant de Galatea ont paru manquer de chaleur et d'énergie." Landon, Salon de 1819, vol. 2, 13.

result of this urge toward the ideal of perfect unity and completeness. Taken to its extreme, the desire for directness and transparency in the declaration of feelings and passions has paradoxical results and the opposite effect of the stated intent.<sup>61</sup> Without the protection of social conventions, the screen of a mediating discourse, social relations break down and retreat from the fear of the indeterminate play of difference and diversity into a closed self-reflective, circulating system that only encounters its primitive self in endless repetition. With Pygmalion and Galatea as his last history painting, Girodet came full-circle in his painting practice. He returned to the theme of his first Salon success The Sleep of Endymion 1791 (fig. 50), his required académie, which he elaborated in order to invest it with the narrative structure of history painting.<sup>62</sup> My discussion of primitivism began with

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<sup>61</sup> In the same vein, Winckelmann recognized the paradox and negation of the concept of ideal beauty and its impossibility. Ideal beauty for him resided in an ideal oneness of subjectivity with all signs of difference erased, including those of sexual differentiation. See Potts, 156-158.

<sup>62</sup> According to Crow, The Sleep of Endymion was transformed into a kind of history painting by Girodet as part of his attempt to assert his independence from David, much as Jean-Germain Drouais had done with Dying Athlete in 1786. See Thomas Crow's "Observations on Style and History in French Painting of the Male Nude, 1785-1794" in Visual Culture: Images and Interpretations, ed. Norman Bryson, Michael Ann Holly, and Keith Moxey (Hanover: University Press of New England, 1994): 151, for his

the trauma of the Revolution and its effects on the formation of the new republican as envisioned by Girodet's portrayal of Hippocrates. Girodet painted the Sleep of Endymion prior to Hippocrates during this same stressful period and, I would suggest, it presents his emotional response to revolutionary conditions. By returning to Girodet's origins to compare the sentiments of Endymion to Pygmalion and Galatea, a continuity is manifest in his oeuvre, from his first to his final works, heretofore unacknowledged.

Writing to Trioson from Rome while working on Endymion, Girodet had described the effect of the painting as "purely ideal, and consequently very difficult to render. The desire to make something new and not feel simply like a worker, perhaps made me undertake something beyond my ability . . . ." <sup>63</sup> To accomplish his goal of portraying the purely ideal that would raise him above the fray, Girodet painted an image of withdrawal from earthly existence. Taking his narrative from the classics (various versions of the Endymion story were related by Ovid,

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interpretation of this painting in addition to the one in Emulation, 131-139.

<sup>63</sup> "quant à l'effet, il est purement idéal, et par conséquent très difficile à rendre. Le desir de faire quelque chose de neuf et qui ne sentit pas simplement l'ouvrier, m'a peut-être fait

Lucian, Apollonius, and Aristophanes) and his visual sources from classical sarcophagi and Raphael, Girodet inventively converted the figure of the virgin goddess Diana into a shaft of moonlight.<sup>64</sup> The chaste goddess gazed nightly at the sleeping figure of Endymion to satisfy her desire for his beauty. "A thing of beauty is a joy forever."<sup>65</sup> The dream of Endymion--to maintain a young, beautiful, and erotically desirable body in perpetuity, against nature and its ineluctable process of decay--was a romantic idea still valid almost twenty-five years after Girodet's painting was successfully exhibited in the Salon of 1793.

The theme of the Endymion myth--escape from everyday consciousness to exist in a state of a never changing now--suggests a reaction to trauma. This desire was expressed in a curious part of popular culture during and after the revolutionary years, in the work of the Austrian physician Franz Anton Mesmer (1734-1815) and the Swiss Marie Gresholtz (1761-1850), otherwise known as Madame Tussaud.

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entreprendre au-delà de mes forces . . . ." Girodet, Oeuvres posthumes, vol. 2, 387.

<sup>64</sup> For a detailed description of these sources, see Levitine, "Girodet-Trioson: An Iconographical Study," 124-129, and James Henry Rubin's "Endymion's Dream as a Myth of Romantic Inspiration," Art Quarterly 1 (Spring 1978): 47-84.

<sup>65</sup> John Keats (1795-1821) wrote Endymion in 1818.

