

BETWEEN FRIENDS: REPRESENTATIONS OF FEMALE SOCIABILITY
IN FRENCH GENRE PAINTING AND PORTRAITURE, 1770-1830

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ABSTRACT

MOLLY A. MEDAKOVICH: Between Friends: Representations of Female Sociability in French Genre Painting and Portraiture, 1770-1830
(Under the direction of Dr. Mary D. Sheriff)

This dissertation examines spaces of female sociability and their representation in late-eighteenth- and early-nineteenth-century genre paintings and portraiture. I look to paintings that feature female companions engaging with one another in various locales – the exotic colonial island, the convent, the boudoir, the salon, and the artist’s studio – and analyze the ways in which artists represent female friendship in such settings. Despite the historical tradition that negated women’s extra-familial relationships and instead privileged the male enjoyment of the offices of friendship, the companionship, intimacy, and collaboration that unfolds within the canvases suggests a dynamic that deserves more attention than has been heretofore been given. Historical and art historical narratives of this period before, during, and after the French Revolution consistently focus on male artistic and social networks, foregrounding them in a language of brotherhood and public virtue, but sisterhood existed in other significant forms.

The images I investigate are drawn from the period 1770-1830, an era of genre painting and portraiture that presents a particularly rich set of scenes featuring female sociability, often in the absence of men. Intimate moments between mothers and maids, friendly strolls in the picturesque garden, scenes of shared confidences, friendship portraits and other physical tokens of affection and memory, and creative companionship all speak to a strong tradition of female collaboration and sociability, often displaying

friendship as a means for individual development and shared emotion. Alongside treatises on friendship, fictional and real letters exchanged between female friends, and personal memoirs, the paintings that this dissertation addresses both reveal and construct the history of female friendship in early modern France. Ultimately, paintings of female sociability suggest that it allowed women to step beyond the strict identity roles of mother and wife and to develop unique subjectivities and identities. The culture of *sensibilité*, in part, aided in the development of a language of female friendship and in the flourishing of images of the period that picture the intimate bond.

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DEDICATION

Looking back on the years of my life that preceded this dissertation, it is clear that the topic of friendship and the rich relationships shared between women have been with me all along. My maternal grandmother's upbeat attitude and tenacity have always been a model of positive living and an example of truly embracing life. My paternal grandmother's careful planning allowed me to pursue my education without financial constraints, freeing me to follow my dreams as they developed. My mother's unwavering support has been essential to my personal and academic development, and her pursuit of her own dreams during times of adversity provided me with a strong example of determination and hard work. My sister's friendship has spanned time and distance, and the differences that once set us apart are now the basis of a close relationship. My "Iowa girls" have inspired me with their own achievements and their lifelong friendship; their visits, phone calls, and ongoing support have enriched my life in immeasurable ways. The many inspirational women that I have encountered in my life have left an impression on me that ignites the pages that follow, and their traces leave an indelible mark on my spirit.

Although this dissertation addresses female friendship, the friendship of my husband has been my ultimate refuge during the rigorous and adventurous process of writing this dissertation. He has been an intimate witness, an ardent champion, and a blissful oasis throughout my years as a graduate student. The success of completing this project is equally his.

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Introduction: Friendship and Representation

Since the days of Cicero, male writers had defined the social affection and political bond of friendship as the exclusive privilege of men.¹ For much of early modern history, friendship was understood as part of a public social economy, a transaction men performed that mutually benefited its participants in the worlds of commerce, politics, and social connectivity. Rather than an intimate emotional tie, the relationship was conceived of as practical in nature, free from the more personal connotations of sociability that it has today. Intellectuals through the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries echoed this tradition, which reached its highest expression in Revolutionary France as men called out public oaths of *fraternité*, the ultimate bond of brotherhood and citizenship in the French state during a tumultuous period of political and social change.² The masculinist tradition of brotherly bonding peaked during the period of the French Revolution, and images of male friendship and bonding typically express active political and public affirmations of brotherhood. Jacques-Louis David's *The Oath of the Horatii* (Figure 1), which pictures the three ancient Roman Horatii sons swearing their loyalty to their father and state as they prepare to wage battle against the neighboring Curatii, has long been revered as an iconic image of the years leading up to the Revolutionary period.

¹ The male prerogative of friendship was a long-established tradition, reaching all the way back to ancient writing such as Cicero's first-century BCE *De Amicitia* and Aristotle's fourth-century BCE *Nicomachean Ethics*.

² The idea of Revolutionary "fraternité" is one model of extra-familial relationships among many that serves as a backdrop against which I conceived of this dissertation. I was struck by the amount of scholarly attention given to these quite public displays of unity. The general historical and scholarly emphasis on the male homosocial culture of the period is striking, and even more so in art history.

The period's ethical and philosophical writings posited that women did not have the intellectual or moral capacity to experience this extra-familial social exchange among themselves or with men, and that women's friendships posed a threat to the marriage contract. Even French author and salonnière Madame de Lambert, writing on friendship earlier in the century, proclaimed, "Women have the misfortune of not being able to depend on friendship with each other: the multiplicity of their failings forms an insurmountable impediment; they unite from *necessity*, and never from *inclination*."³ Other gems of advice from conduct manuals, advice books for husbands and wives, and treatises and essays on friendship echo this language of impossibility in the realm of female companionship:

A young wife can have no friends safely other than her father and her husband.⁴

At best a young wife ought to have the fewest number of friends possible.⁵

Anything is preferable to the society of women, and I agree with one husband who said, with unusual candor, "I would rather find my wife with a grenadier than with someone of her own sex."⁶

³ "Les femmes ont le malheur de ne pouvoir compter entre-elles sur l'amitié, les défauts dont elles sont remplies y forment un obstacle presque insurmontable. Elles s'unissent par nécessité, et jamais par goût." Anne-Thérèse de Marguenat de Courcell Lambert (Marquise de), "Traité de l'amitié," *Bibliothèque de campagne, ou Amusemens de l'esprit du coeur*, tome 4e (La Haye: Jean Néaulme, 1737), 89. Emphasis is mine. Other authors writing about similar issues published excerpts from her writings on friendship, including Thémiseul de Saint-Hyacinthe, *Receuil de divers écrits sur l'amour et l'amitié* (Paris: Chez la Veuve Pissot, 1736), 83.

⁴ Quoted in Patricia Mainardi, *Husbands, Wives, and Lovers: Marriage and its Discontents in Nineteenth-Century France* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2003), 64. Quote originally from Horace Raison, *Code conjugal, contenant les lois, règles, applications et exemples de l'art de se bien marier et d'être heureux en ménage* (Paris, J.-P. Roret, 1829), 64. In turn, Raison was quoting Mademoiselle de Lespinnasse who he claims said, "Une jeune femme ne peut, sans danger, avoir pour ami que son père ou son mari."

⁵ Vicomtesse de G***, *L'Art de se faire aimer de son mari* (Paris : Chez Renaud, 1828), 74. "A bien prendre, une jeune femme doit se lier avec le moins de personnes possible."

⁶ Ibid., 75-76. "...tout est préférable à la société des femmes : et je suis de l'avis de certain mari qui disait, dans sa franchise un peu singulière, j'aimerais mieux trouver chez une femme un grenadier, que d'y voir une personne de son sexe."

Many husbands fear the company of young men for their wives, and prefer to see them surrounded by women; they are wrong. One can say with accuracy: "[Female] friends are more disruptive to the household than male [friends]."⁷

...but the friendship that comes from the firmness of the soul, rightness in ideas, consequence of principles, truthfulness of character, of constancy in one's conduct, and of discernment in choice, is not very suitable to the sex that is feeble by nature, frivolous by education, scatterbrained by pretensions, coquettish in her vanity, and fickle in her idleness. Women are therefore not capable of friendship unless they remove themselves from their essence, and they henceforth approach male virtues that characterize superior men.⁸

After the image that I dared to make of women in the preceding chapters, one shouldn't be surprised that I find a real and constant friendship among women as the rarest phenomenon. Aside from rivalry in this flighty sex, extending to all of their objects; this instinctual attraction that makes friendship active and that gives it its warmth and sweetness and its charm, cannot be known between two people of the same sex.

Furthermore, their ordinary self-importance, as Montaigne said (Essays, Liv. I, ch 27, De L'Amitié), "is not made to respond to this conference and communication, nourishment of this saintly culture, nor are they firm enough to carry on something so important and durable."⁹

⁷ Raison, *Code conjugal*, 41. "Beaucoup de maris redoutent pour leurs femmes la société des jeunes gens, et préfèrent les voir entourées des femmes; ils ont tort. On pourrait dire avec justesse: 'Les amies de pension ont plus désuni de ménages que les galans'."

⁸ Marie-Geneviève-Charlotte Thiroux d'Arconville, *De l'amitié* (Amsterdam et Paris: chez Desaint & Saillant, 1761), 78-79. "...mais l'amitié qui exige de la fermeté dans l'âme, de la justesse dans les idées, de la conséquence dans les principes, de la vérité dans le caractère, de la constance dans la conduite, & du discernement dans le choix, convient très –peu à un sexe foible par sa nature, frivole par son éducation, étourdi par prétention, coquet par vanité, & inconstant par désœuvrement. Les femmes ne sont donc capables d'amitié qu'autant qu'elles s'éloignent de leur essence, & qu'elles se rapprochent davantage des vertus mâles qui caractérisent les hommes supérieurs."

⁹ Ibid., 90-91. "D'après le tableau que j'ai osé faire des femmes dans les Chapitres précédents, on ne doit point être surpris que je regarde comme le phénomène le plus rare, une amitié réelle & constante entre elles. Outre la rivalité qui, dans ce sexe volage, s'étend sur tous les objets ; cet attrait d'instinct qui rend l'amitié active, & qui lui donne cette chaleur douce qui en fait tout le charme, ne peut gueres se rencontrer entre deux personnes de même sexe. D'ailleurs, *leur suffisance ordinaire*, comme dit Montaigne (Essays, Liv. I, Ch 27, de l'Amitié), *n'est pas pour répondre à cette conférence & communication, nourrice de cette sainte couture, ni leur âme semble assez ferme pour soutenir l'étreinte d'un noeud si pressé et si durable.*"

This barrage of quotations represents the tip of the iceberg of texts that address the propriety (and impropriety) of female relationships, how they should be conducted, and how an inherent, essential femininity explains women's shortcomings in the realm of same-sex socialization and intimacies.¹⁰ The overarching tone is a negative one, relegating women to the position of children in descriptions of their fickleness and infirm nature, and as creatures of extreme sensibility whose physical and intellectual substance (or lack thereof) bars them from the lofty ideals of friendship in which men have no trouble participating.

These excerpts from marriage manuals and essays on friendship reveal interesting information about women's friendships and their relationship to the coveted late-eighteenth- and early-nineteenth-century institution of marriage as well as attitudes toward femininity and socialization. They demonstrate that female socialization was considered a threat to the heterosexual economy of marriage, that women belonged to their husbands, and any socializing, especially with other women, meant neglecting one's marital duties. Tracts on friendship were also written in a language parallel to that used in essays on sympathy and sensibility, which utilized similarly gendered categories of socialization and emotional expressivity. Men wrote many of these books, but women authored a surprising number of them as well. These examples demonstrate a general distrust of women's social relationships outside of the heterosexual marital economy because of their threat of disrupting that institution. They express the potential of friendship to divert a woman's attention away from her domestic and conjugal duties and implicitly suggest that friendship may slide into the realm of eroticism should women

¹⁰ There is very little published on this topic, but Nadine Bérenguier's *Conduct Books for Girls in Enlightenment France* (Burlington, VT, and Surrey, England: Ashgate, 2011) addresses eighteenth-century conduct literature and mentions additional eighteenth-century "friendship advice" on pages 101-105.

become too intimate with one another. Heterosexuality's other—homosexuality or same-sex eroticism—depends on its opposite for its definition, and this alternative perhaps lay at the base of many husband's fears.

The negative attitude toward women's friendship is consistent across the period I am considering and represents a strong voice in writings on marriage, friendship, and the family, but it is not the only voice.¹¹ An ideal model of female intimacy went hand in hand with the eighteenth century's emerging ideology of domesticity and the increasingly privatized family unit (as distinct from public life). The sentimentality that often accompanied polite friendship in literature and painting was also a means by which women developed their own language of friendship against the classical concept of *amicitia*, which had historically been reserved for men. In contrast to the pervasive discussion and valorization of men's superiority in the realm of friendship, the cult of domesticity and ideas circulating in the eighteenth-century culture of sensibility, in part, define women's relationships with one another in painting and literature.¹²

Representations of female friendship often stress the private and sentimental aspects of this relationship and construct a language of friendship beyond its traditional male connotations (i.e. virtue, intellect, depth of soul, etc.). Instead, women writers and artists

¹¹ This dearth of scholarly attention to the subject is not surprising and represents a continuation of the enduring opinions about women and friendship that the above quotes illustrate. I was surprised to find this much backlash toward female friendship in the eighteenth century. As I read the texts, it became obvious that eighteenth-century writers (both male and female) were thoroughly indebted to the classical tradition of *amicitia*, their texts quoting authors such as Cicero, Lucien, and others quite regularly. Montaigne is also quoted at length and becomes somewhat of a definitive word on friendship as he is filtered through and rewritten in eighteenth-century terms. At a certain point, I was tempted to change my dissertation to "Between Enemies," but something continued to nag me about the interstices between this "official" writing on friendship and the cultural production that speaks otherwise. Too many examples of a counter-discourse to the male-privileged model of friendship emerge in the eighteenth century, many defined, formulated and enacted by women, to simply avert my scholarly gaze.

¹² Sensibility is woven into all of the chapters below, but pages 180-182 provide a succinct overview of some of the more prevalent "issues" or ideas informing the "culture" of sensibility and its articulation in visual culture.

present their female subjects as sharing effusive emotional and physical connections that, rather than discount their intimacies, results in defining them in positive, often personal terms. The affective, sentimental model of friendship that the following case studies exhibit suggests an alternative rhetoric that allowed women to actually claim friendship and intimacy in the first place.

While men of the eighteenth century vociferously claimed their brotherly bonds in the offices of friendship, women formed alliances with one another, and these became an equally important aspect of their lives.¹³ Women wrote about friendship, experienced it through economic, social, and familial ties, and created and witnessed its representation within visual and literary culture. In the chapters that follow, I analyze the cultural products that contributed to the range of definitions and representations of female sociability, products that contradict the historical privileging of friendship as a male prerogative. The written discourse that helped to define eighteenth-century understandings of friendship provides the backdrop against which I analyze the

¹³ The topic of female friendship has been discussed in numerous scholarly publications on English literature and history, but studies on the history of friendship in early modern France number far fewer. Some of the major works that include France as an element of a broader historical study of friendship, works on friendship in general (not gender specific, but usually with more information on male friendships) and a paltry few that give full attention to French female friendships include Lillian Faderman, *Surpassing the Love of Men: Romantic Friendship and Love Between Women from the Renaissance to the Present* (New York: William Morrow, 1981); Frederick Gerson, *L'Amitié au XVIIIe siècle* (Paris: La Pensée Universelle, 1974); Laura Gowing, Michael Hunter, and Miri Rubin, editors, *Love, Friendship and Faith in Europe, 1300-1800* (Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire, NY: Palgrave MacMillan, 2005); Susanne T. Kord, "Eternal Love or Sentimental Discourse? Gender Dissonance and Women's Passionate 'Friendships'" in *Outing Goethe and His Age*, ed. Alice A. Kuzniar (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1996); Susan S. Lanser, "Befriending the Body: Female Intimacies as Class Acts," *Eighteenth-Century Studies* 32, no. 2 (1998-1999): 179-198; Pat O'Connor, *Friendships Between Women: A Critical Review* (New York: Guilford Press, 1992); Christine Roulston, "Separating the Inseparables: Female Friendship and Its Discontents in Eighteenth-Century France," *Eighteenth-Century Studies* 32, no. 2 (Winter 1998-99): 215-231; Janet Todd, *Women's Friendship in Literature* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1980); Anne Vincent-Buffault, *L'Exercice de l'amitié au XVIIIe siècle* (Paris: Editions du Seuil, 1995); Elizabeth Susan Wahl, *Invisible Relations: Representations of Female Intimacy in the Age of Enlightenment* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1999).

representation of female intimacies in French genre painting and portraiture. Personal correspondence, treatises on marriage and friendship written by both men and women, conduct manuals, and novels all feature female relationships that reveal the period's constructions of gender and sociability. Changing forms of visual culture suggest that female friendships were a vibrant part of eighteenth-century life and acted as a counterbalance to all of the naysayers who would deny women's participation in social networks outside of the family.

I have identified a loose trajectory of images that feature friendship as their subject, and tracing it reveals an evolution of forms across time from abstract and allegorical to illustrative and sentimental. One of the earliest depictions of friendship appears as "Amicitia" in Cesare Ripa's *Iconologia* (Figure 2). According to the 1600 iconological reference book, one that was used well into the eighteenth century, Friendship should be in the guise of a "Beautiful young woman, draped in the white robe of Truth, the virtue upon which friendship is based." She is barefoot, for "friendship knows no inconvenience too great for it."¹⁴ In some versions, her foot rests on a skull, "for friendship jeers at death." The inscription on the breast shows the importance of keeping friends close to one's heart whether they are near or far, in both life and death. She holds a heart in her right hand and stands beside a hardy Elm tree. The figure is part of the emblematic tradition, embodying an abstract concept through a figure and signifying the idea in a conventional visual lexicon. In this early depiction of Friendship, we witness its embodiment in female form, despite its perceived limitation to men alone.

¹⁴ For one of many versions of the entry for "Amicitia," see Caesar Ripa, *Iconologia or Moral Emblems*, trans. and ed. P. Tempest (London: Benjamin Motte, 1709), 3.

Of the paintings and sculptures I surveyed in the early stages of research, the seventeenth century begins to witness the emergence of female companions on the canvas, but they do not suggest the shared intimacy or personal contact that later eighteenth-century genre paintings depict. In particular, Dutch genre painting repeatedly represented women in the domestic interior, typically in the form of a mistress and maid (Figure 3). However, although representing a private moment in the home, one experienced by two women in the absence of men, in these works friendship is not the subject per se. The women typically occupy their separate stations and psychological fields. They do not connect physically or emotionally as they will in later canvases.

Rococo art often features women together in painting, but artists typically couch their companionship in mythological terms. François Boucher's frolicking nymphs and mythological goddesses do not yet bring us to sentimental or reciprocal friendship, but, instead, invite us to study the doubling of the female form in an erotic display of flesh that the *mythologie galante* showcased. In *Diana Leaving Her Bath* (Figure 4), the goddess and her companion, a nymph, rest after the hunt. The visual play of their angular legs, ivory skin, and gazes suggests erotic potential within the canvas and titillating enjoyment on the part of the viewer. The coupling of two nude women serves the purposes of eroticism rather than distinctly representing female sociability.

Perhaps the first "real" embodiment of friendship connected to a specific woman and to a real-life relationship, is present in Jean-Baptiste Pigalle's sculpture of *Madame de Pompadour as Friendship* (Figure 5). As art historian Katherine K. Gordon has discussed, Pompadour fashioned her portrait as an allegory of friendship after the end of

her sexual relationship with Louis XV.¹⁵ When she stepped down from her position as the King's *maîtresse-en-tête* in 1750, her continued friendship with Louis was well known, and she commissioned the work to promote her new political and personal identity in the public eye. The sculpture combines an allegory of friendship similar to Ripa's classicizing "Amicitia" and Pompadour's unique, personal portrait. Rather than the strict guise of a goddess or virtue, Pompadour appears as the physical embodiment of the sentiment and a very personal allegory in the context of her changing relationship with and role alongside the King. She borrows from a classicizing tradition but also makes a sentimental statement.¹⁶

Jean-Baptiste Greuze dominated the 1760s with his genre paintings of bourgeois morality, consistently emphasizing the patriarchal structure of the family, and it was not until the 1770s and 1780s that a new generation of roughly contemporaneous genre painters began to illustrate female companionship more extensively on the canvas.¹⁷ Unlike the genre painters that preceded them, Jean-Frédéric Schall (1752-1825), Michel Garnier (1753-1819), Jean-Baptiste Mallet (1759-1835), Marguerite Gérard (1761-1837), and Louis-Léopold Boilly (1761-1845) paid closer attention to female sociability in their work, emphasizing women's sentimental and emotional connections (Figure 6 and 7),

¹⁵ Katherine K. Gordon, "Madame de Pompadour, Pigalle, and the Iconography of Friendship," *The Art Bulletin* 50, no. 3 (September 1968): 249-262.

¹⁶ See page 116, below, for a more detailed discussion of this work.

¹⁷ Beginning in the 1760s, Greuze's genre scenes featured the family as a fundamental unit of French society. His canvases consistently present moral lessons that paralleled the theatrical genre of the *drame bourgeois* that Diderot had popularized and typically emphasize the importance of patriarchy within both the family and in society. See, for example, Greuze's *Village Bride* (1761), *The Well-Loved Mother* (1765-1769), and *The Father's Curse* and *The Son Punished* (1778).

shared pursuits and activities (Figures 8 and 9), and, at times, erotic encounters (Figures 10 and 11) within the domestic interior and hospitable outdoor settings.

Of this unofficial group of genre painters, Marguerite Gérard's paintings of female sociability piqued my interest by virtue of their repetition, the consistent absence of men, and an underlying primacy of sentimental exchange.¹⁸ Rather than abstract references to friendship, the women on the canvases participate in it. Together, they learn how to draw, tend to children, share the emotional response wrought from reading a letter, play music, and perform other intimate and sociable activities within the small-scale canvases (Figures 17, 28, 33, 40, and 41, among others).

In the chapters that follow, I approach the representation of female friendship through various spaces in which it was enacted. The majority of the spaces that I address—the convent, convent garden, exotic island, domestic interior, boudoir, cabinet, and salon—all share a suggestion of containment. The women and their activities are sequestered in these semi-private spaces that, in the eighteenth and early-nineteenth centuries, were sites of sociability for women, largely separate from the more masculine public sphere of politics and commerce.¹⁹ I think of the spaces as real and represented,

¹⁸ See Sally Wells-Robertson, "Marguerite Gérard, 1761-1837," Ph.D. Dissertation (New York: New York University, 1978). Wells-Robertson's doctoral dissertation is an early attempt at a catalogue raisonnée of Gérard's oeuvre. It is only recently that sustained research on the artist has been resumed by French scholars and museums. See, for example, the catalog for the 2007 exhibition "Le Cardinal Fesch et l'Art de Son Temps," staged at the Musée Fesch d'Ajaccio in Corsica. The catalog features contributions by Carole Blumenfeld, Philippe Costamagna, Andrea Zanella, Jean-Pierre Cuzin, and Anne van de Sandt. Philippe Costamagna, *Le Cardinal Fesch et l'Art de Son Temps* (Paris: Gallimard, 2007).

¹⁹ My aim is not to discuss the gendered politics of space that accompanies the emergence of newly divided public and private spheres in the eighteenth century, but the theory of these separate spaces is still important to acknowledge and underlies my discussion of female friendship. See, Philip Ariès, *Histoire de la vie privée* (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1985-1987), Jürgen Habermas, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere: An Inquiry into a category of Bourgeois Society*, trans. Thomas Burger with Frederick Lawrence (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1991), Joan B. Landes, *Women and the Public Sphere in the Age of the French Revolution* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1988), Dena Goodman, "Public Sphere and Private Life: Toward a Synthesis of Current Historiographical Approaches

and perhaps most important, as social productions, following Henri Lefebvre's theory that "(Social) space is a (social) product [...] the space thus produced also serves as a tool of thought and of action; that in addition to being a means of production it is also a means of control, and hence of domination, of power."²⁰ But, rather than a study of these all-female spaces as sites of control, domination, containment, or power within the public/private division of spheres, I consider how they act as sites of sociability that allowed for the construction and expression of identity.²¹

In Chapter One I present a brief survey of Marguerite Gérard's myriad genre paintings of women and children and ask: where are the proud patriarchs of these happy groupings? Gérard's painting of *L'Enfance de Paul et Virginie* (Figure 12), adapted from Bernardin de Saint-Pierre's popular novel of 1788, plays with this absence of the father figure by picturing a rather untraditional family in the French colony of L'Île-de-France, one that is headed by two matriarchs whose intimate friendship and close maternal collaboration forsake the need of a father figure on the remote island. Gérard depicts the "family" using the visual vocabulary of the eighteenth-century conversation piece, a

to the Old Regime," *History and Theory* 31, no. 1 (February 1992): 1-20, and Sanja Perovic, "Neither Public nor Private: The Domestic Sphere in French Enlightenment Thought," *The Eighteenth Century* 52, no. 2 (Spring 2011): 219-223, among others.

²⁰ Henri Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*, trans. Donald Nicholson-Smith (Oxford, UK, and Cambridge, MA: Blackwell, 1991), 26.

²¹ Denise Amy Baxter expresses a similar sentiment in Denise Amy Baxter and Meredith Martin, eds., *Architectural Space in Eighteenth-Century Europe* (Farnham, UK, and Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2010), 1.

Dena Goodman's work has also provided a model for considering women's co-opting of various private spaces for their own uses and to their own advantages, despite their seemingly restrictive nature. See Dena Goodman, *Becoming a Woman in the Age of Letters* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2009).

fusion of family portrait and genre scene, suggesting a new type of kinship unit, one that is united by the physical and sentimental attachments of its matriarchs.

The presence of African slave women and children in the canvas begs an additional level of analysis, especially in Gérard's placement of the figures as vital parts of the composition and pictorial narrative. Contemporaries had understood the novel as a call for the improved treatment of slaves, and indeed, while Bernardin does not suggest that slavery be abolished altogether, his text features slaves Marie and Domingo as an integral part of Marguerite and Madame de la Tour's family, participating in the emotional life of the four protagonists alongside their physical labors. Similarly, while acknowledging difference in the figure presumed to be Marie at the center of the composition, Gérard depicts her interacting with the children and mothers as if a part of the family.

In a similar manner to *L'Enfance*, Gérard's other numerous genre scenes that picture maids, mothers, and children in the upper bourgeois domestic interior establish a rhetoric of female friendship defined by a triumvirate of intimate connections: nature, domesticity, and reproduction. Like her incorporation of slaves into the sentimental scene, her domestic figures cross class lines as women and their servants bond over children or other external events or objects. While at first glance such scenes appear to promote an idealized model of female intimacy, safely contained within the domestic interior, the possibility of crossing the line from the strictly homosocial to the suggestively erotic often lurks as a subtext within the paintings and in the historical understanding of female relationships.

In Chapter Two, the convent sets the stage for female sociability. I provide a brief history of the many uses and significance of the convent in the lives of early modern women and their families and explore the changing function of the institution during the course of the century, especially leading up to the French Revolution. Convents provided young girls with a basic education that often prepared them for motherhood, marriage, and domestic life, acted as a repository for wayward daughters and the youngest daughters of a family, and admitted novices who would remain within its walls for the duration of their lives. It was a critical social and educational institution throughout the century, and many women called the convent at least a temporary home at some point in their lives.

Texts and images that depict the convent – in particular what lay behind its closely guarded walls and apertures – tend to oscillate between a depraved dystopia characterized by same-sex libidinous desire and an idealized space of female intimacy, a site of proper sociability and a space amenable to pleasurable social commerce between women. Denis Diderot's novel, *La Religieuse* (written 1780; pub. 1786), is perhaps the best known example of the former model. An epistolary novel that began as a practical joke to lure a friend back to Paris, the story is narrated by the young novice Suzanne Simonin. Her story is one of seduction and sadistic abuse in the multiple convents her parents force her to enter. The lurid details of her dual resistance to and complicity in sexual advances of three Mother Superiors both seduce and disturb the reader and express Diderot's disdain toward the monastic institution. Convent erotica, in general, while titillating the viewer or reader, often expressed political and philosophical critiques in the years leading up to the Revolution. In these narratives, and particularly in Diderot's, the

homosocial setting of the convent is pictured as anathema to human nature, and women's same-sex sequestration could only lead to deviant behavior.

My main object of inquiry in this chapter lies, however, on the other end of the spectrum of female sociability. Marie Thérèse Rodet Geoffrin, the famed Parisian salonnière who made a yearly retreat to the Abbaye Saint-Antoine across town, commissioned Hubert Robert in 1773 to paint her circulating through the convent garden with her friends who resided there (Figures 76-78). The three paintings picture the figures promenading in the picturesque garden from canvas to canvas, their movement guided by conversation. I consider the set an "activated triptych" that can be "read" through the lens of eighteenth-century garden theory. In particular, Claude-Henri Watelet's writings on the affective power of the picturesque garden inform my analysis of these paintings of female sociability. Watelet posited that as the body moved through the artfully arranged garden, its various vistas and vignettes had the power to move the beholder, and this impact was heightened when shared with a friend, particularly through the exchange of conversation. Robert's three paintings feature the circumambulation of figures from canvas to canvas, suggesting movement through space and featuring conversation as a primary subject.

While the paintings belong to the tradition of the *fête galante* (Figures 80 and 81), as well as to the traditional conflation of Nature, Woman, and Friendship in allegorical images (Figures 93-95), this theory of sociability and space in the context of the picturesque allows for a more nuanced reading of Robert's canvases. In his representation of Geoffrin and her friends, the convent garden becomes an ideal, private space for the enjoyment of social intimacies. This path of friendship is tread from canvas

to canvas, guided by conversation, and beckons the viewer to visually participate in the promenade. The presence of the three paintings in Geoffrin's hôtel on the other side of town would have served as a reminder of the pleasures she experienced in the gardens at the Abbey with her female friends.

Chapter Three introduces the reader to legendary beauty and socialite Juliette Récamier through François Déjuinne's 1826 painting, *Madame Récamier à l'Abbaye-aux-Bois* (Figure 98). Various objects in the painting call to mind distinct periods of friendship in Récamier's life, leading me to define the work as a "friendship portrait." I open the chapter with a discussion of the artist's direct quotation of Jacques-Louis David's unfinished portrait of Récamier from 1800 (Figure 99), suggesting that it refers to an earlier era of sociability that connected her with the fashionable and publicly visible *merveilleuses* of the Directoire. Récamier ascended into the upper echelons of Parisian social life and salon culture during the 1790s, becoming the "darling" of cosmopolitan society, and I explore the ways in which fashion – especially the gauzy muslin dress that David's portrait depicts her wearing – led to her association with this sartorially conscious group of women. This earlier period of salon sociability solidified her status as one of the most charming and well-known women of Parisian society for decades to follow and would ultimately lead to her friendship with contemporaries like François-René de Chateaubriand, Prince Augustus of Prussia, Germaine de Staël, and other important cultural and political luminaries.

Récamier's unlikely friendship with author Germaine de Staël spanned nearly two decades, and alongside letters, memoirs, and other contemporary descriptions of their relationship, I analyze the traces of their friendship in the various objects Déjuinne

includes in his canvas. My main point of inquiry is the prominent placement of François Gérard's *Corinne au Cap Misène* (Figure 100), which features the protagonist of Staël's novel, *Corinne, ou l'Italy*, performing a poetic improvisation during a climactic episode in which she laments the impending loss of her love interest. Associations between the novel and other painted props in Déjuinne's painting such as the shawl, musical instruments, and the book that Récamier holds in her hand create a complex "portrait" of their friendship. The intertextual references position Récamier as Staël's literary muse and intimate friend, echoing contemporary descriptions of their friendship and gendered characterizations of them as "beauty" and "brains." Ultimately, the painting acts as a nostalgic meditation on their friendship, suggesting memory, reflection, and shared sentiment within the canvas and beyond the frame.

Récamier's abbey apartment and Déjuinne's painstakingly detailed depiction of it also receive attention. The artist's visual inventory depicts the space, its sitters, and its objects, highlighting the multiple functions of the apartment and the activities that occurred within it. The small dwelling consisted of only two rooms and served several functions, fusing different types of domestic rooms into a multi-purpose space: a cabinet for study and writing, a salon for entertaining and conversation, a boudoir, a bedroom, and a parlor for playing music. Like other convents and religious houses, the Abbaye-aux-Bois was also a female homosocial community, an enclave for other women of Récamier's socioeconomic status, and contemporary accounts of the Abbaye reveal other notable women, some of whom held their own salons, occupying the building during the same period. Récamier's home also acted as a primary site for her cultivation of friendship with both men and women and of her well-known salon. Rather than referring

to her identity as a wife to ill-fated banker Jacques Récamier or as an adoptive mother to her niece, Déjuinne's painting characterizes her first and foremost as a friend within this intimate space of sociability.

Chapter Four traces the evolution of the "sister arts," defined as painting, music, and poetry (writing) from allegorical representation to practice. Like paintings that feature friendship in various forms over time, representations of the sister arts evolve from images of abstract allegory to embodiment and creative practice in genre painting and portraiture. My analysis of Marguerite Gérard's *Artist Painting a Portrait of a Musician* (Figure 140) within this trajectory of images includes a discussion of women's "accomplishments" in painting and music (versus more professional creative pursuits), but I argue that the work promotes a more serious image of female creative exchange that connects the artist and musician to more masculine qualities of creative production, including inspiration, enthusiasm, and rational study. I consider the preeminence of touch in the composition and integrate theories of sensibility, music, and the painter's "touche" in my discussion and ultimately argue that Gérard positions the artist as a female Pygmalion who, through studied observation of the model and animation of the musician from studio to canvas, becomes, in effect, an ambitious painter of a genre more akin to Grand Manner painting than small-scale genre painting.

This chapter also considers paintings that feature artistic exchange among women artists in the studio. I offer a brief overview of studio scenes that depict sociability in the atelier, images that suggest artistic lineage from one generation of women artists to the next, and paintings that offer homage from one woman artist to another. I focus on the professional and personal relationship between Academic artist Adélaïde Labille-Guiard

(1749-1803) and her student Marie-Gabrielle Capet (1761-1818). Labille-Guiard was an ardent supporter of other women artists of her time, rallying for their inclusion in the Royal Academy of Painting and Sculpture, and her championing of fellow artists within this creative “sisterhood” extended to her twenty-year friendship and co-habitation with Capet. I discuss the nature of their friendship and their mutual admiration through the lens of two paintings: Labille-Guiard’s *Self-Portrait with Two Pupils* (1785; Figure 177) and Capet’s *Studio Scene: Adélaïde Labille-Guiard Painting the Portrait of Joseph-Marie Vien* (1808; Figure 176). The former features Capet and Marie-Marguerite Carreaux de Rosemond behind Labille-Guiard’s self-portrait of her working at the easel and suggests artistic lineage from the female master to her two students, while emphasizing the femininity of all three. The latter, painted by Capet five years after Labille-Guiard’s death, acts as a posthumous homage to her teacher and friend.

Finally, I briefly mention Madame de Genlis’s writings on women artists and authors to illuminate the ways in which she promotes creative and intellectual women while also warning of the dangers of such public pursuits and the risks of female celebrity. As a highly successful, widely published, and publicly visible woman, Genlis occupied a delicate position as a female intellectual in eighteenth- and early-nineteenth century culture. Her writings on other female “creatives” expose the challenges faced by female professionals working in the public realms of creative and intellectual production.

As a whole, this dissertation challenges the received view of genre painting and portraiture, which has consistently been interpreted through a matrix of heterosexual institutions and relationships that all but ignores the representation of female friendship. I explore how changing notions of the family (in the legal and social sense) related to

female sociability, explore the alternatives that female friendship may have offered women of this period, and investigate how those alternatives were visualized. The topic of female sociability in early modern France has gone largely unnoticed in history, literature, women's studies, and especially in art history. Through my work scholars and students of the "long eighteenth century" will gain a better understanding of the gendered social structures of early modern France, how familial and extra-familial networks positioned women historically, and in what ways female companionship offered a means of agency and action to women of the period.

Chapter One

Oh Father, Where Art Thou? Matriarchy and Friendship In Marguerite Gérard's *Paul et Virginie*

Before art historians were familiar with the extent of Marguerite Gérard's prolific oeuvre, Mario Praz identified her painting, *L'Enfance de Paul et Virginie* (1788-90; Figure 12) as *A Colonial Louisiana Family* and included it in his catalog on conversation pieces.¹ Rather than a conversation piece or portrait, however, the painting represents a scene from Bernardin de Saint-Pierre's famously successful novel, *Paul et Virginie* (1787). The novel's four protagonists—Madame de la Tour and Marguerite and their respective children, Virginia and Paul—appear in a typical format of figures spread out in a shallow horizontal space. Enjoying what appears to be a leisurely day in nature, they engage with one another through gestures, glances, and touch, directing the viewer's eyes from figure to figure and inviting a pleasant meditation on this scene of pastoral peace and plenitude. The setting is a lush and hospitable semi-outdoors space peppered with the comforts of domestic life: a knitting basket, a cradle, simple furnishings, a fan, the family pets, and the domestic servants, which in Gérard's composition are represented by the novel's island slaves, signified by their dark skin, simple cotton clothing, and headscarves.

The initial (mis)classification of the painting highlights the obvious similarities between Gérard's treatment of the composition and the traditional family conversation

¹ Mario Praz, *Conversation Pieces: A Survey of the Informal Group Portraits in Europe and America* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1971), 134.

piece of the period, a combination of the family portrait and genre scene.

Contemporaneous family portraits and conversation pieces highlight the similarities to Gérard's genre painting. Philippe Mercier's (1689-1760) *Belton Conversation Piece* (Figure 13; c. 1725-26; Grantham: Belton House), Johann Zoffany's (1733-1810) portrait of the *Bradshaw Family* (Figure 14; 1769; London: Tate Gallery), and John Singleton Copley's (1738-1815) *Sir William Pepperell and His Family* (Figure 15; 1778; Raleigh: North Carolina Museum of Art) all share similar compositional conventions and displays of familial harmony.² As in Gérard's canvas, an *enchaînement* of tilted heads, outstretched arms, clasped hands, and familiar touch unite the figures together from left to right. In each, the lines between genre and portraiture blur with the informal arrangement of figures, the focus is on an impromptu interruption of activity, and the tightly knit compositions of figures engage with one another before the viewer's watchful eye. This well-worn formula of representing the eighteenth-century "nuclear family" surrounded by domestics in the comforts of their bourgeois lives translates quite well into Gérard's unique interpretation of Paul and Virginia's childhood.

Gérard's painting does, however, contain one glaring omission that the family conversation pieces all include with great prominence and pride: the figure of the father.³ To where have the proud papas who made this happy scene possible disappeared? While the absence of Paul and Virginia's fathers on the island of their mothers' exile is, of course, part of Bernardin's story, Gérard's choice to illustrate the scene in the format of a

² Earlier Dutch examples, such as Gonzales Coques's *A Family Group* (Figure 16), also show an inspiration for the format. For a discussion of the role of seventeenth-century Dutch predecessors of the eighteenth-century conversation piece see Desmond Shawe-Taylor, *The Conversation Piece: Scenes of a Fashionable Life* (London: Royal Collection Publications, 2009).

³ Gérard's painting also avoids any symbolic reference to an absent or deceased father, another detail present in many conversation pieces. It appears that he has been altogether "erased" from the untraditional family represented on the canvas.

family conversation piece further highlights this omission. This absence persists in a striking number of her genre paintings, and the grouping of mothers, maids, and children in a similar compositional, “conversational” arrangement establishes a definitive pattern in her oeuvre (Figures 17-21).⁴ In many of Gérard’s paintings featuring women and children, the father or other male figure is often made present through suggestion or substitution in the form of a letter, a treasured miniature, or a hanging portrait, but the prominent role he assumes in conversation pieces and genre scenes is largely diminished. Instead, the viewer’s focus shifts away from the typical family composition of mother, father, children, servant, and other members of the extended family and finds itself in a dialogue with strictly female company and companionship, carried out within the intimate realms of domesticity and childrearing.

Gérard’s “bread and butter” was this type of painting that featured mothers, maids, and children in the hermetically sealed bourgeois interior or pastoral space, and it was she who seems to have established this subject matter as a sub-genre of genre painting during the final three decades of the eighteenth century.⁵ Like her artistic

⁴ There are innumerable illustrations featuring this figural “formula” of two women and children in Gérard’s oeuvre, and I can only illustrate a small percentage of that number in the scope of this chapter. For a comprehensive catalogue of Gérard’s oeuvre, see Sally Wells-Robertson, “Marguerite Gérard, 1761-1837,” Ph.D. Dissertation, New York University, 1978. Some of Wells-Robertson’s attributions have been discounted in the 30 years since she completed her tome on Gérard, and not all of the illustrations are completely legible, but it still remains the most comprehensive volume on Gérard’s oeuvre. For other information on and reproduction of Gérard’s works, see A. Ananoff, “Propos sur les peintures de Marguerite Gérard,” *Gazette des Beaux-Arts* 94, no. 1331 (1979): 211-218; Jeanne Doin, “Marguerite Gérard,” *Gazette des Beaux-Arts* (1912) : 429-452 ; Sally Wells-Roberston, “Marguerite Gérard,” in *French Painting, 1774-1830: The Age of Revolution* (Paris: Grand Palais; Detroit, MI: Detroit Institute of Art; New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1974), “Marguerite Gérard,” in *Women Artists, 1550-1950* (Los Angeles: Los Angeles Museum of Art, 1976), and “Marguerite Gérard et les Fragonard,” *Bulletin de la Société e l’histoire et de l’art français* (1977): 179-189; and Andrea Zanella, *Trois femmes peintres dans la siècle de Fragonard* (Grasse: Musée International Parfumerie, 1998).

⁵ I make this claim because of the incredible proliferation of this type of genre painting in her oeuvre. While artists like Louis-Léopold Boilly, Jean-Baptiste Mallet, Jean-Frédéric Schall, and Nicolas Lavreince also took on the theme in their genre painting, they did so later than Gérard and with much less enthusiasm and repetition on the configuration of female companionship. Gérard became known for her

predecessors and contemporaries, she painted families and lovers, but her oeuvre marks itself as unique in its repetitive insistence on feminine spaces and activities with mere hints of a masculine presence. Chardin painted serene, moralizing scenes of maids and children in the bourgeois home. Boucher played with the image of nude, frolicking nymphs in his mythological take on female allure. Fragonard focused on the lover's tryst and moments of amorous exaltation alongside the sweet erotics of eighteenth-century family life. And Greuze gave viewers the visual *drame bourgeois* that so famously seduced Diderot. While narrative, compositional, and thematic elements from each of these bodies of work are clearly present in Gérard's oeuvre—families, lovers, wives, husbands, children, maids, the bourgeois interior, familiar domestic props, and emotive narrative scenes—her focus on women engaging with one another in the realm of the home and over the act of cultural production and biological re-production sets her works apart. Gérard transforms the nude, frolicking nymphs of Boucher into tangible, concrete women who share maternal duties and camaraderie within the painstakingly detailed bourgeois interior.

In this chapter, I argue that the two mothers in Gérard's painting represent the heads of an idyllic matriarchy established in Bernardin de Saint-Pierre's *Paul et Virginie* during the childhood of the title characters. The intimate friendship of Madame de la

couplings of women with children as the following quote from the Salon of 1804 expresses: "Encore cette blonde et cette brune qui ne changent point ! Encore cette brune et cette blonde que les amateurs étonnés retrouvent chaque année les mêmes, et avec le secours desquelles Mlle Gérard a fait depuis 15 ans tant de ces petite compositions charmantes par les détails, le choix des sujets, et je ne sais quoi de féminin qui l'est plus que tout le reste dans les ouvrages des femmes !" [M.B. 158, "Salon de 1804," *Journal des débats* (Fonds Deloynes, Tome. XXXII, 880)] Another piece of criticism also stresses the repetition of the theme that official critics were tiring of, although the collecting public didn't seem to share the same feelings and continued to purchase Gérard's paintings throughout her career and after her death. "Toujours des petits chiens, des enfans, des mères et de jolies bonnes! Toujours des bonnes, des mères, des petits chiens, et de jolies enfans. Toujours, toujours la même chose !" [*Arlequin au Muséum*, no. II, An XII (Fonds Deloynes XXXI, 866)].

Tour and Marguerite serves as the foundation of the microcosmic society formed within this untraditional family on l'Île de France. Their companionship represents an idealized and sympathetic model of female intimacy, unconstrained by class and grounded in nature and motherhood within the enclave of the exotic island. Similarly, Gérard's domestic interiors featuring mothers, maids, and children suggest an idealized version of female camaraderie that crosses class lines and unfolds within the secluded space of the home in the absence of a father figure. This idealized vision is not without its ambiguity, however, and the potential for transgression beyond the boundary of the polite often lurks beneath the images. Moreover, their ability to become friends is in part fueled by their mutual status as "outcasts" of French society, each "exiled" on l'Île de France as single mothers. Last, but not least important, I consider the representation of race in Gérard's prominent positioning of the black slave at the apex of the triangular compositional arrangement and reflect on the intersecting discourses of gender, sexuality, race, and maternity that underlie her presence in the painting.

Paul et Virginie

To French readers in 1788, the names Paul and Virginia, two seemingly simple appellations, evoked passion, innocence, nature, exoticism, sentimentality, love, romance, tragedy, terror, beauty, and much more. This was the year that Bernardin de Saint-Pierre published his novel *Paul et Virginie* as an appendix to his successful *Études de la Nature*.⁶ Set in Mauritius (known as l'Île de France at the time the story was published),

⁶ This text was originally published to great acclaim in 1784. Henri d'Almeras discusses the history of the book's publication in *Paul et Virginie de Bernardin de Saint Pierre—Histoire d'un Roman* (Paris: Société française d'éditions littéraires et techniques, 1937), 122.

the narrative centers on the eponymous characters from their infancy through adolescence, raised by mothers whose similar fates, long-term presence on the colonial island, and likeness of hearts lead to an enduring friendship. Both women find themselves on the island without a husband, Madame de la Tour widowed after arrival, and Marguerite seduced by false promises and then abandoned during pregnancy and fleeing her homeland in moral and physical exile. The two women raise Paul and Virginia as brother and sister, but as the story develops, the burgeoning feelings of love and sexuality between the children, as well as the powerful tug of French civilization, ultimately lead to Virginia's demise. Themes of culture versus nature, innocence versus corruption, and love versus cruelty are but a few of the major emphases of the narrative surrounding the relationship between the surrogate siblings.⁷

While the complexities and titillations of the bond between Paul and Virginia are clearly the main concern of the text, another significant relationship exists within the story, that of the friendship between their mothers: Madame de la Tour and Marguerite. The following excerpts from the novel suggest a sense of mutual dependency and emotional connection shared by the women, especially during their children's infancy:

United by the tie of similar wants, and the sympathy of similar misfortunes, they gave each other the tender names of companion, friend, sister. They had but one will, one interest, one table. All their possessions

⁷ Many books and articles have been published on *Paul et Virginie*, addressing its popularity in eighteenth-century literary culture, its infiltration into the mass market of luxury goods, analysis of the plot and characters, and the novel's relationship to contemporary historical issues. See François Cheval and T.-N. Tchakaloff. *Souvenirs de Paul et Virginie: Un paysage aux valeurs morales* (Paris: A. Biro, 1995); Jean Michel Racault, ed. *Etudes sur Paul et Virginie et l'oeuvre de Bernardin de Saint-Pierre* (Paris: Diffusion, Didier Erudition, 1986); M. De Favières, Rudolphe Kreutzer, and Bernardin de Saint-Pierre, *Paul et Virginie, comédie, en trois actes, en prose, mêlée d'ariettes* (Paris: Brunet, 1793); Paul Toinet, *Répertoire iconographique de Paul et Virginie de Bernardin de Saint-Pierre* (Paris: Le vieux papier, 1959); Peter-Christian Wegner, "200 Jahre Paul et Virginie," *Weltkunst* 59, no. 2 (Jan. 15, 1989): 120-125; Ian Henderson, "Portrait of a Lady : Mary Morthon Allport's Paul and Virginia," *Australian and New Zealand Journal of Art* 1, no. 2 (2000): 61-79 ; and Gordon Norton Ray, *The Art of the French Illustrated Book, 1700-1914* (New York: Pierpont Morgan Library; Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1982).

were in common. And if sometimes a passion more ardent than friendship awakened in their hearts the pang of unavailing anguish, a pure religion, united with chaste manners, drew their affections towards another life: as the trembling flame rises towards heaven, when it no longer finds any ailment on earth.⁸

The duties of maternity became a source of additional happiness to these affectionate mothers, whose mutual friendship gained new strength at the sight of their children, equally the offspring of an ill-fated attachment. They delighted in washing their infants together in the same bath, in putting them to rest in the same cradle, and in changing the maternal bosom at which they received nourishment. “My friend,” cried Madame de la Tour, “we shall each of us have two children, and each of our children will have two mothers.”

The language Bernardin uses to describe their unique bond as mothers and friends paints a river of sympathy flowing between the two, of a bond so deep as to confuse the relation between family and friendship, to highlight the porous boundaries between the passions of the soul and those of the body and the means by which to control them, and to display the importance of childrearing in cementing both their emotional and physical bonds to one another, even going so far as to breastfeed one another’s child. In these passages, the delineation between friendship and motherhood becomes blurred, and the reader is left with the impression of a new, different type of family unit, one that rejects any need for a

⁸ This and the following passage are from Bernardin de Saint Pierre, *Paul and Virginia* (McLean, VA: IndyPublish), 7 and 8, respectively.

“Elles-mêmes, unies par les mêmes besoins, ayant éprouvé des maux presque semblables, se donnant les doux noms d’amie, de compagne et de soeur, n’avaient qu’une volonté, qu’un intérêt, qu’une table. Tout entre elles était commun. Seulement, si d’anciens feux, plus vifs que ceux de l’amitié, se réveillaient dans leur âme, une religion pure, aidée par des mœurs chastes, les dirigeaient vers une autre vie, comme la flamme qui s’envole vers le ciel, lorsqu’elle n’a plus d’aliment sur la terre.” Original French from Bernardin de Saint-Pierre, *Paul et Virginie et la Chaumière indienne* (Paris: L. Curmer, 1838), 23-24.

“Les devoirs de la nature ajoutaient encore au bonheur de leur société. Leur amitié mutuelle redoublait à la vue de leurs enfants, fruit d’un amour également infortuné. Elles prenaient plaisir à les mettre ensemble dans le même bain et à les coucher dans le même berceau. Souvent elles les changeaient de lait. ‘Mon amie,’ disait Madame de La Tour, ‘chacune de nous aura deux enfants, et chacun de nos enfants aura deux mères.’” Original French from Bernardin de Saint-Pierre, *Paul et Virginie et La Chaumière indienne* (Paris: L. Curmer, 1838), 25.

father figure and instead is fully functional—both physically and emotionally—with two mothers as heads of household.

References to Madame de la Tour and Marguerite's friendship are subtly woven throughout the text as the story of Paul and Virginia develops, but their relationship during their children's infancy is most striking in the author's portrayal of an idyllic island setting and the pastoral ease with which the two matriarchal figures not only subsist but also thrive in the absence of any father figure or direct symbol of patriarchal authority in their family circle. The women settle in a hospitable valley on the island, their modest cottages situated on the border of each of their plots of land so as to be always near one another. With the help of two slaves, Marie and Domingo, a microcosmic paradise develops, Domingo making the best use of the land to cultivate food, Marie preparing meals and tending to the poultry, and the mothers of the house spinning cotton for clothing. The island life is characterized by its simplicity, a focus on sustenance rather than luxury, and the virtues of living in nature without want.

After its debut, artists frequently illustrated *Paul et Virginie*, and especially scenes from their childhood. Illustrated editions of the text, individual drawings and prints, home wares such as plates and other decorative objects, and even fabric featured episodes from various parts of the story.⁹ The childhood of Paul and Virginia was one of the most common scenes that artists depicted, and the manner of illustrating it highlights the

⁹ D'Almeras, *Paul et Virginie de Bernardin de Saint Pierre*, 140. The 1806 edition, by subscription, in quarto, was illustrated by the prime artists of the time: Gerard, Girodet, Isabey, Lafitte, Moreau le Jeune, Prudhon and engraved by Ribault, Bourgeon, Bovinet, Mecou, Pillement, Prot, and Roget. It sold less than expected, and instead of making Bernardin rich, it ruined him. It remains one of the most stunning collections of scenes illustrating Bernardin de Saint Pierre's novel.

friendship between Marguerite and Madame de la Tour that grows from their common circumstance and duty of raising their children on the island.

The most popular format for illustrating Paul and Virginia's childhood can be seen in Louis Lafitte's *L'Enfance de Paul et Virginie*, from the well-known 1806 Didot edition of the novel, picturing the "family"—two mothers and two babies—as a tight unit within the composition (Figure 22).¹⁰ Madame de la Tour occupies the center of the composition, her breast exposed in a motif reminiscent of the classical figure of Charity, her modest, chaste expression directing the viewer's gaze downward to the two babies who lovingly reach to embrace one another. The dark-haired Paul crawls halfway out of his crib to reach toward Virginia, and this upward diagonal extends through Virginia's arm, which points toward her mother's exposed breast. Even further beyond this diagonal sweep are the peaks of the mountains aptly named "Les Trois Mammelles." Madame de la Tour links Marguerite into this triangular composition with her hand affectionately resting on her thigh. In return, Marguerite gazes adoringly upward at her friend, an expression that might be used to depict a believer looking upon a saint or other holy figure or a lover gazing at his or her beloved. This tight-knit, triangular grouping of figures recalls images of Mary, St. Anne, Christ and John the Baptist and, in particular, Leonardo's Burlington House Cartoon (Figure 23). Similar to Leonardo's composition, this illustration highlights the playful interaction between the infants in the foreground and the deep admiration and emotion between the women in the background. Their bodies are bound to one another through the interlacing of arms, gestures, legs, and gazes.

¹⁰ This illustration was not the first to use this composition, but I begin with it because of the general familiarity with the 1806 Didot edition and the impressive cycle of engravings that it has as illustrations to Bernardin's text. The earliest illustration I have found using this compositional arrangement is by Jean-Frédéric Schall, from 1791.

This quotation—whether intentional or not—of Leonardo’s drawing presents the narrative scene in both religious and secular terms: religious in its reference to the image of the holy quartet and the evocation of saintly emotion, and secular in its emphasis on nature and focus on the lushness and hospitability of the landscape. It also suggests a secular version of the Virgin’s breast, substituting the holy figure with Rousseau’s ideal mother, one who breastfeeds her own child.

