ON SHIFTING GROUND: THE REVOLUTIONARY CAREER OF FRANÇOIS GÉRARD

BY

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DISSERTATION

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Abstract

This dissertation examines the career of François-Pascal-Simon Gérard (1770-1837) from its beginnings in the mid-1780s through the end of the French Revolution and provides a more complete understanding of Gérard as a key artist of the Revolutionary decade. A goal of this study is to set aside long-standing assumptions concerning Gérard’s political convictions and doubts about his artistic originality in order to shed light on Gérard’s critical contributions to Revolutionary art, and in particular, to the Davidian school. I demonstrate that, in the 1790s, Gérard moved away from the subjects and styles forged in Jacques-Louis David’s (1748-1825) studio. Most significantly, he reinvented classicism as a vehicle for moderate political themes, he reintroduced apolitical, sexualized imagery into classicism, and he established an artistic practice in which the serious business of the history painter was thoroughly integrated with that of the high-society portraitist. To do this, Gérard developed new modes of classicism, experimented with the emergent subject matter of Romanticism, and and explored issues of gender and sexuality in uncommon ways. During the tumultuous decade of the Revolution, when political consensus was at best fleeting and the traditional institutions of the French art world faltered, Gérard’s political and artistic flexibility allowed him not only to escape many of the consequences suffered by politically committed artists, but also eventually to thrive as a leading painter of the society of the late Directory. His career provides an alternative case for understanding the interplay of art, politics, and patronage in late-eighteenth century France.
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Introduction

In 1829, art critic Auguste Jal proclaimed, “Glory be to Gérard, who is a Baron and the first painter to the King! What matter that he is a Baron? He is Gérard! What matter that he is the first painter to the King? He is the King of first painters.”¹ From 1795 until the early 1830s, critics hailed François-Pascal-Simon Gérard (1770-1837) as one of the leading artists of his generation. He began his career under the tutelage of Jacques-Louis David (1748-1829), painting critical sections of some of David’s key Revolutionary paintings while producing copies of others. Despite struggling in the early years of the French Revolution to make a name for himself, Gérard won the concours de l’an II on 14 Fructidor an III (31 August 1795) thereby securing a major government commission at a time when such opportunities were scant. In the Salons from 1795 until the end of the Directory on 4 Brumaire an IV (26 October 1795), Gérard’s innovative history paintings and portraits received high critical praise and proved his ability to adapt to the continually changing politics and society of Revolutionary France. From the 1790s until well after the turn-of-the-century, he also designed numerous illustrations for one of the foremost Parisian publishers, Pierre Didot (1760-1853). Throughout Napoleon Bonaparte’s reign as First Consul and then Emperor (1799-1811), Gérard was prolific and lauded. He exhibited numerous large-scale portraits of

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¹ The quotation is found in a pamphlet Jal dedicated to Gérard’s 1827 painting, The Coronation of Charles X. Le Peuple au Sacré: critiques, observations, causeries, faites devant le tableau de M. le baron Gérard, premier peintre du Roi (Paris: A. J. Dénain, 1829), 31. “Gloire à Gérard qui est baron et premier peintre du Roi! Qu’importe qu’il soit baron? Il est GÉRARD! Qu’importe qu’il soit premier peintre du Roi? Il es le roi des premier peintres!”
Napoleon’s family and of the European courts and nobility, and history paintings for Napoleon including *Ossian Summoning the Spirits* (1801) as well as a painting to commemorate Napoleon’s victory over Russia and Austria at the Battle of Austerlitz in December 1805. He also earned prestigious titles: Knight of the Order of the Legion of Honor (1802), First Painter to the Empress Josephine (1806), and Professor at the École des Beaux Arts (1811). After the fall of Napoleon, Gérard once again easily navigated the changing of regimes, maintaining his position as a portraitist to the courts of Europe and eventually producing more history paintings than he did during the Napoleonic years. Honors continued to be conferred upon him: member of l’Institut (1812), First Painter to king Louis XVIII (1817), Baron (1819), and elevation to the rank of Officer in the Order of the Legion of Honor (1824).

Despite Gérard’s presence as one of the leading figures of the Parisian art world for more than five decades, the only monographic study of his life and career to date remains Charles Lenormant’s *Essai de biographie et de critique sur François Gérard, peintre d’histoire*, published in 1846. For the majority of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, Gérard’s oeuvre went largely unnoticed by scholars, and he was never the focus of a

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The first American dissertation to accord Gérard’s career a central place was Carol Margot Osborne’s “Pierre Didot the Elder and French Book Illustration, 1789-1822,” completed in 1979. As her title suggests, Osborne evaluated Gérard’s illustrative work within the context of Didot’s major editions. Until the late 1980s, scholars produced only a handful of articles devoted to a few of Gérard’s works. The years surrounding the bicentennial of the French Revolution witnessed a spate of rigorous scholarship that profoundly revised our understanding of virtually every aspect of the Revolutionary decade. Pioneering scholars provided substantial and much-needed reassessments of the careers of David and many of his students, and a

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3 His better known paintings have, of course, been on view at Louvre and in several museums across the world. The largest single collection of his works, held at Versailles, are in non-public rooms. Only two exhibitions of a fairly substantial number of his works have been held. The earliest is Gros, ses amis, ses élèves held in Paris in 1936. The other was not until 1992, when a larger group of Gérard’s works was featured in Baron François Gérard (1770-1837), an exhibition and sale of his drawings and paintings held at Jill Newhouse Gallery in New York. This show, however, only included two portraits and primarily featured painted sketches and drawings.

4 Osborne completed her dissertation at Stanford University in 1979. Garland Publishing published it in 1985. Prior to Osborne’s study, French scholar Alain Latreille completed a “Catalogue raisonné des portraits peints par le Baron François Gérard” as a mémoire at the Ecole du Louvre in 1973. Latreille listed the portraits in chronological order with relevant factual information for each one, including its dimensions, location, provenance, exhibition history, and bibliography.

profusion of major exhibitions drew renewed attention to the Davidian school. Yet the innovative studies of this period did not produce a fuller understanding or reevaluation of Gérard’s career. More often than not, the scholarship discusses Gérard’s works briefly and almost always in relationship or comparison to those by his fellow Davidians. On the heels of the bicentennial, the first revisionist assessment of Gérard’s role within the studio and of his works of the Revolutionary era appeared in Thomas Crow’s groundbreaking text, *Emulation: Making Artists for Revolutionary France* published in 1995. Crow provided new archival documents and analyzed Gérard’s early career more completely; yet while he devoted entire chapters to a discussion of David’s and Anne-Louis Girodet’s *oeuvres*, Gérard’s received less sustained inquiry.

While the careers of David, Girodet, and several other Davidians have been the subject of serious inquiry repeatedly in light of Crow’s text, Gérard’s has not received nearly as much attention. Scholars have long praised David for his ability to adapt to the demands of the ruling body and social climate after the Terror and through the Empire, regarding it as an “outstanding gift: the sense of what is stylistically appropriate to changed circumstances.” Gérard, on the other hand, has often been perceived as an opportunist who turned his back on his political convictions, if he had

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6 The art history focused upon the Davidian tradition produced from the late 1980s to the early 1990s is vast. The principle scholars of this period include, Sylvain Bellenger, Philippe Bordes, Thomas Crow, Whitney Davis, Stefan Germer, James Heffernan, Dorothy Johnson, Ewa Lajer-Burcharth, Sylvain Laveissière Jean-Jacques Lévéque, Régis Michel, Carol Ockman, William Olander, James Henry Rubin, Antoine Schnapper, Abigail Solomon-Godeau, Udolpho Van de Sandt, and Alan Wintermute. See the bibliography for their texts. It should also be noted that since the 1990s, the Wildenstein Institute has listed a catalogue raisonné for Gérard in preparation by Alain Latrellle; the institute continues to list it as forthcoming.

any to begin with, and altered his style and political allegiances after 1794 in order to maintain his position as one of the favored artists in Paris. At times, Gérard has been cast as a slavish imitator of David whose works are secondary at best to those of his master and are worthy of discussion only in as much as they reaffirm the superiority and influence of David. Alternatively, scholars have portrayed Gérard as an ardent Revolutionary, following in the footsteps of David, only to turn his back on radical politics and serious, academic history painting as early as 1795. As a result of these misunderstandings, Gérard’s contributions to the history of French art have been neglected in the scholarship; moreover, his works have not been the subject of a major retrospective.

Some phases of Gérard’s career have been studied in greater depth since 2000 thanks to new scholarship devoted to the Revolutionary decade as well as a rising interest in reassessing French art of the first third of the nineteenth century. Tony Halliday, Philippe Bordes, and Amy Freund have reevaluated portraiture from the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries and greatly enriched our understanding of Gérard’s early, innovative work in the genre. A few of Gérard’s major works dating to

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the Revolution were included in the exhibition *Au-delà du Maître: Girodet et l’atelier de David*, held at the Musée Girodet in Montargis in 2005, and the catalogue of the exhibition shed further light on this phase of his career. The outstanding catalogue edited by Sylvain Bellenger published on the occasion of the major retrospective he organized, *Girodet: 1767-1824* (2005-2006), included new discussions of representative works spanning the course of Gérard’s career. Lastly, several exhibitions, new monographs, and scholarship focusing on Davidian art after the Revolution and early French Romanticism have appeared since the turn of the twenty-first century; various works by Gérard have begun to be treated more seriously, to a greater or lesser degree depending on the source, and his contributions to the beginnings of Romanticism are explored in many of these.\(^\text{10}\) Despite this outpouring of new research, as Sébastian Likenesses: Portraiture and Politics in France, 1789-1804,” (Ph.D. diss., University of California, Berkeley, 2005).

Allard and Marie-Claude Chaudonneret point out, an extensive study of Gérard’s entire career and a retrospective of it remain to be seen.\textsuperscript{11}

This study encompasses the early phases of Gérard’s career from his first apprenticeships through the last Salon of the Directory, focusing specifically on his output from 1794 to 1799. Gerard was the only history painter from the first generation of David’s students to earn extensive critical praise after Thermidor and throughout the Directory for his inventive history paintings and portraiture, which ushered in new trends in both genres. I set aside, initially, long-held assumptions about Gérard’s political convictions and lingering doubts about his originality in relation to David and Girodet in order to illuminate Gérard’s critical contributions to Revolutionary painting and, in particular, to the Davidian school. A clearer understanding of his development as a painter and of the significance of his work in its original context allows for a reevaluation of his place in French Revolutionary painting. My study of his career also provides new insight into the interplay of art, politics, and patronage in late eighteenth-century France.

In Chapter 1, I discuss Gérard’s beginnings as a student within David’s studio from 1786 to 1794. This chapter chronicles the experiences of an artist from a humble background trying to compete in David’s studio and the Revolutionary art world. Unlike the majority of his colleagues, Gérard could not depend on family wealth to support his rise as a history painter, and this proved to be a difficult obstacle to success.


It meant he was more obligated than most of his peers to devote himself to David’s projects and more reliant on his master to secure patronage. He had little time or resources to compete in the genre of ambitious, large-scale history painting. Add to this the disintegration of traditional systems of patronage and the vicissitudes of Revolutionary politics, and it is not surprising that he failed to make a name for himself during this period. And yet, his works show Gérard was ambitious, skilful (even if his early critical reviews were not glowing), and made important contributions to the early, more severe style of Davidian classicism. Moreover, Gérard’s use of Davidian motifs reveals his deep understanding of the complexity of themes in early Davidian painting and cannot be regarded as slavish copying or as strong evidence of his active engagement in Revolutionary politics.

Gérard’s and Girodet’s book illustrations have, by and large, been overshadowed by discussions of their works in other media. In Chapter 2, I focus on their illustrations for Didot’s *Aeneid*, a project both artists invested seriously in throughout the 1790s. When these illustrations have been discussed, scholars have either emphasized David’s role in the commission, despite the fact that there is little evidence he made significant contributions to it, or focused on Girodet’s designs. My analysis of the stylistic and thematic differences in Gérard’s and Girodet’s illustrations demonstrates divergent forms of classicism coexisted within David’s studio. In 1791, Girodet asserted his originality with his *The Sleep of Endymion* and his illustrations provide further evidence of his pursuit of a more subjective classicism and less linear style. Girodet responded to the private themes within Virgil’s epic that allowed him to explore the subjects of divine
intervention, irrationality, and sexuality. Several scholars have addressed these themes in Girodet’s paintings and questioned the extent to which the nature of his sexuality should be taken into account when interpreting his paintings. I bring Girodet’s Aeneid illustrations into this discussion.

In sharp contrast to Girodet, Gérard explored the themes in the Aeneid that resonated with those found in David’s paintings of the early Revolution – heroic masculinity, civic duty, and the consequences of both. Throughout his illustrations, Gérard demonstrated his mastery of David’s early, severe classical style and ability to employ Davidian motifs in a manner that highlights his true understanding of the thematic complexity in early Davidian painting.

In 1795, Gérard achieved his first public success with his winning entry in the concours de l’an II, The French People Demanding the Overthrow of the Tyrant on the Tenth of August, 1792. Scholars have assumed that Gérard was an ardent Revolutionary who depicted the Tenth of August from a sharply Jacobin perspective; this, along with his closeness to David, both artistically and politically, is thought to have ensured his victory. As I argue in Chapter 3, there is little evidence exists to support the claim that Gérard shared David’s political convictions; moreover, the image’s politics are not specifically Jacobin, and in any case such politics were unlikely to have helped it to win the concours de l’an II. More importantly, a reading of Gérard’s Tenth as straightforward Jacobin propaganda denies the image’s multivalence. Gérard’s choices in the Tenth resulted in an image that accommodated a range of political factions and engaged in the
debates over the presence of women within the political sphere, without favoring one party or opinion over another.

After winning the concours de l’an II, Gérard received a studio in the Louvre and began to work independently from David on history paintings as well as his first portrait commissions. In Chapter 4, I treat first his compositions based on Roman history from the middle of the 1790s, Marius Returning to Rome and Belisarius. Both represent Gérard’s engagement with subject matter that was typical of David’s atelier in its early years. I explore the ways in which Gérard’s versions depart dramatically from their precursors. Since the Marius drawing and painted sketch are not dated, interpretations of it in relationship to Revolutionary politics remain speculative. His Belisarius, shown at the Salon of 1795, however, was a calculated move to recast the story of the Roman general as an allegory for the fate of émigrés during the Revolution. The painting was a resounding success, in part because it represented the prevailing political mood in Paris at the end of Thermidor and the beginning of the Directory, a time when many beleaguered émigrés were returning to France. Gérard’s Belisarius inaugurated a trend for history paintings from 1795 until after the turn-of-the-century that stirred a viewer’s emotions rather than intellect and encouraged contemplation rather than action. Gérard departed from early Davidian classicism not only in terms of the painting’s themes, but also in his style, and critics responded with enthusiasm to both.

In the Salon of 1798, Gérard’s Cupid and Psyche presented a version of the myth that struck a chord with the new fashionable elite of Directory society and disavowed
history painting’s role as a forum for debates about contemporary politics. In Chapter 5, I explore Gérard’s treatment of the tale not only in the painting but also in his illustrations for Didot’s edition of La Fontaine’s version of the story. Just as the Aeneid illustrations allowed Gérard to perfect his early classical style, the La Fontaine project gave him a venue to continue pursuing a style based on blending his linearity with a more lyrical version of classicism. Gérard’s depictions of the couple resonated with fashionable Directory women, who cared little for Revolutionary politics and embraced the story of the beautiful and tortured Psyche, at a time when they began dressing themselves à la grecque. Gérard’s painting launched a vogue for pale skin and blonde wigs, and inspired women to adopt even more transparent fabric for their columnar dresses. Critics hailed Cupid and Psyche as one of the best history paintings at the Salon, praising the erudition, inventiveness, and “Greekness” of his art, and celebrated his rendition of Psyche as an ideally timid yet desirous woman. It is the first painting in France in the 1790s to be described as “romantic,” and it was enormously influential upon the younger generation of artists in the late 1790s and early 1800s.

In Chapter 6, I examine the beginning of Gérard’s career as a portraitist from 1795 to 1799. His success in the genre was due to his ability to create new forms of portraiture, distinctive from those of the Ancien Régime and from early Davidian painting. His society portraits gave glimpses of his sitters’ private lives, at times in ways that resemble genre scenes, while evoking the public personas or professions of his clients in novel ways. His portraits were successful because they were shorn of any references to the political sphere. Instead, Gérard represented the return of fashionable
society, salon culture, and luxury; unlike Girodet and others, Gérard embraced this shift in French culture, establishing his own salon and regularly attending those of others. Moreover, he often earned critical praise for the inventiveness and style of his portraits at a time when many critics lamented the rising preference for portraiture over history paintings. By the end of the Salon of 1799, Gérard had emerged as a leading artist in both genres.
Chapter 1: In the Shadow of David: Becoming an Artist in Revolutionary Paris

A variety of personal, financial, and artistic struggles marked the first phase of François Gérard’s career from roughly 1786 to 1794. On a personal level, he suffered the death of his father, one of his brothers, and his mother. From 1790 onward, he had to support his family, and like many artists of the period, he suffered financially due to the increasing lack of private patronage and the eventual collapse of state sponsorship for the arts. Attracted to David’s early severe style of Neo-classicism, Gérard entered his studio in 1786 and quickly proved he could emulate his master’s style, perhaps more completely than any of his fellow students. David quickly tapped into this talent, encouraging his student to complete portions and copies of his own paintings. Until at least 1795, Gérard’s close association with David proved to be a double-edged sword. His attachment to the best known master in Paris afforded him professional and financial opportunities, yet it left little time for his own works, and while he had success within the studio, he achieved very little in the Salons of 1791 and 1793. Gérard’s closeness to David also led his contemporaries (and scholars ever since) to assume he shared his master’s politics, when in truth we know very little of Gérard’s personal political beliefs. In order to make a name for himself independently from David’s studio, Gérard, like many of his fellow students, would eventually have to separate himself from his master both politically and stylistically.

Born in Rome in the Palazzo Colonna on 12 March 1770 to an Italian mother and a French father attached to Cardinal Bernis, the French ambassador to the Papal States,
Gérard was the oldest of three sons. Gérard exhibited an inclination for art from a young age. According to his nephew, “from his earliest years in Italy, he showed great skill in the art of drawing, a talent so remarkable and a penchant for art so persistent that his family, despite their hesitations, could not help but give in to his desire to become an artist.”¹ Beyond this, we know next to nothing about the first ten to twelve years of his life or education in Rome before his father moved the family to France to work for the Marquis de Breteuil, a minister of the Royal household who garnered a place in the Pension du Roi for the young Gérard.² It appears that Gérard’s parents encouraged their son’s artistic abilities, but apprenticeship in a fairly well-known painter’s studio did not come cheaply. From the very beginning of Gérard’s artistic life in France and for many years to come, financial limitations and familial obligations of one kind or another would be a key factor in determining his career path.

Gérard’s father arranged for his son’s first formal artistic training in the studio of Jacques-Augustin Pajou, choosing a sculptor because this type of apprenticeship was


less expensive. He studied roughly two years with Pajou and learned a great deal about figure modeling, which proved useful when he entered the studio of the academic painter Guy-Nicolas Brenet. Gérard’s decision to enter Brenet’s studio may have been influenced by the fact that David and two of his students, Jean-Germain Drouais and Anne-Louis Girodet-Trioson, also studied with Brenet for a brief period of time.3 Girodet was under the instruction of Brenet between 1784 and 1785 while David was in Rome, and although it is not known whether Gérard met him in 1784, it seems only reasonable that the two artists’ paths would have crossed. Charles Lenormant described Brenet as a “mediocre artist, but very inspired in the lessons he gave to others.”4 We know very little about Gérard’s early student works, but one anecdote regarding Brenet’s lessons has been passed down. Sometime in 1784, inspired in part by David’s Saint Roch Interceding for the Plague-Stricken (1780, fig. 1), Gérard conceived of his own composition for a painting entitled Plague Scene (fig. 2). When he asked permission to use paints for this work, Brenet refused, stating “before taking up the brush, one must serve a long apprenticeship in drawing.”5 Despite Brenet’s refusal and working without his master’s knowledge, Gérard completed his first painted sketch within a few days. The current location of the esquisse is not known, but a print after the

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3 Gérard’s time with Brenet is discussed in Lenormant, p.31. For Drouais and Girodet, see Thomas Crow, Emulation. Making Artists for Revolutionary France (New Haven, Connecticut: Yale University Press, 1995), 22 and 92.

4 Lenormant, 31. “…artiste médiocre par lui-même, mais bien inspiré dans les leçons qu’il donnait aux autres.”

5 H. Gérard, Lettres adressés. . . , 2. “…avant de manier le pinceau, disait-il, il
work made in the nineteenth century by C.V. Normand survives as a record of the original and affords us some idea of the overall composition of the esquisse.\textsuperscript{6} Gérard’s Plague Scene reveals a desire to be abreast of current trends in French painting, a familiarity with the sources and works of early Davidian Neo-classicism, and a level of ambition that drove him to ignore Brenet’s command and create the work in the first place. It demonstrates Gérard was, at the astonishingly early age of 14, an ambitious artist possessing the same impatience with the protocols for professional advancement as David and so many of his students.

Gérard’s Plague Scene serves as a testament to his early attraction to the style of David.\textsuperscript{7} In David’s work, St. Roch kneels before the Virgin and Christ child, shown seated upon a rocky outcropping in the upper right corner of the composition. Plague victims in various states of anguish and death surround these figures; the most powerful is undeniably the reclining male whose placement in the immediate foreground ensures the viewer cannot escape his pained expression and direct gaze.

\textsuperscript{6} Ibid. The esquisse was in the personal collection of Henri Gérard when he published his \textit{Oeuvre du Baron François Gérard, 1789-1836}, 3 vols. (Paris: 1857). The Normand engraving is reproduced in volume three of the \textit{Oeuvre}, under the section “Esquisses Peintes”, number one, unpaginated. Henri Gérard refers to this work as Gérard’s “first painting” and lists its dimensions as 45 x 55 cm.

\textsuperscript{7} The commission for David’s painting, orchestrated by Vien, came from the public health office of Marseille, and was intended to commemorate the defeat of a plague that ravished that city in 1720. For details of the commission, see Thomas Crow, \textit{Painters and Public Life in Eighteenth-Century Paris} (New Haven, Connecticut: Yale University Press, 1985), 203. It is interesting to note that Gérard returned to the theme of the plague of Marseille in 1834 with his \textit{The Plague of Marseille in 1720} which he gave to the city to serve as a pendant to David’s \textit{St. Roch}. See H. Gérard, \textit{Oeuvres}. . ., vol. 2,
David’s figures crowd the foreground, while Gérard provides more distance between the picture plane and the figures. Even a quick glance at these two works reveals how different they are, but Gérard also borrowed rather obviously from David’s work, most notably from the pose of the male figure in the foreground of the St. Roch. Yet, what is more interesting is Gérard’s adaptation of that pose to a figure grouping of a woman and child. Gérard changed the figure into a seated woman but retained the idea of resting her head on one hand. Her other hand supports the back of a small child, an improvement over the listless and contorted hand in David’s canvas. Gérard depicted the young child with one arm reaching out to the woman in a manner that echoes the pose of the Christ child in David’s canvas. In this one figure grouping, Gérard combined features taken from the poses of David’s male plague victim and the Virgin and Christ child. We see here an early example of the way in which Gérard would repeatedly draw inspiration from elements of David’s compositions without directly copying from them, demonstrating precocious originality.

Beyond the figures themselves, another obvious difference between the two artists’ compositions is in their backgrounds. While the city is relegated to the extreme background in David’s composition, Gérard set his Plague Scene in an urban square surrounded by classical edifices. Gérard’s model for this section of his composition was not the St. Roch, but other works by David and his students could easily have served as inspiration. Two in particular stand out as possible sources. Gérard may have taken entry #28, unpaginated.
cues from David’s use of classical architecture as a backdrop in his Belisarius Begging for Alms (fig. 3). Serving as David’s agrément piece and exhibited at the Salon of 1781, where it received a great deal of critical attention, this work marks David’s first steps towards his mature style. David’s success would not have been lost on Gérard, but neither would that of Drouais, who won the Rome Prize competition in 1784 (the date of the Plague Scene) with his Christ and the Canaanite Woman (fig. 4). The parallels between Gérard’s and Drouais’ compositions are readily apparent. Both artists incorporated classical architecture as backdrops for their frieze-like arrangement of figures in the midground. Both also used a large wall with columns to block the view on the left, while on the right the view extends into the distance. These works, as well as David’s Belisarius, with their planar compositions, dominant horizontals and verticals, placement of figures, and emphasis on clarity, order, and line, reveal their indebtedness to the works of Poussin. Such references to the seventeenth-century master of French classicism are hardly surprising, given the resurgence in interest in his works during this period.

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8 Crow, Painters and Public Life. . ., 203-208. It should be noted that the critical attention paid to David’s painting came in the form of both positive and negative reviews. Crow points out the “errors” in David’s composition, from its perspective to its overall darkness, that were often criticized. In his interpretation of the work, Crow argues that the errors themselves contributed to the work’s successful reception in certain political circles. Regardless of how we might interpret these errors or their reception, the composition and style of the Belisarius pointed a new direction for David and his future students and served as a precedent that could not have been ignored by Gérard.

9 Ibid., Emulation. . ., 24-29.

10 Ibid., 28-29. Crow points out that in 1783, two new biography’s of Poussin
Although his *Plague Scene* did not result in any public recognition for Gérard, in July of the following year one of his male nude figure studies won a third place medal in the Academy’s quarterly prize competitions. This *académie* (fig. 5) displays his precocious talent for drawing human anatomy and suggests he did not require the lengthy apprenticeship that Brenet deemed compulsory. Here again we see Gérard assimilating the latest artistic tendencies and attempting a bolder, more Davidian style for rendering the human figure.

In his study of eighteenth-century *académies*, James Henry Rubin identified three stylistic phases of academic figure drawing during the century. Gérard’s exercise exhibits those tendencies found within the third of these phases, corresponding roughly to the decades of the 1760s through the 1780s. The figure drawings of this period, in general, show “an inner expressive realism combined with a more realistic representation of observed forms. Expressive subtlety of a more complex and sober kind . . . was frequently suggested by views of the model from the side or from over the shoulder.” In terms of technique, most of these *académies* were executed in black chalk on tinted paper with white highlights, and the hatching is distinctively “close-knit and

appeared in France, and he refers to Drouais’ *Christ and the Canaanite Woman* as “a competent pastiche of Poussin.”

12 Gérard also included two partially nude male figures in his *Plague Scene* (fig. 2), which exhibit the same characteristics Rubin identifies as representative of the *académies* of the Davidians in the mid-1780s, which are discussed below.
vigorous,” used to emphasize anatomy and create a convincing roundness to the forms. A stump (rolled piece of leather or paper) was used to rub and smear chalk in order “to soften and generalize the background, against which the figure of the model appears more plastically compact and rounded.” Rubin also identified an early académie by David (1770s, fig. 6) and discussed how the Davidians pushed the starkness of these qualities even further both during and after the mid-1780s. In David’s hands, the use of these same characteristics marked an important step towards the development of the severe style of the Oath of the Horatii.

If we compare Gérard’s académie to that of David, the similarities are striking. Both artists depicted figures who attempt to hide their tortured expressions from the viewer by twisting away from the picture plane and partially obscuring their faces. The intense expressions, unruly hair, and inclusion of props in both académies suggest a concern with narrative. David and his early students often invested their académies with a level of complexity that went well beyond the requirements of a simple figure study and academic exercise. The twisting of the figures’ upper and lower bodies in different directions with muscles flexed for potential action serves to activate the figures, as well as providing a vehicle for the artists to explore the contours of the musculature. Anatomy here is convincingly modeled with great realism, and the contours are precisely delineated, revealing sure hands. Rubin notes that it is surprising to see such

14 Rubin, 34.
15 Ibid., 34 and 61.
16 Ibid., 34.
confidence in David’s *académie* at this point in his career.18 Gérard’s *académie* reveals not only his natural abilities, but also shows that he was able to adapt his skills to the most advanced developments in figure rendering even before entering David’s studio. It is not known for certain if Gérard saw David’s study or any of the *académies* of the other Davidians available at this time, such as Drouais’ *The Dying Athlete* (1785, fig. 7), but it is difficult to believe that an ambitious pupil like Gérard would have been unaware of the work of David and his nascent studio, especially since we see evidence of their influence in both his *académie* and *Plague Scene* (fig. 2).19

Gérard’s biographers emphasized the importance of the exhibition of David’s *Oath of the Horatii* in 1785 (fig. 8) after which, “The other masters lost all credit, and the atelier of David was enriched through their losses. Gérard was not the last to follow this irresistible impulse.”20 Not long after seeing the *Horatii*, Gérard left Brenet in order to enter what was quickly becoming the most well-known atelier in Paris. The atmosphere of David’s studio, as is well known, was often highly charged, and the artists within it competed with one another for the attention of their master and for

17 Ibid.
18 Ibid., 61.
19 Daniel Wildenstein and Guy Wildenstein, *Documents complémentaires au catalogue de l’oeuvre de Louis David* (Paris: Fondation Wildenstein, 1937), item 1368. Approximately forty students were estimated to be in David’s atelier in 1784. There is little doubt that Gérard knew about the activities of the Davidians who were beginning to dominate the Parisian art world by this time.
government patronage during the Revolution when it was extremely limited.21

Gérard Enters David’s Circle

In his unfinished Portrait of Gérard (c.1789-90, fig. 9), Antoine-Jean Gros captured the likeness of the young artist just a few years after his arrival in David’s studio at the age of nineteen or twenty. Gérard appears in a white shirt and lace jabot topped by a plain cloth high-collared black coat. The relatively simplified outfit—a style inspired by English working-class dress—became de rigueur for French republicans and anyone who did not want to be accused of having monarchist leanings in the early 1790s. The long, disheveled style of Gérard’s hair was popular with young men during this period and indicated a disdain—either affected or genuine—for elaborate ancien régime hairdressing.22 As seen here, Gérard clearly adopted the fashion of his fellow Davidians and political progressives in Paris; Gros himself appears in the same style of dress, along with the popular tall, wide-brimmed, round hat which customarily completed

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21 In his pioneering study of David’s studio, Emulation, Thomas Crow describes the very personal dynamics of David’s studio and the personalities within it, revealing to us the often melodramatic story lines that describe these artists’ relationships to one another and to the Parisian art world in general. It is not necessary to repeat here the full biographies of the Davidians and the details of the studio politics in full, since Crow’s study has provided us with the definitive source for this material. However, these details are far from trivial; in fact, they are absolutely vital for providing a framework within which the works of David and his students can be fully understood. Information regarding the other artists in the studio and their rivalries and friendships will be included here when they contribute to understanding how Gérard navigated this environment.

22 Aileen Ribeiro, Fashion in the French Revolution (London: B.T. Batsford Ltd., 1988), 48 and 110. The lace jabot worn at the neckline in this portrait is actually a fashion accessory from the ancien régime which continued to be worn until roughly 1794.
this look in a portrait painted by Gérard around 1790 (fig. 10).  

While his appearance was in keeping with his fellow Davidians, Gérard’s family background and financial obligations set him apart from the other students he encountered in David’s studio who, in general, were more financially secure and from higher social classes. Gérard’s parents encouraged their son’s artistic inclinations, but as domestic servants they were unable to provide him with substantial financial backing. He contended with such strains from the beginning of his time in David’s studio; indeed, Gérard’s early biographers and friends constantly referred to his extreme poverty. This only worsened after the death of his father in 1790, when at the age of twenty he became the sole supporter of his family. The loss of a father at an early age, however, formed a common bond between Drouais, Girodet, and Gérard, and made David not only an artistic mentor, but also a substitute father figure to each of them. The father/son relationship between David and his students made the atmosphere of David’s studio both patriarchal and fraternal at the same time. This


24 Crow, Emulation . . . For a biography of David’s early life, see pages 5-9; for Drouais, see pages 21-22; for Girodet, see pages 86-90 and George Levitine, Girodet-Trioson: An Iconographical Study (New York: Garland Publishing, Inc., 1978), 4-7.

25 Ibid., David lost his father when he was nine years old in 1757, Drouais at
environment produced, at least in its early years, pictures of masculine themes that privilege man’s ability to act in the public sphere, choosing self-sacrifice and country over private, familial bonds, no matter the cost. The style used to portray these subjects favors harsh chiaroscuro, strident linearity, and the use of the male nude body as a symbol of stoic, male virtues. But these Davidian nudes are also beautiful, and more often than not, they divulge a latent erotic content in keeping with another side of David’s atelier—its homosocial aspects.26

Given this, it seems surprising that female students were a part of the studio from its inception, and while Gérard was close to his male peers, he also formed bonds with at least one of his female colleagues, L’Émilie de Demoustier, la comtesse Benoist, whose profile he sketched sometime in 1799 or 1800 (fig. 11). Benoist joined the studio between 1786 and 1787, at roughly the same time as Gérard, and the two artists soon became friends, with Gérard almost becoming her stepfather.27 These details are twelve in 1775, and Girodet at seventeen in 1784.


27 Marie-Julietee Ballot, Une élève de David: la Comtesse Benoist, L’Émilie de Demoustier 1768-1826 (Paris: Plon, 1914), 78-79. In 1791, Ballot recounted how Gérard was responsible for his mother, two brothers and young aunt after the death of his father. She indicates that Gérard was in love with her mother and was to marry her, but that the engagement was broken off. She does not indicate the reason, but it may have been due to his familial obligations and the fact that Emily’s family left Paris for some time during the Terror. Gérard appears to have lost contact with them for a few years,
interesting, because they provide us a glimpse of an aspect of David’s studio that is not often discussed. In fact, Gérard not only differed from David’s other students in background, but also in his relationships with women. From the beginning of his career, Gérard enjoyed the company of women artists, he was the first of his circle to marry, and eventually he would hold “evenings” or *salons* frequented by the highest echelon of society women. As will become evident, Gérard depicted women in ways that do not fully accord with their stereotypical portrayal in his master’s works; moreover, he became one of the most sought-after portraitists of women later in his career.

**Gérard’s First Collaborations within David’s Studio**

Gérard’s first year in the studio presumably went rather quietly since we have no documents pertaining to his activities in 1786. The first record we have of his work under David dates to October of 1787, when he won a second prize medal in the Academy’s quarterly prize competitions, improving over his previous third place award. At this stage, Gérard received his first opportunity to work on one of David’s canvases. The working relationship between master and student within David’s studio was far from traditional. Rather than limiting his more advanced students to the preliminary stages of a painting’s creation, David entrusted successive generations of his protégés with finishing critical sections of major works—indeed, many of David’s

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28 Cahen, 75.

but resumed his friendship with them during the Directory.
most well-known canvases represent truly collaborative endeavors. His Paris and Helen (painted in 1787, exhibited in 1789, fig. 12) is the first example of Gérard’s work on one of his master’s paintings. Gérard, along with fellow student and close friend Jean-Baptiste Isabey, completed the decorative colonnade of caryatids that forms the background of the picture.

His next contribution to a painting by David was a critical one. In the turbulent year of 1789, when the Estates-General was summoned and the Revolution began, Gérard gained a new standing within David’s studio: he completed important sections of David’s The Lictors Returning to Brutus the Bodies of his Sons (fig. 13) and made his first attempt at the Grand Prix de Rome. The Brutus was David’s first major government commission since the phenomenally successful Oath of the Horatii (fig. 8) of 1785. For his subject, David chose a tragic moment from the life of the founder of the Roman republic. Brutus’ sons had conspired to restore the old Tarquin monarchy, and under a law put forth by Brutus himself, any person found guilty of treason against the new Republic suffered a mandatory death sentence. In his canvas, David depicted the moment when the Lictors enter Brutus’s home carrying the executed sons. Only the legs of one of the sons are clearly visible, while Brutus sits in the tenebrous left

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29 Crow, especially pp.99-109. It is widely accepted that several of the prominent Davidians contributed key sections to David’s works such as The Oath of the Horatii, The Death of Socrates, Paris and Helen, The Lictors Returning to Brutus the Bodies of his Sons, and others. Crow refers the reader to P.A. Coupin who first noted these facts in his commemorative pamphlet entitled, Essai sur J.-L. David (Paris, 1827).

30 Ibid., p.99. David did have an unspecified illness in 1787 that may have contributed to assigning the background of this work to Gérard and Isabey.
foreground isolated by space, shadow, and emotional restraint from the female figures. Brutus’ wife shelters and supports her daughters with her body and left arm as she reaches across the central gap towards her sons with her right arm. This figure grouping is the most clearly lit in the painting, but it is not alone on the right half of the composition. Behind the mother and daughters sits a nurse, who, shattered over the loss of the sons she helped raise, pulls her dress over her eyes in a powerful gesture evocative of the emotional torment of the scene.31

In the nurse’s gesture to cover her face, an educated member of the Salon audience could not fail to recognize the reference to Pliny the Elder’s description of the lost painting by Timanthes on the *Sacrifice of Iphigenia*. This gesture was a device to show extreme emotional suffering while still maintaining a level of noble decorum and a way for the artist to allow the viewer’s imagination to fill the void with a level of feeling beyond that which could be depicted. Yet, by the second half of the eighteenth century, critics regarded it as an easy out for artists unable to express such complexity of emotion. According to Crow, however, the grieving nurse:

brought this discredited topos back to life by reversing all the terms of its traditional application. The tribute of supreme intensity of emotion is conspicuously withheld from the patriarchal hero and transferred to the lowest-ranking personage in the picture, who happens to be a woman as well. By virtue of her labor in nurturing the sons, the agony she feels over their deaths surpasses even that of the natural mother, and she is thereby raised in her humanity above a member of a royal family.32

She is also distinguished from the women of the family by her body type – another

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31 Ibid, p.102.
common pictorial device; her tensed angular musculature sets her apart as servant from
the supple smooth roundness expected in a noble female body. The grieving nurse was
Gérard’s chief contribution to the canvas.

The Brutus was the result of another collaborative effort within the studio, but it
is an unusual example. While the surfaces are evenly handled in David’s other
collaborative works, the stylistic inconsistencies left visible on the surface of the Brutus
declare outright that this painting is the product of multiple hands. P.-A. Coupin, a
well-known Restoration art critic, outlined the contribution of David’s students to this
work and others that are signed by David in a small pamphlet written after the artist’s
death in 1825.33 Coupin tells us that Girodet completed certain parts of Brutus’ wife,
and even more significantly, Brutus’ head. David is reported to have given this job to
Girodet due to the latter’s excellent ability for rendering chiaroscuro.34 Coupin credits
Gérard with the shadowy area behind Brutus’ head, but more importantly
acknowledged Gérard as the sole author of the nurse in the final painting.

Gérard’s role may even have extended beyond this to the very conception of the
figure. Among David’s studies associated with this painting, an early 1787 drawing
(fig. 14) shows the nurse collapsing in the corner, rolling her head back on her
shoulders, and bearing her breast in a classic sign of unbearable misery. Although not

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33 See footnote 21. Crow is the first art historian to explore this document
specifically.
34 Coupin, pp.62-63. Girodet completed the foot, left arm, and face of Brutus’
wife.
exactly alike, here the nurse is reminiscent of another tortured female from David’s earlier canvas, *St. Roch Interceding for the Plague-Stricken* (fig. 1). In the 1787 drawing, she is also accompanied by two unidentified males who each bear expressions of grief and disbelief. In the 1789 painted study for the entire composition (fig. 15), the nurse appears now as a lone mourner, much like in the final canvas, except that here her left hand and both forearms are exposed while her shoulder is covered. In a 1789 squared-off chalk study (fig. 16) meant for transferring this figure to the canvas and likewise attributed to David, she appears as she does in Gérard’s final painted version with her drapery pulled up over her left hand, more effectively shielding her face and figure from the viewer’s gaze, and her shoulder exposed.

These sketches reveal the substantial changes that took place in the course of determining the nurse’s final form. David began with a figure akin to one in an earlier painting, but at some point in his thinking he decided to change this section of the composition completely, both in the depiction of the nurse and in the elimination of her accompanying figures. It is possible that his students not only painted parts of the final canvas but also contributed to the conception of individual figures. In this instance, the similarity of the grieving nurse in the *Brutus* to the shrouded figure in Gérard’s *Plague Scene* (fig. 2) suggests the possibility that Gérard may have participated in the actual creation and evolution of this crucial figure and not simply have been assigned to paint the figure as conceived by David alone.
1789: A Disappointing Grand Prix de Rome

On 28 March 1789, the Academy selected seven students to compete in the final round of the Prix de Rome competition: Louis-André-Gabriel Boucher, Charles-Toussaint Labadie, Charles Meynier, Jean-Charles Tardieu, Charles Thévenin, Girodet, and Gérard, the youngest at 19 years old. The finished entries were exhibited on 25 August 1789 (the same day the Salon opened); on the 28th of August, the jury announced the winners. Girodet and Thévenin won first place, while Gérard and Meynier took second. In a letter to Benoit-François Trioson, Girodet declared it was an injustice of the Academy that Gérard did not take first place. The subject for the 1789 competition was a Biblical one – Joseph Recognized by his Brothers (figs. 17 and 18). Both artists depicted the moment when Joseph, after having sent his servants away from his home, reveals his identity to his brothers, and asks his shocked siblings if his father is still alive. When they could not answer him, Joseph called them closer in order to calm them. At this point, his youngest brother Benjamin ran toward him, collapsed on Joseph, and the two began to cry. In both artists’ compositions, we see Joseph

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38 Dagorne and Mayer-Michalon, 30. The authors propose the artists were most
standing on the platform before his throne, holding Benjamin in one arm and reaching out to the rest of his siblings with the other.

The story provided both artists with an opportunity to pursue a subject outside the narratives from classical antiquity favored in David’s studio. At the time, relatively little was known in France about Egypt; Napoleon’s campaigns were still to come, but the artists could have drawn from engravings of Egyptian elements and decor. Since the scene takes place in the house of Joseph, both artists attempted to add some Egyptian elements to their settings. Girodet added mummies in niches and a throne with winged lions, just visible on the right margin. Gérard included hieroglyphics on the column surfaces, a vaguely Egyptian relief, a throne with sphinx-like figures, and his Joseph wears a *nemes* as headdress. The figures in both paintings, however, are attired in more generic classical garb.

Both artists relied heavily on the art of their master to formulate their compositions. The head of the older brother with raised arms to the left in Girodet’s work recalls that of the blind Belisarius in David’s painting from 1785 (fig. 3). In Gérard’s *Joseph*, the general movement of the two brothers with outstretched arms resembles that of the brothers in David’s *Oath of the Horatii* (fig. 8). But the differences between the two figure groupings in this case seem to be just as important as the similarities. Gérard depicted two brothers overcome with surprise, rushing to unite likely inspired by le comte de Caylus’ text *Histoire de Joseph*, published in 1757.

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39 Ibid., 32. In particular the authors cite “the engravings of Piranesi in *Receuil d’antiquités égyptienne, étrusque, grecques et romaines* published by Caylus between 1752
with their long lost brother. Their emotional intensity contrasts sharply with the stoic resolve of the Horatii brothers, whose family would soon be ripped apart by war and death. The depiction of Joseph and Benjamin, however, seems to be a direct quotation of the figures of the wife and daughter in David’s *Brutus* (fig. 13), only here the pair has been reversed. Moreover, this quotation would appear to have a thematic link. Both Joseph and Brutus’ wife suffered the loss of family members and David and Gérard depicted them at the moment when their loved ones were returned to them. The difference is obviously that the reunion was tragic for Brutus’ wife.

David’s figure holding the kylix of hemlock in *The Death of Socrates* (1787, fig. 19) inspired – both in terms of its appearance and its narrative function – the figure of the kneeling brother in the foreground of Gérard’s composition. The physical resemblance, although not exact, is striking. Both male figures appear in the foreground of the compositions, with their backs to the viewer, wearing the same garment draped to expose part of their backs and shoulders. David’s figure raises a hand to hide his eyes, while Gérard’s conceals his entire face in both hands. Gérard’s figure has dropped to one knee, as if Gérard anticipated the moment after the executioner released the poison to Socrates and fell. Could Gérard’s figure represent Judah? The identity of each of the brothers in the painting in not certain, yet it was after

and 1767.”

40 It should be noted here that Quatremère de Quincy wrote that Gérard assisted in the production of David’s *Death of Socrates*. This has not been discussed in the text, because no other author has made this claim, and Quincy does not provide any details regarding Gérard’s exact contribution to this painting. See “Notice historique. . .”, 199.
all Judah who led the others to sell Joseph into slavery and then convinced their father
Joseph was dead. While Judah did not actually kill Joseph, he did betray both his
brother and father. His posture in Gérard’s painting could be read as one of extreme
shame and remorse—similar to the level of regret David previously depicted in his
executioner. Gérard’s use of his master’s figures and compositional devices reveals a
reliance on David, but it also demonstrates his understanding of the complex and multi-
layered content of his master’s works. Moreover, a certain degree of emulation was the
expected path of artistic development in the period.

Gérard’s and Girodet’s Rome Prize entries reveal how divergent their styles were
even at this early date. Gérard’s composition is stridently planar with the space clearly
organized in a series of three horizontal planes. The first is marked by the stairs and
frieze of figures across the foreground, the second is created by the flat horizontal of the
wall behind Joseph, and the third is seen in the wall of columns in the background.
Girodet’s organization, in contrast, is more visually complicated with a view opened
into the distance in the left background. The placement of his figures, too, is more
complex. He includes a group of four figures in the left foreground facing Joseph and
Benjamin, another group of figures moving toward the picture plane from the shadowy
wall in the background, and finally a single figure glimpseed in the left background, just
in front of the opening to another room. Girodet’s figures also seem to occupy the
interior much more convincingly, in part due to his ability to model with chiaroscuro.
His talent with lighting effects is exemplified in passages where he uses light to form
contour lines such as that of the upper arm and shoulder of the male wearing a yellow garment and in the soft, golden glow on his and the other brothers’ faces in the left foreground. Gérard’s figures, on the other hand, reveal the linearity of his style, have more sharply delineated contours, are less plastic, and do not always convincingly occupy the space provided for them. For example, it is difficult to ascertain the spatial relationships between the two brothers who rush toward Joseph with outstretched arms and the brother behind them who appears to cower away. In fact, the more we look at Gérard’s figures, the more they seem to be isolated from one another, or at least awkwardly positioned in the space and in relation to one another. Girodet’s placement and rending of figures brings to mind the Academic principle of *enchaînement*. It is easy for the viewer to follow the linking of the figures across the left foreground toward Benjamin and ultimately Joseph; the contour lines of figures blend into one another, relating them to each other and their surroundings. We sense in Gérard’s composition that there is a clear thrust towards Joseph, but this emphasis is achieved in a much more straightforward manner than in Girodet’s treatment. The insistence upon line in Gérard’s work is also readily apparent when we consider his somewhat lackluster coloring in comparison to Girodet’s rich, vibrant, and much more varied color usage. When the entries were exhibited at the Academy, critics remarked on the “weakness of the coloring” in Gérard’s painting.41 Gérard’s colors appear flat and lack significant

41 Béatrice de Chancel, catalogue entry in *La Tradition et l’Innovation dans l’art Français par les peintres des Salons*, ex. cat. (Kyoto: Musée National d’Art Moderne de Kyoto, 1989), 212. While Jean-Jacques Lévéque suggested that Gérard’s *Joseph* was
highlights and shadows—nowhere is this more apparent than in the drapery that hangs from Joseph’s upraised arm. Lastly, the handling of the figures’ expressions is very different in the two paintings. In Girodet’s work, they are much more subtle than the historionic countenances of Gérard’s figures. One cannot help think of têtes de expression exercises when glancing over the bulging eyes in Gérard’s painting.

By 1789 Gérard and Girodet were already moving in distinct directions that mark alternate ways of responding to the influence of their master. Girodet’s path was to strike out from the studio and make his reputation with a style that was as far removed from David’s as possible. This is precisely what he did with his *The Sleep of Endymion* of 1791 (fig. 20)—which initiated a new style and range of subject matter in French painting.42 Conversely Gérard responded like Drouais and attempted to create works that were even “more Davidian” than David’s own. In other words, Gérard seized upon the early phase of David’s neo-classicism and sought to perfect it and push it to its limits. In the mid-1790s, Gros remarked that Gérard was the most capable of reproducing the “severe and laconic style” of David.43 Given his ability to imitate and

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42 See Crow, *Emulation...*, 133-139 for a comparison of Girodet’s *Endymion* to Drouais’ *The Dying Athlete* (1785). In the middle of the 1790s, the proliferation of beautiful, rarified male bodies in paintings and the more dramatic lighting effects used by artists like Guérin have been attributed to the influence of Girodet’s *Endymion*, see page 211 and Solomon-Godeau, “Is Endymion Gay,” 90-93.

perhaps even improve upon his master’s style, it is not surprising that Gérard would be consistently chosen to complete sections or copies of David’s works. During this initial phase of his career, then, Gérard worked closely with David in the studio and executed paintings in a style after that of his master. Although Gérard did not win the coveted trip to Rome, he did win second place, participated in his first public exhibition, and gained a new standing in David’s studio.

1790-1793: A Difficult Period

Gérard would get his chance to go to Rome, but not as winner of the Grand Prix. Since late 1789, his father had been planning to return with the family to Italy, at least in part because of the growing tension in France. Encouraged by the events of 1789, Gérard began work the following year on his entry for the 1790 Rome Prize competition, *The Judgment of the Chaste Suzanne by the Prophet Daniel* (fig. 21). When his father fell ill and died in September 1790, however, Gérard stopped working on his entry in order to accompany his frail mother and two younger brothers back to Italy. He may have been excited at least in part to see his friend Girodet, who left for Rome in early 1790 and sent Gérard numerous letters detailing his exploits in the Eternal City. He could also have been looking forward to remaining there after securing his family’s arrangements in order to study in museums and amongst the ruins. Gérard did not,

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44 H. Gérard, *Lettres...*, 3. Although executed in 1790, this painting was exhibited at the Salon of 1793 and will be discussed later in this chapter.
however, stay in Rome for long, and the only known works presumed to date from this brief sojourn are landscape studies such as Garden of a Roman Villa (fig. 22) and Italian Landscape (fig. 23).\textsuperscript{46} Hostility towards French émigrés in Rome was at a high point, and in order to avoid being listed as one and facing potentially fatal consequences, he left for Paris after roughly six months, taking his mother, two brothers, and his mother’s youngest sister with him.\textsuperscript{47} Not long after returning to Paris, Gérard suffered another setback: his older brother (a member of the French navy) died in a storm at sea, leaving Gérard as the sole supporter of his family. Without the security of an inheritance, Gérard struggled to find patronage at a time when it was virtually nonexistent. Trying to help as much as possible, David arranged with a leading French publisher for Gérard and Girodet to provide illustrations for a monumental folio edition of Virgil’s Bucolica.

\textsuperscript{45} Ibid., and Lenormant, 43.

\textsuperscript{46} H. Gérard, \textit{Oeuvre} . . ., unpaginated. Henri Gérard wrote that they are extant sketches which span the career of Gérard, and “Les premiers ont été fait à Rome en 1791, et representent pour la plupart des vues de cette ville. . .” . Girodet also sketched landscapes in and around Rome in the company of the landscape specialist Jean-Pierre Pèquignot. See Crow, \textit{Emulation} . . ., 122-123. Throughout his career, Gérard made landscape studies, mostly in preparation for larger works. A large series of these landscape drawings are held in the drawings collection of the Louvre.

Throughout this early part of his career, Gérard explored subjects from Roman history, independent from his work on the Virgil edition. One example is his *Death of Caesar*, known today by the engraving by Rosette, done in 1858 (fig. 24). The drawing is undated, but Henri Gérard assigned it to Gérard’s “earliest youth.”49 The scene corresponds to Seutonius’ description of Caesar’s funeral, the day after a group of sixty conspirators assassinated him on 15 March 44 BCE.50 Caesar’s funeral took place in the Campus Martius, near the tomb of his daughter Julia, and according to Seutonius, “before the Rostra was placed a gilded tabernacle,. . .within which was an ivory bed, covered with purple and cloth of gold.”51 As instructed, the Roman people brought their funeral offerings to the Campus Martius, and Gérard included examples of these trophies, vases, statues, and the like at the foot of the bed.52 After the consul Antony spoke, several magistrates began to carry Caesar’s body to the Forum, when “on a sudden, two men, with swords by their sides, and spears in their hands, set fire to the bier with lighted torches.”53 Seutonius concludes his account by describing the throng

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48 These illustrations are the subject of Chapter Two.
49 The drawing is mentioned in Henri Gérard’s *Oeuvres*, vol.3, unpaginated, under “compositions dessinées” and dates to the “la première jeunesse de Gérard.”
51 Ibid., 53.
52 Ibid. “It being considered that the whole day would not suffice for carrying the funeral oblations in solemn procession before the corpse, directions were given for every one, without regard to order, to carry them from the city into the Campus Martius, by what way they pleased.”
53 Ibid.
around the bier, heaping everything that came to hand upon the body and into the flames.54

Gérard did not depict the actual burning of Caesar’s corpse, but elements of his drawing correspond to both the moments just before and immediately after the fire. To the right of the center of the composition, Gérard depicted the group of magistrates removing the body from the tabernacle. Opposite the scene, a group of men rush towards the body carrying what look to be wooden objects, possibly those that were thrown on the burning body. In addition, Gérard scattered men with swords or brandishing torches throughout the composition. Finally, in almost the center of the foreground, Gérard included a heap of cast off weapons, armor, cloth, and what appear to be broken pieces of lumber. Gérard captured the chaotic and gruesome atmosphere of the funeral as described by Seutonius, without resorting to showing Caesar’s body actually burning. Instead, he incorporated different moments of the story into a crowded composition, overflowing with a multitude of figures, details, and incidents. These aspects of the drawing make it stand out stylistically from his other compositions discussed thus far. Here it seems as if Gérard experimented by creating a composition that incorporates more diagonal movement than his later, emphatically planar compositions. His figures are not relegated to a frieze-like arrangement across the

54 Ibid., 53-54. “The throng around immediately heaped upon it dry faggots, the tribunals and benches of the adjoining courts, and whatever else came to hand.” Seutonius continues to describe how the musicians and actors present stripped off their costumes, the legionnaires removed their armor, and women present took off their jewelry and all were thrown onto the fire.
foreground of the composition, as in his Joseph (fig. 17); instead, he included one group rushing towards Caesar in a great diagonal push. This is in turn balanced by the other major group that forms a horizontal charge across the center of the composition. Beyond these two main groups, other smaller clusters of figures appear in the foreground and before the funeral bed.

This drawing represents an early stylistic departure for Gérard and his engagement with one of the key motifs of classicism from the mid-eighteenth century onward – a deathbed scene including mourners. What remains unclear is whether or not Gérard intended his drawing as a commentary on the Revolution. Given that artists at this time frequently used classical history as a means to comment upon current events, it is tempting to find a link between this image of an assassinated ruler and specific political figures in the Revolution. The assassination of Caesar might call to mind the politically-motivated assassinations of Lepeletier de Saint-Fargeau and Jean-Paul Marat, the first two martyrs of the radicalized Revolution. The threat of Caesarism was a constant refrain during the Directory until Bonaparte realized those fears by making himself a dictator, subject to many assassination attempts during his rule. If we accept Henri Gérard’s assignment of the drawing to the artist’s early career, perhaps Gérard

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55 For a discussion of this motif as it was explored by a variety of artists throughout Europe, see Robert Rosenblum, *Transformations in Late Eighteenth Century Art* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1967), esp. 28-39 and 50-106.

56 For a discussion of Caesarism in relation to the French Revolution, and Napoleon I in particular, see: Peter Baehr and Melvin Richter, eds., *Dictatorship in History and Theory: Bonapartism, Caesarism, and Totalitarianism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004) and Philip Thody, *French Caesarism from Napoleon I to Charles de*
explored this subject because he saw a connection between the atmosphere of Rome at the time of Caesar’s death and that of France in the early years of the Revolution. From as early as 59 BCE when Caesar secured his first consulship, his enemies conspired against him. The relationship between Caesar and the senate escalated to a fever pitch in February 44 BCE when Cesar appointed himself perpetual dictator and stripped the senate of its power. Of course, within a month a group of these senators assassinated Caesar. This state of affairs in ancient Rome corresponds on some level with the Revolutionaries’ power struggle with Louis XVI from the convening of the Estates General at Versailles on 5 May 1789 until the abolition of the monarchy on 21 September 1792. Speculations concerning the drawing’s possible political metaphors are intriguing. However, it is unknown whether or not Gérard intended the subject to serve as such, and the drawing does not have a specific date, which further complicates any interpretation of the work’s possible political meaning.

In another drawing based on Roman history that dates to this period, Tullia fleeing her palace, prosecuted everywhere when she passed by the people, who made thousands of charges against her, Gérard drew a more overt parallel between a figure from Roman Imperial history and a member of the French monarchy. Although Gérard’s drawing is now lost,

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57 For a modern analysis of the central sources on Caesar’s life and career, see Michael Grant, *The Twelve Caesars* (New York: Scribner’s Sons, 1975), 29-51.

58 If Gérard’s drawing dates to 1789-1792, he could not have known that the eventual fate of Louis XVI would also resemble that which ultimately befell Caesar. Nor could Gérard have guessed that the men who brought about the beheading of the king would find the same fate as Caesar’s assassins.
we can glean something of its appearance and intended meaning from a letter written by the sculptor Robert-Guillaume Dardel to Gérard in January 1791. In Dardel’s opinion, Gérard’s subject matter is:

very analogous with present circumstances; but there are many difficulties to overcome; because it is necessary not only to give a clear idea of the revolution that takes place in the same moment, but moreover justifies the hatred of the Roman people for this hateful woman. . .The character of Tullia relates so much to that of the woman to whom you wish to make a resemblance, that I believe the physical resemblance is absolutely unnecessary.

“The woman to whom you wish to make a resemblance” could be none other than Marie Antoinette and the only relevant Tullia is Tullia Minor, the younger daughter of pre-Republican Rome’s sixth king Servius Tullius (r. 578-535 BCE). Servius Tullius arranged for his two daughters, Tullia Major and Minor, to marry the sons of the fifth king of Rome, Lucius Tarquinius Priscus (r.616-579 BCE). Tullia Minor, however, quickly grew impatient with her husband’s lack of ambition and unwillingness to listen to her

59 Gérard, *Lettres* . . ., 28-29. The letter is dated 23 January 1791 which means the drawing should be dated to late 1790 or early 1791. It should be noted that Henri Gérard does not list this work in his *Oeuvres*.

60 Ibid., 29. “. . .très analogue aux circonstances présentes; mais il y a de grandes difficultés à vaincre; car il faut non seulement donner une idée nette de la révolution qui s’opère dans le même instant, mais encore motiver la haine du peuple romain pour cette détestable femme. . .Le caractère de Tullia a tant de rapports à celui de la femme à laquelle vous vouliez faire ressembler, que je crois la ressemblance physique absolument inutile.”

61 Phillipe Bordes interprets Dardel’s words as being only a slightly veiled reference to the queen, however he does not discuss the idea that Tullia Minor is the Tullia depicted. See, *Le Serment du Jeu de Paume de Jacques-Louis David: Le peintre, son milieu et son temps de 1789 á 1792* (Paris: Réunion des Musées Nationaux, 1983), 98, fn.73. There are three prominent women in Roman history named Tullia, including Tullia Major (our Tullia’s older sister) and the Tullia who was the daughter of Marcus Tullius Cicero (106-43 BCE). The histories of these two women’s lives, however, do not make
advice. She conspired with her driven and equally conniving brother-in-law to kill her husband and her sister; soon after the murders, Tullia married her co-conspirator. Tullia’s bloodlust and desire for political power did not, however, end there. She convinced her new husband, Lucius, to kill her father in order to take the throne and went so far as to order her charioteer to drive over her father’s bloody body in a demented public display of loyalty to her husband. Tullia and Lucius then reigned as the last king and queen of pre-Republican Rome (r. 534-510 BCE).

The specific moment Gérard depicted most plausibly dates to 510 BCE, at the end of Tullia’s reign when a group of dissidents led by Lucius Junius Brutus drove Tullia and Lucius from the throne and forced the royals to flee their Roman palace; the dethroned king and queen spent the remainder of their lives in exile. Since Dardel’s letter dates the drawing to January 1791, Gérard could have intended his image of Tullia forced from her palace as a metaphor for the October Days of 1789, when a mob of working-class Parisians, largely women, stormed Versailles in outrage over the chronic shortage of grain and inflated price for bread. The mob demanded the royal family vacate Versailles and return to the Tuileries in Paris. The October Days was also the first Revolutionary event to reflect the public’s hatred of Marie Antoinette; in fact, the National Assembly’s official investigation of the event, as well as the more radical press accounts, reveal at least some members of the French mob intended to murder the queen

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if given the chance. It is unclear if Gérard intended his drawing to refer specifically to this attack on Marie-Antoinette. Gérard might simply have chosen Tullia as a surrogate for Marie-Antoinette on a general level; the subjects of both queens deemed them monstrous, too politically powerful, and driven to fulfill their selfish desires at any cost. In Livy’s history, Tullia Minor is presented “as a transgressive woman and an exemplum of evil . . . a royal whose unbounded ferocitas and audacitas branded her as an infamous example of womanhood.” Livy described Tullia from the time of her first marriage and throughout her reign as “ferou, depicting her as even more vicious than her

63 Ibid. Lucius died in 495 BCE, but the date of Tullia’s death is unknown.
64 Nancy Baker, “‘Let them eat cake’: the Mythical Marie-Antoinette and the French Revolution,” Historian 155 #4 (Summer 1993): 712. Baker also describes how the attacks against the queen quickened in the summer of 1789 after The Fall of the Bastille. At this time, “Rumors ran that she [Marie-Antoinette] was sending millions to her brother Joseph to bring an Austrian army to France to use against the people. By September radical journalist Camille Desmoulins was heard in gardens of the Palais Royal urging the Parisians to seize Marie Antoinette and bring the king to Paris lest the Austrians make war on France. Aware of the growing peril, Saint Priest, the minister of war, ordered the Flanders regiment to Versailles. As it turned out, the summons precipitated the very event it was designed to prevent.” In the official investigation of The October Days, “witnesses testified that they had heard the people threaten the queen. Some of the women wanted to seize her and shut her up in a convent. Most wished to murder her outright and parade parts of her body as trophies. ‘Kill! Kill! We want to cut off her head, cut out her heart, and fry her liver,’ they cried. ‘There she is, the filthy whore!’ exclaimed one woman. ‘We don't want her body, what we want is to carry her head to Paris.’”
65 Gérard was not the only one to draw analogies between Marie-Antoinette and wicked women of the past, classical and otherwise, with Marie-Antoinette always worse than her predecessors. After The Fall of Bastille, pamphleteers compared her to Messalina, Agrippina, Catherine de Medici, and Fredegund, see Baker, 215. After Marie-Antoinette was guillotined on 16 October 1793, multiple references in the press can be found to Marie-Antoinette as worse than Jezabel, Agrippina, and other notorious women, see Baker, 729.
66 Ann R. Raia, Cecelia Luschnig, and Judith Lynn Sebesta, Worlds of Roman
husband, who is often cited as a model of depravitas. In Tullia Livy offers a shocking portrayal of familial and civic impietas that ends in her family’s exile.” Livy’s characterization of Tullia resonates with the attacks on Marie-Antoinette that began shortly after she became queen, first at court and then quickly spreading to the popular press. During the Ancien Régime, the standard repertoire of charges against the queen included her foreign status, hatred of the French, extravagant spending, manipulation of Louis XVI, and constant indulgence in licentious acts with multiple lovers. The accusations against Marie-Antoinette only intensified after 1789, when the pamphleteers benefited from the breakdown of royal censorship; from this point until the end of her life, writers painted a portrait of Marie-Antoinette not unlike Livy’s characterization of Tullia Minor. They even went as far as to render the French queen as less than human, with supernatural powers capable of reducing the country to ruins. It is easy to see how Gérard could draw an analogy between Marie-Antoinette and her Roman predecessor, even if Marie-Antoinette was not accused of the same level of depravity as Tullia.

While Gérard executed his drawing of Tullia as a means to comment upon the French monarchy, the work remained a private exercise. The work he chose to present to the public at the Salon of 1791 entitled, Roman Charity, may refer to Roman history but

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67 Ibid., 115.

68 Baker discusses how Marie-Antoinette was often described as “a wild beast of rapacious appetites – a panther, hyena, or tigress who fed on the French people. At other times, classical mythology was invoked to represent her as a harpy. . .By 1793, she had
does so only in the most general and anodyne way; this work contains none of the potentially dangerous or factional political subtext of the previous two drawings.

In September of 1790, David along with other anti-Academy colleagues formed their own group, calling themselves the Commune des Arts. Comprised of nearly 300 members (many also Academy members), the Commune petitioned the Academy to open the Salon of 1791 to all artists. When the Salon opened on 8 September, it included three times the number of paintings exhibited in 1789, and David dominated the exhibition with his six entries.69

Gérard was one of the artists who signed the Commune’s petition, no doubt hoping for the opportunity to exhibit and win a prix d’encouragement.70 Yet, he had few completed paintings and sent only his Roman Charity (fig. 25), known today through an 1857 engraving by Carrey after the drawn version of the subject.71

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70 Marc Fury-Raynaud, Procès-Verbaux des Assemblées du Jury élu par les artistes exposant au Salon de 1791 pour la distribution des prix d’encouragement, publié d’après le manuscrit original (Paris: Jean Schemit, 1906), 105-106. This is a collection of documents related to the Salon of 1791 and includes letters and petitions by various artists, some including Gérard’s signature. Along with being open to all artists, the Salon of 1791 inaugurated another new feature. To encourage progress in the arts, a jury was selected by the exhibiting artists to award commissions based upon the merits of their works shown that year.

71 There seems to have been both a painted and a drawn version of this composition. In his Œuvres...vol.3, Henri Gérard includes this engraving under the section “Compositions dessinées,” #1, unpaginated. In the text, the drawing is dated, along with Le Mort de César, to “la premiere jeunesse de Gérard,” however, the line become the daughter of Satan...”, 216.
The theme of Roman charity is common in the history of European art, but Gérard’s treatment of it is rather unique. The majority of paintings of this subject from the fifteenth to the eighteenth century depict a woman breast-feeding an elderly man in a prison cell, based on Valerius Maximus’ story of Cimon and Pero. Gérard’s scene, in contrast, looks like an uncomfortable amalgamation of a neo-classical composition and subject with Greuzian overtones of domestic morality. In a humble interior that is only vaguely Roman, we see a woman to the far right seated at a table, working in earnest at her sewing with a basket of yarn visible on the table just behind her; before her, an older woman, heavily draped, stands clasping her hands, acknowledging the elderly man at the door. Between these two aged figures a young boy kneels while pouring water into a basin on the floor and another hands something to the visitor. Although the exact object being exchanged is unclear in the engraving, this clearly represents the act of charity that is the painting’s subject. The other figure present, the man kneeling and using a compass in the left foreground, does not seem to relate to the rest of the scene. He is an odd inclusion, and there appears to be no clear reason for his presence, let alone his under the engraving gives the drawing the precise date of 1788. The painting of the subject was included in the Salon of 1791 and is listed in the livret as number 111 under “Tableaux”. Unfortunately, the present location of either work is not known.

72 In his Memorable Acts and Sayings of the Ancient Romans (written during the reign of Tiberus, 14-37 C.E.), Maximus tells the story of the aged Roman father Cimon, starving in prison awaiting his execution. One evening, his daughter Pero snuck into her father’s cell to suckle him at her own breast. Her act of devotion to her father despite the risk ultimately won her father’s release. Many artists have treated this theme, but perhaps the best know paintings are those by Rubens. For a discussion of these works and the story of Maximus, see: Elizabeth McGrath, Rubens: Subjects from History (London: Harvey Miller Publishers, 1997), esp. p101, n 4. It should be noted that Greuze also
activity. Whatever Gérard intended with his figure, no critics mentioned it or its possible references in their reviews.

