

Homoeroticism in neoclassical poetics: French translations of the ideal male nude  
in late-eighteenth-century word and image.

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## Abstract

The thesis consists of four chapters, an Introduction and a Conclusion.

The Introduction considers the theoretical frameworks within which recent readings of the late-eighteenth-century French homoerotic ideal male nude have been developed; and how these readings have in turn emerged from a wider extra-art-historical discourse on the sexual politics of representation and the representation of sexual politics. A clear picture of the ideal male nude as a contested field emerges; and a justification of the materials which will be used in the thesis clarifies their critical engagement with these polemical debates surrounding the object of study. Chapter 1 is in two parts. Part one deals with the possibilities of a textual representation of homosexuality in French neoclassical poetics by focusing on the notion of 'anacréontisme' as a synonym for 'veiled' homoeroticism. Contrary to the present understanding of the notion, it is argued here, by recourse to successive French translations of the Greek source text, that homosexuality was explicitly problematized in the development of *anacréontisme* as a critical term, rather than consensually hidden.

Part two reviews a social history of homosexuality in eighteenth-century France, in order to contextualize the preceding anacreontic debate.

A Kantian reading of the *beau idéal*, in Chapter 3, attempts to contradict the now dominant understanding of this figure as being simply a high-cultural sign of patriarchal dominance. The chapter traces the philosophical coordinates of the *beau idéal* from the late seventeenth century until the moment when this figure coincides with the Kantian transcendental aesthetic, and thereby propels it into an anti-ideological space.

Chapters 4 and 5 focus on a prime exemplar in current art-historical literature of the homoerotic male nude, David's painting *Leonidas at Thermopylae*. Chapter 4 argues for a newly politicized reading of the picture, by focusing on its sociohistorical moment.

Chapter 5 reads David's painting through selected texts, and commentary on, Sade, in order to account for its 'perversity' in more ways than the simply sexual. *Leonidas* is finally understood here as a repository of the various histories which have been precedingly traced.

the Conclusion reflects on how those methodological procedures may open out the study of the homoerotic male nude and the construction of masculinity to further examination.

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## Introduction

If 'the body is a code' (Barthes), and the code itself historically variable, or at least negotiable, a recourse to both *poetics* and *translation* in the study of the ideal male nude will provide us with an understanding of the object in both its fixed and its mutating forms. It is through the combination of these two factors that I have tried, in what follows, to sustain a certain double vision in this study of the ideal male nude - noting both its foreclosed form and the historical possibilities of its transformation - as it appears in late French neoclassicism.

To insert 'homosexuality' into this twin tool of textual exegesis - analysis of poetics and mechanics of translation - is to consider the changing 'conditions of possibility' of its articulation; its *representability*. I have duly attempted to chart the vicissitudes of neo-classical poetics, and to locate the ideal male nude within those developments.

If, for example, in early French neoclassicism homosexuality could be articulated as a stylistic exemplar of *le bas*, the gradual constriction of *le bas* in late neoclassicism - in that of the reactionary First Empire - gradually delimits the articulation of homosexuality and - we, might say, *exiles* it to the confines of the perverse - to, for example, the 'pornographic' scene of Sadean sodomy.

The boundaries of a poetics - its delimitations, or constitutive exclusions - thus determine, insofar as they utilize a certain *a priori* censorship, the presence or absence of the figure of homosexuality in the texts of neoclassicism. This relation between censorship and *regard for representability* is a close one, as Freud pointed out in his *Interpretation of Dreams*<sup>1</sup> and the form which we designate as 'homoerotic' in late eighteenth/early nineteenth-century French painting will be consequently read here as the enunciative

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<sup>1</sup>Freud, 1991, p.650-1.

outcome of a *dynamic* relation between a system of poetics and a system of censorship.

A further complicating factor is *translation*. What will translation admit to be articulated, to be carried across? This is a vital question, largely ignored, in the art-historical study of the homoerotic ideal male nude, where translation is traditionally considered in terms of a *stylistic*, rather than a semantic, re-articulation of the 'source'. But renewed attention to the 'translations' which the homoerotic male body undergoes is important in two respects. Firstly, it is a self-reflexive enterprise; it is in the very nature of neoclassicism that a certain given content is transmitted from source to work. The task of translation is of the very essence of the neoclassical enterprise. Yet what model of cultural transmission will we take to produce the *meaning* of late-eighteenth-century homoerotics? What is the nature of the *néos* of 'neoclassicism', this restaging or reiteration which, in recent theories of signification, has come to be the focus of a transformed textual exegesis of radical consequence?

Then there is a historical dimension to this problem. What was changed in the process of the translation of a Greek homosexuality to a French homoeroticism depended not only on an ethical judgement of the content's admissability or inadmissability, but also on translation's historically variable internal rules, or criteria. An analysis of anacreontism in Chapter One will demonstrate how the way homosexuality was articulated in French 'receptor' texts was dependent on the vicissitudes of translation theory; on its varying emphasis on 'freedom' or strict philological accuracy.

So, we will not only be cognisant of poetics and censorship, but also the poetics of translation. What, we will ask, is the figurability of homosexuality, in the interstices of these discourses? It should now be clear that we will consider the 'homoerotic' in neoclassicism not simply as a sociological urban practise, or as psychoanalytic relation of desire, but also as a *figure in the text*. We will return to the question of the *semantics* of this figure after some further remarks on the historical representability of homosexuality.

Our emphasis on textuality is to some extent an exercise which is critical of Foucault's problematic of homosexuality; or at least of the *effects* of the Foucault debate on recent interpretations of the material here under consideration.

The complex question of the *regard for representability* in this matter of the ideal male nude's homoeroticism has largely been overlooked as the imagery has become recently the focus of conflicting sexual politics. On the one hand a feminist polemic has interpreted those homoerotic qualities as a sign of a patriarchal 'masculinity in crisis'; on the other hand, a queer or gay polemic has claimed them as positivities to be inserted into an identity-supportive canon of queer iconography. If the first interpretation disregards any possibility of a gay content, the second interpretation disregards the other-ness of the imagery - its historical difference. The latter position is inadmissible if we take heed of Foucault's insistence on historical discontinuities; while the feminist interpretation of late eighteenth-century homoerotic imagery as articulations of a certain patriarchal 'male trouble', merely a weak link in the continuing history of patriarchy, finds some support in Foucault for rejecting the presence of an *anti*-patriarchal homosexual content in the imagery.

Yet the complex and circuitous routes by which textual manifestations of Greek homosexuality enter into French neoclassicism contradicts a premature dismissal of reading homoerotic imagery for their sexual content on the grounds of anachronism. We are not so much concerned here with *when* a discourse on homosexuality, as we know it, is produced - whether before or not Foucault's posited dating of c.1870 - as with *how* such a discourse may arise; and, as historians, with how we might trace its development.

The way in which sex is "put into discourse" is the subject of Foucault's *The History of Sexuality*; and if Foucault emphasizes the extensive networks in which the discursive fact of sexuality is implicated, he also delimits those *loci* of Power:

"(Sexuality) is the name that can be given to a historical construct: not a furtive reality that is difficult to grasp, but a great surface network in which the stimulation of bodies, the intensification of pleasures, the incitement to discourse, the formation of special knowledges, the strengthening of controls and resistences, are linked to one another,



in accordance with a few major strategies of knowledge and power."<sup>2</sup>

Foucault's selectivity of material in delineating the *loci* of these 'few major strategies of knowledge and power' - in the eighteenth century, Canon law, the Christian pastoral, civil law; in the nineteenth century, medicine and criminal justice - has resulted, in terms of subsequent research, in a foreclosure of the possible areas in which we might look for the production of discourses of homosexuality. If we imagine that homosexuality in French neoclassicism could only be articulated through the dominant ecclesiastical concept of 'sodomy' then it is not surprising that this presence can hardly be traced in the development of the homoerotic ideal male nude. No link can be made, apparently, between the 'strategies of knowledge and power' which produce sodomy, and the ethereal ideal male nude. The two discourses would appear to be radically discontinuous.

Yet the necessity of translation as the essence of neoclassicism required a negotiation with an 'other' - the ancient classical text - which included an 'other' sexuality. And it is through this negotiation, performed by the translator, that we encounter in the eighteenth-century text, a homosexuality which is neither produced by ecclesiastical knowledges, nor simply re-produced *verbatim* in the same terms as it was, for example, in fifth century B.C. Athens. The fact of an independently *constituted* foreign discourse on sexuality, which needs to be accommodated in translation, is not accounted for in Foucault's linear - albeit *horizontally* linear - account of how sex is 'put into discourse' - of this complex, but overbearing, apparatus of sexuality.

Chapter One, a tracing of the genesis of *anacréontisme*, provides an example of less linear, more complex ways in which homosexuality in neoclassical France may be produced discursively. How does the ancient fragment of a homosexual encounter circulate through the anacreontic text? How is homosexuality - not now as a monolithic determining discourse of sodomy - successively woven into the fabric of classical texts, which are themselves, in the nature of neo-classicism, constantly being re-translated?

But we are not only concerned with the sexual politics of the homoerotic male nude. One

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<sup>2</sup>Foucault, 1990, p.105-6.

of the aims of this thesis is to restore its semantic richness. The meanings of the homoerotic male nude have been foreclosed by its insertion into a sexual political debate. A now dominant feminist-inspired way of looking at this imagery is to see it as a signifier of a crisis in masculinity; and this only reproduces a negative stereotype of the homoerotic, or homosexual, as a pathetic figure in trouble - passive, bound and gagged. If that 'trouble' is understood to be the consequence of an absence of women - in representation, in the public sphere - that reading again reproduces the figure of woman as always under effacement. The 'crisis' argument, however, instigates a *double* erasure. For I would contend that the figure of masculinity, the *beau idéal*, remains effectively *unread*.

More, I would say that the body *per se* remains essentially unread. What, then, of the historic shifts in the epistemological status of the body? If I have insisted on reading the (homosexual) neoclassical body as a textual construct so far, this is but typical of a recent epistemic shift - through linguistics - which has had the effect of *losing* the distinctive and distinguishing specificity of its object, the body - in the double sense of losing the body *in* the text, having it disseminated, and of losing it *to* the text; as a once distinctive material substance, bodyliness, which might be notionally recoverable and distinguished from the text, preceding or exceeding it. An awareness of this historical shift in thinking about the body will only alert us to the possibility of such conceptual discontinuities - epistemic shifts - in our tracings of the body's histories.

It is out of this insight that I have sought, in Chapter 2, to chart a moment of discontinuity and re-emergence of the body as a productive corollary of a philosophical revolution - the Kantian one - which is equally, if not more, momentous than this modern post-structuralist one which has threatened the immanent loss of the body in our time.

The historical *rapprochement* between radical Kantianism and the *beau idéal* demonstrates that it is not just the boundaries, the sub-genres such as *anacréontisme*, which contingently mutate around a central, immutable Idealistic formation; but that Idealism itself - incarnated in the figure of the male nude - was prone to transformation, and no more so than at this historical moment - the late 1790's and early 1800's - when the *beau idéal*, in the reading for crisis, is considered to be both ossified and waning, as well as

semantically inert.

If the *beau idéal* could be *carried across* - translated - into a Kantian space of anti-ideological freedom, it could also be re-appropriated to signify a radical politics of communitarianism; a possibility which has, however, been foreclosed by focusing on its notionally suspect *sexual* politics. The space of a radical politics is immanent in Kant's formulation of the aesthetic, with the concept of Beauty as an arbiter of the *sensus communis*; so much is clear from a reading of Hannah Arendt's *Lectures on Kant*, for example. In chapter 3 a return to politics will be attempted, through a re-reading of a painting which functions in recent art-historical literature as the *locus classicus* of French neoclassical homoeroticism - Jacques-Louis David's Leonidas at Thermopylae. However suggestive these theoretical links between the Kantian aesthetic, politics, and the ideal male nude, in David's painting we are confronted with a sociohistorically *specific* coincidence of the ideal male nude and the re-emergence of a neo-jacobin rhetoric of communitarianism on the fall of the First Empire. David's re-signification of the ideal male nude provides us in turn with a semantically transformed object; the homoerotic male nude not as passive, redundant and *unproductive* - as it has recently typically been represented - but rather as an active and significant player on the stage of a world historical event - this time the political, not the philosophic, revolution.

To determine the *subversive* potential of the re-iteration of the sign has been one of the philosophic tasks of queer theory; notably, in the important work of Judith Butler. How, then, are we to think of these notions of the 'subversive', the 'transgressive' or the 'perverse' as historically determined manifestations? If queer theory has required a notion of critical reappropriation in order to combat an insistent and conventional identification between abjection and homosexuality - one which fixes its homosexual object, Butler reminds us, as a permanently *indisible* exteriority to the Symbolic or the Law - is it possible to locate some such critical reappropriation in the realm of eighteenth-century homoerotics - and then to what political end? If 'the body is a code' and the code an ideological manifestation of the Symbolic or the Law, what, then, are the possibilities of effecting, in Butler's words, "an enabling disruption, the occasion for a radical

rearticulation of the symbolic...".<sup>3</sup> How might the code be *critically* rearticulated in such a way as to escape the "pathos of perpetual failure" (Butler) which is structurally implicit in the notion of 'transgression'? In my final chapter I approach this question through the paradigmatically transgressive figure of Sade. I consider the possibility in late neoclassicism of a critical rearticulation, through the figure of the homoerotic male nude, of a historically specific manifestation of a Symbolic 'signifying chain'. It is the derogation of this 'chain' - this 'perverse' space - I will suggest, that is the place of an unlikely encounter between Sade and David.

Sexuality, aesthetics, politics, pornography; the task of this work is to consider the *translatibility* of the homoerotic male nude within and between these framings. Chapters one and two trace the anacreontic and the *beau idéal*, respectively, as a *long* history - from the late-seventeenth to the early-nineteenth centuries. This is important to grasp the fact of the historical mutability of the ideal male nude. Chapters three and four settle on more discrete synchronic 'moments'. This historical method will, it is hoped, sensitize the reader to the contingency of the homoerotic male nude as it is produced by the dynamic relation between a structuring poetics and a mutating translation.

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<sup>3</sup>Butler (1993), p.23.

## Chapter 1. Sexuality. Part One: Translating the Homoerotic. Homosexuality and 'Anacréontisme' in Eighteenth-Century France

### Introduction

In this chapter our concern will be twofold; on the one hand, in Part 1, we will examine a neoclassical cultural formation in which recent art-historical writing has identified a certain highly sublimated form of homosexuality, namely the homoerotic Anacreontic mode. A long-term historical tracing of the anacreontic genre will provide us, concomitantly, with a knowledge of the vicissitudes of the reception of its homosexual content; and will begin to give us some idea of how we can think of neoclassical homoeroticism without resorting to anachronisms. In Part 2, we will review the evidence of current 'social histories' of homosexuality; and we will consider how the 'sodomitical' relation may, in the eighteenth-century, have signified quite differently to its homosexual or gay successors. We will argue, specifically, for the open possibilities of eighteenth-century 'sodomy' to bear significances for a wider community than an emergent 'gay' subculture. Homosexuality in neoclassicism was embedded in both the classical text and the social; neither 'perversely' outside the text, in a constant relation of transgression, nor indeed wholly absent.

Let us begin, then, with a typically 'anacreontic' line drawing by Girodet {Fig. 1}. Here we have one of Girodet's illustrations to the Odes of Anacreon; specifically to Anacreon's Ode XXIX, entitled 'Portrait de Bathylle'. The image seems innocuous enough. The bearded poet, Anacreon, gently inspires the painter (Girodet?) to set down upon canvas an Endymion-like vision of his - the poet's - beloved Bathylle.

If we take this image as a thematization of the process of cultural transmission - Girodet discoursing on his own inspirational relation to the classics - we will notice that it proffers a particularly idealized version of the dynamics of translation - a fiction of a beautifully undisturbed and fluid mediation between poet, artist, and visual image.

It has been noted that the painter in this line drawing is a "mediating figure" between the adult and the beloved youth.<sup>1</sup> He literally objectifies the poet's homosexual desire. Yet I want to draw attention to another mediating figure, absent however in Girodet's thematization of the cultural transmission of desire; namely, the figure of the *translator*. It is precisely through the missing figure of the translator that the cultural transmission of anacreontism will turn out, contra Girodet's image, to undergo some considerable difficulty. By introducing the translator's ordeal - the *task* of the translator as we are now inclined to see it<sup>2</sup> - in the transmission of this *particular* Ode (XXIX), the apparent innocuousness of Girodet's illustration - and its self-defining fiction of an idealist translation - will be belied.

We might, by extension, take this image to represent the dynamic by which the project as a whole is conceived - the translation of the Anacreontic *Odes* into the neoclassical visual image. For Girodet suppresses in the image the potential misunderstandings between ancient 'source', the modern work, and the mediating translator; misunderstandings which are not least due to the effect of *temporality*. Yet the encounter between ancient and modern text was in reality a more unstable one than that which Girodet imagines. By representing the dynamic of 'inspiration' as if it were an effortless moment of assimilation *all at once*, Girodet pretends here that nothing may be 'lost' in translation. We will ask, then, what happens, in the space of this encounter with the 'other' Greece?

Through a close examination of successive translations of Anacreon we will demonstrate that certain homoerotic imagery in neoclassicism emerged, in fact, out of a troubled engagement with poetic fragments which attested to the prevalence of Greek homosexuality in the ancient world. The constant re-citation of those fragments, through translations and their accompanying commentaries - their explicatory glosses - offers a unique insight into the historically shifting processes of assimilation and absorption of homoerotic imagery into French classicism. And since certain hallowed classical texts were re-translated by successive generations from the sixteenth century onwards, we can thereby locate through an

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<sup>1</sup>Solomon-Godeau, p.113.

<sup>2</sup>I am referring to Walter Benjamin's influential essay on the problem, 'The Task of the Translator', see Benjamin (1989) and Bannet (1993).

examination of those translations *long-term* changes in neo-classical attitudes towards homosexuality. By locating in this case Anacreontism's origins and points of emergence in French culture; and by tracking the transformations in the articulation and reception of its projected homoerotic imagery, we will be better able to locate certain historical points of strain - 'crisis' even - in the encounter between French neoclassicism and homosexuality. French homoerotic imagery in the late 1790's and early 1800's will turn out through this examination to be less an undivulged, sublimated form of its Greek predecessor - a blind echo of an earlier iconography of Greek homosexuality - than a product of a continuing negotiation between the ancient and the modern, which however wishes to take that ancient as its figure of identification. This negotiation, in the case of Anacreontism, turns precisely around the question of homosexuality.

At the same time Anacreontism itself will emerge in a new light; not as the fixed, and impenetrably precious, cultural formation which we now recognize - although its general characteristics will remain determined - but rather as an effect of continuing struggles between philologists, translators and producers of the visual image over an appropriate image of desire.<sup>3</sup> But first, what is understood by the name 'Anacreon'? What are its connotations?

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<sup>3</sup>modern art-historical discussion on *anacréontisme* begins with Schneider's 1916 article, "L'art Anacréontique et Alexandrin sous L'Empire". It has resurfaced more recently in Michel (1988, pp 11-12, 75), Crow (1995, pp.262-265), Ockman (1995, p.48-53), and Solomon-Godeau (1997, pp.103-114). While all writers refer to the defining *eroticism* of the anacreontic mode, only Solomon-Godeau touches on the problem of its *homoeroticism*, or homosexuality. She writes of the *Portrait de Bathylle*: "For Neoclassical artists such effusions existed on a plane entirely apart from what, in terms of sexual behaviour, was the inadmissible, if rarely prosecuted, activity of sodomy" (p.112). We will establish, however, that the nature and extent of the link between sex and sublimated erotic enthusiasm was historically variable; and that moreover Anacreon *did* demonstrably come to be associated, especially during the 1770's, and thereafter, with sexual 'sodomy', was not therefore set entirely apart from a discourse on homosexuality. Solomon-Godeau continues: "Quite likely, many of them - certainly those who knew their Plato - were aware that the relations implied in the poem between the speaker and the beautiful youth were those between the *erastes* and the *eromenos*; the older, more powerful man and the youthful object of his desire. Such relations must be distinguished from pederasty in the modern sense..."(p.112-3). While Solomon-Godeau's emphasis on the *difference* between ancient Greek desire, modern pederasty, 'sodomy', and the Anacreontic image is important, she tends to argue from that the foreclosure of a further enquiry, rather than the possibility for opening out

### Greek lyric poetry and Anacreon

Anacreon the poet was born in the Ionian city of Teos c.570 B.C. and died c.485. He is numbered among the greatest of the Greek lyric poets who were composing between the heroic age of Homer and the democratic age of the fifth century. The lyric poets were so called because their verses were accompanied in performance by the lyre. There were two types of lyric; choral, sung by a choir to the demands of a public occasion; and monody, sung by a single person and expressing private feelings. Anacreon's lyric belongs to the intimate, private, monodic tradition; Pindar's to the public choral. Both types emerged out of essentially pre-democratic - and post-Homeric *heroic* - aristocratic societies. Lyric poetry diminished in importance in the fifth century B.C., after the Periclean revolution which promoted new ideals of political man over the individual expression of emotion. The characteristics of monody were a simplicity of style and metre, the use of familiar speech forms, individuality of expression and intimacy of tone. Anacreon's characteristic wit and playfulness, "skeptical and gay" - consciously eschewing the high passion and moral seriousness of his predecessors (e.g. Sappho) - ideally suited the requirements of an emergent aristocratic leisure class.<sup>4</sup>

Anacreon's poetry is concerned with embracing pleasures: most often those of love and wine. Indeed, Cicero claimed that "all of Anacreon's poetry is erotic".<sup>5</sup> Several of the fragments are addressed to boy loves. Maximus of Tyre, in the second century A.D.,

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one. Even if we admit the problem of culturally changing models of homosexual desire, the question remains to be settled; exactly what kind of awareness, or knowledge, of the desire represented in Ode XXIX did the French neoclassicists have, and what precisely did they do with that knowledge? Our position is perhaps closer to that of Michel, who, without mentioning homosexuality in *anacréontisme*, suggestively notes its confounding of "*gracieux et galant, Antiquité et libertinage, érotisme et nudité*" and ends by judging it to be a "*perversion de l'antique à finalité bourgeoise*", as differentiated from an untainted Winckelmannian *beau idéal*. It is precisely towards a determination of this imminent *perversity* that we we will trace, through translation, the history of French *anacréontisme*.

<sup>4</sup>on the political climate of mid-sixth century Greece see C.M. Bowra, *Greek Lyric Poetry*, Chapter VII, Oxford, 1936.

<sup>5</sup>"nam Acreontis quidem tota poesis est amatoria", *Greek Lyric*, test.20, p.39.



summed up its content with "the hair of Smerdias and Cleobulus, the pipes of Bathyllus and Ionian song".<sup>6</sup> The fifth poem of Anacreonta brings together these abiding preoccupations of Anacreon's poetry, and will incidentally introduce us to its characteristic rhetoric of *visuality*. Here the poet is instructing a silversmith to make him a cup:

"As for festive rites, I request that you engrave no loathsome foreign tale: rather put there for us the child of Zeus, Bacchus, Evius. To initiate us in the drinking let there be the Cyprian, clapping the rythm of the wedding-songs; carve Loves unarmed and laughing Graces; under a spreading leafy vine covered with bunches of grapes add handsome young youths, unless Phoebus is playing there"<sup>7</sup>

From this fragment we can see how the peculiar rhetoric of Anacreon - in the form of instructions to an image-maker - could have, apparently unproblematically, facilitated its translation into a *visual* medium.<sup>8</sup> It shows us as well all the elements which combined to make 'Anacreon' the paradigm of a certain insouciant sensibility.

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<sup>6</sup> Greek Lyric, fr.471, p.125.

<sup>7</sup>Loeb, Anacreonta 5, p. 169.

<sup>8</sup>Girodet's series of illustrations was the most ambitious *hommage*. Yet anacreontic works abounded throughout the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries - in the form of portraits of the poet, as well as more indirectly related works of *anacréontique* sensibility. Examples of the former: Nicolas Bertin's *Anacreon et L'Amour* (1695-1700), Jean-Bernard Restout's *The Pleasures of Anacreon* (1765), Etienne de Lavallée's *Anacreon, Sappho, Eros and a Female Dancer* (c.1790), Garnier's *Anacreon with his Mistress and the Young Bathylos* (1793), Greuze's *Anacreon in His Old Age Crowned by Love* (1793), Harriet's *Sappho et Anacreon* (1796). For the latter we may turn to Schneider (1916), who notes a distinct 'school' of *anacréontisme* in French painting: "Regnault, Prudhon, et Girodet l'ont formellement déclaré. L'alexandrianisme est la protestation antidavidienne, celle de la sensibilité qui aspire au mode mineur, du dessin flexible et de la forme peu ressentie, amollie même jusqu'à l'androgynisme" (p.271). However we should also note David's own excursion into this style, his *Sappho, Phaon and Eros* of 1809. On David, see Crow (1995), p.264-5. On Vien's more pervasive anacreontism see Michel (1988), p.11. On ancient anacreontic imagery see Rosenmeyer (1992) pp. 22-36, and Françoise Frontisi-Ducroux and François Lissarrague, 'From Ambiguity to Ambivalence: A Dionysian Excursion Through the "Anakreontic" Vases" in Halperin/ Winkler/ Zeitlin (eds.), *Before Sexuality. The Construction of Erotic Experience in the Ancient Greek World*, Princeton University Press, 1990, pp.211-257.

## The Text

The poems now known as the 'Anacreontea' were actually produced in the Hellenistic and Byzantine periods. But until the middle of the nineteenth century the Anacreontea were thought to be by Anacreon himself. They were brought together and transcribed in the tenth-century manuscript, the so-called 'Palatine' manuscript, which also contains the Greek Anthology. The manuscript, in two parts, was removed to Paris, from the Vatican, by Napoleon in 1797<sup>9</sup>; at about the time, therefore, when *anacréontisme* was reaching its fashionable height amongst the Parisian urban sophisticate. With some justification might the abductors of the original manuscript have believed that they were simply restoring to themselves the material source of their own heritage. For its contents had entered France and made a considerable impact upon neoclassical French culture already some two hundred and fifty years earlier.

## Franciser Anacreon

The Palatine manuscript was copied by the French classical scholar Henri Estienne during his travels in Italy. He returned to France with his transcription in 1554 and published the 'editio princeps' - about fifty poems and a few epigrams - that year with his own Latin translation facing the Greek text. A second Latin translation of Estienne's Greek text, by Helie André of 1556, prompted Remi Belleau to undertake the first French translation of Anacreon, published in 1556. *Les Odes D'Anacréon teien, traduits de grec en françois par Remi Bellau, ensemble quelques petites hymnes de son invention* gained immediate and extraordinary success; it went through seven re-editions over the next twenty years.<sup>10</sup> The poet Ronsard, feted Estienne for introducing Anacreon into France. In the poem, 'A son laquais', he wrote:

"Verse donc, et reverse encor/  
Dedans cette grand coup d'or;/  
Je vais boire à Henri Estienne/  
Qui des enfers nous a rendu/  
Du vieil Anacréon perdu/  
La douce lyre

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<sup>9</sup>one part, that containing the Anacreontea, still remains in the Bibliothèque Nationale.

<sup>10</sup>1571, 1572, 1573 (X3), 1574, 1577. Maurice Verdier, 'Les Introvables Editions Des Odes D'Anacréon', Bibliothèque D'Humanisme Et Renaissance, XXXIII, 1971.

téienne."<sup>11</sup>

and, in the preface which he wrote to the first (1556) French translation, Ronsard warmly welcomed Belleau into the company of the Pléiade poets. But why such an enthusiastic reception for the foreign poet?

The introduction of Anacreon into French literary life in the 1560's was timely, coinciding with a collective desire to develop what was regrettably considered a still *immature* vernacular language - "auparavant scabreux et mal poly", according to Joachim du Bellay in his influential *Deffence et Illustration de la Lange Française*, 1549. Du Bellay considered the task of developing the vernacular language to be inseparable from the study of Greek and Roman authors; this was premised not on some vague grounds of inspiration, or emulation, but on a secure belief in the linguistic common origins of both languages. Given this fact - to which, for example, Henri Estienne's *Traité de la conformité du français avec le grec* (1569) contributed proofs or demonstrations - Du Bellay argued that "the French language is not as poor as many believe it to be" and recommended that writers "amplify the French language by imitating Greek and Roman authors".<sup>12</sup>

Consequently translation, during the French Renaissance, was not practised on the presupposition of a parity between two equally developed languages; it was considered rather as the occasion to both purify and enrich a newly honoured vernacular, which was still far from standardized, or properly codified. The process of renaissance translation was therefore less one of the search for equivalences than one of internalization and recreation.<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>11</sup>quoted in Egger, 1869, p.363.

<sup>12</sup>Kristeva (1989), p.145.

<sup>13</sup>this theory of translation was justified by recourse to Horace's *Ars Poetica*, which stated "A faithful translator does not seek to render word for word". However, Hollier (1989) notes that in fact Horace had been mis-translated, and was referring to a theory of 'poetic imitation', rather than translation proper. The tension between imitation and translation henceforth characterizes translation's history. See Hollier's article, "Translation as Literature", in Hollier (ed.), *A New History of French Literature*, Harvard University Press, 1989.

The group known as the Pléiade, therefore, immediately internalized anacreontisms, discovering in Anacreon an ideal opportunity to rejuvenate a French school of poetry, to enrich poetic imagination and poetic language and to introduce into it much-needed qualities of gracefulness, elegance and 'douceur'. And no doubt in the 1570's through their 'imitations' and 'versions' they succeeded in seamlessly bridging the gap between antiquity and the modern French school - something later more consciously historicist generations would find problematic.

From 1556 until the end of the eighteenth century there were numerous translations and re-editions of Anacreon (see Appendix 1). Following that sixteenth-century flourishing of literary interest in Anacreon there were few translations in the seventeenth century, presumably for reasons of literary fashion and translation theory, which discouraged verse translation.<sup>14</sup> Ann leFevre (Mme Dacier) published her prose translation in 1681. This remained the authoritative scholarly French version right up until the beginning of the nineteenth century. In the eighteenth century, the number of new translations tripled; the second half being the busiest period. In the 1800's the first decade was especially busy. From the second half of the eighteenth century works associated with Anacreon - ballets, chansons and vaudevilles - were produced in numbers, constituting a poetic 'anacreontic' mode.<sup>15</sup> Girodet's 1810 illustrations, accompanying his own translation of the text, although not published until 1823, were conceived at the summit of French 'anacréontisme'.

### Portrait de Bathylle

We will focus on Ode XXIX, entitled 'Portrait de Bathylle' (see Appendix 2, Loeb

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<sup>14</sup>throughout the sixteenth century ancient poetry had been translated in verse, since the translation, or 'version', was considered a poetic genre in itself. In the seventeenth century poetry was generally translated into prose, conforming to a heightened sensitivity to the *raison* of the poem. See article, "Traduction", in Georges Grente, *Dictionnaire des Lettres Françaises*, Paris, 1954. pp. 669-672, pp.985-987.

<sup>15</sup>for example, a random selection from the B.L. catalogue: Pierre Joseph Bernard, 'Les Surprises de l'Amour, ballet composé de trois actes séparés. L'élévation d'Adonis. La Lyre Enchantée. Anacréon'(1757); 'L'Anacréon François, ou recueil de chansons, romances, ariettes, vaudevilles, et a-propos de société' (1780); Chaussier, Hector, et Bizet, 'Citoyen Anacréon à Surène, hilarodie en trois actes' (1797).

translation, 1988). Included in the *Anacreontea*, it appeared in every translation of Anacreon's poetry and was thought, of course, to be by the poet himself. One of the longest poems in the *Anacreontea*, it is a hymn to male beauty, again in the rhetorical form of an instruction to an image-maker, this time a painter. It is neither, however, to be read simply as a generalized metaphor for Beauty, nor as an abstract idealization of the male body; although both these codes are certainly put into play.

For, characteristically, the object of Anacreon's ardour is a particular person, Bathylle; famously his 'yrater', or 'eromenos', translated in Belleau's 1556 version as 'mignon'. The ode, thought to be amongst the earliest written of the *Anacreontea* (about the first century B.C.), is probably based on now lost poetic fragments by the fifth century poet about his boy love. There is evidence that the relationship was already famous in antiquity. Horace, for example, in the *Epodes*, wrote:

"Not otherwise, they say, did Anacreon of Teos burn for Samian Bathyllus: often with hollow lyre he sang his sad song of love in no elaborate metre." <sup>16</sup>

And the 'Etymologicum Genuinum', compiled under Photius c. 870 A.D., instances "From the form Bathycles comes Bathyllus, the name of Anacreon's beloved boy".<sup>17</sup> Through the ages the relationship between author and subject in Ode XXIX retained, then, a certain intimacy and historical specificity.

Bathylle was still believed in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries to have been a real person, not a poetic fiction. He appears in Bayle's 'Dictionnaire historique et critique' (1697) as "jeune homme de Samos, aimé passionnement par Anacréon".<sup>18</sup> Taking as their sources later latin commentaries or stray biographical remarks on Anacreon, French classicists were able to construct a 'Vie d'Anacréon'; the *Vie* usually prefaced their version

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<sup>16</sup>'non aliter Samio dicunt arsisse Bathyllo/ Anacreontea Teium/ qui persaepe cava testudine flevit amorem/ non elaboratum ad pedem'. Horace, *Epodes*, 14.9.

<sup>17</sup>Loeb, fr. 471, p.125.

<sup>18</sup>Bayle, *Dictionnaire*, article 'Bathyllus'.

of the odes. The life and the work thereby became inextricable.<sup>19</sup> Bathylle - along with other supposed 'favourites' of Anacreon; Cleobule, Megiste, and Smerdias, all beautiful young men but none of whom were the subject, at least in the Anacreontea, of such extended homage in the odes themselves - usually has a place in these short narratives as an instance of Anacreon's tastes. From the middle of the eighteenth century we will find that Bathylle indeed became the *focus* of moral concerns about the problem of pleasure; precisely, the pleasures of male sexual love. This anxiety reached its pitch in the 1790's. However, the origin of the problem of Bathylle can be traced back, chronologically, to Anne Dacier's 1681 translation; and, textually, to just two lines in Ode XXIX.

### The Missing Lines

Madame Dacier's translation of 'Le Portrait De Bathylle' is relatively literal. It faces Estienne's Greek text. Following the convention of seventeenth century translation the Greek verses on the left page are translated into continuous French prose on the facing right. Or, rather, *almost*. For some eight lines before the end of the poem the text is ruptured by two rows of asterisks. Until then Anacreon's sense, the 'raison' of the poem, has been followed to the letter, with less regard for poetic atmosphere than for philological accuracy. The two rows of asterisks are representative. They stand in for the following lines (Loeb translation, 1988):

"above his soft thighs, thighs with raging fire in them, put a simple member that already desires the Paphian".

Dacier's translation proceeds from "Fais-lui l'estomac et les mains de Mercure" to the double row of asterisks, and resumes the text with "Mais tu as un art bien envieux du plaisir des gens, de ne te permettre pas de laisser voir les épaules".<sup>20</sup> {Fig. 2}

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<sup>19</sup>for example, according to the historian Valerius Maximus in about 14-37 A.D, Anacreon died *indulgently* at the age of eighty-five from choking on a raisin pip. Like Socrates, then, the manner of Anacreon's death perfectly characterized the preoccupations of his life's work.

<sup>20</sup>Dacier, 'Les Poesies D'Anacreon et de Sapho', 1681, p.95.

Dacier provides no explanation for these missing lines. And yet there was the space to provide one. The complete translation is followed by 'Remarques Sur L'Ode XXIX', an explicatory gloss in which, point by point, she justifies her choice of words (pages 94-101). The *Remarques* show spectacular erudition - words are cross referenced between different Greek and Latin texts to arrive at as *precise* a meaning as possible - as well as honesty in her role as mediator between Greek text and French 'lecteurs'; she admits when she has decided for a less than exacting equivalent and duly gives her reasons. But as for that highly visible elision, she does not account for it.

Neither have we found any *precedent* for an elision in this particular place. Belleau, in 1556, had translated the missing lines as:

" Du beau Pollux fai lui la cuisse./ Fay luy son aine qui rougisse./ Son aine tendrette, ou soit veu/ Entre les deux un petit feu./ Puis fai luy son, qui ne face ores/ Que bien peu commencer encores/ A se chantouiller du désir/ De Venus, est de son plaisir".<sup>21</sup>

This free, hyperbolic image of luxuriant sexuality could not be further from Madame Dacier's discreet, *pointed* classicism. Indeed, her rigorous style of translation was a conscious reaction against what she would have considered in Belleau a disparagement of the translator's task - a *travesty* of the 'source' text. But what of her own travesty? Like Bathylle's sealed lips in the poem - "il faut que ce Portrait soit éloquent dans son silence" - her silence is eloquent.

How are we to explain this silence, this sudden *failure* of translation? No doubt, the representation of Bathylle's raging thighs and his desiring penis<sup>22</sup> would have offended

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<sup>21</sup>Remy Belleau, 'Les Odes d'Anacreon', 1556, p.36.

<sup>22</sup>the 'Paphian' in "Put a simple member that already desires the Paphian" (Loeb) refers to Paphos, the cult center in ancient Greek religion of Aphrodite, goddess of *sexual* love; therefore signifying the penis in a state of sexual excitement, i.e. an erection. On *thighs* as a "particularly powerful stimulus" in ancient poetry, as in "Ganymede's thighs set Zeus aflame (Sophokles fr.330), or "Achilles, bereaved, recalls the thighs of Patroklos (Aiskylus fr. 228), see Dover, p.70.

Dacier's sense of 'pudeur'.<sup>23</sup> Yet how are we to explain the peculiarly visible form of this silence; the rupture in the text, which so avowedly declares its substitution? Could we not look at this refusal to represent as an *aesthetic* decision; one based, then, not primarily on moral repression, but on the complex and conflicting requirements of classical codes of representation? I would suggest that the the peculiar presence of these missing lines is the outcome of a number of intersecting demands made upon the translator, Madame Dacier. Rather than simply imputing Dacier's move anachronistically to a pseudo-Victorian moral pudeur, along the lines of a 'repressive hypothesis', the complex and dynamic relation between a cultural chauvinism, changing theories of translation and the rules of *bienséances* might better explain Dacier's travestied Anacreon.

The first two points - cultural chauvinism and seventeenth century translation theory - coalesced in the 'Querelle des anciens et des modernes'. We have noted how translation in Renaissance France had been conceived as a way of enriching the vernacular language. Early to mid-sixteenth-century translators continued to be notoriously liberal in their versions of the classics. Due to an over-estimation of the wisdom and sophistication of their age, they altered and mutilated the classics to the requirements of 'honnêteté'. Malherbe, for example, in the preface to his translation of Tite-Live (livre XXXIII) justified the changes he had made - thereby traducing the ideal of a literal translation - in the name of 'délicatesse'. He wrote in 1621:

" Si, en quelques autres lieux, j'ai ajouté ou retranché quelque chose, comme certes il y en a cinq ou six, j'ai fait le premier pour éclaircir des obscurités qui eussent donné de la peine à des gens qui n'en veulent point; et le second pour ne tomber en des répétitions ou autre impertinences dont sans doute un esprit délicat se fût offensé. Pour ce qui est de l'histoire, je l'ai suivi exactement et ponctuellement; mais je n'ai pas voulu faire les grotesques qu'il est impossible d'éviter quand on se restreint à la servitude de traduire de mot à mot. Je sais bien le goût du college, mais je m'arrête

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<sup>23</sup>Dacier had written in the preface to her translation of Plutarch's Lives, in 1662, "J'adoucis des images trop fortes et trop libres, que la chasteté de notre langue ne pourrait souffrir", cited in Delcourt, *Etude Sur les Traductions des Tragiques Grecs et Latins En France Depuis la Renaissance*, Brussels, 1924, p.135.



à celui du Louvre."<sup>24</sup>

This is far from the attitude of rapt emulation which we might expect from the early neoclassicists in relation to their ancient *maîtres*; rather we encounter here a positive *distaste* for perceived classical *obscurités*, *répétitions* and *impertinences* (the 'goût de college'). This tendency to alter and mutilate reached its height with the so-called 'Belles Infidèles', active from about 1625 to 1665.<sup>25</sup> Voltaire was later to take these sixteenth-century translators to task for their hubris, mocking the perversity of a reversed relation of emulation:

"tout le monde se croyait grand seigneur à l'égard de l'antiquité. Il était naturel dès lors qu'en représentant les anciens on tâchat, avec affabilité, de leur communiquer quelque chose de cetter perfection moderne qui leur avait manqué."<sup>26</sup>

Mme. Dacier, no doubt, was reacting against the irreverence with which her proud literary predecessors had treated the classics.<sup>27</sup> But, implicated in the Querelle in which the 'Moderns', situated around Perrault, were in fact fast gaining ground, she was forced to tread a fine line between philological probity and concern for a 'noble' - i.e. *cleansed* - presentation of the classics. If, in his classic study *Histoire de la Querelle des Anciens et des Modernes* (1856), Hipolyte Rigault situated the Querelle within a general philosophical problematic of 'progress', it emerges clearly from his study that the battle was *practically* fought over the acceptability - inextricably both aesthetic and moral - of *particular* words and phrases which different classical texts threw up; and which demanded the choice of a certain assimilation, incorporation, or rejection, omission or veiling - as well as a concomitant translator's discourse by which to justify the chosen strategies. Therefore if

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<sup>24</sup>ibid.,p.125.

<sup>25</sup>see Roger Zuber, *Les "Belles Infidèles" et la formation du goût classique*, Paris 1968.

quoted in Rigault, 1856, p.62.

<sup>27</sup>on the relative fidelity of Dacier's translations, see Grente, op. cit., p.86; Delcourt, op. cit., p.121; Rigaud, op. cit., p.63-64.

Perrault's criticisms of the ancients required the demonstration of the inadmissability of, for example, Theocritus's ancient love poems - the *Idylles*, which he condemned for their "Vilain temps; vilaines mœurs"<sup>28</sup> - Dacier was in turn required to defend the ancients, strategically, upon the same grounds and in the same terms. Her remark concerning Plutarch's Lives shows that she too was prone to 'softening' the classics to suit cultivated French taste, yet at the same time without too painfully traducing an ideal of philological accuracy. She presented them as, on the contrary, entirely *raisonnable*, while paradoxically retaining the force of their exemplary otherness.<sup>29</sup>

The rules of *bienséances* could also have justified Dacier's omission. She states in her preface to Anacreon, "je me suis proposé deux choses dans cet Ouvrage, l'utile et l'agréable". *L'Agréable*, the effect of harmoniousness, and an essential property of French classicism, was often felt to be missing in the ancient classics themselves.<sup>30</sup> The abbé de Marolles altered the epigrams of Martial and made changes to Ovid's 'l'Art d'aimer', in order to render it "fort honnête". La Mesnardière, in his discussion of 'les bienséances' advises the writer to purify poetry of "sentiments infâmes".<sup>31</sup> This tendency to purification in early neoclassical poetics was most marked from the 1660's onwards, and its practical effects were not only to suppress now unacceptable *genres* - e.g. scatology, gauloises, burlesques - but to encourage a heightened sensitivity to particular words and expressions, and even sounds.<sup>32</sup> As far as translations from the classics went, there was plenty, it seemed,

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<sup>28</sup>Tilley, *The Decline of Louis XIV*, Cambridge University Press, 1929, p. 337.

<sup>29</sup>Madame Dacier thus laid herself open to a double attack; for her defense of the 'vulgar' ancients *per se*, and for her theoretical conception of a literal word-for-word translation, which "*par une imitation basse et servile*" could only justify the admittance of the offending articles. On her difficult position regarding the controversial exemplarity of Homer - which she translated in 1711 - see, Paul Mazon, *Madame Dacier et les Traductions d'Homère en France*, Oxford 1936, esp. pp. 17-18.

<sup>30</sup>on Perrot D'Ablancourt rendering Lucien *agréable*, see Rigault, p.60.

<sup>31</sup>La Mesnardière devotes a chapter to 'Les Sentimens Deshonestes' in his 'La Poetique' of 1640, p.301.

<sup>32</sup>see on this Brunot, *Histoire de la Langue Française* (1913), section *La Guerre aux Syllabes*. For example *convaincu*, *consistoire* were censored "non pour leur sens, mais pour leur son". Brunot, p.286. Expressive metaphors which could "donner une idée sale" were

to offend the new sensitivity; and if the classics had been welcomed in early French classicism for the purpose of the enrichment of the French language, it was now too recognised that they were potentially dangerous, requiring a careful warding off. For example, Chapelain writes in 1683:

"Notre langue est sur tout Chaste jusqu'au scrupule, et d'une Délicatesse de goust presque infini. Les Saletés, les Paroles outrageuses, les Bassesses, n'y sont point souffertes; Et si l'on veut s'expliquer sur quelque passion tendre, il ne faut pas que ce soit avec ces vilaines expressions que Catulle et Martial ont si souvent employées. Il faut que cela soit dit d'une manière enveloppée d'un tour fin, et que l'on puisse toujours s'imaginer qu'on a voulu dire autre chose. C'est avoir porté la Parole jusqu'au dernier degré de Noblesse: c'est avoir introduit l'Honnesteté dans la License, et fait une habitude familière avec la Pudeur et la Retenuë. Je scay bien que la langue Française a quelquefois pris ces vilaines libertés; Mais il est certain aussi qu'elles ne sont aujourd'hui approuvées de personnes."<sup>33</sup>

Notable in Chapelain's prescriptions is that the *content* - 'quelque passion tendre' - is not proscribed - but only certain base expressions, *des termes bas*, which would rupture the quality of 'agreeableness'.<sup>34</sup> In her famous defence of the Ancients, *Des Causes de la*

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proscribed such as, for example, "La Republique avait été *châtrée* par la mort de Scipion l'Africain" (cited Brunot, p.281). Words especially referring to the body or animals - *les mots bas* or *réalistes* - were considered offensive, e.g. *vaches* and *veaux*; *berger* was to be preferred to *gardeur de boeuf*. Regarding the body, Brunot notes that Racine carefully distinguished noble and ignoble terms: "Sont noble: bouche, bras, chair, cheveux, cœur, front genou, gorge, joue, main, oreille, os, veine. Disparaissent au contraire, ou sont méprisés: barbe, cerveau, cervell, cuisse, dent, dos (au propre), épaule, foie, jambe, mollet, nerf, peau, poitrine, poumen, ventre, etc.", *ibid*, p.303. The proscribed terminology was, however, maintained in force in libertine literature, libelous pamphlets, and songs.

<sup>33</sup>Charpentier, *Excellence de la langue Française, II*, pp. 611-613, quoted in Brunot, p.281.

<sup>34</sup>Cf. Boileau, who also articulates this distinction in his reading of Longinus: "Il n'y a rien qui avilisse davantage un discours que les mots bas. On souffrira plutôt, généralement parlant, une pensée basse exprimée en termes nobles que la pensée la plus noble exprimée en termes bas." And regarding translation Boileau also separates the sense from the aesthetic effect: "Un terme grec très noble ne peut souvent être exprimée en français que par un terme très bas." *ibid*. p.298.

*Corruption du Gout*, of 1715, Dacier replies to her critics, who had attacked the '*termes vils et communs*' in Homer, by resorting to this distinction between form and content. Considering only the form, she locates the moral problem not in the ancient classical texts, but in the mis-use - through derogation of *bienséances* - and in the inadequacies or immaturities, of the French language; in ourselves, then, and not in the Other:

"Il est vrai, nous avons des termes bas, et des termes nobles; mais quand nos Poètes les mêlent, comme cela arrive souvent, cela fait un composé très risible. D'où vient cela, c'est que notre Langue ne fournit pas cette harmonie que la Langue Grecque fournit".<sup>35</sup>

Therefore, if one of the essential rules of bucolic and lyric poetry was to preserve it from all expressions of baseness or 'grossièreté' - hence Perrault's criticisms of Theocritus - Bathylle's penis might then be perfectly 'harmonious' in its Greek version, but not (yet) in its French version; since the other signified lacked a native signifying 'terme noble'.<sup>36</sup> We must note, then, that Chapelain did not forbid writers *tout court* to describe "sales amours"; he only asked that they do it "avec des paroles honnêtes". "Cela s'appelle envelopper les ordures", he added.<sup>37</sup> This at once seems to provide Dacier with a solution to incorporate "les sales amours" - here Anacreon's for Bathylle ; namely, through recourse to metaphor or euphemism. The *content*, Mesnadière too advises, may remain; only its form ought now to

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<sup>35</sup>ibid. quoted p.300.

