

VISUAL MEDIATIONS OF MOURNING AND MELANCHOLIA IN FRANCE,
1790 – 1830

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ABSTRACT

Alison Hafera: Visual Mediations of Mourning and Melancholia in France, 1790 -1830
(Under the direction of Mary D. Sheriff)

This dissertation investigates the ways artists and patrons in early-nineteenth-century France used portraits, gardens, prints, and material objects to mitigate and publicly express experiences of loss, deep sorrow, and remembrance. By interpreting art objects alongside a range of textual materials, including popular novels, medical treatises, memoirs, and art theory, I uncover the ways images of mourning and melancholia were linked to the cult of the individual while also expressing Romantic sensibilities about the psyche, imagination, and death itself. I trace evolving perceptions about melancholia, mourning, and death from the decades immediately following the French Revolution until the exile and death of Napoléon Bonaparte through case studies of specific objects. I argue that melancholia, death, and mourning rituals reflect the centrality of the post-revolutionary self and constitute a critical aspect of the social and visual climate of nineteenth-century France.

Scholarship on the Romantic Period typically has focused on England and Germany where landscape painting expressed national identity and the artist's subjective experience. I distinguish a particular strain of French Romanticism that expresses loss and melancholia through the relationship between figures and spaces, arguing that Romanticism, an arts movement that emphasized emotion over reason and captured subjective sentimental experiences, is particularly suited to conveying personal responses to the period's events in France. Scholarship on mourning and melancholia in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries

in France has centered on the increased secularization of ideas associated with death and mourning. My research shows the limitations of this approach by demonstrating the complex, varied, and nuanced ways mourning objects were linked not only to religious practices but also to political and social events, Romanticism, and concepts of selfhood.

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INTRODUCTION

In 1801, Philippe Pinel, the Physician in Chief to the Paris mental asylums after the French Revolution, published *Traité medico-philosophique sur l'aliénation mentale; ou la manie* which included his essay on melancholia.¹ There, the influential doctor provided a simplified classification of the four main mental disorders (melancholia, mania, dementia, and idiotism) and their treatment. Pinel defined melancholia as an “excessive and persevering passion for the cherished object” and identifies its symptoms as “taciturnity, a thoughtful pensive air, gloomy suspicions, and a love of solitude.”² His theories build on the Enlightenment position that melancholics were sane except for their peculiar fixation on a single thought or object, by linking the onset of melancholia to various psycho-sociological causes such as “ungovernable or disappointed ambition, religious fanaticism, profound chagrin and unfortunate love.”³ Pinel also found the “events connected with the Revolution” stimulated the development of melancholia in individuals.⁴

¹ Philippe Pinel, *Traité médico-philosophique sur l'aliénation mentale ou la manie* (Paris: Richard, Caille, et Ravier, 1800). On Pinel and melancholia see: Jennifer Radden, “Pinel,” in *The Nature of Melancholy: From Aristotle to Kristeva* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000), 203 – 204; Peter Elmer, *Health, Disease, and Society in Europe, 1500-1800: a Source Book* (New York: Manchester University Press, 2004); Anouchka Vasak, “Nostalgie, hystérie, mélancolie dans la Nosographie philosophique de Philippe Pinel,” in *Les Discours du corps au XVIIIe siècle: Littérature-Philosophie-Histoire-Science*, ed. Hélène Cusssac (Quebec: Pu Laval, 2009) 81- 95; Michel Foucault, *History of Madness* (1961 repri; New York: Routledge, 2006).

² Ibid., 54.

³ Ibid., 56.

On Enlightenment perspectives of melancholia see: Roy Potter, *Medicine in the Enlightenment* (Rodopi, 1995); Greg Eghigian, *From Madness to Mental Health: Psychiatric Disorder and Its Treatment in Western Civilization* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2010); Anne C. Vila, “Beyond sympathy: vapors, melancholia, and the pathologies of sensibility in Tissot and Rousseau,” in *Exploring the Convertible*

By associating melancholia with contemporaneous traumatic events, Pinel's text helps to usher in the *mal du siècle*, a term that refers to the profound spiritual crisis experienced by the generations that grew-up in the decades following the Revolution. According to François-Réne du Chateaubriand in *Le Génie du christianisme*, this collective malady arose in the immediate aftermath of the fall of the *ancien régime* in response to the uncertainties of the new world order brought about by the Revolution.⁵ According to Chateaubriand, the post-Revolutionary Romantic self was displaced, exiled, and distressed by the knowledge that, despite his best attempts, his true desires lay beyond his reach. For later generations, this experience of collective malaise translated into the sense of hopelessness and defeat represented by the collapse of Napoleonic imperialism.⁶ The *mal du siècle* then embodies both the poetic and the sociological circumstances that contributed to development of Romanticism in France, and melancholia represents a crucial symptom of this national experience.

According to early-nineteenth-century conceptions of melancholia and the *mal du siècle*, the conditions, while related, are not synonymous. The *mal du siècle* was marked by several symptoms, one of which was melancholy, but also included a sense of

World: text and sociability from the Classical Age to the Enlightenment, ed. Elena Russo (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1997: 88 - 101; Vila, *Enlightenment and Pathology: Sensibility in the Literature and Medicine of Eighteenth-century France* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1998).

⁴ Ibid., 59.

⁵ François-René Chateaubriand, *Génie du christianisme* (Paris: de l'imprimerie de Ballanche Père et Fils, 1809).

⁶ Scholarship on the *mal du siècle* has mainly focused on the theme as evident in literature of the period, particularly the work of François-Réne Chateaubriand, Alfred de Musset, and Charles Baudelaire. Musset attributed the malady to the loss of Napoléon, the French national "father" after the Revolution. See Armand Hoog, "Who Invented the Mal du Siècle?" trans. Beth Brombert, *Yale French Studies*, no. 13, Romanticism Revisited (1954): 42-51; Michael J. Call, *Back to the Garden: Chateaubriand, Senacour and Constant* (Saratoga, CA: Anma Libri, 1988); Margaret Waller, *The Male Malady: Fictions in French Romantic Novel* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1993); Pierre Babéris, *Balzac et le mal du siècle* (Paris: Gallimard, 1970); Robert Redeker, *Depression and Philosophy: From mal du siècle to Malady of the Century* (Bethesda: Academica Press, 2009).

disillusionment, weariness with life, and feelings of violence or aggression.⁷ It is distinct to the first half of the nineteenth century in France. Melancholia, on the other hand, has an ancient, complicated, and often unruly history that exhibits differing and even contrary meanings.⁸ Various seen as a gift and a burden, a normal disposition and a mental illness, an inherent temperament and an environmental condition, the history of melancholia as a psychic condition and cultural construct is fraught with tension. This tension is present in eighteenth- and nineteenth-century French characterizations of melancholia as well.

Pinel's succinct definition and clear outlining of melancholia belies its complex and diverse manifestations during the early-nineteenth century. Melancholia was variously linked to the powers of the intellect, sweet contemplative moments of reverie, the creative mind of gifted individuals, and the emotions associated with grief, trauma, and loss. In the decades around 1800, assuming the attributes of melancholia became fashionable as during the period the condition became a stylish malady associated with gentility and *sensibilité*.⁹ In his essay, *On the disorders of the people of fashion* (1766), the influential Swiss physician Samuel-Auguste-David Tissot argued that fashionable people are subject to fashionable diseases like melancholia because of their modern, "civilized" lifestyle.¹⁰ Linked with emotional sensitivity and cleverness, melancholia was viewed as an ailment that, under certain

⁷ Call, 5 – 6.

⁸ The literature on the history of melancholia is immense. Some key sources include: Matthew Bell, *Melancholia: The Western Malady* (Cambridge University Press, 2014); Stanley Jackson, *Melancholia and Depression: From Hippocratic Times to Modern Times* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1986); *The Nature of Melancholy: From Aristotle to Kristeva* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000). On the topic of melancholia in art before the French Revolution see, Raymond Klibansky; Erwin Panofsky; and Fritz Saxl, *Saturn and Melancholy: Studies in the History of Natural Philosophy, Religion and Art* (New York: Basic Books, 1964).

⁹ Clark Lawlor, "Fashionable Melancholy," in *Melancholy Experience in Literature of the Long Eighteenth Century: Before Depression, 1660-1800* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011), 19.

¹⁰ Samuel-Auguste-David Tissot, *On the disorders of the people of fashion*, trans. Francis Bacon Lee (1766 repri. Dublin: James Williams, 1772), 79; 100 - 110.

conditions, carried benefits. This manifestation of melancholia features in pictorial representations from the period that helped propagate and shape popular ideas of the disease.

One of the best known of these types of characterizations of melancholia is Paul-Pierre Prud'hon's *Portrait of the Empress Joséphine* from 1805 (Figure 11).¹¹ In perhaps what is the best-known portrait of the Empress, Joséphine is shown free of her imperial trappings, presented in an intimate way to the viewer, and pictured resting among the gardens and park she rejuvenated and studied at her country home Malmaison. Alone and seated on a large boulder shaded by dense foliage overhead, she turns towards us but looks away, caught in a private moment of melancholic reverie. Joséphine's languid pose - seated, looking away and downward, and resting her head lightly against a bent arm - was by this time clearly codified as melancholic. Images like Prud'hon's *Portrait of the Empress Joséphine* participated in making the emotion visible, fashionable, and desirable, particularly when personified by a person as influential and chic as Joséphine de Beauharnais.

Melancholia was also associated with intellectual privilege and the creative gifts of genius, as seen in portraits of Chateaubriand (Figure 74) and Napoléon Bonaparte (Figure 75). Here, these revered national figures of art and politics both assume the posture of the intellectual melancholic, their hands tucked in the folds of their waistcoats as a sign of their cerebral preoccupation. In Jacques-Louis David's portrait of Napoléon the attributes of the general's study reveal his mental prowess while the ruins of ancient Rome in Girodet's

¹¹ Prud'hon began the portrait, commissioned by Napoléon, in 1805 and finished the work in 1809, after which it was exhibited in the gallery of paintings at Malmaison. Joséphine considered Prud'hon a friend as well as her portraitist. When Mme de Chastenay visited the Empress in 1810, she saw the portrait in the gallery at Malmaison and remarked: "This gallery was adorned with the finest works of the best-known painters. At the back of the gallery a freshly finished painting stood on an easel; this painting was the portrait of the empress herself by Prud'hon. It showed her younger, and perhaps more beautiful than she was. Very graciously, she said, 'This is more the work of a friend than of a painter.'" Quoted in Sylvain Laveissière, *Pierre-Paul Prud'hon* (New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1998), 184. See also: Eleanor P. DeLorme, "The Courtly, Heroic, and Romantic: Joséphine's Patronage of Painting," in *Joséphine and the Arts of the Empire* (Los Angeles: The J. Paul Getty Museum, 2005), 29.

portrait of Chateaubriand signify the author's melancholic reflection.¹² Many authors from the period, including the writer and naturalist Henri Bernardin de Saint-Pierre and the pastoral poet Abbé Jacques Delille, wrote enthusiastically about the simultaneous feeling of pleasure and melancholy one could experience at the site of crumbling ruins and edifying tombs of the dead. Along with the malady's elite associations with refinement and depth of feeling, melancholia was also linked to death and loss.

Mourning and melancholia were intimately bound within the first decades of the nineteenth century in France. The collective trauma of the Revolution combined with monumental transformations in burial rites and practices motivated major changes in the ways death and mourning were conceived and positioned within peoples' lives. Mourning rites and rituals played an important part in defining the individual's role in society in the decades following the Revolution. As the power of the French monarchy diminished at the end of the eighteenth century so too did the influence of the Catholic Church, and the sacraments that once structured funerary customs were likewise rejected. To fill this void subjects sought new objects and ceremonies that reflected changing perceptions about the anonymity of citizens and the importance of discrete mourning spaces for survivors. For the first time, legislation granted citizens the right to individual burial plots and landowners could be buried on private estates. New cemeteries were designed and constructed to encourage secluded visitation and prolonged meditation at the graves of departed family and friends. My research shows artworks provided a crucial medium to facilitate and personalize these developments.

¹² David's portrait of Napoléon and Griodet's portrait of Chateaubriand are discussed in more detail in Chapter four of this dissertation. See pages 103 – 105 for a more detailed discussion of the ways melancholia is expressed in both portraits.

Through art people expressed individual and collective emotions in various ways. They commissioned posthumous portraits to commemorate loved ones and constructed tomb monuments emphasizing the beauty and transience of nature. They collected prints and decorative objects that depicted the graves of revered popular figures. Such subjective and public positioning was evident elsewhere: individuals commissioned portraits and displayed them in Salon exhibitions, published memoirs in record numbers, and paraded publically in avant-garde fashions to see and be seen. Artworks, rather unlike fashion, allowed individuals to engage with these social and political trends in both intimate and permanent ways. Art made these changes manifest in a tangible way and provided a visual model for mourners during these new and rapidly changing conditions. While new and desired mourning conditions remained unattainable in reality, artists were also able to construct the ideal grieving experience through carefully composed works.

This dissertation looks to the earliest decades of the nineteenth century to examine the various and complex manifestations of melancholia, mourning, and death within French visual art: death and the lover; death and the mother; death and suicide; death and national defeat. My analysis situates mourning objects and practices within a broader discourse about Romanticism and reactions to the French Revolution, particularly because these rituals reflect the ways the Revolution can be read as a subjective event that touched upon individual and collective identity. Recent scholarship has focused on the practices Revolutionary agents invented to shape and make sense of the events that unfolded around them. Scholars have explored subjectivity and post-revolutionary culture through representations of the body; I add to this knowledge, investigating the ways mourning and melancholia are expressed through the pictured relationship between bodies and environments.

Central to my analysis of mourning objects and images are questions of memory, trauma, loss, and imagination. Major questions that guide my analysis of these images and objects are: how did people use objects to express and mitigate feelings of melancholia associated with the monumental and sustained political and social changes brought about by the French Revolution? To what extent was art conceptualized as everlasting, eternal, and monumental and how is this conceptualization linked to the themes of identity, memory, trauma, and nostalgia? What effect did works of art and constructed spaces have on nineteenth century viewers, emotionally and physically?

To explore these questions I apply an interdisciplinary approach to the material on mourning and melancholia, combining visual analysis of paintings and prints with close reading of contemporaneous textual sources including medical treatises, works of literature, and personal records, such as memoirs and letters, that document reactions to events and artworks. I study the representation of spaces of mourning, melancholia, and grief, both real and represented – the private garden tomb and the public cemetery the creative space of the artist's mind, the battlefield, and island grave.

My research demonstrates the complex and nuanced ways mourning objects were linked not only to religious practices but also to political and social events, Romanticism, and concepts of selfhood in France between 1790 and 1830. This, therefore, expands existing scholarship about death and mourning rites that has centered on the increased secularization of ideas associated with these practices. Thus, by engaging with fields beyond art history – literature, medicine, psychology, social and political history, gender studies – I investigate these artworks from new perspectives enriching understanding of these particular objects and

the context of their creation, while providing new points of interest for scholars in other disciplines.

The following study is divided into two related parts. The first part focuses on the connection between melancholia and private, familial mourning through study of posthumous and commemorative portraits. To explore these issues I focus on two portraits commissioned by Lucien Bonaparte in the wake of his first wife's sudden death, both by an artist closely aligned with his brother Napoléon, Antoine-Jean Gros (1771- 1835). Bonaparte's patronship provides a fascinating and fruitful case study because through paintings, garden spaces, and sculptural monuments he curated an intimate devotional program dedicated to the memory his dead wife that engaged all members of his family, himself, and their two young daughters. Furthermore, his personal writings, *memoires*, and letters afford the opportunity to explore the ways these artworks resonated with family viewers and were incorporated by subjects into the process of mourning.

In the second half of the dissertation, I continue my investigation of the topic of death and melancholia but expand my perspective beyond private mourning to consider larger social and political issues associated with death and mourning including gender, artistic identity, the death of the hero, and sentiments of loss and trauma after the fall of the Napoléonic Empire. Portraiture remains central to my study as I analyze artist self-portraits, portraits of literary and political figures, and military portraits. I combine visual analysis with study of works of literature, newspaper accounts, and artist biographies.

Chapter one centers on the commission and production of posthumous portraits in early decades of the nineteenth century, particularly Gros's *Portrait of Christine Boyer*. Here, I provide new analysis of this unique category of portraiture uncovering the ways artists

incorporated conventional allegorical symbolism of melancholia into representations of actual people to construct emotionally ripe images for patrons while garnering greater public attention and professional acclaim for themselves through display of these works. In this chapter, I argue that Gros's picture engages with new theories about the potential and possibility of private portraiture, not only functioning as a personal memorial object but also as a narrative portrait that uses myth to communicate changing ideas about the nature and ritual of mourning in post-Revolutionary France.

Chapter two continues my investigation of the ways private portraiture maintained connection with the deceased by invoking memory and igniting imagination. Here I turn to the importance of the tomb as an ideal site of burial and the locus of melancholic sentiment. Through study of paintings and prints I analyze the creation and care of public cemeteries and private garden tombs both real and imagined. These paintings and prints show the design and realization of new mourning spaces, recording how these spaces were used and by whom. Through accounts of visits to monuments and cemeteries and my analysis of artworks I argue that secluded natural spaces became the ideal site for processing grief and enacting mourning rituals, reflecting nineteenth century sensibilities about the emotive potential of secular sites.

Chapter three investigates the melancholic artist through several artist portraits, including two self-portraits by Constance Mayer (1775 - 1821) whose long-neglected work has been studied almost exclusively vis-à-vis her relationship with the painter Pierre-Paul Prud'hon. Here, I explore period conceptualizations of emotion and creative genius and consider how conventions of the melancholic artist are uniquely manifest in the French Romantic Period. I analyze the way the person of the "artist" was re-mythologized during the

period to incorporate the melancholic temperament in central and expressive ways. In particular I explore the gendered connotations of the description and characterization of melancholia and the ways women were denied accessibility to the myth of the Romantic artist. Central to this study is the topic of suicide and the ways artist biographies were narrated to either solidify or deny the artist's heroic, melancholic status.

Chapter four continues the study of melancholia and gender but considers the representation of melancholic masculinity. Central to this chapter is the political climate spurred by Napoleon Bonaparte's exile and death. I study paintings and prints that represent Napoleon's island grave on St. Helena and investigate the ways these objects express nostalgia for the Napoleonic Empire and national, collective loss. I also return to the topic of portraiture examining the ways the depiction of masculinity changed during the last years of the Empire. Central to this analysis are military portraits from the Empire by Horace Vernet (1789 – 1863), Pierre-Narcisse Guérin (1774 – 1833), and Théodore Géricault (1791 – 1824).

The material presented in the following case studies suggests many of the ideals and customs we maintain in the twenty-first century are rooted in the Romantic Period. Examining the origins of these concepts and understanding their relationship to the values practiced today gives greater access to their meaning and social value, providing deeper understanding about how we personally and collectively process trauma and grief and ultimately memorialize the events of our own time. French nineteenth-century primary visual and textual sources on death, mourning and melancholia offer a rich body of material that demands further in-depth study, and by focusing several chapters on artworks and artists that have not yet been the subject of sustained research my work contributes to the renewed interest in the early Romantic Period.

CHAPTER ONE

Return to Me: Mourning, Melancholia, and Myth in Gros's Posthumous Portrait of Christine Boyer

Today, Baron Antoine-Jean Gros's *Portrait of Christine Boyer* hangs in the large galleries of the Louvre reserved for grand history paintings from the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries (1801; Figure 1). Originally, the work was a product of a private commission initiated by Lucien Bonaparte, then Minister of the Interior, following the death of his young wife and mother to his two small daughters.¹³ Lucien purportedly engaged Gros to paint the portrait of his late wife to help allay his prolonged and deep melancholy that extended beyond the normal period of mourning.¹⁴ By commissioning a posthumous portrait of his beloved wife Lucien participated in a common eighteenth-century practice. Of all the various kinds of commemorative objects made during the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, to memorialize loved ones and celebrate their lives through the rituals of mourning, portraits have perhaps the most ancient connection to death. The Romans made death masks to capture the exact facial features of ancestors. Their cult of family identity required a commemorative object that stood-in for deceased ancestors, both to maintain

¹³ Boyer died on May 14, 1800 from "lung disease". She was twenty-six years old and six months pregnant at the time. Dr. J. Bergounioux, "La dernière maladie de Christine Boyer," *Bulletin de la Société française d'histoire de la médecine* 2 (1903): 406 - 408. See also François Pietri, *Lucien Bonaparte* (Paris: Plon, 1939), 114.

¹⁴ After being introduced to the young General Bonaparte in Milan by his wife Joséphine in 1797, Gros was commissioned to complete a portrait of Napoléon. This portrait, *Bonaparte at the pont d'Arcole* (1801), initiated a decades-long propagandistic relationship between Gros and the future Emperor of France. See David O'Brien, *After the Revolution: Antoine-Jean Gros, Painting and Propaganda Under Napoléon* (University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2006), 31 - 34.

family lineage and to provide a focus for grief.¹⁵ Eighteenth-century subjects were no different. They too desired imagery that captured the likenesses of beloved family and friends, making them present in the face of absence.

During the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries the portrait remained a visual object closely tied to emotional relationships between people. Before the advent of photography, portraits were understood to bear the presence of the sitter rather than to mark his or her absence. As *aide-mémoires*, portraits were displayed in family galleries as records for posterity, commissioned on the occasion of births and marriages, and exchanged between lovers, often in the form of miniatures – objects small enough that they could be held in the palm of a hand or even worn on the very body as personal adornment. The private portrait, above all, was used to sustain emotional ties during periods of separation even, ultimately, anticipating that most prolonged and disruptive parting brought about by death.

As potent symbols of emotion and connection, portraits often were exchanged during the course of a love affair along with letters and other tokens of affection. In the hand of a skilled artist, portraits could achieve likenesses capable of eliciting sensual responses in the context of romance. The particularities of a lover's appearance – her skin, eyes, lips, and hair – were so well captured within the painted image as to appear lifelike and imminently present. In this way portraits invited an evocation of a sense of touch, especially in the case of miniature portraits, which were held, studied intimately and even kissed. Rousseau describes just such an encounter between Saint-Preux and Julie's miniature portrait in *Julie, ou La Nouvelle Héloïse* (1761). After being separated at the end of the first part of the novel,

¹⁵ John Pollini, "Ritualizing Death in Republican Rome: Memory, Religion, Class Struggle, and the Wax Ancestral Mask," in *From Republic to Empire: Rhetoric, Religion, and Power in the Visual Culture of Ancient Rome* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2012), 13 - 68.

Julie continues to seduce Saint-Preux through letters and the power of her painted image, which act as a surrogate for her.¹⁶ Upon receiving the gift of Julie's portrait, Saint-Preux opens the package in seclusion and compares his first glimpse of her miniature to the ripping of a veil, which once torn offers an unmediated experience of Julie (Figure 2). He engages with the miniature and suggests to Julie in his next letter: "Do you not feel your eyes, your cheeks, your lips, your breast, pressed, crushed, overwhelmed with my ardent kisses?"¹⁷

So powerful were portraits as markers of intimacy that they, along with love letters, were returned to signify with clarity and finality the end of an affair. Genre pictures from the period such as Louis-Léopold Boilly's *Les Malheurs de l'amour* illustrate this custom and the emotional impact the return of one's painted likeness could have on a rejected lover (1790; Figure 3). Boilly's painting depicts the moment a young woman's portrait and love letters arrive by way of messenger from her lover. Upon seeing the cherished items returned, she nearly faints from the rejection. She knows the return of her portrait communicates the removal of her presence from her lover's life, her likeness having served as a tangible and powerful marker of her physical and emotional connectedness to him.

Artists employed innovative methods to make family portraits complete in the face of a member's absence. In *The Family of General Guillaume Philibert Duhesme* sculptor Joseph Chinard incorporates a portrait medallion of husband and father, a format traditionally reserved for tombs where the medallion identifies the deceased, to complete the group (1801 – 05; Figure 4). General Duhesme is made present through his portrait within the portrait, and his family contemplates his image with longing and tenderness. Here, his absence was

¹⁶ Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Julie, or, The New Héloïse: Letters of Two Lovers Who Live in a Small Town at the Foot of the Alps*, trans. Philip Stewart and Jean Vache (Hanover and London: University Press of New England), 216 – 217.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 228 – 229.

brought about by the prolonged warfare that marked France in the early nineteenth century, and consequently, objects such as this one became sought after more and more.

Portraits also supplied presence and enabled connectedness after the death of a loved one. Clients commissioned painted and sculpted portraits not only to commemorate the deceased but also, just as importantly, to maintain ties with loved ones beyond the grave. Viewers likewise engaged with these kinds of portraits in intimate ways. Jean-Baptiste Greuze captures this kind of experience in *The Inconsolable Widow* (1762 - 63; Figure 5). Here, a young widow is consumed with grief as she rereads love letters from her deceased husband. So moved by the memories they elicit, she breaks down in tears and finds comfort in making physical contact with his portrait bust. His continued presence, facilitated through his portrait, within the private spaces of her home reflects her sustained devotion and feelings of affection even after his death. The spaniel curled at the foot of the plinth underlines the theme of fidelity expressed through mourning.

Portraiture's connection with death is a topic much explored by scholars. Louis Marin argues that because the portrait seems to bring the dead back to life it serves the same kind of function as other types of funerary objects.¹⁸ Like other funerary objects, the portrait transcends time, continually making the likeness of the dead available, attending to the personal and sensual experience of the viewer standing before it. For surviving family and friends, portraits of departed loved ones serve as relics that offer, through painted or sculpted likeness, a trace of the departed one's body and face, stimulating memories in those who look upon the image. The meaning and power of portraits necessarily changes and fulfills different functions as the sitter ages, dies, and is absorbed into memory, and the image carries different meanings for immediate family members who are experiencing the loss of a loved one.

¹⁸ Louis Marin, *Portrait of the King* (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 1988), 7 and 89.

In this chapter I argue that Gros's *Portrait of Christine Boyer* engages with new theories about the potential and possibility of private portraiture and that Boyer's portrait not only functions as a personal memorial object but also as a narrative portrait that uses myth to communicate changing ideas about the nature and ritual of mourning in post-Revolutionary France. Gros's *Portrait of Christine Boyer* functions on two separate yet parallel interpretive planes. The first interpretation stems from Lucien Bonaparte's desire to assuage his sorrow through the act of memorializing his beloved wife. This function reflects eighteenth-century trends in funerary rituals, death, and mourning, particularly the belief that works of art, as conduits for memory, can help sustain relationships between lovers even after death. Art made these changes manifest in a real way and provided a visual model for mourners during these new and rapidly changing conditions. While new and desired mourning conditions remained unattainable in reality artists were also able to construct the ideal grieving experience through carefully constructed works. In this portrait Gros constructs just such an ideal mourning space, creating a secluded, clandestine site expressive of and provoking the ideal emotions associated with grief where Lucien Bonaparte might alleviate his sorrowing heart.

The second interpretive plane breaks from the personal sensory experience of Bonaparte to incorporate Gros's own artistic desires and pursuits, particularly his interest in representing themes associated with myth, loss, and death. His academic training as a history painter was yet to be realized in his professional life, and the artist felt restricted by the necessary work of completing commissions for private portraits – work that supported him through the lean years after the Revolution but did not fulfill him creatively.¹⁹ The decline of

¹⁹ When Gros accepted the commission for Boyer's portrait and exhibited the painting at the Salon of 1801 he was yet to complete the major, large-format battle paintings that would mark his career as a favorite painter of

the kinds of commissions the academically trained Gros desired (epic history paintings) coincided with the rise in the visibility and acceptance of portraits within the public realm, thereby making the ability to earn portrait commissions vital to an artist's professional survival and consequently prompting a rethinking of theories about the general importance and value of the genre. By carefully engaging with the iconography present in Gros's portrait of Boyer, while attending to the cultural of mourning in late eighteenth-century France, it is possible to interpret the *Portrait of Christine Boyer* as a hybrid image that functions as both a sensate memorial and a mythic narrative.

An Image After Death: Constructing the Posthumous Portrait

The elements of presence, time, and desire are especially bound up in works of art that functioned originally as deeply personal memorial objects. Such is the classification of Gros's *Portrait of Christine Boyer*. During the first half of the eighteenth century, artists followed established conventions for posthumous portraiture. In some instances, the posthumous nature of the image is self-evident, as when the portrait of a dead relative appears in a portrait of a living sitter. Many artists were less overt in their references, including deceased family members alongside the living as if they were present for the sitting.

Others encoded posthumous portraits with symbols alluding to the disruption of life caused by death: a book marked halfway through completion, an unfinished letter, a setting sun. In Adélaïde Labille-Guiard's *Portrait of Madame Infante*, transience and passing are

Napoléon Bonaparte's. These include: *Jaffa* (1804), *Battle of Eylau* (1808), and *Pyramids* (1810). Following the success of these works Gros received the honor of "Baron of the Empire" from Napoléon after the exhibition of *Eylau* at the Salon of 1808. See: O'Brien, *Painting and Propaganda*, 47 – 51; 84 – 87; 90 – 114.

suggested by the royal princess's shadow cast on the wall behind her, the setting sun, and the shade that falls over her eyes (1788; Figure 6).²⁰ This work, commissioned by her surviving sisters as a pendant to their portraits, does not picture Madame Louise-Elisabeth of France in her public guise surrounded by tokens of ancestry and status, but rather remembers the young woman in her role as mother. Her son reaches towards her with longing, a common gesture between surviving child and deceased parent in posthumous portraits from the period. In another posthumous portrait by Labille-Guiard a mother pens a final letter to her children (c. 1787; Figure 7). This unidentified sitter is shown seated stoically at her writing desk, handkerchief in hand so that she might catch her tears before they fall onto the paper.²¹ She writes: “---to my children, I commend you to friendship, it will protect you.”²² As viewers, we witness her dedication to her children, even beyond the grave. Her letter remains unfinished just as she remains suspended in time, eternally linked through the mediators of letter and painting to her children. In a similar manner, a father in this case, the artist Antoine Vestier memorializes his son (1778; Figure 8). In his posthumous *Portrait of Jean-René*

²⁰ Madame Louise-Elisabeth of France, Infanta of Spain and Duchess of Parma, died in 1759. The portrait was commissioned by her surviving sisters, Mesdames Adélaïde and Victoire, Louis XVI's aunts, from Labille-Guiard as a pendant to their portraits. The works were exhibited together at the Salon of 1789. Tony Halliday, *Facing the Public: Portraiture in the Aftermath of the French Revolution* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2000), 18, 20.

²¹ The literature regarding this portrait by Labille-Guiard exemplifies some of the challenges that come with studying posthumous portraiture. Because works were commissioned, in many cases, immediately following the death of a loved one, the posthumous nature of the portrait is not always evident. Until recently, this portrait was believed to represent a living sitter preparing to abandon her children. This initial reading of the portrait is highly unlikely, as such a dereliction of maternal duty would not have been an appropriate circumstance to celebrate in an eighteenth-century portrait. Death, however, was a proper occasion for commemoration. See: Tony Halliday, “David's *Marat* as Posthumous Portrait” in *Jacques-Louis David's Marat*, eds. William Vaughan and Helen Weston (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 56 – 76; and Dena Goodman, *Becoming a Woman in the Age of Letters* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2009) 20 - 21.

²² “à mes enfants/ je vous recommande / à l'amitié elle vous protégera”. Quoted in Goodman, *Becoming a Woman*, 21.

Vetier, the artist captures the tragic interruption of a young life by picturing his son reading, the boy's fingertips marking the pages halfway through an open book.

Like all portraits, these representations of deceased sitters accent familial duty, refer to the sitter's roles in society, and attempt to capture their virtue and character. As mourning portraits they emphasize the private lives and intimate relationships of the sitters. This preference for the private over the public, the familial over the ceremonial, is in keeping with shifts in the conception of mourning during the second half of the eighteenth century. Beginning around 1740 long-standing conventions about the nature of mourning began to shift to focus less on public personae and more on expressions of private grief.²³ Furthermore, eighteenth- and early-nineteenth-century subjects subscribed to the belief that not only is the individual commemoration of family and friends a necessary part of the grieving process but the void caused by the death of a beloved could, to a certain extent, be filled by the commemorative object and the memories it stimulated. For mourners, the posthumous portrait could act as a conduit between survivor and beloved departed.

Although Gros's *Portrait of Christine Boyer* does not readily reveal itself as a posthumous image, especially when considering the time elapsed between her death and Bonaparte's commission, in many ways the portrait follows established conventions of posthumous portraiture. Boyer is represented full-length, allowing Gros to focus on her entire figure, drawing emphasis away from the degree of likeness in her facial features and recovering the wholeness of her body for the viewer. She is shown close to the picture plane

²³ John McManners, *Death and the Enlightenment: Changing Attitudes to Death Among Christians and Unbelievers in Eighteenth-century France* (Oxfordshire: Clarendon Press, 1981) 344, 463; Richard A. Etlin, *The Architecture of Death: the Transformation of the Cemetery in Eighteenth-century Paris* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1984), 16 – 39.

imbuing her presence with a sense of immediacy and intimacy. Gros depicts Christine in a dark landscape, precariously situated on a rocky outcropping and isolated on the shores of a rushing stream fed by a waterfall spanning the middle-ground of the picture. She turns her face and looks down so that only her profile is visible as she watches a rose blossom float away in the river at her feet.

The portrait is replete with symbols of devotion, loss, and the transience of life. The setting, flora, and fauna, elements of nature, and costume all work to deliver a mournful commemorative portrait. To begin, Gros pictures Boyer within a shadowy landscape much in keeping with period ideas about the appropriate setting for funerary rituals and burial. The conception of mourning as a private and specifically familial activity began to take shape in the mid-eighteenth century, gaining momentum during the Revolution, perhaps in response to the endless state-sanctioned executions of the Terror, where death became a public and social spectacle.²⁴ In 1765 Denis Diderot condemned a sketch by Jean-Baptiste Deshayes of Artemisia visiting the tomb of her husband specifically because Artemisia (Queen of Caria) is depicted surrounded by guards and companions. Diderot writes, “True sorrow needs solitude; it abhors display, it does not wish to be observed.”²⁵ In eighteenth-century France, to truly mourn for someone deeply loved and forever lost was to mourn in solitude. This emphasis on solitude challenged established traditional ceremonies surrounding death, and the setting of the Catholic parish church began to be replaced with the ephemeral splendor of nature. As stated by John McManners in *Death and the Enlightenment*, a natural setting offered the opportunity to:

²⁴Etlin, 229 – 230.

²⁵ Denis Diderot, “Le Salon 1767,” in *Salons*, ed. Jean Seznec and Jean Adhémar (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1983), II: 102.

...mourn religiously, yet without religion, to mourn and to be in love with mourning. Where else should this be found but against the tremendous backdrop of nature; against scenery changing from light to darkness and from color to grayness as the days and the seasons revolve, ever beautiful to recall us to memories of departed beauty, but with somber moods conveying the charm of the melancholy to purify and sustain our grief.²⁶

Nature provided more than much desired privacy and solitude for the mourner. Symbols of germination and decay, not found within the ecclesiastical walls of the parish church, inspired meditation on the phases of life and provided comfort in grief.

Garden theorists such as Christian Hirschfeld, whose hugely influential *Théorie de l'Art des Jardins* was published simultaneously in German and French between 1779 and 1785, supported these emerging ideals, arguing that gardens can and ought to communicate mood. Mournful landscapes, in actual spaces and painted ones, he wrote, should be removed and enclosed, dark and thick with trees.²⁷ The landscape should embrace natural reminders of the transience of life that complement and reinforce carefully placed man-made monuments dedicated to the memory of friends. The sound of water in particular, Hirschfeld offered, was appropriate for spaces dedicated to mourning. A flowing stream provided evocative and conducive sounds to match the sadness of the mourner while also manifesting the flow of life in a literal way: “A muffled, choked rumor is the tone of melancholy and mourning; a sweet murmuring invites contemplation and is appropriate for solitude.”²⁸ We follow the swift current with our eyes, he said, tracing the flow of water that carries away all the fleeting events of this life - even better if bodies of water are combined with darkness:

²⁶ McManners, *Death*, 344.

²⁷ Hirschfeld, *Théorie de l'Art des Jardins* (Leipzig: Weidmann, 1779), I: 93.

²⁸ “Un bruit sourd et étouffé est le ton de la mélancholie et du deuil; un doux murmure invite à la réflexion, et convient à la solitude.” Ibid., 96.

...darkness, settling on ponds and other still bodies of water inspires melancholy and sadness. Deep, silent water, veiled by reeds and overhanging vegetation, where even sunlight cannot penetrate, is very well suited to sites intended for such feelings...urns and monuments consecrated by friendship to the spirits parted from their earthly remains.²⁹

Here, Hirschfeld describes a landscape that could be the one constructed by Gros in his posthumous portrait of Boyer. The bit of sunlight – visible in the upper left corner of the painting – is barely able to penetrate through the dense brambles and woods. This mysterious, murky landscape is dominated by the flowing stream, the thick brush and trees that surround it and the large boulders that at once frame out Boyer's figure and isolated her within the space.