Stylistically, Gérard’s composition reveals a continued reliance on the formal aspects of David’s *Horatii* (fig. 8) generally and *Brutus* (fig. 13) specifically. Working with the vocabulary of early, severe Davidian neo-classicism, Gérard limited the number of anecdotal details (not to the extent of the *Horatii*), incorporated tiles on the floor to reinforce the orthogonals of the perspective system, included a bright, somewhat raking light source stemming from the left, and employed a gendered composition. Gérard appears to have been inspired more directly here by the *Brutus*. Gérard placed his female figures in the more private or domestic space of the home near a cupboard, table, and sewing basket; this section recalls the elements to the right in David’s *Brutus*. While David used a Doric column and drapery to frame the feminine sphere, Gérard incorporated similar elements with the strong post and small draperies over the cupboard doors, behind the elder female. To the right of David’s *Brutus*, the strong light from outside highlights the bodies of Brutus’ dead sons, while Brutus sits in the shadows grieving over his decisions. Gérard vaguely emulated this half of the *Brutus* as well, by incorporating the open door that highlights the act of public charity between a man and 

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73 It is difficult to see this figure and not be reminded of Raphael’s depiction of Euclid in his *School of Athens* (1509-1511, fig. 25). In some respects, Gérard’s figure looks more akin to an amalgamation of Raphael’s rendering of both Euclid and Heraclitus (who has the features of Michelangelo). It is not certain if Gérard was referring to the Renaissance master’s great fresco, but we do know he greatly admired Raphael and critics often noted his influence on Gérard’s works, especially some of his female
boy. Gérard’s kneeling male figure is not truly in the shadows, but the fact that he is isolated and contemplative does recall the figure of Brutus in David’s work. While the subject and tone of David’s Brutus and Gérard’s Roman Charity share little in common, formally Gérard’s composition continues to reveal the influence of his master’s style.

Judging from the surviving critical press about the Salon of 1791, Roman Charity did not make much of an impression. The majority of critics wrote nothing about the painting. The four who did either gave it mixed reviews or despised it. Two of the critics focused on Gérard’s choice of subject, commenting indirectly upon the recent vogue for scenes of classical charity. The critic Pithou wrote, “Charity is so touching! But this word is harsh; whereas those such as kindness, humanity, [and] benevolence, enchant me.”74 The tone of this critique is somewhat enigmatic, making it difficult to state for certain whether Pithou felt Gérard’s efforts were merely touching, or if he indeed found the work truly “enchanted” and his scene full of “goodness, humanity, and charity.” Pithou’s criticism could also be a veiled objection to the idea of charity as an ancien régime concept, or perhaps even a rejection of the sentimentality of the theme in Gérard’s hands. The second review of Gérard’s subject appears in a brief, satirical pamphlet. Its anonymous author proclaims to have found a found a Greek manuscript at the Salon that contains a conversation between two Salon viewers, and he presents his translation of it. The commentary on Gérard’s painting consists of one short line:

“Gérard.  Ah what! You are ignoring it? The work is very public.” The statement implies that one of the two Greek viewers was simply going to pass by Gérard’s canvas without acknowledging what the other viewer finds to be a very “public” or timely subject matter that resonated with the Salon audience. The writer might also be referring to the thematic similarity of Gérard’s subject to another scene of Roman charity popular at the Salon of 1791—the generosity of Roman women taken from Plutarch’s life of Marcus Furius Camillus. In this story, patriotic Roman women donated their jewels to the state in order to pay for a large golden urn Camillus promised to dedicate to Apollo in return for the god’s aid in his victory over the Etruscans of Veii. Like many Roman themes depicted throughout the Revolution, the story was chosen due to its resonance with contemporary events. A group of artists’ wives and daughters dressed in white gowns à l’antique went to the National Assembly on 7 September 1789 in order to offer their jewels to the state. On the one hand, Gérard’s choice of a theme of self-sacrifice was in keeping with the repeated use of scenes from antiquity as models for contemporary virtue and patriotism and was exhibited at a time when each French citizen was being called upon to make sacrifices for la patrie. On the other hand, the sacrifice in Gérard’s scene is almost anecdotal. While Roman Charity may represent his


76 Béraud, et.al., p.39. Both Brenet and Gauffier, among others, exhibited versions of The Generosity of Roman Women at the Salon.

77 Bronwyn T. Maloney, catalogue entry in 1789. . .,212. The subject was a popular
desire to engage in a classical subject with contemporary relevance and may be a significant departure from the traditional representations of the theme, it remained a safe, conservative choice. This aspect of the painting may have led to the vehemently negative reaction to it by Philippe Chéry, a Jacobin and student of Vien who also exhibited in the Salon. Given the rivalry between Vien and David (and often between their students), it comes as no surprise that Chéry critiqued the work most harshly probably due to its fidelity to David’s early style. Chéry described *Roman Charity* as: “A horrible painting by M. Gérard. A painting badly drawn, badly painted, bad. He should blush with shame for exposing the eyes of the public to such things.”

The only other critic who addressed the painting seemed to find the footstool used by the woman seated at the table to be as interesting as the figure of the woman herself. Despite Gérard’s attempt to depict a subject in concordance with the current climate and to emulate his master’ successful compositions, clearly his first Salon entry did not make a splash.

In fact, since returning to Paris from Rome, he had not met with much success. By

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all accounts, the period from early 1791 through 1793 was not a bright one for Gérard. Delécluze described his situation at this time: “Poor and pressed to make the best of his talent, Gérard was forced to surrender himself to the support that was so necessary for him; he strove with uncommon courage against poverty, and redoubled his efforts to improve himself in Paris, where he spent some terrible years.”

The “support” Delécluze referred to was most likely the Virgil illustrations, which Gérard continued to work on, and were his sole income throughout these years. In December 1792, David described Gérard as “farouche” – irascible and unsociable – in a letter where the master lamented that his circle was scattered (Girodet was still in Italy) with the exception of Gérard who remained in the studio. David’s comment may simply be an example of his playing one student off another, but Gérard’s personal and financial burdens, combined with his frustrated performance as a history painter in his own right, could have made anyone disagreeable. The escalation of the Revolution and the charged atmosphere of Paris only made the daily struggles of life worse. The Revolution was at a fever-pitch during 1792. The Jacobins emerged triumphant on 22 September with the formation of the National Convention. At their first meeting, they abolished the monarchy and declared the new Republic. In December, the trial of Louis XVI before the

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80 Delécluze, p.274. “Pauvre et pressé de tirer parti de son talent, Gérard fut obligé de renoncer à un encouragement qui lui était si nécessaire; il lutta avec un rare courage contre la pauverté, et redoubla d’efforts pour se perfectionner à Paris, où il passa alors quelques mauvaises années.”

Convention began, and on 22 January 1793, Louis was guillotined. At roughly the same time, Gérard suffered yet another personal tragedy with the death of his mother, a woman Girodet described as “the best woman in the world.”

He would not, however, have long to grieve. David enlisted Gérard, presumably the best of his remaining students, to help complete the first of his Revolutionary martyr portraits, *The Death of Lepeletier de Saint-Fargeau* (fig. 26). Lepeletier was a deputy to the Convention from the Yonne department. On 20 January 1793 as he dined in a restaurant of the Palais-Royal, a Royalist soldier named Pâris attacked him with a knife, because Lepeletier had voted for the death of the king. The injured deputy took some time to die.

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82 Letter from Girodet to Trioson, June 1791, quoted in Delécluze, p.274. “La mere est la meilleure femme du monde. . .”

83 The unusual provenance of the painting after it was removed from the hall of the National Convention during the Thermidorean Reaction has been well documented. The original painting no longer exists and is thought to have been burnt in 1829. What survives as a record of the original is a badly damaged proof of the engraving by Tardieu, as well as Devosge’s drawing for the engraving. For a discussion of the history of the painting’s provenance, see J. Baticle, “La seconde mort de Le Peletier de Saint-Fargeau. Recherches sur le sort du tableau de David,” *Bulletin de la Société de l’Histoire de l’Art français* année 1988 (1988): 131-145. The *Lepeletier* is very significant in the history of David’s *oeuvre*, but it will only be discussed here in terms of Gérard’s contribution, which was comparatively small. David appears to have entirely controlled both the iconography and the composition of this work and essentially only employed Gérard to complete the actual painting, except for the head. For more complete discussions of the work’s significance in relation to David’s career and politics, see: Anita Brookner, *Jacques-Louis David* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1980) 110-112; Crow, *Emulation*. .156-159; Donna Hunter, “Swordplay: Jacques-Louis David’s Painting of Le Peletier de Saint-Fargeau on his Deathbed,” in *Representing the French Revolution*, ed. J. Heffernan (Hanover and London: University Press of New England, 1991), 169-191; and, Robert Simon, “David’s Martyr-Portrait of Le Peletier de Saint-Fargeau and the Conundrums of Revolutionary Representation,” *Art History* 14 (December 1991): 459-487.
from his wound, after being carried to his brother’s house in the Place Vendôme. The radicalized Revolution had its first martyr, and David staged an elaborate funeral for him. The entire event took place on a pedestal that had once supported a statue of Louis XV in the center of the Place Vendôme. For this event, David arranged the toga-wrapped corpse on an antique couch, propping the body up to lean forward and lowering the toga to expose the fatal wound. An elaborately orchestrated ceremony and funeral was held, and the event was an outstanding success with the Parisian public. We could think of David as literally having arranged the model for his composition, since he is reported to have placed his easel at the foot of the pedestal, which held the body in order to make his sketches. In his drawing after the painting, Devosge depicted Lepeletier’s lifeless body arranged on the couch just as it was for the ceremony. The sword that brought his death has become the sword of Damocles and pierces Lepeletier’s ballot voting for the king’s death.

Just two months after the elaborate ceremony David presented his heroic painting as a gift to the National Convention on 29 March 1793. The swift completion of the work was heroic in itself, given the fact that it was a completely finished, life-size portrait. By all accounts, David designed the entire composition but only painted the head of Lepeletier, and Gérard completed the remainder of the figure’s body and accessories.

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84 Details of the incident taken from Brookner, 110 and Simon, 459-463.
85 Simon, 464.
86 As Crow rightly asserts (*Emulation...*, fn. 55, p.324), this is something which cannot be confirmed since the painting now longer exists. In general, however, Gérard’s work on the final painting is accepted. Coupin (29 and 63) wrote that it was obvious
As Gérard’s worked on the \textit{Lepeletier} and the Didot commissions, the Salon was fast approaching. When it opened on 10 August 1793, it was once again open to all artists. Technically, the old distinctions between academic and non-academic artists no longer existed. Just two days prior to the opening, the National Convention issued a decree abolishing all academies. Still lacking a suitable painting to exhibit, Gérard chose his unfinished canvas for the Rome prize competition of 1790, \textit{The Judgment of the Chaste Suzanne by the Prophet Daniel} (fig. 21).  

Gérard illustrated a story from the apocryphal book of Susanna, the beautiful and wrongly accused wife of Joakim. Once again he constructed a composition that incorporates elements from different moments in the story, this time details from both the climax and the resolution of Susanna’s tale. Her troubles began when the lustful Elders, who snuck into her garden to watch her bathe, made their presence known and from the surface handling that Gérard had completed the entire body of the figure, and Delécluze repeats this assertion (150). In his article, Simon discusses a review by August Jal, a noted critic during the Restoration, who makes the same claim stating that Gérard’s participation in the finished painting was confirmed by a close intimate of David. See Auguste Jal, \textit{Esquisses, croquis, pochades, ou tout ce qu’on voudra sur le Salon de 1827} (Paris: 1828), 385, quoted in Simon, 470-471.

Despite the fact that David had encouraged Gérard’s participation in previous paintings, it is still surprising that the master would have given over the majority, not just a section, of the important canvas to a student. David’s reasons for doing so are simply not known, but it might simply due to a lack of time. Simon relates and discusses the implications of Jal’s dubious anecdote about David being unable to paint a noble’s body (Lepeletier was an aristocrat turned staunch supporter of the Revolution) and therefore assigning the task to Gérard, see 471-473.

\textsuperscript{87} The location of the original painting remained unknown for decades before it appeared in a Christie’s New York auction on 6 April 2006. It is now in a private collection. A squared and highly finished drawing of the composition is in the Musée du Louvre, Paris.
demanded that she consent to their licentious desires. If Susanna refused, they would lie and say they witnessed her with a young man who was not her husband. Susanna kept her resolve and refused their advances, choosing instead to be falsely accused. Gérard’s scene takes place the next day, in the courtyard of Joakim’s home, where we see Susanna near the center of the composition, forced to remove her veil and looking towards heaven, signaling her trust in God. Gérard followed the text in depicting the graceful figure and upward gaze of Susanna, as well as including her parents and children who accompanied her to the judgment. The moment after the Elders found Susanna guilty of the charges, God sent the spirit of the prophet Daniel to save her. Daniel appears to the left of her on the stairs and raises his arm in a protective gesture. When he appeared, he demanded the villainous Elders be separated and questioned. Each Elder was asked where in the garden he had seen her with the young man, and each replied under a different tree; at this moment, their plot was exposed and the two were sentenced to death. True to the story, Gérard portrayed the Elders as divided from one another as possible, on opposite sides of the composition. Gérard’s depiction of these figures is truly masterful, because with them, he was able to allude to both the beginning and the end of their downfall. After Daniel demanded that the two be separated, they were then brought individually to him for questioning. The Elder on the right of Gérard’s composition edging up the stairs in front of Daniel wears an expression that conveys his trepidation and fear of being exposed. His partner in crime on the opposite side of the canvas represents the moment after Daniel denounced the pair when guards led them to
their deaths. The guards quite forcefully take him away from Daniel, down the stairs, pulling at the Elder’s toga with a clenched hand and straining arm muscles. The composition is a successful one, and makes us wonder if Gérard could have secured the Rome Prize with it if his work had not been interrupted. This painting received much better reviews than his Roman Charity (fig. 25) had in 1791. Given the scant criticism available, however, it is difficult to claim any great triumph for Gérard.

During the run of the Salon, tensions were mounting throughout Paris and only escalated after Robespierre was elected President of the Convention on 22 August. Within one month of his tenure, he put the Law of Suspects into effect and the Reign of Terror began. In the midst of such political turmoil, it is not surprising that the press included very few critiques of the Salon. The two surviving commentaries on Gérard’s painting contain similar praise. One critic tells us he found himself unable to pass by Gérard’s history painting in silence, finding the painting “well-composed and well-lit with the faces of the Elders full of expression. . .the work reveals a talent that should be encouraged.88 Another critic shared this judgment of Gérard’s work being well designed and also delighted in the expressive countenances of the Elders. He went on to note that the work was “well painted with vigorous coloring which expresses the subject perfectly” and found the work’s “light used with such intelligence that it is easy to see

from a quick glance that Daniel is the principle figure.” While the reviews are limited, at the very least Gérard could take pride in the fact that a critic found his use of color to be praiseworthy, especially when his lack of ability in this area contributed to his defeat in the Rome Prize competition of 1789.

Not long after the Salon closed, Gérard completed his next major painting, between late 1793 and early 1794, again in association with a work by David. He prepared a copy of his master’s second martyr portrait, *Marat at his Last Breath* (figs. 27 and 28). Marat, a radical who edited his own populist newspaper, *L’Ami du Peuple*, was assassinated on 13 July 1793 by Charlotte Corday, a previously unknown Girondin sympathizer from Caen. Forced to work in his bath by a skin condition, the martyr appears as David last saw him on the night of his assassination (rather than as he appeared in the funeral ceremony also organized by the painter) in a spare composition with his characteristically scumbled background. In one hand, Marat holds the letter

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90 See footnote 41.

91 While it could be argued that Gérard made a significant contribution to the final appearance of the *Lepeletier*, his only role in conjunction with the *Marat* was to produce a copy after it. For this reason, the complex iconography of David’s second martyr portrait will only be briefly treated here. For more complete discussions of the painting, see Brookner, 112-116; T.J. Clark, “Painting in the Year Two,” *Representations* 37 (Summer 1994): 13-63; Crow, *Emulation...*, 162-169; and, Charles Saunier, “*Le Marat expirant de Louis David et ses copies,*” *Gazette des Beaux-Arts* v.10 ser.4 (July 1913): 24-31.

92 Brookner, 114.
that Corday planned to use in order to gain a meeting with the writer. Corday’s letter asks Marat for his help, and to convince us of his charity, David included another letter on the edge of the wooden box. This note, written by Marat himself, is addressed to a mother of five children whose husband died defending the Republic. It lies strategically beneath the money that he intends to send her. Marat, like Lepeletier, faces the viewer showing his wound, and the knife that inflicted it lies in the immediate foreground. David conceived his tribute to Marat as a pendant to his Lepeletier; the two were exhibited together in the Cour de Louvre (essentially David’s private section of the palace by this time) beginning on 24 Vendémiaire an II (16 October 1793). The portraits were subsequently presented to the National Convention for installation in its meeting hall on 24 Brumaire an II (14 November 1793).\(^9^3\) Shortly thereafter, David asked Gérard and Gioacchino Serangeli, an Italian national who had recently joined the studio, to make copies of the painting.\(^9^4\) While the two students worked on their individual copies, David also enlisted their help to complete two banners for the festival of the child-martyrs (now lost) that David was planning in conjunction with his final martyr portrait, The Death of Joseph Bara.\(^9^5\)

\(^9^3\) Clark, 15.

\(^9^4\) Saunier, 26. According to Saunier, the Gobelins tapestry manufacturer requested at least one of these copies in order to reproduce the painting. Serangeli’s version was sent to them. The patron of Gérard’s copy is unknown, and the work remained in David’s studio until his death when David’s son took possession of it. For the provenance of the painting from the time of David’s death until its arrival in the collection at Versailles, see Saunier, 28-29.

\(^9^5\) Crow, 178-179. The banners have since been lost.
The details in Gérard’s copy of the *Marat* do not significantly deviate from those in his master’s, save for David’s personal inscription on the wooden box and the legibility of the letter in Marat’s hand.96 While the style of the original and the copy are obviously similar, we can note some differences. For example, Gérard gives more finish to the background, instead of reproducing the scumbling of David’s work. In general, Gérard handled the transitions from light to dark much more abruptly than David. This is particularly apparent on Marat’s shoulder and arm, which have slumped over the side of the bath, and on the white drapery. Gérard’s contours appear overall to be much more precise and distinct from the finished background. David’s style is still best described as linear in his version, but the handling is a bit looser than his usual style both in the figure of Marat and in the sketchy background. With his copy, Gérard once again proved himself more than able to work within the framework of his master’s early, severe style.

Gérard’s ambition to master the vocabulary of early Davidian classicism, evident from his earliest surviving works (*Plague Scene* and his 1785 *académie*), earned him a prominent place in David’s studio where he remained, for the most part, from 1786 through most of 1794. David entrusted Gérard with significant portions of the *Paris and Helen*, the *Brutus*, and the *Lepeletier* and chose him to produce one of the copies of the *Marat* indicating a level of respect for Gérard’s technical skills. Many of Gérard’s works from the first decade of his career show evidence of his understanding of the complex

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96 T.J. Clark, “Painting in the Year Two,” *Representations* 37 (Summer 1994): 43-44.
themes at the core of Davidian painting and his penchant for planar compositions and linearity. Yet up to this point in his career, Gérard had failed to make a name for himself independent of his master. Of the three paintings he completed, his Joseph failed to win the Rome Prize in 1789 and critics mostly panned his Roman Charity at the Salon of 1791. Both works are consistent with Gérard’s early style, but dull coloring and compositional idiosyncrasies led to the failure of both. Critics responded more favorably to Gérard’s Suzanne at the Salon of 1793, but it did not attract a buyer or lead to a significant commission. No doubt the obligation to work on David’s canvases, the need for money, and the emotional strains caused by the death of his family members, deprived Gérard of the time required to create successful paintings of his own. Even if he had been able to devote himself to his painting more fully, the upheaval and collapse of the monarchy meant that the system of patronage in the arts enjoyed in various degrees under the ancien régime no longer existed in any form. Given this situation, it is no wonder that Gérard took the opportunity to work on Didot’s edition of Virgil as a means to support himself and his family.
Chapter 2:
Neo-Classicism, Politics, and Sexuality:
The Aeneid Illustrations of Gérard and Girodet

Gérard faced financial instability from the beginning of his career and his modest background rendered him extremely reliant upon patronage. His situation only worsened after 1790 when he became the sole supporter of his family.\textsuperscript{1} Securing commissions in France during the Revolution was no easy task given the precarious state of government finances and the disappearance of aristocratic patronage.\textsuperscript{2} Gérard was certainly not alone in his struggle; the competition for limited patronage affected all artists, wealthy or not. History painters, however, found it particularly difficult to pursue their chosen genre and were forced to seek out new or unconventional forms of support. David’s \textit{The Oath of the Tennis Court} (fig. 69) and his portraits of the Revolutionary martyrs Louis Michel Le Peletier de Saint-Fargeau (fig. 26), Jean-Paul Marat (fig. 27), and Joseph Bara demonstrate that even he relied on new patrons such as political clubs and new national legislative assemblies.\textsuperscript{3} Various Revolutionary

\textsuperscript{1} Gérard’s financial obligations and family problems are discussed throughout Chapter One. See especially pages 2, 11, and 24-26.

\textsuperscript{2} Antoine Schnapper, “French Painting during the Revolution, 1789-1799,” in \textit{French painting 1774-1830: The Age of Revolution} ex. cat. (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1975), 107. In addition, Schnapper mentions that Church commissions were becoming more and more scarce by as early as 1791.

\textsuperscript{3} See Chapter Three, 165-166 for a discussion of \textit{The Oath of the Tennis Court}. See Chapter One, pages 54-54 for a discussion of \textit{The Death of Lepeletier de St. Fargeau} and pages 58-60 for a discussion of \textit{Marat at his Last Breath}. David’s \textit{The Death of Joseph Bara} is not discussed in this dissertation. For an illustration and beginning discussion of this painting, see Thomas Crow, \textit{Emulation: Making Artists for Revolutionary France} (New Haven, Connecticut: Yale University Press, 1995), 102, 177-178, 185, 208, 211, plates 120, 125, 127.
governments attempted to support history painting, and in particular to encourage artists to paint the “great events” of the Revolution, through a series of competitions or concours. Yet these efforts to encourage paintings of contemporary events on a grand scale were riddled with all manner of problems stemming in large part from the constant struggle for power among the government’s various political factions. Time delays, the difficulty of choosing appropriate subject matter, and the problems faced by winners trying to get paid for their efforts are just three of the obstacles associated with these competitions. The majority of the new initiatives to support history painting, including David’s *Oath of the Tennis Court* and the winning entries to the concours, never reached completion.4

French Book Illustration During the Revolution

Given the tenuous nature of official patronage, many history painters who wished to pursue ambitious subject matter turned to the graphic arts and commercial publishing. Luxury book illustration, in particular, proved to be especially attractive both aesthetically and financially. This is not surprising given the rich history of the medium in France. Beginning as early as the second quarter of the sixteenth century, the country, and Paris in particular, was a leader in European luxury book illustration—a role that only solidified with the establishment of the *Imprimerie Royale* and the dépôt

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4 Gérard actually participated in and won the *concours de l’an II*, held from 1794 to 1795, although his composition was also never finished. This competition, Gérard’s entry, and its eventual fate are the subject of chapter three.
légal by Richelieu in 1638. Throughout the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries (and beyond), numerous well-known French painters, from Poussin and Le Brun to Boucher and Cochin practiced the art of designing book illustrations. The tradition of fine book publishing and illustration continued during the upheavals of the Revolution. Between 1793 and 1799, a select group of fifteen publishing houses, the largest and most active in Paris, remained relatively unscathed by market and political fluctuations. The house of Didot is one example. A former member of the Paris book guild (dissolved in 1791), the Didot house, which included several members of the family active in different

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6 Ibid., 113, 117, & 142-143. Poussin completed the frontispiece designs for official editions of the *Imitatio Christi* (1640), the *Bible* (1642), a Virgil (1641), and a Horace (1642). Le Brun designed the title page for an official edition of Ovid (1679). Both Boucher and Cochin the Younger created designs for numerous editions and different publishers.

7 Carla Hesse, *Publishing and Cultural Politics in Revolutionary Paris, 1789-1810* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991), 167-179. Hesse notes that overall book publishing declined dramatically with the outbreak of the Revolution in 1789 and did not recover until the beginning of the Directory. Despite this fact, she also found through an analysis of the records of the dépôt légal that 15 elite publishers escaped this fact and continued to publish luxury edition books. The dépôt légal collapsed in 1789, not to be instituted again until July 19, 1793. For this reason, book publishing records in the interim are difficult to reconstruct. The 15 publishing houses Hesse identifies each registered between 17 and 90 books between 1793 and 1799. Besides Didot, these houses are: Henri Agasse, Pierre Plassan, Louis Rondonneau, the Cercle Social, François Buisson, Honnert, Henri Jansen, Aubry, Pierre-Sebastien Leprieur, Mathieu Migneret, Claude-François Maradan, L. C. Huet, Pierre-Etienne Cholet, and Jean-Nicolas Barba.
aspects of the business, was one of the leading publishers and innovators in typography in France in the eighteenth century. Pierre Didot, the eldest son, focused his energy on maintaining the Old Regime tradition of fine arts printing and keeping elite literary culture alive during the Revolutionary period. In particular, he dedicated himself to publishing monumental folio editions of great works by French and classical authors. From 1793 to 1799, Pierre registered thirty-one volumes with the dépôt légal. He received numerous honors throughout his career, including being invited in 1797 to move into the rooms in the Louvre once occupied by the Imprimerie Royale. For this reason, the lavishly illustrated editions he published between 1797 and 1804 are often referred to as the Louvre editions. Didot limited the deluxe format of the Louvre editions to 250 copies and numbered and signed each himself. He employed a separate press to print the copperplate engravings for his books; a binder then sewed the sheets of each engraving into the books. For the designs of the illustrations, Didot employed a large number of artists (primarily history painters) in Paris working in diverse styles; in his own way, Didot “took on the role of intermediary between the painter and the public, generating a new force in the integration of art and society.”

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9 Ibid., 184-185 and Osborne, 26-30 and 50.
10 Didot published his editions in a variety of formats from the deluxe versions described above to lesser expensive ones. For details, see Osborne, 51-57.
11 Ibid., 6. A partial list of the artists who worked for Didot outside David and his
Despite the fact that so many painters engaged in illustration design for Didot (and rival publishers), scholars of the period have largely ignored this illustrative work and continued to focus on paintings. In general, they have failed to appreciate the importance of book illustration to the artists themselves for three interrelated reasons: a lingering prejudice to regard such work as insignificant exercises in a lesser medium; the view that illustrations are too closely tied to the function of complementing a text to be inventive or original; and, a belief that the goal of the artists was only to gain financial reward, making the work insignificant.\textsuperscript{12} There can be no doubt book illustration provided an income and helped alleviate the patronage issue during the Revolution. For example, Didot commissions provided the chief support for Gérard and also helped sustain Girodet throughout the 1790s.\textsuperscript{13} Yet the illustrative work was not motivated by finances alone; more significantly, it provided many artists, and especially several Davidians, with an important opportunity to pursue the subjects and styles of classicism at a time when large-scale paintings were often simply not possible.\textsuperscript{14}

In some respects, history painting and illustration are not altogether different

\footnotesize{closest students includes Fragonard, Moitte, Percier, Peyron, Prud’hon, Regnault, and Taunay.}


\textsuperscript{13} Osborne, 8.

\textsuperscript{14} Ibid., 142.
practices. Both are inextricably bound to text. While text literally and visually accompanies book illustration, text also dominates most history painting, which normally illustrated biblical, mythological, or classical historical narratives. If we compare book illustration to the tenets of classical history painting in particular, we find some striking similarities. Both require artists to select a moment in a story that implies previous and subsequent actions in the narrative. Both also require artists to limit the anecdotal details included in a scene, albeit in book illustration this limit is prescribed more often than not by format. Girodet recognized that the skills required to compose illustrations are very similar to those needed for history painting; looking back on his work for Didot, Girodet commented that only a history painter could succeed in these types of designs, and he wrote about how his work for Didot allowed him the means for visualizing compositions which would become the basis for large-scale paintings. In fact, several of the best known paintings of the Davidian school dating from the 1790s to

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15 For the following discussion of the similarities of book illustration and history painting, I was inspired by ideas I found in Stewart’s book, 7-13. His comments are more general, and he does not specifically discuss the relationship between book illustration and Neo-classical history painting in particular; however, I find this comparison to be particularly appropriate. For another discussion of the relationship between painting and illustration in general, see Wendy Steiner, Colors of Rhetoric: Problems in the Relationship between Modern Literature and Painting (Chicago, Illinois: University of Chicago Press, 1982), esp.148.

16 Quoted in Osborne, 42 n40 and 109, fn.50. “L’artiste qui réussit dans ce sortes de dessins ne peut-être qu’un peintre d’histoire.” On page 109, Osborne includes an extended quotation from one of Girodet’s letters in which this sentence appears and in which he elaborates on the relationship between the designing of illustrations and paintings. Osborne does not provide a date for this letter which she quotes from P.A. Coupin, ed. Oeuvres posthumes de Girodet-Trioson, peintre d’histoire, 2 vols., 1829, vol. 2, 343.
the first decade of the 1800s find their sources in the artists work for Didot.\textsuperscript{17} In studying the illustrative work of Girodet and Gérard, it seems clear that they considered designing illustrations an activity on a par with composing paintings. For these reasons, their illustrative work deserves to be treated as seriously now as it was then by the artists themselves.

The Illustrations for Didot’s Edition of Virgil’s \textit{Aeneid}: Introduction

As a great admirer of Davidian classicism, Didot employed David as director of the illustrations for three of his publications: the works of Racine, Horace, and Virgil. David divided the task of producing illustrations among his students, choosing Gérard and Girodet to work on two out of the three, including Virgil’s \textit{Eclogues, Georgics, and Aeneid}.\textsuperscript{18} This chapter focuses on the illustrations these two artists designed between

\textsuperscript{17} Both Osborne and Crow explore the connections between the \textit{Aeneid} illustrations and various canvases completed by David, Gérard, Girodet, and Ingres. For example, the frontispiece for the Didot edition of Virgil served as a source for Ingres’ \textit{Portrait of Napoleon I}, 1806 (Osborne, 245-246). Gérard’s illustration for the \textit{Aeneid}, Book II influenced David’s \textit{The Intervention of the Sabine Women}, 1799 (Osborne, 250-251), and Girodet’s, \textit{Scene from a Deluge}, 1806 (Crow, 255). Girodet’s illustration for Book III of the \textit{Aeneid} served as a source for his own \textit{Sleep of Endymion}, 1791 (Osborne, 252 and Crow 133); and Girodet’s illustration for Book VII of the \textit{Aeneid} may have served as a source for both his and Gérard’s Ossian paintings of 1801 and 1802, as well as David’s \textit{The Distribution of the Eagles} of 1810 (Osborne, 106, 254-55). In addition to the above pages, Osborne discusses several of these connections in Chapter 5, 84-112.

\textsuperscript{18} Osborne, 1, 26-27, & 245. Didot wanted to commission the drawings from David solely, but his commitments to other projects usually made him unavailable. In addition to his other commitments, David may have preferred to parcel the work to his students for any number of reasons. Gérard contributed a total of fifteen illustrations for the Racine (1801-1805) and sixteen illustrations for the Virgil (1798). Girodet contributed ten illustrations for the Racine and seven for the Virgil. Neither artist worked on the edition of Horace. In addition, Gérard worked for Didot on projects in which David was not involved, including an edition of La Fontaine’s \textit{Les Amours de...}
1790 and 1798 for Didot’s edition of Virgil’s *Aeneid*. For the most part, these illustrations have been overlooked; the only study of them as a group is Carol Osborne’s dissertation in which she states that the artists gave “a new connotation to Virgil’s epic of the founding of Rome. . . .Not surprisingly, David, Gérard, and Girodet had endowed it with Revolutionary overtones.” Osborne links the illustrations of Gérard and Girodet formally to David’s paintings and gives David as much credit as possible for the overall conception of the project and for the designs of individual engravings. For Osborne, the *Aeneid* illustrations were planned by David and Didot

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*Psyché et de Cupidon* (1797) and Longus’ *Les Amours pastorales de Daphnis et de Chloé* (1800). Gérard’s illustrations to La Fontaine are discussed in Chapter Four.

19 Ibid., 26-27 & 245. Osborne states that sometime before 1791 David agreed to give Didot twenty-seven illustrations for the all the works within the Virgil edition, and then he proposed to Didot that Gérard and Girodet work on the project with him. The end result of the collaboration included a total of twenty-three illustrations. Girodet designed the frontispiece of the entire volume and provided illustrations for the *Aeneid* Books I, III, V, VII, IX, and XI. Gérard contributed the illustrations for *Aeneid* Books II, IV, VI, VIII, X, and XII. Although Gérard’s illustrations for the *Eclogues* and *Georgics* will not be discussed here, it should be noted that he provided six illustrations for the *Eclogues* and four for the *Georgics*.

The dating of individual illustrations and volumes of any of Didot’s lavishly illustrated publications can be challenging to say the least since such multi-volume works took years to complete and usually appeared at various intervals in different editions. In her book *Publishing and Cultural Politics*, Carla Hesse (184) states that Didot registered his Virgil at the dépôt légal in 1793. In an electronic mail correspondence (24 May 2004), Dr. Hesse explained that in all likelihood Didot only registered a portion of the Virgil at this time. Osborne indicates (245) that Didot published the Virgil in three fascicles. The frontispiece and the *Eclogues* and *Georgics* were published in September, 1797, the first six books of the *Aeneid* in December 1797, and the last six books of the *Aeneid* in March, 1798. Bibliographic records which document only the date of the completed work indicate that the final, complete Virgil appeared in 1798.

20 Ibid., 89.
and merely executed by Gérard and Girodet.\textsuperscript{21}

This interpretation is problematic for two key reasons: determining the specific involvement of David in the production of the illustrations is difficult at best, and the illustrations themselves are far from unified in subject or style. We do know that both Gérard and Girodet were working on the illustrations by 1791 and submitted their drawings to David for approval and perhaps even corrections before they went to the engravers.\textsuperscript{22} Whether or not David produced illustrations on his own for the Virgil is not known.\textsuperscript{23} At any rate, when the final edition of the \textit{Aeneid} appeared in 1798, Gérard and Girodet received sole credit for the design of its engravings; David is only briefly mentioned in the publisher’s note to the volume.\textsuperscript{24} Most significantly, however, a

\textsuperscript{21} Following Osborne’s theory, Jobert perpetuates the importance of David’s role in the production of the engravings, emphasizing that David “served as the go-between, even when it came to Didot’s payments to Gérard and Girodet, and in fact it was David who managed the project artistically, maintaining his former pupils in distinct subordination in so far as they had to send him their compositions for correction and revision.” See, 152. Jobert does admit, however, that it is impossible to know completely from the surviving drawings what corrections David made or exactly the extent of his “hands on” involvement in the compositions. See, 153.

\textsuperscript{22} Osborne, 252. The evidence for this comes from a letter by Girodet to David dated January 18, 1791. At this date, both Gérard and Girodet were in Rome, and Girodet’s letter mentions three drawings by each artist for the Virgil edition being sent for David’s consideration. Thomas Crow supports this account and quotes the same letter as evidence of the working relationship between David and his students. See his \textit{Emulation}, 128.

\textsuperscript{23} Ibid., 245. The author found five existing proof states with David’s signature for the Virgil. She uses this information to state tentatively that David actually produced these illustrations independent from his students. Given that we know David authorized his pupil’s drawings, his signature may just as well connote his approval of their designs and not his specific authorship.

\textsuperscript{24} Ibid., 244. Didot mentions Gérard and Girodet as painters “who both share honors in the art of painting with their teacher David.” Didot makes no other remarks
careful reconsideration of the illustrations by Gérard and Girodet reveals that they responded quite differently to the task of illustrating the *Aeneid*, and the illustrations cannot be seen as a homogenous group. In them, we can see that already by the early 1790s classicism elicited diverse interests within David’s studio. The works provide clear evidence that these artists were developing in markedly different directions, both stylistically and in terms of the subject matter or themes they pursued, from the very beginning of their careers and took the commission as a serious opportunity to develop their artistic personalities. The divergence in their styles seen in their entries to the 1789 Rome prize competition (figs. 17 and 18) becomes even more apparent in their work on the Didot commission. The differences between the illustrations by the two artists include the themes they depicted, the way each rendered the figure of Aeneas, and their compositional sources.

Gérard and Girodet responded in various ways to the complexity and thematic richness of the *Aeneid*. Virgil’s epic poem is mysterious, full of enigmas and paradoxes, and challenges its interpreters. Most scholars, however, agree the *Aeneid* explores the relationship and tensions “between history, its heroic makers, and the suffering they experience or cause.” Adam Perry finds two voices throughout the poem: “a public

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25 For the discussion of their Rome prize entries and their stylistic differences, see Chapter One, 18-24.

26 Michael C.J. Putnam, *Virgil’s Aeneid: Interpretation and Influence* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1995), 68. The author discusses this theme throughout his text, see also 53, 57, 112-113, 159-160, 162, 164-165, 174, 185, & 193. This is also mentioned as one of the main themes of the poem by M. Owen Lee, *Fathers and*
voice that celebrates in Rome the finest human achievement of nature’s processes, and a private voice that regrets the cost of this in human lives.”27 To reinforce this main theme of the hero divided between public and private, Virgil wove a number of related “sub-themes” through his poem that show how Aeneas grappled with his duties as the founder of Rome. These sub-themes include divine intervention or prophecy, a latent eroticism, and the concept of pietas.28

The following sections explore how differently Girodet and Gérard treated each of these aspects of the narrative. Girodet consistently focused upon the private themes echoing through the Aeneid and more often than not chose to illustrate scenes in which Aeneas, the ostensible hero, is rendered passive or has lost his agency; in other words, Girodet shows Aeneas in private moments when he is idle rather than as the mighty warrior who prevails through his own actions. In some cases, Girodet’s images reveal a subtext in which the sexuality of the characters is explored in a way that is not seen in Gérard’s illustrations. According to Barthélémy Jobert, the Virgil project was not one through which Girodet “would emancipate himself from David’s control.”29

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27 “The Two Voices of Virgil’s Aeneid” in Virgil: A Collection of Critical Essays, ed. Steele Commager (Englewood, New Jersey: Prentice Hall, 1966), 111. The idea of Aeneas being divided and sensing the suffering caused by his public duty is also echoed in Lee, 19. Lee finds this one of the tragic levels of the poem.

28 For the purposes of discussing Gérard’s and Girodet’s illustrations, I will identify what I call sub-themes that I feel support the main theme that I have identified above. Each of these sub-themes is discussed by a variety of scholars, but it should also be noted that scholars have also identified a number of other sub-themes at work in Virgil’s epic. I have chosen to focus on only those most pertinent to the illustrations.

29 “Girodet and Printmaking,” 152.
analysis here, however, counters that assertion and will argue that Girodet rebelled against David using the *Aeneid* project to cultivate a radically different style and subject matter from that of his master. Rather than pursuing public Revolutionary themes, he developed a type of classicism that explores private, subjective states of mind and the latent homoeroticism of classical history painting. Gérard’s illustrations, in contrast, reveal a different interest in the public/private dynamic of the poem. On the one hand, Gérard concentrated upon the public themes of the epic, and throughout his illustrations we see more of a focus on the themes of heroic action, civic virtue, and public duty. On the other hand, it is clear that Gérard was also aware of, and interested in, exploring the private costs and suffering inflicted by Aeneas’ heroic and moral obligations. Unlike Girodet, Gérard took the commission as an opportunity to demonstrate his precocious ability to imitate David’s severe style. He chose to illustrate moments from the *Aeneid* which resonate with the themes found in David’s and his fellow students’ paintings from the first years of the Revolution and adapted compositional devices from those works in order to draw such parallels. To summarize Gérard’s and Girodet’s designs then as “endowed with Revolutionary overtones” denies the intricacy of the subjects the artists pursued and how each managed to express his own artistic sentiments within the parameters of the commission.

Before turning to the illustrations themselves, a brief summary of the main plot of the *Aeneid* is in order. Virgil tells the legendary account of the founding of Rome by Aeneas and his fellow Trojans. Defeated by the Greeks and exiled from their homeland
of Troy, Aeneas and the remnants of his family and people set out on a journey, wandering from shore to shore searching for their fated destination for seven years. Eventually, they land in Italy, where in order to establish dominance, they must fight the Rutulians, led by Turnus. The story is told through twelve books, and scholars have discussed the numerous ways in which Virgil organized and divided his epic. At a basic level, the poem is divided into two halves. In the first six books, Aeneas is primarily a passive hero, mostly subject to his destiny as it comes, moving from place to place, and ignorant of what lies ahead. The founding of Rome remains a distant dream. Book VI provides a transition when Aeneas’ father makes his son more fully aware of the repercussions of his fated, grand task. In the last six books, the dream gradually becomes a reality, and Aeneas is forced to adopt the role of active leader. Moving through difficult and dangerous tasks, Aeneas’ loses his innocence through the experience of war and mounting personal tragedies. At the end of Book XII, Aeneas slays Turnus, and the epic closes with this decisive act.\footnote{Most scholars seem to agree that the poem can be divided in half with significant differences between the first and last six books. Others speak of a tripartite division that links together books one through four, five through eight, and nine through twelve. Still others discuss the many divisions between individual books themselves. For discussions of the ways in which the poem can be divided, see: Putnam, 14, 45, & 80; and, Kenneth Quinn, \textit{Virgil’s Aeneid: A Critical Description} (Ann}

The Linking of Divine Intervention and Eroticism in Girodet’s \textit{Aeneid} Illustrations

From the very beginning of the \textit{Aeneid}, the gods play a central role in determining the course of Aeneas’ life. At the start of Book I, Juno’s anger towards

\footnote{Most scholars seem to agree that the poem can be divided in half with significant differences between the first and last six books. Others speak of a tripartite division that links together books one through four, five through eight, and nine through twelve. Still others discuss the many divisions between individual books themselves. For discussions of the ways in which the poem can be divided, see: Putnam, 14, 45, & 80; and, Kenneth Quinn, \textit{Virgil’s Aeneid: A Critical Description} (Ann}
Aeneas and his fellow Trojans sets the stage for a story threaded along a series of divine appearances and admonitions, as the hindrances, commands, advice, and sometimes practical assistance of various gods guide Aeneas to his destiny.\textsuperscript{31} The constant presence of such “divine machinery” in the poem, often determining its storyline, reflects Virgil’s belief that the affairs of this world are subject to the powers of another realm.\textsuperscript{32} Virgil also establishes in Book I “a strand of eroticism that runs carefully through the poem.”\textsuperscript{33}

Girodet’s was clearly attracted to these two aspects of Virgil’s \textit{Aeneid}, no doubt because of his own proclivity for such subject matter. Five out of six of his \textit{Aeneid} illustrations focus on the relationship between Aeneas and the gods; Gérard, on the other hand, only explicitly treated the subject of the gods twice in his six designs, and in one of these, he chose the one moment when Jupiter calls for a stop to all the gods’ meddling.\textsuperscript{34} The latent eroticism of the poem is everywhere in Girodet’s illustrations

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\textsuperscript{31} Putnam, 79-80, & 85. Putnam sees Juno’s anger as a driving force in the epic from beginning to end. Book I opens with Juno subjecting Aeneas and his fleet to a terrible storm after she helped to cause the burning of Troy.
\textsuperscript{32} W.F. Jackson Knight, introduction to his English prose translation of Virgil's \textit{Aeneid}, (Baltimore, Maryland: Penguin Books, 1966), 14. Knight discusses this aspect of Virgil’s poem as being central and discusses a passage in Book III of the \textit{Aeneid} where Virgil clearly espouses his belief in divine intervention. For the importance of “divine machinery” at work in the poem and an analysis of Virgil’s view of divine intervention, see also Lee, 23-29.
\textsuperscript{33} Putnam, 29. Putnam treats the theme of eroticism as one that ties the poem together from beginning to end in chapter two of his book, \textit{Possessiveness, Sexuality, and Heroism in the Aeneid}, pages 27-49.
\textsuperscript{34} Girodet’s only illustration that does not treat this theme is for Book XI, \textit{The Mourning of Pallas}. Gérard’s two illustrations are for Books VIII and X, and the latter
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and virtually non-existent, or suppressed, in those by Gérard. In the following sections, I will focus upon two instances where Girodet united these two themes, establishing how differently Girodet and Gérard rendered moments of divine intervention and exploring the different ways the two artists addressed the sexual themes of the poem.

When we first meet Aeneas in Book I, he is in the midst of a great storm at sea, sent by Juno to destroy the Trojan fleet. Eventually, Neptune takes pity on the Trojans and calms the waves and the winds, allowing Aeneas and seven of his ships to take refuge on the coast of Africa. It is here while exploring the land with his companion Achates that he comes across his mother Venus, disguised as a huntress, who instructs her son to make for Carthage where he will be received by queen Dido and reunited with his lost comrades. Unbeknownst to Aeneas, Jupiter reassured Venus that Dido would welcome Aeneas and the Trojans with open arms, since he has cast a spell on the queen to do exactly that. Venus cloaks her son and his companion in a dark cape of clouds and mist to protect them on their journey to Dido’s court. Aside from this one meeting with his mother, Aeneas is ignorant of the gods’ activities and has no knowledge of his mother’s intentions when he meets Dido. In Book I, and throughout most of the first six books of the Aeneid, Aeneas is often an agent of divine beings who does not have full control over the events that would transpire, and this is the focus of many of Girodet’s illustrations.

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show the council of the gods on Mount Olympus when Jupiter orders Juno and Venus
In his illustration for Book I, *Aeneas Before Dido* (fig. 29), Girodet captured both the divine meddling and the sexually charged undercurrent that quite literally go hand in hand in this book. He depicted the moment when Aeneas and Achates (visible just behind Aeneas’ left shoulder) emerge from the enveloping clouds and appear before the queen for the first time. Girodet included the magical clouds that only partially obscure Aeneas’ nude body as a reference to Venus’ protection; moreover, a latent allusion to Venus is also made in this scene, since we know that later in Book I Dido arranges a banquet for Aeneas and his companions during which Venus disguises Ascanius (Aeneas’ son) as Cupid in order to make Dido fall in love with Aeneas.

When Aeneas and Dido meet, Virgil provides us with the first physical description, and a rather sensual one at that, of the hero:

> And there Aeneas stood, glittering in that bright light, his face and shoulders like a god’s. Indeed his mother had breathed upon her son becoming hair, the glow of a young man, and in his eyes, glad handsomeness.\(^{35}\)

Girodet’s rendering of Aeneas seems to derive from the sensuality of Virgil’s words. Standing directly in front of Dido, the young Aeneas presents himself to her, and to the viewer. Girodet both conceals and reveals Aeneas’ muscular body with clouds and drapery. Girodet recreates the glowing and glittering of Virgil’s portrait by casting a bright light on the figure of Aeneas, who appears both young and god-like before the queen. The figure of Aeneas corresponds to a body type used in Davidian painting that to stop meddling in the affairs of Aeneas.

\(^{35}\) Allen Mandelbaum, *The Aeneid of Virgil: A Verse Translation*, (New York:
is not quite the ephebe, nor the warrior-hero; perhaps, Aeneas’ figure is closest to Paris in David’s *Paris and Helen* (1787, fig. 12). Both Paris and Aeneas share a similar physiognomy and are depicted wearing a Phrygian cap and a drapery slung over one shoulder. While Paris' genitals are obscured by drapery, those of Aeneas are only partially veiled by Venus' clouds. David's Paris would have been an appropriate model for Girodet, because the *Paris and Helen* depicts a hero who abandons himself to a sexual union instead of performing his civic duties, much like Aeneas with Dido. In Book IV of the *Aeneid*, Virgil describes how Aeneas and Dido fall in love and have an affair that lasts for an unspecified amount of time. Unlike Paris, however, Aeneas, returns to his civic duties, but only after Mercury reminds him of his greater mission to found Rome. As we shall see, it is significant that Girodet chose a source in David that has nothing to do with heroic action, public virtue, or any other value associated with Revolutionary propaganda – these themes are simply not a part of his vocabulary in the *Aeneid* illustrations.

Girodet’s next *Aeneid* illustration, this time for Book III, *Aeneas Dreams of the Household Gods* (fig. 30), focuses upon a moment when Aeneas receives a prophecy on his way to found Rome. This rendering of Aeneas is perhaps even more erotically charged. Towards the end of Book I, during Dido’s great banquet for Aeneas and the Trojans, she asks him to recount the series of events that brought him to her shores. Books II and III consist of a long flashback in which Aeneas tells of the burning of Troy,

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his escape, and his fleet’s six years of traveling throughout the Mediterranean searching for their fated destination. Girodet’s illustration for Book III, corresponds to Aeneas’ description of a vision he had during a night spent on Crete:

Night. Sleep held every living thing on earth. The sacred statues of the deities, the Phrygian household gods whom I had carried from Troy out of the fires of the city, as I lay sleeping seemed to stand before me. And they were plain to see in the broad light where the full moon flowed through windows in the walls.\(^{36}\)

In Girodet’s illustration, we see once again the partially draped figure of Aeneas, his sensual, muscular body turned towards the viewer, sleeping in a bed chamber that is infused with magical light and mysterious clouds. The household gods, who tell him that Crete is not his fated destination, appear in the right background. At this moment, Aeneas is being guided by otherworldly entities, not acting wholly through his own determination, and Girodet has shown him as a passive sensual nude. The scene is brimming with eroticism that this time is not present in Virgil’s description of the scene and is instead introduced by Girodet. While Virgil does mention the moonbeams infusing the interior, Girodet’s seductive nude illuminated by the moon more likely stemmed from his painting *The Sleep of Endymion* (1791, fig. 20) than from Virgil’s poem. In a letter Girodet indicated that both figures derived from the same sources – a live model and an antique relief.\(^{37}\) Endymion and Aeneas are similar not only in terms of

\(^{36}\) Ibid., 62, lines 197-204.

\(^{37}\) Osborne, 252. Osborne cites a letter Girodet wrote to Bernadin de Saint-Pierre in which the artist wrote that he had modeled his *Endymion* on both the living model and on an antique relief at the Villa Borghese. Osborne states that the similarity between the figure of Endymion and that of Aeneas in the illustration to Book III
pose and body type, but also in narrative role. Endymion too was subject to divine intervention; the goddess Diana kept him in a constant state of unconsciousness only to be awakened for her sexual gratification.\textsuperscript{38} Given the similarities between these two passive, sensual nudes, Girodet must have seen a connection between Endymion’s subservience to Diana and the role of the gods in Aeneas’ journey; often, Aeneas was both subject to and aided by female goddesses in particular.\textsuperscript{39}

In both illustrations discussed thus far, Girodet chose moments when Aeneas is subject to the will of the gods, not acting wholly of his own volition. He also chose two scenes that allowed him to showcase his talent for dramatic chiaroscuro and ability to model forms with light.\textsuperscript{40} In both, furthermore, we see Girodet’s inclination is to render the figure of Aeneas in an overtly sensual manner drawing upon different Davidian body types, whether the attractiveness or sexuality of the hero is a part of Virgil’s poem or not.

\textbf{A Comparison: Scenes of Divine Intervention by Girodet and Gérard}

Girodet was not alone in depicting moments of divine intervention in the \textit{Aeneid}, suggests that the \textit{Aeneid} illustration was based upon the same sources as the painting.\textsuperscript{38} For a discussion of the subject matter of Girodet’s \textit{The Sleep of Endymion} and the helplessness of Girodet’s figure who is unable to act, see Whitney Davis, “The Renunciation of Reaction in Girodet’s \textit{Sleep of Endymion},” in \textit{Visual Culture: Images and Interpretation}, ed. Norman Bryson, M.A. Holly, and K. Moxey (Middleton, Connecticut: Wesleyan University Press, 1994), 180-181.

\textsuperscript{39} I am thinking here of how Juno’s anger towards Aeneas creates all manner of problems for him throughout the poem and of how Venus continually attempts to counter Juno’s plots and aid her son.

\textsuperscript{40} David and Girodet’s peers admired his ability to handle not only chiaroscuro, but to model his figures with light rather than shadow. See Chapter One, pages 28 and
but a comparison between one of his illustrations and one by Gérard points to how differently the two artists treated similar subject matter. The two illustrations belong to the second half of the epic: Girodet’s for Book VII, *Aeneas and His Companions Land in Latium* (fig. 31) and Gérard’s for Book VIII, *Venus Gives the Arms of Vulcan to Aeneas* (fig. 32).

At the beginning of Book VII, Aeneas and his fleet sail up the Tiber and land on its banks, in the country that will become the future site of Rome. In his illustration, Girodet presents the moment when Jupiter indicates to the Trojans that they have at last landed at their fated destination:

> the all-able Father thundered three times from the clear sky overhead; from the high air with his own hand he brandished – plainly showed – a cloud that glowed with shafts of light and gold.\(^{41}\)

Given Girodet’s penchant for the supernatural aspects of the *Aeneid*, it is hardly surprising that he chose to illustrate this miraculous moment when the ruler of the Roman pantheon makes his presence known to Aeneas. In his composition, Jupiter’s hand is just visible in the upper-left corner; lightening bolts emanating from his palm shoot across the sky and seemingly part the clouds from which an eagle, the traditional symbol of Jupiter, appears to the Trojans gathered below.\(^{42}\) Aeneas, in roughly the center of the composition, raises his arms in a gesture of prayer and acceptance of

\(^{33}-35.\)

\(^{41}\) Mandelbaum, 167, lines 181-184.

\(^{42}\) It should be noted here that Virgil does not describe Jupiter appearing to Aeneas and his men in the form of an eagle; rather, this is Girodet’s means of representing the god’s presence.
Jupiter’s sign. His men cling to one another or bow in awe, while his son Ascanius (to Aeneas’ left) seems frozen in place by the vision above. Not surprisingly, Girodet also used this illustration as yet another opportunity to dazzle the viewer with his ability to render lighting effects—light and shadow play across the entire composition.

The ultra-bright light from Jupiter’s bolts captures the intensity of lightening in nature and, at the same time, lends a supernatural atmosphere to the scene. Girodet showcased his skill with backlighting to create contour; the technique appears across the clouds but especially across the bodies of the male figures outline their contours and musculature. Girodet’s use of light to model forms here, especially the limbs of Aeneas and Ascanius, is as masterful as it is in his *Sleep of Endymion* (1791, fig. 20). The artist seems to have excelled and delighted in enchanted moments such as this one and captured all their magic and mysteriousness.

Virgil devoted a great deal of Book VIII to the activities of the gods and Aeneas as they prepare for the impending battle against the Rutulians. Gérard might easily have chosen any number of moments of divine intervention to depict in his illustration for Book VIII. For example, in the beginning of the book, the river god Tiberinus appears to Aeneas and tells him he must seek Evander, king of the Arcadians and founder of Pallanteum, for reinforcements -- a moment that is quite significant for subsequent events.43 Virgil also goes to great lengths describing how Venus cajoles

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43 It is at this point in the poem when Aeneas forms an alliance with the king and meets Pallas. Aeneas’ relationship with Pallas is crucial for understanding events in the last books of the epic and will be discussed below.
Vulcan into making special weapons to protect her beloved son in the battle to come. Once Vulcan forges the weapons, Virgil describes a miraculous moment when they appear to Aeneas in the heavens above:

Venus sent them a sign across the cloudless sky. For sudden lightning shuddered through the air with thunder; all things seemed to reel; a blast of Tuscan trumpets pealed across the heavens. They [Aeneas and Achates] look up; and again, again, there roars tremendous thunder. In the sky’s clear region, within a cloud, they see a red-gold gleam of weapons as they clash and clang.44

Virgil’s description of this moment resembles the scene in Girodet’s illustration for Book VII (fig. 31). It is perhaps even more dramatic and has all the supernatural and atmospheric qualities of Girodet’s other illustrations.

Gérard did not display the same affinity for such otherworldly subject matter and chose not to illustrate this extraordinary episode; instead, he depicted a moment from the end of Book VIII, Venus Gives the Arms of Vulcan to Aeneas (fig. 32). Gérard’s illustration corresponds to the moment in the Aeneid when news of the armor’s appearance in the heavens has spread throughout the Trojan camp. Venus, seeing her son resting “beside a cooling stream,” appeared to him, embraced him, and “set up his glittering arms beneath a facing oak.”45 Gérard depicted Venus embracing her son in front of an oak, pointing to the armor at the base of the tree while the river god Tiberinus watches from the background. Virgil describes the helmet as “tremendous with its crests and floods of flames,” the body armor as “blood-red and huge,” and the

44 Mandelbaum, trans., 207-208, lines 680-688.
45 Ibid., 210, lines 791 & 797-98.
shield, “its texture indescribable,” decorated with story after story of future Roman victories; Virgil devotes 140 lines to describing the shield itself. Yet, in Gérard’s illustration, the armor is presented in a rather matter-of-fact manner—no flames, no glittering gold and blood red, and he placed the back of the shield to the viewer.

Gérard limited the divine, miraculous, and outlandish details of this episode; instead, he presents a much quieter, calmer, and straightforward scene. Venus appears to Aeneas as herself, not in any guise, and Gérard’s focus is upon the interaction of mother and son. The moment seems to fulfill Aeneas’ desire, expressed in Book I, to see and touch his mother, and this is the only time in the Aeneid he is allowed to embrace someone he loves. Gérard also chose to illustrate one of the last tranquil moments in the poem for Aeneas. Once he takes up the armor Venus presents to him, the dream of founding Rome becomes a reality, and a violent one at that.

Gérard’s and Girodet’s representations of divine intervention reveal the very different sensibilities of the two artists. Clearly Girodet focused upon a spectacular moment in the poem and used it as yet another opportunity to showcase his talent with dramatic lighting effects. Gérard, on the other hand, eschewed the more dramatic moments of divine meddling in Book VIII in favor of a moment that represents a

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46 Ibid., lines 803, 805, & 809. Lines 810 to 950 contain the incredibly detailed analysis of the scenes Vulcan emblazoned on Aeneas’ shield.

47 Putnam, 43. Putnam notes that this is a significant moment in Book VIII and one that is emotionally charged in many ways. In Book I, Aeneas expresses his frustration over his mother’s manipulations and his inability to see her without any disguises. The lines read, “Why do you mock your son – so often and so cruelly– with these lying apparitions? Why can’t I ever join you, hand to hand, to hear, to answer you
meeting between mother and son that foreshadows Aeneas’ active role as the founder of Rome, his civic duty, and the cost of this responsibility – all subjects which Gérard explored repeatedly throughout his illustrations.

The only other illustration in which Gérard represented the gods is his *Olympus* (fig. 33) for Book X. Gérard’s scene derives from the book’s prologue, in which Jove summons a Council of the Gods or a “Divine Council of War,” the only one in the poem.48 At the beginning of Book X, Virgil described the scene:

Meanwhile the palace of Olympus opens; the father of the gods and king of men within his house of stars has called a council; there, high upon his throne, he watches all the lands, the Dardan camps, the Latin peoples. The gods take up their seats within a hall flanked east and west by portals. Jove begins.49

Gérard placed Jove in the center of his composition, partially seated on his throne, surrounded by his wife Juno (seated next to him and clothed in heavy draperies), his daughter Venus (who stands in the foreground, nude, and accompanied by Cupid), and a host of other gods and goddesses of the Roman pantheon. Following his penchant for severe classicism, Gérard did not recreate the halls of a palace described in Virgil, but chose instead to place his figure on a ground of clouds before a nondescript background. Gérard limited details to an absolute minimum, including only a few attributes of the gods and goddesses. Horizontals and verticals dominate his composition, the figures are monumental and convincingly modeled (although the

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48 Quinn, 213.
49 Mandelbaum, trans., 243, lines 1-7.
gesture of Jove is somewhat unclear or unconvincing), and the gendering of bodies so
typical of Davidian Neo-Classicism is readily apparent.50

Through the absolute solidity and stillness of his figures, Gérard captured the
gravity of the moment; through his placement of Jove between Juno and Venus, he
pictured Jove’s attempt to mediate and to end the tension between the two goddesses.51
But by creating an absolutely static scene, Gérard also captured the larger significance
of this moment in the poem, for it is during the prologue of Book X, that Jove announces
that all divine intervention by the gods and goddesses on behalf of both sides in the
struggle must stop immediately and proclaims, “What each man does will shape his
trial and fortune.”52 In other words, Jove declares that only men will determine the
outcome of the battle.53 This is not a scene of divine intervention; on the contrary, it is a
scene concerned with the halting of divine intervention. The meaning behind this
moment, as expressed through Jove’s words, accords with Gérard’s predilection for
exploring Aeneas’ responsibilities and the potential costs of fulfilling them.

**Heterosexuality and Homoeroticism in the Aeneid Illustrations**

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50 Osborne, 245. Osborne indicates that Gérard may have been influenced by an
engraving of a Roman gem that shows Jupiter enthroned or upon engravings of Zeus
enthroned by the Greek sculptor Phidias. Osborne also relates how Gérard’s rendering
of Jove here, along with Girodet’s frontispiece to Didot’s Virgil, and Ingres’ portrait of
Napoleon from 1806 reveal common sources and cross-influences.

51 After the opening lines of Book X quoted in the text above, Virgil describes
Jove’s speech in which he asks the divinities gathered why they have had so much of a
hand in the affairs of Aeneas and the Trojans. At this point, both Venus and Juno take
turns pleading their cases and explaining why they have interfered on behalf of the
Trojans and Rutulians. See Mandelbaum, trans., 243-246, lines 8-148.

52 Ibid., 247, line 160.
In addition to treating the theme of divine intervention differently, Gérard and Girodet also focused upon the sub-theme of sexuality in the poem in distinctive ways. Virgil himself was frequently preoccupied with the sexuality of Aeneas. Early in the epic, Aeneas is involved in an affair with queen Dido that is clearly consummated and lasts for some time. While Virgil never specifically relates any sexual acts between his male characters, he did clearly infuse his poem with a subtext of homoeroticism and a homosocial atmosphere amongst the men that becomes more pronounced in the second half of the poem, especially after Virgil introduces Pallas in Book VIII. Virgil repeatedly connects and compares Dido and Pallas, establishing that both are the objects of Aeneas’ love and will ultimately die as a result of their connection to him.

In fact, Virgil’s exploration of Aeneas’ love relationships and their consequences poignantly articulates the hero’s divided attention between public duty and private loyalties.

Both Gérard and Girodet treated this intensely personal side of the epic, but in substantially different ways. Gérard never depicted Aeneas with Pallas or Dido and only illustrated Dido’s suffering after Aeneas left her to found Rome (Book IV, fig. 34). For Gérard, this theme resonated with similar motifs in early Davidian painting that he

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53 Quinn, 213-214.
54 Lee, 109. The author notes that many readers have found a “homoerotic haze over the last half of the poem.”
55 Putnam explores this idea at length and points out the many connections Virgil makes between Aeneas’ relationship with Dido and with Pallas. See pages 18-19, and chapter two pages 27-49 (especially pages 35 and 38-42). Lee also points to a specific connection between Dido and Pallas on page 81.
knew well. Girodet, on the other hand, depicted Aeneas with both Dido (Book I, fig. 29) and Pallas (Book XI, fig. 35). These two illustrations suggest that Girodet’s interest in Aeneas’ sexuality was very different from Gérard’s. Whether it be through the rendering of Aeneas or in the choice of the scene represented, Girodet delved into the subtext of homoeroticism in the Aeneid in general and into the relationship between Aeneas and Pallas in particular; in addition, in his design for Book XI, he depicted the private pain Aeneas experiences and the personal price he must pay to complete his epic task.

While Girodet depicted the erotically charged moment when Aeneas and Dido first meet in Book I (fig. 29) and alluded to the meddling of Venus that caused the two to fall in love, Gérard depicted the consequence of their affair in his illustration to Book IV, The Death of Dido (fig. 34). At the end of Book III, the long banquet during which Aeneas has been recounting his wanderings since the fall of Troy and his arrival at Carthage at last comes to an end. Book IV opens with Virgil’s description of how Dido has fallen madly in love with Aeneas. The two soon set out on a hunting trip which is interrupted by a great storm sent by Juno and intended to make them seek shelter in a forest cave. It is here that they become lovers for an unspecified amount of time until Jupiter, angered by Aeneas’ behavior, sends Mercury to remind Aeneas of his fated task. When Dido learns of Aeneas’ plans to leave Carthage, she is furious, implores him to stay with her, and eventually curses him to suffer personally all the ravages and losses of war as he pursues his destiny. Dido’s hex is realized in the last four books of
the epic.

After Dido delivers this malicious diatribe, she runs to an elaborate pyre in order to burn the few personal belonging Aeneas left behind along with the bed the two shared. In his illustration, Gérard depicted the moment after Dido climbed the pyre and stabbed herself with the sword shown falling from her right hand. Virgil described Dido’s sword “foaming with her blood” and her hands being “bloodstained” after the act.56 Virgil also repeatedly describes Dido, from the minute she learns that Aeneas plans to leave her, as terrified and gripped by madness.57 Dido runs about her palace, frantically cursing Aeneas. Just before she kills herself, Virgil describes her as, “desperate, beside herself with awful undertakings, eyes bloodshot and rolling, and her quivering cheeks flecked with stains and pale with coming death.” 58 Gérard, however, refrained from rendering these details and chose the moment when Dido is surrounded by her attendants whose “lamentations, [and] shrieks...sound through the houses,” attracting Dido’s sister Anna who appears with arms raised in shock in the upper-left of the composition.59 Gérard shows Dido in death, when she at last achieved peace from her torment and was no longer an active threat to Aeneas.

Throughout his illustrations, Gérard repeatedly depicted scenes which resonated with what are now considered to be “stock” Davidian themes: stoic virtue, heroic

56 Mandelbaum, trans., 103, line 916.
57 Ibid., 97, lines 620-655 contain several descriptions of Dido’s mental state after Aeneas sets sail.
58 Ibid., 102-103, lines 888-891.
59 Ibid., 103, 919-920.
action, and public duty versus private bonds. In *The Death of Dido*, Gérard focused on a moment that thematized the costs of Aeneas’ mission, whether fated or chosen, and the private suffering inflicted as a result. Gérard, unlike Girodet, followed the Davidian tradition of confining male and female figures to very specific gendered roles. Gérard’s treatment of the Dido and her attendants as an undulating mass of vaguely sensual figures and drapery recalls the group of female figures in David’s *Oath of the Horatii* (1785, fig. 8). With her slumped pose and titled head, Gérard’s Dido is reminiscent of both the woman wearing a white headdress in David’s painting and the dying Camilla in Girodet’s *Death of Camilla* (1784, fig. 36). In all these images, the women verge upon the melodramatic, and not coincidentally they are shown as either victims or mourners. And as mourners, they are allowed to show a level of grief that is in general not permitted for the male heroes of Davidian painting.