Attuned to the text, this illustration of *L’Enfance de Paul et Virginie* visually establishes a sentimental and sympathetic rhetoric of friendship. The emotional and physical bond of Madame de la Tour and Marguerite, so sensitively described by Bernardin in the quotes above and throughout the novel, is here reiterated in the clasping of hands, gently tilted heads, tender glances, and general familial harmony within the hospitable natural setting. The choice of setting and composition in the image ties this form of friendship to three principal entities – reproduction, nature, and the domestic – through its inclusion of the babies, the peaks of the Trois Mammelles, and the humble cabin to the left of the group. In this illustration, the glue that binds is the sentimental—the sympathetic gaze between figures, the hand on the leg, and the likeness of the souls that have brought this paradise into being from tragedy at the hands of men and the patriarchal society that has disadvantaged them.

Other illustrations of this episode of the novel repeat this composition quite freely and with subtle variations. Jean-Frédéric Schall’s earlier version (and likely an inspiration for later illustrations, including the Lafitte engraving from the Didot edition) of *L’Enfance de Paul et Virginie*, engraved by Augustin Legrand for the 1791 edition of *Paul et Virginie* (Figure 24), places the quartet in a similar composition, replete with the

triangular arrangement of figures, family pets and livestock, the Trois Mammelles, and Domingo and Marie toiling in the background. Again, a diagonal line and the embracing children link the figures of the mothers together, all coexisting as a happy family in this pastoral paradise. Schall, a contemporary of Marguerite Gérard, follows the style of both his and Gérard's genre scenes and presents the figures in an even more hermetic space than does the later Lafitte illustration. The expanse of the Lafitte landscape with the looming Mammelles in the background is, in Schall's work, a lush, shallower, more claustrophobic space that envelops the figures within the trees and in front of the cottage, much like the majority of Gérard's genre scenes do. Another example that is also strikingly similar to the Burlington House Cartoon is *Chacune de nous avait deux enfants* (Figure 25), an illustration that brings the quartet even closer into focus with a shallow foreground and the framing device of the foliage. These compositions are also repeated in a design for a *toile de Jouy* by Jean-Baptiste Huet (Figure 26) and in a miniature painting from the end of the eighteenth century (Figure 27), attesting to the popularity of this episode of the novel as well as the composition used to illustrate it. Gérard's scene of *L'Enfance*, and, similarly, her numerous genre scenes that follow the same formula perhaps contributed to the establishment of this visual trope of female bonding within the trilogy of reproduction, domesticity, and nature.

This triumvirate of intimate connections that appears within many of Gérard's canvases is part of an idealized and polite model of female friendship that emerged in French visual culture of the late-eighteenth and early-nineteenth centuries.¹¹ By

¹¹ This model of female intimacy has been written about at length by Elizabeth Susan Wahl in *Invisible Relations: Representations of Female Intimacy in the Age of Enlightenment* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1999).

idealized, I mean a form of female socialization that was culturally sanctioned, devoid of overt sexual expression between women who were engaged in the properly feminine pursuits that kept women within the domestic roles appropriate to the eighteenth-century bourgeois lady. The polite model of friendship included a new language of same-sex companionship, which espoused a “self-consciously idealized and periphrastic rhetoric of intimacy” to sustain a proper degree of modesty within the boundaries of codified social exchange (this in contrast to the opposite model of women drawn to each other by sexual, physical desires).¹² As I shall demonstrate, in genre painting, the artist typically depicts this idealized, virtuous model of female companionship within the domestic space of the bourgeois interior and over maternal and domestic activities in similar format to Gérard’s *L’Enfance de Paul et Virginie*. Ultimately this and other genre scenes present a newly emerging language of female affection and friendship, one that both “performed” certain gendered expectations of women, while at the same time developing a visual language of companionship within the sphere of the domestic and, very often, the maternal. Of course, no discourse or image is absolute, and, as will become apparent, the “ideal” is not always maintained in image or text.

Crossing Boundaries: Intimacy, Maternity, and Class

Gérard’s *Une femme allaitant son enfant regardée par son amie* (1802; Figure 28), painted fifteen years after *L’Enfance de Paul et Virginie*, offers a visually parallel example of female bonding in its emphasis on female intimacies developed and strengthened through childrearing, and here, breastfeeding. This genre painting similarly glorifies motherly affection and sisterly bonding by recycling the figures of Marguerite

¹² Ibid., 78.

and Madame de la Tour and transporting them from the island enclave back into the French domestic interior. No longer specific fictional characters, the blond and brunette that appear in so many of Gérard's paintings become a "type" that is repeated from canvas to canvas. The painting features the two women seated on a neoclassical chaise, one embracing the other while one breastfeeds a plump, healthy infant. The strong lighting acts as a spotlight on the intimate scene, illuminating it for the viewer in all of its affectionate glory. The contrast between the more humbly clothed *nourrice*, dressed in the simple, hooded garb of a peasant or maid, and the more elegantly clad Empire beauty is again made clear by the artist as it was in *L'Enfance de Paul et Virginie*. Blond contrasts with brunette, the simple hood with the golden diadem, the colorful patterns with the gauzy white muslin. From all visual accounts, these women are not equal—they are defined as different in relationship to one another. However, the sentimental is again a major part of the painting, as it was in scenes from Paul and Virginia's childhood, and a gentle arm around the shoulder, the sympathetic leaning and touching of heads, the presence of a pink rose, and parallel directional gazes toward the child all indicate friendship, likeness of hearts, and a shared purpose. This purpose that unites the two seemingly different women in friendship is, of course, the suckling child who returns their gazes and completes this serene scene of domesticity, reproduction, and motherhood.

While the painting's current title would suggest that the two women are friends, the title that appeared with the painting in the Salon of 1802 was *Mère allaitant son enfant* and was later renamed *Une mere de famille voyant allaiter son enfant par une nourrice*. The women's costume indicates that one of the women is the mother and the

other the wet nurse. However, the shift of titles over time indicates a sense of confusion in the true relationship between the women. Not just a contract to work for the family, this wet nurse and mother are intimately connected through the body—one gave birth to the child, and the other sustained and nourished it throughout infancy—each appearing to be emotionally invested in the child through their gentle body language, physical affection, and soft gaze, and clearly linked to one another as female intimates in the process. The structure of the interior space in which these interactions take place further supports a feeling of female intimacy and maternal connectivity. Like many of Gérard's genre scenes, the figures are confined to a shallow interior space, closely surrounded by domestic objects—ornate mirrors, a scrolling wood and velvety cushioned couch, a vase-like receptacle, and the darkness of the room's background space. The comforts of domestic life and the bright spotlight highlight the central figures in such a way that makes the viewer feel like she is looking through a peephole into this intimate scene. Even the cat participates in looking on, perched on the fluffy cushion next to the women and present in many of the artist's genre paintings as a vicarious spectator to the scene.

The *nourrice*, or wet nurse, played an important, if not controversial, role in the family. The employment of the *nourrice* was deeply rooted in French history as far back as the thirteenth century, when an early *bureau des recommanderesses* was begun in Paris to arrange for the hiring of nurses to families.¹³ It was common among the whole range of social classes in eighteenth-century France to hire wet nurses. Wealthy Parisians found their *nourrice* through personal recommendations, carefully choosing her before the birth of the baby and often settled on one living close to the city so they could keep a

¹³ Cissie Fairchilds, *Domestic Enemies: Servants and Their Masters in Old Regime France* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1983), 194.

careful eye on their child and visit often to mark the baby's progress. The wealthiest of parents could pay a wet nurse to live in the home. Less affluent families would visit the *bureau des recommanderesses* after the birth of the child, where they would choose a nurse based on her physical appearance, confirmation that she could produce milk, and would even pay for a medical exam at their own expense. Child and nurse would then return to the countryside where the *nourrice* lived, and the parents would receive updates from afar.¹⁴ At the lowest socioeconomic level were children abandoned by their parents and taken to the Hôpital des Enfants Trouvés and later to the Maison de Couche at the Hôpital for nursing.

Women from all classes hired *nourrices* during the eighteenth century, and for several reasons.¹⁵ When a new mother had difficulty producing milk or breastfeeding, there were no known successful alternative diets for her baby. Most working, artisanal women simply could not afford to nurse, the economic necessity of survival prohibiting them from taking time off of work for their newborn. In some discourses, nursing was seen as vulgar and degrading and was believed to ruin a woman's figure and stress a lady's delicate constitution. Within the marriage itself, the physical demands of breastfeeding on a woman's body and the belief that intercourse and lactation should not be practiced at the same time, men would have to wait longer to regain their marital privileges. From a religious point of view, this refusal might lead to the husband's immorality, turning to adultery or masturbation to satisfy his unfulfilled sexual urges.

¹⁴ Nancy Senior, "Aspects of Infant Feeding in Eighteenth-Century France," *Eighteenth-Century Studies* 16, no. 4 (Summer 1983): 370.

¹⁵ Fairchilds, *Domestic Enemies*, 194.

At the same moment that women were hiring wet nurses to nourish their newborns for many economic, social, and sexual reasons, Rousseau was arguing against employing a *nourrice*.¹⁶ He cited concerns on moral, social, and economic grounds for his vehement disapproval of mothers opting not to breastfeed their own children (this from a man who abandoned his five children to an orphanage). For one, it was believed that a woman's temperament, passions, bad qualities, and diseases were transferred through the humors in her milk.¹⁷ Concern for infant mortality was another issue, as many children of the less wealthy families who were sent to wet nurses in the countryside suffered a relatively high mortality rate due to poor conditions or inappropriate substitutions for breast milk. If a wet nurse got pregnant and lost her milk, she might feed the baby under her care food that was indigestible without the parents knowing of the substitution. Peasant women were overworked themselves with their own domestic duties, farm chores, and families, so neglect and carelessness were also major problems for children sent off to a nurse in the countryside. Also of importance was the development of family ties, and Rousseau (among others) believed that children entrusted to a wet nurse would miss out on the essential bonds between parents and children that were becoming mainstream in the newly emerging culture of the early modern family.¹⁸ Instead of mother-child bonding, this interaction between infant and food supplier was feared to be an economic transaction made between parents and wet nurse—one of debtor and creditor—rather than an authentic bonding between infant and parent.

¹⁶ See Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Émile ou de l'éducation* (1762) and *Les Confessions* (1770, published 1782).

¹⁷ Senior, "Aspects of Infant Feeding," 381.

¹⁸ Sarah Maza, *Servants and Masters in Eighteenth-Century France, The Uses of Loyalty* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1983), 289.

Discourses on breastfeeding also leveled harsh accusations of frivolity and selfishness toward women who hired wet nurses, and often at aristocratic women who had the luxury of being able to choose to send their child to a *nourrice* rather than doing so out of pure economic necessity. The argument that even animals nurse their own offspring was another popular ammunition aimed at the practice of hiring a *nourrice*, one that spanned both the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries by male writers and doctors such as Guérin (1675), Bermingham (1750), Vandermonde (1756), and Saucerette.¹⁹ Children nursed by their mothers were also more likely to survive infancy, and, generally speaking, a child cared for by its own parents was far more likely to thrive than one cared for by strangers. The arguments for a mother breastfeeding her own child were, then, strongly based on moral, physical, and developmental considerations of the child and mother.

At the same time these discourses were emerging, images promoting maternal breast feeding and ill effects of employing a wet nurse began to trickle into the Salon and were distributed in prints.²⁰ Étienne Aubry's *Farewell to the Wet Nurse* (Figure 29) is perhaps the most well-known of such images. The painting features a wealthy, presumably urban couple picking up their toddler from a country nurse. While the husbands, on either end of the centrally positioned mother, wet nurse, and baby, look on from the periphery, the baby is passed between the two women. The child's beseeching

¹⁹ Nancy Senior calls this the "Jungle Beast Argument" in "Aspects of Infant Feeding," 379.

²⁰ See Patricia R. Ivinski, Harry C. Payne, Kathryn Calley Galitz, and Richard Rand, *Farewell to the Wet Nurse. Etienne Aubry and Images of Breast-Feeding in Eighteenth-Century France* (Williamstown, MA: Sterling and Francine Clark Art Institute, 1999); Mary Sheriff, "Fragonard's Erotic Mothers and the Politics of Reproduction," in *Eroticism and the Body Politic*, ed. Lynn Hunt (Baltimore and London: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1991), 14-40; and Carol Duncan, "Happy Mothers and Other New Ideas in French Art," *The Art Bulletin* 55, no. 4 (December 1973): 570-583.

gaze toward the wet nurse and his outstretched hand imply resistance to his return home, suggesting the unnatural attachments to a non-familial figure. Images of “The Happy Mother” (Figures 30 and 31) reiterate the natural pleasures of breastfeeding, depicting women in a haze of bodily and emotional serenity, Augustin de Saint Aubin’s mother figure almost appearing drunk in her state of relaxation. Even the government stood behind the cause, providing lower-class mothers with financial assistance so they could, in effect, enjoy a “maternity leave” after the birth of their children. *The Encouragement of Maternal Nursing* (Figure 32) features the distribution of aid to clamoring mothers whose children cling to their bodies and breasts. Behind them loom the sharp teeth of the “Prison Pour les Mois Nourrices,” equating the early months of a child’s life with a wet nurse to a prison sentence, its crumbling medieval edifice a clear metaphor for the declining practice.

While the relationship between *nourrice* and child is the necessary focus of most studies on breastfeeding in the eighteenth century, the status of the wet nurse within the family—and here I am talking about a wet nurse in a more affluent family who would have had frequent contact with her either in her home or in their own if they had the means to hire one to live with them—is important to this study on female friendship, and in particular, the relationship of the mother to the *nourrice*.²¹ More than any other household servant, the *nourrice* was acknowledged to share a special emotional tie that went beyond the typical duties of servants in the household. As Cissie Fairchilds discusses in *Domestic Enemies*, there was a quasi-mystical bond between the child and the woman who fed him, and, as mentioned above, the child would absorb the character

²¹ Live-in wet nurses were rare and would only have been found among the aristocracy. Most often, the child was sent to the nurse’s home. Fairchilds, *Domestic Enemies*, 195.

and personality traits of the wet nurse through her breast milk, thus becoming as much her child as that of the biological parents.²² Doctor Jacques Gillemeau stated in the seventeenth century that,

It is an accepted thing that milk...has the power to make children resemble their nurses in mind and body, just as the seed makes them resemble their mothers and father.²³

Thus the initial roles of biological parents and subsequent duties of a wet nurse went hand in hand with one another. The intimate bond between nurse and child also extended between the two families involved, the employer sometimes supporting other members of the nurse's family and the nurse's own children believed to have similar personality traits acquired through her milk.²⁴ Just as Paul and Virginia were suckled at both of their mother's breasts, *frères and soeurs de lait* were thought to have a special emotional bond and perfectly matched temperaments with one another. This, of course, was the ideal of the wet nurse, the type that Gérard pictures in many of her genre scenes—a family finding a perfectly suitable *nourrice* with lovely personality traits and upstanding morality, one that was within a reasonable distance to monitor the treatment and progress of the young child, and one who generally fit in with the family for the best interest of the baby.²⁵

²² Ibid., 195.

²³ Quoted from Ibid., 195.

²⁴ Ibid., 195.

²⁵ It is interesting that while women like Madame le Rebours, who experienced the death of several children while in the care of a nurse, successfully switched to nursing her own children and wrote an advice manual about it, among more “official” writers on the subject like Rousseau were championing a return to the maternal breast, scenes of mothers and wet nurses continued to be popular to buyers in the art market. *Avis aux Mères qui veulent nourrir leurs enfants* (Paris: P.F. Didot, 1770; first published in Utrecht in 1767).

The bodily and sentimental intimacy shared between mother and nurse becomes even more obvious when Gérard's scenes of this subject (Figures 28, 33-35) are compared to contemporary family portraits that display the same compositional conventions (Figures 36-37). The eighteenth-century family portrait had, by the latter part of the century, shed many of its former formalities and stiffness in favor of a casual, sentimentalized view of the loving family characterized by companionate—rather than contractual—marriages and a new emphasis on the role of the child within the family unit. Portraits like those of the Desmoulins and Boyer-Fonfrède families show their sitters engaging playfully and affectionately with one another, putting their familial love on display and emphasizing its naturalness. The two adult figures are linked through the child within a chain of gesture and gaze, indicating their intimate relationship that revolves around the child who holds center stage. The child – and the sentiment attached to the baby and between the adults – is the glue that holds the scene (and the figures) together. The Desmoulins portrait, in particular, foregrounds the intimacy of the family with its stark black background, highlighting the figures' loving facial expressions and gentle touch. Camille Desmoulins, a Revolutionary who would be guillotined only two years after the family portrait was painted, appears to pause from his work to enjoy the private moment of familial affection. The strong diagonal created by the three family members is a compositional device that Gérard's genre paintings and Vincent's portrait of the Boyer-Fonfrède family also repeat, encouraging the viewer to study each individual within the harmonious whole. The Academic tenet of *enchaînement* in such images resonates with intimacy and closeness, ideal qualities of the “new” eighteenth-century family.

Carol Duncan's 1973 groundbreaking article on "Happy Mothers" describes the numerous paintings and portraits featuring contented mothers, fathers, and children as promoting "marriage as a state that satisfies both sexual instincts and social demands for stability and order."²⁶ The new ideal featured the virtuous wife who found bliss in her maternal duties and in pleasing her husband, and images like Moreau le Jeune's *The Delights of Motherhood* (1777; Figure 38) and Greuze's *The Well-Loved Mother* (1765-1769; Figure 39) reiterate these ideals.²⁷ In *The Delights*, a happy family focuses their attention on their writhing tot in a lushly landscaped garden that is reminiscent of Watteau's *fête galante* and other scenes that depict amorous trysts. The pleasures of romantic love, though, are both supplanted and enhanced with the addition of a child, who receives the undivided attention of all of the figures in the scene. Similarly, Greuze's painting, at first glance, reveals a proud father gesturing toward his brood of children showering his wife/their mother with hugs and kisses. As Diderot famously wrote of this painting at the Salon of 1765,

This [painting] is excellent both for the talent it demonstrates and for its moral content; it preaches population, and paints a sympathetic picture of the happiness and advantages deriving from domesticity; it announces to any man with soul and feelings: Maintain your family comfortably, make children with your wife, as many as you can, but only with her, and you can be sure of a happy home.²⁸

Diderot's observations sum up the ideal nuclear family in their emphasis on conjugal bliss and place the patriarch at the apex of the family union, responsible for the creation

²⁶ Duncan, "Happy Mothers," 572.

²⁷ Greuze's original painting is in a private collection with limited access. No reproductions of the painting exist in art historical publications, and the print of the painting is the standard image used to illustrate scholarly discussions of the original work.

²⁸ John Goodman, trans., *Diderot on Art, Volume I: The Salon of 1765 and Notes on Painting* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1995), 106.

of the scene and its successful maintenance over time. This arrangement is not only good for individual family members, but ultimately benefits the larger social order in its cultivation of future active members of society.

These pleasures of family life, and especially those experienced by the mother, also extended beyond emotional satisfaction. Women faced a double bind as mothers, particularly with the increasingly popular duty of breastfeeding her own child and attending to the conjugal pleasuring of her husband. On the one hand, the belief that breast feeding and sex were incompatible with one another gave women the choice to either sustain their child at the expense of her husband's moral and physical well-being or to pleasure her husband at the expense of her baby's health.²⁹ Moreover, breastfeeding had, since at least the seventeenth century, been understood as pleasurable and sexually satisfying to the nursing woman, her sensitive nerves tickled to the brink of orgasm by the suckling child.³⁰ With the moral imperative to breastfeed, these two phenomena effectively placed the lover/father (temporarily) on the sidelines, thus creating the child as a stand-in for the male heterosexual lover.

What can we make of these discourses on family life, maternity, and sexuality when the father is replaced with another woman in scenes like Gérard's? A striking similarity exists between the structure and "message" of Gérard's genre scenes and images of sentimental, happy families. Much like the Desmoulins and Boyer-Fonfrède family portraits, Gérard's two (female) figures are bookends on either side of a happy baby reaching out for the one of the figures, typically the one who will offer the child

²⁹ Sheriff, "Fragonard's Erotic Mothers," 21.

³⁰ Ibid., 2.

sustenance of some kind (the breast, a cuddle, etc.). Gérard's scenes do away with the father who physically helped produce the child and replace it with a maid or a wet nurse, effectively "standing in," pictorially, for the male influence (physical and emotional). Often in Gérard's genre paintings, the two women are differentiated by hair color and clothing, maintaining difference that, in the family portrait, was upheld by the male-female gender dichotomy. This "swap" of father for maid, wet nurse, or friend, by preserving the conventions of the sentimental, intimate family portrait, transfers the intimacy to two women, who experience it in a similar manner over the child or children in the scene.

On the one hand, Gérard's simple scenes of the mother, nurse or maid, and the token baby evoke an idyllic vision of domestic intimacies between women – emotionally and physically – over the presence of children and the act of nursing in the comforts of the upper bourgeois home. The scenes are shiny, happy, and, seemingly non-sexual in terms of female intimacies. Emphasis in each is on exchange – physical, emotional, or nurturing – between two women within the intimate sphere of the sequestered interior space. Generally speaking, while the husband and father may be absent from the scene, the women's intense mutual focus on the external "object" of the child ensures that they will not turn toward one another and overstep the boundaries of the "polite" in this secluded space. By coding the maternal-themed genre paintings in reference to the heterosexual family unit, Gérard is able to present the ideal of female friendship and intimacy within the traditional codes of the heterosexual family portrait.

On the other hand, the social duty and perceived eroticism of motherhood and the "conjugal duty" of marriage complicates a single or direct reading of Gérard's

“idealized” scenes of women and children.³¹ No doubt Gérard’s paintings could be read from a traditional Rousseauist and populationist point of view in their repetitive demonstration of the pure delights of motherhood and maternal nurturance. But how can we reconcile the seemingly contradictory topoi of motherhood and sexual satisfaction in such paintings that feature *two women* in the guise of the modern nuclear family? Might it suggest the old advertising jingle, “Double your pleasure, double your fun”? With pleasure in mind, is the child the surrogate for the adult male partner that is missing in the scene? Is the replacement of the father with a female friend or wet nurse perhaps suggestive of homosexual coupling between the two women? In the end, and in tune with the story of Marguerite and Madame de la Tour in these scenes, there is ultimately no need for the man after the woman has conceived.

The emotional intimacy and equality that the women in Gérard’s “maternal” paintings share is evident in many scenes that omit children and instead focus on the figure of the mistress and her maid (Figures 40 and 41, for example). More than just an employer and employee and akin to the status of the family wet nurse, the mistress and servant in the eighteenth century shared a relationship that could be both physical and emotional, more akin to an intimate familial relationship than a job.³² Maids often bathed their mistresses, washed their feet, helped them with dressing and undressing, took care of them when sick, and even slept in their bed or in the same room. The relationship often involved a high level of bodily intimacy between two women from often vastly different socioeconomic backgrounds. It is often difficult to tell in Gérard’s genre

³¹ See Duncan’s “Happy Mothers” (1973) and Sheriff’s “Erotic Mothers” (1991).

³² Margaret R. Hunt, “The Sapphic Strain. English Lesbians in the Long Eighteenth Century,” in *Singlewomen in the European Past, 1250-1800* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1999), 283.

paintings which figure is the lady of the house and which is her lady-in-waiting. In many canvases, their clothing is not clearly differentiated, suggesting that they are friends of similar social standing, while in others, their class disparity is made obvious through their respective fashions. Yet, their camaraderie spans class considerations.

Similarly, in *L'Enfance de Paul et Virginie* the artist clearly delineates the classes of Madame de la Tour and Marguerite, which, in Bernardin's text, is of no real consequence in the early scenes of the novel.³³ Generally speaking, class difference does not affect the forging or maintenance of their friendship. Marguerite, at right, wears a simple peasant or domestic worker's dress with its shirred bust, plain cotton fabric, and simple shawl. Her hair is gently tied into a bun with loose locks framing her face. In contrast, Madame de la Tour (the "Madame" left intact throughout the novel) wears a neoclassical outfit, complete with gold arm band, empire waist, Greek-inspired diadem, and classical sandals. Her clothing seems out of place in this pastoral setting and among the other people in the scene and contrasts with textual and visual descriptions from the novel. This noticeable and significant discrepancy in clothing that Gérard articulates in the canvas overtly signals the inherent class differences of the two women on the island. This class differentiation and the way the artist emphasizes it in the painting suggests that women's friendships, especially those fused through the shared act of motherhood, reproduction, nature, and the domestic, can cross class lines unproblematically, both on the island and back home in the Parisian domestic interior.

³³ Class and money are overriding themes throughout the novel and part of the destruction of Virginia, the idyllic paradise of the island, and the pure love of the children, but in the early stages of the novel, all notions and importance of class are absent as this idyllic enclave is established. Marguerite and Madame de la Tour are described as wearing simple cotton clothing and only wearing shoes to go to Sunday church. Gérard takes much liberty in the costume of her female figures by dressing Madame de la Tour in neoclassical garb as a signal of her social status.

“Ain’t I a Woman?”: Slavery and Maternity on L’Île de France

While most illustrations of Paul and Virginia’s infancy emphasize the four protagonists and highlight the intimacy of the two matriarchs, Gérard’s painting is unique in its prominent inclusion of several African women and children, a detail that perhaps reflects the novel’s (and, by extension, Bernardin’s) more beneficent attitude toward slaves. Woven in and around the principal characters from the novel are two black women (whether or not they are slaves or freed is indeterminable), two young children, and a baby who participate in the conversation piece through gestures and directional gazes. A serpentine line travels from the woman and baby on the left through the face of the enthralled boy holding a fly whisk and observing the central group, continues through Madame de La Tour, Virginia, Paul and the woman who cradles the plump little boy, passes through Marguerite’s watchful eye, and finally ends at the young boy on the far right. Several compositional devices draw the viewer’s eye to the female figure that is placed near the exact center of the composition. Not only does a diagonal extending from the empty crib through Madame de la Tour and the infants peak at her entranced face, but she also stands at the apex of an obtuse triangle. The immediate contrast of her dark skin with that of Paul’s whiteness further draws attention to her figure. Absorbed in her nurturing activity, her downcast eyes and serene expression suggest the tenderness and care typically exhibited by the matriarchs in other illustrations. The three central female figures create an interesting *mélange* of clothing and class: Madame de la Tour in her neoclassical robe and accessories, the figure most comparable to Marie from the novel donning simple cotton clothing, headscarf, and earrings, and Marguerite in more casual eighteenth-century dress and sporting a shawl. Much like compositions featuring

mothers and maids, the women are all presented as different (here in terms of dress, class, and race), yet they convene over the duties of “mothering.”

It is reasonable to assume that the black women and children in the painting *are* slaves, since Bernardin’s novel refers primarily to kept and runaway slaves rather than freed slaves, as do illustrations of the text. Marie and Domingo’s role as the family’s private slaves is outlined throughout the text, their labor critical to the success of the idyllic microcosm.³⁴ Illustrations of the infancy of Paul and Virginia, discussed above, reiterate the slaves’ physical work in the agricultural and domestic realms of the island household. Prints often picture Domingo working the fields in the background, while Marie, her back turned to the viewer, weaves a basket and is directly associated with livestock with her close proximity to the goat and chickens. The slave couple is an important part of Madame de la Tour and Marguerite’s matriarchal paradise, but they are habitually marginalized in the background and outer edge of the frame, allowing the

³⁴ “About the time Madame de la Tour recovered [from childbirth], these two little estates had already begun to yield some produce, perhaps in a small degree owing to the care which I occasionally bestowed on their improvement, but far more to the indefatigable labours of the two slaves. Margaret’s slave, who was called Domingo, was still healthy and robust, though advanced in years: he possessed some knowledge, and a good natural understanding. He cultivated indiscriminately, on both plantations, the spots of ground that seemed most fertile, and sowed whatever grain he thought most congenial to each particular soil. Where the ground was poor, he strewed maize; where it was most fruitful, he planted wheat; and rice in such spots as were marshy. He threw the seeds of gourds and cucumbers at the foot of the rocks, which they loved to climb and decorate with their luxuriant foliage. In dry spots he cultivated the sweet potato; the cotton-tree flourished upon the heights, and the sugar-cane grew in the clayey soil. He reared some plants of coffee on the hills, where the grain, although small is excellent. His plantain-trees, which spread their grateful shade on the banks of the river, and encircled the cottages, yielded fruit throughout the year. And lastly, Domingo, to soothe his cares, cultivated a few plants of tobacco. Sometimes he was employed in cutting wood for firing from the mountain, sometimes in hewing pieces of rock within the enclosure, in order to level the paths. The zeal which inspired him enabled him to perform all these labours with intelligence and activity. He was much attached to Margaret, and not less to Madame de la Tour, whose negro woman, Mary, he had married on the birth of Virginia; and he was passionately fond of his wife. Mary was born at Madagascar, and had there acquired the knowledge of some useful arts. She could weave baskets, and a sort of stuff, with long grass that grows in the woods. She was active, cleanly, and, above all, faithful. It was her care to prepare their meals, to rear the poultry, and go sometimes to Port Louis, to sell the superfluous produce of these little plantations, which was not however, very considerable. If you add to the personages already mentioned two goats, which were brought up with the children, and a great dog, which kept watch at night, you will have a complete idea of the household, as well as of the production of these two little farms.” Bernardin de Saint-Pierre, *Paul et Virginie*, 6-7.

white foursome to take center stage. Not without significance, the very presence of Madame de la Tour on l'Île de France was predicated upon her husband's decision to come to the colonial island seeking fortune and his subsequent death from fever while purchasing slaves in Madagascar.³⁵

The novel also features two notable encounters between Paul and Virginia and runaway slaves. Early in the narrative they find an emaciated runaway slave woman on the edge of their property, the scars on her body a testament to her abusive master's methods of discipline.³⁶ Virginia shares her breakfast with her, after which she leads her back to her master to ask forgiveness. She begs the surly man to pardon the slave, and the young Creole's beauty ultimately convinces him to do so. (Despite his promise, the reader later discovers that he reneges on his pardon.) When their prospects for food run low in the wilderness and Paul suggests they return to the plantation for a handout, Virginia is repulsed by the idea, exclaiming, "Oh, no, he frightens me too much. Remember what mamma sometimes says, 'The bread of the wicked is like stones in the mouth.'"³⁷ Her optimistic proclamation that "God will take care of us; He listens to the cry even of the little birds when they ask him for food,"³⁸ is answered by the sudden appearance of the sound of a crystal spring. Beyond it they discover cabbage to eat from the top of a palm tree. In the following episode, brother and sister become lost in the forest, and after Domingo and his dog, Fidèle, find them after hours of searching, a band

³⁵ Ibid., 3.

³⁶ Ibid., 13.

³⁷ Ibid., 14.

³⁸ Ibid., 15.

of runaway slaves helps carry the tired twosome back home. Domingo leads the way with his torch, and the entourage chants benedictions along the way.³⁹

Images illustrating these episodes were as popular as those picturing the infancy of Paul and Virginia. A 1795 aquatint depicts the siblings returning the runaway slave to her white master (Figure 42). The threatening figure of the slave owner, holding a phallic weapon high above his head and pointing accursedly toward the two, contrasts with the prostrate slave, whose posture seems to suggest that she knows that any promises of freedom will not be honored. (Paul and Virginia later discover that the slave master chained her feet to a wood block and bound her with an iron collar as punishment for her flight.⁴⁰) Other slaves toil in the background and one eavesdrops behind the tree, demonstrating the master's control over his human property and the ultimate futility of Virginia's request. Schall's treatment of the narrative became a popular template for other artists and illustrators to follow, including the version of it in the *toile de jouy* mentioned above (Figure 43). Schall's arrangement of the vignette highlights the unbreakably powerful position of the white slave master, who towers over his slaves and the two children, an ugly caricature of slave culture in the colonies. Virginia's moral indignation toward the slave master's cruelty both co-exists and contrasts with her own family's reliance on slaves for prosperity, highlighting the difficulties in assessing Bernardin as a true abolitionist at this point in his writing.

As I shall discuss in the following pages, the emotional connection between the four main characters and their two slaves is represented alongside the manual labor that Marie and Domingo perform for the family, and scenes of Domingo finding the lost

³⁹ Ibid., 19.

⁴⁰ Ibid., 18.

siblings highlight this sentimental tendency. Descourtis's version pictures an ecstatic reunion in which Fidèle showers canine kisses on Paul's cheek as the equally faithful Domingo rushes in from the right side of the picture plane with outstretched arms eager to embrace his surrogate children (Figure 44). Paul and Virginia return his enthusiasm with upward-turned gazes of relief and joy at his appearance. The subsequent escort of Paul and Virginia on the backs of other runaway slaves, the latter thankful for the children's earlier attempt to pardon the female slave, appears in illustrations as well as in the form of an eighteenth-century clock (Figure 45). Each of these scenes – the runaway slave, the reunion with Domingo, and the escort back home – present the children as compassionate and morally upright in their treatment of slaves and paint a picture of the possibility of shared emotion and compassion between free white Europeans and enslaved black Africans.

Bernardin's novel has long been discussed as an abolitionist text, especially within the context of the growing debates on slavery at the end of the eighteenth century.⁴¹ While it could be argued that he supported more humane treatment of slaves rather than the total eradication of slavery as an institution, his direct observations of slavery on the island inform both *Paul et Virginie*, and his earlier publication, *Voyage à l'Île de France* (1778), is moralizing in tone.⁴² The *Voyage* was written as a series of letters describing the natural history and people of l'Île de France that he observed while

⁴¹ Megan Vaughan, *Creating the Creole Island. Slavery In Eighteenth-Century Mauritius* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2005); Carolyn Vellenga Berman, *Creole Crossings: Domestic Fiction and the Reform of Colonial Slavery* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2006); Pratima Prasad, "Intimate Strangers: Interracial Encounters in Romantic narratives of Slavery," *L'Esprit Créature* 47, no. 4 (Winter 2007): 1-15; Madeleine Dobie, *Trading Places: colonization and slavery in eighteenth-century French culture* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2010).

⁴² While Bernardin exhibits outrage toward the poor treatment of slaves and casts a sympathetic eye on their often tragic plight in both *Le Voyage* and *Paul et Virginie*, he does not argue for the abolition of the institution. Rather, he calls for a more beneficent or paternalistic treatment of slaves in the colonies.

living on the island from 1768 to 1770. While he worked as a master mason during these two years, the Bernardin that history has remembered – the romantic naturalist influenced by Jean-Jacques Rousseau’s meditations on nature – developed alongside his more technical pursuits. The *Voyage*, in particular, represents an encyclopedic compilation of the geography, flora, fauna, and society of Mauritius, described with meticulous detail alongside romantic meditations on nature that contrast with stark portraits of the violent nature of slavery on the island.

French colonial exploration and exploitation of l’Île de France began in 1715 with the French East Indies Company’s *prise de possession* of the island. France had occupied the nearby island of Réunion (then known as l’Île Bourbon) since 1643, producing coffee with the labor of slaves. They eyed Mauritius for its northwest harbors and their potential advantage to colonial trade.⁴³ Despite exploration and temporary colonization by the Portuguese in the sixteenth century and the Dutch in the seventeenth, the island had no native human population. With official French settlement in 1721, the project to populate the island was initiated. Slaves, first from Madagascar, then from Mozambique, Senegal, Malay, and Pondicherry, were imported to perform field labor and private service,⁴⁴ women and girls of *les filles de la Compagnie* were sent from France to contribute their labor (biological and social),⁴⁵ and men in the business of colonial development and

⁴³ Historian Megan Vaughan provides an extensively detailed history of the French colonial island in *Creating the Creole Island* (2005).

⁴⁴ “Noirs de la Compagnie” (Company slaves) and “Noirs de particuliers” (private slaves). *Ibid.*, 23.

⁴⁵ Vaughan discusses the “project of peopling the island,” outlining the various groups of women who were sent to Mauritius “for the purpose of providing their labor or biological and social reproduction.” Les filles de la Compagnie arrived in 1728, followed by a group of peasant girls from rural Brittany (filles paysannes). The project was not completely seamless however, and she notes that “The presence of the girls was said to have caused “disorder” on board the ship that had brought them to the island, and many

mercantile exports soon arrived through Port Louis. The island was a stopover port for sailing ships traveling to the Indies, retained the sugarcane and manioc that had been planted by the Dutch, and generally acted as an “overflow colony” for Bourbon and a “staging post” that supplied boats and crews en route to the East Indies. During the eighteenth century, slaves constituted roughly four-fifths of the island’s population, and Bernardin had two of his own during his stay.⁴⁶

Despite his own complicity in the slave system, Bernardin’s *Voyage* expresses his indignation toward the cruel treatment of slaves within the fifty-year-old colony. His depiction of the runaway slave in *Paul et Virginie* seems mild in comparison to his description of the punishment of runaway slaves in the *Voyage*:

On runaway slaves....usually they hide in the forest, where they are hunted by parties of soldiers, Negroes and dogs, with some of the local plantation owners joining in for the fun. They are dragged back like savage beasts. When they cannot be caught, they are shot by a rifle, their heads are severed and carried back in triumph to town on the end of sticks. That is what I have seen every week.

When runaway blacks are caught, they have an ear sliced off and are whipped. A second time they are whipped, their hamstrings are cut and they are put in chains. A third time, they are hanged but not publicly accused as their masters fear losing their money.⁴⁷

had arrived in a ‘poor condition,’ afflicted with venereal diseases. Henceforth an effort was made to recruit girls from religious communities, in the hope that they might at least arrive in the colony uncorrupted.” Ibid., 28.

⁴⁶ See the Introduction to Bernardin de Saint-Pierre, *Journey to Mauritius*, ed. Jason Wilson (New York: Interlink Books, 2003), 7.

⁴⁷ Bernardin de Saint-Pierre, *Journey*, 129. For the original French, see Bernardin de Saint-Pierre, *Voyage à l’Isle de France, à l’Isle de Bourbon, au Cap de Bonne-Espérance, etc, Vol. I*. (Amsterdam and Paris: Chez Merlin, 1773), 196.

“Pour l’ordinaire, ils se réfugient dans les bois, où on leur donne la chasse avec des détachements de soldats, de Nègres, & de chiens. Il y a des habitants qui s’en font une partie de plaisir. On les relance comme des bêtes sauvages. Lorsqu’on ne peut les atteindre, on les tire à coup de fusil, on leur coupe la tête, on la porte en triomphe à la ville au bout d’un bâton. Voilà ce que je vois presque toutes les semaines.

An illustration from the text (Figure 46) visually reiterates the harsh violence of the slave system described by Bernardin. In the center foreground of the idyllic island landscape walks a slave woman who wears an iron collar and shackle, and in the background a male slave, bound face-down onto a plank, receives a lashing from a white master, whose arm is raised high in the air, mid-swing. The slave on the right appears to furtively eat something, his back turned toward us. The scene suggests both the violence toward and oppression of slaves in Mauritian society, a tragic misery which Bernardin recognizes in another paragraph:

I do not know if coffee and sugar are necessary for happiness in Europe, but I do know that these two plants have led to misery in two parts of the world. We have depopulated America in order to clear land to plant them and we are depopulating Africa to find workers to harvest them.⁴⁸

To Bernardin, land and people represent valuable resources, and both are ultimately wasted in the pursuit for colonial prosperity. The frontispiece to the novel (Figure 47) perhaps sums up his general attitude toward slavery: a slave and white man face one another across a desk upon which is propped the *Code Noir*, the royal decree defining the conditions of slavery, which Bernardin described as “a law passed for their benefit....but nobody follows it here.”⁴⁹ The slave assumes a position of genuflection and holds a set of loose iron shackles and collar. The image suggests the still-powerful position of the

Quand on attrape les Noirs fugitives, on leur coupe une oreille & on les fouette. À la seconde désertion, ils sont fouettés, on leur coupe un jarret, on les met à la chaîne. À la troisième fois ils sont pendus; mais alors, on ne les dénonce pas: les maîtres craignent de perdre leur argent.”

⁴⁸ Bernardin, *Journey*, 131; Bernardin, *Voyage*, 201. “Je ne sçais pas si le caffé & le sucre sont nécessaires au Bonheur de l'Europe, mais je sçais bien que ces deux végétaux ont fait le Malheur de deux parties du monde. On a dépeuplé l'Amérique afin d'avoir une terre pour les planter: on dépeuple l'Afrique afin d'avoir une nation pour les cultiver.”

⁴⁹ Bernardin, *Journey*, 129; Bernardin, *Voyage*, 202. “On dit que le Code Noir est fait en leur faveur. Soit; mais la dureté des maîtres excède les punitions permises...”

slave master but calls for a closer adherence to the “civilized” guidelines presented by the *Code*.

The slave woman, in particular, occupied a unique position in the productive economy of colonial enterprise, and it is with Marie in mind that I outline the discourses that surround this figure. Historian Maureen Elgersman has analyzed the status of slaves in eighteenth-century colonial Jamaica, and, utilizing black feminist theories of labor, she distinguishes slave labor into private and public, paid and unpaid, productive and reproductive.⁵⁰ Productive labor contributed to the white slave master’s financial success, ignored the sexed slave body, and leveled the distribution of work across genders. Examples of productive labor abound in both text and images of *Paul et Virginie* and the *Voyage*; the reader and viewer are privy to the cultivation of fields and the reaping of crops for the economic prosperity and subsistence of the white slave-owning man or family.⁵¹ In representations of *L’Enfance*, especially the book illustrations, Marie is visible in the background or margins of the scene, toiling away in the fields with Domingue or tranquilly performing her domestic work, cooking, tending to the poultry, and going to the market. The colonial project relied on this type of labor for its success, as did Marie and Madame de la Tour.

In contrast to the “sexless” productive labor performed in the fields and in the form of domestic duties, *reproductive* labor was, naturally, only performed by *female*

⁵⁰ Maureen G. Elgersman, *Unyielding Spirits: Black Women and Slavery in Early Canada and Jamaica* (New York and London: Garland Publishing, Inc., 1999): 89.

⁵¹ In her chapter “Plantation Labour Regimes: The Economic Role of Slave Women,” in *Slave Women in Caribbean Society: 1650-1838* (Kingston: Heinemann Publishers, Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, and London: James Currey, 1990), 33-45, Barbara Bush discusses both the French and British colonies in the Caribbean. She describes the types of physical labor performed by women, which included field labor, the creation of kitchen gardens, and domestic servitude, such as washing, cooking, and upkeep of the colonial home.

slaves, whose bodies conceived, carried, delivered, and sustained one or more children. Slave women were especially implicated in this type of labor within eighteenth-century European colonies, as their production of children not only increased the slave owner's wealth (they were born his rightful property), but it eventually led to a larger work force in the fields.⁵² Elgersman suggests that the structure of slavery itself, especially its emphasis on slaves and their offspring as property, mitigated any overt or permanent paternal role within the slave family. In some cases, the slave master impregnated one of his own slaves, and the status of his "mulatto" or "Creole" offspring was contentious, regardless of whether or not he claimed the child was his (which was usually not the case).⁵³ All things considered, despite the need for a male presence at conception, as

⁵² Elgersman, *Unyielding Spirits*, 89.

⁵³ Although my interests in the span of this chapter do not include colonial miscegenation and its representation in eighteenth and early-nineteenth-century visual culture, the topic is relevant to an understanding of the concept of slave motherhood and reproductive labor and the ways it implicated African slave women.

As French literary scholar Doris Garraway so complexly discusses in *The Libertine Colony: Creolization in the Early French Caribbean* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2005), 197, "children of mixed race remained symbolic sites for the projection, extension, and displacement of conflicts arising from asymmetrical and exploitative social relations between masters and slaves. Over time, they became the object of new regulations designed to affirm essential differences between slaves and freed persons. No longer physically destroyed or divided, they were made instead to *signify* for colonial power a fictive division, an insurmountable racial distance." Garraway traces the historical understanding of the "libidinal" relationships between blacks (slaves and freed) and whites (slave masters), and traces a shift in attitude toward who was to "blame" through time. In the early period of colonization (the seventeenth century), she cites a defense of slave women by authors such as Jean-Baptiste du Tertre and Jesuit priest, Pelleprat. Both locate the "crime" on the white European, whose libido was forced on the helpless, defenseless black woman (200). In fact, early colonial law criminalized such abuse. Also, before the reworking of colonial law in the *Code Noir*, when it came to offspring, the colonies followed Roman law, which dictated that the children born to slave women were born into the same condition (slavery). However, in the case of mulatto children, colonial magistrates declared them free as a punishment for the white slave master's "crime." Moreover, the father was required to support the child financially for the first twelve years of his or her life.

Garraway traces a shift in attitudes toward the slave woman from an innocent victim to a seductress, noting a reversal of blame on the slave master to the slave mother. Suspicions that slave women were taking advantage of the system to have "free" mulatto offspring emerged, and the anxiety became a central focus in the conceptualization and drafting of the *Code noir*. The *Code noir* would redact any penalty if the impregnated slave woman and her master married, thus freeing the slave woman and their mulatto offspring. This tenet was meant to discourage libertinage between white and black, and, as

Elgersman aptly notes, “reproductive labor in slavery is consistently described and analyzed in terms that are strictly feminine because the slave system made fathers expendable in the lives of their children.”⁵⁴

Female slave labor also extended to nursing white colonial women’s babies (*une négresse nourrice esclave*), and it comes as no surprise that contemporaries commented on the practice as much as they did on European women’s practice of sending a child off to the wet nurse.⁵⁵ Authors like Moreau de Saint-Méry (part of a prestigious family in Martinique) criticized the substitution of the black breast for the white and emphasized the central role of the slave woman in the child’s infancy as a result. The breast itself became a site of colonial and racial politics, symbolizing miscegenation on a bodily level through the exchange of fluids from slave to European. Like the European discourse of the submission of traits and disease through breast milk transmitted from wet nurse to baby, critics of slave wet nurses similarly criticized this even more foreign milk as a

Garraway asserts, “The dispute over miscegenation thus amounted to a dispute over the proper use of the slave woman’s body, oscillating between two figures of maternity in the colonial economy of reproduction: that of the slave mother of slaves; and that of the free wife of the master, the mother of free colored children (207).

Ultimately, she claims that “For slave women, white male desire represented not only an additional source of physical and psychological oppression but, as importantly, a new set of reproductive demands that inscribed them as the mothers of both slave and free persons [mulattoes] in the colonies. Indeed, slave women bore the burden of and paid the price for cross-racial libertinage in the colony, without necessarily reaping any rewards” (198).

As Pratima Prasad has discussed, Bernardin de St. Pierre’s *Voyage à l’île de France* speaks against interracial intimacy, expressing an uneasiness with “mixing.” She sites Bernardin’s concerns about contamination from black wet-nurse to white baby, the dangers of interracial sexual relationships, and the white male “use” of black slave concubines. Prasad also discusses the ways in which his later *Paul et Virginie* glosses over these issues in favor of a more “utopian vision of colonial settlement.” She points out that he even goes so far as to eradicate men altogether from the family romance, thus making it impossible for any miscegenation to occur. She calls this a “moral matriarchy.” See Pratima Prasad, “Intimate Strangers: Interracial Encounters in Romantic Narratives of Slavery,” *L’Esprit Créateur* 47, no.4 (2007): 1-15.

⁵⁴ Elgersman, *Unyielding Spirits*, 89.

⁵⁵ Vaughan, *Creating the Creole Island*, 132.

“venomous conduit for the slave woman’s essential iniquity and impurity.”⁵⁶ The politics of the slave’s breast and practice of wet nursing take an ironic turn as the body that initially nurtured and sustained the white child would one day be on the receiving end of the white slaver owner’s whip, what Garraway describes as an Oedipal drama of the young white charge passing “from the state of dependency and obedience to a position of tyranny and domination.”⁵⁷ However, not all slave owners were equally cruel, and some wet nurses were given emancipation after completing their important duties within the family.

Like wet nurses in Europe, slave wet nurses often had children of their own, but they were certainly not included in the French paradigm of the “happy mother.” Slave women who sought supplemental aid from the colonial government were rebuffed with charges of being a “bad mother” and returned to her owner.⁵⁸ The vicious cycle of selling her labor at the expense of caring for her own children continued. Slave mothers were often accused of infanticide, abortion, and neglect, the extreme opposite of the ideal European mother, represented by the matriarchs in Bernardin’s text. As Vaughan so succinctly points out, “Motherhood was always about more than reproduction,” and the dehumanization of slave women with such accusations was one means of many to distance the black slave women as “other” to the European ideal.

African women’s sexuality was another method of “othering,” and her perceived promiscuity threatened to weaken the white race through miscegenation. French colonial

⁵⁶ Garraway, *The Libertine Colony*, 280.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 280.

⁵⁸ Vaughan, *Creating the Creole Island*, 139.

law (the *Code noir*), European missionaries, colonists, and artists often represented slave women with an insatiable sexual appetite and as having a predatory grip on white European men. Generally speaking, they were understood as a threat to colonial society and the European sexual and moral economies, especially in the large absence of white European women in colonial islands in both the Caribbean and the Indian Ocean. White slave masters were notorious for taking on black (slave) mistresses, and this occurred in Mauritius partially because of the lack of European women in the first place. Bernardin expresses his dismay at the moral depravity of colonial men in Letter 11:

Idle people meet in the public square at noon and in the evening. There they speculate, slander, and talk scandal. Few people are married in this town. Those who are not rich blame their mediocre financial circumstances on not having married; the rest, they tell us, prefer to wait and establish themselves back in France. *But the real reason for not marrying is the ease with which they find black mistresses.* Moreover, there are few good matches for men; it is rare to find a girl with a dowry of ten thousand francs.⁵⁹

His description reveals not only the importance placed on the heterosexual marriage economy for the general well being of a people, but, more significantly, it implies that black mistresses impede or are a threat to the social order itself. This distrust of black female sexuality was not uncommon across general colonial attitudes.

Gérard's canvas presents the presumed slaves, and Marie, in a decidedly different light than early-nineteenth century political and legal discourses would have, and certainly different than book illustrations do that include her toiling away as an ancillary

⁵⁹ Bernardin, *Journey*, Letter 11, 123. (Emphasis is mine.) “Les gens oisifs se rassemblent sur la place à midi et au soir; là on agiote, on médit, on calomnie. Il y a très peu de gens mariés à la ville. Ceux qui ne sont pas riches s’excusent sur la médiocrité de leur fortune: les autres veulent, disent-ils, s’établir en France; mais la facilité de trouver des concubines parmi les négresses en est la véritable raison. D’ailleurs il y a peu de partis avantageux: il est rare de trouver une fille qui apporte dix mille francs comptant en mariage.” Original French from L. Aimé-Martin, *Oeuvres complètes de Bernardin de Saint-Pierre* (Paris: Armand-Aubrée, 1834), 117-118.

figure in the composition. In the painting, Marie stands at the apex of the triangle created by the central figures and plays an active role in the communal nurturing of Paul and Virginia. She and the other African figures in the scene are positioned throughout the composition, and though the European “family” is toward the front of the picture plane, suggesting hierarchy, all of the figures are evenly distributed from left to right. Like Gérard’s other genre scenes, all of the adult women take part in the nurturing of children. Marie, placed in the middle of the composition and embracing Paul, becomes a third female participant in the island matriarchy, a role which she does not directly occupy in the novel. Moreover, Marie is not the stereotype of black African “Other” in this scene; instead, she engages in the sentimentality of the visual narrative and assumes a new importance within the scene, particularly in her relationship to the children. Like Marguerite and Madame de la Tour, she occupies and participates in this space of maternal sentiment. Rather than performing productive labor upon which the matriarchal island society rests and relies, she is participating in the European women’s reproductive labor through shared sentiment. Like class, race seems to matter not in this idealized pastoral scene of feminine and maternal virtue. The “community of feeling” partially trumps racial and social hierarchies. Of course, this “community” forms within the margins of society, Marguerite and Madame de la Tour occupying a similarly outcast status within patriarchal society by virtue of their position as “exiles” on l’Île de France.

Both Marie and Domingo actively participate in this sentimental community throughout the novel, despite their visual marginalization in its illustrations.⁶⁰ In many

⁶⁰ Both Pratima Prasad and Catherine Labio emphasize the positioning of Marie and Domingue within the narrative as atypical in the representation of slaves in Mauritius and elsewhere. See Prasad, “Intimate Strangers,” 1-6, and literature scholar Catherine Labio’s “Reading by the Gold and Black Clock;

ways, when not at work, the couple is integrated into the matriarchal unit and share deep emotion with and attachment to the family. During the episode in which Paul and Virginia wander the forest and Domingo locates them after many hours of searching, an emotional scene among the three figures transpires:

Before they could recover from their surprise [at seeing Domingo's dog Fidèle arrive], they saw Domingo running towards them. At the sight of the good old negro, who wept for joy, they began to weep too, but had not the power to utter a syllable. When Domingue had recovered himself a little, - "Oh, my dear children," said he, "how miserable you have made your mothers!....I ran backwards and forwards in the plantation, not knowing where to look for you...."⁶¹

Earlier in the novel, when Bernardin describes the hardships of life on the island, Marie and Domingo again are integral to emotional survival:

Even Mary and Domingo hastened to offer their succor, and to weep with those that wept. Thus do weak plants interweave themselves with each other, in order to withstand the fury of the tempest.⁶²

When Virginia leaves for France, she asks about Marie and Domingo in letters and sends Marie a handkerchief in the post.⁶³ The couple also participates in the tense moments leading up to and after the tragic shipwreck, Marie weeping and Domingo praying with

Or, the Recasting of Bernardin de Saint-Pierre's *Paul et Virginie*," *Eighteenth-Century Fiction* 16, no. 4 (2004): 1-24.

⁶¹ Bernardin de Saint-Pierre, *Paul and Virginia*, 18. "Comme ils ne pouvaient revenir de leur surprise, ils aperçurent Domingue qui accourait à eux. A l'arrivée de ce bon noir, qui pleurait de joie, ils se mirent aussi à pleurer, sans pouvoir lui dire un mot. Quand Domingue eut repris ses sens: "O, mes jeunes maîtres! leur dit-il, que vos mères ont d'inquiétude! Comme elles ont été étonnées, quand elles ne vous ont plus retrouvés au retour de la messe, où je les accompagnais! Marie, qui travaillait dans un coin de l'habitation, n'a su nous dire où vous étiez allés. J'allais, je venais autour de l'habitation, ne sachant moi-même de quel côté vous chercher." Bernardin de Saint-Pierre, *Paul et Virginie* (Paris: L. Curmer, 1836), 57-58.

⁶² Bernardin de Saint-Pierre, *Paul and Virginia*, 27. "Marie et Domingue même venaient à son secours. Ils s'affligeaient, s'ils le voyaient affligé; et ils pleuraient, s'ils le voyaient pleurer. Ainsi des plantes faibles s'entrelacent ensemble pour résister aux ouragans." Bernardin de Saint-Pierre, *Paul et Virginie*, 87.

⁶³ Bernardin de Saint-Pierre, *Paul and Virginia*, 44 and 55.