Gros's portrait conforms to these directives, presenting the viewer with an image of the deceased suspended in an idealized scene of the afterlife while also providing her devoted husband with an imagined landscape designed to mirror and assuage his grief. By placing Boyer alone along the riverbank, the image can be viewed as a private place to house Lucien's grief within a quiet, isolated space of visitation and meditation. Furthermore, the importance of solitude and personal connection for Diderot, in the real and represented act of mourning, is reiterated in the art critic's theories about the emotional potential of art. Diderot believed that interpreting any work of art is a highly personal experience and he often constructed narratives around the painted imagery before him.³⁰ Gros's isolated space

²⁹ "...l'obscurité qui repose sur les étangs et les autres eaux dormantes, inspire la mélancholie et la tristesse. Une eau profonde, silencieuse et voilée par des ronces et des buissons suspendus, que même la lumière du soleil n'éclaire jamais, s'accorde très bien avec des sites destinés à des sentiments semblables, avec...des urnes et des monuments consacrés par l'amitié à des esprits dégages de leurs dépouilles terrestres." Ibid., 95.

³⁰ Perhaps the most famous example of such narrative comes from Diderot's Salon review of Jean-Baptiste Greuze's *Une Jeune fille, qui pleure son oiseau mort* (1765): "Why this dreamy, melancholy air? What, all this, for a bird? ...Come, child, open your heart to me . . . I am not your father, I am neither indiscreet nor severe." Diderot, "Salon de 1765," in *Oeuvres complètes*, ed. Varloot (Paris: Hermann, 1980), 14: 179.

underscores the personal experience of viewing art, and for Lucien this isolation offers a quiet space to hold a conversation between lovers.

Other scholars have argued that Gros represents an actual place, Boyer's garden tomb on the family's estate at Plessis-Chamant, rather than constructs an imagined melancholic landscape.³¹ James Henry Rubin documented his attempt to locate that setting on the vestiges of the nineteenth century configuration of the estate but Rubin's claim remains unconvincing, particularly when confronted with the setting presented to us by the artist. I posit that Gros constructs a wholly imaginary landscape, one that exemplifies Romantic sensibilities about the relationship between art, nature, melancholy, and death. A formal analysis of the portrait makes evident that the painting does not represent a real site observable in nature. Instead, by conjuring a sense of drama and mystery, Gros places Boyer in a dark forest that contains not only a winding stream but an elevated waterfall that spills with force just behind her. Mist rises at the fall's base as the rushing water tumbles over boulders and rocks in the stream bed. Occupying only a small plot of ground near the water's edge, Boyer appears to be stranded or trapped within the landscape; the river separates Boyer from the viewer's space, and large boulders and thick brush block passage behind her. Gros constructs a dramatic space that represents not only solitude but isolation and dread. The landscape is ambiguous, and the symbolic function of the environment is heightened by the way light dissipates throughout the image.

Like Labille-Guiard before him, Gros shows the sun setting over the figure of his subject. He captures a particular time of day in the painting, suggesting dusk through the yellow glow that emanates from the background, silhouetting the tree branches against the

³¹ Rubin, "La sépulture romantique de Ch. Boyer et son portrait par Antoine-Jean Gros," *La Revue du Louvre et des Musées de France* 25 (1975): 17 - 22.

horizon. Like the winding stream, the setting sun symbolizes the fleetiningness of time here on earth. Other natural symbols identify the painting as a mourning picture and memorialize Boyer's life on earth. The rose being carried away by the stream also helps to identify the space as a site of mourning. The rose, long a standard emblem of the brevity of life in sixteenth- and seventeenth-century *vanitas* images, had become by the late-eighteenth century symbolic of death, specifically the death of a young woman.³² Two additional roses are visible on the bush to Boyer's right. These tight buds represent her surviving daughters, Charlotte and Christine Égypta, and remind the viewer of Boyer's roles as mother and wife.

Whereas the natural elements within the pictured landscape reference the brevity of life generally, costume situates Boyer historically and socially, further strengthening the thematic implications of time and its correlation with death and mourning within the posthumous image. Wearing an empire muslin chemise, Boyer is depicted as the epitome of elegance and style. The red shawl draped over her shoulders is trimmed in an *au courant* Kashmir-inspired pattern, and she wears a thin veil in her hair.³³ The white muslin gown and shawl signify Boyer's status as a fashionable woman from the upper class.

During the *Directoire*, the institution in power in France from 1795 to 1799, fashion became representative of political affiliations, as well as personal, material references to antiquity.³⁴ Wearing clothes inspired by antiquity was a way of subscribing to certain ancient

³² In the entry "mort" from their *Dictionnaire des Arts*, Watelet and Lévesque list a rose as a sign of premature death for a young girl or woman. Claude-Henri Watelet, *Dictionnaire Des Arts De Peinture, Sculpture Et Gravure* (Paris: L.F. Prault, impr., 1792), III: 557.

³³ Philippe Séguy, "Costume in the Age of Napoléon," in *The Age of Napoléon: Costume from Revolution to Empire, 1789-1815* (New York: Harry N. Abrams, 1989), 64 - 69.

³⁴ Fashions and hairstyles inspired by classical antiquity first appeared in France just before the Revolution. During this time, thin white muslin sheaths with high waistlines and low necklines became popular in part because they imitated the clinging drapery of classical statues. Women also copied the hairstyles of antique statues, wearing cropped, curled hair and wigs beginning in 1798. *Ibid.*, 65, 69.

ideas, such as Athenian democracy, a sense of virtue, the cult of the heroic warrior and exaltation of the civic sense. Drawing directly on Jacques-Louis David's representations of Greco-Roman figures, the basic starting point for women's costume was the muslin, empire chemise dress. This new interest in antiquity and Greco-Roman style worked in two distinct manners, especially with regard to the costume of women and the visual availability of their figures. Modern women rejected the constricting boned corset and multilayered *robe à la française* in favor of more relaxed and audacious styles: the gauzy muslin dresses that clung to their bodies and afforded a new transparency, revealing subtle glimpses of leg from beneath the sheer fabric.³⁵ The muslin chemise became a veil over the female body, exposing not only the bare limbs, shoulders, and neck but also evoking, through its allusion to Greek antiquity, ancient Greek representations of the female nude.

The crimson Kashmir shawl draped around Boyer's shoulders is both symbolic and functional. Shawls mimicked the drapery of antique statues, allowing an elegant woman to give the impression of coverage while still exposing her bare shoulders, arms, décolletage, and neck for display. This element of her dress further situates Boyer within an historic moment and signifies her status within *Directoire* society. Kashmir shawls began to appear with great regularity in French fashion magazines and portraits in the 1790s, having been first introduced in the late-eighteenth century when soldiers brought them back from Napoleon's Egyptian campaign of 1798 as souvenirs (1801; Figures 9 and 10). Often, these souvenir shawls were given as gifts of love and affection. By 1810 the shawl had become a symbol of gentility and true love, as wealthy grooms presented fine wraps as wedding gifts to

³⁵ Madeleine Delpierre, *Dress in France in the Eighteenth Century* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1997).

their betrothed.³⁶ The shawl gained immense popularity when the three most fashionable and celebrated women of Parisian society, Joséphine de Beauharnais (1805), Térésa Talliène (1799), and Juliette Récamier (1805), began wearing them publically, adopting the item as the essential accessory to be worn with the chemise dress (Figures 11, 12, and 13).³⁷

Gros's portrait of Christine Boyer deliberately places her within a certain time and place, and the provocative transparency of her gown can be read as referential to the changes in the French social climate in the 1790s. More importantly, by dating the portrait of Christine via fashion, Gros is able to suspend time, to hold it in a momentary tenuous balance for the single lingering gaze of his patron. The portrait simultaneously models and embodies Lucien's own experience of loss; as he is suspended in a prolonged state of mourning over the loss of his wife and lover, so too is she suspended before us, alone and waiting. The painting presents not only a resurrection of Boyer's likeness through an image, but also provides a narrative about loss, love, and the experience of melancholic mourning.

To better understand the impact of Gros's image as a memorial object that facilitates private emotional experiences of grief through an imagined encounter in time and space, I now turn to the artist's representation of Boyer herself. Up to this point I have focused on the enigmatic landscape as a way of situating the work within the broader discourses about mourning, memory, and emotion. By focusing now on the representation of Boyer's body I will show that the portrait also adheres to social and historic ideals about emotion and gender.

³⁶ Séguy, "Costume", 77; Kimberly Chrisman-Campbell, "The Empress of Fashion: What Joséphine Wore," in *Joséphine and the Arts of the Empire*, ed. Eleanor P. DeLorme (Los Angeles: The J. Paul Getty Museum, 2005), 167 – 69.

³⁷ An 1814 inventory of Josephine's belongings reveals the Empress owned between three and four hundred shawls. Chrisman-Campbell, "The Empress of Fashion," 169.

Erotic Imaginings

Portraits not only capture a sitter's likeness but also represent ideal qualities of the person as formed and shaped by the social mores of the period. A conceived identity can be conveyed through gesture, expression, setting, costuming, and props. Props, through careful placement and integration with the sitter, become signs of an actual or desired social position. In some instances sitters even assume the roles of mythic or historic figures, adopting the virtuous qualities of that character through visual role-play. This tension between recorded likeness and imagined ideal enabled portraits to aspire to the status of didactic objects as they reflected the qualities favored by a community, projecting to the viewing public those virtues worthy of admiration and emulation. Like portraits taken from life, posthumous portraits also construct the identity of the sitter and viewer rather than merely record it.

Achieving this ideal portrait involved a series of negotiations between sitter and artist. In the case of a posthumous portrait, such exchanges are even more complex and possibly more fraught as the execution of an acceptable image is charged by the reality of the physical and emotional absence of the sitter. The patron, in this case Boyer's heartbroken husband, desires much from the portrait. The object is made in an attempt to recover that which has been lost, and the resultant representation cannot be made from life but rather must be generated from memory and from other remaining images. Although the primary role of posthumous portraits is to convey the likeness of the individual and stoke the memory of the patron, these works also demonstrate the imagination of the artist.

Indeed, in Gros's *Portrait of Christine Boyer* it is difficult to distinguish whose rendition is available to the viewer. More clearly stated, because the work was completed after Boyer's death, the identity of Madame Boyer that is articulated to the viewer cannot be

one of her own design. Instead, it is an identity that stems from the decisions made between Bonaparte and Gros based on memory and other preexisting painted imagery. The portrait represents a creative and collaborative relationship between two men – patron and artist. What results from this exchange is both an idealized and erotic image of Boyer.

To begin, she is beautiful – ideally so. Boyer's body occupies the center of the full-length portrait. While most of the painting remains obscured in darkness, she is illuminated frontally and from our left as if from an exterior, artificial source. Her body is spot-lit, with emphasis on her face and upper torso. Her skin glows in the warm, golden light that falls across the side of her face, illuminating her profile and casting her left eye and cheek in shadow. Gros plays with light and shadow throughout the painting. Dappled light, as if falling through the trees above, dances over Boyer's body, especially the folds of her gown as it falls across her thighs and shins. This initial caress of light on Boyer's body emphasizes her corporeal presence within the eerie landscape and triggers an interconnected string of visual elements that reference touch as the primary physical sensation evoked in the viewer. As light softly falls over her lithe and elegant figure, so too is the viewer's gaze invited to linger over specific points of physical contact.

For instance, Christine turns her face to the left, exposing her profile and revealing her body to the gaze of the viewer. The white muslin gown she wears works formally to emphasize the sensuality of the scene. The fabric clings to Boyer's body, particularly emphasizing the space between her legs. In fact, the fabric is rendered with such transparency that the pink flesh of Christine's right knee and calf is readily apparent through her chemise. The luxurious cashmere shawl wraps around her shoulders, caressing her skin just as she wraps her arms in front of herself, touching her forearms in a self-reverential embrace. This

subtle allusion to prolonged physical contact directly references the portrait's private memorial function and the personal commission of the melancholic Lucien. It is specifically through the evocation of the sense of touch via the corporality of Boyer's body that Gros addresses Bonaparte's desire to recover more than just a fleeting memory of his wife.

Touch is also evoked through Gros's sensual use of color and his loose application of the paint. The porcelain smoothness of Boyer's skin and the fine delicacy of her facial features contrasts with the loose, fluidity of the brushwork that describes her body and the clothing that covers it. The shape of her breasts, hips, and thighs are clearly visible through the clinging folds of her gown. The draping of the skirt of her chemise in particular reveals her body as much as it conceals. The rendition of her legs is especially suggestive and provocative. Gauzy folds of fabric skim the edges of her hips and thighs converging just above her knees and sinking provocatively into the open space between her legs caused by her *countrapposto* pose. Subtle reflections of light, as if bouncing off the watery surface just below her feet, cast golden highlights on her legs. Her right leg is especially visible through the sheer fabric. The bones of her knee and shin, the fleshiness of her thigh and the elegant shape of her calf are clearly visible through the white fabric. In this way, the painting evokes a sense of touch not present in other portraits of Boyer. Look for instance at Jean-Frédéric Schall's portrait of Boyer, also completed in 1800 after her death (Figure 14).

Schall's portrait similarly locates Boyer within a wooded grove. She is shown reclining, leaning forward towards us with her elbows and torso resting on a flat rock. Here, the landscape is used to frame Boyer gently, providing support and embracing her reclining figure. The landscape is carefully bifurcated into a line of trees in the left quarter of the painting and greenery and foliage in the immediate foreground. Highly detailed plants and

grasses line the foreground and upper left-hand side of the painting, framing Boyer's upper body and face. Soft foliage provides a backdrop for her figure, giving the effect of an inviting and restful space made for quiet contemplation.

Boyer wears a sheer, white chemise just as she does in the Gros. Her hair is pulled away from her face in the style *à l'antique*, revealing her profile; and she turns her face away from us. Yet, despite these clear similarities, Schall's painting is much less sensual and erotically charged than the Gros. Schall emphasizes Boyer's breast and hands but conceals the length of her figure behind the rock and foliage. Whereas Gros evocatively captures the entirety of Boyer's body by painting her full-length and suggests the availability of her body through the transparency of her gown, thereby evoking the sense of touch through the tactility of the evident brushwork, Schall hides her body behind a rock.

To elucidate further the assertion that Gros's *Portrait of Christine Boyer* primarily reflects Lucien's own desires and memory, it is necessary to look at earlier portraits of Christine, ones that were completed during her lifetime. In 1799, Jacques Sablet painted pendant portraits for the married couple (Figures 15 and 16). These small, intimate portraits depict Christine and Lucien within an arid landscape and memorialize the loss of their infant son. In Sablet's portrait of Christine, completed only a year before her death, she stands in a sunny wooded landscape gazing assuredly out at the viewer.³⁸ Pictured with the commemorative bust of her deceased child, Christine rests her hand gently on the base of the sculpture and turns to look out at the viewer. She is recognizable as much by her fashion and styling as she is by her likeness. She wears a white full-length gown, her dark hair is swept into a chignon, curling around her face, and her red cashmere shawl is visible, draped across

³⁸ Anne Van de Sandt, *Les Frères Sablet* (Rome: Centre Culturel Français de Rome, 1985), 74 - 75.

the bench behind her. By pairing Boyer with the bust of her lost son, Sablet emphasizes her role as mother and wife.

Boyer's material role is characterized further through the representation of her body and clothing. Unlike Gros's rendition of costume in his portrait of Boyer, dress in Sablet's painting conceals rather than reveals Christine's form. Although Christine's dress is contemporary and fashionable, it is also conservative rather than sensual, demonstrating that when Boyer had agency over how she was represented she chose to be shown primarily as a mother and a wife. The fact that the painting is a pendant to a portrait of Lucien Bonaparte further emphasizes Christine's connection with her family. Gros's portrait shares several formal similarities with Sablet's earlier painting: both represent Christine in a wooded landscape, both show her clothed in the most contemporary fashion, both select full-length formats, and both convey her facial features with a common likeness, even if not conclusively so. It is quite possible that Gros used Sablet's painting as a tool for capturing a more realistic likeness of Boyer than he could have managed without an actual sitter.³⁹

Gros's later portrait of Madame Boyer relies heavily on the recollections and memories of her husband and on Boyer's image found in earlier portraits, yet his portrait differs greatly in mood, expression, and setting. The painting expresses sadness and melancholy through the dark, un-navigable landscape, the morose green and blue rocks and tree, and the supernatural light that both illuminates Christine and dissipates into the blackness behind her. There is an elegant fragility and a gently evoked sensuality to Christine's form in the Gros painting, whereas Sablet portrays the young Boyer as a healthy and hearty maternal figure, firmly planted in a bright landscape. While Sablet too deals with death and loss through the inclusion of the sculpted bust of Madame Boyer's child, Gros's

³⁹ Ibid., 76.

portrait expresses a feeling of loss through his manipulation of setting and form.

Furthermore, the main purpose of the Sablet portrait is to capture a pleasing likeness of Christine; Gros's painting also functions as a private visual space for Lucien Bonaparte. His portrait captures a sense of loss and mourning while attempting to reflect the fragmentary images remaining in Bonaparte's memory. It is Lucien's memory, his agency and his collaborative effort with Gros that are represented in the *Portrait of Christine Boyer* rather than Madame Boyer's own conception of self. Just as Boyer is shown stranded on a small parcel of land next to a rushing stream, so too is the articulation of her identity stranded within the memory of her surviving husband.

While Gros's *Portrait of Christine Boyer* is the result of a private commission, and was kept privately for decades in Lucien's family collection, the portrait was exhibited publically at the Salon of 1801.⁴⁰ How then is the sensuality of Boyer's appearance and, what I read as the work's erotic undertones, acceptable within this public context? To create an image that functioned both as a private memorial but also earned recognition within the public sphere, I argue Gros infused the portrait with allegorical symbols that allow the image to be read as both a portrait of Boyer and an allegorical representation of Boyer assuming the role of a mythic figure, Psyche. Gros achieves this subtle slippage in meaning by engaging all the codifiers of identity at a portraitist's disposal: clothing, setting, props, and the imagination of the viewer.

Like her gown and the Kashmir shawl draped over her shoulders, the sheer veil Boyer wears in her hair marks her fashionability while brimming with symbolic potential. Like the shawl, the veil became a chic accessory in the years around 1800. Fashion plates and

⁴⁰ Gros's *Portrait of Christine Boyer* was sold to the Louvre by Placido Gabrielle, Charlotte Bonaparte's husband, in 1894. Maria Teresa Caracciolo, *Lucien Bonaparte: un homme libre, 1775-1840*, eds. Maria Teresa Caracciolo and Isabelle Mayer-Michalon (Milan: Silvana Editoriale, 2010), 172.

portraits of eminent women from the period evidence the popularity of the accessory (1799; Figures 17 and 18). In a miniature portrait by Jean-Baptiste Augustin in the collection of the Louvre dated 1801 Juliette Récamier dons a veil (Figure 19). The way Récamier engages with the item, touching it with her right hand as she looks coyly out at us, suggests the importance of the prop within the context of the portrait. Elisabeth Vigée-Lebrun portrays several fashionable women wearing veils in portraits completed during her years of exile, as seen in her *Portrait of Mrs. Chinnery* (1803) and *Portrait of the Countess Siemontkowsky Bystry* (1797). In the former, the veil acts as a fashion accessory (Figure 20). In the latter, the veil transforms the sitter into a Greek goddess, possibly Hebe or a vestal virgin (Figure 21).

During the eighteenth century the veil was used conventionally to signify the allegorical nature of a portrait, as seen in examples by Angelica Kauffmann (ca. 1780; Figure 22), David (ca. 1787; Figure 23) and Francois Hubert Drouais (1767; Figure 24). These works continue the eighteenth-century vogue for allegorical images showing sitters donning antique dress and embodying figures from classical mythology and literature. Artists such as Jean-Marc Nattier and Nicolas de Largilliere excelled at transforming their aristocratic sitters into goddesses such as Diana or Hebe, historic or religious figures like Cleopatra or Mary Magdalene, Muses such as Euterpe or Thalia, or allegorical figures such as ‘Painting’ or ‘Beauty’. Historically, these kinds of images have been understood as either appealing to the sitter’s vanity or as mechanisms that allowed artists to elevate the status of portraiture generally, and the sitter specifically, by linking the subject matter with history painting.

Although allegory was also a resource utilized by male patrons, particularly during the early decades of the eighteenth century, the conventional tendency to represent abstract virtues and moral values through the female form provided female sitters with endless

symbolic possibilities. Many scholars have argued women patrons were more suitable subjects for allegorical portraiture than men because of their limited public roles within society. Whereas men were able to shape and layer their public persona through professional, political, and military roles, women's primary public identities were shaped by and through marriage. Therefore, women could be transformed more easily into allegorical images than their male counterparts.⁴¹

On the other hand, because these images were understood to be imaginary and performative, allegorical portraiture afforded women a way to nuance and complicate their public image. The fantasy quality of these portraits enabled women to present themselves to others in more varied and imaginative roles than those prescribed by society. As Kathleen Nicolson has shown, allegorical portraiture provided women patrons with agency to complicate and expand their often-limited public personas, even enabling them to challenge existing and entrenched gendered norms.⁴² Allegorical portraiture expanded the private portrait's potential meaning through its varied references to mythology, literature, and history, creating an image of identity that both reflects and absorbs social and cultural values.

Along with allowing female patrons to shape and complicate their public identities, allegorical portraits also carry potential for viewers, particularly female viewers, to expand the meaning of these works. Some of the references embedded within the portraits may be

⁴¹ Marcia Pointon, *Strategies for Showing: Women, Possession, and Representation in English Visual Culture, 1665-1800* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), 173 – 227; Gill Perry, "Women in disguise: likeness, the grand style, and the conventions of 'feminine' portraiture in the world of Sir Joshua Reynolds" in *Femininity and Masculinity in Eighteenth-Century Art and Culture*, eds. Gill Perry and Michael Rossington (Manchester: Distributed exclusively in the USA and Canada by St. Martin's Press, 1994), 18-40; Marina Warner, *Monuments & Maidens: the Allegory of the Female Form* (New York: Atheneum, 1985).

⁴² Kathleen Nicolson, "The Ideology of Feminine 'Virtue': The Vestal Virgin in French Eighteenth- Century Allegorical Portraiture" in *Portraiture: Facing the Subject* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1996), 52 - 72.

carefully masked and function on more than one level simultaneously. Viewers “in the know” could recognize within the work the many and various possible layers of meaning and mythological coding within the work allowed for flexibility in interpretation.⁴³ Nicolson writes, “If unstable meanings surface in the portraits it is because the contradictions are within the cultural matrix; we should regard the portraits not as images whose meaning is fixed, but as blotters, picking up as well as refuting the traces of cultural assumptions through the dialogue fostered by the allegorical references.”⁴⁴

In many cases, these portraits of female sitters offered transgressive messaging because they represent aristocratic women assuming the guise of characters from classical literature who were not celebrated necessarily for their moral virtues, possibly even carrying erotic undertones. Two of the most infamous examples of this type of portrayal from the period include Antonio Canova’s *Paolina Borghese as Venus Victorious* (1804 -08) and Girodet’s *Portrait of Mademoiselle Lange as Danaë* (1799). One of the most popular guises within the genre of allegorical portraiture was the vestal virgin, in part because the role carried these same erotic undertones while communicating the prescribed contrasting duality of “femininity” that positioned women as either virtuous or sensual.⁴⁵

If Gros does evoke allegorical symbolism to link his subject with a mythological figure he would not be the first artist to have done so within the genre of posthumous portraiture. Jean Raoux commemorated Marie-Françoise Perdrigeon, Dame Boucher, the wife of the king’s secretary, in a large-scale portrait showing her in the guise of a vestal

⁴³ Perry, “Women in disguise,” 30 - 32.

⁴⁴ Nicolson, “The Ideology of Feminine ‘Virtue’,” 58.

⁴⁵ Ibid., 58 – 59.

virgin (1734; Figure 25).⁴⁶ The picture incorporates conventional iconography of both allegorical and posthumous portraiture. Elegantly attired, Perdrigeon is shown dressed in white and wearing a veil. She stands next to an altar, a ewer garlanded with flowers at her feet. Beyond, the background opens onto a view of a distant landscape. Here Raoux casts the sitter, who died a young bride, as a modern vestal virgin.⁴⁷

Other scholars have found in Gros's *Portrait of Christine Boyer* more than a straightforward likeness. Margaret Fields Denton reads Gros's image of Boyer as an allegorical representation of melancholy.⁴⁸ Denton argues that Gros's portrait demonstrates the ways Christian iconography was not completely rejected and erased from mourning images but rather was combined within new and emerging symbols for mourning and devotion that stood in for similar concepts and ideas. Denton recognizes in Boyer's posture – her withdrawn body, the way she focuses her gaze downward on the ground – the conventional pose of melancholia from the period. I embrace Denton's notion that posthumous images bear complex iconography that layers their potential meanings for viewers and artists, finding not Christian iconography, however, but mythic.

Recovering the Lover: Portraiture and Narrative Potential

Given the fact that Gros's *Portrait of Christine Boyer* was exhibited at the Salon, there is reason to believe that the artist, in his collaboration with Lucien Bonaparte over the

⁴⁶ Ibid., 60.

⁴⁷ Lille. Musée des beaux-arts. *Masterworks from the Musée Des Beaux-arts, Lille*. (New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1992), 130.

⁴⁸ Margaret Fields Denton, "Gros's *Portrait de Christine Boyer* and Schall's *Pensee sur la brievet de la vie*: Private Grief and Public Rhetoric in Post-Revolutionary French Painting," *Gazette des Beaux-Arts* 138 (September 1996): 103-20.

depiction of Boyer, explores themes associated with his own creative interests.⁴⁹ During his sojourn in Italy, just before the Boyer commission, Gros experimented with representing myths focused on the themes of lost love, sorrow, and death. His *Sappho at Leucadia*, also exhibited at the Salon of 1801, is representative of Gros's work at the end of the eighteenth century (Figure 26). The painting depicts the Greek poet, abandoned by her lover Phaon, throwing herself into the sea from the promontory at Leucadia. This subject represents the departure from the representation of suicide as being an expression of civic duty and moral purpose, a characterization solidified in history paintings produced at the time. David O'Brien, in his discussion of the painting, points out, "Suicide in late eighteenth-century art, as for example, in David's *Death of Socrates* (1787), was normally a heroic and reasonable act committed in accordance with public, moral principles, not the result of irrational despair or weariness with life."⁵⁰ In contrast with images of civic virtue, Gros's *Sappho* explores suffering in its own right and the painting shares formal similarities with the portrait of Boyer. Both paintings exhibit pronounced backlighting, a limited range of tones, an emphasis on defining contour, and a thematic interest in death.

The topic of death, particularly as a catalyst for the separation of lovers, was a prominent theme in both the visual and literary arts of the early nineteenth century. In keeping with the general secularization of mourning rituals and rites, subjects imagined an afterlife that promised eternal reunion with loved ones more than as an impending reckoning with the divine. Beginning in the second half of the eighteenth century, novelists narrated stories of tragic love that reflected emerging ideas about the immortality of the soul and the belief in an ultimate reunion of lovers in the afterlife. The theme of lovers separated by death

⁴⁹ O'Brien, *After the Revolution*, 77.

⁵⁰ Ibid., 49.

appears in the most beloved novels from the period, including Rousseau's *Julie, ou La Nouvelle Héloïse* (1761), Goethe's *The Sorrows of Young Werther* (1774), Bernardin de Saint-Pierre's *Paul et Virginie* (1787), and Chateaubriand's *Atala* (1801).

Readers responded to these novels with passion and empathy. They wept for Julie and Saint-Preux, young lovers forbidden from marrying because of society's arbitrary yet impenetrable barriers. In a letter to Rousseau, one male reader expressed to the author that he did not merely shed tears over the event of Julie's death but was "shrieking, howling like an animal" as he read the words.⁵¹ Goethe's Romantic novel, *The Sorrows of Young Werther*, inspired a cult following of sensitive youths who were affected deeply by the melancholic Werther's suicide, spurred by the impossibility of union with his beloved Charlotte.⁵² Bernardin de Saint-Pierre's wildly popular *Paul et Virginie* relates the story of natural love and innocence that ends tragically for all when Virginie, the story's heroine, drowns. Her death is closely followed by that of Paul who dies of grief over the loss of his love. Similarly, Chateaubriand's *Atala*, a story set in far-away America, captures the inevitable and ultimate heartbreak of young love when the virginal Atala is made to choose between a promise to her mother and her passion for her lover Cactus. These stories of unfulfilled, tragic love embodied the growing Romantic idea that even if lasting union was unattainable on earth, it could be achieved in death.

These novels provided rich emotive material for artists during the period. Artists embraced these tales of love and painful separation, creating works that expressed similar

⁵¹ As quoted in Lynn Avery Hunt, *Inventing Human Rights: A History* (New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 2007), 36.

⁵² Werther's mournful, tragic love story has also long been associated with the tomb of an unknown soul at Ermenonville discussed in Chapter two of this dissertation. The inscription on the tomb is dated June 4, 1791 and refers to the dead youth as "un autre Werther". See Arsenne Thiebaut, *Voyage à l'Isle des Peupliers*, Paris, An VII (1798-99), 78.

themes of love, devotion, sorrow, and the deep yearning for reunion beyond death. Inspired by Chateaubriand's prose, Girodet captured the melancholy suffering of Cactus over Atala's grave in his painting *The Entombment of Atala* (1808; Figure 27). Henriette Lorimer illustrated the emotional impact of the same novel on readers in her painting, *Une jeune fille, près d'une fenêtre, pleurant sur un passage d'Atala*, exhibited at the Salon of 1802. In keeping with their academic training, many artists also looked to classical sources to illustrate themes of devotion, death, and reunion, reinterpreting beloved tales of devoted love from classical mythology. At the Salon of 1800, Joseph Taillasson exhibited *Andromaque offrant des dons funèbres à la cendre d'Hector*. The following year, at the same Salon that included Gros's *Sappho*, Jean Broc exhibited *La mort d'Hyacinthe* and *Le Naufrage de Virgine*.

One of the most popular myths in the decades around 1800 was the love story of Cupid and Psyche as evidence by Francois Gérard *Cupid and Psyche* (1798; Figure 28) and Pierre-Paul Prudhon, *Psyche Borne by Zephyrs to Cupid's Palace* (1808; Figure 29). These young lovers, although not separated by death, suffer from a forbidden love. The contemporary understanding of the ancient story was based on La Fontaine's seventeenth century version, *Les amours de Psyché et de Cupidon* (1669).⁵³ La Fontaine relates the tale of Psyche, a princess so beautiful that men begin to worship her instead of Venus. Insulted, the goddess instructs her son Cupid to make Psyche fall in love with a monster. However, upon seeing the lovely girl, Cupid pricks himself with his own arrow and falls in love with Psyche.

⁵³ Jean La Fontaine, *Les amours de Psyché et Cupidon* (Paris: Editions of history and art, Librairie Plon, 1960).

Soon after, Psyche is carried by Zephyr to a majestic palace where at night she is visited by a man who introduces himself as her husband but insists she must never look upon him. They continue this ritual for some time with Cupid visiting Psyche under the cloak of darkness, but eventually Psyche becomes lonely and asks that her sisters be allowed to visit her. Jealous, her sisters convince Psyche that her husband is a hideous monster. She becomes plagued by doubt and decides she must betray her husband's request and see his face for herself.

That night, while Cupid sleeps, Psyche lights a lamp and gazes upon his beautiful face. Overcome, her hands tremble and she spills hot oil from the lamp onto his skin. Cupid awakens and flees the house, abandoning Psyche. Crushed, Psyche submits herself humbly before Venus and begs for the goddess's help in finding her love. In exchange for her divine intervention, Venus forces Psyche to perform four seemingly impossible tasks: sorting an enormous mound of seeds, gathering the golden wool of a flock of vicious wild sheep, filling a flask with water from a treacherous waterfall of the River Styx, and finally, journeying to the underworld to convince Proserpine to place some of her beauty in a box. Somehow, Psyche perseveres and completes each perilous task. In the end, she is reunited with Cupid and granted immortality by Zeus.

The story of Cupid and Psyche is about the power and immortality of true love. Psyche (the soul) initially doubts Cupid (love) but redeems herself through her unfaltering devotion and her commitment to overcome whatever trials may separate them. Bravely facing death by plunging into the River Styx, the boundary between Earth and the Underworld, Psyche even travels to the world of the dead for love, reemerging to be reunited in immortality with her husband Cupid. The tale's happy ending resonated with early

nineteenth century readers who longed for a promise of reunion and eternal love in the afterlife.

Turning to a representation of a Psyche by Gros's teacher David, it becomes clear that the younger artist's interest in stories of loss and death found in Greek myth situates him within the most current thematic pursuits in academic French painting (ca. 1795; Figure 30). In David's painting we see Psyche perched on the edge of a rock and an empty expanse of sky and body of water behind her. She looks out with an expression of anguish and folds her hands in a gesture suggesting meditation as her nude form is revealed to the gaze of the viewer. David most likely based his image of Psyche on La Fontaine's version, and the painting represents a specific moment described in his fable.⁵⁴ Psyche, having just violated the decree forbidding her to look at Cupid faces complete abandonment. Her lover has flown away in anger and her most valued belongings have suddenly disappeared. La Fontaine describes the scene:

...the poor spouse found herself alone on a rock, half-dead, pale, trembling, and so immersed in her excessive suffering that she remained for a long time with her eyes fixed on the ground, unable to recognize herself or notice that she was naked.⁵⁵

David's *Abandoned Psyche* and the particular iconography associated with the mythic female offer compelling interpretive similarities with Gros's *Portrait of Christine Boyer*, surpassing the cursory formal qualities present in the *Sappho*. Like Psyche, Boyer is stranded on a small rocky outcropping unable to navigate the surrounding landscape. She stands alone, a single female figure in isolation. The diversion of Christine's gaze mimics Psyche's down-cast face, imbuing the image with a narrative quality, while the impenetrability of Christine's eyes and

⁵⁴ Lajer-Burcharth, Ewa, *Necklines: The Art of Jacques-Louis David after the Terror* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1999), 56.

⁵⁵ La Fontaine, *Les amours de Psyché et Cupidon*, 113 - 14.

face empty her figure of any reference to specific identity. Instead of focusing on the distinct qualities of her face, which work to distinguish her unique personality, the viewer becomes caught in the moment represented, a moment that represents loss and the separation of lovers.

The landscape, when viewed along with the mythic reading of Psyche, does not represent a secret meeting place between lovers but rather a space of loss and loneliness. The darkness that enfolds Boyer makes the landscape both physically impassable and emotionally connotative. The darkness envelops her, moving in on the patch of light and land she inhabits, causing the setting to feel foreboding, claustrophobic, transitory, and grimly shadowed. The darkness draws the expression of isolation to a crescendo, culminating in an ultimate disquieting visual response. By pairing the visual iconography associated with Psyche with Gros's portrait of Boyer, the question of allegory and its function within the posthumous portrait materialize. It is possible to read Gros's *Portrait of Christine Boyer* as allegory to emphasize the narrative surrounding the woman represented. By imagining Boyer as Psyche, the landscape and her placement within it, stranded on a dark plot of land, expands and flourishes.

That portraiture had the potential at this time to seek the status of history painting – to represent a scene, present a narrative and carry moral weight – is evident in the ways art critics responded to portraits at the Salons in the years around 1800. Ideas about the classification and role of portraiture within a new Republican society were in flux at this time.⁵⁶ In reaction to the proliferation of portraits of private citizens in the Salons and the new position of citizens in the post-Revolutionary political order, art critics were forced to address portraiture's long-held traditions and standing within the classification of genres.

⁵⁶ Two excellent sources on portraiture during the Revolution are Tony Halliday, *Facing the Public* (2000) and Amy Freund, *Portraiture and Politics in Revolutionary France* (University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2014).

Portraiture's conventions and rank were established in the mid-seventeenth century when André Félibien codified the hierarchy of genres in his *Conférences de l'Académie royale de peinture de sculpture pendant l'année 1667*.⁵⁷ Portraiture, he deemed, was the second most important genre after history painting because it represented the human body. However, the genre was viewed as an imitative art, based not on knowledge of the great works of myth and history, but rather on skills of observation and imitation. Also, unlike history paintings, portraits did not communicate the binding ideals and morals of French society through heroic narrative. Certainly, portraits could qualify as significant works of art but only when they represented great men: kings, generals, ministers, and important thinkers. These concepts and classifications were solidified in the middle of the eighteenth century with the rise of professional art criticism. Such critics condemned portraiture with great regularity as a genre associated with vanity and ambition rather than virtue and character.

One of the most forceful critics of portraiture was Étienne La Font de Saint Yenne who advocated for the revival of history painting. To dramatize the essential conflict between the noblest of all genres and all others, he positioned portraiture as the enemy of serious painting. In keeping with typical characterizations of the genre, as purely an expression of personal vanity with no redeeming moral or aesthetic value, he famously accused portraitists of

...flattering a simpering face, often misshapen or decrepit, almost always without physiognomy, multiplying obscure persons, without character, without name, without status and without merit.⁵⁸

⁵⁷ André Félibien, *Conférences de l'Académie royale de peinture de sculpture pendant l'année 1667* (Paris: F. Léonard, 1668).