<sup>36</sup>Cf. Boileau's translation of Longinus' *Traité du Sublime*, where, faced with translating the words - instanced by Longinus - from a love poem by Sappho in which she describes the throes of passion, "cold sweat runs down me", Boileau comes up with "Un frisson me saisit, je tremble, je me meurs". He explains in a footnote: "Il y a dans le grec *une sueur froide*: mais le mot de *sueur* en français ne peut jamais être agréable, et laisse une vilaine idée à l'esprit." See on this translation, and more generally on the 'taboo' status of words in French neoclassicism as fought out in the Querelle, Brody (1958), p. 113-117.

<sup>37</sup>the passage in full is : "Nous ne sommes plus au temps de la femme de Putifar et de l'impératrice Messaline. Les sales amours se traitent mesmes avec des paroles honnestes et l'on voile les turpitudes des pensées de termes qui les signifient bien, mais qui sont ou métaphorique ou allegorique, en sorte que l'auditeur, s'il veut, peut dissimuler de les entendre et que l'oreille les admet sans s'en scandaliser. Cela s'appelle à cette Cour envelopper les ordures, c'est-à-dire les desguiser sans les rendre mesconnoissables", Chapelain, *Lettres* (1659 - 1672), Paris 1883, p.684.

be appropriately veiled.

The gap in the text *necessarily* arises, therefore, out of an inherent contradiction in the formulation of neoclassical poetics; namely the contradiction between the task of the translator-philologist, and the task of instituting a modern vernacular French *agréable* literature, here specifically a French literature of the new *anacréontique* mode. To have translated the missing lines and assimilated them into the French version *à la lettre*, would have seemed, in terms of the aesthetic requirements of seventeenth-century French classicism, even more rupturous than missing them out altogether. On the other hand, Dacier's scrupulous concern for fidelity to the text allows her neither to paraphrase, and thereby to make the penis acceptable through metaphor or euphemism; nor to make an *undeclared* elision in this part of the text, since she translates, with renewed probity and against her more freewheeling predecessors, line for line. Both these strategies - veiling and unacknowledged repression - were in fact to be practised by Dacier's successors, but in her eyes they would have simply amounted to a philological obscenity. We could see the missing lines, then, as a mark of Dacier's peculiar integrity as a translator-philologist, and of her submission to the rules of a developing early classicism, which was forced to go on the defense. The *étoiles* emerge out of that tight spot.

As with the Ode XXIX, Dacier makes the figure of the poet too - in the preface *Vie d'Anacréon* - conform to French seventeenth century conventions of *honnêteté*. In her 'Preface' she offers a succinct characterization of a now Classical seventeenth century Anacreon; the missing lines are indeed effortlessly justified in this appreciation of his qualities:

"il unite par tout la nature, il sut la raison et ne presente jamais à l'esprit que des images nobles et naives; c'est là la beauté d'Anacréon".

At the same time, however, she clearly feels the need to *disclaim* his legendary moral excess - a convention in the literature of Anacreon since his earliest Roman critics:

"Quelques-uns ont dit qu'il aimoit à boire et qu'il trouvait les belles personnes fort

aimables; elle pourroit bien être; l'on ne lit pourtant point qu'il est été déreglé dans ses plaisirs, qui n'estoient que les divertissemens d'un homme de monde et d'un bel esprit".<sup>38</sup>

Still the otherness of the Greek poet - and his ways of taking pleasures *otherwise* - is never entirely domesticated in this the founding text of French *anacréontisme*.

This state of fragile assimilation may appear to be the end of the story. However, as each successive eighteenth century translator had to decide what to put in their place, the missing lines could only but draw attention to themselves. Eventually they came to achieve a certain limited fame, if not notoriety.<sup>39</sup> For what was originally an omission on the grounds of 'goût' and 'agrément' - as I have argued - came to be seen retrospectively in the eighteenth century as an omission which had been made purely on the grounds of moral probity. So that by the end of the eighteenth century, translators were acutely aware of Bathylle as a sodomitic and pederastic representation and were trying their very best to exorcize this 'homosexual' while retaining the homoerotic. The missing lines eventually came to stand for an unacceptable relation of desire between Anacreon and Bathylle; a homosexual moment which, in spite of - or because of - repeated disavowels, could never be expunged from the anacreontic text, or, we should add, from the resulting constitution of French *anacréontisme*. Let us now continue, then, and trace the subsequent history of those lines from that peculiar absent state in which Dacier had left them in 1681. How to translate, henceforth, that absence? How does that gap in the text erupt into a discourse on homosexuality?

The missing lines are referred to by Bayle in the *Dictionnaire historique et critique* (1697). Bayle devotes an article to Anacreon and refers the reader to the separate article 'Bathyllus', which amounts to a postscript on the subject of sodomy. In the article 'Bathyllus', "mignon

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<sup>38</sup>Dacier, 1681, 'La Vie d'Anacreon'.

<sup>39</sup>Solomon-Godeau notes that this ode - which she reproduces from an obfuscating English translation, Thomas More's, of 1869 - was "particularly popular among critics and artists", that it is mentioned by Winckelmann as well as the critics Auguste-Hilarion Kératry and Joseph Droz - although she does not explain the reasons for its popularity, or, we will now say, its notoriety. Solomon-Godeau, p.113.

d'Anacréon", he writes:

"Entre les odes qui nous restent de ce poète il y en a une (c'est la XXIX) où il a fait le portrait de ce beau garçon. Ce portrait ne se borne pas comme ceux de nos romans aux parties découvertes; il s'étend aussi sur les plus cachées; et de là vient que mademoiselle le Fevre n'a pu remplir tous les endroits de sa traduction; il a fallu y laisser des lignes toutes entières parsemées d'étoiles".<sup>40</sup>

Bayle was acutely aware of the differences between Ancient Greek and Christian limits of acceptability; and his scepticism extended to both cultures. In this sense he was a precursor of Enlightenment relativist critics who believed in the effects of environment - in their terminology, 'climate' - on behaviour. He writes of Anacreon's poetry:

"On y trouve la passion dont il brûlat pour Bathyllus; et si, à cause que l'on n'attachait point alors à cette espèce d'amour une note d'infamie, comme on le fait en pays de chrétienté, il ne mérite pas toute l'horreur que l'on aurait d'un poète chrétien en pareil cas, il faut que l'endurcissement de son siècle paie pour lui: je veux dire que l'indignation des lecteurs doit tomber sur ce-temps là, selon tout ce en quoi elle ne se décharge point sur chaque particulier".<sup>41</sup>

In Bayle's hands Ode XXIX becomes a window into a non-christian world where debauchery is not proscribed and pleasures are polymorphous: "il était d'un tempérament si amoureux, qu'il lui fallait et des garçons et des filles". Bayle suggests that Anacreon's burning passion is only infamous ('les infames', the term used to refer to sodomites) in a christian world. Enlightenment criticism at its best, 'avant la lettre'.

#### Towards 'un discours intelligible'

However, an attitude which is more typical and which gains in momentum during the

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<sup>40</sup>Dictionnaire, article 'Bathyllus'.

<sup>41</sup>Bayle, Dictionnaire, article 'Anacreon'.

eighteenth century, is that of François Gacon in his translation of Anacreon of 1712. Gacon (1667-1725) was a French satiric poet who achieved literary notoriety with his vicious and barely concealed attacks on his contemporaries on both sides of the continuing 'Querelle' - hence his pseudonym, 'Le poète sans fard'. His translation of the Odes is accompanied by a running commentary. Gacon's discussions of the Greek language are anecdotal - far from the spirit of Dacier's scholasticism - and indeed the whole seems largely to be aimed at newly attacking his literary enemies. Gacon refers to the missing lines in the 'Remarques' on Ode XXIX, as the origin of a conspiracy to blacken Anacreon's name. Madame Dacier is mockingly referred to as Eufrosin:

"Eufrosin traduisit aussi cette Ode en prose, et la sema de quantité d'étoiles, voulant insinuer par là que ce Portrait contenoit des choses si contraires à la pudeur, qu'elle n'oisoit y toucher; ce qui fut cause que bien des gens crurent que cet ouvrage étoit une preuve convaincante du feu dont Anacréon bruloit pour Batyle, et publièrent que ce Poète n'étoit jamais si éloquent que lors qu'il composoit sur cette matière".<sup>42</sup>

Gacon claims that Dacier's insinuations have encouraged unruly and base phantasies. This pseudo-journalistic strategy of the heightening of *notoriety* through the disclaimer is then supplemented by a voyeuristic citation; there is now a playing with the absence and presence of what the missing lines might represent, or might be *filled with* semantically. Gacon proceeds to quote Longepierre's (referred to now as 'Litomeris') 1684 translation of the lines<sup>43</sup>:

"Litomeris sur tout se signale par un galimatias des plus étranges; car voici comme

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Gacon, 'Les Odes d'Anacreon et de Sapho', Rotterdam, 1712, p.208.

<sup>43</sup>Longepierre's 'Les Oeuvres D'Anacréon Et De Sapho', of 1684, treats Anacreon's love of boys, and Bathyle in particular, as proof of his extreme 'tendresse': "Les femmes même n'occupent pas seules son cœur; et il y avait un si grand fond de tendresse, que ce sexe, tout aimable qu'il est, ne put ny épuiser ny satisfaire cette tendresse infinie. Entre les personnes qu'il aima le plus passionément, ce qui reste de luy nous fait assez connoître, quelque part eut le jeune Bathylle dans son cœur." p. 7. Longepierre praises Dacier's translation, but writes of his own, "du moins n'ay-je rien changé ou passé sous silence d'un feu considérable". However subsequently his translation was continually criticized for its 'bassesse'.



il prétendoit qu'Anacréon devoit insinuer que Batyle ne faisoit encore que sentir les premières ardeurs de l'amour.

`Donne lui l'estomac et les mains de Mercure,  
Les cuisses de Pollux, le ventre de Bacchus.  
Peins au dessus de ses cuisses charmantes,  
De ses cuisses de feu, de ses cuisses brulantes,  
Un present de l'Amour, ouvrage des Plaisirs.'"

Gacon continues, "Je laisse au lecteur à débrouiller l'idée obscène que ces paroles portent à l'imagination, quoi qu'à dire la vérité, ces vers soient plutôt un amas confus de termes mal apportis qu'un discours intelligible".<sup>44</sup>

Gacon simultaneously condemns and surreptitiously enjoys the representation of Bathylle's pubescent sexuality. He tantalises the reader by invoking the obscene, but quickly withdraws into his role as literary arbiter, pronouncing it 'un amas confus de termes'.<sup>45</sup> Later he adopts a tone of high seriousness and solemnity in defense of Anacreon, "Mais je jure par les Dieux Immortels qu'Anacréon n'aimoit ce jeune homme que d'un amour très-chaste". What we find in Gacon, then, is a shifting, ambivalent relationship to the homosexual charge of Ode XXIX, which moves away from Bayle's enlightened and sceptical acceptance of difference towards a *pathological* uncertainty as to whether it is consuming or expelling the fearful content. But however one wants to understand Gacon's discourse - whether as playful or pathological - importantly it does not avoid or repress controversial aspects of the ode. Longepierre's 1684 restitution of the lines did not, then, finally foreclose imputations of obscenity. Rather, between Longepierre and Gacon controversy over the missing lines is maintained, and enters into the eighteenth century stronger than ever.

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<sup>44</sup>Gacon, 1712, p.208.

<sup>45</sup>Gacon's own translation of the lines dissipates the image of the thighs and the penis. Bathylle's pubescent body is made insubstantial:

Donne lui les mains de Mercure,/ Et l'estomac du beau Bacchus./ Fais qu'a son air on reconnoisse,/ Qu'enflamé depuis peu de jours/ Un desir inconnu le presse, / Effet des premières amours." p. 210

From the middle of the eighteenth century, the aim of translators and commentators was to 'franciser' Anacreon. This required both purification and redefinition. Purification was sought through a repudiation of Anacreon's homosexuality; redefinition through proliferating descriptions of the nature of Anacreon's poetry and 'anacreontisme', which emphasized somewhat different qualities to those which Dacier had offered as exemplary.

Purification is in fact one of the themes of Poinsonnet de Sivry's commentary in his 1758 translation of Anacreon. The Odes are followed by a 'Lettre Sur Anacréon', which is largely about a perceived crisis of translation and a crisis of the French language. This 'Lettre' is redolent of the language of corruption:

"La langue se corrompt tous les jours, au Théâtre, au Barreau, dans la Chaise et dans les Livres".<sup>46</sup>

The corruption is perceived by Poinsonnet to stem largely from smutty, popular elements, and from the mixing of high and low culture:

"S'il est permis de baisser un moment les yeux sur les Héros d'un genre fort au-dessous de celui de Scarron, je me souviens qu'on l'avait nommé dans quelques Brochures: 'L'Anacréon des Halles': C'étaient autant d'impertinences que de mots. Si par hasard il se trouvait dans les chansons grivoises d'un tel Ecrivain, quelques idées, ou quelques expressions Anacréontiques, c'était précisément un défaut. Je ne me suis arrêté sur ce monstrueux assemblage de tous les styles, que parcequ'il n'est rien de plus commun dans la plupart des Traducteurs".<sup>47</sup>

The task, therefore was to rid poetic language of vulgarity, and to return to a (fictional) uncorrupted Anacreon.

Poinsonnet effects this transformation by offering a more attractive image of Anacreon. He

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<sup>46</sup>Poinsonnet de Sivry, 'Anacreon, Sapho, Moschus, Bion, Thyrthee, etc. traduit en vers François', Nancy, 1758, p.16.

<sup>47</sup>Poinsonnet, 1758, p.17.

does not deny the poet's lust for boys:

"il est certain qu'Anacréon poussa fort loin l'amour du plaisir, et ses Ouvrages en font foi. Non-content d'un nombre infini de Maîtresses, il eût encore une violente inclination pour les jeunes Gens".<sup>48</sup>

But without condemning or justifying, he elegantly offers an alternative image:

"Pour moi, soit prévention, soit délicatesse, je me suis formé d'Anacréon une idée toute riante. Je me le représente comme un Poète opulent, un Courtisan agréable, un Philosophe voluptueux."<sup>49</sup>

Anacreon is thus purged of populism, and its associated vulgarities, and becomes a sophisticate; 'l'homme de bonne compagnie'.

When it comes to the translations of the Odes, and particularly, Ode XXIX, Poinset makes notable revisions. In the *Lettre* he criticizes in turn his predecessors: Madame Dacier for her inelegant pedantry ("La lettre tue, l'esprit vivifie"), Gacon for his failure to catch 'l'esprit délicat' of Anacreon's verse. But Longepierre, whose 1684 translation of the missing lines Gacon (in 1712) had thought obscene, comes in for particular criticism; and it is again aimed at the translation of the member in question. Poinset quotes the two lines just before the 'obscenity': "Donne-lui l'estomac, et les mains de Mercure,/ Les cuisses de Pollux, le ventre de Bacchus."

He proceeds to criticize Longepierre on the grounds of anachronism; which raises the larger neoclassical problem of the translatability of the classics. Poinset in fact collapses both points - that of translatability, and linguistic propriety, the philological and the moral - in one damning criticism; "Nous n'avons plus les mêmes objets de comparaison et quand ils nous resteraient rien ne justifierait Longepierre de la bassesse et de l'impropriété des termes". These critical terms - 'bassesse' and 'impropriété' - clearly refer to the somatic words 'ventre' and 'estomac', which he regards as common and over-literal, hence unpoetic.

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<sup>48</sup>Poinset, 1758, 'La Vie d'Anacréon'.

<sup>49</sup>ibid. unpaginated.

However, the `bassesse' may not inconceivably also refer to the obscenity which directly follows in Longepierre's translation<sup>50</sup>; which is however repressed. How else are we to understand the statement "nous n'avons plus les mêmes objets de comparaison...", if it is not in fact alluding to the homosexual desire which Bathylle's penis represents?

In his *own* translation, Poinciset curiously mixes the metaphors of previous versions. He elides the `cuisses de feu...cuisses brulante' translating them into the glacial and sculpturally static "cuisses d'ivoire". The "simple member" (Loeb, 1988) is now replaced by the conventional classical symbols of Venus:

"Peins le contour gracieux,  
Et l'essor voluptueux  
De ses cuisses d'ivoire.  
Au dessus, en traits de feu  
Ose exprimer d'autre charmes:  
Peins l'Amour, peins-y les armes  
Et le carquois de ce Dieu....".<sup>51</sup>

This suggestive *ose* ("Ose exprimer d'autres charmes..."), of Poinciset's own invention, is now all that is left - the only trace - of the inadmissible image, which subsequently is euphemistically represented, or displaced in this translation, in the suggestive rococo image of Love's `quiver'.

The 1773 translation by Moutonnet-Clairfons marks a turning point in Anacreon's reputation. It is more vigorous in its defense of Anacreon against charges of `sodomy':

"Ce poète avoit trop de goût, trop de delicatesse dans l'esprit pour s'être livré a des

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<sup>50</sup>Longepierre's translation continues:

Peins au-dessus de ces cuisses charmantes,  
De ces cuisses de feu, de ces cuisses brûlantes,  
Un present de l'amour, ouvrage des plaisirs,  
Simple, sans art, dont les ardeurs naissantes  
Respirent toutefois Venus et ses desirs.

<sup>51</sup>Poinciset, 1758, p.32.

vices énormes, à une passion honteuse, qui avilit et dégrade l'homme, et le place au-dessous de l'animal."<sup>52</sup>

The unprecedented link between the violence of a pseudo-ecclesiastical rhetoric of sodomy and *Anacréontisme* is curiously belied, however, by the lyric image proffered by the volume as a whole. In it Anacreon is accompanied by other lyrical poets as well as contemporary imitations of lyric and elegiac verse. The full title, *Anacréon, Sapho, Bion et Moschus, Traduction Nouvelle en Prose, suivi De La Veillée Des Fêtes De Venus Et d'un choix de Pièces de différens Auteurs. Par M. M\*\*\*C\*\*.* A Paphos Et se trouve a Paris, gives an idea of the subsumation of Anacreon into a *mildly* pornographic Rococo genre. The whole, illustrated with somewhat insipid engravings by Eisen, is grounded in the 'fêtes champêtres' tradition, therefore *innocently* voluptuous. As a mark and test of this innocence, Moutonnet-Clairfons addresses his work to women:

"Je souhaite que mon travail soit agréable à cette portion charmante qui fait les délices de la Société. Les Savans ont peut être trop négligé le commerce de ce sexe enchanteur, que l'on doit toujours consulter en matière de goût et de délicatesse."<sup>53</sup>

By this date the sanitised 'idée toute riante' version of Anacreon which Poinciset offered in 1758 is thoroughly assimilated into the French poetic imagination and Rococo classicism. Moutonnet-Clairfons' appreciation of the qualities which were by then most valued in Anacreon is typical: "La poésie d'Anacréon est douce, pure, élégante, harmonieuse: ses

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<sup>52</sup>Moutonnet-Clairfons, 'Anacreon, Sapho, Bion et Moschus', Paris, 1773, p.5.

<sup>53</sup>Moutonnet-Clairfons, 1773, 'Avertissement'. For a rethinking of anacreontism as a 'feminine taste' - as represented in the secondary literature by Schneider, for example - in terms of anacreontic taste and *female agency* see Ockman. Ockman writes: "I would like to shift the question of feminine taste away from notions of the natural. Rather, what interests me about the taste for anacreontism among privileged women is the possibility it afforded them to experience sensual pleasure. There is much evidence to suggest that many women did in fact purchase and commission anacreontic work (as did men: witness Murat).", Ockman, p.51. Ockman's research focuses on napoleonic patronage, but we might just as well apply this troping of 'feminine taste' to the pre-revolutionary period.

images agréables, voluptueuses et variées."<sup>54</sup>

Both Poincnet and Moutonnet-Clairfons were attempting to subsume Anacreon into a pastoral, titillatingly erotic vision of antiquity; not, however, compatible with 'burning thighs'.<sup>55</sup> Anacreon, therefore, continued to raise alarmed voices.<sup>56</sup>

The next and last bout of translations in the eighteenth century - in the 1790's - show a heightened concern to wrest the bodies of Bathylle and Anacreon from what is increasingly being represented as their degrading sexuality. Moutonnet-Clairfons' vigorous denunciation of 'une passion honteuse' only anticipated even more violent protestations. Dacier's original pointed silence turns into a veritable discursive proliferation on the subject of homosexuality; and this, just when the object of our study comes into view: the fetishized, homoerotic *beau idéal* in its supposedly 'sublimated' anacreontic mode.

#### Revolutionary rhetoric of denunciation

Anson, in his 1795 translation, 'Odes d'Anacréon', wants to settle the matter of Anacreon's sexuality once and for all:

"Socrate n'a pu échapper à une pareille accusation: ainsi il faut bien se résigner; et en continuant de plaider pour Anacréon lui-même, détruire enfin pour jamais, s'il est possible, cette odieuse idée."<sup>57</sup>

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<sup>54</sup>Moutonnet-Clairfons, 1758, p.11.

<sup>55</sup>Anacreon's proscribed sexuality is, however, made a virtue of in the then fashionable genre of libertine classical 'pornography'. For example, in D'Hancarville's *Monumens de la Vie Privée des Douze Césars*, 1770, p.24; and in Mirabeau's *Erotika Biblikon*, 1783, p. 528. See, for an interesting discussion of D'Hancarville's 'priapism', and Vivant Denon's 'oeuvre priapique' (c.1784-93), Carabelli (1996), 'Priapus à la mode', pp.31-41.

<sup>56</sup>Anacreon is censored in Louis Sebastien Mercier's 'L'An Deux Mille Quatre Cent Quarante', 1770. In the Chapter, 'La Bibliothèque du Roi', the works of four Greek authors are chosen for destruction; Herodotus, Aristophanes, Sappho and Anacreon. Mercier suggests that Anacreon's bad influence is insidious: "Je voulus défendre un peu la cause du defunt Anacréon; mais on me donna les meilleurs raisons du monde, que je n'exposerois point ici, parce qu'elles ne seroient pas entendues de mon siècle.", Mercier, p. 217.

<sup>57</sup>Anson, 'Odes d'Anacréon', Paris, L'An III De la Republique (1795), p.22.

Bathylle, he says is "le grand objet de la querelle", and Ode XXIX "un des principaux motifs sur lesquels on se fonde pour le {Anacreon} censurer". In his preface to the Odes, 'Sur Anacréon', he answers to recent attacks which have been made on his subject's 'conduite privée'. He begins with the accusations:

"il<sup>58</sup> trouve mauvais `qu'il ne se soit mêlé ni d'étude, ni de philosophie, ni de religion, ni de gouvernement: `il réunit en lui tout à la fois l'épicurisme, et les excès de l'ivresse, pour laquelle il avait, dit- il, un goût trop prononcé' ...Enfin il parle sans déguisement des `amans' d'Anacréon, et surtout de Bathylle, avec toute l'indignation que meritait sans doute un tel égarement, s'il eut été réel..."<sup>59</sup>

Anson makes it clear that he is of the same opinion as the 'professeur' insofar as far as male love ought to be silenced. He only wishes that Anacreon be protected from that fate:

"Il est très louable qu'un professeur s'élève avec une haine vigoureuse contre un tel vice; il doit, plus qu'un autre, en poursuivre jusqu'à l'apparence; mais faut-il pour cela s'en rapporter à elle seule pour noircir un grand homme, et pour juger définitivement d'une manière si defavorable le délicat Anacréon."<sup>60</sup>

Anson sustains his defense of Anacreon through eight pages of discussion, which describe the moral climate of Anacreon's century. His argument turns on the historical and moral distinction, which he believes has been mistakenly collapsed, between present vice and ancient innocent nudity:

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<sup>58</sup>Anson does not identify the source of the defamatory remarks, only calling him 'un professeur'. Probably, then, a reference to the prominent French hellenist Jean-Baptiste Gail, who published a translation of Anacreon the previous year; 'Odes d'Anacréon, traduites en françois, avec le texte grec et la version latine, orné d'estampes, de notes critiques, d'un discours sur la musique grecque', Paris, Didot l'ainé, an II.

<sup>59</sup>Anson, 1795, p.7.

<sup>60</sup>ibid. p.7.

"Je demande encore qu'on se reporte au siècle d'Anacréon. Je ne prétends pas y trouver la justification d'un penchant, que non seulement je reprouve, mais que j'abhorre, et qui me paraît aussi absurde que repoussant: mais je soutiens que cet amour ardent des anciens pour la beauté, par ses formes dont la nature paraît plus avare qu'autrefois, les conduisait assez naturellement à ne point regarder comme licentieuses des nudités".<sup>61</sup>

The argument continues thus: It is hardly surprising, given the common sight of nudity in Ancient Greece - nude athletes, nude serving boys at the table - that "les belles formes du corps d'un jeune homme bien fait" should be a legitimate and inspiring theme for poets and artists. And, given that women were not educated in ancient Greece, it is also hardly surprising that attachments should form between men and boys: nevertheless, "n'a-t-on pas profané les attachemens les plus purs par des soupçons injurieux?"

The defense is closely argued, contending with both ancient authorities and contemporary opinion on Anacreon's relationship with young men. Point by point, Anson shows that lasciviousness has been seen where none exists. But when, in fact, he comes to discuss the 'missing lines' of Ode XXIX, even he cannot entirely disclaim the sexual implications therein. They are the only weak point in his argument, and he admits as much:

"Le 40e vers de cette ode renferme la seule expression un peu équivoque, absolument la seule qu'on trouve dans tous les ouvrages d'Anacréon"<sup>62</sup>

Anson offers a revealing argument to counteract the evidence of Ode XXIX. "Il aime beaucoup les femmes". Finally, resting his case, he states:

"Ce goût dominant pour les femmes, qui l'a suivi jusqu'à la mort, ne devrait-il pas seul détourner tout soupçon d'un penchant qui en est l'ennemi et le destructeur?"<sup>63</sup>

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<sup>61</sup>ibid. p.21.

<sup>62</sup>ibid., p. 24.

<sup>63</sup>ibid. p.24.



We might see in the terms of Anson's defense a distinct shift towards a modern conceptualisation of homosexuality. Bayle, in 1697 had seen Anacreon's love for boys in terms of an *excess* of passion ("il etait d'un tempérament si amoureux, qu'il lui fallait et des garçons et des filles"). In 1758, Poinsonnet's Anacreon 'poussa fort l'amour du plaisir' in his 'violente inclination pour les jeunes gens'. By 1795, however, Anacreon's obvious enjoyment of women must necessarily exclude the love of boys or young men. The proof of Anacreon's 'innocence' is in the insistence on his heterosexuality ('ce goût dominant'). A homosexual/heterosexual opposition has begun to establish itself.

The 'homosexualisation' against which Anacreon and Bathylle are defended in the 1790's finds its clearest expression in the last translation of Anacreon in the eighteenth century, Merard de Saint Just's *Imitation des Odes D'Anacréon*, of 1799. Saint Just opens his 'Discours Preliminaire' wishing to please his women readers, who are uniquely "douées d'un tact fin et délicat". Thus realigned with feminine taste, the conventional appreciation of Anacreon's qualities follows - "poli, ingénieuse et délicat, jamais grossière, ni même bouffonne". Saint Just then refers to Anson's defense against the calumny of the 'professeur' (Gail). He launches into a theory of homosexuality, accusing the scholar of being not only pedantic (as the stereotype went), but also pederastic:

"Je renvoie également a la dissertation justificative que M. Anson, homme du monde, plus fait pour décider la question qu'un homme de collège a mise à la tête de son Anacréon. Il prouve sans réplique, du moins aux personnes honnêtes, que ce favori des vierges de Pindare, n'était point un infâme débauché, comme l'en ont accusé plusieurs graves personnages qui, jadis, condamnés par leur état à ne vivre qu'avec de jeunes garçons, n'ont jamais connu d'autres AMOURS que ceux de leur lycée, et se seront peut-être trompés aux charmes d'un bel enfant de douze ou quatorze ans, lequel, à cet âge, peut ressembler assez une jolie fille..."<sup>64</sup>

The charges of debauched infamy are thus thrown back upon the slanderer. This strategy of smearing, which has its parallel in a revolutionary rhetoric of denunciation, effectively

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<sup>64</sup>Merard Saint Just, 'Imitation En Vers Français des Odes D'Anacreon', Paris, 1799, p.27.

silences earlier historicist explanations of Greek homosexuality.<sup>65</sup> In Saint Just's text, both femininity and masculinity are protected from a twofold threat; that perceived as coming from within the hallowed classics (Anacreon's Ode XXIX); and, from without, the threat which is felt to fester in closed, unsupervised spaces in the Paris of the 1790's - the academic 'collège'.<sup>66</sup> At the same time, there is a reinstatement of erotic charge in the 'missing lines'.

"Couronne ses cuisses charmante/ Voluptueuses et brulantes, Du signe du désir naissant."<sup>67</sup>

The homoerotic is maintained at the expense of the homosexual; which has nevertheless proliferated at the margins - the *paratext* - of the classical text.

Before concluding this tracing of ambivalence within anacreontism with the 'inocuous' Girodet illustration with which we started, we will note just one more translation which takes us into the nineteenth century, and which attempts an aesthetic distancing from the entire problem: Lachabeuaussière's *Poésies Galantes et Gracieuses d'Anacréon, Bion,*

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<sup>65</sup>In fact Merard Saint-Just superficially appeals to the ancients to support his argument: "Pourquoi la Grèce donna-t-il à Anacréon l'épithète de SAGE? C'est que pour vivre comme lui, il faut avoir purgé son ame des passions immodérées...", *ibid.* p.27.

<sup>66</sup>Saint Just wrote a poem, incorporated into his 'Discours Préliminaire'. It is his last word, his closing statement on the calumnies that have been made on the moral purity of Anacreon, and Sapho. I reproduce it here in full (Appendix 3), because it usefully shows the extent to which, by the 1790's, Anacreon and 'anacréontisme' had to be protected from what was perceived to be a contemporary corruption; namely, the homosexuals of Paris, outside the text.

<sup>67</sup>*ibid.*, p. 70. At *Couronne ses cuisses*, Merard Saint-Just inserts a footnote referring to an earlier footnote - the debate *cannot* be simply consensually dropped. It reads: "Dans une superbe édition d'Anacréon, en grec, latine et prose française, qui a paru vers la fin de 1798, on trouve, à l'occasion de ces vers une note que nous ne rappellerons pas ici, par respect pour les belles dames; par respect sur-tout pour la pudeur des jeunes vierges, entre les mains de qui tombera ce recueil de chansons. Un savant professeur en grec nous prouve par cette note seule qu'il n'a pas l'habitude de parler aux Grâces, ni d'une manière décente de la volupté." *ibid.*, p.123-124.

*Moschus, Catulle et Horace* of 1803.<sup>68</sup>

Lachabeaussière demonstrates in the 'Notice Préliminaire' a heightened sensibility to the obscene. Again, but ever more markedly, Anacreontism is defined by what it ought not to envisage.

Accordingly we are first given a familiar characterization of desired anacreontic qualities: "Chez lui la délicatesse de la pensée prend un nouveau charme dans la délicatesse de l'expression; une certaine mollesse aimable, une négligence voluptueuse, et l'usage le plus gracieux d'une langue déjà si pleine de douceur et d'harmonie..."<sup>69</sup> This happy description turns out however to occasion a series of denunciations of earlier translations which turns around their 'vulgarity'. The destructive criticism of predecessors by each translator is a necessary convention for the justification of a new version - each is more *faithful* to Anacreon than all those that precede it; this is by now clear. However, it is also clear that with the increasing fashionability of *Anacréontisme* - and we are now, in 1803, at its zenith - there is a distinctly heightened need on the part of the translator to ward off what is seen as contaminating from within the received anacreontic text; namely its concrete language, referring to the body and sexuality. Gacon, for example, comes in for particular criticism for his use of "mots anti-poétiques" such as in the instanced: "Je voudrais être enfin ton habit, ton collier,/Tes gants, ton mouchoir, ta `jartière'...", the last of which Lachabeaussière finds particularly reprehensible. We must not therefore simply invoke the notion of a heightened cultural sensitivity to the beautiful male body in Napoleonic France, as, for example Joan deJean does in her fine study on *Fictions of Sapho*, when she notes a concomitant reduction of interest during these years in the body of the women poet in favour of that of her beautiful male lover, Phaon.<sup>70</sup> For Lachabeaussière's translation of the famous portrait of male beauty, 'Portrait de Bathylle', turns out to be so highly circumspect in figuring forth the poetic image that, in its derogated state, it becomes a poem on *veiling* the male body

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<sup>68</sup>full title: *Poésies Galantes et Gracieuses d'Anacréon, Bion, Moschus, Catulle et Horace. Imitée en vers Français et soumise, pour la plupart au Rythme musical; Par M. Lachabeaussière, À Paris, Thermidor, an XI (1803).*

<sup>69</sup>Lachabeaussière, p.3-4.

<sup>70</sup>DeJean, p. 173.

rather than one displaying it. Lachabeaussière refuses the very logic of the poem which he is ostensibly translating by refusing any words which signify body parts; whereas the poem relies on a cumulative catalogue of body parts. "Bacchus! Adonis! Mercure!", he 'translates', and with the commentating footnote; "Anacréon fait ici l'éloge de quelques statues grecques apparemment fort renommés de son temps. Madame Dacier n'a pas compris ce passage, et quelques traductions après elle, se sont également amusés à traduire littéralement le 'ventre' de Bacchus, les 'cuisses' de Pollux, etc.."71 Still, the image of Bathylle's desiring penis is not however ignored. Rather it is displaced onto the next stanza, but only for the poet - Anacreon/Lacabeaussière - to now prompt its veiling:

"Oserais-tu faire éclo-  
ré  
Cette fleur de volupté.  
Prête à s'embellir encore,  
Au signal de la beauté?  
Non: crains d'embrâser la toile,  
En la mettant trop au jour;  
Jette si tu veux un voile  
Sur le carquois de l'Amour."72

If we were to consider this as a *literal* translation of Anacreon's original image, it is now unrecognizable. However, we will notice a set of borrowings from previous translations, now re-ordered, in many of the terms; *Oserais-tu* a citation of Poinsonet's 1758 "*Ose exprimer...*", as is the symbol of love's quiver, "*le carquois de l'Amour*". What is new here is the twisting of Poinsonet's injunction *Ose exprimer* into a rhetorical *question*, which is then followed by a decisive 'Non', and the original and anxious 'crains d'embrâser la toile'. The fragment/image of Bathylle's penis thus gets displaced in this latest translation by a discourse

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<sup>71</sup>ibid., p.57.

<sup>72</sup>ibid., p.58.

on its very unrepresentability.<sup>73</sup>

### Girodet's Anacreon

If we now return to Girodet's illustration to Ode XXIX (fig. 1) we will have some reason to be suspicious of its trouble-free version of the cultural translation that is the essence of neoclassicism. We have noted how inspiration is represented here as flowing effortlessly from ancient poet to the painter, which we might take to be Girodet himself (the activity of *painting* represented, with brush and palette, canvas and maquettes, is distinctly modern, not ancient); the uninterrupted line which begins at the poet's head, then travels along the profile of his arm where it ends with the gently caressing hand, which is then *extended* into the outstretched arm of the painter, at the end of which the held brush finally meets the canvas, represents both a circuit of inspiration - or the less hypostasized 'influence' - and one of desire. So, what in Girodet's own textual translation, the last we will consider, of around 1810, does the painter-translator make of the desire to which those 'missing lines'-historically accompanied by such difficulties as we have seen - attested?

Girodet's encounter with Anacreon was the outcome of a commission for a set of illustrations for a new version of the Odes by J.B. de Saint-Victor, which appeared in 1810. As Girodet was delayed (he was at the same time working on illustrations for the Aeneid) only two illustrations appeared in the 1810 volume, neither of them of the ode here in question.<sup>74</sup> Girodet refused the division of labour which the illustrated volume generically presupposes; he was clearly compelled to refigure the anacreontic as both textual translator

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<sup>73</sup>on the matter of Anacreon's homosexuality, Lachabeaussière feigns unconcern. He concludes his *Notice Préliminaire* with: "Je ne dirai rien sur la vie, sur la mort d'Anacréon; tout le monde sait aujourd'hui ces anecdotes; c'est à ses ouvrages qu'il faut faire attention beaucoup plus qu'à ses mœurs. On l'accuse, on le défend sur ses goûts et sur sa morale; que nous comporte! Nous jugeons le Poète et non l'homme privé." *ibid.*, p.17. Nevertheless, I would argue that this emergent modern division between public work and private morals is practically untenable when it comes to the task of translating Ode XXIX. Lachabeaussière has to do *something* with the worrying, and now highly significant, detail.

<sup>74</sup>on the circumstances of the commission, See Brown, 1980, pp.324-329.

and producer of the visual image.<sup>75</sup> From the official commission, then, there developed a personal passion for the *Odes* which lasted from 1808 to his death in 1824, and which resulted ultimately in a complete translation and fifty-four illustrations; they were published together, posthumously, by the editor of his *Oeuvres posthumes*, Coupin, in 1825. They became part of the nineteenth-century classical canon; in homage to Girodet, Ingres included the figure of the poet Anacreon in his *Apotheosis of Homer*.<sup>76</sup>

Because of those peculiarly private circumstances - indeed private passion - in which Girodet undertook the project, we cannot properly place his literary translation of the *Odes* within the continuing discourse of the professional translator. Duly, we do not find in Girodet the professional self-reflexivity of philological tradition where the text is divided into version and explicatory gloss. Nor do we find in Girodet's Anacreon the familiar systematic critique of earlier versions which is often the occasion for a re-definition - albeit minute - of classical poetics. Instead, simply the text and the image. Here, then, is Girodet's rendition of the 'missing lines'. His prose translation is so 'fluid' that we shall have to start a line earlier to gain its sense (at 'After his face...' of the Loeb translation, Appendix 2):

"Dans tous ces traits, enfin, joins la force à la grace; que son beau cou efface même le cou d'ivoire du bel Adonis. La poitrine large et les mains élégantes de Mercure sont aussi celles de Bathylle. Pour terminer heureusement un si beau corps, tâche de fondre ensemble, dans une douce harmonie, les formes nerveuses de Pollux et les contours du séduisant Bacchus. Enfin, que, dans cet accord parfait de la jeunesse et de la beauté réunies, tout décèle cet âge heureux des premières impressions de l'amour."

There are both effacements here and poetic injunctions. The injunctions, which derive from a formalist poetics, are incorporated into the portrait as linking devices between the

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<sup>75</sup>the professional translator Saint-Victor is generous in his praise of Girodet's unique contribution, while at the same time putting him in his place. He writes in his Preface: "M. Girodet a traduit ce poète avec son crayon mieux peut-être que n'eût pu le faire la plume la plus éloquente." Saint-Victor, p.xiv.

<sup>76</sup>Norman Schlenoff, *Ingres et ses sources littéraires*, Paris, 1956, p.171.

`fetishized' separate body parts and *command* its aesthetic wholeness; for example, the inserted "tâche de fondre ensemble, dans une douce harmonie", and the "accord parfait de la jeunesse et de la beauté réunies".<sup>77</sup> The effacements seem to occur when the body parts threaten to undo those aesthetic injunctions; `les cuisses de Pollux' becomes "les formes nerveuses de Pollux", `le ventre de Bacchus' is translated into "les contours du séduisant Bacchus'. As for the `simple member', in spite of Girodet's `tout décèle', it remains entirely undisclosed.

The story, however, does not end with the artist's sublimating triumph over the translators' `pedantic' anxieties. If, in respect of the offending article, Girodet's text and image are mute, Coupin, the editor of his *Odes*, may now have the last word. If in the *Discours Préliminaire* of the 1825 edition, Coupin writes, "Le poète et le peintre sont nés sous le même ciel: tout est grec dans cet ouvrage"<sup>78</sup>, in his unique note on Girodet's Ode XXIX, he belies that ideal fusion between the ancient Anacreon and the modern Girodet - belies the attempt to assimilate the Other Anacreon into French Anacréontisme - by returning into the text the obscene image, and thus ensuring Anacréontisme's continuing difficulties with its never effaced imminent homosexual content. Coupin writes:

"Après avoir dit: "Fais lui la poitrine et les mains de Mercure, les cuisses de Pollux, le ventre de Bacchus" ce que Girodet a exprimé avec tant d'élégance, en disant: "Pour terminer heureusement...séduisant Bacchus, Anacréon ajoute (j'emprunte ici la traduction latine de M. Gail):

Tenera unde super femoria,  
Femora illa igriem habentia,  
Apertum facilo pudendum,  
Paphium appentens primulum.'

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for the portrait as a rhetorical code see, Barthes, *S/Z*, New York, 1972, `The Portrait', p. 60-61.

<sup>78</sup>Coupin, p.iv.

Girodet a substitué à ces mots ceux-ci: "Enfin...l'amour." Ainsi il a remplacé une image obscène par une pensée pleine de charme et de délicatesse; et l'idée principale d'Anacréon se trouve revêtue d'une forme aussi heureuse que poétique, sans laquelle il eut été impossible de la faire passer dans notre langue. P.A.C."

### Conclusion

Madame Dacier's missing lines proved to be something of a Pandora's Box. Once activated, the substitution generated many barely manageable problems. Briefly, at the end of the seventeenth century, they opened up a space in which Greek homosexuality could be set against Christian ethics (Bayle's critique of 'sodomy'). Longepierre's restitution of the lines in 1684 succeeded only in eliciting charges of obscenity in the eighteenth century. The lines are the focus of a growing obsession in eighteenth century Anacreon literature. In the 1770's the 'police des mœurs' has its parallel in the policing of texts. The lines engender pages of defense which suggests an increasing anxiety in pre-revolutionary France about the relation between homosexuality and contemporary corruption; be it a corruption of language, a corruption of the academy, or a corruption of Parisian social geography. In the 1790's the language of denunciation takes root (Moutonnet-Clairfons). The body of Bathylle, however, is maintained, under duress, as a representation of classical perfection and ancient innocence. It emerges, in the 1790's, as apparently both uncorrupted and erotic; yet *anacréontisme* enters into the nineteenth-century with its 'split-off' component of homosexuality paradoxically still integral to the homerotic text.

We might liken these cultural dynamics we have traced to a Freudian *disavowal*. Certainly the historical case of Dacier's missing lines has all the *formal* qualities of this mode of repudiation, as advanced by Freudian psychoanalysis. If the translator is confronted by an *absence*, it is here however less that of the absence of a penis in the girl, signifying 'castration'; than that of the implied presence of the penis in the young man, Bathylle, Dacier's absence now signifying 'homosexuality'. And if the disavowal has the necessary consequence of a *splitting* of the subject - simultaneously but incompatibly maintaining both an attitude of disavowal of the presence of lack *and* recognition of the absence and grasp of



its consequences, in the way of a fetishism<sup>79</sup> - may we not locate this internal split within neoclassicism not only in the separation of high and low, noble and pornographic genres, but internally, in the anacreontic text itself - both materially in the division between poem and anxious commentary, and conceptually in the now fractured object which emerges here as the 'perverse' genre of the anacreontic? It is this constant movement which we have historically traced between knowing and not knowing - repudiation and recognition - that allows us to speak of the homoerotic as a disavowal. But, the question we will now have to attempt to answer is; precisely, disavowal of what?

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<sup>79</sup>Laplanche/Pontalis, 'Disavowal', pp.118-120.



## Chapter 1: Sexuality. Part 2. Homosexuality and eighteenth-century phantasies of social order

Our tracing of a 'homosexual' problematic in the construction of anacreontism has thus far emerged from a consideration of a certain blind spot, paradoxically highly visible, in French classical poetics - Dacier's *étoiles*, taken as a representation of homosexuality. Insofar as that specifically textual representation historically mutated into, or was later *filled in by*, something like 'pederasty' or 'sodomy' - especially from the middle of the eighteenth century - we might now enquire further into the discrete histories of those terms. We might, then, perform in parallel to the first part of this chapter a long-term history of the problematization of 'homosexuality' going from the end of the seventeenth century to the beginning of the nineteenth. Yet this may not be the place to do it. Instead, focusing on a shorter time-scale, we will consider how the figure of 'sodomy' might come to signify in more expansive ways than a delving into the confines of the anacreontic text would lead us to believe. We have indeed already gestured towards the possibility of this broader signification when we came across the revolutionary denunciation of pederasty in anacreontic text.<sup>1</sup> Now, then, it is time to extend our enquiry from the simple fact of disavowal, as we have established it, to the significance of that disavowal. What were the widespread and shared connotations of that pederasty and that sodomy, against which Anacreon was so insistently defended?

We will proceed with some further remarks on the question with which we just left off - disavowal of what?

### Is the 'real' real?

While an understanding of the connotive significations of *pedérastie* or *sodomie* as used by Moutonnet-Clairfons or Anson is important - and will be addressed here - we should keep

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<sup>1</sup>supra. p.42 and Appendix 3.

in mind that, when considering neoclassical homoeroticism, there subsists a *mutable* and *dynamic* relation *between* the discourses of 'homosexuality' and those of classical poetics. Not only does their mutual infiltration historically vary - as we have seen; but we should also remember that the anacreontic, or homoerotic, image is as much determined by discourses on homosexuality as it at the same time re-figures those discourses, not least through its own rules of representability. Furthermore, we ought not to consider this 'disavowal' in the way of an *achieved* separation of Bathylle's 'innocently' beautiful body and the penis which represents homosexual desire; we must not simply assume that the resultant textual figure - the homoerotic body in the text - is independent of, marginal, and decathected from its troubled paratext (footnote, gloss, or commentary): rather what is disavowed is constitutive of the homoerotic - here anacreontic - image or representation. When we speak of 'disavowal', then, we are alluding to a complex dialectic between absence and visibility. The disavowal structures the final image.

How might we think this dynamic relation, this disavowal, which is precisely the image's homosexual 'content'? In their discussion of the psychoanalytic notion of 'Disavowal' (*Verleugnung*), Laplanche and Pontalis offer an interesting commentary upon the nature of the 'real' - that which is being disavowed - in the Freudian text. Disavowal, they note, may be distinguished from 'Repression'. If 'repression' consists in a response to the *inner* drives, or the demands of the id, 'disavowal' consists in a response to - precisely a 'radical repudiation' of - *external reality*. Yet what - or, more precisely, where - is this 'external reality'? If the perception of castration, or the traumatic recognition of a lack or of a gap, is taken to be the original scene of the disavowal, its prototype, in what sense, Laplanche and Pontalis enquire, can that gap simply be taken to be identical to the real, or 'external reality', which, when perceived, is *simultaneously* acknowledged as the traumatic 'fact' of castration? Rather, does not the cognitive perception of the gap have to be read - precisely interpreted - *in the first place* as a mark of 'castration'; not, therefore, a simple and glaring anatomical fact, but an oedipal theory of libidinal relations - in order then to trigger the disavowal. Does not the 'sexual theory of children' in fact precede the

constitution of the traumatic real?<sup>2</sup> The authors ask: "does not the disavowal - whose consequences *in* reality are so obvious - bear upon a factor which *founds* human reality rather than upon a hypothetical 'fact of perception'?"<sup>3</sup>

Now if we take this insight to bear upon that disavowal which is implicit, we have seen, in neoclassical homoerotics, it becomes no longer tenable to read our gap as simply registering a traumatic external reality which is 'real' - now homosexuality or 'sodomy', rather than castration or woman's 'lack of a penis'. And, moreover, which it would be our duty to restore in the manner of a historicizing contextualization, in terms of eighteenth-century 'attitudes' to, or a social history of, homosexuality. Insofar as Dacier's gap and the history of its representation instigate a phantasy of homosexuality - in which the absence, the *indisible* gap, is imminent and structural - it is, in this sense, entirely self-sufficient, needing no other 'social history', no solid 'fact of perception', to explain, or account for it. The 'reality' of eighteenth-century homosexuality is thus fully and exhaustively articulated *in* the text; instigated and disseminated by the reiterated disavowals in the text. By this understanding of the 'real' what is being disavowed in the text is perhaps therefore less a sociological urban practise, doomed to unrepresentability, *hors du texte*, but one *phantasy* of 'homosexuality' which formally structures the absences and presences which constitute the homoerotic figure in the final text. The sociological outside is produced from within the psychic 'interiority' of the text.