In 1775 Mesmer discovered what he called animal magnetism or vital magnetism, which he also termed mesmerism. Mesmer understood illness as a resistance in the nervous system, or a solidification of the circulation of humors. As the magnetist, he thought that he emitted a curative force to the patient by means of manipulation and through the mediation of magnetic objects. To enhance his work he paid great attention to the ritual aspect of the cure, using mirrored rooms, chants or prayers, and music. Mesmer conceived of the magnetic force as a universal fluid in which everybody could communicate together as in a kind of ocean of ether.<sup>66</sup> Treated as a charlatan in Vienna, Mesmer moved to Paris in 1777 where he enjoyed immediate, but not enduring, success. In order to treat the one to two hundred people who knocked on his door everyday, he invented "le baquet," a wooden tub-like apparatus with metal attachments filled with water around which many people could sit and experience the magnetism directed by Mesmer.<sup>67</sup> Interest in Mesmerism went hand in hand with the

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<sup>66</sup> Heinz Schott, "Neurogamies. De la relation entre mesmérisme, hypnose et psychanalyse," in L'âme au corps: arts et sciences 1793-1993, ed. Jean Clair (Paris: Réunion des musées nationaux, Editions Gallimard, 1994. 143.

<sup>67</sup> Frédéric Charvet et Hanri Bonnet, "Le baquet de Mesmer," in Jean Clair, L'âme au corps, 154-155.

Enlightenment and new scientific discoveries like electricity. It provided a means for people to understand phenomena of nature. According to Robert Darnton, pre-revolutionary France enjoyed a golden age of enthusiasm for popular science and it was difficult to distinguish legitimate science from pseudosciences like alchemy and Mesmerism.<sup>68</sup> In 1790, Girodet wrote to Trioson in detail about events surrounding the imprisonment of the famous alchemist Cagliostro in Rome for founding a lodge of freemasons called "the Illuminated Ones," whose advocacy of unlimited freedom was perceived as spiritually harmful to the papal government.<sup>69</sup> Mesmerism took a radical turn when disappointed scientists like Jean-Paul Marat, rejected by the Academy of Sciences, joined their mystical ideas about nature with Rousseau's theories by claiming that Mesmerism was a science of a forgotten primitive people and a method of direct access to communication. Thus, a vulgarized version of Rousseau's ideas was transmitted to the reading public.<sup>70</sup>

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<sup>68</sup> Robert Darnton, Mesmerism and the End of the Enlightenment in France (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1968), 23-29.

<sup>69</sup> Girodet, Oeuvres posthumes, vol. 2, 370-371.

<sup>70</sup> Darnton, 116-124. Mesmerism continued to influence literary people in the nineteenth century among whom were Alexander Dumas, Théophile Gautier, and Balzac, 150-151. His interest in Mesmerism might explain Balzac's enthusiasm for The Sleep of

The hypnotic state induced by Mesmer was not dissimilar to the effect of Madame Tussaud's waxworks. Her uncle and guardian Philippe Curtius, a Swiss physician who made wax sculpture in his leisure, was so successful he gave up his practice of medicine. Invited by his French patron Prince de Conti to Paris, he took Marie with him in 1766 and eventually trained her in the art of waxworks. Curtius opened his first of two public displays in 1770, one of which displayed the Royal Family dining in Versailles. In a morbid desire to document and preserve their victims's images, revolutionaries called upon the skills of Curtius and Madame Tussaud to make death masks from severed heads. At the request of David, Madame Tussaud also made a mask of Marat directly after his murder.<sup>71</sup> The psychic state induced by Mesmer's hypnotic methods produced a state of consciousness somewhere between awareness and sleep, a different form of consciousness that allowed withdrawal and, if only temporarily, a denial of

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Endymion, which he used as his model for the painting of Zambinella in his novel Sarrasine, see Helen Osterman Borowitz, The Impact of Art on French Literature: From de Scudéry to Proust (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 1985), 126-128.

<sup>71</sup> Marina Warner, "Waxworks and Wonderlands," in Visual Display: Culture Beyond Appearances, ed. Lynne Cooke and Peter Wollen (Seattle: Bay Press, 1995), 179-183. See also Albert Boime, Art in an Age of Revolution 1750-1800 (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1987), 488-489, for his account Madame Tussaud and her uncle's involvement with revolutionary activities.

earthly existence that was not death. So too, the coating of wax produces an illusion somewhere between life and death; it absorbs light and offers a shining surface as if alive while, ironically, it seals out air and denies nature's mutability and decay, like the process of embalming.<sup>72</sup>