⁵⁸ “...flatter un visage minaudier, souvent difforme ou suranné, presque toujours sans physiognomie, de multiplier des êtres obscurs, sans caractère, sans nom, sans place et sans mérite...” La Font de Saint Yenne, *Réflexions sur quelques causes de l'état présent de la peinture en France. Avec un examen des principaux ouvrages exposés au Louvre le mois d'Août 1746* (Genève: Slatkine Reprints, 1970), 209-210.

Furthermore, La Font de Saint Yenne disqualified the value of portraits because these images were essentially private objects that held no meaning or significance for anyone outside of the sitter's immediate circle of family or friends.

In contrast, portraiture's greatest advocate in the early decades of the nineteenth century was the Republican art critic for the *Décade*, Pierre Jean-Baptiste Chaussard. In his reviews of the Salons from the decades around 1800, Chaussard departed from long-standing tradition by discussing select portraits in the section of his review devoted to history painting. Although his reviews express departure from the centuries-old classification of works, Chaussard does not reject the hierarchy of genres outright. Rather, he proposes a revised approach to portraiture based on the action of the figures and the size of the object, affording the genre a higher status and placing it within the same category as history painting, if the work meets certain formal and contextual criteria.⁵⁹ Those criteria include the physical size of the work, whether it presents a narrative or scene, and the skill and inventiveness of the artist. Portraits, in Chaussard's estimation, could aspire to the status of history painting, and he intended to treat "portraits that represent a scene" as such.⁶⁰

First, Chaussard believed portraits served a vital political and moral function within the new Republic. Unlike the social and political structure of the *ancien régime* when "one man counts for everything, and the others for nothing," in a Republic portraiture acquires:

...a new degree of interest: it can consecrate virtues, talents, service, and memory. It is in a Republic that the images of the hero, the useful man, the estimable woman are greeted with respect: from a moral and political point of view, the genre of the portrait should be elevated.⁶¹

⁵⁹ "il n'y a bonne division, cela qui comprend: 1 les objects animés, 2 les objects inanimés; 3 la combinaison des uns et des autres, en établissant pour subdivision, grands et petits objets." Chaussard, *Décade*, 30 Thermidor An VI (1798), 18:343 n.

⁶⁰ "...les portraits qui presentement un scène." Ibid.

Chaussard aligns the goals of portraiture with those of history painting in this new social and political climate. He even recognizes some opportunity in the genre for aspiring artists, pointing out that portraitists have more allowances for invention than history painters:

The artist even has an advantage: his subject is his alone, he determines it; while historical subjects are susceptible to be treated differently by several brushes. In putting his characters *en scène*, in giving them an action, the artist enters into the class of history painters.⁶²

To illustrate these claims, Chaussard focused attention on portraits that, in his view, transcended the conventions of portraiture to equal the aesthetic and didactic value of history painting.

One such work that was able to achieve this status in Chaussard's estimation is a portrait by François Gérard of the Auguste family gathered around a table (1798; Figure 31). The painting shows the fashionable goldsmith, Henri Auguste, with his wife and their two sons gathered around a table at night. This indoor scene, a private setting, is lit dramatically from two sources: by a lamp at the center of the table and the nocturnal light that permeates the space through a large open window. Due to the dramatic lighting that intensifies the staging and interactions of the group, Chaussard finds religious undertones within the work, comparing Gérard's portrait to Nativity scenes by Rembrandt and Caravaggio. This portrait, according to Chaussard, presents the image of ideal familial love and affection, and by

⁶¹ "le portrait, genre assez insignifiant dans une monarchie, parce qu'un seul homme y est tout et que les autres n'y sont rien, doit acquérir dans une République un nouveau degré d'intérêt: il peut consacrer alors des vertus, des talents, des services, des souvenirs. C'est dans une République qu'on salue avec respect les images du héros, de l'homme utile, de la femme estimable: sous le rapport moral et politique, il convient d'élever le genre du portrait." *La Décade Philosophique, Littéraire et Politique*, 30 Fructidor An VI (16 September 1798), 535.

⁶² "L'Artiste a meme un avantage; son sujet n'est qu'à lui, il le fixe; tandis que les sujets historiques sont sensibles d'être traits différemment par plusiers pinceaux. En mettant ses personnages en scène, en leur imprimant une action, l'artiste rentre dans la classe des peintres d'histoire." *Ibid.*, 535.

bringing private interactions into public purview it provides an edifying example of the virtues of family life.

Furthermore, Gérard's painting and Chaussard's reaction to the work are significant for the study at hand because it includes a posthumous portrait – that of Madame Auguste. Like Gros's *Portrait of Christine Boyer*, Gérard was commissioned to complete this private, family portrait in the immediate aftermath of Madame Auguste's death in the winter of 1796.⁶³ The artist incorporates Madame Auguste into the scene with sensitivity, including subtle references to her absence. She is seated, resting at a table positioned just off-center in the composition, while the surviving members of her family stand. Her husband and sons gather attentively around her; Monsieur Auguste stands just behind her, resting a hand on the back of her chair and her sons draw near. The younger boy leans his chin on his hand and gazes attentively at his mother, while his older brother leans nonchalantly on the table top and gazes out at us, acknowledging our witness to this intimate scene. Madame Auguste reads from an open book, a conventional symbol of premature death, and turns away from us. Hers is the only head shown in profile, perhaps out of necessity for the artist (a profile portrait may have been the only image available for his reference), or perhaps following a centuries-old convention of including images of the dead in profile alongside portraits of the living, or *imagines clipeate*.⁶⁴ This positioning of Madame Auguste's head also allows Gérard to cast her face in shadow, yet another reference to her absence, as seen previously in Labille-Guiard's posthumous portrait of Madame Infante.

⁶³ Charles Saunier, "Un artiste romantique oublié. Monsieur Auguste," *Gazette des Beaux-Arts* 3 (1910): 447.

⁶⁴ Marcia R. Pointon, *Hanging the Head: Portraiture and Social Formation in Eighteenth-century England* (New Haven: Published for the Paul Mellon Centre for Studies in British Art by Yale University Press, 1993), 66.

For Chaussard, the Gérard qualifies for elevated status as a portrait that tells a story and delivers a lesson, because the artist, by putting, “his personages *en scène*, characterizing them with an action, the artist joins the category of history painters.”⁶⁵ Furthermore, the artist demonstrates his technical skill and inventiveness in his staging of the scene and his dramatic use of lighting. This painting and Chaussard’s reaction to it are in line with a new receptivity to portraits as objects of aesthetic contemplation and suggest a new vision for portraiture as a genre. The emerging possibilities and potential for private portraiture opened new expressive avenues for both artists and patrons.

Like death masks of the Roman Empire, painted miniatures, and all other posthumous portraits, Gros’s *Portrait of Christine Boyer* is an object infused with the agency of memory naturally associated with mourning and memorial. However, Christine’s portrait transcends its function related to her death outliving her survivors, outliving even myself as a current viewer, creating subtle slippages in how specific clusters of symbols can be read and understood. Privately, Gros’s portrait of Christine Boyer registers the tragic loss experienced personally by her husband, and his desire to sustain a relationship with his wife through artworks. The posthumous nature of the commission afforded Gros the opportunity to infuse the image with narrative qualities, elevating the status of the work from mere mimicry to a multivalent image of identity and desire. In the work, Boyer becomes the personification of true love lost and recovered in the end through her portrait, expressing the cultural belief in the ultimate reunion between lovers beyond death as delivered through the painted image.

So potent was this ideal vision of romantic reunion in the afterlife that artists imagined and realized actual burial spaces and tombs that joined lovers in burial. Jean-Honoré Fragonard imagines such a burial and the emotions a union in eternity promised in

⁶⁵ *Décade*, 30 Fructidor An VI (16 September 1798), 18: 535.

his drawing, *The Kiss* (ca. 1785; Figure 32). Fragonard's drawing pictures the fantastical moment two lovers are born together into immortality within a joint sarcophagus. The tomb is situated within a grove of cypresses conjuring both the ideal image of a cemetery and connections with Fragonard's own garden settings in his romantic gallant scenes. Inside, two lovers' spirits, flowing out of the urn in which their ashes were stored, are revived by Cupid's torch. This desire for eternal union within a sacred tomb was realized during the period. The adored twelfth century lovers, Abelard and Héloïse, were moved from the Museum of French Monuments and entombed together at Père Lachaise cemetery in 1817. Artistic collaborators and life partners Constance Mayer and Pierre-Paul Prud'hon, dying two years apart, were eventually entombed together at the same cemetery in 1823. In the next chapter I take up this subject of the real and imagined tomb and the melancholic experiences these sights induced in mournful survivors.

CHAPTER TWO

Lie In Our Graves: The Garden as Ideal Site for Mourning the Absent Mother

In 1803, two years after the exhibition of Antoine-Jean Gros's *Portrait of Christine Boyer* at the Salon, the artist completed a pendant for the work, a portrait of Lucien Bonaparte's and Christine Boyer's two young daughters at the tomb of their mother (Figure 33).⁶⁶ Unlike the tenebristic and haunting landscape depicted in his posthumous portrait of Boyer, here Gros pictures the girls in a sun-dappled garden dense with large shade trees, lush grasses, and blooming flowers. Charlotte, five when the portrait was made, stands beside the large cenotaph that honors her mother.⁶⁷ The older girl fully engages in the act of mourning; she cradles a bouquet of wildflowers in the skirt of her dress and looks wistfully at a bas-relief carved into the marble stone. The scene, appropriately, is of a mother's deathbed below which is inscribed a dedication to Boyer: "*Epouse and mere sans reproche*". The activities of a near-by bird distract Charlotte's younger sister, Christine Égypta, two at the time the portrait was commissioned. The creature, pictured in the lower right corner of the work, alights upon a basket of flowers in the center of which are her four nestlings. As in his posthumous portrait of Boyer, Gros uses both art – the carved neoclassical cenotaph – and

⁶⁶ The painting was exhibited recently for the first time at the Palais-Fesch-Musée des Beaux-Arts in Ajaccio, Corsica. See: Caracciolo, *Lucien Bonaparte: un homme libre*, 170 – 172; Béatrice Edelein-Badie, *La Collection de tableaux de Lucien Bonaparte, prince de Canino* (Paris: Editions de la Réunion des musées nationaux, 1997), 29, 197.

⁶⁷ Christine and Lucien had two children, Charlotte (b. 1795) and Christine (1798), before her death in 1800.

nature – the verdant garden, the mother bird and her young – to express emerging ideals and desires about mourning, melancholia and memory.

Unlike Gros's full-length portrait of Boyer, this painting was not publically exhibited. Instead, immediately after its completion instead the portrait assumed a place of honor in the *salle du throne* in Lucien's château, Musignano, in Canino, Italy where it remained in the family's private collection for nearly two centuries.⁶⁸ There, with Gros's portrait of Boyer, Charlotte's and Christine Égypta's portrait hung for decades alongside the most treasured works in the family collection: three portraits by Jean-Baptiste Wicar, *Portrait of Lucien Bonaparte as President of the Counsel of Five Hundred* (1806), *Portrait of Pope Pius VII* (1817), and *Portrait of Charlotte in Peasant Dress of Canino* (1815); Anne-Louis Girodet de Roussy-Trioson's portrait of Luciens's father (1804); Baron François Gérard's *Portrait of Madame Mère* (1802-1804); and a portrait of Lucien's second wife, Alexandrine de Bleschamp by Carolo Maria Vaganoni (1815).⁶⁹ This inventory demonstrates the significance of Gros's painting within Lucien's collection of family portraits specifically and his art collection more broadly. Furthermore, its display alongside this select group of works and its longtime inclusion within the family's private collection attests to the portrait's connection to ancestral history and familial identity.⁷⁰

Gros's portrait is, in fact, only one work within a complex visual record of mourning curated by Lucien in dedication to his late wife. To honor Christine, Lucien commissioned

⁶⁸ Giulia Gorgone, "La galerie de famille de Lucien Bonaparte. Nouveaux elements pour une reconstruction," in *Lucien Bonaparte: un homme libre, 1775-1840*, Maria Caracciolo Teresa and Isabelle Mayer-Michalon, eds. (Milan: Silvana Editoriale, 2010), 215.

⁶⁹ Giuseppe Primoli, *Extrait de l'inventaire de la galerie de famille du prince Lucien rédigé par lui-même*, 1898; Archives de la Fondazione Primoli, 8354, 8363, 8365.

⁷⁰ Gros's portraits were the only pendants displayed in the family gallery. Also, notably absent – a portrait of Lucien's brother Napoléon and any portraits of Lucien Bonaparte's children with his second wife Alexandrine de Bleschamp. See Gorgone, "La galerie de famille de Lucien Bonaparte," 211.

several painted and sculpted portraits of Boyer, himself and their daughters, multiple funerary monuments and cenotaphs, and a private garden tomb at his family estate in France.⁷¹ In their most basic function these artworks commemorate Boyer. More fully, they facilitated a continued relationship with the deceased by conjuring memories of this beloved spouse and mother, providing a model for reimagined mourning rituals and creating ideal sites and spaces to cultivate and call up the desired emotions vital to the grieving process. Gros's portrait of Charlotte and Christine Égypta is a record of an act and an experience. It is a symbol of the daughters' virtue and their mother's continued presence and influence on their moral education. By showing them performing the rituals associated with mourning at the tomb of their mother, Gros represents the virtuous devotion of Boyer's surviving daughters, much in keeping with new cultural attitudes and social mores of this period in France.

In this chapter I situate Gros's *Portrait of Charlotte and Christine Égypta* within the broader discourses associated with familial sentiment and public virtue. During the early decades of the nineteenth century the garden tomb became the nexus of familial devotion and sentiment, and the gravesite, especially those situated within the gardens of private estates, became the ideal site to activate "mourning melancholy." These picturesque and enticing spaces contrasted radically with the cemeteries of the previous three hundred years, as these private and peaceful gardens were designed to encourage repeated visitation and prolonged meditation at the individual gravesites of family and friends. There, through the combination of artworks and nature, mourners could experience "mourning melancholy," the much-

⁷¹ These works include: Gros's pendants; an additional portrait by Gros of Bonaparte at Boyer's tomb that was commissioned but never completed; the Sablet pendants; Schall's portrait; a bust by Houdon; Boyer's garden tomb at Le Plessis-Chamant; Marin's *Mélancholie* funerary monument in Canino; and numerous miniatures and pieces of jewelry.

desired sensation that allowed them to reconnect and commune with the dead. Not only did the living find solace in the presence of their departed loved ones at tombs, they also drew moral inspiration from the visit.⁷² The tender scene of familial mourning represented in Gros's portrait of Charlotte and Christine Égypta presents an ideal vision of grief while also recording real funerary rituals performed by Boyer's daughter's at her actual tomb on the family's estate, Plessis-Chamant.⁷³ Knowing the significance of this private portrait within the family collection, what might the image mean in the context of the family, its values, practices and sentiments?

The Nostalgic Picturesque: French Gardens circa 1800

Long believed to be lost, Gros's *Portrait of Charlotte and Christine Égypta Bonaparte before the Tomb of their Mother* is first mentioned in Alexandre de Laborde's lushly illustrated volume *Description des nouveaux jardins de la France et de ses anciens châteaux*.⁷⁴ Published in 1808, Laborde's text became one of the most influential works on contemporary landscape design in early nineteenth century France. The volume records developments in French architecture and gardens through detailed descriptions and engravings representing twenty-nine French châteaux and their surrounding parks, including

⁷² Lucien Bonaparte held strong beliefs about how art should serve society. He believed all forms of art should be encouraged – not just art that is useful to politics (as his brother employed it) - but all the arts that “beautify life and *strengthen the ties that bind people together*.” These works enhanced benevolence and gentleness becoming the “most pleasant fruit of civilization”. Lucien Bonaparte, *Recueil de lettres, circulaires, instructions, arrêtés & discours publics émanés des cit.* (Paris: Impr. de la République, 1801), 146.

⁷³ Bonaparte purchased the estate in 1799.

⁷⁴ Alexandre L.-J Comte de Laborde, *Description des nouveaux jardins de la France et de ses anciens châteaux; mêlée d'observations sur la vie de la campagne et la composition des jardins* (Paris: Delance, 1808), 133.

Ermenoville, Méréville, Malmaison and Lucien Bonaparte's estate, Plessis-Chamant (Figures 34 and 35). In the "Discours Préliminaire", Laborde presents a lengthy introduction, praising the spirit of country life and the picturesque compositions of modern French gardens.

Throughout the text, he passionately argues in favor of landscape design that finds inspiration in local conditions and reflects France's unique topography, climate, customs, and history by showcasing each site's natural effects. "The true art of gardening," he writes, "consists in the knowledge of how to produce, in some place, the most agreeable aspect that the site is capable of representing."⁷⁵ This emphasis on the local and the natural inclined Laborde to criticize the growing popularity for including didactic and memorializing inscriptions throughout the garden space, complaining that in thirty acres one can encounter "a complete course in morality."⁷⁶ However, in keeping with late-eighteenth century trends in French garden design and urban planning, Laborde makes an exception for carefully placed tombs on private estates like the one found at Lucien's estate, Le Plessis.

In the passages describing Le Plessis, Laborde lavishes praise on both the appearance of the grounds and the estate's owner, characterizing Lucien as a noble sage who retreats to his country home for philosophic reverie. He approves of the way Lucien considered France's cultural history in his restoration of the buildings and grounds and compares the château to those built during the reign of Henry III. He credits the owner with transforming an "indifferent kitchen garden" into a "vast and well planted park."⁷⁷ Laborde focuses special attention on one space within the garden in particular: the tomb of Lucien's wife, Christine

⁷⁵ Ibid., 2.

⁷⁶ Ibid., 4.

⁷⁷ "Le jardin, qui consistoit en quelques terrasses et en un mauvais potager, fut bientôt transformé en un parc vaste et bien planté qui, se joignant à des bois étendus, et à la forêt de Senlis, forme l'ensemble d'une belle habitation." Ibid., 131.

Boyer, going so far as to identify Boyer's tomb as a model for the emerging practice of placing monuments and memorials to departed loved ones within the grounds of familial estates:

...neither too near nor too distant from the principal habitation, it is hid from the public eye by a thick wood. Taste and sentiment have presided over its composition. The ground of the tombstone which is perceived in the middle is surrounded by flowers and shrubbery. There rests the owner's spouse, a person distinguished for her virtues and her goodness.⁷⁸

Laborde continues, proclaiming the tomb to be so well executed that it contributes to the overall beauty of the landscape. The accompanying engraving by Constant Bourgeois closely mirrors Laborde's description, providing an elevated view of Boyer's gravesite and affirming its agreeable placement within the native surroundings (Figure 36). Although Laborde does not name Gros directly, he does suggest that Bourgeois's image is based on the artist's portrait:

This piece represents a scene employed by one of our best painters in a picture that he made of the two children shortly after the death of their mother. The elder of the two girls has just found a nest of birds in the wood; the little ones are already hatched, but still unable to leave their nest. The mother comes as usual to feed them, and this circumstance brings to the eldest daughter's recollection the care her mother had taken of her. She looks at her bust with tenderness, while her little sister, too young to combine a like association of ideas, is wholly taken up with the little birds.⁷⁹

For contemporary viewers, as expressed in Laborde's description and pictured in Bourgeois's engraving, nature provided a model for morality and ideal familial interactions. The maternal

⁷⁸ "...ni trop près, ni trop loin de l'habitation principale, il est chaché aux regards des hommes par un bois épais. Le gout et le sentiment ont preside à sa composition. L'emplacement de la tombe, que l'on aperçoit dans le milieu, est entouré de fleurs et d'arbustes. C'est la que repose l'epouse du propriétaire, personne distinguee par ses vertus et sa bonté." Ibid., 133.

⁷⁹ "Cette plance représente une scène qui servit à un de nos meilleurs peintres dans le tableau qu'il a fait des deux enfans, peu de temps après la mort de leur mere. L'ainée de ces deux filles vient de trouver un nid d'oiseaux dans le bois; les petits sont déjà écals, mais ils ne peuvent encore sortir de leur nid; la mere vient, comme de coutume, leur donner à manger, et cette circonstance rappelled à l'ainée des enfans les soins qu'avoit pour elle sa mere: elle regarde tendrement son buste, pendant que sa petite soeur, trop jeune pour imaginer un semblable rapprochement, ne fait attention qu'aux oiseaux." Ibid., 133.

instincts of the bird clearly express the attentive care Boyer did and would have continued to lavish on her children. The younglings depend on their mother for sustenance just as Boyer's daughters continue to depend on their mother for moral nourishment. Boyer's gravesite commemorates and immortalizes her fine qualities, her "goodness and virtues", so that when she is remembered, she is remembered in a certain way and for particular aspects of her character.

Along with describing the placement of the tomb within the grounds, Bourgeois's engraving also suggests the ways the family interacted with the site and the funerary objects located there; he pictures Bonaparte and his daughters at the grave.⁸⁰ Boyer's tomb and a bust of the deceased by Jean-Antoine Houdon are visible in the center of the composition. To the right of the tomb, Bonaparte sits on a bench just beyond the iron gates that protect the grave and marble bust. Boyer's daughters are visible in the center foreground. The elder Charlotte stands, her gaze fixed on a classical stele decorated with a relief of a putto weeping and holding a torch. Her younger sister Christine Égypta kneels beside her, enamored by a nest of birds, just as in the portrait by Gros. Together, the setting combined with the expressive gestures of father and daughters captures an idealized vision of personal mourning as the family is reunited at the tomb of their beloved matriarch in a collective act of remembrance.

While clearly similar in its treatment of the subject through the arrangement of figures and organization of the composition, differences between Bourgeois's engraving and Gros's painting are evident. These differences, which may initially appear minor, alter the

⁸⁰ In November 1801 Lucien left France for Madrid to assume his new post as ambassador to Spain. He sent a letter to his sister Élisabeth in which he describes the loss of Christine as an emptiness that will never be filled. He asks her to take care of Christine's tomb and to ensure the flowers there do not wither. His heart, he wrote, would always be where his wife was buried. "Le vide qu'elle m'a laissé n'est pas rempli. Il ne se remplira jamais." *Letter to Élisabeth (Madame Bacciochi)*, 24 Brumaire, An IX (November 14, 1800). See also: Théodore Jung, *Lucien Bonaparte et ses Mémoires, 1775 – 1840: D'après les papiers déposés aux Archives Étrangères et d'autres documents inédits* (Paris: Charpentier, 1882 -83), II: 5.

depicted relationship and perceived emotional experience between the figures and the grave. One of the most striking differences between the two works is the proximity between the viewer and the scene represented. Within the context of Laborde's volume, Bourgeois's engraving operates as a topographical sketch of the tomb, its architectural embellishments, and the surrounding landscape. He provides a wide view of the garden, allowing the viewer to study its layout and design. In his portrait, on the other hand, Gros prioritizes the emotional experience of Charlotte and Christine Égypta. He does so by bringing the viewer nearer to the subject and situating us not above but rather within the garden space, immediately alongside the girls. Charlotte and Christine Égypta appear significantly closer to us as we stand before the painting. In Gros's portrait we can study their features and expressions intimately. Their faces, gestures, and clothing are presented in fine detail, as are the lush and fertile environs. More importantly, the young girls are pictured beside their mother's tomb, not separated from it by an iron gate. They stand and kneel immediately adjacent to the marble sculpture, so close that their shadows fall over its surface. Gros uses light throughout the painting to draw attention to their faces, bodies, and hands, shading parts of the landscape – the middle ground and left foreground – to signify the girls' importance within the composition and to create a sense of intimacy and solitude.

Another notable difference between portrait and engraving is the representation of the garden itself. Based on the actual site of Boyer's tomb at Plessis, Bourgeois's engraving shows a wooded space that embraces the sculptural elements of the gravesite. The trees and dense shrubbery appear deliberately placed to create a clearly delineated space around the symmetrical tomb. We easily make out the carefully manicured lawn around the iron palisade, the benches running along three sides of the tomb, and the woods that bring desired

seclusion to this part of the grounds. Similarly, Gros's portrait pictures a neoclassical, carved cenotaph surrounded by trees and shadowy woods, but the location of the gravesite appears plainly different from the one represented in Bourgeois's print. Gros presents an even more natural garden, one far less symmetrical and manicured and seemingly more vulnerable to encroaching nature. Charlotte and Christine Égypta stand and kneel on mossy grass and a winding dirt path rather than on a clipped lawn. Following its trail we see a boat anchored at a shoreline. Evidently, Gros has imagined Boyer's tomb apart from the mainland entirely, picturing Boyer's tomb on a small island. As evidenced by Laborde's description and Bourgeois's engraving of Boyer's actual tomb at Le Plessis, this island garden is a product of Gros's imagination. In the portrait, Gros constructs the ideal tomb site and invites the viewer to inhabit that space alongside Bonaparte's daughters. In situating Boyer's tomb on a small island Gros references the quintessential tomb of the early Romantic period and another gravesite featured in Laborde's volume: the most well-known and celebrated garden tomb in France circa 1800, Jean-Jacques Rousseau's tomb at Ermenonville (Figure 37).

Located northeast of Paris and near Le Plessis, Lucien Bonaparte certainly would have been aware of Rousseau's famous tomb at Réne-Louis, the Marquis de Girardin's picturesque estate Ermenonville. A friend and admirer of Rousseau, Girardin invited the philosopher to take up residence on the estate, where he died shortly after his arrival in 1778. As a Protestant, Rousseau was not permitted burial in a Catholic churchyard, so his remains were interred on the grounds on a small island in the middle of a lake circled by poplar trees.⁸¹ Initially, Rousseau's gravesite was marked by a neoclassical monument and topped with an urn. In 1780 this memorial was replaced with a marble sarcophagus designed by the painter Hubert Robert (Figure 38). The surface of the sarcophagus was inscribed, "Here rests

⁸¹ McManners, *Death and the Enlightenment*, 303 - 360.

the man of Nature and Truth” and was decorated with a bas-relief by Jacques Philippe Lesueur that included allegorical figures representing maternal virtue and natural child rearing, subjects that celebrated the influence of Rousseau’s *Julie, ou la nouvelle Héloïse* and *Émile*.⁸²

Girardin’s decision to bury his friend within the bounds of his private estate conforms to broader trends and discourses at work in landscape gardening in France in the second half of the eighteenth century. Beginning in the 1770s, English models for garden design began to filter into France, bringing about a gradual transformation of the formal, symmetrical and awe-inspiring *jardin français* that dominated during the *ancien regime* into the winding, pastoral and deliberately irregular picturesque garden.⁸³ Ermenonville is one of the earliest and best examples of this type of garden in France. To reconfigure the 2,000-acre park at Ermenonville, Girardin traveled extensively in England, consulting with William Shenstone, the owner and designer of the gardens at the Leasowes, the landscape painter Jean-Marel Morel, and English and Scottish gardeners.⁸⁴ Girardin especially embraced the melancholic thread within English landscape design, embodied largely through the strategic placement of mausoleums, graves and cenotaphs within gardens. To achieve a similar effect at Ermenonville, Girardin had dead trees ‘planted’ throughout the park and, in the years

⁸² Picturesque gardens and lengthy passages on the evocative power of the natural world appear in Rousseau’s *Julie, ou la Nouvelle Héloïse* (1761), *Emile* (1762), and *Reveries of a Solitary Walker* (1782).

⁸³ John Dixon Hunt, *The Picturesque Garden in Europe* (New York: Thames and Hudson, 2002); Dora Wiebson, *The Picturesque Garden in France* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1978); Joseph Disponzio, introduction to Claude-Henri Watelet, *Essay on Gardens: a Chapter in the French Picturesque*, ed. and trans. Samuel Danon (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2003), 1 - 16.

⁸⁴ In his treatise on gardens Girardin praised the Ancient’s practice of burying loved ones outside city limits. He believed these tombs stimulated memory unlike French cemeteries that, with their rotting corpses stacked one upon another in large open pits, could provoke only disgust. René-Louis de Girardin, *De la Composition des paysages, ou des moyens d’embellir la Nature autour des Habitations, en joignant l’agréable à l’utile* (Geneva: 1777), 110.

following Rousseau's death, he added several other graves and commemorative sculptures to the grounds. In 1779 the painter Georges-Frédéric Mayer died while a guest at Ermenonville and was buried on a small island near Rousseau's tomb. An unidentified young man committed suicide on the grounds in June 1791, leaving a note signed "a victim of love". Girardin buried him at the spot of his death and marked his grave with a stone inscribed, "an unhappy, melancholic dreamer" (Figure 39). Another anonymous tombstone in the garden honored an unnamed mother and her child. The stone was marked with the imagined words of the surviving husband and father: "To my son, to my wife/ I lived for them/ I survive to weep them." Ultimately, after the marquis's own death in 1810, his family constructed a monument to his memory on the estate.

In the last quarter of the eighteenth century, the grounds at Ermenonville generally, and Rousseau's tomb specifically, became a source of inspiration and a constant touchstone for modern gardening throughout France. Girardin's park established the importance of including on the grounds real tombs devoted to friends and family with whom one had formed emotional ties during life. The Isle of Poplars, called the Elysium, became an icon of the French picturesque garden, attracting visitors from across Europe. Marie Antoinette, Sweden's King Gustav III, Benjamin Franklin, and Napoleon, to name only a few, all made the pilgrimage to Ermenonville to see Rousseau's tomb, and the Isle of Poplars continued to draw visitors even after Rousseau's remains were transferred to the Panthéon in 1794.

Indeed, Girardin deliberately designed the park to be visited, and he wanted each visitor to receive moral instruction while meandering the paths and contemplating the pastoral views of the grounds. He designed the *Temple of Modern Philosophy*, a classically inspired building held up by columns dedicated to Newton, Descartes, Voltaire, Penn,

Montesquieu, and Rousseau, to imitate ancient ruins in the hope that future generations, upon contemplating the structure, would aspire to have their own names recorded among this elite group of *grand hommes*. Guidebooks directed visitors through the park and to Rousseau's tomb. In one such guide, Mériqot Fils encouraged visitors to settle near the *Bench of Mothers* to enjoy the particular view of the island tomb that the site afforded. There, they could shed tears over the philosopher's grave, preferably by moonlight.⁸⁵ Replete with pastoral views curated around evocative nature, tombs, and ruins, the landscape at Ermenonville provided a place where death is encountered within a beautified and personal setting. These changes to the garden space from formal and awe inspiring to personal and edifying directly corresponded with the increasing debate on burial spaces and mourning rituals that began during the mid-eighteenth century.

From Charnel House to Elysium: The Changing Landscape of Burial and Mourning

Beginning in the mid-eighteenth century, the long-established and deeply held conventions surrounding death and mourning began to undergo substantial changes.⁸⁶

⁸⁵ Mériqot Fils, *Promenade, ou itinéraire des jardins d'Ermenonville, auquel on a joint vingt-cinq de leurs principes vues* (Paris: Chez Mériqot père, Gattey, Guyot, et à Ermenonville chez Murray, 1788).

⁸⁶ The changing attitudes toward death and mourning are discussed by Philippe Ariès, *L'Homme devant la mort* (Paris: Editions du Seuil, 1977), and Michel Ragon, *L'Espace de la mort: essai sur l'architecture, la décoration et l'urbanisme funéraires* (Paris: A. Michel, 1981). Other important sources include: R. Michéa, "Le plaisir des tombeaux au XVIIIe siècle," *Revue de littérature comparée* 18 (1938), 301; André Monglond, *Le préromantisme française* (Paris: Corti, 1966), II: 45 – 57; and Howard Colvin, *Architecture and the After-Life* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1991). The most incisive and revealing studies, however, remain John McManners, *Death and the Enlightenment: Changing Attitudes to Death among Christians and Unbelievers in Eighteenth-Century France* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1981), and Richard Etlin, *The Architecture of Death: The Transformation of the Cemetery in Eighteenth-Century Paris* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1984). This summary of the changing burial practice in eighteenth and early nineteenth century France is based on research presented in McManners and Etlin, unless otherwise noted.

Spurred by religious reformers and new scientific arguments about the rising threat fetid parish cemeteries posed to urban public health, the primary aim was to close existing cemeteries and transfer all remains to new sites beyond the city walls. This plan demolished one of the keystones of urban life, the Catholic parish church, a hallowed space and the long desired resting place of devoted churchgoers because the deceased could be in proximity to the sacred altar and the tombs and relics of saints. However, centuries of use, rising populations and growing mortality strained these limited burial spaces, and the exhausted soil could no longer complete the task of decomposing the corpses.⁸⁷ Physicians became increasingly concerned about the noxious fumes emitting from overburdened graves, as evidenced by numerous recorded accounts of toxic reactions from people who approached the sites.⁸⁸ In some cases, at the height of the crisis, parishioners could not even enter churches due to the smell of rotting cadavers. These imminent concerns for public health brought about action, and by the 1780s, major changes to funerary rituals and burial sites were underway. Local and national governments restricted church burial, closed urban cemeteries, transferred remains to remote sites, and directed new burials to outlying cemeteries to protect residents. These reforms culminated in the closing of Paris's vast ancient cemetery and centuries-old burial site for several churches, the Cemetery of the Holy Innocents.

The practice of burial at the Cemetery of the Holy Innocents maintained customs in place from the late fourteenth and early fifteenth centuries and exemplifies the experience of burial and mourning before reforms were made. Wealthy Parisians were able to secure distinguished places of burial within the space by building richly embellished structures

⁸⁷ McManners, 89 – 104; 303 – 312.

along the walls of the cemetery. These private chapels created a gallery along the edge of the cemetery called a *charnier* and were intended to show the piety of the families whose loved ones were buried there while also reminding the public of the inevitability of death.⁸⁹ The *charniers* were filled with piles of skulls and bones recovered from the mass graves where the majority of the populace found final rest.⁹⁰ These practices continued into the late eighteenth century, imbuing the parish cemetery with gruesome and effective images of death: stacks of human remains, bones, and gaping holes within the ground (Figures 40, 41, 42). Understandably, mourners avoided visiting the cemetery all together, let alone spending prolonged time meditating within its bounds. For the overwhelming majority of people, the opportunity to mourn over an autonomous, identifiable grave dedicated to the memory of their loved one did not exist, as most bodies were interred in large, mass pits. The environment of the typical cemetery before 1800 was generally repulsive, grotesque and legitimately dangerous to one's health.

Burial reforms continued during the Revolution, driven forward by the worst phases of the Terror when daily violence brought death to the center of the city and motivated further reflection on social attitudes towards corpses, tombs and burial practices. The most significant changes concerned religious funerary rites. Church burial was completely abolished in 1789 with the nationalization of churches, and in 1793 all religious burial rites were suppressed along with individual interment in urban cemeteries. Religious neutrality became paramount, as did the designation of an individualized gravesite for each and every

⁸⁹ The most desirable places for burial were two chapels – the Chapelle d'Orgement and the Chapelle de Villeroy – and the *petit charnier* located closest to the church. The cemetery included three other *charniers*. Etlin, 10.

⁹⁰ The Cemetery of the Holy Innocents served eighteen parishes, two hospitals and the morgue. Approximately two thousand people each year, one-tenth of the annual dead of Paris, were buried within this urban cemetery. Ibid.

person; personalized burial became viewed as a right, not a privilege. These significant changes transformed the ways funerary rites, burial spaces and mourning rituals were conceptualized. Mourning became increasingly conceived as an intimate and sentimental act that facilitated an ongoing relationship with the deceased through ‘conversations’ with the dead. The tomb itself, and the physical remains it housed, became a charged and sacred space, and personal, private access to the gravesite of a beloved was considered vital. How to materialize these desires though? As Revolutionaries looked back to ancient sources for models of self-governance, emblems and symbols for their new political and national systems, they also found a prototype for decent burial in the Arcadian cemeteries of ancient Greece.⁹¹ In the years around 1800, the natural and verdant cemetery situated within the countryside, a space of remove from the routines of everyday life, emerged as the predominant vision for the ideal burial site.

Art, as well as ancient history, provided a powerful model in the imagining of new burial spaces and mourning rituals. Images of the Arcadian cemetery were already ingrained in French consciousness through the work of seventeenth-century classicists, most notably Claude Lorrain and Nicolas Poussin. Poussin’s iconic painting *Et in Arcadia Ego* provided a lasting and influential image of the living encountering death within a pastoral landscape (ca. 1655; Figure 43). The painting depicts the moment three shepherds encounter a marble tomb amidst the arid countryside. Guided by a statuesque allegorical female figure, they move closer to study the epitaph carved into the rock, which proclaims that death can be found even here, amongst the pleasures of Arcadia. When the painting was made, the tomb in Poussin’s painting was understood to be a sign and symbol of the transience of life. During the eighteenth century the meaning of this traditional *memento mori* was transformed, as

viewers came to read the stone monument not as a sign of universal mortality but as an actual tomb containing the remains of a real person. Jean-Baptiste Dubos supplied this interpretation of Poussin's painting in his *Critical Reflections on Poetry and Painting* (1718). Dubos describes the shepherds as engaged in prolonged philosophical meditation at the tomb of "a young maid snatched away in the flower of her age."⁹² This analysis motivated Dubos to read the inscription on the face of the stone, "*Et in Arcadia ego*," as "and I was once an inhabitant of Arcadia," an individualized proclamation from beyond the grave by the maiden buried beneath the tomb.⁹³ Dubos's ultimate reading that death "spares neither age nor beauty" would, he believed, motivate those who encountered Poussin's picture to reflect wistfully on the loss of beloved family and friends.⁹⁴ This meditative act would encourage viewers to maintain emotive connections with the deceased rather than contemplate only their own mortality. The meaning of Poussin's painting was reimagined to epitomize period desires for a continued relationship with the dead, aided by the marker of their autonomous pastoral grave, their grief prompted and soothed by the shades and sounds of nature.