Taken in this sense, the homosexual 'real' which is repeatedly disavowed in the history of anacreontism, may be simply merely induced or triggered off - not caused or determined

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<sup>2</sup>"If the disavowal of castration is the prototype - and perhaps even the origin - of the other kinds of disavowal of reality, we are forced to ask what Freud understands by the 'reality' of castration or by the perception of this reality. If it is the woman's 'lack of a penis' that is disavowed, then it becomes difficult to talk in terms of perception or of reality, for an absence is not perceived as such, and it only becomes real in so far as it is related to a conceivable presence. If, on the other hand, it is castration itself which is repudiated, then the object of disavowal would not be a perception - castration never being perceived as such - but rather a theory designed to account for the facts - a 'sexual theory of children'." , Laplanche/Pontalis, p.120.

<sup>3</sup>ibid. p.120.

- by the perception of a 'dangerous' sociological urban practises of same-sex relations; just as the fear of castration hinges on the fact of anatomical difference, yet is not *really* premised upon that difference, but on a pre-existing oedipal theory. We might say that the 'fact' of castration which induces the disavowal is by that theory in fact only retrospectively and ideologically traced back to an 'original' perception of anatomical difference. So to trace Madame Dacier's disavowing omission to a 'really' traumatic, insupportable and unrepresentable scene of sodomy in the social world, even while pretending to liberally recall practises hidden from history, be to legitimate the ideological underpinnings of its self-induced blindness.

On the other hand this subjectivist account of psychic reality is in danger of entirely ignoring what we may call the *irruption of the other*. It is, after all, precisely the unsettling force of an other desire - in the form of Greek 'homosexuality' - which we have just historically traced through our example of a disruption of translation.

*Politically*, such an evasion of the reality of the other's discourse would be just as undesirable. We would not want to throw the baby out with the bathwater by writing out the difference (of women, of homosexuality) as a consequence of locating the trauma of the real and its sources *wholly* within the Freudian subject.

How, then, might we consider the difference of eighteenth-century homosexuality without falling into a negative stereotype - of 'pederasty', of 'sodomy' - to which the delineation of those concepts would be prone?

#### the problem of homosexual content recent art-history

The structuring effect of 'sodomy' on the conception of the homoerotic ideal male nude in the late eighteenth century is subtly accounted for in *Flesh and the Ideal* (1994), Alex Potts' discussion of Winckelmann. To some extent Potts can run free of a post-Foucauldian caveat against positing a homosexual presence in the eighteenth-century Winckelmannian text due to a long tradition, going back, for instance, to Casanova's *Memoirs*, of identifying Winckelmann as 'the son of a cobbler *and a gay man*'. Yet Potts' Winckelmann is already conceived in this text as a fully constructed homosexual desiring

subject; and this assumption may be problematic. Potts' whole account generally turns upon that already formed homosexual subjectivity, for the narrative of *Flesh and the Ideal* is one of a conflict between an already emergent gay subjectivity/psyche and a sociocultural prohibition of homosexuality, out of which emerges Winckelmann's highly charged, neurotic - because symptomatic - readings of classical statuary. He writes:

"In Winckelmann's writings on the ideal male nude, the more disturbing sado-masochistic dramas can be seen as charged by the violence of largely unspoken because rarely contested prohibitions framing male same-sex desire in the culture he inhabited. They play out largely disavowed tensions within his culture's eroticized male self-image."<sup>4</sup>

Potts represents eighteenth-century culture, then, as a Freudian disavowing subject. His account of the psychic dynamic of this subject reveals multiple traumatically induced absences in the homoerotic object: the absence of virile masculinity - in a regressive narcissistic drive, producing the desirable and castrated body of Narcissus (p.166); the disavowal of the feminine, or the 'fact' of castration which was "operating within male subjectivity in the dominantly heterosexual culture of his period" (p.131); and the effacement of homosexuality, producing 'sado-masochistic' scenarios of bodies both dominating and violated. Yet we may ask; what exactly is the nature of that repressed homosexuality - those 'violent prohibitions' - in eighteenth-century France, which crucially structure the final troubled and troubling image of the ideal male nude? And, given those historic prohibitions, what do we mean when we speak of Winckelmann already as a 'gay man'? Finally, in what sense can we establish 'sado-masochism' to be the psychic condition of the eighteenth-century homosexual subject - and in what sense - to whom - would these violent sado-masochistic scenarios be 'disturbing'?

Why, after all, might we *want* the scenario of eighteenth-century homosexuality to be disturbing? Here we might criticize certain queer or gay readings which, in attempting to wrest the historical material out of a heterosexist paradigm, invest articulations of eighteenth-century homoeroticism with radical - radically upsetting - effects, if not

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<sup>4</sup>Potts, 1994, p.5-6.

intentions. Wendy Leeks, for example, would prefer to "queer up" Potts' reading by introducing the matter of (homosexual) *sex* - which she feels is missing from the account - in the place of the basically heterosexual structure of desire, which emerges, she argues, through Potts' reading of Winckelmann's text.<sup>5</sup> Yet equally we may question this process of queering up as anachronistic when it takes lesbianism or homosexuality as transhistorically unvarying *other* structures of desire, which are always and everywhere deeply inimical to an equally unhistoricized and undifferentiated sexual Symbolic order.<sup>6</sup>

If, as I would argue, homosexuality is spectrally disembodied - as a sort of absent yet ruinous force of desire - both in Potts' text and consequently in the constitution of its historical object - and equally in Leeks' ahistorical *concept* of an always radical (homo)sexuality - it may now be useful to review the evidence of the articulated *presences* of homosexualities in eighteenth century France. Only if we do that can we determine how far these diverse presences might conform to this pervasive stereotype - in the study of the homoerotic ideal male nude - of a discretely *dangerous*, and deforming, desire.

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<sup>5</sup>"...it is not fundamentally homosexual activity which gives Winckelmann's texts their erotic charge. Homosexuality implies a sexual relation (impossible or not) between men. Here there is only Winckelmann and rock." Whereas in Lacanian terms homosexuality (as distinguished from homosocial 'homosexuality') is, generally and for instance in Potts' text, truly expunged from - therefore disturbing to - the Symbolic: "Lacan's use of the term 'homosexual' refers to the demonstration that heterosexuality is always a relation of the same, a tie between men 'outsidensex'. The jouissance of woman, beyond the phallus, remains mystified; (homo)sexual relations between men and between women are left out of account." Leeks, p.106.

<sup>6</sup>this criticism of anachronism may also be charged against Whitney Davis' article on late eighteenth-century homoeroticism, in which he attempts to 'queer up' (not his term) Girodet's *Endymion*, and consequently a whole range of late eighteenth-early nineteenth-century homoerotic imagery. We will specifically take issue here with his assertion that late-eighteenth-century homoerotic imagery was implicated in the network of a homosexual subculture. Davis writes: "Considering, however, that a flourishing subculture built around male-male sexual relations imagined and identified itself in many ways, one is not surprised to find that inter-male sodomitical relations could be depicted in quasi-pornographic images produced for specialized circulation or covert viewing." Davis, 1994, p.188. Davis is thinking of the orgiastic illustrations to Sade's *Juliette*; but here, and in Chapter 4, we will question the evidence for such a subculture; and furthermore suggest that this gay reading ignores the larger social phantasmic significance of late-eighteenth-century homosexuality, or sodomy, by delimiting it to a subcultural practise.

### the archival evidence

To look at these questions we will focus on the police records from which Michael Rey and Michel Lever have constructed a social history of homosexuality in eighteenth-century France.<sup>7</sup> What do they tell us of the historically varying significance of a 'sodomitical' relation between, or amongst, men, which occurs equally in the neoclassical text, in the space of the Salon, and across the geography of eighteenth-century Paris? What kind of *dangers* - if any - did that relation pose? And to whom?

At the outset, it is clear that a sociology of homosexuality in eighteenth-century France can only be established from the existing archives. Yet the highly selective nature of these archives - and the consequently sketchy picture of pre-modern homosexuality that emerges - must itself pose itself as an object of analysis; the structural *gaps* in the archive may be as significant as the concrete information they provide. We will see, indeed, that in attempting to produce a holistic view of eighteenth-century homosexualities, we are confronted everywhere by missing links; we will therefore have to *deduce* from the existing fragments of evidence the changing significance of homosexuality in eighteenth-century France.

Early this century (1902) Paul D'Estrée (pseudonym of Henri Quentin) published in serial form, in the review *La Médecine anecdotique et littéraire*, a series of studies, later collected and published under the title *Les Infames sous l'Ancien Régime*. The studies were based on his researches in the existing police files of the *Archives de la Bastille*, section *Administration du Lieutenant général de police*, stamped *sodomie*. The same year the Bibliothèque des Curieux published the anticlerical *Prêtres et Moines non conformistes en amour*, also culled from the same archives by G. Dubois-Dessaule. Not until 1920 were the legal proceedings of the sodomy trials, conserved in the Bibliothèque Nationale, published as *Procès de Sodomie aux XVIe, XVIIe, et XVIIIe siècles*.<sup>8</sup>

D'Estrée's groundbreaking work revealed a multiplicity of 'cases' in which accusations of

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<sup>7</sup>Rey, 1987 and 1989, Lever, 1985.

<sup>8</sup>see, *Cahiers Gai Kitsch Camp*, no. 24, 1994, p. V-VIII.



infamous or sodomitical behaviour emerged from or were received by the Lieutenant of police under the ancien régime. Central to the collection of documents are those referring to the trial and execution of Deschauffours in May 1726. Central, because, unusually, this infamous trial and execution were widely commented upon by contemporaries<sup>9</sup>; and central, because any consideration of male same-sex relations in eighteenth-century France has to read the existing fragments of evidence about everyday practises against this - we will see - sometimes *paradoxical* fact of the dramatic, and horrific, public execution of sodomites. Interestingly, the reason why Deschauffour's execution (he was burnt alive on the Place de Grève on 25th May 1726) was especially commented upon by contemporaries was that the harshness of the sentence was beginning by that date to seem anachronistic. A certain meaning of 'sodomy' and the 'sodomite' was already becoming redundant. So, as well as placing homosexuality structurally within the symbolic and actual social-sexual relations - within a problem of social order - we need to be attentive also to conceptual shifts in notions of homosexuality.

#### the waning of 'Sodomy'

Maurice Lever, in *Les Buchers de Sodome* (1985) surveys, from the existing evidence of trials and police records, the instances of punished crimes of sodomy. He found that there were, in fact, far fewer public burnings of sodomites in the eighteenth century than previously - until the Revolution seven in all, and these mostly in the first half of the century.<sup>10</sup> After Deschauffours in 1726 just two are recorded. The *affaire Diot-Lenoir* in 1750; and for the last time Jacques François Pascal, a monk, in 1783. Pascal was torn limb from limb, then burned alive as "débauché contre nature et assassin".

Yet we might reasonably wonder in what sense those exemplary public displays of punishment were really *about* homosexuality at all. In each instance cited the charge of sodomy consists of interwoven, multiple factors; to the extent that it is not easy for us to determine the exact nature of the perceived crime. For example, the Deschauffours case -

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<sup>9</sup>for example, a 'comedy' written in 1739, *L'Ombre de Deschauffour*.

<sup>10</sup>Lever (1985), p.240.

the most notorious sodomy trial and execution of the eighteenth century - involved the abduction and murder of minors and an organized network of sodomitical activities at Court; only the combination of the two factors determined the harshness of the sentence and the peculiar rhetoric of denunciation which surrounded it.<sup>11</sup> Pascal, in 1783, was also condemned for a double sin, "débauché contre nature *et assassin*".<sup>12</sup> Only the *affaire Diot-Lenoir* appears not to have had any extraneous circumstances; historians are generally baffled by the harshness of the sentence, but it seems at least that it may partly be explained by the unusual social anonymity - no community links - of the victims<sup>13</sup>; as well as by the particular state of tension between the police and the people, which culminated in 1750 with the scandal of the "enlèvements d'enfants".<sup>14</sup> The sodomy trials need to be placed, then, within broader structural tensions between the law and the community.

These are dramatic *exceptions*; and while it may be argued that they were no less effective across the whole arena of sexuality for that, we ought to note that *usually* the charge of sodomy, if it was not accompanied by violence or violation of a child, resulted in a verbal reprimand or a couple of weeks at Bicêtre, depending on the social class of the transgressor. Punishment for sodomy in the ancien regime was, in fact, highly arbitrary,

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<sup>11</sup>Lever notes a case of doublespeak here, one reason for condemnation being offered in the courts, another to the public - "on condamnait l'assassin mais on brûlait le sodomite", Lever, p.372.

<sup>12</sup>on Pascal see Lever, p.385, and Coward, p.243-244. Coward adds that Pascal's sentence was especially merciless because he had stabbed a 'petit savoyard' seventeen times for refusing his advances.

<sup>13</sup>see Barbier's description of the execution on the Place de Grève, July 1750: "Bref, l'exécution a été faite pour faire un exemple, d'autant que l'on dit que ce crime devient très commun et qu'il ya beaucoup de gens à Bicêtre pour ce fait. Et comme ces deux ouvriers n'avaient point de relations avec des personnes de distinction, soit de la cour, soit de la ville, et qu'ils n'ont apparemment déclaré personne, cet exemple s'est fait sans aucune consequence pour les suites." Barbier, *Journal*, p.148-9. We will discuss below how more usually the community regulated, without demonizing, homosexuality in eighteenth-century France.

<sup>14</sup>on the especially urgent civil unrest in Paris in the years 1747-51 see Farge/Revel, *The Rules of Rebellion*, Polity Press, 1991, p.23, and Coward, *Attitudes*, p.243 and p.253, note 58.

depended on class and community relations, and was entirely in the hands of - therefore at the discretion of - the Lieutenant of Police, even before it reached the juridicial courts.

But if `sodomy' had always been, in Foucault's words, an "utterly confused category"<sup>15</sup>, what becomes unavoidably clear from Lever's *Les Buchers de Sodome* is that from the 1730's onwards the charge of `sodomy' becomes less and less compelling, if not entirely redundant. The vicious execution of the last - Pascal's - 1783 sentence is indeed extraordinary and mysterious at that late date; Lever remarks that such an execution for *any* crime had not been seen since Damien in March 1757.

Yet a waning pre-modern `sodomy' did not simply cede to a modern notion of `homosexuality'<sup>16</sup>; there is another third term which it might be useful to consider here - that of *pédérastie*. If this term - pederasty - is in our time, as *paedophilia*, become the latest manifestation of the production of the dangerously perverse in normative discourses of sexuality, we ought to recognize that in the eighteenth century its usage implied a specifically modern *refusal* of the demonizing theological discourse of `sodomy'. Chronologically, the term `pederasty' broke<sup>↑</sup>s the change from sodomy to homosexuality - it comes into prevalent usage during the transformational latter half of the eighteenth

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<sup>15</sup>Foucault, 1990, p.101.

<sup>16</sup>Foucault's narration of the shift occurs in *History of Sexuality, vol 1.*: "As defined by the ancient civil or canonical codes, sodomy was a category of forbidden acts; their perpetrator was nothing more than the juridicial subject of them. The nineteenth-century homosexual became a personage, a past, a case history, and a childhood, in addition to being a type of life, a life form, and a morphology, with an indiscreet anatomy and possibly a mysterious physiology. Nothing that went into his total composition was unaffected by his sexuality. It was everywhere present in him: at the root of all his actions because it was their insidious and indefinitely active principle; written immodestly on his face and body because it was a secret that always gave itself away. It was consubstantial with him, less as a habitual sin than as a singular nature. We must not forget that the psychological, psychiatric, medical category of homosexuality was constituted from the moment it was characterized - Westphal's famous article of 1870 on "contrary sexual sensations" can stand as its date of birth - less by a type of sexual relations than by a certain quality of sexual sensibility, a certain way of inverting the masculine and feminine in oneself. Homosexuality appeared as one of the forms of sexuality when it was transposed from the practise of sodomy onto a kind of interior androgyny, a hermaphrodism of the soul. The sodomite had been a temporary aberration; the homosexual was now a species.", Foucault, 1990, p.43.

century as the preferred mode of description of homosexual acts; and it is therefore complexly situated between the constitution of those flanking discourses, the discontinuities of which Foucault so memorably charted. Furthermore, structurally the term *pédérastie* unexpectedly linked diverse discursive sites during the latter half of the eighteenth century; that of the language of high literary and visual neoclassicism - its derivation and pedigree being distinctly hellenist<sup>17</sup> - and that of an emerging police discourse; an outcome of the daily, and increasingly efficient, surveillance of Parisian social urban space. *Pédérastie* links, then, the erudite classical text - as we have encountered it in the debate over Anacreon's sexuality - with a wider problem of social order, *hors du texte*.<sup>18</sup>

If we now turn to Michael Rey's revelatory sociohistorical researches, constructed out of those police sources - "Police and Sodomy in Eighteenth-Century Paris: From Sin to Disorder"<sup>19</sup>, and "Parisian Homosexuals Create a Lifestyle, 1700-1750: The Police Archives"<sup>20</sup> - we will find that these two studies throw light not on the exceptional 'sodomitical' executions, but on *everyday* aspects of homosexuality within 'normal' urban social relations. To some extent they help us to delineate a geography of deviancy - which we will yet hesitate to call 'perverse' - in eighteenth-century Paris.

Rey's evidence seems to point to the existence of well-known 'cruising' grounds, the development of 'codes' of recognition, and the evidence of active sodomy between men as

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<sup>17</sup>its classical derivation is obvious; "*Pédéraste* n.m. emprunté (1584) au grec paiderastês "qui aime les jeunes garçons, les adolescents". mot composé de pais, paidos "enfant, jeune garçon" et de erastes "qui aime, amant". *Dictionnaire historique de la langue française*, article 'Pédéraste', Paris, 1992.

<sup>18</sup>see Courouve, *Vocabulaire de l'homosexualité masculine*, article 'Pédéraste/Pédérastie', for instances of the term's usages in both literary and police discourse.

<sup>19</sup>Rey, 1989.

<sup>20</sup>reprinted in Maccubin, 1987. I have also referred to a slightly revised version of this paper, "1700-1750, Les Sodomites Parisiens Créent Un Mode De Vie", in *Cahiers Gai Kitsch Camp*, no. 24, 1994, pp.XI-XXXIII.

sexual practise; and from all this it has been deduced that there was a growing 'sodomitical subculture' in eighteenth-century France.<sup>21</sup> Yet I should like to make a case, from the same evidence, for regarding homosexuality in eighteenth-century France as situated within a *complex* of 'deviant' practises, which may paradoxically not be entirely excluded, and therefore set apart as a subcultural practise, from what we might want to think of as the 'normality' of eighteenth-century Parisian social space. Furthermore, if by the end of the eighteenth-century, homosexuality *did* pose a danger, it was less one of a threatening and radically other discrete homosexual subculture; rather the sodomitical figure may have been one way through which 'dangerous' revolutionary phantasies of communitarianism might be imagined - helping to figure, therefore, an alternative, imminently revolutionary, principle of affiliation.

#### The production of deviance in eighteenth-century Paris

Rey drew upon a body of evidence, the police reports of the surveillance of 'homosexuals'. These remain intact from three distinct periods; the years 1723 to 1748, 1748-9 and 1771 to 1781. We can deduce from them certain changes in the treatment and definition of the social 'problem' of eighteenth-century homosexuality.

The reports of the *police des sodomites* provide us with various and fragmented information. They are extensive, *discursive* enough in the early years - 1723 to 1748 - for us to be able to form some idea of what we might think of as homosexual 'codes' in that period. After that, in the second half of the century, methods of surveillance themselves change. The reports of the '*patrouille de pédérastie*' of 1771 to 1778 now consist of hardly more than a list of names, or suspects. The 1740's seems to be decisive in this

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<sup>21</sup>on the development of gay subcultures in eighteenth-century northern Europe see Randolph Trumbach, "Sodomitical Subcultures, Sodomitical Roles, and the Gender Revolution of the Eighteenth Century", in Maccubin (1985), pp.109-21. Trumbach identifies a profound shift in the conceptualization and practise of male homosexual behaviour in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries. He writes, "In this culture the sodomite became an individual interested exclusively in his own gender and inveterately effeminate and passive." We will take issue with this supposition as it has influenced art-historical understandings of an already constituted set of 'gay' signs in late eighteenth century visual culture. See Davis, 1994, p.198, note 36.

shift in policing methods, which itself significantly re-defines the aims of surveillance; whereas the earlier archive shows that the police informally regulated potential social disorder from *within* the social, the later one hints at a police now alienated from the people, and only concerned to maintain control - anonymously - *over* the restless populace. This change brings with it marked differences in the representation and conceptualization of 'pederasty'. But first, what kind of picture emerges of the *early*-eighteenth-century homosexual - that revealed by the earlier pre-1740 archive?

The detailed reports were dictated by agent provocateurs - called *mouches* - to the Lieutenant de Police, who was charged by '*ordre du Roi*' with the policing of sodomites.<sup>22</sup> The *mouches*, themselves former sexual transgressors, encouraged those who solicited them to give as much information as possible about their desires and acquaintances in an attempt to secure a charge.

According to Rey, these archives attest to a density of 'cruising' spots in eighteenth-century Paris. "Like numerous heterosexual couples, or like prostitutes, homosexuals did not hesitate to engage in sexual relations in any places which were somewhat sheltered from view".<sup>23</sup> Public sexual encounters were, unsurprisingly, a necessary corollary to the lack of domestic privacy in ancien regime Paris. The most well known cruising sites were the Tuileries, the Luxembourg, and the Palais-Royal gardens; and these were quite as well known as sites of female prostitution. Indeed, Rey points out that the term for soliciting, *raccrochage*, was used for both cases. Another place for making a pick-up, less exposed, were taverns, some of which had 'complicitous' owners. One of the *mouches* reported in 1723:

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<sup>22</sup>the creation of police for the prevention of disorder dates, according to Rey, to about 1671; preceding therefore by only a decade the "Great Confinement" of the absolutist Classical age, of which Foucault speaks in *Histoire de la Folie*. We might, however, trace the origin of a police force with distinct responsibilities - distinct from the judicial courts - to an Edict of March 1667 which gave the police a wide remit; the responsibility for the security of the city (fires, floods, food supplies), for the inspection of markets, inns, lodging-houses and brothels; the surveillance of public meetings, and any seditions or disorders to which they might give rise, and of the proper regulations concerning the business of printing and publishing.

<sup>23</sup>Rey, 'Parisian Homosexuals', 1987, p.180.

"Il court toutes les promenades et lorsqu'il trouve quelqu'un seul, il l'accoste et lui propose d'aller faire collation. Il a toujours grande attention de demander une chambre en particulier dans l'intention qu'il parviendra à satisfaire sa passion infâme."<sup>24</sup>

Perhaps, then, we can speak of an urban geography of *deviancy* - Rey calls it the 'geography of "la Bonnaventure"' - of which the sodomite or pederast was part. But how exactly ought we to understand this term 'deviant'? How might we begin<sup>to</sup> differentiate the everyday intractable 'deviant' action from the more radical and deeply upsetting 'perverse' action? Surely they have a different relation to the Law. If we understand this sociological term - deviancy - in the sense of a "socially proscribed departure from 'normality'"<sup>25</sup>, how then do we delineate the boundaries of this 'normal' in the historically specific life of eighteenth-century Paris? If we might broadly include within the orbit of the deviant such 'everyday' acts as foul language, keeping bad company, heavy drinking, immoderate dressing - all socially proscribed but not constituting specific criminalities - and if we take heed of the remarkably *noisy* picture of eighteenth-century Parisian social life offered by Arlette Farge in *La Vie Fragile*<sup>26</sup> - in which she demonstrates that social 'deviancy' was both ubiquitous and indeed typical - might we not regard most incidences of pederasty throughout the century as effectively workaday; as precisely the 'normality' which may include historically changing, yet structurally fluid other 'deviancies' within its shifting boundaries? Does not the 'vice' of eighteenth-century pederasty conform rather better to this notion of the *deviant* than to the theologically *perverse* - because *contra naturum* - 'crime' of sodomy, which was already, we have noted, beginning to seem anachronistic by the 1730's? Less 'against nature', the phenomenon of pederasty seems to have become increasingly assimilated into the imaginary and policed social space of Paris as the century progressed.

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<sup>24</sup>Rey, 1994, p.XIII.

<sup>25</sup>one definition offered by Abercrombie/Hill/Turner in *The Penguin Dictionary of Sociology*, London, 1984.

<sup>26</sup>Farge (1986)

### The police and the people: a dialectic of the normal?

The forms of deviance in eighteenth-century France are inseparable from the pervasive aura of *suspicion* created by the Parisian police.<sup>27</sup> Yet in the ancien regime there subsisted not so much a *dialectic* - which presupposes distinct antinomies - between 'low life' popular deviant practises and the higher authoritarian powers of the police, as a fluid interpenetration. For example, if we remember that the informer *mouches* were conscripted by the Lieutenant de Police from a list of *former* (sometimes sexual) transgressors - in lieu of spending time in Bicêtre - the lines of power and knowledge now come to seem considerably more complex. In fact, this one social group - the *mouches* - which was *par excellence* of a deviant type - was one through which the police and the people intimately met. Transgressors were at the same time a crucial part of the police surveillance *machine*; immanent, therefore, and not entirely excluded from the Law.<sup>28</sup>

And then can we really speak of homosexual 'codes'? That economy of suspicion and evasion had the effect of producing the 'signs' of pederasty in early modern Europe as shifting and mobile. From the ambiguous 'descriptions' of the early-eighteenth-century Parisian homosexual it is clear that he was not perceived to bear the marks of a sexual identity upon the body or in his comportment - as will be Foucault's nineteenth-century 'homosexual' - but only behaved a little more suggestively lewdly than was usually socially acceptable in public spaces. Rather than such overt, unproblematically *legible* signs of 'homosexuality', a subtle dialectic subsisted between the visibility and absence of an *intention* - not an identity - which, it seems, was most often kept at bay. The *mouches* reported methods of solicitation; a necessary move at least to prove intent. Yet they do not quite reveal, I think, a secure or lasting set of gay 'codes' - which we might retrospectively want to recognize in these fleeting gestures, in our search, or desire, to

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<sup>27</sup>on the fragile and shifting relations between the police and the people, especially in the years 1747-51 see Farge (1991); on the notion of the Parisian underworld - made up of vagabonds, prostitutes, delinquents - produced in police discourse, especially in the troubled year 1749, p.39. See also Roche, pp.271-277.

<sup>28</sup>on the *mouches*, who were drawn from the city's prisons, See Williams, p.106, and Farge, p.21. Williams cites a case of a 'lesbian' mouche, Marie Dion, who, in 1750, exacted sexual demands from her arrestees in return for a favourable testament of innocence.



produce an eighteenth-century homosexual 'subculture'. Even if it can be argued that the indeterminacy of the forms of gay soliciting (*raccrochage*) is generally implicit in any censorious heterosexist culture, still in early eighteenth-century France, the evidence seems to suggest, the police discourse on daily sodomitical behaviours simply *stops* without further ado at the various manifestations of an intention to simply perform a lewd action. Behind the early police discourse there seems to be no suspicion of an identifiable organized social grouping, or of an individual sexual-psychic disposition - only of an immanent antisocial action, no worse than any other<sup>29</sup>, which is announced by the most trivial of gestures. The length of a stare, for example, could be quite crucial:

"Étant venu près de moi, me faisant tous les signaux que ces infâmes ont accoutumé de faire, pour pouvoir me parler", "étant venu près de moi, me regardant sous le nez par plusieurs fois", fixant "avec affectation", "ayant pissé ledit Gouffier plusieurs fois devant moi, étant un des signaux que tous ces infâmes ont par devers eux"<sup>30</sup>.

Furthermore, Rey's conclusions as to how men actually made (homosexual) love suggests less a rigid distinction from heterosexual codes or roles than an extended arena of virility. From the more extensive and complete files of the years 1723 and 1724, "it is possible to calculate the number and kind of homosexual propositions" (Rey, 1987, p.183). The results suggest that sodomy was practised sometimes as an adjunct to married sexual relations<sup>31</sup>, and that notions of masculine virility as active were important in maintaining evaluations as to which sexual and erotic acts were considered more or less taboo. Rey presents a table of sexual practises - made up of active sodomy, passive sodomy, active or passive sodomy, fellatio, and kissing - and figures for the years 1723 and 1724 of their

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<sup>29</sup>this point is corroborated by Coward, *Attitudes*; "Ravaisson (editor of *Archives de la Bastille*) comments that D'Argenson's policemen were no more shocked by acts of sodomy than they were by acts which infringed the rules of Lent and the same neutrality is observable in police reports throughout the century." Coward, p.239. D'Argenson was Lieutenant of Police from 1697-1718.

<sup>30</sup>Rey, 1994, p.XIV.

<sup>31</sup>in both 1723 and 1737-8 married men constituted one third of those arrested. *ibid.*, p.185.

respective frequency, or desirability amongst Parisian homosexuals, as attested by the *mouches*. Highest on the list is active sodomy, lowest is kissing. 'Active or passive sodomy' comes second in frequency to active sodomy. Evidently, what was considered most taboo, or most unmanly for practising homosexuals, were fellatio, kissing and a sole preference for passive sodomy; if this last was the most associated with a 'degrading' feminine position, fellatio was, according to Rey, commonly considered to be disgusting, or depraved.<sup>32</sup> It seems that being sodomised, one could only maintain one's virility on the grounds of reciprocity, but not desire. Nevertheless the link between homosexuality and effeminacy - the definition of sexuality in terms of gender - might have always been available as a means of disparagement and degradation *when needed* - strategically therefore - whereas the desire to sodomise a man more often simply was interpreted as misdirected virility, or excessive passion.<sup>33</sup> Gender differentiation, the staking out of a particular masculine - albeit unusual - erotic territory, seems to be more important here than a differentiation of homo from heterosexuality.<sup>34</sup>

#### Regulation by the community

One important point to emerge from Rey's researches is that everyday reactions to homosexual soliciting or acts within small localized communities (Paris, he reminds us, was still arranged like a series of small villages) seem to be far less powerfully indictive than the social symbolic condemnations - through spectacular execution - would suggest. Any man 'making a pass' would immediately have been publicly reproached by his closest neighbours and the community for stepping out of line, but his deviancy would not necessarily mark him out as unassimilable. While it may have been located at the boundary of acceptability, the pederastic gesture - the deviant act - was contained when it became public by the community. Rey remarks; "The neighbourhood rebuked them as

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<sup>32</sup>ibid. p.184.

<sup>33</sup>as in the understanding, from Bayle onwards of Anacreon's 'excessive' passion. supra. p.41.

<sup>34</sup>whereas Courouve (1981) suggests that the differentiation between sexualities is already by this time in place. He writes; "We may conclude that by the middle of the eighteenth century, the linguistic setting was established", Courouve, 1981, p.14.

men who had gone too far, who had done something "dirty". They did not incur general hostility, but simply a silent reproach or a physical action such as might have repelled an intruder."<sup>35</sup>

How then might a bodily configuration which, on an everyday level, might be considered merely excessive or distasteful - or, in aesthetic terms as *laid* - be at the same time regarded as a mortifying 'sin against nature'? The evidence we have reviewed from the police files seems to sit oddly with the heavy social symbolic condemnation of 'sodomy', and those spectacular but dwindling *étatiste* executions. How might we explain this contradiction? We should first note that historically there was an overlap - complex and shifting - between religious and civil statist discourses of homosexuality; between the language of *sodomie* and the language of *pédérastie*. The religious indictment of homosexuality as *péché de sodomie*, as a sin against God seemed to have reached its apex in France at the beginning of the renaissance. At least, according to Claude Courouve, it was then that the practise of burning sodomites at the stake historically reached its apogee.<sup>36</sup> The seventeenth century was hardly less stringent in this regard. By the early eighteenth century religious discourse on sodomy comfortably coexisted with an emerging laicized - juridicial and police - discourse. But, again, the 1740's seems to have been a decisive point in the breakdown of this collusion. The former denunciatory naming of the sodomite and the religious connotations of that term became increasingly less observed. If the notion of 'sodomy' prevailed - notably in the writing of Sade, which in turn provides us, through, for example, Klossowski's reading, with a millennial version of the 'perverse' figure of eighteenth-century homosexuality<sup>37</sup> - it may be considered as a merely residual (and renewed) representation of what, by the middle of the eighteenth century was increasingly coming to be considered in differently signifying terms, now as 'pederasty', within the problematic of 'social order'.

That shift is evident in the police records. Until the 1740's the police assumed the moral

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<sup>35</sup>Rey, 1994, p. XVIII.

<sup>36</sup>Courouve (1985), p.9.

<sup>37</sup>see below, Chapter 4.

language of the church. As well as the charge of provocation which the *mouche* would have secured, a particular case was often accompanied by denunciations with distinctly religious overtones. One of the most zealous of these denouncers was the abbé Théro, who, from 1723 to about 1740, unremittingly tracked down sodomites, many of them ecclesiastics, and recommended the harshest sentences, burning at the stake, or exile. Théro's language is itself powerfully excorsizing:

"C'est un loup ravissant et une peste à la porte de notre bergerie. Je connais depuis longtemps sa détestable vie. Il a corrompu entre autres et jeté dans la débauche deux enfants de famille que j'ai taché de remettre dans le bon chemin, qui ne m'ont rien déguisé. J'ai passé hier une bonne partie de l'après-diner avec un jeune homme de vingt ans qui a eu le malheur d'avoir affaire à lui, qui était du souper de dimanche... et qui m'a avoué des choses qui me font horreur."<sup>38</sup>

In the period during which Hérault was Lieutenant de Police (1725-40), sodomites were `systematically interrogated' about the regularity with which they attended confession. Erica-Marie Benabou, in his study of *La Prostitution et la Police des Moeurs au XVIIIe siècle* (1987) remarks that these religious elements of sin and the confessional were even especially reserved for sodomites: "Rien de tel pour les prostituées. Jamais le crime qu'elles commettent contre la religion n'est désigné comme tel par les autorités qui les arrêtent."<sup>39</sup>

Yet the linguistic and conceptual overlaying of police and church did not last. From the 1740's there is a marked change in police procedures. No longer detailing individual encounters and specific acts - through the technique of the confessional - the reports become, according to Rey, now little more than a list of suspects, henceforth termed *pédérastes*.<sup>40</sup> The reasons for the break between the Church and the police, apart from a

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<sup>38</sup>Paul D'Estrée, *Les Infames sous l'Ancien Régime*, Paris, 1902, p.15.

<sup>39</sup>Benabou, 1987, p.181.

<sup>40</sup>Rey dates the disappearance of the term `sodomite' from the police reports - and the concomitant usage of `pederast' - precisely, to 1738. Rey, (1989), p.143.

generalized 'desacralization' in the social world of eighteenth-century French elite<sup>41</sup>, are difficult to determine. However, we may note that with the Lieutenancy of Feydau de Marville, beginning precisely in 1740, a general overhaul of police procedure, personnel, and a restructuration of its Departments was put into place; and the new dispensation continued until the Revolution. *Pédérastie* becomes implicated then, if not entirely refashioned by, the growing 'professionalization' of the police corps<sup>42</sup>, or, we might say, the formalization of the Law.<sup>43</sup> We may think of this change as either a relaxation of controls, or as a step in the direction of an increasingly efficient beaurocratic state control of sexuality.<sup>44</sup>

But whichever, undoubtedly the shift from sodomy to pederasty was effectively kinder to those individuals who were their common referent. Towards the end of the century, in 1778, of the twenty-nine *patrouilles de pédérastie* which were inaugurated by inspector Desurbois to oversee "tous les lieux fréquentés par des pédérastes et des gens suspects du vice de pédérastie" only two arrests were made, and then one immediately dropped.<sup>45</sup> The reports of the *patrouilles* state that "par les différentes marches, recherches, et observations que ledit Desurbois a faites, il a été vu et remarqué nombre de pédérastes,

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<sup>41</sup>see on this the classic study, Daniel Mornet, *Les origines intellectuelles de la Révolution française 1715-1787*, Paris 1933.

<sup>42</sup>henceforth - until 1789 - twenty-five Departments are overseen by Inspectors and/or Commissioners. One of these twenty-five is given over to 'pédérastie'; some of the others survey groups as diverse as pawnbrokers and usurers, charlatans, wetnurses, foreigners, and confidence men (*escrocs*). On the 1740 restructuration, see Williams (1979), p.94-95, 1; also Table 5, p.101, which presents an interesting breakdown, in the form of 'Structural Divisions of the Police Departments 1750-1789', of typologies of deviance in mid to late-eighteenth-century Police discourse.

<sup>43</sup>on the gradual incommensurability of the 'crime' of sodomy with new enlightened notions of the principle of law, which ultimately led to the decriminalization of sodomy in the redrafted *Code Penal* of 1791, see Courouve, "1791 Law Reform in France", 1985.

<sup>44</sup>comparatively, we may note that in the German states too the collusion of sacred and secular punishing powers seems similarly to have ceded to police/state jurisdiction, by the mid-eighteenth century, especially on matters of sexual transgression. Henceforth sexual disorder is linked to a crime against the state. On the situation in Germany see Hull (1996), p.67, note 51.

<sup>45</sup>Benabou, p.184.

dont plusieurs reconnus et déjà arrêtés, roder, raccrocher, et parler avec la plus grand hardiesse; mais aucun n'a pu être surpris en flagrant délit et n'a été arrêté."<sup>46</sup>

One could consider this report as demonstrating a shift from the surveillance of `acts' to the surveillance of `identities', *pédérastes*; and therefore as evidence of the birth-pangs of the nineteenth-century criminalized `homosexual'. Yet equally it may be possible to argue that the fact that charges of imputed criminality demonstrably *decrease* as surveillance increases through the eighteenth-century, is indicative rather of a local historical change in the relations between the police and the people towards the end of the century. We could thus deduce from this changed police discourse a growing alienation from their `subjects', *le peuple*; as well as an increasing requirement on the part of a police, now increasingly desirous of `professionalizing' itself, to delineate more properly the object of its scrutiny. One is struck, above all, by how the phenomena of *pédérastie*, by the 1770's, has become normalized. The subjects of surveillance have attained a full social status. No longer de-ontologized as *contra naturum*, nor abandoned to expulsion or confinement, this form of deviancy has now become fairly unproblematically incorporated as a visible presence into the physical and moral landscape of the city. If the scenario of surveillance - the *objectification* of the *pédéraste* - is unpleasant, compared to the abbé Théro's hysterical visions of `sodomy' it is nevertheless workmanlike.

### Urban order and the problem of disinfecting the city

Yet the very fact that police surveillance was on the increase in the 1770's suggests that the *patrouilles de pédérastie* may only have stepped up their activities as part of a broader strategy to allay some pervasive `pre-revolutionary' social anxiety; an anxiety, we should add, not necessarily *about* homosexuality although *pédérastie* may have been mobilized as a rhetorical device through which to articulate increasingly visible sociopolitical tensions. We might now consider, then, that if *pédérastie* had, by the third quarter of the eighteenth century effectively been emptied of the former demonic connotations of its earlier historical form, `sodomy', the onset of the Revolution once more gave it a wider symbolic

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<sup>46</sup>cited by Benabou, p.184.

currency. If in the 1770's the renewed visibility of 'pederasty' in the capital emerged from an increasing sensitivity to the 'moral disorders' of the populace at large, pederasty may have been implicated, then, in what was perceived to be the imminent *dissolution* of a fragile urban order.<sup>47</sup>

How, then, by extension, might the figure of sodomy in pre-revolutionary France instigate a phantasy of a new, radically communitarian social order? The issue of the moral infection of the city in the 1770's was played around the perceived breakdown of class. In the eighteenth century one of the traditional ways of referring to homosexuality had been as the *beau vice*. That term harboured within it assumptions that homosexual relations originated in debauched court circles, a vice of the aristocracy. The stereotype, of course, survived well into the nineteenth century. But, certainly in the 1770's, there seemed to be a growing recognition, accompanied by anxiety, that *le peuple* were fast being contaminated. By 1784 Mouffle d'Angerville considered the struggle already lost:

"Ce vice qui s'appelait autrefois le beau vice, parce qu'il n'était affecté qu'aux grands seigneurs, aux gens d'esprit ou aux Adonis, est devenu si à la mode qu'il n'est point aujourd'hui d'ordre de l'État depuis les ducs jusqu'aux laquais et au peuple qui n'en soit infecté."<sup>48</sup>

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<sup>47</sup>accordingly Benabou (1987) notes the resurfacing of repression of public prostitution (although not of private brothels) in the decade 1770-1780; this culminated in the alarmist strictures of a new police ordonnance, dated november 1778. He notes that the police memoirs of this period are increasingly preoccupied with a "relâchement des mœurs, de la gangrène de débauche qui infligete la capitale", Benabou, p.26-29.

<sup>48</sup>Bachaumont, *Mémoires secrets*, Tome 23, 13/10/1783. This, of course, begs the question; whether increasing homosexual visibility in the 1770's threatens the social order, or whether accusations of homosexual behaviours are seen to follow from violations of the social order. The fact that homosexuality in eighteenth-century France may only become *visible* during especially unstable sociopolitical moments - hence the discontinuities in the historical record - underlines the very specific conditions of its representability. To return to our initial discussion of disavowal; the 'real' and the textual troping of sodomy may be understood as taking place within the same psychic space. In Bachaumont's text the anxieties are mapped onto each other fairly seamlessly.

The structural principle by which the `perverse' in D'Angerville's text is imagined is neither one of reversal (going backwards), nor one of the world turned upside-down (an exchange of conventional social/sexual positions). It is rather one of levelling. The moral point of the writer is revealed in the movement from "*affecté*" to "*infecté*".

Homosexuality in this text begins as an `affectation' of the upper orders, then becomes *à la mode* - spreading across social boundaries, though still superficially - and finally ends by `infecting' *le peuple*, through the mediators, the *laquais*.<sup>49</sup> Within the space of this short text, then, one model of homosexuality has been transformed - or its history briefly narrated - from homosexuality as individual libertarian *goût*, to homosexuality as widespread social disease<sup>50</sup> - now perceived as both uncontrollable and indiscriminate.

While on the local level of a sexual politics an emergent heterosexual/homosexual distinction may have functioned the better to define and police the latter, in more global terms the very grouping of `pederasts' at the same time threatened to dissolve that other vital difference, one which became increasingly prominent in the 1780's - the difference of *class*. If all orders were feared to be "infected", then all would be seen to merge indistinguishably - possibly even radically so.<sup>51</sup>

But if homosexuality is mobilized by reactionary critics in the 1770's as a threatening force of social dissolution, might not this metaphor - these linkages - be positively re-trope, to construct a new specifically republican chain of associations in the 1790's which would then go something like `homosexuality - class dissolution - fraternity - ideal

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<sup>49</sup>on the mediating and ambiguous social position of the `perverted' *laquais* - neither of the people, nor of the masters, but intimately touching both - see Lever (1985), p.282, and Roche, p.276-277.

<sup>50</sup>we are not, therefore, presenting here a familiar shift from act (*goût*) to identity.

<sup>51</sup>on the threat to public order articulated by pre-revolutionary *libelles*, pamphlets and the gossip press see Robert Darnton, "The High Enlightenment and the Low-Life of Literature", in *The Literary Underground of the Old Regime*, Cambridge University Press, 1982, and Jeffrey Merrick, "Sexual Politics and Public Order in Late Eighteenth-Century France: The *Mémoires secrets* and the *Correspondance secrète*", *Journal of the History of Sexuality*, 1990, vol. 1, No.1, pp.68-84, and on pederasty in particular, p. 71-72. Merrick stresses throughout the reactionary politics, sexual and otherwise, of these libelous publications; we might suggest, though, that as a part of pre-revolutionary `Grub Street' they might have established certain potentially radical social tropes.



communitarianism'? Notwithstanding the continuing and residual strategic uses under the Revolution of sodomy to figure something rotten in the (new) state<sup>52</sup>, might not this initially negative troping of the *dissolving* effects of the sodomitical encounter come to be re-signified under the radical Revolution as precisely the form of desire which best corresponds to its fundamental phantasies of communitarianism? Exactly these implications - these connotive possibilities - will be articulated by Sade in his famous 1795 text *La Philosophie dans le Boudoir* (1795). In chapter Four we will explore, through Sade, precisely this possibility which the Revolutionary figure of 'sodomy' might provide for a phantasy of radical communitarianism.

### Conclusion

We have reviewed the evidence of the social history of homosexuality in eighteenth-century France in order to maintain the possibility of a different art-historical reading of the homoerotic in visual culture. Some previous readings have assumed an entirely discontinuous relation between that imagery and discourses of homosexuality (for example, Solomon-Godeau, 1997); others (Crow, 1995) a discreet, but knowing silence on the part of image-makers - if not translators - to some of the more unavoidable classical references to eros between men. On the other hand the reading of homoerotic imagery as distinctly 'gay' - as implicated in a *subcultural* network - is reinforced by the historical assumption, or 'proofs', that by the late eighteenth century a homosexual subculture was already burgeoning (Davis and Trumbach). Further, if we allow - by extension - the possibility of a gay subjectivity in the late eighteenth century, we may come to consider the homoerotic *beau idéal* as the effect of a pained, because culturally censored, psychosexual disposition (Potts, 1994).

By examining both the 'source' of the visual image - its translations - and the sociological

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<sup>52</sup>for example the pamphlet *Les Enfants de Sodome à l'Assemblée nationale, ou Députation de l'ordre de la manchette* (Paris, 1790). See on this, Antoine de Baecque, "Dégénérescence et Régénération ou comment le livre licentieux juge la Révolution Française", in *Oeuvres anonymes du XVIII siècle: l'Enfer de la Bibliothèque Nationale*, Paris Fayard, 1987.

`outside' of the homoerotic text, or its significance in the `real', we have come to a number of rather different conclusions, which may begin to support a different reading. First, it is now clear that homosexuality in the classical text was specifically problematized in the space of its cultural translation, from Ancient Greece to modern France. Our long-term tracing of a representation of homosexuality demonstrates that it is more or less visible in the neoclassical text, but importantly never absent. The reiterated disavowals of the homosexual fragment, themselves initiated by a silence in the anacreontic text, only serve as a support to maintain it.

Secondly, if we do not assume that this tension is maintained purely within the psychic interiority of the text; if we assume that there *is* an outside of the text, perhaps exerting its own pressures on the text, then we may posit a linkage - a certain movement, back and forth - between a social re-troting of sodomy and the classical homoerotic image. The answer, then, to our initial question - what is being disavowed in the homoerotic classical text - may be that the repudiated material lies neither wholly inside nor outside the conflicted text, but is associated, or linked, through the social imagination, which we might think of as a space of *Phantasy*. And if such phantasies are regarded as the precondition of the institution of any `society' - phantasy, therefore as a support of the `real'<sup>53</sup> - then the connotive possibilities of the figure of sodomy as it coincides with the phantasy of Revolution, begin to come into view.

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<sup>53</sup>see on `Fantasy as a support of reality', Zizek, pp.47-49.