Girodet’s *Death of Camilla* is a rather traditional early Davidian painting in its subject, style, and gendering. In his *Aeneid* illustrations, however, Girodet abandoned many of the stock Davidian devices that Gérard continued to employ. In contrast, Girodet chose to illustrate Dido dominating Aeneas rather than representing her as a victim in Book I (fig. 29). Dido is every bit the queen, and Aeneas must present himself to her and ask for permission to take refuge on her shores. Girodet faithfully developed the way Virgil cast Aeneas as entirely subject to women in Book I whether the woman in question be Dido, Juno, or Venus; the power of women in Book I, whether human or divine, differs markedly from their usual role in early Davidian painting.
In some of his illustrations, Girodet further distinguished himself from both his master’s early works and Gérard’s illustrations by pursuing the current of latent homoeroticism in Virgil’s epic. While Gérard does not seem to have been interested in this theme in any way, Girodet hinted at it through his highly sensual rendering of the nude Aeneas in his illustration to Book III (fig. 30) and explicitly treated the homosocial bonds in the Aeneid in general and between Aeneas and Pallas in particular in his illustration for Book XI of the Aeneid, The Mourning of Pallas (fig. 35). Pallas, the son of king Evander, is introduced to Aeneas in Book VIII and sent along with our hero to aid in the battle against the Rutulians; Pallas, however, is killed by Turnus in Book X.

Osborne identified the moment Girodet depicted as that when Aeneas (seen in the right foreground, holding his grieving son with one arm) speaks to Evander, Pallas’ father (shown lying on his son’s chest, overcome with grief), just after the return of the body of Pallas.60 She based her reading of the scene upon the lines from Virgil that appear in the engraving below the image: "Ah me! How great a protection is lost to thee, Ausonia [Italy], how great to thee, Iulus [Aeneas’ son who also goes by the name Ascanius]."61 For Osborne, Girodet’s illustration refers to “David’s painting The Death of Le Peletier de Saint-Fargeau (1793, fig. 26) and also to Andromache Mourning Hector” (1783, fig. 37), and is a “propagandistic celebration of the Revolutionary cause.”62

This reading of the image is incorrect, however, because the lines quoted in the

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60 Pierre Didot. . ., 256.
61 Ibid.
engraving correspond to a speech given by Aeneas before, not after, the body of Pallas is taken to Evander. In the poem, Aeneas approaches the tent near the battlefield:

where the lifeless body of Pallas is watched over by the old Acoetes: he was once the armor-bearer of King Evander, in Arcadian days; now he had come, assigned as a companion to Pallas, his beloved foster son, . . . When he [Aeneas] saw the pillowed head of Pallas, his white face, and the Aussonian spearhead’s yawning wound in his smooth chest, Aeneas speaks with tears. . . 63

It is at this moment that Aeneas begins the speech presumably to his son (it is unclear in the text) that ends with the lines that appear in the engraving below Girodet's image. The older man lying on Pallas' chest must therefore be Pallas' attendant, Acoetes, and not, as Osborne suggested, Pallas' father Evander.

Given that both Pallas and Le Peletier died from stab wounds, Osborne is not unjustified in seeing some connection between the two martyrs. However, Girodet’s image is not simply about a slain public figure or the tragic effects of the death of a man upon his wife and son, as is David’s Andromache Mourning Hector. 64 In Girodet's illustration, we have a depiction of a "beloved" son who is not mourned by family members but by the dramatic figure of an "assigned companion," Acoetes. 65 The illustration is about a Greek warrior, mourning his lover and attendant. This new identification of the scene is significant, because it provides early and clear evidence of

63 Mandelbaum, 276, lines 38-54.
64 For a discussion of this painting and its relationship to Homer’s Iliad and more specifically to Racine’s tragedy Andromache, see Crow, 41-42.
65 Pallas is also mourned here by Aeneas, but I will treat that aspect of the illustration separately.
Girodet’s interest in homosocial subjects.66

Girodet’s illustration stems only indirectly from the story of Andromache and Hector and finds its closer precedent in another deathbed scene, that of *Thetis Finds Achilles Mourning over the Corpse of Patroclus* (1790s, fig. 38) by John Flaxman -- an artist whom Girodet greatly admired, copied from, and whose works he collected.67 Carol Ockman has explored representations of Achilles and Patroclus that are laden with suggestions of their homoerotic relationship.68 She discussed the pictorial conventions both in works from Antiquity and from the late eighteenth century which highlight:

the intensity of feeling between Achilles and Patroclus in no uncertain terms. Among the plethora of painted scenes of the *Iliad* by artists of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, the most outstanding examples are the representations of Achilles grieving over the dead body of his ‘beloved companion’.69

Ockman specifically highlights Flaxman’s representation (fig. 38) as being typical of the

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66 For a recent and consolidated discussion of this topic within Girodet’s oeuvre, see Abigail Solomon-Godeau, “Is Endymion Gay?,” 81-95.

67 Girodet designed more than one hundred pencil drawings after the *Aeneid* in the outline style of Flaxman, whose art was a major influence on Girodet's early works. (Osborne, 102) These drawings occupied Girodet for a span of thirty years and were to be published in 1811, but the planned edition was never realized during Girodet's lifetime. According to Sarah Symmons, the edition was eventually published in 1827, three years after the artist's death (*Flaxman and Europe: The Outline Illustrations and their Influence* [New York: Garland Publishing, 1984], 141.). The identification of Flaxman's drawing as a source for *The Mourning of Pallas* should not be underestimated. Girodet collected several of the British artist's works including French editions of the *Iliad* and *Odyssey* outlines, an Italian edition of Flaxman's Dante, and several other works (Symmons, 137). For a more detailed account of the influence of Flaxman's outlines upon Girodet see, Symmons, 136-142.

68 "Profiling Homoeroticism: Ingres’s *Achilles Receiving the Ambassadors of Agamemnon*," *Art Bulletin* 75 (June 1993): 259-274.

69 Ibid., 268.
way in which other artists often represented Andromache lying on the body of the dead Hector (fig. 37). What Ockman finds interesting about Flaxman's version is its "fidelity to these other representations [of Andromache and Hector] and the way that Achilles grieves for the dead Patroclus in precisely the way Greek women respond to the deaths of male warriors" – that is, with extreme public displays of grief and mourning.

In *The Mourning of Pallas* (fig. 35), Girodet depicted Pallas and Acoetes in the same manner as Flaxman's Patroclus and Achilles; moreover, Girodet shows Acoetes expressing a level of grief which David's early paintings (and Gérard's illustration for Book IV [fig. 34]) usually accorded only to women. By evoking representations of Achilles and Patroclus, Girodet seems to suggest a similar homoerotic relationship between Pallas and Acoetes. Ancient Greek society was highly segregated and found its "most characteristic and the noblest form of love in the relation of passionate friendship between men," specifically between an older man and a younger one. Pederasty was considered not only the best form of education for young Greek men but was also an expected and cultivated form of comradery between warriors. In this relationship between two men, the older and active partner is known as the *erastes*

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70 Ibid. I have included here the Hamilton painting, engraved by Cunego, that Ockman used to illustrate her point.

71 Ibid., 268-269.

72 In addition to David's *Andromache Mourning Hector* (1783, fig. 34), see also David's *The Oath of the Horatii* (1785, fig. 8) and *The Lictors Returning to Brutus the Bodies of his Sons* (1789, fig. 13) for examples of mourning female figures.

73 George Lamb, trans. H.I. Marrou, *A History of Education in Antiquity* (New
("lover"), and the younger and passive partner (usually between fifteen and nineteen years of age) is known as the eromenos ("beloved"). The only restrictions placed upon this relationship were that the erastes be a free adult citizen and that the eromenos be a free adolescent who would continue the partnership through his military training and for a brief period thereafter until he became a full citizen. The erastes/eromenos relationship was often depicted in Greek vase painting and has also been discussed by Ockman in relation to images of Achilles and Patroclus.

While there is no explicit reference in Virgil's poem to a pederastic relationship between Pallas and Acoetes, certain details suggest it. Virgil describes Acoetes as the former "armor-bearer" of Evander and as an "old companion" who accompanied his "beloved foster son" Pallas on his way into battle alongside Aeneas. First, the obvious should be mentioned: Acoetes is an older warrior who became the companion and mentor to the young Pallas, sent into battle by his father, Evander. Second, the title of "armor-bearer" is significant. In the erastes/eromenos relationship, after the eromenos went through a period of initiation, he would receive gifts from his erastes which included a suit of armor, and the eromenos then became the shield-bearer to his older

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74 Ibid.
76 Ockman, 267.
77 Many scholars have explored the implied and explicit sexual relationships, whether they be homosexual or heterosexual, in Virgil's Aeneid. Particularly relevant to this discussion are the sections in Lee, 108-113 and Putnam, Chapter 2, “Possessiveness, Sexuality, and Heroism in the Aeneid,” 27-49.
companion and was officially recruited into an elite military fraternity. Once the eromenos reached full citizenship, he would in turn become the mentor to an eromenos of his own. The erastes/eromenos relationship often resulted in great loyalty between the partners and was transmitted from one generation to the next. As the former "armor-bearer" of King Evander, Acoetes was presumably once the eromenos of Evander. It seems logical that Evander would entrust the safety of his own son to his former companion. Third, Virgil's description of Pallas as Acoetes' "beloved foster son" is also telling. Not only does eromenos literally mean "beloved", but the older man also served as an educator and as a substitute father for the eromenos. In Ancient Greece, the education of aristocratic male youths (which Pallas would have been) was entrusted to other adult men and not to fathers. Moreover, classical writers often described pederasty as a type of relationship in which the bonds formed were far closer than those between parents and children.

Virgil himself was well aware of the prevalence of pederasty in Greek society, and favorable allusions to same sex love occur in Virgil's works and in other sections of the Aeneid. Of particular importance for this discussion is the story in Book IX of the heroic deaths of the lovers Nisus and Euryalus, which was probably included in the

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78 Lamb, 53.
79 Ibid., 56.
80 Ibid., 57.
81 Bullough, 144. Virgil is believed by some scholars to have been an eromenos himself, but this is speculative. While some scholars believe the references to homoerotic love in Virgil's writings indicate his own sexual preference, Bullough and others indicate that the homoerotic relationships in Virgil's writings may simply stem
poem to replicate the relationship of Achilles and Patroclus in Homer's *Iliad*.\textsuperscript{82} Virgil clearly identified the relationship between Nisus and Euryalus as that of the *erastes/eromenos* partnership, and Girodet completed some line drawings of the two lovers outside of his work on the Didot commission.\textsuperscript{83} It is also noteworthy, that from the very beginning of the epic when we first meet Aeneas, he is accompanied by an older male companion named Achates whom Girodet included in his illustration for Book I (fig. 29) standing just behind Aeneas’ left shoulder. Virgil gives us little information about Achates or the nature of his relationship with Aeneas, but he is virtually Aeneas’ shadow throughout the epic, repeatedly described as faithful to the hero.\textsuperscript{84} Girodet may have had in mind the *erastes/eromenos* relationships among the Trojans in other illustrations, such as that for Book VII (fig. 31), where his band of brothers includes younger and older males embracing and celebrating Jupiter’s prophecy. Girodet also seems to evoke this theme in his illustration for Book IX, *Ascanius Fighting in the Absence of his Father Aeneas* (fig. 39). Here we see Aeneas’ young son in the left foreground as the god Apollo swoops in to protect him from the Rutulians’ attack, yet another example of Girodet’s engagement with the theme of divine intervention. Looking closely, however, it is also clear that Ascanius is protected by an older male who stands beside him and seems to be holding him back with a hand from his borrowings from and desire to rival Greek epic poetry.

\textsuperscript{82} Ibid., 145. Lee also discusses the theme of homosexuality in the *Aeneid* and the story of Nisus and Euryalus in particular.

\textsuperscript{83} Davis, 189.

\textsuperscript{84} Lee, 105. The author discusses the role and presence of Achates on pages 105-
on his stomach.

Girodet invested *The Mourning of Pallas* with a subtext of homoeroticism and private sexuality that has nothing to do with the sentiments expressed in David's *Andromache Mourning Hector* or with a propagandistic celebration of revolutionary causes as Osborne suggested. Girodet's depictions of Aeneas as a relatively passive and sensual male nude, especially in Books I, III, and XI (figs. 29, 30, and 35), share a greater affinity with Winckelmann's descriptions of classical statues than with the heroic males who populate David's paintings dating from before 1790—the year the Didot commission began. Girodet's Aeneas is like his own *Endymion* (fig. 20), a painting that Whitney Davis sees as sharing none of the characteristics of pre-Revolutionary history painting. Davis' description of the figure of Endymion as partly failing “to embody an ideal of active, public engaged, and virtuous masculinity” applies also to Girodet’s treatment of Aeneas. Aeneas is meant to be a hero, but Girodet depicted him in scenes when the action is minimal and more attention is paid to the sexuality or psychology of the man of action. Girodet's *Aeneid* illustrations provide early evidence of his desire to be independent from David and his preference for otherworldly themes and homoerotic subject matter.

108. See also Putnam, fn 4, 47.
85 Osborne, 89.
87 Ibid., 183.
88 This discussion should not be taken as evidence in support of the view that Girodet himself was gay – a topic which has elicited a great deal of debate amongst scholars. For a recent discussion of this debate, see Sylvain Bellenger, “ ‘Too Learned for
The Theme of Pietas in the Aeneid Illustrations

Unlike Girodet, Gérard paid little attention to Aeneas’ love affairs in his illustrations. The only illustration in which Gérard referenced the subject is in his illustration to Book IV (fig. 34), and here he chose to focus on the suffering inflicted upon Dido due to Aeneas’ choice to leave her in favor of his mission to found Rome. In significant ways, this scene is less concerned with eroticism or sexuality than with the consequences of one of the other central themes of the poem – pietas. Repeatedly, Virgil describes Aeneas as pius reflecting the tendency of the pre-Virgilian stories about Aeneas, including Homer’s Iliad, to emphasize this aspect of his character. The concept of pietas is one of the key moral lessons woven throughout Virgil’s epic from the first book to the last. In his discussion of the meaning of pietas in the first century BCE, M. Owen Lee outlines how Catullus, Lucretius, and Cicero defined the concept for Virgil’s generation. In summary, these thinkers described pietas as a code to live by for the man of honor who adheres strictly to the responsibilities demanded of him. Pietas

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89 Lee, 17-18. Lee in particular mentions this aspect of Aeneas’ personality in Homer, Lycophoron, Timaeus, and Varro.
91 Lee, 19-23. According to Lee, these three writers of the generation before Virgil delineated the concept of pietas more than any other thinkers and had a decisive influence on Virgil’s and subsequent generations. My discussion here is a summary of
represents stability, fidelity, honor, and “has nothing to do with emotional display and everything to do with clarity of vision and a sense of purpose.” Finally, pietas manifests itself in respect for the gods and for one’s family along with absolute servitude to one’s country or fellow man. It is this leitmotif within the epic that attracted Gérard the most; five out of his six illustrations treat the theme either overtly or subtly (as in Book IV). Gérard repeatedly focused on not only the subject of pietas itself, but also on Aeneas’ personal struggle to remain pius whatever the costs.

Gérard depicted Aeneas’ first great lesson in pietas in his illustration for Book II, Aeneas Carries Anchises from the Ruins of Troy (fig. 40). Books II and III are an extended flashback; in Book II, Aeneas’ tells Dido the story of the fall of Troy to the Greeks. Aeneas recounts many specific incidents, including the story of the Trojan Horse, how Hector reminded him of his mission to save the Trojans, and how Venus revealed to him that the gods had all joined forces to destroy Troy. When Aeneas’ witnessed the slaughter of King Priam, he realized he must leave the bloodshed behind in order to return home to save his family. Aeneas’ first lesson in pietas is thus the realization that he must control his lust for battle in order to save his father and son. After a speech to convince his father that retreat is the best course, Aeneas tells Dido:

I spread a tawny lion skin across my bent neck, over my broad shoulders, and then take up Anchises; small Iülus now clutches my right hand; his steps uneven, he is following his father; and my wife moves on behind. We journey through dark places; and I, who just before could not be stirred by any weapons cast at me or by the crowds

Lee’s points.

92 Ibid., 21.
of Greeks in charging columns, now am terrified by all the breezes, startled by every sound, in fear for son and father.  

In Gérard’s illustration, we see Aeneas, bearing his father Anchises, who is shown carrying the statue of their ancestral gods, and holding his son Iulus by the forearm, guiding him through the battlefield that Troy has become. Against a cloudy sky and billowing smoke from the fires set by the Greeks, the figures make their way through crumbling architecture, a fallen male figure, and discarded armor and weapons. Iulus looks behind him as he struggles to keep up, and both Aeneas and his father glance sideways with expressions of fear on their faces. While Aeneas’ face may register the desperation of the moment, Gérard depicted his body confidently bearing the weight of his father’s large, heavily-muscled figure. According to Lee, this moment and figure grouping of Aeneas, Anchises, and Iulus has come to symbolize *pietas* for the Western tradition.  

It is hardly surprising, then, that Gérard would depict this moment in his illustration for Book II – it is a scene with many precedents in Western art. Gérard also followed tradition here by not including Aeneas’ wife Creusa in his composition. While she (along with several household servants) followed Aeneas, Anchises, and Iulus to safety, during the flight Aeneas lost sight of her. Once he made it to the shrine of Ceres at Mount Ida, where a group of refugees were gathering, and secured his father

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93 Mandelbaum, trans., 53, lines 974-984. 
94 Lee, 43. 
95 Ibid., 18. There are many, many representations of this figure grouping in Western art, ranging from Antiquity to at least the Baroque period. For a discussion of several of the earliest Roman examples of the tradition on coins, everyday utensils, statuary, relief sculpture, and wall painting see Galinsky, 3-62.
and son there, Aeneas had what has been called a “blind moment” and “falls from pietas.” In short, Virgil shows Aeneas once again giving into his emotions, returning to the city to search for his wife, rushing through the streets and calling out for her. Eventually the dead Creusa comes to him in the form of a ghost and persuades him not to give into “fanatic sorrow;” instead, she tells him he must rejoin his father, son, and fellow exiles and take up his responsibilities to them and to the founding of Rome.

Gérard’s illustration, then, not only represents Aeneas’ first act of pietas, in which he left his lust for fighting behind in order to save his father and son, but also alludes to his second lesson, when his wife reminds him that he must put his feelings for her aside and return to his filial duties. Here, Aeneas becomes aware of the costs of his mission; Creusa is only the first of many victims in Aeneas’ quest. As Putnam notes, the lessons in pietas here and elsewhere in the poem consistently remind us of the “distinction between history and the individual, between public advantage and private suffering, which is one of the Aeneid’s main themes.” This particular example also points to the fact that pietas is a decidedly masculine construct. Although Creusa is a significant character in this section of the epic—it is she who reminds Aeneas of his obligations—Gérard, following tradition, did not include her in his illustration. According to Lee:

Creusa cannot be a part of a group that is meant to symbolize pietas. For the rest of the poem, it is pius Aeneas, pater Anchises, and puer Ascanius who will establish the various relationships that constitute this virtue. A

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96 Ibid., 44.
97 Mandelbaum, 55. The phrase “fanatic sorrow” appears in line 1047 as part of Creusa’s speech to Aeneas in lines 1046-1064.
98 Ibid., 53.
man is *pius* in relation to his father and his son, the gods he bears and the civilization he serves. A man may be any number of things to his wife, but *pietas* is not, for Virgil, part of that relationship.  

The moment Gérard illustrated for Book II and his focus upon the theme of *pietas* is entirely consistent with the themes of David’s paintings from the late 1780s, especially his *Oath of the Horatii* (fig. 8). Given Gérard’s desire to follow in his master’s footsteps, it is clear why he would have chosen such a moment charged with masculine virtues and with the division between public and private loyalties. Moreover, this scene of Aeneas’ devotion to his father and son parallels the paternal and fraternal bonds established in David’s studio.  

Beyond these thematic links, Gérard’s figures of Aeneas and Anchises in this illustration have also been interpreted as compositional sources for paintings by both David and Girodet. Osborne sees Gérard’s figures as a source of inspiration for David’s *Intervention of the Sabine Women*, 1799 (fig. 41). She regards Gérard’s Aeneas as corresponding to David’s new “Greek” style and as a source for the figure of the young nude boy with the horse on the far right of David’s composition and Anchises as the precedent for David’s figure of the woman surrounded by red drapery with raised arms in the center of the painting.  

Crow regards Gérard’s illustration as the source for Girodet’s *Scene from a Deluge*, 1806 (fig. 42). Osborne is here, and elsewhere in her study, concerned with linking the illustrations to David’s hand and works as much as possible despite the fact that it is

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99 Lee, 45.
100 See Chapter One, pages 22-25, for a discussion of this aspect of David’s atelier.
101 Osborne, 95-96 and 250.
difficult to determine David’s exact involvement in the individual illustrations; moreover, the comparisons between the figures in the *Sabines* and in Gérard’s scene seem tangential at best. Crow’s discussion of the influence of Gérard’s work on Girodet, and more importantly of the ways in which Girodet changed the relationship between father and son in his painting is more intriguing. According to Crow, Girodet “reversed the meaning of the dutiful Aeneas from one of filial and fatherly devotion to one of fatal conflicts of obligations.” 103 In Girodet’s hands, the figure of the son does not bear the weight of his father effortlessly as Gérard’s Aeneas does. Girodet’s hero is also further burdened with the weight of the woman and children in a way that Aeneas was not. Girodet’s scene shocks us with heightened emotions of fear, terror, and anguish as his hero struggles with bulging eyes and muscles to shoulder his duties—which he may or may not be able to fulfill. In this painting, as in his *Aeneid* illustrations, Girodet reveals his penchant for the dramatic and/or the irrational once again in a highly emotional scene. In comparison, Gérard’s illustration for Book II, although expressive of the moment in the poem, is subdued and presents the act of *pietas* as a *fait accompli*. This is yet another example of the markedly different aesthetic sensibilities of these two artists which emerged first in the 1790s as they worked on the Didot project and of the importance of these illustrations for subsequent large-scale, painted compositions.

While Girodet’s illustrations reveal his personal interests and desire to set out on
a different path from that of his master, Gérard’s reveal his aspiration to master the language of Davidian neo-classicism, especially through the theme of pietas. The theme surfaces again in the scene he illustrated for Book VI of the Aeneid, Aeneas and the Shade of Anchises in the Elysian Fields (fig. 43). This book begins with the landing of Aeneas and his troops at Cumae in Italy. Once ashore, Aeneas immediately consults the sibyl, whom he asks for help in searching for his now dead father in the underworld, a “vivid display of pietas.” The sibyl eventually escorts Aeneas through the various regions of Hades and enlists Charon to take them across the waters of the Acheron. She talks to Charon, “Trojan Aeneas, famed for piety and arms, descends to meet his father, down into the deepest shades of Erebus,” and she implores that this “image of such piety” should move him to help Aeneas on his journey. At last, Aeneas and the sibyl reach Elysium, where Aeneas and his father reunite. Virgil describes how at this moment Aeneas notices the waters of the Lethe flowing through the fields where “countless tribes and people were hovering” and asks his father who they are. Anchises responds that they are the souls who will return to earth as the descendants of his and Aeneas’ line and then guides Aeneas and the sibyl through the crowd of souls waiting to be reborn to a vantage point where all can be easily seen.

In Gérard’s illustration, Aeneas stands in the foreground to the far right, the sibyl is barely visible behind his right shoulder, and Anchises stands in front of his son

103 Crow, 255.
104 Putnam, 147.
105 Mandelbaum, trans., 146, lines 532-536.
pointing to the individual souls who represent their lineage. In the poem, Anchises 
describes the great men of early Roman history and their heroic acts. Among the souls 
mentioned is Brutus, described by Virgil as:

the haughty spirit. . .He will be the first to win the power of the consul, 
to use the cruel axes; though a father, for the sake of splendid freedom 
he will yet condemn his very sons who stirred new wars. Unhappy man! 
However later ages may tell his act, his love of country will prevail, as 
will his passion for renown.  

Gérard's inclusion of the seated Brutus can be interpreted on two levels. David's Brutus 
(fig. 13) was exhibited at the Salon the year before the work began on the Didot 
commission, and just as David arranged for Gérard and Girodet to work on the Didot 
Virgil, he also had them complete significant sections of the Brutus.  
On a personal 
level, the inclusion of the seated Brutus in the Aeneid illustration allowed Gérard to pay 
homage not only to his master's recent achievements but also to David's democratic 
studio practices. On a thematic level, Gérard's Aeneid illustration resonates with the 
same uncertainty towards Brutus' actions as seen in David's treatment of the subject. 

David's painting could be seen as a promotion of Brutus' stoic determination to 
choose civic duty over familial devotion, but it has also been convincingly argued that 
the painting is "decidedly ambivalent about the costs of the hero's political resolve," and 
that the painting allows "for both halves of Plutarch's famous judgment on his [Brutus']

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106 Ibid., 162, lines 931-932.  
107 Ibid., 165, lines 1083-1092.  
108 For a discussion of the contributions of Gérard and Girodet to David's Brutus, 
see Chapter One, 26-29.
action, that 'it is difficult either to praise or to blame sufficiently.'109 The same uncertainty towards Brutus is seen in the lines from Virgil which describe him as being both "avenging" and "unhappy." Gérard was keenly aware of the paradox of Brutus' situation, for he included the seated figure, again in the shadows, in a scene of filial devotion in which a father and son are reunited -- a moment of resolution that Brutus could never have. Just as David depicted Brutus in a private interior, Gérard, also depicted Brutus in a private setting. Elysium is private in the sense that it is otherworldly, irrational and the opposite of the world of civic duty in which Brutus was forced to act. Lastly, it is important to remember that Brutus' decision to condemn his sons to death also represents an act of pietas, or an act where Brutus is torn between two opposing aspects of pietas – devotion to sons on a private, personal level and devotion to country on a larger, public level. Gérard clearly responded to the dilemmas Aeneas had to face and repeatedly depicted or referred to scenes in the poem where Aeneas not only exemplifies pietas but also struggles with its consequences in a way which accords with Brutus' plight.

The turmoil Aeneas felt in attempting to fulfill the obligations of pietas reaches a climax in the last and twelfth book of the Aeneid when he avenges Pallas' death by killing Turnus, the king of the Rutulians who inhabited part of Italy when Aeneas and the Trojans arrived in the country. The Rutulians engaged the Trojans in several battles

109 Crow, 108-109. As evidence for his interpretation, Crow points to the group of grieving women (the only figures who are clearly illuminated) and the silent protest of Brutus’ wife (whose gesture stabilizes the composition) as being more prominent and
beginning in Book IX, and it was during one of those battles that Turnus killed Pallas. In his illustration for Book XII, *The Death of Turnus at the Hands of Aeneas* (fig. 44), Gérard represented a moment at the end of the fighting. Aeneas stands above the wounded Turnus, grasping a belt around his neck, and raising his weapon to inflict the final blow. Turnus has fallen on one knee, stretches out his right leg and right arm towards Aeneas, and looks his killer in the eye. Rather than showing Aeneas plunging his sword into Turnus, as in the final lines of the epic, Gérard chose to depict Aeneas’ hesitation as he grapples with two conflicting aspects of pietas.\(^{110}\) Virgil describes these moments before Turnus:

> Then humble, suppliant, he [Turnus] lifts his eyes and, stretching out his hand, entreating cries: I have indeed deserved this; I do not appeal against it; use your chance. But, if there is a thought of a dear parent’s grief that now touches you, then I beg you, pity old Daunus [Turnus’ father]—in Anchises you had such a father—send me back or, if you wish, send back my lifeless body to my kin. For you have won, and the Ausonians have seen me, beaten, stretch my hands; Lavinia [Aeneas’ second wife] is yours; then do not press your hatred further.

> Aeneas stood, ferocious in his armor; his eyes were restless and he stayed his hand; and as he hesitated, Turnus’ words began to move him more and more—until high on the Latin’s shoulder he made out the luckless belt of Pallas, of the boy whom Turnus had defeated, wounded, stretched upon the battlefield, from whom he took this fatal sign to wear upon his back, this girdle glittering with familiar studs. And when his eyes drank in this plunder, this memorial of brutal grief, Aeneas, aflame with rage—his wrath was terrible—cried: ‘How can you who wear the spoils of my dear comrade now escape me? It is Pallas who strikes, who sacrifices you, who

\(^{110}\) For a complete discussion of this moment as a key moment in the poem in which Aeneas grapples with his obligation to uphold *pietas*, see Lee, 96-104, and 140-143; Putnam, especially pages 145, 158-159, 162, 172-174, 178, 180, and 185; and Quinn, 272-276.
takes this payment from your shameless blood.’ 111

In his illustration, Gérard captured what some consider to be the most telling and conflicted moment for the *pius* Aeneas in the entire poem. Bent first on destroying Turnus, Aeneas is caught in a moment of hesitation after hearing Turnus’ cry for clemency, and it is Turnus’ mention of their fathers that makes Aeneas falter. Scholars have interpreted this as a moment when Aeneas remembers a warning given to him by Anchises during their visit in the underworld in Book VI.112 Anchises advised his son to “remember, Roman, these will be your arts: to teach the ways of peace to those you conquer, to spare defeated peoples, tame the proud.”113 And yet, the moment Aeneas recognizes Pallas’ belt, he is reminded of Evander’s speech to him and the gods in Book VIII to keep his son Pallas safe in the battle to come.114 In the moment of hesitation, then, Virgil portrays Aeneas weighing “his father’s injunction to spare the suppliant, and his adoptive son’s right to be avenged.”115 Michael C. J. Putnam describes this moment as one in which, “Two forms of *pietas* could thus be said to rest in conflict as Aeneas acts. The first is *pietas* towards his father who in the Underworld had preached *clementia* to his son. . .The second . . .is toward a different father and a surrogate son.”116 Ultimately, in a moment of anger, Aeneas chose to honor the latter, and Virgil closed his epic with Aeneas plunging his sword into Turnus’ chest.

111 Mandelbaum, trans., 335, lines 1240-1268.
112 Lee, 102; and, Putnam, 145, 158, 180.
113 Mandelbaum, trans., 160-161, lines 1135-1137.
114 Ibid., 206-207, lines 610-676.
115 Lee, 142.
In this illustration for Book XII, Gérard chose to depict a scene showing Aeneas torn between duty to his country, to Anchises, and to Evander while at the same time suffering or struggling with the burden of his private loyalties and grief. And, once again, it seems Gérard saw this moment in the *Aeneid* as reminiscent of the subjects pursued in early Davidian painting and borrowed compositional devices from them. The stiffness of the emphatic poses of Aeneas and Turnus reflect the influence of David’s early, severe style, and Osborne rightly notes that the figure of Aeneas appears loosely based on Girodet’s figure of Horatius in his painting *The Death of Camilla* from 1784 (fig. 36).117 The scenes depicted by Girodet and Gérard are also similar thematically. Girodet’s composition stems from the story of the Horatii one which both he and Gérard were intimately familiar with due to David’s exploration of the subject (fig. 8). The story of the Horatii brothers fighting to defend Rome is yet another example of the importance of the virtue of *pietas* in Roman history, and it is easy to see some similarities between the plight of Horatius and of Aeneas. Both heroes slay their victims in part for personal reasons and in part for their great patriotism. Horatius slays his own sister when he finds her mourning the death of her fiancé rather than the death of her two brothers. Horatius’ father defends his sons’ actions as evidence of his overwhelming devotion to his civic duty to defend Rome. Horatius’ anger is echoed by

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116 *Virgil’s Aeneid*, 158.
117 Pierre Didot, 256. Although the poses of Horatius and Aeneas are not mirror images, enough similarity exists between their facial expressions, stance, and costumes to invite such a comparison. Gérard also appears to have referenced this painting in his illustration for Book IV (fig. 34) discussed on pages 27-30.
Aeneas, whom Virgil describes as “aflame with rage – his wrath was terrible.”118

Girodet was not as attracted to the theme of pietas in the Aeneid and beyond the Didot project. In this regard, his The Death of Camilla is exceptional, but it dates to his early career at a time when he wished to emulate Drouais and to compete with him for his master’s attention.119 The only illustration for the Didot project by Girodet that represents the pious Aeneas is, Aeneas Sacrificing to Neptune on the tomb of Anchises (fig. 45). In Book V, Aeneas and his fleet set out for Carthage, but a storm forces them to land at Drepanum in Sicily where the Trojans hold a day of games to mark the anniversary of the death of Aeneas’ father at this location. Before the games are held, Aeneas decides to honor his father with a sacrifice and rituals at his tomb. In Girodet’s illustration, we see the partially clothed Aeneas at his father’s grave accompanied by Acestes’ (the King of Sicily of Trojan descent) pointing to the tomb and a large retinue in the background. Aeneas here is certainly carrying out an act of pietas by honoring both one of his gods and his father. It is interesting, however, that when Girodet engaged the subject of pietas, he focused upon an almost supernatural episode. Virgil described how once Aeneas began his ritual libation:

*a slippery serpent dragged from the bottom of the shrine its seven enormous coils that wound in seven spirals, while twining gently around the burial mound, gliding between the altars; and its back was marked with blue-gray spots, its scales were flecked with gold that kindled into brightness – just as in the clouds, across the facing sun,*

118 Mandelbaum, trans., 348, line 1264.
119 Crow, 90. Crow explains Girodet took on this subject because it was the current one for the Rome prize competition, for which he was not yet eligible, and based his work on an early study by David.
a rainbow casts a thousand shifting colors. Aeneas was astonished at the sight. The serpent, weaving slowly through the bowls and polished goblets, tasted of the feast, then, harmless, made it way back to the tomb and left the altars it had fed upon.\footnote{Mandelbaum, trans., 108, lines 116-129.}

Clearly the media employed (a black and white engraving) did not allow Girodet to capture the rainbow in the sky or the glittering colors and patterns of the snake, but he does capture this extraordinary moment as the snake tastes the libations and the men behind Aeneas look on with astonished expressions and gestures. Although an act of pietas, this moment, with its inclusion of magical lighting or weather effects and the unexplained activity of the snake, also contains the mysterious and miraculous elements Girodet depicted in his illustrations for Books I, III, VII and even VIII (figs. 29 - 32). Girodet’s interest in pietas in the Aeneid is markedly different from Gérard’s repeated engagement with the theme.

**The Reception of Didot’s Virgil**

In his prospectus for the Virgil of 1797, Didot proudly wrote that the illustrations in his volume were highly finished, harmonious, superior to those of the past, and formed a most interesting series.\footnote{Osborne, 98. “Ainsi donc des estampes, toutes très soignées, ne ressemblent en rien aux vignettes que l’on voit communément dans les livres. . .un ensemble rare, et doit former une suite des plus intéressantes.”} He clearly took great pride in the work done by Gérard and Girodet and hoped the public would agree with him when he published the complete de luxe folio edition of Virgil’s Bucolica, Georgica, et Aenesis in 1798, which included a total of twenty-three illustrations engraved after the designs of Gérard and
Girodet. His efforts initially met with critical approbation; in the year of its publication, he exhibited it at the *Exposition des Produits de l’Industrie française*, where it received a gold medal.\(^{122}\) The reception of the illustrations in the larger art world was, however, mixed at best. In 1798, a *Rapport sur le Virgile de Didot l’aîné* was presented to the Institut by a committee appointed specifically to review the folio.\(^{123}\) While the committee praised Didot’s work for its typography, the even quality of its letterpress, and the superiority of its paper’s texture and color, it made few comments on individual illustrations, choosing instead to issue general comments upon them as a group:

> The origins of the engravings of the Virgil are not at all, it is true, from paintings; but they are the designs of excellent artists, Girodet and Gérard. For the engravers, Didot had the good sense to choose among those who one knows are best in the genre… and he made all the sacrifices demanded of a highly remarkable execution. The prints, considered by themselves, are beautiful;… and considering moreover as destined to ornament a book, they are as a whole, superior to those which have been given until our day.\(^{124}\)

On the one hand, the committee lamented the fact that the illustrations did not stem from paintings; on the other hand, it forgave Didot this due to the fact that he employed

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\(^{122}\) Ibid., 100.

\(^{123}\) Ibid., 96-97. Camus wrote the report as the head of the committee which consisted also of the artists Lassus, Naigeon, Vincent, and Regnault.

\(^{124}\) Ibid., 97. “Les originaux des gravures du Virgile ne sont point, il est vrai, des tableaux; mais ce sont des dessins d’excellens artistes, Girodet et Gérard. Pour les graveurs, Didot a le bon esprit de les choisir parmi ce que l’on connoit de mieux dans le genre… et il faut tous les sacrifices que demande une exécution soignée. Les estampes, considérées en elles-mêmes, sont belles;… et considérées de plus comme destinées à orner un livre, elles sont dans leur ensemble, supérieurs à ce qui a été donné jusqu’à nos jours.”
excellent artists and chose his engravers well. The committee also agreed with Didot that the illustrations surpassed those of past centuries. Yet, it is also significant to note how the committee couched its praise. The report states that the illustrations are beautiful, and perhaps even exceptional, but only in so far as they are book ornamentation. There seems to be a latent suggestion here that book illustration, while commendable, was still a “lesser” art form.

It appears that this was the opinion of art critics to engraved illustrations as a whole throughout the 1790s, no matter the artist or the publisher. Although the exhibition of prints had been on the rise since the Salons of 1791 and 1793, critics during the mid to late-1790s consistently wrote of their abhorrence of reviewing works they associated with commerce. In their general comments upon engravings for book illustration, critics complained variously that “the engraving having become today a business venture rather than an art, we will say only a word,” and “in the Arts, as soon as the interest of profit appears, genius withdraws.”\textsuperscript{125} Given the critics’ disdain for engravings associated with the commercial trade of publishing, it is hardly surprising that very few critical reviews of any artist’s designs for the book trade can be found during the 1790s.\textsuperscript{126} Despite the seriousness and ambition Gérard and Girodet invested

\textsuperscript{125} The first quotation [“la gravure étant devenue aujourd’hui une \textit{entreprise} plutôt qu’un art, nous n’en dirons qu’un mot, . . .”] is by an anonymous critic writing for the \textit{Journal du Bulletin universel des sciences, des lettres et des arts} (Paris: 1799), Coll. Deloynes, XXI, 634. The second quotation [“ . . . dans les Arts, dès que l’intérêt du gain approache, le génie s’éloigne.”] is the anonymous Salon review in \textit{Mercure de France} (Paris: 1798), Coll. Deloynes, t.XX, #538.

\textsuperscript{126} Osborne, 98.
in the *Aeneid* illustrations and the inspiration they drew from them for future paintings, in a climate full of hostility towards such ventures it is hardly surprising that the artists chose not to exhibit their drawings for the project, only exhibited a few of the engravings, and then only under the name of the engraver.\(^{127}\) Moreover, surviving criticism suggests that critics ignored the few Virgil engravings that were exhibited.\(^{128}\) While this lack of critical record can certainly be explained by the period’s hierarchical distinctions between visual media and between art and commerce (both of which persist in some circles of art historical scholarship to this day), the association of David with the project is another factor to be taken into account. Although David himself never publically acknowledged his role, Didot boasted of the great master’s guidance in several of his advertisements and announcements for the edition.\(^{129}\) Given this, critics would certainly have been aware that David worked with Didot on a variety of literary projects and even with the printing of *assignats* beginning in 1792.\(^{130}\) When illustrations for Didot’s Virgil and other editions began to appear more regularly at the Salons of

\(^{127}\) The engraving designed by Girodet for Book III (fig. 30) was exhibited in the Salon of 1793 under the name of Godefroy, number 426 in the *livret*. At the Salon of 1798, the engraving he designed for Book V (fig. 45) was exhibited under the name of its engraver, Massard, as number 725 in the *livret*. Gérard only ever exhibited one of his *Aeneid* illustrations at the Salon of 1798 under the name of Copia as number 708 in the *livret*.

\(^{128}\) A search of the surviving criticism assembled in the Deloynes Collection yields no commentary on the three engravings mentioned in the previous footnote. Osborne (97-98) concurs that criticism, if it once existed, no longer does so for the *Aeneid* illustrations.

\(^{129}\) Osborne, 84-85, 97-98. Osborne suggests that David may not have associated his name in public with the projects due to critical prejudice against such media, and possibly due to his own pride and defensiveness.
1798 and 1799, David himself was in political disgrace as a former Jacobin. The lack of critical praise for the few Aeneid illustrations that were exhibited, as well as for those from other Didot editions, may also then stem in part from a critical backlash against David.\textsuperscript{131}

In a letter Didot wrote and read at the Institut in 1799, entitled On the Necessity of Encouraging Artists, Didot declared that “The fine arts are for everyone.”\textsuperscript{132} In the face of the hostility of the art world to commercial book illustration, Didot maintained a vision in which the great artists could be employed by the printing industry in order to elevate art, industry, and taste.\textsuperscript{133} Despite his goals, his editions did not reach everyone; the fact of the matter is that they were luxury volumes that carried a high price tag. Perhaps for this reason alone, all of his Louvre editions were financial failures: “the market did not bear the cost of their production. On the contrary, this was supported by the firm at considerable financial loss. The price of Didot’s idealistic dedication to the art of the book came high.”\textsuperscript{134} While it is true that Didot’s Virgil enjoyed some support during the Consulate, in 1810 some of the original drawings and vellum copies failed to meet their reserve price at auction; at Didot’s death in 1853, fifty copies of the Virgil remained unsold.\textsuperscript{135} Napoleon’s rise to power in many ways coincided with

\begin{footnotes}\footnotetext[130]{Ibid., 32-33.}\footnotetext[131]{Ibid., 99.}\footnotetext[132]{Ibid., 110. “Les beaux-arts sont pour tous.”}\footnotetext[133]{Ibid.}\footnotetext[134]{Ibid., 73.}\footnotetext[135]{Ibid., 101. Osborne reports that an edition of the Virgil was dedicated to Napoleon in 1799 and subsequently presented to General Junot. In addition, Talleyrand}
Didot’s decline, and yet, he fared better than many of his colleagues who declared bankruptcy between 1799 and 1806. Didot did manage to produce illustrated volumes under the Consulate and the Empire (and even during the Restoration), but the return of government patronage for painting meant that many artists who had depended upon Didot had a more significant means of attaining financial support and critical recognition.

Other Napoleonic policies hurt Didot’s reputation. In 1800, Didot failed to win the directorship of the Imperial Press, and in 1804, Didot’s firm was forced to vacate its quarters in the Louvre to make way for Napoleon’s renovations of the palace; by 1814, Didot complained that the government press was too much competition for him and was devastating his business. In many ways, Didot’s de luxe folio editions of the 1790s and early 1800s marked the end of “the great folios in the grand tradition of the purchased twelve copies. According to Osborne, at Didot’s death thousands of his publications were found in storage having never been sold.

136 Hesse, 207. Hesse reports that during this period some forty-two publishers, printers, and booksellers declared bankruptcy including Didot’s own son in 1806. 137 Under the Consulate, Didot published an edition of Delille in 1801 illustrated by Monsiau and another in 1805 illustrated by Catel; Denon’s Voyage dans la Basse et la Haute Egypte, pendant les campagnes du général Bonaparte in 1802; and a Fables de la Fontaine in 1802 illustrated by Percier. Between the Consulate and the Empire, Didot published perhaps his most ambitious work, an edition of Racine from 1801 to 1805 illustrated by Prud’hon, Chaudet, Gérard, Girodet, Moitte, Peyron, Taunay, and Serangeli. During the Empire, Didot published an edition of Ovid in 1806 with illustrations by LeBarbier, Monsiau, and Moreau Le Jeune; Saint-Pierre’s Paul et Virginie in 1806 with illustrations by Lafitte, Girodet, Gérard, Prud’hon, Moreau Le Jeune, and Isabey; Goethe’s The Sufferings of the Young Werther in 1809 illustrated by Moreau le Jeune; and an Anacreon in 1810 illustrated by Girodet and Bouillon. For a listing of these publications and the illustrations for them as well as lesser publications, see Osborne, “Catalogue of Illustrated Classics published by Pierre Didot l’aîné, 182-257.
As the nineteenth century progressed, Didot’s tradition of printing with a handpress and producing copperplate engravings would be replaced by mechanical printing and the more economical, faster, and more readily reproducible techniques of lithography and steel engraving.140

The Differences Between the Aeneid Illustrations by Gérard and Girodet: Summary and Final Thoughts

Few scholars have discussed Gérard’s and Girodet’s illustrations for Didot at length, this study demonstrates that they played a key role in the development of both artists’ oeuvres. The artists took these works as seriously as large-scale compositions, and the illustrations themselves both inspired and were inspired by paintings. Finally, contrary to previous interpretations, the illustrations were not done wholly under the influence of David and as reflections of his Revolutionary politics and aesthetic sensibilities. It becomes clear when exploring the illustrations in depth that this reading is too simplistic and one-sided. Clearly Gérard and Girodet worked on the Aeneid illustrations in distinct classical modes, using it as a means to hone their individual styles, despite sharing a common artistic background. In some ways, Gérard’s illustrations are more in line with David’s pursuits just before and in the first years of the Revolution. For the most part, Gérard eschewed the themes of eroticism and divine influence that run throughout the epic. When he did depict a scene from the affair between Aeneas and Dido in his illustrations for Book IV (fig. 34), he left Aeneas out of

138 Osborne, 144-145.
139 Ibid., 141.
the picture and chose to focus instead on the Dido’s suicide, rather than a scene of
the two lovers together; moreover, Gérard never directly referred to the homoerotic
storylines in the poem. When he represented Aeneas with his divine mother in his
illustration for Book VIII (fig. 32), he played down the more extraordinary elements of
the moment as described by Virgil. In his illustration for Book X (fig. 33), Gérard
presented the moment in the epic when all divine interference is called to a stop.
Gérard’s illustrations, more often than not, are concerned with Aeneas’ actions and
lessons in *pietas* and the personal or private consequences of them. This theme is
consistent with David’s canvases from the 1780s and early 1790s (as well as Girodet’s,
*Death of Camilla*, 1784). Gérard’s continued reliance upon primarily David’s paintings as
a source may stem in part from sheer proximity. He remained with David in Paris for
the majority of the time the Didot project was underway, often absorbed in working on
or making copies of David’s paintings. Given his attraction to his master’s early, severe
style and his precocious ability to imitate it, it is hardly surprising that his *Aeneid*
illustrations are stylistically and thematically similar to David’s early works; Gérard
took the opportunity of the Didot commission to develop his mastery of Davidian
classicism. Gérard’s references to David’s paintings, however, should never be
mistaken for a sign that he was unable to create unique compositions of his own. His
borrowing of motifs from David’s works reveals his deep understanding of the
complicated nature of the content of David’s paintings and he used this understanding

140 Ibid., 147.
to draw thematic links to the subjects he pursued. Lastly, it is important to note that Gérard borrowed from David’s style and classical subject matter more than his politics. If Gérard’s illustrations are to be interpreted in light of the Revolution, it is important to note that they show Gérard to be politically cautious, choosing to preserve the political ambiguity of David’s pre-Revolutionary paintings. In Gérard’s illustrations, we see the beginning of the painter he would become during the Directory and the Empire, benefitting from the vogue for Davidian classicism without being in line with more radical political thought thus allowing him to appeal to fashionable society while avoiding political entanglements at the same time.

The traditional interpretation of the Aeneid illustrations as “endowed... with Revolutionary overtones” is especially problematic when considering Girodet’s illustrations. Unlike Gérard, he chose to focus upon the strains of eroticism, both heterosexual and homosexual (more so the latter), and the theme of divine intervention in Virgil’s epic; moreover, several of his illustrations show moments when the two subjects are intertwined. This is especially true of his illustrations for Book I (fig. 29) and Book III (fig. 30), and could also be considered true of his illustrations for Book VII (fig. 31) and Book IX (fig. 39). When Girodet depicted Aeneas, he chose for the most part to focus on moments when the hero is either passive, acting under the guidance of the gods rather than through his own volition, or when he is with his fellow Trojans.

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141 For a discussion of Gérard’s ability to produce works that were even more severe in style than those of David and show his understanding of the themes of David’s paintings, see Chapter One.
The homoeroticism latent in many of Girodet’s all male scenes comes to the fore in his illustration for Book XI (fig. 35). The theme of *pietas* and of Aeneas divided between public and private realms which Gérard delighted in does not seem to have interested Girodet in the same way. Girodet also differed from Gérard by departing from the style and compositions of David. His brand of classicism here is more emotional, concerned with rendering dramatic lighting effects, using light to model the male figure, and creating generally more visually complicated compositions than those by Gérard.

Girodet may have approached the *Aeneid* project so differently from Gérard for two main reasons. First, Girodet remained in Italy from April of 1790 until November of 1795 pursuing his own artistic and political pursuits. Unlike Gérard, Girodet was separated from the studio which may have allowed him a greater margin of artistic freedom even though David ultimately had to approve both artists’ *Aeneid* designs. Second, we know that Girodet’s relationship with David and his pupils was often problematic. From Crow’s account of David’s studio, it is clear that Girodet felt a constant need to set himself apart from the work of his master and from that of his rivals. Upon finishing *The Sleep of Endymion* (fig. 20), Girodet wrote: “what makes me most happy is that opinion is united that I in no way resemble M. David.” In the *Aeneid* illustrations, Girodet departed both stylistically and thematically from David’s early works and from Gérard’s designs and began to explore homoerotic and

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142 Osborne, 89.
143 Crow, 211.
144 Quoted in Ibid., 134.
otherworldly subject matter for the first time. Girodet’s reaction to David’s tutelage was to create works as unlike those of his master as possible, and he achieved this goal quite early in his career. It took Gérard considerably longer to emerge as an artist independent from his master; in some ways, his entry for the concours de l’an II of 1794-1795 marks a significant step in that direction.
Chapter 3: Stepping Out of the Shadow: 
Gérard’s First Official Success at the Concours de l’an II

Dramatic events directed the course of the French Revolution in virtually every year of its duration, and the period from mid-1793 to late-1795 was no exception. By the late summer and early autumn of 1793, coalition forces had defeated French troops on numerous fronts and occupied French soil along both the northern and southern borders. British fleets were stationed near French ports, and at Toulon on 27 August 1793, anti-revolutionary rebels welcomed them, turning over their port, arsenal, and fleet in exchange for British protection. The situation in the French interior was equally bleak with continued open rebellion throughout the Vendée, Bordeaux, Marseilles and Lyon, in particular. In Paris, fears mounted that Charlotte Corday (who assassinated Jean-Paul Marat on 13 July) was just one of many anti-Revolutionaries secretly operating in the city, especially in those sections to the western end that were not securely under sans-culotte control. Such tensions from without and within the capitol, along with continued complaints over the prices and shortages of basic goods, contributed to a growing sense amongst deputies serving on the Committee of Public Safety that the National Convention was a weak and too moderate government. Georges Jacques Danton proposed on 1 August that the National Convention formally recognize the Committee of Public Safety as France’s provisional government.\(^1\) The Convention never did, but the Committee proved to be the de facto government, after

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\(^1\) William Doyle, *The Oxford History of the French Revolution* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990), 247-248. Danton’s proposal came after another Committee member, Jeanbon Saint-André made a speech before the Convention stating that France
the uprising of 5 September 1793, which inaugurated the Terror. On 17 September, the Law of Suspects was put into effect, which led to the arrest, prosecution, and execution of any person believed to have the slightest inkling of anti-Republican sentiment. From September to December of 1793, the Committee of Public Safety enacted a number of laws, including the General Maxim on 29 September (designed to limit the prices of basic goods), adopted the new Republican calendar on 5 October, and enacted a series of measures aimed at dechristianization culminating in the decree on 23 November to close all remaining churches. The Law of 14 Frimaire, passed on 4 December, gave the Committee of Public Safety more complete and centralized control over every aspect of the country’s administration and closed the provincial courts formed to handle cases of conspiracy and counter-revolutionary charges. These cases would, for the remainder of the Terror, be solely the province of the Revolutionary Tribunal in Paris. Throughout this initial phase of the Terror, Revolutionary armies also successfully suppressed many of the revolts throughout the country, and led by General Napoleon Bonaparte, took Toulon back from the British on 17 December.

By May 1794, the Committee of Public Safety had, for all intents and purposes, was clearly without a government.

The uprising began on 4 September 1793 as a spontaneous demonstration by Parisian workers demanding higher pay and more food. Pierre Gaspard Chaumette (then president of the Commune) and Jacques Hébert (member of the Commune, journalist, and founder of *Le Père Duchesne*) held radical political beliefs and wanted to force the Convention to adopt the strictest enforcement of the laws. Chaumette and Hébert persuaded the demonstrators, along with thousands of *sans-culottes*, to gather again the following day and march on the Convention, to demand not only better wages and more food but also the creation and enforcement of legislation that made, in the words of deputy Bertrand Barère, “Terror. . .the order of the day.” Quoted in Doyle,
successfully curtailed the power of the Paris Commune. To further its judicial powers, on 10 June 1794, the Committee enacted the Law of 22 Prairial (crafted by Georges Auguste Couthon and supported by Maximillien Robespierre and Louis Antoine de Saint-Just), which broadened the powers of the Revolutionary Tribunal, simplified the process by which it handled cases, essentially barred the accused from presenting a defense, and made the death penalty the punishment for all offenses. Deputies within the Convention and several members of the Committee itself did not, however, universally support the Law of 22 Prairial due to its sweeping terms and fears that Robespierre intended to establish a dictatorship that would end the Republic. Alarmed deputies quickly united against Robespierre and his faction, which was significantly lower in numbers. On 9 and 10 Thermidor an II (27-28 July 1794), Robespierre and his closest allies were arrested and guillotined, marking the end of the Terror and the beginning of the Thermidorean Reaction.

The deputies of the National Convention under Thermidor immediately restructured its committees in order to prevent any one deputy from occupying a powerful position for too long, repealed the Law of 22 Prairial, reconfigured the membership of the Revolutionary Tribunal, and stripped the Committee of Public Safety of all of its duties not pertaining to war and foreign relations. Suspects long in prison were released, supporters of the Terror were executed, and on 22 Brumaire an II (12 November 1794) the Convention ordered the closing of the Jacobin Club. From the end of 1794 through the autumn of 1795 during the “White Terror,” Jacobins across the
country were executed and anti-Jacobin mobs attacked everything from theatre performances to liberty trees in an attempt to purge the country of any vestige of the political party. The Thermidorean Reaction was also a period of amnesty for émigrés and Federalists who began to return. Slowly upper-class French society reemerged, but the majority of the middle and lower classes continued to suffer from shortages and inflated prices. Sans-culottes began to threaten uprisings in an effort to force the National Convention to address the living conditions of the working classes, and on 12 Germinal an III (1 April 1795) a mob of some 10,000 Parisians invaded the meeting place of the Convention to demand that the government alleviate their suffering and enforce the Constitution of 1793. The return of émigrés, which accelerated in the summer of 1795, only added to the growing royalist threat and overall political instability of the Thermidorean government.

The Concours de l'An II

Since the beginning of the Revolution and especially throughout the Terror, the constant political upheaval, the lack of public funds for the arts, and the exile of many members of the upper classes left artists with little patronage. By 1794, art critics and commentators were openly disparaging the state of the visual arts in France, and many called for the government to regenerate the arts and put them in the service of the Republic. In response, the Committee of Public Safety proposed a major competition

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in Floréal an II (April 1794) known as the concours de l’an II.\textsuperscript{4} Given the paucity of other opportunities for commissions, it is hardly surprising that Gérard, along with the majority of artists in Paris, submitted drawings.\textsuperscript{5}

The concours included competitions for architects and artists in all media. Painters were asked to depict the most glorious events of the Revolution.\textsuperscript{6} The government clearly intended the entries to serve as propaganda, reminding the citizenry of the reasons why the Revolution had begun and of its triumphant moments. The Committee of Public Safety gave the painters only a month to produce a study of their proposed works; upon completion, the studies were to be displayed in the Convention’s quarters and judged by a jury.\textsuperscript{7} The Convention promised the winners the financial support necessary to undertake their proposed works, which would be given to the Republic upon completion. The first entries, three esquisses, were submitted to Moreau l’aîné on 8 Prairial (27 May), and the last entry by Demachy arrived on 20 Messidor (8 July).\textsuperscript{8} The long delay between the announcement of the competition and that of its results (nearly a year and a half) on 14 Fructidor, an III (31 August 1795) was due to the fall of Robespierre on 9 Thermidor, an II (27 July 1794), the establishment of

\textsuperscript{4} Monique Moulin, “François Gérard, peintre du 10 août 1792,” Gazette des Beaux-Arts (May-June 1983):197. The concours was gradually discussed and organized from as early as the summer of 1793. The final details were made public in a series of announcements on 3, 5, 12, and 25 Floréal, an II (22, 24, April and 1, 14 June 1794).

\textsuperscript{5} Olander, 31.

\textsuperscript{6} Ibid. The first announcement called upon artists to represent “les époques les plus glorieuses de la Révolution Française.”

\textsuperscript{7} Régis Michel, Le beau idéal ou l’art du concept (Paris: Éditions de la Réunion des Musées Nationaux, 1989), 122.

\textsuperscript{8} Olander, fn.12, 43-44.
the new majority in the Convention, and the organization of a new jury to judge the contest. The fall of Robespierre at the end of July led to delays in the judging, which began on 9 Frimaire, an III (29 November 1794) when the entrants elected a jury composed of twenty-seven peers who were non-competitors. They met for the first time on 17 Nivôse, an III (6 January 1795), ended their deliberations on 21 Prairial, an III (9 June 1795), and finally announced the winners on 14 Fructidor, an III (31 August 1795).

9 Ibid. The fall of Robespierre at the end of July led to delays in the judging, which began on 9 Frimaire, an III (29 November 1794) when the entrants elected a jury composed of twenty-seven peers who were non-competitors. They met for the first time on 17 Nivôse, an III (6 January 1795), ended their deliberations on 21 Prairial, an III (9 June 1795), and finally announced the winners on 14 Fructidor, an III (31 August 1795).

10 Thomas Crow, Emulation: Making Artists for Revolutionary France (New Haven,
favoring a single one. The work is perhaps better understood as a product of the divided and uncertain political climate of the period from 1792 to 1795, rather than as a work with an unequivocal Jacobin political agenda. If the latter were the case, the drawing probably would not have been successful in the both the year II, when the concours began, and under Thermidor, when the jury announced the winners.

Gérard’s image was a success for several key reasons. His choice of subject matter was unique among the concours entries and engaged several of the central themes of Revolutionary life and politics. These included the disorder present within the government and the numerous political factions fighting for control, the place of women in the public/political sphere, royal corruption, and the role of the populace in the Revolution. In order to engage the viewer in these topics, Gérard sought a delicate balance between accuracy and invention, tempering empirical details with the ennobling rhetoric of history painting. This balancing act is present in virtually every aspect of the work, from its iconography to the way in which Gérard designed the composition. His seeming truth to actual events convinces the viewer of his clear engagement with contemporary politics, while simultaneously masking his own political ambivalence. Contrary to current perceptions, the evidence suggests that Gérard’s politics were never as clearly defined as those of David or many of his peers.

The Insurrection of 10 August 1792

Following the mandates of the concours, Gérard focused on one of the great revolutionary journées, and one that sealed the fate of the French monarchy: the popular

Connecticut, Yale University Press, 1995), 197.
insurrection which led to the abdication and eventual execution of the king and queen. The stage was being set for this attack as early as the spring of 1792, when fear of foreign invasion, the grave economic crises (caused by the introduction of the assignat and the rise in food costs), and exasperation over the king’s power to veto the decisions of the National Assembly began to anger the fédérés (essentially municipal militias) and the more radical members of the Parisian sections (the sectionnaires), or, as they came to be known, the sans-culottes.11 Called to Paris by the leaders of the sections, the fédérés began to arrive in the city on 8 July ostensibly to attend the annual Fête de la Fédération – a celebration of the fall of the Bastille on 14 July 1789. The Assembly sanctioned the presence of the fédérés, thinking they would help protect Paris from the invasion of Prussian forces. To that end, the Assembly also authorized the arming of all citizens. Essentially, the Assembly welcomed and helped to arm the mob that would soon attack the Hôtel-de-Ville, the Tuileries Palace, and its own meeting place.

The fédérés had their own agenda for marching to Paris and brought with them still more extreme notions about the king than were present in even the most radical clubs of Paris. They made their demands public on 6 August, when a massive assembly of fédérés and sans-culottes gathered in the Champs de Mars, demanded the abdication of Louis XVI, and warned the Assembly that such action must be put into effect or an armed insurrection would take place. Late in the evening of 9-10 August, as the Assembly deliberated over what action to take against the insurgents’ demands, toscins

began to sound announcing the beginning of the revolt. The insurgents first attacked the Hôtel-de-Ville, held the mayor of Paris prisoner, did away with the municipal council, and formed a provisionary government, the Revolutionary Commune. The Commune called the marquis de Mandat, commander of the National Guard, to the city hall and immediately arrested him. As he was led to prison, someone in the crowds outside the Hôtel-de-Ville shot and killed him.12 The insurgents next attacked the Tuileries Palace, protected by an army comprised of Swiss guards, National Guardsmen, mounted police, and noblemen who rallied to the king’s side, known as the chevaliers du poignard.13 By the time of this battle, however, the majority of the defensive forces had gone over to the other side, and only some of the Swiss guards remained faithful to the monarchy. By the end of the battle, approximately 600 of the 900 Swiss, 90 fédérés, and nearly 300 sectionnaires were dead.14 The insurgents looted the palace and then destroyed monuments and statues symbolic of the ancien régime throughout Paris.

**Gérard’s Choice of Subject Matter**

Prior to the concours, the only painting of the 10th of August to be shown publicly was Jacques Bertaux’s Capture of the Tuileries Palace, the Tenth of August 1792 (fig. 47) at the Salon of 1793. Bertaux focused on the battle outside the Tuileries and clearly

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13 Ibid.

championed the insurgents by painting a scene littered with the dead bodies of Swiss guards, making it seem as if the number of casualties on the patriots’ side were few and far between. His decision to illustrate a moment from a *grande journée* in painting is exceptional, given that prior to the *concours* it was primarily popular printmakers who treated such subjects. Some of the first representations of the insurrection were the small, crudely designed etchings that appeared in Louis-Marie Prudhomme’s popular radical journal *Révolutions de Paris* (figs. 48 and 49). After 1794, these subjects entered the realm of official art, as painters drew on the large body of prints for the *concours*.

Yet this was not the case for Gérard. A survey of the prints illustrating the 10th of August reveals that most printmakers focused on scenes of battles and violence. Rather than depicting the bloodshed at the Tuileries or the destruction in Parisian streets, Gérard chose to depict the aftermath of the battle as it played out within the National Assembly. No other painter entered the *concours* with this specific subject, the scene was not exhibited at the Salon either before or after Gérard created his drawing, and it appears that no printmaker illustrated the same event inside the Assembly.

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16 Olander, 36 and 40.

17 A thorough search of popular prints in the collections of the Bibliothèque Nationale and the Musée Carnavalet failed to produce any other depictions of this
Gérard’s choice was, as it turned out, a rather savvy one. He could not have anticipated the delays that plagued the *concours* or the fall of Robespierre, but the Thermidorean regime clearly preferred his choice of subject matter over the others. Despite the more moderate political climate of Thermidor, some artists withdrew works depicting politically radical subjects for fear of anti-Jacobin sentiments on the part of the jury. For example, Pierre-Etienne Lesueur removed his *Execution of Louis XVI* (fig. 50) sometime in Vendémiaire an II (September 1794).\(^{18}\) Another artist who seems to have suffered from his choice of subject matter was a fellow Davidian, Fulchran-Jean Harriet, who entered his *The 2nd of June 1793* (fig. 51). His composition focused on the insurrection that led to the arrest of the twenty-nine Girondin deputies and the ascendancy of the Jacobins within the Convention.\(^{19}\) The original jury for the *concours* formed while Robespierre was still in power awarded Harriet a prize for his entry, but the final jury comprised during Thermidor did not honor this award.\(^{20}\) While the Thermidorean jury insisted that it only considered the intrinsic merits of the entries on display, it is hardly surprising they did not choose this scene of Jacobin triumph.\(^{21}\)

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\(^{19}\) Ibid., 154.

\(^{20}\) Ibid., 151.

\(^{21}\) Olander, 41.
Although it is difficult to document, such “subject prejudice” appears to have been a determining factor in the jury’s choice of winners; clearly Gérard did not fall victim to such discrimination.22

While Gérard’s drawing apparently avoided the pitfalls that eliminated other politically-charged entries in the *concours*, the positive qualities that singled it out for first prize are more difficult to ascertain. This chapter argues that its success is related to the fact that Gérard incorporated more of the individual figures and groups who played a role in the 10th of August in particular and in the Revolution in general, chiefly because he focused on the events as they unfolded inside the Assembly (rather than a scene of violence), and because he freely combined fact with fiction.

**Gérard’s Cast of Characters**

The scene illustrated in Gérard’s drawing does not correspond to any precise historical moment. The overpopulated, dizzying composition is not, however, simply the product of the artist’s imagination; rather, it represents a careful blending of invention and reportage constructed from several different moments.23 Gérard’s dramatic scene takes place within the Salle du Manège, the former royal riding academy and horse stables next to the Tuileries palace where the National Assembly met.

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22 Ibid.

23 Numerous accounts of the events would have been available to Gérard, in the form of eyewitness reports published in the press. Of course, Gérard may have witnessed some of the events himself, although this is not known. Michel states (124) that Gérard had access to government reports, written statements, and popular prints centered upon the events that took place in the Assembly. My search of popular prints has not yielded any images of the events which transpired inside the Assembly. It is not made clear here or in any other source whether or not Gérard was granted specific
Throughout the insurrection of the 9th and 10th, the Assembly remained in session. The official minutes of the meetings of the Assembly, published in *La Logographe*, contain accounts made by citizens and deputies who delivered updates of the battle waging outside. Sometime after the fighting ceased, around 11:00 pm on the night of the 10th, a deputation of representatives from the newly formed Commune were allowed into the Assembly. One of the delegates approached the bar and spoke:

Legislators! The new magistrates of the people appear at your bar. The dangers of the country occasioned our election. The circumstances rendered it necessary; and our patriotism renders us worthy of it. The people, at length tired of being during four years the dupes of the perfidy of the court, have thought it time to endeavor to save our empire from the brink of ruin.

With these words, the Commune charged the Assembly with having lost track of the original intentions of the Revolution and called for the dethronement of the king.

Gérard chose this dramatic turning point in the Revolution for his *concours* entry. Yet significantly, he did not depict the members of the Commune charging the bar; instead, to the left of the center of the composition, he replaced the real actors with three permission by the government to access its own records.

24 See 17 August 1792, #316, 923-28 for the reports recorded by the Assembly’s stenographers.

25 I have quoted this passage from John Moore, *A Journal During a Residence in France from the Beginning of August to the Middle of December, 1792*, v.1, (London: G.G.J. and J. Robinson, 1793), 54, because the microfilm copy of *La Logographe* (926) at the Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris, which contains this speech is partially illegible. A comparison between Moore’s text and what is legible in *La Logographe* reveals that Moore’s transcription is faithful to the official report. “Législateurs! Ce sont de nouveaux magistrats du peuple qui se présentant à votre barre. Les circonstances la consacrent; et notre patriotisme saura nous en rendre dignes. Le peuple, las enfin d’être depuis quatre ans l’éternel jouet des perfidies de la cour et des intrigans, a senti qu’il étoit tens d’arrêter l’empire sur les bords de l’abyme.”

26 *La Logographe*, 926 and Moore, 55.
symbolic figures. In the center, identifiable by his long coat and distinctive helmet, a Swiss guard represents those who converted to the side of the French people. To either side of him stand two Frenchmen. The figure furthest from the viewer is easily recognized by his *bonnet rouge* as a *sans-culotte*, while his counterpart (closest to the viewer) is most likely a *fédéré*. Each of these groups favored wearing the loose-fitting trousers (*le pantalon*) of manual workers and a short, waist-length jacket (*le carmagnole*).²⁷

These three figures echo the poses of David’s *Horatii* brothers (fig. 8), implicitly likening their struggle for a republic to the Horatii’s defense of their city. In David’s canvas, the figures swear an oath to defend Rome and occupy a private setting. Gérard, however, shows the insurgents invading the territory of the law, charging directly toward their enemies, pointing accusing fingers, and trampling a crown and scepter. By replacing the members of the Commune with these three figures representative of the people united against the deputies and the monarchy alike, Gérard referred to the fighting outside the Manège without actually depicting it. By including symbols of royal power beneath the insurgents’ feet, he referred to both the real destruction of royal statues and property on the 10ᵗʰ and following days and the symbolic destruction of the monarchy, which the 10ᵗʰ of August came to represent in the minds of the French.