Initially, this idealized vision of death contained within evocative nature was manifested on the private estates of wealthy landowners. Laws granting property owners the right to be buried within the boundaries of their own land coincided with the vogue for picturesque modes of garden design, and by the early decades of the nineteenth century the

⁹² Jean-Baptiste Dubos, *Réflexions critiques sur la poésie et sur la peinture*, 7th ed. (Paris: Pissot, 1770), I:55. The changing connotation of the phrase was first discussed in a celebrated article by Panofsky. See Erwin Panofsky, "Et in Arcadia Ego: Poussin and the Elegiac Tradition," in *Meaning in the Visual Arts* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday Anchor Books, 1955). Two other important studies of the paintings are François Divorne, "A propos des Bergers d'Arcadie de Nicolas Poussin," *Revue de la Bibliothèque nationale* 31 (1989): 10 – 21, and Elizabeth Cropper and Charles Dempsey, *Nicolas Poussin: Friendship and the Love of Painting* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton Univ. Press, 1996).

⁹³ Dubos, I: 55.

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, 15.

secluded garden tomb emerged as the most desired site for private burial. Boyer's tomb at Plessis-Chamant provides an example of this kind of burial site. Guarded within the bounds of family property, Boyer's tomb is both incorporated within domestic life and given a space of appropriate remove within the garden. There, the signs and sensations of nature supplant the sacred Christian iconography that was once essential to funerary traditions. Mourners found within the landscape earthly symbols about the brevity of life and meaningful reflections of the emotions associated with grief. Like theatre, the natural world provides moving pictures that change as one passes through the environment, allowing the visitor to experience new vistas and private enclaves within the orchestrated spaces of designed parks. The seasons, time of day, and atmospheric conditions all affect the visitor's experience of the garden. These changes and alterations provide deeply evocative metaphors for the mourner. The organic cycle of the garden affords a literal example of the stages of life from birth to death. Embraced by nature, the garden tomb is surrounded by natural elements that express the transience of life through the processes of germination, growth, and decay. Eventually, the pleasures and musings of verdant garden spaces were made available to the populace through the construction of park cemeteries on the outskirts of Paris. The best known of these burial parks, Père Lachaise Cemetery, was opened in 1804, thereby realizing the complete transformation of public burial spaces from the medieval urban cemetery exemplified by the Cemetery of the Holy Innocents into the Arcadian park cemetery.⁹⁵

The closure of the parish cemetery and the cessation of the religious rituals, spaces and objects that accompanied Catholic burial, however, risked the loss one of the primary and most essential functions of commemorative works – the exultation of the holy person. The visitation to holy tombs and the contemplation of religious relics were long linked to

⁹⁵ Etlin, *Architecture of Death*, 37 – 39; 303 – 310.

moral edification.⁹⁶ Stretching back to the late seventeenth century, art treatises made clear that one of the essential functions of commemorative objects is their service to the public good through the creation and celebration of the ideal citizen.

During the Revolutionary period these enduring concepts found new form in the cult of the heroic dead. The holy saint became the heroic citizen in the manifestation of the *grand homme*, a person deemed worthy of national gratitude and upheld as a moral exemplar. In the absence of saints and their veneration, the cult of the heroic citizen gained momentum, and concerted effort was made to conceive of new ways to appropriately consecrate the memory of those who died for the Revolution. This act of public memorialization was essential, because to Revolutionaries virtue was “the foundation of any society, the strength of the Republic, and its underlying principle.”⁹⁷ As Arsenne Thiébaut explains in his *Réflexions sur les pompes funèbres* (1797):

I will not expatiate upon the wondrous effects that the busts of great men and the honors accorded them have upon morals, science, and the arts. I will simply observe that this is the school at which the teacher will form his student; where the artist will seek his subjects; where the mother will take her child to correct his wrongdoings; where the presence of these busts will serve to spur emulation and a love of our country; and where the tourist will come to ascertain the glory of the Republic and the happiness of its people.⁹⁸

While public recognition of superior citizens was almost universally accepted as an essential service to the public good, the form that those commemorations should take was fervently deliberated. The debate over ways to celebrate the *grands hommes* of France properly and powerfully split between those endorsing the construction of an imposing neoclassical temple

⁹⁶ Peter Brown, *The Cult of Saints. Its Rise and Function in Latin Christianity* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1981), 88.

⁹⁷ As quoted in Etlin, *Architecture of Death*, 230.

⁹⁸ Arsenne Thiébaut, *Réflexions sur les pompes funèbres* (Paris, Frimaire, An VI [1797]).

and others committed to situating memorial sites within natural public spaces: along tree-lined avenues, buried within ceremonial fields, and incorporated into urban parks.

Ultimately, the Church of Sainte-Geneviève was converted into the Pantheon to function as a grand mausoleum for heroes, past, present and future. However, even during the period of the Pantheon's conceptualization, plans were submitted that married architecture and nature, situating the temple within a field of poplars, "sacred woods", and "silent shades".⁹⁹ Once again, peaceful and expressive nature emerged as an essential element to honor the virtuous dead.

The union of architecture and landscape appeared also in the other prevailing idea about appropriate ways to honor the great men and women of France: the reinterpretation of the Elysium, or the ancient "Field of Rest". The Abbé Delille imagined a modern-day *Elysée* in his 1784 poem, *Les Jardins*, describing a field marked with statues devoted to four contemporary heroes: Sully, Henry IV, Fénelon, and Cook.¹⁰⁰ In his *Études de la nature* (1784), Bernardin de Saint-Pierre likewise took up this theme, describing a similar space and situating his *Elysée* on an island in the middle of the Seine. This garden was to be filled with tombs and statues dedicated to the illustrious writers, generals, inventors, and worthy men and women of France. At its center should reside a temple of virtue, a rotunda decorated with uplifting moral inscriptions and surrounded by "pious statues of virtuous citizens, crowned with flowers, their features reflecting bliss, peace, and solace."¹⁰¹ According to Saint-Pierre, this island of monuments would provide a profound civic and moral example and trigger a combined physical and emotional response within the visitor, a "metaphysical shiver

⁹⁹ As quoted in Etlin, *Architecture of Death*, 233.

¹⁰⁰ Jacques Delille, *Les Jardins, ou l'Art d'embellir les paysages* (Paris: F.-A. Didot, 1782), 105 - 108.

¹⁰¹ Henri Bernardin de Saint-Pierre, *Études de la nature*, rev. ed. (Paris: Deterville, 1804), II: 320.

(*frisson*)”.¹⁰² Burial spaces were considered privileged sites precisely for their ability to instill virtue within the mourner, communicated effectively through emotions and sensibility. Gaspard Delamalle expressed a commonly held belief during the period about the universalizing power of emotions when he wrote: “Few men have superior reason; all have a sensitive heart when it is moved. Man’s reason is a source of errors; his sensibility is a source of generous actions. Feeling is the hearth of virtue, as heat is the principle of life.”¹⁰³

At the heart of both of these concepts for honoring the great citizens of France, the neoclassical temple, and the Field of Rest, are the foundational beliefs that the dead live on, their presence can be felt, and virtue confers immortality. The visibility of the tombs of the worthy dead was believed to provide moral instruction and national coalition, and this drive to erect commemorative monuments to worthy citizens marked a changing conception of death within society. Before the Revolution, the commemorative monument was reserved almost exclusively for sovereigns and religious leaders. A new sense of equality meant the right to a decent, individualized burial included all citizens of France, and the worthy, heroic, virtuous citizen could be granted elevated status as honorable icon.

But what about the private tomb? How did these public programs for commemoration translate to the private realm? And did the tombs of everyday citizens, such as Christine Boyer, have the same moralizing and edifying potential? What kinds of experiences did visitors have at these newly reimagined burial sites that brought them into direct contact with the remains of their loved ones? And, how does Gros’s painting, a portrait that pictures this

¹⁰² Ibid., 319.

¹⁰³ “Peu d’hommes ont une raison supérieure; tous ont le coeur sensible, quand on sait l’émouvoir: la raison de l’homme est une source d’erreurs; sa sensibilité set une source d’actions généreuses. Le sentiment est le foyer de la vertu, comme la chaleur est le principe de la vie.” Delamalle, *L’Enterrement de ma mere, ou reflections sur les ceremonies des funérailles et le soin des sepultures, et sur la maralité des institutions civiles en général* (Paris, An III), 11.

very encounter, demonstrate the significance of the gravesite within the context of the family?

At a Threshold of Two Worlds: The Virtues of the Private Tomb

In many ways, Saint-Pierre's imagining of a public *Elysée* on an island suspended in the waters of the Seine reflects his general understanding of the experience all mourners have when they encounter tombs. Conceptualizing the gravesite as a threshold – a liminal realm - between the living and the dead, Saint-Pierre viewed the tomb as a charged space that inspired virtuous thoughts and meditative reflections. He describes this complex of sentiments and sensations that drew mourners repeatedly to the burial site of beloved departed family and friends in his *Études*, under the heading “Plaisir des tombeaux”:

What is the source of the sentiment of funerary melancholy that they feel in the midst of pleasure? Does it not stem from the fact that something still subsists after us? If a tomb were to conjure up for them only the idea of what it contains, that is, a cadaver, its sight would be revolting to their imagination. Most are gripped by the fear of death! It is thus essential that this physical idea be joined by some kind of moral sentiment. The voluptuous melancholy that results arises, as with all appealing sensations, from the harmony of two opposing principles: the sense of our own fleeting existence and our immortality, which are brought together at the sight of man's last dwelling. A tomb is a monument placed at the limit of two worlds...It presents us first with an end to life's meaningless anxieties and the image of eternal rest; and it gives rise to the confused sense of happy immortality, whose likelihood depends on the virtue of the one whose memory we contemplate.¹⁰⁴

¹⁰⁴ “D’où peut leur venir ce sentiment de mélancholie funèbre au milieu des plaisirs? N’est-ce pas de ce que quelque chose subsiste encore après nous? Si un tombeau ne leur faisait naître que l’idée de ce qu’il doit renfermer, c’est-à-dire, d’un cadaver, sa vue révolterait leur imagination. La plupart d’entre eux craignent tant de mourir! Il faut donc, qu’à cette idée physique, il se joigne quelque sentiment moral. La mélancholie voluptueuse qui en résulte, naît, comme toutes les sensations attrayantes, de l’harmonie de deux principes opposés, du sentiment de notre existence rapide et de celui de notre immortalité, qui se réunissent à la vue de la dernière habitation des hommes. Un tombeau est un monument placé sur les limites des deux mondes.” Saint-Pierre, *Études*, II: 90 -91.

Through direct encounter with the final resting place of a loved one the mourner senses the lasting immortality of the soul and receives pleasure in contemplating her loved one's goodness in life. There, the mourner experiences all facets of sensibility. The activation of her senses, which in turn arouse her imagination and stir memory, "voluptuous melancholy" is generated by the simultaneous mixture of transience and eternity, and a flood of moral sentiment provokes edifying contemplation. This experience, for Sainte-Pierre, was a fundamental right for all people.

Saint-Pierre was not alone in his view of tombs and their effects on the minds and emotions of visitors. General acceptance of the pleasures and beauties of tombs can be found in visual representations from the period. During the early decades of the nineteenth century the gravesite quickly became accepted as an intensely personal, meditative place designed to encourage solitary indulgence in the "pleasures of melancholy", a philosophical experience recommended to heighten introspection in a way that appealed to growing Romantic sensibilities. Most importantly, this essential and desired experience facilitated through emotion, imagination and memory continued the living's relationship with the dead. It was believed that the personal gravesite of a lost loved one inspired the mourner to materialize the past, feel again the pain of the loss, and anticipate the pleasure of reunion in the future, beyond death. Boyer's gravesite, as described in Laborde's text and pictured in Gros's painting of Charlotte and Christine Égypta, manifests these most desirable elements of a garden tomb, expertly designed to induce the enriching and pleasurable experience Saint-Pierre describes in *Études*.

Mourners believed the silence of woods combined with the subtle murmurings of a stream best echoed their melancholic sensations. Gros recreates this ideal environment in his

Portrait of Charlotte and Christine Égypta. Individualized, demarcated by a gated iron fence and marked with a portrait bust of the deceased, Boyer's tomb at Plessis-Chamant is dedicated to her memory alone. There, her surviving husband and daughters have access to her sacred remains where they may visit freely and perform mourning rituals solely devoted to her. Her final resting place is situated within the shelter of shade trees, considered the best place for private burial, particularly if bordered by a stream or other source of water as in Gros's portrait. He pictures the tomb surrounded by a dense wood and winding stream where the elements of nature may mirror and soothe the mournful sentiments of Boyer's daughters. The trees appear to embrace both the carved cenotaph and the figures of the girls; branches and leaves hang alongside the stone, and the almond-shaped opening of the woods onto the stream behind Charlotte and Christine Égypta gives the impression of their being fully subsumed within the shaded grove. Furthermore, imagining Boyer's gravesite as situated on a private island extends the idyllic construction of the site, literally manifesting Saint-Pierre's conceptualization of the tomb as a liminal space between the living and the dead, just as in his plan for a national Elysium. This place of remove from the building and other areas of the park pictured in the background affords privacy and promotes intimacy for Boyer's daughters, providing perhaps the most important element associated with graveside mourning at this time – solitude.

To eighteenth century mourners, solitude within a natural surround was of primary importance in evoking the desired emotions associated with the ritual of mourning, particularly 'mourning melancholia'. Defined during the period as a mixture of meditation and grief, mourning melancholia was described as a kind of heightened self-awareness that produced a somber emotion intermingled with feelings of pleasure that emanated from the

sensation that was caused by recovering the beloved through the act of remembrance.¹⁰⁵

Marie Guillon-Pastel, the author of *Sur le respect dû aux tombeaux, et l'indécence des inhumations actuelles* (1798 - 1799), stated that to experience mourning melancholia was “to occupy oneself with what one has lost and to enjoy it again.”¹⁰⁶ This complicated sensation was achieved through deep reflection on the past and a direct encounter with the grave. A visit to the tomb was purported to stimulate feelings of both sadness associated with the loss and pleasure experienced through the recovery of the deceased through memory.¹⁰⁷ Because the grave was the focus of cherished memories it also became a virtuous space, an ideal site for instilling collective values and for relaying ideal qualities. As Richard Etlin has shown, “to erect a tombstone, to inscribe an epitaph, these were not only consolations to the heart but also incitements to virtue.”¹⁰⁸

The virtues associated with the private, familial tomb were outlined and expressed in literature as well as in the visual arts. In the *Idylls* by Swiss author Salomon Gessner, burial customs do not celebrate national heroes but rather perpetuate domestic sentiment, parental virtue and familial affection after death. Gessner was one of the most widely read authors of the second half of the eighteenth century, and his writings enjoyed phenomenal success. His writings - two collections of idylls and a biblical epic – were translated into several

¹⁰⁵ Raymond Klibansky; Erwin Panofsky; and Fritz Saxl, *Saturn and Melancholy: Studies in the History of Natural Philosophy, Religion and Art* (New York: Basic Books, 1964), 231.

¹⁰⁶ “S’occuper de ce qu’on a perdu, c’est en jouir encore.” Marie N.-S. Guillon-Pastel, *Sur le respect dû aux tombeaux, et l’indécence des inhumations actuelles* (Paris: 1798 -1799), 13.

¹⁰⁷ P.S. Ballanche, *Du sentiment considéré dans ses rapports avec la littérature et les arts* (Lyon: Ballanche et Barret, 1801), 121.

¹⁰⁸ Etlin, *The Architecture of Death*, 197.

languages, and were popular across class and socioeconomic lines.¹⁰⁹ His work was particularly popular in France where he became a symbol of “natural virtue”, embodying the idea that goodness, happiness and true morality resided in the countryside. In his *Idylls*, Gessner constructed a vision of bucolic harmony framed by simple and natural emotions expressed through exemplary domestic behavior. Admirers praised the author for extending the genre of pastoral poetry beyond the ever-recurring ‘shepherd’ to encompass on all members of the family.

Throughout Gessner’s *Idylls*, the tomb is characterized as a family altar to which the living often returned to pay homage, shed tears, and commune with the dead. Both the text and accompanying illustrations construct this idealized vision of private burial and mourning. Look, for instance, at the frontispiece to the 1797 edition of his *Oeuvres* (Figure 44). Immediately upon opening the book the reader is presented with the idyllic vision of a tomb nestled in the dense foliage of an Arcadian landscape. Shepherds tend their flock, lounge in the shade of large trees, and play music along the shore of a murmuring brook. Just beyond their relaxed grouping, a large cenotaph is visible, framed by foliage and coupled with a portrait bust seen in profile. Paths meander through the lush landscape, drawing people alongside these monuments as they wind their way into the distance. Here, nature simultaneously embraces the living and the dead.

One of the clearest examples of the virtues of the familial tomb can be found in Gessner’s story of the young shepherdess, Glicère. Having lost her mother at the age of sixteen, the beautiful Glicère is forced into servitude. She finds work keeping the flock of a

¹⁰⁹ John Hibberd, *Salomon Gessner: His Creative Achievement and Influence* (London: Cambridge University Press, 1976), 1-3; Gabrielle Bersier, “Arcadia Revisited: The Internalized Appeal of Gessner’s *Idylls* in the 18th Century,” in *From the Greeks to the Greens: Images of the Simple Life*, eds. Reinhold Grimm and Jost Hermand (Madison, WI: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1989), 34.

wealthy landowner who attempts to seduce the innocent and isolated Glicère. She rejects his advances and rushes to her mother's graveside, knowing there she will receive the comfort and guidance only a mother can provide. The heart of the poem focuses on this intimate exchange at the tomb. Gessner describes the natural beauty of the place, making it clear to the reader that Glicère has made repeated trips to her mother's grave, tending it with attentive loving care. Rather than a haunting, fetid pit, the mother's tomb is represented as a familial altar at which Glicère reaffirms her virtue, anointing the site with water, flowers, and tears. When she first sits beside the tomb, "beneath the mournful shade", Glicère pours "a cup of pure water" over her mother's grave and makes an offering of flowers, draping them from the branches of the bushes that she previously planted around the tomb.¹¹⁰ An engraving from the 1797 edition illustrates this moment of intimate communion at the mother's grave (Figure 45). The illustration pictures the shepherdess in classical dress, seated on a stone bench immediately beside her mother's grave. With only her flock visible in the background, Glicère experiences the privacy of the place beneath a grove of trees and shaded by the foliage overhead. The emotion of the scene is embodied in Glicère's expressive gesture as she prepares to anoint the grave.

The story itself is told as a confession – a sacred conversation – between daughter and mother that absolves Glicère of any sin committed:

Accept these garlands! Receive my tears! May they penetrate all the way to you! Oh, Mother, listen, listen. By your ashes which rest under these flowers, which my tears have watered so often, by your sacred shadow, I renew my heart's vows. Virtue, innocence, and reverence for the gods will grant my life happiness.¹¹¹

¹¹⁰ Salomon Gessner, *Œuvres Complètes De M. Gesner* (Genève: [s.n.], 1786), 207 - 212.

¹¹¹ "Agrée ces guirlandes; reçois mes larmes. Puissent-elle pénétrer jusqu'à toi! Écoute, ô ma mere! Écoute: c'est à ta cendre qui repose ici sous ces fleurs, que mes yeux ont tant de fois arrosées; c'est à ton ombre sainte que je renouvelle le voeu de mon Coeur. La vertu, l'innocence et la crainte des dieux feront la Bonheur de ma vie." Ibid., 210 - 211.

The importance of active remembrance and the influence of her deceased mother through memory is a constant thread through Glicère's soliloquy:

Oh most tender of mothers, how dear to my heart is the memory of your virtues! If ever I forget the instructions you gave me, with such a tranquil smile, following which, as you rested your head on my bosom, I saw you expire – if ever I forget them, may the propitious gods forsake me! And may your sacred shade forever leave me. Oh mother! You have just saved my innocence...Glicère, on leaving that place, felt all the powerful charity of virtue.¹¹²

The experience of visiting her mother's tomb transforms Glicère. Her virtue reaffirmed, she vows to remember always her mother's model and the lessons she imparted to her daughter, knowing that by living a moral life she too will experience a good death: "O my mother, by living thus, I hope to die as you died, smiling, and weeping tears of joy!"¹¹³ Glicère's earthly reward is immediate. Having overheard the shepherdess, her employer apologizes for his unwanted advances, praises her moral purity, and begs her forgiveness. To make amends, he gifts the shepherdess the land near her mother's grave and half his herd.

Descriptions of melancholic meditations at pastoral graves that result in real change in the lives of survivors appear throughout Gessner's *Idylls*. In "Mirtile", a young man pledges to build an altar at his father's tomb so that he may pour milk and spread flowers there. In "Damète et Milon", Damète's father is buried in a once fallow field that is again made fertile through his father's physical presence in the ground and by Damète's dedicated, hard work. In the story of Palémon who, through continued devotion to his beloved wife twelve years after her death, is transformed into a cypress tree, providing consoling shade

¹¹² "O la plus tender des meres, que le souvenir de tes vertus est cher à mon coeur! Tu viens de sauver mon innocence. Si jamais j'oublie les insructions que tu me donnas, avec un sourire si paisible, dans ce moment funeste, après lequél, reposant la tête sur mon sein, je'ty vis expirer; si jamais je les oublie, je consens que les dieux favorable m'abandonnent, et que ton ombre sainte me fuie à jamais. O ma mere! C'est toi qui viens de sauver mon innocence... Glicère en quittant ce lieu, éprouva tout la charme de la vertu." Ibid., 207 – 208, 211.

¹¹³ "O ma mere! en vivant ainsi, j'espere mourir comme tu mourus, en souriant et en versant des larmes de joie." Ibid., 211.

and solitude to those who visit their conjoined grave. And in Glicère, the mother is an ongoing force in the young woman's life, even after death. The liminal space of the tomb becomes the mortal threshold that unites, rather than separates, mother, and daughter through the sacred presence and immediacy of her mother's remains. Furthermore, the gravesite provides the stage where Glicère performs, and therefore reaffirms, her feminine virtue alongside the ideal model supplied by her good mother.

Gros's *Portrait of Charlotte and Christine Égypta* similarly pictures the sacred altar at which Boyer's daughters perform and reaffirm their virtue. Like Glicère, they too bring offerings of flowers to beautify their mother's tomb and express their devotion. They visit alone, unaccompanied by their father and even, by way of boat, traveled some distance to hold vigil. In a very real and practical way, Gros's portrait supplies access to Boyer's sacred tomb in the face of absence. In 1803 Lucien Bonaparte's family was forced into exile by Napoleon at Lucien's refusal to divorce his second wife Alexandrine de Bleschamps and marry a Bourbon Spanish princess at his brother's arrangement. Denied an imperial throne, Bonaparte found refuge in Italy. Once there, he exchanged the lands at Le Plessis for a residence in Bassano Romano, thirty-five miles north of Rome.¹¹⁴ Because Charlotte and Christine Égypta could no longer visit their mother's actual place of burial through representation the portrait provides access to that place in its most ideal manifestation. The portrait became both a record of their devotion and virtue as well as a visual medium of the sacred space itself, enabling their continued access to this vital site in the ongoing, transformative process of mourning.

¹¹⁴ Iung, *Lucien Bonaparte et ses Mémoires*. II: 122.

Much of transformative power of the private, familial tomb as represented in Gros's portrait and narrated in Gessner's "Glicère", stems from their use of the trope of the absent mother. A literary device and keystone of psychoanalytic theory, the death of the mother and the void she leaves behind act as the decisive trauma that motivates the protagonist to gain a better, unified vision of self. Within nineteenth and twentieth-century understanding of psychoanalytic identity formation and language acquisition, the initial break from the mother provides a pivotal and continuous catalyst in the identity formation of the child. The removal of the mother, in turn, allows for the work of making her ideal and perfect beyond reproach. The mother maintains power in her absence and silence; she is idolized. In "Glicère", as in Gros's *Portrait of Charlotte and Christine Égypta*, the absent mother is expressed both literally and symbolically.

Recovering the Absent Mother

Psychoanalytic object-relation theory provides a useful lens through which to consider the meaning and impact of representations of the dead mother.¹¹⁵ The narrative of subjective origin in psychoanalysis begins with the universal crisis precipitated by the loss of the mother. Whether the loss stems from actual maternal death, the recognition of the female genitalia as "castrated", or simply the mother's momentary but anxiety-producing absence, the child must eventually break from the mother to construct a subject-position that is

¹¹⁵ The absent mother is a much researched and discussed topic in the field of nineteenth-century British literature, particularly in studies of the work of Jane Austen, Mary Shelly, and Virginia Wolf. Lesley Walker addresses the theme in eighteenth-century French novels. See Lesley H. Walker, *A Mother's Love: Crafting Feminine Virtue in Enlightenment France* (Cranbury, NJ: Bucknell University Press, 2008); Other useful sources include Carolyn Dever, introduction to *Death and the Mother From Dickens to Freud* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998); Marianne Hirsh, *The Mother/Daughter Plot: Narrative, Psychoanalysis, Feminism* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1989).

independent of hers. This necessary break, however, becomes the generative trauma as the subject remains eternally engaged in pursuit of the first lost object, the absent and idealized mother. However, in psychoanalysis, the maternal body figures as a problem. The good, supportive mother is potentially so powerful a figure as to shield her daughter from challenges, ultimately unwittingly preventing her from completing the process of maturation. If the good mother is dead or absent, she can remain idealized without disrupting her daughter's identity formation. The mother thereby derives her power from absence; nurturing is denied in order to propel the daughter into self-assertion and maturation and the good mother becomes the virtuous ideal. The daughter is propelled to fulfill the potential passed along to her by her mother; she recreates her mother's life, preserving what is best and avoiding its failures. This theory situates the mother as a place of loss.

Psychoanalysis also posits loss as a catalyst for both mourning and melancholia. In Freud's seminal text on the subject, "On Mourning and Melancholia," he differentiates between "normal" mourning and pathological melancholia, characterized as a narcissistic disorder marked by the ego's inability to forsake a loved object. Loss provides the catalyst for both mourning and melancholia, and the difficulty and painfulness of both are due to the fixation on a love-object that is no longer available. Whenever a loved object is lost, as in the case of the actual death of a loved one, there is opposition to giving up the love-object. Eventually, through the natural and time-consuming process of mourning, realization and acceptance of the object's permanent absence wins out and the subject's clinging to the object ceases. This process is painful and can take time: "...each single one of the memories and expectations in which the libido is bound to the object is brought up and

‘hypercathected’, and detachment of the libido is accomplished in respect of it.”¹¹⁶ At the end of this process the ego becomes, “free and uninhibited again.”¹¹⁷ If mourning does not follow along this prescribed route and remains protracted, it can develop into melancholia.

In other cases, melancholia results from an un-named, unidentified loss. The loss may not stem from the actual death of a loved one but could be “a more ideal kind” of loss.¹¹⁸ For Freud, this idea places melancholia in the realm of the unconscious, and the painful ideas and feelings typically directed at the lost object are now turned inward: “In mourning it is the world which has become poor and empty; in melancholia it is the ego itself.”¹¹⁹ Melancholics experience a loss of ego. While in mourning the libido withdraws from the lost loved object and is displaced onto another object, where as in melancholy, “the free libido was not displaced on to another object; it was withdrawn into the ego.”¹²⁰ The melancholic “establishes an identification of the ego with the abandoned object.”¹²¹ Freud’s theorization of the effects of mourning and melancholia encompasses the idea that grief is resolved by breaking the attachment to the lost object (de-cathexis) or the subsequent making of new attachments. Melancholic identification permits the loss of the object in the eternal world precisely because it provides a way to preserve the object as part of the ego itself and avert the loss as a complete loss. The object is not abandoned but rather transferred from external

¹¹⁶ Sigmund Freud, “On Mourning and Melancholia,” in *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud, Volume XIV (1914 – 1916): On the History of the Psycho-Analytic Movement, Papers on Metaphysical and Other Works*, trans. and ed. James Stachey (London: Hogarth Press, 1963), 245.

¹¹⁷ Ibid.

¹¹⁸ Ibid.

¹¹⁹ Ibid., 246.

¹²⁰ Ibid., 249.

¹²¹ Ibid.

to internal. Melancholia is a process of internalization or incorporation of that loss into the psyche.

Following Freud's ideas as presented in "On Mourning and Melancholia," when artworks (active in the present) stand in for the absent beloved they can produce an experience of catharsis, of pleasure and release. These objects embody the dualities of loss that exist simultaneously: presence and absence, fullness and emptiness, beauty and death, pleasure and pain. Mourning objects – portraits, carved tombs, cultivated garden tombs – were designed to facilitate presence and maintain connection while acknowledging absence. These works attempt to recover something that is irrecoverable. These artworks facilitate a unique aesthetic pleasure by providing a sublime experience for the viewer, because the loss (absence) that is internalized by the mourner is now objectified in the artwork and re-presented to the viewer. They attempt to recover the irrecoverable.

In Gros's portrait of Charlotte and Christine Égypta, the mother/daughter relationship is expressed visually. Most literally, the absent Boyer is made present through the materiality of her tomb and its surrounding garden. Her daughters' physical proximity to the cenotaph itself suggests their connection, as does the physical closeness and emotional affection between the two sisters as they offer mutual comfort in mourning. The mother/daughter relationship also is embodied within the design and display of the painting itself; this portrait is a pendant to Gros's posthumous portrait of Boyer. This very format as a pendant connects the works and therefore their subjects together, literally coupling them as a related group. As such, the works were displayed together, side by side in the family gallery at Bonaparte's

estate in Italy. The paintings are nearly identical in size and, in keeping with artistic convention, this portrait complements and formally mirrors its twin.¹²²

Mother and eldest daughter look alike – Charlotte resembles her mother. Her pose mimics and emulates Boyer's. Charlotte also stands in the center of the composition, her head tilted to the left and down. She dips her chin and gazes longingly at a *memento mori*. As Boyer looks upon a fallen rose swept away by the river in her portrait, Charlotte contemplates her mother's tomb in hers. Their gestures mirror one another – Charlotte holds her right arm across her torso in a manner similar to Boyer's – and both mother and eldest daughter hold flowers in their hands. Whereas Boyer has just released the blooming rose into the stream, a symbol of her early death, Charlotte cradles the flowers she has gathered for her mother's grave in the skirt of her dress. Their attire is similar too. Both wear simple white muslin empire gowns and flat satin shoes that signify their status and crystalize the moment of each portrait's completion. In turn, each subject is memorialized at the moment of heightened grief following the event that the works commemorate – Boyer's death.

Gros's construction of the tomb itself in the portrait of Charlotte and Christine Égypta expresses a specific narrative of feminine virtue as enacted through familial devotion and self-sacrifice. In addition to the epitaph that identifies and declares Boyer's unique qualities, the carved bas-relief that is the focus of Charlotte's meditation on also provides a model for emulation. The sculptural frieze depicts the dramatic deathbed scene of the Greek heroine, Alcestis, a woman known for her unfailing love of her husband. When Euripides' tragic play opens, Alcestis is on her deathbed. Soon, as the play unfolds, the circumstances of her

¹²² The portrait of Christine Boyer measures 214 cm x 134 cm. The portrait of Charlotte and Christine Égypta is slightly larger at 230 cm x 180 cm.

premature death come to light.¹²³ Years before their union, Alcestis's husband, King Admetus, brokered a deal with the Fates, through Apollo, to prolong his own life. In exchange for this bargain, the Fates imposed one condition: that another person must assume his place when Death arrives. However, years later, when Death (Thanatos) comes to make his claim on Admetus, no one is willing to die in his place except for his beautiful and devoted wife Alcestis, who agrees to be taken by Death because she "wishes not to leave her children fatherless or be bereft of her lover."¹²⁴

The action in Euripides' play runs parallel to Alcestis' unfolding death. She embraces her children in a final goodbye and only asks that in honor of her sacrifice her husband not remarry in fear that her children will not be loved by a stepmother. She grieves the loss of her children, especially her daughter, and openly weeps at the thought of her growing up without a mother. In her final goodbye, Alcestis addresses her family:

Farewell. God keep you happy. – Husband dear,
Remember that I failed thee not; and you,
My children, that your mother loved you true.¹²⁵

Admetus reassures his wife that he will keep his deathbed promise to her to never remarry. He will honor Alcestis by declaring perpetual mourning in his home. Admetus promises to have Alcestis' likeness made to line in bed beside him as he mourns until he can take his place beside her in their shared tomb when he dies. Then, Alcestis dies before her husband, children, and the audience. She is consumed by the darkness of the Underworld and her

¹²³ Niall W. Slater, *Euripides: Alcestis* (New York: Bloomsbury USA Academic, 2013).

¹²⁴ *Ibid.*, 21 - 22 .

¹²⁵ *Ibid.*

children lament her death. Eventually, her selflessness is rewarded when Heracles wrestles with Death at her grave and rescues her from the Underworld.

Alcestis's act of self-sacrifice, her devotion to her children, and their expressions of love and grief over her death confirm Alcestis's goodness as a wife and mother. Clearly, one of the major themes of Euripides's play is the marital bond and the devoted wife. However, more central to the action of the play is Alcestis relationship with her children. As she moves closer to death so does not worry for herself or her husband, but only prays for her children's happiness and good fortune in life without her. Her children return her love, remaining by Alcestis side as she dies and sing a moving lament after she is taken to the Underworld. Through the relationship between mother and children, Euripides stages an image of the ideal family in *Alcestis*, and, because Alcestis

Believed to be based on Winckelmann's description of *La Mort d'Alceste* from the Villa Albani, Gros's relief captures the emotional climax of Euripides' tragic play - the moment Alcestis bids final goodbyes to her children.¹²⁶ Surrounded by her family, Alcestis reclines lifelessly on her deathbed while her eldest child stands attentively beside her. Weeping, the daughter clings to her mother, clutching Alcestis's limp hand and burying her face in her mother's lap. Her younger sister is carried away from the devastating scene in the arms of a nurse.

In Gros's portrait, the bas-relief illustrates a moment of heightened emotion from the myth of Alcestis and functions as a solemn, yet hopeful, reminder that the absent mother will once again be reunited with her children. Ultimately, *Alcestis* presents a maternal and feminine ideal that communicates the belief that familial devotion delivers freedom from death. In the end Alcestis is rewarded for her act of self-sacrifice and is reunited with her

¹²⁶ Caracciolo, *Lucien Bonaparte: un homme libre*, 170 – 172.

children. Her virtue and commitment as a mother ensures the triumphant strength of her bond with her children. It is a bond that is not broken by death but bares the promise of eternal reunion.

Period conceptualization of portraits positioned them as works with the potential to create presence in the face of absence. As *aide-mémoires* the pictured image of a beloved facilitates connection during periods of separation. In the case of Gros's *Portrait of Charlotte and Christine Égypta*, the work functions both as an *aide-mémoire* to enable the process of recollection and reencounter with the absent mother and as a narrative picture that captures a ritual performed by Boyer's daughters. This performance, in turn, helps shape their identity after the death of their mother. Like Gessner's account of Glicère's confession and transformation at the scared space of her mother's burial, Gros's portrait connects Charlotte and Christine Égypta to their mother across the threshold of her grave.

CHAPTER THREE

Mythologizing the Artist: Constance Mayer's *Self-Portrait as Melancholia*

Constance Mayer exhibited *Self-Portrait of the Artist with Her Father* at the Salon of 1801, a work that engages in the long-standing tradition of self-promotion through the public display of a self-portrait (Figure 46). The young, ambitious painter presents herself in her atelier, surrounded by the tools and symbols of her profession. Plaster casts of a face and hand, a drawing portfolio, books, and a large canvas all signify the legitimacy and professionalism of the space. Mayer stands alert and upright, lifting a new sheet of paper from her portfolio. To her immediate right, her biological father, Pierre Mayer, sits in a large chair with one hand resting on an open book and the other raised and pointing toward a bust of Raphael. He looks up at Mayer who appears to follow the direction of his emphatic gesture to consider the head of the Renaissance artist with her gaze. The explanatory caption that originally accompanied the listing of the portrait in the Salon *livet* makes clear the message of the work: “He [the father] points out the bust of Raphael to her, inviting her to take this famous painter as a model.”¹²⁷

At first glance, and as suggested by the caption, Mayer appears to present an image of the female artist that is framed by paternal authority and devotion to the classical ideal

¹²⁷“Il lui indique le buste de Raphaël, en l'invitant à prendre pour modèle ce peintre célèbre.” *Explication des ouvrages...* (New York and London: Garland, 1977). *Salon de 1801*, 43.

supplied by the model of the great male artists of the Renaissance, specifically Raphael.¹²⁸ By including her father within the portrait and appearing to heed his emphatic directive to take Raphael as her artistic model, Mayer represents herself as both a dutiful daughter and subordinate pupil. To reiterate these relationships, Mayer exhibited the work using her father's surname and shrewdly listed herself as a pupil of both her former male teachers, Jean-Baptiste Greuze and Joseph-Benoit Suvée.¹²⁹ Along with her artistic devotion, Mayer also presents her femininity to the viewer. Elegant, poised, and fashionably dressed, Mayer pictures herself attired in a simple *au courant* white chemise empire gown with her hair styled in soft curls and swept away from her face. By tracing her familial and artistic lineage and performing her femininity within this self-portrait, Mayer astutely follows conventions established by her female predecessors, carefully constructing a public image in ways that adhere to socially accepted gendered norms for women artists. Like women artists before her, Mayer gives the appearance of conforming to social and academic expectations while also constructing a self-portrait that asserts her independence and legitimacy as artist.