Paul.⁶⁴ After all of the melodrama ends, the narrator reveals that all six were buried in the same plot of land. An illustration of the modest cemetery shows three separate headstones for each “couple”: Paul and Virginia, Marie and Domingo, and Marguerite and Madame de la Tour (Figure 48).⁶⁵ Bernardin’s consistent emphasis on the sentimental bonds of Marie and Domingo to their white masters redirects the hierarchical relationship of slave to master in favor of integrating them more fully and through shared emotion into the family itself. Although they perform the labors of typical slaves on the l’Île de France, *sensibilité* and its emphasis on a “community of feeling” is written into the novel and unifies and, on the surface at least, in the form of sentimental “signs,” transcends class and race.⁶⁶

If we compare Gérard’s inclusion of Marie in the scene to other conversation pieces that feature an African figure, the intimate inclusion that the artist accords her is even more apparent.⁶⁷ First, it is unique to see a female slave in European conversation pieces; the genre typically features a male slave in the role of a servant to the family. Most paintings of the genre picture Africans, presumably brought back home from the

⁶⁴ Ibid., 50 and 84.

⁶⁵ Ibid., 95.

⁶⁶ I think the importance of appearances and expressions of sentiment was a major part of the “community of feeling” that characterized the cultural moment of *sensibilité*. In *Paul et Virginie* Bernardin uses shared emotion and sensibility as a way of superficially unifying the figures in order to promote more of a paternalism when it came to the treatment of slaves. He didn’t argue for the abolition of the institution of slavery but did feel that the system itself needed revisions, especially when it came to the often violent treatment of slaves.

⁶⁷ Conversation pieces were a predominantly British genre of painting during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. I have not come across any French equivalent, and definitely none that includes a black slave in the composition. This makes Gérard’s painting even more interesting in its similarities to the British examples. It is difficult to know the influence on her compositional choices. Did a British patron commission and/or own the small canvas, perhaps? The lack of information on the commission of the canvas makes it particularly difficult to assess the connection between this canvas and British conversation pieces that present a strikingly similar compositional arrangement.

colonies, as submissively resigned to their life under white tutelage, often occupying the margins of the composition and definitively *not* part of the family that is pictured.⁶⁸

Zoffany's *The Family of Sir William Young* (c. 1770; Figure 49) places the black servant in the background, helping the young son mount the horse that his father rides. One has to search the canvas in order to pick him out of the crowd. Francis Wheatley's *A Family Group in a Landscape* (c. 1775; Figure 50) obscures the figure even more, placing the servant on the very left edge of the canvas, bathed in compositional shadows. In Hogarth's *The Wollaston Family* (1730; Figure 51), the black servant is barely a blur of dark paint on the picture plane. In *Ape to Apollo*, David Bindeman provides examples of aristocratic women's portraits that include a black servant to both mark her own socioeconomic status and highlight the whiteness of her skin, presenting it as idealized perfection.⁶⁹ He flags Pierre Mignard's portrait of *Duchess of Portsmouth* (1681; Figure 52) guilty as charged. In addition to the use of the dark-skinned servant as an aesthetic foil in the composition, this particular figure is also equated to other luxurious, exotic curiosities that she holds: pearls, coral, and a shell. Generally speaking, the majority of Africans represented on canvas are anonymous and pictured in roles of subservience (i.e. the domestic servant). Like the book illustrations from *Paul et Virginie*, they are often positioned in the margins as they perform a labor for the benefit of their white superiors. While the physical shackles of slavery are not present, the power structure between whites and blacks is still evident.

⁶⁸ See Hugh Honour, *The Image of the Black in Western Art*, vol. IV (Cambridge, MA, and London: Harvard University Press, 1989); David Bindman, *Ape to Apollo. Aesthetics and the Idea of Race in the Eighteenth Century* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2002); and David Dabydeen, *Hogarth's Blacks. Images of Blacks in Eighteenth Century English Art* (Athens, GA: The University of Georgia Press, 1987).

⁶⁹ David Bindeman, *Ape to Apollo: Aesthetics and the Idea of Race in the Eighteenth Century* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2002), 39.

In the novel, Marie is also represented as asexual or sexually innocent, again contradicting stereotypes of the black female slave, and, I would argue, making her a more suitable candidate for Gérard's "ideal" brand of maternity and friendship. Bernardin presents her marriage with Domingo as sanctified along the lines of contemporary European social mores, and his discussion of slave relationships in *Le Voyage* characterizes them as motivated by love rather than charged sexual appetites, as was the common conviction⁷⁰:

By temperament, Negroes are naturally playful, but after some time as slaves, they turn melancholic. Only love seems to still conjure away their sorrows. They will do anything to get hold of a woman. If they can choose, they prefer women who have passed the prime of their youth; they say 'they make better soup.'⁷¹

As historian Megan Vaughan concludes, "Bernardin de St.-Pierre's male slaves are looking for mothers, and his female slaves are soup-making matriarchs, rather than sexually predatory sirens. He domesticates slave desire and makes love among slaves innocent."⁷²

Ultimately, alongside the benevolent light shed on slaves in the novel, Gérard's canvas "invites" the figure of the female slave into the community of feeling that characterizes the island matriarchy. Rather than participating in labor *for* the family with back turned toward the viewer, Marie is actively engaged with the family on an intimate and sentimental level. She visually becomes part of the "moral matriarchy" in Gérard's conversation piece, a structure that appears to include all women, regardless of class or

⁷⁰ Vaughan, *Creating the Creole Island*, 169.

⁷¹ Quoted in *ibid.*, 170.

⁷² *Ibid.*, 170.

race, while still upholding difference by virtue of the color of her skin and the inescapable discourse surrounding it.⁷³

Intimate Exile and Inseparability

While at first glance the intimate spaces this chapter explores – the Parisian domestic interior and the exotic, pastoral island – might seem at odds, Gérard's construction of them as contained stages for female intimacy and companionship share several similar qualities. One compositional and conceptual device that all of these paintings have in common and that contributes to a strong impression of female community in Gérard's paintings is a sense of enclosure that the format, composition, and subject matter each espouses, artistic choices that contribute to the sense of intimacy between the painted figures. Gérard's mothers, maids and nurses, slave women, and children are placed within a tightly painted, carefully constructed space, which is described in painstaking detail and which emphasizes the domestic and private in all of its minutiae. The decorative aspects of furniture, clothing, hairstyles, etc., are an important part of this process of enclosure, which sequesters women within a space that typically has no room for escape. Gérard's domestic interiors, in particular, become a sort of gynaceum, in the sense of the word for women's apartments where men are rarely present, a completely self-contained space, and if a door is present, it simply leads to another room rather than a true exit.⁷⁴ There is literally no escape for these women who

⁷³ Prasad, "Intimate Strangers," 6.

⁷⁴ Christine Roulston discusses the significance of the gynaceum in "Separating the Inseparables: Female Friendship and its Discontents in the Eighteenth Century," *Eighteenth Century Studies* 32, no. 2 (1998-1999): 218-219.

serenely perform their domestic roles within the canvas. This extends to the small island of Marguerite and Madame de la Tour's exile, an enclave they inhabit until their deaths.

Christine Roulston likens this type of enclosure, which sequesters women within the tightly controlled and private sphere of the home, to an ideological emblem of containment.⁷⁵ Her astute observation of the enclosed spaces in literary representations of early modern women's milieu is helpful in understanding the symbolism of space and its contribution to a sense of female intimacy in visual representations of the domestic, ideal model of female companionship that resonates throughout Gérard's oeuvre. She contrasts Julie and Claire's domestic friendship in *La Nouvelle Héloïse* with Suzanne's seduction by the Mother Superior in *La Religieuse*, both relationships unfolding within a removed, self-contained location: Clarens is remote and surrounded by mountains, and the convent is completely fortified. It is within these tightly enclosed, architecturally framed spaces that female intimacies can be explored and experienced without risk.⁷⁶ Visually, we could say the same of eighteenth-century genre paintings, especially in the context of all-female scenes of intimacy and bonding.

This sense of enclosure – whether oppressive or liberating in relationship to female community – also contributes to and is heightened by Gérard's presentation of female figures as visually inseparable from one another, again reinforcing the idea of bodily and emotional intimacy. Inseparability is visually achieved by the figures' shared, intense concentration on an external object that often links them physically together in a chain of gesture, emotion, and expression. She also presents her figures, in many cases,

⁷⁵ Ibid., 219-220.

⁷⁶ I discuss this at greater length in my chapter on convents, below. For a discussion of enclosure and intimacy, see Christine Roulston, "Framing Sensibility: The Female Couple in Art and Narrative," *SEL* 46, no.3 (Summer 2006): 651.

as visually doubled, heads swooning in a similar direction, shared facial expressions reacting to an external stimulus, sympathetic body language, and reflections in mirrors. For example, in *The Good News* (Figure 41), Gérard's blonde figure reads a letter while her brunette companion looks on from behind. Their bodies are pressed closely to one another, creating a diagonal line from their heads to their feet. The blonde's right arm frames one side of their close-knit body, and the brunette's left arm functions similarly on the other side of the figural unit. Their heads are also in close proximity to one another, creating an opposing diagonal line to the one made by their bodies. The arrangement seems to suggest an empathy for and investment in one another. When the nursemaid is on the scene, this doubling becomes even more significant as a doubling of maternal figures, one the body that gave birth to the child and the other that sustains him through the nourishment of her breast. In Gérard's *Une femme allaitant son enfant* (Figure 28), the blonde and brunette's faces are nearly touching as they gaze down upon the nursing infant. The women's bodies are inseparable from one another, closely knit through a hand on the shoulder and a lean against the other's body. Their forms become a solid compositional unit and focal point of the painting, drawing the eye toward their close affection. Generally speaking, these strategies of doubling and inseparability between and among the female figures on the canvas create a sense of oneness between them and reinforce a sense of intimacy. The physical gesture and gaze that indicate likeness of souls or emotional intimacy in so many of her compositions extends further into a combined or doubled effect when both women participate in the same act or gesture.

A comparison with a work like Greuze's *The Well-Loved Mother* (Figure 39), in which a young mother passively endures the groping hugs and assaulting physical

affection from her large litter of children while the proud patriarch looks on – an image that might be considered the poster child for scholarly interpretation of eighteenth-century genre painting – highlights Gérard’s center-staging of female connections rather than the stereotypical mother-child (and –father) relationship that most genre paintings of the period foreground. The visual and ideological “program” for the mutual bond of motherhood that is the bedrock of female friendship between Marguerite and Madame de la Tour in *Paul et Virginie* – its claims to equality, its dependence on emotional intimacy, and its ties to sympathy and sentimentalism – becomes even more obvious when compared to Greuze’s scene, which, although commissioned as a family portrait, is more about the proud patriarch’s accomplishment at producing such a large brood of children to which he comes home, and their borderline erotic possession of their mother’s immobilized body.⁷⁷ The often moralizing works of mid-century genre painters such as Greuze have long secured the interpretation of such paintings as representations of ideal conjugal love and familial harmony. The spectacle of the nuclear family and young lovers in genre painting has come to represent the ideal of a heterosexual, reproductive economy, its locus within the private, domestic sphere, and, by extension, its relationship to the prosperity of the French State.

In contrast, however, Gérard’s scenes, by highlighting the relationship of women in genre painting – sometimes facilitated by their childrearing duties, other times not – rather than the male/female dichotomy such as that in Greuze’s painting, opens up other

⁷⁷ Greuze articulated this in his “Salon of 1767,” by saying about the oil sketch of the painting, “This is excellent both for the talent it demonstrates and for its moral content; it preaches population, and paints a sympathetic picture of the happiness and advantages deriving from domesticity; it announces to any man with soul and feelings: Maintain your family comfortably, make children with your wife, as many as you can, but only with her, and you can be sure of a happy home.” Denis Diderot, “The Well-Loved Mother, Sketch,” in *Diderot on Art, Vol. 1. The Salon of 1765 and Notes on Painting*, ed. and trans. John Goodman (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1995), 106.

possibilities of social identity. In the eighteenth-century, women's identities in many ways hinged upon their role in the domestic, heterosexual economy of marital and maternal roles. Marital status was one of the most important markers of identity for the eighteenth century woman, for it solidified her status as both a mother and a wife. To stray far from conventions and to take female inseparability to the physical and emotional extreme would be to threaten the normal functioning of the heterosexual economy. Either women's inseparability could become too intense – physical and/or sexual and therefore anathema to “nature” and a threat to patriarchy and the heterosexual imperative – or women's friendships were viewed as too shallow or trivial to even be considered legitimate social relations in the first place, a notion regularly repeated in the conduct manuals that were outlined in the introduction to this dissertation.⁷⁸ The devalorization of female friendship in conduct books and other “official” tracts acted as a strategy to separate women from their intimate connections with one another and to disrupt the threat that their intimacies posed to both the public and private social realms.

Literature provides a fitting parallel to this tightrope act of balancing friendship with family and ensuring that “inseparable” women could not threaten a separation of the cherished family unit. Rousseau's Julie and Claire from *La Nouvelle Héloïse* are a primary example of inseparable, yet sanctified female intimacy, a friendship that transpires within the hidden pastoral countryside and private domestic sphere. Both sites ultimately become “safe” places for female friendship to develop, especially in its relationship to and focus on maternal duties and to the heterosexual imperative of marriage. At one point in the novel, Julie asks the widowed Claire to come live with her family and help her with maternal duties:

⁷⁸ Roulston discusses this dynamic as well in “Separating the Inseparables,” 217.

I need a friend, a mother who is as crazy as I am about my children and her own... When I hug your daughter, I feel it is you I am pressing against my bosom. We've said it a hundred times; seeing our children playing together, our united hearts mix them up, and we forget which one of the three belongs to whom.⁷⁹

This excerpt is strikingly similar to the two quotes from *Paul et Virginie* that I presented above, its focus on the emotional bond between women forged through their mutual attachment on the external figure of the child. The expression of joy at the sight of their children together and the comingling of friendship, maternity, and sentiments of familial love all course through the images I have analyzed throughout this chapter. Rather than acting as a negative force on the relationship between Julie and Saint-Preux, or as any potential disruption on their heterosexual coupling, the focus on shared maternity erases any threat that would arise from inseparability between the two cousins and friends. It is within the enclosed domestic space and over the task of maternity that the ultimate sanctioning of female companionship emerges.

I do not claim that Bernardin de Saint-Pierre's episode of Paul and Virginia's childhood was meant to present to its reading public an ideal female friendship in the names of the two mothers, nor am I stating that Gérard painted these scenes with the explicit intention of formulating this new model of idealized female friendship. Indeed, if one reads Bernardin's novel to its end, one learns that patriarchy prevails and that matriarchy cannot subsist on the island, or anywhere else for that matter, and the pastoral vision of matriarchal paradise ultimately perishes with the death of Virginia. If one also considers that many of Marguerite Gérard's collectors purchased her works to place beside seventeenth-century Dutch masters as a statement of their taste and collecting

⁷⁹ Rousseau, *La Nouvelle Héloïse*, 298.

habits, we would likely come to the conclusion that the paintings' dominant function was not to portray female friendship.

However, I *am* claiming that Gérard's visualization of the *Enfance*, alongside other similar genre compositions, in its structure as a conversation piece and its employment of an overt language of sentimentalism and friendship, sustains my reading of the image as a new kind of family unit based on female intimacy and male absence and able to overcome class (and race). The discourses of female sociability that inform images of Madame de la Tour and Marie, as well as mothers and maids, allow the women on the canvas to inhabit the best of both worlds: an idyllic matriarchy, but not too radical or out of convention, yet still presented within the image of ideal motherhood and domesticity and referencing the traditional nuclear family.

When papa is not present, the sequestered domestic interior or isle of exile and the intimate exchanges that unfold within the space become symbolic of a refuge of intimacy, a community of like feeling in which the outward display of sentiment links each member in an ideal emotional and physical connection. Rather than a man setting the tone for his own masculine pleasure or pride, as in an image like Greuze's *Well-Loved Mother*, his absence shifts our focus to the exchanges among women and affirms a specific vision of female community. While still "performing" expected gender roles and certainly not meant to restructure patriarchal norms, the women pictured take their everyday roles and infuse them with the pleasures of the body and the soul and play with the swirling and ever changing positioning of female identity.

Chapter Two

Sister Act: Ties of Female Affection In the Eighteenth-Century Convent

The convent in eighteenth-century France was a space of highly fraught contradictions. With increasing disillusionment toward the Catholic Church in the years leading up to the French Revolution, monastic life and law came under vitriolic attack for its perceived irrelevance, abuses of power, and the hierarchy within its closely guarded walls. According to developing currents of philosophy, the cloistered life was wholly incongruous with human nature.¹ Writers and artists became obsessed with the deep recesses of the convent and constructed dramatic tales of abused power and sexual perversions in the isolated worlds of these same-sex communities. In such representations, nuns were both unwitting victims and co-conspirators in an organization that was considered one of the many symptoms of a heavily religious monarchy in decline, and convents became the maps upon which the ills of society were charted.²

Imagining what lay behind the doors of the convent became a popular exercise for eighteenth-century French artists and writers. They envisioned the monastic life's virtues

¹ Voltaire, Diderot, and Condorcet were among the most vocal writers of anticlerical sentiment. The most notable works that critiqued the institution of the Catholic Church include Voltaire's *Dictionnaire Philosophique* (pub. 1764), Diderot's *La Religieuse* (written 1760/pub. 1796), and Condorcet's *Vie de Voltaire* (1789).

² This discourse is outlined in innumerable sources. See, for example, Derek Beales, *Prosperity and Plunder: European Catholic Monasteries in the Age of Revolution, 1650-1815* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), Mita Choudhury, *Convents and Nuns in Eighteenth-Century French Politics and Culture* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2004), and Timothy Tackett, "The French Revolution and Religion to 1794," in *Enlightenment, Reawakening, and Revolution, 1660-1815*, ed. Stewart Jay Brown and Timothy Tackett (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006).

and vices, suggested the proximity and intimacy of its inhabitants, and represented a world of female sociability, both polite and sacrilegious, emotional and physical. In this chapter, I analyze a constellation of images related to the convent and the multiple discourses of sexuality, sensibility, gender, sociability, and intimacy that intersect within this genre of imagination, representation, and critique. More than a site where all the ills of *ancien régime* society merged, as is the most common scholarly approach to the convent, this institution meant many different things to many different people, both within and outside of its walls. This spectrum of perceptions of the convent becomes apparent in the vastly differing representations of the space and its inhabitants. In the images I discuss, a familiar pattern emerges that is present in each space I visit in this dissertation: a tug of war between the homosocial and the heterosexual is constantly at play, enacted through a demonstration or aberration of virtue, and, in the case of the convent, a female intimate or companion typically acts as a foil to draw the main character into the homosocial and, at times, homosexual, world. Much as in the domestic sphere, images of women in the convent reveal the space as a site of female-female desire and sexual initiation on the one hand, and an idealized space of female sociability on the other, marking the convent as a retreat for female communion or, in contrast, a breeding ground for dystopian desire.

To penetrate the recesses of the convent and interpret the imaginative visual renderings of what went on behind closed doors, an understanding of the history, structure, and role of the convent and the experience of a nun is in order. The contemplative convent, in contrast to the more service-based and community-oriented convents I focus on in this chapter, constituted the large majority of houses built in Paris

during the first half of the seventeenth century.³ Nuns in such convents abided by the strict, post-Tridentine rules of enclosure (*clausura*), which were decreed by the Council of Trent in the sixteenth century and stipulated that,

[under pain of eternal damnation,] bishops will re-establish nuns' clausura [or cloister] wherever it has fallen into abeyance, and see that it is rigorously maintained where it stills holds.⁴

However, as Barbara Diefendorf has charted in her histories of early modern religious life, as convents' pious members increasingly engaged in service-based vocations such as teaching, nursing, and caretaking, the mandate of *clausura* gradually began to weaken, and the boundary between nuns and the secular world slowly became more permeable.⁵ By the second half of the seventeenth century, the proportion of contemplative orders declined even more in the capital city, and the functions of the convent and the variety of women who came into contact with it began to resemble the eighteenth-century model. Also contributing to more frequent mixing of the secular and holy was a growing need to supplement inadequate house income, which necessitated the taking in of boarders. Additionally, patrons who helped found and sustain religious houses in the seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries received special privileges of entry and exit that brought such benefactresses not only added piety, but a social cachet that horrified some clergy at

³ Diefendorf cites 80% of convents founded between 1604 and 1632 as contemplative (18 out of 22 convents), this proportion declining even more (12 of 25 convents) between 1633 and 1649, as teaching orders began to rise. Barbara Diefendorf, "Contradictions of the Century of Saints: Aristocratic Patronage and Convents of Counter-Reformation Paris," *French Historical Studies* 24, no. 3 (Summer 2001): 474. See also Mary M. Rowan, "Between Salon and Convent: Marie de Rohan, a Precious Abbess," *Papers on French Seventeenth-Century Literature* 22 (1985): 191-207.

⁴ Jean Delumeau, *Catholicism between Luther and Voltaire: a new view of the Counter-Reformation*, trans. Jeremy Moiser with an introduction by John Bossy (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1977), 22.

⁵ Barbara Diefendorf, "Contradictions of the Century of Saints," 469-499.

its blurring of the boundaries between secular and sacred societies. For example, as early as the mid-1630s, Capuchin Père Joseph complained that,

...there was not a single house so reformed that the ladies of the court didn't have permission to enter. Yes, I mean the most reformed houses; as for the others, no one deigns to go there. And not only do they enter, but they stay there a week or two at a time, eating and sleeping and bringing with them five or six young girls. And while all of this is going on, just imagine what becomes of the silence, the retreat, good order, and the mortification of the house. They laugh, confide secrets to their friends, and gossip about whomever's behavior displeases them.⁶

This expression of clerical concern highlights a discomfort with female sociability within the convent, by patronesses and other outsiders, and its potential to disrupt the pious routine of the monastic community. While the post-Tridentine standards of enclosure sought to contain *femmes religieuses* within the quiet austerity of the house, this and other examples of sociable exchange had an opposite effect.⁷

The historical trajectory from contemplative houses to teaching- and service-based convents extended well into the eighteenth century in France, and the latter model dominated the monastic landscape in the period that this dissertation considers. By mid-century, the convent was a multi-functioning space with members and visitors (extended and temporary) drawn from a wide spectrum of French society. Daughters of the nobility, bourgeoisie, and working families entered its gated doorways, and royalty also counted its women as devoted sisters, including Marie-Adélaïde, daughter of the duc

⁶ Diefendorf, "Contradictions of the Century of Saints," 479. Gustave Fagniez, *Le Père Joseph et Richelieu, 1577-1638* (Paris, 1894), 2:95, citing the "Exhortation qui fait voir les raisons pourquoi l'on a mis l'esprit intérieur au dedans de la congregation du Calvaire et donne les moyens de l'y maintenir," included at the end of Père Joseph's *Epitres écrites à plume volante* (1638).

⁷ The word cloister/lausura itself originates from the Latin "claudere," which means to "shut up" or enclose.

d'Orléans, and Louise, daughter of Louis XV (both took vows).⁸ The convent relied on its surrounding community—especially the elite, aristocratic members of society—for financial donations and protection, and, in return, nuns provided civic services to the public such as education, boarding, the production of luxury goods for the commercial market, and the admittance of girls from families needing to ease the financial burden of multiple children. Novices, often from families who wished to consolidate the family inheritance for (typically) the oldest child, were sent to the convent with the equivalent payment of a modest dowry. Some families sent daughters to the convent for strict spiritual devotion and a means for her and her family's salvation. Not all women entered the convent to take the veil, of course, and it was an acceptable place for single women to rent a room, and was often part of a girl's basic education during one to several years of her youth.⁹ It also served as a prison or correctional facility for wayward daughters or wives. Widows often entered the convent later in life, its walls a safe and acceptable enclave for the "unattached" woman. Such was the case for Madame Geoffrin, the widowed salonnière who took a yearly retreat at the Abbaye Saint-Antoine-des-Champs on the eastern edge of Paris.

Indeed, the convent and the secular world had an important, interdependent relationship with one another, a symbiosis that involved financial support in exchange for

⁸ Choudhury, *Convents and Nuns*, 2. The daughter of the Duc d'Orléans, Marie-Adélaïde, and the daughter of Louis XV, Louise, both took monastic vows in the Catholic Church.

⁹ *Pensionnaires* in the convent were housed in separate quarters from the nuns within the convent. Boarders who didn't take vows might include students, widows, or other single women. Elizabeth Rapley likens such convents of the later 18th century who took in large numbers of boarders as private hotels, a way for convents to increase their annual income. "Rent" ranged from 250 livres and up, while the annual rate for a student's lodging was 120 to 150 livres. It was clearly indispensable for convents to accept women as *pensionnaires*—by the end of the Old Regime, these boarders could constitute up to one third or more of a house's total income. Elizabeth Rapley, *A Social History of the Cloister: Daily Life in the Teaching Monasteries of the Old Régime* (Montreal, London, and Ithaca, NY: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2001), 254.

important community services, and more importantly, the guarantee of a woman's place within eighteenth-century gender and society. Thus convents had multiple functions and meanings, all of which centered upon housing women who did not carry the status of "wife" at a particular point in their lives. For some women, entry into the convent meant outright social control, as in the case of the Comtesse de Verrue, whose husband ordered her enclosure in a Benedictine convent on the rue Cherche-Midi from 1701 until 1704, the year of his death.¹⁰ For others it represented a space of freedom from the conventions of marriage and motherhood. It removed "unnecessary" members of elite society from their social and familial milieus, preserved family finances for fewer members, and educated women to become either nuns or wives and mothers.¹¹ With the variety of intentions and circumstances of women who entered the convent on temporary and permanent terms, it was a site of both spirituality and sociability, a space in which women lived among one another, cooperated to keep the community running smoothly on a daily basis, and shared social and emotional intimacies by virtue of proximity and friendship. While, by the decades leading up to the French Revolution, sisterhood was demonized as a *vocation forcée*, political critiques on the status quo and abuses of the Church do not nullify the communities of women who devoted—forced or not—much of their lives to their convent and to one another.

¹⁰ G. de Lérès, *La Comtesse de Verrue et la Cour de Victor-Amédée II de Savoie* (Paris: A. Quantin, 1881)

¹¹ Choudhury, *Convents and Nuns*, 18.

Convent Sociability

This active exchange among convent and secular worlds and the variety of women who came into contact with religious houses at various points and different purposes during their lifetimes suggests that it was a space of dynamic female sociability. Memoirs, letters, prints, illustrated novels, paintings, and other historical and visual materials support this assessment, and it is through evaluating these testimonies and representations that we can see that the convent was more than a strictly serious space of work, prayer, and order (the sixteenth- and seventeenth-century model), or a dumping ground for unattached, powerless women. Instead, these materials suggest a vibrant space of sociability and even play.

For the sake of demonstrating this initial and important point, two Venetian paintings of convent parlors provide a somewhat exaggerated representation of convivial socialization of nuns with one another and with friends and family. These paintings contain several elements that repeatedly appear in French visualizations of various spaces of the convent (the parlor, gardens, and other inner rooms): metal grilles/gates, co-mingling of secular dress and religious habit, and by obvious extension, people from each sector, and various modes of expression and communication (the letter, conversation, performance). The bustling convent parlor is the subject of two mid-century Venetian paintings by Francesco Guardi and Giuseppe de Gobbis (Figures 53 and 54). Both paintings depict one of the few thresholds of the typical convent—in French monastic architecture as in Italian—where *femmes religieuses* made contact with the outside world, presenting an opportunity for the sacred and secular to intersect through conversation and

social exchange.¹² Rather than suggesting the sanctity of enclosure and separation of the worldly from the spiritual, Gobbis's and Guardi's paintings picture the convent as a space of dynamic social exchange based on conversation and theatricality. While the "ideal" parlor (in the eyes of the clergy, at least) was one that was safely enclosed and separated from the space occupied by nuns—preferably by thick double grilles and cut off even more by the nuns donning dark veils—and was defined by minimal, quiet conversation, this was not likely to happen in practice.¹³ Instead, the convent ushered in both lay and ecclesiastical visitors who chatted with each other and their spiritual sisters on topics as mundane as city news and daily details of the cloistered life. Additionally, nuns might share spiritual advice, deal with community business, or commission works of art.¹⁴

Guardi's *The Parlour of the San Zaccaria Convent* (Figure 53) shows this active exchange between cloistered nuns and the busy outside world. Like the nuns on the other side of the grille, the viewer is privy to a ballroom-sized parlor populated with a diverse cast of characters performing multiple actions, attitudes and exchanges, giving the viewer a sense that the space is reserved for not only conversation, but also entertainment. Two patrician gentleman share the bottom left portion of the canvas with a hobbling beggar, a theatrical character in carnival attire punctuates the painting with a burst of red color, and a finely dressed woman in white strikes a dramatic attitude as she hands a letter through

¹² The parlor (in French, *le parloir*), gate and church all presented opportunities for contact between nuns and the secular public. While, by the middle of the eighteenth century, the dictum of enclosure was drastically ceding, some veiled nuns did take the vow of enclosure, which was part of a long-standing Christian tradition that symbolically equated female chastity with the enclosed convent environment, a safe haven from worldly temptations, an idea that still circulated within the Church. As the Brides of Christ, enclosure in the convent ensured a *femme religieuse's* purity, preparing her body and soul for her spiritual union or marriage with God. Physical space and ideology were thus intimately intertwined on both symbolic and real levels. Silvia Evangelisti, *Nuns. A History of Convent Life* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2007), 15 and 46.

¹³ Ibid., 51.

¹⁴ Ibid., 51.

the grille with her right hand and a biscuit to her dancing lap dog with her left. Right of center, two young noble boys watch a puppet show, while the right background of the picture plane features a vignette of bread distribution. The sweeping diagonal arrangement of this active space in which all figures participate in small, grouped conversational vignettes, reads like a stage performance in which both the viewer and the nuns behind the grille are its spectators. A closer look reveals, however, that the nuns are equally part of this busy scene, albeit from behind the grated, curtained apertures that separate the parlor from the interior of the convent. The nuns in the left window of the parlor have tea with patrician gentlemen, the middle window reveals four nuns engaged in conversation and the exchange of a letter with the central grouping of parlor visitors, and the far right grille shows a nun and monk conversing with a widow dressed in black.

Gobbis's *The Convent Parlor* (Figure 54) presents a convent parlor with similar compositional and thematic conventions but with even greater theatrical flair than Guardi. His parlor resembles a masquerade performance well-known in Venice, with a group of men and women wearing traditional masks and veils of the carnival season (Figures 55 and 56). A musician plays a cello to the left of the crowd, accompanied by violinists whose backs turn to the viewer. The viewer's eye lingers on the couple in mid-step of a dance, and a *grande dame* occupies the central zone of the painting, suggestively fingering the end of her flirtatious fan as the masked figure leans toward her, perhaps propositioning her to dance. Onlookers to the right of them crowd in to watch. Nuns ranging in age from childhood to middle age watch the performance through the grill with rapt attention, curiosity, and pleasure, and one carries on what appears to be a coy conversation with a visitor in one of the grilled windows. Like the Guardi painting,

conversation and performance are the predominant subjects of the scene, indicated by gesture, leaning heads, body positions, and physical proximity among all of the interconnected figures. The sacred status of the convent gives way to a more secular form of communion among nuns and visitors, underscored by the candelabra that obscure what are likely religious paintings at the top of the picture plane. Indeed, the painting, in its demonstration of performance and convivial socialization is similar to Gobbis's *The Ridotto* of 1760 (Figure 57), which pictures an even more elaborate masquerade within the socially charged space of a Venetian theater's foyer. Were it not for the presence of the grilled windows or the bonneted and veiled nuns behind them, both Gobbis's and Guardi's scenes would appear to be staged in contemporary Venetian drawing rooms or side-spaces of the theater, complete with well-appointed furniture and decorations and demonstrating a celebration of song, dance, and conversation.

While not as carnival-esque in spirit as Venetian convent culture, French depictions of the convent parlor and other social spaces similarly present active atmospheres of sociability between lay and religious worlds. Authors and illustrators offer a fictionalized look at the parlor in works such as Marivaux's *La Vie de Marianne*, a story of a young orphan whose unfortunate fate leads her to the protection of a convent and the benefaction of the generous Madame de Miran, with whose son Marianne falls in love. Illustrations of the three figures convening in the convent parlor feature the by-now-familiar grille separating the parlor from enclosed space. Marianne is visible behind the grille in both images as Madame de Miran and Valville discuss the possibilities and impossibilities of the amorous young couple, Valville pleading for his mother's blessing to marry this less suitable bride. In the novel, the frequent visits of the mother and son to

Marianne's convent are described in terms of space, conversation and narrative flowing across and through the grille that separates the convent from the outside world and its inhabitants. Marivaux describes scenes from Marianne's perspective from within the convent, recounting the extension of her fingers through the bars to grasp those of Madame de Miran during emotional moments of the narrative. Visually, the separation of spaces is quite clear, and, as usual, the viewer is placed in the secular realm, looking in on Marianne beyond a heavily latticed grille (Figures 58 and 59). In both images, the circulation of gazes and the connection of the figures through gesture suggest conversation despite the heavily guarded aperture.

Another fictional work, *Le Perroquet au parloir*, features the parlor in a comedic story that centers on a beloved parrot loaned by a convent at Nevers to a convent at Nantes, but who, on his way to Nantes, picks up the blasphemous vocabulary of the sailors, much to the shock of the sisters. One of the poem's illustrations depicts a family visiting the infamous parrot, who occupies a perch built into the parlor grille (Figure 60). The nuns of the house are visible behind its bars, propping the parrot up in his specially designed opening. Even more than the illustrations of Marianne in the convent, lively exchange between the two distinct spaces is emphasized. The young boy closest to the grille stands on tiptoes to touch or otherwise gesture to the parrot, while the rest of the family reacts to the parrot's colorful words. The woman at the center of the composition, presumably the mother of the two children, raises her hands in surprise or disbelief, her male companion leans forward with a gesture of indignation, the woman behind him has parted lips suggesting her own vocal contribution to the fracas, and a woman walks into

the room through an open door at left, perhaps following the noises that the exchange has provoked.

While images and textual narratives of the parlor represent the convent as a space of sociability at the threshold between the secular world and a spiritual, all-female monastic space, they also tease the viewer into wondering what lies beyond the grille and what intimacies these single women share when the visitors are gone and they retire to the recesses of the cloister. While the convent as a space of sociability is a major aspect of this study, I am interested, in particular, in the convent as a site of *female* sociability and the ways in which this homosocial environment was represented in the eighteenth century. Curiosity of what lay behind closed doors led to a wide spectrum of representations, some of which I will analyze in this chapter, and others—less visual in nature—that have been written about at great length and do not need further elaboration here.¹⁵ Like other images of enclosed communities of women (domestic interiors,

¹⁵ Katharine Rogers pares down the large volume of English and French literary representations of the convent into three themes: the convent as a prison, a setting for picturesque tableaux, and an idealized university. The works she discusses range in content and tone from the polite to seductive and include Gabriel Joseph de la Vergne, *Les lettres portugaises* (1669); Baculard d'Arnaud, *Lucie et Mélanie, ou les Deux sœurs généreuses* (1767); Pierre Marivaux, *Vie de Marianne* (1731-41); Choderlos de Laclos, *Les liaisons dangereuses* (1782); Adélaïde de Sousa, *Adèle de Sénange* (1794); and Louis Gresset, "Vert-Vert" (poem; 1734). See Katharine M. Rogers, "Fantasy and Reality in Fictional Convents of the Eighteenth Century," *Comparative Literature Studies* 22, no. 3 (Fall 1985): 297-316.

Similarly, Christopher Rivers, in his article on the French libertine convent novel, lists a multitude of texts that feature the convent as the setting for at least one scene, and, in several cases, the entire novel: Abbé Jean Barrin, *Vénus dans le cloître, ou la religieuse en chemise* (1680); Michel Millot, *L'école des filles* (1655); Nicolas Chorier, *L'académie des dames* (Latin ed. 1660, French ed. 1680); Gervaise de la Touche's *Portier des Chartreux* (1741); the Marquis d'Argens, *Thérèse philosophe* (1748) and *Les nones galantes ou l'amour embéguiné* (1740); Brunet de Brou, *La religieuse malgré elle* (1720); Anonymous, *Le triomphe des religieuses ou les nones babillardes* (1748); Crébillon fils, *Tableaux des mœurs du temps* (1750); Meusnier de Querlon, *Sainte Nitouche ou histoire galante de la tourrière des carmélites* (1770); Anonymous, *La cauchoise* (1774); Anonymous, *Lettres galante et philosophique des deux nones* (1777); Anonymous, *Mémoires de Suzon, soeur de Dom Bougre, portier des Chartreux* (1778). He also lists a number of libertine plays, perhaps inspired by the novel, and sent in the convent: M.D.C.L.A.P., "Les plaisirs du clôtre" (1773) and Anonymous, "Les putains cloîtrés (c. 1793). See Christopher Rivers, "Safe Sex: The Prophylactic Walls of the Cloister in the French Libertine Convent Novel of the Eighteenth Century," *Journal of the History of Sexuality* 5, no. 3 (January 1995): 381-402.

harems, and boudoirs, for example), the imagination of (often male) artists and writers presented the figures in such scenes along a spectrum that spanned from idealized friendship to lesbian eroticism.

Behind Closed Doors: Narratives of Containment, Resistance, and Desire

Despite the gradual secularization of convent culture in the course of the century, writers, artists, readers and viewers continued to wax on the theme of enclosure. A study on eighteenth-century convents would not be complete, of course, without mentioning Denis Diderot's novel *La Religieuse*, an epistolary novel that emphasizes the physical containment of women, their renunciation of heterosexuality by virtue of taking a vow, and the irrepressibility of sexual desire (both illicit and sanctioned) within the convent walls. In contrast to the conceptualization of the convent as a space of emotional freedom and polite sociability for women, which I discuss below, the space in this and other narratives is represented as a prison, an enclosure predicated on forced vows. On the one hand, this physical and spatial enclosure has the potential to generate homosexual desire in the absence of men, but it also remains safely contained behind the walls and grilles of the convent. I will explore this and other tropes in the following pages before turning to a contrasting case study that features the convent garden as an *ideal* space of female sociability.

Generally speaking, literary explorations and constructions of female intimacies that focus on deviation from the heterosexual norm or illicit behavior in the convent bring forth several issues that writers and contemporaries grappled with in regards to female

sexuality, autonomy and desire.¹⁶ One common idea was that female-female sexual intimacy was an “apprenticeship” leading up to marriage. A common fear was that women would no longer need men or would no longer have the imperative to participate in the heterosexual reproductive economy. Also related to these ideas was the perceived threat of women receiving pleasure from a source other than the male sexual organ. By assigning “desire” within the convent as psychosexual madness in scenes such as those found in *La Religieuse* and other literary and visual works, the threat was abated, relegated to the purely bodily and physiological, something that could be defined, diagnosed, cured, regulated, and ultimately controlled by the men of science and medicine.¹⁷ Ultimately, though, while this supposedly illicit sexual behavior springs from the very fact that these women are shut off from the world and “normal” social behavior, it is this fictional enclosure that, theoretically, safely contains the acts, ensuring that they don’t portend any real threat to the heterosexual economy or the desiring male gaze. Enclosure becomes the perfect device for the sexual satisfaction of the male voyeur. While female sociability becomes perverted behind closed doors, it becomes so for the delight of the viewer and reader.¹⁸

Denis Diderot’s (in)famous novel, *La Religieuse*, is perhaps the best known convent narrative that features the all-female space as a prison in which female sexuality and same-sex eroticism manifest in the absence of men. Written in 1760 and published in 1796, after Diderot’s death, the novel centers on a young novice, Suzanne Simonin,

¹⁶ See Elizabeth Wahl, *Invisible Relations: Representations of Female Intimacy in the Age of Enlightenment* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1999).

¹⁷ Ibid, 174.

¹⁸ See Christopher Rivers, “The Prophylactic Walls of the Cloister,” *Journal of the History of Sexuality* 5, no. 3 (January 1995): 381-402.

whose forced enclosure and vows initiate a downward spiral of *sensibilité* in the form of same-sex seduction and initiation, lack of bodily control, and a general questioning of monasticism and its relationship to the rights of the individual. Diderot wrote the novel as a practical joke of sorts, constructing it as an epistolary call for help directed at the Marquis de Croismare. The Marquis was a friend of the author and had left Paris for Normandy the year prior; the novel, an impassioned first-person narrative of the fictive Suzanne, was meant to seduce him into returning to Paris to aid the young woman who was being held in the convent against her will. In Diderot's novel, Suzanne is an illegitimate child resulting from her mother's extramarital affair, and the convent not only opens the door to heftier dowries for her (legitimate) sisters, but it also provides a place for a young woman whose status within the family is not completely sanctioned. The first-person account of her sexual trials and spiritual odysseys during her "imprisonment" are meant to tug on the reader's emotional and sexual sensibilities. She is forced to take vows, experiences a variety of lesbian encounters with different Mother Superiors, and is on the receiving end of sadistic games within the convent walls. Generally speaking, this novel of sensibility highlights the loss of the self as Sister Suzanne slides down a slippery slope into physical and emotional despair. Her pleading letters asking for aid and release are meant to seduce the Marquis, and, ultimately the reader.

Scholars frequently discuss the novel in terms of the author's personal and political stance on the cloistered life.¹⁹ Diderot and other Enlightenment thinkers viewed

¹⁹ Among innumerable other interpretations of Diderot's novel, see Herbert Josephs, "Diderot's *La Religieuse*: Libertinism and the Dark Cave of the Soul," *MLN* 91, no. 4 (May 1976): 734-755; Carole F. Martin, "Legacies of the Convent in Diderot's *La Religieuse*," *Studies in Eighteenth-Century Culture* 25 (1996): 117-129; and Jack Undak, "Diderot's 'Unnatural Acts': Lessons from the Convent," *French Forum* 11, no. 2 (May 1986): 151-157.

the monastic establishment and enclosure as anathema to reason and nature, a symbol of the loss of individual liberty, and a vocation that isolated individuals from society.²⁰ The work has been interpreted along three major lines. It has been analyzed within the tradition of libertine fiction, featuring the convent as a site of sexual initiation and fantasy. As Russell Goulbourne points out, the original text was written *by* a man with the express intention of persuading or seducing *another* man, and the text itself generally acts as a titillating narrative for a presumably male reader. However, this interpretation discounts the female readership in the eighteenth-century.²¹ The most common analysis of the novel highlights Diderot's commentary on the unnatural state of the cloistered life, a same-sex confinement that can only lead to madness.²² This is in line with general Enlightenment philosophical attacks on the monastic interpretation. Finally, other scholars interpret the narrative and literary structure of the novel as a liberal representation of same-sex desire in early modern France, conceiving of Sister Suzanne's convent as a haven for female-female erotic desire.²³

²⁰ See Voltaire, Diderot, and Condorcet, above.

²¹ For a discussion of the issues of gender and authorship and readership of the eighteenth-century novel, see Béatrice Durand, "Diderot and the Nun: Portrait of the Artist as a Transvestite," in *Men Writing the Feminine: literature, theory, and the question of genders*, ed. Thais E. Morgan (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1994), 89-106 and William Ray, "Reading Women: Cultural Authority, Gender, and the Novel. The Case of Rousseau," *Eighteenth-Century Studies* 27, no. 3 (Spring 1994): 421-447.

²² Cited above.

²³ Desire and sexual identity in the context of the novel is explored by Vivian Mylne, "What Suzanne Knew: Lesbianism and *La Religieuse*," *Studies on Voltaire and the Eighteenth Century* 208 (1982): 167-173; Rita Goldberg, *Sex and Enlightenment: Women in Richardson and Diderot* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984); Eve Sokofsky Sedgwick, "Privilege of Unknowing," in *Tendencies* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1994), 23-51; Irene Fizer, "Women 'Off' the Market: Feminine Economies in Diderot's *La Religieuse* and the Convent Novel," in *Illicit Sex: Identity Politics in Early Modern Culture*, ed. Thomas DiPiero and Pat Gill (Athens, GA: University of Georgia Press, 1997), 89-108; and Terry Castle, *The Literature of Lesbianism: A Historical Anthology from Ariosto to Stonewall* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2003).

Rather than a reiteration of these much-explored interpretations of the novel, however, I am more interested in the dynamics of female sociability that appear in Diderot's fictive convent and the ways in which they relate to a body of similar types of images in literature and art. In his vivid description of intense emotions and physical/physiological urges among the sequestered protagonists, Diderot portrays the space as dystopian or disturbingly "unnatural" while simultaneously marking it as a safely enclosed, erotic space for the curious (presumably) male voyeur. The dialog between Suzanne and one of the mother superiors highlights the erotic tension that courses through the novel, also emphasizing the dynamics of power and sexuality inherent to the structure of Diderot's imagined convent.

'Sister Suzanne, do you love me?'

'How could I possibly not love you? I'd have to be terribly ungrateful.'

'That's true.'

'You show me such kindness...'

'Or rather, such fondness for you...'

And as she spoke she would look down, with the hand she had round my waist she would squeeze me more tightly still, pressing down more firmly with the hand she had placed on my knee, she would pull me towards her, my face would be against hers, she would sigh, fall back in her seat, trembling, as if she wanted to tell me something but did not dare, she would be crying, and then she would say: 'Oh! Sister Suzanne, you don't love me!'

'I don't love you, dear mother?'

'No.'

'Tell me what I have to do to prove it to you.'

'You have to guess.'

'I'm trying to, but I can't think.'

By that point she had lifted up her gimp and had placed one of my hands on her breast. She said nothing, and neither did I. She seemed to be experiencing the most intense pleasure. She would ask me to kiss the forehead, the cheeks, the eyes, and the mouth. Her hand, which she had placed on my knee, would now wander up and down all over my clothes, from the tips of my shoes to my waist, pressing me here, then there.

Stammering and in a faltering, soft voice, she would urge me to caress her even more, and I would do so. Eventually there came a point, and I do not know if this was out of pleasure or pain, when she went deathly pale, her eyes shut, her whole body tensed violently, her lips tightened at first, slightly moistened as if by some kind of foam, then her mouth opened and she gave a deep sigh, as if she was dying.’²⁴

In this passage, the Mother Superior guides Suzanne (and the reader) along her body, initiating her to its pleasures as she directs and commands her touch, taking advantage of her position of power as the head nun in her seduction of the young novice. Suzanne occupies a position of naïveté as she narrates the Mother Superior’s requests, but it is this innocence that also seduces the reader. Her description of the nun’s body (the face, thigh, and breast), her bodily fluid (the “foam” of her moistened lips), and the “petite mort” that takes over her body invite the reader to participate in the erotic encounter, from the initial request for affection to the end result of orgasm.

Several passages of the novel repeat this detailed description of erotic touch – and its climactic result – between the women behind the locked doors of the convent. Rather

²⁴ Denis Diderot, *The Nun*, trans. Russell Goulbourne (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2005): 105-106. Original French from Denis Diderot, *La Religieuse* (Paris: L’Imprimerie d’Andre, 1797): 103-105. “...soeur Suzanne, m’aimez-vous? –Et comment ferois-je pour ne pas vous aimer? Il faudroit que j’eusse l’ame bien ingrate. –Cela est vrai. –Vous avez tant de bonté. –Dites de gout pour vous...Et, en prononcant ces mots, elle baissoit les yeux, la main don’t elle me tenoit embrassée me serroit plus fortement, celle qu’elle avoit appuyée sur mon genou pressoit davantage, elle m’attiroit sur elle, mon visage se trouvoit place sur le sien, elle soupiroit, elle se renversoit sur sa chaise, elle trembloit, on eût dit qu’elle avoit à me confier quelque chose, et qu’elle n’osoit; elle versoit des larmes, et puis elle me disoit: ah! soeur Suzanne, vous ne m’aimez pas! –Je ne vous aime pas, chère mere! –Non. –Et dites-moi ce qu’il faut que je fasse pour vous le prouver. –Il faudroit que vous le devinassiez. –Je cherche, je ne devine rien. –Dependant elle avoit levé son linge de cou, et elle avoit mis une de mes mains sur sa gorge; elle se taisoit, je me taisois aussi; elle paroissoit goûter le plus grand plaisir. Elle m’invitoit à lui baiser le front, les joues, les yeux et la bouche, et je lui obéissois; je ne crois pas qu’il y eût du mal à cela; cependant son plaisir s’accroissoit, et comme je ne demandois pas mieux que d’ajouter à son Bonheur d’une manière aussi innocente, je lui baisois encore le front, les joues, les yeux et la bouche. La main qu’elle avoit posée sur mon genou se promenoit sur tous mes vêtemens, depuis l’extrémité de mes pieds jusqu’à ma ceinture, me pressant tantôt dans un endroit, tantôt en un autre; elle m’exhortoit en bégayant, et d’une voix altérée et basse, à redoubler mes caresses; je les redoublai: enfin, il vint un moment, je ne sais si ce fut de plaisir ou de peine, où elle devint pale comme la mort, ses yeux se fermèrent, tout son corps se tendit avec violence, ses lèvres se pressèrent d’abord, elles étoient humectées comme d’une mousse légère, puis sa bouche s’entrouvrit, et elle me parut mourir en poussant un profound soupir.”

than the more “polite” connotations of sensibility in the context of homosocial relationships, sensibility in the novel signifies a physiological response based on orgasm, same-sex physical stimulation, and the impossibility of resistance. Diderot, in part, used this discourse to express Enlightenment disapproval of the unnatural state of celibacy that the monastic institution demanded, and he did so by presenting same-sex encounters as dystopian, playing out within the dark recesses of the convent and based on a model of virile pursuer and unwitting victim.²⁵ Rather than suggesting the potential for true friendship between *femmes religieuses*, Diderot claims that the sequestration of women instead wreaks havoc on both body and mind.

Illustrations of the novel, however, are not as explicit as one would expect. Engravings from an 1804 edition feature rather chaste-looking genre scenes of various narrative moments such as Suzanne playing the harpsichord (Figure 61), the death of Mère Moni (Figure 62), Suzanne refusing to pronounce her vows (Figure 63), and the clergy paying a visit to the defiant protagonist’s cell (Figure 64). In contrast to the graphic description of same-sex eroticism in Diderot’s literary convent, the images seem to simply mark a place in the book or, at most, to suggest only subtly Suzanne’s resistance to her enclosure and taking of the veil. For example, the illustration of “Suzanne refusing to pronounce her vows” (Figure 63) depicts Suzanne at the center of an interior room of the convent, flanked by other nuns and a bishop. A glimpse of the outside world is available to the viewer and the novice, but a nun has begun to lower the

²⁵ The discourse of female sexuality raises the issue of celibacy, which Diderot addressed in his article “Célibat” in the *Encyclopédie*. In the article, Diderot condemns celibacy as unnatural to human nature, a violation of natural law, and antithetical to social behavior. The ultimate – and most frightening – aspect of this wholly unnatural celibacy was the lack of reproduction, this terrifying to a people who were convinced that France’s population was in decline during the eighteenth century. See Shane “Sex Education in the Enlightened Nation,” in *Studies in Eighteenth-Century Culture* 37 (2008): 68-9, and Célibat from *L’Encyclopédie* 2:801.

grated grille, threatening to extinguish the fluidity between two spaces that individually symbolize enclosure and freedom in the book. Her refusal to “pronounce the vow” is visualized with her defiant hand raised toward the quickly disappearing view of the outside world. She defies the closure of the aperture much as she resists her official acceptance of the life of a nun. The pointed Gothic Revival arches above her head not only remind the viewer of the historical significance of the Church, but also, by virtue of the downward pointing wood- or stonework, draw attention to Suzanne in the center of the composition. The other illustrations seem more dedicated to the recording of banal moments in the daily lives of the nuns, milestones in the community (i.e. someone’s death), or the general sociability of the convent’s inhabitants. Generally speaking, they mirror the subject matter and style of contemporary genre painting that featured the mundane aspects and activities of family life within the enclave of the domestic interior.

These illustrations of the more mundane aspects of life in the convent are in contrast to the explicit nature of convent erotica, a popular eighteenth-century genre that is an entire topic unto itself and one that has been treated in depth elsewhere.²⁶

Illustrated novels like *Histoire de Dom Bougre, Portier des Chartreux* (1741), *Vénus dans le Cloître* (first published in 1683), and the Marquis de Sade’s *Juliette* (1797-1801) position the convent as a space where unsanctioned sexuality develops among both men and women. *Dom Bougre* features an illustration of a nun carrying a dildo as she enters the cell of a fellow *religieuse* (Figure 65) and an engraving from the earlier *Vénus dans le*

²⁶ Convent erotica in the context of libertine fiction is a topic unto itself addressed by scholars across disciplines. See, in particular, Rivers, “Safe Sex”; Lynn Hunt, “Introduction: Obscenity and the Origins of Modernity, 1500-1800,” in *The Invention of Pornography: Obscenity and the Origins of Modernity, 1500-1800* (New York: Zone Books, 1993), 9-45; and Jean-Marie Goulemot, *Ces Livres qu’on ne lit que d’une main: Lecture et lecteurs de livres pornographiques au XVIIIème siècle* (Paris: Minerve, 1994).

Cloître includes an image of a willfully punished nun who receives a bare-bottomed whipping from another while several more look on without any obvious disdain for the display and action (Figure 66). The nun who receives her punishment kneels down before her bed in a position of prayer, but the satisfied look on her face indicates that she prays for the sadistic flagellation to continue rather than abate. The Marquis de Sade explains away the illnesses provoked by convent upbringing in his masturbatory diatribe on the unnatural, irrational state of religion, exposing multiple sexual combinations in the sexual underworld of the monastic institution (Figures 67 and 68).²⁷ Most of his scenes emphasize a heterosexual model of libertine excess, the sexual fusion of nuns and abbots serving to illustrate the ills of the Church and the unnatural state of celibacy rather than suggest a specific model of sociability or sexual intimacy.