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²⁷ Aileen Ribeiro, *Fashion in the French Revolution* (London: B.T. Batsford, Ltd., 1988), 85-86. Because the different groups wore similar clothing, it is difficult to determine the exact identity of the figure closest to the viewer. He is obviously one of the insurgents, and may be specifically a *fédéré* from Marseille. The *carmagnole* was names after Carmagnola near Turin, which was the home of many of the original Italian settlers of Marseille. The *bonnet rouge*, however, specifically identifies the *sans-culotte*. 
Faithful to the eye-witness accounts of the event, Gérard depicted the royals in the Manège; the gesture of the insurgents leads directly to them. At 9:30 in the morning of the 10th, the procureur-général of the department of Paris, Pierre-Louis Roederer, finally persuaded the king to flee the Tuileries Palace and seek the sanctuary of the National Assembly. Accompanied by National and Swiss guards, Louis XVI, Marie-Antoinette, their children, and several royal ministers entered the Manège. The Constitution of 1791, however, stipulated that the king could not be present in the Assembly during its deliberations. After debating where the royals could remain safe from the mob without breaking this rule, the Assembly decided that they should be relegated to the stenographer’s box behind the desk of the President. It has been asserted that curtains separated this loge from the rest of the Assembly and that another of Gérard’s ingenious fabrications is his depiction of the royal family behind bars, thus prefiguring their eventual imprisonment at the Temple. While a scene of the royals behind bars in 1792 is certainly symbolic of their fate, Gérard in this instance simply depicted the setting as it was – numerous sources indicate that iron bars did cover the opening to the room at this time.

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28 La Logographe, 925.
29 Ibid. It was in this box that the stenographers and reporters took minutes of the meetings for publication in La Logographe and various other journals.
30 Crow, 197-198.
31 See Moore, 52, 97, and 186; Anonymous, “Précis Historiques de la Révolution du 10 Août,” La Républicain: Journal des Hommes Libres de Tous les Pays, November 1792, xvj.; and, L.C. Bigot de Sainte-Croix, Histoire de la Conspiration du 10 Août (London: 1793), 20 and 43. Moore provides the most thorough description of the loge on page 97: “The loge or box in which the royal family sat for three days from morning till night, is a small room of about nine or ten feet square, at the president’s right hand, and
Sainte-Croix, who accompanied the royal family into the loge, expressed outrage at the fact that the royals remained confined in such a small space behind an iron grill for three days before being moved to the Temple.  

Gérard experimented with ways to emphasize the conflict between the insurgents and the royals before settling on his final composition. In a small oil sketch (fig. 52), he dramatically illuminated the two figure groups in a single band of light, throwing the rest of the composition into shadow. In the finished drawing (fig. 46), however, he greatly softened the artificial effects seen in the study and brought the deputies of the Assembly out of the shadows. By making this change, Gérard essentially echoed the Communards’ accusations and made the deputies just as much the target of the insurgents’ indictment as the monarchy. The lower right corner of the composition is crowded with the accused legislators. Among them, Gérard included the Girondin and current President of the National Assembly, Gaudet, seated at the desk just in front and next to the stenographer’s box. Other deputies huddle around and below Gaudet’s desk in the space normally reserved for secretaries.

Various sources note that the Commune’s delegates entered the hall carrying banners inscribed with the words “patrie, liberté, égalité.” Gérard included one of these banners, but once again he was not entirely faithful to the facts and switched the order

32 Histoire de la Conspiration..., 43 and 59.
34 La Logographe, 926 and Moore, 54.
of the words to read instead, “patrie, égalité, liberté.” Along with this banner, he included a second sign inscribed with the words plus de roi and capped with a bonnet rouge, one of the most easily recognized symbols of freedom during the Revolution. Gérard invented this second sign, which was never a part of the original event. Its inclusion, along with Gérard’s placement of “equality” before “liberty” in the other banner, represents the demands of a populace united as equals seeking liberty from the tyranny of unfair government, whether it be the legislators or the king.

The reports of the activity inside the Manège record no single moment when a mass of insurgents rushed the Assembly; instead, they reveal that various citizens or groups of them periodically entered and approached the bar. Taking artistic license, Gérard created a more dramatic and chaotic scene by depicting the floor of the hall crowded with figures and surrounded by deputies in the tribunes, directly under the galleries. Gérard shows them having risen from their benches, which they did in fact do at different points during this session. Their boisterousness is matched by the public in the galleries directly above the tribunes. We know that the crowd in the galleries of the National Assembly repeatedly interrupted the proceedings by applauding, cheering, and even heckling. John Moore (a British doctor living in Paris during 1792), who attended the Assembly’s sessions on the 9th and the 10th, wrote that he was “shocked at the savage disposition manifested by some of the people in the

36 Michel, 124. No mention of this sign is made in La Logographe or in Moore.
A deputy seated next to him remarked that the people above them “are ferocious beasts,” and numerous calls “that the insolence of the people in the galleries should be checked” were made to no avail. Even the threat of beheading failed to silence the public and only elicited a “loud and universal peal of laughter.” Gérard captured the raucous atmosphere of the galleries where individuals crowd together raise their hands, appear to shout, and lean over the balconies to get a better glimpse of the action below.

Gérard barely delineated the majority of the figures in the far galleries and floor of the hall. To the left of the lower part of the composition, however, he clearly articulated a group of figures carrying a young man into the room who looks towards the viewer, raises a bonnet rouge in one hand, and leans on a young boy carrying a sword. This figure grouping may allude to one of the more extraordinary moments after the fighting. At some point on the night of the 10th, as Moore explained:

After the Swiss began to give way, and when those ill-fated soldiers, assailed on all sides, were slaughtered without remorse, a citizen of Paris had the humanity and the courage to protect one of them whom he saw overpowered by numbers, and ready to be sacrificed.

Having torn this poor Swiss from the hands of his assailants, he conducted him over the bodies of his countrymen to the bar of the National Assembly – “Here (cried the generous Frenchman) let this brave soldier find protection – I have saved him from the fury of my fellow citizens, whose enemy he never was, and only appeared to be through the errors of others;
that is now expiated, and Oh! Let him in this hall find mercy!"\textsuperscript{42} After the speech, all those present burst into a great round of applause and cheers. Deputies quickly motioned that this great citizen’s name be recorded in the minutes.\textsuperscript{43}

It is impossible to know for certain whether or not Gérard intended this figure to represent the Swiss guard or simply included it as a means of referring to the many patriots wounded on this day. Either way, the inclusion of the wounded, yet supported, figure registers the cost of fighting for liberty, and testifies to the bravery and unity of the insurgents. If the figure is indeed a fallen Swiss, the motif serves to extol the virtues of the Revolutionaries by lauding their clemency. This figure, like the three insurgents, reveals Gérard’s intention to treat his subject as a history painting, conveying its moral lesson through a limited number of significant actions. The dilemma of his drawing, however, was that contemporary politics and public figures did not fit neatly into such a scheme and their significance changed rapidly.

**The Disorder of Revolutionary Politics and Gérard’s Tenth**

If one thing characterizes the period surrounding the 10\textsuperscript{th} of August, it is the uncertainty and instability present amongst the various factions maneuvering in Paris. In May of 1792, Lord Gower, an English ambassador in Paris, described a divided city. On the one hand, he noted how “the most ardent advocates of the Revolution begin now to wish and pray, and even cry out, for the establishment of despotic power;” on

\textsuperscript{42} *A Journal During a Residence*, 187-188.

\textsuperscript{43} This incident appears in *La Logographe*, 928. The citizens’ name is recorded as M. Clémence, wine merchant. What is not recorded, is Moore’s testimony (189) that the king and queen were the first to applaud.
the other hand, he also commented on the disarray within the Jacobin camp and on the factional in-fighting in the Assembly itself.44 Something of the turbulent atmosphere of Paris just prior to the 10th is reflected in the opening lines of the 6 August 1792 issue of La Gazette de Paris: “all the hordes, whether those who talk or those who slay, Republicans, Pétionists, Innovators, Brissotins, Philosophers, are writing, debating, slandering, sharpening daggers, distributing ammunition, issuing orders, running here and there, bumping into one another.”45 The threat of violence against National Assembly deputies escalated in the days prior to 10 August and several were attacked on the night of 9 August (while others met their fate at the guillotine after Robespierre assumed power).46 Within the Manège itself on the night of 10 August:

An atmosphere of unrest pervaded the Assembly, yet only manifested itself in dull murmurings, arising from private conversations, and from the need to know who was asking all the questions and who was giving the reports. The insults thrown at a large number of deputies on leaving yesterday’s session, the acts of violence towards several of them, and the sinister threats that assailed those members who had the courage to speak their minds, had filled almost every heart with a deep and doleful indignation, which, before showing itself openly, manifested itself in the hushed conversations of the majority. During this time another party in the Assembly, the least considerable, appeared sad and anxious.47

Before the insurgents entered the Manège, the suspicion between the parties became palpable when one deputy approached the bar and demanded that it was necessary to “watch the capitol closely and the traitors who are gathered there; we must strike the ministers already overthrown, and watch out equally for the present ministers to do no harm.”

Gérard depicted the chaotic atmosphere within the Manège and his drawing conveys the power struggles, suspicions, and unrest both between the insurgents and political factions and within the factions themselves on the night of 9-10 August specifically (and more generally from the fall of 1792 until the establishment of Thermidor.) Few of Gérard’s deputies look directly at the insurgents; instead, they turn away and seem more concerned with eyeing one another. Some point fingers, others seem to whisper, one looks to the royals, and one deputy, seemingly unable to stand the tension, rests his head in both hands. The poses and expressions of these men are curiously ambiguous. For example, does the deputy seated at the front of the dais hold his head in his hands out of shame or disgust, or is he realizing the end of his tenure and uncertainty of his fate? The strident pose, clenched fists, locked elbows, and stern expression of Gaudet (one of the only easily recognized deputies in Gérard’s drawing, seated at the desk on the right margin) reveals his determination to face the insurgents directly and contrasts sharply with the anguished expressions of his fellow deputies.

Some key political factions are notably absent from Gérard’s image. No Jacobins

47 Translated extract reprinted in Gilchrist and Murray, 149.
48 Extract of a deputy’s speech translated and reprinted in Ibid., 149.
are present despite the fact that Jacobin leaders supported and fomented the action
of the insurgents and used them for political gain.\footnote{Richet, 130. See also François Furet, *Revolutionary France, 1770-1880*, trans. Antonia Nevill (Oxford: Basil Blackwell Ltd., 1992), 109.} Given that art historians have
regarded Gérard as sharing the political commitments of David and have interpreted
his *concours* entry as a celebration of the ascendancy of the Jacobins, this is a curious
omission, and one that suggests Gérard was not so interested in creating specifically
Jacobin propaganda. Gérard also excluded another party that played a pivotal role in
the 10\textsuperscript{th} – the members of the newly formed Commune. It is often argued that the
Commune, more than any other force, directed the insurrection and held the most
power in the months directly following the 10\textsuperscript{th} of August.\footnote{See for example, Richet 130-132; Furet, 109-111; and A. Aulard, *The French
Publishing Ltd., 1990).} What could account for
Gérard’s decision to replace the members of the Commune who actually appeared
before the Assembly with his three symbolic figures and the crowd as a whole? The
answer is to be found in the changes in the government that took place between the 10\textsuperscript{th}
of August and Thermidor.

Within two months of the *grande journée* and after the National Convention
replaced the Assembly, Moore recorded a speech given by the deputy Buzot in which
he complained that the Commune has “usurped so much power” and wielded it “with
so much tyranny” that he wondered what would “prevent the Convention from being
domineered over by the General Commune of Paris, as the Legislative Assembly had
been.” Buzot concluded his speech with a call to bring the Commune under control, to
deprive it of its power, and if possible to have guards protect the Convention from it. How quickly the tide had turned: the Commune that had essentially given the Convention its existence was now its chief enemy. Gérard was no doubt aware of the changes in the political climate, and it is not surprising, therefore, that he minimized the role played by the Commune in the 10th of August. It was a strategic move on Gérard’s part, because in 1794 and 1795 neither the Jacobins nor the Girondins wanted to acknowledge the level of political disorganization surrounding the 10th that allowed for a third, independent political body to usurp so much power.

Not only did Gérard omit the Commune from his version of the event, but he substituted a mob for it. This shifted attention from the power struggle between governing bodies to the actions of the insurgents, to their bravery and patriotism, and to a populace united against despotism. Gérard drove this latter point home with the banners. If Gérard’s concours entry, champions anything, it was the cause of the “People” and not any one politician, party, or governing body. No political faction could argue with such a noble message; indeed, every party claimed to represent the will of the People. While Gérard depicted the divisive nature of Revolutionary politics in his composition, he also made sure to hit upon one of the Revolution’s universal themes.

Women’s Public/Political Life in Revolutionary France and Gérard’s Tenth Terrace, 1910), 75.

51 A Journal During a Residence. . ., v.II, 27.
While the majority of the figures in Gérard’s concours entry are men, he included a number of women in the galleries and two on the floor of the hall. Warren Roberts noted that, “Somewhat incongruously, Gérard’s fierce *sans-culottes*, . . . are accompanied by women. By the spring of 1794, when Gérard began work on his 10 August, the political role of women had been sharply curtailed, and yet in his patriotic painting they are shown center stage, along with the men.”

The simple explanation for this is that Gérard’s subject dates to 1792, when women were still active players in Revolutionary events. In the years before and in the months immediately after the 10th of August, in what Joan Landes refers to as the liberal phase of the Revolution, women enjoyed an active public role in Revolutionary politics. The prominence of women in Gérard’s *Tenth* speaks to his awareness of and willingness to address the issues concerning the participation of women in the course of the Revolution. The anxieties men expressed regarding women’s political/public actions are implied in Gérard’s drawing by his choice of what women to include and how to depict them, as well as those thought best to exclude. There is nothing in Gérard’s drawing to suggest he was a feminist, but he depicted both ends of the spectrum of women’s activity in the Revolution, from their active participation before 1793 to their prescribed roles as republican mothers after this date, when the Republic was constructed against women.

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and not just without them.\textsuperscript{54}

Gérard relegated the majority of the female figures in his drawing to the galleries where they appear side by side with men. During the period from 1789 to 1793, women did indeed attend the sessions of the National Assembly and its subsequent incarnation as the National Convention, as well as the Parisian sections’ general assemblies, male political clubs, and even the Revolutionary Tribunal.\textsuperscript{55} The majority of women who attended these sessions were working class, and judging from the most completely articulated female figures in Gérard’s galleries, he faithfully reproduced their simple dress. Pierre Etienne Le Sueur, a popular printmaker during this period, recorded the characteristic dress of these women in such images as \textit{The Red Cap of Liberty} (fig. 53) and \textit{Patriotic Club of Women} (fig. 54). The women wear the common mop cap or bonnet, at times decorated with a ribbon, and a cotton or woolen dress topped sometimes with a plain apron (as in fig. 53) but almost always with a large kerchief or shawl draped over their shoulders.\textsuperscript{56} In 1794, Gérard painted a bust-length portrait of his cousin, Madame Lecerf, wearing essentially the same working-class attire (fig. 55).

The atmosphere of the galleries was often raucous. While Moore criticized the populace in the galleries as a whole, it was the women who were increasingly regarded as a problem, and their presence became a source of great debate. Some of these

\textsuperscript{54} Ibid., 3-7.


\textsuperscript{56} Ribeiro, 83 and 89.
women came to be known as les tricoteuses, or “knitters,” and Robespierre’s adversaries accused them of being his paid supporters.57 Many women brought their handiwork with them to the galleries; more often than not this was sewing or shredding linens for dressing soldiers’ wounds rather than actual knitting.58 While statistics point out that the majority of these women were either too young or too old to be occupied with the daily raising of children, reports also include complaints that the cries of children brought to the galleries by their mothers interrupted proceedings.59 Gérard included one infant in his Tenth, held aloft by a woman in the galleries, visible just below the arch of the ceiling and in front of the window closest to the viewer. Another child, a small boy, peers out from the upper-right corner of the galleries, almost directly above the seated Gaudet. Despite the fact that women brought their work and perhaps even their children with them, men repeatedly accused them of neglecting their work and duties as mothers and increasingly regarded them as unnatural and dangerous. Although to a viewer today the female figures in Gérard’s galleries may not appear any more menacing than the males, during the Revolution, an animosity and fundamental unease emerged toward women’s new forms of participation in the political arena.60

The type of woman who most threatened men, the militant sans-culottes, is absent from Gérard’s drawing despite the fact that a few of these women did actively engage

57 Godineau, xviii.
58 Ibid., 212.
59 Ibid., 213 and Landes, 110-111.
60 Godineau, xviii.
in the battle at the Tuileries on the night of 9-10 August.\textsuperscript{61} Only one image of the fighting on the 10\textsuperscript{th} includes female fighters, G. Texier’s \textit{Journée of the Tenth of August at the Tuileries Palace} (fig. 56).\textsuperscript{62} Texier included two women in the right background of his scene: one, furthest from the viewer, leads a charge of three men carrying pikes and her counterpart, visible just on the right margin, follows another group of pikemen. An anonymous witness recounted that “thousands of women hurled themselves into the fray, some with sabers, others with pikes; I saw several kill Swiss guards there.”\textsuperscript{63} While this clearly is an exaggeration, three women, Louise Reine Adu (wounded in the thigh by a bullet), Claire Lacombe, and Théroigne de Méricourt, distinguished themselves so much in the fighting that the \textit{fédérés} honored them with civic crowns.\textsuperscript{64}

Numerous popular prints recorded the dress of the militant French woman. One image, \textit{French Women Become Free} (c.1791, fig. 57), depicts Méricourt standing on a rocky outcrop, armed with a pike, having broken the shackles that once bound her to a passive role. She wears a costume akin to a military uniform comprised of a blue jacket and shortened gown, meant for easier movement. Atop her head, a short rounded top hat, decorated with the tri-color cockade, looks similar to those worn by republican

\begin{footnotes}
\item[61] Rudé, 184. These women were also an active presence in the October Days of 1789, in a great deal of the fighting on Parisian streets at least until 1793/94 and in food riots throughout the Revolution.
\item[62] Pressly, 88-89.
\item[63] Translated excerpt taken from Godineau, 110.
\item[64] Ibid., 111. Moore (117) also commented upon the participation of Méricourt whom he saw in person at a meeting of the Jacobins on 17 August 1792. At this meeting, Moore learned that she led an assault by the Marseille \textit{fédérés} against the Swiss. Godineau (245) records the name of a young Parisian artist, Catherine Pochetat who also took part in the attack on the Bastille and on 10 August, but considerably less is
\end{footnotes}
Several printmakers also illustrated the female *sans-culottes* (fig. 58). Here she appears clutching a dagger in one hand and holding a sword upright in the other. While her dress is for the most part generically working-class, the cotton headsquare ornamented with a cockade was a marker of a woman’s support of the Revolution and not just her social class. Led by Lacombe, these women founded the Club des Citoyennes Républicaines Révolutionnaires in February 1793. Its members led armed patrols in the streets of Paris, reported incidents of food hoarding, levied for the Law of the Maximum, and called for the arrest and trial of suspected counter-revolutionaries.

Beginning in 1793, however, within months of the founding of Lacombe’s club, a growing consensus emerged amongst the various political factions that women should not be allowed to participate in the Revolution in this manner. This sentiment gained force after Charlotte Corday’s assassination of Jean-Paul Marat on 13 July 1793 and came to a head, surprisingly enough, over a dispute concerning an article of clothing. On 21 September 1793, in response to petitions by the Revolutionary Republican Women, the Convention ruled that all women must wear the tricolor cockade; however, the women also pressed for the right to wear the *bonnet rouge*. On 6 Brumaire, an II (28 October 1793), while attempting to force Parisian market women to don the red cap of known about her.

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65 The description of this outfit is taken from Harris, 293 and Ribeiro, 88. The addition of a plume to the hat accords with the written description of Méricourt, as well.

66 Harris, 293 and 296; Ribeiro, 87.

liberty, Lacombe and her followers were attacked and whipped.\textsuperscript{68} The next day a
group of market women filed a formal complaint against Lacombe’s club and pleaded
with the Convention, in the name of liberty, to be allowed to wear what they pleased.
Applauding this request, the Convention promptly revoked the law requiring women
to wear the cockade.

The debate soon progressed to the question of women’s political rights and the
proper role for them both in the Revolution and new Republic. There emerged a
stereotype of public women as frivolous, disorderly, and deviant. Those who wised to
curtail the rights of women argued that politically active women were neglecting their
true nature and proper roles as caretakers of the home and children. Ironically, as men
silenced women’s public voices, they politicized their roles and wives and mothers.\textsuperscript{69}

On 9 Brumaire, and II (30 October 1793), André Amar, addressing the Convention on
behalf of the Committee of General Security, insisted that women possessed neither the
moral nor physical strength for politics; moreover, he argued that women should be
confined to the private sphere where “morals and even nature has assigned her
functions to her.”\textsuperscript{70} After Amar’s address, the Convention decreed the suppression of
all women’s clubs.\textsuperscript{71} Louis-Marie Prudhomme’s commentary on this decree serves to
highlight what most male republicans felt to be true. In the 10 Brumaire, an II (31

\textsuperscript{68} Madelyn Gutwirth, “The Rights and Wrongs of Women: the Defeat of Feminist
Rhetoric by Revolutionary Allegory,” in \textit{Representing the French Revolution: Literature,
 Historiography, and Art}, ed. James A.W. Heffernan (Hanover, New Hampshire:

\textsuperscript{69} Landes, 106 and 129-138.

\textsuperscript{70} Quoted in Ibid., 143-144.
October 1793) issue of his journal, Révolutions de Paris, he wrote:

*Citoyennes,* be honest and diligent girls, tender and modest wives, wise mothers, and you will be good patriots. True patriotism consists of fulfilling one’s duties and valuing only rights appropriate to each according to sex and age, and not of wearing the [liberty] cap and pantaloons and not carrying pike and pistol. Leave those to men who are born to protect you and make you happy.72

In other words, the best means for women to serve the revolutionary cause became to honor their true natures by remaining in the private sphere, fulfilling their domestic responsibilities, and leaving the politics to men. Given this type of rhetoric, it is hardly surprising that Gérard chose in 1794 not to depict any of the women in his drawing wearing a cockade or a *bonnet rouge,* or any clearly identifiable items associated with female militancy. While Gérard remained faithful to the fact that in 1792 women could still participate in the galleries, by the time his drawing won the *concours* (14 Fructidor, an III [3 August 1795]) these figures represented a bygone era. In Prairial, an III (May 1795), the Convention outlawed women from all galleries, thus eliminating the possibility that women could even be spectators in the political sphere. The only acceptable place for women became their homes and workplaces, where they were expected to receive any news of the Revolution from fathers, husbands, sons, and brothers.73 Amar, Prudhomme, and even writers sympathetic to women began to assert

71 Graham, 248.
73 Landes, 145.
that the home and the woman’s role within it had a civic purpose: to instill patriotic virtues in her children; this was the chief objective of republican motherhood.74

Two female figures in Gérard’s composition allude to the more acceptable roles for women in the Revolution after October 1793. On the floor of the hall, to the far left, behind the wounded soldier, a mother struggles to make her way into the Manège, while she supports her daughter with one arm and extends the other, mimicking the gesture of the men around her. Their location rather conspicuously sets them apart from their counterparts in the galleries. Their classically inspired draperies contrast with the detailed modern dress throughout the rest of his composition. This distinguishes them from politically radical women, aligning them more closely with their allegorical sisters representing such ideals as Liberty, Reason, and Wisdom which proliferated at the same time as real women’s participation in the Revolution was curtailed between late 1793 and early 1795. According to Lynn Hunt, women “could be representative of abstract qualities and collective dreams because women were not about to vote or govern.” The representations of women as allegories was “made possible. . .by the expulsion of women from public affairs.”75 Thus, the rise in the use of female allegories corresponded to the proscription of real women to the role of virtuous republican mothers.

Long before this time, however, David established the visual prototype for

74 Ibid., 144-145.
75 “The Political Psychology of Revolutionary Caricature,” in French Caricature and the French Revolution, 1789-1799, ex. cat., ed. Lynn Hockman (Los Angeles: Grunwald Center for the Arts and Wright Art Gallery, University of California, Los
representing certain aspects of republican motherhood with his *Horatii* (fig. 8) and *Brutus* (fig. 13). In both these paintings, mothers, daughters, sisters, and nursemaids are cast in supportive private roles opposite fathers, husbands, and brothers who act in the public sphere. Although not an exact copy, the main source for Gérard’s mother and daughter in the *Tenth* was clearly David’s *Brutus*. David’s female figures, at least in these two paintings, also function as victims, or at the very least, mournful witnesses. As a history painter trained to seek metaphors for contemporary events in the classical past, Gérard would have seen a parallel between the grief of Brutus’ wife and daughters and the sorrow of an enormous number of women who did indeed lose husbands and/or sons during the Revolution. On the night of 10 August, Moore ventured into the streets after the fighting ceased and described the air as “rent with the exclamations of others, particularly women and children, who trembled for the lives of fathers, husbands, and brothers, who had left their families at the first call to arms, and had not been seen since.”

Moore, like Gérard, may have been invoking the stereotype of the emotional, grieving woman, but certainly they were also responding to the experience of the Revolution.

If the women Gérard included in the galleries reflect the fears about politically active Revolutionary women, the mother and daughter embody competing stereotypes of women that men found comforting. With their classical dress, Gérard’s mother and daughter reference the passive women of David’s paintings and the female allegories of Angeles, 1988), 39.

the Revolution. They may also bring the mid the laudable tales of women’s actions in the early Revolution that could be safely valorized when Gérard began his drawing. In April 1794, at roughly the same time as the first announcements for the concours de l’an II, Léonard Bourdon began to publish his Recueil des Actions héroïque et civiques des Républicains Français. The Recueil purported to be a history of individual citizens, both men and women, whose bravery throughout the course of the Revolution deserved to be recognized. Whether or not all the tales in its pages were true proved to be inconsequential. The Recueil became popular, and at least one of its stories about a woman captured the attention of a variety of artists (figs. 59-61) and provided the subject matter for François-André Vincent’s concours entry (now lost), which shared first prize with Gérard’s drawing. The heroine of Vincent’s image came to known as the Vendéen heroine of St.-Milhier, and her tale of bravery appeared in the third issue of the Recueil. On 5 November 1792, a band of counter-revolutionaries sweeping the provinces confronted her as she worked in her shop. Left alone by her husband fighting on the front lines in France’s war with Austria, she successfully defended herself and her children by pointing a pistol at a barrel of gun powder and threatening to blow it up. In 1794, after the suppression of women’s political activity, the heroine of St.-Milhier could be safely praised for her actions in 1792, because she acted in defense

77 Bourdon began the work in 1793 and issued it in thirteen installments between April and June 1794.
78 Phillipe Bordes, “Un dessin attribué à Charles Thévenin: l’héroïsme féminin au temps de la Révolution,” Revue du Louvre 4 (2000): 56. At one time, figure 59 was attributed to Vincent, but this is no longer accepted and Vincent’s entry remains lost.
79 See issue three, act 28, 25.
of her private space—her family’s business, and by extension, her home. Her actions, like those of other women in the *Recueil*, could be celebrated in a way that those of radical women could not.\textsuperscript{80} Her true name (if she did in fact exist), unlike those of Méricourt and Lacombe, is not known and hardly matters. The purpose of her story was to serve as a role model, as her actions exemplified an ideal of republican motherhood rather than civic or military pride.\textsuperscript{81}

**The Indictment of the Queen in Gérard’s Tenth**

While opinions fluctuated regarding the proper roles of women over the course of the Revolution, Revolutionaries consistently vilified Marie-Antoinette, whom Gérard clearly identifies in his drawing. A woman in the galleries leans over the balcony and points out the infamous queen sequestered in the loge below. From this vantage point, the royal family listened to reports of the destruction of their palace and the calls for the king’s dethronement, as they watched their possessions arrive at the bar. While Louis is reported to have responded to it all “with apparent tranquility” and spent a great deal of energy calming his children, the Queen “showed evident marks of indignation.”\textsuperscript{82}

On the 11\textsuperscript{th}, she was described as leaning forward in the loge, so that she “surveyed

\begin{quotation}
\textsuperscript{80} In fact, the *Recueil* only praises women who supported the Revolution in roles appropriate to their sex. The third issue (19-20) records the donation of jewels by artist’s wives to the National Assembly on 18 September 1789. The fourth issue (20) praises a young girl for taking care of her mother and remaining at home. While a female soldier is recorded in the tenth issue (16-17), Reine Liberté Barreau, she is listed for her bravery as a devoted wife who abandoned fighting in order to care for her wounded husband and fellow soldiers thus overcoming her temporary transgression.
\textsuperscript{81} Bordes, 57.
\textsuperscript{82} Moore, 56 and Sainte-Croix, 44 and 47.
\end{quotation}
every part of the hall,” and her face showed “rage and the most provoking arrogance.” The expression Gérard gave to Marie-Antoinette certainly suggests contempt for the people; furthermore, she is the only member of the group behind bars to look directly, even defiantly, at her accusers. Louis, in contrast, appears in profile, turned away from the hall, in conference with his ministers who crowd the rest of the small space. His purported calm may have been due to the fact that he was confident he could appease the Revolutionaries; he had, after all successfully thwarted the planned insurrection of 20 June 1792 by donning a *bonnet rouge* and drinking to the health of France (fig. 62). In a sardonic twist, Gérard placed a *bonnet rouge* atop a placard declaring “no more king” to represent the fact that Louis was not able to stop the insurrection of 10 August. Insurgents demanded the abdication of the king on the 10th in part because of the power of the royal veto but also due to the excessive spending of the royals. Gérard referred to royal excess by including caskets of jewels and silver on the steps below the secretaries’ desk, perhaps responding to the reports that from the 10th to the 11th citizens repeatedly appeared at the Assembly to deliver the spoils taken from the palace.

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83 Moore, 54.
84 On 20 June 1792, the first anniversary of the king’s flight to Varenne and the third anniversary of the Tennis Court Oath, the members of the Parisian section of faubourg Saint-Antoine staged a massive demonstration. Joined by the more radical *sectionnaires* from throughout Paris, they marched through the streets to the Tuileries palace. Demanding to be admitted, they broke down a gate to the gardens and entered the château, thus trapping Louis XVI for more than two hours. In order to placate the crowd, Louis grabbed a *bonnet rouge* from a member of the mob, put it on, and raised a glass to France. The image of Louis wearing the red cap of liberty was reproduced in numerous caricatures and popular prints, such as the one included here.
Both the king and the queen were charged with lavish spending, but Marie-Antoinette, or “Madame Deficit,” was more frequently accused of squandering the nation’s money and single-handedly bankrupting the country. Many considered her the most formidable woman of the era. One sans-culotte described the queen as “the ruin of France.” Thomas Jefferson went so far as to suggest that, “if there had been no queen, the Revolution would never have happened.” While this is an exaggeration, the perceptions of the queen, fired by both truth and rumor, made her the target for blame. Hunt has explored the numerous pamphlets criticizing the queen at the end of the eighteenth century. The majority of these were pornographic and reveal fundamental anxieties about women occupying positions of power in the public sphere. The authors of these pamphlets attacked the queen for her nationality; she was “the Austrian” and, as such, an agent of foreign interests hostile to France and its king. Many claimed she had too great an influence over her husband, and through him, national politics. Pamphlet authors frequently cast her as a nymphomaniac who engaged in various exploits with men, women, and animals, and declared she had an on-going sexual relationship with the king’s brother, the count of Artois. She

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85 Anonymous report quoted in Ribeiro, 21.
apparently intended her private activities in the Trianon to remain outside the public eye, but in doing so she forgot the “unwritten maxim that royalty has no right to a private life.” 88 Marie-Antoinette found herself trapped. She was a queen and as such had a public role, but she could no more act in it without reproach than she could pursue a private life separate from her official court life.

Gérard invoked the popular image of the queen as arrogant and dismissive of the common people by depicting her refusing to cower in the face of the insurgents and scowling behind the bars of the loge. The caskets of her jewels in the foreground seem to play off another popular image of Marie-Antoinette as the modern Pandora. The mythological woman was sent to earth by Jupiter, and despite admonitions, opened a box which unleashed a host of evils that brought an end to the Golden Age. Grafting this myth onto the story of Marie-Antoinette, the French pamphleteers claimed the Austrians sent her in the guise of a gift to become the bride of Louis XVI, cuckold him, and bring the French under Austria’s control.89 An anonymous print from around 1791, Pandora’s Box (fig. 63) explicitly associates Marie-Antoinette with Pandora. In the image, a group of various social types eagerly look upon a box presented as a gift by the Austrian ambassador. Out of the box pops a doll named “Antoinette.” The interior of the box’s lid features the imperial arms of Austria, and the text on its front reads, “Of all evils, this is the worst.” The ambassador declares, “Here is the only jewel in Austria on

89 Hockman, 184-185.
which one can put a price.” The cases in Gérard’s drawing do not contain tiny Marie-Antoinette dolls, but they do overflow with her jewelry – a sign of her excess. Her reckless spending became a central theme in pamphlets discussing the Diamond Necklace Affair.90 The scandal became so infamous that in its aftermath even a straightforward depiction of the necklace itself (fig. 64) could be interpreted as an indictment of Marie-Antoinette.91 In light of the written and visual assaults waged against Marie-Antoinette, it is difficult not to read the chests as symbolic of her lavish lifestyle specifically and of the threat she was perceived to pose to France. The majority of the middle and lower classes in France despised Marie-Antoinette, and Gérard’s Tenth incorporates this public opinion.

**The Role of the Populace and the Crowded Composition of Gérard’s Tenth**

The spoils looted from the royal palace might also allude to the donation of riches to the state by citizens both during the Revolution and on the 10th.92 While many stole from the palace on the 10th, Moore also noted the honesty of those who refrained:

> Some poor fellows who had not whole clothes on their backs, brought little sacks of gold and silver coin, and deposited them unopened in the hall of the Assembly. One soldier brought his fist full of louis, and emptied it on the table. It is in the times of great political struggles and revolutions, that the minds of men are most apt to be exalted above the selfish considerations of ordinary life: . . .It is an error to imagine, that

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90 For a condensed summary of the details of the Diamond Necklace Affair, see Ibid., 184.
91 Ibid.
92 A connection could be made here to the donation of jewels to the National Assembly by artists wives and daughters on 7 September 1789. Michel (124) noted this possible connection, as well.
men of the lowest rank in life are unsusceptible of heroic and generous acts.  

Gérard similarly extolled the virtues of the populace, emphasizing their noble action and ignoring details such as the drunkenness that resulted from the taking of the king’s wine cellars at the Tuileries, the several robberies that followed this journée, including the theft of the crown jewels on 16 September 1792, and the depravity of the battle outside the Tuileries.

Gérard chose only to celebrate the more commendable acts of the populace in the Revolution. Several aspects of the composition convey this message, from the substitution of the Commune members with the three insurgents, to the banners carried by the crowd, to the motif of the wounded soldier, to the inclusion of attributes of royal power and corruption. Even the mother and daughter can be seen as a reflection of the government’s desire to celebrate proper republican motherhood and patriotism. These elements reveal that Gérard focused on the virtues of republican patriotism. At the same time, some of the more menacing aspects of the Revolutionary mob are also reflected in Gérard’s drawing. He captured the disorder of the people in the galleries, who often interrupted the proceedings and even levied threats at the deputies. In some respects, Gérard also conveyed the dangers of mob violence in the course of the Revolution. This is especially apparent if we consider the crowd of the composition as a collective presence, rather than looking at individual figures and elements within it.

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94 Ibid., 421-422. Looters stole the crown jewels from the Garde-Meuble where they were being kept. Moore also notes (91) that plenty of royal belongings were successfully stolen from the palace and only some were saved by other citizens and
The threat of the mob was a constant refrain from at least the 10th of August until the end of the Revolution. On the heals of the 10th, the September massacres followed, during which an angry mob slaughtered between 1,100 and 1,400 prisoners. Moore saw how each of the political factions used the force of the people to their advantage and wrote in his journal of the dangers of relying on the populace in such a way, because “it is an engine which often turns against those who undertake it, and which neither they nor any others can always controul [sic]. As well may they say to the ocean in a storm, ‘Thus far shalt thou go, and no farther.’” Moore’s predictions proved to be only too true. Sans-culottes under Jacobin control soon forcibly expelled the Girondins from the Convention on 31 May 1793. The union of Jacobins and sans-culottes was a tenuous one, however, and soon the Jacobins themselves were the target of popular rebellion. Protests over food prices and shortages, a constant source of tension since the beginning of the Revolution, contributed to the sans-culottes turning against the Jacobins and led to the latter’s downfall on 9 Thermidor, an II [27 July 1794]. And, just as quickly as the Girondins rose once again to power, they had to contend with the invasion of their meeting place by a new uprising of sans-culottes on 12

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95 Rudé, 108-110. As early as August 11th, police administrators began warning against the threat of yet another uprising among the sectionnaires against priests, counter-revolutionaries, and forgers of assignats held in Parisian prisons. The September massacres took place in the first week of the month.
96 A Journal During a Residence. . ., v.II, 34.
97 Rudé, 120-121.
98 Ibid., 128-132.
Germinal, an III [1 April 1795] and on 1-3 Prairial, an III [20-22 May 1795]. Even this brief sketch of popular insurrections between 1792 and 1795 makes plain how much they contributed to, and in some instances, directed the course of the Revolution.

The profusion of incidents, figures, and details in Gérard’s drawing creates a chaotic atmosphere that registers both the frenzy and the power of the crowd—a crowd that was still a considerable threat in 1794 and 1795 when Gérard created his drawing and won the concours. Gérard conveyed the danger and chaos of the moment when the Revolution made a rapid and radical turn. His formal choices resulted in a crowded and compressed composition that distinguishes his drawing both from the actual space of the Manège and other visual sources, suggesting that he thought of the event both visually, and by extension literally, in these terms.

The Salle du Manège, part of the Tuileries palace, was a long, narrow, rectangular space designed for equestrian exercises. It became the meeting place of the National Assembly in November 1789. A plan of the Manège (fig. 65) indicates the adjustments made to the hall in order to house the representative body. The President’s desk (number one) sat on an elevated platform, in front of which (number two) was a table for the secretaries and steps leading to the floor. The deputies sat in the tribunes (number three) which wrapped around the hall on the level closest to the floor. Directly opposite the President and his secretaries, was the bar (number four) from which orators addressed the President. The two levels of the galleries (numbers five and six)
were the only spaces open to the public. Many depictions of the interior of the Manège exist and document both the space itself and several of the events which transpired within it. Some of these images are more faithful to the actual appearance of the hall than others; for example, an anonymous print from 1790, *The Trial Target; or the Labors of Hercules* (fig. 66) provides a relatively straightforward depiction of the Manège. In another print, *Interrogation of Louis XVI at the National Convention, the 26th of December 1792* (fig. 67), the artist shortened the expanse of the hall, allowing for a more detailed depiction of the different sections of its interior. The same event handled by still another artist (fig. 68) shows a more creative view of the space and provides a detail of the area of the President and his secretaries, as well as the deputies seated in the benches of the tribune.

While it is difficult to find other depictions of the National Assembly as it sat in session on August 10th, Gérard’s unique configuration of the space becomes clear in comparison with these few prints of other events in the Manège. Gérard included enough specific details of the interior of the Manège to make his setting recognizable. Like the popular artists, he preserved elements of the actual layout, gave a sense of the great umber of figures in attendance in the various levels of the hall, showed the President seated in his elevated section, and included women in the galleries. It is, however, also readily apparent that Gérard took considerable liberties in his depiction of the Manège interior. Instead of a vast, long hall, Gérard dramatically shortened the length of the space and lowered both the ceiling and the galleries. The tiers of the

101 Details and plan taken from Ibid., 124-131.
benches are either not included in Gérard’s drawing or are simply not visible behind the standing deputies and mass of people. Another major difference is the prominence Gérard gave to the stenographer’s loge behind the President’s desk; while written reports clearly indicate the location of the loge and mention the iron grill separating it from the main hall, the majority of popular printmakers did not include it in their scenes. They were not, however, depicting the 10th of August, when that space and its inhabitants were of central importance. In the popular prints, deputies sit comfortably and are not crowded, figures approach the bar in an orderly fashion, and the people of the galleries sit quietly watching. For his Manège, Gérard created a scene of near pandemonium with a shallow and compressed pictorial space crammed with figures.

Gérard’s dense composition reflects the difficulty of adequately including the many actors and details involved in the event. While he drew on David’s The Oath of the Tennis Court (fig. 69), the clear action and composition of his master’s work was neither appropriate nor possible for Gérard’s subject.102 As Ronald Paulson has stated, “the sheer novelty of the French Revolution required new forms of representation and even more basically raised the central aesthetic challenge: how to represent the

102 It may be true that David’s reconfiguration of the space of the tennis court at Versailles to meet his own expressive ends provided Gérard with an example to follow (Crow, 197 and Roberts, 263). Other scholars have made elaborate suggestions as to how Gérard manipulated his master’s composition in order to create his own. For example, Olander (36) described how Gérard “split David’s drawing in half, using its left side as the basic scaffold upon which to hang his action and then compressing the right side into approximately one-third of his own.” Such examinations as this, however, seem somewhat futile, for they highlight the differences in the two compositions just as strikingly as the similarities.
unprecedented.”¹⁰³ Gérard’s Tenth would have necessarily been dependent upon David’s precedent, for few other depictions of contemporary political events by history painters existed, but Gérard faced a far different task. The deputies in David’s composition were supported and encouraged by the populace represented in the upper left and right of his composition. In Gérard’s drawing, however, the people are taking over the legislature, invading its very meeting place, and occupying the majority of Gérard’s composition. David portrayed a moment of collective will in France, when the Revolutionaries united in pursuit of a common goal. Gérard, in contrast, depicted a moment lacking in such unanimity, and the chaos and differing perspectives he represented is one of the key features of his drawing and explains why he departed from David’s precedent to the extent that he did.

The Question of Gérard’s Personal Politics and Interpretations of his Tenth

Those who have interpreted Gérard’s concours entry as a celebration of Jacobin politics and who view Gérard as a radical revolutionary in the vein of his master point to his position on the Revolutionary Tribunal as evidence to support both claims; yet closer scrutiny of this argument reveals it is circumstantial at best.¹⁰⁴ In September 1793, in the midst of his work on the copy of the Marat and the banners for David’s festival, Gérard faced the draft. Etienne-Jean Delécluze described Gérard at this time as “swept away like so many other artists, by the passions of his master, in the whirlwind

¹⁰⁴ The scholar who has most recently presented this argument is Thomas Crow.
of revolutionary ideas, although still young (he was only twenty-three years old), his name was listed among the jury of the Revolutionary Tribunal.” The National Convention, which David became a member of at this time, established the Tribunal on 10 March 1793 in order to try those accused of political crimes, or in other words, to decide who would be guillotined.

In Gérard’s own account of his political activity, during this period, he claimed that he was not a willing participant in these trials. At the beginning of the Bourbon Restoration, rumors of Gérard’s involvement with the Tribunal and his vote for the death of Marie-Antoinette forced him to write a letter of explanation to the monarchy. Gérard recounted how at the time of the draft in 1793 he successfully petitioned to serve on the military’s corps of engineers, presumably to avoid actual combat. Without his knowledge, David intervened on his behalf to keep him in Paris. Gérard stated that this was out of concern for him having to abandon his family, but the maneuver also ensured that a loyal and experienced student would remain in David’s studio. Gérard wrote:

The terrible result of [David’s] measures was the inscription of my name on the list of the Revolutionary Tribunal. No excuse was accepted, and no refusal was possible: my only resource was to feign grave illness... I still shudder to think of the situation. I appealed to all means humanly possible to free myself from this odious function that I was condemned to fulfill; each day called for a new proof of my pretend illness and often the fear that they would refuse my requests. The fear and anguish of my family

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105 Louis-David, son école et son temps (Paris: 1845), 3. “Etraîne comme tant d’autres artistes, par les passions de son maître, dans le tourbillon des idées révolutionnaires, quoique bien jeune alors, il était dans sa vingt-troisième année, on inscrivit son nom parmi ceux des jurés au tribunal révolutionnaire...”.

See Emulation... 178.
for whom I was the only support was all that maintained me at this time. Finally, the 22 of Prairial came. The repulsive Tribunal was reorganized, and I was excused.\(^{106}\)

Though the motivation for this letter may have been to save his own neck after the monarchy was restored, the evidence suggests that Gérard was indeed telling the truth. He only sat as a juror on two or three occasions in the approximate ten months of his inscription; moreover, records indicate that he was actually expelled from the Tribunal due to poor attendance on the same day that the law of the Great Terror was put into effect.\(^ {107}\) Charles Lenormant described how Gérard obtained doctor’s notes to feign illness and went so far as “to laboriously drag himself along the staircases of the Louvre, supported by crutches.”\(^ {108}\) Gérard both began and concluded his letter with the absolute assertion that he took no part, either directly or indirectly, in the judgment of Marie-Antoinette (or for that matter any member of the royal family). He makes it clear that a search of the Tribunal’s records will prove his innocence. Documents at the Archives National, Paris confirm that Gérard was investigated and found innocent of


\(^{107}\) Crow, fn.47, 332.

\(^{108}\) *François Gérard*, 39. “. . .il se traînait péniblement dans les escaliers du Louvre,
having taken part in the vote for the queen’s death.\textsuperscript{109}

Gérard’s correspondence (both letters written to him and those from his own hand that still survive) and descriptions of him by biographers and friends, say little about his political beliefs.\textsuperscript{110} This absence is striking, especially when we consider the

\begin{quote}
appuyé sur des béquilles.
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{109} Carton \#F/21/0003, dossier 33.


Like Bajou, Jean-Loup Champion also mentions Gérard’s supposed persecution of Gros in the context of his discussion of Girodet’s \textit{Self-Portrait in a Phrygian Cap} (c.1792): “we know that Gérard. . .also painted himself as an ‘unflinching Republican.’ During his royalist period Gérard tried in vain to get this compromising portrait back. The picture remains unknown, and we cannot guess at how he portrayed himself.” See, “A Theatre of Mirrors: Girodet’s Self-Portraits,” in \textit{Girodet 1767-1824}, ex. cat., ed Sylvain Bellenger (Paris: Gallimard, Musée du Louvre Éditions, 2006), 101. For evidence of the unknown self-portrait by Gérard, Champion cites Marie-Juliette Ballot’s \textit{Une élève de David, la comtesse Benoist, L’Émilie de Dumoustier} (Paris: Plon, 1914), 78-79. According to Benoist, Gérard “ painted himself as an unflinching Republican at the time of the Revolution. He gave this portrait to m mother, whom he was supposed to marry. The engagement was broken off, however, and he wanted his portrait back. But all his efforts, event the intervention of his illustrious fried de Humboldt, were in vain, and the portrait of the Republican become a royalist remained our property.” Benoist does not give a date for the self-portrait.

It is difficult to know what to make of this self-portrait, since it is presumably lost
ample evidence for the political commitments of other artists during this period, including David, Harriet, and Girodet, or even those outside David’s immediate circle, like Philippe-Auguste Hennequin or Jean-Baptiste Topino-LeBrun. David was even known to demand the death penalty for artists who continued to create royalist propaganda.\footnote{Ibid., 89.} The intensity of David’s political convictions left little room for Gérard to develop his own views, but this should not be taken as proof of his allegiance to David’s political radicalism. Indeed, the evidence suggests the contrary.

David’s very active and sincere participation in the Jacobin party affected his choice of subject matter and has rightly shaped the ways in which scholars interpret his works. Gérard’s \textit{Tenth} has been similarly interpreted as a celebration of Jacobin rise to power. Gérard’s extensive work on David’s paintings and political propaganda during the Revolution has led most scholars to conclude that he shared the same Jacobin politics of his master. It must be remembered, however, that he was a young student with great financial burdens that made him dependent upon the work which David gave him. One of the fundamental aims of this exploration of Gérard’s \textit{Tenth} has been to dispel the myth that the image is rife with Jacobin sympathy and to suggest the ways and none of Gérard’s biographers make reference to it. Many of the Davidians portrayed themselves in various guises; according to Champion, Girodet portrayed himself as a revolutionary, bohemian, and a romantic throughout the course of his career. It is entirely possible that Gérard was trying on the role of Republican in his self-portrait, and that it was not intended as a serious expression of his political beliefs especially given the fact that he so rarely expressed any. Finally, it should be remembered that “unflinching Republican” is not synonymous with “radical Jacobin” and without the self-portrait to examine, we simply do not know how Gérard depicted himself.

\footnote{Ibid., 89.}
in which Gérard’s imagery accommodates a range of Revolutionary political views without voicing a single emphatic opinion. Seeing how quickly the tide turned in Revolutionary politics, Gérard wisely created an open-ended image in order to appeal to a broader audience.

Concluding Comments & The Outcome of the Concours

The final results of the concours reveal that its original goal “to glorify the events of the Revolution and produce republican propaganda” was, at least in part, honored. Scenes of contemporary history received the highest honors—Gérard’s Tenth and Vincent’s The Citizen of Saint-Milhier (now lost). Yet under the new Thermidorean settlement, the initial purpose of the concours was also severely undermined due to the fact that most rewards were given to repay artists for the hardships they had suffered under past regimes. Many artists were simply awarded monetary prizes that carried no further obligation or were given in exchange for a work of art of the artist’s own choosing from his existing oeuvre.

In addition to the change in political regimes, other factors may have contributed to Gérard’s victory, including possible jury favoritism and political developments in the spring and summer of 1795. It is possible that the contest was, at least in part, rigged. While the artists displayed their entries anonymously for judging, it is difficult to believe this method was entirely effective when one compares the composition of the

112 Olander, 40.
113 Ibid.
114 Ibid.
115 See Crow, 198; Olander 41-42; and, Van de Sandt, 153-154.
jury against the list of winners. For example, Jean-Honoré Fragonard was on the jury and his thirteen-year old son, Alexandre-Evariste, received two second place prizes. While David remained in prison during the judging, Gérard appears to have had another benefactor looking out for his interests. Some months before the announcement of the winners, the minister of public instruction, Pierre-Louis Ginguéne, gave Gérard a studio in the Louvre. In a letter dated 12 Germinal, an III (1 April 1795), Ginguéne wrote to Gérard to tell him that this atelier was a mark of the great esteem and hope Gérard’s work inspired in him. While such favoritism does not completely account for either Gérard’s success or that of any other artist, it should be kept in mind when considering the concours results.

Thomas Crow proposes that events taking place during the judging of the concours contributed to the appeal of Gérard’s subject matter. As already mentioned, an outbreak of popular insurrections in the spring of 1795 brought on by rising food costs and shortages challenged Thermidorean control. To squash the threat of further popular uprisings, the Convention put an end to the sans-culottes movement by imprisoning 1,200 of them and executing six more followers of Robespierre. Not long after this, a renewed royalist threat came in the form of a band of émigrés who landed in

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116 Olander, 42.
117 David was imprisoned initially for three days after 10 Thermidor, an II (28 July 1794) and remained there until 8 Nivôse, an III (28 December 1794). He was arrested and thrown in prison once again after 1 Prairial, an III (20 May 1795) where he remained until 16 Thermidor, and III (3 August 1795).
119 *Emulation*. 200.
Brittany on 8 Messidor, an III (8 June 1795). They were easily defeated at Quiberon, but once again it was clear that those with royalist sympathies still presented a threat to the Republic. Crow rightly asserts that Gérard’s image of the royals behind bars “answered present anxieties on the part of the government concerning indigenous royalists who had grown assertive in the wake of Thermidor.” Moreover, Gérard’s composition could be selected as a means, “To celebrate sublime political passion in the sans-culottes of 1792, their élan in defense of country against a king in league with its enemies, could ease any bad conscience about the privation and persecution of many of the same people in 1795.”

However much favoritism and political events may have influenced the judging of the concours, Gérard could not have won the competition if his subject were simply a propagandistic celebration of Jacobin political ideology. One need only remember the fate of Harriet’s concours entry (fig. 51) to understand this. While the original jury awarded his depiction of a moment of Jacobin triumph with a prize, the final jury under the Thermidorean Reaction did not find it acceptable to do so. It should also be remembered that Gérard was encouraged, perhaps even favored, by Ginguené, who was hostile to radical Jacobinism and thus unlikely to champion Gérard’s work if it only expressed Jacobin sympathies. The most important factor leading to Gérard’s victory seems to have been the political ambivalence of his drawing, which diplomatically

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120 Ibid.
121 Ibid.
122 Crow, 199. Robespierre sent Ginguené to the prison of Sainte-Lazare during the Terror where he remained until the fall of Robespierre.
portrayed the events and actors, appealed to a range of political viewpoints, carefully navigated between rocky political issues, and perhaps celebrated a populace united against despotism more than any single political faction. By moving through the dizzying composition and picking out different figures and details within it, it becomes clear how open-ended his imagery is. Gérard incorporated elements that bring to light the factional infighting of Revolutionary politics without advocating one group’s views over the other. On the other hand, his downplaying of the role of the Commune speaks to his sensitivity to the charged political atmosphere of 1794. The types of women Gérard included reveal his awareness of the debates concerning the proper roles for women in the Revolution. It is difficult to find much license for different points of view in Gérard’s depiction of Marie-Antoinette; instead, he mirrored the majority view that the queen was mostly to blame for the monarchy’s corruption while not making any decisive statement regarding the execution of either the king or the queen. Lastly, Gérard makes us want to believe at times that he championed the cause of the insurgents’ patriotism, yet the claustrophobia and chaos of his scene also make the viewer feel the very real threat of mob violence.

Unfortunately, Gérard never got the opportunity to realize his composition on a grand scale. In October 1795, Ginguené exempted Gérard from the general conscription so that he could continue to work on his painting; in February 1796, he moved into a new atelier, the former home of the Academy of Architecture, a space large enough to
accommodate the canvas. Gérard was supposed to receive 20,000 francs to support his endeavor, but the government did not pay him the first installment—one third of the total—until May 1797. In December 1798, Gérard received another sixth of the amount promised him. This appears to have been the final payment, and given Gérard’s continual money troubles, the project could never be completed without the promised financial support. By this date, however, Gérard may have been relieved not to have to finish it, given the political climate of the Directory and his recent successes in history painting and portraiture.

123 Moulin, 198.
124 Details of the payments taken from Ibid., 199. The canvas Gérard began has since disappeared. According to Lenormant (39), it remained in his studio for an unspecified amount of time.
Chapter 4: Retellings: Gérard’s *Marius* and *Belisarius*

From the Thermidorean Reaction on 9 and 10 Thermidor an II (27 and 28 July 1794) through the end of the Salon of 1795, Gérard’s personal life and career underwent a profound transition. Throughout much of this time, David remained either in prison or under house arrest outside Paris at the country home of his brother-in-law, Pierre Sériziat.¹ With David removed from the heart of the French art world, Gérard, like many of his peers, had to focus his energy on projects outside the studio and continued to earn a living working on illustrations for the publisher Pierre Didot.² In early Vendémiaire an III (October 1794), Gérard married. In the short term this added to his financial responsibilities at a time when patronage was scant and he had yet to hear the results of the *concours de l’an II.*³ The year 1795 proved to be one of the most turbulent in the young artist’s career, as it began in despair and ended in glory. On 9 Pluviôse an

¹ First arrested on 15 Thermidor an II (14 August 1794), David remained in prison until the end of that year when he was released to his brother-in-law’s home for the first time. Arrested again on 1 Prairial an III (20 May 1795), David stayed in jail this time until early Thermidor an III (August 1795) at which time he was again released to Sériziat’s home. From this time until the end of the 1790s, David lived at the Sériziat’s outside Paris.

² See Chapter Two for a discussion of Gérard’s work on Didot’s edition of Virgil’s *Aeneid*.

³ The exact date of Gérard’s marriage along with the identity of his wife remains unclear. Thomas Crow indicates that Gérard married in early October 1794 but does not specifically identify Gérard’s wife by name. See: *Emulation: Making Artists for Revolutionary France* (New Haven, Connecticut, Yale University Press, 1995), 202. Crow cites letters written between Antoine-Jean Gros and his mother as well as Charles Lenormant’s biography (*François Gérard, peintre d’histoire, essai de biographie et de critique* (Paris, 1847), 370 as evidence of Gérard’s marriage. While Crow indicates that at this time Gérard was the “sole supporter of his mother’s sister,” Gérard’s nephew Henri indicates that it was she whom Gérard married. See: *Lettres Adressés au Baron François*
III (28 January 1795) during the so-called “White Terror,” the Committee of General Security issued an arrest warrant for Gérard charging him with being an “agent and partisan of Robespierre and the Terrorists” due mostly to his service on the Revolutionary Tribunal; Gérard spent the majority of the month of February in prison, with records indicating he received authorization on 1 Ventôse (19 February) to return home for some money and provisions. It is not known exactly when or how Gérard secured his release, but presumably the fact that little evidence existed to support the accusations and that he was expelled from the Tribunal worked in his favor. It may also have been due to the protection of the Minister of Public Instruction, Pierre-Louis Ginguéné. Not long after his release from prison and by the beginning of April, Ginguéné had granted him a studio of his own in the Louvre. Gérard’s prospects began to look brighter. On 14 Fructidor an III (31 August 1795), the long-awaited results for the concours de l’an II were finally announced, and Gérard received a first prize with his entry. He had now made a name for himself independently from David. His next opportunity to gain acclaim was the first post-Thermidor Salon, which opened

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5 For a discussion of Gérard’s participation in the Revolutionary Tribunal, see Chapter Three, 166-68.  
6 Confirmation of this exists in a letter from Ginguéné to Gérard dated 12 Germinal an III (1 April 1795), see Chapter Three, 172.  
7 At this time, Gérard would not have known that he would never receive full payment or see the work through to completion. See Chapter Three for a discussion of Gérard’s concours entry, _The French People demanding the Overthrow of the Tyrant on the Tenth of August 1792_ (1794-95).
on 10 Vendémaire an IV (2 October 1795).

Despite his success in the concours, Gérard abandoned contemporary events and returned to classical history and the pre-Revolutionary repertoire of Davidian painting. In the drawing *Marius Returning to Rome* and in the painting *Belisarius*, Gérard depicted two exiled generals who had been the focus of paintings by both David and Drouais in the 1780s. The differences, however, both between Gérard’s two works and between them and their predecessors are striking. In both his *Marius* and his *Belisarius*, we see Gérard rethinking familiar themes, but now striking out on his own and achieving independent success at the Salon of 1795 with his *Belisarius*. In this painting, Gérard abandoned his earlier severe classicism based on David’s style and drew inspiration from Girodet’s works, in both style and subject matter, as well as new currents emerging in the Directory art world. His *Belisarius* introduced a new type of history painting, resonated with the political atmosphere of Thermidor, and brought him long-awaited critical praise in the highest genre. Perhaps most importantly for Gérard’s career, the *Belisarius* attracted the attention of the influential circle of *La Décade philosophique*, one of the leading Parisian journals of the period with ties to the government. Thus, in the fall of 1795, Gérard was in a more secure position and had managed once again to align himself with the new political regime. He had the promise of government money for the *The Tenth*, continued to work for Didot (whose publishing

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8 For Richard Dagorne, the subject of Marius amounted to a “permanent concours” within David’s studio. He discusses the different artists’ versions of the studio in, “Marius ou le concours permanent,” in *Au-delà du Maître: Girodet et l’atelier de*
house enjoyed the support of the Directory government), earned the accolades of critics also connected to the government, and had begun his career as a portraitist.  

**Gérard’s Marius Returning to Rome**

Gérard’s drawing *Marius Returning to Rome* (fig. 70) depicts a scene from the life of the Roman general and seven-time consul Caius Marius (c.157-86 BCE) derived from Plutarch’s *Lives.* Both the drawing and a painted sketch (fig. 71), present an altogether different side of Marius from that seen in Drouais’ 1786 painting, *Marius at Minturnae* (fig. 72), by focusing on the darker side of Roman history and referencing early works by David and Girodet. It is safe to assume that Gérard intended his subject to resonate with Revolutionary politics given the Davidians’ penchant for seeking metaphors for contemporary events in the classical past. Thus far, the scholars who have discussed the relationship between Gérard’s drawing and its political context have assumed that the drawing dates to 1794-1795, but this date is not certain. Without an indisputable date for both the drawing and the painted sketch, it makes it difficult to interpret the *Marius* works definitively; however, we are able to posit different interpretations of Gérard’s intentions and understand how the significance of classical subjects could change dramatically as political events unfolded during the Revolution.

The best known contemporary depiction of Marius was Drouais’ painting (fig. 72).
72), which represents an incident that occurred after the Senate exiled Marius and issued an order that if captured he should be killed. Having fled Rome, Marius was eventually apprehended near Minturnae where the city’s magistrates voted to follow the orders of the Senate. Drouais depicted Marius seated at a desk, being confronted by his would-be assassin. Plutarch described how “the chamber wherein Marius lay was very dark, and as it is reported the man of arms thought he saw two burning flames come out of Marius’ eyes, and heard a voice out of that dark corner, saying unto him: ‘O fellow, darest thou come to kill Caius Marius?’” At this, the executioner dropped his sword and fled from the room declaring that he could not kill Marius. Drouais painting does not focus on whether or not Marius was justly exiled and condemned to death, but instead explores Marius’ charisma, which ultimately led to the people of Minturnae to repent and exonerate him.

Gérard presented a different side of Marius by focusing upon the eventual consequences of his release at Minturnae. By 88 BCE, Marius had united with Cinna (d.84 BCE) and the two were invited by the Senate to enter Rome in peace. While Cinna did so, Marius remained outside the gate, “speaking partly in anger, and partly in mockery, that he was a banished man and driven out of his country by law.” He declared that if he were to enter Rome, the Senate would first have to issue a decree revoking his banishment. The particular scene Gérard depicted corresponds to the

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following passage in Plutarch:

Thus he [Marius] made the people assemble in the market-place to proceed to the confirmation of his calling home again. But before three or four tribes had time to give their voices, disguising the matter no longer, and showing plainly that he meant not to be lawfully called home again from exile: he came into Rome with a guard about him, of the veriest rascals, and the most shameless slaves, called the Bardicéians. . . and they for the least word he spake, or at the twinkling of his eye. . . slew many men through his commandment. . .they continued killing all them that Marius did not salute, and speak unto: for that was the very sign he had given them, to kill openly in the streets before every man, so that his very friends were afraid of being murdered. . .

At this point, Plutarch describes how “Marius’ anger and insatiable desire for revenge increased more and more, so that he spared not one if he suspected him never so little: and there was neither town nor highway, that was not full of scouts and spies to hunt them out that hid themselves and fled.”

Gérard’s Marius is every bit the embittered exile who returns to enact his vengeance against those who cast him out. In Gérard’s drawing, Marius appears almost in the center of the foreground, backed by his seemingly endless murderous retinue who brandish weapons and pikes topped with severed heads. All about them, Gérard has barely sketched in figures fleeing or falling under their feet. To the left of Marius, Gérard included a few Senators, identified by their togas, who cower before Marius pleading to be spared from death. In some respects, Gérard presented Marius in a manner that is more representative of his character in Plutarch than Drouais did.

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11 Ibid., 181.
12 Ibid., 181-182.
13 Ibid., 182.
Plutarch repeatedly described Marius as having a “rough severity of nature and manner,” and as unable to “bridle his anger and choleric nature.” Gérard in particular captured Plutarch’s description of Marius at the end of his exile with long hair, a “sober gait” and a “sour look” that revealed he “would straight fill Rome with murder and blood.” Gérard explicitly focused on the violence of Roman Republican history, which was, repressed more often than not in some of the most well-known early Davidian paintings such as David’s Horatii (fig. 8) and Brutus (fig. 13), as well as Drouais’ Marius (fig. 72). In order to capture both the nature of Marius and the darker side of Roman history, Gérard drew upon works by David and Girodet that he would have known intimately. The motif of severed heads on pikes may have its source in one of David’s prepatory sketches for Brutus (fig. 73). While David eliminated this explicit reference to violence in his final painting, Gérard featured it prominently in the center of his composition. Régis Michel has suggested that Gérard’s use of the Roman triumphal arch and his rendering of Marius’ followers may have been influenced by Girodet’s painting, The Death of Camilla (1784, fig.36) which is an exception in early Davidian painting for its portrayal of the vengeful and murderous Horatiius.

Gérard may have crafted his Marius as a response to Drouais’ painting; after all,

\[\text{\footnotesize 14 Ibid., 146.} \]
\[\text{\footnotesize 15 Ibid., 180-181. Plutarch describes the continued violence after Marius’ return on page 183.} \]
\[\text{\footnotesize 16 Both Régis Michel and Crow refer to David’s prepatory sketch as a source for Gérard’s drawing. See: Michel, \textit{Le Beau Idéal, ou l’art du concept}, exh. cat. (Paris, Réunion des Musées Nationaux, 1991), 110; and, Crow, 205.} \]
\[\text{\footnotesize 17 \textit{Le Beau Idéal}, 110.} \]
this would not be the first time early in his career that Gérard drew inspiration from Drouais’ works. In 1786 and 1787, Drouais attracted critical praise in both Rome and Paris with his *Marius at Minturnae* at roughly the same time that Gérard entered the studio. While most of the surviving commentaries on Drouais’ work were favorable, at least two criticized Drouais’ rendition of Marius as being inconsistent with Plutarch’s description of the Roman general’s true character. The same could not be said of Gérard’s version of Marius, which depicted an episode that embodied aspects of the general’s character emphasized by Plutarch.

Gérard’s *Marius* engaged with a subject from Roman history that was integral to David’s *atelier* in its early phase, yet which was also distinct from that found in Drouais’ painting. This much is clear; however, it is not certain precisely how Gérard intended his subject to relate to the larger context of Revolutionary politics since the dates of the drawing and the painted sketch remain a matter of debate, leaving the interpretation of the works’ political subtexts open to differing possibilities.

In his catalogue of the artist’s works, Gérard’s nephew listed a painted sketch

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18 Gérard also drew inspiration from Drouais for his *Plague Scene*, 1784 (fig. 2), see Chapter One, pages 15-18.

19 Crow, 65-68. At the roman Academy in 1786, Drouais’ painting was well-received. In the spring of 1787, he exhibited it at his family’s home in Paris where it attracted many visitors and received critical attention.

20 Ibid., fns. 41 & 42, 68. Crow mentions the review published on the 12 May 1787, written by “Nigood d’Outremer,” who criticized Drouais’ depiction of Marius as being too refined in comparison to Plutarch’s description. The other critical voice belongs to the painter Pierre- Paul Prud’hon who, in a letter of 1787, disparaged Drouais for not portraying Marius in a manner more akin to his “fierce, bloodthirsty, and cruel” nature. Michel also refers to “Nigood’s” critique, see 111.
with the title *Marius Returning to Rome*, dated to 1795, and mentions that Gérard gave this sketch to Girodet, who owned it until his death in 1825. The sketch is now located at the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston.\(^{21}\) Henri Gérard also indicated that a drawing of the same composition, the one under consideration here, was at the Louvre.\(^{22}\) It should be noted that Gérard’s nephew does not date the drawing itself, and Gérard did not date either the drawing or the painted sketch himself. Gérard’s nephew also contended that Gérard created the drawing for a student competition within David’s studio and won with it, but this information has been considered suspect at best since none of Gérard’s nor David’s biographers mention this competition.\(^{23}\)

Finally, we also know from Gros’ personal correspondence with his mother that Gérard gave him a drawing on the subject of Marius returning to Rome.\(^{24}\) In all likelihood Gérard would have given it to Gros sometime before the latter set out for Italy in

\(^{21}\) Henri Gérard, *Oeuvre du Baron François Gérard 1789-1836*, vol.3, (Paris: 1857), unpaginated. Dr. Helga Aurisch, Assistant Curator of European Paintings at the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston, informed me in an e-mail correspondence in July 2006 that the museum purchased this sketch in 1991 and provided the provenance the museum had for it. According to their provenance, this sketch is the one given by Gérard to Girodet. In 1825, Amboise Firmin Didot purchased it. It later passed into a private collection until Houston purchased it from the dealer W.M. Brady and Co., Inc in New York City.