In several ways, Mayer distinguishes her figure within the work and expresses a sense of ambition and individualism as a departure from both her father and the symbolic embodiment of Raphael. For instance, as Helen Weston has noted, it is curious that Mayer decided to place her father in the center of the composition rather than herself, elevating his

¹²⁸ On the influence and admiration of Raphael within French art of the early nineteenth century see: Martin Rosenberg, *Raphael and France: the Artist as Paradigm and Symbol* (University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1995).

¹²⁹ At the beginning of her career Mayer alternately used the surnames Mayer and La Martinière, sometimes even in the same document, as is the case of the 1791 *Exposition de la Jeunesse* where Mayer listed herself in the published *livret* twice, as “Mademoiselle La Martinière” and then as “Mademoiselle Constance Mayer”. By 1796, when she first began exhibiting at the official Salon, she was listed in the *livret* as “Citoyenne Mayer (Constance)”. See Margaret A. Oppenheimer, “Women Artists in Paris, 1791 – 1814” (PhD diss., New York University, 1996), 232.

status within the work.¹³⁰ Early photographs of the painting, however, indicate a strip has been removed from the right side of the canvas, cutting off a part of the painting that included a painting cabinet and the rest of the plaster hand and face on the wall.¹³¹ Originally then, Mayer, not her father, would have been situated in the center of the composition. Imagining Mayer at the center of the work shifts the dynamic of the figural group and along with it, the image of the artist presented. The bust of Raphael, previously prominent and pulling compositional weight away from Mayer, is now balanced by the artist's tools: the cabinet full of paints and plaster models used for constructing figures that once occupied the right side of the canvas. While her father points towards history, embodied in the bust of one of the most admired masters of the Renaissance, Mayer stands closest to the implements of art making. Her standing position suggests imminent forward motion compared to her father's seated position of rest, and her open mouth, lips slightly parted as if to speak, suggests dynamism rather than passivity. Mayer's upright posture, the activity of her hands, and the alertness of her gaze all suggest someone attuned to the present work at hand, rather than contemplating the products of history. As Alexandra Wettlaufer notes, Mayer's gaze even appears to look beyond the bust of Raphael, giving the appearance of someone consumed with her own thoughts as she lifts a clean sheet of paper from her portfolio, signifying an artist ready to begin new work.¹³² The canvas in the background further supports this reading, as it is not merely a blank backdrop that silhouettes her father's hand and Raphael's profile, but rather the beginning of new work, a preliminary under-drawing for

¹³⁰ Helen Weston, "The Case for Constance Mayer," *Oxford Art Journal* 3, no. 1 (April 1980): 15.

¹³¹ Oppenheimer, "Women Artists in Paris, 1791 – 1814," 160.

¹³² Alexandra K. Wettlaufer, "Hands Off: Gender, Anxiety and Artistic Identity in the *Atelier*," *Dix-Neuf*, no. 10 (April 2008): 7.

a painting marks the surface. While her father gestures towards the past in exultation of the great masters who have come before, Mayer assumes their company, acknowledges history, but fixes her vision firmly on the future.

Near the end of her life, Mayer presents an altogether different image of her artistic persona. In a later, undated self-portrait in the collection of the Bibliothèque Marmottan in Paris, Mayer presents herself not surrounded by the symbols of her profession but rather assuming the guise of Melancholia (Figure 47).¹³³ In this portrait, she is alone, seated before us in a spare room dressed simply in a similar white muslin gown. Her hair, again, frames her features in soft curls, but here she faces forward, resting her forehead in her left hand and assuming the iconic pose of genial melancholia. The painting is striking in its simplicity and precise composition. The room, its appointments, Mayer's dress and styling, while fashionable, are simple and unadorned, drawing focus to the psychological state of the sitter, her interiority rather than the external symbols of status and character. Gone are the implements of painting and drawing. Nothing in this portrait signifies her artistic career, one that she carefully crafted during three apprenticeships with established painters and actively publicized through continuous exhibition of her work at the biennial Salons.¹³⁴ Instead, in this self-portrait, her emotional condition is the subject.

In these two self-portraits, one from the beginning of her career and the other made near the end of her life, Mayer presents herself as embodying two entirely different ideals of

¹³³ In addition to the two portraits discussed in this chapter Alexandra Wettlaufer lists another self-portrait as one of Mayer's initial Salon entries. She writes that Mayer exhibited "in 1796, a self-portrait 'presenting the sketch of the portrait to her mother' who had died several years earlier." The location of this portrait remains unknown at this time. See: Wettlaufer, "Hands Off," 7.

¹³⁴ Mayer's eagerness to exhibit her work as a professional artist is demonstrated in her early and consistent participation in the public Salons, even sending four portraits to the *Exposition de la Jeunesse* in 1791 at the age of sixteen. Oppenheimer, "Women Artists in Paris, 1791 – 1814," 232.

‘the artist’.¹³⁵ In the first she is a studious professional and active artist fully engaged in the spaces and processes of artistic creation. In the second, we are presented with her psychological state – an image of the artist assuming the attributes of a condition. What might have prompted this change?

The early nineteenth century witnessed the rebirth of the myth of the melancholic artistic genius, but despite the clear fascination with melancholia and its connection with artistic identity, Mayer’s self-fashioning as *Melancholia* is virtually unprecedented among women artists. Why is this? What does it mean for Mayer to assume the guise of Melancholia and what did this representation mean for a woman artist? To uncover the ways melancholia was personified and constructed as an essential component of artistic identity, I compare Mayer’s *Self-Portrait as Melancholia* to other artists’ self-portraits from the period. In these self-portraits artists highlight the characteristics of the temperament, clearly tying their profession and creative abilities to an ancient revival of melancholia’s gifts and burdens. Mayer’s *Self-Portrait as Melancholia* also embodies and reflects the significant ways artistic identity was mythologized anew to reflect changing ideals about the nature and origin of creativity and the purpose and function of art. Mayer’s self-portrait and her personification of Melancholia reveal some of the ways women artists of the early nineteenth century claimed the Romantic myth of the melancholic artist for themselves.

¹³⁵ Although the Marmottan painting remains undated, the portrait was likely completed near the end of Mayer’s life. She died in Paris on May 26, 1821 at the age of 46.

Melancholia and Creative Genius

During the early nineteenth century melancholia was viewed increasingly as a marker of creative and cerebral privilege. The Romantics, looking to historical sources to ground their own understanding of the condition, revived melancholia's ancient characterization as a wellspring of inspired genius. Rather than merely adopting previous generations' conceptualizations of the condition wholesale, the Romantics reframed melancholia by focusing special attention on its precarious, troubling qualities. They favored melancholia's darkest manifestations and exalted the temperament as an essential, if perilous, characteristic of the artistic genius. The idea of genius itself evolved over the course of the long eighteenth century, changing from an attribute of the gifted individual to an identity in and of itself. During the eighteenth century, the term *génie* referred to a mental faculty.¹³⁶ By the early nineteenth century *génie* was used to designate a person who possessed this extraordinary faculty; an attribute became an identity.¹³⁷ The same is true of melancholia. Once viewed as a condition, melancholia became the defining characteristic of a person's identity. Above all, melancholic genius remained gendered as masculine in direct contrast with the condition's consistent embodiment in the form and figure of Woman. This gendering is found in the language that defines genial melancholia's ancient origins.

The association between inspired creativity and melancholia is an ancient one, stemming from Greek humoral theory. Pre-Enlightenment understanding of the human body and its condition was based on this system of thought, which dominated Western medicine

¹³⁶ Mary D. Sheriff, *Fragonard : Art and Eroticism* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1990), 137 - 138.

¹³⁷ Ibid.

for thirteen hundred years.¹³⁸ Briefly stated, humoral theory was founded on the belief that four qualities and four elements formed the basic components of all life, including the human body, and all substances contained them in some combination. The humors existed as fluids within the body: blood, phlegm, black bile and yellow bile. These liquids linked the body to the mind and the human being to its environment, as each humor corresponded to the four elements, the four seasons, and the stages of life from youth to old age. Maintaining balance amongst the four humors was essential to physical and mental healthy.

Melancholia is, by definition, a state of excess compared to a state of health. As described by ancient Greek philosophers, the condition stems from an excess of black bile; every human has some black bile, but the melancholic has too much of it.¹³⁹ Excess black bile carries the qualities of hot and cold throughout the body and thus is prone to extreme fluctuations in temperature. The temperature of the black bile affects more than anything else the character of the melancholic.¹⁴⁰ Melancholics whose black bile is cold by nature are "dull and stupid", whereas melancholics with a large quantity of hot bile become "frenzied, or clever or erotic or easily moved to anger and desire."¹⁴¹ In between these two extremes a third kind of melancholia is found: the melancholic genius.

¹³⁸ Noga Arikha, *Passions and Tempers: a History of the Humours* (New York: Ecco, 2007), 18 - 32. On the topic of humoral theory and ancient medicine see: Vivian Nutton, *Ancient Medicine*. 2nd ed. (New York: Routledge, 2013), 74 - 86; and Lois N. Magner, *A History of Medicine*. 2nd ed. (Boca Raton: Taylor & Francis, 2005), 71 - 78. For humoral theory's relationship to melancholia see: Stanley W Jackson, *Melancholia and Depression: From Hippocratic Times to the Modern Times* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1986), 30 - 31.

¹³⁹ Black bile corresponded with earth, winter, and old age.

¹⁴⁰ This summary is based on research presented in Raymond Klibansky; Erwin Panofsky; and Fritz Saxl, *Saturn and Melancholy: Studies in the History of Natural Philosophy, Religion and Art* (New York: Basic Books, 1964), 17 -21.

¹⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 19.

The earliest documented connection between melancholia and genius comes from Aristotle (384 - 322 BCE) who first observed the coexistence of intellectual and creative aptitude and the depressive temperament in his *Problemata physica*:

Why is it that all those who have become eminent in philosophy or politics or poetry or the arts are clearly of a melancholic temperament, and some of them to such an extent as to be afflicted by disease caused by black bile?¹⁴²

The passage concludes: “all melancholy persons are out of the ordinary, not owing to illness, but from their natural constitutions.”¹⁴³ Aristotle finds positive associations that are resultant from an excess of black bile, linking inspired gifts with the melancholic temperament.

However, his characterization represents only one side of a debate that would continue for centuries. Is melancholia, as Christian doctrine stated, a curse directly linked to the expulsion of humankind from Paradise, or could the melancholic temperament produce positive effects such as powers of concentration and reflection, the capacity for solitary study and creative thinking?¹⁴⁴ The construction and perception of melancholy throughout Western history has never been static, but constantly bound up within fluctuating definitions and characterizations of the temperament is its dual nature, capable of producing inspired genius or damaging insanity. Albrecht Dürer captures this duality in *Melancholia I*, imagining an artist caught within the fraught balance of emotions between the highs of inspiration and the depths of despair.

In his iconic engraving, *Melancholia I* Dürer embraces the Aristotelian definition of melancholia as a temperament conducive, even necessary, to artistic production (1514;

¹⁴² Ibid., 18.

¹⁴³ Ibid.

¹⁴⁴ As found in Robert Burton, *The Anatomy of Melancholy* (1621). Burton’s text is in line with contemporary Christian doctrine that equated melancholia with madness and with sin. According to Burton, all people possess “natural” melancholia, a trait directly tied to original sin.

Figure 48). This relatively small work (24 x 18.5 cm) is packed with visual information.¹⁴⁵

To begin, Dürer imagines Melancholia as a monumental, winged figure seated on the ground, her head resting dejectedly in her left hand. With darkly shaded eyes and knitted brow, she gazes outward in seeming consternation, with a pair of dividers poised in her right hand and a latched book in her lap. An emaciated dog sleeps, curled at her feet. Her inactivity and apparent frustration are immediately contrasted with the hurried and focused work of a putto, seated precariously atop a millstone, directly to Melancholia's right. Together they are surrounded by numerous and various instruments of science and art, many of which are tools of measurement and time. In the upper left-hand corner a bat displays the title of the work across its opened wings.¹⁴⁶ Behind him, in the distant background, a comet streaks across the sky, illuminating the loaded scene and giving source to the work's dramatic chiaroscuro. We see clearly marked in the precise intaglio lines flesh and shadow, folds of fabric, tufts of hair and the feathers that arch and bend to create Melancholia's massive wings.

This enigmatic and densely layered image visually expresses and embodies ancient ideas about the fraught relationship between creativity, imagination and melancholia - ideas that continued to fascinate subjects into the nineteenth century, especially the Romantics. Like Aristotle's ancient text, Dürer's image of the melancholic artist provided source material for subsequent visual iconography of the temperament. Artists from the sixteenth century onward looked to his engraving as a fundamental reference for the depiction of the

¹⁴⁵ The Collection Online, "Melancholia I," *The Metropolitan Museum of Art*, 12 April 2015, <http://www.metmuseum.org/collection/the-collection-online/search/336228>.

¹⁴⁶ Dürer's source for the title, *Melancholia I*, likely comes from Arippa Nettesheim's *De occulta philosophia* (1533). There, Nettesheim expands the idea of melancholy, previously thought to exist on two levels, to incorporate an additional level – the imagination. The imagination came to constitute the first (lowest) level of this new concept of the melancholic genius. See: Klibansky, Panofsky, and Saxl, *Saturn and Melancholy*, 356 – 357.

melancholic artist, and Dürer's representation remained the foundational image for melancholic iconography into the nineteenth century.¹⁴⁷

Long an image that fascinates, Dürer's allegory has been interpreted in various ways, remaining a visual puzzle to viewers even today. Some interpret the figure in *Melancholia I* as a resigned figure, one who sinks into depression at the realization that all knowledge is limited.¹⁴⁸ Others view Dürer's *Melancholia* as a humanist figure; her attitude is not one of laziness and resignation but one of wisdom and acceptance.¹⁴⁹ While the essential meaning of the work remains open, it nonetheless clearly represents for the viewer's contemplation the direct connection between melancholia and artistic pursuit.

Dürer's characterization of the artist as a melancholic philosopher who is aware that, in spite of her talents and aspirations, she is destined to failure resonated with Romantic artists who looked back to earlier periods for inspiration. They found within the print's layered, multivalent imagery a kinship with and expression of their own mythologies about creativity and artistic identity.¹⁵⁰ The Romantics fully embraced the Aristotelian characterization of genial melancholia, but reconstituted his ancient formula in essential ways to encompass their own beliefs and desires concerning the condition. According to Aristotle,

¹⁴⁷ In their examination of melancholy imagery and iconography before the French Revolution Kilbansky, Panofsky and Saxl find that, "nearly all portraits of melancholy in the strict sense, as well as many pictures on similar themes, right down to the middle of the nineteenth century, owe a debt to the model set by Dürer, either direct, through conscious imitation, or by virtue of the unobtrusive pressure that is called 'tradition'." *Saturn and Melancholy*, 374 – 375. On the nineteenth century French fascination with Dürer's print see: William Hauptman, *The Persistence of Melancholy in Nineteenth Century Art: The Iconography of a Motif* (The Pennsylvania State University, Ph.D Dissertation: 1975), 2, 9-12.

¹⁴⁸ Kilbansky, Panofsky, and Saxl, *Saturn and Melancholy*, 320; and E. Panofsky, *The Life and Art of Albrecht Dürer* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1955), 157 - 171.

¹⁴⁹ Jean Clair, *Mélancolie, Génie Et Folie En Occident: En Hommage à Raymond Kilbansky, 1905-2005: Galeries Nationales Du Grand Palais, Paris, 10 Octobre 2005-16 Janvier 2006; Neue Nationalgalerie, Berlin, 17 Février-7 Mai 2006*. (Paris: Gallimard, 2005), 138.

¹⁵⁰ Hauptman, *The Persistence of Melancholy*, 9- 12.

exceptionalism is achieved through balance; a man of distinction is made and determined by a stable mixture of the humors. The Romantics' conceptualization of the temperament, on the other hand, was decidedly out of balance. Rejecting the rational and empirical, the Romantics reformulated 'artistic genius' to favor extreme emotional and mental states. They privileged the darker aspects of human experience - the irrational, the unconscious, the mysterious and the sublime - and were fascinated by instances when melancholia threatened to overcome the individual, even possibly leading to madness.

The renewed Romantic fascination with the link between artistic genius and melancholia is evident in the depiction of artists by themselves and their cohorts in portraits from the early decades of the nineteenth century. These images of artists employ the full gamut of canonical iconography of melancholia. For instance, *Portrait of an Artist in His Studio*, previously attributed to Géricault and dated circa 1820, shows the lasting influence of Dürer's print as well as ancient associations between artistic pursuit and melancholia (Figure 49). In the painting a young man looks out at us from the shadows of his studio. Blacks and browns dominated the picture. The brown cast of his skin, his hollow, deeply shadowed eyes, and the grey drabness of his clothing reinforce the dark emotional tenor of the work. Color and light are also used to express the sitter's state of mind and condition of creative malaise. The artist limits his palette to neutral tones and uses light and shadow to express the heightened emotion of the sitter, particularly the shadow cast over his eyes. Once again, melancholia is expressed through the head-in-hand pose. Like Dürer's winged genius, this artist is paralyzed by his melancholia, unable to employ any of the artistic tool's that surround him: a painter's palette, an *écorché* figure, and the sculptural fragments that rest on a small self behind him. A skull, a traditional signifier of melancholia, looms above his left

shoulder, matching his blank gaze out at us. *Portrait of an Artist in His Studio* indicates that elements of the traditional iconography of melancholia - skulls, the head-in-hand pose, tools of art and science - persist into the nineteenth century.

In general, however, artists generally cast off overt symbolism associated with the temperament preferring instead to express melancholia's dramatic duality and psychological effects through painterly style and formal choices. These strategies are reflective of broader changes taking place in the years around 1800 when emphasis shifted decisively away from the skill of the painter or sculptor to the exceptional personality of the creative individual.¹⁵¹ Artists and writers of the period set high value on imagination, originality, creativity, and self-expression. Rejecting the prevailing insistence on conformity to a set of approved rules and models proscribed by academies, the Romantics believed that a work of art should reflect the individual sensibility of the artist. Thus, Romantic portraits, including self-portraits, are marked with a distinctly psychological quality that emphasizes the inner character of the sitter over his or her public persona or professional lineage.

This change in the ways artistic identity was conceived and constructed is evident in a comparison of *Portrait of an Artist in His Studio* with an earlier image of the artist, Élisabeth Vigée-Lebrun's *Self-Portrait in a Straw Hat* circa 1782 (Figure 50). Unlike our unknown Romantic painter, Vigée-Lebrun does not represent herself as a dejected, solitary figure shut up in an atelier and paralyzed by melancholia; instead she takes up the painter's palette and engages us, her lips half parted as if to speak. Positioned against an expanse of blue sky, she appears confident and relaxed, achieving within her self-portrait the eighteenth-century

¹⁵¹ Maurice Z. Shroder, *Icarus: The Image of the Artist in French Romanticism*. (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1961); National Gallery, *Rebels and Martyrs: the Image of the Artist in the Nineteenth Century* (London: Distributed by Yale University Press, 2006); Allard, Sébastien, *Nineteenth Century French Art: from Romanticism to Impressionism, post-Impressionism and Art Nouveau* (Paris: Distributed in North America by Rizzoli International Publications, 2007).

artistic ideal of beauty and refinement through the deliberate avoidance of formal excess. As Mary Sheriff has shown, Vigée-Lebrun's self-portrait, in direct contrast to the Romantic ideal, "assumes a theory of art within which paintings are not expressions of an artist's inner self, but skillful artistic performances dependent on the ability to mimic signifying codes, gestures, and styles."¹⁵² In her self-portrait, Vigée-Lebrun becomes the eighteenth-century paragon of the artist as a person of reason, sensibility, and sociability.

These changes in the ways the life and personality of the artist were mythologized by Romantics can be gauged through a study of the ways artists represented themselves and each other during the period. Many of the artists trained in Jacques-Louis David's studio - Baron Antoine-Jean Gros, Anne-Louis Girodet-Trioson, and Jean-Auguste Dominique Ingres - shaped early Romanticism, and their self-portraits reveal a fascination with melancholia as an integral and desired trait of the artist. Markedly similar, these self-portraits exemplify the innovative methods Romantic painters used to express melancholia in new, personal, and darkly emotive ways. They manifest melancholia through literal allusions to the dark isolation that comes along with melancholia's intellectual and creative supremacy. Rather than highlight the artist's elevated social or academic position, as was desired during the eighteenth-century, these portraits focus on capturing and expressing the unique psychological temperament, imagination and vision of the 'artist genius'.¹⁵³

A study of three self-portraits by Gros, Girodet, and Ingres, painted during a ten-year period from 1795 to 1805, reveals the consistent ways melancholia was visually codified

¹⁵² Mary D. Sheriff, *The Exceptional Woman: Elisabeth Vigée-Lebrun and the Cultural Politics of Art* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996), 215.

¹⁵³ Along with drawing from the iconography outlined in Dürer's print, the Romantics also were influenced by the work of seventeenth century Dutch artists, particularly the self-portraits of Rembrandt. On melancholia and artistic identity in the seventeenth century see: Laurinda S. Dixon, *The Dark Side of Genius: the Melancholic Persona in Art, Ca. 1500-1700* (University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2013), 115 – 142.

during the early Romantic period (Figures 51, 52 and 53). Each artist presents himself alone in what appears to be the private confines of a murky, empty room. Informally attired to match the intimacy of each picture, the artists wear draped fabric that resembles togas. Gros and Girodet wear their hair long and hanging loose to their shoulders and depict the left side of their faces in shadow. The shadow in Ingres's *Self-Portrait at Age 24* appears behind him projected against a blank wall. Blacks and browns dominate the three paintings giving the impression that a murky darkness surrounds the figures. Each artist looks out at us in a steady gaze, with closed lips set in a flat line, suggesting his thoughts remain locked in his own mind. These young, ambitious artists, (Ingres aged 24, Girodet 28, and Gros 24) make no overt reference to their studio space or artistic lineage except the sliver of an easel and piece of white chalk that encroach on the right edge of Ingres's self-portrait. Rather, the lack of obvious references to academic training, combined with the artists' solitude, conveys creative independence and a focus on inner vision rather than external dictates. The blank walls behind their faces and the nondescript spaces they inhabit suggests a 'no-where place' that draws focus away from the external in favor of the internal; the spaces they create in these portraits are expressive of the spaces of their minds.

Formal emphasis on darkness and shadows within the portraits suggests in a direct and literal way the inner darkness of melancholia. Adhering to the medical paradigm in which body and mind are integrated, these artists construct an outward appearance of self that becomes a sure indicator of the condition of the mind and soul. Gros, Girodet, and Ingres communicate this concept primarily through the manipulation of light and shadow. The murky darkness of the paintings, in terms of both color and light, reinforces medical treatises from the period that claimed that melancholics saw things not as they actually looked but

through a tangible veil of darkness. These medical evaluations reflect long-held beliefs about the melancholic's mental condition. For instance, drawing upon ancient humoral theory, Robert Burton in *The Anatomy of Melancholy* attributed the clouded sight of melancholics to "the spirits being darkened, and the substance of the brain cloudy and dark"; hence, "the mind itself, by those dark, obscure, gross fumes, ascending from black humors, is in continual darkness, fear and sorrow."¹⁵⁴ For Romantic artists this "clouded sight" translated into inspired creative vision, and the most common way they represented this concept is through the presence of shaded eyes or faces emerging from blackness. Gros and Girodet, as well as the unidentified artist in *Portrait of an Artist in His Studio*, are all shown with shaded eyes. By shrouding their faces in shadow, Gros and Girodet make literal allusion to the melancholic artist's psychic darkness, and through their self-portraits they invite us to share their unique vision of the world, filtered through the veil of their imaginations, while simultaneously claiming elevated intellectual status.

These emerging conventions appear in other self-portraits from the period as well, evidencing the general fascination with melancholia and artistic genius. Another of David's students, Alexandre Abel de Pujol, utilizes similar formal techniques in his *Self-Portrait* from 1806 (Figure 54). In this striking portrait, de Pujol represents himself cloaked and wrapped in a brown toga, his right arm and hand bound to his body within the tight folds of fabric. Through this unusual gesture, de Pujol offers a new symbolic interpretation of the paralyzed creative genius, his arm made immobile, appearing even wounded by the way it is wrapped against his chest. Again, the artist limits his palette to neutral tones and peers out from the shadowy space that surrounds him, looking at the viewer directly and locking eyes in an intense but distant gaze. Like his contemporaries, de Pujol's expression – the unsmiling

¹⁵⁴ Burton, *The Anatomy of Melancholy* (1621; repr., New York: E.P. Dutton, 1932), I: 419.

mouth, knitted brow, and intense steady gaze – suggests an inner anguish that comes with the gift of genius.

Returning to Mayer's *Self-Portrait as Melancholia*, the ways the artist encodes her portrait with both long-established iconography of genial melancholia and emerging Romantic interpretations of the creative condition become clear. She presents herself alone in the shadowed space of a sparsely appointed room. The chair she rests in and the table she leans on bring no warmth or particularity to the space but rather act as props that support and reinforce her melancholic attitude. Her gaze is marked with steady intensity and appears to be fixed not on us, but rather beyond as if she is deeply absorbed in her own thoughts. This reading of Mayer's state of mind is reinforced by the gesture of her head resting in her left hand, a pose long used to connote melancholic contemplation and intellectualism. The arch of her fingers across her forehead casts a shadow over her eyes further emphasizing the interior workings of her mind and suggesting her exceptional creative vision.

The composition is dominated by neutral tones – ivory, grey-blues, and ruddy browns – and Mayer uses dramatic shifts in dark and light to bring emotive tension to the painting. Blocking off the background into prominent rectangles of light and dark, Mayer silhouettes her figure against a brightly illuminated wall. This formal choice emphasizes her head and facial features along with the iconic gesture of genial melancholia and her shaded eyes – symbols of her unique artistic gift and vision. This illuminated rectangle dramatically abuts a black shadow that looms behind Mayer, markedly dividing the background of the portrait into two separate planes of light and dark. These contrasting spaces reflect the duality of melancholia – its gifts and demons — and the ways it supports artistic endeavor and threatens the psychic balance of the exceptional individual.

Mayer also utilizes fashion to express this ancient formulation of genial melancholia. Her white muslin empire gown, once a signifier of elegance and modernity, now denotes ancient associations between melancholia and inspired creativity. Women artists have long utilized clothing to code their public images. Vigée-Lebrun and Adélaïde Labille-Guiard both employed the identity-shaping and multivalent power of fashion in their own publically exhibited self-portraits.¹⁵⁵ Mayer's contemporary, Hortense Haudebourg-Lescot, likewise uses the symbolic potential of dress in her *Self-Portrait* from 1825 (Figure 55). Like Mayer, she creates an image that espouses her creative power and constructs her identity as an established and experienced painter. To publicize her knowledge of Italian art and its Renaissance heroes, Haudebourg-Lescot pictures herself wearing a beret directly connecting herself with Raphael, his *Portrait of Baldassare Castiglione* and the tradition of learned intellectuals wearing berets as signifiers of their scholarly position (1514; Figure 56). Along with dressing like Castiglione, who was a poet, ambassador, and author, Haudebourg-Lescot formally matches the simplicity of Raphael's natural and engaging portrait. She shows herself from the waist up, seated with her hands folded and gaze fixed steadily on the viewer. Like Raphael, she limits her palette to shades of black, grey, and white, and bathes the portrait in diffuse light that focuses attention on her head and shoulders and, in turn, on the beret that frames her face and, thus, her mind, the source of her creativity.

Using costume and setting, shade and light, color and form, Mayer embraces Romantic interpretations of the creative genius to express her emotional experience and to construct her own artistic identity anew as melancholic. In addition to the formal choices Mayer has made outlined above Mayer's very body - her relaxed figure, bowed head, and

¹⁵⁵ Sheriff, *Exceptional Woman*, 197 – 203; 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.

classically inspired dress - signifies Melancholia. Unlike her male counterparts, Mayer does not merely represent herself as melancholic; she becomes Melancholia, a slippage made possible by the established gendering of the temperament as solidly feminine by the early nineteenth century. Because the concept of melancholia is embodied emblematically in the form and figure of a woman, Mayer can assume the guise more directly than her male contemporaries. What then is the link between melancholia and period beliefs and constructions about the female body?

Precedents: Melancholia Embodied in Woman

Studying a lineage of imagery representing Melancholia reveals the consistency of the figure's manifestation by the time Mayer represents herself in the role, and for French artists of the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries the figure of Melancholia is feminine. Visually, the temperament has a long history of being embodied in the figure of woman. Following the Western emblematic tradition of personifying abstract ideas as female figures (e.g., Justice, Liberty, Charity), artists, such as Albrecht Dürer in his *Melancholia I*, signified the attributes of genial melancholia as an isolated woman resting her head in her hands. The symbolic embodiment of melancholia from the 1624 illustrated edition of Cesare Ripa's celebrated *Iconologia* reiterates this point (Figure 57).¹⁵⁶

¹⁵⁶ Cesare Ripa's *Iconologia* was first published in 1593 without illustrations. His dictionary of symbols formed a complete catalog of emblems and allegories observed in a range of visual sources including sculpture, medals, and engravings. The book was used by viewers and artists alike, and remained influential well into the eighteenth century. For another version of Melancholy see Cesare Ripa, *Iconologia or Moral Emblems*, trans. and ed. P. Tempest (1593; repr., London: Benjamin Motte, 1709), 15.

As part of the emblematic tradition, in which an abstract concept is embodied in human form, Ripa's *Melancholia* translates the malady into conventional visual lexicon. Here, Melancholy is represented in the guise of an old woman. She sits alone, isolated within a barren landscape; a dead tree is the only vegetation to accompany the rock on which she rests. Her classically inspired dress is simple and unadorned in keeping with the desolateness of the image. Her body bows forward under the apparent weight of her head, which she cradles in her hands. Ripa's accompanying text explains the inclusion of the natural elements with the isolated figure: melancholy has the same effect on the human mind that winter has on trees – it depletes the mind of creative nourishment. The rock on which Melancholia sits reiterates this theme. Just as nothing grows on stone, melancholy inhibits the individual's ability to speak and act.¹⁵⁷ In this early depiction, along with other early emblem books and iconographic dictionaries, Melancholia is clearly represented as a brooding introspective female.

Eighteenth- and nineteenth-century artists continued to engage in this emblematic tradition, consulting books, dictionaries, and even theatrical manuals that outlined the proper ways to pose and position symbolic figures. For instance, in Watelet's and Lévesque's *Dictionnaire des Arts* (1792) entry on melancholia the authors refers to Johann Engel's essay on theatrical expression, "Idées sur le Geste & l'Action Théâtrale," citing it as a useful source for painters.¹⁵⁸ There, Engel describes melancholy as an experience of self-absorption best represented by a figure completely indifferent to her surroundings. Ideally, she would be shown staring at the ground or meditatively considering the subject of her sorrow, made symbolically manifest in a tomb, flower, or skull. Silence, immobility and solitude are

¹⁵⁷ Jean Clair, *Mélancholie: génie et folie en Occident*, 99.

¹⁵⁸ Johann Engel's essay was first published in French in 1787. *Dictionnaire des Arts*, III, 711-21.

identified as the dominant characteristics of melancholia, and as a passive state, melancholy was best expressed through the slackening of the body's muscles: the head bowed, the knees soften, and the arms completely relax.¹⁵⁹ Engel's description is in keeping with broader period characterizations of the melancholic's mental and physical state, particularly the diagnosis of melancholia occurring in someone whose mind is fixated on a single subject or lost object.¹⁶⁰ Because she is occupied with one idea alone Melancholia's body must likewise assume a single attitude.

Eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century artists constructed images of Melancholia that adhered to these directives, often providing viewers with a context for the figure's malaise. The two most popular manifestations of the disease in French art from the period associated melancholia with mourning or represented it as a sweetly pleasurable emotion that induced reverie. Joseph Marie Vien's *La Douce Mélancholie* from 1758 is among the earliest of this kind of interpretation of the malady and helped established the fashion for the emotion that lasted into the early nineteenth century (Figure 58). Vien's Melancholia is not a tragic mourner or a brooding intellectual, but rather a wistful figure. The artist secures the particular tenor of the malady by providing a context for the sitter's emotional response through the inclusion of a letter visible on the table to Melancholia's left. Étienne Falconet's *Sweet Melancholy* in marble reiterates the continued popularity of the subject and theme nearly a decade later (1763; Figure 59).

François-Xavier Fabre couples melancholia with death in his *Allegory of Melancholy or Della Mourning the Death of Corydon* dated 1795 (Figure 60). His young, female

¹⁵⁹ Ibid.

¹⁶⁰ Sheriff, *Moved by Love*, 36 - 37; Philippe Pinel, *Nosographie philosophique; ou, La method de l'analyse appliquée à la medicine* (Paris: J. A. Brosson, 1813), I: 97.

Melancholia rests her cheek on the cool marble of a funerary urn and turns her mournful gaze heavenward. André Vincent continues this association in his *Melancholia* from nearly ten years later (1801; Figure 61). Also embodied in the figure of Woman, Vincent's statuesque Melancholia sits alone within the shade of death; a large tomb silhouettes the figure as she limply rests on a near-by boulder. Nighttime, forested scene expresses emerging trends.

Another version of the temperament was exhibited at the Salon of 1801 alongside Vincent's panting, Constance Charpentier large-format painting, *Melancholia* (Figure 62). Charpentier's interpretation of the malady effectively communicates and brilliantly embodies emerging period conceptualization of the condition that imagined melancholia existing independent of mourning as a defining characteristic of identity. Here, Melancholia sits, not under the shade of death but rather beneath the soothing shade of a weeping willow. The artist imagines her Melancholia alone in a darkly wooded forest, resting languidly at the foot of a weeping willow tree. She is relaxed and her eyes are fixed on a single point. Dressed simply in a classically inspired white gown, she leans forward so that her upper back tips downward toward her waistline, causing her torso and arm to form a gentle c-curve. Her legs are crossed gently one in front of the other and one arm hangs limply, as if weighted, by her side. Here, Melancholia does not meditate on tragic news delivered in a letter, the edifying tomb of a beloved, or even a traditional *memento mori* – a skull or flower. The same is true in Mayer's *Self-Portrait*.

While the iconographic history of melancholia is strikingly consistent in its representation of the temperament as Woman, the philosophical and medical construction and diagnosis of the condition as it relates to gender presents a much more complex picture. Since 1800, melancholia, as it becomes gradually displaced by depression, has been

increasingly considered a predominately female disorder.¹⁶¹ However, before 1800, the field is less conclusive on the topic of gender and melancholia. In many ways pre-modern constructions of women's bodies made them more susceptible to suffering from melancholia, albeit in specifically female ways. Ancient theories about human bodies and how they were formed were based on an idealized body imagined as male. When the female body was imagined it was as a diversion from this male norm, creating an implicit hierarchy from the beginning. Female bodies were thought of as male bodies with a difference. Physicians and philosophers believed either, woman was created through a process of insemination that was not carried through to completion,¹⁶² or the conditions of the different sides of the womb determined the sex of the child.¹⁶³ The hot and moist right side of the womb produced male children; the dry and cold left side produced female children. Psychological consequences naturally followed from these physiological constructs, and consequently both theorizations about how sex was determined made women more prone to melancholy.

While these corporeal models make women more susceptible to melancholia generally, physicians and philosophers determined women experienced the disease in specifically feminine ways, genial melancholia not being one of these manifestations. As demonstrated in the very text and language of Aristotle's *Problemata*, while genial melancholia may be emblemized through the figure of Woman, the creative gift was coded as masculine. Throughout the text the author uses the word "man" exclusively, references only male examples of melancholic genius from myth and history, finds correlation between

¹⁶¹ Susan Nolen-Hoeksema, *Sex Difference in Depression* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1990), 26 – 28.

¹⁶² Aristotle, *De Generatione Animalium*, 766b15-17, in *The Complete Works of Aristotle: The Revised Oxford Translation*, ed. Jonathan Barnes, 2 vols. Bollingen Series LXXI (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1984), I: 1186.