Rather than an analysis of the meta-historical and -social structures that such texts and images suggest, I include the material to think about female enclosure as a trope through which authors and artists acted out the fantasies of “available” women behind closed doors. A large genre of images depicting various private, interior spaces – the boudoir, brothel, and harem, to name a few – suggests that enclosure is not limited to the convent and offers an illicit yet tantalizing fantasy of sexually available women in the confines of these sequestered spaces, available for viewer’s or reader’s taking. Such images include domestic scenes featuring the comparison of breasts and buttocks (Figures 69 and 70), women embracing, kissing, and otherwise being physically intimate behind closed doors (Figure 71, 72, 73), and “remedy prints” (Figure 74), which depict the administration of bodily curatives from a maid to her mistress. These scenes repeat the convent erotica’s insistence on the penetration of “feminine” space and moments of

²⁷ Marquise de Sade, *Juliette* (1797-1801).

bodily intimacy shared between “enclosed” women. Representations of the “comparison”, in which women compare breasts and buttocks within the disheveled space of the upper bourgeois boudoir, imagine what women do when left to their own devices and in their carved-out private architectural spaces or in nature. In these intimate vignettes, they participate in activities based on the body and its anatomy – they compare it, dress it, and explore it within the safe confines of an interior, private space or nature. Erotic images like those by Boilly and Lavreince (71-73) offer the viewer a private peek into a closed interior room, often a bedroom, to expose kissing, caressing, and “bedding” between half-dressed women surrounded by ruffled bed sheets and general disarray. Even an image like “Le Clystère” (Figure 74) makes an allusion to sexuality as the maid’s phallic instrument poses in the air before penetrating the body of the prostrate woman, whose exposed (and expansive) buttocks offer an interesting point of view to the spectator. If a salacious encounter isn’t implied overtly, then the fellow peeking in on the affair seals the deal for the viewer, who assumes the gentleman’s nosy position from the outside of the canvas looking in, much like the man who peeks in from the door. Taking Diderot’s enclosed world of female seduction further, a print like Jean-Baptiste Mallet’s *Par Ici!* (Figure 75) seems to subscribe to the author’s association between female sexuality and illness or moral decay. Mallet depicts two prostitutes displaying themselves in their feminine attire like a peacock showing off its wings as they peer out the window at prospective clients. Disarray and decline are suggested by the mess of fabric draped across the window frame, as well as the haphazardly drawn window blinds that sloped precariously across the frame and above the woman in the foreground. The

edifice of the building crumbles away below the door jamb, suggesting both physical and moral decay.

What I hope to demonstrate in the case study that follows is the antithesis of such negative assessments of the convent and the women whose life experiences were colored by the institution. Rather than disbelief that female friendship was a vibrant part of convent life, that women could indeed exist and subsist without men, that the only aspect of the convent worth mentioning is the sensationalized torture of *vocations forcée* and that a community of women could indeed function without a male subject presiding over it, I would like to suggest that the female monastic community was, in a way, a site of freedom for women born into a patriarchal society. I argue that the development of emotional attachments through female friendship offered women an avenue of expression, and as I will explore, was heightened and maintained through the exchange of letters, the exchange of tokens of affection, and the commissioning of paintings to commemorate their friendships. I agree with Katharine Rogers's assessment that,

...[French and English writers] were equally prone to call the convent a tomb or a prison. None of them considered the possibility that women might find more fulfillment in the convent than in marriage—might prefer a community of congenial women to a husband whom they were bound to obey, or enjoy running their own domestic affairs or administering schools and property.²⁸

In a similar spirit, I would like to demonstrate how female social networks, in this case fostered in the convent, were an important part of the development of individual identity and subjectivity and that through conversation with friends, women could articulate their unique identities. For some women, the enclosure of the convent brought with it a freedom from enclosure within the family (i.e. obedience to a husband), while for others

²⁸ Rogers, "Fantasy and Reality," 302.

it represented a site of intellectual freedom and professional development. For many, it was a space of emotional expression, fostered in the female friendships that often lasted well beyond the years spent in the convent.

What follows, then, is an analysis of three paintings that have heretofore not been sufficiently explored and deserve more particular attention in their representation of female friendship: Hubert Robert's "triptych" of Madame Geoffrin at the Abbaye Saint-Antoine, including *La Promenade de Madame Geoffrin à l'Abbaye Saint-Antoine*, *Madame Geoffrin déjeunant avec les dames de l'Abbaye Saint-Antoine*, and *Les cygnes de l'Abbaye Saint-Antoine*, all dating from 1773 (Figures 76-78). As I will demonstrate, rather than a *loss* of the self as sensibility takes over the body and mind of Suzanne, the convent garden engenders the *construction* of the self through sensibility, developed and shared by Madame Geoffrin and her female friends as they traverse its picturesque spaces. Rather than a male-penned text that distorts and sensationalizes the interactions within the walls of the religious house, I turn to the series of paintings, commissioned by the salonnière as a celebration of her tranquil retreat in the company of her female friends, as a visual token of her time away from *le monde* that hung in her Parisian hôtel on the other side of town.

Motion and Emotion: The Picturesque Convent Garden and Female Sociability

In 1773, Marie Thérèse Rodet Geoffrin commissioned Hubert Robert to paint one of the many spaces of the convent that she frequented as a *pensionnaire*, a space with which the painter of landscape and ruins was certainly familiar: the garden (Figures 76-78). The series of three canvases depicts Madame Geoffrin and her noble friends

promenading and conversing in the gardens of the Abbaye Saint-Antoine in Paris, where the famous salonnière rented an apartment for a yearly retreat during the later decades of her life. Not only does Robert's rendition of the garden and the social activity that transpires within it recall his large oeuvre of *jardin paysagers* and *jardins pittoresques*, but the garden—a highly symbolic space where multiple discourses converge in literature and art—is central to an analysis of Robert's idealized vision of polite female sociability and conversation within the all-female space of the convent, and in this particular instance, the picturesque convent garden. Robert's paintings reveal the lush, verdant garden of the Abbaye as a retreat from *le monde*, a space in which Geoffrin could leave her official salon duties at the convent gate and enter into a hospitable world of female companionship. Consistent themes arise in textual and visual representations of the convent, revealing it as a social space: the convent garden as an ideal, private space for the enjoyment of social intimacies, a haven in which female subjectivity can develop, and a space of freedom unattached to the heterosexual imperative of motherhood and marriage.

The first panel, *La Promenade de Madame Geoffrin à l'Abbaye Saint-Antoine*, pictures the salonnière and her sisterly cohorts, including the abbess and good friend of Geoffrin, the Princess de Beauveau-Craon, member of an aristocratic Lorraine family and abbess from 1760 to 1790, strolling the garden arm-in-arm as a male gardener and converse nun tend to the foliage on either side of the central figural grouping.²⁹ Another group of nuns strolls in the middle ground, similarly linked to one another through close

²⁹ Paula Radisich proposes an order for the “triptych,” which I am not following in my analysis of the images. I am approaching them from a thematic and structural point of view in my consideration of how conversation functions in the context of friendship and the garden. See Paula Rea Radisich, *Hubert Robert: Painted Spaces of the Enlightenment* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 37.

physical proximity and repetition of form, and another pair of women walks in the background, toward a fountain. The large, arching trees usher the figures (and the viewer's eye) to the background of the painting, toward what appears to be another expanse of idyllic landscape. The lush, verdant scene is an image of hospitable, picturesque nature. While the gardeners may be grooming the land in the foreground, there is still a natural feel to it, as if the gently arching trees were designed by Nature herself rather than by the toilers. They form a protective, womb-like passageway to the garden beyond, creating an intimate setting suitable for conversational exchange between the figures that inhabit it. This private outdoor space is a refuge that visually beckons and envelops Madame Geoffrin, ushering her away from her bustling city life and demanding role as a salonnière. Still in her street clothes, yet part of the quartet of nuns, Geoffrin acts as an intermediary figure between the enclosed space of the convent and the world outside.

In *Madame Geoffrin déjeunant avec les dames de l'Abbaye Saint-Antoine*, we encounter a similar scene of garden abundance, outdoor delights, and the contentment of shared company, a homosocial complement to the heterosexual *fête galante*, made popular in the earlier half of the eighteenth century. A canvas of the same format and dimensions as the other two, Robert pictures Geoffrin and her friends seated around a *plein air* dining table in a different part of the abbey's gardens. Included in the scene are Madame Geoffrin, still distinguished from the sisters by her gray clothing and black bonnet, the Princesse de Beauveau-Craon, Madame de Mainville (a trustee), Madame de Massabeky (a vestry nun), and Madame de Blaiset, all women of noble standing.³⁰

³⁰ Ibid., 29.

Geoffrin's female servant holds her cloak while her male domestic hands her a letter, an emblem that Paula Radisich identifies as a symbol of the outside world as well as a sign of her profession and status as a *salonnière*, perhaps indicating salon business.³¹ As in the previous canvas, Geoffrin occupies the scene as an intermediary figure between the two worlds she moves in and out of. Also similar is the emphasis on engagement in polite conversation. Female sociability within the garden in this canvas and the others is the subject of this conversation piece in its combination of genre painting and portraiture. The setting, too, contributes to the sense of privacy within the space: an arcaded wall frames the figural grouping from behind, and the ruinous structure at right, evoking "Robert des Ruines," is punctuated by the grille of the gate, signifying a passageway to either a different part of the garden or to the outside world. The gate, highlighted by the raking natural light, is a symbol of entry or access and departure, and it is securely closed, suggestive of privacy.³²

The third canvas, *Les cygnes de l'Abbaye Saint-Antoine*, does not include Madame Geoffrin, but rather her friends, still in the convent gardens playing a game of cards in the background while other nuns look on, and another feeds swans in the foreground. A repetitive theme becomes apparent in this final painting: garden architecture and foliage frame socializing activities, and conversation is the predominant

³¹ Ibid., 30.

³² The gate, along with the parlor and church, represented points of contact and entrance or exit between the outside world and the convent. Once a woman entered the convent and took vows, she would never pass back through the gate. We can think of the (enclosed) convent as a hermetically sealed micro-community. Clearly a *pensionnaire* or temporary visitor/resident like Madame Geoffrin would have a different relationship with this threshold, but it's symbolic role as separating the public from the private for Geoffrin is significant to our understanding of the paintings. For further analysis of the gate as threshold between the secular and sacred in the convent, see Silvia Evangelisti, *Nuns. A History of Convent Life* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2007), 48.

subject or “action” in the scene. This canvas also shares an emphasis on picturesque garden scenery, exemplified by the craggy angles of the tree arching across the picture plane and the cracking pediment of the wall. A rustic wood door with iron supports is open, revealing a doorway and stairs, but it is not clear where it leads, again piquing the viewer’s interest beyond the picture plane.

The most recognizable predecessor to Robert’s paintings of landscape and sociability is Jean-Antoine Watteau. His personal image of *male* friendship within the garden setting in *Assis au près de toi* (engraved by Tardieu) (Figure 79) is similar in its placement of figures in the lush landscape and the alliance of picturesque nature and sociability. This portrait of friendship, based on the artist’s artistic and intellectual exchange with collector Jean de Jullienne takes place in a picturesque enclave of a garden, the painter looking out from his easel, Jullienne pausing from plucking the cello, and a statue of Venus towering behind them. Julie Plax describes the scene with the following words:

In *Seated Near You*, Watteau and Jullienne occupy the space of love; they appear where an amorous couple would be situated if this were a typical Watteau *fête galante*. They also inhabit the space of art lovers; they are the subjects of their own artfully created world. Their friendship, their mutual love of art is here literally the stuff of paintings.³³

The scene has similarly sexual allusions as Watteau’s *fêtes galantes* (Figures 80 and 81): the Venus, the open hat, the phallic cello bow, open legs of Jullienne as he plays his instrument, and frolicking female figures echoing their own poses in the canvas within the canvas. In this image of friendship and in Watteau’s amorous *fête galante* genre, the lush garden and its symbolic structures provide the backdrop for sociable exchange and is

³³ Julie Plax, “Belonging to the In Crowd: Watteau and the bonds of art and friendship,” in *French Genre Painting in the Eighteenth Century*, ed. Philip Conisbee (Washington, D.C.: National Gallery of Art, 2007), 65.

a superbly hospitable setting for conversation itself.³⁴ The harmony of their mutually beneficial friendship is alluded to in the strings of the instrument, the fluidity of Watteau's brush and easel, the statue of Venus, and the verdant landscape that contains it all.

However, Madame Geoffrin engages in a more intimate type of exchange in the company of her female friends than Watteau's friendship portrait does and in a way that emblematic images of Friendship cannot. Similar to Watteau and Jullienne, Robert's articulation of Geoffrin's friendships within the garden setting resonate with harmony and intimacy, but the basis of these female friendships, rather than collecting or artistic exchange is *conversation* within and *movement* among the three canvases. Figures traverse the gardens, linked arm in arm, heads leaning toward one another, completely absorbed in communication and movement or activity in this idyllic garden. The women exhibit the same type of "refined generalized conversation" that Vidal talks about in Watteau's "painted conversations" in the lack of open mouth dialogue or exaggerated gestures that would indicate that talk is being exchanged.³⁵ Instead, the small, dwarfed figures in the picturesque landscape are linked to one another through physical proximity, repetition of costume, touch, exchanging glances, leaning heads, and a horizontal arrangement of figures in *enchaînement*. They engage closely in activity together—playing cards, sharing a meal, and promenading as solid units that occupy distinct positions within the expansive, lush garden landscape.

³⁴ Art historian Mary Vidal frames her understanding of the *fête galante* as pictures of conversation, discussed at more length below. Mary Vidal, *Watteau's Painted Conversations: Art, Literature, and Talk in Seventeenth- and Eighteenth-Century France* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1992).

³⁵ Ibid., 19.

Like Watteau's *fête galantes*, the picturesque landscape setting in Robert's paintings is as much of a subject as the figures that populate it. "Nature" occupies the majority of each canvas, stretching vertically over three-quarters of the picture plane, but this is Nature formed by the artful hand of the landscape gardener (and painter). The poetically rendered, soft foliage weeps about the picture plane, and the irregular lines of the trees draw the eye to details of bark and leaves. Gates, doorways, and paths suggest the potential to meander beyond the immediate setting, and the generally un-tamed and un-groomed naturalism of the convent gardens speaks of contemporary trends in gardening techniques and the outdoor experience. Indeed, the figures within this lyrical landscape occupy it as it was intended to be experienced: enjoying the bounty of the picturesque garden, they spend their time outdoors wandering the grounds together, conversing and reflecting, and coexisting peacefully in artfully arranged nature. Ultimately, unlike Watteau's unique genre, Robert's paintings replace couples and lovers with groups of women, a new take on both the *fête galante* and picturesque garden scenes.

The carefully arranged elements of the picturesque garden were part of a new trend in eighteenth-century France. While the formal French garden's strict symmetry and symbolic adornments were intended to impress and awe its visitors in a very structured experience, especially for the courtly and aristocratic classes, the *jardin anglais*, so named because of prolific British writings on and implementations of the picturesque, emphasized feeling and *sensibilité* as primary aims of the garden experience and style, a space of leisure for the middle classes and aristocracy.³⁶ By the 1770s,

³⁶ Thomas Whately's *Observations on Modern Gardening, illustrated by descriptions* (1770) was one of the most influential British texts on the picturesque, one that French theorists looked to as they

English garden and landscape theory had filtered into France, and writers, painters, landscape designers, and garden enthusiasts embraced the newly heightened aesthetic experience that the garden could offer, precipitating major changes to the formal French garden plan. Strict geometry and symmetry made way for winding paths, free-form arrangements of trees and plants, and strategically placed “ruins” around which revelers could ramble, find refuge, immerse themselves in conversation and contemplation, and enjoy the health benefits of sights, sounds, and fresh air. *Les jardins français* were transformed into *jardins anglais* from small scale (Parisian townhouses) to large scale (royal gardens and city parks), and many monastic houses similarly followed the trend.³⁷

Not only was the picturesque garden meant to be aesthetically edifying, but a complex discourse of interiority, reflection, and virtue was bound up in the space, ideas of French garden theory that were greatly influenced by Jean-Jacques Rousseau.³⁸ While the seemingly natural and irregular beauty of the picturesque garden was of utmost importance to theorists and designers, the *effects* of the picturesque were equally important in the realm of well-being and virtue. In his dialogic and fictional writings, Rousseau argued that nature (both untouched by man and the modeled picturesque garden) was a space of harmony, a model of beauty and goodness uncorrupted by the

articulated their own theories of the picturesque. Horace Walpole’s *Essay on Modern Gardening* (1782) was also part of this generation of British garden theory. Of course, a discussion of the picturesque and its role in aesthetic theory is not complete without reference to William Gilpin, whose 1768 *Essay on Prints* introduced many important questions regarding the relationship between the picturesque landscape and its representation in art.

³⁷ The Abbaye Saint-Antoine had been completely redesigned upon the Princesse de Beauveau-Craon’s assumption as abbess, but I haven’t found any information regarding the redesign of the gardens. We might suppose that they were renovated in the spirit of the picturesque, but there is no evidence to support this aside from Robert’s paintings.

³⁸ Rousseau includes the picturesque garden and nature in his *Julie, ou la Nouvelle Héloïse* (1761), *Emile* (1762), and *Reveries of a Solitary Walker* (1782).

devastating forces of civilization. His *Reveries of a Solitary Walker* features nature as a fitting backdrop for empirical observation as well as a continued criticism of culture, ideas on education, and thoughts on political theory. While emphasizing solitariness and contemplation, the text demonstrates that it is within the setting of nature and circulation that one is inspired to reflect, to develop a specific subjectivity in relationship to the oppositional spheres of “nature” and “civilization,” and to reconnect with virtue, divorced from external, worldly forces. Similarly, Rousseau’s description of “Elysium” in *Julie, ou La Nouvelle Héloïse*, features figures walking deeper and deeper into the recesses of an enclosed picturesque garden, each step on the path leading to empirical observation of plant life as well as meditations on the state of man within and outside of nature, ultimately creating a sense of inspired virtue that the speaker (Saint Preux) comes to understand by way of his meditative reflections.³⁹ Both textual examples reveal the proposition of nature as harmonious and human’s experience in and meditation upon it a source of moral improvement. It is through *rêverie*, or imagination, that the landscape garden inspires and from which the individual draws to strengthen the soul.⁴⁰ This places us squarely within sensationist theory that posited a direct connection between the impression of external stimuli and sensation on internal understanding and experience, an element of the picturesque that separates such gardens from earlier garden theory. Above all, the garden landscape was thought to have an *affective* power over the individual who

³⁹ Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Julie, or the New Heloise*, trans. Philip Stewart and Jean Vache (Hanover and London: University Press of New England, 1997), 386-401. Part Four, Letter XI contains a vivid description of the picturesque garden of Elysium.

⁴⁰ Eva Maria Neumeyer, “The Landscape Garden as a Symbol in Rousseau, Goethe and Flaubert,” *Journal of the History of Ideas* 8, no. 2 (April 1947): 190.

moved through it in space and time. As I shall demonstrate, this affect is strengthened even more when in the company of friends.

It is no coincidence that the newfound enthusiasm for the picturesque in landscape gardening, the perceived physical and mental benefits of nature, and theoretical writings on the relationship of individual virtue to the natural world coexist with the painting of circumambulating figures in the picturesque landscape.⁴¹ Hubert Robert's own artistic career was largely based on these ideas and themes; many of his paintings picture the garden as an intimate space for socialization and conversation, both within the canvas and between the viewer and the painting. Movement and conversation within the *paysage pittoresque* are the dominant themes of works such as Robert's *The Terrace at the Château de Marly*, set in Marly-le-Roi, Louis XVI's royal retreat, conceived of as a more natural version of the formality of the gardens at Versailles (Figure 82).⁴² Three women have been strolling the property's grounds and gardens, suggested by their bonnets and bustled skirts, as well as the walking stick held by the woman on the right. The viewer presumes the vista they have stumbled upon has caused them to rest and has led to

⁴¹ See the essays in Michel Conan, ed., *Landscape Design and the Experience of Motion* (Washington, D.C.: Dumbarton Oaks Research Library and Collection, 2003) for a discussion on movement and experience in the landscape garden.

⁴² John Dixon Hunt signals the gardens at Marly as an important benchmark for a distinctively French adaptation of the English picturesque garden in its combination of regularity and feigned naturalism. Designed with the natural topography of the valley in which the château and the grounds are nestled, the gardens of Marly contained the typical picturesque elements of decorative trellises and arbors, meandering paths, curving lines, garden follies, and the insertion of retaining walls below grass banks. The grounds ushered visitors through the space by means of their purposeful arrangement of trees, paths, and focal points, and it was designed to delight promenaders with various vistas, such as the expansive view toward St. Germain. In short, such carefully constructed space, as were all picturesque gardens in their supposed naturalism, was intended to shape the experience of its visitors. Framed views made possible by careful arrangement of design elements, wandering through passages of grouped trees, and "stumbling" upon a beautiful view were all meant to inspire, awe, and calm those on the promenade as well as inspire conversation, contemplation, and discussion. John Dixon Hunt, "Emblem and Expression in the Eighteenth-Century Landscape Garden," *Eighteenth-Century Studies* 4, no. 3 (Spring 1971): 294-317 and John Dixon Hunt, *The Picturesque Garden in Europe* (London: Thames and Hudson, 2002), 88.

reflection and discussion, one of the primary aims of picturesque garden design. The two figures at left are loosely linking arms as one gestures toward something in the distance, and they lean their heads toward one another in conversation, while the third figure looks in their direction to listen. Even Pigalle's sculpture of *Mercury Attaching His Wings* (Figure 83) seems to eavesdrop on the conversation, much as Watteau's sculptural figures join in the party in his numerous *fêtes galantes*.⁴³ Robert's hallmark style of painting nature is again identifiable in this painting: greenery is the primary motif of the canvas, spilling into the picture plane and creating a sense of soft, lush foliage; softly cloudy skies take up much of the composition; craggy branches are juxtaposed with soft leaves; and the painter emphasizes human activity within the outdoor space.

What interests me about this sub-genre of the painted *paysage pittoresque* in general, and Robert's paintings of Madame Geoffrin in the convent garden in particular, is the relationship between "motion and emotion" in the picturesque landscape.⁴⁴ More specifically, an understanding of the relationship of movement to space, and in this case the gendered space of the convent garden, is central to how we can understand Robert's representation of Madame Geoffrin among her friends in terms of sensibility as a model for female friendship. I would ultimately like to consider the "affective power" of the

⁴³ We might even say that Watteau's *fête galante* provides a heterosexual forerunner to the category of painting I am discussing, his paintings of conversation part of an earlier discourse on the changing signs of the aristocracy, the civilizing role of polite society, and the flourishing of the salon. However, the earlier gardens of Watteau, while visually picturesque, have a different role to fulfill in the *fête galante*: nature is a backdrop to comportment and *honnêteté* in Watteau, while it serves to heighten *sensibilité* in Robert. See Mary Vidal, *Watteau's Painted Conversations* (1992).

⁴⁴ See, specifically, Linda Parshall, "Motion and Emotion in C.C.L. Hirschfeld's *Theory of Garden Art*," in Michel Conan, ed., *Landscape Design and the Experience of Motion* (Washington, D.C.: Dumbarton Oaks Research Library and Collection, 2003), 35-51.

garden—the ideal result of motion through space and time—to suggest the development of subjectivity through conversation and shared feeling or reflection within the space.

To better understand how movement within the affective space of the picturesque garden was articulated in eighteenth-century theory, we must turn to an essay by Robert's good friend and fellow attendant at Madame Geoffrin's *lundis*, Claude-Henri Watelet. This well-known figure in academic, artistic, and literary circles published an expressive and vivid theory of the picturesque garden in 1774, the decade in which French writing on the topic reached fever pitch.⁴⁵ Watelet's *Essai sur les Jardins* presents various types of gardens and landscapes and picturesque elements within them while leading the viewer on a guided tour of the various spaces he charts. Arguing for the inclusion of landscape gardening among the liberal arts, Watelet discusses the aims and methods of the French picturesque garden. He asserts that the garden should be both "useful" and "agreeable," advocates the return to a simpler, more natural style of gardening, and stresses the role of the garden in stirring the soul and satisfying the spirit through *sensation*. His ideas, although published somewhat later in the "debate" of the picturesque, would inspire many other writers on the subject and were translated into both German and English,

⁴⁵ Other important but less theoretical French gardening books were published in the decades before *Essai*, including Antoine-Joseph Dezallier d'Argenville's *La Théorie et la pratique du jardinage* (1709) and Jacques-François Blondel's *Architecture française* (1752-1756). Joseph Disponzio, in the introduction to the translated edition of Watelet's *Essai*, argues that the first theoretical treatment of the picturesque garden came with Thomas Whately's *Observations on Modern Gardening*, published in 1770 and translated into French and German in 1771. He signals Watelet's *Essai* as the first major French contribution to the picturesque, opening the floodgates to myriad French-penned books, essays, and treatises on the structure and aim of the picturesque garden. Other publications followed such as Antoine-Nicolas Duchesne's *Considérations sur le jardinage* (1775) and *Sur la formation des jardins* (1775), Jean-Marie Morel's *Théorie des jardins* (1776), René de Girardin's *De la composition des paysages* (1777), Louis Carrogis de Carmontelle's *Jardin de Monceau* (1779), and George-Louis Le Rouge's *Jardins anglo-chinois à la mode; ou, Dails des nouveax jardins à la mode* (1776-1789). For a brief but informative historiography of the development of picturesque garden theory in France, specifically its flourishing in the 1770s, see the Introduction by Joseph Disponzio to Claude-Henri Watelet, *Essay on Gardens, A Chapter in the French Picturesque*, ed. and trans. Samuel Danon (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2003), 3.

representing the two other major contributors to the development of picturesque aesthetic theory. Not intended as a book of technical expertise or precise methods of garden design, the *Essai*, rather, offers a glimpse into the morally edifying potential of the picturesque garden, its language and themes echoing Rousseau's disdain of society's corruptive effects on humanity, the benefits of living in the countryside, and the importance of nature as a source of authenticity or a return to origins.⁴⁶ For Watelet, landscape design is critical to social fabric and moral regeneration, and the causal relationship of the arrangement of trees, vistas, water, farm structures, and other elements of the picturesque to moral restitution relies directly upon the former elements to imprint or impress themselves on the figure who penetrates the space.

We might think of the *Essai* as an ex post facto articulation of the design theories that Watelet's own "Moulin Joli" realized in three-dimensional form nearly twenty-five years earlier. In 1750 Watelet, with the help of his mistress's husband, began acquiring land south of Paris, along the Seine, and the garden he created within the property is generally considered the first exercise in picturesque garden design in France. With his sizeable wealth and budding thoughts on the picturesque as his tools, Watelet set about constructing and artfully arranging the trees, plants, flowers, and garden structures (mills, row boats, Latin inscriptions, etc.) within the property. The garden no longer remains,

⁴⁶ Watelet was an acquaintance of Rousseau, and several passages of the *Essai* reveal indebtedness to Rousseau-ian ideals of nature and contemplation found in works such as Rousseau's *Discours sur les sciences et les arts* (1750) *Discours sur l'origine et les fondements de l'inégalité parmi les hommes* (1755). Similar to Rousseau's idea that civilization is a corruptive force, Watelet posits that a return nature, here in the form of the picturesque garden, is a return to origins, or to the authentic self. Joseph Disponzio describes the influence of Rousseau on Watelet's *Essai* with the following: "Watelet heeds Rousseau's message of the corrupting tendency of the cities ("laboratories [of] artificial pleasures") and praises the purer virtues of country living. In his social interpretation of landscape design, the garden—as the space of mediation between nature and art—becomes for Watelet the locus of moral restitution of the human mind, body, and spirit." Disponzio, "Introduction" to Claude-Henri Watelet, *Essay*, 10.

and the plan (Figure 84) suggests a space more akin to formal French design, but artistic renderings of the gardens and Watelet's own description of Moulin Joli in the *Essai* present the landscape in full picturesque form. In his narrative tour of the property, Watelet guides us through the soft, winding curves of foot paths leading to vast views, willows, Lombardy poplars, springs, herb gardens, well-kept stables, a simple dwelling, and other sights, all of which incite *feeling* through the sensations that the various details of the garden inspire. In his words, "What results is pleasure: ever so sensual, if one knows how to savor it; useful, if one knows how to take advantage of it."⁴⁷ Moreover, the scenes he blissfully describes similarly have the ability to inspire the artist:

It should be stated here that the touchstone of the most picturesque scenes created in gardens or parks is the feelings they inspire in artists. If a scene is worthy of nature's approval, the painter is delighted. He will want to imitate it, and if he does, his rendition will be stimulating and lovely.⁴⁸

"Imitate," they did, and artists such as Jean-Baptiste Le Prince, François Boucher, Hubert Robert, and Watelet himself record various picturesque views and vistas of the property, offering not only a pictorial exercise in the picturesque but also documentation of his contact with the well-established artists of his day, with whom Madame Geoffrin was also conversant (Figures 85-92).

Important, too, was the role of Le Moulin Joli as an intimate retreat for Watelet and his friends, a theme that reverberates throughout the *Essai* and was realized in the

⁴⁷ Watelet, *Essay*, 37. "Qu'il entremêle au moins à la vie ordinaire des jours de retraite; plaisir si sensuel, lorsqu'on fait le goûter; utile si l'on fait en profiter." Original French from Claude-Henri Watelet, *Essai sur les Jardins* (Paris: Chez Prault, Saillant & Nyon, and Pissot, 1774), 43.

⁴⁸ Watelet, *Essay*., 39. "C'est ici le lieu de dire que la pierre de touche de la plupart des scènes pittoresques qu'on dispose dans les jardins ou dans les parcs, est le sentiment qu'ils inspirent aux artistes. Si la scène est digne d'être avouée par la Nature, le Peintre se recrée. Il desire de l'imiter; & s'il l'imité, la représentation devient piquante & agréable." Watelet, *Essai*, 65-66.

lived, shared experience within the garden. The text is first and foremost dedicated to his friends as an offering of pleasure:

In ancient times garlands were offered to benevolent divinities. This small book, in which flowers abound, is a garland I present to friendship.

To you, my friends, whom friendship guides and attracts to this pleasant retreat where together we may taste those pleasures so dear to gentle and sensitive souls; to you, who come here occasionally to find the solitary peace so favorable to literature and the arts, the consolation of wise men; and finally, to you, who, although born in palaces where hereditary virtues are preserved, do not disdain the huts where such virtues are honored, it is to you that I present this tribute. The offering is quite small, but the simple and true feeling that accompanies it may at least prove worthy of you.⁴⁹

Watelet evokes several images in this portion of his dedication that recur throughout the text: the garden as a site of retreat (in contrast to the abominable life of the city and civilization), the garden as a place of pleasure (rooted in sensory experience), nature as a return to virtue and authenticity, and the hospitality of Nature to the communion of friends. This sense of closeness between and among friends in the picturesque landscape is heightened with Watelet's description of the "sage" who predicts happiness to those who choose to settle in the countryside:

Oh, how happy they would be, those who inhabit the countryside, if they truly knew the value of the benefits they enjoy, or could enjoy! They would wish to settle down forever amidst these buildings. Thus the owner of the premises had a house built near the hermitage, similar to that of Socrates. He intends to enjoy there, from time to time, a special, more contemplative kind of pleasure derived from all these pastoral scenes. *Or he may share it with a friend, for although the delectation of this kind of*

⁴⁹ Watelet, *Essay*, 19-20. "On offroit autrefois des guirlandes aux Divinités bienfaisantes; ce petit Ouvrage, où les fleurs ne sont point étrangères, en est une que je présente à l'Amitié. O vous! qu'elle conduit & qu'elle fixe dans la retraite agréable qui nous rassemble, pour y goûter des amusemens chers aux âmes douces et sensible; vous qui venez y cherchez quelquefois ce calme solitaire, si favorable aux Lettres & aux Arts, la consolation des sages; vous enfin qui nés dans des palais où se conservent des vertus héréditaires, ne dédaignez pas les cabannes où elles sont honorées; agréez cet hommage. L'offrande est peu considérable, mais le sentiment simple & vrai qui l'accompagne, peut être au moins digne de vous." Watelet, *Essai*, 3-4.

*pleasure is best experienced in total solitude, it can never be disturbed by the presence of a friend with whom we speak of the happiness we feel. We let him enter into our soul, and we say to him what we need to say to ourselves. Without selfishness we allow him to become our very person as we savor that most delicate, pure pleasure that grows when it is shared.*⁵⁰

Thus, pleasure in the picturesque landscape is enhanced when shared with a friend.

Watelet creates an image of deeply connected individuals communing over the effects of the landscape on their thoughts and souls. It is the affective experience of artfully arranged nature that brings two friends together in shared pleasure.

The very founding and cultivation of Le Moulin Joli seems to be largely based on friendship in Watelet's writing. His initial "discovery" of the site, which he accidentally stumbled upon while on a river ferry going toward Paris, was almost missed because of his preoccupation with "thoughts of my friends and of the arts, two subjects so dear to me that, as you know, I have allowed them to dominate all others."⁵¹ Fortunately for the history of French picturesque garden design, a lovely view attracted his eye that suggested to him that "this is where I could taste in tranquility both the delights of study and the beauties of nature."⁵² Even luckier for his friends who would someday while

⁵⁰ Watelet, *Essay*, 31. Emphasis is mine. "O trop heureux les habitans des campagnes, s'ils connoissoient mieux le prix des biens dont ils jouissent, ou dont ils pourroient jouir! On desireroit de se fixer pour toujours au centre de ces établissemens; aussi possesseur s'est-il construit près de l'hermitage une demeure semblable à celle de Socrate. Il la destine à se procurer, de tems en tems, une jouissance plus particuliere & plus réflêchie de toutes ces scènes pastorales. Il peut la faire partager à un ami; car si la jouissance de cette sorte de plaisir peut convenir à une solitude absolue, un ami à qui l'on parle du bonheur qu'on goûte ne la trouble jamais; on la met à la place de son ame; on lui dit ce qu'on a besoin de ce dire. C'est le soi qu'on personifie sans avoir d'égoïsme à se reprocher, & ce plaisir si sensible & si pur s'accroît lorsqu'on le partage." Watelet, *Essai*, 41-42.

⁵¹ Watelet, *Essay*, 60. "...occupé de mes amis & des Arts, deux pensées pour moi si douces, que je leur ai donné, comme vous le savez, le droit de dominer sur toutes les autres..." Watelet, *Essai*, 140.

⁵² Watelet, *Essay*, 60. "...il faudroit goûter en paix & les délices de l'étude, & les beautés de la Nature." Watelet, *Essai*, 140.

away the hours at Le Moulin Joli, his thoughts immediately turned to the pleasure that the site could elicit in them:

I did not go long without taking advantage of my lucky discovery. Shortly after experiencing the enchantment of the site, I made plans to share my delight with friends, to take them to visit the location, to convey my impressions to them, and eventually become, in their company, both the owner and a resident of the place.⁵³

This excerpt, along with multiple short poems that mention the shared joys of friendship, make it clear that the picturesque site, away from the hustle and bustle of the city and the vanities of refined man, is the ideal setting for socialization and the overwhelming satisfaction of the senses, heightened by shared feeling.

Watelet shared such affective, *sensible* pleasures with his friends at Moulin Joli, and perhaps it is no coincidence that many in his social circle were also in the orbit of Madame Geoffrin's milieu. François Boucher,⁵⁴ Jean-Claude de Saint Non, Jean-Baptiste Le Prince, and Hubert Robert all executed drawings, prints, or paintings of the picturesque property, Vigée-Lebrun wrote about her pleasurable memories at the Moulin Joli in her memoirs,⁵⁵ notable intellectuals the likes of the Abbé de Saint-Non, Jean-Jacques Rousseau, the Comte de Caylus, and the Marquis de Condorcet spent time

⁵³ Watelet, *Essai*, 67. "Une découverte heureuse ne demeura point inutile. En être enchanté, former le projet d'en partager la jouissance avec des amis, les y conduire, leur communiquer ses impressions, en devenir avec eux possesseur & habitant; tout cela fut l'ouvrage de peu de tems." Watelet, *Essai*, 144-145.

⁵⁴ Boucher attended Madame Geoffrin's "Mondays" early in his career, a period in which she commissioned many paintings from him. See Janet Aldis, *Madame Geoffrin: Her Salon and Her Times, 1750-1777* (London: Methuen and Company, 1905), 77-78.

Watelet mentions him in the *Essai*: "Out of friendship, an artist famous for his masterfull works of painting became my architect, just as we know of someone who once became a painter out of love. Finally, those talents who use so well reveals the value of natural beauties and the sentiments that render them so enjoyable collaborated in completing our work." Watelet, *Essai*, 67 (notes 52-54).

⁵⁵ Elisabeth Vigée-Lebrun, *Souvenirs, Vol. 1* (Paris: Charpentier, 1869), 104.

there,⁵⁶ Marie Antoinette and Louis XVI visited in 1774 and shortly thereafter began the Hameau at Versailles,⁵⁷ and nobility also frequented the gardens, which became a popular escape from the city and an influential space for the generation and spread of ideas concerning the implementation of picturesque garden design theories, ideas that the *Essai* cast into textual form.

Prince Charles Joseph de Ligne's rapturous description of his experience at Le Moulin Joli highlights a shared understanding of the garden as a site for the generation of *sensibilité* within its visitors:

One day, abandoning the vain whirl of the capital and following my own whimsy, I lost sight of Paris at Moulin Joli and *found myself* (possible only in Nature). Whoever you may be, unless your heart is hardened, sit down in the fork of a willow by the riverside at Moulin Joli. Read, look around, and weep—not from sadness but from a delicious feeling of sensibility. The *panorama of your soul* will appear before you. Past happiness (should you have known it), happiness to one thought, regrets, joys, desires, all will rush upon you at once. Struggles...your indignation...the heart...the memories...the present...Go away, unbelievers! Reflect upon the inscriptions that Taste has placed there. Meditate with the wise man, sigh with the lover, and bless M. Watelet.⁵⁸

The overwhelming rush of feeling resulting from the experience of the gardens is described dreamily in de Ligne's writing, but, more interesting is his equivocation of the soul and the self with the picturesque landscape. It is Nature alone that has the power, through its impressions on the individual, to bring one back to one's authenticity. This positions the garden as a space that, with careful choices in design, has the power to

⁵⁶ See Sylvia Lavin, "Sacrifice and the Garden: Watelet's 'Essai sur les jardins' and the Space of the Picturesque," *Assemblage* no. 28 (December 1995): 19.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 19.

⁵⁸ Quoted in Watelet, *Essay*, 83 (note 54). Originally From Prince Charles Joseph de Ligne, *Coup d'Oeil at Beloeil* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991), 188-89. Emphasis is mine.

deeply affect or impress the people who inhabit the space, men and women alike. In simple terms, space structures experience and, by extension, shapes the individual.

The rhetoric employed by Watelet to engage the reader on a *sensible* journey through the ideal picturesque garden is also present in fictional writing, salon criticism, and visual representation, filtering the picturesque to the public in a wide variety of mediums that aimed to entertain, inspire the imagination, and instruct. We see this ekphrastic and rhetorical tendency in Saint Preux's promenade through Elysium in Rousseau's *Julie, ou la Nouvelle Héloïse*, in the same author's personal, reflective narrative of *Reveries of a Solitary Walker*, in Diderot's vivid entry into the frames of Vernet's landscape paintings at the Salon of 1767,⁵⁹ and, as I shall discuss, in Robert's depiction of Madame Geoffrin strolling the gardens at the Abbaye Saint-Antoine. Like Watelet's descriptive tour of Le Moulin Joli, the reader and viewer in all of these instances moves through the space simultaneously as the narrator (author or painter) does. The space is thus "activated" from the armchair, through imagination, and heightened through the senses it vicariously arouses.

Diderot's "Promenade Vernet," in its emphasis on movement through the landscape and the reflection that results, is a particularly suitable comparison to Robert's "activated triptych." Diderot begins his 1767 criticism claiming that a trip to countryside prohibited his attendance at the Salon, but he invites the reader to enter with him into seven remarkable sites that he encounters on his journey. These landscapes are, of course, Claude-Joseph Vernet's paintings, which Diderot describes in great detail alongside an account of the profound emotional effect the outdoor spaces have on him.

⁵⁹ Denis Diderot, "Vernet," *The Salon of 1767*, trans. John Goodman (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1995), 86-123.

Traversing the “narrow, twisting paths” and “following a long and difficult course through brambles, thorns, plants and thick bushes,” he meanders from site to site in the company of an Abbot, with whom he discusses subjects like the relationship of art and artifice in landscape painting, gardening, and nature itself, the picturesque and sublime in landscape painting, the authenticity of man in nature (“Natural Man”) and moral ramifications of modern, urban culture, and other remarks on subjectivity, pleasure, and contemplation in relationship to landscape and its representation. In contrast to Rousseau’s strictly solitary adventures in nature, Diderot claims his preference for company, saying,

If the Abbé’s company was not exactly what I would have chosen, I preferred being with him to being alone. Pleasure that’s for myself alone makes little impression on me and is of short duration. It’s for my friends as well as myself that I read, reflect, write, meditate, listen, look, and feel; in their absence, my devotion relates everything to them, I dream ceaselessly of their happiness; if a beautiful phrase makes an impression on my, they know of it; if I stumble on a good deed, I resolve to tell them about it; if I have before my eyes an enchanting spectacle, without being aware of it I contemplate how I should describe it to them. I’ve consecrated the use of all my senses and all my faculties to them; and perhaps this explains why everything in my discourse and my imagination is exaggerated and enriched; and sometimes they reproach me for this the ungrateful wretches!⁶⁰

As in Watelet and Robert, sensation, derived from the landscape is keener in the company of a friend, and pleasure increases as a result. Friendship itself allows Diderot to express himself and articulate his response to the landscape, ultimately making the experience more pleasurable from both an aesthetic and emotional point of view.

Had Madame Geoffrin commissioned just one canvas of the convent garden from Hubert Robert, the present discussion might be different, but the significance of multiple canvases takes on new meaning when considered in light of the primacy of movement in

⁶⁰ Ibid., 99.

relationship to the picturesque garden of Watelet and Diderot's recognition of nature's conduciveness to reflection. Much like Diderot promenades the reader along Vernet's landscapes, Robert leads us and the figures within his paintings from point to point in the Abbey's garden, employing a variety of visual techniques to suggest movement and motion within the space (within each canvas and across the three canvases as a group). As a set of paintings considered together, movement is implied through the point-to-point vignettes Robert depicts from one canvas to another. Various apertures in each painting suggest an entry or exit from a particular area of the garden—the tunnel of the trees in *Le Promenade*, the arcade and gate in the dining scene, and the open door in the painting with the swans, for example—and the figures within these paintings had to enter or exit the thresholds to find themselves at these particular points in the garden. The viewer can imagine that the nuns and Madame Geoffrin have traipsed through varying landscape vignettes in between each scene, recalling Rousseau's detailed description of St. Preux going deeper and deeper into the recesses of Elysium and the feelings it inspires:

I began to roam ecstatically through this orchard thus metamorphosed; and although I did not find exotic plants and products of the Indies, I found the local ones arranged and combined in a manner that yielded a cheerier and pleasanter effect.⁶¹

The more I roamed through this agreeable sanctuary, the more I felt increasing the delightful sensation I had experienced upon entering; yet curiosity kept me expectant. I was more eager to see objects than to examine their impressions, and I was happy to abandon myself to that enchanting sight without taking the trouble to think...⁶²

⁶¹ Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Julie, or the New Heloise*, trans. Philip Stewart and Jean Vache (Hanover, NH: University Press of New England, 1997), 388.

⁶² *Ibid.*, 390.

We went down via a thousand twists and turns to the bottom of the orchard where I found all the water gathered into a lovely brook flowing gently between two rows of old willows that had often been pruned.⁶³

Like St. Preux and Julie traversing the garden and coming upon various spots that St. Preux describes in great detail and with much emotional fervor, Madame Geoffrin and her friends wind their way from canvas to canvas, presumably conversing along the garden paths they must cross to reach the next scene. The audience is taken along this picturesque walk in both Elysium and the abbey gardens: the descriptive visual and textual language offers the viewer/reader a glimpse into the private recesses of the garden, an overwhelming sense of the vegetation that winds its way through each section of the outdoor space, and, in Robert's paintings, by including "doppelgangers" who visually bring us into each scene by virtue of their position on the canvas (i.e. the nun feeding the swans, the artist sketching the dining scene, and the group of women whose backs turn to us as they prepare to walk further into the garden). Not only does the garden act as a backdrop for conversation, but the implied movement through space and time and its implications in the overarching discourse of the benefits and role of the picturesque garden give a sense of shared experience among the figures as well as with the viewer.

Geoffrin's idyllic afternoon in the abbey gardens wasn't the first or final representation of friendship pictured in a verdant setting, of course. There was an art historical tradition that was alive and well in the eighteenth-century that conflated nature, woman, and friendship in abstract, allegorical, and emblematic terms. The linkage of these three entities is visible in miniatures featuring the "Altar of Friendship" (Figures

⁶³ Ibid., 390.

93-94), which picture a classically attired female figure in the setting of the garden, playing an ancient lyre alongside or pointing toward a physical monument to friendship. Similarly, in large-scale works such as Adélaïde Labille-Guiard's portrait of Madame Victoire with a statue of Friendship in the gardens of the Château de Bellevue (Figure 95), the painted and sculpted women interact with one another on the canvas; Madame Victoire gestures toward the sculpture, while Friendship bows in reverence in return. Boucher's portrait of Madame de Pompadour in a garden setting next to Pigalle's sculpture of *Amour et Amitié* (Figure 96), and the famous sculpture of Pompadour *as* *Amitié*, also placed in the gardens of Bellevue (Figure 5), combine allegory and portrait to assert the once Titled Mistress's new position as "friend" to Louis XV. These examples, among many others, conflate the abstract with the real in the combination of emblem and portrait, giving a fixed meaning to them that functions in indexical or symbolic terms rather than *sensible* or emotive terms. Moreover, unlike the appeal of Robert's picturesque triptych in leading the viewer through a tour of the garden's recesses, these static images engage with the spectator in an entirely different way that does not rely on movement to inform meaning.

We might even go so far as to say that the exchange of conversation within the picturesque garden or the convent presents an occasion for the development of female subjectivity. In the opening pages of his text, Watelet suggests that the act of walking through the picturesque garden is akin to "one of those novels that *every man composes for himself*, just like the 'novel' of his loves, his ambitions, or his fortune," suggestively privileging men with the offices of friendship as "activated" by the landscape.⁶⁴ Whereas

⁶⁴ Watelet, *Essay*, 21. Lavin's article argues for the trope of male possession and domination of the female-coded picturesque landscape garden. Instead, I am interested in thinking about this in a

Sylvia Lavin interprets a strictly heterosexual, masculine relationship to the feminine garden in Watelet's *Essai*, the importance of the convent setting makes Robert's painting a more complicated essay on female friendship.⁶⁵ In Lavin's assessment of "authorship" in the garden, the model relies on the heterosexual imperative that places sex, gender, and pleasure in decidedly binary terms: male and female. This binary is forced to fall apart in the all-female setting of the convent and the context of Madame Geoffrin's leisurely engagement with her female friends.

The convent setting is a major element of the painting that plays an equal role to the picturesque in the Robert "triptych." Eighteenth-century women's memoirs and accounts from time spent in the convent reveal the development of subjectivity through the cultivation of friendship, its maintenance, and reflection upon shared emotional ties. A pleasurable and fulfilling view of the convent life appears in the memoirs of Madame Roland, penned while in jail during the French Revolution (Figure 97). A loyal Girondist, she was guillotined in 1793 at the young age of 39. Before she met her razored fate, however, she wrote her memoirs while imprisoned in the Conciergerie during the summer and fall of that year. She devotes nearly thirty pages to recounting her childhood days at the Sisterhood of the Congregation, rue Neuve Saint Etienne, in the

different way in the context of Madame Geoffrin and her friends occupy the Abbaye garden. The space of the convent and its garden, rather than a site of domination, becomes, in Robert's paintings, a site of female empowerment in the context of the homosocial convent environment.

⁶⁵ "Watelet's pleasurable immersion in the garden simultaneously produces a narrative and the author himself. This birth of the author requires an intimacy with nature that Watelet suggests is not merely pleasurable, but is eroticized, sexualized, and gendered. The spatiality of the picturesque garden enables men to achieve a state of psychic resolution by assisting them to attain the absolute virility of the phallus: in the garden, men penetrate the feminine space of nature." Sylva Lavin, "Sacrifice and the Garden," 23. This begs the questions: In this picturesque landscape, is there room for *female* pleasure, self-authorship, and self-authentication that Rousseau, Watelet, and others were prescribing in nature? What is the significance of the picturesque garden in the context of the all-female space of the convent? Finally, how does the active commissioning of the three paintings suggest a form of creative agency on the part of the patroness?

faubourg Saint Marcel, including the intimate emotional affections she shared with the dear friends she made during her year there. Roland vividly conveys a nostalgic, emotional tale of her year at the convent, made rich by the intimate friendships she developed during her time within its walls. Her recollections of her yearning to enter the convent and receive her first communion bursts with enthusiasm and *sensibilité* as she describes her joyous entry into the Congregation on May 7, 1765, at eleven years old. Much like Diderot's account of *sensibilité* in the character of Suzanne Simonin in his notorious *La Religieuse*, Roland's description of this period of her life and her self-characterization is written in a vivid language of sensibility.

Unlike the dystopian desires that Sister Suzanne's enclosure in the convent engenders (discussed below), the *sensibilité* of Roland contributes to the sweet cultivation of friendship in this female homosocial community. Two young women stand out in her account: Sister Agatha and Sophie Cannet, a fellow boarder four years older than Roland. Her textual portrait of Sophie and her older sister, Henriette, is written in the language of sensibility, describing their distinctly different personalities in terms of constitution, emotion, temperament, and feeling. Roland's own sensible heart is attracted to that of Sophie's, whose "veil of white gauze covered her mild countenance, and ill concealed the tears that bedewed it."⁶⁶ Sophie's cool composure and reasoning intellect mirror Roland's own dedication to learning and practical applications of knowledge that she extols in herself throughout the memoir, but the fellow feeling shared between the young girls becomes dominant in Roland's recollections:

Her sorrows had touched me. I was pleased with the manner in which she occupied her time; I felt that I had found in her a companion, and we became inseparable. I attached myself to her with that unreserved

⁶⁶ Ibid., 92.

affection which flows from an impulse to love at first sight and entirely the object that appears to accord with us. Working, reading, walking, all my occupations and amusements were shared with Sophie. She was devout, with as much sincerity as myself, though a little less tenderness, which contributed to the intimacy of our union; it was, so to express myself, under the wing of Providence and in the transports of a common zeal, that our friendship was cultivated: we wished mutually to encourage and assist each other in the path to perfection.⁶⁷

The two also shared reciprocal sentiments on a deep emotional level, balancing their attraction from shared reason and rationalism,

Her society was extremely dear to me, for I had need of intrusting to a person who could understand me the sentiments I felt, which seemed to be strengthened by being shared in.....To my dear friend alone was I truly communicative; others had only, as it were, a glimpse of me, those excepted who were sufficiently skilful to lift up the veil, which without intending to hide myself, I naturally assumed.⁶⁸

The veil, a very real, physical aspect of convent costume and signifier of rank or station within the convent, here becomes a metaphor for access to intimacy, both emotional and intellectual.

Angélique Boufflers is another significant intimate that the *Memoir* relates, a young woman without an inheritance who entered the convent and took her vow at seventeen. A woman of the “highest possible degree of sensibility of her heart and the vivacity of her mind,”⁶⁹ Sainte Agathe became attached to the much younger Roland during her duty of attending to the boarders. Roland describes their connection as one of tenderness, pleasure, civility, and affection. The reader gains an entirely different idea of the private, intimate encounter within the convent cell than in Diderot’s *La Religieuse* in Roland’s description of their regular encounters:

⁶⁷ Ibid., 94-95.

⁶⁸ Ibid., 95-96.

⁶⁹ Ibid., 96.

Sometimes she would lead me to her cell, where she had a charming little bird, tame and caressing, and which she had taught to speak. She gave me even a secret key to this cell, that I might have access to it in her absence. I read there all the books of which her little library was composed: the poems of Father du Cerceau, and some mystical works. When her avocations prevented her from spending any time with me, I was sure to find in her cell an affectionate little note, which I never failed to answer; she treasured up these missives like so many jewels, and showed them to me long afterwards carefully stored away in her desk. Presently the attachment of Sainte Agathe to the little Philipon was the talk of the convent; but it was accepted quite as a matter of course, none of my companions taking offence at the favor accorded me.⁷⁰

Her relationship with Sister Agatha remained intact and significant even during the French Revolution. After her departure from the convent and return to secular life, Roland continued to visit her at the Congregation, and, ironically, as Roland penned her memoirs, poverty-stricken Agatha retired in a meager pension following the closure of the Congregation. She melodramatically adds that Agatha laments over the captivity of her “daughter.”

Memoirs, of course, are not completely “objective” accounts of an individual’s life or the experiences that inform it. Madame Roland penned her *Memoirs* while in prison during the French Revolution, just months before she was executed at the guillotine for her involvement with the Girondin political party. At several points in the passages that describe her happy memories of the convent, she makes direct comparisons between “the gloom of a prison, in the midst of those civil commotions which ravage my country and sweep away all that is dear to me,”⁷¹ that contrast so pointedly with her project of recalling “that period of rapture and tranquility”, asking the question, “What pencil can depict the ecstatic emotions of a young heart imbued with tenderness and

⁷⁰ Ibid., 97-98.

⁷¹ Ibid., 78.

sensibility, greedy of happiness, in which the feelings of nature begin to awaken...”⁷²

Furthermore, Roland paints a highly flattering picture of herself as the object of numerous affections, as a figure to which all of the women in the convent were naturally attracted.

I include these lengthy passages from Madame Roland’s memoirs for several reasons. While a memoir is not a completely objective historical account of the convent in eighteenth-century France, Roland’s descriptions of the physical and organizational—hierarchical, educational, what types of women entered, what skills were developed—layout of the community offer an intimate glance into the physical and emotional space of the convent. On another level, I think that her very emotive, descriptive writing on the intimate attachments she formed at this critical time in her life offer a glimpse into the language of sensibility that characterizes friendship in the early modern period, and indeed offered an emotive language with which to structure, experience, and describe such emotional and intellectual attachments. Roland plays with the nuanced connections between sense and sensibility in both her self-description and her description of the other characters in the convent. Finally, this textual account offers a striking counterbalance to the dystopian space of sensibility that Denis Diderot creates in his *La Religieuse*. While Roland posits her own disdain for the corruption of the church and those in the institution who don’t “practice what they preach,” she weaves her political commentary around the very lively descriptions of the positive things she took away from her experience behind the convent walls: her friendships. Diderot, in contrast, uses the female body and sensibility within the narrative of the convent to diagnose the ills of the Church and society in general. While Roland was horrified when she witnessed a young novice take

⁷² Ibid., 78.

the veil or the vow and knew it was not her own personal destiny, her story is not a direct attack on the Church but rather an essay on feeling, on a gut reaction that repelled her from the idea. She goes on to marry and live a traditional secular life. Diderot's Sister Suzanne's narrative, however, and her very body become the very sites upon which these ills are mapped.