\(^{22}\) *Oeuvre du. . .*, unpaginated.

\(^{23}\) Michel, 110. This idea of a competition in the studio is first found in P.A. Coupin, *Notice nécrologique sur Girodet, peintre d’histoire, member de l’Institut, officier de la Légion d’Honneur, chevalier de l’ordre de S. Michel* (Paris: Imprimerie de Rignoux, 1825), 615. While Michel doubts the accuracy of this story, other scholars accept it at face value. See, for example, Dagorne, 43 who accepts the story and uses it to date Gérard’s drawing to 1788.

\(^{24}\) Crow, fn.53, 332. Crow notes a letter from Gros to his mother, dated 16 May 1796, discovered by David O’Brien.
February 1793. If the drawing Gérard gave to Gros is in fact the one under consideration here, then that would mean that the drawing stems from sometime prior to or in early 1793.

Despite the uncertainty of the drawing’s date, the two scholars who have discussed it at length have given it a later date, based on Henri Gérard’s dating of the painted sketch, and have offered different interpretation of how its subject resonates with Revolutionary politics. Michel has argued that based on the scant evidence available, Gérard’s drawing can be dated to the period of Thermidor (sometime between 27 July 1794 and 31 October 1795). He suggests that Gérard turned to the motifs of civil war and violence as a means to reflect upon the Terror, with Marius being a veiled reference to Robespierre, and the heads on pikes a reminder of all those who lost their lives to the guillotine. Thomas Crow dates the drawing to 1795 specifically, assumes that Gérard executed it in preparation for the Salon of that year, and rejects the idea that Gérard intended his Marius as a public condemnation of Robespierre specifically or of Jacobin violence in general. Crow bases this interpretation on his reading of Gérard’s Tenth (1794, fig. 46) and his belief that Gérard shared the political allegiances of David. Quite apart from the problem of dating, Crow’s interpretation is questionable for two reasons. First, we have no confirmation

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26 Michel, 110.
that Gérard intended his *Marius* as a study for a Salon painting. Second, the evidence of Gérard’s personal politics is scant and it is far from clear that he shared his master’s political convictions.\textsuperscript{28}

It might be best to consider Gérard’s interest in the subject of Marius returning to Rome as one that developed over time. It is entirely possible that he first considered the subject early in his career while he was a student in David’s studio and executed the drawing then, whether or not a competition ever took place. If created at this time, the drawing would be a student work in which Gérard reflected upon the themes of his master’s and peers’ works and the general political atmosphere of France in the waning years of the *Ancien Régime* and the initial phase of the Revolution.\textsuperscript{29} A case could also be made that the drawing represents Gérard’s response to a specific revolutionary event. The subject of Marius and his angry, armed mob invading the precinct of law in ancient Rome brings to mind the invasion of the National Assembly on 10 August 1792. Even if the drawing were created prior to February 1793, Gérard could have returned to the subject later and created the painted sketch in 1795 as Henri Gérard asserted.\textsuperscript{30}

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{27} Crow, 202-205.
\item \textsuperscript{28} For a discussion of Gérard’s personal politics, see Chapter Three, especially 166-171.
\item \textsuperscript{29} Michel also suggests this as one possible interpretation of the drawing, 110-111.
\item \textsuperscript{30} Alain Latreille has discussed another painted sketch by Gérard of a scene from Roman history. He suggests that the subject of this sketch could also be Marius returning to Rome, he dates it to 1786-91, and notes that it may “be a first thought for the Houston project.” While this possibility cannot be confirmed or denied, it should be noted that the composition of the sketch Latreille discussed is markedly different from both the Louvre drawing and the painted sketch at Houston. See: Catalogue entry in
\end{itemize}
1795, the subject could have come to mean something entirely different for the artist. It is tempting to apply Michel’s interpretation of the drawing to the painted sketch. Given the backlash against the supporters of Robespierre during Thermidor and the fact that Gérard personally suffered the effects of it through his arrest and imprisonment, it is certainly possible that Gérard returned to the subject of Marius with the painted sketch in 1795 as a means to condemn the atrocities of the Terror, thereby separating himself from the followers of radical Jacobin politics. Until the dates of Gérard’s drawing and sketch can be confirmed beyond the shadow of a doubt, we have to acknowledge that the interpretations of the subject in relationship to political context presented thus far remain largely speculative. We may never know exactly what Gérard intended. We do know, however, that Gérard kept his Marius a private exercise and never exhibited it or a painting based upon it. He did not, however, completely abandon the general theme of an exiled classical hero; instead, he focused on a different, much more benign exiled general in an image shorn of all violence and radical politics for the Salon of 1795.

**Introduction to Gérard’s Belisarius**

On 7 Thermidor an III (25 July 1795), the Executive Commission of Public Instruction (Commission exécutive de l’instruction publique) announced that the Salon would open on 24 Fructidor (10 September) and invited artists to send their works. By

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*French Oil Sketches and the Academic Tradition: Selections from a Private Collection on Loan to the University Art Museum of the University of New Mexico, Albuquerque, ed. Peter Walch (New York: American Foundation of Arts, 1994), 117.*
the end of Fructidor, so few artists had submitted works that the committee delayed the opening by one week.\footnote{Udolpho van de Sandt, “Institutions et Concours,” in \textit{Aux Armes et Aux Arts! Les Arts de la Révolution 1789-1799}, eds. Philippe Bordes and Régis Michel (Paris: Adam Biro, 1989), 156.} The Salon did not open, however, until 12 Vendémiaire (3 October), nearly a month after the commission had originally planned. The delay was not simply due to the limited number of submissions, but was also the result of their low quality.\footnote{Ibid. and Crow, 207.} The exact date of when Gérard’s \textit{Belisarius} (figs. 74 and 75) made its debut in the Salon has been a matter of debate; however, it is certain that critics greeted it with great enthusiasm.\footnote{Crow (211) and other scholars have often asserted that Gérard’s painting arrived late at the Salon, since several critics reported this to be the case. For example, the reviewer for the \textit{Mercure de France} noted that it was only a painted sketch when the Salon opened. See Anonymous, “Réflexions sur l’exposition des tableaux, sculptures, etc. de l’an quatrième adressées à un ami dans le département du ***,” \textit{Mercure de France}, 10 Nivôse an IV (31 December 1795) t. XX, #19, 35. Coll. Deloynes, t.XVIII, #470, 505. Also, since Amaury-Duval did not discuss the painting until the last installment of his review (see the discussion of his review below), it has been presumed that Gérard’s painting made its appearance at the Salon sometime between 20 Brumaire and 10 Frimaire (10-30 November). More recently, however, Cyril Lécosse has contended that \textit{Belisarius} appeared at the Salon on 23 September (2 Vendémiaire) “according to the registry for the Salon so that means it was finished before the opening of the Salon on 3 October.” In addition, the work listed in the registry is large in scale, 8 pied high by 6 pied wide. See, “De L’intérêt d’être amis, ou le Bélisaire de Gérard et son Portrait d’Isabey,” in \textit{Au delà du Maître. . .}, 110. Lécosse then speculates that the painting was removed from the Salon temporarily. This would explain its belated reviews. Lécosse contends there was only one means by which a work could be removed from the exhibition (according to the announcement in the \textit{livret}): at the request of its owner. The question of the painting’s commission and original ownership will be discussed below. Gérard’s original canvas is now lost. Its complete provenance is unavailable, but its last known location is the Leuchtenberg Collection, St. Petersburg. It was presumably lost during the Soviet Period. A painted smaller copy by Léonore Mérimée


regarding it as a break from the Davidian tradition. With his Belisarius, Gérard introduced a new form of history painting that appealed above all to the emotions, rather than the erudition, of the viewer. Finally, by transforming the figure of the exiled general into a homeless wanderer, Gérard gave Belisarius new life as a symbol of the fate of émigrés under the Revolution.

Perhaps the best known source in eighteenth-century France for the life and career of the Byzantine general Flavius Belisarius (505-565), who served most of his military career under the emperor Justinian I (483-565), was the 1767 novel Belisarius, by Jean-François Marmontel. Marmontel’s rendering of the general differs dramatically from that found in the writings of Belisarius’ secretary and advisor, Procopius (c.500–?).34 In Procopius’ History in Eight Books, Belisarius is a successful, if not merciless, military commander who nearly doubles the size of Justinian’s empire. Despite these successes, Belisarius found himself charged and convicted of conspiracy against Justinian in 542. The emperor pardoned and released him shortly thereafter, thus

(fig. 74), which served as the source for the engraving by Desnoyers (fig. 75), gives at least some indication of the original’s coloring, and is today housed in Los Angeles at The J. Paul Getty Museum. Among other copies known and still in existence are a painted enamel copy by Adèle Chavassieu, now held in Milan at the Galleria d’Arte Moderna, and a smaller scale copy once in the collection of Firmin-Girard and now at The High Museum of art in Atlanta. In addition, a drawing by J.-A.D. Ingres of the head and shoulders of Belisarius is held today in a private collection. See Crow, fn.58, 332 and fn.30, 335 and Lécosse, 109.

restoring his reputation and imperial favor.\textsuperscript{35} By contrast, in Marmontel’s novel, the focus is upon Belisarius as the ever loyal public servant, remaining steadfast in his devotion to an emperor who charged and convicted him without evidence and ordered that he be blinded, dispossessed, and banished.\textsuperscript{36} In the last days of the Ancien Régime, Marmontel’s Belisarius became a symbol of all that was corrupt about the royalty specifically and the upper nobility in general.\textsuperscript{37} Not long after the publication of the novel, artists seeking to win favor with the Surintendant des Bâtiments, the Comte d’Angivillier, adopted Marmontel’s version of the general and began to depict Belisarius as a sympathetic, elderly, and blind beggar; David’s version of the subject (fig. 3) belongs to this tradition both in terms of its depiction of alms-giving and its political message.\textsuperscript{38} When Gérard turned to the subject of Belisarius in 1795, he departed significantly from David’s interpretation of the subject — so much so, that the only similarities between the two artists’ works are that they feature the Byzantine

\textsuperscript{35} Ibid., vi-vii.

\textsuperscript{36} Thomas Crow, Painters and Public Life in Eighteenth Century Paris (New Haven, Connecticut: Yale University Press, 1985), fn. 53, 198. Marmontel incorporated into his novel the legendary story that developed sometime during the Medieval period of Belisarius spending the remainder of his life as a blind beggar.

\textsuperscript{37} Ibid. According to Crow, “the social evils denounced by the fictional Belisarius. . .are the same ones attacked by establishment philosophes like Marmontel himself: official intolerance, parasitical nobility, the reign of luxury, and the nomination of favoritism over merit.”

\textsuperscript{38} The Comte d’Angivillier served his post from 1774-1789. For a discussion of his tenure and the Belisarius theme in particular, see Crow, Painters and Public Life, 198-209. The most well-know versions of this subject dating to this period are discussed and reproduced in Crow, including Vincent’s Belisarius, 1776, Peyron’s Belisarius receiving hospitality from a peasant who had served under him, 1779, and David’s Belisarius
general and his young guide. Gérard re-imagined Belisarius and added another level of symbolic meaning to this familiar figure. He focused upon Belisarius as a weakened, unjustly proscribed exile, worthy of sympathy and amnesty.

In Gérard’s composition (figs. 74 and 75), the fate of the once-heroic general remains uncertain. Although aged and blinded, Belisarius’ upright stature and extreme musculature creates a physically powerful presence. On the other hand, many other details undermine the viewer’s confidence in Belisarius’ ability to persevere. Mid-stride, Belisarius appears to hesitate slightly as he uses only a walking staff to find his way down the path. His journey is all the more arduous due to the fact that he has to carry the young boy meant to serve as his guide. While this young boy appears in Marmontel’s novel, the way in which Gérard depicted him has no textual source.39 Resting in Belisarius’ left arm with his eyes almost completely closed, the guide is either dead or dying from a snakebite; the venomous serpent is still – inexplicably – wrapped around the boy’s left leg. Without the benefit of a guide, it is unclear whether or not Belisarius will find his way to shelter; the sun, while it enlivens the sky, is also setting behind the distant mountain range and announces the coming of night, making the search for refuge all the more pressing. Gérard’s Belisarius is an image of extreme pathos. Scholars have interpreted Gérard’s composition as an allegory of misfortune.

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39 Régis Michel, “L’Art des Salons,” in Aux Armes et Aux Arts! Les Arts de la Révolution 1789-1799, eds. Philippe Bordes and Régis Michel (Paris: Adam Biro, 1989), 52. By departing from literary accounts, Gérard is here employing a technique he would have learned from David who departed from all accounts of the story with his Begging Alms, 1781.
and suffering: twilight symbolizes his disgrace, his unsteady wandering represents his exile, his blindness reminds us of his disfigurement, and the serpent and his guide symbolize death.\textsuperscript{40}

\textbf{The Critical Reception of Gérard’s \textit{Belisarius}}

Among the reviews of Gérard’s painting, two in particular stand out for the praise they contain. The anonymous critic of the \textit{Mercure de France}, after opening his chronicle of the Salon by stating that he would discuss the works that moved him the most, began with Gérard’s \textit{Belisarius}. The critic first excused the artist for deviating from the literary sources and enthusiastically praised the painting, describing the rendering of Belisarius’ head as displaying “the best thought and the best rendering” and admiring the “truthfulness” of the way in which the young boy rests in Belisarius’ arm and drapes across his shoulders.\textsuperscript{41} The only fault the critic found with Gérard’s rendering of Belisarius concerned the figure’s arms, which he thought could have been painted in a way to suggest the “prolonged effort and fatigue” of such an old man struggling to support his young companion.\textsuperscript{42} In Gérard’s handling of the young guide, suffering from the deadly bite of the serpent entwined around his ankle, he rightly

\textit{Oath of the Horatii} (fig. 8).

\textsuperscript{40} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{41} Anonymous, “Réflexions sur l’esposition. . . ,” 30. Coll. Deloynes, t.XVIII, #470, 505. “. . . jamais cette aventure n’est arrivée à Bélisaire; aucun historien. . . . Qui est-ce qui vous dispute ce petit délit de lèse-histoire, repit avec feu un jeune homme en cheveux noirs et en manteau relevé avec goût?” “Bélisaire, ou cet vieillard offre une tête des mieux pensées et mieux rendues. . . .”

\textsuperscript{42} Ibid., 31. “. . . mais s’il pouvait donner au bras du vieillard qui soutinet seul l’enfant blessé et défaillant, l’air de la contention et de la fatigue. . . .”
detected an echo of the famous Hellenistic sculpture, *Laocoön and His Sons* (fig. 76).43

The critic further praised Gérard for creating a scene of “beautiful twilight” by using “warm but varied tones which lend to all the contours the nuances of a prism. . .Vernet has never given a setting sun with such truthfulness.44 Charles-Alexandre Amaury-Duval, a writer for one of the leading critical journals of the period, *Le Décade philosophique*, also admired Gérard’s rendering of Belisarius, the young guide, and the artist’s evocation of the *Laocoön*:

> What a simple yet interesting subject! It has been rendered with expression and feeling. We can read in the admirable head of Belisarius his great nobility of soul, his resignation in misery; and this poor young child, how he suffers! But without grimacing, without any extreme contortions, in the same way that the sons of Laocoön suffer. — Nothing forced, nothing theatrical in the painting: *voilà le bon genre.*45

Amaury-Duval declared Gérard’s painting to be “worthy of the palm of victory” and “far above even the very best of the other works in the Salon.”46

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43 Ibid. The critic praised Gérard for making reference to the antique sculpture without copying it slavishly: “Belle imitation, sans servitude, des fils du Laocoon!”

44 Ibid. “. . .ce beau crépuscle, ces tons chauds, mais variés, qui donnent à tous les contours les nuances du prisme. . .Vernet n’a jamais rendu avec cette vérité aucun soleil couchant.” As mentioned, the original painting is now lost. These effect of the original can only be surmised from the painted copy at the Getty (fig. 75).

45 Writing as Polyscope, “Première Lettre de Polyscope sur les ouvrages de peinture, sculpture, etc. exposés dans le grand Salon du Museum,” *La Décade philosophique* 10 Frimaire an IV (30 November 1795) t.VII, #58, 415. Coll. Deloynes t.XVIII, 473. “Quel sujet intéressant et simple! Il a été rendu avec expression et sentiment. On y lit la noblesse de son âme, sa resignation dans le malheur; et ce pauvre jeune enfant, comme il souffre! mais sans grimace, sans de grandes contorsions, ainsi que souffrent les fils de Laocoon. — Rien de forcé, rien de théâtral dans ce tableau: voilà le bon genre.”

46 Ibid. “C’est aussi le tableau qui, à mon avis, mérite la palme: il est même fort au-dessus des meilleurs du salon.”
In the second installment of his review, Amaury-Duval issued a challenge to artists: “Dare always to make your own path. Despite the reputation of David, imitate neither him nor anyone. Imitators will always remain at the second rank. Great men invent.”47 For the critic of the Mercure, Gérard had already struck out on his own with his Belisarius, proving that not all of the master’s students slavishly copied their master.48 Amaury-Duval’s high praise of Gérard’s painting appeared in the fifth and final installment of his review, suggesting that by the end of the Salon he had at least found that one of David’s students had risen to his challenge.

Amaury-Duval responded to Girodet’s Hippocrates Refusing the Gifts of Artaxeres (1792, fig. 77) with much less enthusiasm in the third installment of his review. After noting that he had high hopes for Girodet as an artist, the critic expressed his disappointment with the Hippocrates finding faults in its figures, their gestures and draperies, and the background.49 In his opinion, Girodet’s painting was unoriginal and too similar to the work of David.50 Completed in 1792 while the artist was still in Rome, Girodet’s Hippocrates does represent a return to pre-Revolutionary Davidian painting in


50 Ibid. “J’aurais aimé à trouver dans le tableau un plus grand caractère d’originalité. Il rappelle trop le maître de l’artiste.”
terms of both the subject and style of the work. This is somewhat surprising, given the artist’s dramatic departure from Davidian tradition with his *Endymion* (fig. 20), painted in 1791 and exhibited at the Salon of 1793. When the *Hippocrates* made its public debut at the Salon of 1795, Amaury-Duval knew full well when and why it was painted, as well as the reasons for its delayed exhibition; nevertheless, he took the opportunity to criticize Girodet for returning to the early, severe style of David. It is tempting to speculate if Amaury-Duval delayed his review and crafted it from start to finish in order to set the stage for Gérard’s *Belisarius* to triumph.

Whatever the case may have been, by the Salon of 1795, Gérard had learned a valuable lesson: the severe style of early Davidian painting, with its hyper-masculine subject matter and emphasis upon stoicism and civic duty, was increasingly falling out of favor. As Carol Duncan has demonstrated, critics increasingly gravitated toward history paintings that appealed “to a passive observer who contemplates his own emotive state rather than his potential for moral passion and decision” over those that

51 Girodet intended the painting as a gift for his close friend and guardian, Benoit-François Trioson. For a discussion of Girodet’s *Hippocrates* and its relationship to works of pre-Revolutionary Davidian painting, see Crow, *Emulation*... 139-144.

52 Ibid., 212. No doubt a variety of personal motivations could have influenced the critic’s review of Girodet’s painting and hostility to the Davidian tradition in general. Crow suggests there may have been “bad blood” between Amaury-Duval and Girodet, that the latter may have attacked Girodet’s painting in order for Gérard’s *Belisarius* to shine in comparison.

53 Crow mentions this as one possibility to explain the critic’s attack of Girodet’s *Hippocrates*, see *Emulation*... 211. Amaury-Duval’s admiration of Gérard’s painting was expected to some extent given that *La Décade* was founded by Pierre-Louis Ginguené, who had been supportive of Gérard since the spring of 1795. For a discussion of Ginguené’s protection of Gérard, see Chapter Three, 172.
“stirred the emotions by magnifying the significance of moral choice.”

In his analysis of the *Mercure* review and others of the Salon of 1795, Tony Halliday contends that critics were increasingly disillusioned “with history painting of the traditional mould [sic.] — a disenchantment which coincided with the appearance of a newly attenuated sort of history painting, where figures, action and moral exemplary were all reduced to a minimum, as in Gérard’s *Belisarius*.”

Gérard succeeded in introducing a new form of history painting that was not overtly moralizing and didactic, offering to viewers instead “the opportunity of speculating about the mental state and future of a more or less fictional personage [Belisarius] with only a tenuous relationship to his historical counterpart.”

The focus of Gérard’s *Belisarius* is upon pathos and sentimentality, encouraging the viewer to respond to the painting emotionally, rather than intellectually. To a certain extent, the reviewer of the *Mercure*, as well as other critics, did just this when they contemplated whether or not the blind, aged Belisarius would ever find shelter without the help of his guide or would instead topple over the cliff next to the path.

Michel notes that for the critics, Gérard’s *Belisarius* “appeared in fact like a genre painting. . .with melodramatic expressiveness;” and, “its graphic

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54 “Neutralizing ‘the Age of Revolution’,” *Artforum* (1975): 46f.


56 Ibid., 54.

57 Ibid. Halliday notes that at least three critics speculated on the fate of Belisarius in just such a manner. This is mentioned in the *Mercure* review and Amaury-Duval’s review already cited (30), and in [J.-B.C. Robin], *Exposition publique des ouvrages des artistes vivans dans le Salon du Louvre, au mois de 7bre, année 1795, V.S., ou vendémiaire de l’an quatrième de la République, par Mr. Rob. . .*, (Paris: 1795), 478.
linearity to the point of stylization. . . [along with] its coloring. . . broke with the cold tones of classicism. With his Belisarius, Gérard managed not only to prove himself but also to innovate in the genre of classical history. He broke with Davidian tradition in style and in his approach to the subject. While he remained true to his artistic heritage by choosing a subject once famously depicted by his master, he dramatically transformed that subject, recasting Belisarius as a symbol of the suffering of the Revolution’s émigrés. Gérard’s new treatment of Belisarius was not lost on critics, who saw in his general a representative of the many victims/exiles of the Revolution, especially the Terror. The politics of Thermidor shed light on Gérard’s choices in his Belisarius as well as its critical reception.

The Political Context of Gérard’s Belisarius

The brief period of the Thermidorean Reaction, like most phases of the Revolution, was a contradictory one. The deputies of Thermidor sought to recover order and establish a more conservative government in a country reeling from the fanaticism of Robespierre and his followers. Yet these goals were only achieved through further repressive measures, including the suppression of political enemies, the dismantling of political organizations and reforms associated with Robespierre and previous Revolutionary governments, and the creation of a new Constitution that took power away from the majority of French citizens.

The Thermidorean Convention and its supporters systematically attacked,

arrested, and killed radicals and violently put down popular insurrections in Paris and throughout the country. On 11 Thermidor an II (29 July 1794) more supporters of Robespierre, including members of the Revolutionary Tribunal, were put to death in the largest mass execution of the Revolution; throughout the remainder of Thermidor, sans-culottes were investigated, convicted, and executed in large numbers. The Thermidorean government also successfully defeated popular revolts by squashing the sans-culotte led journées of 12-13 Germinal an III (1 and 2 April 1795) and 1-4 Prairial an III (20 to 23 May 1795). It is worth remembering that Gérard himself became a victim of this Thermidorean backlash, spending the month of February 1795 in prison.

Throughout late 1794 and early 1795, the Convention also successfully countered royalist insurrections. On 9 Messidor an III (27 June 1795), just months before the opening of the Salon, a group of some 4,000 exiled Frenchmen supported by British forces landed at Quiberon on the southern coast of Brittany. The general Louis Lazare Hoche successfully defended the Republic against this attack, bringing the royalist insurrection to an end on 3 Thermidor an III (21 July 1795). In addition, just three days after the opening of the Salon, the young General Napoleon Bonaparte crushed a royalist revolt in the very heart of Paris.

50 For a complete discussion of these activities, see William Doyle, Chapter 12, “Thermidor,” in *The Oxford History of the French Revolution* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990), 272-296.
61 Ibid. , 274. This mass execution included a total of 71 radicals.
62 The Salon opened on 12 Vendémiaire an IV (3 October 1795), while the revolt and its suppression occurred on 13-14 Vendémiaire an IV (5-6 October 1795).
The Thermidorean government also took a variety of legal measures in order to secure its power, including restructuring all governmental committees and curtailing the powers of the Committee of Public Safety, releasing thousands of prisoners arrested under Robespierre’s Law of Suspects, and decreeing the end of the Jacobin Club on 22 Brumaire an III (12 November 1794). The removal of the busts of Marat and Lepeletier, as well as David’s paintings of them, from the hall of the Convention on 21 Pluviôse an III (9 February 1795) reveals the new deputies’ desire to distance themselves even from the imagery associated with radical Revolutionary politics.63 The conservative nature of the Thermidorean deputies also led them to reinstate freedom of worship and the separation of church and state on 3 Ventôse an III (21 February 1795).64

The Thermidoreans’ final blow to radical revolutionary and counter-revolutionary forces alike was the Constitution of Year III (1795), approved on 5 Fructidor an III (22 August 1795) and inaugurated on 5 Brumaire an IV (27 October 1795). This new constitution brought an end to the Convention, established a new, more oligarchic form of government, and ended any hopes that it would embrace the much more radical democratic constitution drafted (but never adopted) in 1793.65 Differing dramatically from its predecessor, the Constitution of Year III placed political power in the hands of the socioeconomic elite by reimposing property restriction for office-holding, rejecting universal suffrage, and instituted a new form of government

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64 Ibid.
based on two “Councils” along with an executive body, thereby at least theoretically limiting the possibility of any one man or branch usurping total power.\textsuperscript{66} In his comments regarding the drafting of the new Constitution, François Antoine Boissy d’Anglas, made the assumptions behind the drafting of the document clear:

Civil equality, in fact, is all that a reasonable man can claim. Absolute equality is a chimera; for it to exist, there would have to be absolute equality in intelligence, virtue, physical strength, education and fortune for all men. . .We must be governed by the best; the best are those who are educated and most interested in the maintenance of the laws: now, with very few exceptions, you find such men only among those who, owning a piece of property, are devoted to the country that contains it, to the laws that protect it, . . \textsuperscript{67}

Clearly the framers of the Constitution of Year III sought to end the participation of the working classes in the political sphere. Thermidor ushered in a time of little sympathy for the plight of the lower classes. As the poor suffered the effects of runaway inflation and food shortages, the wealthier classes and their fashionable society began slowly to re-emerge in Parisian cafés and theaters due, at least in part, to the government’s sympathy with this class in general and for wealthy \textit{émigrées} who suffered under Robespierre in particular. On 14 Thermidor an II (1 August 1794), the Thermidorean Convention repealed the law of 22 Prairial an II (10 June 1794) and expunged from its list of \textit{émigrées} those who had fled the country since 31 May 1793.\textsuperscript{68}

\textsuperscript{65} Doyle, 318-319.
\textsuperscript{66} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{67} Quoted in Doyle, 318.
\textsuperscript{68} Ibid., 53 and Crow, \textit{Emulation. . .}, 208. The law of 22 Prairial established the Great Terror and gave the Revolutionary Tribunal unprecedented power for convicting and executing its suspected enemies.
Beginning during Thermidor and continuing under the Directory, a large number of émigrées returned to France, and this tide continued into the early nineteenth century.\(^6^9\)

In this political climate, images that were suspected of Jacobin content did not fare well at the Salon.\(^7^0\) With his Belisarius, Gérard fashioned an image that could in no way be associated with radical Revolutionary politics (like those of his master) and struck a chord with those critics and leaders who supported Thermidorean politics. For example, Amaury-Duval, who had reviewed Gérard’s Belisarius so glowingly, wrote for La Décade philosophique, founded by Pierre-Louis Ginguené in the spring of 1794 at least in part to counter Robespierre’s anti-intellectualism. Following the fall of Robespierre, Ginguené’s journal argued for the centrality of artists, thinkers, and cultural productions in the formation of the Republic, and Ginguené used his position to support Gérard beginning in the spring of 1795.\(^7^1\) Moreover, La Décade supported the Thermidorean policy of granting amnesty to those émigrées condemned under

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\(^6^9\) Doyle, 332-334. It should be noted that returning émigrés did include royalist supporters who continued to be a threat throughout the Directory and into the Consulate. Nevertheless, the return of exiled French men and women continued to increase, Bonaparte decreed a partial amnesty in October 1800, and in April 1802 all but 1,000 émigrés were allowed to return to France. Much later, under the Restoration, Louis XVIII gave compensation totaling 1 billion francs to those émigrés who had lost property.

\(^7^0\) One example is Jean-Baptiste Regnault’s Liberty or Death (1795). For a discussion of its inclusion of Jacobin symbolism and its critical response, see Crow, Emulation. . . , 210-211 and Michel, “L’Art des Salons,” 54-56. The other example is François-André’s William Tell (1795). For a discussion of it and its relationship to Jacobin ideology, see Michel, “L’Art des Salons,” 56-58 and Halliday, 56.

\(^7^1\) Ginguené was the minister of public instruction and in this capacity, granted Gérard a studio in the Louvre in the spring of 1795 and wrote to Gérard expressing his admiration of the artist’s talent. See Chapter Three, 172. For a discussion of the agenda
Simple favoritism, however, does not fully explain Amaury-Duval’s review of Gérard’s painting; rather, Gérard correctly judged the prevailing political climate and presented an image of a benign exile, deserving of forgiveness, who had suffered unjustly and could be embraced as a symbol of the worthy émigré. Charles Lenormant, Gérard’s earliest biographer, noted the artist’s uncanny ability to choose subjects that aligned with prevailing public opinion, and he marks the Belisarius as the first example of this skill. While his painting was not the only one at the Salon of 1795 that treated the subject of Belisarius, it was the only history painting to do so and received the most praise. By 1797, one writer referred to contemporary émigrés as “our modern Belisariuses.” Moreover, Gérard’s Belisarius seems to have set the precedent for subsequent paintings on the theme of the plight of worthy exiles. This trend reached its

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of La Décade, see Crow, Emulation, . . .206-208.
72 Crow, Emulation, 207.
73 François Gérard, peintre d’histoire. . ., 61-62. While I agree with Lenormant’s estimation of Gérard’s ability, I would argue that his entry for the concours de l’an II serves as the earliest evidence of this talent. See Chapter Three for a discussion of the entry.
74 Michel, “L’Art des Salons,” 53. The artists Hue and van der Burch exhibited landscapes with the figure of Belisarius in them at the Salon of 1795. Michel also notes that the genre painter Drolling exhibited a work that could be considered a “modern version” of the subject. In addition, Crow notes that Marchais exhibited a landscape with Belisarius in the preceding Salon of 1793 (Emulation. . ., fn.65, 332).
zenith under the Directory in 1799 with Pierre-Narcisse Guérin’s *The Return of Marcus Sextus* (fig. 78), a painting whose success contemporary critics attributed in large part to “an outpouring of sympathy for the émigrés.” It is notable that Guérin’s protagonist actually began as a figure of Belisarius.

**Conclusion: The Rift Between Gérard and Girodet**

It has long been reported that despite its critical success Gérard’s *Belisarius* did not find a buyer at the Salon of 1795 and was purchased instead after the Salon by Gérard’s long-time friend and once studio-mate, Jean-Baptiste Isabey. The review of the painting in the *Mercure de France*, however, does not support this claim. According to the *Mercure* critic, Gérard sold the painting to Isabey before the Salon as a means to alleviate his financial difficulties. Moreover, the same critic claimed that Isabey easily sold the painting after the Salon and passed on his profits to Gérard. An unpublished manuscript written by baron de Trémont, however, gives us yet another version of the

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76 Rubin, 154. The earliest example of the theme in Rubin’s account is Gérard’s *Belisarius* (155).
77 Ibid, 155. Guérin’s conception of Marcus Sextus stems from a particular scene in Chapter VI of Marmontel’s 1767 novel.
78 This is the sequence of events purported by Gérard’s biographer Lenormant, 104 and repeated in Crow, *Emulation*. . ., 223 and Michel, “L’Art des Salons,” 67-68. The support for this argument is found in Etienne-Jean Delécluze, *Louis David, son école et son temps*, 1983 edition, (Paris: Macula, 1983), 276-277. According to Lécosse (“De L’intérêt. . .,” 110), however, Delécluze’s recounting of the events should not be trusted, since it appears in a section of Delécluze’s text that flatters Isabey’s generosity and was written in 1855, some sixty years after the fact.
79 Halliday is the first scholar to posit the account of Isabey’s purchase and selling of Gérard’s *Belisarius*. See, *Facing the Public*. . ., fn. 24, 68. According to Halliday’s research, Isabey purchased the painting for 4,000 livres and then sold it to the Dutch ambassador Meyer for a reported 10,000 livres.
commissioning and eventual ownership of the Belisarius. Trémont emphasizes Gérard’s poverty in 1795 and contends that Isabey lent Gérard 50 louis in order to buy the supplies he would need to create a history painting for the Salon; in other words, Isabey did not commission nor purchase the completed Belisarius.\textsuperscript{80} Whatever the exact details of the purchase of the painting, it is certain the Belisarius brought Gérard both critical and financial rewards, and marked the beginning of a new stage in his career, launching him as an independent artist no longer reliant upon David. The painting and its success, however, also dramatically impacted and fundamentally changed his relationship with Girodet.

By the Salon of 1795, Gérard and Girodet had known one another for ten years, presumably having met first in Brenet’s studio in 1784. As students in David’s atelier, they worked side by side on David’s Brutus (1789, fig. 13) and competed against one another in the Prix de Rome competition of 1789, with Girodet taking first prize and Gérard securing second.\textsuperscript{81} It is unclear when their relationship soured. On the one hand, it appears that the two artist remained good friends and respected one another

\textsuperscript{80} Collection de lettres autographes des personnages célèbres des XVIIIe et XIXe siècles, formée par le baron de Trémont, t.III, no date, Bibliothèque nationale, cabinet des Manuscrits, 476-477, 476-477 quoted in Lécosse, 110. Lécosse agrees that Belisarius was purchased by Meyer, but believes it was before the Salon opened and not after it closed which explains why it was removed temporarily from the Salon (see fn. 33 above). He suggests it is possible Meyer saw the painting in Gérard’s studio during his February 1795 visit to Paris and that David could have introduced the ambassador to Gérard (although this is speculation). See Lécosse, fn. 25, 115.

\textsuperscript{81} For a discussion of the 1789 Rome prize competition and its results, see Chapter One, 30-36.
between 1790 and 1795. On the other, the atmosphere of competition within David’s studio, may also have begun to drive a wedge between them as early as 1790. In a letter dated to the 17th of January of that year, Girodet wrote to Gérard trying to engage him in an elaborate ruse intended to reveal how David favored his students and often played one against the other. Girodet told Gérard that David might ask for Girodet’s address in order to determine if his two students had been communicating. Girodet instructed Gérard to tell David that he and Girodet were no longer speaking due to Girodet’s inflated ego since winning the Rome prize. Girodet predicted that David would then sympathize with Gérard by making complaints against Girodet. According to Girodet, if Gérard then took this opportunity to laud David, namely to say that David possessed genius, David would respond by stating that Gérard too possessed this quality. Finally, Girodet predicted that if Gérard accused Girodet of not having enough faith in the art of antiquity, then David would launch into a bitter

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82 Girodet sent numerous letters to Gérard detailing his exploits in Rome, and both artists provided numerous illustrations for Didot publications throughout the 1790s and after the turn of the century. For a discussion of their work on Didot’s edition of Virgil’s Bucolica, Georgica, and Aeneas in particular, see Chapter Two. In addition, Girodet entrusted Gérard with his Endymion of which Gérard took possession in 1793 after the Salon and stored it with a neighbor for safe keeping until Girodet’s return from Italy, see Crow, Emulation. . ., 212.

83 The letter is reprinted in two slightly different versions in Gérard, Lettres Adressées . . .131-134 (this is the full letter) and Henri Gérard, Correspondance. . ., 50-52 (this is an excerpted version).

84 Gérard, Lettres Adressées, 132 and Correspondance, 51. Girodet at this time was staying at Châtillon. “S’il t’a demandé mon adresse, c’est un piége qu’il te tendait pour savoir si nous étions en correspondnace réglée; je la lui ai donnée. . .”. Shortly after this point in the letter, Girodet calls David “fourbe et fourbissime” — a fraud and the ultimate in frauds.
assessment of Girodet’s lack of talent and character meant only to flatter Gérard by comparison. The conversation would end, Girodet had no doubt, with David returning the discussion to self-flattery.85

While the letter speaks volumes about Girodet’s mental state, it also clearly reveals his suspicions that David was manipulating his students. We might even suspect that the letter reveals Girodet’s fear that Gérard would eventually usurp his place in the studio. In some respects, Girodet’s fear was validated. Between early 1790 and late 1795, Girodet remained in Italy while Gérard took the lead amongst his master’s students and worked closely with David on projects, including The Death of Lepeletier de Saint-Fargeau (fig. 26) and a copy of Marat at his Last Breath (fig. 28); moreover, Gérard had begun to establish a name for himself, independent from David, with the announcement that his entry (fig. 46) took one of the first prizes in the concours de l’an II on 14 Fructidor an III (31 August 1795).86

The critical reception of Gérard’s Belisarius at the Salon of 1795 compared to that

85 Gérard, Lettres Adressées, 132, and Correspondance, 51-52. “. . . je t’avais témoigné quelque amitié. . . depuis que j’avais eu le prix, je me regardais comme un gros monsieur. Fais-lui beaucoup de plaintes de mois, mais d’un air indifférent, et finis par lui faire beaucoup de compliments sur son talent et surtout sur son génie. Il ne te sera pas difficile de l’amener là, et voici, he crois ce qu’il te répondra s’il ne soupçonne pas le but. Il commencera par convenir qu’il a du génie, puis il te dira qu’tu en as; il te fera beaucoup de compliments; à son tour, il te donnera de belles espérances. . . te dira que je n’en veux rien croire et que je n’aime pas l’antique, que je suis entêté, que j’ai de l’amour-propre; de la critique de mon talent, il passera à celle de mon caractère; il ira plus loin, et voilà ce que je désire. . . il finira par un retour complaisant sur lui-même.

86 For a discussion of this phase of Gérard’s career and his work on the Le Peletier and the Marat copy, see Chapter One, 53-55 and 58-60. For a discussion of his entry into the concours de l’an II, see Chapter Three.
of Girodet’s *Hippocrates Refusing the Gifts of Artaxeres* (discussed above) could only have been a further blow to Girodet’s ego and marked the beginning of open hostility between the once close friends. Girodet must have been incensed to find his painting labeled as unoriginal in comparison with Gérard’s, especially given their works prior to 1795. While Gérard had essentially failed to strike out on his own, Girodet had done so dramatically in 1791 with his *The Sleep of Endymion* (ex. 1793, fig. 20). Girodet’s sole purpose with this painting had been to establish his originality, as he made clear in a letter of 1791: “The desire to do something new, something which does not give off the scent of the worker, has led me perhaps to reach beyond my strengths, but I mean to avoid plagiarism. . .what makes me most happy is that opinion is united that I in no way resemble M. David.”87 Adding further insult to Girodet, both Amaury-Duval and the critic of the *Mercure* praised Gérard’s depiction of Belisarius’ young guide and his evocation of the sons of Laocoön in the figure, but neither critic gave Girodet credit for establishing the prototype of the ephebic, male youth with his *Endymion.*88 As Crow rightly asks, “What must Girodet have thought at seeing his most treasured achievement already recycled, integral to the triumph of the Salon, and no one bothering to recall his *Endymion*?”89

After the Salon of 1795, Gérard and Girodet did not speak to one another for

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88 Crow, *Emulation.* . ., 213-214. Crow assets that the figure of Belisarius’ guide in Gérard’s painting represents the artist’s combination of Girodet’s figure of Endymion along with David’s *Bara* (1794).
quite sometime. The final break in their friendship came in the summer of 1799 when Girodet received a government commission with an advance of half the purchase price for a large-scale painting to commemorate the recent assassination of two French diplomats by Austrian soldiers. Numerous artists complained that Girodet had received a special favor, and Gérard was outraged that Girodet received it without a public competition like the one he had endured for the concours de l’an II. The verbal sparring escalated between Gérard and Girodet and became public knowledge. When the dust settled each artist banned the other from his studio. Perhaps feeling the need to have the last word, Girodet sent a short letter to Gérard, dated 23 Floréal an VIII (13 May 1800):

Belisarius has remained blind for a long time. I should, therefore, congratulate him on having recovered his sight and being able to ascertain that Endymion would only wake at Cupid’s first kiss. But I advise this Cupid to leave his wings aside when he comes to play the role of friendship.
— [signed] Endymion.

Girodet made reference here not only to Gérard’s Belisarius, but also to his Cupid and Psyche (1798) which apparently represented to Girodet another affront by Gérard. Some twenty years later, Girodet made an attempt to reach out to Gérard, but their friendship

89 Ibid., 211.
90 Ibid., 229.
91 Ibid. Crow refers to a letter written to Antoine-Jean Gros by his mother, dated 18 July 1799.
never recovered its former closeness.  

In an undated caricature of both artists as older men (fig. 79), Julien-Léopold Boilly (1796-1874) satirically depicted the rift between Girodet and Gérard, as well as their very different personalities. To our left, the almost skeletal Girodet appears like a man possessed: his hair is disheveled, his cloak whirs around him, he wields some brushes and a palette outfitted with burning candles in his left hand, and reaches towards Gérard with his right. He is surrounded by a background composed of streaks of smoky brown, black, and grey washes from which two faces appear and seem to wail. Boilly created a kind of visual cacophony in his depiction of Girodet, capturing the artist’s mental instability. In extreme contrast, the somewhat plump and balding Gérard appears on the right as the embodiment of calm and restraint: with a self-assured manner and respectable attire, he casually stands leaning on his walking stick with his right arm, holding his hat in his right hand, with his left hand tucked away in his pocket. He appears unaware of Girodet’s presence as he looks to his left with a slightly befuddled expression. Boilly further captured Gérard’s calm demeanor by leaving his surroundings completely stark. In essence, Boilly’s caricature pictures Girodet and Gérard on two ends of the spectrum — one as the crazed artist, driven by inspiration and the other as the gentleman artist, the successful yet uninspired

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93 Girodet wrote a letter to Gérard around 1820 inviting him to his studio to look at a painting he was working on at the moment. See, Gérard, Correspondance. . ., 73. It is not known whether or not Gérard took him up on this offer. It should be noted, though, that Gérard did eulogize Girodet at his funeral on 13 December 1824, and by all accounts, was mournful and shaken by his friend’s death, see Crow, Emulation. . ., 217.
professional. The small gap between the two figures evokes the rupture in their friendship and rivalry from 1799 forward.
Chapter 5: A New Direction: 
Gérard and the Theme of Cupid and Psyche During the Directory

The earliest known written account of the story of Cupid and Psyche dates to the second century and appears as the centerpiece of Apuleius’ *Metamorphosis* (or *The Golden Ass*). While the tale was revived periodically over the centuries, Sonia Cavicchioli notes that, especially in Paris and Rome, neoclassical artists beginning in the mid-eighteenth century, “demonstrated an intense interest in the theme of Psyche,” the like of which had not been seen since Antiquity.1 The work of neoclassical scholars, especially that of Winckelmann, brought to light a rich tradition of ancient representations of the couple.2 The vogue led to the fame of two Roman sculptures, one in the Uffizi (fig. 80) and the other in the Capitoline Museum (fig. 81).3 In addition to

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1 *The Tale of Cupid and Psyche* (New York: George Braziller, 2002), 202. Cavicchioli also notes (185) the tale underwent a revival, although to a lesser extent, at the court of France in the seventeenth century. In 1619 at the Louvre, there was a performance for queen Marie de Medici of the *Ballet de la Reyne tire de la fable de Psiché*. In addition, the queen sponsored the Italian poet Giovani Battista Marino’s poem, *Adonis* (1623). Marino retold the story of Cupid and Psyche in the fourth canto of this poem. In 1669, La Fontaine published his version of the myth as, *The Loves of Cupid and Psyche*

2 René Schneider, “Le mythe de Psyché dans l’art français depuis la Révolution,” *Revue de l’art ancien et moderne* 32 (July-December 1912): 244-45. Schneider indicates the importance of Wincklemann’s studies of antique gems carved from sardonyx and carnelian discussed in his publications, *Descriptions des Pierres gravées du feu Baron de Stosch* (1760) and his *Catalogue du Cabinet du Roi de Prusse* (1767).

3 These sculptures are discussed in more detail below. The Uffizi group became a part of the Medici Collection shortly after its discovery near Rome in 1666, and became very famous in the eighteenth century. It was reproduced on porcelain, copied in plaster, and appears in Zoffany’s *The Tribuna* (1772-78), see Cavicchioli, 49. It was also reproduced with a description written by Mongez in 1789, see Schneider, 245. The Capitoline group was unearthed in 1749 and quickly equaled, if not surpassed, the Uffizi group in terms of popularity: it was reproduced on a small scale in gems, bronzes, and porcelain, as well as copied to scale in plaster and marble. In 1797, it was ceded to the French as part of the terms of the Treaty of Tolentino and was triumphantly displayed in Paris in 1798, see Francis Haskell and Nicholas Penny, *Taste*
the rediscovery of ancient works, neoclassical artists drew upon the great sixteenth-century fresco cycles by Raphael and his students. The revival of the fable only intensified in France between 1780 and the turn of the nineteenth century. Many artists depicted the couple with increasing frequency and exhibited their works at the Salons including David, whose *Paris and Helen* (painted in 1787, exhibited in 1789, fig. 12) contains an ornamental bas-relief of Cupid and Psyche in the right middle of the composition, just visible on the pillar beneath the hanging drapery. The major exhibitions at the Louvre in 1796 of stained glass windows from the Gallery of Psyche at the Château d’Écouen, Chantilly and in 1797 of master drawings from the former royal collection contributed to the popularity of the theme of Cupid and Psyche amongst artists, patrons, and the general public. The 1790s also marked a renewed interest in

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4 These include those by Raphael at the Villa Farnese, Rome (1518-19); by Romano in the Palazzo Te, Mantua (1527-30); and by Perin del Vaga in the Palazzo Doria, Genoa (1528-33) and in the apartment of Paul III at the Castel Sant’Angelo, Rome (1545-47).

5 Cavicchioli, 202.

6 Gerard, along with Jean-Baptiste Isabey, completed the decorative colonnade of caryatids that forms the background of David’s composition, see Crow, *Emulation: Making Artists for Revolutionary France* (New Haven, Connecticut: Yale University Press, 1995, 99. Perhaps the first neoclassical French artist to treat the subject was Pajou in his *Abandoned Psyche*, begun in 1785 and exhibited at the Salon of 1790. Between the late 1780s and late 1790s, Canova created his versions (and copies) of the Cupid and Psyche embracing (*Cupid Awakening with a Kiss*, 1787-93 and *Standing Cupid and Psyche*, 1797) and the *Standing Psyche*, 1789-92. The Salon livrets from 1791 to 1798 list some 17 works depicting either Psyche alone or Cupid and Psyche together at different moments during the story. For a compiled list of these works see, Hanna Böck and Monika Krebser, “Répertoire: Amour et Psyché aux Salons de 1791 à 1819,” in *Regards sur Amour et Psyché à l’âge néo-classique*, ex. cat., ed. Paul Lang (Zurich: Institut suisse pour l’Étude de l’Art, 1994), 168-169.

7 The 44 stained glass windows had been removed in 1792 to protect them and
both La Fontaine’s 1669 version and the original tale by Apuleius. New editions of both texts were published in Paris, including Pierre Didot’s 1797 deluxe edition of La Fontaine’s text funded in part by the Directory government and illustrated solely by Gérard.8

In her analysis of French art after the Terror, Ewa Lajer-Burcharth discusses the wide-spread fascination with the myth of Psyche and notes:

In the late 1790s and early 1800s in Paris, Psyche was everywhere, from opera, ballet, and Salon art to the panneaux decorating the chic boudoirs of the newly rich; from the officially sponsored deluxe book editions of the fable to a type of dance, a mirror, clocks, dresses and a hairstyle à la Psyché. In one of the Parisian pleasure parks, a temple of Psyche was erected as a special attraction and was illuminated in the evenings.

Whereas the myth appeared in art immediately after the Terror as an iconography of persecution, loss, and suffering. . .under the Directoire it was explored mostly as a parable of desire. The myth introduced the notions of personal affect and sexual pleasure that had been missing from the republican ethos of male stoic virtue. But Psyche was also, importantly, a figure in which women could recognize themselves; she offered an...
identificatory ideal of the feminine self in pursuit of her desire. 9

The popularity of Psyche’s story was part of “women’s renewed cultural prominence” in elite Directory society when they, and especially their bodies draped in sheer gowns inspired by antique dress, became increasingly visible at fashionable public venues and in portraits exhibited on the walls of the Salon.10 Their sartorial displays and prominent public roles, not the least of which was as patrons of the arts, generated a great deal of anxiety amongst male cultural critics who repeatedly warned their readers of the dangers of immoral women who dared to assert their independence and to flaunt both their bodies and sexuality so publicly. With his illustrations for Didot’s edition of La Fontaine’s novel (1797, figs. 82-85) and his painting Cupid and Psyche (1798, fig. 86), Gérard depicted the myth in a manner that accommodated its divergent interpretations but did not provoke male fears regarding its heroine’s or Directory women’s sexuality. Critics praised Gérard’s painting at length; it was Gérard’s first truly popular work with the public – especially with female viewers who strove to imitate Psyche’s appearance. Both the Didot commission and the painting represent Gérard’s turn away from the exploration of Roman metaphors for Revolutionary events towards a mythological and apolitical subject, which addressed issues of love, beauty, and sexuality. For Gérard, this was new territory and would inspire a younger generation of French artists who were interested in Greek stories and aesthetics. Gérard’s images of Cupid and Psyche also reveal his continued stylistic evolution away from his early, more severe classical

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9 Necklines, 278-279.
10 Ibid, 241. I discuss Gérard’s portraits of both male and female sitters from Thermidor through the Directory in the following chapter.
style influenced by David’s paintings of the 1780s and his continued exploration of elements of Girodet’s style, now combined with features influenced by the paintings of Italian masters on view at the Louvre and the sculptures of Antonio Canova (1757-1822).

**Gérard’s Illustrations for La Fontaine’s *The Loves of Psyche and Cupid***

In Apuleius’ original text, Psyche is simultaneously a character in the narrative and a symbol of the human soul who must endure a variety of trials before achieving immortality and an everlasting union with divine love, symbolized by the character of Cupid. While La Fontaine acknowledged in his preface that Apuleius provided him with the material for his tale, he also wrote that the taste of his times required him to bring the story up-to-date and to emphasize the gallantry and the pleasantness, as well as the elegance and the passion of the story.¹¹ La Fontaine’s version became the preferred one in France and inspired Baroque and Rococo artists to focus upon Psyche as a beautiful young woman of royal lineage, dressed in either sumptuous gowns or shown semi-nude, in richly appointed interiors or in lush, outdoor settings.¹² In both La Fontaine’s text and these visual renditions of the story, the moral or symbolic content of

¹¹ La Fontaine, *Les Amours de Psiché et de Cupidon*, ed. Françoise Charpentier (Paris: Flammarion, 1990), 37-38. While La Fontaine’s novel was and continued to be the best known of the 17th century French versions of the story of Cupid and Psyche, other versions did exist and enjoy popularity at court. In particular, the ballet-drama on the theme of Psyche first staged by Molière in 1671 at the Hall of the Tuileries (with text also by Corneille and music by Quinault) continued to be performed into the early eighteenth century. According to Sonia Cavicchioli, Molière’s version was directly inspired by that of La Fontaine, see *The Tale of Cupid and Psyche*, 186.

¹² See Cavicchioli, 186-197 for a discussion of Baroque and Rococo tapestry cycles commissioned by the monarchy which illustrate La Fontaine’s version.
Apuleius’ original was all but forgotten.\textsuperscript{13}

La Fontaine chose Versailles as the setting for his novel and told it in the form of a conversation between four friends. At the beginning, we learn that one of the friends, Poliphile, has just completed his version of the lovers’ tale and wishes to read it aloud to his friends Acante, Gélaste, and Ariste, who in turn comment upon the text whilst strolling through, and also discussing, various features of the palace and its gardens.\textsuperscript{14} Gérard did not, however, depict the four men nor did he depict their settings; instead, he focused upon the tale of Cupid and Psyche alone. Just as La Fontaine modified Apuleius’ text in order to appeal to the sensibility of his audience, Gérard focused upon the story of profane love between a beautiful young woman and her equally attractive celestial lover and employed a style intended to appeal to the tastes of Directory society in general and of his patron in particular.

La Fontaine’s novel is divided into two books. At the beginning of Book I, after the introductory section, Psyche is introduced as the youngest of three daughters of a king and queen. Due to their great beauty, Psyche’s two sisters were easily married off to older, rich men; their beauty, however, was merely mortal. That of Psyche was incomparable and beyond all power of human description. Although no man dared to ask for Psyche’s hand in marriage, men of the city treated her as akin to a goddess and worshiped her to such an extent that the temples dedicated to the true goddess of beauty began to fall into ruin. It was not long before an irate and envious Venus

\textsuperscript{13} Schneider, 243.
\textsuperscript{14} For a summary of La Fontaine’s text and its interpretations, see Charpentier, ed., “Introduction,” 9-36.
ordered her son to go to the city and cause Psyche to be wedded to the ugliest man there. Before Cupid could carry out this plan, Psyche had grown miserable because no man dared to have her, and her father had begun to fear that he had angered the gods by allowing his subjects to worship her. He did not know how right he was. Psyche’s father went to the oracle of Apollo to offer sacrifices and to ask for advice on how to find a suitable husband for his daughter. The oracle declared the only way to appease the gods was to abandon Psyche, dressed as a bride, on a grassy hilltop as a sacrifice to a great winged beast.

For his first illustration to Book I (fig. 82), Gérard depicted the moment when Psyche’s father reveals the oracle’s prophecy to his wife and daughter.15 A sculpture of Apollo, taken straight from the Apollo Belvedere, stands in the niche of the façade above Psyche’s father, who appears resigned and detached from his wife and daughter. Psyche’s mother looks heavenward as she attempts to console Psyche, who has collapsed in her arms. Just outside the small courtyard, Cupid eavesdrops. This is a critical moment in the story, because the revelation puts Psyche on the path to meeting Cupid. With great sorrow, Psyche’s father and mother accepted the oracle’s demands and left their daughter alone and weeping to await her fate. Zephyrus, however, rescued Psyche and whisked her away to a grassy plain where she fell asleep. The next morning, Psyche began to explore her new surroundings and followed a stream to a magical palace. As she gazed upon the impossible beauty of the architecture, a

15 Gérard’s image appears opposite page 25 in the 1797 Didot edition and the lines included below the image read: “L’Époux que les Destins gardent à votre fille/Est un monster cruel qui déchire les cœurs,/Qui trouble maint État,/détruit mainte famille,/Se nourrit de soupirs, se baigne dans les pleurs.”
disembodied voice told Psyche that it would all belong to her and that she was to prepare to marry the lord of the palace. Psyche entered the royal palace where she was attended by invisible servants and prepared to receive her husband. In the darkness of night, her husband came to her bedchamber and made her his wife, all the while remaining invisible to his bride. Several days followed during which the invisible maids attended to Psyche during the day, while her still unseen husband visited her in the evenings.

It was not long before Psyche began to long for the companionship of her sisters, complaining that she was a prisoner in the palace. She eventually persuaded her husband to allow her sisters to visit, but he warned Psyche that they must not try to see him or discover his identity. When her sisters arrived, they became inflamed with jealousy over Psyche’s good fortune and convinced Psyche that her husband must be a monstrous serpent who will devour her when she becomes pregnant with their first child. The naive Psyche believed her sisters and followed their advice to prepare a lamp and a knife in order to see and kill her husband during his next visit. For his second illustration to Book I (fig. 83), Gérard depicted the curious Psyche, motivated by her sisters’ claim, sneaking into her bedchamber at night in order to uncover the identity of her husband and kill him.16 To her delight, Psyche discovered in the light of her lamp that her husband was not a hideous monster, but the beautiful god of love.

Psyche did not have long to contemplate her good fortune. In the narrative, as

16 This image appears opposite page 105 in the 1797 Didot edition and the line included below the image reads: “Psyché demeura comme transportée à l’aspect de son Epoux.”
soon as she made her discovery, she threw herself on him, showering him with kisses, thrilled with her discovery; in the process, a drop of oil from the lamp scalded Cupid and awoke him. In La Fontaine’s version, Cupid does not say a word to Psyche but instead flies away and makes the magical and sumptuous palace that was their home instantly disappear. Faithful to the text, in his first illustration to Book II (fig. 84), Gérard depicted the moment when Psyche found herself, “alone on a high rock, half-dead, pale, trembling . . . unaware she was nude . . . However, Cupid remained [invisible] in the air.”¹⁷ La Fontaine further described Psyche as overtaken by extreme despair, with her clothing resting at her feet, at first staring at the ground for a long time before raising her eyes in disbelief, not understanding what had just occurred.¹⁸ Gérard depicted Psyche with shoulders hunched, arms slack, and a bewildered expression to convey both her physical and emotional stupor. After regaining her composure, the now abandoned Psyche attempted to drown herself in a river, but the river washed her ashore; Pan tried to comfort her, but to no avail. Psyche eventually took revenge on her evil sisters, but even this brought her no solace.

Meanwhile, Venus had learned of her son’s disobedience and was angrier than ever at Psyche. She issued a reward for Psyche’s capture. Unable to convince Juno and Ceres to defend her, Psyche eventually surrendered herself to Venus, who in turn put

¹⁷ Gérard’s image appears opposite p.141 in the 1797 Didot edition and the lines included below the image read: “La pauvre épouse se trouva sur le Rocher, demi-mort, pale, tremblante . . . et sans prendre garde qu’elle étoit nue . . . Cependant l’Amour étoit demeuré dans l’air . . .”.

¹⁸ Charpentier, ed., 113-114: “et tellement possédé de son excessive douleur, qu’elle demeura longtemps les yeux attachés à terre sans se connaître . . . Ses habits de fille était à ses pieds: elle avait les yeux dessus, et ne le apercevait pas.”
the young beauty through a series of deadly trials, all of which Psyche completed successfully with the help of other gods. At last Venus issued a final chore to Psyche: descend to the Underworld and ask Queen Proserpine to send some of her regal beauty back to Venus in a small box. Psyche did so, but on the return trip, her curiosity and naïveté once again got the best of her. She peaked inside the box hoping to steal some of the beauty for herself and was instead enveloped in a deadly sleep. At long last, tired of his mother’s games and desperate to reunite with his suffering wife, Cupid intervened, revived Psyche and then appealed to Jupiter to sanction their union. Jupiter gave Psyche immortality and great wedding festivities were held on Mount Olympus. For his second illustration for Book II (fig. 85), Gérard depicted a scene that has no direct counterpart in the text. Rather than showing Psyche’s apotheosis or the couple’s wedding on Mount Olympus, he depicted the reunited lovers embracing in the heavens beside a bed, alluding to both their marriage and future child.\footnote{Gérard’s image appears opposite p.303 in the 1797 Didot edition and the line included below the image reads: “Ces plaisirs leur eurent bientôt donné un doux gage de leur amour.” The couple had a daughter they named Voluptas.}

Gérard’s decision to show the pair alone and embracing was probably due to the rich tradition of representing the couple in antiquity, and as mentioned above, many of these representations were well known in neoclassical circles.\footnote{See fn 99 above and Carl C. Schlam, \textit{Cupid and Psyche: Apuleius and the Monuments} (University Park, Pennsylvania: The American Philological Association, 1976), 2-3.} Scholars have located the origins of Apuleius’ second-century tale in various folk tales, myths, and other pre-existing literary traditions, and have argued that the tale represents Apuleius’ response
to Plato’s discussion of love and the soul in *Phaedrus* (c.370 BCE).\textsuperscript{21} Carl Schlam was one of the first scholars to show that Apuleius’ tale also relates to an abundant ancient tradition of visual representations of Cupid and Psyche which can be traced back to at least the fifth century BCE, showing that depictions of the two figures both predate and are contemporary with Apuleius’ text.\textsuperscript{22} In the earliest surviving depictions of them, Cupid and Psyche appear most often as an embracing couple. This motif became the preferred way of representing the pair first by Hellenistic and then by Roman artists whose works set the iconographical prototypes that inspired countless artists over the centuries.\textsuperscript{23} Two of the best-known Roman sculptures of Cupid and Psyche (figs. 80 and 81), serve to illustrate the common elements and variations on the theme.\textsuperscript{24} Artists tended to depict Cupid nude -- if he does wear clothing it will be a long cloak down his back -- and Psyche as semi-clothed with drapery covering her lower body only (although at times she wears a full dress of transparent drapery). The couple almost always appear standing with their arms around each others’ torsos as they do here, gazing into each others’ eyes, about to kiss (as in fig. 80) or kissing (as in fig. 81). These sculptures also display two of the most noticeable and common variations in these

\textsuperscript{21} Ibid., 3.

\textsuperscript{22} Ibid., 2 and Cavicchioli, 46-47. Schlam and Cavicchioli argue that the Ancient Greek representations of the human soul either as a young girl with butterfly or bird wings or simply as just a butterfly stems from Plato’s description of the human soul in his *Phaedrus*. It should also be noted that the word “psyche” in Greek means both butterfly and soul. As early as the first half of the fifth century BCE, this type of winged maiden is found paired with Cupid in works made in a variety of media.

\textsuperscript{23} Ibid., 9 and Cavicchioli, 47-48. While Schlam discusses only the representations of the couple from Antiquity to Apuleius’ era, Cavicchioli traces the images of the couple from Antiquity through the late nineteenth century.

\textsuperscript{24} Cavicchioli, 46-49. The author discusses this pair as typical of Hellenistic and Roman representations of the pair embracing.
representations: the age of the figures and whether or not they have wings. In the Capitoline group, Cupid and Psyche are shown as young adults, without wings, and very passionately kissing one another. In the Uffizi group, they are shown as young children. Cupid has bird wings, Psyche has butterfly wings, and the tone of the sculpture is much more innocent or playful. Artists used these differences to express divergent interpretations of the story of Cupid and Psyche.25 The features of the Capitoline group are meant to express the carnal love of Cupid and Psyche as newlyweds, full of desire for each other and rendered with more overtly sensual body types. The child-like bodies and wings of Cupid and Psyche in the Uffizi group were meant to convey, to the contrary, the Platonic version of their story with Psyche symbolizing the quest of the human soul to achieve immortality and Cupid embodying the ultimate union with the divine. Thus, love between Cupid and Psyche could be interpreted as either profane or sacred.26

Despite the fact that there was a significant revival of interest in the loftier connotations of the couple’s romance and in the identification of Psyche with the soul, Gérard’s illustrations as a whole do not refer to this aspect, which is understandable because he was illustrating La Fontaine’s novel and not Apuleius’ original.27 The one iconographic detail included by Gérard that could be interpreted as alluding to the

26 Primarily in Italy, writers and artists from the Roman period through the mid-sixteenth century continued to be inspired by Apuleius’ story, crafter their own versions, and alternatively emphasized or neglected the symbolism of the original fable. Cavicchioli surveys these developments in Chapters 3-5.
27 Cavicchioli discussed this aspect of the Neoclassical revival on pages 202-204. Gérard would, however, reference the symbolism of the couple’s story in his 1798 painting as discussed below.
symbolic (in light of the tradition of depicting the pair discussed above) is the fact that he consistently depicted Cupid with wings, but this was and is also simply iconographic tradition for representing the god of love. And unlike the Uffizi group (fig. 80), Gérard did not depict Psyche with wings in any of his illustrations, much less in his scene of their final embrace at the end of Book II (fig. 85). In this illustration, Gérard presented an image of the couple embracing that was entirely of his own invention and in accord with the character of La Fontaine’s version.

In her analysis of the vogue for the myth of Psyche, Lajer-Burcharth explains:

When the Directoire government helped sponsor Didot’s luxury edition of La Fontaine’s version of the fable in 1797, it most likely wished to endorse a model republican love story harnessing feminine sexuality within a socially acceptable narrative ending in marriage . . . this sumptuous edition illustrated by David’s acclaimed student Gérard was a sort of pedagogy of libidinal restraint directed at the newly moneyed elite but in particular at women, and meant to instruct through both text and images . . . Gérard’s engravings represented the four moralizing ‘stations’ in the story . . . the illustrations to the Didot edition enclosed it [feminine desire] within a moralizing linear sequence of transgression, punishment, penitence, and reward. Yet this tale, featuring a transgressive female protagonist pursuing her love object against all odds, also struck a somewhat dissonant note among the family-oriented romances of the Directoire. It offered, in the climate of phobia about women as free-roaming sexual agents, a culturally acceptable means for women to express themselves as desiring subjects . . .

As Lajer-Burcharth rightly notes, Gérard depicted what could be considered the “moralizing stations” within the couple’s love story. As expected, he approached the task of illustrating the La Fontaine with the eye of a history painter and depicted the key points in the narrative, highlighting Psyche’s transformation from a worshiped, but ill-fated, beautiful young woman to a blissfully wedded, immortal wife and mother. In

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28 Necklines, 279.
doing so, Gérard chose pivotal episodes that are also highly emotionally charged and/or decidedly sensual and not necessarily overtly moralizing. In other words, the scenes he depicted are open to both of the possible interpretations Lajer-Burcharth discusses. On the one hand, Gérard’s illustrations accommodate the reader/viewer who regards the story as teaching a moral lesson concerning the necessary “libidinal restraint” of “transgressive” female sexuality. On the other, his illustrations feature Psyche as the unrestrained heroine and feature moments brimming with irrationality, passion, and sensuality – scenes which female readers/viewers who were fascinated with the story of Psyche could privately relish.29

Gérard’s illustrations can be organized into two groups. The first illustrations for Book I (fig. 82) and Book II (fig. 84) depict two of Psyche’s punishments: when she learns she will be sacrificed for allowing herself to be worshipped more than Venus in Book I, and when Cupid abandons her and she has lost everything in Book II. These scenes are the most didactic in tone in that they show Psyche suffering the consequences of her “immoral” behavior (allowing herself to be worshipped more than Venus in Book I and disobeying her husband in Book II). However both are also highly-charged moments and appeal to the emotions of the viewer by showing the despair of Psyche, as she either collapses into the arms of her mother or gazes in a near stupor upwards and towards the viewer. Moreover, the emotional atmosphere of both scenes is heightened by their fantastical nature; the moment in Book I stems from the

29 For a discussion of the many ways that women of fashionable Directory society identified with and enacted their fascination with the story of Psyche (in everything from their fashions to their furnishings), see Lajer-Burchharth, especially pp.136-139, 157-162, 181-204, and 276-279.
revelation of an oracle and that of Book II occurs after her palace has magically and instantaneously disappeared while Cupid hovers as an invisible presence in the clouds above. These two illustrations therefore not only depict key episodes in which Psyche is penalized for her transgressions but also poignant moments in which the gods control her fate.