¹⁶³ Arikha, *Passions*, 81 - 82.

the condition and “male” attributes (passion, desire, talkativeness), and lists only male social roles (the statesman, poet, philosopher). These masculine associations were reiterated by Marsilio Ficino when he rediscovered the *Problemata* in the late fifteenth-century and continued into the mid-eighteenth century.

Instead of melancholic genius, the centuries long tendency was to mark women’s melancholia as love melancholy. This strain of the disease, *amor hereos*, was a particular manifestation of the condition gendered as feminine because it specifically focused on romantic relationships and the emotions generated through courtship and marriage, experiences women were expected to engage in and understand. In his 1610 treatise on lovesickness physician Jacques Ferrand acknowledged that, according to medical constructs, men should be more prone to love melancholia than women, because their physiology made them dryer.¹⁶⁴ However, as love is opposed to reason, women, being less rational than men, should in theory experience love melancholia more frequently. To support his belief, Ferrand references both his everyday observations, stating he witnesses more “witless, maniacal and frantic” women than men, and physiological “fact.” Men are better able to regulate the temperature of their humors than women because in male bodies greater distance separates, and therefore protects, the sexual organs from the heat of the stomach. A woman’s womb is in greater danger of becoming overheated by the functions of the stomach, resulting in love melancholia.¹⁶⁵

¹⁶⁴ Jacques Ferrand, *A Treatise on Lovesickness*, trans. and ed. by Donald A. Beecher and Massimo Ciavolella (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 1990), 311.

¹⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 312.

The fragility of the womb was linked to melancholia beginning in the sixteenth century.¹⁶⁶ Burton wrote that melancholia could be caused by the “vicious vapors that come from menstruation blood” especially when the blood was not properly evacuated from the womb. Burton asserts melancholia could be found with regularity and acuteness in unmarried women, nuns, widows, and pregnant women because the purification of the blood in menstruation had been suppressed.¹⁶⁷ By the seventeenth century, melancholia was connected with the disease hysteria, a uniquely female disorder believed to originate in the womb and thought to disturb both the body and mind.

Female predisposition to certain kinds of melancholia continued into the eighteenth century with the emergence of nerve-based theories of physiology. These theories of the body claimed that women’s refined and delicate nerves made them more receptive to external influences and more liable to be made melancholic by shocks and upsets like lost love. The rise of the new culture of *sensibilité* during the second half of the eighteenth century gave new, positive value to women’s receptivity, however, even as women were credited with sensibility they were still denied intelligence and genius.

In her *Self-Portrait as Melancholia* Mayer does not assume the guise of love melancholy or mourning melancholy, versions of the temperament coded as feminine, but rather explicitly encodes her portraits with the symbols of genial melancholia. Why might Mayer be motivated to make clear her artistic genius in this self-portrait? Mayer’s public and professional identity, shaped by her gender and her decades-long collaborative relationship with Prud’hon, did not easily adhere to period ideals about “the artist.” Their collaborative

¹⁶⁶ Graeco-Roman physicians blamed the womb for all kinds of illness, but they did not identify the womb as the location of the noxious melancholic humor. Andrew T. Scull, *Hysteria: The Biography* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009), 13.

¹⁶⁷ Burton, *Anatomy of Melancholia*, I: 414.

artistic exchange did not conform to and reaffirm the Romantic belief that art is created in isolation by a solitary genius. Suffering through the demons of melancholic genius to produce exceptional art did.

Narrating the Artist/ Mythologizing the Artist

As is the case with many women artists from the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, fascination with the events of Mayer's personal life has long overshadowed recognition of her professional accomplishments. Hers is a biography bookended by the influence of and mutual recognition by men. The story of her life frequently begins with discussion of paternity, her relationship with her biological father Pierre Mayer and the evolution of her selection of a public name. The story of Mayer's life concludes with careful retelling of her suicide on May 26, 1821 in the studio of her artistic collaborator and romantic partner, Pierre-Paul Prud'hon. In between these personal realities, Mayer carefully and deliberately established herself as a professional artist. She lived and worked in Paris all her life, actively sought out and secured positions with established painters, and exhibited extensively at the Salons beginning in 1796. Mayer studied with the best genre painter of the day, Greuze, and then with Suvée. She also is reported to have spent time studying in David's studio before beginning her long-term collaboration with Prud'hon in 1802.

Born March 9, 1774 Mayer was the illegitimate daughter of a German businessman, Pierre Mayer, and a successful linen merchant, Marie-Françoise Lenoire-La Martinière. She was raised as the daughter of her mother's legal husband Pierre La Martinière until her parents wed in 1789. Biographers make sure to note that her biological father did not

acknowledge his paternity until Mayer was fifteen, and that “there were undoubtedly issues generated by this belated recognition,” made evident through the various ways she listed her name in early Salon *livrets*. While the issues this paternal situation generated remain unknown, this family background necessarily affected the trajectory of Mayer’s artistic training. Unlike many of her female cohorts from the period, Mayer did not come from an artistic family and therefore her early training and entry into the art world did not begin at home with a parent – i.e. father – active in the field. There is no evidence of Mayer’s earlier artistic training, but like most educated young women she probably received drawing lessons at her convent school. After, she was required to seek out educational appointments with Greuze and Suvée before striking out on her own. This early training, or lack of academic instruction, in fact epitomizes the Romantic mythos of the independent, self-directed artist.

Initially, Mayer focused primarily on portraiture, a genre deemed suitable for female painters, and her skills as a portraitist are evident both through her ability to continuously earn commissions and in the quality of the finished productions, as is seen in her *Portrait of a Boy* from 1799 (Figure 63).¹⁶⁸ The arresting naturalism of the work simultaneously demonstrates Mayer’s mastery of the medium along with her sensitivity as a portraitist. Mayer expertly captures the young boy’s character and expression, conveying his alertness through a turning three-quarter pose. She shows him gazing out at us over his right shoulder; he lifts his chin slightly and looks at us through hooded eyes. Her loose, free handling of the paint makes his blue velvet coat, striped brown linen vest and the white ruff around his neck

¹⁶⁸ In 1798, Mayer exhibited *Portrait d'un enfant*, *Portrait d'un enfant tenant un pigeon*, and *Portrait du pere de l'auteur* (Salon de 1798, 50). In 1799, she exhibited *Une petite fille en prière*, *Une jeune personne surprise par un coup de vent*, *Portrait d'enfant*, and *Miniature à l'huile, représentant une petite fille tenant une colombe* (Salon de 1799, 44). In 1800, Mayer exhibited *Portrait in pied d'un homme à son bureau* and two *dessins à la manière noire*, *Une femme assise sur un banc fond de paysage* and *Un jeune homme représenté in chasseur* (Salon de 1800, 47). Oppenheimer, “Women Artists in Paris, 1791 – 1814”, 232.

visually lush and tactile. The obvious skill and ability of the artist contributed to the work's long-time misattribution as a portrait by Jacques-Louis David. However, recent research solidly demonstrates Mayer is the rightful artist of the portrait.¹⁶⁹ As Mayer's career developed, she focused her talents increasingly on allegories and genre scenes, works she exhibited regularly until her death.

An active and productive artist, Mayer exhibited nine allegories and genre scenes at the Salon between 1804 and 1821.¹⁷⁰ These large format narrative paintings primarily imagine mythological subjects orbiting around the themes of love, desire, happiness, and sorrow. During this period, she also executed several paintings dealing with the subject of domestic sentiment and familial relationships: *A Mother and Her Children at the Tomb of Their Father* (Salon 1802; whereabouts unknown); *The Happy Mother* (1810; Figure 64) and *The Unfortunate Mother* (1812; Figure 65); and *The Unfortunate Family* (completed posthumously, exhibited in 1822; Figure 66). This phase of Mayer's career was largely conducted after she began working alongside Prud'hon. Their relationship, both public and private, plays heavily in the narrative of Mayer's life, above all others. Complex and

¹⁶⁹ The attribution for this painting has been in question since the work entered the collection of the Nelson Atkins Museum of Art in 1931. Long attributed to David, careful study and X-radiographs revealed the signature "David Pinxit, 1799," was not original to the canvas but rather covered the area where the original artist's name had been cut out. What remained of that damaged portion was the letter "C" and the word "Pinxit." One of the few artists who employed the Latin tag at the end of the eighteenth century was Constance Mayer. Comparison with the intact signature with Mayer's on other known works bore strong similarities. Furthermore, Mayer exhibited *Portrait d'enfant* at the Salon of 1799. See Margaret A. Oppenheimer, *The French portrait: Revolution to Restoration: [exhibition] September 30-December 11, 2005, Smith College Museum of Art* (Northampton, MA: Smith College Museum of Art, 2005), 154 – 157, and D. Hoffmann, "Throwing Suspicion on the Masters: Nelson's Curator Reassesses Status, Authenticity of Art," *The Kansas City Star*, July 26, 1987, ID, 6D;

¹⁷⁰ These works include: *Innocence Prefers Love to Wealth* (1804); *Venus and Cupid Asleep* (1806); *The Torch of Venus* (1808); *The Happy Mother* (1810); *The Unfortunate Mother* (1812); *A Young Water Nymph Teased by a Band of Cupids* (1812); *The Dream of Happiness* (1819), and *The Unhappy Family* (1822). See Elizabeth Guffey, "Prud'hon, Mayer and *The Dream of Happiness*," *Master Drawings* 34, (December 1996): 390 – 399.

multifaceted, Mayer was at first his pupil but she quickly became his artistic collaborator, his companion and the caretaker of his children.¹⁷¹ Their private relationship and collaborative exchange as artists has long informed and shaped the way Mayer's work has been received, positioned, researched, and discussed. Recent scholarship has focused on distinguishing Mayer's production as an artist and understanding in greater detail the ways she collaborated with Prud'hon to create some of their most successful projects.

In *Drawing an Elusive Line*, a book focused on the work of Prud'hon, Elizabeth Guffey dedicates two chapters to his relationship with Mayer. There, Guffey untangles the couple's symbiotic artistic exchange through careful study of one of Mayer's earliest allegorical paintings, *Innocence Prefers Love to Wealth* (1804; Figure 67). Most simply stated, their process relied on Mayer's initial concept for a painting. Prud'hon would then apply his passion for drawing to working up the composition through a series of drawings and oil sketches. Mayer, contributing feedback during this preliminary phase of the process, would transform these drawings into a finished oil painting and exhibit the work under her name alone at the Salons. *Innocence Prefers Love to Wealth* provides one example of this collaborative method and allows for close analysis of their shared efforts and individual contributions through several surviving preparatory drawings and oil sketches. The development of these drawings from one to the next provides a traceable example of their

¹⁷¹ Prud'hon's personal life was complicated during this period by his wife's institutionalization in a nursing home in 1802, which left him with custody of their five children. Shortly thereafter, Mayer moved into the apartment next to his at the Sorbonne. On Prud'hon's personal life, see Elizabeth E. Guffey, *Drawing an Elusive Line: the Art of Pierre-Paul Prud'hon* (Newark, DE: Associated University Press, 2001), 173 - 177; Sylvain Laveissière, *Pierre-Paul Prud'hon* (New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1998), 11 - 17; E. de Goncourt and J. de Goncourt, "Prud'hon," *L'Art du XVIIIe siècle* (Paris, 1859-75; Eng. trans., 1948/R1981): 1-32

working method from initial concept to finished painting, revealing a balanced system of mutual exchange that highlighted each artist's strengths, artistic training, and personal interests.¹⁷²

Mayer's finished painting pictures the figure of Innocence in an intimate embrace with Love. Wealth, luxuriously attired, approaches the couple with a treasure box of riches and offers Innocence gold and jewels in exchange for her abandonment of Love. The statuesque and refined figures are set against a dreamy Italianate landscape lush with woods and moats surrounding a large manor in the background. Typical of many of Mayer's allegorical paintings, the work is infused with wistfulness expressed through the graceful figures and the hazy light that illuminates their bodies and the surrounding environment.¹⁷³ Preparatory drawings in the collection of the Louvre and an oil sketch at the Art Institute of Chicago show Prud'hon's primary interest in working out the placement and positioning of Love, Innocence and Wealth (Figures 68, 69, and 70). In keeping with their process, Mayer transformed his dark and smoky compositional drawings into a polished and refined oil painting. Her figures are elongated and elegant. Love and Innocence bend and fold into each other in graceful, easy attitudes of their shoulders, arms, hips, and legs. The solid, statuesque figure of Wealth is offset by the nimble liveliness of Cupid on the opposite side of the canvas. Mayer achieves careful balance in the coloring of the work as well as shade and light.

¹⁷² This painting originally appeared in the Salon of 1819 under the title *L'Amour et la Fortune conduisant dans une barque, sur le fleuve de la vie, un jeune homme assis à l'arrière de l'embarcation et protégeant de ses bras sa femme et ses enfants endormis* (*Love and Fortune Steering a Boat on the River of Life, a Young Man Seated in the Rear Protecting His Sleeping Wife and Children in His Arms*).

¹⁷³ Sylvain Laveissière has convincingly shown the poses of Love, Innocence and Wealth are based on a previous composition by Prud'hon for a medal commemorating the Peace of Amiens. This work was executed in 1802 before Mayer entered his studio, therefore solidly attributing the initial concept for the work to Prud'hon. Over the course of their collaboration this would change with Mayer generating the majority of ideas for finished paintings and Prud'hon working out the composition and figural arrangements through a series of drawings, oil sketches and studies. See: Laveissière, *Pierre-Paul Prud'hon*, 180.

The same precise and brushless application of paint used in her early self-portrait is visible here as well.

Evidence in the form of drawings and oil sketches for subsequent projects shows Mayer and Prud'hon consistently applied this reciprocal working method throughout their professional relationship. During their lifetime, their collaborative process was mutually beneficial, designed and tailored to showcase each artist's unique talents and individual interests. Long-term, however, this artistic collaboration benefited Prud'hon and complicates the identification and study of Mayer's *oeuvre*. Even though most of the works they completed together were initially exhibited under Mayer's name alone history preferred to remember many of the works they completed together as Prud'hon's. Part of this inaccuracy is driven by the market; paintings sold under Prud'hon's name brought a higher price.¹⁷⁴ In just one example, Mayer was commissioned to paint *The Sleep of Psyche* by Empress Joséphine and exhibited the work at the 1806 Salon under her name as *The Sleeping Venus and Cupid Caressed and Wakened by Zephyrs* (Figure 71).¹⁷⁵ Nonetheless, the painting originally sold as a Mayer and later brought a much higher price when it was sold as a Prud'hon. It entered the Wallace Collection as Prud'hon's *The Sleep of Psyche* and was displayed as such until 1911. This does not represent an unusual occurrence. During the period, in a collaborative artistic relationship between a man and a woman, the male artist was given credit for executing the most accomplished finished works. Prud'hon was male, older than Mayer and more established in his career. Mayer, like most women during the period, was not trained in the extensive drawing and preparatory processes in which

¹⁷⁴ Helen Westen, "Constance Mayer," *Dictionary of Women Artists*. ed. Delia Gaze (London: Fitzroy Dearborn Publishers, 1997), 478.

¹⁷⁵ Salon *livret*, 1806.

Prud'hon excelled. She was certainly excluded from the opportunity to receive extensive study of the human form, Prud'hon's chief specialty. But Mayer's strengths, her training in oil painting, her agency, dedication and determination, resulted in an exhibition history as established as Prud'hon's. Scholars speculate that Mayer motivated her more passive artistic partner to become more publically engaged after they began working together.

Mayer's and Prud'hon's collaborate process did not adhere to Romantic myths about artistic identity and the nature of creativity. The Romantic ideal favored originality and solitude over collaborative exchange and shared input. Tragically, one of the ways Mayer's biography does directly connect with Romantic mythologies of the artist is her ultimate decision to end her own life on May 26, 1821. Her relationship with Prud'hon and her eventual suicide encouraged the diagnosis of Mayer's melancholia to be situated within the feminized type of love melancholy.

Creative Inspiration/ Creative Destruction: Melancholia, Suicide, and Artistic Genius

The topic of suicide captivated the imagination of French artists, critics, and audiences alike during the nineteenth century. Romantics believed the requirements of the artistic profession – solitude, rebelliousness, and the burden of genius – could in extreme cases result in an artistic propensity for suicide. This identification of suicide as an occupational hazard is a development unique to Romanticism. Rudolph and Margot Wittkower, in their survey of artistic behavior in Western society from antiquity to the French Revolution, observed that suicide of artists occupied a relatively minor place in the artist's biography before the Romantic era. The nineteenth century, on the other hand,

witnessed increased fascination with the topic and stories of artists' tragic ends filled periodicals and populated images.

The importance of Mayer's suicidal act in the narrative of her life and professional career is evident in the attention and detail it repeatedly receives in the totality of her biography. The circumstances of her death remained a point of interest for the public well after the fact and was even represented in a lithograph by Eugène Deveria ten years on in the Romantic journal *L'Artiste* (1831; Figure 72). This melodramatic image of Mayer's suicide imagines the moment just after she slit her throat. Deveria shows her sprawled on the floor of Prud'hon's studio, the straight razor still visible in her lifeless right hand. Blood pools on the floor beneath her. Three men stand at the entry to the studio – Prud'hon and two of his friends. Upon seeing the dead Mayer Prud'hon breaks down weeping and turns to his friend for physical support. Tellingly, Mayer lies dead at the foot of one of Prud'hon's most well known paintings, *Christ on the Cross*, rather than a work of her own. This visual account of Mayer's suicide depicts her death through the lens of Prud'hon's life. Her lifeless body lies at the foot of his painting, in his studio, and her death is confirmed through his witness and discovery. Here, I analyze the way Mayer's suicide is discussed and contextualized within her larger biography in comparison to her male contemporaries who befell the same fate, both by biographers and in popular accounts from the period.

The Romantics created a new mythology of artistic creation through biography. In her act of suicide Mayer dies an artist's death. But in biographical accounts the cause of her suicide and melancholy is not linked to her work or her artistic temperament. Instead, the cause most frequently cited for Mayer's despair and desperation is her romantic relationship with Prud'hon. This is evidenced in Deveria's lithograph from *L'Artiste*. In the image,

Prud'hon is made witness to this tragic act. In written accounts of Mayer's suicide she is characterized as a woman whose failure to secure romantic love, a commitment of marriage and produce children becomes too much for her to take as she enters her mid-life. Just a few examples from biographical accounts of Mayer's life reveal this consistent characterization:

On May 26, 1821 [Mayer] removes a straight razor from Prud'hon's drawer and slit her throat. The proximate cause of her suicide appears to have been Prud'hon's declaration that, were his institutionalized wife to die, he would never remarry.¹⁷⁶

Although she had made a reputation for herself as an artist and had been given lodgings in the Sorbonne, she never had children of her own and became depressed and ill with her personal circumstances. When Prud'hon refused to contemplate the idea of remarriage should his wife's illness become fatal, Mayer cut her own throat with his razor.¹⁷⁷

Mayer killed herself by cutting her throat with a razor. Various reasons have been given for this desperate act; it has been said that Prud'hon had been told that he had to leave his home at the Sorbonne, and that Mayer believed herself to be the cause and felt terrible guilt. Another version is that Prud'hon told a friend that he would never marry again, since his first marriage had been disastrous, and Mayer's secret hopes thereupon were destroyed; alternatively, with her extreme sensitivity and her predisposition to melancholy, she found Prud'hon's declaration insulting, and was affected so deeply that she killed herself.¹⁷⁸

[Mayer] began to show signs of strain, and was often ill or depressed. At age forty-four, she had received scant artistic recognition and her social position as Prud'hon's mistress was increasingly untenable. Neither she nor Prud'hon had been financially successful and Mayer, who had given most of her own inheritance to his children, was virtually destitute. Complicating the situation, Mayer was evicted from her government-subsidized studio in 1821 (along with other artists then living in the Sorbonne). Her despair came to a head when Prud'hon declared that he had no plans to remarry after the death of his wife.¹⁷⁹

¹⁷⁶ Jordana Pomeroy, Laura Auricchio, Melissa Lee Hyde, and Mary D. Sheriff, *Royalists to Romantics: Women artists from the Louvre, Versailles and other French national collections* (Washington, DC: National Museum of Women in the Arts, 2012), 100 – 101.

¹⁷⁷ Helen Weston. "Mayer, Constance." Grove Art Online. Oxford Art Online. Oxford University Press, accessed February 13, 2015.

¹⁷⁸ "Marie Françoise Constance Mayer", Benezit Dictionary of Artists. Oxford Art Online. Oxford University Press, accessed February 13, 2015.

¹⁷⁹ Guffey, "Prud'hon, Mayer and *The Dream of Happiness*," 390 – 399.

In narrating her suicide as a result of a lack of matrimonial commitment from her long-time partner, Mayer's melancholia is characterized and defined according to the signs and symptoms of the feminine love melancholia. Her depression and malaise is retraced and connected to private, amorous exchanges – her desire for children, her age, her unfailing love to Prud'hon who, in the unbearable act of final betrayal, refuses to consider remarriage if his living wife were to die. The attention of these written accounts also display the lasting Romantic fascination with the suicidal death of the artist. The episode of Mayer's suicide is told in exacting detail with references to the studio space, the razor, the personal failures and rejections that lead up to this fateful act. Mayer's suicide is written as the direct cause of failed love and private tragedies. The same is not true for her male contemporaries who suffered similar fates.

For instance, Léopold Robert, a Swiss painter working in Italy, killed himself by similar means in March 1835. The reasons given for his suicide were variously related to his professional desires, not his personal failings. In just one example, Heinrich Heine attributed the tragedy to Robert's realization of the limits of his talent: "What pushed Robert to take his own life, was what is perhaps the most horrible of all sufferings, that which occurs when the artist discovers the disproportion that exists between his desires to create and his forces of execution."¹⁸⁰ Only a few months after Robert's suicide, Baron Antoine-Jean Gros took his own life. The timing of the act, after the disastrous public reception of his *Hercules and Diomedes* at the Salon of 1835, resulted in Gros's suicide being directly linked with the critical failure of that work. Commentators consistently identify a cause and effect

¹⁸⁰ Heine, *Lutèce*, 216 -17, quoted in Mark Gotlieb, "Creation and Death in the Romantic Studio," in *Inventions of the Studio: Renaissance to Romanticism*, eds. Michael Cole and Mary Pardo (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2005), 148.

relationship between the public criticism Gros received over his work during the last years of his life and his dramatic suicide by drowning in the waters of the Seine. Several of the artist's biographers speculate Gros identified the Salon of 1835 as the venue for his professional comeback and designed the large format mythological painting to confirm his skill and continued relevance. When the press reviewed the work unfavorably, Gros became overcome with his sense of artistic failure and committed suicide. In the immediate aftermath, Gros's defenders blamed his death on the press's "sarcasm" and the public's "ingratitude." Several critics from the years around Gros's death write about the event in the context of the artist's professional despair. The year after the Gros's suicide the critic Gustave Planche remarked that Gros had been a victim of adverse criticism that contributed to his despair. He concluded that Gros's suicide was a result of the artist's inability to match the masterpieces of his early years under Napoleon.¹⁸¹ Other critics concurred with this view, stating that Gros had a highly passionate nature that was especially sensitive to criticism.¹⁸² Edmond Pilon identifies the reason for Gros's suicide as constant self-doubt and the fear of becoming "*passé*".¹⁸³ Others blamed Gros's artistic personality, his melancholic temperament.

In accounts by critics, fellow artists, and his biographers Gros's deepening melancholia and eventual suicide are viewed as the result of his declining career and recent failures in critical reviews. Thus, his melancholia fits within the characterization of genial melancholia and therefore the Romantics elevated Gros, becoming infamous as much for his melancholia as for his artistic production. In an 1848 article Eugene Delacroix described Gros's mental

¹⁸¹ Gustave Planche, "Salon de 1836," in *Études sur l'Ecole Française* (Paris: M. Levy, 1855), I: 343.

¹⁸² Paul Charpentier, *Maladie Morale: le mal du siècle* (Paris: Didier, 1880), 389.

¹⁸³ Edmond Pilon, "Le Wertherisme ou le mal Romantique dans la peinture," *L'Art Vivant* (June 15, 1927), 463; Christopher Sells, "The Death of Gros," *The Burlington Magazine* 116, no. 854 (May 1974): 266-70.

condition as “an incurable despair” which was always accompanied by intense depression and constant self-doubt.¹⁸⁴ Even medical treatises of the period repeatedly refer to Gros as an example of the creative individual succumbing to his own “melancholy fever”.¹⁸⁵ His suicidal act is even monumentalized beyond his critical failings. Biographers characterize his tragic decision to end his own life as resultant of an epic internal struggle between critical constructs: Neoclassicism (his past/ David) and Romanticism (the future/ his desire). The narrative of Gros’s suicide within his larger biography cast him as an artistic martyr in the epic battle between the Classic and the Romantic. His work and ultimate failure to achieve the high standards set by himself and his larger-than-life artistic father, David, is identified as the catalyst for his tragic decision: “Torn between his classical training and his romantic future, the painter committed suicide in 1835.”¹⁸⁶ This myth frames Gros’s suicide within the realm of the public and the collective. Mayer’s suicide, on the other hand, is situated within the realm of the personal and the private. It is her domestic failings that are identified as the causes of her depression and despair. Unable to secure Prud’hon’s commitment of marriage, have children of her own, and therefore complete her transition into full womanhood, Mayer ends her own life. The story of her suicide reaffirms social gendered norms where women ultimately desire domesticity above all else.

Describing Mayer’s melancholia as conforming to the symptoms of love sickness rather than genial melancholia is in keeping with the ways other icons of the Woman Genius were narrated, characterized, and represented during the period. One of the most beloved and

¹⁸⁴ “...un désespoir incurable.” *Oeuvres Littéraires* (Paris: 1923), II: 163f. The article first appeared in the *Revue de Deux-Mondes* (September 1, 1848).

¹⁸⁵ “fièvre mélancolique.” Quoted in A. Corlieu, *Études sur les Causes de la Mélancolie* (Paris: J.-B. Baillière et fils, 1861), 28.

¹⁸⁶ Eric Turquin, “La Victoire selon Gros,” *Cormaissance des arts* 431 (January 1988): 70 -75.

influential images of female genius comes from Germaine de Staël's wildly popular novel, *Corinne, or Italy* (1807). Staël's novel, her female protagonist, and the author herself became cultural touchstones for nineteenth-century conceptions of women's creativity and the life of the woman artist.¹⁸⁷

Written and published during Staël's years of exile from Paris, *Corinne* tells the story of a celebrated Italian artist and public persona with a mysterious past. Corinne is "the most celebrated woman in Italy...poet, writer, *improvisattrice*, and one of the most beautiful women in Rome."¹⁸⁸ This inspired woman meets Oswald, Lord Nelvil, a conservative English gentleman far from home and mourning the death of his father. On arriving in Italy, Oswald witnesses Corinne's coronation as a national genius at the Capitol and like the rest of Italy he immediately becomes enamored with her. Slowly their love affair reveals both characters' secret histories. We learn Corinne was raised in Rome by her Italian mother and spent time in England with her father after her mother's death. Prior to the opening of the novel, Corinne's father Lord Edgermond and the elder Lord Nelvil, being close friends, decided their children would someday marry. However, upon meeting Corinne Lord Nelvil immediately realizes her exceptionality and thus divergence from the domestic ideal. Instead, Oswald should choose Lucile, Corinne's half-sister, for his wife. Years pass, the fathers die, and the novel opens with Oswald and Corinne's first meeting as though dictated by destiny.

¹⁸⁷ On the topic of Madame de Staël and female genius see: Madeleine Gutwirth, *Madame de Staël, Novelist. The emergence of artist as woman*. (Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 1978); *Staël's Philosophy of the Passions: Sensibility, Society, and the Sister Arts*, eds. Tili Boon Cuillé, and Karyna Szmurlo (Lewisburg, PA: Bucknell University Press; Co-published with the Rowman & Littlefield Publishing Group, Inc., 2013); Gayle A Levy. "A Genius for the Modern Era: Madame de Staël's Corinne," *Nineteenth Century French Studies* 30, nos. 3-4 (Spring-Summer 2002): 243-254; Angelica Goodden, *Madame de Staël: The Dangerous Exile* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008).

¹⁸⁸ Madame de Staël, *Corinne, or, Italy* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998).

In spite of their clear passion for one another, Oswald is unable to overcome his late father's opposition to the proposed match between him and Corinne. On returning to England, he succumbs to convention and honors his dead father's wish marrying Lucile, the dutiful English girl. Corinne follows him abroad and learns of her lover's betrayal. Heartbroken, she becomes deathly ill and returns to Rome. Corinne's death is a slow and protracted wasting away of her inspired gifts and creative genius, and her melancholia induced by inadequate love leads to her eventual demise. Corinne dies of unrequited love but not before passing her talents on to her niece Juliette, Oswald's and Lucile's daughter.

For nineteenth-century women artists, Staël's *Corinne* established the originary portrait of the female genius. Throughout, Staël uses the word *génie* to describe her heroine and Corinne's genius manifests itself in a number of domains: improvisational poetry, theater, and dance. Corinne paints and writes in private but her moments of inspired genius always take place in the public sphere, under the gaze of an audience. Her genius is performed and witnessed.

Ultimately the novel presents the picture that creative genius and domesticity are mutually exclusive. Corinne rejects marriage explicitly and consciously. While it is clear that she desires to be Oswald's lover and companion, marriage is never her goal. It becomes clear that had Corinne chosen to marry Oswald she would have lost her identity as a public figure and therefore her abilities as a poet and artist. For Oswald, women are not meant to be public persons; women must sacrifice all other interests for private love and emotion. He follows the patriarchal system and the values of his father by selecting the woman chosen for him. The refusal to compromise inevitably carries a heavy cost for the protagonist suggesting the

high price the artist pays for her creative freedom. For Corinne, the price of her artistic gift is ultimately life itself.

Staël based her artistic protagonist in part on the legendary Greek poetess Sappho. During the eighteenth century the legend of Sappho was re-fictionalized to position the legendary poetess as heterosexual and devoted to love as much as to the gifts of her creative genius. Joan DeJean's *Fictions of Sappho* traces Sappho's reception over the last five centuries in French literature and outlines the ways the life and work of Sappho were reconstructed by generations of scholars and writers to conform the poetess to cultural assumptions, biases, needs and desires. Representations of Sappho provide a way to understand and analyze attitudes toward genius, gender, and sexuality.

During the eighteenth and nineteenth century Sappho's biography was altered to emphasize the poetess's romantic relationship with Phaon. According to the myth, Venus and Cupid conspire to make Sappho fall in love with the boatman Phaon, and, at the same time ensure that Phaon will remain unreceptive to Sappho. In the end, the poetess chooses suicide rather than face life without her love. The primary source for nineteenth-century artists on the subject was Ovid's *Heroides*, which had been recently translated into French, along with new translations of her poetry. The reliability of these interpretations is questionable as they emphasize with new zeal Sappho's heterosexuality by detailing her desire for men.¹⁸⁹ Nevertheless artists emphasized Sappho's dejected state of "love fever" by choosing to represent her suicidal leap from the cliffs of Leucadia. The interest in Sappho within the realm of visual arts is evidenced in the large number of paintings that took her up as their subject during the period. Jean-Joseph Tallasson's interpretation of the myth from 1791

¹⁸⁹ Sheriff, *Moved by Love*, 63 – 66; Dorothy Johnson, *David to Delacroix: The Rise of Romantic Mythology* (Chapel Hill, NC: The University of North Carolina Press, 2011), 154 –156.

shows the poetess lunging forward over the rocky edge as she looks back wistfully at the world she leaves behind (Figure 73). Both Pierre-Narcisse Guérin and Gros's also represented Sappho in monumental paintings in the years around 1800 (Figures 74 and 26).

Although women traditionally have been excluded from the ideal model of melancholic genius, recent scholarship has shown the ways women actively sought to assume the attributes of melancholia as a means of authenticating creative abilities and the act of creation itself.¹⁹⁰ In her *Self-Portrait as Melancholia*, Mayer, by assuming the pose, posture, and appearance of contemporaneous images of Melancholia, constructs her own narrative of self as one afflicted simultaneously with malaise and artistic genius simultaneously. In the portrait, she positions herself as a person of solitary creative genius. Her self-portrait presents her as just that – alone, on her own, her inspired mind the source of her preoccupation and malaise, just as it should be in the ideal manifestation of melancholic genius.

¹⁹⁰ In *Moved by Love* Mary Sheriff examines and reassesses the relationship between gender, madness, deviance and inspired creativity in eighteenth-century France; Katherine Hodgkin provides a focused, autobiographical case study of the complex psychic relationship between religion and madness in early seventeenth-century England in *Women, Madness and Sin in Early Modern England: The Autobiographical Writings of Dionys Fitzherbert* (Burlington, VT: Ashgate Publishing, 2010); Heather Meek considers the ways eighteenth-century women authors mobilized their melancholia to claim artistic genius in “Creative Hysteria and the Intellectual Woman of Feeling,” in *Figures et culture de la dépression, 1660-1800*, eds. Clark Lawlor and Valérie Maffre (Montpellier: Presses universitaires de la Méditerranée, 2010), 87 – 98.

CHAPTER FOUR

Wounded Glory: The Changing Image of Melancholic Masculinity at the End of the Empire

Anne-Louis Girodet's famous portrait of François René de Chateaubriand exemplifies early nineteenth century representations of melancholic masculinity (1808; Figure 75).¹⁹¹ The portrait, originally exhibited at the Salon of 1809 under the title *A Man Meditates on the Ruins of Rome*, depicts the French author in a pose of deep contemplation. Standing on a hill elevated above the markers of the Eternal City – the distant ruins of the Coliseum are visible in the lower left and another of Rome's seven hills to the right - Chateaubriand leans listlessly against an ivy-covered wall. His left elbow supports the weight of his body while the fingers of his right hand are tucked under his vest in a conventional pose of meditative contemplation.¹⁹² He looks away into the distance with intensity, and in spite of the still Italian air Chateaubriand's hair is windswept, hinting at the intellectual activity of his mind.¹⁹³ The author's clothing, contemporary and fashionable yet slightly too-big and rumpled, also points to his preoccupation with loftier pursuits. His pose, clothing and intense gaze all suggest the inspired genius of the writer.

¹⁹¹ The work was later exhibited in the salon of Madame Recamier at the Abbaye-aux-Bois in 1849, near the portrait of Madame de Staël by Mrs. Godfrey and not far from *Corinne at Cape Misenum* (1822, Lyon, Museum of Fine -Arts) by François Gérard.

¹⁹² Arline Meyer, "Re-Dressing Classical Statuary: The Eighteenth-Century 'Hand-in-Waistcoat' Portrait," *The Art Bulletin* 77, no. 2 (March 1995): 45 - 64.

¹⁹³ Not everyone responded positively to Girodet's portrait of Chateaubriand. Upon seeing the painting at the Salon of 1810, Napoléon said the portrait looked like that of a conspirator who had come down a chimney.

The International Man of Feeling

During the Romantic period, a man striking a contemplative pose in an outdoor setting combined with a melancholy expression and an averted gaze connoted creative genius and ambition. Chateaubriand's gesture of a single hand tucked nonchalantly into the folds of his waistcoat appears in numerous portraits of other "great" men from the period, including those of Napoleon Bonaparte, for instance Jacques-Louis David's well-known portrait of the Emperor in his study at the Tuileries (1812; Figure 76). Here, the general is shown in the private, quiet confines of his study having worked through the night on the French Civil Code (*Code Napoléon*). Because David represents the Emperor not on the battlefield but rather in his role as statesman, he shows Napoleon in an attitude similar to that of Chateaubriand: standing, caught in a moment of brief repose, his right hand tucked into his waistcoat. This gesture conveys both ability and measure, appropriate in that David intends to focus on Napoleon's intellectual power rather than his military prowess. To further this context, David surround's the Emperor with overt symbols of erudition: books, documents and maps cover his desk and the area around the table while his sword rests unneeded in his chair.

These symbols of scholarship and writing are notably absent from Girodet's portrait of Chateaubriand. The author's ability is not signified through the literal presence of a quill, book, or paper. Instead Chateaubriand's intense gaze and ruffled hair set against the evocative backdrop of Rome signify the intellectual superiority of the figure. Often conflated with René the young melancholic wanderer from his novella of the same name, Chateaubriand here fully assumes the guise of melancholic genius.

Published in 1802, *René* was a public sensation and swiftly came to epitomize the

spiritual malaise and melancholy experienced and enjoyed by the most sensitive and emotive Romantics.¹⁹⁴ Indeed, Chateaubriand is even credited with inventing the modern form of melancholia in *René*.¹⁹⁵ The novel traces the story of a sensitive and passionate young Frenchman from his lonely childhood in his father's castle in Brittany, through his travels touring the ruins of ancient Greece and Rome and the Ossianic landscape of Scotland.¹⁹⁶ Repulsed by modern civilization upon his return to France, René withdraws from society, living in isolation in an obscure part of the city before retreating entirely to the countryside. Despite his efforts, René cannot find a place for himself within modern society and he sinks further into lonesome despair: "Alas, I was alone, alone on the earth. A secret languor was taking hold of my body. The disgust for life I had felt since childhood came back with renewed force. Soon my heart no longer provided food for my mind, and the only thing I felt in my existence was a deep ennui."¹⁹⁷ After an aborted suicide attempt and his beloved sister's initiation as nun and thus removal from his realm, René leaves Europe and travels to America where he lives amongst the Natchez. He dies there, one of many casualties in a battle between the Natchez and the French.