## Chapter 2: Aesthetics. The Kantian male nude and aesthetic theory in post-revolutionary France

It is *man*, alone among all objects in the world, who admits of an ideal of *beauty*...

Kant, *On The Ideal of Beauty*<sup>1</sup>

### Introduction

In Victor Cousin's Kantian philosophical *Cours* of 1818 Anacreon's *Odes* are instanced as an example of *le beau*.<sup>2</sup> The anacreontic text is thus now framed within a radically different theoretical locus from the linguistic/philological one which we have located it within. Now the *Odes* come to be implicated in a discourse which is expansive, generalized, and of revolutionary significance. This is the discourse of *aesthetics* as it has emerged across the Revolution, across the Empire, and into the 'utopian' social space of early Restoration Paris. Here I will want to trace another history; this time of the *aesthetic* and its relation to the 'homoerotic' ideal male nude's central theoretical support, the *beau idéal*. As a figure of transcendence the *beau idéal* could only last so long as its metaphysical support retained legitimacy. So that with the collapse of the transcendent promises of theology, radical politics, and Platonic metaphysics in Revolutionary France, it might fully be expected to wane. Yet Cousin's *Cours* is only a late formulation of a philosophical enterprise which promised to rehabilitate the sources of transcendence, and concomitantly redeem the *beau idéal*. This radical enterprise, this redemptive new foundation of metaphysical *jouissance* is represented in the name 'Kant'. We will suggest that, through the historical development of the Kantian aesthetic, a certain revolutionary

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<sup>1</sup>Kant, *Critique of Judgement*, 1987, p.81.

<sup>2</sup>Cousin, p.249.

aspiration came to be lodged in the figure of the ideal male nude {fig. 3}.

If Anacreontism has been consistently read as a *decadent* phenomenon of the First Empire - at least in our modern art-historical literature ever since Schneider's 1913 article - so too now is the phenomenon of post-revolutionary *aestheticism* generally regarded under the sign of a decadence; and this where *decadence* is connoted negatively in its literal, and normative, sense of *decline* or *deterioration*.<sup>3</sup> That there is a post-thermidorean increase in institutionally encouraged speculative thinking on the arts there is no doubt. But *how* this phenomena of transformation is to be thought - exactly under which concept of the aesthetic - naturally determines the interpretation of the historical texts - the discourses which emerged from the Institut as well as the visual images which artists produced - which have retrospectively provided the material for the characterization of the period as *aesthetic* in the first place.

The same goes for a reading of the post-revolutionary ideal male nude as a paradigmatically *aestheticized* figure. How is this descriptive naming - as 'aesthetic' - of the *beau idéal* been implicated in negative critique? The figure has been doubly condemned. On the one hand we have a critical perception of the aestheticized *beau idéal* which ultimately emerges from a Marxist critique of the aesthetic; where the aesthetic is understood as an ideological screen for the disavowal of class difference.<sup>4</sup> On the other hand, we have a critical perception which emerges from a feminist critique; now as a figure embodying universalist values but which in fact disavows - both condoning and representing - a repressive patriarchal masculinity. Both critical positions tend to represent the *beau idéal* as the outcome of a negative praxis. Beauty either metaphysically masks the suppression of class, or the suppression of gender; or sometimes, insofar as those critiques may be mutually reinforcing, even both.<sup>5</sup> Meanwhile the historical object which

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<sup>3</sup>O.E.D. definition.

<sup>4</sup>Eagleton, p.8.

<sup>5</sup>on the ideology of the homoerotic male body, See for example, Solomon-Godeau, p.185.

represents Beauty - the male body - remains in those two critical understandings semantically inert. Now *unmasked* by critical theory, it is ready to be jettisoned; never to be, or historically never having been, re-signified.

Here we will trace a different history of the *beau idéal*. One which will end not by its critical (i.e. crisis-ridden) waning following upon the dual crises - gender crisis, class crisis - of the French Revolution, but rather by its positive emergence into an object which is renewed through a historic *rapprochement* with an emergent Kantian aesthetic. Against those double critiques, we will understand this late 1790's Kantian aesthetic as denoting a certain *anti-ideological space*, a *radical Kantianism*;<sup>6</sup> one which may be incidentally incorporated into a post-revolutionary academic discourse on the ends and praxis of art within the increasingly independent organization of the French *Institut*. The homoerotic male nude may thus be speculatively re-articulated as an object with a certain *positive* and historically shifting signification. We will not, therefore, jettison the category of the aesthetic as it is applied to the *fin-de-siècle beau idéal*; on the contrary we will approach the *beau idéal* through a more rigorous and historically specific examination of the *aesthetic* itself - namely, in its now paradigmatic Kantian version.

The homoerotic *beau idéal* in this account will thus be re-articulated as a contingent figure which historically and speculatively coincides with a discourse of freedom, rather than one, post-thermidor, of the conservative retrenchment of sexual and political ideologies.<sup>7</sup>

### Beauty: a fragmented object

This will involve a historical tracing of the idea of Beauty - *le beau* - in French neoclassical aesthetics. In parallel with our last chapter we will adopt a long time-frame; going from the institution of the *Academie* in the 1640's to the classically homerotic 'moment' at the turn of the nineteenth century. This long-term tracing will allow the

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<sup>6</sup>on radical Kantianism as denoting an historically contingent space of anti-ideological freedom, a certain 'free space', see Rancière, p.282-289, and p.297.

<sup>7</sup>see Hunt (1992) for this aspect of post-thermidorean ideological retrenchment regarding women, men and the family; and Solomon-Godeau (1997) for a reading of the post-revolutionary *beau idéal* in relation to that retrenchment.

vissitudes of the concept of the *beau idéal* to emerge more clearly.<sup>8</sup> But if we have already introduced the possibility of a certain alternative trajectory, or the linear tracing of a different telos - *towards* a rapprochement in the 1790's of Kantianism and the *beau idéal* - this is not to ignore the complex *circulation* of the concept of Beauty amongst and between different discourses throughout the eighteenth century; its *intertextual* indeterminacy.<sup>9</sup> Therefore, we will remember that the notion of Beauty was always located in the interstices of philosophical, aesthetic (or poetic), and political discourses - and the resultant overdetermination of the object - the *beau idéal* - is no more clear than in the late 1790's and early 1800's.

For example, the French academic recourse to Kant was one solution to the collapse of a Platonic metaphysics in philosophy; a response to a *crisis* in philosophy. This consequently threatened to leave the notion of the *beau idéal* technically grounded, since *la doctrine classique* had depended upon Platonic metaphysics. However the re-articulation of the 'aesthetic', in that famous 1790 text, the *Critique of Judgement*, for the first time determined an autonomous anti-ideological space which 'Beauty' could contingently inhabit, or represent; if only, in that text, rhetorically. Thus the Kantian aesthetic provided the opportunity - in the realm of a restructured *Académie* - for a radical re-articulation of the notion of Beauty - and without decathecting it from the bodily figure of the male nude. The figure of the male nude was thus determined by the exigencies and occasional uses - the *exemplarity* - of Beauty.

Then there are the political teleologies of the concept. Speculatively, Kant's formulation of an aesthetic space might become the condition of a re-articulated and renewed notion of communitarianism - a new glue for the constitution of a post-revolutionary community - in short, it promised to provide a new notion of *politics* per se. Hannah Arendt concluded

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<sup>8</sup>I am greatly indebted to the work already undertaken in this direction on the *beau idéal* by Régis Michel in the Louvre catalogue *L'Art du Concept* (1989).

<sup>9</sup>see, for the consequences of an intertextual reading, on recognising the 'plurality' of the text, which consequently breaks up its 'identity', Kristeva, "Intertextuality and Literary Interpretation", 1985, reprinted in Ross Mitchell Guberman (ed.), *Julia Kristeva: Interviews*, Columbia University Press, 1996, pp.188-204.

that the place to look for politics in Kant was in his discourse on Beauty. She ended her *Lectures on Kant* by insisting on this mutual implication of Beauty and Politics in the Kantian text. Kant, according to Arendt at last conjoined the two, finally abandoning the classical hierarchy - the division of labour - between philosophy and politics: "the condition sine qua non for the existence of beautiful objects is communicability: the judgement of the spectator creates the space without which no such objects could appear at all".<sup>10</sup> Yet this cotermination of Beauty and Politics may not quite be a Kantian *invention*. If we offer a reading of the ideal male nude in terms of the rearrangement of these relations - between Beauty and Politics - in Kantian critical philosophy, and particularly in the formulation of the 'aesthetic' in the late 1790's, it will nevertheless be considered, less as an unprecedented *rapprochement* within the Kantian philosophical text; rather Kant's objective grounding of communitarianism in the aesthetic sense will be considered as one possible, and contingent, outcome of a continuing traditional historical dialectic between philosophical metaphysics and politics. The Kantian *sensus communis* is thus only the latest 'objective' formulation of that dialectic. A historical tracing of debates on *le beau* will thus need to be alert to such historically shifting political implications, rather than retrospectively assuming a post-Kantian notion of Art's autonomy.<sup>11</sup> We will therefore also trace a certain *politics of Beauty* which has neither its beginning nor its end in the Kantian text, but simply its contingent revolutionary re-articulation.

We will require, therefore, an intertextual approach to the circulating terms of aesthetic debate. The aestheticians who will be mentioned in the following pages - Winckelmann, Eméric-David, Quatremère de Quincy, Kant and Victor Cousin - were working within quite variously under-defined discursive fields and ought not to be primarily thought of as professional, certainly not academic, aestheticians. Pre-Kantian 'Aesthetics', which I take to include the work of Kant himself, is loosely interstitial - circulating between the domains of professional philosophy, moral science, the art academy, and the Salon space. It is the very lack of 'professionalism' which makes eighteenth and early nineteenth

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<sup>10</sup>Arendt, p.63.

<sup>11</sup>see, on the relation between Kantian aesthetics and the *bios politikos*, Bernstein (1992), p.13.

century aesthetic discourse so dynamic, and, I will argue, unstable, indeterminate and connotively rich.

### The body and philosophy

There is some historical justification in speculatively bringing together these two sites - the Kantian aesthetic and the ideal male nude - through the mediating concept of Beauty. In a circular way when we call these images 'aestheticized', or speak about the 'aesthetic hero', we have always ultimately depended on Kant. Nevertheless there has always been a perceived contradiction which has prevented this *rapprochement* in anything but the most vague, and usually critical, terms; namely the perceived contradiction between the low body and a lofty metaphysics. Upon this ground both feminist and Marxist critiques tend to agree; metaphysics repudiates the body - be it gendered or classed - as an inferior source of knowledge. Yet if we determine to what extent the post-revolutionary *beau idéal* could accede to that 'free' space which might satisfy Kant's fourfold negative criterion of the Beautiful<sup>12</sup> - then we may point to one real *contingent* historical coincidence of the body and the aesthetic which develops out of a speculative metaphysics. The relation of the body to philosophical metaphysics, or the body as it is projected *in* philosophy more generally, is thus seen not to be historically unvarying; rather the relation may be re-articulated in accordance with major epistemological shifts. 'Kant' stands for one such epistemological 'rupture', and it is my argument that through this shift a moment is opened up where the body virtually coincides with a space of freedom.

### Lost object of desire: Winckelmannian beauty and the homoerotic male nude

We are attempting to shift our readings of the homoerotic male nude from a Winckelmannian paradigm to a Kantian one. This is because the interpretation of the ideal male nude through a Winckelmannian paradigm only ends in a negative hermeneutics; not

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<sup>12</sup>the four *moments* being: (1) the liking or disliking of an object *devoid of all interest*, (2) what, without a concept, is like universally, (3) an object's form of purposiveness insofar as it is perceived in the object *without the presentation of a purpose*, and (4), what, without a concept is cognized as the object of a *necessary* liking.



least when the question of a gay desire is introduced.<sup>13</sup> Winckelmann explains for us the apparent paradox of coincidence between the curious *passivity* of the late-eighteenth-century homoerotic male nude and its political promise.

If one defining characteristic of the homoerotic nude is taken to be precisely this passivity - which is customarily contrasted with an active and normative virile heroics - Winckelmann *redeems* this aspect of the *beau idéal* by investing it with a politics of freedom. Yet, only theoretically. We might take as the most obvious example of a Winckelmannian pathos Broc's *Death of Hyacinth* (fig.4).<sup>14</sup> This painting of 1801 thematizes Greek homosexuality and does so, troublingly I find, in a way which appears to justify a conventional link between homosexuality and effeminacy; thus incidentally reiterating a common confusion between gendered identity and sexual orientation - not to speak of its link with imminent death. In exemplary fashion, homosexuality, effeminacy and death seem to be literally fused in the *pathetic* figure of intertwining bodies. One way of lending Broc's stereotypical representation of passive homosexuality intellectual dignity would be to take it as a Winckelmannian construct. This would be justified on a historical level, as well as on an aesthetic one. Accordingly, we could make sense of the undifferentiated, glacial and immobile forms of the intertwined bodies of Apollo and Hyacinth as adequately exemplifying Winckelmann's aesthetic of minimalist gesture, and radical non-differentiation, which Alex Potts has likened to a dissolution of ego boundaries.<sup>15</sup> But can we then extend this reading to its logical conclusion and thereby posit the homoerotic in Broc's painting as a representation of a Winckelmannian "free and unconstrained subjectivity"?<sup>16</sup> This at once seems both more hazardous and less convincing. If the painting appears to invoke a Winckelmannian aesthetic of beauty, it also seems to refuse the *political* reading which ought to follow from that. This

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<sup>13</sup>thus Davis (1994) likens the Winckelmannian phantasy of a 'lost object' to both a typically doomed gay desire, and an impossible art-historian's quest for reconstitution of the object.

<sup>14</sup>on Broc's picture see Levitine, pp.116-117, the entry (no.16)in *French Painting 1774-1830*, Solomon-Godeau (1997), p.164.

<sup>15</sup>Potts, 1994, p.170.

<sup>16</sup>ibid. p.144.

interpretive stalling follows, I would hazard, from a dominating assumption about the nature of homoeroticism as a style of passivity which necessarily precludes the actively political. Taken together with a concept of the aesthetic which is equally determined by its exclusivity from the field of politics, it follows that the confused construction of the 'aestheticized homoerotic male nude' ends by representing its object as the very site from which the possibility of freedom is excluded. Unsurprisingly, the present art-historical literature associates the homosexual passivity of the *Death of Hyacinth* less with free subjectivity than with the most constrained subjectivity; the homoerotic nude is typically seen as being 'bound and gagged'; metaphorically and literally.<sup>17</sup>

A potential 'free space' - a space of free subjectivity - which the male homoerotic nude might conceivably inhabit is lost when it is brought into line with both a Marxist historiography of the French Revolution *and* a Marxist sociological understanding of taste, or the aesthetic, understood as a fetishistic disavowal of class inequalities.

So that even if Broc's male nudes derive their *forms* from a Winkelmannian aesthetic, their historical moment can no longer recognize those forms' once potential revolutionary implications; indeed, post-thermidor, must suppress those implications which, it seems, would be inimical to a newly consolidated bourgeois order. The aesthetic, then, is in this understanding considered as a *safeguard* of a return to order, and not order's radical undoing. The potential danger momentarily inherent in the concept of the aesthetic - of a Kantian re-formulation of Beauty - is thus defused. Any theoretical identification between Winckelmann's more radical formulation of a 'free subjectivity' and post-thermidorean homoeroticism is disrupted; instead homoeroticism's significance is seen to lie in its historical coincidence with the aesthetic, which Marxist critical theory will reveal to have everything to do with bourgeois domestication and class suppression.<sup>18</sup> The domains of politics and aesthetics are thus represented as being radically discontinuous, or more precisely, their respective moments of 'fulfillment' are inversely related.

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<sup>17</sup>as in Solomon-Godeau's characterization of the post-thermidorean male nude - in which she instances Broc's painting as exemplifying the qualities of "passivity, debility, helplessness and impotence", Solomon-Godeau, (1993), p.298.

<sup>18</sup>see Bourdieu, 'Towards a 'Vulgar' Critique of 'Pure' Critiques', pp.485-503.

No wonder, then, that when Potts traces through the after-life of the Winckelmannian aesthetic into the French Revolution, he will present the post 1791 revolutionary troping of the Winckelmannian body - David's tortuous *Bara* - as being historically inadequate to its task. Although David - like Broc later - draws upon a Winckelmannian radical reductionism and non-differentiation for his *beau idéal* - a putative 'ideal oneness' - in 1794 such a free space is already an impossibility. Radical aesthetics and politics - the realpolitik of the thermidorean moment - diverge, or short-circuit. How much more unlikely, then, will it be to maintain such a space in *post-thermidorean* France, when class lines in the new regime become increasingly separatist and aesthetics - in this Marxist version - takes on the function of a historic disavowal. Between the 'moment' of radical politics (1794, an II) and post-thermidorean quietism, aesthetics can at most attest to, but can never properly coincide with, a historical moment of freedom. We have here a critical trajectory which traces the increasing loss of a notional free space, once posited *in* aesthetics, and which, in Potts' account, for example, ends with the consolidation of the bourgeois order, represented ironically by that very same aestheticism; in, for example, the paradigmatic aesthetic redundancy of David's *Leonidas*.

Taking into account the problems attached to a Winckelmannian reading of the homoerotic male nude regarding the latter's possibility of representing a 'free subjectivity', how might we, then, posit post-thermidorean aestheticism as a radically free space; and without understanding the 'aesthetic' as either being no more than a symptom of withdrawal from the exhausted field of 'politics' (a turn from 'virtue' to 'pleasure'), or as an ideological gambit intended to veil the very fact of the historical loss of a free space. One way, I suggest, is to shift our reading of the homoerotic male nude from a Winckelmannian paradigm to a Kantian paradigm. The successful release of the homoerotic male nude from its passive 'bound and gagged' status will stand or fall by the demonstrability of that shift; one which we may consider both historically and speculatively.

Before proceeding to our tracing of the *beau idéal*, let us briefly consider how, in art-historical writing on the *beau idéal* Kantianism may inform the reading of the object as *aestheticized*; while Kant - and the revolutionary implications of that name - may be nevertheless missing from the account.

One of the more rigorous readings of post-revolutionary aestheticization is Germer and Kohle's 1986 article which charts the historical transformation "From the Theatrical to the Aesthetic Hero".<sup>19</sup> In their text the authors succeed in demonstrating that the category of the aesthetic is perfectly adequate to both transformed conditions of spectating in post-revolutionary France, and to the changed nature of the art object itself. Their understanding of the aesthetic is a quite particular, though apparently inclusive, one, and I will probe their text only in order to elucidate a constitutive absence in it; this absence will then open up the possibility of our own enquiry, and our alternative reading of the 'aesthetic hero'.

The authors, Germer and Kohle, distinguish and identify the growing aestheticization of visual culture from pre-revolutionary to post-thermidorean France on a number of levels, which, taken together, appear to exhaust the definition of the aesthetic as it is understood in its modern *post*-Kantian formulation. The phenomenon they observe satisfies all the requirements needed to bring it in line with their understanding of the concept. Firstly, they note a growing **privatization** of the idea of virtue, a conceptual shift from the classical 'political' ideal of virtue to a Rousseauian 'individualist' one.<sup>20</sup> This is paralleled with an increasing **individualism** which manifests itself particularly in a new relationship between the spectator of a painting and the painting's content in the late eighteenth century. The moral contents of history paintings from the 1780's onwards now demonstrate, according to the authors, a new **psychologization** both in terms of what is

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<sup>19</sup>Stefan Germer and Hubertus Kohle, 'From the Theatrical to the Aesthetic Hero: On the Privatization of the Idea of Virtue in David's 'Brutus' and 'Sabines'', *Art History*, vol.9, no.2, June 1986.

<sup>20</sup>"Rousseau's abandonment of the model of antiquity is part of the bourgeois search for oneself, which conceives of the public sphere as the generalization of personal experience and distinguishes itself categorically from the classical definition of the realm of politics." Ibid. p.168. Thus introducing the Kantian redefinition of the distinction between private and public, where public now denotes the public use of one's *private* reason. On Rousseau's influence on Kant, see Ernst Cassirer, *Rousseau, Kant, Goethe*, trans. J. Gutman, Princeton, New Jersey, 1970.

represented in the painting<sup>21</sup> and how the viewer is expected then to sympathize with the new psychologized content. This 'radical subjectivization', they note, dissolves the traditional classical conception of history painting which previously had relied on a communal understanding of rhetorical codes, namely the seventeenth century rhetorical vocabulary of the 'passions', which late neoclassical aesthetics often found so inadequately crude and declamatory (renunciation of the 'grimace').<sup>22</sup> Finally, the authors draw attention to an increasing formalism in the production of images. Mid-eighteenth-century illusionistic devices were gradually forsaken, they claim, for something approaching a formalist conception of painting; as an instance of the latter they take David's self-conscious manipulation of classical poetic devices in his 1789 *Brutus*.<sup>23</sup>

The problem with Germer and Kohle's analysis - which nevertheless usefully introduces us to the radical transformations which Kantianism had on art at the end of the eighteenth century - is that they take these Kantian qualities to be already and fully constituted; and not as the outcome - as we will argue it was - of a dynamic relation between politics, philosophy and aesthetic debates.

Rather, they ultimately reiterate the notion of a relation between politics and aesthetics which is exclusive; where the latter is defined negatively through the former. The historical trajectory they describe is determined by this antinomy. There is no relation of how politics might *inflect* the aesthetic - or vice versa; only a determinate historical progression from the one to the other.

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<sup>21</sup>for example, in David's *Brutus*, "the hero's role as a victim becomes explicitly thematized, his dealing with the events is made central, and attention is led away from the action toward reflection." *ibid.* p.172.

<sup>22</sup>this is analagous to Kant's renunciation of 'convention' as a support for the determination of 'the Good'.

<sup>23</sup>"Illusionistic painting strives to convince us that it reflects as faithfully as possible events that have occurred outside the realm of painting. David breaks with this conception: the entire composition of his picture constantly calls to mind the fact that the depicted exists only inside the realm of painting and only as a result of the consequent use of pictorial means....The parameter for the organization of parts is no longer the hierarchy of the real, but rather the requirement of the painting itself." *ibid.* p.174.

This exclusive politics/aesthetics relation is not explicitly thematized in the article. But while the authors largely refrain from a simplistic causative explanation which interprets the aesthetic as the (negative) historic effect of disillusionment with revolutionary politics, politics is notably written out of the account. Rather, in Tocquevillian fashion, the Revolution is represented in the text as a minor glitch which has little determining effect on the inevitable passage to modernity, which is aestheticization.<sup>24</sup> A historically inevitable aestheticization takes place over the long term, then, *despite* the political rupture of the Revolution. In this reading the possibility of a relation - we should add, not necessarily or simply causative - between the notionally communitarian political revolution and the Kantian aesthetic, or 'Art', which is the condition of a re-articulated and objectively grounded 'sensus communis' is disregarded.

This may be because the teleological thrust of the trajectory they describe is already informed by a post-Greenbergian formalist notion of 'Art' which regards it as definitively independent from the political realm. Thus, by a circular logic, their supposed historical reconstruction of the emergence of modern spectating in the 1790's turns out to be little more than the construction in *their* text of a point by point retrospective correspondence between pre-determined Greenbergian 'aesthetic' qualities and selective material facts about David's paintings, which when combined, are meant to conclusively demonstrate the historical origin of 'the aesthetic'. So that although the authors of the article attempt a rigorous objectivity - in the way of an empirical *matching up* between phenomena and concept - in their description of the passage to modernity in fact a somewhat jaded perspective on modernity itself informs their historical account of its historic origins. The effect of this procedure is to bypass the complexity of historical process. *How* the one notion of subjectivity gets transformed into the other and under what specific conditions is not touched upon, only that it does get transformed. So that the unchecked historical inevitability - as it is most clearly represented in the text by its dismissal of revolutionary politics and the discourse of 'communitarianism' as merely 'superficial' ideology - of the rise of 'Art' denies the possibility of contingency in the historical process of change. More

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<sup>24</sup>"...in revolutionary French painting the primarily individualistic spirit of the day has only *superficially* been covered up by an ideology which puts stress on community", *ibid.* p.178, my emphasis.

importantly, the inexorable historical transition from one state to the other (the 'theatrical' to the 'aesthetic'), which anyway is represented less as a transition than as a fully-fledged emergence -the fulfillment of the *a priori* idea of the aesthetic - has the effect of spectacularly bypassing what we might take to be a radically disruptive Kantian moment of aesthetic freedom. A post-Kantian terminology of the 'aesthetic' pervades and determines their account, yet any direct consideration of radical Kantianism as a radical historical moment, for which there is no lack of evidence, is denied and silently passed over.<sup>25</sup> This remarkable gap in their historical text, itself ideological, helps to portray the process and ends of aestheticization in an essentially conservative mode, forgetting the revolutionary implications of its moment of origin.

Apart from simply not mentioning Kant, how is this exclusion committed and what reading of the homoerotic male nude follows from it? We might begin with the following interesting comment taken from the close of the article:

"...the *Sabine Women* figures no longer possess a specific content but are instead potentially accessible to the most varied interpretations: because of their artificiality, they may simply be taken as examples of fine art."<sup>26</sup>

This description of a new 'interpretive emancipation' is perhaps premature. It not only denies David's picture of its ostensibly specific republican values, and denies that the *beau idéal* in 1799 was, as well as anything else, a carrier for those values, but furthermore Germer and Kohle's moves towards an aesthetical interpretation are consistently reductive of the possibilities of what we may call a radical aesthetic communitarianism; they instead stop short at a notion of the aesthetic which emphasizes privatization, individualism and subjectivism. And while these last qualities are certainly central to the social effects of the Kantian aesthetic, when they are taken as antinomial to a politics of communitarianism,

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<sup>25</sup>Kant is never mentioned in Germer and Kohle's text.

<sup>26</sup>ibid. p.183.

they may rather be seen as positively anti-Kantian.<sup>27</sup>

Furthermore, what is interesting in Germer and Kohle's text is how a new historical form, or notion of subjectivity is related to the formation of the category of 'Art'. This relation goes to the heart of the wide differences between a notionally Kantian formulation of the aesthetic hero and Germer and Kohle's post-Kantian modernist one. In the quotation above there is an implied synonymous relation between independence of interpretation and 'fine art'. It is suggested that the very indeterminacy of the forms in the picture require an active meaning-producing subject. Thus, in a Kantian spirit, the authors do posit a subject who is newly liberated, at the same time as the traditional statist or theological power of the image *over* the subject is diminished.<sup>28</sup> However, along with the demise of an *ancien régime* authoritarian functionalist notion of art the authors also curtail any future possibility of art's radical intentions. The emergence of 'Art' is thus the condition of the subject's freedom, but at the same time the inevitable foreclosing of any social meanings in art. Given this state, it would be incongruous to regard the ideal male nude, the *beau idéal*, as the sensible representation of the notion of the freedom of the subject; it can only be viewed as one of the circumstantial forms the very vacuity of which is the defining condition of the free subject. "By transposing the active figures into aesthetic calmness he (David) opened these up to the public emotions, offering an unrestricted projection screen."<sup>29</sup>

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<sup>27</sup>see Arendt on the uneasy relation between the Kantian redefinition of 'Beauty' as constituting publicness, and a politics of action. Arendt remarks that Kant teaches us how to be public, but not by extension how to *act* as a public. Still, he provides the foundations for the very possibility of public action: the importance of the shift thus lies not in its end, but in its opening up, i.e. the *hope* of the French Revolution. Arendt, p.58.

<sup>28</sup>they write: "The viewer thus turns from an unsolicited witness into an active participant in the production of meaning, while at the same time the role of the depicted figure is reduced from that of the active agents to that of elements in the totality of the picture". *ibid.*, p.182. This is an interesting take on the 'passive' character of the post-revolutionary 'hero'. And it could be argued that the passivity is not only the condition for the liberated viewing subjectivity, but momentarily, in the form of the *beau idéal*, the sensible philosophical representation of that free subjectivity.

<sup>29</sup>*ibid.* p.181.



### Tracing the *beau idéal*

We will now focus on the concept of ideal beauty, classical aesthetics' most revered concept from Plato to Kant. The *beau idéal* is primarily instanced, in authoritative aesthetic texts, through the figure of the male body.<sup>30</sup> If the *beau idéal* derives from a classical extra-aesthetic philosophical discourse on the limits of cognition, it enters into aesthetic discourse in sixteenth-century Italy, and is transported from there into seventeenth-century French classicism.<sup>31</sup> In seventeenth-century French classicism we might therefore expect the represented male body and a discourse on poetics to come together naturally in the concept of the *beau idéal*. Following from that, my aim is to register the historical mutations of the concept of the *beau idéal* in French classicism, identifying the political revolution as a particularly privileged point of rupture. For while the construction of ideal beauty - the transcendent Idea derived from platonic idealism - may seem, from Socrates onwards, to be the still centre around which other valences are dialectically defined, the concept of the *beau idéal* is in fact prone to manipulation and contestation, never more so than during the 1790's and 1800's, when its meanings are daily contested. Again, because the *beau idéal* was traditionally exemplified through the male body, we will need to chart the changes, or mutations, of attitudes to the male nudity - its *decorum* - in French classical representation. There is a double aspect to relations between the *concept* of the *beau idéal* and representations of the male body. Those neoclassical representations are *effects* of theoretical re-elaborations of the *beau idéal* - theory producing the body; and at the same time those theoretical redefinitions of the *beau idéal* constitute an extended gloss on the discoveries produced by antiquarian knowledges of the material artefacts of classical statuary.<sup>32</sup> Therefore, reformulations of the *beau idéal* project a male body which shifts in accordance with theoretical redevelopments in Classical poetics and antiquarianism. The homoerotic nude is thus an

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<sup>30</sup>on the *beau idéal* see, Benoit pp. 80; ;Fontaine, p.34;, 104;Locquin, pp.147-152; Becq (1984,1986); Michel; Potts (1994), 156-64; Solomon-Godeau pp.185-196.

<sup>31</sup>Panofsky, p.108-9.

<sup>32</sup>on Quatremère de Quincy's late (1816), and disturbing, encounter with the Elgin Marbles, see Schneider (1910) , p. 15-20.

ever-contingent product of a process of negotiation; between theory and visual representation, and between eighteenth-century knowledges and ancient classical knowledges.

### The *beau idéal* in seventeenth-century French classicism

The transference of the notion of the *beau idéal*, already considerably mutated from its original Platonic 'hard' version, from the sixteenth-century Italian renaissance, to seventeenth century French classicism, is thought to have been effected through Bellori in the 1660's.<sup>33</sup> The transmission was decisive and influential. Bellori's notion of the *beau idéal*, with Poussin as its most accomplished exponent, was almost immediately appropriated by the new French Academy. Bellori's *beau idéal* had a lasting influence; it became central to the later renewal, or retroping, of French neoclassicism, through its determining influence on Winckelmann in the 1750's.<sup>34</sup> Alex Potts, while noting important differences between Bellori's concept of the 1660's and Winckelmann's difficult rereading of it in the 1750's, throws light on the reasons why Bellori's *beau idéal* may have been ideally suited to the requirements of the French Academy, and more broadly, of French classicism, in the 1660's. While essentially adding nothing new to Italian Renaissance and Mannerist speculation on the 'ideal' and 'beauty', Bellori, Potts points out, successfully performed some closures, and resolved some tensions which had always been implicit in the contradictory notion of Ideal Beauty. Essentially, the tension, classically articulated by Socrates in the Charmides, consists in a conflict of desire - between the lure of the ideal and the lure of the sensuous. Their posited relation of polarity drove, indeed, the very necessity of a bridging concept - in the formulation of a *beau idéal*. Bellori, then, in Potts' words, "adopts the (more) fetishistic strategy of defining the ideal precisely as the figure that succeeds in denying the structural difference between idea and body, and effortlessly mediates it".<sup>35</sup> From here, then, it is not difficult to imagine the ease with which the notion of the *beau idéal* could be strapped to the demands of French

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<sup>33</sup>Panofsky, p.108-9.

<sup>34</sup>Panofsky, p.242-3, note. 22; Potts, p. 157-158.

<sup>35</sup>Potts, p. 157.

seventeenth-century academic requirements. When de-spiritualized and codified according to the requirements of French academic 'enseignement', the *beau idéal* becomes little more than a polemical rejoinder to 'vulgar' naturalism, and a privileged emblem of the 'Ancients' in French academic art theory.<sup>36</sup> The transition from Bellori, to Le Brun, to academic *enseignement* seems as yet remarkably unproblematic.

### 'Envelopper les ordures'

But if academic *enseignement* provides the perfect pretext and conclusion for what Potts metaphorically terms 'fetishization', when we turn to the wider field of poetics the foreclosures of classical aesthetics appear less easily achieved. In seventeenth-century classical poetics there is an ongoing negotiation between *le beau* and *le laid*. For example, when Boileau in 'L'Art Poétique' (1674) famously writes,

"Il n'est point de serpent, ni de monstre odieux,  
Qui, par l'Art imité, ne puisse plaire aux yeux;  
D'un pinceau délicat l'artifice agréable  
Du plus affreux objet fait un objet aimable."

he is, so to speak, walking on a tightrope, by theoretically extending the *boundaries* of classical representation (to include *le laid*) while simultaneously retaining, indeed demonstrating, a proper respect for the strictures demanded by the 'super-ego' of classical doctrine, the theory of *bienséance*. Boileau's is a contentious move, and not a rigorously *fixed* rule of classical poetics. This historical pliability becomes clear when we consider that more than a century later, the moral and stylistic limits of classical representation are still, or again, under negotiation. Sobry's *Poétique des Arts* (1810), offers a version of the

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<sup>36</sup>therefore the compromise notion of the *beau idéal* is effectively further compromised in academic teaching in the 1660's. While the early academy was generally anti-naturalistic - drawing from nature being the lowest in the hierarchy of taught skills - neither was it for that ambitiously speculative. Students were taught to imitate antique statuary which presupposed the interpretation of the object through a notion of ideal beauty; but ultimately the pedagogic end could only be satisfied through the *materiality* of the ideal object. On early academic *enseignement*, see, for example, Montaiglon, vol.1, p.48-49.

*beau idéal* - one which is *politically* cautious<sup>37</sup> - in the now philosophically impoverished notion of *embellissement*. In this 1810 text, it seems *embellissement* ought not to include *anything* to do with 'le laid', which is placed firmly beyond representation. Sobry instances Boileau's lines only to refute them, with the gloss,

"l'Art ne peut jamais embellir les formes dégoûtantes, la tristesse hideuse, l'horrible cruauté, et un peintre doit éviter tout ce qui est difforme, vil, affreux".<sup>38</sup>

My point is not only to exemplify the essentially contingent and unstable nature of the classical doctrine, always locally and historically negotiable. It is also clear, from the aforesaid Sobry/Boileau disagreement, that any consideration of 'le beau' in classical aesthetics - whatever its problematic relation to philosophical idealisms - is always closely tied to a historically shifting notion of 'le laid', and the possibilities and extent of the latter's recuperation, both in theory and practice, within the system which constitutes '*la doctrine classique*'. And it is this structural difference between beauty and ugliness, rather than that one between 'Flesh and the Ideal', which may have the more important consequences for the representation of homosexuality, or even homoeroticism, in French classicism.

In seventeenth-century classical poetics concern over the recuperability of 'le laid' surfaces in discussions of '*les bienséances*'. René Bray, in his classic *La Formation de la Doctrine Classique* (1927), clarified just how important, complex and wide-ranging is the regulatory function of '*les bienséances*' in classical aesthetics. He wrote:

"...la bienséance est une chose complexe; elle anime la théorie des mœurs, elle englobe la règle de la vraisemblance dans son application aux caractères, elle traduit dans la poétique les exclusions morales prononcées par l'honnêteté contre certaines situations,

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<sup>37</sup>we are now at the height of the rigours of Napoleonic censorship. Sobry's poetics gear a softened and bastardized version of the *beau idéal* (as 'embellissement') to unashamed Bonapartist propagandist heroics. On the link between the *beau idéal* and the politics of Empire as exemplified in this text, see Becq (1986), p.26.

<sup>38</sup>Sobry p.86.

certaines sentiments, certains spectacles. Elle mele des éléments intellectuels à des éléments moraux. Si on cherche à lui donner une base unique, on ne la trouve que dans ce désir d'harmonie...harmonie à l'intérieur de l'oeuvre d'art, harmonie entre l'oeuvre d'art et le public".<sup>39</sup>

Harmony, therefore, negotiates many aspects of the work, but especially, Bray emphasizes, the *moral*, through the aesthetic.

It would be tempting to characterize the seventeenth-century notion of '*la bienséance*' anachronistically along the lines of a 'repressive hypothesis' ( i.e. doing the ideological work of a censor, euphemistically 'harmonizing' through silencing). Rather, it is, in its complex mediating aspect, a sophisticated attempt to *extend* the boundaries of representation, while maintaining the social identities which depend on distinctions of preciousness and honnêteté. Therefore, less a disavowing fetishization, than a contingent negotiation; a sophisticated play - a *knowingness* - which determines the mutual relation between a subjectivity and a poetics. Through the notion of '*la bienséance*', it is not any particular 'transgressive' subject matter as such (homosexuality, say) which is deemed unrepresentable, but more importantly, poetic or stylistic incompatibilities which are specifically proscribed. The *game* of classicism, eminently creative, is precisely to include *le laid*, to place it within the boundary. So that the representation of 'le bas, le bouffon, le grossier et l'impudique' is certainly to be avoided, but only, or especially, in the elevated genres from which it is excluded. Since different codes govern different genres, it can be given relatively free reign in, for example, the satiric mode.

All this may seem to be contradicted by the apparent obsession of classical poetics, from the 1630's onwards - reaching its apogee in La Mesnadière's long pages on "les sentiments infames", (Poétique, 1639) - with detailing 'les propos déshonnetes'. We have argued, however, that those pages work not to reject, but to assimilate the 'low' with the 'high'. Not, therefore to deem things unrepresentable, only that they must be represented rightly. And this is what French classical poeticists from the sixteenth thirties onwards

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<sup>39</sup>Bray, p.216.

meant by "adoucir sans changer", "respecter en accomadant". According to Chapelain, "cela s'appelle envelopper les ordures".<sup>40</sup>

### The turn to morality

If we were to trace the subsequent history of the notion of 'la bienséance' in classical aesthetics we would find that it mutates in the Enlightenment into the modern notion of 'decency'. The notion of *décence* will determine a different structural relation between repression and visibility; and a different relation of the dynamic between the two and morality. If we now go on to consider the eighteenth-century *beau idéal* as it is enmeshed in this specifically moralistic turn in French culture, we will see that seventeenth-century classical notions of aesthetic judgement, based in 'gout' and 'Raison', as generally a 'seeming-rightness'<sup>41</sup>, lose their pliability and their more subtle ties with the identities of their audience.

Take the case of La Font de Saint-Yenne's criticism of Boucher's male nudes in 1754. The transition from the seventeenth-century notion of 'la bienséance' in classical poetics to an enlightenment notion of 'décence' is fully achieved by that date. La Font de Saint-Yenne, retrospectively reinterprets the concept of 'honnêteté', now giving it a moralistic turn. The object of his critical attention is Boucher's allegorical pair *Lever/Coucher du Soleil*, now in the Wallace Collection, and shown at the Paris Salon of the previous year, 1753. The nudities in the paintings are deemed offensive to the morality of 'les jeunes filles', and La Font introduces the much rehearsed charge of decadence, which the pure *beau idéal* (nostalgically imputed to the 'honnête' seventeenth century) will have to defend itself against. "Leurs indécences seront surement applaudies et admirées par les libertins, mais elles auront toujours les mépris des honnetes gens", he writes of the central male

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<sup>40</sup>Chapelain, *Lettres*, t.II., p.684, on representing 'sales amours'. Although, as I have shown, those accomodations prove intolerable when the requirements of 'la bienséance' contradict the severe demands of seventeenth-century translation theory in Madame Dacier's 1684 translation of Anacréon. *supra.* p.29.

<sup>41</sup>on Boileau's 'Raison' as 'seeming-rightness', therefore not programmatic and doctrinaire, but contingent and negotiable, see Pockock 1980.

nudes.<sup>42</sup> The separation in Enlightenment criticism of good and bad bodies is, of course, just one amongst many antinomies necessary to the destructive/reconstructive intentions of the enlightenment project.

We have noted that the *beau idéal*, geared to the requirements of academic 'enseignement', had already in the 1670's been metaphorically reduced to sufficiently quotidian adequacy. From the 1690's onwards there is a gradual desublimation of the concept of the *beau idéal* coinciding until the middle of the eighteenth century with a Rococo aesthetics which prefers an appeal to nature or the imagination, over classical 'imitation'; and will later be derogatorily referred to as *la petite manière*.<sup>43</sup> From the middle of the eighteenth century the *beau idéal* only temporarily neglected, enters into complex relations with the critical movement of the Enlightenment. Complex, because enlightenment debates paradoxically re-invigorate the concept of ideal beauty, while at the same time introducing a process of moral relativism and historicism which, when applied to the concept of Beauty, will disintegrate its universalist metaphysical support. The challenge to the *beau idéal* will not primarily come, then, from a philosophical materialism, but from the development of a critical History. That this development produces an intolerable contradiction in the concept of Beauty, rather than simply a tolerable paradox, becomes clear when we come to consider the attempts of post-revolutionary theoreticians, Eméric-David for example, to square historicist arguments about the peculiar rightness of ancient conditions to produce the classical perfect male body (social constructionist arguments from 'climate') with idealist attempts to return contemporary French male bodies to their pre-cultural, natural perfect state (essentialist arguments - stripping away of civilized, institutional effects on the body). The post-revolutionary homoerotic body becomes a product of these cultural contradictions. And it

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<sup>42</sup>La Font de Saint-Yenne, *Sentiments sur quelques ouvrages de peinture, sculpture et gravure*, 1754, pp. 34-43, cited in Crow, 1983. See also on this Rousseauian moralistic and *normative* turn in the 1750's, articulated around Boucher's erotic works, Michel (1989), p.28.

<sup>43</sup>by maintaining the study of the antique and the idealistic theory of imitation in his *académies*, perhaps only Bouchardon maintained the link in the mid-century with philosophical idealism in the Académie. On Bouchardon's maintenance of *dessin*, see Locquin, p.73.

is precisely the formation of this local contradiction which will open up a space for the *possibility* of a Kantian intervention.

### Diderot's recuperation of neoplatonic idealism

Confusing an 'aesthetic' formalism - 'le vrai ligne' - with a revitalized notion of the Good, Diderot, in the Preface to his Salon of 1766, attempts to liberate the *beau idéal* from dry school pedantism, and return to it some radical powers of regeneration. The moral imperative of the *beau idéal* in Enlightenment aesthetics is nowhere clearer than in this passage. Rejecting the perceived bowdlerized academic version of the *beau idéal* which consisted by the 1750's largely in the principle of simply copying from the antique<sup>44</sup>, Diderot asks 'And if the antique had not existed, how would you proceed?'. His reply, a reformulation of the *beau idéal* which has nothing original in it, but demonstrates rather an intertextual resourcefulness, is worth quoting at length (see Appendix 4). For here we encounter a proto-revolutionary coalition between 'beauty' as a moral force for the Good, and 'society' - "climate, government, laws" - as a reciprocal cradle for beauty's encouragement. The *beau idéal* in this crucial passage, is at once liberated from the constraints of academic tuition, even almost liberated from its enlightenment polar dialectical relationship with La Font's 'indécences'.<sup>45</sup> Instead, Diderot returns some of neoplatonic (pre-Bellorian) utopian force to the concept, laying the rhetorical foundations for its social revolutionary signification, which is prefigured here as a return to nature - 'a barbaric state'.<sup>46</sup>

### The rupture of radical relativism

But at the same time, against this investment of the *beau idéal* with proto-revolutionary

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<sup>44</sup>Locquin, p.73-74.

<sup>45</sup>since "it's always meaningless to query the acceptable limits of deviation from the ideal model of beauty...", Appendix 1.

<sup>46</sup>although Diderot clearly rejects the possibility of a Plotinian theological *direct* apprehension of the noumenon; rather his account of how the ancients attained the Ideal is evolutionary. Art practise might then evolve by arduously learning to return to "a barbaric state".



moral agency, the enlightenment encourages a critical unmasking of the inherent universalist presuppositions of the concept of beauty through a relativist critique of culture. We can identify this most clearly in the Voltaire's anti-platonic article *Beau/Beauté* of the *Dictionnaire Critique* (1764).

Here, beauty is the occasion for a sceptical discourse on the possibility of universal agreement. The question for Voltaire is less the political one of *who* decides what is to be taken as the 'universal' metaphysical - not, here, therefore, an attack on schools' Beauty, or Christianity's theological Beauty in the name of a radical philosophy of reason - than one of *on what grounds*. Voltaire's disarmingly simple refutations of the very object of mid-century speculative aesthetics - the determination of an objective standard of taste as arduously worked out in Diderot's article on *Beau* in the *Encyclopédie*, for example - are equally ruinous to the functionalist explanation of Beauty as well to an idealist one. We are confronted, when contemplating Beauty, with the impossibility of a universal arbiter, and simply left with the judgement of cultural taste, or pleasure.<sup>47</sup> The ancients are thus disinvested of their function as a conduit to the Good.<sup>48</sup> Yet in local terms precisely how to square individual judgements of taste, and universality - the recuperation of the discredited universal through the individual apperception of Beauty - will be the central task of Kant's 1790 *Third Critique*.

#### Beauty as a 'lost object'

Finally, an important third element, which will have a decisive impact on the transformed semantics of the *beau idéal* in revolutionary and post-revolutionary culture, is Rousseau's influential functionalist/teleological version of ideal manhood. Functionalist in two senses

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<sup>47</sup>Voltaire plays on the the classical *beau/laid* distinction to underline his point: "Demandez à un crapaud ce que c'est la beauté, le grand beau, le to kalon? il vous répondra que c'est la femelle avec deux gros yeux ronds, sortant de sa petite tête, une geule large et plate, un ventre jaune , un dos brun. Interrogez un nègre de Guinée, le beau est pour lui une peau noire huileuse, des yeux enfoncés, un nez épaté.", Voltaire, 1994, p.407.

<sup>48</sup>the long-term consequences of this cultural relativism may be traced to Stendhal's precocious formulation of a *beau idéal moderne*, in *Histoire de la Peinture en Italie*, vol.2. 1817, p.133-209.

- beautiful bodies being both condition and effect of right society.<sup>49</sup> Rousseau is rarely directly concerned with questions about the nature of beauty. Rather, it is the importance of the origins of which beauty is an effect which will deem it worthy of concern. For example, Rousseau's ideal of Spartan manhood implicitly bears within it a theory of degeneration, akin to Diderot's more neoplatonic *vrai ligne*.<sup>50</sup> Where Rousseau's arguments are placed differently from Diderot's however, is in the question of the recuperability of perfect male bodies, or, applied to aesthetics, the attainability of the *beau idéal*, a question which will become urgent in post-revolutionary political culture and aesthetics. If, as we saw, Diderot's *vrai ligne* is always recuperable, indeed has itself a dynamic force to break open boundaries and inhibitions discursively instituted by civilized society and religion (between civilization and eroticism, the ideal and the sensuous), Rousseau's 'real men', on the other hand, approximate more closely to Winckelmann's 'lost object'. Henceforth, most pronouncements on the *beau idéal* will engage with a Rousseauian anxiety over the recuperability of the state of 'perfection'. 'Real Presence' will be sought for - or rather yearned for - in the *beau idéal* less as a Plotinian possibility<sup>51</sup>, than as an irrecuperable loss.