Overall, Roland's musings on the convent life give the reader a coveted glance into the practical structure (physical and social) of the convent, the intimate attachments formed within its walls and a *sensible* account of Roland's personal experience during her year there. The contrast between the narratives of Roland and Diderot, which were clearly written for different purposes, motivations, and audiences, reveal the ways in which the convent was understood and operated in eighteenth-century culture and open up vastly different dialogues on the pleasures and dangers of female intimacy.

Significantly, the uniting of two sensible hearts in friendship during Roland's childhood year in the convent creates lasting memories upon which she reflects while awaiting her death at the Conciergerie. Like those of other young (pre-marriage) women of her time, Roland's letters offer a young woman's critique and fear, perhaps, of marriage, a necessary evil for an eighteenth-century girl, and it becomes obvious through her epistolary conversations, defined by a vocabulary of love, that friendship is preferable (and more palatable) than marriage ever could be. In an age when marriage was going through growing pains, Enlightenment discourse privileged (male) friendship over marriage, and Roland's own assertion of intimate friendship with another woman

represents agency in the patriarchal world in which she lived and the ultimate destiny she faced as a wife.⁷³

Literature from the seventeenth and early-eighteenth century, too, creates an impression of an ideal space of female homosocial bonding and subjectivity in the convent. Nicole Pohl's work on women's utopian writing from the period in France and England provides a useful parallel in thinking about the social production of space as one of freedom and friendship for women. Pohl analyzes Mary Cavendish's *The Convent of Pleasure* and Mary Astell's *A Serious proposal* as spaces of utopian sociability, painting the all-female communities as utopian spaces of freedom for their fictional inhabitants, which she illustrates with the following excerpts from the texts:

Wherefore, in order thereto, I will take so many Noble Persons of my own Sex, as my Estate will plentifully maintain, such whose Births are greater than their Fortunes, and are resolv'd to live a single life, and vow Virginity: with these I mean to live in cloister'd with all the delights and pleasures that are allowable and lawful; My Cloister shall not be a Cloister of restraint, but a place of freedom, not to vex the Senses, but to please them.⁷⁴

Happy Retreat! which will be the introducing you into such a Paradise as your Mother Eve forfeited, where you shall feast on Pleasures, that do not like those of the World, disappoint your expectations, pall your Appetites, and by the disgust they give you put on the fruitless search after new Delights, which when obtain'd are as empty as the former; but such as will make you truly happy now, and prepare you to be perfectly so hereafter. Here are no Serpents to deceive you, whilst you entertain your selves in these delicious Gardens.⁷⁵

⁷³ Ibid., 239.

⁷⁴ Quoted in Nicole Pohl, *Women, Space, and Utopia: 1600-1800* (Aldershot, England and Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2006), 95. Original text from Mary Cavendish, *The Convent of Pleasure*, ed. Jennifer Roswell (Oxford: Seventeenth Century Press, 1995), 11.

⁷⁵ Quoted in Pohl, *Women, Space, and Utopia*, 95. Original text from Mary Astell, *A Serious Proposal* (London: R. Wilkin, 1696), 40.

Both texts in general, and these excerpts in particular, explore the realm of pleasurable possibilities that life within the all-female monastic community could offer to women. The transformative potential of the freedom that such a space offers is in contrast to the binding demands of the heterosexual world, extending all the way to the original sin within the Garden of Eden. Women are “off the hook” in the protected, utopian spaces that the female authors create, and their own pleasure and personal growth, more fully realized in the absence of men, are the ideal outcomes of each project. Written a century earlier than the painting of the Robert canvases, the theme of convent as retreat extends into the 1800s in optimistic writings (letters, memoirs, and novels) and visual representations. In these examples and excerpts, the convent is an ideal community in which women can develop selfhood, happiness, and subjectivity that was impossible in the outside, heterosexual world.⁷⁶

The Path of Friendship

In eighteenth-century literature, visual art, and memoirs, then, the convent was experienced and represented as a haven in which women could establish acceptable identities outside of marriage. In an ideal convent community, the all-female group represented a spiritual family that did not rely on a tangible, ever-present patriarchal figure determining their emotive or affective bonds to one another.⁷⁷ Of course, in reality the initiated nuns were “married” to their “heavenly groom” and were still functioning within the patriarchal structure and system of the church, but the sentiment of an all-female community was still a strong and significant one and one that existed outside of

⁷⁶ Pohl, “In this Sacred Space,” 153.

⁷⁷ Evangelisti, *Nuns*, 32.

the traditional institution of marriage. For a single, widowed woman like Madame Geoffrin, the convent could have represented a refuge from her daily life as a busy *salonnière* and an appropriate setting for retreat as a widow. Additionally, artistic and literary activities flourished in aristocratic convents like the Couvent des Filles de Saint-Joseph, for example. Music, theater, painting, copying manuscripts, and embroidery and tapestry work occupied members in active engagement and pleasurable pursuit in the company of one another. Surely this must have been appealing to a socially and culturally conversant *salonnière* such as Madame Geoffrin.

The paintings are among the final canvases Geoffrin commissioned in her life, before dying in 1777 at the age of 78. She hung them in her townhouse on Rue Saint-Honoré, across town from the abbey and where she hosted her famous salon from 1750 to 1777. In stark contrast to the bustling social and intellectual life that characterized her salon, which hosted such notable figures as Voltaire, Diderot, Montesquieu, Robert himself, and other artists and thinkers, one can imagine that her convent retreat provided her with an altogether different type of social experience. Most obvious was the all-female space of the convent, a retreat for homosocial interaction among her noble friends who had taken vows many years earlier. Rather than being surrounded by the works of art that attendees would bring to her Monday “dinners” for discussion and connoisseurly advice, rather than hosting conversation in the comfortable milieu of her fashionable townhouse, and rather than an elaborate or multi-course meal over conversation, Madame Geoffrin engages with her friends in nature. While her salon was characterized by a more formal, structured form of conversation, the conversation that unfolds in the picturesque

garden can perhaps be compared to the structure of the garden itself: flowing, natural, and fluid, allowing for an intimacy in conversation that was not possible in the salon.

Madame Geoffrin's calling cards featured the phrase, "Grass must not be allowed to grow on the path of friendship," a fitting sentiment indeed in relationship to Robert's triptych.⁷⁸ This path of friendship is tread from canvas to canvas in Robert's paintings, guided by conversation, and beckoning the viewer to participate in the promenade. The presence of the three paintings in her hôtel on the other side of town would have served as a reminder of the bountiful pleasures she experienced in the gardens at the Abbey with her female friends, a very personalized *souvenir d'amitié*.

⁷⁸ Radisich also mentions that swans, present in Robert's third canvas, also accompany the emblem of Benevolence (Bienveillance) in Cesara Ripa's *Iconologia*. Similarly, Goodness (Bonté) is represented in the guise of bird feeding its young. Radisich, *Hubert Robert*, 35.

Chapter Three

A Portrait of Female Friendship: Juliette Récamier at the Abbaye-aux-Bois

At first glance, the protagonist in François Déjuinne's 1826 painting of *Madame Récamier à l'Abbaye-aux-Bois* (Figure 98) immediately evokes the famous beauty from Jacques-Louis David's unfinished portrait of 1800 (Figure 99). Upon deeper investigation of Déjuinne's canvas, however, the coolly composed figure assumes an alternative identity beyond her beauty, charm, and reserve. Déjuinne's inclusion of several objects in the abbey apartment and references to texts outside of the frame leads me to define the painting as a "friendship portrait" that recalls distinct periods of *amitié* in Juliette Récamier's life: her association with the fashionable *merveilleuses* of post-Thermidorian Paris, her well-known friendship with Germaine de Staël that lasted through mutually difficult years of exile at the hands of Napoleon, and their wider circle of mutual friends who gathered at Récamier's convent apartment in the middle and later years of her life. These chapters of friendship unfolded in the spaces of the public eye, epistolary exchange, and the private sphere of her home and salon.

My main interest in this chapter lies in the relationship between Staël and Récamier. I explore the inclusion of François Gérard's painting of *Corinne au Cap Misène* (1819-21) within the canvas (Figure 100) and analyze the context of the painting-within-the-painting's inception and creation – commissioned by a friend, for a friend, and

in the spirit of commemorating a friend.¹ Finally, I consider the ways in which it refers to images and texts outside of both frames that construct Récamier's identity as a female friend in early modern France. The complex interplay of the visual and textual suggests Récamier's role as Staël's personal and literary muse. It implies the ways in which their relationship was understood in gendered, complementary terms. And, perhaps most significantly, it demonstrates the potential role of painting as a token and *aide-mémoire* of friendship. Finally, I also explore the representation of Récamier's abbey apartment as a private yet social space, serving simultaneously as a personal dwelling, salon, boudoir, and cabinet.

“La Belle Juliette”: Introducing Madame Récamier

When the young Lyonnaise, Juliette Récamier (née Jeanne-Françoise Julie Adélaïde Bernard; 1777-1849) joined her family in Paris in 1787, three years after her father was appointed *receveur des finances* in the capital city, no one would have imagined the social sensation she would become in the following decades. Her ascension in polite culture comes as no surprise, though, when we consider her legendary good looks, well-crafted education, and strategic marriage. While in Lyon, she was educated at the Couvent des Benedictines de la Déserte, a typical educational institution for young girls of the eighteenth century. In Paris she continued her learning, at home and directed by her mother, in the more “polite” arts that would prepare her for life in society.² This

¹ The painting was commissioned by Prince Augustus of Prussia and Récamier after the death of Madame de Staël, their mutual friend. Augustus and Récamier shared a close friendship as well. Augustus ultimately gave the painting to Récamier as a gift, and it remained in her possession until her death.

² Amélie Lenormant, Récamier's niece, recounts her aunt's memories of the convent in the posthumous *Mémoires de Juliette Récamier*, p. 2 (she quotes from Chateaubriand's *Mémoires*).

included playing musical instruments, dancing, singing, drawing, and painting, and a recent exhibition catalog centered on the life of Récamier suggests that her mother taught her the delicate art of composure that would serve her famously well in her life as a salon hostess.³ Her mother's twice-weekly dinners, largely made up of other Lyonnais residing in and visiting Paris, was perhaps most influential in her future position as a *salonnière* from the late 1790s in her Greek revival hôtel on the rue du Mont-Blanc through the 1840s at her more modest apartment at the Abbaye-aux-Bois, a venue which saw the likes of François-René de Chateaubriand, Benjamin Constant, Jean-Jacques Ampère, the Duc de Noailles, Balzac, Prince Augustus of Prussia, and other prominent eighteenth-century intellectuals.⁴ Her financial future was (presumably) secured with her marriage to wealthy banker Jacques Récamier, nearly three times her age, in 1793, a union that has

Chateaubriand also mentions her early days in the Abbaye de la Déserte in his *Mémoires d'Outre Tombe*, Book XXIX, Chap 1, Sec 1.

"Madame Récamier was placed in that Abbey; she spent her childhood behind its grill, which only opened onto the church beyond at the Elevation of the Host. Then one could see young girls prostrating themselves in the chapel inside the Convent. The Abbess's name-day was the community's principal day of celebration; the most beautiful of the girls paid the customary compliments: dressed in her finery, her hair plaited, her head was veiled and crowned by her companions; and all was done without speaking, since the hour of rising was one of those named as an hour of *profound silence* in the convents. It goes without saying that *Juliette* had the honours of the day.

Her father and mother, established in Paris, summoned their children to them. With the rough sketches written by Madame Recamier I received this note:

'On the eve of the day when my aunt came to fetch me, I was led to the Abbess' room to receive her blessing. On the next day, bathed in tears, I passed through the egress whose door I could not remember opening to allow my entry, and found myself in a carriage with my aunt, and we left for Paris.

I left that time of peace and purity with regret, in order to enter one of anxiety. It comes back to me sometimes like a vague sweet dream with its clouds of incense, its endless ceremony, its processions through the gardens, its hymns and flowers.'

³ *Juliette Récamier, Muse et Mécène* (Paris: Éditions Hazan and Lyon: Musée des Beaux-Arts, 2009): 18-19; Delia Austrian, *Juliette Récamier* (Chicago: Ralph Fletcher Seymour, 1922): 13; and Amélie Lenormant, *Madame Récamier*, trans. Isaphene M. Luyster (Boston: Roberts Brothers, 1878):4-5.

⁴ Peter Quennell, ed. *Affairs of the Mind: The Salon in Europe & America from the 18th to the 20th Century* (Washington, D.C.: New Republic Books, 1980):57.

been consistently described as an arrangement characterized by paternal affection rather than sexual attraction or romantic love. By all accounts, Récamier would appear to have established a quite conventional life for herself. In addition to her marriage, she adopted her husband's niece, Amélie Lenormant, in 1811 and occupied a prominent position at the helm of her salon.

Rather than marriage and motherhood, however, it appears that friendship was the guiding force in her life and the primary site of her sense of identity, both private and public. Her friendship with Germaine de Staël was, above all, a source of intimacy and sociability that figured prominently in both of their lives. She and Staël became acquainted in 1798 at the Château de Clichy, which M. Récamier rented during summers beginning in 1796 and where friends and acquaintances from Paris came to escape the city. Amélie Lenormant recounts Récamier's first impression of Staël in her aunt's posthumously organized memoirs:

One day, a day which marked a turning-point in my life, M. Recamier arrived with a lady whose name he did not mention and whom he left alone with me in the drawing-room while he went to join some people in the park. This lady had come to talk about the sale and purchase of a house. Her toilet was curious; she wore a morning dress and a little hat decorated with flowers, and I took her for a foreigner. I was struck by the beauty of her eyes and of her glance; I could not account to myself for what I felt but I was certainly thinking more of identifying her and appraising her than of making the usual conversational commonplaces, when she told me, with lively and penetrating charm, that she was truly delighted to know me, that M. Necker, her father. ...At those words I knew that she was Mme de Staël! I did not hear the rest of her words; I blushed and my confusion was very great.

I had just read her *Lettres sur Rousseau*; I had been much moved by reading them. I expressed what I felt more by my looks than by my words; she intimidated me and attracted me at one and the same time. One immediately felt in her a person perfectly natural in a superior nature. She fixed her great eyes upon me, with a curiosity full of benevolence, and paid me compliments upon my figure which might have seemed

exaggerated and too direct, if they had not seemed to escape her, which gave her praise an irresistible attraction...My confusion did me no harm; she understood it and said that she would like to see much of me on her return to Paris, for she was leaving for Coppet.

At that time she had only made an abrupt appearance in my life, but the impression was vivid, and from then on I thought only of Mme de Staël, so strongly had I felt the effect of a nature so ardent and so strong.⁵

Récamier's recollection of this fateful encounter is worded in a language of heterosexual attraction and nostalgic reflection. The feelings inspired by Staël – intimidation and irresistible attraction – and the vivid impression she left on Récamier are reminiscent of an encounter between young lovers, further emphasized by an ardent desire to see Staël again after their initial encounter. It is also significant to note Récamier's notice of Staël's attire and "curious toilet," indicative of her well-known interest in fashion, and she also reveals her own literary pursuits in having read Staël's 1788 *Lettres sur Rousseau*. Like any memoir, Récamier's words are retrospective in their reflection, and they capture a romantic vision of her initial encounter with Staël.

⁵ Amélie Lenormant, *Memoirs and Correspondence of Madame Récamier*, 9th edition, translated and edited by Isaphene M. Luyster (Boston: Roberts Brothers, 1878): 12.

For the original French volume of the text, see Amélie Lenormant, *Souvenirs et correspondances tirés des papiers de Madame Récamier*, 2 vol. (Paris: Michel Lévy Frères: 1859): 24. "Un jour, et ce jour fait époque dans ma vie, M. Récamier arriva à Clichy avec une dame qu'il ne me nomma pas et qu'il laissa seule avec moi dans le salon, pour aller rejoindre quelques personnes qui étaient dans le parc. Cette dame venait pour parler de la vente et l'achat d'une maison; sa toilette était étrange; elle portait une robe du matin et un petit chapeau paré, orné de fleurs: je la pris pour une étrangère. Je fus frappé de la beauté de ses yeux et de son regard; je ne pouvais me rendre compte de ce que j'éprouvais, mais il est certain que je songeais plus à la reconnaître et, pour ainsi dire, à la deviner, qu'à lui faire les premières phrases d'usage, lorsqu'elle me dit avec une grâce vive et pénétrante, qu'elle était vraiment ravie de me connaître, que M. Necker, son père....A ces mots, je reconnus Mme de Staël! je n'entendis pas le reste de sa phrase, je rougis, mon trouble fut extrême. Je venais de lire ses *Lettres sur Rousseau*, je m'étais passionnée pour cette lecture. J'exprimais ce que j'éprouvais plus encore par mes regards que par mes paroles: elle m'intimidait et m'attirait à la fois. On sentait tout de suite en elle une personne parfaitement naturelle dans une nature supérieure. De son côté, elle fixait sur moi ses grands yeux, mais avec une curiosité pleine de bienveillance, et m'adressa sur ma figure des compliments qui eussent parus exagérés et trop directs, s'ils n'avaient pas semblé lui échapper, ce qui donnait à ses louanges une séduction irrésistible. Mon trouble ne me nuisit point; elle le comprit et m'exprima le désir de me voir beaucoup à son retour à Paris, car elle partait pour Coppet. Ce ne fut alors qu'une apparition dans ma vie, mais l'impression fut vive. Je ne pensai plus qu'à Mme de Staël, tant j'avais ressenti l'action de cette nature si ardente et si forte."

At the time she met Staël, the author was thirty-two years old, a mother of two, and formally separated from her husband, the Swedish ambassador Baron de Staël-Holstein (married 1786). She had published the sentimental drama, *Sophie* (anonymously in 1786), *Lettres sur les ouvrages et le caractère de J.-J. Rousseau* (1788), *Jane Grey* (1790), and other popular books and essays. Her role as a salonnière in both Paris and Coppet, cultivated by her presence in her mother's salon, was as important as her authorship. Her liberal venue hosted prominent intellectuals, politicians, and friends such as author and politician Benjamin Constant, Lyonnais politician Camille Jordan, and statesman Matthieu de Montmorency, among others. The gatherings would eventually draw the ire of Napoleon and earn Staël two extended periods of exile from Paris.

Following their 1798 encounter, Staël and Récamier's individual histories converged in multiple ways during their friendship, which lasted until Staël's death in 1817. Both women were well-known in cosmopolitan European society through their Parisian salons, they shared a mutual set of intellectual and otherwise well-known friends who gathered at Coppet, they were both exiles under the Napoleonic regime, and their reputations followed both of them on their travels outside of France.⁶ Both women entered into strategically planned marriages during their teen years. Staël's marriage to the Baron von Holstein was better characterized as a marriage of convenience rather than one of mutual affection. It ended in the birth of two children and divorce, and was followed by remarriage to the much younger Napoleonic lieutenant, Albert Jean Michel de Rocca in 1812, and the birth of two additional children. Her travels and relationship

⁶ Both women were exiled by Napoleon at various points in time. Récamier was exiled in 1803 after the closure of her salon, its regulars deemed a threat to Napoleon's growing power, and again from 1812-13, when she was exiled for her association with Staël. Staël was ordered out of Paris in 1803, on the heels of her publication of *Delphine* (1802), and remained in exile until 1814.

with Benjamin Constant and other lovers mark her as a woman with numerous love interests, the traces of her effect on men recorded in many memoirs and personal letters.⁷ Fate delivered Récamier a man who was more of a father figure than a husband and a string of infatuated men who could not win her heart. Her famous charm and seductive nature in some ways marked her as a coquette among the wagging jaws of European men, including Benjamin Constant, François-René de Chateaubriand, and the Prince of Prussia. Generally speaking, her personal life was not dominated by one particular man, any great love affair, or biological motherhood. Despite their independent romantic attachments, Récamier and Staël's friendship spanned periods of exile at the hands of Napoleon, divorce, deaths, bankruptcy (M. Récamier's), and changing political climates. Letters, memoirs, and other early-nineteenth-century documents create a textual portrait of this intimate alliance and inform my analysis of Déjuinne's painting, among other visual materials.⁸

“Les Merveilleuses”: Fashion and Friendship in Directoire Paris

A closer look at Déjuinne's “insertion” of the unfinished David portrait into his canvas reveals that the lone figure occupying the abbey apartment is not an idealized, nor even realistic, representation of Récamier. Rather, her features are more generally

⁷ See Renee Wingarten, *Germaine de Staël and Benjamin Constant: A Dual Biography* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2008) and Elisabeth de Nolde, ed. and Charlotte de Constant, trans., *Madame de Staël and Benjamin Constant. Unpublished Letters* (New York and London: J.P. Putnam's Sons, 1907).

⁸ While Récamier's letters are largely unaccounted for, Staël's letters survive in fragmented, reproduced form in multiple publications. See, for example, Emmanuel Beau de Loménie, *Lettres de Madame de Staël à Madame Récamier* (Paris: Éditions Domat, 1952); Edouard Hérriot, *Madame Récamier*, trans. Alys Hallard (New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons and London: William Heinemann, 1906); Amélie Cyvoct Lenormant, *Madame Récamier and her Friends*, Boston: Roberts Brothers, 1875); Maurice Levaillant, *The Passionate Exiles: Madame de Staël and Madame Récamier* (New York: Farrar, Straus, and Cudahy, 1958).

suggested and less legible than other renditions of her, leading to the conclusion that the visual quotation was more important to the artist (and/or patron) than was capturing an exact likeness. Additionally, Déjuinne's canvas was painted in 1826, when Récamier was 49 years old, while David's portrait was painted when she was a youthful 23. While the recent Lyon exhibition on Récamier (2007) proposes that the quotation is Déjuinne's nod to his artistic "grandfather," Jacques-Louis David (Déjuinne studied under Girodet), and that the painting's immediate recipient, Prince Augustus of Prussia, wished to remember his unrequited love during the prime of her life (they met around 1807) – perfectly plausible arguments – I would add that the painting signals an earlier era of Récamier's sociability. In particular, Déjuinne's quotation of David's iconic portrait and the inclusion of the poster bed in the abbey apartment's mirror recall Récamier's association with the fashionable *merveilleuses* in post-Thermidorian Paris and her ascension to the prominent public role as a salonnière in her hôtel on the rue Mont Blanc from 1799 to 1803.

In the 1790s, after the end of the Reign of Terror, Juliette Récamier acquired a public identity as one of the *merveilleuses*. An ironic appellation coined by flabbergasted cultural critics in the popular press, the "Marvelous" included among its fashionable ranks many nouveaux-riches women who enjoyed circulating and displaying themselves in Parisian social spaces during the Directory and early Consulate.⁹ Their sheer muslin

⁹ For more on the fashion-conscious set of the Directoire, see Aileen Ribeiro, *Fashion in the French Revolution* (London: Batsford, 1988), and especially the exhibition catalog for the 2005 Musée Carnavalet, *Au Temps des Merveilleuses: la société parisienne sous le Directoire et le Consulat* (Paris: Paris Musées, 2005). One of the few articles to take an in-depth look at the sociological and political implications of fashion during this period can be found in E. Claire Cage's "The Sartorial Self: Neoclassical Fashion and Gender Identity in France, 1797-1804," *Eighteenth-Century Studies* 42, no. 2 (2009): 193-215. Ewa Lajer-Burchard also takes the trends and their cultural implications to task in *Necklines: The Art of Jacques-Louis David after the Terror* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1999). The trends spread to the United States, as well. See Betty Bright P. Low, "Of Muslins

dresses *à la grecque* represented a rejection of the more ornate styles of ancien régime aristocracy, adopting instead the Antique style of dress and British interpretations of it (Figures 101 and 102). Dressing *en chemise* as Marie-Antoinette scandalously had done in her 1785 portrait by Vigée-Lebrun found full expression in post-Revolutionary fashion (Figure 103). Women's sheer muslin dresses seemed to jump right out of neoclassical canvases of the previous decade, as women shed stiff corsets and bright satins in favor of revealing, clingy, sheer garments of India muslin, silk, gauze, cambric, dimity, percale, and tulle. Sleeves were shortened or completely removed, and pale, bare arms saw more publicity than they had since the days of the ancient Romans. In a similar spirit of exposure, necklines were lowered and waists were raised. Styles were worn flowing in white and accented with brightly colored shawls and ribbons with classical motifs along their edges. On their feet they wore delicate slippers or golden sandals that recalled Roman and Greek footwear. It was even said that some women dampened their clothing to make it cling more suggestively, one *merveilleuse* appearing at the opera wearing a wetted white silk slip of a dress with no sleeves or petticoats, causing a great stir among spectators.¹⁰ Women curled their hair with ribbons *à la grecque* or cut it short *à la victime*, a nod to the victims of the guillotine, whose hair was cropped to facilitate the smooth slicing of the neck by the "national razor." This "decade of undress" was so visible in the public eye that women donning such styles earned nicknames such as "Diana," "nymph," "goddess," and "white shadow," and critics of the style described

and Merveilleuses: Excerpts from the Letters of Josephine du Pont and Margaret Manigault," *Winterthur Portfolio* 9 (1974): 29-75.

¹⁰ Low, "Of Muslins and Merveilleuses," 8.

them as “Phyrnes,” “hetaerae”, and other derogatory and unflattering names.¹¹ English caricaturists in particular mocked their state of undress, depicting bare-bottomed fashionistas galavanting around town in unsuitable coverage (Figure 104) or becoming prey to a sudden gust of wind (Figure 105). The perceived ridiculousness of the style is exposed in these images, making the women’s preoccupation with visual appearance and style seem frivolous, irrational, and foolish in its impracticality and exposure.

Their male counterparts, the *incroyables*, shared a similar love of fashion and its display, donning dramatic and often eccentric attire, decked out in riding coats (redingotes), fitted breeches, soft leather boots, beribboned stockings and garters that drew attention to exposed calves, and a variety of accessories that included canes, hats, and cravats.¹² Large lapels, loops of fabric hanging from knee breeches, and overall self-consciously displayed fashions led caricaturists and critics to describe such figures as fops and dandies, questioning their masculinity because of their exaggerated concern for fashion and personal appearance (Figures 106 and 107). Satirical images pictured distorted, spider-like bodies sporting overstated collars, breeches, and hats while performing overarticulated gestures of refinement. The engraving of a “Café des Incroyables” (Figure 108), illustrates the fops’ meticulous self-presentation with their neck scarves, long coats, and elaborate hairstyles, sizing one another (and the viewer) up with their ocular devices. Outlandish costume and long, powdered hair worn in a ponytail or in the style of “ears of the dog” signified more than overstated fashion choices, however; it symbolized the solidification of counter-Revolutionary ideals

¹¹ Ibid., 8.

¹² Lajer-Burcharth, *Necklines*, 184-5.

following a period in which many believed the original aims of the Revolution had been taken to extremes.

Many scholars have attributed these flamboyant styles, renewed public visibility, and overwhelming culture of pleasure that characterized the Directoire to a visual manifestation of the liberated spirit that followed the trauma of the French Revolution and the violent excesses of the Terror, likening the discarding of undergarments to a newfound state of social and civic freedom.¹³ The years following the harrowing period of the Terror brought the once stable (or at least entrenched) social structure of the ancien régime and its signifiers of class, gender, and status into a state of flux, threatening the legibility of individual and group identity. For women, in particular, this chaos resulted, temporarily, in a new culture of female pleasure and unprecedented public visibility. The act of seeing and being seen took on new significance in the context of returning exiles who slowly regained their wealth, resumed their social circulation, promenaded in public parks and along the boulevards, and participated in a reconstituted culture of fashion.

It was precisely at this pivotal moment that Juliette Récamier established herself as one of the most notable women in pleasurable and fashionable Parisian society. She had married affluent banker Jacques-Rose Récamier, thirty years her senior, in April of 1793, and by 1798 the couple had purchased the Hôtel Necker on the rue Mont-Blanc (present day rue de la Chausée d'Antin) in the ninth arrondissement. The townhouse was owned by Germaine de Staël's father, and it was her presence at the real estate transaction that led to Staël and Récamier's initial introduction. The Récamiers moved into the house in 1799, following a year of lavish renovations at the hand of architect Louis Berthault, who transformed the hôtel into a stylish space of Greek Revival design

¹³ See, in particular, Lajer-Burchard (1999) and E. Claire Cage (2009).

and decor, typical of the neighborhood and time. Soon after, Juliette established what would be one of Paris's most fashionable salons, hosting well-known society figures, politicians, artists and writers, and returning émigrés such as the duc de Guignes, Adrien and Mathieu de Montmorency, Christian de Lamoignon, the Comte de Narbonne, Mme de Staël, Camille Jordan, Bertrand Barrère, Lucien Bonaparte, Eugène Beauharnais, Joseph Fouché, Jean-Baptiste Bernadotte, André Masséna, Jean-Victor-Marie Moreau, Frédéric César de la Harpe, poet Gabriel-Marie Legouvé, and Emmanuel Dupaty.¹⁴ On Mondays from 1799 to 1803, her devotees gathered under her roof to discuss politics, art, and other intellectual subjects, and with the ascent of Napoleon to power, conversations became increasingly political in tone. As a result of the potentially disruptive sympathies held by some of the attendees of her salon, Napoleon ordered its closure in 1803. Staël was exiled 150 miles from Paris the same year, not only for her political and social alliances, but also for her publication of *Delphine* (1802), which was considered a veiled attack on the aristocracy and ruling elite. By 1805 M. Récamier and his financial ventures were in a state of bankruptcy, and the majority of the opulent townhouse was rented to a third party in order to supplement the couple's bills.¹⁵

Within this charmed period of sociability, Récamier's legendary beauty and grace were captured in the most well-known portraits of her, the prime of her youth

¹⁴ The duc de Guignes was a French ambassador, Adrien and Mathieu de Montmorency aristocratic statesmen, Christian de Lamoignon the member of an aristocratic royalist and parliamentarian family, the Comte de Narbonne a Constitutional Monarchist-turned-Napoleonic Lieutenant General and Diplomat, Camille Jordan a Lyonnais politician and vocal opponent of Bonaparte, Bertrand Barrère a member of the National Convention and Directory, consort to Napoleon, and servant of Louis-Philippe, Fouché, Bernadotte, Masséna, and Moreau revolutionary generals and members of the assemblies, Jean-François de la Harpe a critic and playwright, Gabriele-Marie Legouvé a poet, and Emmanuel Dupaty, also a poet. *Juliette Récamier: Muse et mécène* (Lyon: Musée des Beaux-Arts and Paris: Éditions Hazan, 2009): 106.

¹⁵ *Muse et mécène*, 256.

immortalized on canvas and in marble. Eulalie Morin's 1799 portrait of the socialite (Figure 109), Joseph Chinard's portrait bust (Figure 110), David's unfinished portrait (Figure 99), and Gérard's iconic full-length portrait (Figure 111) all feature the signature style of Récamier: gauzy, white, draping fabrics, exposed arms, neck, and décolleté, simple accessories, upswept hair bound by a ribbon or other swathe of fabric, slightly tilted head, and engaging or otherwise coquettish gaze.

The Gérard portrait remains the most iconic among those of Récamier, and the artist seems to have been a somewhat "unofficial" portraitist of the most publicly visible *merveilleuses*. At the helm of this well-known group of Parisian high society women was Thérésia Cabarrus (Figure 112), the privileged daughter of a Spanish banker who, after her first divorce, engaged in an affair with and eventually married Jean-Lambert Tallien, a Revolutionary, member of the National Assembly, an administrator of the Terror, and a member of the Committee of Public Safety. Her nickname was "Notre Dame de Thermidor," a reference to her participation in the conspiracy to oust Robespierre in 1794. Her salon was one of the most famous in Paris, and her public appearances were never without flair. Gérard's 1804 full-length portrait of Tallien is hung next to Récamier's, with a door separating the two, at the Musée Carnavalet, a striking arrangement that reunites the beauties for twenty-first century viewers. Like Récamier, Gérard pictures Tallien in typical *merveilleuse* "uniform": flowing, gauzy robe, low, revealing décolleté, cashmere shawl, and a come-hither glance.

Josephine de Beauharnais (1763-1814) was the other ringleader of this fashion- and image-conscious group of women. She was widowed and imprisoned during the Directory, released by the grace of Monsieur Tallien in July of 1794 after three months in

prison. She had an affair with Paul Barras, one of the five executive Directors of the new French Republic, and then began a courtship with General Napoleon Bonaparte that would ultimately lead to marriage in 1796. During his military campaigns, when duty took him out of the city, Josephine was free to engage in pleasurable social pursuits, and her public appearances, especially those with Tallien, were the object of much gossip and buzz. Like Tallien and Recamier, Gérard painted a full length portrait of Beauharnais (Figure 113), but it is more conservative in self-display by virtue of her role as the empress. However, the hallmarks of the *merveilleuse* style are again present in the gauzy material of her lightweight, white dress, the simple adornment of accessories, and the confident, outward gaze that engages with the viewer.

Other notable *merveilleuses* included Fortuné Hamelin (née Lormier-Lagrange, 1776-1851; Figure 114), a fellow Creole friend of Beauharnais. Born in the French colony of Saint-Domingue, her marriage into the wealthy Hamelin family and her friendship with Josephine put her on center stage in Directory social life. Her friend Madame Regnault de Saint-Jean-d'Angély, née Laure de Bonneuil (1754-1817; Figure 115), was a notable salonnière from the Directory through the Restoration. And Madame d'Arjuzon, née Pascalie Hosten (1774-1850; Figure 116), was the daughter of a wealthy planter in Saint-Domingue who was killed in the 1802 Haitian Revolution. She married the son of a *fermier général* who rose in the ranks of the government and diplomacy, and she eventually assumed the post of “dame d'honneur” for Queen Hortense.¹⁶ Their portraits share the similar grace and ease of style that the former three exhibit, and we again witness Gérard's professional circulation among the social group who likely wished to have a certain cachet to their portraits.

¹⁶ *Au temps des merveilleuses*, 108.

While evidence of sustained, intimate, or personal friendship with other Parisian *merveilleuses* is not directly available, it is interesting to note that journals, fashion magazines, memoirs, letters, and other texts directly associated Récamier with the prominent group of women, discussing them in conjunction with one another. While her social interaction with the *merveilleuses* certainly was not akin to the intimate friendship she shared with Staël, she was understood as one of “them” in the public eye by virtue of her social circulation, public visibility, and the styles she adopted. Observers dubbed Récamier, Tallien, and Beauharnais the “Three Graces,” referring to both their beauty and antique fashions that led the sartorial trends for a good decade of Parisian history. An early twentieth-century monograph on Récamier describes the women’s effect upon venturing out into public together:

These three ladies drove Paris wild, and saw the most illustrious personages at their feet, - those lovely feet which they wore bare, except for sandals, and with emeralds on their toes. They were to be seen everywhere, at the concerts, at which Garat used to sing – at the balls where Trénitz used to dance....They were the soul of all gaiety.¹⁷

Moreover, Récamier and her fellow *merveilleuses* not only wore the same styles in public, but, for the large part, commissioned the same artist to paint their portraits and to do so in a very similar manner. The full-length format and detailed portraits by artists such as Gérard facilitated the sartorial display for which the women were so well known.

As Queen Marie-Antoinette had proven in the ancien régime, fashion and its display were solidifying elements of public, group identity. She donned the *robe en chemise* that her female cohorts similarly popularized in their social rendez-vous at the Trianon. As Mary Sheriff points out, Vigée-Lebrun’s individual portraits of this intimate circle of friends feature them donning the casual dress. In particular, her portraits of the

¹⁷ Quoted in Alys Hallard, *Madame Récamier*, 27.

Queen's two favorites, the Princesse de Lamballe (Figure 117) and the Duchesse de Polignac (Figure 118) picture both women in the same *robe en gaule*, the gauzy cascading fabric a true departure from the still stiff styles of the 1780s.¹⁸ The artist also allied herself with the powerful group in a self-portrait (Figure 119) in which she wears the *robe en chemise* and which closely resembles an earlier portrait she made of the Duchesse de Polignac (Figure 120). For this group of women, as for the *merveilleuses*, sartorial statements and their representation through portraiture constituted a form of social "membership" and facilitated an outward display of group identity and status.

Fashion also became a site of sociability for French émigrés living in the United States. Letters exchanged between Josephine du Pont and Margaret Manigault, two *merveilleuses* of their own making in America, demonstrate that conversations surrounding fashion and taste could hold meaning within friendship, contribute to self-development, and cement social bonds. The former, a French transplant, and the latter, a lover of French culture who had lived abroad for ten years, shared a long-lasting friendship as mothers, wives, and social women in turn-of-the-century Charleston, South Carolina.¹⁹ The excerpts from their letters offer useful glimpses into the relationship between sociability, friendship, fashion, and taste in the last decade of the eighteenth century and the first decade of the nineteenth. Fashion is a strong topic of conversation

¹⁸ See Mary Sheriff, "The im/modesty of her sex. Elisabeth Vigée-Lebrun and the Salon of 1783," in *The Consumption of Culture, 1600-1800. Image, Object, Text*, eds. Ann Bermingham and John Brewer (London and New York: Routledge, 1995), 473.

¹⁹ Du Pont, née Gabrielle Joséphine de la Fite de Pelleport, married Victor Marie du Pont, a French diplomat and son of the famous Pierre Samuel du Pont de Nemours. The family emigrated to the U.S. in 1799. Manigault had spent ten years in France with her family and received her education abroad while gaining a strong appreciation of French culture and language. Her husband's predecessors were Huguenot refugees that had settled in Charleston generations earlier. See Low, "Of Muslins and Merveilleuses" for more detailed biographies of both women.

in Manigault's and Du Pont's epistolary exchange, alongside marriage, motherhood, and discussion of everyday life. The reader of the letters gets a strong sense of the prominent role fashion plays in their lives and social circles, both women describing in great detail other women's appearances, belongings, homes, and purchases. They reveal the various social spaces inhabited by turn-of-the-century women in both America and France and also reveal the underlying feeling of rivalry that tinges the comparative discussions. Frequent emphasis on appearance,²⁰ reference to fashion plates in the publications *Gallery of Fashion* and *Les Costumes Parisiens*,²¹ discussion of *bon ton*, and references to the *merveilleuses* of Paris reveal the women's shared interest in all things tasteful and *à la mode*.

In addition to referring to themselves as "élégantes" or "merveilleuses,"²² the reader of their letters senses that for the two women, fashion and taste were the glue of their friendship:

The conformity of our tastes and our feelings has often brought me the greatest pleasure. I am presently enjoying the coincidence that made us act the same way at the same time. You were assembling for me a little extract from the box that arrived from France, while I was copying for you the contents of a case that came from London.²³

...A friend, you are going to exclaim. Made a friend in a week spent shopping and being entertained? A modern Greek would not be more ridiculous! I Agree, and to justify myself and make the matter less extraordinary would take a page of reasoning and two or three of explanation. So I am sorry to have confessed this, especially if you are not a physiognomist, and if you do not agree that there sometimes exist certain points of contact in character and feeling that attract you involuntarily and

²⁰ Ibid., 49.

²¹ Ibid., 51, and 44-5, respectively.

²² Ibid., 56.

²³ Ibid., 72.

assume real consistency when one sees them shared. That is what happened.²⁴

The identification of one another as “kindred spirits” based on purchasing power and material objects comes through in these quotes. The ability to develop a friendship during “a week spent shopping” is inexplicable yet experienced, attributed to a certain “je ne sais quoi” of character and feeling based on commercial pursuits.

Similarly, the material object constituted important cement to the bond that the women shared with one another, its status not only fodder for conversation, but symbolic tokens of affection:

...Allow the small piece of furniture which accompanies this letter to call me to your mind.²⁵

I forgot to apologize to you for not having sent your circlet of hair. I had an argument over it with the maker who I believe profited from my absence in order to sell it. However he swore to me that he had not yet made it and that he had searched in vain for as much blond hair as I had specified in order to have a natural curl and a truly alluring effect. I have one made from Amélie’s hair which is charming. Eventually I hope to get yours.²⁶

On August 3, 1800, Manigault tells Du Pont that her infant daughter has died, and Du Pont’s letter conveys her desire to console her with a material object:

If by a magic wand I could evoke in your bedroom a mahogany sofa trimmed with a handsome green material embroidered in brown and a draped Etruscan fringe in the most Greek manner it seems that I would see you resting there with greater ease.²⁷

²⁴ Ibid., 72.

²⁵ Ibid., 63.

²⁶ Ibid., 67.

²⁷ Ibid., 66.

In the above excerpts the object is used to console, to remember, or to please. Reference to the gift reinforces the bonds of friendship from a distance, reminding the recipient that her friend is thinking of her despite the absence and distance. Their bonding through fashion and material culture suggest an emotional attachment to materiality that in part inscribes their friendship with tangible objects of affection and shared taste. This investment of meaning and memory in an object or material good is in many ways similar to the underlying sentiment of friendship that the objects and portraits referring to Staël and Récamier's friendship do, albeit one more superficial in nature.

The famed Parisian *merveilleuses* also mused with one another on the topic of fashion, and an exchange between Tallien and Beauharnais suggests the potential rivalry that fashion and friendship could engender. In a letter, Thérésia consults with Josephine on her choice of clothing before attending a masquerade at the Luxembourg Palace, writing to her friend,

My dear, there is going to be a magnificent party at Thelusson. I don't have to ask whether you will be there, for the fête wouldn't be a success without you. But I write to ask you whether you won't show yourself with that peach-flower *dessous* I like so well. I'm going to wear one like it.²⁸

Avoiding the faux-pas of showing up to the same event dressed like another, Tallien claims her attire for the evening. While Beauharnais's presence at the party was essential to her friend's enjoyment of it, Thérésia makes sure Josephine will not steal the sartorial show.

²⁸ Quoted in Sidney B. Whipple, *Scandalous Princess, The Exquisite Thérésia Cabarrus* (New York and London: The Century Co., 1932): 259.

The Most Famous Bed in Europe

In addition to Déjuinne's overt reference to and direct borrowing from David's 1800 portrait of the *merveilleuse*, the artist includes the reflection of Récamier's bedposts in the mirror on the left side of the composition. A seemingly normal inclusion of the room's inventory of furniture, the bed had an additional significance in the context of Récamier's earlier sociability. Several sources describe her reception of guests "en couchée," positioning herself in a gilded bed wearing her muslin dress, bare feet, and flowers in her hair.²⁹ This ritual was recorded by travelers, in engravings, and in memoirs, and oscillated between lionization and admiration. The bedroom became one of the most famous in all of Paris, creating an interesting mix between public and private life, her boudoir on display for the lucky few who entered its doors. Louis Berthault's 1798 design for the mahogany bed included delicately gilded sculptural motifs, classical Empire-style lines, and a dramatic canopy of Belgian lace draped above it (Figure 121). Here, we see her in that guise, and the hint of the bed reflected in the mirror at the left side of the composition, a reminder of this earlier period of fashion and sociability, her self-display a significant part of her identity in the public eye.

²⁹ See *Muse et Mécène*, 184-187; *Nouvelles acquisitions du département des Objets d'art 1990-1994* (Paris: RMN, 1995), 216-218; D. Alcouffe, A. Dion-Tenenbaum, and A. Lefebure, *Le Mobilier du Musée du Louvre*, t 1 (Paris, 1993), 304; Marion Preston Bolles, "Diana and Endymion in Brussels Lace," *The Metropolitan Museum of Art Bulletin* 3, no. 8 (1945): 204-206.

A Portrait of Friendship

In 1819, a year and a half after the death of Staël, Récamier and Prince Augustus conceived a plan to commemorate their mutual friend.³⁰ They commissioned François Gérard, an artist with whom they were both familiar (Figure 122), to paint a scene from Staël's novel, *Corinne, ou l'Italie* (Figure 100).³¹ Published in 1807, the same year that Récamier, Staël, and Augustus enjoyed a summer with other members of the "Groupe de Coppet" at the author's Swiss château, the novel chronicles the ill-fated love between the inspired Italian poetess, Corinne, and the duty-bound Scottish general, Oswald, Lord Nelvil.³² Against the backdrop of their Italian travels, the two share a romance as passionate as the people, ruins, and landscape they encounter on their journey. While Oswald's sensibilities are seduced by his surroundings and the object of his affection, he finds himself torn between his love for Corinne and the promise to fulfill his deceased father's parting wish that he marry a proper young Englishwoman. Ultimately, he follows his head rather than his heart and chooses the dainty Lucile as his English bride. The decision has a tragic effect on Corinne, whose flame of poetic inspiration is eventually extinguished by her broken heart. She represents the ultimate "exceptional

³⁰ Staël died July 14, 1817.

³¹ All quotes and excerpts come from Sylvia Raphael's translation of Germaine de Staël, *Corinne, or Italy* (New York Oxford University Press, 2008).

³² The "Groupe de Coppet" gathered at Staël's chaâteau near Lake Geneva between the French Revolution and the Restoration. Its unofficial membership included Benjamin Constant, Chateaubriand, August Wilhelm Schlegel, Mathieu de Montmorency, les Barantes père et fils, Juliette Récamier, Augustus of Prussia, and other noted European intellectuals. See Simon Balayé and Jean-Daniel Candaux, eds., *Le groupe de Coppet : actes et documents* (Geneva: M. Sltakine; Paris: H. Champion, 1977); Lucien Jaume, ed., *Coppet, creuset de l'esprit libéral: les idées politiques et constitutionnelles du group de Madame de Staël*, Coppet colloquium, May 15–16, 1998 (Aix-en-Provence and Paris: Presses Universitaires d'Aix-Marseille et Economica, 2000); and Etienne Hofmann and François Rosset, *Le Groupe de Coppet. Une constellation d'intellectuels européens* (Presses polytechniques et universitaires romandes, 2005).

woman” whose genius prohibits her from living a conventional life and for whom love itself cannot coexist with her talent and its expression.

Gérard’s canvas illustrates Corinne’s most impassioned and climactic improvisation of the novel, a poetic speech performed after Oswald (unknowingly) reveals Corinne’s own half-sister as his father’s intended marriage match. The revelation occurs during their travels in Naples, and it is on the cape of Miseno, overlooking the Bay of Naples, where Corinne chronicles the history of the land and the ghosts of its former inhabitants. In a telling passage she pays homage to the tragic plight of abandoned and widowed women such as Cornelia, Agrippina, and Porcia, lamenting their losses as she presages her own.

Gérard places the poetess at the Sapphic edge of a rocky promontory overlooking the expansive Bay and the smoking Vesuvius. Her audience consists of Italian *lazzarone* who listen with attentiveness and excitement, two Englishmen who Stendhal, in criticism from the Salon of 1824, described as expressing foreboding disdain at the unusual spectacle of such a gifted woman, and Oswald, who clings to Corinne’s every word.³³ Much like the theme of her improvisation, Corinne’s placement at the edge of the precipice, the sublime atmosphere, and her heavenward gaze signal a mix of regret and impending loss. Her lyre hangs passively at her side, symbolic of the future dissipation

³³ “Two Englishwomen distinguishable in the background of the picture are, in my opinion, placed with perfect artistry. From their frigid, disdainful expressions I can foresee the fate in store for poor Corinne once she has left the beauties of Italy to go and bury herself in the chilly, northern land of propriety. Here the painter has given their full meaning to Madame de Staël’s fine pages on those women from the North, with their respectability, class-consciousness and tea-making talents. In those two Englishwomen I can see Corinne’s entire fate, and I can hear their expressions of disdain as they meet a person of their own sex with a supreme gift: *Very shocking! Very improper!*” Stendhal, “The Salon of 1824,” in *Stendhal and the Arts*, selected and ed. by David Wakefield (London: Phaidon, 1973): 97.

of her inspiration as she unravels into the depths of her aching heart after Oswald's departure for England.³⁴

Nineteenth- and twentieth-century observers and scholars have understood the novel's inspired *improvisatrice* as semi-autobiographical in identity, comparing Staël's skills at conversation and authorship to Corinne's poetic genius, as well as their similar status as "exceptional women" in patriarchal culture.³⁵ As Sheriff has noted, Vigée-Lebrun's *Memoirs* includes a direct comparison between the two in her description of Staël:

One saw her then walking into her salon, holding in her hand a small branch of greenery; when she spoke, she agitated this branch, and her words had a warmth that belonged only to her salon; [it was] impossible to interrupt her; in this moment she seemed to me an *improvisatrice*.³⁶

While she compared Staël's art of conversation to Corinne's poetic talents, the artist also visually fused the two in her well-known portrait of 1808, which pictures Madame de Staël as Corinne, her homelier qualities existing alongside references to her literary genius (Figure 123). Madelyn Gutwirth suggests an even closer identification between author and character, recounting that contemporaries went so far as to call Staël

³⁴ "The pure pale glow of the moon lit up her face, the fresh sea breeze blew her hair, and it seemed as if nature delighted in making her lovelier still. Yet Corinne was suddenly seized by overwhelming emotion; she contemplated the enchanting setting, this intoxicating evening, Oswald who was there beside her, but who might not be there always, and tears streamed from her eyes." Staël, *Corinne*, 236.

³⁵ Mary Sheriff, *The Exceptional Woman: Elisabeth Vigée-Lebrun and the Cultural Politics of Art* (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1996): 243-261; Madelyn Gutwirth, *Madame de Staël, Novelist: The Emergence of the Artist as Woman* (Urbana, IL, Chicago, and London: University of Illinois Press, 1978): 259-309; Joan DeJean, "Portrait of the Artist as Sappho," in *Germaine de Staël: Crossing the Borders*, ed. Madelyn Gutwirth, Avriel Goldberger, and Karyna Szmurlo (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1991): 122-137.

³⁶ Quoted in Sheriff, *The Exceptional Woman*, 243. Original quote from Elisabeth Vigée-Lebrun, *Souvenirs*, 2:184. "On la voyait alors marchant dans son salon, tenant en main une petite branche de verdure; quand elle parlait, elle agitait ce rameau, et sa parole avait une chaleur qui n'appartenait qu'à elle seule; impossible de l'interrompre: dans ces instants elle me faisait l'effet d'une improvisatrice."

“Corinne,” who responded by saying, “I am not Corinne, but if you like, I shall be.”³⁷

Indeed, the title under which Déjuinne’s painting exhibited at the Galerie Lebrun in 1826 makes a similar connection: “Madame Récamier looking at the portrait of Madame de Staël by Gérard.”³⁸

With this recurring and overt comparison in mind, Déjuinne’s painting, then, serves to reunite the two friends who had been separated by death, bringing them together in the second floor apartment of the Abbaye-aux-Bois, Récamier’s residence from 1819 until her own death in 1849. The viewer occupies the open space in the foreground of the room and encounters the familiarly lounging figure pausing from reading a book, her gaze turned toward the right, in the direction of Gérard’s canvas, which prominently hangs on the wall on the opposite side of the room. Their figures appear as mirror images, echoing one another through similar costume, turned heads, and the gentle c-curve of their bodies. The musical instruments that occupy the lower right corner of the composition also unite the two pictorial spaces, the harp and lyre turning sympathetically toward one another in a similar manner as the women.

Between and around these parenthetical figures stand several objects that offer clues to the nature of their twenty-year friendship.³⁹ The most prominent is the shawl that lies draped across the stool, below the midpoint of an imaginary diagonal line extending from head to head. The prop serves several purposes, not the least of which is

³⁷ Gutwirth, *Madame de Staël*, 259.

³⁸ *Juliette Récamier: Muse et Mécène*, 89. “Madame Récamier regardant le portrait de Mme de Staël par Gérard.”

³⁹ The Musée des Beaux-Arts (Lyon) exhibition, “Juliette Récamier: Muse et Mécène” and associated catalog provided fundamental information on Récamier’s “material” life. The inclusion of many of the objects from the Déjuinne painting in both the exhibition and the catalog provided invaluable information for this chapter.

a reference to Récamier's popularization of the fashionable cashmere accessory in the 1790s, as well as a suggestion of a narrative in which Récamier has gone from playing the harp to reading a book, leaving her shawl behind. More significant, however, is the shawl's association with both Corinne and Staël, and Récamier's own public personality. During her youth and the early days of her acquaintance with Staël, Récamier became known for her "shawl dance," which her niece, Amélie Lenormant, describes in her aunt's posthumous memoirs:

I do not know from whom she learnt the shawl dance which served Mme de Staël as a model in *Corinne*. Mme Récamier only consented to execute it while very young. One day, during the sad winter of 1812-13, which she passed as an exile at Lyons she gave me an idea of this dance, in order to dissipate her ennui; and also, no doubt, to recall the memory of other days. With a long scarf in her hand, she went through all the poses, wherein the light tissue becomes in turn a girdle, a veil, and a drapery. Nothing could be more graceful, more decorous, or picturesque than this succession of harmonious attitudes, worthy to be perpetuated by the pencil of an artist.⁴⁰

Lenormant's description evokes not only the beauty and charm that Récamier legendarily possessed, but it positions the dance itself in a direct link with a nostalgic meditation on the past, the "memory of other days" called to mind during Récamier's exile from Paris, instituted because of her association with Staël.

⁴⁰ Isaphene M. Luyster, trans. and ed., *Memoirs and Correspondence of Madame Récamier* (Boston: Roberts Brothers, 1878): 5. For the original French, see Amélie Lenormant, *Souvenirs et Correspondance Tirés des Papiers de Mme. Récamier*, vol. I, 3rd ed. (Paris, 1860): 18. "On a tant parlé de la danse de Mme Récamier qu'il convient peut-être d'en dire un mot. Belle et faite à peindre, elle excella en effet dans cet art. Elle aima la danse avec passion pendant quelques années, et, à son début dans le monde, elle se faisait un point d'honneur d'arriver au bal la première et de le quitter la dernière: mais cela ne dura guère. Je ne sais de qui elle avait appris cette danse du châle, qui fournit à Mme de Staël le modèle de la danse qu'elle prête à Corinne. C'était une pantomime et des attitudes plutôt que de la danse. Elle ne consentit à l'exécuter que pendant les premières années de sa jeunesse. Pendant le triste hiver de 1812 à 1813 que Mme Récamier, exilée, passa à Lyon, un jour que l'isolement lui pesait plus cruellement que de coutume, pour tromper son ennui et sans doute aussi se rappeler d'autres temps, elle voulut me donner une idée de la danse du châle: une longue écharpe à la main, elle exécuta en effet toutes les attitudes dans lesquelles ce tissu léger devenait tour à tour une ceinture, un voile, une draperie. Rien n'était plus gracieux, plus décent et plus pittoresque que cette succession de mouvements cadencés dont on eût désiré fixer par le crayon toutes les attitudes."