Gérard’s second illustrations for Book I (fig. 83) and Book II (fig. 85) constitute the second grouping and are obviously brimming with sensuality and emotion. In this pair, Gérard portrayed Cupid and Psyche in their earthly bedchamber in Book I and in their heavenly one at the end of Book II. In the former, the nude Psyche treads softly towards the bed, guided by the flame from the lamp, and peers at the languid, nude body of Cupid as he sleeps. The scene is infused with soft lighting and utter stillness, which allows the viewer to focus on the young couples’ beautiful forms. In the other scene, the nude Cupid kneels with one knee on the edge of a barely visible bed as he gently embraces Psyche, who stands gracefully and wears a diaphanous gown. This scene is also softly lit and still, with minimal background details, which also encourages the viewer to concentrate upon the loving couple. The settings of both illustrations are also obviously fantastical: one is a magical palace and the other is the couple’s eternal, divine home. These scenes are not overtly moralizing (especially in comparison to the previous two examples). However, by featuring a married couple, these intimate moments could be interpreted in Directory society as a “safe” vision of female sexuality and desire within the sanctity of marriage. Finally, while it is true that for the most part Gérard’s illustrations are devoid of references to the symbolic connotations of Apuleius’
original, the erudite viewer/reader of the day could regard the final scene as a reunion not only between Psyche and her husband but also of the immortal soul with divine love.

The La Fontaine commission provided Gérard with an opportunity to depict a subject that was both in vogue and extremely different from the stoic and political subject matter of his previous works. The commission also afforded him the chance to continue experimenting stylistically, as he moved even further away from the severity of his earlier Davidian neo-classicism and began to combine his penchant for linearity with a softer, more lyrical version of classicism – a transition he had already begun to make with his *Belisarius* of 1795 (figs. 74 and 75). Remnants of his earlier style are still seen throughout the illustrations, especially in his use of line, relatively shallow spaces (even when further depth is seen, the figures remain in the foreground plane), minimal anecdotal details, classical architecture, furnishings, and draperies, and convincingly modeled, mostly nude figures. These typical neoclassical elements are softened, however, by Gérard’s use of chiaroscuro to convey emotion, create atmosphere, and model the figures.

In his first illustration for Book I (fig. 82), Gérard convincingly used light and shadow to convey the drama of the moment. The bright light shining from the upper left of the composition not only highlights Cupid as he eavesdrops outside the small courtyard but also draws attention to the sculpture of Apollo and the stern profile of Psyche’s father, thus visually connecting the divine figures and the patriarch’s acceptance of the oracle’s pronouncement. Appropriately, Gérard placed the emotional
Psyche with her mother in the shadows cast by the stone beam, creating a visual equivalence between their despair and the darkness surrounding them. The dramatic subject matter of the second illustration for Book II (fig. 85) hinges on the play of light and shadow and provided Gérard with a vehicle to display his mastery of chiaroscuro. The small flame emanating from Psyche’s lamp illuminates the darkened bedchamber, revealing the couple’s beautifully rendered bodies and faces, as well as the dropped dagger at Psyche’s feet. Osborne describes this illustration as “an extreme example of the Mannerist variation of classicizing style” that Gérard sometimes used in his work for Didot and as a reflection of Didot’s penchant for the Italian Mannerism of the sixteenth century. While it is possible that Gérard intended to cater to Didot’s tastes, he would not have had to look to Italian Mannerist works in order to do so; instead, Gérard seems to have turned to his own depiction of the young guide in his Belisarius (figs. 74 and 75). The position of Cupid’s neck and head as he rests on the pillow bears a striking resemblance to that of Belisarius’ young companion, which was in turn inspired by Girodet’s Endymion (fig. 20). In fact, Gérard’s sleeping Cupid is even closer in spirit to Girodet’s languid male nude; moreover, Gérard’s image brings to mind another of Girodet’s works that Gérard would have known well: the latter’s Aeneid illustration, Aeneas Dreams of the Household Gods (fig. 30). When Gérard turned to depicting a nocturnal scene with dramatic lighting featuring a male nude body, Girodet

30 *Pierre Didot the Elder. . ., 82; see also her discussion of Didot’s interest in Mannerism on pages 62-62, and 72. It is certainly possible that Gérard intended to cater to Didot’s tastes; after all, by this point in his career he had already consistently proven himself to be an artist capable of catering to the sensibilities of all his patrons and not just those of Didot.*
must have seemed an obvious model because he was known for his ability to work with such a subject. Like Girodet, Gérard used dramatic chiaroscuro not only to create mood but to model the figures as well, even going so far as to borrow Girodet’s device of using bright highlights to form the contours of different body parts (especially noticeable in Psyche’s arms, legs, and feet). Of the four, this illustration displays Gérard’s most dramatic chiaroscuro, while those for Book II reveal his ability to employ the device with greater subtlety. When Gérard rendered the abandoned Psyche (fig. 84), he created an appropriately dimly lit scene in order to capture Psyche’s dismal state, and thus the transitions between light and dark here are much more restrained. Gérard’s skill is perhaps best seen in the upper-right of the composition where Cupid hovers, simultaneously blending with and emerging from the surrounding clouds. Finally, in his fourth illustration (fig. 85), Gérard again employed light and shadow to encircle the reunited couple with a frame of clouds and once again used bright highlights to form the contours of clouds. The bright sun shining in the first illustration serves to announce the tragedy that Psyche must endure. The bright light visible behind the dark clouds in the fourth illustration brings the story full circle – the dark clouds remind the reader/viewer of the couple’s past tribulations and the bright light just visible behind the clouds symbolizes their future, eternally together.

It appears that Didot was pleased with Gérard’s designs, because he twice praised the artist’s work publicly. First, Didot dedicated his 1797 translation of the works of Horace to Gérard with the inscription: “To Gérard, Painter, Author of the designs of my edition in-4° of Psyche; after having seen the advanced sketch of his
painting of Psyche and Cupid.”\(^{31}\) Then, in his 1799 advertisement for the La Fontaine edition (originally published in 1797), Didot further praised not only Gérard, but the engravers as well, commenting that it would be “difficult to desire something more perfect than the compositions and the execution of the engravings;” furthermore, Didot referred to Gérard as a “painter-poet” and wrote that the engravers could not wait to engrave his designs and competed amongst themselves to match Gérard’s talents with their own.\(^{32}\) Didot’s praise for Gérard was self-serving in so far as it promoted his financially struggling publishing house.\(^{33}\) He may also have hoped to capitalize on Gérard’s success with *Cupid and Psyche* at the Salon of 1798 (discussed below). Yet, the fact that he continued to employ Gérard for illustration designs well into the early nineteenth century suggests he genuinely admired Gérard’s abilities.

The critical response to Gérard’s designs is difficult to ascertain. The Salon *livret* for 1796 indicates that he exhibited all four drawings, but in the surviving Salon criticism, only one critic commented on them. This is hardly surprising given the scant attention critics gave to works connected to illustration or commercial art during the

\(^{31}\) Quoted in Osborne, 80. The quotation in Osborne reads: “A Gérard, Peintre, Auteur des dessins de mon edition in-4° de Psyché; après avoir vu l’esquisse avancée de son tableau de Psyché et l’Amour.” Osborne indicates that Didot wrote these words in 1796 but did not publish them until 1797.

\(^{32}\) Quoted in Ibid., 79-80. The full quotation in Osborne reads: “Imprimé très soigneusement avec un nouveau caractère grave et fondu dants toute la perfection possible de Firmin Didot, et orné de cinq gravures d’après les dessins de Gérard. Il est difficile de desirer quelque chose de plus parfait que la composition de ces dessins et l’exécution des gravures. Les artistes à qui elles ont été confiées, jaloux de travailler d’après les productions de ce peintre-poète, ont formé entre eux une lutte honorable de talents; et leur rivalité dans cet ouvrage n’aura fait qu’ajouter à leur réputation. Ces artistes distingués sont Niçolet, Blot, Marais, Tardieu, et Matthieu.”

\(^{33}\) Ibid., 73. The sales and financial difficulties of Didot’s Louvre editions are discussed in Chapter Two, see 116-118.
1790s. Still, the one anonymous critic did review the designs favorably, if only briefly. The critic found them to live up to Gérard’s reputation, and he singled out Gérard’s first illustrations to Book I and II in particular as further evidence that Gérard, “is always a painter and a good painter.” Didot may have taken some comfort in this comment; after all, he took great pride in having the most prominent and promising painters, especially history painters, working for him.

It is interesting to compare the subject matters and styles of Gérard’s La Fontaine illustrations with those he produced for Didot’s edition of Virgil’s *Aeneid*. For the Virgil, Gérard depicted Aeneas as the virtuous and dedicated hero, in charge of his destiny, and fighting for his country; however, Gérard also represented the suffering and conflicts that often resulted from Aeneas’ actions. These themes, of course, resonated with those found in Davidian painting prior to and in the beginning of the Revolution. Moreover, Gérard’s *Aeneid* illustrations showcase his talent for emulating David’s early, severe style of Neoclassicism. Given that the story of Virgil’s epic poem is extremely different from La Fontaine’s tale, it is not surprising that the subjects of Gérard’s illustrations for the latter have nothing to do with heroic action or civic duty.

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34 The general attitude of critics at this time to such work was to consider it “business art” and not worthy of critical attention. This issue is discussed in connection with Gérard’s and Girodet’s *Aeneid* illustrations in Chapter Two, see especially 112-118.


36 This topic is discussed throughout Chapter Two.
Instead, Gérard used the commission as an opportunity to showcase his ability to handle more private, irrational subjects and themes, and to engage with one of the most popular stories of the period. And while vestiges of his earlier style remain in the La Fontaine compositions, these are tempered by his new confidence in using chiaroscuro to soften the severity of his linear aesthetic. These differences in Gérard’s approach to the La Fontaine illustrations were most likely informed, at least in part, by his success with the *Belisarius*, in which he introduced a new level of sentimentality and successfully distanced himself from the stoic rhetoric of French painting during the early stages of the Revolution. He also experimented with his style by overtly modeling the figure of the young guide after Girodet’s male nude in the *Endymion*. Given that the *Belisarius* was well-received by critics, it is hardly surprising that Gérard would apply the lessons he learned to his designs for the La Fontaine; both the *Belisarius* and the illustrations feature subjects intended to appeal to the viewer’s emotions and reveal Gérard successfully emulating aspects of the style of Girodet rather than David.

Throughout Thermidor and the Directory, Gérard continually experimented with subjects and styles and found new sources of inspiration. His motivation for doing so was most likely two-fold: to distance his art from that of David and to keep abreast of the changing tastes of critics and potential patrons. With his last history painting of the Revolutionary era, Gérard once again judged the mood in Paris correctly and continued his experimentation, creating a work that was even more removed from David’s art. His efforts paid off when his *Cupid and Psyche* (fig. 86) gained him his greatest critical success as a history painter.
Introduction to Gérard’s *Cupid and Psyche*, 1798

Gérard began *Cupid and Psyche* sometime in 1796, and a letter from Julien de Parme (a student of Carle Vanloo) makes it clear that the canvas was near completion, if not finished, by the end of May 1798, shortly after he took the commission for the La Fontaine illustrations. In the painting, he explored some of the possible connotations of Cupid and Psyche’s story that are not emphasized in La Fontaine’s version of the tale. This point is best made by comparing the painting to his illustration for Book II of La Fontaine (fig. 85). In this final illustration to the story, Gérard depicted the couple in a passionate embrace, in the heavens, reunited at the end of their tale. He showed them as mature adults in an emotionally-charged scene that represents the final “moralizing station” of the story and the ultimate consummation of their love. In the painting, on the other hand, Cupid and Psyche appear to embrace, but they do not actually touch one another. They are surrounded by a pristine but earthly landscape, and appear

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37 As mentioned above, Didot’s inscription to Gérard dated to 1796 references Gérard’s sketch for the painting, see Osborne, 80. The Julien de Parme letter, dated 10 Prairial, an VI (29 May 1798), is reproduced in Henri Gérard, *Correspondance . . .*, 46-47. De Parme’s (1736-1799) letter reads as if it is a reply to one from Gérard (now lost) in which the latter sought the older artist’s critique of the painting in progress. From de Parme’s comments, it is safe to state that the major features of Gérard’s composition were already completed. In the letter, de Parme was frank with Gérard concerning what he considered to be a few shortcomings of the painting, but he insisted that Gérard excuse his frankness and that his comments were born of the high esteem in which he held Gérard’s talent, that the painting clearly has “great beauty,” and he signed the letter as “a father, a friend.” Clearly the two artists enjoyed a great friendship and Gérard would have valued de Parme’s critical eye. In addition to these textual references to the painting, there are a group of six small undated sketches by Gérard that feature scenes of Cupid and Psyche embracing now in a private collection (reprints of the sketches are available in the dossier at the Centre de la documentation du Département de peinture, Louvre. It is not clear, however, whether or not these sketches were in preparation for the painting or for his second illustration to Book II of the La Fontaine.
much younger, better described as adolescents on the verge of adulthood. The exact
moment from the story Gérard intended to depict here is difficult to pinpoint. The
alternative title often given to Gérard’s painting, *Psyche Receiving Cupid’s First Kiss,*
suggests he may have had in mind two possible episodes: either their very first kiss
before Psyche knew the identity of her husband, or the kiss Cupid gave his wife to
revive her after she opened Pandora’s box (during the trials Venus subjected Psyche to
near the end of the story) and fell into a deadly sleep. At both times, Cupid is invisible
to Psyche, which explains the expression on Psyche’s face in Gérard’s painting; we are
meant to understand that she is at this moment unaware of Cupid’s presence. Yet, the
painting does not truly capture these moments as described by either Apuleius or La
Fontaine, suggesting Gérard did not intend his painting to be read as a literal depiction
(or illustration) of a specific moment, and for the most part, critics did not regard his
subject in this way. The majority of critics, instead, read the painting as an allegory that
evoked the philosophical connotations of Apuleius’ original text and/or as symbolic of
the awakening of adolescent innocence to love and physical desire. Gérard’s painting
captured the attention of the Directory art world in a way his illustrations did not;
moreover, available records indicate the painting appealed to the larger public.
Numerous critics commented in their reviews that it was the work attracting the largest
crowds at the Salon.38 At a theatrical performance of the *Commedia dell’Arte* at a Parisian

38 See, for example, Reicrem, “Salon du Musée central des arts.” *Journal de Paris*
est ce tableaux favorisé d’une groupe pressé et qui se renouvelle lentement? Il attire à
tous les spectateurs.”; Anonymous, *Exposition du Salon de l’an VI ou les tableaux en
vaudevilles. Ile numéro,* Paris, 1798, Coll. Deloynes t.XIX, #527, 4: “Ce tableau . . . est le
theatre, in which the stock characters reenacted the most popular paintings on view at
the Salon, the tableau vivant of Gérard’s painting was considered “one of the most
striking parts [of the performance] and received the most applause.”  Critics and
fellow artists responded favorably not only to Gérard’s iconographical choices but also
to his technique and formal choices. The surviving Salon criticism suggests state that
Gérard’s Cupid and Psyche was the most popular painting at the Salon of 1798 and
attracted the praise of both highly influential critics and amateurs alike. Jean-Baptiste-
Pierre Lebrun included the painting at the top of his list of the most distinguished
history paintings that year and Charles-Paul Landon concurred with his assessment.

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39 The pamphlet for this performance is: Leger; Chazet; Dupaty, Em.;
Desfougerais, Le Déménagement du Sallon ou le portrait de Gilles, comédie-parade en un acte
et en vaudevilles, représente pour la première fois, sur le theater du Vaudeville, le 25
vendémiaire, an VII, (Paris: 1798). The review of the performance is found in:
Anonymous, [sans titre], Magasin encyclopédique, t.III, (an VI-anVII [1798]), 555-556. The
quotation in the text is from page 555 and reads: “Une des endroits les plus saillans, et
qui a été le plus applaudi . . .” The text continues by describing how Colombine took
the pose of Gérard’s Psyche and Arlequin took that of Cupid.

40 Lebrun’s comment is found in a letter he wrote in response to learning that the
government intended to select the best works of the Salon of 1798 to be displayed in a
special exhibition for the fête de la République. Members of l’Institut were to compose
lists of possible works. Lebrun insisted that he did not wish to contradict the members,
but he did compose a list of artists by genre whose works he felt were the most
deserving amongst those at the Salon. He ranked Gérard’s Cupid and Psyche as the best
amongst the history paintings. See: Lebrun, “Réflexions du citoyen Lebrun sur la notice
des tableaux, statues, dessins et estampes exposées [sic] au Salon du Musée,” Coll.
Deloynes, t.XIX, #534, 711-717. Landon wrote a letter in response to Lebrun’s in which
he agreed with the majority of Lebrun’s assessment, including his high esteem for

plus généralement admire.”; and, in a letter of Mayeuvre de Champvieux to the
engraver Jean-Jacques de Boissieu (3 Vendémiaire year VII [24 September 1798]) quoted
in Crow, Emulation . . ., fn 75, p.333: “le tableau de psyche et L’amour [sic] de ce Gérard,
don’t tout paris [sic] raffolle, qu’on exalte aux nues, qui est réellement le meilleur des
tableaux exposés . . .”

Lastly, Gérard’s version of Psyche particularly appealed to fashionable women, many of whom soon emulated her appearance.

**The Critical Reception of Cupid and Psyche**

Amongst the critics who praised Gérard’s painting, a few stand out for the length and quality of their reviews, and in them we find similar points asserted albeit with some different nuances.⁴¹ Reicrem, a critic writing for the *Journal de Paris*, published one of the earliest reviews of the painting and established the interpretation of it as “the most ingenious of allegories; it is the union of the ethereal soul and the earthly sphere.”⁴² Another critic for the same journal announced at the beginning of his review that he needed to make “the true thoughts” of Gérard better known and explained the allegory of the painting in more detail:

> It was a beautiful allegory of the Greeks to suppose that the soul (in Greek Psyché) was a creation of love, not sensual love, but the other more pure, more celestial love, which gives rise to all the elevated and generous thoughts, so brilliantly described by Plato...Such is the allegory that Gérard wanted to paint, and it seems to me that he has rendered it perfectly. When one thinks about the painting of Psyche, and when one recalls that of Belisarius, one sees that Gérard approaches painting as a philosopher.⁴³

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⁴² “Salon du Musée...”, 1330. “...c’est la plus ingénieuse des allegories; c’est l’union de la l’âme étherée et du globe terrestre.”

⁴³ C.T.B.H., 1361. “Cétoit une belle allégorie des Grecs de supposer que l’âme (en grec Psyché) étot une creation de l’amour, non pas de l’amour de sens, mais de cet autre amour plus pur, plus céleste, qu’ait naît du concours de toutes les pensées élevées et
This critic also pointed out that Gérard depicted Cupid about to kiss Psyche on the forehead and not the mouth, which reflects the “ancients’” belief that the forehead is the “seat of the soul.” For him this was a sign that Gérard did not want the viewer to “misunderstand his thoughts.”\textsuperscript{44} For Kérartry, Gérard’s painting was “similar to the finest dialogue by Plato.”\textsuperscript{45} All these critics felt Gérard’s painting expressed the same message as Apuleius’ fable, where Psyche represents the human soul seeking an eternal union with divine love symbolized by Cupid.\textsuperscript{46} The references to Plato reflect the belief that Apuleius’ fable was influenced (at least in part) by the Greek philosopher’s discussion of love and the soul in his \textit{Phaedrus} (c.370 BCE).\textsuperscript{47} Gérard’s inclusion of the butterfly, above Psyche’s head, suggests he intended the critics to read his painting as such an allegory, since it was well-known that in Greek “psyche” means both “butterfly” and “soul.”\textsuperscript{48}

Critics also praised Gérard’s technical abilities and the painting’s style, which
they referred to as graceful, charming, and beautiful. The critic for the *Journal de Paris* felt that “all the beauty of execution, [and] all the prestige of art embellish this charming composition.” The critics also consistently likened Gérard and/or his painting to a wide range of Italian masters, perhaps in part as a nod to Gérard’s Italian heritage, but more importantly due to the recent exhibition of sixteenth-century Italian drawings from the former royal collection and the arrival in Paris of Italian art seized by Napoleon Bonaparte. Reicrem boasted, “I have seen the angel of the visitation by Guido Reni, and he is not more beautiful than this Cupid! I have seen the Venus of Guercino, and Psyche is the more beautiful still! When we possess such a charming painting, there is no need to admire exclusively those we call the masterpieces of Italy.”

The anonymous critic for the *Mercure de France* wrote his review in the form of a conversation taking place between two citizens at the Salon. When one of the citizens asks the other who the artist of *Cupid and Psyche* is, he speculates that it must be Correggio or Domenichino Zampieri; his fellow citizen corrects him by saying, “Not at

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49 C.T.B.H., 1361. “toutes les beautés d’exécution, tous les prestiges de l’art viennent embellir cette charmante composition!”


51 “Salon du Musée . . .,” 1330. “J’ai vu l’ange de la visitation du *Guide*, et il n’est pas plus beau que cet amour! J’ai vu la Vénus de *Guerchin*, et Psiché est plus belle encore! Quand nous possédons un aussi charmant tableau, ne voyons pas une admiration exclusive à ce qu’on nomme les chef-d’œuvres de l’Italie.” In France, Guido Reni (1575-1642) was known as “le Guide” and Guercino (1591-1666) was known as “Guerchin.”
all, Monsieur. The author is a painter living in France, since the painting is part of the exhibition . . . The author is Gérard.” Mayeuvre de Champvieux, in discussing the painting in a letter, felt that “those who are the best in history, such as Gérard, seem to walk in the footsteps of Leonardo da Vinci.” Pierre-Jean-Baptiste Chaussard, the leading art critic of *La Décade philosophique*, one of the premier Salon critics of his time, and a member of the Beaux-Arts section of the Directory’s Interior Ministry, compared Gérard’s Psyche to the “expressive value of the head of Santa Cecilia painted by Raphael.” Implicit in these critics’ references to Italian artists is a not too subtle vein of nationalism; one gets the feeling that for them Gérard’s *Cupid and Psyche* not only equaled but indeed surpassed Italian masterpieces, thus proving the superiority of French painting. It is also interesting that these critics make reference to both mythological and Christian subjects. We might expect the connection between Psyche and a Venus of Guercino, but the comparison of Psyche to an angel by Reni and a St. Cecilia by Raphael is somewhat surprising.

The only negative criticism of Gérard’s composition found in the 1798 reviews

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52 Anonymous, “Sur l’exposition . . .,” 30. “Apprenez-moi seulement de qui est ce tableau. – Il est à-la-fois du Corrège et du Dominquin. – Point du tout, M. L’auteur est un peintre vivant et Français, pisque le tableau fait partie de l’exposition . . . l’auteur est Gérard.” In France, Corregio (1489-1534) was known as “Corrège” and Domenichino Zampieri (1581-1641) was known as “le Dominquin.”

53 Quoted in Crow, fn 75, 333. “. . . ceux qui font le mieux dans l’histoire tel que Gérard semblent marcher sure les traces de Léonard da Vinci.”


55 These critics clearly regarded Gérard as a French artist, which he was (all of his formal artistic training took place in Paris) despite his birth in Italy and his Italian mother.
concerns the poses of Cupid and Psyche. For Chaussard, the pose of Cupid appeared somewhat awkward and would be better if Cupid’s right leg were raised rather than his left; however, this would have exposed Cupid’s genitals and marred the theme of sexual innocence the critic praised at such length.\(^{56}\) In the conversation found in the *Mercure*, one viewer tells the other that the torso of Psyche is “rigid [and] lacks sentiment [and] the angle formed between the torso and thighs of Cupid is too sharp.” The other viewer admits “there could be some truth in your observations, but I have only barely noticed these things after viewing the work some twenty times.”\(^{57}\) The tenor of these comments suggests that the critics regarded these faults as minor ones at most; moreover, the majority of critics did not even mention them. Reicrem even praised Gérard’s rendering of Cupid for the figure’s “undulating forms and his smooth contours which are the most true expression of life and grace.”\(^{58}\)

**An Alternative Reading of Cupid and Psyche**

In addition to praising Gérard for his erudition and seeing the painting as a philosophical exercise, critics presented another interpretation of the painting’s symbolic content that had more to do with the physical and emotive content of the painting than the spiritual and intellectual. Reicrem described Psyche as having “a marked blush blending with the tender whiteness of her cheeks” and “a mouth gently


\(^{57}\) Anonymous, 30. “. . .comme le torse de Psyche est froide! Il manqué de sentiment . . . l’angle que forme le torse de l’amour avec ses cuisses est trop aigu . . . Il peut y avoir quelque chose de vrai dans vos observations. Mais, moi, je n’aurais peut-être vu tout cela qu’à la vingtième séance.”

\(^{58}\) *Journal de Paris*, 1330. “. . . ces formes ondoyantes et ces contours coulant, qui sont l’expression la plus vrais de la vie et de la grace.”
opened, breathing sweet emotion;” he described her eyes as tranquil, not seeing Cupid, and regarded the moment as “the passage of adolescence to youth.”59 He further described Psyche’s “fingers of rose,” her “modesty and innocence . . . celestial body . . . [and] grace and charm.” Cupid was “the most beautiful of adolescents.” Rather than having “passionate desire” for Psyche, Cupid possessed a “sweet rapture having nothing of earthly voluptuousness.”60 The other critic writing for the Journal de Paris, who so emphatically argued that Gérard’s painting was philosophical in nature (as discussed above) simultaneously read the painting as an allegory of adolescent innocence awakening to the first pangs of physical desire: “Psyche, whose leg announces she is barely fourteen years old, has not yet received the soul: one reads on her figure, unlike those of the young women of our day, not the embarrassment of a desire that she wants to hide, but a timid ignorance mixed with a sweet uneasiness.61 Another anonymous critic stated the message of the painting even more directly, writing “Beautiful like the most beautiful rose bloom, Psyche finds herself on new ground . . . She feels an unknown thrill . . . Let me join this brilliant dawn, this opening

59 Ibid. “. . . un point rosé se mêle à la tendre blancheur de ses joues; sa bouche mollement entre ouverte respire, mais cette emotion est douce; ses yeux sont tranquilles, et ne regardent point l’Amour . . . c’est, sin e he me trompe, l’instant du passage de l’adolescence à la jeunesse que le peintre a voulu nous reveler.”

60 Ibid. “La main de l’Amour, qui pose si ligerement sur ce sien si pur, n’annonce point le desir fougueux; c’est bien là l’enfant céleste; c’est le plus beau des adolescents; . . . il est dans le ravissement, mais ce ravissement est doux, et n’a rien de la volupté terrestre.”

61 C.T.B.H., 1361. “Psyché, dont la jambe annonce à peine 14 ans, n’a pas encore reçu l’amé: on lit sur sa figure, non pas comme sur celle d’une jeune fille de nos jours, l’embarras d’un dédir qu’elle veut cacher, mais une ignorance timide, mêlée d’une douce inquietude.”
of a virginal heart . . .”62

Chaussard wrote perhaps the most eloquent explanation of Gérard’s painting in this vein. According to Lajer-Burcharth, Chaussard directed his review to “the ghosts of the imaginary enemies of the painting and the entire review was hedged against a potential misreading of Gérard’s image.”63 Chaussard wrote:

Stay away, you whose arid and withered soul ignores the powerful, celestial charm of chastity, of timid religious respect, of this whole ineffable mixture of desire and self-restraint of which the true and pure sensual delight consists! Stay away, you who, nourished by academic systems and prejudices, look only for the extraordinary, for the tormented, and for what is inappropriately called the effect; you who are incapable of understanding that true passions are most impressive in their silence rather than in their explosion. This composition is calm, pure, divine, virginal. Those who failed to appreciate the expressive value of the head of Santa Cecilia painted by Raphael could not appreciate that which reigns in Gérard’s entire figure of Psyche.64

Chaussard also made the point that in the demeanor of Psyche, “and above all in her physiognomy, reigns this vague romanticism, this silent understanding, this mysterious and profound confusion that tests the timid virgin presented to the altar of love.”65 He regarded the innocent and charming Psyche in a moment of uncertainty when “desires . . . resemble fear, and fear resembles desire.”66 This is the first time that the term “romanticism” was used to describe a French painting; for Chaussard, the painting

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63 Necklines, 281.
64 “Beaux-Arts . . .,” 335. Quoted and translated in Ibid.
65 Ibid., quoted in Michel, 75-76. “et surtout dans sa physionomie, règne ce vague romantique, cette entente muette, ce trouble mystérieux et profund qu’éprouve la vierge timide présentée au autels de l’amour.”
66 Ibid., 336. Quoted and translated in Necklines, 282.
was romantic because it rendered Psyche as simultaneously virginal and awakening to desire, making the eroticism and nudity of the painting praiseworthy.67 Lastly, Chaussard asserted, “This is not a modern Psyche, not even that of the Opera; it is not a voluptuous Bacchante; it is a young girl, simple, sincere, virtuous, naïve; but where is the pleasure? Don’t you see it in her innocence? . . . if your taste or your morality are depraved, this painting will not affect you.”68

The “modern Psyches” whom Chaussard referred to were fashionable women in general and the group known as les Merveilleuses in particular who were one of the most visible manifestations of the return of elite society during the Directory. These women and their fashionable male counterparts known as Incroyables, along with government officials, military men, an emerging class of parvenus (who made their fortunes as army contractors and financial speculators), and some recently returned émigrés formed the “new aristocracy” of the Directory and fueled a rebirth of culture, consumerism, and leisure pursuits.69 They put the reality of recent Revolutionary history behind and exhibited “an uninhibited liberation from and non-compliance with the residual post-Thermidorean republican ethos.”70 They felt free to display and enjoy their wealth, which led to the development of chic neighborhoods of new homes on the Right Bank, especially along the Chaussée d’Antin and the rue de Clichy.71 New public baths, such

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67 Michel, 76.
71 Ribeiro, 112.
as the Bains Vigier, opened as part of “the whole industry of bodily care and pleasure that flourished under the Directory.”72 The new pleasure gardens (Tivoli and Frascati), select boulevards (especially the Boulevard des Italiens), and the Palais Royal provided venues for the nouveaux riches to see and be seen, while lavish balls, dance halls, and theaters offered them light-hearted amusements.73 By 1796, salons reemerged in Paris led by some returning émigrés (who had been salonnières before the Terror) and by a few of les Merveilleuses.74 Gérard, along with his close friend and fellow artist Jean-Baptiste Isabey (1767-1855), frequented the society balls, dance halls, cafés, and salons of the Directory, mingling with potential portrait clientele and cementing their reputations as fashionable artists.75 As Philippe Bordes notes, artists like Gérard and Isabey “appropriated the values of the new elite to reach their clientele.”76 For his part, Gérard began to hold his own salon around 1795/96, which E. J. Delécluze described as taking place on Wednesday evenings, each week, initially in his lodgings at the Louvre.

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72 Lajer-Burcharth, 181.
73 Ribeiro, 112. The Duke d’Orléans opened the Palais Royal as a public pleasure garden in 1780, and it quickly became a place of popular entertainment and fashionable boutiques. During the early years of the Revolution, it also became a place of pamphleteering and public political debate, and under the Terror, it was temporarily renamed the Palais-Egalité. During the Directory, it regained its privileged status with elite society as a place for shopping, entertainment, and conspicuous displays of wealth and fashion.
74 Steven Kale, French Salons: High Society and Political Stability from the Old Régime to the Revolution of 1848 (Baltimore, Maryland: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2005), 6. Mme Germaine de Staël was perhaps the most famous of the émigrés to return and re-open her salon in 1796.
75 Philippe Bordes, Portraiture in Paris Around 1800: Cooper Penrose by Jacques-Louis David, ex. cat., (San Diego, California: Timken Museum of Art, 2003), 11. Gérard’s portraiture along with more information regarding his long friendship with Isabey are discussed in Chapter Six.
76 Ibid.
Gérard’s salon began as small gatherings for artists, performers, and literati but quickly became a sought-after destination for fashionable Parisians as well as visitors from other countries; for Delécluze, the widening of Gérard’s salon was a mark of his talent and increasing renown.77

The return of salon culture coincided with the revival of fashion and the fashion industries, as well as the appearance of illustrated fashion magazines beginning in 1797 with the *Journal des Dames et des Modes*.78 This magazine (and others), the popular press, and printmakers documented the vagaries of *la mode à l’antique* and the lifestyle of *les Merveilleuses*.79 In the early phases of the Revolution, women adopted classical-inspired fashions, modeling themselves after the women in David’s canvases of the mid- to late-1780s, as a means to distance themselves from the excesses of female fashions during the *Ancien Régime*, to model themselves after popular female allegories such as Liberty,


78 Ribeiro, 119. The first issue of this popular fashion magazine appeared on 1 June 1797.

79 Ibid., 117. The popular press also featured the dress and manners of their male counterparts, known by various names including, *Incroyables, Muscadins*, and *Jeunesse dorée*. Although at times there were differences between how and to whom these terms were applied, in general all three were used to label men dressed in the latest fashions from the time of Thermidor through the Directory. The dress of these men is discussed in Chapter Six, 292-296.
and to express their republican sentiments. By the Directory, however, women’s appropriation of antique dress moved in a new direction, changed radically in meaning, and was the subject of numerous commentaries, images, and caricatures.

In his *Le Nouveau Paris* (1798), Louis-Sébastien Mercier (1740-1814) recorded the new mood and culture of the city during the Directory, noting with some surprise how difficult it was to believe the Terror had so recently ended. Mercier described the fashions worn by women at the numerous, recently-opened dance halls:

Here lighted lustres reflect their splendor on beauties dressed à la Cléopatre, à la Diane, à la Psyché; . . . [the beauties] have modeled the form of their dress after that of Aspasia; bare arms, naked breasts, feet shod with sandals, hair turned in tresses around their heads by modish hairdressers, who study the antique busts. Guess where are the pockets of these dancers? They have none; they stick their fan in their belt, and lodge in their bosom a slight purse of morocco leather. . . The shift has long since been banished, as it seemed only to spoil the contours of nature; . . . The flesh-colored knit-work silk stays, which stuck close to the body did not the leave the beholder to divine, but perceive, every secret charm. This is what was called being dressed à la sauvage, and the women dressed in this manner during a rigorous winter, in spite of the frost and snow.

The references to women and goddesses of Antiquity above are typical of the descriptions of *les Merveilleuses*. In fact, the popular press referred to three of the women considered amongst the leaders of women’s fashions à la antique, Térèse Tallien (1773-1835), Joséphine Beauharnais (1763-1814), and Juliette Récamier (1777-1849), as

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81 For a discussion of the variety and extravagance of women’s antique-inspired clothing and accessories popular during the Directory period and the contemporary reactions to them in both text and image, see Ribeiro, chapter 4, especially pages 122-135; Lajer-Burcharath, especially pages 190-204; and, Grimaldo Grigsby, especially pages 320-327.
82 Quoted in Ribeiro, 124-127. Mercier is describing a ball which took place in the winter of 1794-95.
“the Three Graces.” The *Journal des Dames et des Modes* announced to its readers, “These are the women we follow to the spectacles, balls, [and] promenades; we give to you as models their costumes copied with the most exact precision.”*83* Of these three, Tallien was perhaps the most notorious for dressing up in the guise of various goddesses; for a night at the Opéra, she appeared as Diana, goddess of the hunt, and carried a quiver adorned with jewels.*84* It was not only such elite women who paraded in gauzy outfits through the public promenades and parks and while dancing at the popular society balls. By the summer of 1797, reports boasted (and no doubt exaggerated) that such fashions had become the daily clothing of choice for “nine-tenths of women [who] are dressed in white and very negligently assembled.”*85*

Mercier and others described the sartorial displays of Directory women who wore very light and transparent white, sleeveless gowns made of gauze or thin muslin, with plunging necklines, a high bodice, and open backs, thus revealing their arms, breasts, and backs. Mercier notes the dresses were worn over knitted stays, but more often they appeared over flesh-toned skin tight pants, or a short slip, or even nothing at all; in all cases, women’s flesh, whether beneath the gown or exposed by it, was decidedly on display. Louis-Léopold Boilly (1761-1845) depicted the sheerness and simplicity of these chemises in his *Absolutely No Agreement* (c.1797, fig. 87), in which the woman wears a very short slip, exposing the length of her bare legs to an *Incroyable* having his boots shined. He offers her a coin and she responds by crossing her fingers,

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*83* Ibid., 127. Quoted from the 9 April 1799 issue.
*84* As reported by J de Norvins, quoted in Lajer-Burcharcht, 191.
a gesture that indicates her unwillingness to accept his offer. It is unclear from Boilly’s canvas whether we should interpret the woman as a prostitute negotiating for a higher fee or if the man has mistaken an honorable woman for a sinful one. According to a government surveillance report of 1798, such a misstep was possible, since all categories of women, from prostitutes to demi-mondaines, to respectable mothers and daughters, regularly appeared in public so scantily clad. Boilly’s woman also wears the fashionable flat sandals, known as cothurnes with delicate leather or silk laces, one of the two preferred styles of shoes, the other being simple thin, nearly flat, short pumps. Her coiffeur is a typical style of the day, known as à la grecque, which features the hair wound in a chignon at the back of the head and adorned with thin ribbon to match the sash at the high waist. It is possible she is wearing a wig, which became popular again; unlike the powdered and elaborate versions of the Ancien Régime that indicated social rank and power, wigs during the Directory were fashion accessories allowing women to parade different hairstyles derived from antique statuary (as Mercier noted) throughout the week. Two of the most popular styles were à la Caracalla and à la Titus.

Unlike the simplicity of the woman’s dress in Boilly’s painting, other images, especially satirical prints, captured the more elaborate components of women’s neoclassical fashion. In Jean-François Bosio’s (1764-1827) La Bouillotte (1798, fig. 88), fashionable men and women have gathered to play one of the Directory’s most popular card games, while others flirt or primp before a large mirror. A few versions of the

86 Bureau Central report of 4 Messidor an VI [June 22 1798] quoted and translated in Grimaldo Grigsby, 323.
87 Lajer-Burcharth, 191.
chemise are seen, as well as glimpses of the plunging necklines of such dresses. Here, too, are the fine shawls, often of cashmere, embroidered with neoclassical motifs, which women draped across their shoulders and arms. A few of the woman wear turbans and short hats adorned with feathers, which became popular accessories to be worn with or without wigs.

As the Directory progressed, it became a common expression to compliment a woman for being “well-undressed” rather than “well-dressed.” And as Mercier noted, light clothing was the norm even during the rigors of winter. Towards the end of the Directory, English caricaturists and printmakers increasingly delighted in mocking and exaggerating the transparency of French women’s gowns, which exposed the body to the public and the elements. In Full Dress: Parisian Ladies in their Winter Dress for 1800 (published 24 November 1799, fig. 89), Isaac Cruikshank (1756-1811) provided a satirical preview of the season’s fashions. Here, the majority of women’s bodies are dramatically revealed through the thinnest of fabrics, while their heads and faces disappear beneath elaborate wigs and heavily adorned hats. Since the thinness of the dress material necessitated the elimination of pockets (which Mercier also noted), women began to carry reticules, the first version of the purse, seen here dangling from the ladies’ wrists. While Cruikshank poked fun at the impracticality of Directory women’s winter dress, by 1798, French physicians were publishing reports warning of the health risks, citing numerous cases of grave illnesses, contracted by ladies wearing

88 Grimaldo Grigsby, 322.
89 Ibid. While Mercier notes women placed the purses in their bodice when dancing, it was more common for purses to be carried with a strap from the wrist.
such flimsy attire deemed unsuitable for the French climate.\(^{90}\)

Perhaps the more damning criticism of *à la antique* fashion came from male writers who increasingly attacked the exhibitionism of such dress as a sign of immorality. As Darcy Grimaldo Grigsby explains:

> During the Directory, the appropriation of Greek attire evoked the revolutionary prescription of female chastity but transgressed it, playfully manipulating but quite wittily rejecting the virtuous role imposed on women throughout the Revolution. . . . During the hedonistic days of the Directory, the shift from liberty to license seemed all too inevitable.\(^{91}\)

Louis-Mathieu Langlès (1763-1824), member of l’Institut, published a letter to the editor in the *Journal de Paris* (3e jour complémentaire an VII [19 September 1799]) in which he pondered: “What do dangers and even death mean to those who dare to risk modesty, a sentiment more important to this [feminine] sex than self-preservation? Whether one dresses, *à la grecque* or *à la romaine*, I dare predict the result will never be Cornelias.”\(^{92}\)

By the late-1790s for Langlès and many men, neoclassical dress was no longer seen as the mark of proper Republican womanhood; instead, it had become the attire of femme-fatales who displayed their bodies flagrantly in order to distract, seduce, and control their suitors.

For Chaussard, these “modern Psyches” of Directory society were more akin to Jean-Honoré Fragonard’s (1732-1806) representation of Psyche in *The Sacrifice of the Rose*

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\(^{90}\) Grimaldo Grigsby quotes several reports from physicians claiming young girls were dying in unprecedented numbers from respiratory illnesses acquired since the advent of such sheer neoclassical fashions, 322.

\(^{91}\) Ibid., 321-322.

\(^{92}\) Ibid., 323.
In Fragonard’s painting, Cupid extends one hand to ignite a rose, symbolic of Psyche’s virginity, placed on a low altar. An ecstatic Psyche, with flushed cheeks and eyes rolling upward, wears the thinnest of drapery and swoons into the wing of Cupid, as he “sacrifices” her virginity. According to Lajer-Burcharth, Fragonard presented “a late rococo iconography of female sexual pleasure exemplified by Fragonard’s more or less obvious reworking of Bernini’s *Saint Teresa* in the direction of the salacious.” Chaussard condemned Fragonard’s painting in 1799 in his defense of David’s *Intervention of the Sabine Women*. After proclaiming that veiled figures in general are more at odds with decency than nude ones, Chaussard labeled Fragonard’s composition as “libertine,” lacking “true genius,” and asserted that compositions such as this one “address themselves less to the sense of vision than to vicious thought, reawakening all disorders with the aid of seductive allusions, voluptuous signs, sometimes vague and devious, always expressive and licentious. Here, here are indecent compositions that corrupt the heart and trick and pervert the spirit.” The diatribe suggests that Chaussard had Fragonard and his generation of artists and patrons in mind when he warned “arid and withered souls . . . nourished by academic systems and prejudices” to “stay away” from

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93 For Chaussard’s reference to “modern Psyches” see his quotation on page 242.
94 Necklines. . . , 165.
95 Chaussard’s pamphlet is entitled *Sur le tableau des Sabines par David* (Paris: Pougens, Year VIII [1799-1800]). In her analysis of Chaussard’s text, Darcy Grimaldo Grigsby discusses how Chaussard ridiculed Fragonard’s *Psyche* as a means to praise both the male nudity and the figure of Hersilia in David’s painting. See: “Nudity à la grecque in 1799,” *Art Bulletin* 80 (June 1998): 330.
96 *Sur le tableau des Sabines. . . ,* 33. Translated and quoted in Grimaldo Grigsby, 330.
Gérard’s painting. In Chaussard’s discussion of The Sacrifice of the Rose, “the dangers of veiled seduction evoke not only Rococo libertinism but current fashion, that style à la Grecque now made Rococo, that perversion of the former marker of virtue into a new kind of libertinism.” Even though Gérard’s Psyche was no more clothed than Fragonard’s figure, Gérard’s painting amounted to an exemplum virtutis for Chaussard, because his Psyche before the “altar of love” was timid and fearful of the sacrifice she was about to make. Chaussard “offered Gérard’s image as a corrective ideal for the women of nouvelle France.” As Régis Michel asserts, Chaussard regarded Gérard’s Psyche as “a profane Virgin” and peppered his review with “quasi-religious epithets” in order to make the point and as yet another means of contrasting Gérard’s heroine with Fragonard’s and with contemporary women.

As he did with his Tenth of August (1794-95, fig. 46), Gérard successfully navigated public debates concerning women during the Revolution with his Cupid and Psyche. The female figures in the galleries of Gérard’s Tenth reflect the active political roles of women prior to 1793, when women attended the sessions of the National Assembly, then the National Convention, and meetings of the general assemblies of the Parisian sections, as well as male political clubs. Gérard did not, however, depict any of the militant French women who armed themselves, actively fought, and founded the Club des Citoyennes Républicaines Révolutionnaires. By 1794, these women’s activities

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97 For Chaussard’s quotation, see 241.
98 Grimaldo Grigsby, 330.
99 Necklines, 282.
100 “L’Art des Salons,” 75.
101 For a discussion of the female figures in Gérard’s Tenth, see Chapter Three, 145-160.
had been universally condemned and Gérard made a prudent choice to exclude them from his composition. He also wisely included a mother and daughter on the floor of the meeting hall wearing classically inspired drapery who, in 1795, evoked female allegories such as Liberty and symbolized virtuous Republican females supporting the revolutionary cause from within the private rather than the public sphere. By 1798, however, fashions à la antique had radically changed meaning. Directory women appropriated neoclassical dress to convey their taste and flaunt their sexuality in increasingly sheerer gowns. Les Merveilleuses, who made the most scandalous sartorial choices, responded enthusiastically to Gérard’s painting, applying pale cosmetics (a trend referred to as “paleur à la Psyché”) and wearing blond wigs to mimic Psyche’s appearance.¹⁰² Yet, Gérard’s young, timid, and innocent Psyche did not evoke male fears over contemporary women as free, sexual agents. For Chaussard and other critics, Gérard’s Psyche was a model of appropriate femininity in contrast to what was, in their opinion, a sea of cunning sirens in their midst.

**Gérard’s Cupid and Psyche and Canova’s Sculptures**

While Gérard’s critics likened Cupid and Psyche to the works of great Italian masters, subsequent scholars have suggested Gérard may have been inspired more directly by the works of two of his contemporaries, Angelica Kauffmann (1741-1807) and Antonio Canova (1757-1822). A few have compared Gérard’s painting to Kauffmann’s Cupid Drying Psyche’s Tears (1792, fig. 91), primarily to point out how differently the artists treated a similar moment in the story, when Cupid is invisible to

¹⁰² Lajer-Burcharth, 283.
Psyche and “reviving her” in some way.\textsuperscript{103} It should be remembered, however, that Gérard’s subject does not precisely correspond to a specific episode in either Apuleius’ or La Fontaine’s version while Kauffmann faithfully depicted a specific moment near the end of La Fontaine’s novel, following the description in the text closely.\textsuperscript{104} Despite the very obvious differences in the two artists’ works, Paul Lang considers Kauffmann’s composition as one of Gérard’s sources. He sees an affinity between one of Gérard’s sketches and Kauffmann’s composition and believes Gérard could have known her painting either from one of several prints made after it or could have seen the painting in person at her Roman atelier where it remained unsold between 1792 and 1796.\textsuperscript{105} Gérard was not, however, in Rome during those four years; his trip to Italy lasted only about six months between 1790 and 1791.\textsuperscript{106} It is not out of the realm of possibility that Gérard could have visited Kauffmann to see her painting in progress or that he could have seen one of the prints after it; however, it is difficult to see the similarity Lang does between Gérard’s sketch and Kauffmann’s figures. Moreover, as mentioned above, it is not known for certain whether or not Gérard made the sketches in preparation for his

\textsuperscript{103} The most recent comparison is found in Lajer-Burcharth, 280. See also, Lang, 68, 77, and 104.

\textsuperscript{104} Lang, 68-70. Kauffmann depicted La Fontaine’s description of the final trail of Psyche by Venus. After Psyche returns from hell with the box given to her by Persephone, sits in a dark wood, and inhales the vapors which put her in a trance. Cupid comes to her while remaining invisible, and fearing for her life, he revives her.

\textsuperscript{105} Régards sur Amour et Psyché à l’âge néo-classique, 68, 77 & 104. Lang reproduces the six small sketches of Cupid and Psyche that are now it a private collection on p.102 and finds the sketch in the lower left corner of the reproduction similar to Kauffmann’s positioning of Cupid and Psyche. Princess Bariatinsky commissioned the painting but refused it when completed. The painting remained in the artist’s studio until it was purchased by Princess Anhalt-Dessau in 1796.

\textsuperscript{106} Ibid., 104. Lang incorrectly dates Gérard’s trip to Rome to between 1791 and 1793 when in fact the trip was much shorter, see Chapter 1, 36-37.
painting or for his La Fontaine illustrations. It would seem that if Gérard were inspired by Kauffmann’s work, he was so only indirectly or on a general level.

Comparisons between Gérard’s painting and Canova’s works are more convincing. Already by the mid-1790s, Canova was celebrated as the best neoclassical sculptor in Europe. According to Christopher M.S. Johns, “in Italy, Britain, Austria, and even the United States, Canova had no serious rival” and by the early 1800s, he had become “almost as famous as his patrons, if not more so.”¹⁰⁷ Scholars most often cite two of Canova’s best-known sculptures from the early part of his career, *Cupid Awakening Psyche with a Kiss* (1793, fig. 92) and *Standing Cupid and Psyche* (1797, fig. 93), as sources of inspiration for Gérard’s painting.¹⁰⁸ As Gérard sought new stylistic inspiration during Thermidor and the Directory, Canova’s works, despite being in a different medium, would have been a viable alternative for a few reasons.

Canova’s subject matter was essentially the same as Gérard’s and his sculptures exemplified a vein of classicism – lyrical and sensual – far removed from the stoic, masculine, and politicized classicism of David’s canvases. Canova’s mythological subjects from his early career were repeatedly admired for their sweetness, grace,

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¹⁰⁸ Scholars usually focus more on the comparison between Canova’s earlier group and mention the later group more in passing. The first scholar to make these comparisons was René Schneider, “Le Mythe de Psyché dans l’art français depuis la révolution,” *Revue de l’art ancien et moderne* 32 (July-December 1912): 249-253. Following Schneider’s lead, many scholars have mentioned the “shared spirit” between Gérard’s painting and Canova’s explorations of the tale. See, for example: Cavicchioli, 207-211; Lang, 84-87; Michel, “L’Art des Salons,” 76; and Jean Starobinski, 1789: The Emblems of Reason, trans. Barbara Bray (Charlottesville, Virginia: University Press of Virginia, 1982), 164-172.
idealization, and beauty. One of Canova’s ardent supporters who became the director of the Venetian Academy in 1808, Count Leopoldo Cicognara (1767-1834), described Canova’s sculptures as “above all distinguished by the exquisite representation of the flesh and appearance of the skin” achieved through his meticulous attention to polishing his surfaces to a soft, glowing sheen; Cicognara declared this attention to surface texture as “the most interesting part of his art [and] that which takes the work to it most exquisite perfection.” While David did not care for “the false and affected manner” of Canova, whom he also described as the “seductive marble worker,” Gérard recreated Canova’s surface treatment by giving his Cupid and Psyche an incredibly smooth licked surface. Both of Gérard’s figures have pristine, pale skin, especially Psyche, whose marble-like flesh recalls the surfaces of Canova’s sculpture and inspired Directory women to adopt paleur à la Psyché.

In addition, Canova’s artistic persona would also have been attractive to Gérard as he sought to distance himself from David. Lajer-Burcharth describes David under the Directory and Consulate as:

in a peculiar position: he was at once prominent and vulnerable. The shadow of opprobrium that enveloped him after Robespierre’s fall continued to haunt the artist. No one had doubts regarding his extraordinary talent, but his reputation was tarnished by the memory of his involvement in the Terror. Despite his official recognition as a professional, in the public perception David remained socially isolated.

110 Ibid., 125-128.
111 Ibid., 121. Padiyar quotes and translates comments David made regarding Canova to David d’Angers found in H. Jouin, David d’Angers (Paris, 1878), vol. I, 75.
throughout the Directoire and the Consulate.\textsuperscript{112}

According to Johns, Canova:

refused to work exclusively for one set of politically cohesive patrons. [His] retiring nature and aversion to political intrigue [meant he] avoided engagé politics and focused either on ‘neutral’ aesthetic issues related to Truth and Beauty or on highly personal human and moral tragedy, veiled in safe ways . . . He rarely took the step of directly and unequivocally making political reference or commentary in his art. And given David’s political problems during the Directory, perhaps the sculptor’s discretion was the wiser policy.\textsuperscript{113}

Canova’s sensibilities were more in line with Gérard’s political neutrality and professional goals, especially during the Directory when Gérard began establishing himself as a member of fashionable society and courting new patrons amongst the \textit{nouveau riches}.

Gérard could have seen Canova’s Cupid and Psyche sculptures in process during his visit to Rome in 1790-91 and recalled them when he began his painting in 1796.\textsuperscript{114}

Sir John Campbell, an Englishman whom Canova met in Naples, commissioned both sculptures in 1787, and Canova began working on them in 1788; the works could not be safely delivered to England, so they remained in Canova’s studio in Rome until 1800. At that point, Canova sold them to a Dutch collector, who in turn sold both works to the

\footnotesize{\textsuperscript{112} Necklines . . ., 216.  
\textsuperscript{113} Antonio Canova . . ., 7-9. While Canova did work for Napoleon Bonaparte, their working relationship was strained to say the least. Johns explores this in Chapter Four of his text, “Canova, Napoleon, and the Bonapartes,” 88-122.  
\textsuperscript{114} Cavicchioli, 207 and Michel, “L’Art des Salons,” 76. Michel notes Quatremère de Quincy was already aware of and discussing Canova’s sculptures in 1788. Given Canova’s reputation and the two artists shared Roman heritage, it would be more surprising if Gérard did not visit the master’s studio.}
French general, Joachim Murat.\footnote{For further details of the commission and provenance of both sculptures, see Christopher M.S. Johns, \textit{Antonio Canova and the Politics of Patronage in Revolutionary and Napoleonic Europe} (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998), 216.} When he exhibited them in 1801 in his chateau at Villers-la-Garenne, outside Paris, they were a sensation, cemented the sculptor’s reputation in France, and only heightened the Parisian fascination with “all things Psyche” that Gérard’s painting had contributed to four years earlier.

In his first sculpture (fig. 92), Canova chose to represent a moment near the end of Apuleius’ fable before the couple ascends to Mount Olympus and after Psyche fainted from the vapors rising from Persephone’s jar and Cupid rushed to save her.\footnote{Canova wrote to Quatrèmere de Quincy, in a letter dated 12 December 1801, that he was directly inspired by Apuleius’ fable. Canova’s letter is quoted in Savicchioli, 207. Canova’s comment, along with his inclusion of a Greek vase lying on the ground behind Psyche and Cupid’s quiver of arrows (slung low on the figure’s back), has lead scholars to identify the specific scene as that described above.} Despite the difference in scenes, in both the painting and this sculpture, Psyche is unaware of Cupid’s presence either because she is semi-conscious or because he is invisible. Both artists depicted Cupid as the one who rouses Psyche to consciousness, either by saving her from death (in the Canova) or by awakening her to the possibilities of love. For Schneider, in both works “the hands of Cupid do not touch Psyche: they are about to touch her. The couple does not embrace: they are about to embrace.”\footnote{“Le mythe de Psyché. . .,” 252. “dans le groupe penché de Canova et chez Gérard les mains de l’Amour ne touchent pas Psyché: elles vont l’effleurer. Il ne l’embrasse pas: il va l’embrasser.”} Both works capture a moment of stasis that allows the viewer to anticipate Cupid’s touch and kiss, and in doing so, they remind us of the emotional and sexual content of the couple’s story. Many scholars have read Canova’s work as focusing upon the sexuality
of the figures, pointing especially to the couple’s pose. As we have seen, critics at the Salon of 1798 also read a latent eroticism in Gérard’s more chaste version and regarded Psyche as a virginal and yet desirous adolescent girl (as Apuleius described her). Perhaps somewhat paradoxically, critics and scholars have also regarded both works as embodying the philosophical heart of Apuleius’ tale – the reunification of the human soul with divine love. This Platonic allegory is more obviously emphasized in Gérard’s painting than in Canova’s 1793 sculpture. In this respect, Gérard’s painting shares a greater affinity with Canova’s second, 1797 sculpture (fig. 93), which makes the philosophical the focal point of the work through the inclusion of a butterfly.

Both artists also portrayed Cupid as a winged, ephebic, and nude god and Psyche as the young, idealized, mortal beauty clothed only from the waist down in a diaphanous tunic. If Gérard’s Cupid more closely resembles Canova’s earlier version, then his Psyche, with her upswept hair and drapery rolled at the waist, evokes Canova’s later figure. In all three works, Schneider sees two fourteen- or fifteen-year-olds whose bodies display “neither wrinkles, nor veins, nor muscles [or anything] to interrupt the purity of the line.” The physical perfection of the figures is hardly surprising given Apuleius describes them both as physically beautiful. In fact, he

118 See sources in footnotes 188 and 189.
119 Ibid. Strobinski (164-166) in particular emphasizes the philosophical content as critical to understanding Canova’s 1793 work and argues against reading it as only a frivolous or sensuous work. Cavicchioli (207) sites and agrees with Strobinski’s assessment. I would argue that if Gérard found the philosophical in a work by Canova, it would have more likely have been the 1797 group.
120 The word “psyche” in Greek can be translated as both “butterfly” and “soul.”
121 “Le Mythe de Psyché. . .,” 253. “Ni plis, ni veines, ni muscles n’interrompent la pureté de la ligne. . .”
described Psyche as having a “breath-taking loveliness, . . .the like of which had never been seen before [and] was beyond human speech. . .[made] all the more beautiful because she is still a virgin.”\textsuperscript{122} Apuleius describes Cupid as the “beautiful Love-god” or as having a “divine beauty” throughout the story; when Psyche gets her first glimpse at him by lamplight, Apuleius describes him as having “golden hair, washed in nectar and still scented with it, thick curls straying over a white neck and flushed cheeks and falling prettily entangled on either side of his head . . . The rest of his body was so smooth and beautiful that Venus could never have been ashamed to acknowledge him as her son.”\textsuperscript{123} Clearly this physical perfection reinforces the sensuality of the story; moreover, despite the fact that the tale is a heterosexual one, scholars have interpreted both artists’ use of an ephebic body type for Cupid as evidence of the underlying homoeroticism found in so many works of the latter-half of the 1790s.\textsuperscript{124} This means, that while Gérard’s rendering of Cupid could have been inspired by those of Canova, it did not have to be given the popularity of the body type and the fact that Gérard had already rendered this type of figure as the young guide in his own \textit{Belisarius} (figs. 74 and 75) three years earlier.\textsuperscript{125} A final point of comparison can be made between Gérard’s and Canova’s approach to rendering Cupid in particular. The works of both

\textsuperscript{122} Translated and quoted in Cavicchioli, 26-27. We should remember, too, that Psyche’s journey, begins in some ways, as a result of her beauty.
\textsuperscript{123} Ibid., 27 and 29.
\textsuperscript{124} Lajer-Burcharth (282) makes this point in her discussion of Gérard’s Cupid and feels Chaussard’s reading of the painting goes to great lengths to “disavow the homoerotic appeal of Gérard’s ephebe, the aesthetic cousin of the effeminate adolescents that abounded at the Parisian Salons of the late 1790s.”
\textsuperscript{125} It should be remembered that Girodet thought both the young guide of Belisarius and the Cupid ultimately stemmed from his own rendering of Endymion. See above, 196.
artists display a trend amongst neoclassical artists working around the turn-of-the-century to regard “the famous antique precedents for the idealized, adolescent Amor [as embodiments] of the beau idéal, a quality they considered to be the principle characteristic of the greatest production of antique sculpture.” Thus Gérard’s and Canova’s renderings of Cupid as a beautiful ephebe manifest not only an underlying homoeroticism but also one of the most fundamental principles of neoclassical aesthetics.

The Beau Idéale and Greek Purity in 1798

The beau idéal, like Apuleius’ story, has its origins in Plato’s Phaedrus, but in the mid to late-eighteenth century, Winckelmann’s conception of it proved most influential. During the mid to late 1790s, the German antiquarian’s espousal of the cultural superiority of Ancient Greece was specifically promulgated by the influential writers of La Décade philosophique, especially Amaury-Duval and Chaussard, both ardent supporters of Gérard’s paintings at this time. According to Lajer-Burcharth:

At stake in the cultural debates of the late 1790s was a need to separate the Post-Thermidorean regime from its predecessor, the Jacobin Republic, which was constructed after 1794 as a period of terror, anarchy, and vandalism. The Directoire . . . sought to present itself as a lawful, legitimate republic coming at the end of the revolutionary process. La décade championed Antiquity as a cultural model for different republican practices through

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128 Lajer-Burcharsh, 145-146.
which the image of the desired political and social stabilization could be produced. Specifically, it advocated ancient Greece, inasmuch as Greece demonstrated the link between artistic excellence and political liberty . . . La décade’s advocacy of Greek Antiquity offered a cultural vehicle for representing the desired distance from immediate French history, thus feeding the paramount ideological effort of constructing the Directorial status quo as the Revolution Accomplished.129

For Chaussard and his peers, one of the chief means for an artist to emulate the greatness of Ancient Greece was to paint the beau idéal; moreover, they argued this construct appealed to the intellect and required a sophisticated and well-educated viewer to appreciate it.130 The symbolic meaning of the ephebic body in French painting had, thus, changed dramatically in four turbulent years. In 1794, David employed the body type to render the wounded and dying body of a Revolutionary martyr in his The Death of Joseph Bara (fig. 94); here, the body symbolized, at least in part, Jacobin ideals of civic duty and the sacrifices of the French populace during the height of the Terror. Gérard’s ephebic Cupid stands literally and figuratively in dramatic contrast to David’s Bara. Gérard’s ephebe is physically perfect, divine, and inhabits a timeless and idyllic landscape; in 1798, Gérard’s Cupid symbolized a philosophical and elitist ideal as far removed from the atrocities of recent Revolutionary events as possible.131

129 Ibid.
130 Grimaldo Grigsby, 311.
131 Numerous scholars have discussed the changing conceptions, forms, and symbolism of the male nude in Davidian painting from its origins in the 1780s until after the turn-of-the-century. In addition to Padiyar’s and Lajer-Burcharth’s texts already noted, see also: Thomas Crow, “Observations on Style and History in French Painting of the Male Nude, 1785-1794,” in Visual Culture: Images and Interpretations, ed. Norman Bryson, M.A. Holly, and K. Moxey (Middleton, Connecticut: Wesleyan University Press, 1994), 141-67; Whitney Davis, “The Renunciation of Reaction in
The trend towards a more correct or pure Greek classicism in French painting of the mid to late 1790s was not limited to a revival of le beau idéal in the form of ephobic nudes. In terms of style, this tendency also included carefully structured compositions, a limited color palette, linearity, precise contours, and perfectly smooth, licked surfaces. Gérard’s Cupid and Psyche displays these qualities and we have seen how critics in 1798 repeatedly commented on the “Greekness” of the painting’s style and subject. According to Gérard’s earliest biographer, Charles Lenormant, it was the painting’s Greek purism that contributed greatly to its success.132 Throughout his discussion, Lenormant specifically praises Gérard’s brushwork, describing how “the trace of the brush . . . disappears,” and is one of the keys to Gérard’s ability to reproduce “antique beauty in all its purity.”133 Lenormant also calls attention to Gérard’s use of sharp contours, clarity, and limited colors and boasts the painting gives the viewer a glimpse of what actual Greek painting may have looked like; in Lenormant’s estimation, Gérard is akin to Apelles, Greek vase painters, and even the Argonauts in his quest for antique beauty.134 Lenormant echoes the reviewer of the Journal de Paris, who in 1798 declared

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132 Lenormant discusses these qualities of Gérard’s painting as key features of not only it, but also of Greek painting. See, 52-55, 88-95.

133 Ibid., 55. “. . .la trace de pinceau,. . . disparait alors que le peintre s’attache à reproduire la beauté antique dans toute sa pureté.”

134 Ibid., 53-54, 91-92.
Gérard as the equivalent of the legendary Timanthes and his painting as worthy of the same level of praise of those of the Greek master.\textsuperscript{135}

Lenormant was obviously enthusiastic about the so-called Greek qualities of Gérard’s painting, but he was ambivalent regarding Gérard’s relationship to a somewhat notorious group of young artists within David’s studio known variously as les primitifs, les Barbus, or les Méditateurs.\textsuperscript{136} Led by Maurice Quaï, these artists formed a quasi-religious and artistic sect at the turn-of-the-eighteenth century, were both inspired by and disdainful of David’s interest in Greek art at the time, and earned a reputation for their appearance and antics as much as, if not more than, for their works of art.\textsuperscript{137} The group insisted on a return to “the primitive” and “naïve;” for them this meant not only emulating the style of Greek art (primarily sculptures and vase

\textsuperscript{135} C.T.B.H., 1361. The writer concludes his review of Gérard’s painting by proclaiming that Pliny’s speech before Timanthe’s paintings could well be given to Gérard’s Cupid and Psyche. “On pourrit lui appliquer ces belles paroles de Pline à l’occasion des tableaux de Timante, l’un des plus grands peintres de l’antiquité: In omnibus ejus operibus intelligitur, plus quàm pingitur; & cûm ars summa fit, ingenium tamen ultra artem est.”

\textsuperscript{136} Lenormant, 56.

\textsuperscript{137} The group formed at around the same time that David was engaged in the preparatory work for The Sabine Women and pursuing his own in interest in “more pure” Greek art. The members of the group grew long beards, wore apostolic robes, held secret meetings in an abandoned monastery, and eventually publicly criticized David’s work which led to some of the members, including Quaï, being ousted from the master’s studio.

painting) but also Etruscan vase painting and fourteenth-century Italian painting, especially that of Mantegna. For subject matter, les primitifs turned their back on the Roman subjects of early Davidian painting and instead drew almost exclusively from Greek tales of love, sex, and death. Many of the themes of les primitifs are an early manifestation of the “anacreontic” motifs that appeared in French art and literature during the late Directory and became increasingly popular during the Consulate and Empire. Given the similarities between the interests of les primitifs and Gérard’s Cupid and Psyche, it is easy to understand why scholars have suggested a connection between Gérard and the group. The exact nature of this relationship remains, however, a matter of debate.

In the surviving criticism from the Salon of 1798, no critic mentioned the influence of les primitifs, but this is most likely due to the fact that the group was in its nascent stage. With the benefit of hindsight, Lenormant was able to connect Gérard’s painting to the ideas of les primitifs, but he insisted that Gérard did not participate in the group. While Lenormant adored the Greek qualities of Cupid and Psyche, he detested the style, doctrines, and eccentricities of les primitifs. He even suggested that if Gérard had not turned to portraiture, he might not have shaken off their influence and

139 René Schneider is the first art historian to discuss these motifs during the Empire specifically, see his “L’Art Anacréontique et Alexandrin sous l’Empire,” Revue des études napoléoniennes 10 (November-December 1916): 257-271. More recent discussions of the topic can be found in chronological order: Michel, “L’Art des Salons,” 75-76; Crow, Emulation, 262-265; Carol Ockman, Ingres’ Eroticized Bodies: Retracing the Serpentine Line (New Haven, Connecticut: Yale University Press, 1995), 48-53; Solomon-Godeau, Male Trouble, 103-114; and, Padiyar, Chains, 51-87.
“returned to reality.” Viollet-le-Duc, in his introductory essay to the first edition of Gérard’s letters, went so far as to claim that Cupid and Psyche was perhaps the only product of les primitifs at this time. Régis Michel, however, asserts that Gérard’s painting was not influenced by les primitifs; rather, it was the “prototype” for “anacréontisme” and the impetus for “the dissident sect of David’s students . . . to go on a quest for absolute idealism.” Michel’s thesis finds support in two letters that appeared in the Journal des Arts in October and December 1799, the first written by an anonymous friend of les primitifs and the second by a “mock primitif.” Both authors count Gérard as one of the few contemporaries whom les primitifs deem worthy of respect and emulation. We also know that Jean Broc, one of David’s oldest students and most successful of les primitifs, cultivated Gérard as a contact and was inspired by Cupid and Psyche in the creation of his The Death of Hyacinth (1801). It seems safe to conclude that the older, more established Gérard influenced the younger students and, perhaps, even supported and learned a bit from their artistic endeavors given they were similar to his own at the time.