### Beauty's undecidability

Thus a plurality of 'philosophical' concerns congregate in the pre-revolutionary concept of the *beau idéal*. Yet this dissemination of the term 'Beauty' was ruinous. By the eve of the Revolution the concept has become almost *intolerably* overdetermined. For example, it is clear that Watelet, in the article '*Beau idéal*' of the '*Dictionnaire*'<sup>52</sup>, is having trouble with adequate definition of the concept. In the interests of 'enseignement', Watelet even seems prepared to jettison the notion altogether. After a long passage pointing out the confusion

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<sup>49</sup>so that, " in a republic men are needed" , whereas " The first Romans lived like men and found in their constant exercises the vigour that nature had refused them, while we lose ours in the indolent and soft life to which our dependence on women reduces us". Bloom, p. 101-103.

<sup>50</sup>Locquin, p.148-9.

<sup>51</sup>see Blunt, p.69.

<sup>52</sup>the *Dictionnaire* was only published in 1792, although Watelet had been working on the articles up until his death in 1786.

and 'obscurities' of existing explanations (the notion's overdetermination), he offers his own definition of the *beau idéal* in what is effectively a compromised theory of imitation. "Le beau idéal est aujourd'hui, à notre égard, la réunion des plus grandes perfections que puissent offrir partiellement certains individus choisis".<sup>53</sup> Concerning this kind of imitation (as distinguished from both 'imitation servile' and imitation by 'choix du sujet'), "il ne peut être soutenu que par le concours d'un nombre de causes actives, et puissantes...". Watelet then proceeds to present a complex of conditions and extenuating circumstances for the *beau idéal*:

"Ces causes sont une température favorable aux développemens physiques et moraux; l'art de transmettre, à l'aide de l'écriture, des idées et des lumières, et ascendant des grandes institutions, ascendant prodigieux, puisqu'il élève l'homme audessus de lui-même, c'est-à-dire, de la personnalité, et qu'il porte, à l'aide d'enthousiasme et de l'amour de la gloire, les vertus, ainsi que les Arts, à des perfections sublimes et en quelque façon surnaturelles".

However, this complex of conditions and effects, by now familiar, turns out ultimately to be both historically specific, and therefore not recoverable; Beauty is even now incomprehensible. The identifications ancient religion offered between transcendent gods and earthly heroes no more subsist and, "Ce genre de beauté n'ayant plus les mêmes bases parmi nous, ne peut, comme on le voit, nous inspirer généralement les mêmes idées, et c'est de-là que naît la difficulté d'atteindre à la même perfection que les Anciens, et de s'exprimer sur cet objet de manière à être entendu de tout le monde".<sup>54</sup> We can begin to discern in Watelet a crisis in the notion of the *beau idéal* which emerges from a growing awareness of its intolerable internal contradictions; one brought on by the aforesaid reformulations of the concept in enlightenment critiques. An unforeseen - possibly

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<sup>53</sup>Watelet's definition is thus firmly placed along less idealist lines than a classically neo-Platonic version would condone. The dominating tendency in the history of the *beau idéal* has been indeed to desubliminate the concept. 'Beau' being the substantive term, accordingly it can be qualified by 'vrai', 'naturel', 'de réunion'; all of which *modify* the originally Platonic spiritual aspirations of 'idéal'.

<sup>54</sup>Watelet/Levesque, article 'beau idéal', Dictionnaire des Arts, De Peinture, Sculpture et Gravure, Paris 1792, pp.204-211.

traumatic rupture with classical culture thus infects *neoclassicism* at the moment - this 'pre-revolutionary' moment - its regenerative capacity is most needfully mobilized. The structural contradiction in the concept of Beauty is now no longer one between the sensuous and the ideal, that which had been 'fetishized' by post-Bellorian academic practise; it is now one between History as difference and Ideality as the desire for transcendence, or 'ideal oneness'. The relation between body and idea - one which was thought not so much *within* philosophy as *in the space between* philosophy and 'Art' - has thus become discontinuous, the dialectic halted. The perfect body cultivated through right institutions - paradigmatically in 'Sparta', or the perfect body pre-existing culture and institutions - Diderot's positive identification of the *vrai ligne* and 'barbarism'; Watelet attests to the impossible gulf which appeared by the Revolution to separate the two.

#### Revolutionary 'fetishisation' of the *beau idéal*

What relation, then, between that paradigmatic historical *event* and the troubled metaphysical notion of Beauty?

How might the Revolution have enabled or precipitated this shift to a Kantian re-formulation of the *beau idéal*? Or, indeed, did the revolution momentarily retrogressively check it? Did the 'aestheticization' of the concept take place, as Germer and Kohle suggest, *despite* the radical Revolution?

It is at once clear that the concept of the *beau idéal* was in important ways revitalized and refocused by its deployment in revolutionary culture. The connection between politics and aesthetics had already been decisively effected through the French reception of Winckelmann.<sup>55</sup> This newly privileged status of the *beau idéal* in revolutionary aesthetic discourse has been sufficiently established in art-historical literature.<sup>56</sup> Briefly, for our

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<sup>55</sup>the reception of Winckelmann into French aesthetics was immediate. The 'Gedanken' published in Dresden in 1755, and within a year two French translations appeared. Eventually, Winckelmann's writings were officially sanctioned during the Revolution through Jansen's 1790-94 translation. The history of the French reception of Winckelmann is detailed in Pommier (1989, 1991), and Hartog (1994).

<sup>56</sup>for example Détournelle, in the *Société populaire et républicaine des arts* (1794), ensured the continuation of the neoplatonic theory of imitation - as against copying from

purposes, it is important to note that in a state of revolutionary emergency, the anxiety over the aforesaid contradictions between climate and nature, were necessarily suspended; that the beautiful male body is figured forth in revolutionary culture as both effect *and* agent of democratic politics; that those newly constructed beautiful bodies are seen momentarily to identify unproblematically with ancient (Greek, typically Spartan) beautiful bodies as figured forth textually by Winckelmann; that to question the recuperability of perfect bodies was suddenly not only to ask a question of aesthetics, but to be immediately identified as politically counter-revolutionary; that, in a last gasp, the original sublime aspects of the *beau idéal* found an unexpected and momentary concordance with the millennial religious aspirations of the radical revolution;<sup>57</sup> finally, that, post-thermidorean condemnations of the Jacobins - Robespierre, Saint-Just, and the whole project of the recuperation of 'Sparta'- could take the form of an attack on the classical aesthetic theory of 'imitation'.<sup>58</sup> So that, it is so far clear that, in a state of emergency, the *beau idéal* could for present purposes be figured forth as entirely recuperable.

But the question remains of whether we can register, along with the revalorization of antiquity in the Revolution, a possible rupture in classical aesthetics, language, and rhetoric at this point. Does the violence of revolution now make intolerable demands on classical aesthetic notions of 'decorum' - subsumed under 'la bienséance'? How might the revolutionary re-articulation of the *beau idéal* - now as allegorical representation of *le peuple* - entail the *beau idéal*'s ruin once that constituency threatens to break the boundaries of polite discourse, or aesthetic harmony? Is the concept of the *beau idéal*, while newly 'fetishized' - disavowal of the aforesaid theoretical contradictions - too

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life

- by recommending that artists read Winckelmann's descriptions of ideal classical statuary: "une leçon prise devant les belles figures que je viens de décrire leur fera faire plus de progrès que s'ils copient seulement pendant un hiver entier le modèle de l'école.", cited in Pommier, 1991,p.332.

<sup>57</sup>see Potts 1994, Chapter V, 'Oneness and Ideal Beauty', for how a concordance might be effected between the *beau idéal* and radical egalitarianism.

<sup>58</sup>Hartog, 1994, p.141.

severely compromised, indeed damaged, by its revolutionary re-articulation, then requiring, in post-revolutionary aesthetics, its hysterical restitution?

From the viewpoint of a Marxist historiography of the Revolution, an argument can be made that these *post*-revolutionary homoerotic bodies function precisely to cover over traces of class conflict. In this view the *beau idéal* had become, in effect, one of the figures through which a political factionalism was played out over the representation of *le peuple*. Potts, for example, sees in David's *Bara* a body twisted and deformed by irreconcilable Jacobin desires; "He is the *Bara* of middle-class imagination, besieged by contending populist and revisionist pressures". The Winckelmannian *beau idéal* is now contingently mutated into a 'beautiful violence'. But while the body of *Bara* in late '94 *may* reveal class conflict, or the inherent difficulties of Jacobin 'fetishization', at the same time David invokes a specifically Winckelmannian troping of the *beau idéal* precisely in order to *efface* those "great unspoken distinctions...of class and gender."<sup>59</sup> In Potts' account, post-thermidorean aesthetics increasingly brings this *effacing* function of the *beau idéal* to the fore; which is to say that it ideologically *succeeds* in masking social antagonisms where, for David, in an II it had *failed*. "In this high aesthetic domain," writes Potts, now focusing on *post*-revolutionary aesthetic debate, "pleasure was allowable only in so far as it could be conceived as categorically different from bodily lusts or desires, just as the ethical significance of art came increasingly to be severed from the supposedly 'prosaic' realities of politics." And he continues, "In Quatremère de Quincy's unbendingly abstract definitions of ideal beauty, or Eméric-David's unremittingly beaurocratic analysis, such issues are almost hysterically repressed".<sup>60</sup> This estimation of renewed, now multiple, 'fetishisation' may be questionable. It springs from a certain historiographical tradition which perhaps prematurely forecloses what is considered as *the* "truly revolutionary moment", an II; which is then seen to be followed by a sudden reversal of radical potential - *post*-revolutionary, then, where 'post' signifies as a mark of decadence. Yet both a continuing *post*-revolutionary sensitivity to the male nude in relation to 'decorum', and an already indivisible coupling of the ideal male nude and

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<sup>59</sup>Potts, 1994, p.235.

<sup>60</sup>*ibid.*, p. 227.

political narratives (as evidenced, for example, by the aforementioned post-thermidorian criticism of 'imitation' on political grounds) suggest that differences - class difference, difference between ideal and sensuality - could not be so adequately, or at least successfully, repressed or disavowed. We might rather *suspend* a radically critical 'revolutionary moment' beyond the boundary which decisively separates, in Jacobin historiography, the two periods which flank the moment, and determine the meaning of, 'Thermidor'. Indeed, I would suggest that it was the continuing inability to divest the *beau idéal* of the moral and political associations attributed to it since the Enlightenment and in the Revolution which required a re-framing - precisely a *displacement* of the radical potential - of the concept of Beauty - and concomitantly the ideal male nude - within a system of Kantian transcendental aesthetics. In the long history of the concept of Beauty, then, the French Revolution might be considered, less as a Toquevillian glitch, than as a *traumatic* moment in Beauty's history which could only find its positive articulation *after* the event - *nachträglich*-like - in that *other* truly revolutionary moment of critical Kantianism. This squinted time frame does not ignore the Revolution in favour of the aesthetic; but it does do away with the notion of a *trans-discursive* radical political 'moment'; as well as the notion of a *moment-less* aesthetic.

This is not to argue that there were not significant setbacks to the representation and practice of a radical egalitarianism post-Thermidor. It does, however, cast the aesthetic in a more dynamic role. Rather than assuming a certain demise of the radical potential of the *beau idéal*, attendant with the demise of its signified, radical republicanism, we might now ask whether that aesthetic consists precisely in the *working through* and displacement of a republican problematic; now perhaps otherwise unutterable within a sanitized post-revolutionary political rhetoric. Is the work of aesthetic theory, and the reformulated *beau idéal* in post-revolutionary aesthetics, not so much one of repression of real conflicts (sexual, social)<sup>61</sup>, or domestication<sup>62</sup>, but rather one of *recuperation* - the recuperation of a

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<sup>61</sup>as in Solomon-Godeau's interpretations of the post-revolutionary homoerotic nude, in which the work of the homoerotic nude is to accommodate (through introjection), therefore corroborate, the social/political repression of women.

<sup>62</sup>as in Potts (1994), in which the work of post-revolutionary theory on the male nude is one of re-creating coherences. Potts, p.226.

certain 'free space' which is no longer amenable through compromised Winckelmannian tropings of the *beau idéal*? A 'free space', which we might, moreover, designate as Kantian?

#### A time of theory

Much of post-revolutionary aesthetic theory on *le beau* may for all that be motivated by the desire for an impossible recuperation. This may explain aesthetic theory's phenomenal growth in this period. The need to decahct troublesome aspects of the *beau idéal* is evident in the project of a more comprehensive reformulation of neoclassicism in the 1800's.<sup>65</sup> And this more general tendency to self-critical review in post-revolutionary aesthetic theory - articulated through the endless reorganization of classical poetics' internal terms of debate - may spell trouble. Emeric-David's *Recherches sur l'Art Statuaire Considéré Chez les Anciens et Chez les Modernes* (1805) was only the most competent in attempting to rescue a conception of the *beau idéal* which might retain both its revolutionary semantics of social utopianism and its adequacy to the quotidian necessities of academic *enseignement*. The tone of the *Recherches* is above all conciliatory. The texts' competence and consequent influence lies in the successful application of two objectives. Firstly, it tries to grapple with the overdetermination of the concept; it is impressively wide-ranging, rehearsing and commenting on a number of questions with which the *beau idéal* had become associated. For example, Eméric-David begins his 'Consideration' with historicist arguments against the recoverability of the beautiful male body - individual climate, inherent natural bodily beauty of the ancient Greeks, ancient public visibility of naked male bodies; but only to refute them. Similarly, the Winckelmannian linkage between beautiful male bodies with political liberty is taken into account, again only to be refused - on the slender grounds that, it is argued, there

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<sup>65</sup>thus Sobry's pointed disapproval in the *Poétique* of 1810 of Boileau's inclusive classicism. However, we should note that Sobry's criticism takes place within a larger neoclassical *return* to Boileau in the late 1790's and early 1800's. This return is avowedly in order to "retrouver toutes les sources du beau", although certain troubling aspects of seventeenth-century poetics are effectively censured. See on this, Miller, p.485-498. Miller notes (p.497) that in 1804 no less than thirty-two *discours* on Boileau were presented at the Institut.



were even free people who renounced the arts.<sup>64</sup> Classical philosophical traditions of enquiry concerning 'beauty' are rehearsed, namely that which posited the link between the 'beau' and the 'utile'. These last are, incidentally, recommended by Eméric-David.

The second objective of Eméric-David's text - following comprehensiveness (i.e. inclusiveness) and strategic rejections (of historicist arguments, radical political arguments) - is a conciliatory one.<sup>65</sup> This last objective was institutionally sanctioned if only because it was *required* for the continuation of a re-organized academy.<sup>66</sup> In Eméric-David's text it conspicuously fails. While Eméric-David succeeds in detaching the 'beau' from the realm of the 'idéal'<sup>67</sup>, he does not concomitantly, as one would expect, re-attach the 'beau' to the present 'visible'; in spite of his fetishistic intentions, Eméric-David keeps returning to historicist teleological and functionalist arguments which tend to impress with the perfect male body's *irrecuperability*. The text thus keeps folding back on itself. The text fails to offer up a theoretically tenable, anchored vision of the perfect male body. It vacillates. On the one hand it offers a more or less classically neoplatonist version of the *beau idéal*:

"Qu'est-ce que la beauté du corps humain? C'est un état dans lequel les formes humaines se montrent telles que la nature les a vouloues pour l'espèce, et dans leur perfection. La beauté du corps de l'homme consiste dans sa parfaite ressemblance avec l'exemplaire originale, que la nature s'est donné pour modèle, et qu'elle représente dans ses productions, toutes les fois que ses moyens agissent avec une pleine liberté. La beauté du corps de l'homme est le complément des formes humaines. Un bel homme est mieux

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<sup>64</sup>Eméric-David, p. 17.

<sup>65</sup>for an example of the post-thermidorian discourse of reconciliation in the restructured Institut - immediately following its institution in 1795 - see the comments made in the *Troisième séance* of the *Classe des Beaux arts et de Littérature*, the *Mémoire* of C. Mongez, *Sur la réunion des Littérateurs et des Artistes dans l'Institut français, et sur les esprit qui doit les animer*, in Bonnaire, p.14.

<sup>66</sup>on the post-thermidorean re-organization of the academy, see Franqueville.

<sup>67</sup>"Le nom de beau idéal, considéré en lui-même ne peut donc désigner que le beau visible, le beau réel, le beau de la nature"; this is the conclusion to the section 'Sur le Beau Idéal. Etymologie et véritable signification de ce mot', Eméric-David, p. 285.

un homme que celui qui n'est pas beau, ou qui l'est moins. De-là vient l'empire de la beauté"<sup>68</sup>,

and on the other hand it offers a functionalist explanation of the judgement and production of beauty:

"L'instinct avoit reconnu le beau: guidé par la nécessité autant que par l'attrait du plaisir, un jugement éclairé ne tarda point à en apprécier la convenance...L'intérêt public et l'émulation des guerriers, firent attacher un grand prix aux qualités corporelles. Les villes se félicitèrent de posséder beaucoup d'hommes bien faits, c'est-à-dire, beaucoup de soldats agiles et robustes. Il fallut honorer la beauté".<sup>69</sup>

The unsettled plurality of the text, and the fact that Eméric-David ultimately fails to offer up an identifiable modern version of the ideal male nude, derives from the fact that complex and multiple 'sources' of the text cannot be brought into line with present historical exigencies - with an Institut now increasingly alienated from political power, and having to forge a new identity. Ancient classical fragments cross with a modern discourse, which is itself highly conscious of its more recent revolutionary experience, so that the dialogue between the Ancients and the Moderns - which was premised, we might add, on a stable sense of identity *as* modern<sup>70</sup> - becomes uselessly and intolerably complicated. Furthermore, although Potts characterizes Eméric-David's essay as "unremmitingly bureaucratic" and its work as 'hysterically repressive', even in terms of 'somasochistic fantasies', or at least 'complex' investments of pleasure in the male body, Eméric-David's text continues to articulate a rhetoric of high passion before its ostensible object of desire; therefore never quite achieves a repressed post-revolutionary domestication.<sup>71</sup> More generally, the attempt at reconciliation only ends in confusion.<sup>72</sup>

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<sup>68</sup>ibid. p.233.

<sup>69</sup>ibid., p.47-48.

<sup>70</sup>not thus simply a replay of the 'Querelle', but an instability of identity.

<sup>71</sup>"Quoi donc! Je parle des Grecs et de la beauté, ne compterai-je pour rien les vœux de l'amour? Non, la beauté n'est pas une propriété exclusive de celui qui la

Another important text which attempted to fix the *beau idéal*'s meaning was Ponce's *Memoire sur Cette Question proposée Par L'Institut National. Quelles ont été les causes de la perfection de la sculpture antique, et quels seroient les moyens d'y atteindre?* (An IX). Again a whole range of ancient and modern philosopher/aestheticians (Plato, Seneca, Quintilian; Winckelmann, Reynolds, Mengs, Hogarth) are reconsidered and brought to bear on the question of how to attain perfect male bodies.<sup>73</sup> Ponce does in fact succeed in fixing his object, which is the perfect male body, although, we should add, only as the result of a significant philosophical impoverishment. Ponce's argument is bolder than Eméric-David's; he altogether abandons metaphysical definitions of the *beau idéal* which are always in danger of producing 'un objet fantastique'.<sup>74</sup> Instead Ponce posits a practicable 'beauté de réunion'. The more quotidian 'real' presence of male beauty in the ancient polis is evidenced, he claims, in classical texts - Socrates' Alcibiades, Plato's Charmides, public baths and the specularity of gymnastics. With favorable social conditions *le beau* may yet flourish. In terms identical to those of Rousseau, Ponce links causally 'la beauté abâtardie' with deformed modern culture:

"Certes, l'on commettrait une erreur grossière en jugeant les Grecs du temps d'Alcibiade d'après ceux de nos jours; ceux-ci, entièrement dénaturés, sont tombés dans un complet abrutissement, par toutes les causes physiques et morales que la nature peut

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possède. J'éprouve d'immenses désirs; il faut des plaisirs à mes sens; à mon cœur, de l'amitié; à ma raison, des jouissances. Composé de deux substances, je demande et je veux donner: j'ai besoin des plaisirs de l'homme terrestre, et de ceux de l'être divin. Oh! si le beau et le bon n'étoient en effet qu'un même chose! Beauté parfaite dont nul mortel ne peut méconnaître les charmes; beauté divine à laquelle les Grecs élevoient des autels, daigne donc te montrer à ma vue, et que, le cœur brûlant, les bras tendus vers toi, je me prosterne et je t'adore", Eméric-David, pp. 66-67.

<sup>73</sup>this is not to dismiss the success of Eméric-David's *Recherches*. But if the Institut required an instantly canonical re-formulation of the *beau idéal* for its continuing practise, the fractured condition of the *Recherches* - as I have tried to represent it - may attest to the insecure sociopolitical conditions of its enunciation.

<sup>74</sup>female beauty is summararily dismissed: "En général, même dans les plus beaux temps de la Grèce, les femmes y furent moins parfaites que les hommes", Ponce, p. 14.

<sup>74</sup>ibid., p.44.

produire".<sup>75</sup>

Thus what is required is a *moral* revolution which would "régénérer la beauté abartardie en quelque sorte en Europe" (p. 47). Ponce argues that this process has indeed already begun with the recent revolution in France, which introduced a new clarity of gesture, at once dissolving "habituelles effeminés" (p. 49). The task, now, Ponce claims, is to find varied and beautiful male models for artists - and even to erect semi-nude arenas for modern French artists to gaze upon them (p.50). In short, it is important now to attend to the raw materials producing beautiful male bodies, and to reproduce the conditions which produced ideal Greek manhood. Ponce thus agrees with Eméric-David - although his solutions are perhaps rather more literally *mundane* - in placing his emphasis on the importance of right institutions as a solution to the problem of producing modern beauty. Yet by simply recommending the wholesale importation of classical institutions Ponce simply, and boldly, bypassed the problem of cultural translation.

For all its classicizing references, it will be clear from this summary of Ponce's argument that it has very little to do with the classical conception of the *beau idéal*. Recuperability is gained through the *beau idéal*'s complete desublimation. In Ponce's text the male body seems to be oddly detached from some of its former more glorified semantic associations, namely the universalist ones which had always been implicit in the concept, and which had fitted the male nude as the ideal vehicle for representing communitarian ideology during the radical revolution. In this text we may clearly ascertain the gradual erosion of the discourse of the public function of the *beau idéal*; the relevance of perfect male beauty is gradually delimited to the sphere of academic *enseignement*; to the problem of how to produce the perfect *modèle*, and of how to maintain it.

What is most striking, then, about these post-revolutionary texts on *le beau* is that despite their fraught intentions to reclaim the beautiful male body, now separated both from 'radical' politics, and from speculative metaphysics, they fail to offer up a body which has

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<sup>75</sup>ibid., p.13. On these grounds - of the ancients' difference - it was also argued that ancient 'homosexuality' was something quite other - and more pure - than modern pederasty.

any significance other than its utility to artistic *enseignement*. And, we might add, for *that* end, any other object might have done just as well.<sup>76</sup> Like 'sodomy', a certain meaning of 'beauty' was becoming lost.

But if the *beau idéal* had reached a state of doubly inflected crisis by 1800, and if the ideal male nude continued to come under its provision, under what new aesthetic might the male body now retain its theoretical legitimacy and traditional metaphysical value? Does the *beau idéal* and its corporeal representation, merely dissolve in a fuss of internal contradictions; or are those post-revolutionary homoerotic male nudes analogously working out a compensatory, but impossible, recuperation? What is the relation between collapsing theory and continuing, indeed flourishing, practise? Is the collective lack of vigour of the ideal male nude precisely an index of the waning of its theoretical support, the *beau idéal*? If we chose to be carried along by a specific telos - a history of aesthetics - that dying fall cannot be the last fateful chapter, and we will therefore resist that identification between a waning *beau idéal* and the homoerotic nude as its consequent emptied and redundant *aestheticized* signified; and resist an unhappy ending to the history of Beauty. For in tracing the history of the concept of the *beau idéal* a new configuration comes into focus precisely during those years in which we have located the fall of a compromised classical and then revolutionary reformulation of the concept; namely, the radical formulation of Kantian aesthetics. How might the body be speculatively transformed in accordance with *this* philosophical revolution?

What, indeed, is the nature of this Kantian transformation regarding the concept of the *beau idéal*? It is one of both rupture and displacement. Erwin Panofsky's classic *Idea. A Concept in Art Theory* (1924), illuminates, in its very closing paragraph, the importance of the epistemological shift which Kant's philosophical system induced. Since Plato, Panofsky concludes, the theory of 'Idea' - Platonic idealism, transformed by the sixteenth century

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<sup>76</sup>Schiller attests to the exhaustion of the concept of Beauty in a letter to Goethe, dated July 1797. He wonders whether the term 'Beauty' ought to be "dismissed from circulation" because its meaning had been too narrowed and consequently emptied. Cited in Beardsley, 1966, p.230.

into the specifically art critical notion of the *beau idéal* had been consistently based on a presupposition of an external "thing in itself", with which the subject's internal mental notion - be it in the way of reproduction through nature or independent creation - may correspond. In classical epistemology, therefore, before and beyond human consciousness or its natural or earthly derivatives there was an external thing which was thought to exist, *hors du sujet*. In Kant's epistemology the presupposition of the alterity of the "thing in itself" is profoundly shaken. Consequently, Panofsky concludes,

"artistic perception is no more faced with a "thing in itself" than is the process of cognition; on the contrary the one as well as the other can be sure of the validity of its judgements precisely because it alone determines the rules of its world (i.e. it has no objects other than those that are constituted within itself)".<sup>77</sup>

All at once this notion of aesthetic judgement, "entirely indifferent to the existence or non-existence of its object" (Kant, *Third Critique*) radically makes redundant the classical theory of mimesis, dominant in Western aesthetic thought since Aristotle. Now Beauty is at once freed, both from its former mimetic functions - from the presupposed and primary 'object' or 'thing'; and from its former ethical imperatives - from considerations of the Good.<sup>78</sup> Redundant now too are eighteenth-century aesthetic debates on the notion of aesthetic judgement which revolved around the objective/subjective problematic.<sup>79</sup> Concomitantly, Kant's *Third Critique* apprehends the end of the dialectic antinomy between naturalism and idealism.

Manifestly, we are dealing with an epistemological rupture of radical consequence. But what consequence for Beauty, for *le beau*?

If suddenly disinherited, the notion of Beauty is neither consequently renounced nor disenfranchized. On the contrary Beauty in Kant's third *Critique* now potentially becomes

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<sup>77</sup>Panofsky, p.126.

<sup>78</sup>on the philosophical emancipation of 'Art' through Beauty, see the neo-Kantian Cassirer, 1944, p.136.

<sup>79</sup>the problematic crystallized, and somewhat arduously worked out, in search of a normative aesthetics, in Diderot's article 'Beau', in the *Encyclopédie* (1751).

the very condition of a new objectively based notion of communitarianism - the proof of the *desire* which constitutes community, or the 'sensus communis'. Kant's philosophical system therefore introduces both rupture - with those old teleologies of Beauty - and displacement - to a privileged, indeed crucial, position in his critical system.<sup>80</sup> Kant's 'transcendental aesthetic' could provide a solution to the impasse of the concept of the *beau idéal* around the year 1800, both radically freeing *le beau* from its now ruined former classical associations - and concomitantly from an imminently collapsing *doctrine classique* - and subsequently relocating it in a politically significant theory of *disinterested* intellection - what we have ever since been used to thinking of as the 'aesthetic'.

### The reception of Kant in France

The revolutionary implications of Kant's new critical philosophy were recognized in France early; certainly well before the publication of Madame de Staël's *De l'Allemagne* (1814), or Mme. Necker de Saussure's translation of Schlegel's Kantian *Cours de la littérature dramatique* (also 1814).<sup>81</sup>

In 1796 *La Décade* announced the translation by Hercule Peyer Imhoff of the *Observations sur le Sentiment du Beau et du Sublime*; and in the same year two articles were published by Dorsch (in *La Décade*, 7 and 17 October) on *Perceptions obscures*, which laid out the moral and political implications of the new metaphysics as "une révolution dans l'esprit humain". But it was Villers' *Exposition des principes fondamentaux de la philosophie transcendente de Kant*, published in 1801, and dedicated to the Institut National de France, which decisively, although contentiously, proclaimed the revolutionary implications of Kantian metaphysics for French classical thought.<sup>82</sup>

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<sup>80</sup>see especially 'On the Ideal of Beauty', Kant, 1987, pp.79-85.

<sup>81</sup>on the influence of Kant on French culture and politics in the 1790's see, Picavet (1913), Vallois (1924), Azouvi/Borel (1991), and the article 'Kant' in Ozouf/Furet (1989).

<sup>82</sup>Picavet, 'Sur la philosophie de Kant en France de 1773 à 1814', in 'Kant. Critique de la Raison Pratique', Paris, 1913.

In Villers' presentation of Kant the new German metaphysics is seen to function for a French philosophic audience - after the ruins of the Revolution - as a return to morality, now re-concieved in terms of Kantian 'duty'. Viller's text claims to open out an escape route from local philosophical contradictions. He is concerned to demolish the bases and effects of the French empiricist tradition, which he associates with 'la sensualisme et l'immoralisme'. Against 'le libertin matérialiste et athée', after Kantian metaphysics "l'homme est libre dans ses volontés et dans ses actions".<sup>83</sup> Indeed, for Villers, Kant's revolutionary importance lies in the indisputable scientific basis for precisely those values which theology, classical culture and the the *interested* political revolution, had each failed to institute as social praxis:

"...c'est pour mettre le fort de la conscience à l'abri des attaques du sophisme, pour rétablir l'intégrité et la liberté du sens moral, pour élever le DEVOIR au dessus de toute atteinte des passions et des raisonnemens faux dont elles se servent; c'est pour assurer sur de nouvelles bases la *croynance* en une justice supreme et en l'immortalité de l'ame, que Kant a porté un jour nouveau dans la théorie de la cognition et de l'intelligence humain".<sup>84</sup>

Kantian metaphysics opens out, then, for a post-revolutionary French audience, the possibility of *another* revolution, which is posited as radically discontinuous with the previous failed one.<sup>85</sup> At the same time, German idealist thought intervenes in French culture in the 1800's as a more virtuous other, one which we could argue is implicitly critical of the nationalist heroics of Napoleonic ideology.<sup>86</sup>

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<sup>83</sup>Villers, 'Philosophie de Kant. Aperçu rapide des bases et de la direction de cette philosophie', Paris 1801, p. 9.

<sup>84</sup>ibid. p. 10.

<sup>85</sup>failed, that is, because of its 'sophisme', its 'adherence' to ideology, and its interested motivations. Villers associates 'la doctrine sensualiste' (French empiricism, Locke and Condillac) with "libertins...terroristes...la corruption des cours...la ferocité des clubs"; therefore with both Jacobin 'anarchists' *and* ancien régime libertarians.

<sup>86</sup>Picavet (1913) thus notes how Kantian metaphysics won the support of neither the materialist idéologues, nor Bonaparte. p.XVI. Also on Napoleon's suspicion of Kant, see



This is not to argue that at this early date Villers could have won over a significant constituency. Kantianism did not gain support from large sections of the Institut. The continuing dominance of philosophical materialism in the Institut - represented by the Idéologues (Volney, Garat, Cabanis, Destutt de Tracy), who claimed inheritance from Condillac - ensured that the intervention of Kantian metaphysics in it would remain at least, however, controversial, if not radical. For example the *Décade philosophique* ironically mocked the revolutionary implications of this foreign philosophy, and chose the example of its supposedly revolutionary effects on the fine arts and *la doctrine classique* to do so:

"Le grand philosophe de la Germanie va nous apprend<sup>re</sup>, ce que personne avant lui n'avait imaginé, que le principe de l'imitation de la nature dans les beaux-arts est mesquin et insuffisant".<sup>87</sup>

And even amongst the more metaphysically inclined, the repercussions of finally jettisoning the 'thing-in-itself', or the 'modèle universel', were keenly felt and criticized.<sup>88</sup> And not, one might judge, without good cause. For while the intervention of Kantian aesthetics might have provided the moral high-ground for a struggling and weighed-down French conception of the *beau idéal*, the logical anti-phenomenal end of the new metaphysics still might have threatened to delegitimize the pre-eminence of the male nude as an ideal for beauty. In Kantian aesthetics, the male nude certainly *could* function as an ideal for beauty, but not necessarily, or especially so.<sup>89</sup> Indeed the tenor of Kant's Third Critique of 1790 is inclined to be dismissive of the fine arts as they had been traditionally practised.<sup>90</sup>

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Azouvi, p.156-7.

<sup>87</sup>Décade philosophique, 30 fructidor An IX.

<sup>88</sup>see, Becq (1984), on Quatremère de Quincy's attacks on Kantian metaphysics, in the 'Considerations morales' (1815), p. 847.

<sup>89</sup>Kemal (1986), p.103-4.

<sup>90</sup>Kant tended to associate the fine arts - the *beau naturel* - with the 'agreeable' or the 'useful', henceforth distinguished from the more pure Beautiful. The examples Kant

Yet while this anti-fine art tendency in early Kantian epistemology is undeniable, I would suggest that in the horizon of French aesthetics, as they existed in the early 1800's, the overlap between two philosophies of metaphysics - the native French classical Platonic concept of *beau idéal* and the foreign Kantian 'transcendental aesthetic' - could not have been avoided. Indeed it was *required* by the Fine Arts section of the Institut for the very survival of its theoretical *raison d'être*, the concept of ideal beauty, or metaphysics *per se*.<sup>91</sup> An already badly functioning *beau idéal* was therefore necessarily transformed and relegitimated by a Kantian metaphysical redefinition of Beauty. While Kantian metaphysics thus infiltrated aesthetic discourse on *le beau* as a result of a larger philosophical dilemma, its local effect in the Fine Arts section was to resuscitate the practise and theory of the ideal male nude. The dialectical antinomies of the concept of Beauty which we have traced are arguably settled in the Kantian text. But, given this contingent resolution, how does Kantian philosophical metaphysics exactly re-define 'Art' for a French academic audience, and influence art practise, through a theoretically supported *enseignement*? If Kantianism remained contentious and without a fixed constituency in the Institut during the years of Napoleonic 'compromise', it was demonstrably consolidated - yet without losing its radical force - by the early years of the Restoration.<sup>92</sup>

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offers of Beauty in the Third Critique are more often in nature (e.g. flowers or gardens), or in 'abstract' ornament; these latter examples of Beauty - the *beau naturel* - allowed better, it seemed to Kant, to put the 'free play' of the subject's faculties - the 'pure' aesthetic sense - into practise. Kant thus radically empties the traditional classical notion of art of most of its defining qualities. This theoretically might lead to the death - or total delegitimation - of Art. On the Kantian *trait* - "dernier vestige avant le vide" - which radically pushes classical art to its formalistic limits, i.e. mortal ends, see the interesting remarks of Michel (1989), p. 82. Here we are suggesting the possibility it provided for a new *beginning*, however.

<sup>91</sup>just as, we should add, radical communitarianism - a principle of transcendence - required *it*. See on the *mutuality* of the needs of Art and philosophy following the historic ruination of and disenchantment with all transcendent principles, Jean-Marie Schaeffer (1992), p.19. "La sacralization de l'Art dote les arts d'une fonction de *compensation*".

<sup>92</sup>on continuing radicalism in the early Restoration, especially in the locus of Cousins's early *Cours*, see 'Victor Cousin: The Professor as Guru' in Alan B. Spitzer, *The French Generation of 1820*, Princeton University Press, 1987, p.71-97.

### Cousin's Kantianism

The evidence of this strain of influence - of a Kantian metaphysical notion of Beauty on nineteenth-century academic art theory and practise - lies in the *Cours* given by Victor Cousin at the Sorbonne for the class of 1818.<sup>93</sup> We will concentrate on its central section, *Du Beau*.<sup>94</sup>

We have seen that the compromise solution of seventeenth-century academic art theory - the formulation of a fetishized *beau idéal* - could not for long maintain the inherent but weakened *Idea*, and, through succeeding generational critiques, eventually ended in the sapping of the theoretical *raison d'être* of the concept of *le beau* itself. Cousin rehabilitates the concept of the Ideal - by recourse to the 'source', Plato, but also by identifying it with 'God' - and attempts to redefine 'Art' as the prime locus of the manifestation of that Ideal; the historic problem of the structural contradiction between the 'real' and the 'ideal' is finally resolved through the hypostitization of 'Art' as the privileged means by which the ideal, or absolute, may be cognized. The role of Art - now reconceived as a Kantian disinterested space - is to provide access to an independent absolute principle, God, the Ideal or Kant's 'moral law', which is the only guarantor of a collectivity.

For Cousin the ideal can never be *directly* cognized; it is Beauty which phenomenally mediates between sensory experience and that ultimately inaccessible Ideal. Like Kant, Cousin *empties* Beauty of its associations with both the agreeable and the useful; with pleasure for itself, and the functional - since these ends are neither disinterested, nor universal.<sup>95</sup> Notably, in severing Beauty's relation with the useful, Cousin contradicts both

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<sup>93</sup>the *Cours* were only published in 1836, and with many re-editions throughout the nineteenth-century, over which it gained enormous influence. On Cousin's sources for his theory of Beauty see Will (1965).

<sup>94</sup>I have referred to the 1840 edition, *Cours de Philosophie sur le Fondement des Idées Absolues Du Vrai, Du Beau et Du Bien*, Bruxelles, 1840.

<sup>95</sup>on the rejection of the agreeable: "La peine et le plaisir n'ont de réalité que dans le sein de celui qui les éprouve, et quand nous disons: Cela m'agrée, cela me déplaît, nous jugeons comme individu, et nous épuisons d'un seul coup tous les degrés de juridiction; mais la vérité, et cette partie de la vérité que l'on appelle beauté, n'est pas enfermée dans chacun de nous; c'est comme la patrie commune de l'humanité, dont

recent republican and Empire theories of art's *political* function and ends<sup>96</sup>; and formulates the famous argument for the autonomy of Art: "Il faut de la religion pour la religion, de la morale pour la morale, comme de l'art pour l'art".<sup>97</sup> The *beau idéal*, and concomitantly its historic representative, the ideal male nude, is thus *cleared* of its former ideological functions, and contingently enters into a space of freedom, which we might now think of as *radical* Kantianism.

But how does this historic *rapprochement* influence academic practice, that is to say, *enseignement*. We have seen that ever since the seventeenth century, *enseignement* has only *brought philosophical idealism down*; that artist's practice of drawing from the live male nude - *l'école du modèle* - consistently derogated the principle of extreme abstraction, the practice of the *inner eye*, as maintained, for example, by Quatremère de Quincy.<sup>98</sup> Cousin's text on *le beau* confronts that tension produced in practice between teaching, drawing and the Ideal; which is to say, he does not disregard the practical necessity for a certain *procedure*. How then are artists to produce the Ideal, the *beau idéal*, in accordance with its new Kantian significance?

Cousin notes the unproductive extreme *partis pris* of the two French schools of artists

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personne n'a le droit de disposer souverainement; et quand nous disons: Cela est vrai, cela est beau, ce n'est plus le sentiment variable et individuel que nous voulons exprimer, mais le jugement universel". Cousin, p.204. On the rejection of the useful, p.226.

<sup>96</sup>"On a dit que les Grecs avaient conçu la poésie comme un moyen politique: quand ils célébraient sur le théâtre l'héroïsme de leurs ancêtres, ils étaient portés, dit-on, à imiter ces modèles. Je l'accorde; mais ce patriotisme, enfanté par l'art, n'était que sa création médiante. Le poète avait d'abord excité le sentiment du beau.", *ibid.*, p.229. Cousin's Kantianism destroys too the historical *étatiste* pretensions of history painting: "On cesse d'être artiste quand on consacre son pinceau, son ciseau ou sa lyre à une autre mission qu'à la production du beau. Aussi, quoique le beau puisse faire du bien aux hommes, autrement que par le sentiment pur qu'il développe en eux, jamais le véritable artiste ne se propose un autre but que ce sentiment. Le tableau émané des mains d'un peintre d'histoire peut produire un effet moral qui soit utile à la société; mais le peintre n'a songé qu'à la beauté de son oeuvre comme oeuvre de peinture: il n'a pas eu d'autre but ultérieur que le peintre de paysage; l'un et l'autre n'ont cherché qu'à transmettre aux spectateurs le sentiment délicieux et désintéressé dans ils étaient pénétrés.", *ibid.*, p.234.

<sup>97</sup>*ibid.*, p.229.

<sup>98</sup>Benoit, p.31, Schneider (1910), p.6.

represented by Eméric-David (*beau réel*) and Quincy (*beau idéal*): his task is to reconcile the two, and thereby to overcome the crisis in both art and philosophy.<sup>99</sup> Or, more precisely, to resolve art's crisis *through* philosophy. He does this by re-posing the question; not now *whether* access to the truth (*le vrai*) can be gained in the first place either from sense or from idea; but *how*, given the presence of both idea and sense, we are to gain access to the elusive ideal. It is no longer a matter, then, of choosing between the two - the old subjective/objective dilemma - but rather of determining their 'order of succession'. What, Cousin asks, is the link between the two sorts of beauty? Like Kant, Cousin eschews the temporality which is implied in the subjective/objective aesthetic dilemma, in order to propose a simultaneity of affect:<sup>100</sup>

"Le beau idéal se tire donc du beau réel par une abstraction immédiate qui aperçoit l'un dans l'autre. L'opération est double; si elle ne l'était pas, on n'obtiendrait que l'individuel tout seul, ou l'absolu sans l'individuel, c'est-à-dire la vie sans l'idéal, ou l'idéal sans la vie. L'art doit s'attacher à reproduire également l'idéal et la nature."<sup>101</sup>

This important linkage in Cousin's text at once eradicates the historic sense of *loss* which is paradigmatically articulated in Winckelmann's mournful and longing texts, and which infiltrates late eighteenth-century French discourse on the ancients and the possibilities of the attainment of the ideal. Now Cousin provides a way, a contiguity, a link, between the natural and the *beau idéal*. And this will save both academic *enseignement* and the philosophical idealism which is its ultimate *raison d'être*, insofar as Art's base and ends are henceforth compatible.

#### The Apollo Belvedere as a 'free space'

The phenomenon through which this linkage is supported is, of course, the work of art.

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<sup>99</sup>on the academic schools' quarrel, Cousin, p.208-210.

<sup>100</sup>for Kant, judgement of the beautiful is exercised at the same moment in which the object is cognized. The faculty of judging is inseparable from the presentation of the object.

<sup>101</sup>ibid., p.212.

Cousin, in *Du Beau*, does not often cite individual works of art<sup>102</sup>, but some of his most significant observations are exemplified through the statue of *Apollon*, site of so many eighteenth-century conflicting desires. In one instance Cousin retracts the Apollo from its over-exalted position as unattainable, by emphasizing its mediating aspect between sense and Ideal:

"Il (l'idéal) reste indéterminé; c'est un point qui recule sans cesse, et qui fuit jusqu'à l'infini. Tout oeuvre de l'art, quelque idéale qu'elle soit, est encore individuelle: l'Apollon affecte certaines formes, présente telle ou telle attitude, il est déterminé, il n'est donc pas l'idéal lui-même; autrement il n'y aurait qu'un seul genre d'idéal, et toutes les statues devraient être jetées dans le même moule. Toute l'oeuvre de l'art n'est donc qu'une approximation: le dernier terme de l'idéal es dans l'infini ou en Dieu."<sup>103</sup>

while in another Cousin takes Winckelmann, who had famously praised the Apollo Belvedere in his *History of the Art of Antiquity*, to task for his obsession with the statue of Apollo's outer form - its provoking Flesh:

"Il est curieux d'étudier cette analyse et d'y reconnaître combien la beauté physique se lie à la beauté spirituelle....mais ce qu'il y a de singulier, c'est qu'il ne s'en est par aperçu: il n'a pas vu que toute cette beauté, dont il receuillait les traits avec tant d'amour, n'était que la manifestation d'une beauté intérieure, que c'était la beauté incorporelle qui brillait à travers son enve<sup>p</sup>lope..."<sup>104</sup>

The phenomenon, the work of art - here the ideal male nude - is projected by Cousin into a liminal Kantian space, where it is neither so unattainable - so Ideal - that it is alienating, nor so intimate - so Sensual - that it is prone to encapture the spectator's strongest possessive, even 'somasochistic', interests or desires. Concomitantly it might

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<sup>102</sup>although we have noted that Cousin takes Anacreon's *Odes* as an instance of *le beau*, *ibid.*, p.249.

<sup>103</sup>*ibid.*, 212-3.

<sup>104</sup>*ibid.*, p.257.

be argued that through Cousin's *beau idéal* - via Kant - the ideal male nude is, within academic discourse, protected, in this liminal 'free' space, from both political and sexual ideologies.

### Conclusion

We have argued that the *fin-de-siècle beau idéal* can no longer be considered as unmoved and unmoving; and we have attempted to demonstrate that it was always complexly situated between various discourses - political, philosophical, aesthetic - which re-trope it accordingly.

It should now be clear that the figure of the *beau idéal* was never free from its shifting political mobilizations, despite its claims to transcendence. Yet the primary aim of this chapter has been to demonstrate how historic shifts *within* the philosophy of transcendence - speculative metaphysics -, doubtless themselves inflected by politics, could entail the re-signification of the Absolute, and concomitantly the re-signification of its incarnation - the body, the flesh (*incarnare* deriving from the Latin *caro*, 'Flesh') - the *beau idéal*. And, furthermore, radically.

We have seen how the early *étatiste* Academy had already inherited a compromised *beau idéal* from seventeenth-century Italy; how the metaphysical aspects of ideal beauty were gradually abandoned during the period of Rococo naturalism; how Diderot's *vrai ligne* recuperated a universal transcendentalism which might have directly led to the Kantian *trait*; yet how, under increasing Enlightenment revisionist pressures, the metaphysical fundamentals of the *beau idéal* had by the Revolution been fatally undermined; how the Revolution itself only contingently saved metaphysics - now as a metaphysics of *le peuple*; how the concept of the *beau idéal* emerged, post-thermidor, as a concept in crisis.

Yet if this post-revolutionary crisis may be thought of as part of a larger crisis of Absolutism - theological, monarchical, philosophical - in *philosophy* at least the Absolute is radically redeemed, in French culture of the nineties, through the epistemological shift

we think of as Kantian. The precise anti-ideological position which Kant inhabits - since he does not *recuperate* the old absolutes of theology and monarchy, but finally disproves their legitimacy, and puts in their place a radical communitarianism - we have thought of as a *radical* space.

And given that the Fine arts section of the Institut required a continuing idealist metaphysics in order to maintain its central theoretical support; given that the alignment of the *beau idéal* within a renewed French idealism coincides precisely with this flourishing of the classically 'homoerotic' male body in French visual culture in the late 1790's and early 1800's; given that those Kantian apologetics arise from precise *local* anti-ideological positions - neither Ideologue nor Bonapartist - we might now be in a better position to conceive of the historical encounter between aesthetics, politics, and homoeroticism in a more positive light than liberal critiques of the 'aesthetic hero' allow.



### Chapter 3: Politics, The Representation of Leadership in Napoleonic France: David's *Leonidas at Thermopylae*.

#### Introduction

In this penultimate chapter we will focus on a painting which has come to function in recent art-historical literature as the *locus classicus* of homoerotic representation in French neoclassicism, David's *Leonidas at the pass of Thermopylae* (1799-1814) (fig. 5). One of the most systematic and complex statements of the rhetorical uses to which the *beau idéal* could be put, the ideal male nude is situated in this painting at the interstices of political, aesthetic, sexual and erotic discourses. Having considered sexuality and aesthetics in chapters 1 and 2, respectively, we will now focus on how homoeroticism may be intimately linked with a *politics of communitarianism*.

This is the first of two essays which take *Leonidas* as its point of departure. In the second - our final chapter - we will end by exploring the rich speculative possibilities of thinking the male body in David *through* the paradigmatically 'pornographic' figure of Sade.