The most startling effect of Girodet's Endymion upon the viewer today is the sense that it looks carefully preserved and encased within a protective coating not unlike a layer of translucent wax. Girodet was known for his expertise in surface finish and was considered more accomplished in the use of glazes than David.<sup>73</sup> Preoccupied with the finished look of Endymion, he wrote to Trioson in July 1791 of his failed attempt to mix olive oil in his paint. It would not dry and he had to start over.<sup>74</sup> The glazed surface of Endymion creates a sense of distance for the viewer, as if one were looking at a world apart--hermetically sealed off, protected from whatever might

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<sup>72</sup> Ibid., 187. According to Warner, the only intersection between Mesmer and Curtius occurred when Benjamin Franklin chaired a commission in 1784 to investigate Mesmer's practice. The commission concluded that there was no scientific proof for animal magnetism but that his methods produced therapeutic effects through the power of the imagination, nonetheless. Franklin also sat for a portrait by Curtius, 199.

<sup>73</sup> Crow, Emulation, 102.

intercede from outside to disturb its exquisite tranquility. Later critics would point to Girodet's style of painting as too glacée in order to explain the failure he experienced toward the end of his career. According to this reasoning he lacked a new vocabulary to paint his otherwise romantic subjects.<sup>75</sup>

Girodet's career began in the midst of chaos in the political realm. Threats of disruption to the structured stable academic world increased upon his arrival in Rome. Under these circumstances, his style of painting and choice of Endymion as subject appear to be the logical response to trauma.<sup>76</sup> For instance, at the time he was struggling with the Endymion's finish, anxiety about news from France and the constant threat of attack in Rome if suspected of being a patriot, affected his ability to work.<sup>77</sup> Because his first major painting under the pressure of these conditions was a success, it seems reasonable that he would cling to

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<sup>74</sup> Girodet, Oeuvres posthumes, vol. 2, 395.

<sup>75</sup> See Adhémar, 273.

<sup>76</sup> This has also been suggested by John Elderfield in The Language of the Body: Drawings by Pierre-Paul Prud'Hon (New York: Harry N. Abrams, 1996), 71. The numbness of sleep can also be seen as a reflex reaction to danger, not so much to escape but to feign death, a stillness that protects the body. Protection becomes a form of mimicry: with the urge to survive, one adapts to death. See also Horkheimer and Adorno, 180.

<sup>77</sup> Brown, 79.

that response as a kind of refuge. By rearranging the figures in Endymion he could return to it over and over--a pair of lovers attended by Amor or the moth-winged Zephyr in his first version. Endymion became his emblematic work; he never sold it and continued to exhibit it at almost every Salon during his life.<sup>78</sup>

According to Rubin, Girodet's identification with Endymion was embedded in the subject itself: an artist receiving divine inspiration. The body of Endymion does not represent death but an active kind of sleep, indicated by the turn of his face to catch the ray of light. His body is stirred by a divine illumination associated with moonlight in the eighteenth century.<sup>79</sup> The moonlight that forms a crescent shape as it passes over and is absorbed by Endymion's body and radiates back to the moon also indicates Girodet's awareness of current scientific knowledge, according to Barbara Stafford. Not too dissimilar from Mesmer's theories, scientists believed an "immense ocean composed of an electric fluid circulated throughout the atmosphere."<sup>80</sup> The light is also

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<sup>78</sup> Levitine, "Girodet-Trioson: An Iconographical Study," 118.

<sup>79</sup> Rubin, "Endymion's Dream," 60-69.

<sup>80</sup> Barbara Stafford, "Endymion's Moonbath: Art and Science in Girodet's Early Masterpiece," Leonardo 15 (1982): 194.

symbolically erotic like the light in Pygmalion and Galatea. In addition to its erotic play over Endymion's body, it reveals another erotic scene. As the mischievous Zephyr, riveted by the sight of Endymion's body, pulls back the branches to facilitate Diana's visitation, light catches his boyish buttocks and adds an inescapable homoerotic frisson to the painting.<sup>81</sup>

The frontal plane of Endymion's body coincides with the plane of the canvas; he is fully on display and arranged in total abandon but self-absorbed in the act of turning his head toward the light. He is at once accessible and inaccessible to the viewer.<sup>82</sup> Endymion exists as a passive receptacle for visual erotic pleasure. While sleeping, he is undisturbed by any other conflict, incompleteness or tension from the outside world. The viewer is offered a vision of ideality--replete with signs of unlimited narcissistic transference and thus

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<sup>81</sup> For Solomon-Godeau the homoerotic gaze of Zephyr on the visually displayed body of Endymion is Girodet's most dramatic departure from earlier versions of the narrative. However, this aspect of the painting provoked no comment from the critics at the time. See Male Trouble, 66-82.