140 François Gérard, 56.
141 In Gérard, Correspondance, 11.
142 On page 75 in “L’Art des Salons,” Michel writes, “Dans un article ancien, R. Schneider a décrit le phénomène sous le nom bien venu d’anacréontisme. Or le tableau de Gérard n’est pas le sous-produit de cet art décadent, . . . mais son prototype, vite caricature.” On page 76, as Michel discusses critics at the Salon of 1798 who referred to Gérard as akin to a Greek philosopher, he concludes with the statement: “ce processus d’intellectualisation, qui pass par le contour – linéaire, désincarné --, rejoint l’esthétique des Primitifs, ou Méditateurs, la secte dissidente des élèves de David, autour de Maurice Quaï, en quête d’un idéalisme absolu, qu’ils nomment naïveté.”
143 The author of the October letter boasts that Gérard is the only artist since Poussin worthy of praise. Both letters are reprinted and discussed in Rubin, “New Documents. . .,” 785-90.
144 Levitine, The Dawn of Bohemianism . . ., 50.
Conclusion

In his analysis of the Parisian art world in France from the mid to late 1790s, Stefan Germer writes:

artists could no longer take their audience for granted and had to begin by defining their relation to it. Such redefinition implied a reconsideration of painting’s content as well as the development of strategies of attracting or involving the beholder . . . rather than addressing an undifferentiated general audience, they had to select subjects that would appeal to specific segments of the public.¹⁴⁵

Gérard did just that with his Cupid and Psyche. He chose a subject intended to target the wealthy and the connoisseurs who wanted to leave the atrocities of the immediate past behind. The Cupid and Psyche appealed to the nouveaux riches, especially the fashionable young women among them, who were enjoying a moment of renewed cultural centrality and wanted their reflection in psyche mirrors to match the look of Gérard’s ideal female.¹⁴⁶ Moreover, the painting addressed the taste of prominent critics, who responded not only to the painting’s philosophical and emotional content but also to Gérard’s formal choices and incorporation of the beau idéal.

Despite the public and critical acclaim of the Cupid and Psyche, the painting did not immediately translate into financial success for Gérard. It did not find a patron at the Salon and was later bought by Isabey who, in turn, sold it to Joachim Le Breton.¹⁴⁷

¹⁴⁶ Lajer-Burcharth discusses the popularity of psyche mirrors during the Directory in Necklines, 136-39, 157-62, and 261-62. In fn.129, page 350, the author suggests that “Given the popularity of Psyche as the iconography of women’s boudoirs at the time, Gérard’s canvas was quite possibly targeting a female audience . . .”.
¹⁴⁷ Lang, 101. The exact date of the sale to Isabey or Le Breton is not known. In 1822, General Rapp purchased the work for the Musée du Luxembourg, and in 1837, it
It is not difficult to see why, after the Salon of 1798, Gérard temporarily turned his back on the time-consuming and expensive genre of history painting. He learned this lesson while working on his Belisarius and the experience of the Tenth project would only have reinforced it. On the other hand, the Belisarius and Cupid and Psyche were not complete financial losses and did serve to ingratiate Gérard with a wealthy audience of promising clientele. It is possible Gérard even intended his Cupid and Psyche to be, at least in part, a display of his potential as an emerging portraitist; he did little, after all, to disguise the identity of his models/sitters. According to the critic Kérartry, Gérard’s figures were paradoxically both “beautiful ideals” and “in fact, models (more or less identified since).”

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148 Crow, Emulation, 201. Crow reports that Gérard received a third of the reward money for his Tenth in May 1797 and a sixth of it at the end of 1798. He never received the full promised fee and abandoned the project by early 1799.

149 Translated and quoted in Lacambre, 67. While Kérartry indicated both models were known, he only specifically identified Psyche as modeled after Émelie Brongniart, whose portrait by Gérard is discussed in Chapter 6, 270-282. According to one of Gérard’s own students, this was common knowledge at the time as was the fact that the model for the figure of Cupid was Jacques-Luc Barbier-Walbonne, a younger pupil of David. See, Monique Moulin, “Une élève de Gérard: Julie de Montferrier,” Bulletin de la Société Historique de Compiègne 27 (1980): 169-181.
Chapter 6: Becoming a Society Portraitist: 
Gérard’s Portraits from the End of Thermidor through the Directory

Gérard’s Belisarius was not his only successful painting shown at the Salon of 1795. He also earned his first critical acclaim in portraiture – a genre he had practiced before, but in which he would now establish his reputation.\(^1\) It is not surprising given his dire financial situation that Gérard, like many artists during Thermidor and the Directory, began accepting and exhibiting portrait commissions.\(^2\) Judging from Gérard’s surviving correspondence and the fact that he continued to produce portraits (almost exclusively) long after he needed to, it would seem Gérard did not share the low opinion of portraiture held by some of his fellow Davidians.\(^3\) Moreover, Gérard never quarreled with his sitters, as Girodet did publically and dramatically with

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\(^1\) Prior to 1795, Gérard executed at least two painted portraits, one of Antoine-Jean Gros (c.1790, fig. 10) and one of his cousin Madame Lecerf (1794, fig.55). Neither works were exhibited at the Salon.

\(^2\) Gérard’s financial hardships have been noted throughout this dissertation. In 1795, in particular, he did not have enough money to purchase the supplies needed to begin his Belisarius until Isabey lent him money. See Chapter Four, 201-202. The number of artists turning to portraiture and its increasing presences in the Salons at this time will be discussed below.

\(^3\) Perhaps the two Davidians who were the most vocal about their disdain for the genre were Antoine-Jean Gros and Jean-Auguste-Dominique Ingres. Early in his career, Gros often wrote to his mother of his abhorrence for the “lowly genre” of portraiture. See David O’Brien, After the Revolution: Antoine-Jean Gros: Painting and Propaganda Under Napoleon (University Park, Pennsylvania: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2006), 30-31. Like Gros, Ingres often lamented the fact that portraiture kept him form working on the history paintings he longed to complete, and even went so far as to curse portraiture and regard his portraits as his enemies. See, Neil MacGregor, et al., “Director’s Forward,” in Portraits by Ingres: Images of an Epoch, ex. cat. ed. Gary Tinterow and Philip Conisbee (New York: Harry N. Abrams, Inc., 1999), ix and Andrew Carrington Shelton, “The Critical Reception of Ingres’ Portraits,” in Portraits by Ingres, 498. Gérard made no disparaging comments about portraiture in his surviving letters.
Mademoiselle Lange in 1799 and David did quietly with Madame Récamier in 1800. Gérard, in contrast, embraced the genre and enjoyed good relationships with his sitters, and mingled freely in the fashionable society that emerged in Paris after the Terror. Their ability to ingratiate themselves with the nouveaux riches circles may have been due, at least in part, to their noncommittal political beliefs and willingness to acquiesce to a changed society and art market.

While Gérard’s portraits after the turn-of-the-century depict members of the European aristocracy and courts on a grand scale, those from 1795 through 1799 portray people of lesser social status, within his immediate circle (friends, or friends of friends, artists, singers, etc.), on an intimate scale, and in private moments. With his Belisarius (1795) and Cupid and Psyche (1798), Gérard established his reputation as a history painter.

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4 For a recent summary of the public grievance between Girodet and Lange, see Sylvain Bellenger, “Painting as Vengeance,” in Girodet 1767-1824, ex. cat., ed. Sylvain Bellenger (Paris: Gallimard, Musée du Louvre Éditions, 2006), 272-281. David’s quarrel with Juliette Récamier was not nearly so public or tragic as that between Girodet and Lange, see Anita Brookner, Jacques-Louis David, (London: Chatto & Windus, 1980), 144-145.

5 Isabey’s politics were, like Gérard’s, never clear throughout the Revolutionary decade. For a discussion of this and the friendship between him and Gérard, see Bruno Chenique, “L’Atelier d’Isabey: fraternité des arts,” in Au-delà du Maitre: Girodet et l’atelier de David, ex. cat., Valérie Bajou, et.al. (Paris: Somogy Éditions d’Art: 2005), 116-125.

Philippe Bordes makes the point that “Isabey, in particular, knew how to attract and reassure the nouveaux riches: he publicized his fashionable lifestyle and rarely refused the demands for private drawing lessons.” Gérard, undoubtedly, saw a secure future for himself by adopting the same opportunistic stance; indeed, during the Directory, he began to hold his own salons and by the Consulate, he was (along with Isabey) a regular at society functions and cafes. See, Portraiture in Paris Around 1800: Cooper Penrose by Jacques-Louis David, ex. cat. (San Diego, California: Tinken Museum of Art, 2003), 3, 11, 23.
painter independent from David and moved in new directions in terms of both his subject matter and style. Critics often found Gérard’s portraits from this period to be as innovative as his history paintings. They praised Gérard’s abilities to go beyond merely recording an individual’s physical appearance and to invest his portraits with character and narrative, thereby initiating new trends in the genre. The portraits also reveal Gérard looked to new sources, outside the circle of David, for stylistic inspiration. This tendency was not lost on critics who appreciated Gérard’s references to the works of Old Masters on view at the Louvre. While he drew upon David and Girodet, he continued to distance himself from his artistic lineage and to secure his independent reputation.

Portraiture at the Salon of 1795 and Gérard’s Mlle Alexandrine-Émilie Brongniart, 1795

While the estimates vary, the number of portraits shown at the Salon during the Revolution began to rise in 1791 and would reach its zenith under the Revolution in the Salons of 1798 and 1799. The increase in the number and variety of portraits at the Salon throughout the Revolution can be attributed to a number of factors, including the

institution of “open” or unjuried Salons in 1791, the dissolution of the Academy in 1793, and the sharp decline in patronage for large-scale history paintings from both the government and wealthy individuals. After Thermidor and especially under the Directory, portraiture also increased due to the fact that the newly-formed government “encouraged private cultivation of the arts and the luxury trade. . .[which] tended to relegitimize certain aristocratic practices of the Ancien Régime, such as renovating interiors, collecting art, commissioning portraits, and keeping up with fashion.” The Salons from 1795 until well after the turn of the century became, in some respects, akin to a marketplace in which artists sought to gain the attention of potential clients and portraiture (along with other genres) was one of the principle vehicles for doing so, even for artists that had made their reputations as history painters. Yet, while portraiture gained in popularity amongst artists and the public throughout this period, it did not meet with immediate critical praise. Beginning in 1791, and repeatedly throughout the decade, many critics lamented the growing number of portraits, expressing dissatisfaction with the genre as a whole and those artists who specialized in it. Critics protested that portraits were merely objects of private luxury that forced artists to be subservient to their patrons and prove their technical skills and ability to

7 Bordes, 1.
8 Ibid.
9 Ibid., 2-3.
10 Oppenheimer, 10. She notes that such complaints by critics and observers of the Salons, along with worries over the number of portraits on view, can be found in the literature well before the Revolution, as early as 1769.
render a sitter’s likeness (while flattering them). In some respects, this criticism reflected the still lingering status accorded to portraiture within the academic hierarchy of genres and the absolute disdain for the artificiality and pretentions of French Baroque and Rococo portrait conventions.

Despite these complaints, critics praised some portrait painting, perhaps recognizing that the new circumstances of the art world and new class of patrons meant that they would inevitably have to accept the genre. They especially championed newcomers who broke away from the traditional academic oil portrait in various ways: by imbuing their works with something more than mere likeness and virtuoso execution; by incorporating aspects of other genres in their portraits, especially the more general or universal qualities of history painting; and/or, by focusing on private citizens of lesser social status than had been depicted previously in academic portraiture. At the opening of the Salon of 1795, Amaury-Duval remarked on the large number and variety of portraits, which were attracting more attention than the history paintings on display. He chastised the public for ignoring history paintings, but he found himself forced to admit that the public’s judgment was not wrong. He was

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12 Oppenheimer, 18.
13 Halliday, 35-38.
14 “And those large pictures hung up high, which took so much time and so much effort, are they to receive no share of the praise? People look at them, but coldly and in silence. It is the portraits which win all the votes! What shame for the arts! – What a great opportunity to scold my fellow-citizens – but alas! I am forced to agree that their judgment is not inaccurate.” “Première Lettre de Polyscope sur les ouvrages
himself conflicted, for the first work that he unabashedly praised was a portrait, Gérard’s *Mlle Alexandrine-Émilie Brongniart* (figs. 95 & 96).\(^{15}\)

In April 1795, the influential architect Alexandre Théodore Brongniart (1739-1813) gave Gérard his first private portrait commission, to paint his daughter, one of Gérard’s pupils. Given the prominent social standing of his patron, the stakes were high for Gérard. A successful portrait would ingratiate him with his patron’s circle and establish his reputation as a portraitist. A reading of Émilie’s diary makes it clear that Gérard struggled through several sittings between Germinal and Floréal an III (April-May 1795).\(^{16}\) On the morning of her final session with Gérard, she described him as “so

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\(^{15}\) Gérard’s portrait was listed in the Salon livret as *Portrait of a young girl*. Robin was the only critic in 1795 to identify the sitter by name, see Halliday, 54. Alexandrine-Émilie Brongniart was born on 15 September 1780, joined the workshop of the sculptor Chaudet, received drawing lessons from David, and instruction from Gérard. The dates of these apprenticeships are not known. Jean-Louis Couasnon sculptured a bust of her in 1784 (now in the Louvre) and Elisabeth-Louis Vigée Lebrun painted her portrait in 1788 (now in the National Gallery, London). She married Louis-André Pichon (1771-1854) in 1801 and some time after moved with him to the United States. After her death on 18 March 1847, her portrait passed to one of her sons, Baron Jérôme-Frédéric Pichon (1812-1896). For unknown reasons, he cut off the lower portion of the painting some time after 1885. An engraving of the original painting by Huot (fig. 92) gives us a sense of the complete composition. The surviving fragment of the original canvas (fig. 93) went up for auction at Sotheby’s New York, lot 216, on 28 January 2010, where it went unsold and presumably remains in the family’s private collection.

\(^{16}\) Anonymous, entry for lot 216, in *Sotheby’s New York, Old Master Auction, January 28, 2010*, unpaginated. An excerpt from her diary entries is included in the information for the sale of this painting. It is clear Gérard sketched his initial composition in Germinal an III (April 1795) and finished it by 1 Floréal (April 20\(^{16}\)), but Gérard was not satisfied with the results since he requested another sitting with Émilie on 28 Floréal (May 17\(^{16}\)).
unhappy with my portrait that he insisted on starting over . . . in the afternoon, I
posed in his studio because he wanted to draw my portrait on another canvas.”17

Gérard’s persistence, however, paid off. The diary recounts the stir Émilie’s presence
elicited when she attended the Salon (on 23 and 24 Vendémiaire an IV [15-16 October
1795]) and the praise her portrait received:

I was dressed like he painted me, and it is such a good likeness that all
eyes were turned towards me and that people pointed their fingers. The
next day, the reactions were a little less strong, as I wore a hat. The painting
is considered to be the most beautiful one, despite there being two very
fine ones by Mr. David, who says himself that mine is a masterpiece.18

While it is not possible to corroborate her account of David’s reaction, critics certainly
found Gérard’s painting to be of the highest caliber. Amaury-Duval wrote an extended
description:

She stands there, arms folded, a pencil in her hand. She lives. . . She must
only be twelve or thirteen years old. Her eyes are soft and calm: you see
that they will soon sparkle. As yet she desires nothing, but desire is not
far away. Her black hair frames her forehead: she does not know how to
dress it coquettishly; she does not dream of that. Her complexion is rather
pale: she’s at that age. . . Oh! those cheeks will take color: I can already
glimpse a hint of carmine. . .

Young artist, you who have done this portrait, you have recorded
her nature, you have not even tried to embellish it. It was thus that
Leonardo da Vinci painted. I wager that you have studied him well.
Do not stop; you are on the right path. This is only a small work; but
it will make its artist famous.19

17 Ibid. The translation of the quotation appears in the entry text and the
following French is found in footnote 1: "Le citoyen Gérard était si mécontent de mon
portrait qu'il a voulu absolument le recommencer..." and "l'après-midi, j'ai été poser à son
atelier parce qu'il voulait dessiner mon portrait sur une autre toile pour le recommencer."
18 Ibid., translated and quoted from, J. Silvestre de Sacy, Alexandre-Théodore
Brongniart (1739-1813), sa vie, son œuvre, (Paris: 1940), 112-113. At the Salon of 1795,
David exhibited his Portrait of Émilie Sériziat and her son and Portrait of Pierre Sériziat.
The critic thus responded enthusiastically to Gérard’s ability to capture his sitter’s adolescent innocence, while also suggesting that innocence would soon be lost. For him, Gérard’s skill in capturing this moment of transition from girl to woman was comparable to Leonardo, and he applauded Gérard’s close study of the master’s works.

After singing the praises of Gérard’s Belisarius, the anonymous critic writing for the Mercure de France turned his attention to Gérard’s portrait of Brongniart, echoing some of the sentiments found in Amaury-Duval’s critique. The Mercure critic began by praising Gérard for his simplicity and his emulation of Van Dyck (rather than Leonardo), and went on to scoff at those who would criticize Gérard for treating a single figure. In his estimation, the viewer cannot help but be attracted to the sitter who arrests his attention and “presents herself to the critic with modesty, yet without fear.” Like Amaury-Duval, the Mercure critic appears to have been taken by Gérard’s rendering of Brongniart’s adolescent, innocent beauty, stating that “she will blush if you look at her with too interested an eye,” and compared her skin to budding roses and

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19 “Première Lettre...,” 10 Brumaire an IV (31 October 1795), 210, translated and quoted in Halliday, 49 & 53. Alexandrine-Émilie would have been around fifteen years old at the time Gérard painted her.

20 Anonymous, “Réflexions sur l’exposition des tableaux, sculptures, etc. de l’an quatrième adressées à un ami dans le département du ***,” Mercure français, 10 Nivôse an IV (31 December 1795) t. XX, #19, 32-33. Coll. Deloynes, t.XVIII, #470, 506. “Encore Gérard! et pour un simple portrait! — Porquo pas, s’il rapelle Vandick [sic.] — Mais une seul figure, quelle pauvreté d’imagination! — Les sots qui ont fait ou dit une balourdise se sauvent dans la foule, et les peintres médiocres cachent leur nullité derrière une tourbe de personnages.”

21 Ibid., 33. “Le spectateur la parcourt toute entiere: il tourne inême d’elle, parce que rien ne détoure son attention. Cette aimable adolescente se présent au critique
lilies. He concludes his review by praising Gérard for his rendering of the background and “the wisdom of the pose;” in his estimation, these two elements “would make one believe it was painted in the sixteenth century.” In addition to Amaury-Duval and the writer for the Mercure, at least two other critics found Gérard’s portrait of Brongniart worthy of special praise.

With his Brongniart, Gérard began to experiment with portraiture in a new way. It is very different from the portrait he painted in the previous year of his cousin, Madame Lecerf (1794, fig. 55). The latter is a bust-length portrait of Lecerf, attired in the simple dress of working and middle-class women during the Revolution. She wears a mop cap or bonnet decorated with ribbon and the tri-color cockade, a cotton or woolen dress, and a large kerchief or shawl draped over her shoulder. The austerity of her clothing, made from less expensive fabrics in muted, brown and ivory tones, the absence of extravagant accessories (she wears only a plain ribbon and simple strand of beads), and the cockade would have identified Lecerf as sympathetic to the revolutionaries whether she actually shared their political beliefs or not. It would
have been prudent for her to adopt this manner of dress because prior to the Directory (but especially under the Terror), anyone dressing in a manner associated with the privileged classes of the Ancien Régime would have been at best suspect. The simplicity of Lecerf’s attire is enhanced by the direct manner in which Gérard portrayed her: she is nearly frontal (with her right shoulder angled away from and her head turned towards the viewer), her gaze meets that of the viewer, and her expression is non-threatening, if not vacant. She is seated in front of a nondescript, sketchy background painted in relatively bland brown tones of her dress. Through Lecerf’s pose, gaze, and dress and the seemingly unfinished background, Gérard evoked David’s portraits of women from the early Revolution. It is interesting to note that David himself returned to this format in 1795 with his portrait of Catherine-Marie-Jeanne Tallard (fig. 97). In some ways, David’s Tallard is strikingly similar to Gérard’s Lecerf of the previous year. Although the gazes and facial expressions of the sitters are markedly different, the two works are both bust-length portraits and share similar coloring, visible brushwork, and scumbled or roughly-finished backgrounds. Both women appear in simple dresses with few accessories, and the position of their upper-bodies

wool, linen, and cotton, as opposed to extravagant silks, velvets, and brocades. In addition to materials and cuts, color also became an important political marker in this period. The tri-color cockade, a symbol of the Republic, became a compulsory accessory for men after July 1792 and for women after September 1793. See: Aileen Ribeiro, Dress and Morality (London: B.T. Batsford, Ltd., 1986), 90-120 and Ribeiro, Fashion in the French Revolution, 75-76.

26 Ribeiro, Fashion in the French Revolution, 75.
27 In particular, Gérard’s Madame Lecerf is similar in these ways, although reduced in scale, to David’s Portrait of Louise Trudaine and Portrait of Louise Pastoret, both
and shoulders appear to mirror one another.

Gérard departed decisively from this style in his Brongniart. While background details are still minimal, Gérard abandoned the sketchy brushwork seen throughout his Lecerf, in favor of a highly-finished surface with few, if any, visible brushstrokes. In contrast to his Lecerf, Gérard’s Brongniart was originally a three-quarter length portrait. The young Alexandrine-Émilie stands in the center of the composition, with her lower body nearly in profile and her upper body turned slightly more towards the viewer. Her arms cross at her waist, her right arm rests on her left, and with her right hand she holds a pencil, symbolic of her artistic pursuits. She turns her head slightly towards the picture plane, and her gaze meets ours. Amaury-Duval described her as “living;” indeed, her pose and expression appear quite life-like. Her facial expression is enhanced by her large, rich brown eyes and the shadow falling across her right cheek and onto her neck — it is almost as if she emerges from the sparse, shadowy background into the light of the foreground. Gérard’s use of chiaroscuro here is subtle and convincing, and it reveals a newfound mastery; in future portraits, he will display this skill in striking ways.

While both Lecerf and Brongniart are dressed in relatively simple attire, the differences in the styles of their clothing and their accessories are significant and reflect the changing taste of the period. The young Brongniart is dressed in a version of the new style known as à la antique which was inspired by neoclassical art and the recent painted in 1792.
excavations of Herculaneum and Pompeii. The style emerged in Paris at the end of Thermidor and became widely popular under the Directory. Brongniart wears a more modest version of the fashion, befitting her young age, but also revealing she followed the latest trends. Her gown is a white, high-waisted cotton chemise with short sleeves and a drawstring waistline and neck, typical of the style. Her outfit is made more appropriate for her age with the addition of a higher neckline and extra lining which gives the chemise more structure and makes it opaque. Her hair is arranged à la grecque: pulled back with short curls and braids covering her ears, short bangs, and ornamented with a ribbon headband. She wears a simple ribbon crossed around her waist that ends in a bow just visible on her left hip. For jewelry, she wears a small ring and linked, chain necklace (both presumably made of gold). These accessories are delicate and petite, yet they are also more decorative and richer than the simple beads worn by Lecerf. Another significant difference between the accessories worn by Gérard’s cousin and Brongniart is that the latter has forsaken the once mandatory cockade. After Thermidor, this accessory increasingly fell out of favor and was rarely worn by fashionable men and women in the late 1790s. Gérard’s Brongniart is a portrait of a fashionable young lady from a prominent Parisian family, whose pose and expression captivated critics on the eve of the Directory. Shorn of overt political symbols or

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29 These fashions under the Directory are also discussed in Chapter Five, especially 244-249.
30 Ribeiro, 127.
31 Ibid.
meanings, it would have appealed to viewers, who like Amaury-Duval, were “tired of political meditations.” The fact that Gérard was always less politically committed than David or other artists served him well and made him more accessible to a wider circle of potential patrons.

With his *Brongniart*, Gérard secured his position in the new market for portraiture by deviating from David’s example, and in the process, earned great admiration from the critics. Both Amaury-Duval and the *Mercure* critic saw in Gérard’s portrait something new, an intangible quality in the pose and expression of the sitter that went beyond the genre’s requirement to render mere likeness and that opened the door for the two critics to speculate on the mental state of a girl on the verge of adulthood. In their eyes, Gérard had gone beyond the normal limits of academic portraiture and imbued this portrait with more general qualities that allowed them to form a narrative of sorts. The critics’ response to the portrait is similar to their response to Gérard’s *Belisarius* — both paintings inspired critics to speculate upon the figures’ inner states and futures. According to Halliday, Ingres’ portrait of:

> Mademoiselle Rivière [1806], was painted in direct emulation of the portrait of Mademoiselle Brongniart which had established François Gérard’s reputation. ...Ingres’s likeness of the daughter of an unknown official proclaims the success of the project which Gérard’s painting helped to inaugurate — the metamorphosis of private portraits into significant

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32 Ibid., 132.
33 Writing as Polyscope, “Première Lettre. . ., 30 Vendémiaire an IV (21 October 1795), 139, translated and quoted in Halliday, 48. Halliday discusses how Amaury-Duval, in his first installment of his Salon review, described his feelings in this way as he approached the Salon of 1795.
34 Halliday, 53-55.
public spectacles, and that of the jobbing portraitist into an artist of independent genius.  

Recently, scholars have also argued that Gérard’s *Brongniart* inaugurated the “the evolution of portraiture towards genre scenes.”  

Gérard would capitalize on the success of his *Brongniart* and continue to merge elements from genre scenes in his portraits from this point forward.

The critics also admired Gérard’s new stylistic direction in the *Brongniart* (as they had with his *Belisarius*), which they regarded as stemming alternately from Leonardo da Vinci, Van Dyck, or the sixteenth century in general. It is not known for certain which of the Old Masters inspired Gérard (although we do know in general that he admired Raphael and Leonardo greatly); however, both he and the critics would have viewed portraits by artists such as Raphael, Titian, and Van Dyck in the recent exhibitions of the new national collection at the Louvre.  

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35 Ibid., 4. Ingres also created a pencil drawing after Gérard’s *Brongniart* which is now in the collection of the Musée Ingres, Montauban, under the title *Young Girl with Her Arms Crossed*. It should also be noted that Ingres completed a drawing after Gérard’s *Belisarius* which focused upon the head of the general and his guide. Philip Conisbee argues that his study of the *Belisarius* also influenced some of Ingres’s early portraits and discuss the influence of Gérard’s *Brongniart* on the *Mlle. Rivière*. See, “Montauban—Toulouse—Paris, 1780-1806,” in *Portraits by Ingres*, 28, 39-41.  


37 Lenormant mentions Gérard’s admiration of these Italian artists throughout his biography, see François Gérard: peintre d’histoire, essai de biographie et de critique (Paris: 1847), 73-74, 81, 90, and 92.  

The Louvre opened as the Musée Central des Arts on 10 August 1793 and began to show the now national collection (formerly the royal collection) throughout the 1790s, as well as works of art taken from conquered countries later in the Directory and
sixteenth- and seventeenth-century history painters began in 1795 to transform the way critics responded to contemporary portraiture, especially by artists like Gérard who had been trained first and foremost as history painters. Increasingly, critics would appreciate the portraits created by history painters of the past that rose above their mundane goals of creating likenesses of the ruling classes and this contributed to their burgeoning acceptance and approval of contemporary painters whom they believed were achieving similar effects in their portraits of private French citizens. Within this context, Gérard’s portrait of Brongniart struck a chord, signaled a new direction for portraiture, and announced his talent in the genre to potential future patrons. After the success of his Brongniart, it is not surprising that Gérard chose Émilie as his model for Psyche in 1798. With the portrait, Gérard discovered that an image of an innocent but sexually charged young woman could have great appeal to critics in Directory society. With his Cupid and Psyche (fig. 86), he capitalized on the discovery and further cemented his critical reputation and appeal amongst the fashionable women of Directory society who desired portraits that rendered them as beautiful as Gérard’s Psyche.

the Consulate. Some of the portraits on display included those by Raphael, Titian, and Van Dyck, see Halliday, 83. Halliday speculates that Amaury-Duval’s reference to Leonardo in his commentary on Gérard’s Brongniart was perhaps an allusion to the Mona Lisa, see fn.1, 53. Halliday does not, however, expand upon this connection. Leonardo’s painting remained in 1795 at Versailles and was transferred to the Louvre only in 1798. It is interesting to wonder what, if any, influence Leonardo’s painting may have had on that of Gérard. There does seem to be a vague evocation of Mona Lisa in the Brongniart, particularly in the young girl’s somewhat enigmatic expression, the shading around her face, and the positioning of her arms.

38 Ibid., 83-84.
39 See Chapter 5, 267.
**Gérard’s Jean-Baptiste Isabey and his Daughter**

Gérard’s other major canvas painted in 1795 but exhibited at the Salon of 1796 was also a non-traditional portrait, but on a much grander scale — the full-length, over life-size, *Jean-Baptiste Isabey and his Daughter* (fig. 98).⁴⁰ According to Charles Lenormant, Gérard created the portrait as a means to pay homage to his friendship with Isabey and more specifically to express his gratitude for Isabey’s generosity after the sale of the *Belisarius*; Etienne-Jean Delécluze stated Isabey volunteered to sit for Gérard in order to curry favor for Gérard amongst his wealthy circle of patrons.⁴¹ Isabey, in turn, exhibited drawings of Gérard’s wife, some of his students, and his assistant, thus making their close friendship visible on the walls of the Salon of 1796.⁴² In addition to commemorating the special relationship between the artist and sitter, Gérard portrayed Isabey as an ideal citizen, a quintessential dandified artist, and a member of elite

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⁴⁰ Bordes, *Portraiture*, fn.13, 36. According to Bordes, “it is rarely noted” that Gérard’s painting is dated 1795 but was not exhibited until 1796. The portrait measures 195 x 130 cm.


In the portrait, Isabey pauses on a landing of the Henri IV staircase at the Louvre, holding his daughter Alexandrine’s hand, accompanied by an excited-looking pet. In the original canvas, Isabey’s wife appeared, with her back turned, just ahead of her husband and daughter, at the foot of the stairs. The setting, poses of the figures, and the view of a sunny lawn through the open doorway, led Amaury-Duval to conclude that the image created the effect that “the entire family was going out for a walk.” Gérard’s painting (in its original form) could be regarded a family portrait that evokes a genre scene. Gérard clearly cast Isabey as the central figure within the family unit by virtue of his size, placement, and the fact that it is he who tends to his young daughter. On the one hand, then, this is a portrait of a family man, a caring father, and not an image that solely identifies the sitter by his profession. Gérard’s choice to represent Isabey in this manner is evidence once again of his sensitivity to the prevailing social

43 Several scholars have discussed these different aspect of Gérard’s portrait of Isabey. See, for example, Conisbee, 7 & 17; Crow, Emulation: Making Artists for Revolutionary France (New Haven, Connecticut: Yale University Press, 1995), 224-225; Halliday, 67-74; and, Ewa Lajer-Burcharth, Necklines: The Art of Jacques-Louis David after the Terror (New Haven, Connecticut: Yale University Press, 1999), 209-211.

44 Halliday, 70. The area at the base of the stairs was presumably repainted some time after the Salon of 1796. Several critics describe the figure of Isabey’s wife in the original composition, but it is not known why or when she was removed.


46 The fact that the painting includes a family about to leave a private interior for a public promenade links it with genre scenes. Halliday also notes (94) “the use of a staircase in the Isabey to indicate the distinction of private space from public space derives from seventeenth-century Dutch painting, where it had been used as a narrative
climate – this portrait resonates with the ideologies of fatherhood, family, and good citizenship which emerged after Thermidor and under the Directory.47

In defining what constituted a citizen, the framers of the Constitution of Year III emphasized family life and the male role within it, declaring: “We want to naturalize the family spirit in France. . .No one is a good citizen unless he is a good son, good father, good brother, good friend, good husband.”48 Under the Directory, the desire to have only “good citizens/fathers” in the upper house of the government (the Council of Ancients), resulted in the limitation that only men who were married or widowed were allowed to serve. In her analysis of this ideology, Lynn Hunt contends that government leaders “wanted to institute a pro-family regime without the elements of patriarchalism they had opposed in Old Regime arrangements.”49 Hunt points to a prominent proponent of such ideology, Louis-Marie de La Révellière-Lépaux, one of the five Directors. According to Hunt:

He linked family sentiment — ‘the love of parents for their children, filial piety, fraternal tenderness, memories of the paternal home. . .[in short], the sweet name of father’ — to patriotism, whereas under the Old Regime it was device.”


49 The Family Romance. . . , 163.
linked to willingness to obey the king. He concluded, ‘It is only...by concentrating in the heart of man all of the family affections that, following the expression of the citizen of Geneva [Rousseau], you will give him this exclusive passion for the fatherland.’ La Révellières-Lépaux’s paean to the family emphasized the memory of good fathers...not the venerable, august, or righteous attributes of the father.50

Elsewhere La Révellières-Lépaux placed an emphasis on the importance of the paternal duties of fathers to daughters as being key to the regeneration of France.51 In Hunt’s analysis of comments like these and others, she finds that fathers post-Thermidor were “expected to be more loving, more affectionate, ‘sweeter,’ and less inclined to despotic assertion of their will.”52 Gérard’s depicted Isabey as the model of the good citizen being promoted by the leaders of the Directory: Isabey appears in the midst of a family outing, gently holding his daughter’s hand, helping her down the stairs, every bit the embodiment of the good father and husband. Both Isabey and Gérard are also models of “the good friend,” one of the other qualifications of a citizen, and the portrait bears witness to this fact.

According to Halliday, in order for Gérard to posit Isabey as a symbol of the new model citizen, he had to strike a balance between portraying the likeness of his sitter

50 Ibid., 164. Hunt translates and quotes from La Révellières-Lépaux’s report on the session of the government on 1 Thermidor an III (19 July 1795) published in the Moniteur universel, 306 6 Thermidor an III (24 July 1795). La Révellières-Lépaux was also a fervent critic of Catholicism and promoted the deist religion of Theophilanthropy in which all priests were to be fathers. In particular, he championed fathers of daughters. For a discussion of his believes in this vein, see Halliday, 72 and G. Touchard-Lafosse, La Révolution, L’Empire, et La Restauration; ou 178 anecdotes historiques dans lesquelles apparaissant, pur des faits peu connus, 221 contemporains français et étrangers (Paris: L’Huillier, 1828), 113-114.

51 Halliday, 72.
and “smoothing out those very signs of individuation which distinguished Isabey from other men,” namely his “somewhat simian” features and “unusually short” stature. Gérard was, apparently, successful enough in this endeavor, since in the surviving criticism, few critics commented on the similarity, or lack thereof, between the likeness and the sitter. Only Amaury-Duval remarked that Gérard’s rendering of Isabey’s figure was “much larger than” the sitter’s true appearance. On the one hand, he dismissed this as a “minor fault;” on the other, he found it to be a “fault, nonetheless, since the work was indeed a portrait.”

These comments reveal the lingering prejudices against portraits as works that merely convey a flattering likeness of sitters. Gérard’s Brongniart went beyond issues of resemblance and established new expectations for the genre. Yet, in the following year, Amaury-Duval still wanted Gérard to produce a reasonable similitude of Isabey. The Directory was a period of changing definitions of portraiture, in part due to Gérard’s own contributions to the genre. By as early as 1798, the expectations had shifted so

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52 Hunt, 171.
54 “Observations de Polyscope. . .30 Vendémaire an V (21 October 1796) t.XI, #3, 3153. “La figure entière. . .est beaucoup plus grande que l’original. Quoique cette faute soit légère sans doute; c’en est une, puisque c’est un portrait que l’on a fait.”
much that, according to Halliday, “the observation that a good likeness did not in itself make a good portrait had denigrated into a cliché served up by the critics.”

Critics had by 1798, reluctantly or not, raised the status of portraiture, seeing the best portraits as universal works of art and not simply as likenesses of public or private citizens. For many critics, Gérard’s Brongniart had achieved this status in 1795, and in the mind of one critic, Gérard’s Isabey, in particular, should be considered a “tableau” and not merely a portrait.

Gérard rendered Isabey as a good citizen and father at a time when the number of portraits and genre scenes featuring fathers and families at the Salons began to increase. Isabey would even present himself in this mode as the dutiful father with his wife and three children in his drawing Isabey and his Family (which came to be known as The Barque of Isabey, fig. 99) at the Salon of 1798 where it attracted crowds of viewers. According to Philippe Bordes, the drawing “was interpreted as an allegory of paternal guidance, with the father steering loved ones past dangers on the river of life.” Both Gérard’s painting and Isabey’s drawing are representative of not only the ideology of good fathers in particular, but of the new appreciation for portraits which “celebrated

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55 Facing the Public, 85.
57 Hunt, 164-165. Hunt also describes how this trend is also witnessed during the Directory in the rise of family romances in plays, novels, and melodramas, see 171-191. Cyril Lécosse discusses this theme in Isabey’s works from 1796, 108-109 and 113-114.
58 Halliday, 139. The drawing is known today by an engraving made after it by François Aubertin in 1799.
59 Portraiture, 17.
the charms and the virtues of private life” in general. Gérard would seize on this trend and repeatedly create portraits of his sitters in private moments from 1796 forward.

During the Directory, there was also an increase in popularity of “portraits which recorded the amitié of painter for sitter.” In 1796, Gérard’s Isabey set an early precedent for this trend and reflects not only a personal relationship but also a professional bond between colleagues. Although Gérard excluded the customary tools of the painter’s profession, through the painting’s setting, references to portrait painting of the past, and Isabey’s appearance, he crafted an image of Isabey that spoke to the community of artists and their emerging status within Directory society. Portraits of one artist by another “when shown at the Salon, . . . attested to the need to define professional identities and loyalties in the wake of the abolition of the Academy [in 1793].” From this point forward, artists had to find new ways to establish a sense of community and to affirm their social and professional identities and worth at a time when such things were in transition. The studios and lodgings within the Louvre of many prominent artists, including Gérard, became the locus of the Parisian art world where artists lived, worked, and socialized with one another and patrons from 1794 until just after the turn of the nineteenth century. Gérard’s choice to represent Isabey

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60 Halliday, 82.
61 Ibid., 66.
62 Ibid., 66.
63 Ibid., 61.
64 Bordes, Portraiture. . ., 23. This artistic community came to an end between
on a staircase within the Louvre, despite the fact that Isabey lived and worked elsewhere, can be interpreted then as a means to convey Isabey’s place within this community.65 Furthermore, as a portrait by an artist of an artist, set in this prestigious locale, Gérard’s Isabey also speaks to the changing relationship between portraitist and sitter at this time. Traditionally, under the Ancien Régime, the portraitist was considered a paid servant, beholden to his sitter; during the Directory, there was a “profound change in the traditional rivalry between portraitist and sitter, each vying for preeminence over the other. . .the effort to present portraits as ambitious works of art in their own right was a way to enhance the professional prestige of the artist.”66 Gérard’s Isabey then can be regarded as a work that posits both Gérard and Isabey as distinguished artists/portraitists within the Parisian art world, designed to enhance both their reputations.

Gérard also portrayed the high social standing of Isabey as an artist and patron by referencing the portrait style of Van Dyck. Several critics mentioned the similarity between Gérard’s Isabey and the Flemish master, including the anonymous reviewer for the Mercure and Amaury-Duval, if only in passing.67 Another critic provided a more extended comparison, finding in “the figure of the citizen Isabey and in that of his young daughter, whom he holds by the hand, the truthfulness, the ease, the bold

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1801-02, when transforming the Louvre into a museum became a priority of the government under Napoleon. David was the last artist to vacate his space in 1804.

65 Ibid.
66 Ibid., 8.
67 “Sur le Salon de l’an V,” 90. “. . .ce serait un Vandick [sic].” and “Observations
execution, and the vigorous coloring that we recognize in the portraits by Van Dyck.\textsuperscript{68} Although no critics cited a particular Van Dyck portrait, Régis Michel has suggested that Gérard might have been inspired by Van Dyck’s \textit{Portrait of a Man with His Son}, c.1628-29 (fig. 100) in the new national collection of the Louvre.\textsuperscript{69} The original composition of Gérard’s \textit{Isabey}, with the figure of his sitter’s wife still visible, may have made Gérard’s source in a specific Van Dyck painting more difficult to ascertain; today, however, the similarities between Gérard’s \textit{Isabey} and Van Dyck’s painting are readily apparent suggesting Gérard rather purposefully borrowed aspects of Van Dyck’s sought-after style of full-length portraiture. In her study of society portraits, Gabriel Badea-Paün identifies Van Dyck as “the artist invoked so frequently by fashionable portrait painters working in the nineteenth century.”\textsuperscript{70} Perhaps Gérard’s emulation of Van Dyck’s style set the precedent for this later trend, as well. Following Van Dyck, Gérard framed his figures in his \textit{Isabey} against an interior architectural setting that affords a glimpse of the outdoors, positioned his figures in such a way as to suggest they are pausing for just a moment, and mimicked the somber palette of Van Dyck’s de Polyscope. . .” 153. “On se croit en le regardant près d’un beau VanDick [sic.].”

\textsuperscript{68} Anon. (Hector Chaussier?), “Exposition des productions de l’école française au Musée central des arts,” \textit{L’Ami des Arts: Journal de la Société Philotechnique}, 16 Brumaire an V (6 November 1796), 366. “. . .que nous y avons reconnu, dans la figure du c.Isabey et dans celle de sa petite fille, qu’il tient par la main, la vérité, l’aisance, le faire hardy et la vigueur de coloris auxquels on reconnoît dans les portraits de Vandick [sic.].”

\textsuperscript{69} “L’Art des Salons,” in \textit{Aux Armes & Aux Arts}, 68. Van Dyck’s painting had been a part of the royal collection since the 17th century and is still housed at the Louvre under the title, \textit{Portait d’un homme de qualité avec son fils}. It has a pendant, also housed at the Louvre, entitled \textit{Portait d’un dame de qualité et sa fille}, also dated c. 1628-29.

\textsuperscript{70} \textit{The Society Portrait from David to Warhol} (New York: The Vendome Press, 2007),
work. Michel also sees in Gérard’s Isabey, “the refinement of the costume [and] nobility of expression” that were part of Van Dyck’s “consecrated formula.” By referencing Van Dyck’s composition, Gérard appears to draw an analogy between Isabey and the wealthy patrons of Van Dyck, “reinventing the leisured cavalier of Van Dyck in the person of the cultivated French artist . . . defined, like an aristocrat, by progeny and sport.” In essence, Gérard presented Isabey as a man who had “arrived” — at once a successful artist, patron, and member of elite society whose milieu was that of the nouveaux riches of the Directory — a social standing Gérard himself was on the verge of achieving.

Gérard’s depiction of Isabey as a “pseudo-aristocrat” suited the new status accorded to some artists at this time. By 1795, Isabey was accustomed to moving in high society, as he had been a sought-after miniaturist specializing in portraits of the upper-classes for quite some time. Before he entered David’s studio in 1786, Isabey was a favorite at the court of Marie-Antoinette, not only for his portraits, but also for his talents as a kind of “social director,” planning balls and theatrical entertainments for which he designed costumes, painted scenery, and in which he sometimes acted. During the Directory and into the Consulate, Isabey was described by one of his biographers as being, “in a word. . . à la mode.” Gérard depicted Isabey in a pose that

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71 Michel, 68.
72 Crow, Emulation. . ., 224.
73 Quintana, 241.
74 Edmond Taigny, J.-B. Isabey: sa vie et ses œuvres, (Paris: E. Panckoucke, 1859),
affords us a full view of his elegant attire, portraying Isabey as a man who adopted the latest fashions. The style of Isabey’s clothing is in keeping with the revival of Anglomania in men’s clothing under the Directory. Isabey wears a high-collared, short, square-cut coat in the English style made of black velvet and a black silk double-breasted waistcoat, with over-sized lapels that overlap those of his coat. These lapels were designed to reveal the simple white linen shirt and lightly starched, wide, linen cravat wound around Isabey’s neck. On his lower body, Isabey sports fashionable grey/green pantaloons with ribbon garters just below the knee which were designed to help support, via loops, his soft leather top-boots, and also created the illusion of knee-breeches. Isabey’s hair, too, is consistent with one of the most fashionable coiffures for men at this time. Designed to compliment the relative simplicity and ease of his attire, Isabey’s hair is short and purposefully disheveled in the antique style, one that was intended to look natural despite being carefully arranged. His only accessories are his leather gloves, in a color that compliments his pantaloons, and a hat which appears to be the English round hat. Bordes contends that the “subdued chromatic harmonies [in Gérard’s Isabey] came to be associated with an ethos of artistic dedication.” While this may be true for the overall limited palette of Gérard’s painting, the dark, somber colors of Isabey’s clothes are also consistent with what fashionable men preferred from 1795 to

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75 For a discussion of Anglomania in French fashion in the 1780s see, Ribeiro, Fashion in the French Revolution, 24-37.
76 The descriptions of Isabey’s clothing and hairstyle were derived from Ribeiro’s discussion of men’s fashions under the Directory, see Ibid., 119-122.
Gérard represented Isabey as a member of elite, ultra-fashionable society by depicting his clothing with such care and attention to detail. Although Isabey’s dress is more subdued and simple than that adopted by some men under the Directory, it does identify him as being a member of a group of mostly younger to middle-aged men, of the middle to upper classes, who were known primarily as Les Incroyables under the Directory. They were among the men who accompanied Les Merveilleuses to the new popular pleasure parks, balls, and salons of Paris. Isabey caricatured himself and other members of this elite society in his Le Petit Coblentz (fig. 101) from 1797. Isabey depicted the boulevard des Italiens (known as “le petit Coblentz”), a popular gathering place where men and women paraded about nightly in their elaborate costumes in order to see and be seen. The work reads like an intimate “who’s who” of Directory society since several of the figures have been identified: Isabey appears on the left margin, in the immediate foreground with his back to the scene; behind him, dressed in light blue and striped leggings is the dancer Auguste Vestris; Joachim Murat appears seated in the background; opposite him, on the far right margin are Napoléon

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77 Portraiture... 65.
78 Ribeiro, Fashion... 119.
79 Ibid., 117. After 1796, the terms Muscadin and Jeuness dorée, while still sometimes applied, began to go out of favor as fashionable men became less concerned with political action and more concerned with dress itself. According to François Gendron, some of the other names for these men were: “collets noirs, collets, verts, oreilles de chien, chouants, messieurs à batons, Royale Cravate, Royale Anarchie, . . .and so on.” Quoted in Ribeiro, Fashion in the French Revolution, 117.
80 See Chapter Five, 242-244 for a discussion of these entertainments.
Bonaparte and Charles-Maurice de Talleyrand-Périgord; and, the prominent couple in the right foreground dressed in pink tones is Juliette Récamier and the singer Pierre-Jean Garat. As an artist and *Incroyable*, Isabey moved comfortably in Directory society; Bordes notes, “he publicized his fashionable lifestyle and rarely refused demands for private drawing lessons.” While David struggled to adapt to the changed political and patronage circumstances after Thermidor, Isabey easily re-established himself as a member of high society and portraitist during the Directory since he was never directly involved in Revolutionary politics. Isabey served as an beneficial mentor for Gérard at a time when he sought to eschew politics, distance himself from David, and ingratiate himself with the new potential patrons of the Directory. Following Isabey’s lead, Gérard began to host his own “Wednesdays” around 1795/96 in his quarters at the Louvre as an informal salon where the fashionable elite mingled with artists, entertainers, and writers. Gérard exhibited his *Isabey* at the Salon at roughly the same time that he began to make a concentrated effort to join the upper echelons of Directory society. By depicting Isabey at once as a citizen of the new republic, a caring father, respected artist, and fashionable gentleman, Gérard positioned himself as an artist

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82 Ibid., 3. Lécosee also notes that from 1796 to 1799, Isabey was a frequent member of the entourage of the Beauharnais family and created portrait drawings of many fashionable women, see 114.
83 Lajer-Burchar, 216-217. David was released from house arrest on 4 Brumaire an IV (26 October 1795).
84 Delécluze, 281-282 and Marc Fumaroli, “Terror and Grace: Girodet, Poet of
capable of delivering innovative, ambitious, and à la mode portraits. With his
Belisarius, Gérard presented an image encoded with sympathy for the émigrés; with his
Isabey, he announced he was willing and able to portray the wealthy of Directory
society in the manner they expected.85

According to one critic, Gérard’s Isabey “pleases as well as interests everyone.”86

Based on this comment and the praise found in other reviews, scholars have asserted
that Gérard’s Isabey was a public and critical success “that posited Gérard as one of the
greatest portraitists of his generation.”87 Yet, a survey of the extant criticism reveals
that the painting, in fact, received mixed reviews; while most critics found elements of
the work praiseworthy, almost all of them also pointed to the work’s faults.88 For
example, Amaury-Duval admired Gérard’s evocation of Van Dyck, praised the
rendering of the figures’ movement, and admired Gérard’s ability to convey in the
Painting,” in Girodet 1767-1824, 66.
85 It is tempting here to speculate that these two paintings might also be symbolic
of the way in which Gérard wanted to be regarded himself (with sympathy and as a
member of the new fashionable society) in the political climate and competitive art
market of the Directory.
86 Villiers and Capelle, 3, quoted in Lécosse. “Tout plait, comme tout interesse.”
87 Lécosse, 114. “À lire les critiques, le success est considerable. Isabey ‘trône’ au
centre au Salon. Gérard n’est pas en reste, qui par cet ouvrage s’impose définitivement
comme l’un des grandes portraitists de sa generation.” Bordes (7) states Gérard’s Isabey
received “effusive praise.” Halliday (70), however, notes “the critical reception
accorded to Gérard’s Isabey was decidedly mixed.”
88 Some of the positive aspects of the reviews have already been discussed above.
One critic praised the work for exceeding the expectations for academic portraiture (see
fn 54, 21) and others praised his emulation of Van Dyck’s portraiture (see fns. 71 & 72,
25).
figure of Isabey’s young daughter “all the grace and naive allure of her age.” In Amaury-Duval’s estimation, Gérard was “among the original painters” which he felt there were too few of at the time. Yet, he also found fault with Gérard for not depicting an accurate likeness of Isabey, and his critique is, to a large extent, negative:

The light that shines outside the door, is well-imitated, but unfortunately it is this which first attracts attention. But, the first glance should not be for an accessory. The head [of Isabey] is of a good color; but it is not in harmony with the rest. The linens . . . are grey and dirty. The entire figure [of Isabey] is not well-posed . . . Finally, I would like Gérard to tell me why his small figure [Isabey’s wife] seems much too small in comparison with the large, why he has not followed the easy rules of perspective.

The first fault Amaury-Duval mentions is the lighting effect, which he finds too distracting in a portrait. Other critics complained about this aspect of Gérard’s painting, echoing Amaury-Duval’s charge that it diverted a viewer’s attention away

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90 Ibid., 150 & 153. “Parmi ces peintures originaux je nommerai sans crainte d’être dementi, Gérard, Cacault, Isabey, Sablet, Dandrillon, Sicardy, deux ou trois autres encore.”
91 Ibid., 153-154. “La lumière du soleil qui brille au-delà de la porte, est bien imitée, et malheureusement c’est cela qui d’abord attire l’attention. Or, le première coup-d’oeil ne devrait pas être pour un accessoire. La tête de la figure principale est d’un bonne coleur; mais elle n’est pas en harmonie avec tout le reste. Les lignes, que les colorists n’ont jamais manqués, sont gris et sales. La figure entière ne pose pas bien . . . enfin, je voudrais que Gérard me dit pourquoi sa petite figure paraît beaucoup trop rapprochée de la grande, quiqu’il ait sûrement suivi les règles si faciles de la perspective.”
92 Halliday has interpreted this comment in light of contemporary criticism of history paintings in which such lighting effects were praised by critics; however, in criticizing this kind of effect in a portrait, Amaury-Duval responds according to the belief that the focus in a portrait should be first and foremost on its principle figures, see 70-71.
from Isabey, including the critic for L’Ami des Arts. The critic for the Mercure went so far as to call the lighting effect “wretched,” claiming it created a “hole” in the painting. Only two critics praised Gérard for this aspect of his painting; one, the anonymous critic for the Journal de Paris, found Gerard’s painting to have “the greatest merit” and concluded “only an artist of such skill and strong feeling could set about to and execute with success the kind of lighting he chose.”

Like Amaury-Duval, other critics also expressed their dislike of Gérard’s handling of the color and perspective in the Isabey. For example, the critic for L’Ami des Arts found that “the shadow projected from [Isabey’s] head on the cravat gives it a dirty appearance, thanks to the dark velvet of the coat,” and he described the perspective in the background as being “completely treated in a brusque manner.” The critic for the Mercure agreed with Amaury-Duval that Gérard obviously rendered Isabey’s wife

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93 Anon. (Hector Chaussier?), “Exposition des productions. . .,”366. “Il en résulte un grand effet du lumière, qui nos paroit nuisible à celui de la figure principale. . .”.
94 “Sur le Salon de l’an V (1796),” 90. “. . .sans ce maudit effet de lumière qui fait trou dans le tableau. . .”.
95 Anon., “Exposition au Salon; Addition à l’article Salon inséré dans la feuille d’avant’hier,” Journal de Paris, 21 Brumaire an V (11 November 1796) #51, 205. “Son portrait d’Isabey a le plus grand mérite; il n’y avoir qu’un artiste fort, et ayant le sentiment de sa force, qui put entreprendre et executer avec success le genre de lumière qu’il a choisi.” Halliday (70) does not mention this critique and states that only one critic, the writer of the pamphlet, Critique du Salon ou les Tableaux en Vaudevilles par Villiers et Capelle, praised this aspect of the painting.
96 Anon. (Hector Chaussier?), “Exposition des productions. . .,”366. “. . .et nous ne pouvons nous défendre de nous ranger de l’avis de ceux qui pensent que l’ombre portée de la tête sur la cravatte, lui donne un ton salé, malgré le velours noir du gilet.” “La perspective du fond. . .nous paroit bein brusquée.”
much too small due to his improper use of perspective.\textsuperscript{97} The reviews of Gérard’s  
\textit{Isabey} were not anywhere near as favorable as those he received in the previous Salon  
for his \textit{Belisarius} and \textit{Brogniart} — two paintings that Amaury-Duval, in particular,  
praised at length. It seems the critic felt the need to explain why he judged Gérard’s  
\textit{Isabey} so harshly. At the end of his critique of the portrait, he wrote:

\begin{quote}
I have been severe in the examination of this painting; it is how I should  
be with those who have great talent, and who announce the more great still.  
The author of the \textit{Belisarius Carrying his Guide}, has begun with the public some  
engagements that he should fulfill. It is not of the \textit{good} that one awaits from  
him; he should aspire to \textit{perfection}.\textsuperscript{98}
\end{quote}

By mentioning the \textit{Belisarius}, Amaury-Duval’s comments suggest that he may have  
criticized the \textit{Isabey} more severely because it was a portrait, and not the history painting  
he wanted or expected to see from Gérard in 1796. While Amaury-Duval championed  
Gérard’s \textit{Brogniart} in 1795, this portrait was exhibited alongside the \textit{Belisarius} that the  
critic hailed as a masterful work. \textit{Isabey} was the only painting Gérard showed in 1796,  
and Amaury-Duval expected more from him than a portrait, even if it was on a grand  
scale. While the critic might have appreciated some portraits, overall he remained  
critical of their increasing popularity and visibility. In the first installment of his review  
of the Salon of 1796, Amaury-Duval commented, “Again so many portraits! I will wait

\textsuperscript{97} “Sur le Salon de l’an V (1796),” 90. “...et puis la petite femme! Oh! L’amateur,  
mettez la main sur la conscience; vous avez assez de perspective pour voir que la petite  
femme est trop petite.”

\textsuperscript{98} “Observations de Polyscope. . .”, 153. “J’ai été sèvere dans l’examen de ce  
tableau; c’est qui il faut l’être avec ceux qui ont de grands talens, et qui en  
annoncent de plus grands encore. L’auteur du \textit{Belisaire portant son guide}, a pris avec le  
public des engagemens qu’il doit remplir. Ce n’est pas du \textit{bon} que l’on attend de lui’ il
[to address them]. As long as there is vanity in the world, that is to say as long as
the world exists, men, and even more so women, love to expose copies of their figures
to the eyes of the public.”

While Amaury-Duval was reluctant to embrace the growing number of portraits
exhibited, patrons were not, and the quantity of portraits on view at the next Salon in
1798 only increased. The patrons of fashionable Directory society embraced portraiture,
a genre previously reserved for the aristocracy and court, and created a tradition of
their own, the “society portrait,” which displayed their private lives and roles as
citizens on the walls of the Salon. Gérard’s *Isabey* secured his reputation as one of the
most innovative portraitists of his generation despite the fact the painting received
mixed critical reviews. With his *Isabey*, Gérard set the precedent for common trends in
portraiture from the Directory until well after the turn-of-the-century: the expectation
that a portrait depict “something more” than resemblance; male sitters represented as
caring fathers and husbands; portraits as expressions of the true friendship between
artist and patron; the fusion of genre elements with portraiture; and, the emphasis upon
a sitter’s private life rather than his or her profession. Gérard’s political flexibility, or
perhaps even indifference, and his willingness to embrace the genre positioned him as

doit viser à la *perfection*.”

99 Observations de Polyscope. . .,” 20 Vendémiaire an V (11 October 1796) t. XI,
#2, 95. Coll. Deloynes, t. XVIII, #493.

100 Badea-Paün, 15. As Badea-Patin notes, the society portrait born at this time
was a “direct descendent of the aristocratic portraits of earlier eras” and, in some ways,
represents the “nostalgia for the old ways of aristocracy” that is also a part of Directory
society. At the same time, however, the new society portraits express significantly
one of the preferred portraitists in Paris from the Directory forward eventually bringing an end to the financial instability that plagued him from the beginning of his career.\textsuperscript{101} Finally, with his Isabey as he had with his Belisarius and Brongniart, Gérard further distanced himself from his earlier, severe Davidian style. While he would never completely disavow David, the ties that once bound him to his teacher had long been unraveling.\textsuperscript{102}

\textbf{Gérard’s La Révellières-Lépaux, Member of the Directory, 1797}

Gérard’s next move to assert himself as a society portraitist was to approach one of the government’s five Director’s, Louis-Marie de La Révellières-Lépaux (1753-1824), and “insist” in the summer of 1797 upon painting a full-length portrait of him (fig. 102).\textsuperscript{103} La Révellières-Lépaux (who, it should be remembered, was outspoken on the different interests from their aristocratic precedents as Gérard’s paintings reveal.

\textsuperscript{101} Oppenheimer, 11. By the Consulate, Oppenheimer notes that “for wealthy clients, the artistic quality of the portrait and the renown of the artist who created it might be as important as the person portrayed.” Oppenheimer describes Gérard as amongst the highest ranking portraitists by this time, commanding between 6,000 to 12,000 francs for a portrait.

\textsuperscript{102} Philippe Bordes argues an “implicit rivalry [existed] between David and Gérard . . . arbitrated by the test of the Salon. The contrast between the sparse critical comments inspired by the \textit{grand maître} and his two portraits in 1795 [the \textit{Sériziat}] and the effusive praise elicited by Gérard’s \textit{Isabey} in 1796 corresponds to the greater excitement provoked by the latter picture.” See, 7-8.

\textsuperscript{103} The Director’s son, Ossian, made this claim in the “Introduction” to his father’s memoirs published in Paris in 1895, quoted in the catalogue entry on Gérard’s portrait, Frederick Cummings, Pierre Rosenberg, and Robert Rosenblum, eds., \textit{La Révellières-Lépaux, Member of the Directory} in: Detroit Institute of the Arts, \textit{French Painting 1774-1830: The Age of Revolution}, ex. cat. (Detroit, Michigan: Wayne State University Press, 1975), 433. While there has been some dispute as to the date of this portrait, the date of the summer of 1797 is the most plausible.
role of fathers in their children’s lives and the new republic) had served as a deputy to the National Assembly from 1789-1791, and then to the National Convention from 1792-1793. When he protested against the Terror and resigned due to his disapproval of Jacobin radicalism, he only narrowly escaped arrest orders in Vendémiaire an II (October 1793). He returned to politics after the Thermidorean Reaction, serving as a Director from 11 Brumaire an IV (2 November 1795) until 30 Prairial an VII (18 June 1799) when he vacated his position after being accused of corruption.104 After the 18 Brumaire an VIII coup (9 November 1799), he fully retired from politics and retreated from Paris to his country home at Andilly, in the valley of Montmorency. He was allowed to remain in France after the Bourbon Restoration, because he was not among those named as a regicide. Prior to his political career, La Révellière-Lépaux worked as a lawyer, and then began to study natural history in 1781 and to teach botany in Angers by 1787. Even during his term as Director (from 1795-99), he continued to study botany privately at the botanical gardens in Thouin and on the grounds of his home at Andilly, where he also spent his retirement studying agriculture, botany, and archaeology.105

In his portrait, Gérard emphasized the Director’s personal interests and life rather than presenting him in his official capacity. La Révellière-Lépaux appears seated outdoors near the grounds of his home, holding a book in his left hand and a bunch of flowers in his right.106 According to the poet Jean-François Ducis, friend to Gérard and

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104 Cummings, et al, 433.
106 Ibid. The bunch of flowers (forget-me-nots) were given to the sitter by his wife.
La Révellière-Lépaux, Gérard “painted him seated, tranquil, dreaming like a botanist about a little flower which his wife gave to him.”\textsuperscript{107} The pose, moreover, allowed Gérard to minimize a hump that deformed his sitter’s back.\textsuperscript{108} While his clothing is similar to Isabey’s, the more vibrant colors, length of his coat, and style of his boots indicate his higher socio-economic class.\textsuperscript{109} His burgundy tight-fitting coat is short and square-cut in the front, with long tails in the back. His red waistcoat with large lapels appears double-breasted, and he wears the typical, but more elaborate, white cravat tied high on his neck. His \textit{culottes} of dark green are tucked into soft leather top-boots of red and brown, with elaborate leather loops at their sides to aid in pulling them on. His hair, with its long cascade of curls in the back, was one of several fashionable styles of the day, sometimes indicating anti-Jacobin sentiments.\textsuperscript{110}

In his portraits of Isabey and La Révellière-Lépaux, Gérard minimized their distinctive physical traits (whether he was motivated by a need to flatter his subjects or by a desire to create works more “universal” than portraiture), focused upon the private activities or interests of each man, and recorded his friendship with the sitters, thereby and were actually not painted by Gérard, but by La Révellière-Lépaux’s friend and professor at the botanical gardens at Thouin, Gérard van Spaendonck.

\textsuperscript{107} The quotation stems from a letter by Ducis to Néopmucène, dated 12 June 1805, quoted in Ibid. Gérard also completed a bust-length portrait of Ducis in 1805.

\textsuperscript{108} Cummings, et al, 434. The catalogue entry mentions that in his memoirs, Napoleon referred to La Révellière-Lépaux as, “small, hunch-backed, having the most unpleasant appearance one could imagine.”

\textsuperscript{109} Ribeiro, 117.

\textsuperscript{110} Ibid. Some men immediately after the Terror wore their hair long, turned upwards at the back with a comb, in imitation of the arrangement of hair of those about to be guillotined. By 1797, however, this style did not always serve as a political
leading the way in the trends that would come to dominate portraiture through the Directory and the Consulate. In 1895, Ossian La Révellièrè-Lépaux described Gérard as a friend to his father and wrote, “the affection of the great painter for his model [Ossian’s father] was long-lasting and courageous. It was never altered.” Gérard’s portrait marks the beginnings of their friendship, suggesting La Révellièrè-Lépaux approved of Gérard’s work. The fact that even a leader of the Directory government preferred to have his private interests depicted, rather than his public/political status, provides further evidence for the popularity of this style of portraiture during the period. Gérard must have hoped that by delivering a successful portrait of such a prominent figure he would attract more patronage. While the portrait was never exhibited at the Salon, it would have been viewed by the sitter’s intimate and extensive circle of friends and government officials.

**Gérard’s First Portraits of the Fashionable Women of Directory Society**

Gérard began his career as a portraitist to the women of high Parisian society with his Madame Barbier-Walbonne (1796, fig. 103) and La Comtesse Regnault de Saint-Jean-d’Angély (1798, fig. 104). While the latter was married to a close friend, the former represents Gérard’s entry into the highest echelons of les Merveilleuses society. Regnault was a friend of Joséphine Bonaparte and her husband was a close collaborator with Napoleon. In both portraits, Gérard continued to pursue some of the innovations and the stylistic direction he introduced with his previous portraits. Both women are shown statement and could instead be a mark of fashionable taste.
in private settings, yet Gérard also referenced their public personas in creative ways. His skillful rendering of the sitters’ clothing and accessories reveal his understanding of the importance of sartorial displays in elite Parisian society. Formally, they show he continued to model his style after seventeenth-century portraiture, no doubt due to the fact that critics were responding favorably to it. With these portraits, Gérard also maintained his hard won independence from David by securing his own commissions and pursuing his own style. The *Regnault* was a resounding success at the final Salon of the Directory and secured Gérard’s future with the circle of patrons (both male and female) who became the leaders of the Consulate after the coup of 18 Brumaire an VIII (9 November 1799) brought the Directory to its close.

Madame Barbier-Walbonne, born Marie-Philippe-Claude Walbonne (1763-1837), became one of Paris’s most celebrated singers; by 1802, she was “the reigning diva of the Théâtre-Italien and the toast of Paris.” Halliday describes her as “perhaps the most admired voice in Europe” and notes that she would also sometimes entertain at private parties.

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111 Quoted in Cummings, et al., 433.
112 Richard Campbell, “François Aubertin 1773-1821,” catalogue entry in *Regency to Empire: French Printmaking 1715-1814*, ex. cat., David P. Becker, et.al. (Minneapolis, Michigan: Minneapolis Institute of Arts, 1984), 326. Sylvain Laveissière notes she was born in Paris on 8 December 1763 and notes Jacques-Luc Walbonne added her surname to his after the two married, see *Pierre-Paul Prud’hon* ex. cat. (New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1998), 344. She presumably left Paris with her family sometime early in the Revolution, but the exact chronology of her life is not known. Richard Campbell notes she was a student of Pierre-Jean Garat (1764-1823, who can be seen in Isabey’s caricature [fig. 99]), also a famous singer, who went to England in 1789 until 1794; presumably, this would be the time frame for her training with Garat who only visited Paris infrequently between 1794 and the end of his life. The Théâtre-Italien had closed in 1792, but it reopened in Paris in 1801 and the majority of its productions were operas,
Gérard’s Wednesday salons. Her husband, Jacques-Luc-Barbier-Walbonne (1769-1860), a student of David by 1789, became a close and life-long friend of both Gérard and Isabey, and after the turn-of-the-century, he joined Gérard’s studio. It is not known when the Barbier-Walbonnes met, but their wedding took place sometime in 1796; since Gérard’s portrait of her dates to this year, it could have been commissioned as a wedding portrait, or perhaps given as a wedding present by the artist to his close friends.

In the half-length portrait, Barbier-Walbonne appears in a private, intimate interior space, seated, paused from her reading, on a red-toned chair, before a window largely masked by a heavy, dark green velvet curtain. A view to a distant landscape appears through the window and the hint of a reflection of the back of her head and both tragic and comedic.