*Leonidas* has long been defined through its failures. As an exemplar of waning classical aesthetics, declining artistic genius, political impotence and, lately, gender 'trouble', it stands as a negative trace to a prior and more heroic revolutionary moment. We will consider the presuppositions - not least historiographical - behind that long-standing status as negative *exemplum*. Whence we will attempt a new reading, one which will emphasize less its *passive* relation to a 'lost' myth of political origin, than its *dynamic* work of political reclamation in a post-revolutionary, post-Napoleonic culture. The year of its completion, 1814, is an especially complex moment of political instability and transformation. I will argue that those instabilities are inscribed in David's painting. But if 1814 denotes a crisis in the politics of representation, it was also the outcome of a radical

lifting of mechanisms of censorship, consequent to the fall of the Napoleonic Empire. This newly-won freedom enabled David to re-articulate Jacobin convictions which for years - not least in the 'forgotten' work, *Leonidas* - had been forced into secrecy. *Leonidas* thus coincides with a moment of intense political anxiety and also with the renewed possibility, in the contingent space between Empire and Restoration, of a radical communitarianism.

Concomitantly, this understanding of the painting offers a re-reading of its homoerotic content; one which is more positive than has been allowed. If in chapter two we attempted to present a case for the continuing post-revolutionary significance of the *beau idéal* as a philosophical construct here we will consider how the *beau idéal* was equally maintained, in David's work, as a politically engaged signifier through the years of the Empire and the beginning of the first Restoration. The pervasive homoeroticism in *Leonidas* is considered now as a pivotal rhetorical device in the cultural resolution of a political crisis which, given years of severe censorship, could not be otherwise articulated. A consideration of the unstable political culture of the first French Empire will thus return us to a consideration of the relation between censorship and homoeroticism, and the effects of censorship's displacements. If in Chapter one we found that homosexuality in neoclassical poetics was censorship's *object* - Madame Dacier's missing lines - in this case, we will see that the articulation of the homoerotic is best understood as the positive *result* of the censor's intervention in another field - that of politics. So that if one of the effects of censorship is the affective heightening of the prohibited wish, we might consider how David's phantasmic eroticization of the politics of communitarianism is dialectically related to the mechanics of a pseudo-totalitarian Napoleonic repressive apparatus.

Apropos of censorship, we will begin with a silence.

#### A moment of historic silence and its afterlife

In late 1814, from October to December, David exhibited together in his atelier, in the église de Cluny, his two great history paintings, *The Intervention of the Sabines* and the

*Leonidas at the Pass of Thermopylae*. The coupling of the 'grandes machines' seems momentous. The *Sabines* was the painting with which David had restored his damaged reputation after his discredited political liaison with Robespierre, which resulted, post-Thermidor, in a brief period of imprisonment. That was in 1799. Recently it has been argued, by Ewa Lajer-Burcharth, that the *Sabines*, using the iconography of family strife as a metaphor for the revolutionary process, provided an imaginary *closure* to revolutionary conflict.<sup>1</sup> The political message of the *Sabines*, emphasizing the need to sacrifice political factionalism for a greater cause, that of the nation, could not have been clearer, or indeed more welcome to a public which was by 1799 more or less exhausted, if not traumatized, by political instability and conflict. Hence the phenomenal success of the private exhibition of the *Sabines* - an estimated 50,000 visitors - and the outpouring of critical comment on the picture in the Parisian press in 1799. Certainly the *Sabines* had placed David firmly back on the Parisian Directorial cultural map. Now, in 1814, the *Sabines* was again on show, this time with its newly completed complement, or pendant, the *Leonidas at Thermopylae*.<sup>2</sup> David had once more made a decisive intervention with a moral and political statement every bit equal in scale and moral import to that of 1799. So what of the public reaction to the 1814 exhibition?

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<sup>1</sup>Lajer-Burcharth, 1981, p.399.

<sup>2</sup>the political trajectories of the two paintings are closely linked, although, we shall see, hardly in a simple relation of complementarity. The *Sabines* was exhibited at the Académie d'Architecture, in the Louvre, from December 1799 to May 1805. In 1801 it was shown, for two months, opposite *Bonaparte franchissant le Grand-Saint-Bernard*. At the Salon of 1808 the *Sabines* appeared before the Parisian public this time with the *Couronnement*; then, again at the Exposition des Prix décennaux in 1810. Finally it was removed to David's atelier in the église de Cluny, where it was publicly exhibited from November to December of 1814, as a pendant to the *Leonidas*. Both paintings, the *Leonidas* and the *Sabines*, were sold, under the Restoration regime, to the Musée Royal, for 100,000 francs, at the end of 1819.

We can, I'm afraid, only conjecture. For there is an extraordinary silence surrounding the 1814 exhibition. In the bibliography of criticism on the *Leonidas* only two contemporaneous reviews of that exhibition are listed. One, superciliously mocking, in the *Journal Général de France*; the other, serious, by the critic Boutard in the *Journal des Debats*. The only other existing document on the painting from 1814 is David's own written short twelve page *Explication*. Unlike the *Sabines* in 1799, the *Leonidas* was clearly, then, not a text-generating image. This lack of critical response to the painting is astounding considering its grand physical dimensions - difficult to ignore - and moral weight; not to mention the author's still undiminished pre-eminence. Neither does the exhibition of 1814 figure any more prominently in the modern literature on David, from Delécluze onwards. *Leonidas'* immediate effect is thus occluded to us in ways in which the *Sabines'* never has been. How can we account for this collective muteness?

We could read it as an *alienated* response, on the part of the public, to a defunct philosophical idealism (i.e. a *waning beau idéal*); registering therefore a certain demise of the *beau idéal* as a potent public symbol, concomitant to the demise of classicism itself. Or, we may want to read it as an *embarrassed* response to the painting's nudities; an instance of cultural *pudeur*. Schnapper (1989) explains the critical silence as a consequence of the painting's exemption, on political grounds, from the first Restoration Salon of 1814.<sup>3</sup> Yet its absence from the Salon is not a sufficient explanation, I think, for its being ignored. We only have to think of the public and critical furor over the 1799 exhibition, staged in similar conditions, independently of the Salon. The *reasons* for the painting's exemption from the Salon are, furthermore, not altogether clear. It seems probable that David *himself* decided to re-stage the conditions of the private 1799 exhibition, especially given that the *Leonidas* was likely meant as a pendant to the *Sabines*. However, the *Journal des Arts*, on 15th October 1814 announces elusively that the David's picture will not figure in the forthcoming Salon "parce que le peintre a, malgré son talent, négligé la partie des draperies". Wildenstein (1973) comments that

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<sup>3</sup>Schnapper (1989), p. 497.

"cette étrange excuse cache des raisons politiques"<sup>4</sup>; clearly, though, the excuse also refers - and sarcastically - to the nudity in the painting. The charge of erotic obscenity thus appears to be a coded way, in public discourse, to refer to a political subversion, where the latter has become unutterable. Likewise, Jules David (1880) was not convinced of the Journal des Art's obfuscating reasoning: "On donnait pour prétexte de cette absence le manque de décence du Léonidas, qui cependant, comme on le faisait judicieusement observer, n'offrait rien de plus hardi que certains ouvrages de Girodet".<sup>5</sup>

Yet it is possible to argue that the meaning of that silence has less simply to do with David's discredit as an artist-politician on the return of monarchy (in March-April 1814), but can be linked rather more closely to the strange rhetoric of the picture itself; which is not reducible to its nudities *per se*. In what follows we shall try to unravel the overdetermination of that silence, and of that exclusion. If the gaps in discourse are as significant as that which is articulated, the silence which greeted *Leonidas* in 1814 demands renewed analysis and explanation. The silence will, in fact, provide us with the opening for a different interpretation. We will attempt to provide a meaning to that silence.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>4</sup>Wildenstein, 1699.

<sup>5</sup>David, 1880, p.513.

<sup>6</sup>"Silence itself - the thing one declines to say, or is forbidden to name, the discretion that is required between different speakers - is less the absolute limit of discourse, the other side from which it is separated by a strict boundary, than an element that functions alongside the things said, with them and in relation to them within over-all strategies. There is no binary division to be made between what one says and what one does not say; we must try to determine the different ways of not saying such things, how those who can and those who cannot speak of them are distributed, which type of discourse is authorized, or which form of discretion is required in either case. There is not one but many silences, and they are an integral part of the strategies that underlie and permeate discourses.", Foucault, 1987,p.27.

I suggest that, like the *Sabines*, the *Leonidas* did in fact answer to the concerns of the moment - this time, however, not with a reassuring image of consensus and closure, which in October 1814 probably *would* have granted it a phenomenal success equal to that of 1799.<sup>7</sup> On the contrary, *Leonidas* presented its audience with the articulation of a political crisis. If that crisis hardly featured explicitly as a *sujet* of the picture - if it was not exactly thematized - it was nevertheless, it seems, articulated through the picture's strange rhetorical moves.

Far from being redundant, then, *Leonidas* is, in fact, replete with meaning - meanings which have been lost to us, and which in this chapter we will try to recover. I will argue that the *beau idéal* in David's hands in 1814 was neither defunct, nor obscene - that, on the contrary, *Leonidas* testifies to the continuing possibilities of the ideal male nude as a signifier for *political* freedom. That gesture of silence before the eroticized male nude in 1814 will therefore emerge in this reading as a result of complex *political* desires, which consist not least in the long censured libidinal ties which forge the notion of 'community'. Those desires - specifically neo-Jacobin ones - for a political community, long proscribed through the rigours of Napoleonic censorship, had remained throughout the *episode napoléonienne* an unspeakable in political discourse; one which could only be articulated upon the regime's ruin and subsequent demise in 1814. Furthermore, we shall see that silence was a constitutive element in the political rhetoric which attended the end of the Empire and the beginning of the Restoration; and that therefore the silence which greeted *Leonidas* cannot be simply be taken as an index of disinterest, or alienation. On the contrary, it can be likened to a collective holding of breath, before and between momentous and confusing political transformations which are themselves inscribed in the picture. My aim, then, is to reconsider *Leonidas* as a potent political symbol, which

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<sup>7</sup>the first Restoration government, pre Hundred Days, attempted to encourage a policy of *reconciliation* between royalists and ex-Bonapartists. The fetishistic relevance of the political message of the *Sabines* would presumably not have been lost to the governing elites in 1814.

cogently expresses the uncertainties and inner contradictions which accompanied one moment of revolutionary closure - the end of a stage of democratic idealistic politics with the restoration of the monarchy in July 1814.<sup>8</sup>

### Leonidas' failures

What reading, then, has subsequently claimed this work which initially drew a blank? Certainly that silence only marks the origin of a history of ensuing incomprehension. The image has never quite recovered from its initial negative reception.

How will we explain the image's illegibility, its historic inability to produce a reading in the first place - and then continually? Certainly not by recourse to the 'problem' of its nudity alone, although, as we will see with Delécluze, nineteenth century commentators may have ostensibly taken this to be one major alienating factor.

The 1814 criticisms give us few clues to the reasons for the painting's subsequent neglect. We will later have occasion to examine in greater detail Boutard's contemporaneous 1814 review, but here we can immediately note, with Schnapper, that initially the painting's *failure* was understood to lie in its perversion of a classical aesthetics; above all in its derogation of 'unity', *la conception d'ensemble*. The little criticism there was seemed preoccupied with *deciphering* the image in the first place, and not *interpreting* it.<sup>9</sup> We will have to keep in mind, then, this fact of a problem in 1814 with classical poetics - a

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<sup>8</sup>1814 is perhaps a historically more significant moment in terms of 'revolutionary closure' than 1799. In 1799, revolutionary closure was explicitly on the agenda as a *theme* in political rhetoric, although as a sociopolitical fact it was hardly evident (see Baczo, B., *Comment sortir de la Révolution*, Paris 1989, and, apropos the *Sabines*, Lajer-Burchardt (1991)); in 1814 it is now both a political fact - the return of monarchy - and paradoxically *absent* from political rhetoric. I suggest that this is one of the central ambiguities articulated by David in *Leonidas*.

<sup>9</sup>According to Boutard, compared to the *Sabines*, *Leonidas* suffers from a "défaut de clarté". *Journal des Débats*, dec.11, 1814, p.3.

sudden cultural inability, it seems, to read the classical text.

Delécluze, in 1855, addressed this cultural loss in his account of *Leonidas*. He begins the discussion of the painting with an eloquent defence of its nudities. The necessity of this defence attests to the decline, certainly by 1855, of the currency of the *beau idéal* as a public symbol.<sup>10</sup> It provides the reigning terms, too, in which *Leonidas*, from the mid-nineteenth-century onwards, will be maligned. Delécluze begins with a description of the ideal male nude's by now distressed connotations:

*"On regarde ordinairement la représentation du nu comme une prétention pédantique des artistes, et plus souvent encore comme le résultat d'un libertinage d'imagination".*<sup>11</sup>

The nude is now conceived of as no more than a masturbatory exercise; issuing either from academic or pornographic, both essentially private, spaces. Yet, Delécluze continues, David - in the company of Phidias and Michelangelo - did not reproduce the nude only to parade his science or to excite "*les passions les plus grossières*". Delécluze proceeds to a justification of the *beau idéal*; one which ignores its traditional neoplatonic metaphysical signification in favour of a more functionalist notion of the purpose of the study of the nude as essential to art's necessary *practical* infrastructure. The possibilities of the *beau idéal*'s philosophical meanings, or indeed a recognition of it as the *outcome* of philosophical discourse on the body<sup>12</sup>, are not deployed in this justification; are indeed occluded. In defending the *beau idéal* Delécluze severely reduces its former metaphysical

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<sup>10</sup>Stendhal, already in 1824 wrote of the nudity of the *Sabines*, "If the 'Sabine Women' came out today, we'd find its characters lacking in feeling and consider it absurd to go into battle without one's clothes on in any country...the Greeks liked nudes: for our part, we never see them and I will go so far as to say that they repel us.", cited. in Schnapper (1980).

<sup>11</sup>Delécluze (1983), p.216.

<sup>12</sup>supra. chapter 3.



valency.

Yet, despite that initial defence of *Leonidas'* nudities Delécluze, in fact, hardly conceals his *dislike* of the the picture, discoursing at some length on its `incoherences'. This last term is understood by the critic in the sense of a derogation of the rules of classical aesthetics; this time specified as the incompatible and innappropriate *mixing* of genres or modes. According to Delécluze, David has failed in this work to reconcile historical verisimilitude and poetical ideal; or, that old antinomy realism and metaphysical idealism. Although David's self-induced challenge was indeed to reconcile the two - precisely to poeticise the historical subject - between the initial ambitious conception and the final `failed' work, the tendency to idealism was diminished, and this contradiction between poetry and truth - the picture's incoherence - is manifested, according to Delécluze, on the canvas.<sup>13</sup>

Although he does not make the link explicitly, what rents apart the aesthetic code which governs this notional fusion is, in Delécluze's text, the Bonapartist interim, which promoted a `bourgeois' aesthetic of realism, incompatible with the higher aims of classicism. Delécluze thus identifies an internal split within the painting, which conforms to its two historical moments. Parts of the painting which were conceived earlier (circa 1800) - the young man tying his sandal, those offering wreaths, the writer of the inscription and the embracing `father and son' - attain the requisite qualities of poetic lyricism; while later figural additions (circa 1813-14) - the blind man, the seated figure on the right of Leonidas, the two nude figures about to take their arms from the tree, and the

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<sup>13</sup>David "finit en prosateur ce tableau, qu'il avait entrepris en poete" (Delécluze, p.339). The contradiction is also referred to, following a distinction from literary classical aesthetics, as one between dramatic/lyrical; they ought not to clash, or coincide in the same text. "*Ce qui niat donc le plus à l'effet général de cette scène est sa nature, qui la classe au nombre des sujets dramatiques, tandis que David l'a traitée originairment dans une mode lyrique, s'il est permis d'appliquer cette qualification à l'art de la peinture*". (p.339)

background figures - are inadmissably prosaic, or realist.<sup>14</sup>

This irreconcilable rupture within the painting - perhaps not immediately obvious to us - conforms precisely to a certain critical trajectory which narrates a political intervention in style. The rupture between realism and idealism can be traced back to a historical travesty of the tenets of classicism which, it is implied, is politically determined. So much is clear when Delécluze maintains that the realist style was initiated in David's *oeuvre* with the Napoleonic commissions, the *Couronnement* and the *Distribution of the Eagles*.<sup>15</sup> It is thus the propoganda of glorification, with its aesthetic corollary of 'bourgeois' realism, or individualism, which has decisively rent apart the old republican classical aesthetic, and it shows in - indeed accounts for - the failure of the painting.<sup>16</sup> *Leonidas* is thus beset with an internal aesthetic contradiction, which stems from a political intervention in style.

In my reading of Delécluze's reading of David I have tried to push forward some hints and implications in Delécluze's text concerning the relations between aesthetics, politics and the male nude. Delécluze at no point conjoins these concerns in his text with any intention of producing an integrated reading or an interpretation of David's picture. Indeed, the three areas - male nudity, aesthetics, politics - are treated by him consecutively as entirely separate points. Yet, if they amount to an explanation of *Leonidas'* failures, they do not for all that endow that failure with any significance. No

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<sup>14</sup>this chronological division into two distinct periods of David's work on the *Leonidas* has been however questioned by later writers, notably Nash (1978).

<sup>15</sup>David had, in Delécluze's words, 'copied nature' in the two great Napoleonic works of 1804 and 1810. Delécluze, p.339.

<sup>16</sup>Napoleonic commissions "ou le fait représenté captivait toute l'attention...où l'imitation des accessoires finit par devenir l'objet principal...le plus nuisible au développement de l'art considéré sérieusement", Delécluze, p.19-20. Delécluze considers this derogation of idealist - 'serious' - aesthetics to have been a widespread cultural phenomenon in around 1810, at the height of Napoleonic rule. He writes of the disintegration of aesthetics in terms of a lack of a central idea which encourages a "diversité...qui font diverger les idées au lieu de les ramener à un centre unique, et dont en somme l'incohérence et la multiplicité affaiblissent promptement le souvenir." *ibid.*p.324

causal connections between them are offered, so that finally we are left in as much confusion about the picture as Delécluze sees inscribed therein - left, that is, with a collection of stray facts which do not quite make up a story. Still, Delécluze's account does provide us with this set of diverse framings - eroticism and the rhetoric of the male nude, aesthetics and politics - which *suggests* the possibility of their interrelations. We will henceforth take up Delécluze's suggestive juxtapositions and try to make some *sense* of them - to give the painting back its sense, and its readability.

### later readings

Since Delécluze, interpretations have narrowed, rather than opened up. The painting is usually understood as a late flowering of the neoclassical aesthetic, which however lacks the political force which motivated that movement in the 1780's; decadent, therefore. Contrary to my reading, the painting's political message is commonly understood as defeatist, resigned or at best nostalgic. The effect of all this has been to obscure *Leonidas'* origins; and effectively almost to write it out of serious David scholarship.<sup>17</sup> For example, amongst the papers in the most recent major David colloquium in Paris, *David contre David* (1989), there was nothing focusing on the painting. *Leonidas* remains, then, for present-day art historians an enigma. Its archaic, timeless nuditities seem largely to have escaped interpretation.

We will now approach *Leonidas* from the other direction. Having traced its subsequent critical history, its disappointing afterlife, we will now follow its notoriously difficult *genesis*, starting from the year of its inception in 1799 and following its hesitant progress until it occasions the silence of 1814. The historical vicissitudes of its development, unique in David's *oeuvre* for being so protracted, if not tortuous, will demonstrate those

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<sup>17</sup>the most influential modern readings of *Leonidas* until now have been: Hauteceur (1954), Kemp (1969), Rubin (1976), and Levin (1981). It has appeared in passing in Fried (1980), Bryson (1984), Germer (1986). The painting has re-emerged as an object of critical concern in the gender readings of Potts (1994) and Solomon-Godeau (1997).

very qualities which have been historically denied it; its dynamic and strategic interventions within a rapidly self-transforming political culture. We will argue that the David's *difficulty* with completing the painting over fourteen years was inseparable from a problem in articulating a fast disappearing Jacobin politics; and that the silence of 1814 is implicated in the politics of *that* silencing. In all this we will need to be sensitive to the *modes* of silence which are, at any particular historical moment, possible. Now that we have considered the detrimental *effects* of that silence, we will, taking heed of Foucault, look into the "archeology of that silence".<sup>18</sup>

David had completed the *Sabines* in October 1798. *Leonidas* is first mentioned by Delécluze as a subject provided by the master for the monthly *concours* which was an element of David's teaching practice at that time. If at its inception in 1799-1800 the *Leonidas* was apparently conceived as a pendant to the *Sabines* - if the *pur grec* aesthetic seems to unite the two works in terms of a neoclassical 'late style' - the political message is, nevertheless, quite different.

#### Sources and translations

The story of Leonidas leading his troops to certain death against the Persian forces comes to us, as it did to the eighteenth-century erudite, primarily from Herodotus' *History*. The *History* recounts, through its nine books, the war between Greece and Persia and its preliminaries, "so that the memory of what men have done", writes Herodotus in his opening lines "shall not perish from the world nor their achievements, whether of Greeks or of foreigner, go unsung". Kemp(1969) usefully adds to this primary source one other; Xenophon's *Constitution of Sparta*, re-translated in a trilingual edition - Greek, Latin, French - and published from 1797 to 1804 by J.B. Gail; he whom we have encountered as somewhat hysterical translator of *Anacreon* in 1799.<sup>19</sup> If Herodotus' text provided David with the basic narrative of the heroic event, Xenophon's *Constitution* accounts for much

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<sup>18</sup>supra. note 6.

<sup>19</sup>supra., p.39, note 58.

of the painting's exquisite incidental detail; for example, the ubiquitous garlands of flowers. One particular detail, important for us, puzzles Kemp, though, as he is unable to find its source in either of those two classical texts. This is the homoerotic 'father and son' group to the right of the central figure of Leonidas. But if we now add to the two classical sources an eighteenth-century mediating text - the immensely popular *Voyage du Jeune Anacharsis* by the abbé Barthélemy (1788)<sup>20</sup> - as far as textual sources are concerned, no element in the *Leonidas* remains wholly unaccounted for.

In the classical world the story exemplified selfless, indeed self-sacrificial, devotion to the fatherland; a theme which clearly took on heightened significance during the French Revolutionary wars. The moment depicted by David is that just before battle, when the trumpets sound, calling the Spartan forces to take up their arms and bring to an end their ritual sacrificial offerings. Leonidas, their leader, is shown centrally, just aroused from meditating on his and his friends' certain death. The moral of the episode is provided succinctly at the end of David's *Explication du tableau des Thermopyles*, written in 1814:

*"Ce dévouement de Léonidas et de ses compagnons produisit plus d'effet que la victoire la plus brillante: il apprit aux Grecs le secret de leurs forces, aux Perses celui de leur faiblesse. Le nombre des Spartiates était de trois cent hommes; les Perses en comptaient plus de six cent mille."*<sup>21</sup>

More than force of numbers, unflinching fidelity to an ideal secured a *moral* victory for the Spartans; thus was secured the future of a threatened Greek civilisation.

### Difference in *Leonidas*

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<sup>20</sup>its use is attested to by an inscription in David's hand on one of the preparatory drawings. See Schnapper, p.500.

<sup>21</sup>the complete text of the *Explication* is reproduced in Schnapper(1989), p.486.

The question of difference - namely, the *absence* of gender difference - is one which has recently preoccupied writing on *Leonidas*.<sup>22</sup> Yet what system of differences avowedly generates the terms of David's picture?

Improbability aside, we may note in David's moralizing explication the reiteration of a discourse of difference; here that between Persian "faiblesse" and Greek "forces".

Despotic *faiblesse* was a common preoccupation in eighteenth-century French political thought, escalating in the Revolution as it came to coincide with a rhetoric of denunciation aimed at purifying national identity.<sup>23</sup>

The construction of a series of differences - between austerity and luxury, principle and fickleness, reason and rhetoric, articulated largely through a typology of bodies appears with clarity, for example, in Girodet's *Hippocrates refusing the gifts of Artaxerxes* (1792, fig. 6) where the 'force' of the Greek Hippocrates is articulated, as in the figure of David's earlier Brutus, as an ultimately disciplined conflict of will inscribed through the controlled tensions of the hero's body: Persian 'faiblesse', on the other hand, is articulated in the bending, supplicant and yielding of the oriental bodies demonstrably untouched by tensions necessarily brought on by virtue. A preparatory sketch of Girodet's painting, reproduced in Crow (1995, p.141), - in which all the figures are nude - shows that the difference between the Greek and the Persian is not however morphologically distributed. The array of naked bodies on either side of the moral divide equally conform to the Davidian heroic mode of the *beau idéal*. If there is a stereotype of the feigning and

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<sup>22</sup>on the 'repressive' absence of women in *Leonidas*, see Potts (1994), p.237-8, and Solomon-Godeau (1997), p.64-65.

<sup>23</sup>see on the gradual ostracization of the foreigner after 1792, who had however previously been welcomed in the earlier more universalist egalitarian phase of the Revolution, Kristeva, *Strangers to Ourselves*, trans. by Leon S. Roudiez, New York, London, Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1991, pp.159-64.

fawning Oriental being proffered here, the difference is articulated only through expressive gesture and physiognomy, not physiognomically. The bodies are not typologically distinct.<sup>24</sup>

In a later painting, the *Revolt of Cairo* (1810, fig. 7), also by Girodet, morphological differences do however create a series of oppositions, but notably still without conforming to a proto-orientalist discourse of physiological difference. Here the same qualities of luxuriant, swooning sensuality are inscribed onto the body of the oriental *other* in the figure of the swooning Arab on the right of the image, upheld by his comrade-in-arms; the figure is fabulously conflated by Girodet with his own famously reformulated version of the *beau idéal*, the *Endymion* of 1792, hence 'eroticized'.<sup>25</sup> However, the difference between the 'force' and 'faiblesse' is distributed in Girodet's later picture *amongst* the figures of the orientals (again pushed to the right of the image), and not *between* victors and the vanquished. A moralizing oppositional discourse again infiltrates the painter's text, yet this is located less in a typology of bodies than in the trappings of luxury - providing eminent visual opportunities - which are pictured in the 'antiquarian' detail, now, we might say, gradually transformed into commodity. We cannot but notice that the painter takes up this moral discourse only in order to undo the opposition by implicitly colluding with a commodification of the 'other' orient which is synonymous with the 'Empire style'. The spectator is paradoxically lured into a consuming delectation of the depiction of 'oriental luxury' he/she is notionally invited to revile. The radical qualities of the Kantian 'trait' are undermined by the 'faiblesse' which is located less in the 'other' (Persian, oriental) bodies, than in the perverse luxurious 'antiquarian' detail. We shall see that David himself is not immune to this painter's weakness - his luxuriously abundant

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<sup>24</sup>see Grigsby, on the "volatile, fragile, and fissile Orientalist construction of the Napoleonic French State"; she focuses on Gros' 1804 *Plague-Stricken of Jaffa*.

<sup>25</sup>"providing", as Crow puts it, "in advance of David's *Leonidas*, a passionate vignette of same-sex affection unto death.", Crow, 1995, p.260.

image is rather less than - or just that much more than - properly laconic.<sup>26</sup>

Nevertheless our diversion onto Girodet's work only shows more clearly that although David emphasized the opposition between *force* and *faiblesse* in the *Explication*, in the painting itself he refused the articulation of that difference; in a way that Girodet, for example, in the *Hippocrates*, had not done.<sup>27</sup> Despite the clarity of the moralizing dichotomies in the *Explication*, the only oppositions actually inscribed in the picture, I suggest, are ones inherent in the fraught idealism of the revolutionary self. David refuses external, conventionally rhetorical oppositions between barbarity and civilization; and this in favour of the self-critical examination of the ideal self, or ideal ego - the only distinctions here are played out within the realm of the *beau idéal*. The rather conventional moral sentiments expressed in the *Explication* hardly conform, then, to what is actually going on in the *work*; which is far more complex.

### Sparta

Yet the distinctive feature of Spartan 'force', or laconism, is that it *was* seen to be inscribed on the body. The key to Spartan success, according to Xenophon, lay in the state's powers to shape and educate the individual.<sup>28</sup> Spartan education was famous for its systematic rigour and its remarkable success. Young boys were raised with few comforts

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<sup>26</sup>Boutard criticized this contradiction: "Au moyen de ces figures nues de jeunes gens, dont quelques-unes ont une grâce charmante, le peintre a tempéré avec beaucoup d'art ce que son sujet pouvait avoir de trop austère. C'est dans ce dessein aussi qu'il a eu recours à ces couronnes des fleurs, à ces apprêts de sacrifices, même à ces armes enrichies d'or, à ces manteaux de pourpre rehaussés de broderies dont la sévérité Spartiate auroit bien pu se scandaliser.", *Journal des Débats*, dec.11 1814, p.4.

<sup>27</sup>in the picture, the Persians are barely distinguishable in the farthest background, although David picks them out in the *Explication*.

<sup>28</sup>Xenophon, *Constitution of the Lacedaemonians*, Talbert, 166-185.



(no shoes, only one article of clothing , food rationing), adolescents were taken into the care of the state and entered into communal messes where conditions were no less testing, but which encouraged masculine mutual respect and a desire to make oneself worthy in the eyes of one's compatriots. At the age of eighteen young men were expected to take older male lovers and to learn from them the proper habits of a soldier and a citizen.<sup>29</sup>

The ultimate object of the Spartan way of life was war and the military ethos. Before joining battle, the Spartan soldier would march in step to the music of an oboe. In battle he would wear a crown of flowers and he wore scarlet, lest his fellows should lose heart to see him bleeding. Adult men would live in messes, eat frugally and only surreptitiously visit their wives in the night. Such value was placed on virility that feeble or deformed children were exposed at birth - the decision to rear or destroy a child lay with the elders. Famously, women were encouraged to exercise and play a prominent part in communal festivals, an important binding element of Spartan social life. Weak women, it was said, could not bear strong sons. The clue to Spartan strength and success lay then, according to Xenophon, in the systematic production of perfect bodies in the service of the state. Elizabeth Rawson, in her study *The Spartan Tradition in European Thought*(1969) commented that it is hardly surprising that "admiration for Sparta reached a fantastic conclusion under the Nazis" as an exemplar of Nationalist Socialist values.<sup>30</sup>

Yet if the repressive aspects of the Spartan *polis* no longer now appeal to our liberal democratic ideologies we ought to remember that for the eighteenth century it held out the phantasmic promise of a radically cleansed community. To invoke Sparta as against

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<sup>29</sup>see on this Cartwright, "The politics of spartan pederasty", *Proceedings of the Cambridge Philological Society*, no.207, 1981, pp.17-37; Hindley, "Eros and Military Command in Xenophon", *Classical Quarterly*, 44, 1994, pp.347-366, Harvey, in Powell/Hodkinsai (1994), pp.144-46.

<sup>30</sup>Rawson, p.1.

Athens, or indeed the Roman Republic, was to make an implicit and radical critique of luxury, self-indulgence, and cultural sophistication.<sup>31</sup> Politically it provided an ideal model of an egalitarian, more or less communistic republic; and was thus distinguished from the more liberal, democratic 'bourgeois' Athens.<sup>32</sup> Above all it was considered exemplary for the way in which the subject was indissolubly identified with the State.<sup>33</sup> Sparta suggested

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<sup>31</sup>see, for example, the Abbé de Mably's *Observations sur l'histoire de la Grèce*, 1776, where the revolution in Spartan 'mœurs' is attributed to Lycurgan austerity; Mably admired the Spartan's proscription of the use of money and private ownership of property, as well as the discouragement of "les arts que servent au luxe" - Lycurgus, then, "étouffa le germe de l'amour des richesses", Mably, p.20. Rawson (p.256) considers Mably a "nostalgic communist". Incidentally, we may invoke here another Athens/Sparta distinction, this time of ancient origin: Harvey presents five Aristophanian jokes about Spartan homosexuality, in which "the Athenian's desire for frontal intercourse is...contrasted with the Spartan's longing for proktal intercourse" where the latter was usually reserved for intercourse with a young man. One connotation of *lakonizein*, then, was, in Aristophanian comedy, to have intercourse with a beloved boy. *These* laconic connotations will be considered in our next chapter. Harvey, pp.41-42, op. cit., supra note 35.

<sup>32</sup>see on the Athens/Sparta distinction, which goes back to Plato, Mossé, p. 47-60, and also Nicole Leroux/Pierre Vidal-Naquet, "La Formation de l'Athènes Bourgeoise: essai d'historiographie 1750-1850", in R. Bolger (ed.), *Classical Influences in Western Thought A.D. 1650-1870*, Cambridge University Press, 1979.

<sup>33</sup>hence Rousseau's interest in this social order which pre-figured the theoretical identification of the citizen with the General Will. On Rousseau and Sparta see Rawson, p.237. See also Barthélémy - one of David's sources - who articulates the revolutionary implications of the Spartan social when he locates sovereignty *within* the Spartan subject, revealing too the secret of its affective - not enforced or 'totalitarian' - ties: "comment ne pas adorer une constitution qui, attachant à nos intérêts la souveraine bonté jointe à la suprême puissance, nous donne de si bonne heure une si grand idée de nous-mêmes?",

a kind of psychosocial engineering which would have chimed in with materialist philosophies, Rousseauian quasi-totalitarian utopias, and later radical revolutionary stateist educational schemes - Saint Just's utopian public education proposals, for example.<sup>34</sup> It functioned as an ideal support for maintaining a phantasy of a community entirely transparent to itself. "Sparte brille comme un éclair dans des ténèbres immenses" declared Robespierre in full Terror.<sup>35</sup>

### Genesis of the painting

David's early studies for the *Leonidas* reveal that he began the work under a different *idée* from the one articulated in the final picture; and it was one which suited the times. At its inception in 1798-9, the theme conformed unproblematically to the political, specifically military, demands of the moment. The *première pensée* (fig.8), probably of 1800, is clearly informed by the rehearsed rhetoric of 'la patrie en danger' in 1799.<sup>36</sup> Although we can see that the *première pensée* is really quite different from the final version, some of the figures and groupings are already in place; notably, the group of young men embracing, the boy tying his sandal and the heated exchange between the so-called 'father and son'. I will have more to say later about the figure of Leonidas, which is significantly different in the final painting. This early version is, if anything, more passionate, therefore less pure *grec*, than the final version. The now widespread understanding of *Leonidas*' exemplary 'aesthetic' quality seems, then, at the outset, only to have been a retrospective conceptual support for a reading which would emphasize its political

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Barthélémy, 1790, p.113.

<sup>34</sup>Saint-Just's radical proposals drawn up in the *Fragments sur les institutions républicains* (published 1800) translate many Lycurgan customs into contemporary France *in toto*. On Saint-Just's laconism see Rawson, p.277.

<sup>35</sup>18 floréal an II (7 may 1794), cited in Loraux/Vidal Naquet op. cit. p.183.

<sup>36</sup>see Hauteceur (p.185) for David's involvement with the cultural politics of the militaristic Consulate around 1800.

*disengagement*; yet the *première pensée* clearly demonstrates that *Leonidas*, no less than the *Sabines*, was born of a passionate engagement with the continuing problem of 'saving' the Revolution. In this respect David's early avowed intention of creating a pendant to the *Sabines* seems satisfied by the early conception of the *sujet*. Thematically, they are complementary; if the *Sabines* tries to heal internal division, the *Leonidas* - in this early version - represents the consequent libidinal effects of a renewed, indeed saved, national unity. But although at this early stage, in 1799, the rhetorical strategies of the picture and even its central idea seem conventional enough - representing only the latest articulation of a familiar revolutionary rhetoric of *la patrie en danger* - we will say that by the time of the painting's completion some fourteen years later 'History' will have transformed and deformed it beyond all recognition. And if, in 1799, the *Leonidas* clearly emerges from within a continuing revolutionary rhetoric, by 1814, David must necessarily negotiate its considerable historical distance from that moment. The transformation from the initial conception of the *première pensée* to the final version, which I take to be in the nature of a *deformation*, is the effect of an historical rupture. Between the moment of its origin and that of its completion *Leonidas* had attained a metadiscursive critical function; its transformed rhetoric will gesture towards a considerably more complex discourse on the Revolution itself - which is now, in 1814, decisively *finished*. In speaking of this 'History' we refer, of course, to the *épisode napoléonienne*.

### David and Napoleon

No doubt the unusually long and painful gestation of the *Leonidas* was due to the rise of Napoleon and David's involvement with Napoleonic commissions. The facts of that political intervention speak for themselves. In 1800 David received his first offer from Napoleon to become the government painter (which he however declined); Delécluze tells us that it was then that David abandoned the *Leonidas* in order to complete his first Napoleonic commission, *Bonaparte crossing the St. Bernard Pass* (1801).<sup>37</sup> Next came the

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<sup>37</sup>Delécluze, p. 233.

two major monumental commissions, the *Sacre* in 1804, and the *Distribution of the Eagles* in 1808 (completed 1810). It was only in early 1811, as is made clear from pupils' correspondence, that David resumed work on the *Leonidas*.<sup>38</sup>

After a long break - perhaps some ten years - David returned to *Leonidas*. The Metropolitan Museum New York sketch (Fig.9) probably dates from 1812, and the radical revisions are already in place. Yet David is manifestly now having trouble with its resumption. In this sketch a series of abortive attempts and radical restructurations is visible in the superimposition of motifs and ideas, which would conform to the notion of a palimpsest, except that here *nothing* is in fact effaced; instead motifs jostle on the page. The letters - cited in Wildenstein (1973) - of one of David's pupils, Suau, written to his father, attest, in fact, to the mixture of indecision and determination which afflicted the artist during these last months leading to the work's completion. In June of 1813, we learn that David is determined anew to complete the painting, although "Il y a tout lieu de croire qu'il fera beaucoup de changements". From June to August the master is noticeably absent from his teaching atelier, and, Suau notes, is still 'making many changes'; on 22nd August Suau writes that David is working constantly on the picture, and that "la figure de Léonidas est achevée". This process of constant revision continues arduously - again, we hear, on 6th October, that work is held up because David has effaced entire figures, and revised the groupings. Finally, with the help of his pupils, he completes the *Leonidas* in the summer of 1814.<sup>39</sup> The exhibition in the église de Cluny of *Leonidas* and the *Sabines* ran from October to December, 1814. As I mentioned in my opening the paucity of

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<sup>38</sup>these were of course not the only works David produced during these intervening years of spiritual and political exile. The napoleonic *grandes machines* were complimented by a 'privatized' output; the portraits of close friends, for example that of the antiquarian Mongez and his wife (1812); and the exercise in the anacreontic mode commissioned by Sommariva, the *Sapho et Phaon* (also 1812).

<sup>39</sup>Wildenstein, 1673, 1674, 1677, 1680, 1689.

critical response seemed already in 1814 to have sealed its fate as a redundant image. It was propelled into history at the moment of its reception.

It is clear from all accounts, that by 1813, when David was furiously working to complete the *Leonidas* the painter was out of sympathy with the Napoleonic regime.<sup>40</sup> The history of this disillusionment begins as far back as 1799. Like most who had survived the upheavals of the Terror and Thermidorean moments David had initially embraced Napoleon, not as Emperor, but as a republican military leader of charisma who would revive fraternal bonds within the fatherland. In the late 90's Napoleon came into prominence under the banner of republicanism and non-partisan militarism.<sup>41</sup> The *Sabines* of 1799 attested to David's own wish to see internal strife gone.

In Hennequin's 1797-8 image of Napoleon, *Bonaparte couronné en Egypte par la Victoire* {fig.10}, for example, it is clear that Napoleon's promise for the French nation has nothing yet to do with the need for a 'strong man'. Bonaparte is the obvious and necessary *link* between Victory (Minerva) and the French nation (Hercules, who has laid down his club as a sign of deference to the hero's proven military capabilities), but he is not yet represented as singular and imperious, let alone self-sufficient. Rather, the leader, inscribed into the dynamic figuration of the collective embrace, claims his legitimacy from a republican discourse of 'fraternity'. Bonaparte's role is clearly, as was widely perceived and hoped in 1788-9, to *save* the fragmenting Republic; not singlehandedly to *represent* it. This iconography of mutual dependence distinguishes Hennequin's drawing from later representations of the hero. For there is much in this early representation of Bonaparte which will turn out to be anathema to later Napoleonic Imperial self-representation; and

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<sup>40</sup>"De même que sa carrière politique sous la Révolution s'était achevée par une catastrophe, de même sa carrière officielle sous l'Empire s'achevait avant l'heure dans l'amertume". Schnapper, 1989, p.376.

<sup>41</sup>Tulard, 1984, p. 65-66.

indeed these elements will be gradually, but inexorably, foreclosed from later propagandist visual imagery. Napoleon will not like to see himself nude *à la grecque*; he will not like to see himself flanked, especially aided, by figures of allegory; his touch will be sacrosanct, not intimate; his gaze hypnotic, never casual.<sup>42</sup> All this, however, is yet to be negotiated. For the time being, in 1798, Napoleon is, like the figure of David's Hersilia in the *Sabines* both reconciler and saviour of France's internal civil war; a totemic fetishistic figure, we could say, disavowing the increasing conflicts between democratic populist ideals of Jacobin republicanism and the onset of a post-revolutionary oligarchy.

Yet it is possible to identify a historical tension articulated in the rhetoric of Hennequin's image which attests to the instability of political culture in the late nineties.

For in this image we notice the subtle beginnings of that historical slippage which imperceptibly led from 'Bonaparte' to 'Napoléon'; from revolutionary hero to Imperial dictator. Between an established revolutionary rhetoric of 'brothers-in-arms' and an emergent rhetoric of 'saviour of the people', the tension begins to manifest itself iconographically. We could say that the figure of 'fraternity' - the fraternal embrace *à trois* - which presupposes, indeed itself represents, the notional *equality* of its constituent elements, is, in this Hennequin drawing, derogated by virtue of the privileged heroisation of just one - the central - of those elements. The old fraternal structure, or form, remains the same; its ideological function is significantly altered. The once politically radical

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<sup>42</sup>I am thinking, specifically, of Napoleon's dislike of Canova's nude statue of himself; the ordered suppression of the allegorical figure of Victory in David's *Distribution of the Eagles*; the transformation of the figure Napoleon in Gros' *Pesthouse at Jaffa* from one which offers physical intimacy - the soldierly embrace - to autocratic distance 'Roi Thaumaturge'; and endlessly produced and disseminated official portraits of Napoleon - for example, those of Gerard, which clearly make a feature of the leader's hypnotic, disciplining gaze.

meaning of the fraternal embrace - through which Bonaparte nevertheless claims his legitimacy - has thus been usurped, derogated. We may therefore see in this image an uneasy tension between ideology and form - a political and rhetorical *misuse* of the radical revolutionary fraternal chain. It is in such *imperceptible* slippages between Revolution and Empire that a radical communitarianism comes to be abandoned.

### Disaffection with Napoleon in 1799

Yet perhaps they were not always so imperceptible. For it was the coup d'état of Brumaire, in November 1799, which proved a decisive turning point in the political image of Napoleon. In Jacobin historiography, the coup d'état retrospectively represents the initial dramatic step which inexorably led to the 'despotic' First Empire.<sup>43</sup> The coup effectively dissolved the first Republic, and centralized power in the hands of Bonaparte, now First Consul. Consequently, the revised Constitution of an VIII formally completed a transference of sovereignty from the people to a *chef du gouvernement*, initiating the gradual slide into 'dictatorship'. Although Napoleon made some concessions to his fellow Consuls, Cambacères and Lebrun, and especially conceded to Sièyes' insistence on retaining an (overly-complicated) concept of (hardly popular) political representation, the new Constitution finally invested the executive authority in his person alone.<sup>44</sup> Bergeron (1990) remarks that taken together 18th Brumaire and the Constitution "signified the re-establishment of a certain kind of monarchy" (p.17). But we should again note that the 'slide into dictatorship' was usually effected more gradually, even for the most part imperceptibly; and this insofar as it was technically founded upon successive, apparently

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<sup>43</sup>Soboul, for example.

<sup>44</sup>under section IV *Du Gouvernement*, article 42 reads: "Dans les autres actes du gouvernement, le second et le troisième consul ont voix constitutive: ils signent le registre de ces actes pour constater leur présence; et s'ils veulent, ils y consignent leur opinions; après quoi la décision du premier consul suffit.", Hélié, p.581.



minor revisions to the Constitution of an VIII - in 1802, 1804, and in 1815. Thereby the gradual and systematic abolition of popular sovereignty could appear less as a dramatic political backslide to monarchism, or as a rupture in political culture, than as a series of minor constitutional, even beaurocratic revisions. The obscure detail of the letter thus *concealed*, we will say, the most profound sociopolitical revolution.<sup>45</sup> How then does David negotiate this shift of power, at once profound and superficial?

Delécluze tells us of David's response to the coup d'état of 1799. It took the form of a cynical and melancholic comparison of himself to Cato the Younger - who chose to commit suicide rather than submit to Caesar's dictatorship after the collapse of the Republic of Rome.

"*Allons, j'avais toujours bien pensé que nous n'étions pas assez vertueux pour être républicains... Victrix causa diis placuit sed victa Catoni*". And puffing on his pipe, David repeated the last phrase several times to himself: *sed victa Catoni*".<sup>46</sup>

If we are to believe this anecdote, the response may seem not only rhetorically antiquated, harking back to David's 'hysterical' self-sacrificial postures of '94, but frankly hypocritical; David's subsequent implications in Napoleonic propoganda show that the artist fell short of the exemplary integrity of Cato's refusal to submit. Yet despite that stoical rhetoric David was forced, we shall see, to enter into a different, less apparently heroic, strategy of opposition; one more typical of the time and in conformity with transformed political conditions. We need to consider, then, when looking at David's relation to the regime, the historically *changing* forms of opposition, and the conditions of possibility - under specific political regimes - of anti-hegemonic enunciations. Still, simply

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<sup>45</sup>article 'Constitution de l'an VIII', *Dictionnaire Napoléon*.

<sup>46</sup>Delécluze, p. 230. 'The victorious cause pleased the Gods, but the defeated one pleased Cato'.

in terms of thematic relevance, it is revealing that this moment of political disillusionment coincides with David's interest in the subject of a *moral* victory over the power of *force*, namely in the *Leonidas at Thermopylae*. One could read the meaning of *Leonidas* in 1799 as both commemoration of fast disappearing republicanism and celebration of the values which sustained that republicanism. From its very inception it can be seen as harbouring an anti-Napoleonic stance.

Let us take note of another silence; this time on the part of the painter himself, in 1800. If we now turn to James Rubin's important but somewhat ignored, 1975 article "Painting and Politics: J.L. David's Patriotism, or the Conspiracy of Gracchus Babeuf and the Legacy of Topino-Lebrun" we will find there David at the dock, on behalf of his pupil Topino-Lebrun, who, in January 1800 is accused of 'anarchist' anti-governmental Babeufian conspiratorial actions. David's short testimony for Topino's trial, Rubin notes, was in the event "carefully guarded", circumspect, and amounted to a refusal to enter into the subject of politics - it only speaks of their mutual love of art. Clearly the testimony was woefully inadequate, given the stakes of the political trial, and indeed its conclusion. For Topino was condemned to death on 9 January, and guillotined on 30 January 1801.<sup>47</sup>

Rubin suggests that David's uncharacteristic withholding of any kind of *effectual* fraternal feeling between master and pupil - David had after all defended and 'saved' numerous of his friends through his influence before; Vivant Denon, for example<sup>48</sup> - can be explained by the artist's moral conflict between fidelity to republicanism and self-preservation; "for along with his silence at Topino's trial David began accepting Napoleon's advances privately" by agreeing to paint *Bonaparte Crossing the Alps*.<sup>49</sup> The article is mostly taken up with the contextualization and detail of Topino's political activities leading up to his

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<sup>47</sup>Rubin, p.567.

<sup>48</sup>David defended Vivant Denon before the Convention, Delécluze, p.318.