In a footnote of the novel, Staël herself cites this dance as inspiration for Corinne's tarantella, a dance which accompanied many of her improvisations, explaining that,

It was Madame Récamier's dancing that gave me the idea of the dance I have tried to depict. This lady, so renowned for her grace and beauty, gives an example of showing, in the midst of adversity, such touching resignation and total disregard of personal interest that her moral qualities seem to all eyes as remarkable as her charms.⁴¹

In her description, Staël cites Récamier's charming performance as a direct inspiration for her novel's protagonist, and the fluid movements of her friend become Corinne's inspired dance that accompanies her poetic improvisations. Despite the shawl's motionlessness in Déjuinne's canvas, it is certainly active in these associations outside of the frame. The explanatory information also serves as a personal notation of their friendship and a display of her respect for Récamier; Récamier's husband had lost his fortune in 1806, and European society expressed profound admiration at her composure in the face of such adversity. Ultimately, this quip reveals Récamier as a source of both moral and artistic inspiration to Staël.

What marks this particular muse-artist relationship as unique, of course, is the unusual coupling of two women in a dyad typically conceptualized in gendered terms. Apollo had nine female muses in his entourage (Figure 124), Pygmalion's marble beauty sprang from his own desire (Figure 125), husbands had their wives (Figure 126), and women such as Emma Hamilton (Figure 127), like Récamier, inspired *more* than one man. A similar dynamic emerges in Staël's letters to Récamier, their language, analogous in tone to love letters, revealing the beauty's intoxicating effect on the author. After Récamier's 1807 visit to Coppet, Staël wrote the following in a letter to her friend:

⁴¹ Staël, *Corinne*, 406 (note 14).

You have made me experience, dear Juliette, something that is quite new to me: a friendship which fills my imagination and spreads over my life an interest which one other sentiment alone has inspired in me. This year especially there was something angelic about you; that charm which deigned to concentrate on me moved my soul, and I felt cut off from some heavenly influence when you disappeared...in short, you have produced a supernatural impression on every heart. I am afraid of this impression. Something extraordinary must happen inside you to affect people to this extent...how sad this château [Coppet] has seemed since your departure!⁴²

Like the seductive charms of the muse or siren, Récamier's presence at Coppet during the memorable summer they spent together left a deep impression on Staël, which she expressed with a language of love and effusive sentiment. The space of epistolary exchange was one of the primary sites of the development of their friendship, and this, among other letters written from Staël to Récamier, expresses the inspirational effect that the latter had on the former throughout their friendship.

The prominence of stringed instruments also suggests the emotional resonance of their intimate friendship, and, similar to the shawl, refers to the novel. In Staël's text, the playing of stringed instruments occurs during moments of heterosexual passion: Corinne plays the lyre at the Capitol festival where Oswald first lays eyes on her, she strums her harp in a private tête-à-tête with him, which calms his bashful nerves, and she performs during other emotional crescendos of the novel.⁴³ It is a narrative and symbolic device

⁴² Maurice Levaillant, *The Passionate Exiles: Madame de Staël and Madame Récamier* (New York: Farrar, Straus, and Cudahy, 1958):182.

⁴³ Musical instruments first appear just before she is about to be the poet crowned with laurels at the Capitol festival. She has chosen her lyre to accompany her voice, which Staël describes as "Corinne had her lyre, her chosen instrument, brought to her; it closely resembled a harp but it had a more antique shape and simpler sound." This is handed to her just before her improvisation at the Capitol, the instrument and her voice just about the capture the attention and affection of Lord Oswald in the audience (and Récamier, outside of the picture frame). During a later encounter with Oswald at her apartment, Oswald's nervousness contrasts with the self-assuredness of Corinne, and the harp becomes a distraction from the nervous, bashful twitterings of early romance: "Corinne had more self-assurance in conversation than Oswald, but she shared his embarrassment, and in an effort to save face she fingered the harp beside her and struck a few random chords. These harmonious sounds heightened Oswald's emotion and seemed to make him a little bolder." Staël, *Corinne*, 28 and 45.

that signifies seduction, emotionalism, drama, and above all, sensibility. Indeed, eighteenth- and nineteenth-century music theory made overt connections between stringed instruments and nerves, positing the intense power of music on physiology and, by extension, emotional resonance within the heart and soul of the listener.⁴⁴ Music, in its connections with nerves and sensibility, was particularly suitable as an accompaniment to such dramatic and seductive narrative moments.

In Déjuinne's painting, though, music suggests homosocial harmony rather than heterosexual passion. Perhaps it is not entirely coincidental that Récamier's harp nearly touches the sympathetically inclined lyre held by Corinne in Gérard's canvas. The prominence and connection of the instruments suggest reverberation of feeling between the women, emphasizing their sentimental connection with one another, both within and beyond the canvas. With the inclusion of the shawl and its reference to the tarantella, Déjuinne constructs an imagined dialog of music and dance between the two women in the canvases, a tribute to their friendship and a reference to a dynamic of sentimental connection and artistic inspiration.

In addition to the harp and shawl, a third prominently displayed object suggests another facet of this "friendship portrait." The inclusion of a book in Récamier's hand – to my knowledge the only painting that features the beauty with such a prop – suggests a fusion of their individual qualities, typically characterized as "beauty and brains," into an ideal balance of attributes. Récamier's unique act of reading is at odds with her

⁴⁴ James Kennaway cites Jean-Philippe Rameau's *Traité de l'Harmonie* (1722) and Johann Mattheson's *Der vollkommene Capellmeister* (1739) as influential eighteenth-century tracts that connected sensibility and music. James Kennaway, "From Sensibility to Pathology: The Origins of the idea of Nervous Music around 1800," *Journal of the History of Medicine and Allied Sciences* 65, no. 3 (2010): 400. I discuss these connections in more depth in Chapter Four, below.

legendary beauty and composure, which David, Gérard, and others immortalized in portraits of her (Figures 99 and 109-111), and which contemporaries described in their memoirs and letters. A contemporary female observer cited Récamier's unlikely blend of beauty and likeability, stating,

The fact, however, is that never was a woman as likable and as beautiful at the same time as Mme Récamier. Yet, never susceptible to the usual calculations of the mediocre people, she was never afraid to surround herself with women more witty than herself, and, moreover, no woman has ever sacrificed more of her own charms to let the others shine, so thus she is adored by anyone who has genius, talent, or wit.⁴⁵

The poet Lamartine wrote that “Her angelic face can bear no other name; one look suffices to bind your heart to her forever,”⁴⁶ Staël commented on her “Beauty that has no equal in Europe, a spotless reputation, a proud and generous character...”,⁴⁷ Chateaubriand felt that “to see her was to love her,”⁴⁸ and, according to the Republican politician Antoine-Claire Thibaudeau, “she had the beauty, the grace, the simplicity, of one of Raphael's Madonnas.”⁴⁹ Récamier's particular combination of social grace and beauty is emphasized with a tone of surprise, aggrandizement, and awe in contemporary descriptions of her. By all accounts, she represented the physical, social, and moral ideal. Additionally, the porcelain vase behind her featuring a painting of Raphael's *Madonna della Sedia* reinforces the ideal femininity and grace she was considered to

⁴⁵ *Mémoires d'une femme de qualité sur le Consulat et L'Empire* (Paris: Mercure de France, 1987): 80.

⁴⁶ Lamartine, quoted in Hugh Noel Williams, *Madame Récamier and her Friends* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1906): 1.

⁴⁷ “Beauté sans égale en Europe, reputation sans tache, caractère fier et généreux.” Lenormant, *Mémoires*, 130.

⁴⁸ François-René de Chateaubrian, *Mémoires d'Outre Tombe*.

⁴⁹ Cited in Edouard Herriot, *Madame Récamier*, vol. I (New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons and London: William Heinemann, 1906): 28.

possess (Figure 128). In fact, the Duchesse d’Abrantes, upon meeting Récamier, said she “...reminded me at first sight of the Madonnas of the pious Italian painters; but the resemblance consisted wholly, in expression – not in regularity of features.”⁵⁰ Along with the abbey steeple visible through the open window, the vase perhaps also functions as a symbol of Récamier’s “pure” character.

This blend of beauty and brains in the figure of Récamier similarly occurs in the figure of Corinne. Known for her “rougher” display of femininity, which contrasted with the loveliness of her keen intellect and sharp wit, contemporaries such as the Comtesse de Boigne described Staël’s physical appearance in frank terms, as this recollection of her initial impression of the author during her 1806 stay at Coppet reveals:

Thus it was that this meteor appeared before my sight, and my head was completely turned. At first she seemed to me ugly and ridiculous. A big red face, a complexion by no means fresh, and her hair arranged in a manner which she called picturesque, in other words...badly done...⁵¹

In contrast to the Comtesse’s initial reaction to Staël’s less-than-ideal femininity, Gérard represents Corinne in the convention of *le beau idéal*, reinforcing the coexistence of beauty and brains that characterizes her in the novel. While Augustus and Récamier requested that their friend’s likeness be used for the image of Corinne, much as Vigée-Lebrun had done in the 1808 portrait, Gérard thought it more suitable to elevate the subject with a more beautiful countenance, a choice that led several observers to remark on the figure’s similarity to Récamier.⁵² Thus contrasting characterizations – the prophetic sibyl and the inspiring muse, the impressive intellectual and praiseworthy

⁵⁰ Duchesse d’Abrantes, *Memoirs of Napoleon, His Court, and Family*, vol. 1 (London: Richard Bentley, 1836): 455.

⁵¹ Comtesse de Boigne, *Memoirs*, 219.

⁵² See Richard Dagonne and Sidonie Lemeux-Fraitot, *Girodet sous le regard de Déjuinne – Portrait du maître dans son atelier* (Montargis: Musée Girodet, 2006): 23-26.

beauty – are fused into two hybrid specimens in Déjuinne’s painting. David’s *merveilleuse* becomes more like Staël in her intellectual and imaginative exercise, and Staël becomes more like Récamier in her beautification as Corinne.

While the book is key to this melding of identities, it also functions, perhaps most significantly, much like the painting itself does, as a vehicle of memory and nostalgia in the context of their friendship. Both women have laid their instruments to rest to engage in a quiet moment of reflection that extends across the space between them. Récamier has been reading and looks up as if lost in a moment of reverie, her imagination perhaps inspired by the book she holds. Sidonie Lemeux-Fraitot has suggested that the presence of the book and the painting of *Corinne* in Déjuinne’s work points to the prop’s identity as Staël’s novel.⁵³ Moreover, in 1824, Récamier, with the book in hand, visited the very spot that Staël described in the novel and which Gérard’s painting depicts. While her description of the disappointment she felt at finding the site much less impressive than Staël described it in the novel, Récamier’s pilgrimage and her subsequent reflection on her experience underscore her nostalgia for her friend, whose work she directly inspired and who inspired her in return.⁵⁴ It is this silent pause and shared moment of reflection between the two figures on the canvas that functions most significantly in the painting. While Corinne laments the unavoidable loss of her love in Gérard’s canvas, Récamier meditates on the enthusiasm of her friend’s words and reflects on her memory.

⁵³ Ibid., 24.

⁵⁴ “On fut très surprise, et je dois le dire, très-desappointé en débarquant au cap Misène. Ce cap est une langue de terre, plate et sans caractère; quelques tristes peupliers y élèvent leur cimes, et si on depouillait ce coin du ravage de Naples de la lumière qui prête à tous de la beauté, il n’y resterait rien.” Amélie Lenormant, *Souvenirs et correspondances tirés des papiers de Madame Récamier*, vol. 2 (Paris: Michel-Lévy Frères, 1859): 142.

These and other paintings and portraits of Récamier's social circle suggest the function of portraiture (and intertextual references to paintings outside of the frame) as an *aide-memoire* of friendship, a device through which one friend remembers another in the context of physical absence or death. During her own lifetime, Staël prominently displayed a portrait of Récamier in her bedroom at Coppet (Figure 129), alongside renderings of her father and second husband. Similarly, Prince Augustus, who had received Gérard's well-known portrait of Récamier from her in 1822, had the Déjuinne painting in his collection from 1827 until his death in 1843.⁵⁵ If he couldn't possess his unrequited love, he could at least enjoy a view of her in the abbey apartment he had visited two years earlier. Finally, when Récamier moved to a larger apartment within the abbey, she brought Gérard's painting of Corinne with her and placed it among portraits of Staël and Chateaubriand (Figure 130). The latter was said to have recited the first chapters of his *Mémoires d'Outre Tombe* under the watchful eye of the painted poetess.⁵⁶ Much like the correspondence between members of this exclusive social and intellectual circle, the circulation of paintings and portraits made the absent present and cemented the bonds of friendship through material exchange.

Récamier's solitary contemplation of Gérard's canvas and of Staël's novel suggests that the loss that Corinne so desperately feared was Récamier's ultimate fate. The sentiments of nostalgia and mourning so prominent in *Corinne au Cap Misène* are effectively transferred to Récamier's own mourning and memorialization of Staël. Ultimately, Récamier outlived most of her closest friends, including Staël, Prince Augustus and Chateaubriand. Like Cornelia, Agrippina, and Porcia, their ghosts hover in

⁵⁵ Paccoud and Widerkehr, *Juliette Récamier*, 89.

⁵⁶ *Memoirs of the Comtesse de Boigne*, xix.

her memory and physical space, reminding the viewer of her position at the center of this vibrant constellation of friends.

Space and Sociability

In addition to the histories discussed above, the actual *space* of Juliette Récamier's apartment – contemporary descriptions of it, Déjuinne's representation of it, and Récamier's use of it – merits further attention and analysis. Récamier moved into the third-story abbey apartment in October of 1819, after her husband experienced continuing financial troubles, forcing them to sell their fashionable house on the rue de la Chaussée d'Antin. They lived apart in this manner until his death in 1830, and she remained at the convent until April of 1849, when she left to spend her remaining months at the home of and under the care of her niece. In total, Récamier spent roughly 30 of her 72 years of life in the seventh-arrondissement abbey, first in the modest two-room apartment (1819-1829) that Déjuinne pictures and later in more spacious lodgings on the first floor (1829-1849). The establishment had been a boarding house for the nobility and other well-heeled members of French society during the ancien régime, was transformed into a prison during the Terror, and was repurchased in 1797 and reverted to its original purpose: a site of education and boarding for the women of high society. Récamier hosted her popular salon and entertained her fashionable and intellectual friends in both apartments.

Récamier's use of the space was manifold. The modest, two-room apartment functioned as both a private and social space for its inhabitant. The bookcase suggests its use as a personal library or *cabinet*, its various tomes organized on the shelves making up

nearly an entire wall of the room. Some appear to have been used and haphazardly returned to the shelves, and Récamier is pictured using her collection as she reads on her *chaise longue*. The French Academy defined the *cabinet* as “a place of retreat in which to work, or to converse privately, or to keep papers, books, or hang pictures, or other precious things.”⁵⁷ Historian Dena Goodman discusses the eighteenth-century *cabinet* as a “small world” unto itself, a private retreat in which women wrote letters and shared personal company, both male and female.⁵⁸ In a period when women generally could not walk about town without an escort or chaperone, “freedom” could be achieved within the confines of the *cabinet* through correspondence, reading, and reflection. While a writing desk, a typical piece of furniture in an eighteenth- or nineteenth-century *cabinet* is not present in the scene, the image still professes a state of reflection in Récamier’s act of reading.

The presence of the piano and harp to the right of the room suggests its use as a salon or parlor, a space in which she practiced her musical skills and played for visitors. This area of the apartment also appears to have enjoyed recent use, her shawl discarded on the stool next to the harp. The reflection of the bed in the mirror alerts the viewer of the second room of the small apartment where Récamier slept. The bedroom’s attachment to the sitting room also recalls the boudoir, a space typically connected to a woman’s bedroom and part of her private apartments in a larger home, set aside for receiving a few friends or for personal time. And, of course, the room Récamier occupies

⁵⁷ Dena Goodman, “Letter Writing and the Emergence of Gendered Subjectivity in Eighteenth-Century France,” *Journal of Women’s History* 17, no. 2 (Summer 2005): 13. Original quote from *Dictionnaire de l’Académie Française*, 4th ed. (1762) in ARTFL, <http://humanities.uchicago.edu/orgs/ARTFL>.

⁵⁸ Ibid., 18.

was the site of her popular salon, where she received friends and other guests on a regular basis. Finally, the room is within the setting of a female-populated abbey, so Récamier's day-to-day life was set within a homosocial community of women, including the Duchesse d'Abrantès (1784-1838), a longtime acquaintance and salon attendee who also lived at the Abbaye-aux-Bois from 1830 to 1838.⁵⁹

Abrantès published an essay about the Abbaye in 1831, providing a loose portrait of its many inhabitants and largely characterizing it as a space of salon sociability. She gives a brief description of hostesses living there that includes the Comtesse de Beaufort d'Hautpoul (Anne-Marie de Montgeroult de Coutances; 1760-1837), who penned a prolific number of novels, poetry, and educational tracts and lived at the Abbaye-aux-Bois during her later years as a widow.⁶⁰ She also cites Mesdames Gouvello and de Séran, whose jointly hosted salon which drew many ecclesiastical members from other houses and from within the Abbaye-aux-Bois.⁶¹ A certain "Madame de B...y" also called the abbey home and brought her avid interest in literature to the table, along with heady opinions and less-than-modest comportment. Other women in the convent who attended social gatherings included Anne Sophie Swetchine (1782-1857), formerly part of Catherine II's court in her native Russia but best known for her Parisian salon,

⁵⁹ La Duchesse d'Abrantès, "L'Abbaye-aux-Bois," in *Le Livre e cent-et-un*, Vol. 1 (Paris: Chex L'avocat, 1831), 345-380.

⁶⁰ Joseph Fr. Michaud and Louis Gabriel Michaud, *Biographie universelle, ancienne, et moderne*, tome 18 (Paris: Chez Madame C. Desplaces, 1857), 574.

⁶¹ Duchess d'Abrantès, "L'Abbaye-aux-Bois," 362-363. She describes these gatherings with the words "là, tout est grave et recueilli."

Mademoiselle de la Sablière, and Mademoiselle de Clermont-Tonnerre.⁶² She saves her most effusive praise for Madame Récamier, whose salon saw the most luminous guests of them all.⁶³ Abrantès characterizes her apartment as a vibrant meeting place, where the brightest minds came together and where Récamier's star shined much as it had in her more youthful days on the rue de la Chaussée d'Antin.

Aside from several digressions into gossip – content also found in her *Memoirs* – Abrantès mentions that the abbey earned a reputation as “un second hôtel de Rambouillet” for a certain period of time, allying it to the famous seventeenth-century literary salon of Madame de Rambouillet, which counted Mademoiselle de Scudéry, Madame de Sévigné, Richelieu, Corneille and other illuminati among its regulars. She also refers to the abbey and its social circles as a “ce nouvel Athénée,” marking it as a fashionable and intellectual milieu.⁶⁴ The convent was thus a buzzing site of social and intellectual exchange among both men and women, serving not just the purpose of lodging women whose former fortunes had dwindled. Instead, the space allowed them to continue their hold within the public sphere as salonnières.

Sheriff's discussion of women's apartments in eighteenth-century France also provides a model with which to “read” Récamier's apartment and Déjuinne's representation of it. While, according to French architect Nicolas Le Camus de Mézière, the traditional eighteenth-century boudoir, a distinctly feminine space, was considered a space of pleasure and delight and reserved for the personal business of the toilette and for

⁶² See, too, Armand Dayot, “L'Abbaye-aux-Bois. Le dernier royaume de Madame Récamier,” *L'Art et les Artistes* IV (October 1906-March 1907): xi-xiv, for a history of the Abbaye-aux-Bois, its inhabitants, and Récamier's residence.

⁶³ Duchesse d'Abrantès, “L'Abbaye-aux-Bois,” 370.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 370

love (Figure 131),⁶⁵ Sheriff offers other, more varied possibilities for the use of the space. Many women's apartments had studies, offices, and even libraries, even if such spaces weren't included in "official" publications on theories of architecture or in plans for the ideal home.⁶⁶ In a similar vein, women's apartments were often decorated with motifs that reflected their perceived usage, often including allegories of love, natural scenes, and generally pleasurable and playful scenes.⁶⁷ Mezières compares the boudoir, a space of delight, to the fashionable lady herself, decorated and adorned, and available for pleasure and enjoyment.⁶⁸ Images of women in the boudoir reinforce this parallel between the room and its inhabitant. Genre scenes of women gathered in a lady's boudoir emphasize the frivolities of fashion and amorous pursuits alongside the delicately decorated space that contains them (Figure 132).

Récamier's space, however, does not fit this criterion for a lady's apartment, and instead of amorous references surrounding her, meant to inspire lovemaking and pleasure, her boudoir cum library cum salon features her surrounded by images and references to significant friendships in her life, books, and music, altogether different kinds of pleasure. The trope of the "woman reading" in the private confines of her boudoir or the enclosed picturesque garden, typically visualized as having the potential to slide into erotic fantasy when left unchecked (Figure 133) is here not the case. Rather than any kind of sexual pleasure brought on by reading solo in the private apartment, a more pious vision of devotion is suggested. The space and its objects activate

⁶⁵ M. Le Camus de Mézieres, *Le Génie de l'architecture* (Paris: Benoit Morin, 1780).

⁶⁶ Sheriff, *Moved by Love*, 119-120.

⁶⁷ Ibid., 119.

⁶⁸ Meziere, *Le Génie de l'architecture*, 117. Sheriff, *Moved by Love*, 119.

remembrance and reflection rather than amorous thoughts, and the placement of Récamier between the reproduction of the *Madonna della Sedia* and the church steeple through the window further underlines her piety.

Material Memory and Nostalgic Longing

Another noteworthy aspect of Récamier's abbey apartment, aside from its social uses, is Déjuinne's meticulous depiction of the physical space and the material objects that fill it. Every object and detail of the room is recorded with intense exactitude, giving the viewer a catalog-like inventory of Récamier's personal property and its arrangement in the apartment. This factual observation and rendering of the space is part of a genre that might be loosely termed a "room portrait."⁶⁹ This unique, undefined, and relatively ignored genre of painting emerged as an independent category of art in the nineteenth century and served to record the appearance of a room at a particular moment in time, sometimes after a renovation, other times as a simple testament of the taste of its inhabitants, or as an inventory of the art, furniture, and other possessions of the owner.⁷⁰

Seventeenth-century Dutch genre scenes suggest an early ancestor to this genre of meticulously detailed interior settings, many of which use objects of the domestic interior to suggest a moralizing message or pictorial narrative. For example, in Jan Miense

⁶⁹ I am thankful to Jeffrey Collins, who suggested Déjuinne's canvas shared certain qualities to this unofficial genre of painting and from whom I have borrowed the term "room portrait." See Mario Praz, *An Illustrated History of Interior Decoration from Pompeii to Art Nouveau* (New York: Thames and Hudson, 1981); Peter Thornton, *Authentic Décor: The Domestic Interior, 1620-1920* (New York: Viking, 1984); and Gail S. Davidson, Floramae McCarron-Cates, and Charlotte Gere, *House Proud: Nineteenth-Century Watercolors from the Thaw Collection* (New York: Cooper Hewitt National Design Museum, 2008). While a recent exhibition at the Metropolitan Museum of art addressed the Romantic motif of the figure at the window, the survey of interiors that it provides are useful in thinking about this genre. See Sabine Rewald, *Rooms with a View: The Open Window in the 19th Century* (New York: The Metropolitan Museum of Art and New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2011).

⁷⁰ Davidson, McCarron-Cates, and Gere, *House Proud*, 31.

Molenaer's *Allegory of Vanity* (Figure 134), necklaces, coffers, a mirror, multiple stringed instruments, and a chained monkey act as emblems of vanity signifying the fickleness, folly, and transitory nature of life and its pleasures. Similarly, a work like Johannes Vermeer's *Lady Writing a Letter* (Figure 3) records the details of a Dutch interior – tiled floor, window, a painting hung on the wall, and furniture – and, as many scholars have argued imbues the objects in the room with religious significance, here a reference to the Virgin Mary and the Last Judgment. In both the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, detailed interiors also serve to display a collector's *objets d'art* (Figure 135). Careful rendering of masterpieces on walls and sculptures on pedestals ensured an accurate depiction of an individual's, family's, or Crown's holdings, often presenting the owner as a refined and knowledgeable connoisseur or suggesting a sense of vastness in the size of the collection. In the eighteenth century, interior drawings, typically executed by architects, were often done as elevations or building sections for presentation to the client.⁷¹ An elevation for a bedroom wall in the Hôtel Soubise is one such example of an emphasis on detail for documentation, planning, and design purposes (Figure 136). The delicate gilded molding, the intricate candelabra, and the overdoor paintings were meticulously planned before their execution. Eighteenth-century genre paintings, too, often feature detailed rooms in the background that reveal the styles and arrangements of interior design of the day. One fitting example of many is François Boucher's *Le déjeuner* (Figure 137), which includes fashionable details of *chinoiserie* and fanciful rococo forms amongst the dining family. By the nineteenth century, the images seem to be more about the room than the people, some images omitting people altogether, making the room and its objects the true subject of the painting (Figure 138).

⁷¹ Ibid., 9.

In a similar vein, Récamier's room and its objects are painted in more detail and with greater exactitude and care than the figure itself. The artist did not attempt a true portrait of Récamier but, rather, inserted a loose interpretation or quotation of David's 1800 portrait into the room. One could argue that the room is more of a portrait than is the figure who occupies it. Moreover, there is a general lack of an overt narrative or social interaction depicted, something that earlier eighteenth-century predecessors of the "room portrait" exhibited (i.e. servants helping a woman bathe in a bed chamber, women reading letters together, etc.). Instead, I would argue that sociability has been mapped onto the objects that fill the room. Their detailed visual description is fitting in this sense, as they stand in for the people and relationships to which they refer. Indeed, even the referential figure of Récamier herself refers to the "real" Récamier, but she is as much of an object or referential symbol as are the other objects that surround her reclining figure.

While the categorical description of the room initially seems like a visual inventory, the symbolic association of the objects and their relationship to one another still evokes nostalgia. Walter Benjamin's theory of "traces," which considers interiors as "portraits" of those who dwell in them seems particularly fitting to Déjuinne's painting.⁷² Benjamin writes,

To dwell means to leave traces. In the interior, these are accentuated. Coverlets and antimacassars, cases and containers are devised in abundance; in these, the traces of the most ordinary objects of use are imprinted. In just the same way, the traces of the inhabitant are imprinted in the interior.⁷³

⁷² Davidson, McCarron-Cates, and Gere, *House Proud*, 9. The authors make this connection to Benjamin's theory of "traces" from the latter's *Arcades Project*.

⁷³ Walter Benjamin, *Arcades Project*, trans. Howard Eiland and Kevin McLaughlin (Cambridge, MA, and London: Harvard University Press, 1999), 9.

Part of his larger *Arcades Project*, he attributes these “traces” to the developing distinctions between public and private life that began in the eighteenth century and continued through the nineteenth, referring specifically to the era of Louis-Philippe. He describes the distinctly private bourgeois interior as “not just the universe but also the *étui* of the private individual.”⁷⁴ Benjamin locates history within the interstices of objects, interiors, passageways, creating a certain materiality of memory, with objects and spaces acting as repositories for a collective experience or history. Thus a room itself (and its objects) becomes the portrait of its inhabitant and vice versa. For the abbey room, the space and its objects also become a larger portrait of a network of friends. The space, by virtue of the objects that fill it, recalls memories of friendships and sociability, marrying the visually descriptive with the elegiac.

Additionally, the space itself appears to be part of the romantic tradition of the “window in the room” (Figure 139).⁷⁵ Art historian Lorenz Eitner wrote a now-classic essay on the nineteenth-century genre, describing it as “a combination of hard, detailed realism with a curious passivity of mood.”⁷⁶ In the examples he discusses, figures in the scenes often read books or otherwise relax, and no overt narrative is implied. Rather, the story is of being “at home,” and the paintings picture an untroubled existence within a detailed bourgeois interior. The appearance of the “figure at the window” after around 1810 signals a more symbolic intent, the window acting as a symbolic reference to

⁷⁴ Ibid., 9.

⁷⁵ See Lorenz Eitner, “The Open Window and the Storm-Tossed Boat: An Essay in the Iconography of Romanticism,” *The Art Bulletin* 37, no. 4 (December 1955): 281-290.

⁷⁶ Ibid., 283.

romantic longing, the view beyond the window as much interest to the painting as the room itself.

Récamier's abbey apartment window plays a prominent role in Déjuinne's painting, and can be considered within this tradition of the "figure at the window" or "window in the room." Its position in the room is not without interest; the room is rotated so that the corner of the room is at the center of the composition, both of the visible walls extending at forty-five degree angles to either corner of the canvas. The open window is highlighted by the light that streams in and illuminates the curtain, and the bright sky beyond the window frame contrasts with the relative darkness of the room. The window also shares roughly the same dimensions as the painting of *Corinne*, on the wall to the right, and both of these square shapes take up the entire right wall. Finally, the elongated and bright figure of Récamier leads the eye across the *chaise longue*, to the pane of the open window, and out into the courtyard. The directional lines of the patterned carpet also lead the eye to both Récamier and the window.

Eitner talks about the window as both a "threshold" and a "barrier," assigning it a symbolic meaning of yearning and self-reflection for figures positioned at or near it.⁷⁷ Although Récamier does not physically stand at or look out of the window, it is framed by a painting of Coppet at moonlight on the left and Gérard's painting of *Corinne* at the right. The open window also mirrors the open book on Récamier's lap, which, recall, is a copy of Staël's novel. Like the two paintings-within-the-painting and the act of reading

⁷⁷ Ibid., 286.

Corinne, the open window suggests an “elsewhere” beyond the room, both physically and mentally.⁷⁸

In text, too, a combination of exacting description and nostalgic longing appears in recollections of Récamier’s abbey apartment. In his *Mémoires d’outre tombe*, Chateaubriand devoted an entire chapter to his dear friend and includes a detailed account of her third-floor dwelling.

Increasingly tried by fate, Madame Récamier retired to the Abbaye-aux-Bois. A dark corridor connected two little rooms; I maintained that this hallway was lit by a gentle light. The bedroom was furnished with a bookcase, a harp, a piano, a portrait of Madame de Staël, and a view of Coppet by moonlight. On the window sills were pots of flowers.

When, breathless after climbing three flights of stairs, I entered this little cell as dusk was falling, I was entranced. The windows looked out over the Abbey garden, around the green enclosure of which the nuns made circuits, and in which the schoolgirls ran about. The summit of an acacia tree reached to eye-level and the hills of Sèvres could be seen on the horizon. The setting sun gilded the picture and entered through the open windows. Madame Récamier would be at the piano and the *Angelus* would toll; the notes of the bell, which seemed to mourn the dying day: ‘*il giorno pianger che si more*’, mingled with the final accents of the invocation to the night from Steibelt’s *Romeo and Juliet*. A few birds would come and settle on the raised window-blinds. I would merge with the distant silence and solitude, above the noise and tumult of a great city.⁷⁹

⁷⁸ At ASECS Vancouver (2011), Christopher Johns suggested an interesting relationship between the *Madonna de la sedia* on the Dagoty vase, the reclining Récamier, and the steeple beyond the threshold of the window. Perhaps the alignment of the two religious references with Récamier in the middle further references or reinforces her image of “purity.”

⁷⁹ “Un corridor noir séparait deux petites pièces; je prétendais que ce vestibule était éclairé d’un jour doux. La chambre à coucher était ornée d’une bibliothèque, d’une harpe, d’un piano, du portrait de Madame de Staël et d’une vue de Coppet au clair de lune. Sur les fenêtres étaient des pots de fleurs. Quand tout essoufflé, après avoir grimpé quatre étages, j’entrais dans la cellule aux approches du soir, j’étais ravi. La plongée des fenêtres était sur le jardin de l’Abbaye, dans la corbeille verdoyante duquel tournoyaient des religieuses et couraient des pensionnaires. La cime d’un acacia arrivait à la hauteur de l’oeil. Des clochers pointus coupaient le ciel et l’on apercevait à l’horizon les collines de Sèvres. Le soleil couchant dorait le tableau et entraînait par les fenêtres ouvertes. Madame Récamier était à son piano; l’Angelus tintait; les sons de la cloche, qui semblait pleurer le jour qui se mourait: “*il giorno pianger che si muore*,” se mêlaient aux derniers accents de l’invocation à la nuit, du Roméo et Juliette de Steibelt. Quelques oiseaux se venaient coucher dans les jalousies relevées de la fenêtre. Je rejoignais au loin le silence et la solitude, par-dessus le tumulte et le bruit d’une grande cité.” François-René de Chateaubriand, *Mémoires d’Outre Tombe*, Vol. IV

Reading this passage of Chateaubriand's recollection of the apartment translates Déjuinne's representation directly into text. The one seems a transcription of the other, and vice versa. The description of the room itself – the view out the windows, the pictures on the walls, the musical instruments present in the room, and even the tree peeking through the window are accurately described by both author and artist. Each "document" acts as a piece of the inventory, a textual and visual "room portrait" that creates a careful record of the contents of the room and their placement. Nostalgia permeates the description of the apartment, and Chateaubriand signals the space as a private refuge for friendship and reflection. His reference to the "mourning of the dying day" and *Romeo and Juliet* rings with a romantic melancholy, one that Déjuinne's painting echoes in its intertextual references to Récamier's friendships and losses.

(Paris: Imprimerie de J. Claye, 1860), 486-487. English translation from "François-René de Chateaubriand's *Mémoires d'outre tombe*," Book XXIX, Chapter 1, Section 5, trans. A.S. Kline, last modified August 27, 2011, accessed March 28, 2012
http://tkline.pgcc.net/PITBR/Chateaubriand/ChateaubriandMemoirsBookXXIX.htm#_Toc145913803

Chapter Four

Sister Arts / Sisterhoods of the Arts

For the final chapter of this dissertation, I arrive full circle with a Marguerite Gérard painting that stoked my intellectual fires early on in the process of investigating dissertation topics. Gérard's *Artist Painting a Portrait of a Musician* (Figure 140) reintroduces the blond and brunette familiar from her oeuvre and places them in an artist's studio. Both are absorbed in an exchange of their individual performances – the one on the canvas, the other assuming the pose of playing the guitar – and intensity marks their interaction within the confines of the studio. Gérard visually locks the figures together with a strong diagonal line that extends from head to head, and their gestures echo one another: the artist's right arm reaches up to apply paint to the canvas, and the guitarist's left arm crooks upward to facilitate the strum. A dialog of gazes circulates through the painting and links the two figures – the musician looks toward the artist, and the artist studies the musician with rapt attention. The only element of the composition that breaks the illusion of absorptive creative performance and exchange is the portrait image of the musician who stares out of the canvas and engages with the viewer.

Perhaps most striking about this painting is this canvas-within-the-canvas, which demonstrates the painted artist's dramatic transformation of the sitter from a statically-posed guitarist to an inspired musician whose hair and ribbons swing through the air as she plays her tune. A cursory glance at these visual changes suggests a translation of the musician's implied notes into the form of the more inspired portrait image, made possible

by the discerning eye and the impressionable ear of the artist, through whom visual and audible signs pass. A certain affective shift has occurred, and it relies on this communion and exchange of the arts of painting and music that the women share.

Both the subject and the formal dynamics of this genre scene, discussed in more detail below, spurred my thinking about and questioning of women's creative connections in the realm of the "sister arts" (defined here as painting, music, and poetry, or more generally speaking, "authorship") and their representation from 1770 to 1830. In what ways were creative or expressive interests and pursuits shared among women in the three realms? What creative pursuits did women engage in, both professionally and as amateurs, and did creative and intellectual "sisterhoods" or networks exist within these fields of expression? Generally speaking, what kinds of camaraderie emerge among creative women, and what discourses underscore these forms of sociability and exchange?

As I demonstrate in the chapters above, women's social networks existed within what has been described as a largely male homosocial culture of politics, art, and public life in the decades before and after the French Revolution. The real and theoretical spaces of the convent, the exotic island, the salon, epistolary authorship and exchange, and visual representation all speak to a rich history of female sociability and intimacy, one that opened up possibilities for intimate expression, emerging subjectivities, and affective friendship. Similarly, Gérard's painting, alongside the others I discuss in this chapter, speaks of another kind of exchange. In the pages that follow, I investigate several case studies of what I refer to as women's "creative camaraderie." I draw from various aspects of creative production and collaboration and its visualization in genre

painting and portraiture, including the pursuit and representation of “accomplishments” (in contrast to the professional artist or musician), female artists’ paintings of other creative women (writers, artists, and musicians), images of women artists in the studio, and critical writing on women artists that suggests a veiled call for a professional sisterhood. What emerges is a vibrant picture of creative and intellectual camaraderie within the realms of these “sister arts.”

Allegories of the Arts

In her foundational work on women’s public visibility during the years of the French Revolution, Joan Landes argued that women’s appearance in the political sphere was primarily in the form of allegory, as representations of patriotic virtues and abstract ideas related to liberty, equality, and nation. By contrast, their actual exercise of political rights and civic participation remained suppressed, perhaps even more so than during the *ancien régime*.¹ Figures like Liberty and the Republic – and their opposite, the grotesque fury – provided visual and symbolic models of virtue to an emerging (male) republican citizenry and replaced the now-contentious body of the king in symbolic representation. For allegory in general, the embodiment of the universal is typically its aim, and the ideas inherent to the universal are most often deployed through the female figure. Universal, though, in the context of the Revolution, referred specifically to men, and while women flooded the stage of public visual representation during the years of the Revolution, their actual political mobilization and individual rights were largely denied.

¹ Joan B. Landes, *Visualizing the Nation: Gender, Representation, and Revolution in Eighteenth-Century France* (Ithaca, NY, and London: Cornell University Press, 2001).

I have always been struck by this paradox or tension between symbolic representation and lived experience or reality and see a similar phenomenon among other emblems within the allegorical tradition. Historically speaking, allegory has been a primary means by which women have been linked (visually, at least) with traditionally male realms of culture.² As I briefly discuss in the Introduction, Friendship in the guise of a female figure appears as early as 1593 in Cesare Ripa's *Iconologia* (Figure 2). Although women were long considered unlikely candidates for the offices of friendship, its representation in female form acted as a symbolic reference to the qualities of friendship – truth, a means to a certain immortality, and dedication, among others. Offshoots of Ripa's emblematic figure of “Amicitia” were used well into the eighteenth century, especially in miniature paintings that were presumably exchanged between friends or lovers. A miniature on ivory after Jacques-Joseph De Gault (Figure 141) pictures a classically-robed “Friendship” with a dog curled up by her feet – a traditional symbol of fidelity – and inscribes “To friendship” on an oval slate. Two doves snuggle on top of a garlanded Doric column, and Cupid enters from stage right offering what appear to be two goblets. In contrast to the more affective images of friendship that this dissertation explores, the allegorical “Friendship” stands for the idea rather than an experienced sentiment or intimacy. The miniature itself would be exchanged as a token of friendship or love, and the allegorical figure would take the additional role of signifying the gift giver's feelings.

² See Stefanie Schäfer-Bossert, “The Representation of Women in Religious Art and Imagery: Discontinuities in Female ‘Virtues’,” in *Gender in Transition: Discourse and Practice in German-Speaking Europe, 1750-1830*, eds. Ulrike Gleixner and Marion W. Gray (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2006), 137-156, and Marina Warner, *Monuments and Maidens: The Allegory of the Female Form* (London: Vintage, 1996).

The allegorizing tendency also exists in the representation of various arts throughout the sixteenth, seventeenth, and eighteenth centuries. The arts of painting, poetry, and music appear singly and in pairs or groups as “sister arts” and consistently appear within codified pictorial conventions through time. François Boucher’s *Allegory of Music* (Figure 142) translates the emblem, often associated with love and harmony, into a rococo scene of fluffy clouds, chubby putti, revealed breasts, canoodling doves, and a reference to Venus through the discarded armor on the left. Laurent de la Hyre’s earlier representation of Music (Figure 143) features a more sober style characteristic of the seventeenth-century French Baroque, maintaining a classical visual vocabulary. The bare-breasted figure tunes her guitar as she looks toward an open book of sheet music before her. Other instruments surround her in the classically decorated space, including the pipes of an organ, a flute, a violin, and a lute. Allegories of Painting typically feature the emblem with paintbrush and/or palette in hand, preparing to or in the act of marking the canvas (Figures 144 and 145). And allegories of Poetry feature the figure lost in thought as she inscribes her words onto the blank pages of an open book or recites her words with lyre in hand (Figures 146 and 147).

Groupings of the sister arts were also popular in seventeenth- and eighteenth-century allegorical painting.³ Louis Lagrenée brings painting and sculpture together in a sensuous embrace in his *Union of Painting and Sculpture* of 1768 (Figure 148). Angelica Kauffman’s representation of Music and Poetry (Figure 149) pictures them in an image more akin to friendship, with Music wrapping her arm around Poetry’s shoulder and

³ For a discussion of the sister arts and their increasing relevance to eighteenth-century visual culture and artistic theory, see Thomas Tolley, *Painting the Cannon’s Roar: music, the visual arts, and the rise of the attentive public in the age of Haydn, 1750-1810* (Aldershot, UK, and Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2001), and Janice Mercurio, “Staging Alliances: Redefining Painting and Music in Early Eighteenth-Century France,” Ph.D. Dissertation, University of Pennsylvania, 2006.

gazing at her adoringly. Bernardo Strozzi's *Allegory of the Arts* (Figure 150) features painting, sculpture, and architecture together, emphasizing their full bosoms and close physical proximity. Similarly, Johann Friedrich August Tischbein's *Allegory of Painting* (Figure 151) foregrounds Poetry, Painting, and Sculpture in the composition and connects them through interlocking hands, arms, and gazes. The muses, too, consistently appear together in the history of art. Eustache Le Sueur's painting of Clio, muse of history, Euterpe, muse of music (she holds a flute), and Thalie, muse of comedy and idyllic poetry (contemplating her theatrical mask) (Figure 152) features the trio in a lush landscape, each holding an attribute of their art. For each scene that groups the sister arts or muses together, the figures are connected physically through an embrace, close proximity, eye contact, or other physical touch that signifies their union.

Two notable examples of early modern women artists who integrated allegory in their self-portraits present a challenge to the historical separation of emblem and historical practice. In her *Self-Portrait as La Pittura* (Figure 153), seventeenth-century Italian artist Artemisia Gentileschi pictures herself both as an artist at work, absorbed in the act of applying paint to a canvas, but also *as* the allegory of Painting. Borrowing from Ripa's illustration of Painting in the *Iconologia*, she wears the allegory's attributes: a gold chain with a mask pendant attached to it, a symbol of imitation. Her unkempt hair signifies the workings of the artist's mind, and a bright light bathes the figure, illuminating her face and chest, highlighting her heart and head as the sites from which her divine creativity originates.⁴

⁴ Mary D. Garrard's article on this painting identifies these attributes and connects them to Ripa's allegory in the *Iconologia*. She provides a lengthy discussion on the history of the allegorical representation of the arts as they rose to prominence and esteem during the renaissance, and she situates Gentileschi within this pedigree of artists and the increasing nobility of painting as a liberal art. Garrard

Swiss-born artist Angelica Kauffman introduces allegory into her late-eighteenth-century portrait *Angelica Kauffman Hesitating Between the Arts of Painting and Music* (Figure 154). The self-portrait features the sister arts on either side of her, representing the choice she made between the two when she embarked on her professional painting career in the early 1760s. Angela Rosenthal compares the self-portrait to the iconography of Hercules at the Crossroads, which necessitates the choice between virtue and vice, one that is couched in erotic heterosexual terms, and instead sees Kauffman's choice as a wholly rational one.⁵ By "reading" the image through the masculine model of Hercules, Rosenthal claims that the reference served to separate Kauffman from prevailing notions of female sensibility and visual objectification. Here, the "sister arts" serve to not only illustrate a moment of choice in her professional past, but they also help promote an artistic identity through their references to the masculine narrative of rational choice. For both Gentileschi and Kauffman, the self-portraits complicate the traditional paradox between allegorical representation and historical reality and between inactive symbol and practice. They are tools with which the artists promote their professional identities.

The following case studies address other takes on the "sister arts" and their transformation into and representation as a "sisterhood of the arts," which I define as a network of creative and social exchange and the mutual support of intellectual and creative women. Underlying this paradox was a set of theories related to male and female intellectual and creative faculties and the institutional reinforcement of such attitudes. I

ultimately points to the female artist's unique ability to represent herself as *both* Painting and a painter, a powerful combination of references and meanings unavailable to the male artist. Mary D. Garrard, "Artemisia Gentileschi's *Self-Portrait as the Allegory of Painting*," *The Art Bulletin* 62, no. 1 (March 1980): 97-112.

⁵ Angela Rosenthal, "Angelica Kauffman Ma(s)king Claims," *Art History* 15, no. 1 (March 1992): 38-59.

investigate a more active collaboration among creative women that releases them from the pictorial constraints of the allegorical tradition and expose various discourses of creativity that circumscribed women's participation in music, art, and authorship.

Painting, Music, and the Accomplishments

As mentioned above, the sister arts of painting and music appear in action in Marguerite Gérard's genre painting, *Artist Painting a Portrait of a Musician* (Figure 140). A brunette artist occupies the left-hand side of the composition, while a woman and her guitar occupy the right half. The canvas-within-the-canvas, which features the portrait image of the guitarist, bisects the composition and room, and the atmospheric sky and landscape of the portrait provides a background for the artist, while the details of the studio's domestic appearance occupy the same space as the musician. Hair color and clothing further individualize the two women. The artist, a brunette, wears a cream-colored dress covered by an emerald green smock, and her sleeves are rolled up to accommodate her painterly labors. Her back is to the viewer, highlighting her sharp profile that turns to study her sitter, and her extended arm applies paint to the canvas. In contrast, the musician faces out toward the viewer and holds a Baroque guitar, plucking the strings with delicately maneuvering fingers. Her blond hair is tied back with a handkerchief, and the décolleté of her cream-colored silk dress exposes her right breast.

The pursuit of any one of the "sister arts," and music in particular, was a mark of the "accomplished woman" in the eighteenth century, and it signified femininity and cultivation.⁶ For any woman circulating in the early modern marriage market, a genteel

⁶ Ann Bermingham has theorized the representation of and role of accomplishments in eighteenth-century British visual culture at length in "The Aesthetics of Ignorance: The Accomplished Woman in the

education and array of talents created an appealing choice to potential husbands. During the course of the eighteenth century women learned to sing, play the harpsichord and lute, and in some cases even write music.⁷ Knowledge of basic geography, the ability to draw, and an occasional amateur attempt at painting lowlier subject matter such as flowers or drawing an informal portrait also made up the repertoire of a desirable bride-to-be. By the end of the century, an appreciation of both art and music was considered an essential aspect of any well-rounded young woman's education.⁸

Practiced as hobbies, painting or drawing and music were particularly popular among upper-bourgeois and aristocratic young women, and a distinct body of portraiture and genre painting reflects and advertises their refined pursuits. Well-known "accomplished" women from eighteenth-century France included Madame de Pompadour, the Titled Mistress to King Louis XV, who was skilled at etching and drawing as well as singing and playing the harpsichord, and Queen Marie-Antoinette played music and drew as well.⁹ Images of the royal ladies feature them surrounded by tools of their artistic hobbies. Two of François Boucher's portraits of Pompadour (Figures 155 and 156) display her alongside emblems of her accomplishments and

Culture of Connoisseurship," *The Oxford Art Journal* 16, no. 2 (1993): 3-20. Though conduct literature and other texts prescribing to young women the pursuit of music, art, and other creative hobbies appears to be more widespread in eighteenth-century England, portraits and genre paintings of French women exhibiting amateur talents offer a similar vision of female talent and comportment. The article reappears as a chapter in Bermingham's larger volume, *Learning to Draw: Studies in the Cultural History of Polite and Useful Art* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2000).

⁷ Julie Anne Sadie, "Musiciennes of the Ancien Régime," *Women Making Music: The Western Art Tradition, 1150-1950*, eds. Jane Bowers and Judith Tick (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1986): 191.

⁸ Thomas Tolley, *Painting the Cannon's Roar: Music, the Visual Arts, and the Rise of an Attentive Public in the Age of Haydn* (Aldershot, UK, and Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2001), 16.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 15.

learning. In the iconic 1756 portrait, her engravings are visible underneath the side table, and in the other her fingers tickle the keys of a harpsichord, and a world map indicates her knowledge of geography. In both paintings, books are a prominent feature and reflect her voracious appetite for reading. Marie-Antoinette's love of and skill in music is the subject of Jean-Baptiste-André Gautier d'Agoty's painting of her playing the harp for a courtly audience at Versailles, accompanied by singers and an artist (Figure 157). Innumerable portraits depict women strumming the guitar, proudly holding it as a testament of their talents and social position (Figures 158 and 159). Genre paintings of music and drawing lessons abound (Figures 160 and 161). And informal concerts that include amateur female performers make up a large corpus of images throughout the eighteenth century (Figure 162).

As Bermingham has discussed in the context of British visual culture, accomplishments and their representation were part of a "discourse of fashion and femininity ordered by an economy of commodification and consumerism that constituted the bourgeois marriage market."¹⁰ She convincingly argues that the performance of music, in particular, created a dynamic of sanctioned gazing, allowing a male suitor to size up his potential mate, his sexual desire masked beneath a guise of detached aesthetic judgment. This mode of performance and gaze positioned women as both "aestheticized and commodified,"¹¹ advertising a woman's availability and desire to be looked at rather than resulting in a genuine subjectivity stemming from the serious pursuit of a creative or intellectual activity. Accomplishments also reinforced feminine virtue, acting as outward signs of a particular socioeconomic class and mores.

¹⁰ Bermingham, "The Aesthetics of Ignorance," 3.

¹¹ Ibid. 5.

Bermingham's most comprehensive illustration of her argument rests on George Romney's portrait of *Caroline, Viscountess Clifden, and Lady Elizabeth Spencer* (Figure 163), a portrait that features two sisters displaying their accomplishments in painting and music. Elizabeth plucks on the harp as her sister Caroline draws her, and a small sculpture of a nymph peeks out from the left side of the canvas. Bermingham compares the posed and polished Elizabeth to the sculpture, calling her a "living statue," an object of art, and an elegant woman. Rather than a "true" or professional musician, the portrait aestheticizes the young amateur into an object for viewing and consumption. Similarly, Bermingham locates the amateur efforts of the accomplished Caroline in her implied contrast to the professional artist, here Romney, and the implied viewer, her father, who would have possessed this refined image of the girls whom he had raised and who had recently entered society through marriage.¹²

The distinction between amateur and professional was a critical one to the upholding of the status of the "accomplishment" or the "accomplished woman," and the division in the context of the professional artist, by the eighteenth century, was entrenched in the discourse of sensibility.¹³ In both France and England the medical and cultural discourse of sensibility is important to the understanding of female creativity and ability to assume the role of a professional musician, artist, or other "creative." In the eighteenth century, the close relationship between the body to the brain or the soul was theorized according to the senses. The origins of sensibility extend back to medical

¹² As Bermingham notes, Romney began the portrait in 1786, Lady Elizabeth married John Spencer in 1790, it was finished in 1791, and roughly one year later, Caroline married the Viscount Clifden. Bermingham argues that three subject positions are implied in the painting: that of the accomplished woman, the artist (Romney), and the father (the 4th Duke of Marlborough). Ibid., 5.

¹³ In her groundbreaking work on Elisabeth Vigée-Lebrun, Sheriff provides a thorough analysis of the mechanisms by which sensibility operated on an artist's mental and creative processes, highlighting the discrepancy between genders. Sheriff, *The Exceptional Woman*, 19-30.

treatises that discuss the human nervous system and its relationship to sensual and perceptual experience. Unsurprisingly, theorists conceptualized women's sensory systems as finer and as weaker than those of men, therefore making them more susceptible to impressions from external sources and stimuli. This precluded women, of course, from many important intellectual and sensory experiences, and the female body's sensitivities were seen as potentially dangerous in their ability to lead to overstimulation of both the physical body and mind. While the idea of impressionability would inscribe a proclivity of creative capacities for men, this was not case for women, as they were understood to lack the rational, intellectual skills of men that were necessary to sort out all of the conflicting impulses brought on by sensory experience. Early medical literature (and literature beyond this period) espoused an essentializing view of male and female difference, located in the body, which proscribed particular activities or experiences as either accessible or inaccessible for women and men. This inclination toward feeling, the internal response to the external world through sensory experience was first developed by British philosopher John Locke, who applied it to concepts of education and development. Locke stated that individuals are not born fully formed, but rather the environment, including education, helps to shape the human subject. It was largely based on women's heightened sensibilities that they were less suitable than men to pursue music, painting, and other arts in a professional capacity.

Sensibility also extended to moral judgment and educational direction. Madame de Genlis's writings on education echo these thoughts and distinctions that ensure women do not go too far in their efforts to learn or to attempt to join the ranks of men. For young girls, she proposes a model of simplicity, focusing educational efforts on simple lessons

in few subjects and attempting to cultivate an appreciation and mild rationalism through study:

Adelaide, at twelve years old, will neither be capable of making extracts, or of writing good letters, or of assisting me in doing the honors of my house. She will have but few ideas, but they will be rational ones; she will read music well, and play on several instruments; she will draw in a surprising manner for her age, without her master's retouching any of her performances; and by that means teaching her to tell a falsehood, instead of improving her in the art of drawing. She will neither understand History, Mythology, nor Geography, except what she has gained by our tapestry, our conversation, and other methods, which I shall mention hereafter. In this respect I think she will be better instructed than children in general are; she will have many other accomplishments, which will only be discovered by living with her, and which she has acquired in the form of amusements.¹⁴

Rather than the more serious pursuits of history, mythology, geography, or other lofty subjects that boys would be learning in a more formal learning environment, Adèle is expected to pursue the sister arts of art (drawing) and music with relative proficiency. Other accomplishments are acquired through amusement, relegating them to less rational and less serious or “lighter” pursuits. Adèle may have “a few rational ideas,” but Genlis is careful to suggest that they will not be cultivated or present any kind of a challenge to the gendered intellectual culture of the day.¹⁵

In contrast to professional cultural or intellectual pursuits, the reward for practice and performance of a particular accomplishment was not the resulting quality of the performance or proficiency of skill but, rather, the attempt itself.¹⁶ The popular conduct

¹⁴ From the translated English edition of Stéphanie Félicité Genlis, *Adelaide and Theodore, or, Letters on education: containing all the principles relative to three different plans of education; to that of princes, and to those of young persons of both sexes*, Volume 1 (Dublin: P. Wogan, 1796), 51.

¹⁵ Genlis is an interesting figure in this discourse, and I will demonstrate the complicated nature of her writings on women below.