113 Facing the Public, 190.
114 In 1792, Jacques-Luc Barbier-Walbonne joined the French army and ultimately earned the rank of lieutenant in the Fifth Hussar Regiment. In 1794, with the help of David, he became an arts commissioner and went to Belgium to oversee the confiscation of artwork and its transport to Paris. By 1797, he was exhibiting at the Salon again. See Campbell, 326. Isabey exhibited a portrait drawing of Barbier-Walbonne at the Salon of 1796 entitled, Man with a Pipe or Portrait of Jacques-Luc Barbier-Walbonne, now at the Cleveland Museum of Art. Barbier-Walbonne is also rumored to have been the model for Gérard’s figure of Cupid in Cupid and Psyche of 1798, see 261. It is not known when he became an assistant to Gérard, but he did produce copies of the latter’s portraits, while still producing and exhibiting works independently.
115 Whether the work was a commission or a gift is simply not known. Whether or not it was ever exhibited at the Salon is also a matter of debate. Most sources indicate it was not, but Halliday notes it could be the work listed in the Salon livret of 1798 under #193 as, Portrait de la Cit.***. If this is the Barbier-Walbonne, Halliday states the work must have arrived at the Salon too late for critics to comment upon it, see fn.14, 92.
shoulders is suggested in the mirror behind her.\[116\] Her body is almost in profile, just slightly turned toward the viewer, while her head turns enough for her gaze to meet that of the viewer. Although seated, the pose is similar to that in Gérard’s *Brongniart*, albeit in reverse. She is dressed in a more modest version of the current, classically-inspired fashions; in 1796, they were not as revealing, nor as scandalous as they would soon become.\[117\] Her dress, popular in several variations in the second-half of the 1790s, is a morning dress (a style worn during the day). It is a high-waisted cotton chemise with drawstring waist, short transparent sleeves, a ruffled v-neck bodice, and a short train attached at the back of the collar.\[118\] Since these dresses always had short sleeves, gloves became a common practical accessory to protect from a chill. They were always worn outside the home and almost always worn inside, removed only for dining.\[119\] The gloves are her only accessories; she does not wear jewelry,

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\[116\] T.C. Bruun-Neergaard identifies the small landscape seen through the window as being close to St. Cloud, now a western suburb of Paris. See, *Sur la Situation des Beaux-Arts en France ou Lettres d’un Danois à son ami* (Paris: 1801), 117. Since we know Ingres latter drew inspiration from Gérard’s early portraits, the use of a mirror here may have inspired Ingres to do the same in several of his portraits of women which he did for the first time in 1814 with his *Madame de Senonnes* (Musée des Beaux-Arts, Nantes). For a discussion of Ingres’ use of mirrors in portraits of women see, Sarah Betzer, “Ingres’s Second *Madame Moitesser*: ‘Le Brevet du Peintre d’Histoire,’ *Art History* v.23 #5 (December 2000): 681-705.

\[117\] For a discussion of the extremes of Directory fashions, see Chapter 5, 244-249. For a recent succinct discussion of the fashions for both men and women during the Directory and Consulate, see Bruson and Forray-Carlier, “Les Modes,” Chapter 6 in *Au temps des merveilleuses*, 126-148.

\[118\] In order to indentify her clothing, I consulted Ribeiro, *Fashion in the French Revolution*, 127 and Oppenheimer, 128.

which was common at this time, even if the sitter was considerably wealthy.\textsuperscript{120} Her coiffeur is one of the most common and popular for the time: it is gathered in a bunch of curls at the crown, parted in the middle, and soft, curling tendrils frame her face.\textsuperscript{121}

Perhaps the most striking feature of this portrait, is its dramatic lighting. According to Bruun-Neergaard, the source of illumination in the painting is the morning light coming from the window which, shaded by the curtains, creates the strong shadows surrounding her and the bright highlights on her face and torso.\textsuperscript{122} He must have admired the effect, because he acknowledged it was “very difficult to achieve.”\textsuperscript{123} This was true for Gérard, perhaps more than Bruun-Neergaard realized. Early in his career, and in stark contrast to Girodet, Gérard struggled with chiaroscuro and limited his use of it in favor of a more linear, severe style.\textsuperscript{124} It was not until his \textit{Belisarius} (figs. 74 & 75) and La Fontaine illustrations (figs. 82-85), that Gérard used

\textsuperscript{120} Ibid., 122 and 128.
\textsuperscript{121} Ibid., 131. Ribeiro describes this as one of the variations of \textit{coiffeurs à l’antique}. It is similar to, but not the same as, the style \textit{à la grecque} worn by Brongniart in her portrait by Gérard.
\textsuperscript{122} \textit{Sur la situation…}, 117. He indicates the light comes through the window and determines it must be early in the day based upon her “very natural” hairstyle. “On aperçoit un petit paysage près de St. Cloud, d’ou le tableau tire sa lumière, que ne fait pour ainsi dire que jouer sur son visage, don’t la plus grande partie est dans l’ombre. . .Le jour se montre à peine dans ses cheveux, qui sont très-naturels.”
\textsuperscript{123} Ibid. “...chose très-difficile à render.
\textsuperscript{124} Girodet appears to have been “a natural” with chiaroscuro and mastered it so early in his training that David entrusted him to complete the difficult area of shadow and light surrounding Brutus’ head (fig.13). Gérard, however, had great difficulty with the device, which is evident in discussions of his 1789 Rome prize entry (Fig.17) as compared to that of Girodet (fig. 18). See Chapter One, 30-36. In all of Gérard’s paintings prior to 1795 and in the \textit{Aeneid} illustrations, his style is better described as linear and lacks convincing use of chiaroscuro as a means to create atmosphere, model
chiaroscuro like Girodet to model forms and establish mood.\textsuperscript{125} In his Isabey (fig. 98), Gérard had also created a dramatic lighting effect, contrasting the darker area of the stair landing with the bright sunlight streaming through the door at the base of the stairs; here, however, critics found Gérard’s lighting effects unsuccessful and a distraction.\textsuperscript{126} Unfortunately, we have no reviews of the Barbier-Walbonne, making it impossible to assess whether or not Gérard’s critics would have approved of the dramatic chiaroscuro that enlivens the painting.\textsuperscript{127} Bruun-Neergaard’s assessment stands as the work’s only documented praise. In addition to admiring the play of light and shadow, he remarked on the “delicacy of [the sitter’s] mouth and nose . . .the admirable lightness of the drapery” and concluded “the portrait offers all the harmony proper to a painting.”\textsuperscript{128} Since he referred to the work as both a “portrait” and a “tableau” at the end of his critique, he may have intended to praise Gérard for his ability to achieve affects in the Barbier-Walbonne that transcended the expectations of portraiture.

Bruun-Neergaard’s appraisal of Madame Barbier-Walbonne contains little to disagree with; however, his contention that the light source emanates from the window

\textsuperscript{125} For a discussion of Gérard’s use of chiaroscuro in these works and its similarity to Girodet’s style, see Chapter Four, pages 224-226. Girodet’s skillful use of chiaroscuro is discussed in relation to his Endymion (fig. 20) and his Aeneid illustrations (figs. 29-31, 35, and 39).

\textsuperscript{126} See the discussion of the critical reviews of the painting above, 294-295.

\textsuperscript{127} See fn. 110 above.

\textsuperscript{128} Ibid. “...chose très-difficile à render. La bouche et le nez sont d’une déicatessacheavée. La draperie est d’une légèreté admirable. En general, ce portrait
is unconvincing given that the majority of the window is shrouded in dark fabric. Rather than depicting bright morning sunshine reflecting of the sitter’s white gown, Gérard chose to distort the lighting in order to depict his sitter as she would appear on stage, lit below from footlights.\textsuperscript{129} Gérard may have intended to exhibit the portrait, in which case, the artificial lighting he created would ensure the viewing public would recognize the singer.\textsuperscript{130} The dramatic chiaroscuro here acts as a device similar to Gérard’s depiction of Isabey on the Henry IV staircase of the Louvre – a setting that symbolized his sitter’s role as a successful artist. Rather than depicting \textit{Barbier-Walbonne} on stage, or in the guise of one of her operatic characters, and rather than representing Isabey with the customary tools of the trade, Gérard found innovative solutions that allowed him to incorporate his sitters’ professional lives. In his discussion of \textit{Madame Barbier-Walbonne}, Halliday argues that Gérard found “a novel solution to the problem traditionally associated with the public exhibition of privately commissioned portraits: that of how an object whose scope was ostensibly private could acquire public interest

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{enumerate}
\item[	extsuperscript{129}] Halliday, 95. While Halliday notes this lighting effect, his argument focuses on the chiaroscuro in this portrait and others by Gérard as evidence of the artist’s indebtedness to Labille-Guillard’s portrait of \textit{Madame Louise-Elisabeth de France, duchess of Parma (Madame Infante)} with her son, 1788.
\item[	extsuperscript{130}] Ibid. Halliday notes, “The distorting effects of such lighting were recognized as constituting a problem for artists who exhibited portraits of well-known performers, since spectators who were accustomed to seeing the sitsers only on stage were liable to misjudge an adequate likeness painted under natural lighting.” While Gérard did not exhibit this work, his choice of lighting, following Halliday’s argument, implies he intended to.
\end{enumerate}
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and approbation."\(^{131}\) Judging from the critical press, Gérard had already achieved this goal with his *Brongniart*. His *Isabey* and *Madame Barbier-Walbonne* display his recurrent originality and ability to create new traditions for presenting the private lives of Directory patrons.

Gérard’s other portrait of a famous woman of the Directory is his *La comtesse Regnault de Saint Jean D’Angely* (1798, fig. 104). Born Laure de Bonneuil (1776-1856), she was of aristocratic origins and raised between Versailles and the family’s home in Paris, until her family fled to one of their homes in the French countryside at the outbreak of the Revolution.\(^{132}\) Laure de Bonneuil debuted, in a way, in French society at the young age of 12, when she and her mother took part in Vigée-Lebrun’s infamous “Greek dinner” of 1788.\(^{133}\) The evening is famous for being one of the first manifestations of the

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\(^{131}\) *Facing the Public*, 96.

\(^{132}\) Laure was the daughter of Nicolas-Cyrille Guesnon de Bonneuil and Michelle Sentuary. Her father held a minor post in the home of the Comtesse d’Artois, he was “sickly” for most of his life, and his biography has been overshadowed by those of his wife and daughter. Her mother, on the other hand, was one of the reigning beauties of court and Parisian society during the Ancien Régime and a close friend of Elizabeth Vigée-Lebrun. From the beginning of the Revolution, she was a staunch royalist. Her arrest in 1791 and imprisonment until 1792 only strengthened her royalist sympathies. She became one of the most infamous counter-revolutionary spies working under several aliases throughout Europe. For a biography, see Olivier Blanc, *Madame de Bonneuil, femme galante et agent secret* (1748-1829) (Paris: Robert Laffont, 1987).

\(^{133}\) Vigée-Lebrun gave regular dinners at her Parisian home on the rue de Cléry. This one, however, became the most notorious, when rumors spread that she had spent a lavish sum for one night’s entertainment. Inspired by her brother’s reading of Jean-Jacques Barthélemy’s *Voyage de jeune Anarcharsis en Grèce*, Vigée-Lebrun dressed the majority of the dinner’s guests *à la grecque* with white draperies taken from her studio, served Greek dishes, and decorated the table with Greek vases. For Vigée-Lebrun’s own account of the evening, see *Memoirs of Madame Vigée-Lebrun*, trans. Lionel Strachey, (New York: Doubleday, Page, and Company, 1903), 38-41. In her recounting of the
vogue for antique-inspired clothing. Vigée-Lebrun described the young Laure that evening as “lovely as an angel . . . ravishing to behold . . . and [as] a marvelous singer;” a small, bust-length sketch of Laure’s costume (fig. 105) reveals part of the outfit Vigée-Lebrun fashioned for her. The event no doubt made quite an impression on the young Laure and foreshadowed her adoption of fashions à la grecque during the Directory. Sometime during the Revolution, while living in the countryside, Laure met her future husband, Michel Regnault de Saint-Jean-d’Angély (1761-1819) and the two married in August 1795 after barely surviving the Terror as suspected royalists. 

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evening, Vigée-Lebrun refers to Mme. de Bonneiul as “so remarkable for her beauty.”


135 Strachey, trans., 40. While Vigée-Lebrun does not mention the sketch in her retelling of the evening, Olivier Blanc dates the sketch to that night, see 87. Vigée-Lebrun also depicted another of Gérard’s sitters, Mlle Brongniart, as a child in the same year. In 1805, upon her return from exile to Paris, Vigée-Lebrun also completed a portrait of Mme. Regnault de Saint-Jean-d’Angély.

136 Laure’s association with the court made her a target of Robespierre’s National Convention. She was arrested during the Terror, briefly imprisoned, and released due to various connections. Her sister and brother, however, were guillotined. Michel Regnault de Saint-Jean d’Angély studied law and worked as a lawyer until his election to the Estates General in 1789. In 1791, he became a member of the Feuillants, a political party that split from the Jacobins and advocated for a constitutional monarchy. He resigned from the Estates General in 1791, returned to working as a lawyer, and began his journalistic career which he continued on and off from this point forward. After 10 August 1792, he was labeled a royalist, and like most of the Feuillants, became a target for arrest. Between the fall of 1792 and the end of Thermidor, he lived mostly in hiding and under assumed names. During this time, he had an affair with the actress Marie-Louise Chenie and had an illegitimate son, Auguste (1794-1870), who he and Laure raised; in 1859, Auguste became a Maréchal de France. In 1796, shortly after the wedding, Michel became the Director of the Hospitals for the Army of Italy, and the couple accompanied the troops to Milan in 1796. In 1798, he also accompanied Napoleon Bonaparte (1769-1821) to Egypt while Laure remained in Paris. Before leaving, he commissioned her portrait from Gérard (fig.101), see Bruson and Forray-
Shortly thereafter, in spring of 1796, Laure accompanied her husband, recently appointed Director of the Hospitals for the Army of Italy, to Milan where they entered the Bonaparte circle.\textsuperscript{137}

Laure quickly made friends with Josephine Bonaparte (1763-1814), but she grew even closer to Fortunée Hamelin (c.1776-1851).\textsuperscript{138} Laure and Fortunée enjoyed a lifelong and significant friendship; Laure referred to Fortunée as “the dearest friend of my heart.”\textsuperscript{139} An early testament to their mutual support is the pendant pair of portraits (figs. 106 & 107), commissioned while in Milan, from Andrea Appiani (1754-1817).\textsuperscript{140} In the paintings, both women appear before spare landscape backdrops with a view to water, and they face one another (Laure looks to her right while Fortunée looks to her left) with gazes that testify to their mutual fondness. This effect is heightened by their very similar appearance. Both women wear the \textit{de rigueur} sheer white chemise with

\begin{itemize}
  \item Carlier, 110. As an ally of Napoleon, Michel supported the coup of 18 Brumaire an VIII (9 November 1799) and became a Council of State during the Consulate and Empire, and in 1808, Napoleon made him a count. Gérard’s grand portrait of him at Versailles dates from the same year. For a recent biography of Michel, see Olivier Blanc, \textit{L’eminence grise de Napoléon: Regnault de Saint-Jean-d’Angély} (Paris: Pygmalion, 2002).
  \item\textsuperscript{137} Napoleon’s troops began their march to Italy on 13 Germinal an IV (2 April 1796) and began their first campaign on 22 Germinal (11 April). The exact dates of the Regnault de Saint-Jean d’Angély’s departure from and return to Paris are not known.
  \item\textsuperscript{138} Married to Romain Hamelin, a “petit fils de fermier general,” Fortunée accompanied her husband to Milan where she met Josephine. Details of Madame Hamelin’s life remain incomplete. For a recent discussion of contemporary descriptions of her, some of them blatantly racist, see Darcy Grimaldo Grigsby, \textit{Extremities: Painting Empire in Post-Revolutionary France} (New Haven, Connecticut: Yale University Press, 2002), 270-272.
  \item\textsuperscript{139} Bruson and Forray-Carlier, 110.
  \item\textsuperscript{140} The portraits are giving various dates depending upon the source consulted, but it is safe to state they were commissioned in 1796 when both women were in Milan.
\end{itemize}
drawstring waist and neckline and short sleeves. Laure’s neckline (fig. 106) is a little lower, and she personalized her dress with a pale blue sash at the waist and a gold “Roman” armband, both popular accessories. Fortunée’s neckline (fig. 107) is higher, and she wears one of the most ubiquitous accessories of the Directory, a large shawl, which women draped around their bodies in several configurations; the thin band of floral ornament is a typical design for the mid-1790s. The women’s distinctive coiffure is one of the most daring of the time period. Called à la victime or à la guillotine, the style features curly, even frizzy, and purposefully disheveled hair, meant to evoke the appearance of prisoners of the Terror just before execution. For les Merveilleuses, adopting the style could be an act of mourning their loved ones, a sartorial expression of political moderacy, and/or a sardonic commentary on the extremes of the Terror in general.

In their social circle, Laure was nicknamed “Euturpe” (the muse of music) for her singing and harp playing, while Fortunée’s epithet was “Terpsichore” (the muse of dance and chorus) primarily for her dancing. The women were constantly together from 1796 forward, and had much in common, despite contemporary descriptions of them having quite different personalities. Fortunée is described as ostentatious,

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142 Ibid., 124.
143 Bruson and Forray-Carlier, 110. Laure was also known for her artistic abilities, primarily drawing and sculpture, which she appears to have dabbled in rather than pursued seriously. Her husband encouraged her musical pursuits and hired Garat, the same singer who trained Mme. Barbier-Walbonne, to give her private voice lessons for an unspecified period of time. While she was known to sing and play the
entertaining, and daring in her dress and attitudes, preferring to clothe herself in the
guise of the Greek courtesan Laïs, rather than a goddess. Laure, on the other hand, is
described as kindhearted, affable, elegant, a classical beauty, talented musician, and
more understated in her appearance and actions than her more boisterous friend.

By 1798 when Gérard depicted her, she had become well-known and widely
admired in large part due to the salons she held initially in the couple’s home, the hôtel
Regnault, on the rue de Provence, located at the very heart of nouveaux-riche Paris.
According to Victorine de Chastenay (1771-1855), her salons (beginning in 1797)
attracted not only her fellow Merveilleuses, but also writers, musicians, and artists of
“the highest order,” including Gérard; moreover, it was one of the more interesting
salons in Paris, because it included men and women of diverse political leanings whose
conversations Laure directed. A number of repatriated royalist émigrés were also in
regular attendance, which is unusual for the Directory, since the majority of them
tended not to socialize with nouveaux-riche circles. The salons of the Directory earned

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harp frequently at her salons and those of others, she did not appear on Parisian stages.


See for example, descriptions of her quoted in Bruson and Forray-Carlier, 110; Erickson, 157, and Blanc, L’Eminence grise de Napoléon, 129.

Mémoires de Madame de Chastenay, 1771-1815 (Paris: Librairie Académique Perrin, 1987), 307 and 447 quoted in Bruson and Forray-Carlier, 110. Nearly all the political parties of the Directory, and later the Consulate, were among the political factions represented at her salons, despite the fact that she and her husband were Bonapartists.

Steven Kale, French Salons: High Society and Political Stability from the Old régime
a reputation for their decadence and frivolity, being dominated by “women of easy virtue.”

It is true that Directory salonnières flaunted their sexuality and provided light-hearted entertainment to their guests in ways that separated them from their more intellectual counterparts of the Ancien Régime; yet, this does not mean that salons, especially those in the vein of Regnault, were not also significant social venues where “through mondanité (the distractions of high society), conflicts between old and new social elites and political factions could be reconciled, and discordant voices brought into harmony.”

Chastenay’s description of late 1790s Paris indicates that certain quarters were governed by women who “had more personal dignity, more real importance within their circles, more of what one may call conversation and congeniality.”

Lajer-Burcharth notes Chastenay’s description of Directory society “provides a corrective view to the homogenizing perspective of her male contemporaries” who primarily focused on the more scandalous behavior of Directory

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148 André-François Miot de Mélito (1762-1841), a French diplomat returned to Paris in 1798 after three years in exile. Upon his return, he described the Directory salons as crowded with “contractors and generals, with women of easy virtue, and ladies of the ancient nobility, with patriots and returned émigrés.” Quoted in Ribeiro, 112 from Memoirs of Count Miot de Melito, ed. General Fleischmann (London: 1881), vol. I, 262.

women. Although Chastenay did not mention Regnault by name in the context of this comment, it is reasonable to regard this as a fitting description of her given that Chastenay praised her and her salon elsewhere.

When Gérard exhibited Regnault’s portrait (fig. 104) at the Salon of 1799, many critics praised it. Some features within it recall those of Madame Barbier-Walbonne (fig. 103). Although Regnault is not shown pausing from any activity, both portraits feature shallow interior spaces with backgrounds comprised of a view through a window (although the size of the view varies), green curtains (also of different proportions), and both women appear seated on chairs upholstered in red tones. Regnault’s hairstyle appears similar to Barbier-Walbonne’s in that it is pulled back (presumably with a bun or twist of curls in the back typical for these styles), has a middle part, and delicate curls are just visible at the side of her face; the addition of braids at the crown that serve as a bandeau is yet another variation on coiffures à l’antique. Mme. Regnault’s dress is a version of the classical chemise, but by 1798, they had become as sheer as they possibly could; hers is made more modest by virtue of its darker and semi-opaque lining, but the

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151 Necklines, 242.
152 The Salon opened on 1 Fructidor an VII (18 August 1799) and closed on 10 Brumaire an VIII (23 October), seventeen days before Napoleon’s coup of 18 Brumaire (9 November) which ended the Directory and established the Consulate. See Heim, et.al., 69. The authors also note that one out of three paintings on view were portraits. Halliday states it “was to prove the most successful portrait on show at the Salon that year, see 114.
neckline is conspicuously low.\textsuperscript{154} As she did in the Appiani portrait (fig. 106), she wears a light blue sash wound just below her bust (the waistline of her chemise), but here it drapes across her hip. This is the only similarity in her appearance in the portraits by Appiani and Gérard. In the latter, we are presented with the image of a recent bride, who had only just entered the fashionable society of the Directory, and whose look is certainly fashionable, but hardly unique.\textsuperscript{155} In Gérard’s portrait, her clothing is much more distinctive – the dark greens of her dress are very unusual for a period when white was the ideal color choice with the occasional pastel to break the monotony.\textsuperscript{156} Her choice to be depicted on the walls of the Salon in such a unique color, along with her gold and cameo bracelet and ring, reveals that by 1798 not only was she married to a wealthy man, but she had become a trend setter.\textsuperscript{157} In this portrait, Gérard conveyed the individuality of one of the most distinguished women of her day.

Despite the uniqueness of her appearance, Pierre-Jean-Baptise Chaussard likened her to another female figure in Gérard’s oeuvre. He began his review of the portrait by


\textsuperscript{155} Many scholars have noted the uniformity of neoclassical dress during the Directory. See, for example, Ribeiro, \textit{Fashion in the French Revolution}, 132.

\textsuperscript{156} For a discussion of the preference for white and its symbolic connotations during the Directory, see Ibid., 127-129 and Cage, 207.

\textsuperscript{157} Ribeiro notes that during the Directory, despite the uniformity of women’s fashions, “one of the signs of a true élégante was to demonstrate individual taste” in her clothing and accessories. And by the late 1790s, the wealthiest of fashionable society began to wear authentic antique cameos. See, \textit{Fashion in the French Revolution}, 132. Her choice of green is also interesting, because during the early years of the Revolution, this color symbolized royalist sympathies (68). By the Directory, the color seems to have been shorn of its early symbolism; while critics commented on the Gérard as a colorist,
proclaiming in mock disbelief, “One thought this character to be ideal: it exists” and declared Regnault as one of “Psyche’s sisters.” For Chaussard, her portrait displayed a similar “ineffable mixture of subtlety and dignity, of sensuality and modesty” that he found so alluring in Gérard’s Cupid and Psyche (fig. 86) at the previous Salon.\textsuperscript{158} The pose and shadow across Mme. Regnault’s face and neck (albeit in reverse), along with her paleness, facial features, and expression are similar to Gérard’s rendering of Psyche which had created a vogue amongst the Merveilleuses to don blonde wigs and powder their faces heavily in order to achieve a paleur à la Psyché.\textsuperscript{159} By evoking his own rendering of Psyche in his portrait of Mme. Regnault, Gérard may have been hoping to capitalize on the popularity of the latter and further ingratiate himself to the fashionable elite. It is also possible that Mme. Regnault reminded Gérard of her mythological counterpart, since she was renowned for her beauty generally, but for her nearly perfect classical profile in particular; to quote Chaussard, she was indeed for many of her followers a living embodiment of the ideal.\textsuperscript{160} Although Chaussard opened his review in 1799 with a comment lamenting that too few history paintings were on view and too many portraits were, in his review from the previous year, he argued that since the

\begin{footnotesize}
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\item Chaussard took over as the leading art critic of La Décade philosophique in 1798 and praised Gérard’s Cupid and Psyche at length. For a discussion of him, the journal, and his 1798 review, see Chapter Five, pages 235-42. Chaussard’s review of Mme. Regnault quoted and translated in Lajer-Burcharth, 283 and fn.128, 350.
\item Such comments upon Mme. Regnault’s physical beauty are ubiquitous in contemporary descriptions of her. See, Bruson and Forray-Carlier, 110 and Blanc, L’Eminence grise . . . , 134.
\end{enumerate}
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Revolution, some portraiture was a worthy endeavor.¹⁶¹ According to Lajer-Burcharth, Chaussard made a distinction:

between a monarchic and a republican portrait [and regarded the latter as serving] an important political and moral function. Rather than merely a likeness or a proof of social standing, the portrait was for Chaussard the means of conveying a gendered ideal of the self, an image of ‘a useful man and a respectable woman.’ Moreover, the critic explicitly upgraded the portrait in the hierarchy of genres, asserting that since the Revolution it had become the property of a history painter.¹⁶²

Chaussard had already declared Gérard to be one of the best history painters of his generation. The praise he lavished on this portrait suggests he considered it an example of the “republican” portraiture he admired, implying he also considered Gérard to be one of the best portraitists. Gérard’s portrait of a respectable “modern Psyche” so captivated Chaussard that he was able to overlook his own prejudice against the preponderance of scantily clad women in society.¹⁶³

In his critique, Chaussard admired other details of the portrait, including Regnault’s “hands of inimitable perfection! The one that presses on the cushion seems to impart love and feeling on this inanimate object;” he described her dress as a “voluptuous crepe” and admired the way it highlighted the “ravishing shapes” of her

¹⁶¹ An excerpt from the beginning of his 1799 review is quoted in Heim, et.al., 69. According to Chaussard’s estimate, one out of six paintings exhibited in 1799 were history paintings; in 1789, the ratio had been one out of three. He accounts for the decrease in part due to the lack of sufficient numbers of wealthy patrons. He then goes on to note that the nouveau riches of Directory society, who have the resources to command history paintings, prefer portraits instead.

¹⁶² Necklines, 240.

¹⁶³ Chaussard’s absolute disdain for what he called “modern Psyches” is discussed in Chapter Five, 242.
Other critics praised the work at length, as well. The anonymous critic for the *Journal des Arts* admired Gérard’s “originality” and considered the “correct design, pure execution, simple tone, sweet and harmonious effect, exquisite taste, finesse [and] severity, the principle qualities of this seductive painting.” The critic for the *Journal de Paris* was even more effusive. He began his review by declaring Gérard’s portrait as worthy of the “top rank” and then enumerated its many strengths:

Simplicity, nobility of style, pure and gracious drawing, strong relief, harmony, finesse of tints and of execution, these are the beauties that characterize this delicious painting . . . For us, we don’t hesitate to say that this portrait is the most beautiful that the artist has produced, and perhaps the most perfect that has been offered at the public exhibitions. It would hardly be out of place amongst the most beautiful portrait of Leonardo da Vinci: we cite this celebrated master, because Gérard seems to be filled with his principles and to appropriate his most laudable qualities.

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164 Quoted and translated in Lajer-Burcharth, fn.128, 350. Chaussard’s comment about Regnault’s hand is bizarre, to say the least. The tone of these comments suggest he found the portrait, as he had Gérard’s Psyche, an erotically-charged painting.


166 Anon., “Suite de l’Exposition au Salon,” *Journal de Paris*, 1er jour complémentaires an VII (17 September 1799) #361, 1582. “Nous pouvons, sans crainte d’être démenti par l’opinion général, placer au premier rang le portrait de la C.ne Regnaud St.-Jean-d’Angeli [sic.], peint par le C.n Gérard, no.716. Simplicité, noblesse de style, dessin pur & gracieux, force de relief, harmonie, finesse de teintes & d’ execution, telles sont les beautés qui caracterisent ce tableau delicieux; . . . Pour nous, nous ne hesitons pas à dire que ce portrait est le plus beau qu’ait produit l’artiste, & peut-être le plus parfait qui ai été offert aux expositions publiques. In ne seroit point deplac aupres des plus beaux portraits de Léonard de Vinci: nous citons ce maître célèbre, parce que le C.n Gérard semble s’être pénétré de ses principes, s’être approprie ses qualités les plus estimables.”
Chaussard also compared Gérard to da Vinci, while an amateur likened Gérard to Van Dyck. These statements echo those found in reviews of his portraits beginning with the Brongniart in 1795 and his Isabey in 1796 and his history painting Cupid and Psyche of 1798. Critics clearly responded enthusiastically to the new stylistic direction Gérard had adopted, preferring his emulation of sixteenth- and seventeenth century artists over his earlier, more severe classical style. The only perceived fault critics consistently noted in Gérard’s Regnault was a weakness in the work’s coloring, but this did not prevent them from proclaiming the work a resounding success.

The Salon of 1799 was not only a success for Gérard as a portraitist. The viewing public and critics were reminded of his previous triumphs in history painting, as well. His Regnault recalled, at least for Chaussard, his Cupid and Psyche. The overwhelming success of Guérin’s The Return of Marcus Sextus reminded viewers of Gérard’s Belisarius.

According to one of the attendees of an elaborate banquet held to honor Guérin’s

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167 Chaussard’s comment is paraphrased in Lajer-Burcharth, fn.128, 350. According to L. M. Henriquez, “If faut bien s’arrêter, et s’arrêter avec plaisir sur ce joli portrait de femme que P. Chaussard nomme une soeur charmante de Psyché. Quelle delicatesse dans les traits! Quell charme sure cette figure! Quell doux repos! Quelle sauvité! C’est ainsi que Vandick eut peint, et c’est ainsi que peint Gérard.” “Coup d’oeil sur le Salon par un amateur,” Mercure de France, 25 Fructidor an VII (11 September 1799) #565, 267.

168 This criticism is found in Chaussard, see Lajer-Burcharth, fn.128, 350. It is also found in the Journal des arts review, 2. The critic for the Journal de Paris, who declared it one of the best portraits ever exhibited, did not criticize the color palette, nor did the critic for the Mercure de France. The most ardent criticism of the work’s coloring is found in J.V., no title, Journal des Arts 15 Fructidor an VII (1 September 1799) #9, 5.
achievement, at the end of the evening, Guérin turned to Gérard and said, “It’s Belisarius whose eyes I have opened.”\(^{169}\)

Gérard’s success at the Salon of 1799 was in sharp contrast to the professional disaster of Girodet that year due to the very public fiasco surrounding his commission from Mademoiselle Lange for which critics blamed Girodet and not his patron.\(^{170}\) At some point in the fall of 1799, Gérard and Girodet publicly declared their studios off-limits to one another. A number of factors led to the end of their friendship, but in the wake of the Lange affair, it was more prudent than ever for Gérard to distance himself from Girodet’s eccentric personality.\(^{171}\) While Girodet would continue to alienate himself further from Parisian society, Gérard appears to have reveled in it. His “Wednesdays” grew in popularity and began attracting guests from the highest, most influential levels of European society. He was also in regular attendance at the Parisian salons. His Regnault led to more commissions from other well-known Merveuilleuses including, most notably, Mmes. Récamier and Tallien. His portraits from 1795 to 1799, along with his ability to adapt to the prevailing social and political climate, form the first phase in what would be a long, successful career.

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\(^{170}\) See fn. 4, 263.

\(^{171}\) For a discussion of the long-standing rivalry between the artists and the end of their friendship, see Chapter Four, 203-210.
Conclusion

Numerous studies since the late 1980s have enriched our understanding of the pivotal role played by the atelier of David in shaping history painting and portraiture of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth-centuries. The scholarship has focused on the work of David, to be sure, but it has also led to a far more detailed understanding of the work of his students Drouais, Girodet, and Gros.¹ Yet, Gérard, who was viewed as every bit the equal of these other students during his own lifetime, and who arguably enjoyed more sustained critical and public success, has been overlooked by this latest wave of revisionary art history.

In some respects, this oversight is not surprising. The careers of David, Drouais, Girodet, and Gros make for riveting art history. David’s defiance of the Academy in his early career culminated in his supervision of its demise, and his seat within the Convention allowed him to orchestrate public spectacles celebrating the events and martyrs of the Revolution. For his allegiance to Robespierre during the Terror, he was arrested and imprisoned, only to see his star rise dramatically again in the Directory, Consulate and Empire; for his active role on the Revolutionary Tribunal, the Bourbon monarchy sent him permanently into exile. Drouais’ premature death on 13 February 1788 allowed him to be memorialized as a genius tragically struck down. His obsessive work habits and ceaseless devotion to David and his example of serious, public history painting lent themselves to the legend.

¹ Scholars have been able to reconstruct these artists’ personal and professional struggles due, in large part, to the vast collections of their correspondence in which we find evidence of their successes, failures, manias, and hostilities. A reading of Gérard’s surviving letters, however, reveals nothing of the sort.
Girodet joined to his talent and success a psychological instability and competitive spirit that rendered his life equally dramatic. He struck out on his own early in his career, but his lack of critical success in the Salons and public scandals in the second-half of the 1790s, led him to isolate himself more and more from French society. During the Empire, he continued to earn critical praise, but he never seemed satisfied with his achievements. The neuroses that plagued him for the majority of his life eventually took over between 1813 and 1819, when he obsessively worked and reworked his *Pygmalion and Galatea* in pursuit of his idea of perfection. While Girodet’s trajectory is usually regarded as one of early success followed by a slow decline, Gros’ experience was the reverse. Between 1793 and early 1801, Gros’ was in Italy, separated from the Parisian art world and David whom he cherished. He repeatedly lamented this state of affairs, and the fact that he was “forced” to take portrait commissions that prevented him from realizing his goal of Salon success in classical history painting.² During the Empire, he successfully reinvented the genre of battle painting, but after the fall of Napoleon, he never recovered professionally or personally. The bouts of extreme self-doubt and despair he suffered from earlier in his life resurfaced after the Bourbon Restoration when he found himself unable to come to grips with the new political regime and the rise of Romanticism. Gros’ story became the most heartrending of the Davidians when he ended his life on 26 June 1835.

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Gérard’s trials and tribulations were far less dramatic than those of the other Davidians. The only constant hardship we know he faced during the early years of his career was poverty. If Gérard felt anguish, professionally or personally, at points during his career, he did not write about it. If he struggled with patrons or officials in the art world, or doubted his artistic abilities, he did so privately. According to his chief biographer, he died quietly 11 January 1837 after suffering from a short, but serious illness. Gérard’s story is not one of an artist who battled art establishments, or who suffered due to his political and artistic convictions, or failed to meet the demands of his patrons, or could not adjust to the sweeping changes in French politics during his lifetime. He consistently adapted to the circumstances in which he found himself, and created works that time and again engaged the salient concerns of their audience while earning the respect of critics. Nothing suggests Gérard was a tragic, tortured artist.

Gérard’s reputation has also suffered because of a lingering perception of him as an artist who failed to fulfill his potential as a serious contender in the genre of history painting after the Directory. It is true that after the success of his early portraits, patrons from across Europe commissioned him to paint their likenesses, establishing him as one the most respected portraitists of the Consulate, Empire, and Restoration.

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3 Charles Lenormant, François Gérard, peintre d’histoire. Essai de biographie et de critique (Paris: Imprimerie d’ A. René et Compagnie, 1847), 177-178. Lenormant ended his biography with a brief discussion of Gérard’s death noting that on 4 January 1837, he did not leave his bedroom to join the guests gathering downstairs for his weekly “Wednesdays.” The following Wednesday, when guests arrived, a note on the door announced Gérard’s passing early that morning. Lenormant did not name the illness, but he did describe Gérard’s last minutes when the artist was purportedly heard whispering, in Italian, some lines from Dante’s Purgatorio that his mother had often read to him during childhood. Accurate or not, this is the only sentimental anecdote concerning Gérard that is occasionally repeated in the literature.
Gérard moved freely and comfortably in the fashionable and powerful circles of Parisian society; contemporaries found him affable, generous, intelligent, and gifted. Yet, it is not true that he dropped his previous ambitions and turned his back on history painting once he could afford to do so. From 1800 to 1836, he accepted commissions for history paintings from private and public patrons and worked with the widest possible variety of subject matter, including Ossianic narratives, classical history, mythology, allegory, contemporary events, national history, Romantic subjects, and, neo-Catholicism. While not every effort resulted in critical success, his works were major attractions at the Salon and consistently earned critical praise.

He received his first commission for a history painting during the Consulate in 1800 from the architects Percier and Fontaine to decorate the Château de Malmaison, the private retreat of Josephine and Napoleon on the outskirts of Paris. Both he and Girodet produced scenes based on the poetry of Ossian, a supposedly ancient Celtic bard who enjoyed a vogue amongst patrons, musicians, writers, and dramatists throughout the late eighteenth and nineteenth-centuries until it was discovered that he was the creation of James MacPherson. While Girodet, predictably, produced a bizarre, overly complicated painting, Gérard’s version of Ossian was more straightforward. Gérard presented Ossian as a blind and abandoned old man, surrounded by the ghosts of his loved ones, pursuing themes and the lyrical and emotional classicism that he had introduced with his Belisarius in 1795. Girodet’s painting confounded many and

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4 My estimate, derived from early lists of his oeuvre, is he completed about 23 multi-figured history paintings during this period and 8 large-scale allegorical figures for different projects. These numbers do not include compositions that were left unfinished.
received mixed reviews at best, while critics and the First Consul preferred Gérard’s version. Napoleon also commissioned Gérard to commemorate his battle over Russian troops in 1805. The result, Gérard’s *The Battle of Austerlitz* (1806-1810), received a great deal of critical praise at the Salon of 1810. Gérard’s *Austerlitz* demonstrated his ability to deliver the kind of propagandistic contemporary history painting favored by Napoleon’s regime. The painting was a success due, in part, to Gérard’s consummate skill as a portraitist; the work is replete with specific details of costumes and flattering likenesses of its key protagonists. During the Consulate and Empire, Gérard also continued to work on more traditional classical history subjects, despite not finding as much success with them. The best-known example of this pursuit is his *The Three Ages*, painted in 1806 and exhibited at the Salon of 1808. The composition features a female figure, seated between an older and younger male figure, set within a pastoral landscape. While the female figure is unusual for the subject, since she is not one of the three ages represented, it was explained by a Salon review as being inspired by a line from Antoine Galland’s 1694 compilation, *Remarkable Speeches, Beautiful Words, and Maxims of the East*, “In the voyage of life, woman is the guide, the charm, and the support of man.”5 Although Gérard’s painting received praise for some aspects of its style, for the most part, the work fell flat. So much so, that when it came time to consider works for the important *Prix Décennaux* in 1810, Gérard’s was all but ignored.

Despite this failure, he still cared enough about traditional, classical subject matter to wrestle with it for the remainder of his career in paintings including The Judgment of Paris (1812), Blind Homer (1814), Thetis Bearing Arms to Achilles (Salon of 1822), Daphnis and Chloe (Salon of 1824), Hylas and the Nymphs (1827), Lucretia (1836), and Achilles Mourning the Death of Patroclus (1816 and 1836). Gérard left some of these works unfinished and decided not to exhibit others, suggesting he was struggling with the classical tradition. On the other hand, he did achieve some success with such works as his Thetis, commissioned by a Russian diplomat. The painting earned praise at the Salon of 1822, and the engraving after it by Étienne Réveil, was called a “small masterpiece.” Gérard’s Daphnis and Chloe and Hylas and the Nymphs represented his continued interest in mythological love stories that had risen in popularity in part due to his enormously successful Cupid and Psyche (1798). The enthusiastic critical and public responses to these paintings, and others with similar subject matter by younger artists during the Restoration, confirmed Gérard’s central role in the increasingly popular category of romantic mythology, even if some critics lamented its vogue.

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6 Lenormant indicates Gérard destroyed the Paris, Homer, and the first version of the Achilles, while the Lucretia and second version of the Achilles, remained unfinished in Gérard’s studio upon his death in 1837, 180.

7 Ibid., 180. Commissioned by Carlo Andrea Pozzo di Borgo(1764-1842), the painting is obviously an homage to Raphael’s Galatea, 1512-14 and gives further evidence of Gérard’s deep respect for the Italian painter. The engraving was also exhibited in the Salon of 1824. The appraisal of it is quoted in Sébastien Allard and Marie-Claude Chaudonneret, Le suicide de Gros. Les peintres de l’Empire et la generation romantique (Paris: Gourcuff Gradenigo, 2010), 58.

8 Dorothy Johnson, David to Delacroix, the Rise of Romantic Mythology (Chapel Hill, North Carolina: The University of North Carolina Press, 2011), 190. Gérard’s illustrations for Didot’s La Fontaine (1797) informed his painting Cupid and Psyche. In 1800 and 1802, Didot published versions of The Pastoral Loves of Daphnis and Chloe with
Gérard was a well-respected figure amongst the circle of Romantic authors, poets, and artists in Paris from the beginning of the Restoration until his death. Unlike other Davidians, he did not condemn Romantic subjects perhaps because he had contributed to their growing prominence since the Directory; and while he never adopted a painterly style, he did not publicly criticize it either, as Gros did. Indeed, he received many of the leading painters of the Romantic generation at his weekly salon, including Eugène Delacroix.

Gérard was the only former Davidian to make a successful transition to the Restoration and continued to receive important official commissions for both portraits of Bourbon nobility and large-scale history paintings that commemorated their achievements, past and present. In 1817, Louis XVIII (r.1814-24) commissioned from Gérard The Entry of Henri IV into Paris, which memorializes the arrival of Henry IV in Paris on 22 March 1594, when he brought an end to a long conflict and received the keys to the city. By seeking a metaphor for the contemporary political climate in the past, albeit in national and not classical history, the painting demonstrates Gérard’s continued use of one of the key devices of Davidian painting of the Revolutionary era. Of course the times had changed, and now the device (along with a Rubenesque style) could be employed to ingratiate oneself with the new king. Apparently, it worked, because Louis XVIII appointed Gérard First Painter to the King after viewing the painting at the Salon of 1817. Gérard’s success here inaugurated the trend for painting scenes from the country’s past. Gérard maintained his title throughout the reign of illustrations designed by Gérard and Prud’hon which in turn inspired Gérard’s 1824 painting.
Charles X (r.1824-30), whose 1825 coronation at Reims he depicted with all its monarchical grandiosity in *The Coronation of Charles X* (1827). Besides executing multi-figured history paintings and grand portraits, Gérard also produced paintings of allegorical figures for two large-scale, public projects during the Restoration. In 1820, he received the commission to complete allegorical figures to adorn the pendentives of the dome at the Church of Saint-Geneviève, today known as the Panthéon, installed in 1836.9 In 1832, Charles X commissioned four allegorical figures to flank the doors of the Salle des Sept Cheminées in the Louvre.10

While Gérard never complained publicly about his official commitments as First Painter, it is possible that he preferred private commissions for Romantic subjects over official celebrations of Bourbon accomplishments.11 His longstanding friendship with Mme. Juliette Récamier resulted in commissions for two Romantic history paintings, which proved to be his greatest achievements of the 1820s. He had been in regular attendance at her salon and at Mme. Germaine de Staël’s (when she was in Paris) since

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9 According to Henri Gérard, the artist’s other official commissions delayed the project. He began working on it in 1829, but work stopped with the downfall of the Bourbon Monarchy in 1830. He returned to the work in 1832, and the four panels were finished by 1836. Given Gérard’s failing eyesight, he must have been considerably assisted by his students in order to complete the project. The allegorical figures represent Fatherland, Justice, Glory, and Death. See, *Oeuvres du Baron François Gérard, 1789-1836*, 2nd volume, (Paris: 1857), unpaginated, entry numbers 30-33.

10 This commission was part of the monarchy’s project of renovating various halls of the Louvre beginning in 1817. Gérard’s paintings are *Courage, Genius, Persistence*, and *Clemency* and today they are held at Versailles.

11 Auguste Jal commented in his review of the Salon of 1828, that Gérard’s *Sacre* would not be in the Salon, because Gérard disliked the stately painting and was better suited to more poetic subjects. See, *Esquisses, croquis, pochades, ou tout ce qu’on voudra sur le Salon de 1827* (Paris: Dupont, 1828), 372.
the Directory and had painted both women’s portraits.\textsuperscript{12} He was the obvious choice to commemorate the life of de Staël after her death in 1817. In 1819, Prince Augustus of Prussia commissioned Gérard’s *Corinne at the Cape Miseno* (1821, exhibited 1822) as a tribute to the recently deceased de Staël and as a gift to Récamier, whom he courted endlessly.\textsuperscript{13} The patrons asked Gérard to portray de Staël in the guise of her incredibly popular heroine, whose story she told in her 1807 novel *Corinne*. Gérard illustrated a scene that took place near Naples, with Mount Vesuvius visible in the distant background. The heroine, whom de Staël described as renowned for her beauty, intelligence, lyric poetry and ability to play the lyre, appears seated on rock, leaning on a fragment of an ancient column, at a moment in the novel when she sings one of her odes. Among Corinne’s admirers is Oswald, a Scottish aristocrat and her suitor, who steps forward with what can only be described as a rapturous expression. As Corinne is overtaken by her mournful verses, she hesitates and looks heavenward for inspiration and encouragement. Like so many of Gérard’s pictures, the *Corinne* conflates

\textsuperscript{12} Gérard’s *Récamier* (Musée Carnavalet) is one of his best known portraits, created between 1802-1805. His *de Staël* (Versailles) was completed sometime between 1810-17.

\textsuperscript{13} Gérard had previously created a portrait of Mme. de Staël (at Versailles) sometime around 1810 in which the author also appears in the guise of her famous heroine, Corinne. In exchange for the gift, she gave him her 1802 portrait by Gérard to take back to Berlin, where it enjoyed a renewed popularity.

Prior to Gérard receiving the commission, Augustus and Récamier approached David with the prospect, but for various reasons, David did not complete the commission. For the second time, David’s attempt to work with Récamier was unsuccessful and Gérard would deliver a work to that pleased her. Philippe Bordes, *Jacques-Louis David, Empire to Exile* ex. cat. (New Haven, Connecticut: Yale University Press, 2005), 295-296. Bordes details some of the letters exchanged between Récamier and David concerning the commission and suggests when David still had not begin the project some months later, Augustus and Récamier approached Gérard.
portraiture and history painting. Corinne’s appearance represents an idealized, yet recognizable portrait of de Staël, fused with some of the features of Récamier, making the painting a tribute not only to the deceased author but also to the lifelong relationship of the two women.\textsuperscript{14} Récamier so adored Gérard’s Corinne she had it installed in her Parisian home where visitors to her salon repeatedly admired it and praised the talents of its creator until her death in 1849.

Récamier’s great esteem for Gérard led her to commission from him a painting of Saint Theresa to adorn the chapel of the Infirmerie of Marie-Thérèse, founded by her close friends and Chateaubriand’s wife in 1819 as a sanctuary for aging priests and destitute noblewomen.\textsuperscript{15} The stir surrounding Gérard’s Saint Teresa before, during, and after the Salon of 1828 surpassed anything he had experienced in his career. In part, he helped orchestrate this near frenzy, because he worked on it secretly and allowed only the Chateaubriands and a select few others to see it before it was finished. Of course, the press soon reported that Gérard was working on a new, mysterious painting that was not going to be shown at the Salon. Critics quickly wrote and published letters begging the artist and his patrons to exhibit the work before installing it in the chapel. Thus, by the time the painting appeared in the Salon, the clamor preceding it ensured

\textsuperscript{14} Marc Fumaroli notes that Augustus requested Gérard to improve and flatter de Staël’s features by recalling those of Récamier, and it should be remembered that de Staël intended her heroine to be an idealized version of herself. See, “Terror and Grace: Girodet, Poet of Painting,” in \textit{Girodet 1767-1824}, ex. cat., ed. Sylvain Bellenger (Paris: Musée du Louvre Éditions, 2005), 66.

\textsuperscript{15} Princess Marie-Thérèse was the daughter of Louis XVI and the wife of his first cousin, the Duc d’Angoulême, Dauphin, and son of Charles X. Saint Theresa of Avila was the patron saint of the princess. While the subject represents the neo-Catholicism of Chateaubriand’s circle, it is also indirectly pays tribute to the Bourbon line.
its success; it was the subject of long reviews praising Gérard’s consummate skill. After
the Salon, a ceremony was held when it was unveiled on its altar, and for some time,
visitors gathered on a regular basis to see the work in its proper place.

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Histories of the art of the Revolutionary period have long celebrated the artists
who suffered heroically, challenged the institutions of the art world, and refused to
compromise in pursuit of their artistic ideals. By setting aside these preferences and the
long held assumptions about Gérard’s career, I have shown that such self-sacrifice was
not the only means to success in David’s studio or at the Salon. Gérard’s willingness to
experiment with subjects and styles that moved away from those forged in David’s
early studio affords us a better understanding of the various modes of classicism, the
emerging strains of Romanticism, and issues of gender and sexuality, especially
heterosexuality, in Davidian art of the 1790s. For Gérard, painting could be many
things: stoic, emotional, masculine, feminine, public, and private. His early career also
provides an alternative model from which to study the changing role of art in
relationship to politics and the public sphere. Gérard did not align himself with one
political faction during the Revolution, and as a result, his imagery accommodated
multiple political points of view. Both during and after the Terror, his neutrality meant
he avoided the consequences that befell artists who adhered staunchly to a single party
line; moreover, it allowed him to adapt to the changed political atmosphere of
Thermidor and the Directory. His works from the mid- to late-1790s, which expressed
sympathy for those who had suffered during the extreme phases of the Revolution and
depicted the concerns and members of elite, fashionable society, established Gérard as one of the leading artists of his generation. During the turbulent decade of the French Revolution when politics changed swiftly and long-standing institutions of the art world faltered, Gérard’s political and artistic flexibility allowed him to carve out an alternative path to success and to court new and powerful patrons who continued to support him after the turn of the century.
Fig. 1. Jacques-Louis David, *St. Roch Interceding with the Virgin for the Victims of the Plague*, 1780, oil on canvas, 260 x 195 cm., Marseille, Musée des Beaux-Arts.
Fig. 2. After François Gérard, *Plague Scene*, 1784, engraving by C.V. Normand, 19th century, 252 x 265 mm., Paris, Bibliothèque nationale, Cabinet des estampes.
Fig. 3. Jacques-Louis David, *Belisarius Begging Alms*, 1781, oil on canvas, 288 x 312 cm, Lille, Musée des Beaux-Arts.
Fig. 4. Jean-Germain Drouais, *Christ and the Canaanite Woman*, 1784, oil on canvas, 114 x 146 cm., Paris, Musée du Louvre.
Fig. 5. François Gérard, *Académie*, 1785, black chalk heightened with white on paper, 425 x 375 mm., Paris, Ecole nationale supérieure des Beaux-Arts.
Fig. 6. Jacques-Louis David, *Académie*, 1770s, black chalk, stumped or wetted in areas, heightened with white on grayish brown paper, 545 x 445 mm., private collection.
Fig. 7. Jean-Germain Drouais, *The Dying Athlete*, 1785, oil on canvas, 125 x 183 cm., Paris, Musée du Louvre.
Fig. 8. Jacques-Louis David, *Oath of the Horatii*, 1785, oil on canvas, 330 x 425 cm., Paris, Musée du Louvre.
Fig. 9. Jean-Antoine Gros, *Portrait of François Gérard Aged Twenty*, c.1789-1790, oil on canvas, 26 x 20 cm., New York, Metropolitan Museum of Art.
Fig. 10. François Gérard, *Portrait of Jean-Antoine Gros Aged Twenty*, c.1790, oil on canvas, 26 x 20.3 cm., Toulouse, Musée des Augustins.
Fig. 11. François Gérard, *Portrait of La comtesse Benoist*, 1799-1800, medium unknown, dimensions unknown, private collection.
Fig. 12. Jacques-Louis David, *Paris and Helen*, 1787 (ex. 1789), oil on canvas, 147 x 180 cm., Paris, Musée du Louvre.
Fig. 13. Jacques-Louis David, *The Lictors Returning to Brutus the Bodies of his Sons*, 1789, oil on canvas, 323 x 422 cm., Paris, Musée du Louvre.
Fig. 14. Jacques-Louis David, study for the composition of the *Brutus*, 1789, pen and wash on paper, 14.2 x 12 cm., Malibu, California, Collection of the J. Paul Getty Museum.
Fig. 15. Jacques-Louis David, study for the composition of the *Brutus*, 1789, oil on paper over canvas, 27.5 x 35 cm., Stockholm, Nationalmuseum.
Fig. 16. Jacques-Louis David, study for the nurse in the *Brutus*, 1789, black chalk heightened with white on paper, 56.6 x 43.2 cm., Tours, Musée des Beaux-Arts.
Fig. 17. François Gérard, *Joseph Recognized by his Brothers*, 1789, oil on canvas, 120 x 155 cm., Angers, Musée des Beaux-Arts.
Fig. 18. Anne-Louis Girodet, *Joseph Recognized by his Brothers*, 1789, oil on canvas, 120 x 155 cm., Paris, Ecole nationale supérieure des Beaux-Arts.
Fig. 19. Jacques-Louis David, *The Death of Socrates*, 1787, oil on canvas, 129.5 x 196.2 cm., New York, Metropolitan Museum of Art.
Fig. 20. Anne-Louis Girodet, *The Sleep of Endymion*, 1791, oil on canvas, 197 x 261 cm., Paris, Musée du Louvre.
Fig. 21. François Gérard, *The Judgment of the Chaste Suzanne by the Prophet Daniel*, 1790, oil on canvas, 44 7/8 x 57 5/8 in., private collection.
Fig. 22. François Gérard, *Garden of a Roman Villa*, n.d., pencil on paper, 207 x 272 mm., private collection.
Fig. 23. François Gérard, *Italian Landscape*, n.d., black chalk and brown wash on paper, 20.7 x 27 cm., private collection.
Fig. 24. After François Gérard, *The Death of Caesar*, n.d., engraving by Rosette in 1858, 24 x 26 cm., Paris Bibliothèque nationale, Cabinet des estampes.
Fig. 25. After François Gérard, *Roman Charity*, 1791, engraving by Carrey in 1857, 21 x 23 cm., Paris, Bibliothèque nationale, Cabinet des estampes.
Fig. 26. After Jacques-Louis David and François Gérard, *The Death of Lepeletier de St. Fargeau*, drawing by Anatole Devosge, 1793, black chalk on paper, 46.7 x 40 cm., Dijon, Musée des Beaux-Arts.
Fig. 27. Jacques-Louis David, *Marat at his Last Breath*, 1793, oil on canvas, 165 x 182 cm., Brussels, Musées Royaux des Beaux-Arts.
Fig. 28. After Jacques-Louis David, *Marat at his Last Breath*, 1793-4, attributed to François Gérard, oil on canvas, 165 x 182 cm., Versailles, Musée national du Château.
Fig. 29. Anne-Louis Girodet, illustration for Book I of the *Aeneid, Aeneas Before Dido*, engraving by Copia, published 1798.
Fig. 30. Anne-Louis Girodet, illustration for Book III of the *Aeneid*, *Aeneas Dreams of the Household Gods*, engraving by Godefroy, published 1798.
Fig. 31. Anne-Louis Girodet, illustration for Book VII of the Aeneid, Aeneas and His Companions Land in Latium, engraving by Massard, published 1798.
Fig. 32. François Gérard, illustration for Book VIII of the Aeneid, *Venus Gives the Arms of Vulcan to Aeneas*, engraving by Copia, published 1798.
Fig. 33. François Gérard, illustration for Book X of the *Aeneid, Olympus*, engraving by Massard, published 1798.
Fig. 34. François Gérard, illustration for Book IV of the Aeneid, *The Death of Dido*, engraving by Baquoy, published 1798.
Fig. 35. Anne-Louis Girodet, illustration for Book XI of the *Aeneid*, *The Mourning of Pallas*, engraving by Marais, published 1798.
Fig. 36. Anne-Louis Girodet, *The Death of Camilla*, 1784, oil on canvas, 111 x 148 cm, Montargis, Musée Girodet.
Fig. 37. Jacques-Louis David, *Andromache Mourning Hector*, 1783, oil on canvas, 275 x 203 cm., Paris, Musée du Louvre.
Fig. 38. John Flaxman, *Thetis Finds Achilles Mourning over the Corpse of Patroclus*, 1790s, engraving, 16.99 x 23.5 cm, private collection.
Fig. 39. Anne-Louis Girodet, illustration for Book IX of the *Aeneid*, *Ascanius Fighting in the Absence of his Father Aeneas*, engraving by Mathieu, published 1798.
Fig. 40. François Gérard, illustration for Book II of the Aeneid, *Aeneas Carries Anchises from the Ruins of Troy*, engraving by Patas, published 1798.
Fig. 41. Jacques-Louis David, *The Intervention of the Sabine Women*, 1799, oil on canvas, 385 x 522 cm, Paris, Musée du Louvre.
Fig. 42. Anne-Louis Girodet, *Scene from a Deluge*, 1806, oil on canvas, 431 x 341 cm, Paris, Musée du Louvre.
Fig. 43. François Gérard, illustration for Book VI of the Aeneid, Aeneas and the Shade of Anchises in the Elysian Fields, engraving by Copia, published 1798.
Fig. 44. François Gérard, illustration for Book XII of the Aeneid, *The Death of Turnus at the Hands of Aeneas*, engraving by Copia, published 1798.
Fig. 45. Anne-Louis Girodet, illustration for Book V of the *Aeneid*, *Aeneas Sacrificing to Neptune on the tomb of Anchises*, engraving by Massard, published 1798.
Fig. 46. François Gérard, *The French People Demanding the Overthrow of the Tyrant on the Tenth of August, 1792*, 1794-5, graphite, pen, and sepia wash heightened with white on paper, 66.8 x 91.7 cm., Paris, Musée du Louvre.
Fig. 47. Jacques Bertaux, *Capture of the Tuileries Palace, August 10, 1792*, 1793, oil on canvas, 1.24 x 1.92 m., Versailles, Musée national du Château.
Fig. 48. Anonymous French print, *Firing on the Tuileries Palace, 1792*, etching, 9 x 15 cm., from *Révolutions de Paris*, #161, facing p.230.
Fig. 49. Anonymous French print, *Burning of the Swiss Barracks in the Place Carrousel, August 10, 1792*, etching, 9 x 15 cm., from *Révolutions de Paris*, #161, facing p.238.
Fig. 50. Pierre-Etienne Lesueur, *The Execution of Louis XVI*, 1794, pen on paper, 26 x 38.5 cm., Paris, Bibliothèque nationale, Cabinet des estampes.
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Fig. 52. François Gérard, study for the *Tenth*, oil on paper transferred to canvas, no dimensions available, Private collection.
Fig. 53. Attributed to Pierre-Etienne Lesueur, *The Red Cap of Liberty*, n.d., gouache, dimensions unknown, Paris, Musée Carnavalet.
Fig. 54. Attributed to Pierre-Etienne Lesueur, *Patriotic Club of Women*, c.1791, gouache, dimensions unknown, Paris, Musée Carnavalet.
Fig. 55. François Gérard, *Madame Lecerf*, 1794, oil on canvas, 56 x 47 cm., Paris, Musée du Louvre.
Fig. 56. After G. Texier, *Journée of the Tenth of August, 1792 at the Tuileries Palace*, 1792, engraving by Madame Jourdan, 36 x 52 cm., Paris, Bibliothèque nationale, Cabinet des Estampes.
Fig. 57. Anonymous French print, *French Women Become Free*, c.1792, hand-colored etching, dimensions unknown, Paris, Musée Carnavalet.
Fig. 58. Anonymous French print, *The Pretty Sans-Culotte Armed for War*, c.1792, hand-colored etching, 260 x 174 mm., Paris, Bibliothèque nationale, Cabinet des estampes.
Fig. 59. Attributed to Charles Thévenin, *The Heroine of Saint-Milhier*, 1794-5, black ink on paper, 16 x 20 cm., Vizille, Musée de la Révolution française.
Fig. 60. Anonymous, *The Heroine of Saint-Milhier*, 1794-5, etching, dimensions unknown, Paris, Bibliothèque nationale, Cabinet des estampes.
Fig. 61. Jean Thouvenin after Jean-François Cazenave, *Heroic Courage (The Heroine of Saint-Milhier)*, 1794-5, etching, dimensions unknown, Vizille, Musée de la Révolution française.
Fig. 62. Anonymous French print, *Louis XVI*, 1792, hand-colored stipple engraving. 288 x 174 mm., Paris, Bibliothèque nationale, Cabinet des estampes.
Fig. 63. Anonymous French print, *Pandora’s Box*, c.1791, hand-colored etching, 204 x 274 mm., Paris, Bibliothèque nationale, Cabinet des estampes.
Fig. 64. Anonymous French print, *Exact Representation of the Famous Diamond Necklace by MM. Boëhmer and Bassange*, c.1786, etching and mezzotint, 327 x 235 mm., Paris, Bibliothèque nationale, Cabinet des estampes.
Fig. 66. Anonymous French print, *The Trial of Target; or, the Labors of Hercules*, 1790, etching, dimensions unknown, Paris, Bibliothèque nationale, Cabinet des estampes.
Fig. 67. Le Beau, Interrogation of Louis XVI at the National Convention, the 26th of December 1792, c.1792, engraving, dimensions unknown, Paris, Bibliothèque nationale, Cabinet des estampes.
Fig. 68. Anonymous French print, *The Trial of Louis XVI*, c.1792, hand-colored engraving, dimensions unknown, Paris, Bibliothèque nationale, Cabinet des estampes.
Fig. 69. Jacques-Louis David, *The Oath of the Tennis Court*, 1791, graphite, pen, and sepia wash heightened with white on paper, 65 x 105 cm., Versailles, Musée national du Château.
Fig. 70. François Gérard, *Marius Returning to Rome*, 1795?, black chalk and graphite heightened with white on brown paper, 35.2 x 45.4 cm, Paris, Musée du Louvre.
Fig. 71. François Gérard, *Marius Returning to Rome*, 1795?, oil on canvas, dimensions unknown, The Museum of Fine Arts, Houston.
Fig. 72. Jean-Germain Drouais, *Marius at Minturnae*, 1786, oil on canvas, 271 x 365 cm. Paris, Musée du Louvre.
Fig. 73. Jacques-Louis David, *The Lictors Returning to Brutus the Bodies of his Sons* (study), 1789, oil on paper over canvas, 27.5 x 35 cm., Stockholm, Nationalmuseum.
Fig. 74. Léonore Mérimée copy of François Gérard, *Belisarius*, 1797, oil on canvas, 35 ¾ x 29 in., Los Angeles, California, The J. Paul Getty Museum.
Fig. 75. After François Gérard, Belisarius, 1795, engraving by Auguste Boucher Desnoyers in 1806, unknown dimensions, Paris, Bibliothèque nationale, Cabinet des estampes.
Fig. 76. Hagesandros, Polydoros, and Athanadoros of Rhodes, *Laocoön and His Sons*, 2nd-1st century BCE (or a Roman copy of the 1st century CE), marble, height 8', Cortile Ottagono, Rome, Musei Vaticani, Museo Pio Clementino.
Fig. 77. Anne-Louis Girodet, *Hippocrates Refusing the Gifts of Artaxerxes*, 1792, oil on canvas, 99 x 135 cm., Paris, Faculté de Médecine.
Fig. 78. Pierre-Narcisse Guérin, *The Return of Marcus Sextus*, 1799, oil on canvas, 217 x 243 cm., Paris, Musée du Louvre.
Fig. 79. Julien-Léopold Boilly, Caricature of Girodet and Gérard from an Album of 73 Caricatures, undated, pencil, pen and ink and watercolor on paper, 21.5 x 28.2 cm, Private collection.
Fig. 80. Anonymous (Roman), *Cupid and Psyche Embracing*, 2nd century CE, marble, height 1.3 m, Florence, Galleria degli Uffizi.
Fig. 81. Anonymous (Roman), *Cupid and Psyche*, 2nd century CE, marble, height 1.2 m, Rome, Musei Capitolini.
Fig. 82. François Gérard, first illustration for Book I of *The Loves of Psyche and Cupid*, engraving by Nicollet, published 1797.
Fig. 83. François Gérard, second illustration for Book I of *The Loves of Psyche and Cupid*, engraving by Blot, published 1797.
Fig. 84. François Gérard, first illustration for Book II of *The Loves of Psyche and Cupid*, engraving by Tardieu, published 1797.
Fig. 85. François Gérard, second illustration for Book II of *The Loves of Psyche and Cupid*, engraving by Marais, published 1797.
Fig. 86. François Gérard, *Cupid and Psyche*, 1798, oil on canvas, 186 x 132 cm., Paris, Musée du Louvre.
Fig. 87. Louis-Léopold Boilly, *Absolutely No Agreement*, c.1797, oil on canvas, unknown dimensions, private collection.
Fig. 88. Jean-François Bosio, *La Bouillotte*, 1798, hand-colored etching, 19.1 x 13.6 in., Paris, Musée Carnavalet.
Fig. 89. Isaac Cruikshank, *Full Dress: Parisian Ladies in the Winter Dress for 1800*, 24 November 1799, hand-colored etching, 34 x 22 cm., New York, New York Public Library.
Fig. 90. Jean-Honoré Fragonard, *The Sacrifice of the Rose*, c.1785, oil on canvas, dimensions unknown, Private collection.
Fig. 91. Angelica Kauffmann, *Love Drying Psyche’s Tears*, 1792, oil on canvas, 216 x 166 cm, Künsthaus, Zürich.
Fig. 92. Antonio Canova, *Cupid Awakening Psyche with a Kiss*, 1793, marble, height 155 cm, Paris, Musée du Louvre.
Fig. 93. Antonio Canova, *Standing Cupid and Psyche*, 1797, marble, height 1.45 m, Paris, Musée du Louvre.
Fig. 94. Jacques-Louis David, *The Death of Joseph Bara*, 1794, oil on canvas, 118 x 155 cm., Avignon, Musée Calvet.
Fig. 95. After François Gérard, Mlle Alexandrine-Émilie Brongniart, 1795, engraving by Huot, unknown dimensions, Paris, Bibliothèque nationale, Cabinet des estampes.
Fig. 96. François Gérard, *Mlle Alexandrine-Émilie Brongniart*, 1795, oil on canvas, fragment of the original painting measures 50 x 38 cm., Paris, Private collection.
Fig. 97. Jacques-Louis David, *Catherine-Marie-Jeanne Tallard*, 1795, oil on canvas, 64 x 54 cm., Paris, Musée du Louvre.
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Fig. 104. François Gérard, *La Comtesse Regnault de Saint-Jean-d’Angély*, 1798, oil on canvas, 102.5 x 74 cm., Paris, Musée du Louvre.
Fig. 105. Louise Élisabeth Vigée-Lebrun, Portrait of Laure de Bonneuil, 1788, charcoal, brown pencil, heightened with white chalk, 30 x 20.2 cm., Paris, Musée du Louvre.
Fig. 106. Andrea Appiani, Madame Regnault de Saint-Jean-d’Angély, c.1796, oil on canvas, 70 x 55 cm., Versailles, Musée national du Château.
Fig. 107. Andrea Appiani, *Madame Hamelin*, c.1796, oil on canvas, 70 x 55 cm., Paris, Musée Carnavalet.
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