<sup>49</sup>Rubin (1976), p.565.

trial. But in an interesting and frankly speculative move, Rubin finally proceeds to link David's silence at the dock, a silence which we could say is this time invoked by the Law through the subject-painter's speech(lessness), with the contemporaneous *Leonidas at Thermopylae*. Rubin thus reads the painting as an outlet to David's frustrated political idealism. "Having acquiesced externally to Bonaparte's rule", he writes, "David was left to prove "*au moins*" through painting that he was still a patriot".<sup>50</sup> The painter was, then, in a double bind, and the painting negotiated this conflict between the subjection before a silence-invoking Law, the painter's ensuing guilt, and his historically outmoded, and now *secret*, continuing commitment to radical Jacobinism.

Taking all this into account, a reading of the painting as a simple and contingent reworking of the theme of *la patrie en danger* has already become considerably complicated. Rubin perfectly captures the complex mood of suspicion, reprisal and repression which accompanied the painting's inauguration. And he is right, I think, to emphasize the painter's acute sense of unease - David's characteristically sharp sensitivity to moral conflict - which accompanied, and explains that double gesture of authoritarian silence - induced in the public courtroom - and independent expression - articulated in the privacy of his studio - in early 1800.

But if our reading takes its cue from Rubin's exemplary analysis of 'Painting and Politics', still we will differ as to his final judgement of the *Leonidas*; as an expression of resignation and defeatism in the face of inexorable and increasingly consolidated Bonapartism. Rubin ends his article on a negative note, which we have seen is generally characteristic of writing on *Leonidas*. He writes in conclusion:

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<sup>50</sup>ibid. p.567. "au moins" referring to David's remark, quoted earlier by Rubin; another response to the coup d'etat as remembered by Delécluze, "*Je veux au moins...patriotisme sur la toile*" (emphasis in the original).

"If we now trace the revolutionary ideal from the *Horatii* to the *Leonidas*, we find ourselves moving from aspiration and readiness for action to an ideal of noble resignation. As much as David tried to characterize the sacrifice of Leonidas as holy, as "profond, grand et religieux", we now know, however, that it was linked in his mind to defeat - that this ideal was aspiration rather than fact. Topino's Republic was a lost cause, for which men of action like Napoleon had nothing but contempt."<sup>51</sup>

Rubin is led to such a negative conclusion, it must be said, through the force of his own strong evidence for the death of a certain kind of political idealism in early 1800. Certainly the conception, genesis and completion of *Leonidas* coincided with a concerted and largely successful attempt to suppress the memory of the recent radical republican past. Isser Woloch, for example, concludes his study of the *Democratic Movement Under the Directory* with an equally decisive sense of the 1799 coup d'état as a historic moment of irreversible *rupture*:

"It is therefore possible to argue that instead of being an overdue or natural sequel to Thermidor, Brumaire was a marked change of direction. A counterrevolution of major proportions, Brumaire broke the fragile evolution of a certain kind of democracy, and closed off certain options, as Thermidor had not. The significance of that evolution is easily overlooked because the fourteen years of Napoleonic rule produced an extreme discontinuity in political life. When democrats revived the revolutionary tradition and organized opposition to the monarchies of nineteenth-century France, it is safe to say that they were unaware of their full heritage".<sup>52</sup>

But if we were to believe these two conclusions, Rubin's and Wolloch's, it would be to ignore on the one hand, the continuing history of the painting, and, on the other, the

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<sup>51</sup>ibid. p.567.

<sup>52</sup>Woloch, 1970, p.398.

continuing history of political Jacobinism. If Rubin's evidence explains why David abandoned the *Leonidas* for nearly a decade it does not explain why at the end of that period he resumed it. I suggest that although the *Leonidas* may have proceeded in 1800 from a certain interment - of political idealism, of a real Jacobin constituency - what we find in 1812-14 is a *disinterment* of those same ideals, which suggests an historical continuity, a lost thread, of a Jacobin presence, on which, both historian and art-historian, Wolloch and Rubin, may prematurely have shut the lid. We are dealing here not so much with a decisive and irreversible *disappearance* of neo-Jacobin idealism, one which will only perhaps resurface in the Revolution of 1830, but rather with a continuing but *repressed* presence; a repressed which is then able to return only after the French nation has been thoroughly disillusioned, if not traumatized, by the *episode napoléonienne*. Wolloch's implication of a collective amnesia regarding the revolutionary tradition - a break in the chain of memory - is interesting as a historical problem. But we may now ask whether the gap in knowledge which he ascribes to the amnesiac revolutionaries of 1830, is not in fact our own - precisely that of the historians'. Does not the historical "discontinuity" in fact emerge as an effect of a gap in the archive, an absence which was itself politically motivated, rather than as an unarguable proof of historical inexistence? And would not that loss of a recognizable trace of Jacobin presence compel us instead to seek out its more secretive, mutating forms, prior to its re-emergence on the other side of the Empire and Restoration? Can we not in fact attempt to *re-link* the severed chain of this discontinuous history? And ultimately even posit David's painting, *Leonidas*, as the link which will connect two discontinuous moments of political consciousness?

Accordingly we may well question Rubin's crucial statement that revolutionary idealism was condemned to "aspiration rather than fact". By placing the moment of the disappearance of Jacobinism in public discourse in 1800 Rubin prematurely closes off the possibilities of a *Nachleben* to the problem of a radical neo-jacobin politics.

Rubin settles on one especially complex and violent moment in the history of Jacobin

suppression, that of the purge of 1800. But it may be useful, before considering another equally complex political moment, 1814, to trace the changing conditions of Jacobin visibility from the 1790's to the end of the Empire. This is not only important because David and *Leonidas live through* these transformations. It is also important because 1801 (the date of Topino's trial and execution) will then appear as only one, albeit especially violent, moment in a long history of renewed attempts - on both sides, the government and the opposition - at replaying that conflict, in which the very notion of politics was at stake. If we attend to this long - or at least longer - history, therefore, the decisiveness of the event of suppression begins to dissipate. It loses its quality of irreversibility, and the possibility of a continuity and even an explicit emergence begins to open up. From resignation and loss, then, we may meet, precisely through *Leonidas*, with a critical *renewal*.

#### Censorship and the continuing 'silent' history of Jacobinism

The problem with restoring the history of Jacobin presence under the Empire is, of course, that few records exist; a consequence of the efficacy of censorship during these years. We can, therefore, only connect, or *re-link*, the few historical fragments which escaped the censoring authority. What, then, remains to us? The historical literature on forms of opposition under the Empire largely focuses on underground political plots - notably those of Murat in 1808 and Malet in 1812 - which are represented as being invariably doomed.<sup>33</sup> No doubt those plots testify to an oppositional presence - be it neo-

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<sup>33</sup>the Jacobin plots which are most often recounted in histories of the Napoleonic regime are the conspiracies of the Rue Nicaise affair of December 1800, which provided a spurious justification for the great jacobin purge of that year, and the two failed Malet conspiracies of 1808 and 1812. The brutal assassination by Napoleon of the Duc d'Enghien in 1804 marked a turning-point for *any* oppositional aspirations; thereafter, it is supposed, both royalists and jacobins were reduced to impotent silence. Sutherland, p.364. On

Jacobin or royalist. And yet, in a sense, historians' continual concentration on those frustrated conspiracies only reiterates in similar terms Napoleon's own smearing campaigns, which, in order to undermine the very principal of oppositional politics, occasionally re-vivified the spectre of a Jacobin 'bogey-man'.<sup>54</sup> How, then, do we trace a Jacobin presence which is not collusive with the ideology which created the censorship in the first place - and which does not continually present its subject in the position of either victim, or demonic conspiratorial?

Opposition under the Empire was fragmented; which is to say that, given the lack of the inner links which characterize a *community*, communicative actions often simply fell on fallow ground - hence the failure of each conspiracy against the régime. The regime had effectively dissolved the networks of association. Yet at the same time the regime's efforts at suppressing the rallying points for an oppositional community - which included the ban on democratic revolutionary symbolism, e.g. the *bonnet rouge* - were not entirely successful. So much is clear when we note the *resurgence* of some revolutionary symbols during the particularly troublesome years of 1813-14. *Song*, for example, revived a certain communitarian and oppositional spirit. A prefect of the Seine-Inférieure reported in november 1813:

"les anciens jacobins parlent très bas, mais l'on chante très haut des chansons qui peuvent faire supposer qu'ils songent à se réveiller; j'ai vu des enfants de douze à quinze ans

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opposition under the Empire see, Aulard (1894), Vidalenc (1968), Villefosse/Boussonouse (1969).

<sup>54</sup>the description of the Jacobins under Napoleon as the 'bogey for the man in the street' was first articulated (in print) by Mme. de Staël's in her *Considérations sur la Révolution française* (published 1818). For the continuation of this construct in revolutionary historiography, see Peter Geyl, *Napoleon: For and Against* (London, 1949).

danser sur l'air de la Carmagnole et des jeunes gens entonner l'hymne de Marseillais".<sup>55</sup>

Criticism of the repressive regime had perforce to be articulated through less direct and violent means than open insurrection. But as the regime became increasingly and bureaucratically centralized even the most mild criticisms were proscribed. If most of the energies of the censoring authorities were largely given over to the political press, censorship extended too, albeit less systematically, to the theater, literature, engravings and 'high' visual art.<sup>56</sup> These interdictions started with the subject of censorship itself; revolutionary debates over freedom of speech were abruptly curtailed, only to re-emerge more powerfully during the first months of the Restoration in 1814.<sup>57</sup> Preliminary, or *a priori*, censorship also proscribed certain 'dangerous' subjects from public discourse; the scriptures, the Bourbons, military victories over France - even, after 1810, the person of Napoleon himself.<sup>58</sup>

But if most of this censorship was apparently aimed at the suppression of the voices of *royalist* dissident groups, ought we to infer from that the absence of a neo-jacobin threat?

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<sup>55</sup>Vidalenc, p.478. Vidalenc comments on this revealing report: Après de longues années d'une interdiction de ces chants, antérieure à la naissance des chanteurs parfois, il fallait une singulière persistance d'une propagande orale discrète, mais efficace et diffusée largement pour avoir pu donner lieu à de telles manifestations."

<sup>56</sup>see Welschinger (1882), Holtman (1950).

<sup>57</sup>Cabanis, p.205. Post-Restoration debates on the value of censorship unanimously condemned this Napoleonic evasion. This resulted in the introduction, in the 1820's, of a new practise of printing blanks and dots in the press to indicate the places of censorship. Harrison (1995), p.27.

<sup>58</sup>Holtman, p. 150. These were the subjects which were ritually expunged, from 1800 onwards, through the preliminary censorship of plays. Holtman also includes the themes of the usurpation of a throne, and the punishment of a tyrant.



Was the purge of 1800, as history tells us, *so* successful that the battle against insurrection need henceforth only be fought on the one front.<sup>59</sup> Early attempts to eradicate the memory of the radical phase of the Revolution might suggest this.<sup>60</sup> Yet, if the anxieties of the censoring authority seem less preoccupied with the spectre of Jacobinism - or with its real constituency - and if this systematic silencing successfully ensured that *overt* allegiance to neo-jacobinism became gradually more unthinkable as the Empire consolidated its hold over the subject population, we ought not therefore to disregard the possibility of continuing *coded* modes of Jacobin opposition. We might, therefore, be able to read the text - e.g. David's *Leonidas* - for a neo-jacobin presence which could only be articulated ever more elusively. Insofar as we are here following a logic of *displacement*, we could, then, attempt to follow certain "chains of association" which might lead us back to the

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<sup>59</sup>why this emphasis on the royalist opposition? Undoubtedly, that group was in real terms more threatening to the régime, since they were lent substantial weight and support by the foreign allies. But we need also to be aware of the potential distortion of historical writing; histories of this period inevitably stress the royalist opposition to Napoleon as a prelude to the narrative of that group's emergence in the months leading to the Restoration. The end of the story thus determines the presence that is being traced.

<sup>60</sup>for example, Wrigley (1993) notes that "under the Consulate, the jury let it be known that it would refuse any work which deliberately recalled the recent revolutionary past": the jury stated on 5th August 1800 that "les ouvrages dont la composition blesseroit les bonnes mœurs par l'expression ou l'intention manifeste de rappeler des souvenirs ou d'exciter des passions contraires aux pratiques du gouvernement et à la tranquillité publique ne seront pas admis." Wrigley, p.45. This was only part of a concerted attempt to eradicate the memory of the revolution; it was also effected through education - the new history taught in the lycées passed from Henri IV to 18th Brumaire, bypassing Revolutionary strife - and through the banning of the commemoration of the 'violent' *journées* in the press. Cabanis, p.207, 210.

presence of a hidden critical intent.<sup>61</sup>

The classics, for example, provided such an allusive vocabulary through which opposition might be articulated. A familiar example would be Topino-Lebrun's *Death of Caius Grachus*, shown at the salon of 1798, which has been convincingly read as a coded reverential reference to a struggling Jacobin politics in those years.<sup>62</sup> Yet here we will offer another example; one which does not spell the inevitable demise of a neo-jacobin political tradition and the death of the hero. The example which we present here concerns rather a coded critique of the régime's pretensions on the eve of the Empire; in which the theme of Thermopylae is, furthermore, implicated.

In the die-hard Jacobin Chaussard's scathing critique of the directorial regime, *Le Nouveau Diable Boiteaux*, Chapter XXXV is entitled *Le Museum*.<sup>63</sup> Here Chaussard

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<sup>61</sup>"The fact that an idea's emphasis, interest or intensity is liable to be detached from it and to pass on to other ideas, which were originally of little intensity but which are related to the first idea by a chain of associations". Laplanche/Pontalis, 'Displacement', p.121.

<sup>62</sup>Rubin persuasively argues that Topino-Lebrun can only have been paying a concealed homage in this painting to the jacobin martyr, Babeuf. Babeuf, considered in the twentieth century to be an early communist, took the 'nom de plume' of Caius Grachus and himself committed suicide after an unsuccessful plot to overthrow the newly anti-democratic regime in 1796, the so-called 'Conspiracy of the Equals'. See also Bordes (1979) on political painting during the Directory which attests to a continuing history of Jacobin opposition. Bordes follows Rubin in putting a break on neo-jacobin opposition in 1800, which again neatly intersects with the beginning of *Leonidas*. He writes, "Cette histoire prend fin quand tous les démocrates sont vaincus par Brumaire, et le *Léonidas* de David, achevé bien plus tard, sera le testament de leurs espoirs malheureux.", Bordes, p.199.

<sup>63</sup>*Le Nouveau Diable Boiteaux* was first published in 1799, republished with additions, an XI (1803). *Le Museum* is one of the later added chapters.

lengthily decries the Napoleonic vogue for battle paintings, "*ces images de destruction*", "*scènes d'atrocités*", which only succeed in discouraging peaceful accord. Alluding to their powerful social effects Chaussard rhetorically asks, "*Le signe ou le souvenir ne doivent-ils pas disparaître avec la chose?*". He continues:

"Non que je veuille conclure de-là qu'il ne faut plus peindre des batailles; j'en infère seulement qu'il serait *moral, politique, humain, de ne retracer que les batailles qui décident du sort d'un grand Peuple*; telle est la journée de Maringo; telle fut celle de Marathon chez les Grecs."<sup>64</sup>

Chaussard's two examples are carefully chosen. The battle of Marengo (June 1800), while it consolidated Bonaparte's prestige at home, fulfilled widespread hopes for imminent *peace*. Even Mme de Staël "succumbed to the universal euphoria" on hearing of the victory.<sup>65</sup> Like the battle of Thermopylae, Marathon (490 B.C.) was - as also told by Herodotus - a *defensive* action taken to ensure the survival of the Greeks under Persian threat. Implicitly criticized here is the new regime's avidity for news of military conquest - satisfied by the increasingly despotic Bonaparte - and now divorced from the fast disappearing republican concept of *la gloire nationale*. "Les Grecs", continues Chaussard, "qu'il faut citer éternellement quand il s'agit des arts, nous donnent encore, dans cette occasion, une grande leçon. Ils ne représentaient que des sujets qui intéressaient la gloire nationale." Chaussard proceeds to demonstrate this, by way of a lengthy quotation from Thomas' *Essai sur les éloges*, in which a fictional father and son roam through the edifying *monuments de la gloire*. Eventually, "Arrivés aux Thermopyles, ils se prosternent sur le lieu où trois cents hommes se sont dévoués contre trois cent mille." Now this is followed a couple of paragraphs later (taken up by a description of the ancient *jeux olympiques*) by what we might take to be a barely concealed - yet coded - allusion by

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<sup>64</sup>Chaussard, p.102. Italicized in the original.

<sup>65</sup>Villefosse, p.112.

Chaussard to Bonaparte's hubris. He writes:

"Supposons que, dans ce moment même, Thémistocle, vainqueur de Salamine, parut au milieu des jeux. On sait que, lorsqu'il s'y montra après sa victoire, tout retentit d'acclamations et de battemens de mains; les jeux furent interrompus, et l'on oublia, pendant une journée entière, les combattans pour voir et regarder un grand homme."<sup>66</sup>

The progression, in this brief fable, from democratic *jeux*, to wild applause, to forgetting of the combattants, to all eyes on the great man, may be surely read as a coded reference to another more recent political trajectory; that which charts the transformations from Revolutionary republican spirit (the games as the jacobin *fêtes*), to public infatuation (the young Bonaparte), to the forgetting of republican ideals ("*l'on oublia, pendant une journée entière*"), to the institution of a sarcastically named '*grand homme*', or despot. Chaussard's choice of hero is furthermore highly ambiguous; Themistocles was famous for saving Greece from the Persians, but not less famous for his consuming lust for power, which finally brought him to a discredited, shameful end.<sup>67</sup> Unlike Topino-Lebrun's earlier image of the neo-Jacobin hero as victim, then, republican Chaussard - who was of the same political stripe as David<sup>68</sup> - imputes a persistence to the revolutionary tradition, which will only be *temporarily* forgotten through the hypnotic charisma of the hero, here Napoleon.

What is implied in Chaussard's citation of Thermopyles - namely, the importance of the commemoration - may be seen to be re-iterated in David's painting; and furthermore

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<sup>66</sup>Chaussard (1803), pp. 101-108.

<sup>67</sup>as told by Plutarch, *Themistocles*.

<sup>68</sup>Like David, Chaussard too was discredited after Thermidor, and initially embraced Bonaparte. He continued, however, to champion a republican theory of art's purposes, which culminated in the *Pausanias français* of 1806.

linked to the early suppression of republican, or neo-jacobin, dissent.<sup>69</sup> Yet between these two texts the political climate had changed. If between Chaussard's polemic of 1803 and David's painting of 1813-14 silence nevertheless remained the *typical* response on the part of ex-revolutionaries throughout the Empire<sup>70</sup>, the fissures in the Napoleonic episode, which by 1812 were becoming daily more apparent, provided new opportunities for the visual articulation of, until recently repressed, contending ideologies.

the significance of *Leonidas*' 'incoherence'

Returning now to David's *Leonidas*, how exactly is this disaffection with the Napoleonic regime and assertion of neo-jacobin ideology articulated - apart from those thematic connotations - in the rhetoric of the picture? I want now to draw attention to the figure of the leader in *Leonidas*, and, specifically, to his isolation. I suggest that the unresolved and problematic relation of the figure of Leonidas to the troops behind him, the relation between leader and people, may be indicative of a crisis - namely a crisis in the representation of *authority*. The picture articulates the historical and theoretical difficulty

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<sup>69</sup>the terms 'neo-jacobin', 'republican' are not, of course, identical. However, in the Imaginary of the authoritarian Empire the two were not yet sharply distinguished. 'Republicanism' was *tarred* by its association with neo-jacobin 'anarchism'.

<sup>70</sup>opposition to the regime by liberal intellectuals - the Idéologues and the so-called Auteuil circle - was effectively curtailed by the abolition of the Second Class of the Institut, that of Moral Science and Politics, in 1803. Its members were 'dispersed' among other classes. Furthermore, *La Décade*, organ of the Idéologues and last refuge of republicanism, was dissolved in 1807. Henceforth, liberal opposition was confined to exile - Mme. de Staël - or silence. For example Pariset, friend of Volney, writes in a letter to Fauriel: "I have chosen the path of silence; not because I have relinquished my principles, but these must be hidden under a bushel... What to do? Range oneself on the side of the leaders, adopt their maxims and their language? Or live without prostituting yourself, without renouncing your opinions? My choice is made, it is irrevocable.", Villefosse, p.206.

of integrating a democratic politics with an authoritarian state; and this is enunciated through a derogation of neoclassical *form* - precisely through that which has been taken as the image's *failure*; its 'incoherence'. Furthermore, what the figure of Leonidas is removed from - precisely the homoeroticized bonding going on all around him - is, I would suggest, the heightened embodiment of a central component of early Jacobin ideology; namely, *fraternité*, the concept under which the unity of *le peuple* is organized. The 'incoherence' of Leonidas is the effect of an *alienation* between the leader and the people. Let us make this clearer.

### Representation of the leader

In one of the two reviews which took as their object David's Leonidas in 1814, the critic Boutard, art correspondent to the now royalist *Journal des Débats*, criticized the central figure in the picture. He wrote:

"Quant à Léonidas, il ne s'est point encore mis en mouvement: tout au plus il se lève et commence à agir. Mais s'il ne faut rien dissimuler, cette figure me semble un peu académique. La tête, ou l'on s'accarde à reconnoître l'expression très heureux d'un sentiment de compassion, joint à une fermeté de résolution inébranlable, demeure encore dans le repos de la méditation; et le bras armé de l'épée nue et détaché du corps, est en mouvement. Quant aux jambes, leur pose n'est ni celle ordinaire dans l'état de méditation, ni celle propre à un mouvement actuel. Enfin, Léonidas, personnage principal sous le rapport historique et sous le rapport pittoresque, n'a d'aucune manière part à l'action, ou plutôt à ces mouvemens divers et épars qui ne sont en effet que les préparatifs d'une action".<sup>71</sup>

Boutard was right to point up the awkward and unresolved relation *within* the 'heroic' central figure between passivity and activity; right too to note Leonidas' isolation from the

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<sup>71</sup>Journal des Débats, December 11, 1814.

`diverse and scattered' movements around him. For in fact David had the greatest difficulty with this figure. In the *première pensée* of c.1800 (Fig.8) Leonidas was marginalized and dejected. There he sits slightly hunched, one hand on the knee, legs insecurely crossed. But this is only the beginning of the gradual waning of the hero.

In an early single study for the figure of Leonidas (fig.11) the same elements - sad expression, torso hunched and folding in on itself, legs again insecurely folded and crossed - make for a figure which seems less ready for heroic struggle, and more likely to want to fold into a foetal position. The figure is even more striking in its contrast to Boutard's conventional expectations of "une fermeté de résolution inébranlable". It is troublingly indecisive and psychologically depressive. It was not in fact until quite late that David found his solution to the problem of the leader-figure in an engraving of an antique gem representing the figure of Ajax, published by Winckelmann in the *Monumenti Antichi Inediti*. Nevertheless, still we must, I think, concur with Boutard that even this final solution, while certainly more heroic than David's earlier failed attempts, remains highly ambiguous and unresolved. Boutard's criticism that the figure of Leonidas is `un peu académique' shows a canny intuition that David had resorted to copying, rather than imitation; that David had, in short, merely superimposed the borrowed figure, rather than working it into the composition and narrative. David's `solution' to the problem ends in an extraordinary disparagement of the neoclassical aesthetics of *unité d'action*<sup>72</sup>; a point which royalist Boutard was quick to take up on. This extraordinary deferral in the face of defeat on David's part may suggest an emotional withdrawal - a dis-identification - from the body of the `heroic' leader.

#### Post-revolutionary problem with leader, or the Father

What, then, is the significance of David's problem with the central figure in *Leonidas*? We will suggest that the difficulty is attendant upon a loss of confidence - particularly

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<sup>72</sup>on the neoclassical requirement of *unité d'action* see Puttfarken (1985).

acute in the years of the painting's completion - in the symbolism and very notion of political leadership.

Lynn Hunt has argued that the revolutionary discourse of anti-monarchism specifically forbade the re-inscription within the body politic of a central authority, or *father* figure. In *The Family Romance of The French Revolution* she suggests that especially in the eighteenth century, "the French had a kind of collective political unconscious that was structured by narratives of family relations".<sup>73</sup> Hunt uses the freudian notion of 'family romance' to tease out the self-representations and phantasies which structured the revolutionary Imaginary.<sup>74</sup> Once the revolutionaries had committed the centrally important act of killing the king/father the field could be taken over by what Hunt calls the 'band of brothers'; analogous to the *fraternal clan* which Freud speaks of in *Totem and Taboo*. Thereby an 'original' state of democratic equality could be returned, but only so long as "no one could be allowed to gain 'the father's supreme power'". Although the space which is left vacant by the murder of the father is no longer amenable to symbolization as the locus of power, it continues to structure, as a disavowal, the ensuing 'democratic' re-organization of social relations. Hence Hunt reminds us that in the Revolution, consequent to the murder of the king, the only mythologised heroes were dead heroes. The formation of the 'band of brothers', on the other hand, newly accedes to symbolisation during the radical Revolution. Hunt writes, "In the new family romance of fraternity, the revolutionaries seemed to hope that they would remain perpetually youthful, as the heroes of romances always were; they wanted to be permanently brothers and not founding fathers".<sup>75</sup>

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<sup>73</sup>Hunt, 1992, p. xiii.

<sup>74</sup>on the notion of the 'Revolutionary Imaginary' see, Singer, 1986.

<sup>75</sup>Hunt, 1992, p.80. Hunt continues, "In their own self-image (then) the French revolutionaries remained brothers. They were romantic heroes willing to fight for virtue and the triumph of the Republic against the forces of evil and corruption. They were prepared to



If we are to carry the terms of Hunt's reframing of the Revolution as freudian scenario forward, to the Empire, we will realize that the structure of these relations of desire becomes perverted. Not until Napoleon was cult status again attached to a living leader; yet at the same time, as we have seen in Henequin's image, Napoleon strategically played the card of revolutionary-in-arms.<sup>76</sup> That contradiction only became fully apparent when the leader's authority began to wane. David, then re-invokes the 'Romance of the French Revolution' in the *Leonidas* with a double move; *against* the re-inscription of 'the father's supreme power' and *for* fraternal romance. If David invokes the republican Revolution in *Leonidas*<sup>77</sup>, the revolutionary ban on the symbolization of the position of power which was the father/king's could not admit of the charisma of the leader, however centrally he may be positioned; and therein lies the nature of the 'problem' with the leader in the painting.

And the problematical status of the leader which we have seen in some forms of neo-jacobin ideology (e.g. Chaussard) is equally evident in David's overtly Napoleonic propogandist works, as it is in the more circumspect *Leonidas*. For example, both in formal and symbolic terms the representation of the distribution of power in *La Distribution des Aigles au Champ-de-Mars le 5 décembre 1805* (1810) is highly ambiguous. In that image the figure of Napoleon is oddly marginalized. All the impetus and energy of the composition is reserved for the citizen-soldiers. Napoleon's charismatic gesture hangs uneasily, multiplied and

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become martyrs for their cause, either on the battlefield or in the line of official duties. They expected the gratitude of the nation, but their chief reward was their sense of solidarity with their brothers",

<sup>76</sup>see on this structural contradiction in Napoleonic power, "une royauté de la démocratie", Furet, p.78.

<sup>77</sup>see Levin, on the multiple echoes of republican iconography in the painting. Levin imputes these references, interestingly, to a resurgence of republicanism in the *Institut* around 1810; but she does not thereby see any tensions inscribed in the picture.

parodied in the confused and empty gestures of his charges before him.<sup>78</sup>

This failure of pictorial unity, the effect of a dis-identification with the leader, emerges yet more clearly when seen against the overtly propagandist imagery of the Emperor which appeared bi-annually before the Parisian public at every Salon of the Empire between 1804 and 1812. Customarily, the elements of these representations consisted of the leader (Napoleon) and the group, which might be, according to the event depicted, Grande Armée soldiers-in-arms or the supplicating vanquished. The most successful of these, those for example by Gros (the *Eylau* and *Pest-House*), are only more inspired versions of a staggeringly simplistic official formula which determined how the right relations were to be represented between the leader and the people. The formula hardly needed to be enforced in any direct or coercive sense, so much did it rely on the traditional iconography of monarchic heroism and beatitude<sup>79</sup>, and on artists' willingness to passively reproduce those traditional forms. The precision of the commissioning description, however, closely *determined* the disposition of figures across the canvas, as artists were invited to reproduce visually that which the Bulletins daily offered as terse verbal information to an otherwise ignorant civilian

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<sup>78</sup>Johnson (1993) notes that David had difficulty projecting a heroic figure of the Emperor, both in the portraits of Napoleon, and in the grand history paintings, the *Sacre* and the *Distribution des Aigles*. Her reading of the *Aigles* reveals its "subversive elements"; the censured allegorical figure of Victory, which would have detracted attention from the figure of Napoleon, the *pre-Imperial* standards and flags - which had by 1810 been relinquished - gesturing towards the early French victories of Lodi, Rivoli and Marengo, the barely noticeable flag which the inscription *La République*, and not least, the diminutive figure of Napoleon himself. Furthermore, Johnson provides evidence that critics in 1810 found the work to be seditious and politically subversive. Johnson, pp.208-216.

<sup>79</sup>a point made famously by Friedlander of Gros' *Pest-House at Jaffa*, in 'Napoleon as Roi Thaumaturge', *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* 4 (1941).

subject population. The *sujet* of Napoleonic commissions, communicated to artists through Minister of Arts Denon in the official *Moniteur*, was textually explicated in such a precise way that a proper sense of hagiography - certain right relations - would appear as inevitable translations from text to image. Appropriately, then, these images have been likened to painted Bulletins, both in their rhetorical strategies and in their crude political content.<sup>80</sup> Through these directorials to mediating artistic subjects little was left to chance or discretion.<sup>81</sup>

It is clear that the correct *grouping* of figures was a matter of explicit concern, even anxiety, for Denon, who saw himself in the role as transmitter of a sometimes obscure Napoleonic will.<sup>82</sup> It was important that through these commissions all eyes should be directed - trance-like - to the figure of the leader; both internally within the dynamic of the picture, and externally, in the gaze of the Parisian Salon spectator. Countless history paintings of the Empire testify to the former condition. We will provide here one example, typical, where ideological content and formal structure are inextricably linked. In Meynier's *Rentrée de Sa*

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<sup>80</sup>or, as Delécluze put it, "comme une *Moniteur* visible", Delécluze, p.320.

<sup>81</sup>example of a proposed topic for the 1808 Salon: *La bataille d'Austerlitz, en choisissant le moment où sa Majesté se porte sur les hauteurs de Pratzen, à l'instant où elle fait placer la batterie et où sa garde est occupé à enlever les blessés. Dans le fond on représentéra les lacs glaces sur lesquels l'armée russe s'engage et que le feu de la batterie fait ouvrir.*

<sup>82</sup>concerning a picture representing the revolt of Cairo, eventually won by Girodet, Denon writes to Daru on 17th February 1809: 'Concerning the picture of Cairo, I really would have wanted His Majesty to determine the moment he might want represented, since a revolt only consists of isolated incidents. Would his Majesty like us to take the episode when the great mosque was captured and rebels of every sort were siezed? This instant ended the disaster. Eyewitness of this rebellion, I nevertheless saw nothing which lends itself to a powerful picture and might yield an attractive grouping', cit. Marrinan, p.192.

*Majesté l'Empereur dans l'île de Lobau, après la Bataille d'Esling* (fig.12) the redeeming sight of the Emperor is both explicitly thematized and determines the structuration of the groupings. There is no other point of attention apart from the figure of Napoleon. And we have only to turn to an earlier report to Napoleon, Vivant Denon's *Compte rendu du Salon de 1810*, to appreciate the ideological importance of the structural and emotional centrality of the figure of the leader in official history painting of the Empire. Of Gautherot's *Napoléon blessé devant Ratisbonne* Denon reassuringly reports:

"le plus grand mérite de cette composition est qu'on n'y trouve qu'un seul mouvement, qu'un unique intérêt, et cet intérêt est entièrement porté sur la personne de Votre Majesté. Toute l'armée n'est occupée que de Vous, Sire, est vous n'êtes agité que de l'inquiétude de l'armée".<sup>83</sup>

Denon ingratiatingly, but surely, captures in this overly insistent description the exacting, though blindingly simple, *political* requirements of the regime in relation to art practice. Furthermore, between Denon's descriptive text and the visual image there is little failure of translation. Both image and text deliberately foreclose the possibility - indeed disavow - the growing reality of a troubling gap between people and leader.<sup>84</sup> Against that visual rhetoric

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<sup>83</sup>report dated 11 November 1810. Cit. Lelièvre (1993), p.118. This is perhaps somewhat over-insistent on the point because of the inherently troubling - to Napoleon - nature of the subject. It is nevertheless revealing of the *general* requirements of Napoleonic history painting, which the title of this work may threaten to undermine. An illustration of Gautherot's painting may be found in Armand Dayot, *Napoléon Raconté par l'Image*, Paris 1895, p.241.

<sup>84</sup>but if translation *always* fails, this cannot be an end to the matter. Accordingly, it has been argued that in the translation from word to paint there is opened up the possibility of *resistance* to Napoleon's authority. See Marrinan, 1991, pp.177-199.

of Napoleonic propaganda, which relies on the unifying charisma of the figure of the leader to heal the effects of the disseminating violence which he brings about, the critical and subversive power of David's painting in 1814 becomes now clearer.

#### Difficulty with 'the people'

Yet if David is re-articulating the notion of *le peuple*, he cannot nevertheless, given censorship, simply re-cite the former signifiers. The suppression of old forms of heroic opposition with which David identified effects a re-organization of the terms of opposition to the Empire. One clear representative example of pure self-censorship in the *Leonidas* is the dramatic suppression of the figure of Hercules in the final picture.

Prominent in David's late (c.1812) highly finished sketch in the Metropolitan Museum (Fig.9) is the figure of the leader of the Spartan forces, just behind and to the right of Leonidas, as an aggressive club-wielding Hercules - a clear and distinct iconographic reference to the popular representative politics of the Jacobin ideology of An II.<sup>85</sup> In the final picture (fig.5) that dominant, striding figure is effaced; now smoothed over and transmuted into an incarnation of Apollonian gracefulness. This remarkable transformation from a fully virile bearded Herculean figure to the smooth-limbed 'Apollo belvedere'-type warrior is not to be read here primarily as an effacement of sexual difference, or even as an index of 'male trouble';<sup>86</sup> rather, it demonstrates the impossibility of the sign's - *le peuple's* - critical re-citation. And the necessity of its displacement. If the 'romance of revolutionary fraternity'

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<sup>85</sup>we are reminded of David's project for a statue of Hercules of 1793-4, which embodied the principle that *le peuple est souverain*. See also Hunt, "The Imagery of Radicalism", in Hunt, *Politics, Class and Culture in the French Revolution*, Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1984.

<sup>86</sup>since this one instance of transformation might seem to perfectly represents that narration of virile to ephebic masculinity as the index of a gender crisis.

is now newly eroticized in *Leonidas* - Hercules ceding to the fraternal embrace - that is because, I would suggest, the fraternal embrace has become for David - like the instance of the singing of the Marseillaise we have noted above - the primary, and necessarily coded, signifier of a politics of communitarianism. And this, when all other signifiers of a left-wing politics have been quashed, by the Napoleonic great purge, through political censorship and repression.

### 1813-1814: *le peuple* as jilted lover

The moment when David resumed *Leonidas*, about 1812, coincides with the beginnings of the fracturing of the Napoleonic myth.<sup>87</sup> Certainly, as far as the *theme* of David's painting goes - military fidelity - it could not have been further from the truth of the French *esprit de corps*. In spite of Napoleon's efforts at concealment, as news of the disastrous Russian campaign began to infiltrate French soil, any desired replay of the spirit of '93 through a *levée en masse* became increasingly unlikely.<sup>88</sup> But the problem of unity was not limited to the military level; the eventual fall of Napoleon and the ensuing restoration of the monarchy revolved around the question of the relation between the nation and its leader. When Napoleon finally abdicated in April 1814, the French nation was left with a vacuum of authority.

This loss of leadership was prepared for by the gradual manifestation of a gap between

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<sup>87</sup>most historians locate the beginnings of a widespread resentment against the regime to the economic crisis of 1810, the sore effects of which began to be felt in 1812-13. Sutherland, pp. 413-17.

<sup>88</sup>as a consequence the regime's sensitivity to criticism became almost paranoid, requiring ever more vigilant censorship. In 1812, for example the Minister of the Interior reprimanded the *Annales de la Haut-Vienne* for stating that "la conscription s'est opérée avec une facilité étonnante"; the word *étonnante* was deemed displeasing. Cabanis, p.222, note 80.

Napoleon and the French people, which Napoleon duly attempted to deny.<sup>89</sup> If the invading allies in 1814 cannily announced that they were the enemies of Napoleon, and not of France, responding to a by then fully formed distinction between the leader and his people, the wording of the announcement of the Napoleon's final abdication in 1814 clearly attests to the absolute severing of an emotional link. The provisional government stated on 3rd April "Que Napoléon Bonaparte, pendant quelque temps d'un gouvernement ferme et prudent, avait donné à la nation des sujets de compter pour l'avenir sur des actes de sagesse et de justice; *mais qu'ensuite il a déchiré le pacte qui l'unissait au peuple français...*".<sup>90</sup> The manifest regret implied in the first *reconnaissant* clause of that statement, and the force of this *déchiré* suggests the image of *le peuple* as jilted lover: *déchiré... déchiré de douleur* - heartbroken.

#### Silence: the characteristic expression of political anxiety in 1814

Yet in early 1814 that *douleur*, a combination of loss and anxiety, found its most characteristic expression precisely in silence. If in 1793 the overthrow of the king was accompanied indeed justified, by a dissolving of power into *le peuple*, now in 1814, the concept of *le peuple* - after fourteen years of inexorable erosion - had become, as a rallying point, outmoded; we have seen a concrete manifestation of the erosion of *le peuple* in David's writing out of the Hercules figure in *Leonidas*. It is notable that David was not able replace that incarnation of *le peuple* with a signifier of greater currency; the political rhetoric of 1813-14 provided none.

The phenomenon we are confronted with, therefore, is speechlessness. Reading through the

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<sup>89</sup>"il ne cessa de lutter pour faire croire à un sentiment de ralliement, au moins, et souvent d'adhésion enthousiaste bien éloigné d'une réalité qui donne plutôt l'impression d'une simple indifférence, voire de la résignation.", Vidalenc, p.473.

<sup>90</sup>Hélié, p.874. my emphasis.

literature on the fall of the Empire and the Restoration one is struck by the pervasive, and many modes of, silence which accompanied that political and cultural transformation. First, there was the continuing silence of the Napoleonic regime over its internal and external failures; both the re-emergence of conspiratorial activities and the disaster of the Russian campaign - a silence of censorship.<sup>91</sup> Then there was the silence - both relieved and uncertain - of Paris in March 1814 when it finally collapsed and capitulated to the allies - no revolutionary noise accompanied it.<sup>92</sup> The Paris press responded to that event too with a cautious silence.<sup>93</sup> Neither was this characteristic expression of anxiety by any means eclipsed by the restoration of the monarchy. Houssaye, in his classic 1915 study of that year, *1814*, remarks that the first attempts at Restoration were received by *le peuple* with silence; "La foule resta muette".<sup>94</sup> The army, still loyal to Napoleon remained silent, as did his few surviving supporters, *les patriotes*.<sup>95</sup> If the royalists - by no means a majority - could now emerge from *their* silence with a ringing voice, large sections of French opinion could only respond to the entrance of the king, Louis XVIII, into Paris in May of that year with *inarticulate* mourning.<sup>96</sup>

Yet, while we might want to explain this cultural phenomenon of apparent apathy as due to the erosion of public opinion through censorship over the preceding fourteen years, we will

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<sup>91</sup>Tulard (1970), p.353.

<sup>92</sup>ibid. p.364.

<sup>93</sup>Houssaye, p.455, note 2.

<sup>94</sup>ibid. p.557. and on silence of *le peuple*, also p.561.

<sup>95</sup>ibid. p.642, 562.

<sup>96</sup>"A l'entrée du Roi à Paris, écrivait Metternich, les sentiments les plus opposés se lisaient sur les visages. Ils éclataient dans le cri de "Vive le Roi!" et ne se révélaient pas moins dans le morne silence des ennemis de la royauté." Tulard, p.376. Citation of Metternich's *Mémoires*, Paris 1886-84, I, p.197.



not take these manifestations of the inarticulate as passive indices of the *absence* of political desires. On the contrary, the atmosphere of the nation in the years 1813-14 is characterized by *un désir vague*<sup>97</sup> - by the stirrings of hopes and regrets which provided the conditions for the emergence, tentative at first, of new, or renewed, constituencies of all persuasions. If, retrospectively the return to monarchy seems inevitable, a careful reading of historical accounts of this brief transitional period reveals the *open possibilities* of the proposed mode of government in April 1814.<sup>98</sup> For the first time, since Brumaire, out of an apparent state of *profound forgetfulness*, a neo-jacobin language *could* begin to be reconstructed. If silenced, the neo-jacobin presence had never been entirely extinguished.<sup>99</sup> And the extent of the resurgence of ex-revolutionaries upon the fall of Napoleon became manifest a little more than a year later, in the *fédérés* movement during the Hundred Days.<sup>100</sup> All of which might

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<sup>97</sup>the phrase used by Ponteil, p.11.

<sup>98</sup>the allies were in fact content to leave the question of which kind of government to the French people themselves. The possibility of a return to republican government was therefore a distinct possibility, see, for example, Houssaye, p.565.

<sup>99</sup>until the very end of the regime the imperial police continued their surveillance of ex-revolutionaries, exiled from Paris. For example, a list, of 20th may 1813, reports, with succinct details: "Georges, cordonnier pour femmes, ancien membre du Comité révolutionnaire de la section des Tuileries: Henriot, ferblantier, 50 ans, massacreur de septembre...etc.. See J. Dautry, *La police impériale et les révolutionnaires*, A h. Rev. Fr. no.194, 1968, p.558.

<sup>100</sup>Alexander (1991) provides evidence of a Jacobin resurgence during the popular *fédérés* movement of 1815. "Undoubtedly the most striking feature of the associations was the pre-eminent role played by old champions of the Revolution. At least 13 associations boasted regicide 'conventionnels' as leading members...men who had served as mayors during the Terror, sat on Revolutionary tribunals, and organized Jacobin popular societies...". Alexander, p.13. He also notes that, if conscious of his usefulness, they remained suspicious of Napoleon. *ibid*, p.157.

leads us to deduce the existence of a political constituency with which David's painting may link up.

Yet we should remember that a wilfull forgetfulness was rather the style and requirement of that political moment than remembrance. At the moment when David finally completed his great work *his* chains of association seemed ever more urgently to need articulation. When Louis XVIII finally proclaimed his Charter on the 4th of June 1814 he proclaimed:

"En cherchant ainsi à renouer la chaîne de temps, que de funestes écarts avaient interrompues, nous avons effacé de notre souvenir, comme nous voudrions qu'on pût les effacer de l'histoire, tous les maux qui ont affligé la patrie durant notre absence."<sup>101</sup>

It is before the closure of this critical gap, wherein long suppressed desires could momentarily emerge into visibility - providing the open possibility for the articulation of a communitarian phantasy - where we might locate the moment, and the meaning, of *Leonidas*.

### Conclusion

I have argued that the manifest silence which greeted David's picture in late 1814 was only part of a larger structural network of silences which seems to characterize the fragmented political culture of the waning Imperial regime and the early moments of Restoration. By linking those silences with the peculiar rhetoric of *Leonidas* - precisely its formal 'failure' - we have seen how complex political desires may have been invested in the picture; and are certainly inscribed there.

All this would support a reading of the *Leonidas at Thermopylae*, less as an image of

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<sup>101</sup>Hélié, p.886.

redundant nostalgic utopianism, than one which wilfully refuses to forget radical Jacobin convictions; precisely at a time when the preoccupation with the politics of representation is the most *vital* one of the day. The central message of *Leonidas* is after all to do with the importance of memory and not forgetting. The inscription in the painting which denotes historical memory, "*Etranger, va dire aux Lacedemoniens que nous sommes mort ici, en obeissant a leurs ordres*", and David's own *Leonidas* as inscription, become, then, the only sure guarantors of the survival of an heroic heritage.

In *Leonidas* we can see the visual articulation of two models of societal organisation, one which has historically supplanted the other, although by early 1814 clearly unsuccessfully. On the one hand, that of communitarianism and egalitarianism, represented by the pervasive image of the fraternal embrace, and on the other, that of authoritarianism or charismatic leadership, represented by the figure of Leonidas. The 'incoherence' of the image may now be put down to the clash, or contradiction, between the two in the fragmented political discourse attending its completion.

Crucially, the figure of Leonidas, commanding the spectator's attention, if not himself commanding, literally bars us from the possibility of an unmediated visual and libidinal access to the eroticized phantasy of revolutionary brotherhood. The leader is central but obstructive. I have argued that this discordant structure of David's painting indirectly articulates a crisis of leadership; that ex-Jacobin David had been sensitive to this crisis ever since Brumaire; and that his passionate re-engagement with the work from 1812 to 1814 stemmed from the renewed possibilities of a neo-Jacobin ideal of communitarianism.

In the picture the homoerotic works against that 'crisis', which is figured in the problematical status of Leonidas as leader. If the 'crisis' lies in the rupture of a *libidinal tie* between a people and its leader, David works to dispel the crisis of political leadership through a phantasmic eroticization of the Jacobin notion of communitarianism. So the *Leonidas* simultaneously poses a problem and articulates the solution. What is most

politically powerful in *Leonidas* then, is precisely the homoerotic. At issue here is the erotics and politics of the gesture, the touch of flesh against flesh and the constant assertion of tactility against the fact of annihilation, and, specifically, against the empty centre, which is the figure of the isolated leader.

#### Chapter 4: Pornography. David/Sade

If we started this thesis with a gap in the text - Dacier's gap, taken as a representation of homosexuality in the Anacreontic text - now we will finish with what may be thought of as the ultimate radical and exhaustive mining of that gap in classical poetics and Enlightenment rationality - namely the Sadean text. In one sense, the proliferation of a discourse on homosexuality which we discovered as progressively inhabiting that gap in our first chapter, finds its ultimate systemization, while translated into a positively *perverted* mode, in Sadean representation. We have thus - by a detour through Kant and David - reached the limits of our enquiry with a consideration of the conceptual limits of the Enlightenment's understanding of the 'problem' of homoeroticism, in philosophy and in classical poetics. It is both chronologically and conceptually fitting, then, to end with a consideration of the male body in David *through* 'Sade'.

#### Introduction

We have just left off with a critical silence in Restoration Paris in October to December 1814. Now we can link this with another 'silent' event, only kilometres away, in fact, from the privacy of David's exhibition. Sade dies incarcerated at Charenton on December 2nd 1814; he is summararily buried, against his express wishes, in the Charenton cemetery. Censored. Incarcerated.<sup>1</sup> Naturally, we will consider this unfortunate link fortuitous. Yet, that post-Restoration Parisian *geography of perversion* may provide the starting point for a *rapprochement*; one which turns around this central point of *ensorship*.

If we have argued that David's *Leonidas* was committed in conditions of growing secrecy,

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<sup>1</sup>On Sade's death see Lely (1957), pp. 661-2. "Tel s'enfonça dans la nuit muette l'homme qui, vingt-huit ans captif, demeure l'esprit le plus libre qui ait encore existé."

it is hardly necessary to labour the same point as regards Sade's work generally; his name is synonymous with the forbidden. We might only add that his last and longest spell of imprisonment coincides almost exactly with the long gestation of *Leonidas*, 1801-1814<sup>2</sup>; and, we repeat, his death with that work's effectual cultural incarceration in December 1814.<sup>3</sup> These uncanny parallels between the works and the lives, then, can perhaps only be made sense of by considering the formal relation between repressive forces of silence and censorship, and the artist-subject, through which they are traced and effectively relayed, perhaps in the manner of an *interpellation*.