¹⁶ Jane Girdham, “At Home: Everyday Music in Eighteenth-Century Life,” in *Performing the “Everyday”: The Culture of Genre in the Eighteenth Century*, ed. Alden Cavanaugh (Newark: University

book, *Le Nouvel ami des femmes*, written in 1758 by Pierre-Joseph Boudier de Villemert and published in at least five subsequent editions, echoes Genlis's prescription of the "amusements" of music, art, and other accomplishments to provide pleasure (versus rational mastery) and suppress boredom:

They [the arts] so agreeably imitate nature, and are often embellished, that those who cultivate them find a second source of pleasure. They are a good resource against boredom...¹⁷

He goes on to suggest painting, poetry, and music – the classical "sister arts" – as appropriate pastimes for women, a parallel to the British prescription for "accomplishments."¹⁸ Like Genlis, however, he dissuades too much cultivation of one's talents, thus surpassing mere gentility and pleasurable entertainment and risking greater ambitions. These performative hobbies were ideally kept in the home and on an amateur level, distinct from the publicly consumed products of professional male artists, musicians, or other professionals. Villemart stresses the word modesty ("la pudeur") in his chapter on feminine virtue and the importance of women staying behind the scenes, in

of Delaware Press, 2007), 21. Girdham makes this point in her discussion of music, but the same could be said for artistic pursuits as well. Similar discourses about women's place in the cultural realms circulated in the contexts of both music and art.

¹⁷"C'est en quelque manière se procurer un nouveau sens, que de se familiariser avec les Arts. Ils ont si agréablement imité la nature, et l'ont même si souvent embellie, que qui les cultive, y trouve une source seconde de nouveaux plaisirs. Il est bon de se faire une ressource contre l'ennui..." Pierre-Joseph Boudier de Villemert, *Le Nouvel ami des femmes* (1779), 45. He also suggests the cultivation of friendship: "Si quelque chose peut ajouter aux plaisirs que procure une compagnie choisie, ce font les délices de l'amitié. Je ne sais sur quoi l'on fonde l'injustice qu'on fait aux femmes de les en exclure; elles sont nées plus sensible que les hommes, & sont capable de devenir amies, lorsque la galanterie n'a pas éterné leur coeur. Je ne m'attendrai pas sur les avantages de l'amitié, qu'on peut appeler une double vie, puisqu'on vit dans son ami." He goes on to refer to the Marquise de Lambert and her *Traité de l'amitié* (date), singling her out for her prominent role as a friend, and lauding her text as a masterpiece. *L'ami des femmes*, 47.

¹⁸The chapter in which he includes this prescription has as its title "Des études convenables aux femmes."

contrast to men who “play, unmasked, all the roles that the passions assign them on the great theater of the world, women must only play...behind the scenes...”¹⁹

Genre paintings of women performing in the setting of the home and in the context of the family illustrate these ideas. For example, the genre scene of *Le Hussard en famille* features a wife playing the guitar for her husband, maid, and children (Figure 164). Adorned with flowers in her hair and wearing an ice blue satin dress, she looks into space as she concentrates on the delicate movements of her fingers plucking at the guitar strings. Her husband stands tall and proud at the apex of the composition, an air of authority suggested by his firm stance and hand on his hip. His gaze directs ours down a diagonal line to his wife, and it implies his patriarchal position as head of the family. We can see the outcome of the accomplishment under the watchful eye of a proud husband and within the construct of the family.

In genre painting, too, the position of a woman within the family is often illustrated by virtue of her accomplishment. The ability to play the guitar suits family life well in Gérard’s *Sleep* (Figure 165), a work that features a nearly identical musician to the 1803 *Artist Painting a Portrait of a Musician*. The satin dresses are almost exactly alike, save for the seventeenth-century-style fur jacket that the earlier version sports over the dress. Like the later musician, this musician is in the act of playing the Baroque guitar and looks downward at the exact same angle as the later musician. The object of the gaze, however, is an infant fast asleep in a Moses basket rather than an artist at work.

¹⁹ Translation from Auricchio, “Adélaïde Labille-Guiard’s *Self Portrait*,” 53. Original French from Villemart, *Le nouvel ami des femmes*, 188. “Ce qui juge quelquefois assez injustement du sexe, c’est sa modestie même qui tient ses vertus dans l’ombre; cette modestie et ce silence sont cependant la plus haute vertu. La gloire des femmes est de faire peu parler d’elles; bien différentes des hommes qui jouent à visage découvert tous les rôles que les passions leur distribuent sur le grand théâtre du monde, les femmes ne doivent jouer; pour ainsi dire, que derrière la toile.”

Similarly, the oval painting hanging between the figures is not an inspired musician but, rather, a portrait, presumably of the father and husband of this young family. The mother plays the guitar to sooth the child while the loyal King Charles spaniel looks up at her, and the father presiding over the scene sends a confident look out to the viewer, assured that the tranquil domesticity of his household is upheld in his absence.

With the discourse and representations of accomplishments in mind, then, an initial glance at Gérard's *Artist Painting a Portrait of a Musician* perhaps suggests the amateur pursuits of a painter and a musician, much like those of the Spencer sisters in Romney's portrait, discussed above. The space contains elements of the comfortable domestic interior – a bureau behind the canvas, the familiar reflective glass ball on top of it that appears in other Gérard paintings, a framed picture on the wall, a velvet-lined bench, and a *gueridon*, items that likely belonged to many contemporary viewers of the painting. Moreover, the plaster casts that indicate the study of anatomy in many artists' studios are here absent. The guitar player also appears less than professional, her half-hearted strumming of strings hardly convincing in terms of bravado or talent.

Painting the Senses: Sound, Touch, and Sight

Lest we immediately judge Gérard's painting to represent solely a straightforward endorsement of eighteenth-century accomplishments that kept women confined and contained within the home and the marriage economy, a closer, more critical and theoretical look at the dynamics of the canvas is in order. One of the most striking aspects of the painting is the visual transformation that occurs from the standing musician to her representation on the large-scale canvas that bisects the studio in two. The model

at right stands firmly as an object of the artist's gaze, her voluminous satin gown providing a supporting structure for her torso and the guitar she holds. Her fingers delicately pluck her instrument, and her head and eyes are slightly downcast toward the artist, who is absorbed in the activity of painting. The only sense of movement in the musician's body is provided by the hem of her dress, which has caught on a piece of furniture as if she has just stood up, and by her fingers, which tickle the strings of the guitar. Finally, the low bodice of her empire-waist dress reveals the nipple of her right breast peeking from the garment. Overall, the model is calm, composed, and serene as she awaits her likeness's transcription onto the canvas. She strikes a pose that contemporary women would have exhibited in their own portraits as musicians, whether amateur or professional (Figures 158 and 159). Looking toward the artist, she holds her guitar up with fingers on the strings in order to demonstrate and capture her skill and beauty. Her reserve signifies virtue; rather than becoming carried away with her playing, she maintains a sober appearance as her features are transcribed onto the canvas. She is on display as much as her instrument is, and she holds it up as an attribute or extension of herself.

In striking contrast to the static model in the studio, however, the artist's canvas features a much different image of the musician. Most obvious about the artist's translation of the figure is the painted musician's movement, suggested by the tilted head, the twisted torso that extends through the body of the guitar, and the hair ribbons that flutter behind her. Also quite different is the atmospheric brushstroke on the canvas, which suggests clouds or smoke swirling behind and around the figure. The loose paint application used to illustrate the canvas-within-the-canvas contrasts greatly with the

exacting brushstroke that Gérard uses to depict the artist's studio. The former highlights the expressivity of the portrait, while the latter depicts the interior of the room and its domestic accoutrements in great detail.

What exactly has transpired from the model to fictive canvas? The painted musician appears to possess an enthusiasm that the model does not, and the background scenery of the canvas-within-the-canvas further contributes to the increased drama of the portrait. This transformation suggests an inspired or enthusiastic guitarist, one brought to life by the watchful eye and talented hand of the artist. She appears more like portraits of *male* musicians, such as the image of Italian tenor, Paul Mandini (Figure 166), pictured in a miniature by François Dumont. Mandini's dynamic stance and expressive face suggest that he enjoys the act of playing the guitar and possesses an inner enthusiasm that animates his outer appearance. Even the strings of his guitar have energy in their coiled state. Light bathes his face, and he is in a picturesque outdoor setting, both adding to the enthusiastic and romantic nature of the image. Like the Mandini miniature, Gérard's painted musician appears to actually be *playing* with enthusiasm rather than just *signifying* the model's ideal femininity and gentility. It is the artist, here pictured at work, who facilitates this dramatic transformation of her sitter from complacent strummer to enthusiastic musician, and several aspects of Gérard's painting point to the pivotal role of the artist's senses in this process. As I shall demonstrate, sound, touch, and sight and their representation in Gérard's canvas position her painted artist as both rational and ambitious in her creative pursuits. Moreover, the exchange of sensory information between the two female "creatives" in the scene connotes a "stimulation" of the senses that ultimately results in artistic inspiration.

The sense of sound is a dominant theme of Gérard's painting, emphasized by the occupation of one entire half of the canvas with the "sister art" of music in the guise of the woman posing with her guitar. Rather than the suggestions of Music, however, I am more interested in the *effects* of this music, and in particular its effects on the artist. Like other artistic, social, moral, and medico-scientific discourses of the early modern period, theories of sensibility permeated music theory of the eighteenth and early-nineteenth centuries. While previous theories of music had ascribed the art's power to mathematics and the greater cosmic harmony of the universe,²⁰ eighteenth-century sensationists developed a model of "stimulation" to theorize the process of hearing and, by extension, the effects of listening to music. The workings and effects of music on the body were theorized and explained on a physiological level, through the model of nerve stimulation, to suggest the source of emotion elicited by music. British physician Richard Browne's 1729 text, *Medicina Musica, or a Mechanical Essay on the Effects of Singing Music, and Dancing on Human Bodies*, is among the first to make these connections between music, the nerves, and one's individual emotional response:

Sounds then may be supposed to rise from small Vibrations, or tremulous Motions of the Air, and to be propagated in Undulations; and these being collected by the external Ear, are from thence carry'd through the auditory passage to the Drum, on which beating, the four little Bones that are thereby mov'd and they move the internal Air, which, according to Degree of Motion, makes an Impression of the Auditory Nerves in the Labyrinth and Cochlea, so that according to the various Refractions of the external

²⁰ James Kennaway, "From Sensibility to Pathology: The Origins of the Idea of Nervous Music around 1800," *Journal of the History of Medicine and Allied Sciences* 65, no. 3 (2010): 396-426. Kennaway argues that around 1800, the understanding of the relationship between music and the body, and more specifically the functioning of the nerves, shifted from a healing relationship to a discourse of pathology. What was once considered an avenue to refinement and sensibility became, at the turn of the century, a threat to morality in its ability to overstimulate the nervous system. He cites Susan McClary, "Music, the Pythagoreans, and the Body," in *Choreographing History*, ed. Susan Leigh Foster (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1995), 82-104, as a useful source for exploring the older model of music as cosmic harmony.

Air, the internal Air makes various Impressions upon the Auditory Nerve, the immediate Organ of Hearing, and these different Impressions represent to the Mind different sorts of Sound.²¹

Browne's description features a point-to-point journey of sound from its origin, its transformation as a vibration through and disturbance of the air, its reception in the ear, its impression on the auditory nerve, and, ultimately, its translation into meaning in the brain, perceived of as various tones and types of sound.

French physician Ménuret de Chambaud, writing about "the Effects of Music" in the *Encyclopédie* (1765) presents a similarly materialist understanding of music and its effects on the human body. He establishes the physical properties of music by describing its transference from its original point of sound to the recipient of the sound, the air its medium of travel, and gives physical "proof" of music's effect on the physical, material object.²² His examples of the properties and physical effects of sound include clouds dissipating from a loud clap of thunder, church candles flickering at the ringing of the bells, and birds falling from the sky as a result of boisterous outdoor celebrations.²³ This

²¹ Kennaway quotes Brown's material in "From Sensibility to Pathology," 401. The original material is from Richard Browne, *Medicina Musica; or a Mechanical Essay on the Effects of Singing Music, and Dancing on Human Bodies* (London: J. Cooke, 1729), 33. See, too, Penelope Gouk, "Music's Pathological and Therapeutic Effects on the Body Politic: Doctor John Gregory's Views," in *Representing Emotions: New Connections in the Histories of Art, Music and Medicine*, eds. Penelope Gouk and Helen Hills (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2005), 191–208.

²² "L'action du son & de la *Musique* sur l'air, n'a pas besoin de preuves; il est assez démontré quel est le principal milieu par lequel ils se communiquent. Le mouvement excité dans l'air par le son, est tel qu'il pourroit parcourir 1038 piés dans une seconde, s'il étoit direct." See Ménuret de Chambaud, "Musique, les effets de," *Encyclopédie*, Volume 10, eds. Denis Diderot and Jean d'Alembert (1765), 904–909. Full text and reproductions of the original pages/entry are available on ARTFL: <http://artflx.uchicago.edu/cgi-bin/philologic/getobject.pl?c.9:2342:3.encyclopedia0311.8925816>

²³ He traces the effects of music back to ancient times, providing the example of Orpheus and his melodious lyre. Music also served the purpose of mobilizing military troops as far back as ancient Greece. As he creates a general history of the uses of music for a particular effects in specific time periods, but it was the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries – and materialism/sensationist physiology that began to theorize/conceptualize the mechanisms by which music actually affected the human body, which much of his entry explores.

effect of sound and music through the air and its physical reception by an external body extends to human beings as well, whose nerve fibers and fluids are equally, if not more, susceptible to these movements. Unlike a cloud, candle, or bird, however, sounds elicit an emotional reaction in human beings, activating the passions and feelings of pleasure.

According to Menuret,

It is principally upon people who are more susceptible to different impressions and more capable of feeling the pleasure excited by music, that it works on the greatest of prodigies, either by giving rise to and exciting the passions, or by producing changes within the body that are analogous to those that operate on inanimate objects.²⁴

Menuret suggests that music will have its greater effects on the more *sensible* body, exciting pleasures through sensory stimulation. While the same physical mechanisms of the travel of sound are at work in both animate and inanimate objects, their effects are quite different by virtue of human *feeling*.

The physiological relationship between the vibrations of music and its stimulation upon the body and its nerves also made it a prime application as a therapeutic device,²⁵ a civilizing force, an agent in inspiring love, and, generally speaking, an instrument of pleasure. Rather than the sounds themselves, Menuret makes it clear that it is the mechanic nature of the transmission of the vibration of sound itself which physically affects nervous fibers and leads to such effects.²⁶ Similar to eighteenth-century art theory

²⁴ “C’est principalement sur les hommes plus susceptible des différentes Impressions, et plus capable de sentir le plaisir qu’excite la *Musique*, qu’elle opère de plus grand prodiges, soit en faisant naître et animant les passions, soit en produisant sur le corps des changements analogues à ceux qu’elle opère sur les corps bruts.” Translation is mine. *Encyclopédie*, 10:905. Accessed on ARTFL: <http://artflx.uchicago.edu/cgi-bin/philologic/getobject.pl?c.9:2342:3.encyclopedie0311.8925816>

²⁵ Doctors had long believed that music could cure the effects of a tarantula bite by virtue of inspiring dance in the unlucky victim. The author reiterates this claim 10:906.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 10:907.

that art should move and play on the spectator's passions, so music assumed a relationship to emotional responsiveness.²⁷ The physiological effects of sound ultimately transformed it from an external auditory property to internal feeling.

Music and the body itself were often paralleled in medical and theoretical writings throughout the century. In his *Traité des effets de la musique sur le corps humain* (first published in 1758), Joseph-Louis Roger (d. 1761) compares the human body and its organs to a musical instrument, referring to the seventeenth-century empiricist Francis Bacon:

The human body, says Bacon, by virtue of its complicated and delicate organization, resembles quite closely a musical instrument; but one that is perturbed with great ease. All of medical science is reduced to thus knowing how to harmonize and touch the lyre that is the human body, in a manner that makes possible/evokes tuned and agreeable sounds.²⁸

The author likens the body's physiological responses to the tunes and sounds of an instrument and suggests its sensitivity, one that is easily ruffled depending on external stimulation. His mention of the lyre is also significant, as these stringed instruments in particular were typically compared to the human form, especially in literature and painting, to suggest sensitivities and emotions of the sensible body (often women).

Pierre-Antoine Baudouin's *La Lecture* (Figure 167) visualizes this metaphor with the parallel positioning of a guitar next to a day-dreaming, novel-reading, masturbating

²⁷ By the early eighteenth century, sensationist philosophy permeated artistic theory and theorists like Jean-Baptiste du Bos used the model to suggest the power of paintings to play on an individual's emotion. Du Bos's *Réflexions critiques sur la poésie et sur la peinture* (pub. 1719) theorizes the moving nature of painting and poetry (at times painting versus poetry), addressing what types of subject matter and personages speak most strongly to our feelings.

²⁸ "Le corps humain, dit Bacon, ressemble, par son organisation compliquée et délicate, à un instrument de musique très-parfait; mais qui se derange avec la plus grande facilité. Toute la science du médecin se réduit donc à savoir accorder et toucher la lyre du corps humain, de manière qu'elle rende des sons justes et agréables." *Traite*, viii.

young woman. The excitement derived from reading the novel is suggested by its placement next to the stringed instrument, which becomes a reference to the thoroughly stimulated nerves of the reader.²⁹ A new alliance of the instrument with the female body and its suggestive ability to be “played” appears in images such as this, and this pleasure is based on a heterosexual model. Since the seventeenth century, the pleasures of music and the sensual nature of the medium had been articulated, and vestiges of this attitude filtered into writings on music.³⁰ These associations with pleasure and the body also raise the question of morality, for, like the dangers of reading the novel and overstimulating one’s senses (and imagination), music, too, posed a threat to women’s virtue.

Viewed in this light, the painted guitarist’s strings perhaps provide the necessary stimulation for the artist’s enthusiastic transformation of the model into an inspired musical portrait. On the one hand, we can think of the shift of the sitter’s appearance from reality to portrait image as engendered or facilitated by the very music she plays. As the artist listens to her strumming of the strings, the resulting portrait image becomes activated and more akin to an enthusiastic musician than the original model conveys. Gérard emphasizes the plucking action in her articulation of the musician’s/sitter’s active fingers, and this activity becomes fully embodied in the canvas-within-the-canvas, extending from her fingers through her torso, and expressed outward through her swirling hair ribbons. The artist is thus the physiological apparatus or body through which sound travels from its original source and through the air, resulting in a more impassioned

²⁹ Mary Sheriff brings this example to light in *Moved by Love*, 95.

³⁰ These suggestive connections between the musical instrument and body, and the suggestion that the body could be “played,” emerged in the seventeenth century. See Roy Sonnema, “Musical Indulgence and Pleasurable Sound in Seventeenth-Century Dutch Art,” in *Art and Music in the Early Modern Period*, ed. Katherine A. McIver (Burlington, VT, and Aldershot, UK: Ashgate, 2003), 333-352.

visual form as a result of its impression on the artist. The plucking of the strings also translates into the artist's bravado brushwork and expressionistic rendering on the canvas-within-the-canvas.

This exchange of creative performances also suggests harmony between the two figures that display their respective arts in Gérard's canvas. Music and harmony had long been associated with love – the goddess of love herself was often used as the figure of the allegory of Music (Figure 142) – and French painting often features amorous couples under the spell of music (Figure 168). Moreover, connotations of the physical manipulation of the female body that went hand in hand with the music-body metaphor add a more erotic dimension to the amorous suggestions of music making. In Gérard's painting, the musician stimulates the artist's painterly hand through her own performance, leading to the final product on the canvas-within-the-canvas, and Gérard's artist depends upon her sitter's music for this transformation.

Similar to the musician's delicate plucking of the guitar strings, Gérard's artist grasps a paintbrush in her fingers and is in the process of applying paint to the canvas, evoking and demonstrating the sense of touch. Like the musician's touch of the guitar strings, the artist's touch acts as a source of animation. As Ewa Lajer-Burchard has discussed, touch became an important trope in eighteenth-century sensationist and materialist philosophy and aesthetic theory.³¹ For French philosopher Étienne Bonnot de Condillac, touch was the most important of the senses, for it provides physical, tangible “proof” of the external world and of the distinct “self” within that world in a way that

³¹ Ewa Lajer-Burchard, “Pompadour's Touch: Difference in Representation,” *Representations* 73 (Winter 2001): 54-88.

other senses could not provide.³² Condillac explores the senses with his narrative of a fictive statue with a soul but no ideas who slowly gains sensory perception, beginning with smell, and followed by taste, hearing, sight, and, finally, touch. Only touch allows the statue to distinguish between self and non-self because of its direct relationship to external entities beyond the physical body. Over time, the impressions left by the senses lead to ideas and memory, and thus to the formation of the consciousness.

In aesthetic theory, too, “touche” became an important indicator of the artist. In the *Dictionnaire des Arts*, Claude-Henri Watelet describes the artist’s touch as a generator of movement in the depicted figures, as well as an indication of the painter’s inner feeling or state of mind. To Watelet, the artist’s creative inspiration engenders his touch and acts as a signature of sorts, a visual index of his unique style and talent.³³ And as Sheriff has explained, the touch of the artist was also indicative of his/her character (masculine/firm, feminine/soft, etc.).³⁴

The performance of “touch” also informs the generative narrative of Pygmalion. The story of Pygmalion from Roman poet Ovid’s *Metamorphoses* is a well-known tale of masculine artistic creativity and the male artist’s generation of female form, a gendered trope of inspiration and creation that many scholars have borrowed for the purposes of art historical analysis.³⁵ The eighteenth century, in particular, was fascinated with Ovid’s

³² Condillac’s *Treatise on the Sensations* (1754), trans. Geraldine Carr (Los Angeles: University of Southern California, 1930), 236. “All our cognitions come from the senses, and particularly from touch, because touch is the sense which instructs all the others.”

³³ See Claude-Henri Watelet, “La Touche,” *Dictionnaire des arts de peinture, sculpture, et gravure*, 784.

³⁴ See Sheriff, *Fragonard: Art and Eroticism*.

³⁵ Mary Sheriff, in particular, provides a richly nuanced reading and exploration of this discourse in “Passionate Spectators: On Enthusiasm, Nymphomania, and the Imagined Tableau,” *Huntington Library*

first-century CE myth, and the climactic moment of the narrative in which the cold, lifeless sculpture comes alive was, understandably, the most popular moment for artists to depict. The story of Pygmalion's animation of matter through touch became a popular metaphor for artistic production.³⁶ This metaphor was based on an erotic, heterosexual trope of masculine creativity and creation, in contrast to feminine procreation in the context of private family life. The relationship between sexuality and imagination was one fraught with gendered meanings, and the myth of Pygmalion and Galatea was a medium for exploring these issues. While female sexuality as expressed through the imagination was likened to a blazing fire, wont to rage dangerously and out of control, male sexuality's relationship to fire and the imagination extended to creative enthusiasm, the necessary attribute of an effective artist.

It is significant that Gérard's artist is in a state of intense concentration rather than enthusiastic rapture and that touch characterizes her painterly activity. Her ability to animate the rather inanimate sitter and bring her to "life" on the canvas-within-the canvas leads me to loosely identify her as a female Pygmalion. While Gérard likely did not paint

Quarterly 60, no. 1/2 (1997): 51-83. See also, Alexandra K. Wettlaufer, "Introduction: Pygmalion and the Paragone," in *Pen vs. Paintbrush: Girodet, Balzac and the Myth of Pygmalion in Post-Revolutionary France* (New York: Palgrave, 2001), 1-3 and 249-255.

³⁶ Jean Jacques Rousseau's opera melodramatic opera *Pygmalion* highlights this trope of creative production and male sexuality in its presentation of the two characters on the stage. The most poignant or dramatic part of the narrative occurs when Galatea comes to life and lays eyes on her creator. Touching herself, she utters "me." She touches another sculpture and says "Not me." Finally, she touches her creator and exclaims "Me again." Psychoanalytic interpretations of this process of differentiation have been explored already and are not my interest in the context of this chapter, but they are still informative and useful in thinking about the metaphors of touch in artistic representation. I am more interested in the preeminence of touch in Condillac's treatise and eighteenth-century interpretations of it through cultural products such as Rousseau's opera and paintings that feature touch as a prominent theme of the composition. Ultimately, Rousseau uses the statue's animation to explore ideas of the self: what constitutes the self and how it differentiates from other, external bodies. See Jean-Jacques Rousseau, "Pygmalion, Scène lyrique" in *Oeuvres complètes*, ed. Bernard Gagnebin and Marcel Raymond (Bibliothèque de la Pleiade, 1961), vol. II, pp. 1224-1233.

the canvas with the express intention of calling Pygmalion to mind, a comparison to other eighteenth-century representations of the myth, and particularly the moment of Galatea's animation, reveal interesting visual connections that remind us of the strong ties between the myth, metaphors of artistic practice, and the theme of touch (Figures 169 and 170).

If we consider the left half of Lemoine's canvas, a similar compositional arrangement appears in which Galatea hovers above the artist, who is crouching below her, looking up in awe at what he has brought to life. Opposite the artist, to the side of Galatea putti flit around as symbols of Venus, who was in part responsible for making Pygmalion's dream come true. Roses, another attribute of Venus, are often strewn about the composition, typically at the feet of the animated statue, smoke or fire clouds the scene, and in some cases portfolios of sketches lie abandoned on the studio floor.

The left side of Gérard's canvas features a similar arrangement of figures with the lively painted musician positioned above the seated artist, Eros replaced by a King Charles spaniel as symbol of fidelity rather than love, a disheveled stack of drawings or prints peeking out of an envelope, and a grouping of pink roses at the bottom left of the picture plane. Her work station and the crumpled paper atop it resemble the ember, and the fictive fire visually rises onto the smoky, atmospheric background on the canvas that she paints. The primacy of touch that facilitates transformation in Ovid's narrative is here reinforced by the pointed accentuation of the artist's brush, the touch of which brings the painted musician alive on the canvas.

One major difference in the Gérard canvas, however, is the reaction of the artist herself. In Ovid's myth and representations of it, Pygmalion is completely overcome with emotion as his creation "awakens." While the musician's portrait image appears

enthusiastic in her performance, Gérard's artist remains calm and composed, engaged in the study and transcription of her sitter rather than overcome by the "nervous effects" of music or by the vision of her sitter "come to life" on the canvas-within-the-canvas. Instead, the artist's transformation of sound (music) into image, facilitated by her painterly touch, results in the inspired musician on the canvas. In contrast to the myth of Pygmalion and Galatea, in which touch and creation are centered on (male) sexualized models of artistic and material generation, here it is a female artist generating another woman, and an enthusiastic one at that.

Adding to this confusion of gender and artistic generation is the exposure of the musician's nipple, and the emphasis of the artist touching/painting it on the canvas and gazing at it with an exacting eye. While breasts throughout the history of art, and specifically in the eighteenth century, could signify pleasure and sexuality, motherhood, the Antique and allegory, and fashionable trends, the nipple itself is the locus of multiple nerve endings and susceptible to sexual stimulation, one of the body's most sensitive sites. Gérard's emphasis of this detail seems to link the artist, again, to a more male-centered position of creation and stimulation through this particular form of touch that characterizes the canvas. Her concentration on this detail of the sitter's body might also suggest more serious pursuits of anatomical observation and drawing. The artist's brush lands right on the musician's painted breast, and her gaze is directed toward the sitter's exposed breast and nipple. The pink hue of her nipple picks up the pink color of the roses strewn in the lower left foreground, and it is to this anatomical detail that Gérard's artist focuses her attention. Moreover, the word *bouton* in French signifies both the nipple and a rosebud, and this equation of the two is visually articulated in images like

Gabriel de Saint-Aubin's *Comparison of the Rosebud* (Figure 171). In the image, a young girl holds a rosebud up to her exposed breast and studies it alongside her exposed nipple, reflected in the mirror she holds in her other hand. While the artist's gaze draws the viewer's attention to the sitter's exposed nipple, her touch on the canvas highlights the corresponding body part on the canvas, simultaneously signifying stimulation and enlivenment.

A comparison of Gérard's canvas to Charles-Alphonse Dufresnoy's seventeenth-century *Allegory of Painting* (Figure 145) further illuminates the unique system of signification in Gérard's painting of female creative camaraderie. Dufresnoy's work features a similarly organized composition with the figure of Painting occupying the left half of the canvas, and, instead of a musician, the figure of Eros poses for his portrait at the right. Attributes of the arts, learning, and love surround and relate specifically to each of the figures. Behind Painting and in line with her profile is a bust of Poetry, indicated by the wreath of laurel that crowns her head, and below her on the floor are two putti without wings who dabble in other applications of the liberal arts. The toddler on the left props open a book and points to the name "LEONARDO" on the left page; the right page reveals "DA VINCI," suggesting an art history text. Next to him, the other toddler crouches on the floor and uses a compass to inscribe a circle or other angle onto his paper. A geometric square lies on top of the left corner of his papers, and both tools allude to the renaissance fascination with classical proportion and measurement. Thus, the entire left hand side of the canvas refers to the elevation of painting as a lofty, liberal art in the tradition of the Italian renaissance. Eros, too, is surrounded by emblems and objects that suggest the liberal arts. He holds a laurel branch in his left hand, connecting

him symbolically to the bust of Poetry, and at his feet lie his bow, quiver, and arrows, discarded to facilitate his pose. To the right of his feet rest a violin, open sheet music, a lute, and an armillary sphere, another popular mechanical instrument of the renaissance that references the heavens. The relief on the pier that supports the posing Eros appears to depict Athena, goddess of arts, wisdom, civilization, mathematics, and other attributes, and her profile echoes that of Painting and Poetry.

Dufresnoy foregrounds Painting's "touch" in a similar way to Gérard's articulation of it as an artistic action upon the canvas-within-the-canvas. Painting rests her hand on a mahlstick, she applies paint to the canvas with the tip of her paintbrush, and the point at which the two tools intersect draws the eye to the painted Eros's groin. This visually parallels Gérard's emphasis on the musician's nipple, and this suggestive touch on the canvas-within-the-canvas evokes the potential for eroticism in the creative, generative act of painting.

The articulation of the sense of sound and the presence of two contemporary women in Gérard's fictive studio presents a model of creative companionship that is not available in the earlier allegorical tradition. Rather than an abstract reference to the liberal art of painting or a simple reference to the harmonies of music and painting, Gérard's canvas suggests a sympathetic communion of the arts as practiced by two women within the intimate confines of the studio. The senses of sound, sight, and touch all converge in the figure of the artist and enable her creative transformation of the model from studio to canvas. Touched by the music emanating from the musician's guitar, Gérard's artist is inspired by sound as it passes through her ears and creates an internal impression. Rather than losing herself in these effects of music, though, her gaze remains

steadfast on her model, and she transforms and transfers the passion inspired by music into a portrait of an enthusiastic musician. The physical means of transformation relies on “la touche,” and instead of a sculptural touch and prayers to Cupid or Venus to animate the object of her creation, the individual touch of the artist facilitates the metamorphosis. Gérard’s own “touche” further highlights the animation of the painted musician, her painterly enthusiasm on the canvas-within-the-canvas suggesting looseness of brushstroke, movement and expression that contrast with the tightly controlled details of the room’s interior.

Despite the active exchange of senses in the canvas, Gérard’s artist remains calm and composed. Studied observation and steady touch characterize her method and allow her to create an ambitious, life-sized portrait of female musical performance and inspiration. The scale and nature of the canvas-within-the-canvas suggest the aims of Grand Manner portraiture rather than small-scale genre painting for which Gérard herself was known. Through an active exchange of sensory signals and their proper, rational channeling through the figure of the artist, the sister arts come alive in a profound manner on the canvas. The artist’s identity depends on this performance and exchange of sensations; she is a “feeling” artist but methodically applies the sensory signals she receives from the guitarist into a more ambitious painting. In Gérard’s canvas, the artist and musician perform together in harmony, are absorbed in their mutually artistic exchange, and inspire one another through the senses.

Women Artists in the Studio

Gérard's fictive studio features the artist at work in the company of another female "creative," a genre of representation that extends to other genre paintings and portraits featuring "real" women artists at work. Scholarship on this topic has been addressed at length and continues to receive attention from art historians like Mary Sheriff, Melissa Hyde, Laura Auricchio, and others, but a brief overview of images that picture women's collaboration in the studio merits mention in a discussion of creative camaraderie.³⁷ Paintings of women artists at work suggest a wide range of meanings and practices related to female artistic exchange and fall into several general categories: artists at work, collaboration and sociability, and women artists paying homage to their female teachers and friends.

Like Gérard's scene of the artist and musician, genre paintings like her *The Drawing Lesson* (Figure 161), Martin Drolling's *The Drawing Lesson* (Figure 172) and Constance Charpentier's *L'Atelier du peintre* (Figure 173) picture women collaborating in the studio. Gérard's *Drawing Lesson* pictures two well-dressed young women positioned in the corner of a sparsely decorated studio space. The only furniture present

³⁷ Mary Sheriff generously shared her manuscript of "Framing the Artist in the French Tradition: Portraiture, Self-Portraiture, and the Femme Artiste," a selection from her upcoming volume on eighteenth-century women artists with Melissa Hyde. In it, she discusses self-portrait conventions of the artist and how women artists' self-portraits worked within this tradition and capitalized on the unique connection between their own "womanness" or femininity and the projection of a "pleasing" self-image. While myriad publications on women artists of the eighteenth and early-nineteenth centuries have emerged in the past three decades, sources exclusively devoted to picturing women in the studio have been less prevalent. See Christine Havice, "In a Class by Herself: 19th Century Images of the Woman Artist as Student," *Woman's Art Journal* 2, no. 1 (Spring-Summer 1981): 35-40, and Alexandra Wettlaufer, *Portraits of the Artist as a Young Woman: Painting and the Novel in France and Britain, 1800-1860* (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 2011). Discussion of the all-male studio and its representation has received ample attention, especially in the context of Jacques-Louis David's studio. See Thomas Crow, *Emulation: Making Artists for Revolutionary France* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1995) and Abigail Solomon-Godeau, *Male Trouble: A Crisis in Representation* (New York: Thames and Hudson, 1997). See, too, Robert Rosenblum, "David and Vien: Master/Pupil, Father/Son," in *Jacques-Louis David: New Perspectives*, ed. Dorothy Johnson (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 2006), 45-57.

is the artist's table and the chair upon which she sits. She props her canvas on her lap, and it leans against the front edge of the table. Her back faces the viewer, and she looks up at her companion, her gesture and turned head suggesting she is speaking to the dark-haired standing figure. Their heads interlock along a diagonal line, further contributing to the conversational aspect of their encounter. Gérard depicts their costume and accoutrements in great detail. The standing figure's rich blue dress and brown shawl contrast against the seated artist's cream-colored dress and red velvet shawl. The artist wears a crown of flowers in her hair, further emphasizing her femininity. Contrasting to these details is the blank canvas; although the artist holds her brush and paint has been put on her palette, she has yet to generate an image. Instead, their sociable exchange is the focus or subject of the painting.

Drolling's painting of the same subject similarly highlights the exchange of two women artists in the studio, but his includes more detailed description of the props they use to execute their art. A palette hangs on the wall, an empty easel stands on the right edge of the composition, and a sheet hung across the width of one half of the window creates a desired light effect in the studio. Both women are spectacularly clothed, their voluminous fabrics and scarves covering their entire bodies and occupying a significant portion of the canvas with their form and color. The lap dog on the stool – could its presence be a play on an artist's model? – adds an element of domesticity to the scene. Like Gérard's women in the studio, the two engage in conversation, and Drolling pictures their working relationship as one of familiarity and ease. The standing figure, presumably the teacher, casually leans into her student, resting forearm on her student's shoulder as

she gestures toward her drawing and offers advice. In return, the student gazes up at her teacher's face, absorbed in her speech.

Constance Charpentier's *Atelier of a Painter* emphasizes feminine dress as much as the other two canvases, and while a seated figure at the left sketches something, what she draws is unclear (the two women in the center? The large portrait bust on the table at the right?). In the center of the composition, two women talk with one another, and the painting privileges this exchange over the more studious activities of the artist. Similar to Gérard's and Drolling's scenes, Charpentier emphasizes the more sociable aspects of the all-female studio, using tilted heads and physical touch between the figures to suggest conversation, which in Drolling's painting does not have a direct import on the artistic activity that is pictured in the canvas.

With Adrienne Marie Louise Grandpierre-Deverzy's (1798-1869) *Studio of Abel de Pujol* (Figure 174) we move from the fictive spaces of genre painting that feature women socializing in the studio to an image of a real studio and of women artists occupied with both work and socializing. Abel de Pujol (1787-1861) was a former student of Jacques-Louis David and a member of the Institute. Pujol, Grandpierre-Deverzy's husband, ran separate studios for men and women, and the painting accords his role as a teacher a prominent position. He leans casually and confidently back in his seat in the right foreground, his booted foot propped up on a footstool to enable him to rest a drawing and board on his lap for his female pupils to view. He converses with one student in particular, pontificating with his upwardly turned left hand as he looks at her with an ambiguous expression. He possesses an air of instructional authority through his body language and his interaction with the student.

Over a dozen female art students populate the studio space, engaging in various artistic and social pursuits. Two figures behind Pujol, one of whom puts her arm around the student whose work he critiques, look out the window, suggesting a distraction from the outside world of the city below. In the background, artists pore over their canvases together in the act of painting, and two draw from a seated model whose positioning echoes that of the sculptural fragment of Venus that sits on a table against the back wall. In the foreground, a seated artist rustles through her open box of supplies, while two women prepare materials in the left foreground. The artist in the blue dress wears a smirk on her face and looks out toward the viewer, as if her companion has just said something amusing. Overall, the painting merges sociability with artistic activity, creating a bustling scene of work and camaraderie. The plaster casts that line the shelf on the left wall suggest more serious pursuits of anatomy and modeling, but the male torso faces the wall, ensuring that indecency does not infiltrate this female studio session. While Pujol's presence in his wife's painting refers to his prominence in the studio as a teacher and ultimate arbiter and judge of artistic talent among his students, the image also speaks to the wide range of educational abilities available to women under his tutelage, as well as a sense of convivial sisterhood within the context of professional artistic development.³⁸

Another category of images of women artists in the studio is in the form of homage. Scholars consider Marie-Victoire Lemoine's (1754-1820) painting of an *Atelier of a Painter* (Figure 175) as a depiction of Elisabeth Vigée-Lebrun's studio, the Academic painter standing in the center of the composition with palette and mahlstick in

³⁸ Alexandra Wettlaufer, *Portraits of the Artist as a Young Woman: Painting and the Novel in France and Britain, 1800-1860* (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 2011), 47-50.

hand and Lemoine crouching on a stool below her, absorbed in the act of drawing. Although it is doubtful that Vigée-Lebrun ever taught Lemoine, as the painting might suggest, they were connected with one another through their mutual teacher François-Guillaume Ménageot.³⁹ The large canvas-within-the canvas features a preparatory drawing and painting-in-progress of two women revering a statue of Minerva, goddess of poetry and wisdom. Like the worshippers of Minerva in the fictive painting, Lemoine crouches down below Vigée-Lebrun, connecting her deference to Vigée-Lebrun with that of the worship of Minerva. The Metropolitan Museum of Art, where the painting resides, describes this compositional and figural choice as a “eulogy of Vigée LeBrun as a sort of high priestess of painting and a protagonist of female artists.”⁴⁰ Art historian Tony Halliday discusses the image as one of *amitié*. He, alongside other scholars, suggests that the image was part of a campaign to restore Vigée-Lebrun’s position within the post-Revolutionary Parisian art world while the artist was in exile as a result of her associations with Marie-Antoinette.⁴¹

Generally speaking, the painting pays tribute to Vigée-Lebrun, positioning her as a modern Minerva and revealing Lemoine’s respect for her sister-in-“arts” through her implicit “worship” of the standing figure in the middle of the composition.⁴² Overall, the painting signifies one woman artist’s respect and promotion of another in the public eye

³⁹ Tony Halliday, *Facing the Public: Portraiture in the Aftermath of the French Revolution* (Manchester and New York: Manchester University Press, 2000), 67.

⁴⁰ "Marie-Victoire Lemoine. Atelier of a Painter, Probably Madame Vigée Le Brun (1755–1842), and Her Pupil (57.103)". In Heilbrunn Timeline of Art History. New York: The Metropolitan Museum of Art, 2000–. <http://www.metmuseum.org/toah/works-of-art/57.103> (October 2006).

⁴¹ Halliday, *Facing the Public*, 67.

⁴² Phyllis Culham discusses the painting in this manner in “Recovering Feminist Aesthetics by Reading a Reaction on the Left,” in *Politics, Gender, and the Arts: Women, the Arts and Society*, eds. Ronald Dotterer and Susan Bowers (Cranbury, NJ: Associated University Press, 1992): 23-24.

of the Salon, a spirit of professional sisterhood revealed through a combination of the portrait and more elevated references to the classicizing theme of Minerva.⁴³

Another, more direct visual homage that connects two women artists as friends and professionals appears in Marie-Gabrielle Capet's (1761-1818) *Studio Scene: Adélaïde Labille-Guiard Painting the Portrait of Joseph-Marie Vien* (Figure 176). Capet's painting places her in a sun-lit studio with her teacher, Academic painter Adélaïde Labille-Guiard, at work. Labille-Guiard shares the center of her composition with her easel and large canvas. Behind the artist, leaning toward the painting with an extended index finger, is Labille-Guiard's husband, fellow Academic painter François Vincent (1746-1816). He appears interested in or about to critique his wife's portrait of Joseph-Marie Vien (1716-1809), the famed Academic history painter and Vincent's teacher, who poses on the right side of the canvas. The seated Vien wears regalia indicating his position as a senator of the Empire and a recipient of the Cross of the Legion of Honor. He holds a crayon in his hand, and a folio of drawings is propped beside him.⁴⁴ Behind Vien stand his son, Joseph-Marie Vien fils, and daughter-in-law, Rose-Céleste Vien, who discuss his drawing as two gentlemen to their left look on. The other two male figures in the group look toward Labille-Guiard.⁴⁵ Behind Vincent stand

⁴³ Melissa Hyde discusses women artists' evocation of the iconography of Minerva for their articulation of artistic identity in "Under the Sign of Minerva: Adélaïde Labille-Guiard's *Portrait of Madame Adélaïde*," in *Women, Art, and the Politics of Identity in Eighteenth-Century Europe*, eds. Melissa Hyde and Jennifer Milam (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2003), 139-163. She also talks about how Adélaïde Labille-Guiard and Vigée-Lebrun were referred to as "modern Minervas" in the critical press (159).

⁴⁴ Thomas Gaehtgens has identified the drawing as *Andromache crying as she shows her son the armor of Hector*. Thomas W. Gaehtgens, "Eine gemalte Künstlergenealogie zu Marie-Gabrielle Capet's Atelierszene in der Münchner Neuen Pinakothek," *Niederdeutsche Beiträge zur Kunstgeschichte* 38 (1999): 209-219.

⁴⁵ Gaehtgens identifies the figures, from left to right, as Jacques-Augustin Pajou, Jean Alaux, Etienne Pallière, and Léon Pallière. *Ibid.*, 3.

five male figures, four of whom direct their gazes toward the canvas and observe the exchange between Vincent and Labille-Guiard.⁴⁶ Finally, Capet sits next to Labille-Guiard, holding a palette prepped with paint for the artist and looking out toward the viewer.

Thomas Gaetghens has persuasively discussed the painting as a visual expression of artistic genealogy.⁴⁷ The image clearly establishes a line of artistic training and dissemination of knowledge and skill from Vien through Vincent, through Labille-Guiard (she studied under François-Elie Vincent, her future husband's father, and then with Vincent himself), and ending with Capet. The model that Gaetghens establishes in this tracing of artistic generations places Vien at the patriarchal head of this artistic "family." As an earlier "father" and "restorer" of the French school of painting in his role in the regeneration of history painting under the orders of the Comte d'Angiviller in the 1770s and 1780s, Vien's prominent role in the French Academy further ascribes a prominent patriarchal identity to the artist.⁴⁸ Gaetghens uses this aspect of Vien's career and position in the academic art world to suggest his prominent role at the helm of his artistic "family," training subsequent generations of artists, with Capet pictured as part of the younger generation, inviting the spectator to visually trace the lineage within the group portrait.

⁴⁶ These figures are likely Jean-Joseph Ansiaux, Jean-François Mériée, Charles Thévenin, Charles Meynier, and François-Edouard Picot. Ibid, 4.

⁴⁷ Ibid., 209-219.

⁴⁸ Ibid., 18. Christopher M.S. Johns talks about Vien's role in the academy most recently in "The Roman Experience of Jacques-Louis David, 1775-80," in *Jacques-Louis David: New Perspectives*, ed. Dorothy Johnson (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 2006), 58. See too, Emilia F. Dilke, *French Paintings of the XVIIIth Century* (Elibron Classics, 2005), 19.

Significant is Gaehtgens's mentioning of Capet's prominent place in the foreground of the picture plane, which he attributes to her pride in being part of this illustrious artistic genealogy that the painting conveys. I would add to this important observation that the coupling and proximity of Capet and Labille-Guiard also suggest an important subtext of collaboration and friendship in the work. Capet presents herself as a supportive assistant to her teacher, prepping the palette with paint and ready to supply Labille-Guiard with brushes and a range of colors as she executes Vien's portrait on the central canvas. The women's bodies are similarly positioned in their seats, the angle of their right knees accentuated, and their pointed right shoes peeking out from underneath the hems of their floor-length gowns. Their right arms are also crooked, Labille-Guiard's as she paints and Capet's as she rests her arm on the table. Both hold an implement of painting or drawing in their right hands. The biggest difference in the presentation of their bodies is the direction and object of their gazes. Labille-Guiard is fully absorbed in her work, while Capet gazes out at the viewer, her lips slightly parted as if she is about to speak. This slight shift of perspective to the left of the picture plane and its singling out of this visual "doubling" allows for a slightly different reading of the canvas. In addition to understanding the painting as an image of artistic genealogy originating with Vien, we can also consider the work as a reference to the deep, longtime friendship of Capet and Labille-Guiard.

Labille-Guiard, a painter of portraits and one of the mere four female members of the Royal Academy of Painting and Sculpture since 1783, was an ardent champion and supporter of women in the arts from the earliest years of her career. It is speculated that

by 1781, she had as many as ten (female) students in her studio,⁴⁹ and she provided a strong voice for women artists in the impassioned speech she delivered to the Academy on September 23, 1790, asking for greater inclusion of women through official admission, the privilege of attendance at business meetings, and the honor of serving on the governing board.⁵⁰ She welcomed Capet into her studio sometime in the early 1780s, and their student-teacher relationship developed into a close friendship, with Capet eventually living with Labille-Guiard and her husband, Vincent.⁵¹ Capet moved in with Labille-Guiard in 1795 and continued to live in her household after Labille-Guiard married Vincent in 1800.⁵² She shared lodgings with the couple at both the Louvre and the Institute and continued living with Vincent after Labille-Guiard's 1803 death. She appeared to have truly become a member of the family. The friendship between the two women was well-known during their lifetime, and their eleven-year age difference likely created a dynamic that hovered between mother-daughter and sisters or friends.

Labille-Guiard included Capet and another female student from her studio, Marie-Marguerite Carreaux de Rosemond (d. 1788), in her 1785 *Self-Portrait with Two Pupils* (Figure 177). To date, Laura Auricchio's interpretation of the life-sized portrait remains one of the most thorough analyses of the painting.⁵³ Auricchio highlights the ways in which Labille-Guiard used the image to navigate her "fraught position as a professional

⁴⁹ Mirzoeff, "Revolution, Representation, Equality," 161, and Anne-Marie Passez, *Adélaïde Labille-Guiard* (Paris: Arts et métiers graphiques, 1973), 15.

⁵¹ Capet arrived in Paris in 1781.

⁵² Laura Auricchio, *Adélaïde Labille-Guiard: Artist in the Age of Revolution* (Los Angeles: J. Paul Getty Museum, 2009), 107-108.

⁵³ Laura Auricchio, "Self-Promotion in Adélaïde Labille-Guiard's 1785 *Self-Portrait with Two Students*," *The Art Bulletin* 89, no. 1 (March 2007): 45-62.

woman artist,” positing the portrait’s function as an advertisement of Labille-Guiard’s skill and style, a testament to her virtue and femininity, a nod to the Academic sculptor Pajou, and a mechanism by which she supported her young female students. The juxtaposition of large scale and exacting technique demonstrating her painterly virtuosity, the inclusion of the sculptor Houdon’s statue of the vestal virgin (Figure 178) and Pajou’s bust of her father, Claude-Edmé Labille (Figure 179), and her spectacularly feminine attire indicate a conscious display of both feminine virtue and professional ambition.⁵⁴ This practice of inserting oneself into the masculine tradition of art history through references to or emulation of male artists, while also reaffirming one’s femininity, was a common strategy employed by eighteenth-century women artists.⁵⁵

What is immediately striking about the painting is the sense of solidarity among the three figures. Labille-Guiard arranges them as a tight-knit triangular group, and an upward diagonal extends from the easel, through Labille-Guiard, and ultimately to the

⁵⁴ Labille-Guiard includes Pajou’s 1785 bust of the artist’s father, Claude-Edme Labille in her self-portrait, and Auricchio interprets this inclusion as a nod to both paternal authority and artistic geneology.

⁵⁵ Labille-Guiard’s somewhat guarded insertion of herself into the male tradition of painting by including references to two male artists in her self-portrait is a strategy that other female artists similarly adopted. Both Angela Rosenthal and Mary D. Sheriff have exposed the double bind of practice and representation in the context of Angelica Kauffman and Elisabeth Vigée-Lebrun. See Angelica Kauffman, “Ma(s)king Claims,” 38-59, and Mary D. Sheriff, *The Exceptional Woman: Elisabeth Vigée-Lebrun and the Cultural Politics of Art* (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1996).

Several scholars have addressed the foundational concept and practice of emulation in the training of male artists, particularly in the context of the Royal Academy. As the following sources discuss in detail, the notion of emulation was fraught with contradiction when applied to women’s creative pursuits and artistic training, always tinged with the threat of jealousy and rivalry that was assumed to be part of female “nature.” While emulation and competition inspired healthy artistic interaction among male students and professional artists, the practice was perceived differently for women artists. For a lengthy discussion of these important issues, see Nicholas Mirzoeff, “Revolution, Representation, and Equality: Gender, Genre, and Emulation in the Académie Royale de Peinture et de Sculpture, 1785-93,” *Eighteenth-Century Studies* 31, no. 2 (Winter 1997/1998): 153-174; Laura Auricchio, “The Laws of Bienséance and the Gendering of Emulation in Eighteenth-Century French Art Education,” *Eighteenth-Century Studies* 36, no. 2 (Winter 2003): 231-40; and Mary Sheriff, “Jacques-Louis David and the Ladies,” in *Jacques-Louis David: New Perspectives*, ed. Dorothy Johnson (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 2006), 90-107.

pupil's faces. Their gazes further connect them to one another and to the viewer as eyes circulate within the canvas and out of the picture plane toward the audience, inviting us into the studio with them and piquing our interest in what Labille-Guiard might be painting on the reversed canvas. The positioning of their hands also reinforces their unity: Capet's hand rests on the back of Labille-Guiard's chair, while Rosemond's wraps around Capet's waist. Finally, the fine silken and gauzy fabrics of their clothing rustle against one another, signifying a comfort with their physical proximity. Like Capet's *Studio Scene* a circulation of gaze and a doubling (here tripling) of the figures' bodies unites them and also invites the viewer into the scene.

As Laura Auricchio suggests, this portrait pays homage to the theme of artistic inheritance.⁵⁶ She compares the arrangement of figures and their activity and interaction to Antoine Coypel's *Portrait of the Artist with His Son, Charles-Antoine* (Figure 180), which depicts the artist sitting in his studio and poised to paint his canvas. His son, a future artist himself, sits next to him, his arm leaning on the seat of his father's chair, and his face gazing up at the reversed canvas with a combination of awe and rapt attention.⁵⁷ Like the canvas in Labille-Guiard's painting, the viewer does not have access to it, and we can only guess what it contains by virtue of the responses of the figures within the canvas who react to it. Auricchio reads this overt reference to the Coypel portrait, which Labille-Guiard likely saw at some point as an academician, as her own insertion into the

⁵⁶ Laura Auricchio has published extensively on Labille-Guiard, and while I summarize many key points of information from her scholarship, I do so with the intention of calling greater attention to the creative, professional, and personal camaraderie of Labille-Guiard and her student, Marie-Gabrielle Capet. I wish to shift our understanding of the paintings that Auricchio discusses to encompass them more broadly within the history of female sociability that this dissertation addresses.

⁵⁷ Auricchio, *Adélaïde Labille-Guiard*, 43.

academic pedigree, much like her reference to Pajou and Houdon places her within a visual pedigree of great artists.

Labille-Guiard's *Self-Portrait with Two Pupils*, then, functions as a statement of matriarchy within the studio, her solid seated form anchoring the trio of figures in the composition. A reference to an obituary of the artist suggests her maternal inclination to her students:

Her care for her students, says Lebreton in his obituary, compared only to that of a mother. She enjoyed with delight their progress, and it is not the return or self-esteem or even by natural goodness that she took such interest in the young people who frequented her studio.⁵⁸

Labille-Guiard had no biological children, so a reference to her motherly role in the studio suggests, on the one hand, a woman's natural inclination toward nurturing a younger generation. Such sentimental insinuations certainly were not used in discussions of male studios with strong artistic lineages. However, the quote also reminds us of her dedication to her students, which both her and Capet's group portraits display in pictorial form. Like Vien and Coypel, Labille-Guiard *did* preside over an active studio, and her arrangement of the figures in the self-portrait overtly refers to her position at the helm of a group of aspiring young female artists. Auricchio has emphasized Labille-Guiard's "maternal virtue" in her elegant display of costume and femininity, considering her "children" that stand behind her as her muses.⁵⁹

⁵⁸ "Ses soins pour ses élèves, dit Lebreton dans sa notice nécrologique, ne peuvent se comparer qu'à ceux d'une mère. Elle jouissait avec délices de leurs progrès et ce n'est point par un retour d'amour-propre, ni même par bonté naturelle, qu'elle prenait tant d'intérêt aux jeunes personnes qui fréquentaient son atelier." Baron Roger Portalis. "Adélaïde Labille-Guiard (1749–1803)." *Gazette des beaux-arts* 27 (1902), 105-106.

⁵⁹ Auricchio, "Self-Promotion," 49.

Twenty years passed between Labille-Guiard's execution of her *Self-Portrait with Two Pupils* and Capet's *Studio Scene*. Within this period of personal and professional friendship, Labille-Guiard painted a portrait of Capet at work on a miniature (Figure 181), Capet copied various paintings from Labille-Guiard's oeuvre, and they lived under the same roof and likely painted in the same studio.⁶⁰ Capet's completed her *Studio Scene* five years after Labille-Guiard's death, suggesting a nostalgic meditation on and homage to her friend and mentor. Similar to Récamier's posthumous remembrance and veneration of Staël, intertextual reference among paintings creates an ongoing dialogue of friendship through time, the traces of which remain in the painted image. The *Studio Scene* acts as both a record of artistic collaboration and as final adieu from "daughter" to "mother" and intimate friend.