The many autobiographical elements in the book, particularly those that draw on Chateaubriand's memories of his own childhood in Brittany and his travels to North America in 1791, inspired fans of the novella to fuse author and main character. Through his writings and his image Chateaubriand came to epitomize the melancholic ideal of a generation.

¹⁹⁴ *René* was first published as part of Chateaubriand's *Génie du christianisme*, which also contained his other wildly successful novella, *Atala*. *René* enjoyed such popularity that it was republished separately, with *Atala*, in 1805.

¹⁹⁵ Théophile Gautier, *Histoire du romantisme* (Paris: Charpentier, 1927), 4.

¹⁹⁶ Chateaubriand, *Atala. René* (London: One World Classics, 2010).

¹⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, 94.

Chateaubriand and the hero of his novel *René* became paragons of melancholy and masculine genius for the Romantic generation. In his *Mémoires d'outre-tombe*, Chateaubriand responded to the melancholy craze created by his novel and its main character:

An entire family of René poets and René prose writers proliferated: lamentable and disjointed language was all one ever heard; all they ever discussed were winds and storms, mysterious sorrows delivered up to the clouds and dark of night. There wasn't a single callow youth just out of school who didn't dream he was the most unfortunate of men; not one lad of sixteen who hadn't exhausted his life, who didn't believe himself tormented by his genius.¹⁹⁸

Girodet's "artist's portrait" of Chateaubriand was a huge success with the public, beginning with the author himself who wrote in his memoirs, "Girodet put the finishing touches to my portrait. It was as dark as I was then; he fills it with his genius."¹⁹⁹

The melancholic male portrait was generally popular in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century. Men of privilege especially assumed the posture of intellectual melancholic. Lucien Bonaparte commissioned a series of portraits that portray him intensely absorbed with the workings of his own mind, set against a backdrop of darkly wooded nature. As discussed in Chapter one, Bonaparte commissioned pendant portraits by Jacques Sablet to commemorate the death of his wife Christine Boyer and their young child (Figure 15). These modest portraits concentrate on the rituals associated with private mourning and eternally memorialize the spaces and objects Lucien commissioned and constructed to honor his beloved departed family members. The melancholic pose Lucien assumes in this portrait by Sablet is directly linked to the act of mourning.

Sablet excelled at capturing the elegiac mood of mourning figures set amidst a landscape that mirrors the emotional storms associated with death and commemoration, as

¹⁹⁸ Chateaubriand, *Mémoires d'outre-tombe*, 2 vols. (Paris: Gallimard, 1946), I: 462.

¹⁹⁹ Ibid.

seen in his *Roman Elegy* from 1791 (Figure 77). The subject of Sablet's painting was inspired by Goethe's collection of poetry on his Italian journey. Here two sophisticated men, dressed in traditionally appropriate mourning attire, meditate at tombs and grave monuments within the Protestant Cemetery in Rome. The cemetery, identifiable by Sablet's deliberate inclusion of the *Piramide dei Caio Cestio* in the distance, exemplifies the Northern fascination with Italy's graves, ruins, and arid landscape during the age of the Grand Tour. Like Girodet, Sablet also uses "Italy" as a backdrop for solitary meditation. Here, the Italian landscape houses the anonymous figure's melancholia as they focus their emotional output on the markers of the temporality of human existence. Their presence contrasts with the shadow of death made symbolically manifest in the storm clouds that hover over the pyramid.

In another much larger portrait of Lucien Bonaparte by Sablet, the picture is entirely absent of any signs or symbols of mourning. Lucien's malaise is inspired by an all-together different source and he assumes the pose of the melancholic gentleman. Sablet selects a landscape format for this portrait of Bonaparte, allowing him to emphasize the reclining pose of his sitter. *Lucien Bonaparte at Aranjuez*, circa 1800, shows the patron resting in solitude against a tree (Figure 78). Nestled in a dark, wooded forest, the buildings and bridges of a near-by city are visible in the distant background, yet the figure is apart from these spaces of civilization. Shown in a landscape of remove from society, Bonaparte is consumed by his own musings; the book that once occupied his attention has fallen absentmindedly to his side and he looks off into the distance. His shaded eyes and limp posture both suggest the kind of melancholia that consumes the scholar.

Joseph Wright of Derby, in his well-known *Portrait of Sir Brooke Boothby* from

nearly twenty years earlier, also expresses the intellectualism of his sitter through this posture and portrait format (1781; Figure 79). In Wright's version, Sir Boothby's body is intimately fused with the natural world. The amateur poet and philosopher reclines languidly on his side, rests his head in his hand and looks out at us contemplatively. Here, Boothby's melancholia is a product of his academic pursuits. His mind is distracted by more elevated cares than the everyday concerns of this world. Like Chateaubriand, his unbuttoned waistcoat and sleeves give him a deliberately disheveled appearance. A life-long admirer of Jean-Jacques Rousseau's work, Boothby pays tribute to the French *philosophe* in his portrait; he holds a vellum-bound volume in his left hand and indicates with his forefinger the name "Rousseau" inscribed on the spine. In the image, Boothby is meant to embody the Rousseauian ideal of man living in harmony with the natural world. The reclining figure, however, seems too big for the setting, well outsizing the trees, foliage, and stream that surround him.²⁰⁰

German artists embraced the ideal as well, as seen in Johann Tischbein's *Goethe in the Roman Campagna*, completed in Rome in 1787 (Figure 80). Again, the artist selects a landscape format and formally aligns Goethe's semi-reclining pose with the hills and ruins of the *Roman Campagna* behind. A wide-brimmed hat distinguishes the author's head from its surrounds, drawing attention to the seat of his gift. Goethe is shown wearing Greco-Roman wrap draped over his contemporary dress further joining him with the value and treasures of ancient Rome. These treasures of classical antiquity are strewn about the feet of the intellectual: a broken frieze, a toppled pillar, and vestiges of buildings in the distance.

²⁰⁰ To imagine this reclining pose nestled within the space of nature, Derby looked back to the melancholy tradition in Elizabethan portraiture seen, for example, in Isaac Oliver's *Portrait of Lord Herbert of Cherbury* (1613-14). On Elizabethan portraiture, masculinity and melancholia see Elizabeth Goldring, "'So Lively a Portrait of His Miseries': Melancholy, Mourning and the Elizabethan Malady," *The British Art Journal* 6, (October 2005): 12 – 22.

Goethe's pose, with one foot planted on the ground and the other elevated, looking off intently into the distance, suggests his ability to reflect on the past but serve the present.

As demonstrated in the works listed here this prototype of the melancholic intellectual male appeared simultaneously in England, France, and Germany. These portraits suggest a kind of masculinity that is grounded in intellectual power rather than physical force. These figures of literature, culture, and politics are revered for their mental prowess and their introspection as their melancholic repose seems to stem both from their natural "genius" and their worldly knowledge. If images of the melancholic intellectual gentleman were international in scope during the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century a new kind of melancholic masculinity emerged that was particular to France during and after the Empire – the image of the melancholic soldier or veteran. These images, paired with scenes of collective mourning at the tomb of the exiled national son, Napoleon Bonaparte, distinguish a new strain of melancholia associated with virile masculinity and national sentiment.

Specters at the Tomb - Supernatural Melancholia

During the early decades of the nineteenth century a new vision of melancholic masculinity emerges, one sprung from the militaristic culture that buttressed the early years of the Empire but was also tied to its eventual collapse. The resplendent glory and opulent regalia that visually marked the officers and soldiers of Napoleon's *Grande Armée* eventually gives way to the defeat and tragedy of the lost hero and the mourning veteran. Francois Gérard's *Portrait of Louise-Antoinette-Scholastique Gueheneuc, Madame la Marechale Lannes, Duchess de Montebello, with her Children* from 1814 signals this new kind of

mourning image, unique to the Empire and French painting in the early nineteenth century (Figure 81). The painting honors the sacrifice and memory of one of the Empire's many lost heroes, General Jean Lannes, who was among Napoleon's most successful and favorite generals. Completed nearly five years after his death on an Austrian battlefield in 1809, the painting shows his surviving widow and their five children gathered at the foot of the statue that both honors his memory and symbolically evokes his presence in the family group. Set amidst the lush environs of the family estate, the portrait brims with references to Lannes's military career, his stunning success as a general who served in all of Napoleon's campaigns from Italy and Egypt to Austria, and the aftermath of his tragic death. The imposing size of the painting - eight feet high - documents the heroic importance of Lannes and records the depth of his sacrifice to the state through the picture of his surviving family.

Lannes's four sons, ranging in age from ten to thirteen, all wear suits modeled after military uniforms. The oldest son, and heir to the Montebello title and fortune, stands to his mother's immediate right and looks up at the statue of his father with mournful intensity. A cannonball, the very symbol of Lannes's death, is clearly evident next to his left foot and sword suggesting that as viewers contemplated the statue they were invited to recall the cause of his death. Unlike his brothers and sisters who look out at the viewer and hold objects of play or study, the eldest son removes his hat as he gazes upon his father's memorial in a gesture of respect. Within the context of the painting his mother's tender hold on his shoulder suggests comfort and tenderness as well as pointing to his status as inheritor of his father's title and estate.

The actual monument to Lannes is marginalized within the portrait occupying just the top left corner of the painting. In its place, Gérard refers to another eternal, living monument

– the family itself. He carefully groups Lannes’s surviving family, his wife, daughter, and sons, in a pyramidal form so that they assume the very shape of a funerary monument. At the center of the portrait, we see the Duchess, fashionably dressed and assuming the position at the pinnacle of the familial group with her children gathered around. Lannes’s family beneath his statue becomes the living and lasting expression of homage to the lost hero.

Gérard’s portrait also honors the efforts of the Duchess to protect her family in the private insecurity that followed the death of her husband and the public upheaval that resulted from the ultimate defeat and exile of Napoleon Bonaparte. After Lanne’s death, his widow of noble birth, kept her place at the Imperial Court but she strategically withdrew to the family estate far from the politics of Napoleonic life. Gérard’s portrait is a statement about the family’s new life and their longing for peace after a lifetime built around warfare. In 1814, the very year Baron Gérard completed this portrait of the Montebello family, Napoleon was sent into exile.

After his final defeat at the battle of Waterloo on June 18, 1815, Napoleon Bonaparte, Emperor of the French, was taken captive and forced into remote exile by the victorious allied forces. Sentenced to live out the remainder of his life on the rugged and remote island of Saint Helena, a British protectorate suspended in the middle of the South Atlantic, Napoleon surrendered to Captain Maitland of the HMS Bellerophon on July 15, 1815.²⁰¹ The deposed Emperor and his group of loyal companions arrived on the distant island in October of that same year. Saint Helena was then, as it remains today, one of the most inaccessible and remote places on Earth. British authorities wrote Napoleon would be confined there to prevent him “from disturbing the repose of Europe.” He lived only five and a half years more, dying at his residence on the island, Longwood House, on May 5, 1821 after weeks of

²⁰¹ Alan Forrest, *Napoléon* (London: Quercus, 2011), 298.

sickness and suffering. He was 51 years old.²⁰²

Napoleon's funeral on May 9 began with a religious ceremony in the house and continued with a funeral procession terminating at his burial site in the Sane Valley under a grove of willow trees next to a small freshwater spring on the island.²⁰³ The funeral ceremony was modest for a man of his stature, especially compared to the opulent ceremonies that typified his Imperial Court and the eventual pomp that would usher the return of his remains to be buried at *les Invalides* during the second empire.²⁰⁴ His coffin was reportedly covered by a blue velvet pall on top of which was placed Napoleon's sword and the cloak he wore at the battle of Marengo, a victorious and early defining moment in the career of the general. The simple procession was witnessed by some two thousand British soldiers and sailors stationed on the island who lined the route silently before filing in behind the coffin and accompanying its final march to Sane Valley. Once there, the heavy sarcophagus was carried and then slowly lowered into the ground by a group of grenadiers, before being covered with layers of earth and cement and ultimately sealed with a huge flat stone. The tombstone remained unmarked and anonymous, the governor of Saint Helena having refused the French request that it should carry a simple inscription of his name, dates and places of his birth and death. Napoleon was originally interred, not as he wished on the banks of the Seine amongst his fellow Frenchmen, but thousands of miles from France, on a

²⁰² Ibid., 309 – 310.

²⁰³ On Napoléon's life on the island before his death and his funeral on Saint Helena see Emanuel-Auguste-Dieudonné, *Mémorial de Saint-Hélène* (Éditions Garnier frères, 1961); Bernard Chevaillier, Michel Dancoisne-Martineau and Thierry Lentz, *Sainte Hélène, île de mémoire* (Paris, 2005); Gilbert Martineau, *Napoléon à Sainte-Hélène, 1815 – 1821* (Paris: J. Tallandier, 1981).

²⁰⁴ For a detailed, archival account of the construction process, historical context, and political and social meanings of Napoléon's tomb in the Church of the *Invalides* in Paris, see Michael Paul Driskel, *As Befits a Legend: Building a Tomb for Napoléon, 1840 – 1861* (Kent, OH: The Kent State University Press, 1993).

remote and inaccessible island in the middle of the South Atlantic.²⁰⁵

Inspired by the grave's remote distance from mainland France images and written accounts of Napoleon's tomb proliferated in the decades after his death. Subjects desired personal and intimate information about the Emperor's life on the island and his initial burial site in the valley. Written narratives such as *Napoleon at St. Helena*, the published diary of the exile's surgeon Barry Edward O'Meara, describe the Emperor's final months on the island accompanied by illustrations of Longwood House, the tomb and surrounding environs (Figures 82 and 83).²⁰⁶ Prints from the period illustrate the topography of the site and bring the faraway space near to viewers for their own personal and intimate contemplation. These works reveal with consistency the modesty of the site and its simple, direct placement within the landscape. We see the rolling hills of the valley and surrounding ridge, the small stream that runs alongside the tombstone and grove of willow trees, eventually diminished by the consistent removal of branches and bark by devotees who did make the impossible trek to St. Helena. These straightforward images provide viewers with factual information about the appearance of the site in the face of its distant remove from France.

Other works provide Romantic imaginings about the site, for instance *The Tomb of Napoleon on St. Helena* in the collection of the Museo Napoleonico in Rome (Figure 84). The unknown artist of this print includes the symbolic elegiac willow hanging over an elaborate stone grave marker. He positions the burial site not as it was – situated within a valley – but rather elevated on a cliff overlooking the sea. There, the deposed emperor could

²⁰⁵ Forrest, 298.

²⁰⁶ Barry Edward O'Meara, *Complément Du Mémorial De Sainte-Helène. Napoléon En Exil; Relation Contenant Les Opinions Et Les Réflexions De Napoléon Sur Les Événemens Les Plus Importans De Sa Vie, Durant Trois Ans De Sa Captivité, Et Ornée D'un Facsimile*, 4. éd. (Paris: Béchét, 1824).

look out from his island of exile towards France. Small boats are visible on the water suggesting transport from the island that Napoleon never experienced. The popularity of both topographical and embellished images of Napoleon's grave is evident through its copious reproduction in an entire range of formats and on various kinds of decorative objects, from wall hangings and clocks, to snuff boxes and porcelains (Figures 85, 86, and 87). These works allowed viewers to engage with this remote and highly politicized site (simply by virtue of the person buried there) in informal and intimate ways. These personal items that were kept within the home and worn on the body of the owner in the case of snuffboxes, expressed the intimate feelings associated with the death of this polarizing national leader. The proliferation of these decorative and functional objects reiterates the increasing sense of mourning as a personal, necessary, and ongoing act. As I will show in this chapter, Napoleon's exile and death were the catalyst for different kinds of grief responding to the loss of an individual and an era.

History painters also took up the subject, infusing their images of the gravesite with Romantic sensibility and heroic Grandeur. Their large-format, monumental pictures and the ways they were displayed and viewed also reflects personal sentiments and intimate ways of engaging with the imagery and subject. Horace Vernet, a great admirer of Napoleon, completed his fantastical image of the tomb on the island of Saint Helena, *The Apotheosis of Napoleon*, in July 1821 after learning of the defeated general's death two months earlier (Figure 88).²⁰⁷ He imagines the site, not as nestled in the rolling Sane Valley near a narrow

²⁰⁷ Horace Vernet was the grandson of Claude-Joseph Vernet, and he studied under his father Carle, also a painter. H. Vernet exhibited at the Salon beginning in 1812, and from 1828 to 1835 he was Director of the French Academy in Rome. Vernet was a loyal Bonapartist and was awarded the Legion of Honor in 1814 for his brave defense of Paris under enemy attack. He was commissioned to paint several portraits of Napoléon before the emperor's exile. Vernet later secured the patronage of the duc d'Orléans who commissioned, among other works, several large format battle scenes. I discuss two of these works briefly below. For more on Horace Vernet, see the catalogue for the exhibition of his works: *Horace Vernet (1789 – 1863)* (Rome: De Luca, 1980).

stream, but as on the edges of a small promontory by a stormy sea. Napoleon's sword and his famous bicorn hat lie on top of the Emperor's roughhewn grave. Nearby, two of Napoleon's generals who were present with him on Saint Helena, General Montholon and General Bertrand and his family, console one another. They weep openly while a group of cloud-borne mourners, deceased members of Napoleon's *Grande Armée*, pay their respects at this tumultuous burial site. In the bottom foreground the wreckage of a ship, inscribed with the names of the Emperor's most important battles, beginning with "Rivoli" and ending with "Wat..." for Waterloo, bashes against the landmass.

Vernet's version of the gravesite and the activities taking place there, attest to the growing taste for the sublime, particularly evident in his painterly treatment of the sea and sky, his inclusion of a shipwreck symbolically embodying Napoleon's epic downfall, and his devising of a supernatural body of eternal mourners from the general's own *Grande Armée*. While it imagines the simultaneous gathering of a collective body of mourners eternally devoted to the memory of their beloved leader, Vernet's picture became the literal focus of mourning rituals devoted to Napoleon after its completion and initial exhibition. *Napoleon's Tomb* was first exhibited in Vernet's studio as an external marker of the sorrow he and many of his contemporaries felt when the emperor died. The painting was displayed mournfully draped in black crepe. For those unable to pay respects at the actual site of burial the painting stood in for Napoleon's grave, as devoted Bonapartists made "pilgrimages" to Vernet's studio to see the work and mourn before the scene it presents in lieu of making the impossible journey to Saint Helena.²⁰⁸

²⁰⁸ J. du Seigneur, "Appendice a la notice sur Horace Vernet. Ses Tableaux et ses lithographies," *Revue universelle des arts* 17 (1863), 345. Vernet depicted the collective mourning of Napoléon's death in another work completed after his death, a lithograph entitled *Soldat, je le pleure* (1821; Figure 89) in which an anonymous soldier and mournful dog weep over the newspaper report of Napoléon's death.

The image of a *Grande Armée* vigil of spectral soldiers hovering above the tomb of Napoleon appears in several large format paintings immediately following his death and continued for decades as evidenced by Jean Alaux's 1837 painting *Allegory at the tomb on Saint Helena: Napoleon's army mourns his death* (Figure 90). While Alaux aligns his depiction of Napoleon's tomb closer to written descriptions of the topography of the site he, like Vernet, includes a gathering of Napoleonic soldier's shrouded in mist mourning at the grave of their beloved general. Alaux pictures the tomb beneath a grove of large weeping willows immediately adjacent to a small stream as described in prints depicting the actual site on Saint Helena and written accounts by visitors to the island. The large stone rests in isolation in a large, flat field. Moonlight illuminates the space, as does the heavenly cloud filled with mourners suspended directly above the stone. The soldiers represent the variety of men who served in Napoleon's *Grande Armée*: grenadiers, sappers, dragoons, chasseurs and hussars are all represented and made identifiable by their uniforms. They gesture expressively, looking to one another in grief and pointing in despair to the reality of Napoleon's death as evidenced by the stone.

Alaux distinctly separates earthly and heavenly realms in the picture. The grave is clearly earthbound, occupying the lower third of the painting, while the cloud of dead soldiers floats across the top third, in line with the blue-green nocturnal light of the moon as it passes through the literal nighttime clouds and illuminates the stone beneath. The soldiers weep and assume conventional poses of melancholy.

Supernatural scenes of this kind were popular in the years around 1800 and were, in part, inspired by public enthusiasm for the poems of the Celtic bard Ossian. Between 1802 and 1813, Gérard, Girodet and Ingres all painted Ossianic scenes containing visions of

ghostly spirits similar to the figural groups depicted in both Vernet's and Alaux's pictures of Napoleon's island tomb. The epic poem of Ossian was originally published in 1762 by Scottish author James MacPherson who claimed to have discovered the ancient texts during his travels in the Scottish Highlands.²⁰⁹ Written in Gaelic, the poems were purportedly the long-lost ballads of a third century Celtic bard relating the story of a sentimental warrior-king, Fingal, whose heroic accomplishments were recorded and memorialized by his son, the blind Ossian. The epic poems depict the Scottish past as replete with supernatural voices and honorable warfare, presenting an image of an advanced culture comparable to and contemporaneous with those of classical Greece and Rome. The poems were instantly popular and found fans beyond Great Britain. MacPherson's work was translated into French immediately after its publication in 1762 by Pierre Letourner and enjoyed immense success with the French public, who on cusp of the Revolution and the Napoleonic wars related to the strains of lament over a defeated society and its heroes present throughout the epic prose.

The phenomenal success and interest in Ossian throughout Europe is evident in the range of works that responded to the text. The years around 1800, nearly forty years after the poem's initial publication in France, witness a burst of Ossianic imagery. The fascination with Ossian is likely tied to the poem's portrayal of warfare and characterization of heroic warriors. The melancholy and haunting strains of the text certainly resonated with a French populace fatigued and disenchanted by Revolution and protracted warfare. Furthermore, the Ossianic sagas provided a way to mythologize the domestic experience of France in the early years of the Empire, particularly the harsh realities of sacrificing the nation's youth in the pursuit of Napoleonic imperialism.

²⁰⁹ It is now widely accepted that MacPherson himself authored the poems in the years between 1760 and 1790, basing his text on the Celtic mythology and on Gaelic oral tradition.

Artists including Gérard, Girodet and Ingres were encouraged to portray Ossianic subjects by Napoleon himself who reportedly carried a copy of the epic poem with him on his military campaigns.²¹⁰ The general's enthusiasm for these Gaelic ballads was not unusual for the period; prominent literary and political figures, including German author Goethe and American diplomat Thomas Jefferson, offered enthusiastic assessments of the sentimentality and humanity found within the poems.²¹¹ Goethe even referenced Ossian in his cult novel *The Sorrows of Young Werther* (1774) writing that Werther praised Homer while sane and Ossian while mad. In 1800 Napoleon engaged Gérard and Girodet to complete paintings representing Ossianic themes. These paintings were intended to complement one another and hang opposite each other in the emperor's Château de Malmaison. Instead, the resultant works offer dramatically different interpretations of the ancient myth.

In *Ossian Conjures the Ancestral Spirits on the Banks of the Lora* Gérard focuses on the evocative power of Ossian's song (Figure 91).²¹² Pictured in the center of the composition the blind bard Ossian uses his music to call-up the spirits of his family, friends, and ancestors. Seated and bent toward his harp in intense introspection, Ossian is surrounded by the heroes of his music who appear as ghostly apparitions in the effervescent moonlight around him. Gérard includes with literary exactitude the characters from the poem. Ossian's son Oscar and daughter-in-law Malvina embrace just behind him on the left side of the

²¹⁰ Several artists represented subjects inspired by Ossian in the early decades of the nineteenth century. Gros painted Malvina singing and playing the harp to "open up to [the spirit of Oscar] the palace of clouds". Ary Scheffer painted *The Death of Malvina* in 1802. Forbin exhibited a work portraying Ossian revisiting the ruins of his ancestral castle Selma at the Salon of 1806. English painter Elizabeth Harvey also exhibited *Malvina and Oscar* at the same Salon. See Pierre van Tieghem, "La peinture ossianique (1801 – 1817)", in *Ossian in France* (Paris: F. Rieder and Cie., 1917), 2: 141 – 165.

²¹¹ Howard Gaskill, *The Reception of Ossian in Europe* (New York: Thoemmes Continuum, 2004).

²¹² There are at least four versions of Gérard's painting. The version presently in the collection at the Hamburger Kunsthalle came from Malmaison. *French Painting 1774 – 1830: The Age of Revolution*, The Metropolitan Museum of Art and the Detroit Institute of Art (Detroit, MI: Wayne State University Press, 1975), 434 – 436.

canvas. His parents Roscrana and Fingal are enthroned on the right. In the background we see the palace of Selma, Ossian's birthplace, silhouetted against the eerie nighttime sky.

Gérard makes visually manifest the complete Ossianic poetic imagery.

Girodet's version of the Ossianic myth is markedly different than Gérard's interpretation.²¹³ The work is complex and brimming with iconographic details (Figure 92).²¹⁴ Rather than presenting a synthesis of Ossianic imagery, Girodet uses the glory of Scotland's ancient warriors to express the valor of France's contemporary military heroes. The warriors of France, those generals and soldiers who perished in the Revolutionary wars, are welcomed into the afterlife by the warrior-bard Ossian. On the right side, the ghosts of Ossianic heroes surge towards the center where their leader embraces General Desaix in a dramatic whirling mass of bodies.

The painting is dense with figures that appear to climb, swim, and float into and over one another. Rather than frothy clouds, the warriors appear to step on a plateau of heavenly figures. The contact of bodies infuses the scene with drama and vigor as they collide with affection and as if driven on by supernatural forces. The painting's emotional impact comes from the artist's rendering of a heavenly humanity. Girodet painstakingly includes portraits of illustrious French generals – Desaix and Klébier – but also represents Napoleon's *Grande Armée* in mass. The diversity of soldiers who made up this massive fighting force in reality is

²¹³ Girodet's interest in Ossian continued after the completion of this commission for Napoléon. The artist produced other works inspired by the bard including *Death of Malvina* (1802) and several illustrations of the *Poems of Ossian*. George Levitine, "A Newly Discovered Project of Girodet: Originality, Ossian, and England," in *Paris: Center of Artistic Enlightenment*, eds. George Mauner, Jeanne Chenault Porter, Elizabeth Bradford Smith, and Susan Scott Munshower (State College, PA: The Pennsylvania State University, 1988), 160 – 166.

²¹⁴ The full title of the work matches the complexity of the visual image: *The Ghosts of French Heroes, Killed in the Service of Their Country, Led by Victory, Arrive to Live in the Aerial Elysium Where the Ghosts of Ossian and His Valiant Warriors Gather to Render to Them in Their Voyage of Immortality and Glory a Festival of Peace and of Friendship*. See, *French Painting 1774 – 1830*, 455 – 457; Albert Boime, *Art in an Age of Bonapartism, 1800 – 1815* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1990), 61 – 63.

represented here in this divine afterlife through the unique detailing of their uniforms. These figures appear to stretch endlessly into the distance evoking both the literal enormity of the army and alluding to the extent of human sacrifice that would befall France in Napoleon's imperial pursuit of Europe.

Throughout the painting Girodet mixes fantasy and fact, myth and history. He mythologizes the French heroes by visualizing their eternal rest alongside the ancient Ossianic warriors and creates an appropriately elegiac mood by bathing these ancestral phantoms in a crystalline lunar light. Having completed the painting shortly after the Treaty of Lunéville between France and the Austrian Empire, Girodet imbeds the image with iconographic reference to this victory and represent the French as peacemaking warriors. At the top of the composition, Victory accompanies the Gallic cock who rescues a dove from the Hapsburg eagle. On the left a French dragoon defends Agandecca, the daughter of King Starvo, by slaying Fingal's enemy with a sword of honor awarded to him by the First Consul. By aligning France's military heroes with the Ossianic warriors Girodet simultaneously valorizes their sacrifice and diverts public gaze away from the carnage and horrors of war, shrouding the harsh realities of Napoleon's imperialism in an air of myth and enchantment.

Ghostly apparitions appear throughout the visual culture of the period including images that mythologized and memorialized the emperor himself. Both Gérard's and Girodet's Ossianic paintings likely influenced Jean-Pierre Franque's retrospective work, *Allegory of the State of France before the Return from Egypt* of 1810 (Figure 93). The painting casts Napoleon as the singular savior of the nation. France, embodied in a spectral female figure, appears as a divine vision before Napoleon who, having been cut off by the British navy, finds himself stranded in Egypt. The pyramid in the background clarifies the

reference to Napoleon's Egyptian Campaign (1798 to 1799) and his victory at the Pyramids. In his absence, France is plummeted into chaos by the corrupt government of the Directory and she reaches out from the cloud that has ferried her to his side in a dramatic imploring gesture. Franque does not merely suggest a relationship between Ossianic myth and Napoleonic France but goes further, conflating the general with Ossian himself and replacing apparitions of ancestors and warriors with a moonlight and spectral allegory of France. The painting mythologized Napoleonic history casting him not as abandoning his men in Egypt but heeding the call of a nation in need. Franque captures Bonaparte's own notion of immortality as achieved through the memorialization of his victorious battles, while other commemorative material from the decades after Napoleon's death focuses on the recovery of his body and spirit.

Visual culture offers stunning images of a resurrected Napoleon either climbing out of his grave or haunting his own burial site. These works continue the propagandistic tendency to sacralize Napoleon by conflating his image and body with Christian iconography.²¹⁵ Popular prints show the Emperor's silhouette outlined in the trees and foliage that surround his grave on Saint Helena. The figure, identifiable by his iconic bicorne hat, looks pensively upon his own grave marker as if mourning his own death (Figures 94 and 95). In Vernet's extraordinary painting *Napoleon Rising from His Tomb* we witness the moment of resurrection (Figure 96). Like Christ, Napoleon is shown as triumphant over death, ably pushing away his own tombstone and climbing from a pit in the ground. Dressed

²¹⁵ Much has been written concerning reinvention of Christian iconography in the propagandistic paintings of Napoléon's military campaigns, particularly Gros's *Pesthouse at Jaffa* (1804) and *Battle at Eylau* (1807). See: Christopher Prendergast, *Napoléon and History Painting: Antoine-Jean Gros's La Bataille d'Eylau* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1997); David O'Brien, *After the Revolution: Antoine-Jean Gros, Painting and Propaganda Under Napoléon* (University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2006); Todd B. Porterfield and Susan Siegfried, *Staging Empire: Napoléon, Ingres, and David* (University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2006).

in full military regalia, a laurel wreath crowns his head and is surrounded by a golden orb-like halo. The supernatural drama of the moment is marked by a wind that whips through the near-by willow. Vernet reactivates Christian mythologies to elevate the emperor to divine status. This grandiose image of resurrection contrasts with the way Vernet imagined the actual moment of death. In his life-like and solemn painting of Napoleon on his deathbed Vernet presents a simple, humble scene focused on Napoleon's head and face (1826; Figure 98). The small picture is moving in its simplicity. The laurel wreath crowning his head and the crucifix resting atop his chest are the only overt symbols that glorify the figure. Set against the backdrop of plain white linen, the vulnerability and mortality of the body is apparent; his face appears grey and thin and his chest withered and small.

Fascination with ghostly apparitions and the desire for heroic resurrection permeated post-Revolutionary culture. One compelling example is Étienne-Gaspard Robertson's phantasmagoria.²¹⁶ In 1798 the showman and inventor staged his first macabre moving picture show, the phantasmagoria, meaning an "assembly of phantasms." Robertson used a projector, the Fantoscope, to choreograph elaborate slide shows that both delighted and terrified his rapt audience. Painted on blacked slides and projected onto a waxed theatre scrim Robertson's specters appeared to hover in mid-air, move out toward the frightened audience and disappearing. To achieve these haunting effects Robertson reimagined the existing magic lantern technology by placing the lantern on wheels and rolling it back and forth behind a screen to give the impression that the images were alive and capable of movement (Figure 99). The images grew, shrank, and shifted with tricks of the light, creating

²¹⁶ Important sources on Robertson's phantasmagoria include, Terry Castle, *The Female Thermometer: Eighteenth-Century Culture and the Invention of the Uncanny* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995); Françoise Levie, *Lanterne magique et fantasmagorie* (Paris: Musée national des techniques, 1990); Max Milner, *La fantasmagorie: Essai sur l'optique fantasique* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1982).

the illusion that they possessed the quality of conscious life. By painting on black backgrounds the images appeared to float free in space, and saturating the thin, gauzy scrim in wax caused the images to further dematerialize. Sometimes Robertson even projected onto smoke.

Robertson's phantasmagoria won international renowned, receiving rave reviews in travel manuals that encouraged tourists to see a performance: "The devil, specters, and ghosts being very fashionable in France today, foreigners go see the apparitions, phantoms and ghosts at Robertson's."²¹⁷ His success lay in his savvy combination of technology and showmanship. To see the show and experience the fantastical conjuring audiences gathered after dark at an abandoned former convent, the Couvent des Capucines, the decaying walls of which were draped in black fabric and painted with hieroglyphs. In Robertson's own words the space seemed "to announce the entrance to the mysteries of Isis."²¹⁸ He began the show with a speech and a promise:

Citizens and gentlemen, it is a useful spectacle for a man to discover the bizarre effects of the imagination when it combines force and disorder; I wish to speak of the terror which shadows, symbols, spells, the occult works of magic inspire...I have promised that I will raise the dead and I will raise them.²¹⁹

Contemporary events - the Revolution, Terror, and Napoleonic Wars - furnished Robertson with endless source material. He conjured the severed head of Danton, the ghosts of Marat and Robespierre (who was incinerated by a flash of lightning), and literary figures including Voltaire and Rousseau.²²⁰ He projected the ghosts of generals of the *Grande Armée* days

²¹⁷ Marcier de Compiègne, *Manuel du voyageur à Paris*, An VII (1798 – 99), 101.

²¹⁸ Etienne-Gaspard Robertson, *Mémoires récréatifs, scientifiques et anecdotiques d'un physicien-aéronaute*, vol. 1 (Paris: 1830–1834), 144–145.

²¹⁹ Ibid., 272–310.

after they had died on the battlefield.²²¹ Audience members were drawn to Robertson's phantasmagoria in the hope of seeing the spirits of their own deceased loved ones conjured before their very eyes.

To achieve this end, attendees hoping to revive the spirits of a beloved were instructed to bring a portrait of the deceased and present it to Robertson ahead of time: "It is false that we can make appear, at our will, the shade of a person we have lost unless the inventor had first been given a portrait of the dead person."²²² Of course, Robertson would then have a copy made onto a glass slide in preparation for the show, but the vague wording of the handbook suggests the inherent power of the image. Portraits were positioned as the channels through which Robertson connected with the dead.

Viewers responded to the horror and startling realism of the show, with one anonymous reviewer confirming, "it is impossible for the illusion to be any greater".²²³ The magic and horror experienced at Robertson's phantasmagoria can be seen in contemporaneous engravings of the show. In the frontispiece from the 1831 edition of Robertson's *Mémoires récréatifs, scientifiques et anecdotiques d'un physicien-aéronaute* the audience responds dramatically to the vision of floating demons and spirits (Figure 100). Members of the crowd recoil in fear from the phantoms appearing to hover just above their heads. Men reach for their swords in self-protection, while others exclaim in disbelief at what

²²⁰ Robertson's phantasmagoria was even temporarily closed after rumors spread that he could bring Louis XVI back to life.

²²¹ Levie, *Lanterne magique et fantasmagorie*, 20; and Laurent Mannoni, "Son ombre descend parmi nous...": Napoléon et la Grande Armée des jeux d'optique," in *Napoléon et la cinéma*, ed. Jean-Ierre Nattei (Ajaccio: Alain Piazzola, 1998), 15 – 29.

²²² Mercier de Compiègne, *Manuel du voyageur à Paris*, 101.

²²³ *Nouveau guide du voyageur à Paris* (1802); Anonymous review cited in Robertson, *Mémoires récréatifs*, 165.

they witness. Like the imagery presented by Gérard and Girodet in their paintings illustrating Ossianic themes and memorializing France's dead war heroes, Robertson's *Phantasmagoria* offered the Romantic idea that the dead are not so distant from the living but rather hover all around as phantoms.

Géricault, Alaux, and Vernet offer a similar picture of the afterlife. In their paintings, the deceased are pictured as occupying a realm that closely borders the world of the living, and each represents these male mourners grieving the lost hero together in solidarity. These imagined gatherings reiterate the men's military association and provide an appropriately gendered venue for this outpouring of sentiment. They mourn in unison as a consolidated force just as they served in the *Grande Armée*. During the disintegration of the Empire, another image of male grief and melancholia emerges, that of the lone figure shown isolated within the field of battle. In these works, emphasis shifts from triumphant heroism and mutual consolation to universal suffering and defeat.