<sup>82</sup> Characteristic of académies, according to Elderfield, was a play of contradictions, specifically the appropriate display of a nude figure that avoided explicit voyeurism. Two options could be offered the viewer: identification with self-absorption or admiration of an unavailable figure, 62.

inaccessibility.<sup>83</sup> And Girodet's wax-like filmy glaze, a narcissistic reflecting layer, attenuates the materiality of the painted surface. The penetration of moonlight dissolves the side of Endymion's body and his image exceeds itself by seeping into the vaporous moonlit atmosphere. His shadowed opposite side blends into the dark of night. The body's edges are softened; its materialization depends upon the light. The monochromatic color reinforces the sense that the body is coalescing with light and air. The linear perfection of Girodet's didactic, descriptive style is reserved for the details, the accessories--the rust-colored cloak with its Greek-designed border, the leopard skin, sandals, staff, and the profusion of botanical foliage. He carefully chose the foliage because it was indigenous to Greece--oak, acanthus, laurel, and evening glory.<sup>84</sup>

The viewer is presented with a dream image of ideal beauty and autonomy--a circulating, repetitive system closed off from the world and preserved forever in its state of indifference. Not unlike the image of Pygmalion and Galatea united in sameness, Endymion's body effaces

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<sup>83</sup> Ibid., 64. Girodet's painted Endymion is comparable to similar aspects of Winckelmann's ephebic figures as described by Elderfield.

difference by escaping boundaries, denying the physical and psychic limitations that set into play an infinity of needs and desires.<sup>85</sup> There is no tension in the musculature of Endymion's body; its ideal perfection is of satiation and satisfaction--a state of immobility resembling death. Like Pygmalion and Galatea, The Sleep of Endymion is symbolic of the primitive dream, a golden age of unfettered transparency in a world without obstacles.<sup>86</sup> The reality of that dream is that its fulfillment turns the living into a form of death. Removal from a world of complexities, particularities, and conflicts--the challenges that make one feel alive--is the object of the dream because at its core is fear of disorder and diversity.

### Conclusion

Girodet's return to his origins as a painter reenacts in an uncanny way the structure of primitivism itself. Rousseau imagined the origins of human life and constructed

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<sup>84</sup> Rubin, "Endymion's Dream," 48.

<sup>85</sup> See Copjec, Read My Desire, 60-61, for her discussion of desire and its dependence upon limits.

<sup>86</sup> In his last book, Rousseau wrote that in his isolation deprived of all social relationships, only his mind remained active with intense feelings. His body had become the final hindrance, obstacle: "I do all I can to sever my ties with it in advance." Jean-Jacques Rousseau, Reveries of the Solitary Walker, trans. Peter France (New York: Penguin Books, 1979), 33.

a model of early man who was virtuous and lived unencumbered in nature with his physical appetites fully satisfied. As taken up by proselytizing revolutionaries in their efforts to define the new citizen who would be worthy to live in and/or govern the new republic, the virtuous qualities of primitive man, his pure and autonomous nature, became the reigning tautology. Hippocrates illustrates the attempt to transfer that model to the new citizen of the revolutionary republic. The return to origins also facilitated the construction of nationalism. The rise of nationalism produced a synchronous interest in myths of origin as vehicles to promote the illusion of unified peoples. The myths joined people by a supposedly shared corporeal inheritance and enabled this union, as if originated in nature, to be manipulated by political power.

The unity of bodily wholeness by its definition negates desire and its acknowledgment of lack. But as Girodet's paintings The Portrait of Jean-Baptiste Belley and The Revolt at Cairo demonstrate, the disavowal of desire is attended by its simultaneous obsession. The return to the imagined golden age of idealized relationships like that of Pygmalion and Galatea is an attempt to escape the conflict and anxiety produced by desire's suppression. The structure of the return to the

imaginary state of tranquility of homogeneous bodies is self-reflexive and only fulfilled by a return to the fantasy of a singular whole body. In this way, primitivism has been metamorphosed into our modern social reality. The state of nature--with its evocation of unity accompanied by freedom--is now a state of mind that is central to the make-up of the much-vaunted modern autonomous individual. With the power of the advanced capital state, we are able to believe that we are merged in manifold ways to an infinitely fluid nexus, like invisible rays that circulate around the earth. Thus the seduction of the myth of seamless unity--the logic of primitivism--endures. With the flick of a finger on a keyboard, we may imagine that the obstacles of a complex, diverse world are only an illusion.

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