By considering the two portraits in relationship to one another and separated by twenty years, we gain a sense of the friendship and respect shared by the women. Capet and Labille-Guiard were eleven years apart, begging the question of how exactly they understood and experienced their relationship. Was it closer in dynamic to a mother and daughter, or to close friends or sisters? While Labille-Guiard's *Self-Portrait with Two Pupils* distinguishes her from her students as the head of the artistic household, Capet's later portrait signifies the evolution of the terms of their relationship. In Capet's *Studio Scene*, the student assists her mentor with paints and brushes, but the doubling of their bodies and Capet's utterance and directing gaze create a greater sense of camaraderie and

⁶⁰ Auricchio identifies Labille-Guiard's 1798 *Portrait of Marie-Gabrielle Capet* as a 'poignant identification between teacher and student. Its iconography of a woman artist as a miniature painter returns us to the miniature self-portrait that Labille-Guiard had exhibited in her 1774 debut. Even the composition recalls that early painting, depicting a female artist seated to the right of a work table on which we see, but cannot fully read, a miniature in progress.' Auricchio, *Adélaïde Labille-Guiard*, 105-106.

equality in the studio. No longer looking at her teacher's canvas with rapt attention and awe, Capet's knowing look at the viewer speaks of her prominent position both within this canvas and within the two decades of her life that were spent by Labille-Guiard's side both at home and in the studio.

Writing the Paradox: Madame de Genlis on Female Artists

Adélaïde Labille-Guiard's portrait of famed author and educator Stéphanie Félicité Ducrest de Saint-Aubin, more familiarly known as Madame de Genlis (Figure 182), suggests that the artist's collaboration with other creative and intellectual women expanded beyond her bustling studio. The two likely crossed paths in the royal household: Labille-Guiard was the official painter of the aunts of King Louis XVI, and Genlis was the governess of the children of the Duke of Chartres, the cousin of the King.

Born into a minor noble Burgundian family in 1746, Genlis was raised under the traditional model of the "accomplishments." Educated in her home, she developed excellent skills on the harp, dabbled in homespun theatrical performances, danced, and became an avid reader.⁶¹ Her socially and economically advantageous marriage to Charles-Alexis Brûlart de Genlis (1737-1793)⁶² allowed her to continue her self-directed

⁶¹ "I led a charming life: in the morning I played a little on the harpsichord and sang, then I learnt my parts, and then I took my dancing lesson and fenced; after this I read until dinner-time with mademoiselle de Mars." Quoted in Austin Dobson, *Four French Women* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1890), 126. For more information on Genlis, see Julia Kavanagh, *French Women of Letters. Biographical Sketches: Madame de Genlis, Madame de Charrière, Madame de Kriidner, Madame Cottin, Madame de Staël* (London: Hurst and Blackett, 1862); Dena Goodman, *The Republic of Letters: A Cultural History of the Enlightenment* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1994); Carla Hesse, *The Other Enlightenment: How French Women Became Modern* (Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2001); Renee Winegarten, *Accursed Politics: Some French Women Writers and Political Life, 1715-1850* (Chicago: Ivan R. Dee, 2003); and Bonnie Arden Robb, *Félicité de Genlis: motherhood in the margins* (Cranbury, NJ: Rosemont, 2008).

education in Paris and introduced her to a wide range of professional opportunities. In addition to her instructional appointment within the royal family, she published hundreds of works on education and morals, many of which in some ways question and in other ways reinforce Rousseauian theories of teaching, learning, and strict gender ideologies.⁶³

Portraits of Genlis often highlight her well-known talent and skills on the harp. An undated miniature on ivory (Figure 183) pictures her strumming the instrument, her body turned ninety degrees and in profile view, her right arm extended in a strum on the diagonally positioned instrument, and her head turned toward the viewer, engaging us with her forward-looking glance. To the left and behind her is a table upon which a globe and books sit, and in the right background is a landscape with a circular-shaped classical temple. The image forges connections with her musical talent and her learned pursuits, and perhaps also allies her with the classical allegory of Poetry, who often held a lyre and was pictured playing it within a similarly classicized setting. Her costume, though, is completely contemporary and reaffirms the femininity and fashion of the sitter. The dramatic ribbon and feathers of her hat fill the top register of the composition, and her grey dress accentuates her small waist.

⁶² Brûlart was part of the hereditary nobility and inherited his title of Count of Genlis from his father. He was also an accomplished naval officer and colonel of the King's army, a knight, and deputy of the National Convent, among other titles and achievements.

⁶³ Anne Schroder refers to the tensions inherent to her relationship with the *philosophes* and their ideas on education. Anne L. Schroder, "Going Public Against the Academy in 1784: Mme de Genlis Speaks out on Gender Bias," *Eighteenth-Century Studies* 32, no. 3 (1999): 376-382. Other significant titles within Genlis's illustrious and high-volume publishing career include: *Théâtre à l'usage des jeunes personnes* (1779-1780), *Adèle et Théodore ou Lettres sur l'éducation contenant tous les principaux relatifs aux trois plans d'éducation des princes, des jeunes personnes et des hommes* (1782), *Les Veillées du château, ou Cours de morale* (1782), *Adèle et Théodore, ou Lettres sur l'éducation contenant tous les principes relatifs aux trois plans d'éducation des princes, des jeunes personnes, et des hommes* (1782), *Mademoiselle de Clermont. Nouvelle Historique* (1802), and *De l'influence des femmes sur la littérature française comme protectrices des Lettres ou comme auteurs. Précis de l'histoire des femmes françaises les plus célèbres* (1811).

Other paintings, such as Jean-Antoine-Théodore Giroust's image of Genlis instructing two young pupils on the harp, feature her educational practices in action. Titled *Portrait of Mlle d'Orléans taking a harp lesson at the Salon of 1791* (Figure 184), the portrait-cum-genre-scene pictures Genlis, at left, overseeing the music lesson of Adélaïde, the daughter of the Duc de Chartres, and Mademoiselle Pamela, a young English girl that Genlis helped to raise.⁶⁴ Genlis fingers through the sheet music on the stand, while the girls strum on their harps, Adélaïde looking toward the viewer, and Pamela directing her gaze at Genlis. Behind them stands a bronze statue of Minerva, goddess of wisdom and the arts, overlooking their musical pursuits. In the lower right hand corner of the composition, rolled up papers and papers stuffed inside a portfolio lean against a footstool, upon which a pencil or other drawing tool rests, pointing to the other accomplishments that make up the young girls' educational repertoire.

By contrast, Labille-Guiard's portrait of Genlis does not suggest the sitter's musical skills or refer directly to her intellectual accomplishments. The portrait features a three-quarter-length, three-quarter turned figure decked out in fine clothing and standing out against the plain dark background of the composition. She wears a muted blue dress trimmed with delicate lace, a bright white scarf covers her décolleté and neck, and lace covers the back of her informally arranged hair that is loosely pulled away from her face. Her green gloves, the fan she holds closed in her left hand, and the large white satin bow on her head add to her dignified and ladylike appearance. She looks out at the viewer with a sober expression; her eyes are not expressive, and her mouth is firmly set. Her arms, crossed just above her waist, contribute to her air of reserve. While a fan could signify flirtation when artfully held and manipulated by a woman, Genlis's is definitively

⁶⁴ Halliday, *Facing the Public*, 38 (note 24).

snapped shut in this image, and the directness of her gaze signifies a decidedly non-coquettish seriousness. The sobriety of her countenance suggests a more solemn character underneath these outward signs of femininity. This is an image of a dignified woman in her mid-forties with an impressive career under her belt.

While Genlis's own writing does not address Labille-Guiard directly in return, her popular novel, *Tales of the Castle, or, Stories of instruction and delight* (1784),⁶⁵ does contain a lengthy section on women artists that exposes the tensions and paradoxes inherent to women's presence in the male-dominated world of art. The majority of the narrative deals with the positive moral tales resulting from a family's move from the hectic city to the more peaceful, "natural" countryside, but an eighteen-page diatribe on the history of art appears within the text, and five of its pages address the presence and position of women artists within contemporary and historical artistic culture and practice.⁶⁶

In the fictional episode, Madame de Clémire, the main narrator of the story, takes her children to the Louvre, at that time still a site of artistic residences and studios. Five pages of the eighteen-page art history lesson that ensues include a discussion of Vigée-Lebrun and the merits of her skill and effect as a painter. The voice of wonder and admiration at the talents of Vigée-Lebrun comes from the mouths of babes, the narrator's

⁶⁵ Madame de Genlis, *Tales of the Castle, or Stories of instruction and delight*, 9th ed., trans. Thomas Holcroft (Brattleborough, UK: William Fessenden, 1813). The initial run of the book sold out within eight days, was translated into several languages, and was printed in at least sixty editions by the end of the nineteenth century. Heather Belnap-Jensen, "Portraitistes à la Plume: Women Art Critics in Revolutionary and Napoleonic France," Ph.D. Dissertation (University of Kansas, 2007), 106.

⁶⁶ Mary Sheriff drew my attention to Anne L. Schroder's thoughtful discussion of Genlis's discussion on women artists in *Tales of the castle* in Anne L. Schroder, "Going Public Against the Academy," 376-382. See, in particular, Heather Jensen-Belnap, "Tentative Excursion: Art Criticism in the Novels of Juliane de Krüdener and Stépahnie-Félicité de Genlis," in "Portraitistes à la plume," 100-180. See, too, Vivian P. Cameron, "Two 18th-Century Art Critics," *Woman's Art Journal* 5, no. 1 (Spring-Summer, 1984): 8-11.

children speaking in awe about the artist's "genius," noble subjects ("Her subjects are taken from the Iliad; her figures are large as life"), the worthiness of women artists for academic membership ("I observe, mamma, with great pleasure, that there are many women at present worthy to rank with great painters; four in France are admitted of the academy, without mentioning several others, who have much greater abilities than certain academicians"), and other prominent women artists from history ("Johanna Gazzoni; Elizabeth Cirani; Maria, the daughter of Tintoret; and of Rosalba").

The narrator, too, acts as an advocate for women artists, suggesting the underlying cause of the discrepancies between genders in the world of art with the following words:

I will give you a list of the names of women most celebrated for their paintings. It would require a large volume to speak of them all; and if the number be not equal to that of the men who have been eminent painters, it is the effect of that prejudice, which judges us incapable of works where genius is required. When men condescend, which is very seldom, to employ themselves a little on our education, they wish only to give us vague notions, consequently often false, superficial knowledge, and frivolous talents.⁶⁷

She locates the lack of education and opportunity at the hands of men as a significant reason for the lack of women in creative professions, a sentiment that Linda Nochlin would famously express nearly two hundred years later in her 1971 essay, "Why have there been no great women artists?"⁶⁸ Genlis implicates the structure of patriarchal culture in women's lack of access to intellectual and creative opportunities and education.

⁶⁷ Genlis, *Tales of the Castle*, 202.

⁶⁸ Linda Nochlin, "Why have there been no great women artists?" *ARTnews* (January 1971): 22-39, 67-71.

Genlis also includes an appendix of famous women artists in response to the child's inquiry in the quote directly above.⁶⁹ This "large volume" of artists to which she refers includes Élisabeth-Sophie Chéron (1648-1711), a French writer, translator, and portrait painter, Sofonisba Anguissola (1532-1625), a prominent and noble Italian portrait painter of the late-fifteenth and early-sixteenth century, Lavinia Fontana (1552-1614), a Bolognese portraitist and history painter who received the esteemed honor papal commissions, Maria van Oosterwijk (1630-1693), a Dutch still-life painter, Rachel Ruysch (1664-1750), another Dutch still-life painter who became famous for her flower compositions, and others, including a list of ancient women who left their mark on the art historical record. Among these and others are Calypso, Lala of Cyzicus ("No person had a lighter touch; she engraved also on ivory"), and Irene.

Anne Schroder attributes Genlis's outspoken support of women artists and her promotion of Vigée-Lebrun as a form of retaliation for her public humiliation when what had appeared to be a guarantee to receive the prestigious Montyon gold medal for the best book written of the year, for which she submitted *Adèle et Théodore*, turned into bitter disappointment when Madame d'Épinay won the prize for her *Conversations d'Émilie*.⁷⁰ The same year, 1783, Vigée-Lebrun had been accepted into the Royal Academy of Painting and Sculpture, submitting a history painting, *Peace Bringing Back Abundance*, as one of her reception pieces. Vigée-Lebrun's audacity to proclaim her artistic and intellectual worth with her self-appointed history painting led to scathing indictments in the press of that artist's overstepping of the boundaries of propriety and

⁶⁹ Genlis, *Tales of the Castle*, 285-289.

⁷⁰ Schroder, "Going Public Against the Academy in 1784," 376.

decorum. Schroder suggests that Genlis's inclusion of Vigée-Lebrun in her art history lesson of the *Tales of the Castle* acted as a call of support from one maligned creative woman to another, a form of identification within a public "sisterhood" of the arts that aimed to both defend and promote herself and her fellow "sister-in-arms."⁷¹

However, while Genlis railed against academic gender bias and women's educational disadvantages in *Tales of the Castle*, she was also careful to warn young women against seeking celebrity for their creative and intellectual endeavors. In her *Memoirs*, Genlis dissuades young women writers in their hasty pursuit of fame and prolific publication, warning that,

Women must realize under which conditions they are permitted to become authors: first they must never be in a hurry to publish their works; throughout their youth they must shun any form of attention, even the most honorable; second, every rule of propriety requires them invariably to show the greatest respect for religion and the most austere morality; third, they must answer the critics only when they misquote [them], or when [women authors] are blamed for something they did not do.⁷²

Telling is Genlis's reference to the "conditions" under which women may write and publish their works. Rather than actively seeking out fame, women writers must seek to maintain their modesty and demureness when they present themselves to the reading public and critical press. Much like the self-presentation of a woman artist, the woman writer must maintain her outward signs of proper femininity in the public realm of creative production and performance.

⁷¹ Ibid., 377. As Schroder discusses, both women were criticized in the press for their very public roles, Genlis in her status not only as a prolific publishing author, but also as the *gouverneur* to the royal princes, and Vigée-Lebrun for her close associations with Marie-Antoinette and for her audacity to submit a history painting for her 1783 admission into the royal Academy of Painting and Sculpture.

⁷² Quoted Letzter and Adelson, *Women Writing Opera: Creativity and Controversy in the Age of the French Revolution* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001), 126. Originally from Madame de Genlis, *Mémoires inédits de Madame la Comtesse de Genlis*, vol. 6 (Paris: Chez l'Avocat, 1825), 338-339.

The quote I included above from Genlis's *Adèle et Théodore*, relating to the accomplishments, similarly suggests a prescription for women's "self-effacing modesty," a phrase with which Schroder describes Genlis's mode of writing about creative and intellectual women working in the public eye. Rather than encouraging young women to launch more professional ambitions in their education, her prescription for Adèle's education ensures she will not become too proficient (in other words, professional) at any one accomplishment, talent or realm of knowledge. Instead, her education suits her for domestic pursuits, as the future feminine figurehead of the traditional bourgeois family.

In spite of her ominous warnings, Genlis was a voracious writer and published prolifically, and her own somewhat precarious position in the public world of letters suggests the paradox faced by women working in professions of creative production. While prescribing modesty and emphasizing the importance of feminine virtue within the private confines of the home and family in much of her writing, Genlis defied her own advice in both her life and career. She herself pursued celebrity and achieved public successes, but not without consequence. Like women artists, the fine line between femininity and genius was often a challenging one to navigate.

Sisterhoods of the Arts

My research into the foray of painting, music, and authorship reveals a complex web of interconnectivity among professional creative women actively working between 1770 and 1830. While the limits of this chapter and the dissertation have not allowed me to explore absolutely all connections among these figures, a multitude of images speak to these connections, some of which other scholars have already addressed in depth. Artists

Elisabeth-Louise Vigée-Lebrun and Madame Godefroy both depicted the author Germaine de Staël (Figures 123 and 185).⁷³ Anne Vallayer-Coster painted a portrait of famed opera singer Madame de Saint-Huberty in her most renowned role of Puccini's Dido (Figure 186), which she performed to great esteem in 1783.⁷⁴ Vigée-Lebrun circulated in the world of the stage, too, as evidenced by her portraits of Saint-Huberty (Figure 187), Luisa Todi (Figure 188), and Elisabeth Mara (Figure 189). Vigée-Lebrun depicted her friend, Madame Grollier at work on a canvas (Figure 190). Adèle Romany executed multiple portraits of actors and actresses of the Comédie Française, among them the actress Mademoiselle Raucourt (Figure 191). In addition to her portraits of Madame de Genlis, Labille-Guiard also depicted the actress Madame Dugazon (Figure 192), actress and opera composer Julie-Candeille (Figure 193), as well as a portrait of her friend, the Comtesse de Selve, "making music" (Figure 194). In a similar mode of representation, women's memoirs and other forms of writing mention fellow creative women, Vigée-Lebrun's *Souvenirs* among those that mention Genlis, women artists, and women of the stage. Such collaboration and exchange signal a shift in women's participation in painting and publication that would only increase in the nineteenth century, as "sisterhoods of the arts" slowly became more dominant forces within the creative and intellectual spheres of France and beyond.

⁷³ See Mary Sheriff, *The Exceptional Woman* (1996).

⁷⁴ See Amy Stidwell, "Masquerading as Queen: Anne Vallayer-Coster's Portrait of Madame de Saint-Huberty at the Paris Salon of 1785," M.A. Thesis (Southern Methodist University, 2003).

Conclusion

In the spirit of Madame Geoffrin, whose calling card read “Grass must not be allowed to grow on the path of friendship,” I have attempted to prune away the misconceptions about and obscured history of female friendship in the late-eighteenth and early-nineteenth centuries. Rather than rehearse the classical masculine narrative of *amicitia*, I have focused on the relatively unexplored domain of female friendship and its historical embodiment and art historical representation. The unique paths of female friendship that this dissertation addresses have led me from the exotic island to the picturesque garden and from the private apartment to the artist’s studio. I have been privy to murmurs of companionship expressed in personal letters, proclamations of camaraderie within the penned lines of memoirs, and visualizations of intimacy upon the canvas.

In the early modern period (and well into our own era) women’s lives were largely circumscribed by their identities as mothers and wives. Rousseau’s articulation of gender roles within the family held sway long after his death, and these categories of identity are discernable not only in genre painting and portraiture of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries but also in the dominant art historical approach to their interpretation. “Happy Mothers,” proud fathers, and a general emphasis on patriarchal structure certainly set the tone for many paintings by artists such as Jean-Baptiste Greuze, Jean-Honoré Fragonard, Jean-Baptiste-Siméon Chardin, and even Marguerite Gérard. There is no doubt as to the powerful presence of the gendered family unit during this

period and its visual interpretation onto the canvas. However, as I have demonstrated, a slight shift in perspective allows for a much different reading of genre painting and portraiture, uncovering a point of view that has generally been omitted from the art historical record.

Although the path was somewhat hidden as I began my research, female friendship emerged from the historical and visual archive in a way that suggests its prime importance to women of this period of French history, a cultural moment in which *sensibilité* permeated interpersonal relationships and visual production. The culture of *sensibilité*, in part, provided a new language of female *amitié* in contrast to the classical language of male *amicitia*, and narratives of female camaraderie reinforce its prominent role in and representations of sociability and lived experience. A privileging of affect and intimate exchange characterizes and connects the images that I analyze above. The suggestion of close physical proximity, the visual doubling of figures, emphasis on conversation, personal intertextual references among works of art exchanged between friends, and painted and penned homages reveal a range of experiences and bonds shared between the women in question. Like Marguerite and Madame de la Tour's effusive language of mutual admiration in their description of their idyllic life on the Île de France, so, too, these other forms and material manifestations of friendship rely on the expression and exchange of sentiment for their meaning. And while *sensibilité* could be used to suggest women's weakness or to raise various specters of "danger" within the realms of friendship, authorship, and artistic production, I have demonstrated that it could also be used in the formulation and expression of communities of women. Rather than a limiting factor in women's individual subjectivities and chosen pursuits, *sensibilité*

provided a language to forge connections in these realms of life and informed their representation on the canvas.

The island setting that I address in Chapter One is emblematic of the general theme of refuge and sequestration that the other backdrops of female sociability articulate, albeit in different shape and form. For Marguerite and Madame de la Tour, the vast Indian Ocean and their inconceivable distance from the homeland enabled their friendship to grow, perhaps initially out of “necessity” as Madame de Lambert might have suggested with the quote from the introduction above, but ultimately out of profound spiritual and bodily connections and within the shared duties of motherhood. Likewise, the walls of the convent and its garden as articulated by Hubert Robert provide a hospitable space for the development of female friendship through conversation and promenade. On the one hand, these enclosed spaces provide the necessary space or backdrop for female relationships to develop. They act as the symbolic and physical stages upon which intimacy can flourish, largely separate from the demands of motherhood and marriage, a “room of one’s own,” if you will. Like Madame Roland reminiscing on the sweetness of her girlhood friendships, so the images on the canvas offer a momentary refuge of female companionship, shifting the complexities of gendered life into a less prominent position, at least in representation. Much like Dena Goodman’s discussion of the development of female subjectivity within the practice of letter writing and epistolary exchange, these physical and pictorial spaces of friendship inscribe subjectivity among and between the women who populate them. Indeed, pictorial spaces also became sites of mutual empowerment, as the examples of Labille-Guiard’s and Capet’s self-portraits that feature and promote one another demonstrate. While

patriarchal structures underly these representated spaces of female sociability (i.e. Gérard's repeated emphasis on maternity and the "nuclear" family; the status of the convent as a "repository" for "superfluous" female members of society; or the patrilineal model of artistic dissemination), the scenes consistently minimize men's visible presence within the frame. Instead, friendship reigns supreme as the main subject of the canvases or through the exchange of canvases, and the omission of an overt male presence suggests the exhibition of alternative identities and subjectivities outside of the family unit.

One unexpected finding that surfaced in my research on friendship and its representation is the way in which gender infiltrates descriptions of female sociability. Most striking was the conceptualization of Madame de Staël and Madame Récamier as possessing distinctly complementary qualities, as male and female in nature and appearance. That such an intimate friendship and its female participants would be repeatedly described with such gendered description is perhaps indicative of a need to understand and articulate such a close and well-known friendship shared between two women. Gender also operates in the narrative of Madame de la Tour and Marguerite, their friendship developing over their "natural" and mutual inclination toward mothering, their matriarchal family unit modeled after typical family unit typically headed by a father figure. Even the obituary describing Labille-Guiard's more "motherly" instincts, a reference much different than those evoking the "paternal" role of the male artist within the genealogy of his studio, suggests an ingrained disavowal of women's professional creative camaraderie.

The case studies I chose for this dissertation are diverse in content and material, each contributing to an understanding of the challenges that female friendship posed to the heterosexual economy, as well as the advantages it offered its participants. Moreover, multiple discourses emerged as the material developed, many of them converging within and across chapters. Gérard's "conversation piece" from Chapter One privileges the less prominent narrative of female friendship in Bernardin de Saint-Pierre's *Paul et Virginie* by sequestering it on a remote, exotic island. The intimacy and self-sufficiency of the matriarchs obviate the need for a father figure in their untraditional family, and their differences in class (as well as their difference from Marie in terms of race) are leveled through their exchange of sentiment and maternal duty. Similar to the island, the convent was associated with "enclosure" (symbolic and real) in the images and materials related to it. Its walled spaces and gardens housed women who were widowed, never married, took vows, and/or pursued an education, offering a refuge for "unattached" women at various points in their lives. As Robert's paintings of Madame Geoffrin in the abbey garden suggest, this homosocial space of sociability brought with it a certain pleasure and freedom, which written accounts of convent experiences similarly suggest. While the convent of the ancien régime was certainly subject to attack by philosophes such as Denis Diderot, many women found refuge in the conventual space, and it was the site of rich relationships that were often cherished well beyond one's stay. The case study of Récamier and Staël reveals a unique example of two women whose lives and friendship were lived out in a quite public realm of sociability. Neither woman's life was defined by one particular man or lifelong love affair, and both were, in large part, defined and understood in their own time and throughout history as "friends." The paintings and

copious amount of writing related to their friendship provided the opportunity to develop a nuanced interpretation and “decoding” of the Déjuinne painting. Finally, my discussion of the “sister arts” and “sisterhoods of the arts” reveals the ways in which women’s professional networks offered a means of support and advancement, if not always practically, at least in theory. Women had to navigate a system of art historical and literary training and practice that sought to limit their participation for centuries, and this chapter continues the feminist inquiry of art history and artistic production begun in the 1970s. The material also lent itself to a more sustained discussion of sensibility through an analysis of the senses in Gérard’s canvas. Ultimately, the shift of representation from the abstract allegories of the “sister arts” to women’s active and professional participation in them offers a striking similarity to the evolution of the allegory of Friendship to women’s active engagement in the office (and its representation).

For women of the “long eighteenth century” – both real and represented – friendship ultimately enabled the development of a unique non-familial form of sociability and identity that the traditional roles of marriage and motherhood did not afford. The path from *amicitia* to *amitié* was often fraught with obstacles and discouragement, and its aims did not entail Revolutionary oaths or public commerce. It did, however, offer an alternative experience of shared sentiment, collaboration, and agency, and its textual, visual, and material traces represent a vibrant record of early modern sisterhood.

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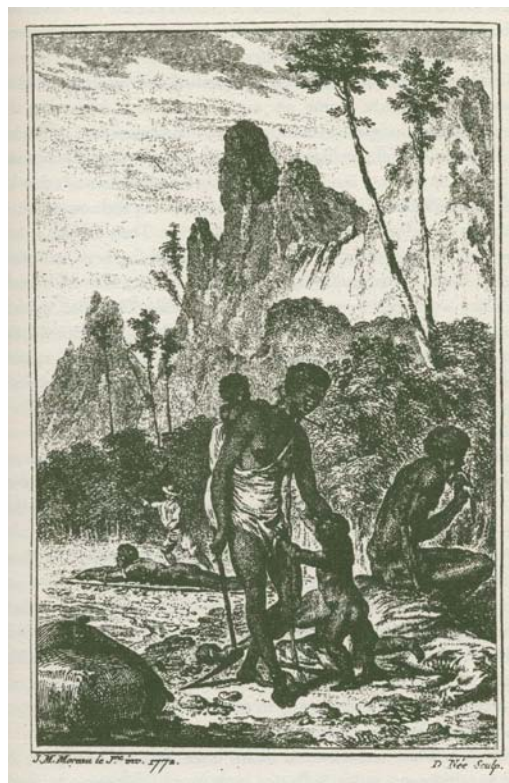


Figure 46. *Voyage à l'Ile de France*, illustration #6



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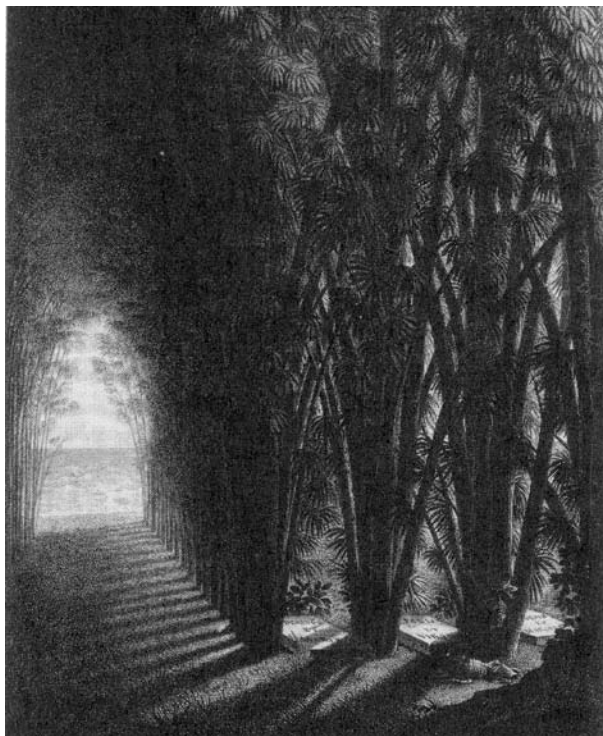


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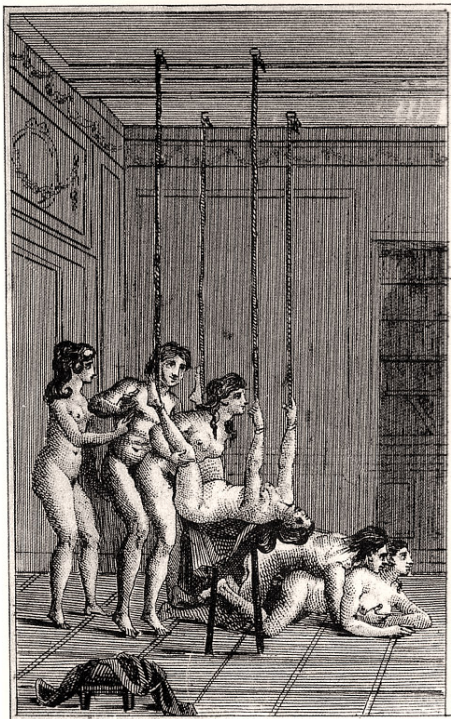
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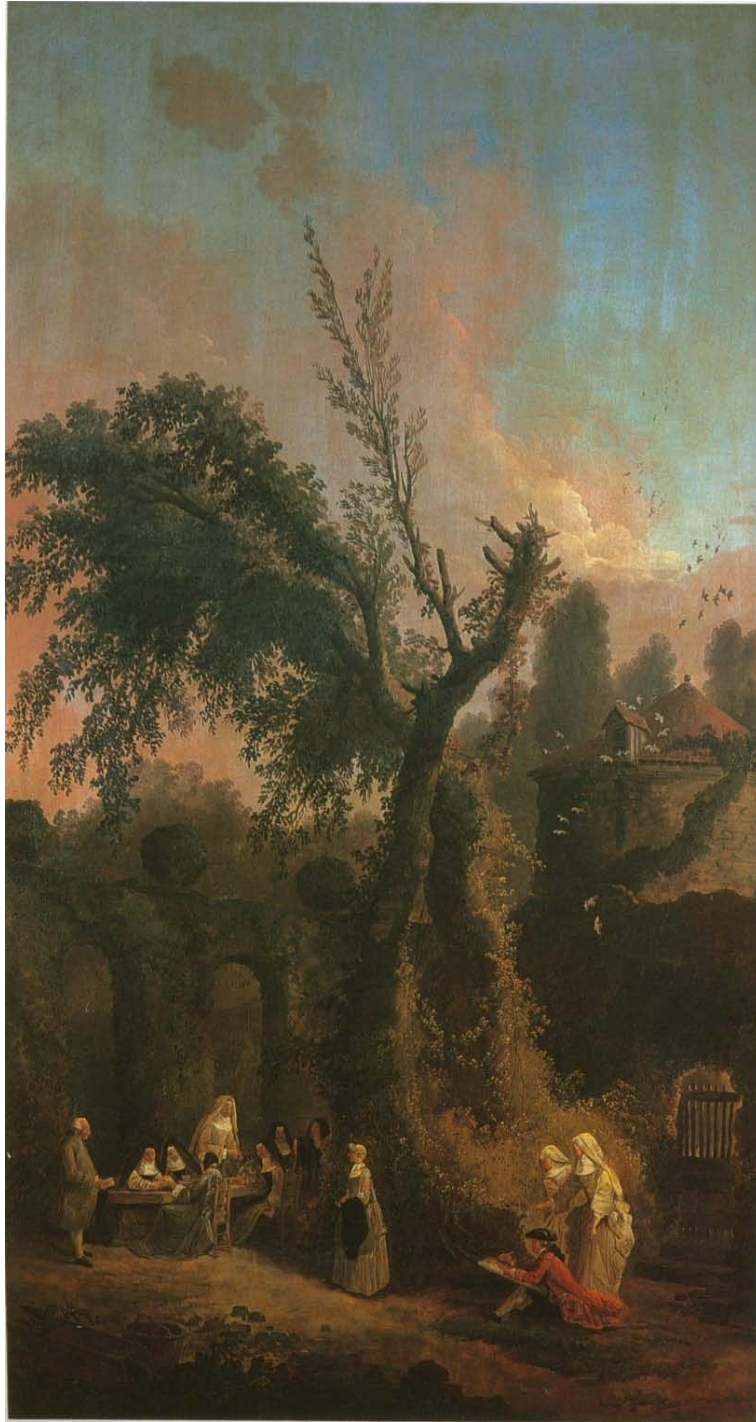


Figure 77. Hubert Robert, *Madame Geoffrin déjeuner avec les dames de l'Abbaye Saint-Antoine*, 1773, oil on canvas (Paris: Private Collection)



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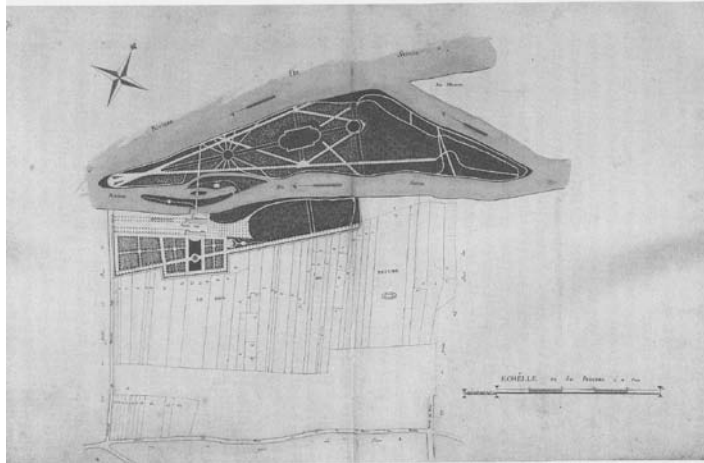


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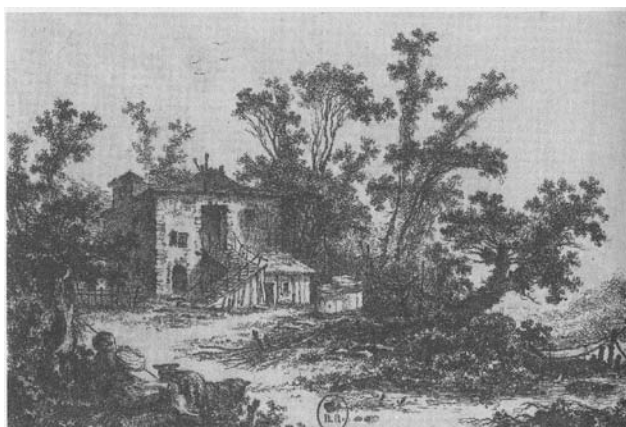


Figure 88. Richard de Saint-Non after Jean-Baptiste Le Prince, "Moulin Joli: Landscape with a Shepherdess in the Foreground," etching, 1755 (Paris: Bibliotheque Nationale)

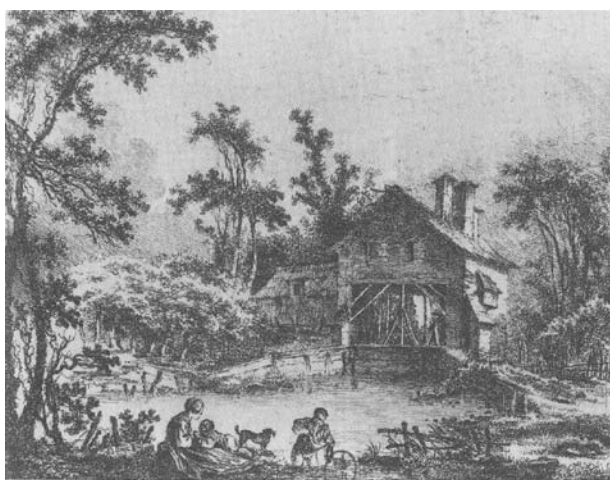


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Figure 90. Richard de Saint-Non after Jean-Baptiste le Prince, "Moulin Joli," 1755, etching (Paris: Bibliotheque Nationale)



Figure 91. Richard de Saint-Non after Jean-Baptiste le Prince, "Moulin Joli: Fishermen," 1755, etching (Paris: Bibliotheque Nationale)

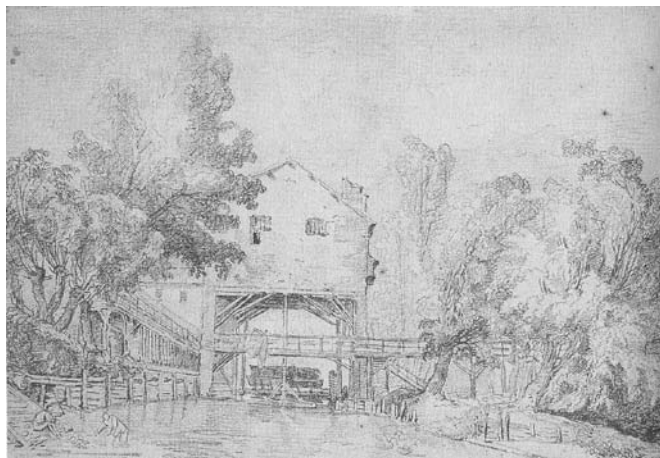


Figure 92. Hubert Robert, "Moulin Joli: Sanguine" (Valence: Musée des Beaux-Arts)



Figure 93. Jean-Baptiste-Jacques Augustin, *Portrait de Mlle Fanny Charrin: Temple de l'Amitié. Fanni en connoît tous les issues – la Reconnaissance l'y conduit*, late- 18th/early-19th century, ivory miniature, 6 x 4 1/2 in. (Paris: Musée du Louvre, Département des Arts Graphiques)



Figure 94. Jean-Baptiste-Jacques Augustin, *Portrait d'une femme jouant de la lyre près d'un autel de l'Amitié*, 1795, ivory miniature, 3 in. diameter (Paris: Musée du Louvre, Département des Arts Graphiques)



Figure 95. Adélaïde Labille-Guiard, *Marie-Thérèse-Louise-Victoire de France, fille de Louis XV, dite "Madame Victoire" représentée en 1788 devant une statue de l'Amitié (1733-1799) au château de Bellevue, 1788*, oil on canvas, 8 ft. 11 in. x 5 ft. 5 in. (Versailles: Châteaux de Versailles et de Trianon)



Figure 96. François Boucher, *Portrait of the Marquise de Pompadour*, 1759, oil on canvas, 35 3/4 x 26 3/4 in. (London: Wallace Collection)



Figure 97. Johann Ernst Jule Heinsius, *Jeanne Phlipon, Madame Roland* (1756-1793), 1792, oil on canvas, 26 1/3 x 21 in. (Versailles: Châteaux de Versailles et de Trianon)



Figure 98. François-Louis Déjuinne, *Madame Récamier à l'Abbaye-aux-Bois*, 1824, oil on canvas, 13 1/4 x 18 1/2 in. (Paris: Musée du Louvre)

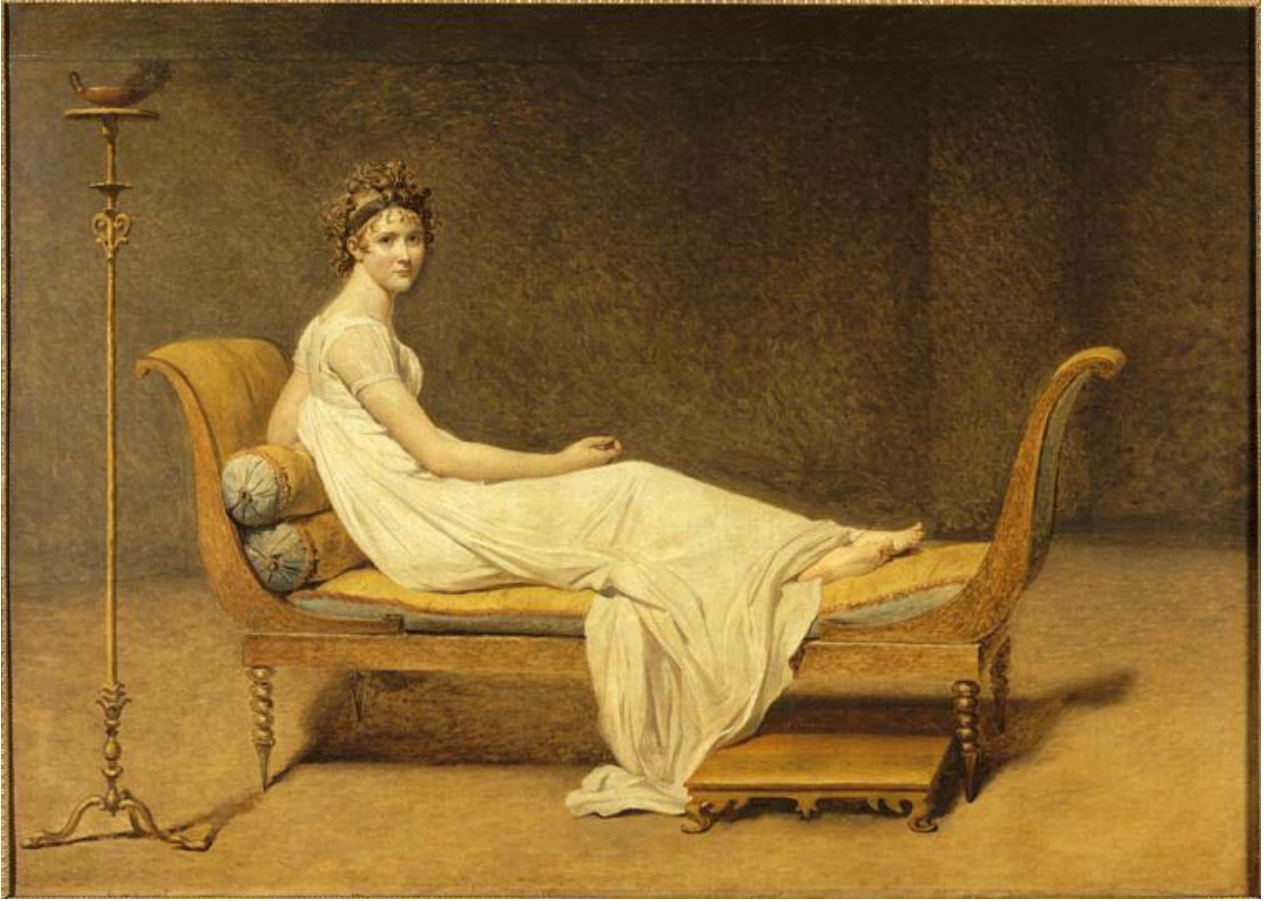


Figure 99. Jacques-Louis David, *Madame Récamier*, 1800, oil on canvas, 68 1/2 x 96 in. (Paris: Musée du Louvre)



Figure 100. François Gérard, *Corinne au Cap Misène*, 1819-1821, oil on canvas, 8 ft. 5 in. x 9 ft. 1 in. (Lyon: Musée des Beaux-Arts)



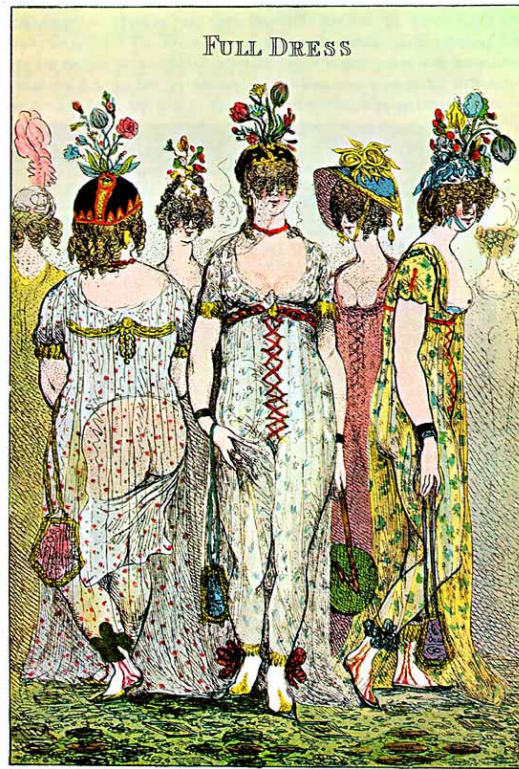
Figure 101. Child and woman's dress à la grecque, From *Journal des dames* (1798)



Figure 102. "Morning Dress," Plate from *Journal des dames et des Modes* (1799)



Figure 103. Elisabeth Vigée-Lebrun, *Marie Antoinette "en chemise,"* 1783, oil on canvas, 35 1/3 x 27 1/2 in. (Kronberg: Private Collection)



PARISIAN LADIES in their WINTER DRESS for 1800

Figure 104. Isaac Cruikshank, *Parisian Ladies in their Full Winter Dress for 1800*, Nov. 24, 1799



Figure 105. James Gillray, *Three Graces in a High Wind*, c. 1810



Figure 106. An “incroyable,” from *Journal des dames et des modes*, Plate 16 (1797)



Figure 107. An “incroyable,” from *Journal des dames et des modes*, Plate 100 (1798-1799)



Figure 108. *Café des Incroyables*, 1797



Figure 109. Eulalie Morin, *Juliette Récamier*, 1799, oil on canvas, 45 1/4 x 34 1/4 in. (Versailles: Châteaux de Versailles et de Trianon)



Figure 110. Joseph Chinard, *Madame Récamier*, c. 1801-1802, terracotta, 24 7/8 x 12 3/4 x 9 1/2 in. (Los Angeles: The Getty Museum)



Figure 111. François Gérard, *Juliette Récamier*, 1802-1805, oil on canvas, 7 ft. 3 in. x 4 ft. 10 in. (Paris: Musée Carnavalet)



Figure 112. François Gérard, *Thérésia Cabarrus, comtesse de Caraman*, 1805, oil on canvas (Paris: Musée Carnavalet)



Figure 113. François Gérard, *Madame Bonaparte dans son salon*, c. 1801, oil on canvas, 5 ft. 7 in. x 5 ft. 5 in. (Rueil-Malmaison: Musée National des Châteaux de Malmaison et Bois-Préau)



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Figure 124. Anton Raphael Mengs, *Parnassus*, 1761, fresco (Rome: Villa Albani)



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Figure 135. Andrey Nikiforovich, *Interior of the Painting Gallery of Count A.S. Stroganov*, 1793, oil on canvas, 15 x 21 3/4 in. (St. Petersburg: State Hermitage Museum)

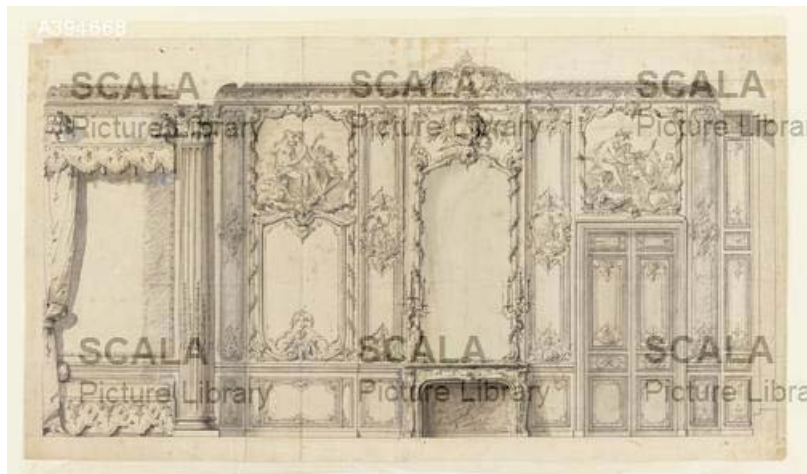


Figure 136. After Germain Boffrand, *Wall Elevation of the Bedroom for the Prince de Rohan, Hôtel de Soubise, Paris*, 1735-36, pen and black and gray ink, brush and gray wash, gouache, graphite, on three joined sheets of white laid paper, 11 7/16 x 20 5/8 in. (New York: Cooper-Hewitt, National Design Museum, Smithsonian Institution)



Figure 137. François Boucher, *Le déjeuner*, 1739, oil on canvas, 32 x 25 3/4 in. (Paris: Musée du Louvre)



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Figure 140. Marguerite Gérard, *Artist Painting a Portrait of a Musician*, before 1803, oil on canvas, 24 x 20 1/4 in. (St. Petersburg: State Hermitage Museum)



Figure 141. In the manner of Jacques-Joseph de Gault, *The Altar of Friendship*, 18th century, miniature on ivory, 2.5 in. diameter (Paris: Musée du Louvre)



Figure 142. François Boucher, *Allegory of Music*, 1764, oil on canvas, 40 3/4 x 51 3/16 in. (Washington, D.C.: National Gallery of Art)



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Figure 144. François Boucher, *Allegory of Painting*, 1765, oil on canvas, 39 15/16 x 51 3/16 in. (Washington, D.C.: National Gallery of Art)



Figure 145. Charles-Alphonse Dufresnoy, *Allegory of Painting*, 1642/1650, oil on canvas (Dijon: Musée des Beaux-Arts)



Figure 146. Adam Lambert-Sigisbert, *Poetry*, 1752, marble, 6 ft. 9 1/2 in. tall (Paris: Musée du Louvre)



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Figure 149. Angelica Kauffman, *Allegory of Music and Poetry* (also identified as *Painting*), 1782 (London: Private Collection/)



Figure 150. Bernardo Strozzi, *Allegory of the Arts*, c. 1640, oil on canvas, 5 x 4 1/2 ft. (St. Petersburg: State Hermitage Museum)



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Figure 152. Eustache Le Sueur, *The Muses Clio, Euterpe, and Thalia*, 1640-1645, oil on panel, 51 x 51 in. (Paris: Musée du Louvre)



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Figure 154. Angelica Kauffman, *Angelica Kauffman Hesitating Between the Arts of Painting and Music*, 1791, oil on canvas, 4 ft. 10 in. x 7 ft. 1 in. (Private Collection)



Figure 155. François Boucher, *Madame de Pompadour*, 1756, oil on canvas, 83 1/2 x 64 1/2 in. (Munich: Alte Pinakothek)



Figure 156. François Boucher, *Madame de Pompadour*, c. 1750, oil on canvas, 23 1/2 x 17 3/4 in. (Paris: Musée du Louvre)



Figure 157. Jean-Baptiste-André Gautier d'Agoty, *Marie-Antoinette Playing the Harp at Versailles*, 1777, oil on canvas, 26 1/2 x 21 1/2 in. (Versailles: Châteaux de Versailles et de Trianon)



Figure 158. Robert Lefevre, *Antoinette-Pauline de Montet-Duchambge*, 19th century, oil on canvas, 6 ft. 3 in. x 4 ft. 7 in. (Versailles: Châteaux de Versailles et de Trianon)



Figure 159. François-Hubert Drouais, *Madame Clothilde de France*, 1775, oil on canvas, 32 1/2 x 26 3/4 in. (Versailles: Châteaux de Versailles et de Trianon)



Figure 160. Jean-Honoré Fragonard, *The Music Lesson*, 1769, oil on canvas, 47 1/2 x 43 in. (Paris: Musée du Louvre)



Figure 161. Marguerite Gérard, *The Drawing Lesson*, c. 1820, oil on canvas, 23 1/4 x 18 1/2 in. (Grasse: Musée Fragonard)



Figure 162. Louis Carrogis Carmontelle, *Mlles Royer, filles du musicien de Zaide*, 1760, gouache (Paris: Musée Carnavalet)



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Figure 166. François Dumont, Portrait miniature of Paul Mandini, 1792, miniature on ivory, 6 1/2 x 5 in. (Paris: Musée du Louvre)



Figure 167. Pierre-Antoine Baudouin, *La Lecture*, 1760, gouache on paper (Paris: Musée des Arts Décoratifs)



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Figure 171. Louis Dannel, after Gabriel de Saint-Aubin, *Comparison of the Rosebud*, 15 3/8 x 10 1/2 in. (Private Collection)



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Figure 173. Constance-Marie Charpentier, *L'Atelier du peintre*, date unknown, oil on canvas



Figure 174. Adrienne Marie Louis Grandpierre-Deverzy, *Studio of Abel Pujol*, 1822, oil on canvas (Paris: Musée Marmottan)



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Figure 176. Marie-Gabrielle Capet, *Studio Scene: Adélaïde Labille-Guiard Painting the Portrait of Joseph-Marie Vien*, 1808, oil on canvas, 27 x 33 in. (Munich, Bayerische Staatsgemäldesammlungen, Neue Pinakothek)



Figure 177. Adélaïde Labille-Guiard, *Self-Portrait with Two Pupils*, 1785, oil on canvas, 83 x 59 1/2 in. (New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art)



Figure 178. Jean-Antoine Houdon, *Vestal Virgin*, 1787, marble (Paris: Musée du Louvre)



Figure 179. Augustin Pajou, *Bust of Claude-Edmé Labille*, 1785, marble, 24 1/2 in. tall (Paris: Musée du Louvre)



Figure 180. Antoine Coypel, *Portrait of the Artist with His Son, Charles-Antoine*, 1698, oil on canvas, 23 1/4 x 16 1/2 in. (Besançon: Musée des Beaux-Arts et d'Archéologie)



Figure 181. Adélaïde Labille-Guiard, *Portrait of Marie-Gabrielle Capet*, 1798, oil on canvas, 30 $\frac{7}{8}$ x 24 $\frac{5}{8}$ in. (Paris: Private Collection)



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Figure 183. *Stéphanie-Félicité Ducrest de Saint-Aubin, Comtesse de Genlis*, miniature on ivory, 3 1/2 x 3 in. (Chantilly: Musée Condée)



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Figure 188. Elisabeth Vigée-Lebrun, *Luisa Todi*, 1785, oil on canvas



Figure 189. Elisabeth Vigée-Lebrun, *Elisabeth Mara*, 18th century, oil on canvas



Figure 190. Elisabeth Vigée-Lebrun, *Madame Grollier*, 1788, oil on panel, 36 3/16 x 28 1/4 in. (Private Collection)



Figure 191. Adèle Romany, *Mademoiselle Raucourt*, 1812, oil on canvas



Figure 192. Adélaïde Labille-Guiard, *Madame Dugazon as Babet*, 1778, oil on canvas



Figure 193. Adélaïde Labille-Guiard, *Julie Candaille*, 1791, oil on canvas (Present location unknown)



Figure 194. Adélaïde Labille-Guiard, *The Comtesse de Selve Making Music*, 1787, oil on canvas (New York: Private Collection)

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