Wounded Glory: Melancholia on the Battlefield

Vernet exhibited *A French Grenadier on the Battlefield* at the Salon of 1819 (Figure 101).²²⁴ The gruesome scene shows a nameless soldier seated on a mound of dirt amidst the carnage and destruction of the battle's aftermath.²²⁵ He assumes the pose of melancholia, leaning forward to rest his weary head in his bent left arm. His other hand holds a shovel

²²⁴ *The French Grenadier on the Battlefield* was exhibited again at Vernet's 1822 studio along with many Napoléonic battles, portraits, and genre paintings. Étienne de Jouy and Antoine Jay, *Salon d'Horace Vernet. Analyse historique et pittoresque des 45 tableaux exposés chez lui en 1822* (Paris: Ponthieu, 1822).

²²⁵ Géricault and Vernet were lifelong friends. His first teacher was Carle Vernet, Horace Vernet's father and their apartments were within walking distance of one another. After leaving C. Vernet's studio, Géricault worked for a time in Guérin's studio and enrolled in the École des Beaux-Arts in 1811.

planted between his legs as he contemplates the surrounding scene of death; at his feet is the fresh grave of a comrade, in the right distance bodies are strewn on the hillside, and set against the blazing horizon, a grave is marked by a single wooden cross.²²⁶ The sky, a glowing abstraction of pink, grey, and deep blue, is both gloomy and heavenly as the sun sets on a scene whose specific circumstances are obscured by the generic title. The male figure in Vernet's painting is unnamed, identified only by his French soldier's uniform, now torn and stained with blood, and an expression of universal pain and tragedy. The material symbols present in the composition - the graves, cross, and sunset – all contextualize his suffering and signify loss. In the lower right corner, just beyond the soldier's outstretched right foot is a French Imperial Eagle half buried in the mud and grass. This standard – a clear symbol of Napoleon's *Grande Armée* - reveals the specific site and historic context of the scene.

The French Grenadier on the Battlefield later appeared in an exhibition of works at Vernet's studio and is listed in the catalog under a different title: *The Soldier of Waterloo*.²²⁷ The generic battlefield becomes Waterloo, the site of Napoleon's final defeat, and the soldier now mourns more than the defeat of battle and the death of his comrades; he mourns the end of the Empire. Completed in the years between Napoleon's exile and death, the painting mournfully signals the end of an era and the cessation of decades of protracted warfare. In the painting, Vernet conveys the collective emotion of a generation through a single figure. This format contrasts with established academic standards and conventions for the genre of battle painting.

In other large format battle scenes including *The Battle of Jemmapes* (1821) and *The*

²²⁶ The painting was commissioned by the Duc d'Orleans. *The French Grenadier on the Battlefield* went undiscussed by reviewers of the 1819 Salon.

²²⁷ Jouy and Jay, *Salon d'Horace Vernet*, 5.

Battle of Montmirail (1822) Vernet employs established conventions for epic battle paintings by prioritizing historic precision and illusionistic accuracy to capture the expanse of the battlefield (Figures 102 and 103). The paintings offer a panoramic, map-like view of the scene. He splits the canvas horizontally into clear planes of land and sky and displays troop formations in the middle ground. Unlike his strategy in *The French Grenadier on the Battlefield* Vernet positions death and destruction at a distance from us. The horrors of combat are contained within the puff of cannon smoke on the horizon or the smoldering flames of the aftermath.

In *The French Grenadier on the Battlefield* Vernet focuses on a solitary, anonymous figure. This single figure expresses national, collective disillusionment after Napoleon's defeat at Waterloo. The entry for the painting in Jouy's and Jay's 1822 catalog cites Lord Byron's poem: "Tears, big tears gush from the rough soldier's lid/His tread is on an Empire's dust/The grave of France, the deadly Waterloo."²²⁸ Byron's verses then gives way to Jouy's and Jay's own effusive analysis of the moment depicted and the soldier's internal workings. As Jouy and Jay see it, he contemplates the "sleep of glory into which his companions have fallen...he gives a last sigh to his flags, and a last thought to our glory."²²⁹ They continue, comparing Vernet to Sir Walter Scott, because, as the critics explain Vernet and Scott were both poets of "national emotions."²³⁰ Following the catalog description of Vernet's painting, a fictional figure is made to express the experience and sentiments of a nation. I am interested in investigating the woundedness of the figure and the ways paintings positioning

²²⁸ Ibid.

²²⁹ Ibid., 6.

²³⁰ Ibid.

members of the *Grande Armée* as vulnerable and wounded problematize an otherwise hegemonic portrayal of manhood and masculinity during the period.

Glory and melancholia were theatrically embodied in pendants completed by Théodore Géricault during the final years of the Empire: the *Charging Chasseur* and the *Wounded Cuirassier Leaving the Field of Battle* (1812, 1814; Figures 104 and 105). In 1814 he exhibited the works together, side-by-side at the Salon. Similar in size, format, and subject matter the paintings have since been interpreted and positioned as symbolic embodiments of the glory and decline of the Napoleonic Empire.

Both paintings represent a rider and his horse. In *Charging Chasseur* Alexandre Dieudonné, an officer of the elite Imperial Guard and friend of the artist, sits astride a rearing horse. Man and animal form a dynamic, upright, and unified figure centered in the middle of the full-length portrait. Géricault positions them close to the picture plane making them feel near and immediate. Facing away from the viewer as they lunge into the field of battle, the rider suddenly turns and, in an act of self-defense or final flourish before completing his charge, whips his sword behind him.²³¹ The physicality of the officer's pose and the power of the animal he rides communicate ability and strength. Géricault hones in on this action only alluding to the larger battlefield in fragments. We see flames and burning cannons in the distant right, and a mass of horses and bodies in a tangle to the left, but we cannot optically survey the field and gather our bearings. The majority of the conflict takes place outside our purview beyond the edges of the pictorial space. This framing positions us within the space

²³¹ The figure has equally been interpreted as charging and retreating, and the action of his sword as either an act of self-protection or a gesture engaging the men behind him to follow in the charge. See: Nina Athanassoglou-Kallmyer, *Théodore Géricault* (New York: Phaidon, 2010), 32; Norman Bryson, "Géricault and Masculinity," in *Visual Culture: Images and Interpretations*, eds. Norman Bryson, Michael Ann Holly and Keith Moxey. (Hanover: Wesleyan University Press, 1994), 226 - 259; Albert Boime, *Art in an Age of Counterrevolution, 1815 - 1848* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2004), 120 - 121.

of carnage and engages the viewer's imagination to complete the narrative. With this theatrical and expressive work, Géricault departs from academic conventions of formal equestrian portraiture in several ways.

Gros's *Portrait of Joachim Murat, King of Naples* exemplifies the established formula for representing a heroic officer astride his horse (1812; Figure 106).²³² He positions the rider and horse parallel with the foreground so the viewer can plainly see and identify the many signifiers of military status and regalia. Murat's body is made resplendent through the opulence of his uniform but the crisp, brushless surface suggests the pomp of parade rather than the heat of battle. Géricault, in contrast, selects a vertical format, positioning Dieudonné diagonally across the picture plane so that he appears to simultaneously dive forward and tip backward precariously, and his rich impasto brushwork suggests the energy and tension of the battlefield. Murat, on the other hand, sits confidently atop his horse and appears to move steadily forward. His horse lifts his front legs but appears more to dance for the benefit of the viewer rather than respond to the volatility of warfare. The battlefield is removed from Murat and his horse, suggested only through a small cluster of figures to the right and rising smoke from canon fire that mingles picturesquely with the ash of a smoldering Mount Vesuvius visible in the distant background.

In the work's pendant, the *Wounded Cuirassier Leaving the Field of Battle*, Géricault breaks with convention even further representing an anonymous figure in a heroic format traditionally reserved for famous or historical figures (1814). The rider here is fully dismounted and struggles to maintain grip of the reins as his horse threatens to rear beyond his control. The pair skids down a shallow ridge and the cuirassier looks over his shoulder

²³² Géricault's *Charging Chasseur* was first exhibited at the Salon of 1812 alongside Gros's portrait of *Joachim Murat, King of Naples* allowing viewers to make this comparison in person in front of the paintings. Athanassoglou-Kallmyer, *Théodore Géricault*, 37.

intently. Unlike his counterpart in the *Charging Chasseur* this officer does not lift his sword to protect himself from the unseen threat but leans on it for support. His weapon becomes a crutch. At first glance, the cuirassier's specific wound is difficult to identify. His imperial uniform is pristine, his breastplate and breeches are unmarked, and his boots are barely muddied. On second look a smear of red blood is visible behind his right ear, but the extent and severity of the physical wound is not as important as the general sense of psychic disturbance and defeat. He is shown in a position of vulnerability, off his horse and below whatever approaches from behind. A dark cloud looms over the figure and the cuirassier's wide eyes search anxiously over his shoulder. Through the figures monumental anonymity Géricault captures a universal sense of woundedness, symbolic of a defeated nation and emperor.

The mournful mood of the *Wounded Cuirassier* is reiterated through the somber palette of blacks, greys, and muddy browns. His uniform, while depicted in precise, accurate detail, has lost the shimmer and resplendence of the imperial red and gold of the *Charging Chasseur*. Géricault's deliberate move to exhibit these paintings side-by-side in 1814 is indicative of the political climate and the militarist atmosphere of the final years of the Empire. The short period of time that separates the two works were decisive years for Napoleon's Empire. *Charging Chasseur* was painted on the eve of Napoleon's Russian campaign. By 1814, Napoleon was banished to Elba and the once mighty *Grande Armée* was drastically reduced in numbers. In 1867 Charles Clément, Géricault's first biographer, wrote:

In 1812 success was still in the air, whilst in 1814 everyone knew they were facing defeat...The echo of the cries of distress from our suffering armies on the plains of Russia resounded through the lands. Hearts were full of fear and terror. It is this universal feeling which Géricault expressed in his painting and explored in the

Wounded Cuirassier...He painted two pictures the first about glory and the other about faded glory.²³³

Clément's early interpretation has been reiterated and reinforced by scholars from then on. Albert Boime writes, "By showing these two works together Géricault literally traced the demise of Bonaparte."²³⁴ In the paintings Géricault transformation of the heroic military figure from a charging, powerful force cloaked in glory into a wounded, vulnerable and melancholic hero. This crisis in the masculine figure is communicated through the figures's military regalia as well.

Géricault's paintings of military men communicate a sense of spectatorship over the male body and a desire for the glory it once signified during the period. His images of officers on foot and on horseback downplay the unique facial features of the subject but emphasize the complicated regalia of their uniforms. This is true of the pendants discussed here. Géricault lavishes paint in thick impasto on the imperial officers navy waistcoat, embroidered in gold and trimmed with tassels. His red sash appears to have the same level of animation as his horse as it whips behind his fur cape and magnificent fur hat. The same is true of the darker and moodier *Wounded Cuirassier*. While simpler and more straightforward in design, the cuirassier's uniform associates him with the elite fighting force and is captured in precise detail. The viewer is able to clearly make-out the gold buckles of his breastplate, the red lining of his cape, and the gold and feather trimmings on his helmet. Fashion plates dedicated to the distinctive uniforms of the various Grande Armée regiments and published in albums such as the *Collection des Uniformes des Armées françaises* demonstrates the general fascination with these spectacular and intricate ensembles (Figure 107). And during

²³³ Charles Clément, *Géricault, étude biographique et critique* (Paris: 1867), 67.

²³⁴ Boime, *Art in an Age of Bonapartism, 1800 – 1815*, 629.

the last years of the Empire the capital teemed with men either returning from campaigns or preparing to leave for the front. Géricault was able to see these regiments in person and close-up.²³⁵

Scholars have interpreted the artist's emphasis on these superficial markers of power and status as overcompensation in the face of eminent defeat and humiliation. Norman Bryson interprets Géricault's exaggerated emphasis on military dress and accessories as signs of overstated virility in compensation for thwarted masculinity at a time of crisis.²³⁶ Abigail Solomon-Godeau also takes up the subject of masculinity and dress comparing Géricault's *Charging Chasseur* to military portraits of Vendean generals by Guérin and Girodet, and the ways these "young men are envisioned as objects of desire, closer to fashion plates than to warriors, manifesting a kind of erotic investment in martial masculinity (however prettified) that was one of the hallmarks of Imperial culture."²³⁷ These portraits, particularly Guérin's pendants of the Rochejacquelein brothers, also invite comparison in their various presentations of woundedness and the male figure (1817 and 1819; Figures 108 and 109).

As part of a series of portraits commissioned by Louis XVIII for the Château de Saint-Cloud to commemorate the service of dedicated royalists, Guérin provides a glamorous portrayal of Louis de la Rochejacquelein, the youngest Vendéen general. Unlike Géricault's cuirassier Rochejacquelein's wound is bodily and apparent rather than psychic and hidden. His right arm is bound and wrapped in a sling, but the wound does not hinder his advance as

²³⁵ As is often noted, Géricault avoided recruitment into the Grande Armée as his father was able to purchase a substitute conscript to serve in his son's place.

²³⁶ Bryson, "Géricault and Masculinity," 238 - 239. Linda Nochlin takes up the issue of the absence of women in Géricault's paintings. Nochlin, "Géricault, or the Absence of Women", *October* 68 (Spring, 1994): 45 – 59.

²³⁷ Abigail Solomon-Godeau, "Genre, Gender and Géricault", in *Théodore Géricault: The Alien Body: Tradition In Chaos*, eds. Serge Guilbaut, Maureen Ryan and Scott Watson (Vancouver: Morris and Helen Belkin Art Gallery, 1997), 104.

his climbs over an embankment followed closely by his men. Guérin positions his full-length figure above us so that we look up to him, following the line of his leg through his pelvis and finally to his lifted head and outstretched right arm. Both his gaze and pistol are fixed ahead of him into the field of battle; the Bourbon flag silhouettes his face. Symbolically, Rochejacquelein's sight line aligns with the word king, emblazoned on the white, energetically whipping fabric. Guérin's portrait fully embodies patriotism and military glory, presenting a glamorized image of the sacrificed military hero as an able bodied and resolute figure.

Chateaubriand's classic Romantic novel *René* presents a narrative that situates the male protagonist as a melancholic victim out of step with the values and dictates of his age. This picture undermines the ideology of gender otherwise promoted during the period. Suffering and wounded masculinity became a visual trope in the paintings of Vernet, Girodet, Guérin, and Géricault. As the Empire crumbled the markers of power and strength also crumbled. The defeat, exile, and death of Napoleon Bonaparte and the cessation of his national policy of imperial conquest precipitated a crisis in masculinity. The pictures discussed here tell the story of a generation shaped by the horrors of consistent and prolonged warfare and the perpetual restructuring of political power and social systems.

EPILOGUE

In 1824, Eugène Delacroix revives the reclining melancholic male figure in his monumental painting, *The Massacre at Chios* (Figure 110). His unconventional composition arranges nearly life-size figures of captive Greeks along the foreground of the picture in frieze of suffering, desperation, and death. Dominating the bottom half of the canvas, the bodies alternate poses of hopelessness and defeat with desperate, tearful embraces, and continued struggle against their Turkish captors. Some await slavery while a half-nude woman is dragged away by a Turkish rider before our eyes as her lover begs in vain for her release. The bodies of the dead mingle with those of the wounded and the living. Their Turkish captors loom behind them as veiled specters, identifiable by their opulent uniforms, and their guns and swords silhouetted against the landscape beyond. Behind this figural group, the background drops off dramatically and we can see through the openings between bodies that the battle – or massacre – rages on. In the center of the painting, above the imprisoned Greeks, Delacroix stages a brutal exchange between armed Turks and helpless figures being shot at point-blank range. The arid Chios landscape is marked with similar pockets of aggressive clashes as smoke from the field fades into the blue sea beyond.

For the picture, Delacroix's second submission to the biennial Salon, the artist strategically selects a subject ripe in the minds of the French public, the Turkish massacre of the Greeks on the Island of Chios, from the beginning of the Greek War for Independence.²³⁸ Visitors to the Salon would have been aware of the events taking place hundreds of miles

²³⁸ Nina Athansassoglou-Kallmyer, *French Images from the Greek War of Independence 1821 – 1830: Art and Politics Under the Restoration* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1989), 9-13 and 66-107.

away on the Greek isles, particularly the massacres on the island of Chios, as the events were reported with fervor in the French media.²³⁹ Although exhibited two years after the event it commemorated, the subject was still fresh in the minds of the public. The massacres on Chios were of particular focus in reports of the war, in part because the modern-day island was closely associated in French imagination with ancient Greek history, art, and culture. For two months, slaughter and fire raged on the island, while men, women, and children were taken as slaves and deported to the markets of Asia-Minor. The massacres were devastating. All but nine hundred of the ninety thousand inhabitants were killed or taken captive. For several months, from May to August of 1822, news of the events on Chios dominated the front page of French newspapers sympathetic to the Greeks.²⁴⁰ To construct the work, Delacroix read contemporary newspaper accounts and interviewed eyewitnesses. He studied costumes and carefully worked out the arrangement of figures through a series of preparatory drawings.²⁴¹ The format, size, and subject of the picture suggest an epic history painting but the provocative work breaks with pictorial tradition to focus, not on the triumph of battle, but on individual and intimate experiences of trauma and death.

As Elisabeth Fraser has shown, the full title of the work, *The Massacre at Chios: Greek Families Awaiting Death and Slavery*, reveals another of Delacroix's strategies for catching the attention and engaging the empathy of the Salon-going public.²⁴² Delacroix includes a range of subjects from infancy to old age and groups the figures in couples and

²³⁹ Scholars point to the full title of Delacroix's work as listed in the Salon livret, as evidence that the details of the events on Chios were common knowledge with the French public. For analysis of the title of Delacroix's painting see, in particular, Boime, 200 – 202, and Athansassoglou-Kallmyer, 28.

²⁴⁰ The best source for newspaper accounts and the reporting of the Greek War for Independence in French newspapers is Athansassoglou-Kallmyer, 9 - 13.

²⁴¹ Elisabeth Fraser, *Delacroix, Art and Patrimony in post-Revolutionary France* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 42 - 62.

²⁴² Ibid., 39 - 42.

familial groups. He grounds the suffering and death, not in the epic battle between the Greeks and Turks (Christianity and Islam/ oppressor and oppressed), but within the intimate relationships of the family unit. Delacroix focuses on individual moments of suffering, expressed through each figure's unique misery. Moving from left to right we encounter family groups, husbands and wives, and brothers and sisters, mothers and children. At the center of the composition dejected couples lean on one another and embrace desperately. To the immediate right, an older woman lifts her face mournfully heavenward, and beside her, we see a dead mother and her surviving child in the lower right of the painting. Fraser reads Delacroix's representation of this range of ages as an allegory of the stages of life so that the viewer "focuses on the meaning of tragedy in personal, familial terms, rather than in larger, symbolic or geopolitical ones."²⁴³ Delacroix constructs an intimate, suspended experience of death and grief within the larger context of the massacres by pushing these figures close to the viewer. We see their red-rimmed eyes, their open mouths, the tears that run from a woman's cheek to her lover's hand, blood oozing from wounds, and skin turning from peachy-pink to pallid grey. The death and suffering is close to us and recorded in vibrant, expressive detail.

Delacroix's selection of a contemporary subject of political significance related to themes of death and suffering is in line with artistic trends of the 1820s. However, he breaks with conventions of history painting in provocative and moving ways. His is a history painting without a heroic act. Instead, its focus is on suffering and death itself. By comparing his painting to Géricault's *Raft of the Medusa* these differences become clear (1819; Figure 111). In many ways, Delacroix's *Massacre at Chios* is clearly a painting that follows Géricault's *Medusa*. Géricault, like Delacroix after him, looked to sensational newspaper stories of contemporary events for the subject of a painting that would draw spectators. As is

²⁴³ Ibid., 51.

well known, Géricault drew his inspiration from the account of two survivors of the *Medusa*, a French Royal Navy frigate that set sail in 1816 to colonize Senegal. The *Medusa* was captained by an inept officer of the *ancien régime* who ran the ship aground on a sandbank. The captain abandoned the ship, took the lifeboats for himself and his crew, and left more than one hundred survivors to construct a lifeboat that drifted at sea for thirteen days before it was rescued. Only ten people survived.²⁴⁴ Newspaper accounts of the shipwreck recorded in gruesome detail the brutality and cannibalism that took place during the disaster.²⁴⁵ To construct his work, Géricault spoke with survivors, had the raft reconstructed in his studio, and visited the morgue where studied drowned corpses to bring an accurate representation of death into the work.²⁴⁶ The grisly results are most evident in the foreground of the enormous painting where the raft seems to jut into the viewer's space forcefully. Twisted, decomposing bodies float halfway in the sea and on the raft. Bodies appear broken and cut up. An older man mourns the death of his friend whose dead body he clings as he is engulfed in a catatonic state.

Both Géricault's *Medusa* and Delacroix's *Chios* are monumental works that engage the emotion of the viewer by focusing on the trauma experienced by the human body, and both Géricault and Delacroix bring death to the center of their paintings. However, Géricault gives the viewer some relief from the suffering and infuses his *Medusa* with hope in ways that are absent from Delacroix's *Chios*. The strong diagonal composition in Géricault's *Medusa* eventually leads our eye away from the horror of the dead and decomposing

²⁴⁴ Athansassoglou-Kallmyer, *Théodore Géricault*, 122. See also, Albert Alhadeff, *The Raft of the Medusa: Géricault, Art, and Race* (Munich: Prestel, 202); Bruno Chenique, *Géricault – Images of Life and Death* (Frankfurt: Hirmer, 2013).

²⁴⁵ Athansassoglou-Kallmyer, 123 124.

²⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 128 – 130; 148 – 149.

cadavers and mad survivors in the foreground, to the heroic actions of the group as they reach toward the horizon and their heroic rescue. Delacroix, on the other hand, blocks off his composition in horizontal bands that make it visually difficult to move through and beyond the horrific scene of the foreground. Our eye moves from left to right from one suffering, dead or dying vignette to another. We see a family that will imminently be torn apart, lovers whose limbs intermingle in a final embrace as life slowly drains from their bodies, an infant child unaware that his mother has already died. To even catch a glimpse of the background we must pass over their bodies first, and there we find only more massacre. In Delacroix's *Chios* we cannot escape the scene of death and are made to meditate, like the mourners pictured within the group, on the human loss.

Even though Gericault's painting is dark and shadowed, it is infused with optimism. The darkness actually serves to consolidate the group so that their legs, arms, and torsos meld and fuse into one another in a singular force pushing into the horizon and their collective salvation. Delacroix, on the other hand, uses lush, vibrant color to distinguish the individuality of each figure. He entices us to come closer and to study carefully the rich fabrics draped over the nude and semi-nude bodies. He displays the exotic cloth and accessories of the Greek captives for our inspection, illuminating the foreground with intense light. His free and loose brushwork further draws attention to the surfaces of things and points of contact – fabric, skin, hair, sweat, tears, and dirt. The depiction of the Turkish rider and his horse evokes this sense of dramatic touch too as Delacroix represents multiple points of contact between the rider and his animal, the animal and the Greek man, and, of course, the semi-nude female and the horse. The randomly placed accessories in the immediate foreground, positioned as objects in a still life, reiterate this experience of close study and

contemplation.

Delacroix's *Chios* is void of heroism. Even in the end, the subjects are presented with a tragic end, the choice between slavery or death. This theme is best expressed through the dejected and emasculated bodies of the male Greeks, particularly the reclining figure in the foreground. This figure anchors the group as a whole. He is literally at the center of the composition and his horizontal position links the groups on the left to those on the right. Yet, he is void of energy and power. Looking carefully, we see the source of his wound and his immobilized body, a bloody cut above his left hip. However, Delacroix diverts our attention away from his wound by the figure's idealized beauty. He is almost entirely nude so that we see his otherwise pristine musculature and physiognomy clearly. Here, Delacroix draws on Christian visual iconography of the dead Christ to reference the fallen Greek's Christianity and position him as a martyr to the greater cause. Furthermore, the smallness of his physical wound suggests the physical pain as depicted in the scene is subordinate to the emotional pain represented.

Delacroix's interest in melancholia themes associated with death and power continues throughout his career. In his next major work for the Salon of 1827, *The Death of Sardanapulous* (Figure 112), a work he referred to as his "seconded massacre", Delacroix uses the melancholic pose to characterize the Assyrian ruler from Lord Byron's 1821 play.²⁴⁷ Although in Byron's version, Sardanapulous's death is noble, Delacroix chose another track. His painting shows the passive sovereign reclining on a bed surrounded by luxuriant splendor as he watches the slaughter of his wives, horses, and dogs. Above a burning pyre, King Sardanapalus assumes the pose of melancholia with one hand supporting his head as massive legs sprawl out in front of him. Before his impending suicide, Sardanapalus witnesses the

²⁴⁷ Walter Friedlander, *David to Delacroix* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1968), 113.

destruction of everything that brought him pleasure in life. In the painting, he is an actor and spectator of the action, both judge and executioner. The violence of the attack, combined with the ruler's excessive luxury, evokes a feeling of repulsion and disgust.²⁴⁸

Sardanapalus was Delacroix's most controversial of his early works and the only one not purchased by the state.²⁴⁹ In her discussion of the painting's resonance with contemporaneous political events, Fraser evidences a letter from Charles X's Director of Fine Arts to the Director of Royal Museums demanding that Delacroix's picture of the Assyrian king be removed from the Salon. She shows the ways Delacroix's history painting, depicting the death of a ruler associated with cowardice, perversion, and effeminacy, highlighted the failure of Charles X to embody ideals of masculine authority. Fraser shows that in comparison with the stoic masculinity of Davidian Neoclassicism, Delacroix's sensual image "worked in concert" with political caricatures to emphasize the corporeality of the royal body, thereby collapsing the distinction between the physical and sacred body, a claim on which the monarchy's divine power rested.²⁵⁰

Delacroix's early paintings *The Massacre at Chios* and *The Death of Sardanapulous* demonstrate the continued relevancy and resilient potency of melancholic themes and iconography beyond the early decades of the nineteenth century. His employment of melancholic bodies to express national suffering, near and far, and critique political institutions and governing bodies under the Bourbon Restoration reiterates the complexity and the power of melancholia as an emotion and an idea.

²⁴⁸ Elisabeth Fraser, "Delacroix's Sardanapalus: The Life and Death of the Royal Body," *French Historical Studies* 26, no. 2 (Spring, 2003): 315-350.

²⁴⁹ Delacroix won a second-class medal for *The Massacre at Chios* and the government immediately purchased the painting for the new Musée du Luxembourg. For more on the picture's reception see Boime, *Art in an Age of Counterrevolution*, 200 and 210 – 214.

²⁵⁰ Fraser, *Delacroix, Art and Patrimony*, 115 - 164.

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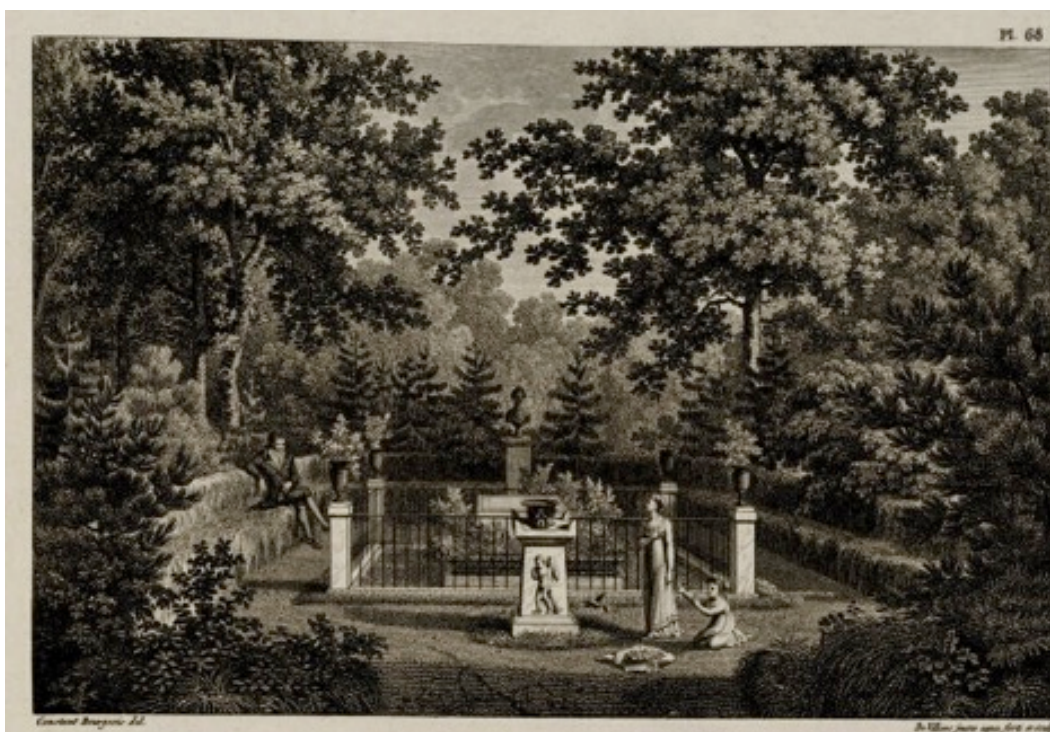


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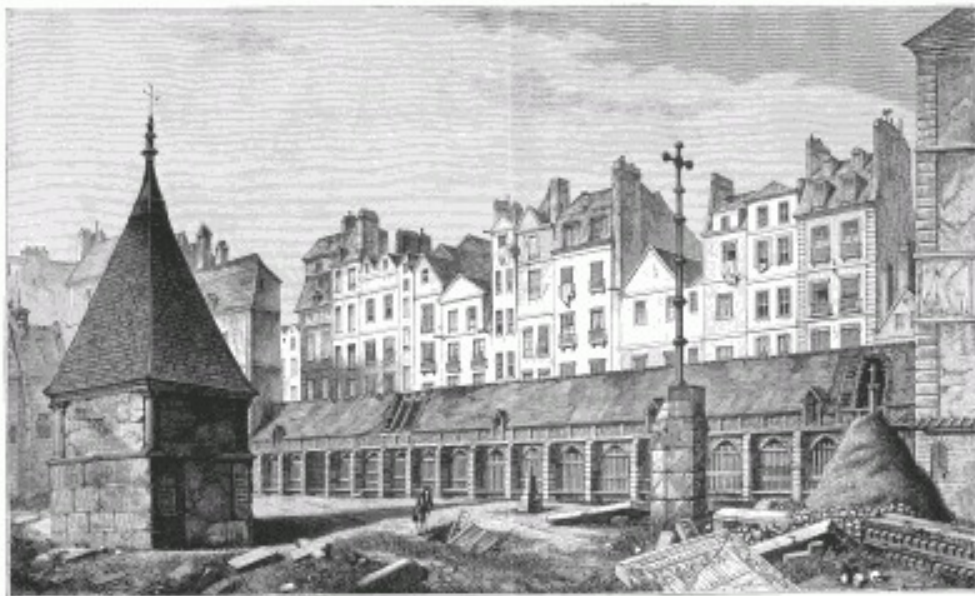


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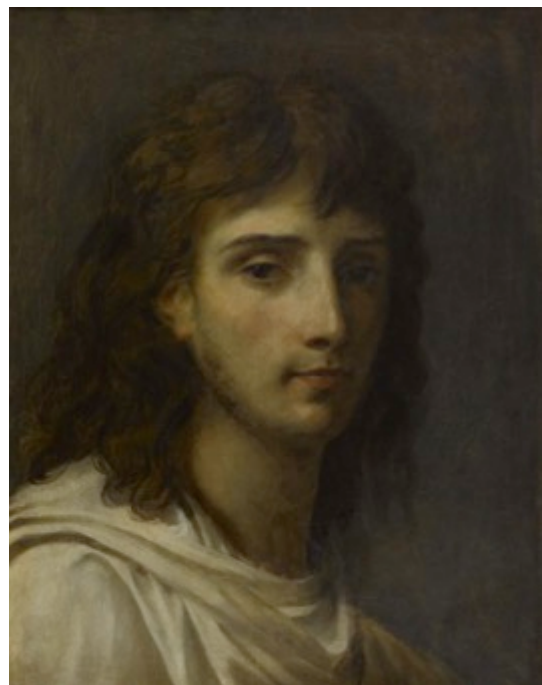


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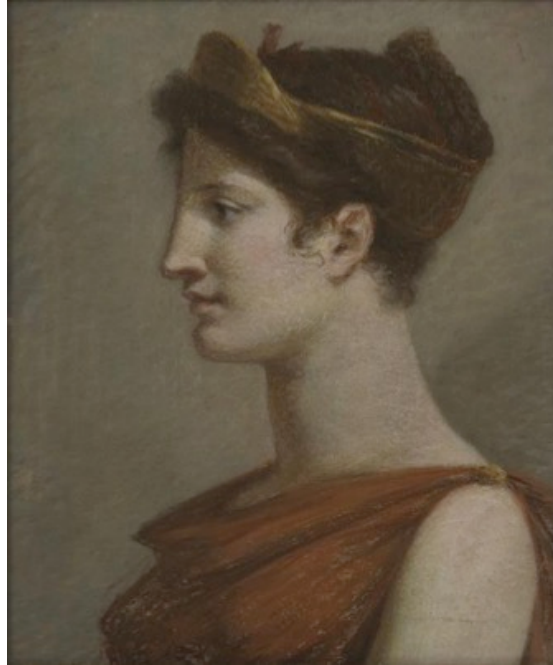


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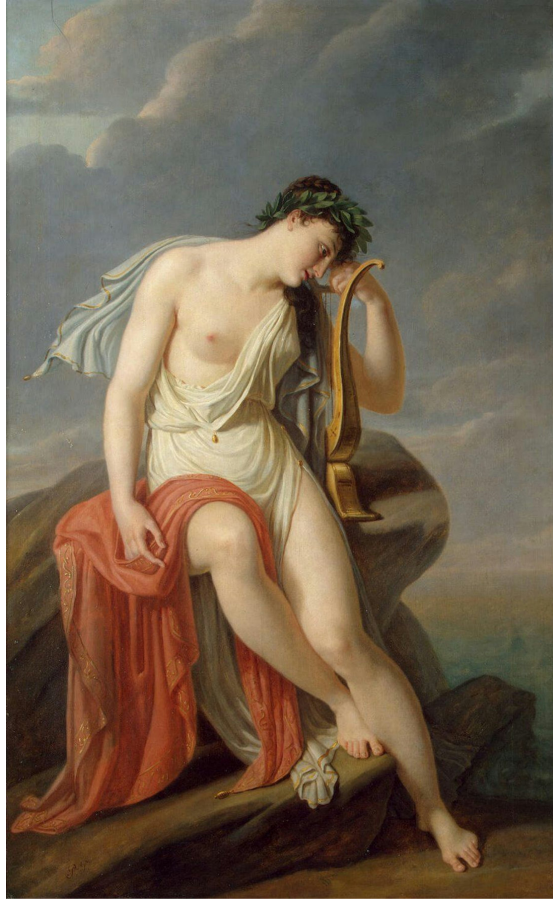


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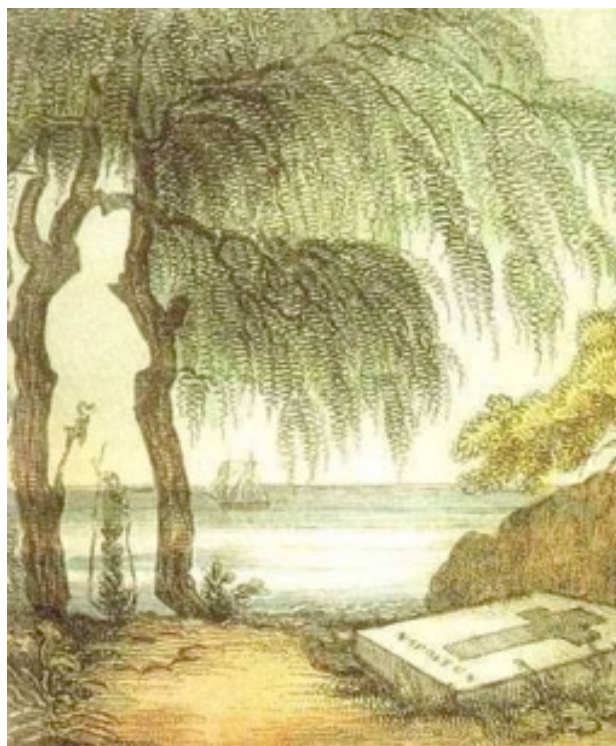


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Figure 108. Pierre-Narcisse Guérin, *Portrait of Henri de la Rochejacquelein*, 1817, Musée d'Art et d'Histoire. Cholet



Figure 109. Pierre-Narcisse Guérin, *Louis de la Rochejacquelein*, 1819, Musée d'Art et d'Histoire, Cholet



Figure 110. Eugène Delacroix, *The Massacre at Chios*, 1824, Musée du Louvre, Paris



Figure 111. Théodore Géricault, *The Raft of the Medusa*, 1819, Musée du Louvre, Paris



Figure 112. Eugène Delacroix, *The Death of Sardanapalus*, 1827, Musée du Louvre, Paris

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