However, in this chapter I will want to consider how the conditions of censorship in which both David and Sade were working may have provided the opportunity for a critical and *perverse* relaying, or reiteration, of the specific sociohistorical 'oublié' of *political* philosophy; not the 'body' per se, or even its abject or utopian 'pornographic' form, but a way of imagining social bonds through a certain *enchaining* of male bodies, which may have had potentially radically implications.

We will approach this problem of the dynamic between institutionalized censorship and 'perverse rearticulation' through the formal, sometime *paradoxical*, figure of the *chain*.

### The Chain

Let us begin by noting an iconographic resemblance between two images. One is a detail of an engraving for the 1797 edition of Sade's *La Nouvelle Justine* (fig.13), the other, a detail from David's *Leonidas aux Thermopyles* (fig.14)

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<sup>2</sup>there were three periods of imprisonment: 1772-1773, 1777-1790, december 1793 - october 1794, and 1801 - 1814.

<sup>33</sup> Sade's final long spell of imprisonment can be linked directly to Napoleonic tyranny. He was interned, in Saint-Pélagie, in April 1801. As is attested to by Napoleon's signature on the two reviews of the Sade case in July 1811 and April 1812, his maintenance in prison was a matter of Napoleon's direct intervention. Anti-Napeolonic agitators were incarcerated in Imperial prisons without trial, and more often than not declared to be 'fou'. On this see, Lely pp. 580-582 and pp.588-9, and Lever (1991), "Prisonnier de l'Empereur", pp. 634-636.

It will immediately be noticeable that they resemble each other through the figure of the chain. Leaving aside their generic differences (philosophically, as 'Art'), *iconographically* the two images are alike. In both representations a series of male bodies interlock as if forming a human chain. In the Sade illustration this applied metaphor of the chain admittedly works better; the effect of a chain of bodies - bodies both extensive and replaceable - is indeed a typical Sadean trope.<sup>4</sup> While the formation in the David detail is chain-like only as an effect of the aesthetic requirement of legibility; insofar as the depiction of four male interclasping bodies *side on* must be in fact represented as each behind the other, for the sake of visual clarity. They would otherwise amorously obscure one another. And let us not forget, too, that the Davidian image of the oath-taking in *Leonidas* more than likely harks back to the orchestrated 'chains' of the revolutionary *fêtes*. So we can take the two images, the David and the Sade, as acceding to the same metaphor.

Yet, once we introduce the question of *meaning*, setting them thus beside each other may point to disquieting and unheard-of combinations. The resemblance between the grouping and gestures of the figures is indeed apparently at odds with their different *meanings* - the one a group anal fucking, conceptualized as 'sodomy'; the other, a collective oath-taking, conceptualized as 'fraternity'. What is the connection, then, between 'sodomy' and 'fraternity'? Is the latter the *sublimated* expression of the former? Or, in other words does Sade 'speak the truth' of David? Given that David's picture is a representation of the military - the 'narcissistic' soldier-male - as the stereotypical construction goes - this question of whether Sade is giving the lie to David now becomes a question of sexual politics, one still hotly debated - precisely that of the relation between the 'homosexual' and the 'homosocial'. How we explain their relation will thus have important implications for this sexual politics of the image.

On the other hand, there is the more formalistic consideration of how to *think* their relation, apart from those literal thematics. Can we say that the one *completes* the other,

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<sup>4</sup>Barthes writes of the Sadean text: "for the *couple*, whenever possible, is substituted the *chain*...The meaning of the chain is to posit the infinity of erotic language (isn't the sentence itself a chain?)...", Barthes, p.165.

that in putting them together we are reconstituting an original, though hidden, split; or that the one *requires* the other, but only in order to outrage it, that therefore the one is the 'perversion' of the other? Homosexuality as the normality, or the transgression of normality? In what relation to connect the two signifiers?

Already they are *effortlessly* entering into a certain symbiotic, self-referential relationship. We might, then effect a separation, heuristic no doubt, by turning them around the concept of a third term, the Law.

Now it is a question, then, of their dual relation to the concept of the 'Law', or social order; and of how homosexuality might be thought within a problematic of the visual and textual construction of social order. This will require consideration of the symbolic position of sodomy within *historical* reconceptualizations of the social order in revolutionary France - here especially within the concept of *fraternity*. Consideration, too, of their dual relation to the Law as it is represented in *theory*: feminist and psychoanalytic theories of the relation between law and sexuality, the Phallus and the possibility of *jouissance*. Or, again, Irigaray's homosexuality/homosexuality distinction. How theory constructs the social/sexual relation out of a selective representation of the sociohistorical moment has significance for the politics of reading the sodomitical or political image this way or that.

### Perversion of the chain

This will also involve a rethinking of the notion of the 'perverse', and specifically its displacement from an adherence to the figure of sodomy to the rhetorical figure of the chain itself. My very introduction of the term here - the 'perverse'- follows what is now understood to be the defining characteristic of Sade. This is still more true when the 'perverse' is introduced into a discussion of Sadean *sodomy*. The absolute identification of 'sodomy' and 'perversity' in Sade derives from Klossowski's still influential post-war readings of Sadean thought and the Enlightenment. In his essay "The Philosopher-Villain", an elaboration of a paper read to the Tel Quel group in 1966 entitled "Sign and Perversion in Sade", Klossowski drew out his now paradigmatic formulation thus:



"An absolutely central case of perversity, which Sade will take as the basis for interpreting all others, as the principle of affinity in what will form integral monstrosity, is the case of sodomy."<sup>5</sup>

The Klossowskian interpretation of sodomy as the most significant figure, or 'central case', of Sadean perversity is then further extended in its overreaching significance by defining that perversity as absolute negativity, in relation to both God (Christian discourse) and Reason (enlightened rational discourse). Both biblical sinful Man and enlightened rational Man are negated through this "principle of affinity" which, Klossowski continues, is "the most significant in Sade's eyes - that which strikes precisely at the law of the propagation of the species and thus *bears witness to the death of the species in the individual.*"<sup>6</sup>

Klossowski's apocalyptic interpretation of the relation which is Sadean sodomy, is thus foreign to any theory of homosexuality which is turned around either the notion of a sexual order, or that of pleasure. It expressly contradicts, for example, Irigaray's understanding of homosexuality as more or less imminently institutionalized within a patriarchal Symbolic order. And still more it defies her associated notion of 'homosexuality'; no *jouissance* in Klossowski.<sup>7</sup> For Klossowski, sodomy in Sade is the very figure of a repeated *disintegration*, but also institutes *another* order altogether, that of "integral monstrosity". Insofar as Sadean sodomy has, for Klossowski, nothing to do with sexuality at all, but is instead seen as an anti-philosophical philosophical troping, it might be seen as a useful theoretical rejoinder to the idea of a homosexuality which is, more or less covertly, invariably institutionalized as patriarchy's, or the Law's, central form.

Yet, in fact, Klossowski is deeply cynical about the prospects of disorder, despite the millennial bleakness which is located in the repeated sodomitical encounters of the Sadean text. For their very repetition attests to Sade's ultimately impotent strategy of outrage, and

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<sup>5</sup>Klossowski, 1992, p.24.

<sup>6</sup>ibid., p.24.

<sup>7</sup>Irigaray, p. 193.

"in outrage what is outraged is maintained to serve as a support for transgression"<sup>8</sup>; so that Sade is in the end, according to Klossowski, reduced to repeated *blasphemy* which attests to the power of God.<sup>9</sup>

This presents sodomy squarely within the pre-enlightenment apocalyptic terms of biblical exegesis. Contra this, we might question the recourse to the fixing of sodomy within a discourse of millenarian wrath - especially so, when we consider the gradual diminution of the notion of theological sodomy during the eighteenth century and the rise of differently inflected enlightened and beaurocratic understandings of the fluctuating term.<sup>10</sup> Further, to posit sodomy as the *indisible* of classical language, or its undoing, does not take into account either the explicit enlightened problematizations of sodomy, or homosexuality's occasional, and normative embededness in classical poetics. Our historical tracing of some of these more normative aspects of homoeroticism in neoclassical poetics suggests that the figure of sodomy does not suddenly flare up apolyptically in the Sadean 'pornographic' as the Enlightenment's self-destructive blind-spot. If sodomy, or more broadly homoeroticism, has all along posed a certain formal problem for neoclassical poetics it is not therefore until Sade simply *unthinkable*, or at least, *only* to be thought of within a residual millenarian theological conceptual framework.

Therefore, we will attempt to extricate the 'perverse' from its customary adherence to the figure of sodomy in Sade, and to displace it to a place, as an imminence, within the 'Law' itself, in order to explore the notion of a 'perverse' representation of the Law, or of social order.<sup>11</sup> This means that theoretically we might locate the perverse as an always inherent potentiality and fragility *within* the Law; and not external *and* dependent on a

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<sup>8</sup>ibid., p.18.

<sup>9</sup>"What the act of transgression recuperates from the possible in what does not exist is *its own possibility of transgressing what exists*", ibid., p.21.

<sup>10</sup>supra chapter 1, part 2.

<sup>11</sup>for a recent rethinking of the notion of the perverse, see Dollimore, 1991, "Political Perversions", p.125-126.

Law which ultimately remains unruffled by it in a relationship of 'transgression'.<sup>12</sup> If we say that the Law itself provides the rhetoric which may be re-trope to effect its own undoing, and if we now take the *chain* as one of these possibly perverse rhetorical figures, then the distinction between Sade and David, and the boundary upon which their dual relationship to transgression depends, is thereby dissolved.

It is to be hoped that this procedure will throw further light on the uncanny effect of David's representation of social order in the *Leonidas*, which until now we have explained in terms of a sociohistorical 'crisis'. The explanation of that uncanny effect now in terms of a notion of the 'perverse', will require the return of a certain authorial intention, in the form of the historic possibility of a counter-systemic gesture. We will thereby attempt to outline the Sadean *perversity* of David's *Leonidas* as one formalistic explanation of the work's abiding strangeness.

### Uses of the Chain

I will use the figure of the "chain" to open up this series of interpretive transformations. How, then, does this element of the "chain" open up certain lines of interpretation, and certain historical archives?

The metaphor of the chain will prove to be rich in speculative possibilities. Its use here will be both methodological and historical.

Firstly, we will simply *link* them together. The shared figure of the chain points to inner affinities between two thought systems which we can nominate 'David' and 'Sade'; this is not primarily a question of (mutual)'influence', but rather of inquiring into the conceptual

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<sup>12</sup>this is to ask a question of how the two authors *exploited* the self-censoring, or strategic silences, of ancien régime and Imperialist strategies of the Law. Slavoj Žižek notes "the way in which censorship not only affects the status of the marginal or subversive force that the power discourse endeavours to dominate, but, at an even more radical level, splits from within the power discourse itself", Žižek, "Multiculturalism, or, the Cultural logic of Multinational Capitalism", in *New Left Review*, Sept/Oct., 1997.

*inteference* of the two. I shall, furthermore, not insist on the absolute conceptual *coherence* of both `Sade' and `David' - and this because a notion of translatability tends anyway to undo the internal coherence of the proper name.<sup>13</sup> On the contrary we will aim to explore the points of their continuities, rather than their discontinuities. And this will mean a return to the centralizing point which the figure of the chain *formalistically* represents, which is the place of homosexuality within the two systems, and in the space (historical and theoretical) of their mutual contamination. If I am bound nevertheless to state a priority in the direction of *influence* (transforming potential) I will end up emphasizing a reading of David through Sade, rather than the other way around. This is in order to attempt another, and final series of interpretive `translations', upon the image, *Leonidas aux Thermopyles*.<sup>14</sup>

*Historically*, the chain as a metaphor is resonant, for in theological and philosophical discourses it has traditionally provided an important way to articulate different conceptions of social relations. Importantly for us, it has been one way - occasionally a radical one - to *visualize* the concept of social order; from the theological vertical medieval `chain of

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<sup>13</sup>Derrida writes in *Des Tours de Babel*, "the"tower of Babel" does not figure merely the irreducible multiplicity of tongues; it exhibits an incompleteness, the impossibility of finishing, of totalizing, of saturating, of completing something on the order of edification, architectural construction, system and architectonics. What the multiplicity of idioms actually limits is not only a "true" translation, a transparent and adequate interexpression; it is also a structural order, a coherence of construct. There is then (let us translate) something like an internal limit to formalization, an incompleteness of the construct. It would be easy and up to a certain point justified to see there the translation of a system in deconstruction.", Derrida, 1985, p.244

<sup>14</sup>we should, perhaps, have refrained from calling this a `contamination' of David through Sade. The traditional, paranoid nineteenth-century deliverance of Sade and sadism as *forbidden* is already premised on an understanding of Sade as pathologically contagious, or contaminating. And yet `contamination', understood now in a Derridean sense, may also be understood as the `opening of a chance', and not necessarily a threat, through a crossing, and a translation which goes *both* ways - there is no *dangerous* source text here. Therefore, I have preferred to frame this method of `reading through' - this mutual infiltration of David and Sade - through a general theory of translatability, within which the notion of `contamination' may be, hopefully, emptied of its former ethical and medicalized connotations.

being', to a humanistic horizontal conceptualization of the community of men.<sup>15</sup> We might, then, frame our readings of the Sadean/Davidian chain within the historical articulation of this `problematic'. This would be to place them within a history of the visualization of social relations through the metaphor of the chain, from absolutism (where Sade's *120 Journées* fictionally *begins*), to the enlightenment `breaking' of chains, which is classically articulated in Rousseau's famous dictum, `Man is born free, and every where he is in chains'.<sup>16</sup> The new revolutionary consciousness of the breaking and remaking of chains is articulated with renewed transparency in its attempt to both fix the social through symbolic rites and images (to create emotional ties through custom), and in the rearticulation and reconceptualization of a *binding* law. The Revolution, newly aware of this fact<sup>17</sup> of the necessity of the reinscription of the chain in a different mode is thus obsessed not only with breaking but also with remaking - with the concrete visualization of transformed social relations, new formations of the chain. We have only to think of the liberty trees, which functioned to `spontaneously' effect the disposition of bodies into a symbolic chain-like formation, and of the revolutionary *fêtes*.<sup>18</sup> Thus we might explore the `chain' as a figure or metaphor in the discourse of political philosophy; only to clarify what I will take to be its counter-systemic potential at the end of the eighteenth century, when it is strategically opposed to, on the one hand, the systemic notion of the authoritarian `command' (rehabilitated by Napoleon), and on the other hand, a revolutionary bourgeois notion of `social harmony' (which, post-an II, becomes politically

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<sup>15</sup>see, Lovejoy, A.O., *The Great Chain of Being: a study of the history of an idea*, Harvard University Press, 1933. For an example of an earlier enlightened radical critique of the chain, see Voltaire's article "Chaîne des êtres créés" in the *Dictionnaire Philosophique* (1764).

<sup>16</sup>the first line of the first chapter of *On Social Contract*, published in 1762.

<sup>17</sup>for the new articulation of the problematic of the `social' in the revolution , see Singer, 1986.

<sup>18</sup>Mona Ozouf notes that "in 1789 the gathering of the orders had taken place under the aegis of "fraternal union". The federations' brief moment in the sun revived the emotions of that time: in the exchange of oaths (Lafayette's on the Champ de Mars contained a promise that he would remain bound to the French people "by indissoluble bonds of fraternity"); in the ritual exchange of food and arms; in the vocabulary of speeches, which used the metaphors of a "chain" and "ties" of fraternity." (my emphasis), article `Fraternity', in Furet/Ozouf, 1989, p.695.

compromised). It will be recognised that the chain will, linking up with our reinterpretation of the *beau idéal*, have a certain relation to the possibility of the symbolic representation of an anti-ideological 'free space' in post-revolutionary France.

*Methodologically*, in structuralist and post-structuralist theory, the 'chain' raises the question of textual narrative and meaning-formation. Structuralism's revelatory insight into the structure of the sign, wherein a *gap* is posited between the signifier and signified even before the sign emerges - Saussure's 'arbitrariness' of the signifier, structuralism's 'floating signifier' - can be extended to the *signifying chain*. Barthes suggests "isn't the sentence itself a chain?"; and we are radically alerted to the formal *lateral* relation between a series of signifiers which pre-figure their fixity to a set of signifieds (i.e. their *sense*), be they ultimately denotive or connotive.<sup>19</sup>

We might enquire, now against the early Barthes; where is the author of the chain, the one who puts it into process, not necessarily *in the first place*, but at least at each contingent historical moment? Here I am referring to the notion of the command, or the injunction and its effects. This notion can be carried across into a way of thinking about the relation between authority and textuality in the mass formation of bodies. A certain author, or authority - synonymous with an originating Name: Sade, David, Napoleon, Sparta... - will set these chains of bodies - this signifying chain - in process; be it in the form of the Sadean orgy, or the neo-Spartan military group. And if this seems crudely deterministic, the potential of the signifier for 'arbitrariness' - the insight of *post*-structuralism - will however open the possibility, both historically and theoretically, for a derogation of the set of dispositions which the Name/Author only promises to induce.

And here we can note another *rapprochement* - that between post-structuralist theories of the sign and queer theory. Judith Butler, in *Bodies that matter* (1993), speaks of the

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<sup>19</sup>on the formalistically inclined notion of the "chaîne de discours", for example, Saussure: "L'oreille perçoit dans toute chaîne parlée la division en syllabes, et dans toute syllabe une sonante", Saussure, *Cours de linguistique générale*, 1916, p.88. Or, for French classical poetics, Du Bellay: "Nous avons un certain nombre de syllabes en chacun genre de poème, par lesquelles, comme par chainons, les vers françois lié et enchainé...", cited in Littré, *Dictionnaire*, 1954, p.693.

"chains" of iteration invoked and dissimulated in the imperative utterance".<sup>20</sup> Butler's notion of the command as 'performative' conjoined to the post-structuralist Derridean notion of the inherently indeterminate progress of the 'trace' opens up the possibility of recuperating the notion of the 'perverse', now in formalistic terms. The 'perverse' may be thought of as the waylaying (or dissimulation) of the ideal hegemonic trajectory of the injunction, the political and juridical 'sentence'; here, for example, the Napoleonic *ordre du jour*. We can thus relate the peculiarity, or 'perversity', of both the Sadean and the Davidian chains, to their squinted relation to and *from within* dominant and hegemonic chains of the "sentence"; which is both injunction and desired/required effect, both an order and a formal disposition of bodies.

In order to historicize this, we might take, for example, as a classic 'hegemonic' chain the Napoleonic command, or injunction, the 'imperative utterance' which powerfully releases a social formation, represented visibly in the *enchainement* of bodies (e.g. the imperial army, Napoleonic history painting) as extension and effect of the injunction. This injunction and its effects, considered ontologically as a form of knowledge - releasing its effects, it constitutes its own materiality as epistemic object, or 'reality' - we can then conceive of both David's and Sade's alternative chains as perversifications, or perverse "reiterations", which, at a particular historically opportune moment, exploit the slippages, the undisclosed constitutive absences, of the dominant Imperial (perverted by David in *Leonidas*), or ancien régime (perverted by Sade in *120 Journées*) chain.

A Derridean understanding of the process of *translation* as an essentially deconstructive activity alerts us to the radical indeterminacy of the passageway between the 'origin' of the command, and its (concrete) effects; it thus allows us a reading of David and Sade as the immanent critique of the ideality of the (Napoleonic) hegemonic gesture - its ideological fiction of origin and authority - and of the articulation of that commanding gesture's historical exclusions.

So far in *Sade/David* we have downplayed their differences. Having positing the

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<sup>20</sup>Butler, 1993, p.188

resemblance between the David detail and the Sade illustration, we must now note that the Sadean chain is, in important respects, a *derogation* of the meaning of the Davidian chain. However similarly they might disrupt, or pervert, what we will take as the ideal hegemonic chain, through their common form, we should recognize that our respective examples, the Sadean and the Davidian text, have a *different* relation to the dominant, or the Law. In this respect they are as different from one another, and hence in their relation to power, as they are sometimes similar in their strategic 'perversity'.

For example, their respective *philosophical* positions - which determine the conditions from which their bodies ontologically emerge - are apparently contradictory. If Sadean pornography can be located in a tradition of radical philosophical materialism as its utopian condition of possibility<sup>21</sup>, the Davidian body (*beau idéal*) derives from a counter-tradition of 'pure' neoplatonic metaphysics; no less, we have argued, possibly utopian. Here we return to the question of whether the Sadean body is best thought of as a 'transgression' of the Davidian body; insofar as the Sadean body, or the body *per se*, can be thought of as the "oublié de la philosophie"<sup>22</sup>, or the constitutive absent of a philosophical metaphysics. This rather simplistic model of the sacred and profane - metaphysics and the body - on which the notion of transgression depends, is beholden to an exclusive material/ideal binarism consecrated *in* philosophical thinking which, Butler reminds us, is at the same time disavowed by the constitutive distinction itself within idealistic philosophy, which projects materiality as its de-ontologized other.<sup>23</sup> Therefore the taking of the Sadean text as the 'return of the repressed' of the Davidian text will be approached with some cynicism. Instead, following Butler, we might rather follow the historical slippages performed by reading David through Sade which ruin rather than re-

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<sup>21</sup>see, Margaret C. Jacob, "The Materialist World of Pornography", in *Hunt* (ed.), 1993, pp.157-203.

<sup>22</sup>Jallon, 1997, p.51.

<sup>23</sup>Butler provides a genealogical tracing of this material/ideal binarism in Aristotelean philosophy. The important political task of that tracing is to deconstruct the body/philosophy distinction, which has effectively continued to take "sex" as a given. She writes: "feminists ought to be interested, not in taking materiality as an irreducible, but in conducting a critical genealogy of its formulation.", Butler, 1993, p.32.



consecrate this material/ideal opposition which is presupposed in philosophy's meta-discourse. We might then consider, through Sade and David, the question of the historical contingency of the 'body' in philosophical thinking, and, through a notion of translatability, obtain a more dynamic understanding of the mutually contaminating relation between the two. Indeed, we have already begun to do this here by suggesting and attempting to demonstrate that the 'body' in the late 1790's - under the nomination of the *beau idéal* - became the privileged site of the representation of the purest philosophical metaphysics, namely the Kantian transcendental aesthetic, and this through peculiar sociohistorical circumstances; namely, the exhaustion of politically compromised philosophically 'free' spaces.<sup>24</sup>

Consequentially, we might take David's *Leonidas* as a specific exemplification of the *beau idéal*, now considered as the representation of a Kantian 'free space'. If so, what are we to make of Sade's utopian 'transgression' of the metaphysical *through* the 'body', once we take the metaphysical *as a body* to be the very site of freedom? This question of the relation between the (Sadean) body and (Kantian) philosophy, and their dual relation to the Law, will be opened up through a consideration of Lacan's 1966 essay, *Sade avec Kant*. But first it may be useful to consider exactly how Sade troubles the aesthetic unity of the body. What is *his* concept of Beauty?

### Sadean critique of Beauty

Any consideration of beauty in Sade must start from the construction of the male body in theological neoplatonism. There the beautiful male body is understood - for example, in Ficino - as the light emanating from God.<sup>25</sup> We have noted how this theological conception of *le beau* gradually enters into art discourse in the 1670's - through Bellori - and this through a process of fetishization according to the requirements of academic *enseignement*, culminating in the 1750's with the reconstituted neoplatonism of

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<sup>24</sup>supra, chapter 3.

<sup>25</sup>Panofsky, Appendix 1, pp.129-141.

Winckelmann.<sup>26</sup> The ideal male body thus *originates* at the intersection of a theological and aesthetic discourse.<sup>27</sup> Now, if we have understood, following Potts, the fetishization of the *beau idéal* to consist in a disavowal of the difference between the sensuous - Christian notion of the 'Flesh'- and the ideal, here we can add another aspect to that fetishization; namely, the gradual historical *confusion* of the theological and the aesthetic - God the Father and the Beautiful - never entirely decathected even in the reconstructed Winckelmannian neoplatonic aesthetic.<sup>28</sup> Sade *defetishizes* the *beau idéal*; but not simply by returning or reducing the 'Ideal' to the 'Flesh'. Insofar as the *beau idéal* still harbours within it, residually, theological significance, Sade's critique of beauty is fully invested with his rage against God. Here again we may turn to Klossowski's insight into Sade's "circuit of complicity", for in outraging God, to repeat Klossowski's words "what is outraged is maintained to serve as a support for transgression". Both God and Beauty are thus *maintained* in Sade, although a fetishizing sublation is denied. Defetishization here means, then, drawing the confused aspects of *le beau* apart - its aesthetic unity and its religious significance or fetishized ideality - in the knowledge of their ideologically induced structural compatibility.<sup>29</sup> Sade thus *tinkers* with the beautiful male body; he never abandons it. The body in Sade is thus neither reduced to machine under the aegis of philosophical materialism, nor is it entirely displaced into the realm of some abjected, 'pornographic' other. It is reinscribed into theological discourse, and then duly fragmented. This deconstruction is effected individually prior to its insertion into the sodomitical figure of the chain.

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<sup>26</sup>supra. p.90.

<sup>27</sup>see on this Blunt (1956), p.69.

<sup>28</sup>I am thinking here of the Plotinian notion of the 'Beautiful Soul', Panofsky, p.31.

<sup>29</sup>Nor does Sade place his critique on the side of the anti-ideological *bourgeois* enlightened defetishization of the *beau idéal*. If we have already traced the process of fetishization gradually undoing itself, from the middle of the eighteenth century, under the strain of both materialist and relativist Enlightenment critique, Sade gives the lie to *that* project too, since he positions his critique of *le beau* against *both* the theological-metaphysical conception of beauty and an emergent 'bourgeois' notion of the beautiful virtuous male body, and unmasks their secret affinity.

In Sade beauty is not so much degraded as disorganized; beauty's constitutive exclusions are returned and the hierarchy implicit in the *beau/laid* distinction is troubled in favour of a notionally egalitarian aesthetic equality. This becomes clear in both Sade's programmatic statements concerning beauty<sup>30</sup>, and in the concrete textual descriptions - the portraits - of the protagonists' 'beautiful' desirable bodies. In the one Sade considers beauty as an impoverished 'effeminate' aesthetic category, one linked to bourgeois propriety and virtue; this critique is simple and quickly exhausted. Far more devastatingly transgressive is the textual praxis - the ways in which bodies in Sade are textually constructed. There he overreaches that specifically aesthetic programmatic point of contention (critique of aesthetic terminology - *le beau*) and produces a corporality which is radically disorganized and 'monstrous'. It is the literal *monstrosity* of these physical description which most outrages a theological conception of the body (bestiality was a more serious sin in the hierarchy of christian sexual ethics than was sodomy, so threatening that it is only articulated as *absence* in the obsessive purity of the theological beautiful body).

By way of an example of this tinkering with theologico-aesthetic codes let us take the celebrated 'heroic' portrait of the Duc de Blangis - a spectacular model of one kind of Sadean 'master' masculinity; one both overwhelmingly desirable and threateningly desiring. In this portrait Sade phantasmically transmutes a given code - the classically Herculean body<sup>31</sup> - into what is most proscribed in both neoplatonic aesthetics and the theological notion of Man, namely raging animality. Here is the *portrait de Duc de Blangis* from *120 Days of Sodom*:

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<sup>30</sup>Sade refuses the bourgeois insipidity of *le beau/vertu*: "Revenons maintenant sur nos pas et peignons de notre mieux au lecteur chacun de ces quatre personnages en particulier, non en beau, non de manière à séduire ou à captiver, mais avec les pinceaux mêmes de la nature, qui malgré tout son désordre est souvent bien sublime, même alors qu'elle se déprave le plus. Car, osons le dire en passant, si le crime n'a pas ce genre de délicatesse qu'on trouve dans la vertu, n'est-il pas toujours plus sublime, n'a-t-il pas sans cesse un caractère de grandeur et de sublimité qui l'emporte et l'emportera toujours sur les attraits monotones et efféminés de la vertu?", Sade, *120 Journées*, p.20.

<sup>31</sup>which is anyway already precariously located at the boundary of *beau/laid*. On the anxieties attending the representation of the Herculean body, see Chard, 1994.

"Ce colosse effrayant donnait en effet l'idée d'Hercule ou d'un centaure: le duc avait cinq pieds onze pouces, des membres d'une force et d'une énergie, des articulations d'une vigueur, des nerfs d'une élasticité... Joignez à cela une figure mâle et fière, de très grands yeux noirs, de beaux sourcils bruns, le nez aquilin, de belles dents, l'air de la santé et de la fraîcheur, des épaules larges, une carrure épaisse quoique parfaitement coupée, les hanches belles, les fesses superbes, la plus belle jambe du monde, un tempérament de fer, une force de cheval, et le membre d'un véritable mulet, étonnamment velu, doué de la faculté de perdre son sperme aussi souvent qu'il le voulait dans un jour, même à l'âge de cinquante ans qu'il avait alors, une érection presque continuelle dans ce membre dont la taille était de huit pouces juste de pourtour sur douze de long, et vous aurez le portrait du duc de Blangis comme si vous l'eussiez dessiné vous-même. Mais si ce chef d'œuvre de la nature était violent dans ses désirs, que devenait-il, grand dieu! quand l'ivresse de la volupté le couronnait? Ce n'était plus un homme, c'était un tigre en fureur. Malheur à qui servait alors ses passions: des cris épouvantables, des blasphèmes atroces s'élançaient de sa poitrine gonflée, des flammes semblaient alors sortir de ses yeux, il écumait, il hennissait, on l'eût pris pour le dieu même de la lubricité."<sup>32</sup>

The force of this description arises out of the admixture of two rhetorical codes; the one, of the classical portrait, the other of theological denunciatory declamation. On the one hand Sade catalogue's the desirable body anatomically; this is done in the first part of the description, with unusual tightness and economy, refusing all metaphorization, apart from the brief mention of Hercules, and the centaur. But the Hercules and the centaur are mentioned only to prepare us for the extraordinary transformation of the portrait, in the second part of the description, when desire is introduced; "ce n'était plus un homme, c'était un tigre en fureur". Suddenly, with desire, movement is introduced, shifting and destroying the excessive classical discipline of the ideal male hero.<sup>33</sup>

In this respect we can say that an aesthetic of ugliness, *le laid*, which had been gradually ostracized from neoclassical poetics, returns in Sade and destroys the coordinates of the 'reasoned' body - that he is in fact working that gap and exploiting the undesirable 'piquancy' which forbade Madame Dacier to incorporate the 'ugly' penis into her portrait of Bathylle, and which subsequently constructed the anacreontic body as one *not* subject to desire; although, as we have seen only ideally. Sade thereby deconstructs the classical

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<sup>32</sup>Sade, *120 Journées*, p.24.

<sup>33</sup>the textual fracturation of the body in Sade - the cut-up discordant descriptions - readies us for the literal dismemberment which will come at the end of the narrative.

aesthetic through the systematic disorganization of the *beau/laid* distinction, and the disruption of its hierarchy.

Both the theological significance of the individual male body, and the classical significance of the body as a representation of the 'Good', are maintained *and* destroyed through this admixture with animality and through a textual fracturation.<sup>34</sup>

### The Law and Desire: Lacan's *Kant avec Sade*

Sade can be said to prefigure, in *120 Journées*, the dilemma which will propel *le beau* into a detached Kantian free space, and require the formulation of Kantian aesthetics and ethics. This is true insofar as both Sade and Kant start from a historic disillusionment with two now disinherited transcendent principles, God and Virtue, or the Good.<sup>35</sup> We have seen how the metaphysical notion of the beauty of Man - the figure in which those two transcendent principles are fixed and fetishized - is deconstructed in the figure of the heroic Sadean libertine. When it comes to the *group*, however, it might be said that Sade reintroduces a notion of the metaphysical, since the text repeatedly attempts to resolve its philosophical dilemmas by recourse to an 'ideal' and perfectly homogeneous group formation - the fetishistic orgy which is now the only occasion for an ideal oneness.<sup>36</sup> We can now ask, then, that if the individual beautiful male body, or Beauty, now freed from its former ethical and ideological coordinates, can no longer properly represent an ideal oneness, what then of the radical potential of this other signifier, the group? As in David's *Leonidas* the transcendent principle now theoretically lies in the attainability of the

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<sup>34</sup>we have already noted the suppression of 'Hercules' - the violence of *le peuple* - in David's *Leonidas*. See also, on anti-theological and anti-classical *anality* in David's revolutionary works, especially the caricature *Gouvernement anglois* (1793-4), Boime, 1988. Boime links David and Sade through their articulations of revolutionary 'low' anality, p.80-81.

<sup>35</sup>strictly speaking, Kant was not disillusioned with the notion of the existence of God; but specifically with the notion of God as an *a priori* transcendent principle of social harmony.

<sup>36</sup>the individual body can no longer fulfill that function, since its fragmentation is the occasion for *destroying* the fetishized body's philosophical and theological coordinates.

homogeneity of the group. If it more or less fails there, in that picture, *in toto* - as we have shown - it is perhaps in this isolated, yet metonymic, *detail* of the fraternal/sodomitical chain that we might locate a critical displacement of Beauty's principle of (social) transcendence.

Yet Lacan argues that Sadean *jouissance* is, analogous to the Kantian moral law, perfectly *contiguous* with the Law, or, in psychoanalytic terms, the Symbolic structure of desire. No critical displacement in Lacan's *Kant avec Sade*.

Now we might begin to interrogate this most complicated of Lacanian texts by simply noting that it introduces here a new *formal figuration*. Lacan structures the Sadean scenario as a *tripartite* division of subject - Law (primary signifier, or Phallus) - object, rather than as a simple dual relation (subject/object, master/slave) or as a potentially extensive *series*, the chain. We might notice, then, how Lacan's interpretation of Sade/Kant is centralizing, projecting, we might say, an 'absolutist' model of social desiring relations; while relations of en-chainment, such as the textual instances of Sadean 'sodomy' or Davidian 'fraternity', are inherently de-centering. What we might take as Lacan's 'absolutist' theoretical understanding of the structure of desire in *Kant avec Sade* figuratively *predetermines*, then, the structure of the object (the Sadean scenario) and its political significance. Lacan returns the body which was missing in the Kantian philosophical 'free space' via Sade, but in doing so encaptures both Kant and Sade in the unyielding logic of the primary signifier, the Phallus. Yet if, through the figure of a binding mutuality - the Sadean master/slave relation, the Kantian categorical imperative - both Kant and Sade reveal, according to Lacan, their *submission* to the Law, how still might the structure of a form which precisely disrupts that constraining mutuality, by the introduction of the possibility of an endless and wayward proliferation - the chain - provide the possibility for a perversion of the 'totalitarian' structuring command?

In *Kant avec Sade*<sup>27</sup> Lacan sets out to demonstrate the structural similarity between the

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Kantian moral law and Sadean *jouissance*. *La Philosophie dans le boudoir* comes only eight years after *Critique de la raison pratique*, and "Si, après avoir vu qu'elle s'y accorde, nous démontrons qu'elle la complète, nous dirons qu'elle *donne la vérité de la Critique*" (my emphasis). The first part of the essay sets out to interrogate the nature of this relation. The argument hinges around the Sadean maxim, taken from *La Philosophie dans la boudoir*: "*J'ai le droit de jouir de ton corps, peut me dire quiconque, et ce droit, je l'exercerai, sans qu'aucune limite m'arrête dans le caprice des exactions que j'aie le goût d'y assouvir*"<sup>37</sup>. Lacan points out that Sade's maxim of the *right of jouissance* as an absolute a priori principle instituting mutuality has all the radical qualities of the transcendent Kantian moral law. Sadean *jouissance* as one version, then, of the Kantian categorical imperative.

But for Lacan Sadean *jouissance* is not only contiguous or identical with the Kantian moral law. It is, more, an especially revealing instance of its workings. It *completes* it, restoring to it its disavowed component, desire; therefore a reintroduction of the question of desire into philosophy, through the body, and not simply a returning of the body to philosophy. In reintroducing the 'desire' that was missing in the Kantian text, Sade, according to Lacan, reveals the suppressed 'truth' of the *Critique*.

Through the introduction of desire, Sade will serve to unmask the delusions of a Kantian notion of freedom. He will reveal the notion of a free Kantian subject to be underwritten by a constitutive blindness to a binding Law - analagous to the law of the primary signifier - to which it is unawares bound, and indeed of which it is only the latest historical (misrecognizing) representation. It is not only that Sade raises *jouissance* to the status of a categorical imperative, which would simply make Sade a Kantian; more important is that in doing so the categorical imperative is revealed to be nothing more or less than a historic reinterpretation of the law of the Phallus, the deterministic workings of which are momentarily laid bare in the Sadean scenario. What is the structure and dynamic

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<sup>37</sup>in *Écrits*, Paris, 1966, p.765-790. See also the english translation, annotated, by Swenson Jr., Lacan 1989.

<sup>38</sup>ibid. p.769.

of this relation of desire?

As revealed by Lacanian psychoanalysis, the individual only accedes to social subjecthood through a spurious identification with an ontologically prior and pre-determining symbolic signifier - the Law or the primary signifier, the Phallus. The subject is ontologically *incomplete* without such an imaginary identification. Yet, insofar as the identification is *imaginary* and insofar as the recognition is always a *mis*-recognition - failed, therefore - the subject is forever 'split' between, in a linguistic analogy, signifier and signified; which only phantasmically come together in the transcendent 'Phallus'. The Lacanian subject can never achieve an ideal oneness. But the Phallus stands as the fictional promise of a transcendence, without which the subject is doomed to constant fragmentation - de-ontologized.

Now it is Kant's historic task, according to Lacan, to have recovered to the Phallus a certain philosophical visibility, now in the notion of the *disinterested* moral law. The relation in the Kantian text between subjects and the moral Law is analagous, Lacan argues, to the relation between the dual split subject and the primary signifier.<sup>39</sup> Divorced from all and any particular interests the Law, in its Sadean or Kantian versions, is truly disinterested, and in an ontological redefinition of 'Man' organizes 'split' subjects around itself, as a binding constitutive agent.

Both the revolutionary doctrine of the rights of man - the 'sensus communis' - and social contract theories had been premised on the understanding of an *already* constituted desiring subject which then joins up with an other transcendental political signifier - the Good, Virtue; a 'thing in itself' to which the discrete subject may accede or not. Now the new concept of the moral Law in Kant, both disinterested and constitutive of 'community', radically presumes a subject brought into existence *through* the concept itself. Kant therefore liberates the moral Law from its previous links to those secondary

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<sup>39</sup>"it is from the Other that its commandment makes its demand on us... the bipolarity by which the moral Law institutes itself is nothing other than this splitting of the subject which occurs in any intervention of the signifier; namely that of the subject of the enunciation from the subject of the statement.", Lacan, 1989, p.59.



`ideological' elaborations of a principle of unity; and redefines the subject as an *a posteriori* effect of the Law.

But there is a self-sacrifice which necessarily follows from that Kantian `liberation'; and it is left to Sade, Lacan argues, to articulate this. Sade's parodying Kantian maxim showed precisely how the dual split subject can only assume their integrated subject positions in relation to a disinterested Law - Sadean *jouissance*. But Lacan uses a striking metaphor, in itself `sadistic', and of self-sacrificial Christian origin, of how the sadean command - the principle of *jouissance* - figuratively 'skewers' the split subject together, or crucifies the subject into existence:

"Mais ce discours n'est pas moins déterminant pour le sujet de l'énoncé, à le susciter à chaque adresse de son équivoque contenu: puisque la jouissance, à s'avouer impudemment dans son propos même, se fait pole dans un couple dont l'autre est au creux qu'elle fore déjà au lieu de l'Autre pour y dresser la croix de l'expérience sadienne."<sup>40</sup>

This sadean master/slave relation has thus nothing to do with pleasure - or, if so, only perversely or coincidentally.<sup>41</sup> Rather the scenario unmasks the painful, if necessary, process of the fixing of the subject. Insofar as the irruption of the command, for Lacan, issues, therefore, precisely from the place of the moral Law, it is disinterested, unmotivated, simply structuring. While the voice or the command of the master/leader in Sade is thus decisively disengaged from pleasurable intention, still it reinstates that which Kant was at pains studiously to avoid in his construction of a free space - the `thing in

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<sup>40</sup>ibid. p.771. "But this discourse is no less determining for the subject of the statement, in that each address suscitates him through its equivocal content: since *jouissance*, by shamelessly confessing itself even as it speaks, makes itself one pole of a couple of which the other is in the hollow which it is already drilling in the place of the Other in order to erect the cross of the Sadian experience there.", Lacan, 1989.

<sup>41</sup>whereas for Irigaray *pleasure* is the decisive factor in any counter-systemic significance of the Phallus, "Once the penis itself becomes merely a means to pleasure, pleasure amongst men, *the phallus loses its power.*", Irigaray, p. 193.

itself'. Sade betrays the persistent trace of the determining Law: "Cet objet, ne le voilà-t-il pas, descendu de son inaccessibilité, dans l'expérience sadienne, et dévoilé comme Etre-là, *Dasein*, de l'agent du tourment".<sup>42</sup> The disinterested Sadean command thus operates for Lacan as a return of the repressed from the Kantian text.<sup>43</sup> Therefore, according to Lacan, while Sade introduces desire into the Kantian metaphysics, any pleasure of the master, or the slave, would be either coincidental or perverse.

Lacan therefore disputes Sade's transgressive aspect:

"Sade s'est donc arrêté là, au point où se noue le désir à la loi. Si quelque chose en lui s'est laissé retenir à la loi, pour y trouver l'occasion dont parle saint Paul, d'être démesurement pécheur, qui lui jetterait la pierre? Mais il n'a pas été plus loin." The final verdict with which the essay closes is: "Notre verdict est confirmé sur la soumission de Sade à la Loi." This was undoubtedly a contentious, if not radical, interpretation of Sade, whose writings were in that cultural climate imbued with more or less philosophically subversive significance; notably by Klossowski, whom, given his Christian ethics, Lacan in the essay is not surprised to find considering Sade his *prochain*.<sup>44</sup> But at the same time, either the possibility of reading for Bataillean transgression or for a post-structuralist critique of the fixity of the signifier is foreclosed in Lacan's violent figuration of the

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<sup>42</sup>Lacan, 1966, p.772.

<sup>43</sup>Lacan thus identifies the Sadean law of *jouissance* with the constraining command, which is the repressed 'object' of the Kantian text. Lacan writes, "C'est donc bien l'Autre en tant que libre, c'est la liberté de l'Autre, que le discours du droit à la jouissance pose en sujet de son énonciation, et pas d'une façon qui diffère du *Tu es* qui s'évoque du fonds tuant de tout impératif". Lacan emphasizes too the absolute objectivity of the imperative, which needs no desiring body for the site of its enunciation: "...cet objet est étrangement séparé du sujet. Observons que le héraut de la maxime n'a pas besoin d'être ici plus que point d'émission. Il peut être une voix à la radio, rappelant le droit promu du supplément d'effort qu'à l'appel de Sade les Français auraient consenti, et la maxime devenue pour leur République régénérée Loi organique." *ibid*, p.772.

<sup>44</sup>*ibid*. p.789. Lacan notes also as evidence of Sade's attachment to a Christian ethics, "Chez Sade, nous en voyons le test, à nos yeux crucial, dans son refus de la peine de mort, dont l'histoire suffirait à prouver, sinon la logique, qu'elle est un des corrélats de la Charité", *ibid*. p.789. Therefore, implicitly in the same gesture Lacan screws both Sade and Klossowski (now the split subject) to the cross which is the absolute imperative, the Christian Law. This is why "il n'a pas été plus loin".

Sadean subject as self-sacrificial Christian victim of a now disembodied injunction. How, then, might, the law and desire be brought together in a less prohibitive relation?

### *Fraternité* and the Law in Sade and David

Both David and Sade are concerned with the representation of a new combinative order with the body as the key figure for the articulation of that problematic. If both *120 Journées* and *Leonidas* can now be taken as disquisitions on political philosophy - the Law, the State and social relations - which are articulated through the ordering of bodies, how exactly, then, does the sodomitical/fraternal chain induce an immanent critique of those terms of engagement? How do those paradoxical formal connections and dispersions in both texts relate 'perversely', if not transgressively, to an ideal normative disposition of bodies; to those formal relations historically produced under the twin mechanisms of a repressive and ideological censoring, and an authoritarian injunction, silence and speech?

That these disquisitions are equally articulated through the body there is no doubt.<sup>45</sup> What is in question here is their precise relation to a binding Law which Lacan had pointed out is granted a new visibility in Sade, and which we may now displace and inscribe into the Davidian text, here *Leonidas*. Through the figure of the sodomitical/fraternal chain, we will come to a different conclusion from that of Lacan as to their relation of 'submission' to the Law. How, then, should we rethink the "principle of affinity" which binds bodies in both Sade and David, if not in Klossowskian apolyptic terms, or in Lacanian deterministic terms?

We will begin to consider this question through the rhetoric of the political signifier

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<sup>45</sup>I assume here that in comparing image and text we are not dealing with incommensurable qualities. We may turn to Barthes, who writes: "The Sadean group is often a pictorial or sculptural object: the discourse captures the figures of debauchery not only as arranged, architected, but above all as frozen, framed, lighted; it treats them as tableaux vivants." (p.154). Also, on Sade's visuality, See Hénaff (1978), pp.119-120. Also I would contend that a notion of translatability provides the methodological ground upon which image and text can be commonly analyzed. If Sade "respects the identity of painting and classical writing" {Barthes, 1977, p.155}, David too draws from the textuality of his 'sources', Herodotus, Barthélémy, etc..

*fraternité* which both Sade and David invoke through the formal figure of the chain. Here we must take note of a complex theoretical rethinking of the notion of the 'political signifier' which follows upon both the Derridean critique of the fixity of the proper name, and a psychoanalytic insight into the imminent *failure* of (political) identification.<sup>46</sup>

Briefly, the first - Derridean - critique unhinges the political signifier from its notional original and rigid designation, through a theory of the *iterability* of the sign, emphasizing its continual *translation* from one context to another, and therefore its differential and unpredictable significations. For Butler this constant re-iteration of the signifier (political or sexual) may provide the occasion for a politics of resistance; and this through what she terms "the risk of catachresis", a misnaming, or incorrect use of words.

We might add that *historically* this catachrestic strategy may be more or less culturally developed depending on the extent of the repressive powers which police that potential linguistic mis-use - depending, that is, on the historical variability of the effects of institutionalized *censorship*.

But - and secondly - to take the ground further from under the feet of a notionally stable 'political signifier', we could also, now following Slavoj Žižek, think of the political signifier as one which *may* function to confer identities - political identities - but is nevertheless an *empty* sign; one which may bear the subjects' *phantasmic* investments, but only as the site of, in Lacanian terms, a 'perpetual *méconnaissance*'. This recognition of inevitable failure, or impossibility as a *condition* of the political name - here *fraternité* - at once dissolves the assumption that David or Sade may be simply referring to some fixed pre-given constituency, or that they are simply strategically linking up with, or as subjects acceding to, it. Rather, we will consider how *fraternité* may be phantasmically re-invested by them, on the assumption that it immanently provides the opportunity for its own strategic and counter-hegemonic re-signification.

### Fraternal chains in Sade

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<sup>46</sup>we refer here to Butler's exposition of this re-articulation in 'Arguing with the Real', Butler, pp.187-222.

The re-articulation of social bonds in Sade is effected on two levels. First, as a subversive play on existing institutional structural ties; this involves a redistribution of private familial and social hierarchical ties. Second, as a principle of *confusion* which is imminently figured in the amorphous structure of the orgy, with the sodomitical encounter at its center.

At the very start of *120 Journées*, Sade narrates a transformed principle of mutuality within the private sphere of Silling. In the Introduction he charts the progress of a *fraternal* bond between the four masters, which progressively becomes objectively consolidated. Although initially their intimacy is grounded conventionally enough upon their social class (*très grands seigneurs*) and their fiscally based criminality, the intimacy between them (*Ces deux illustrés personnages, intimement liés et de plaisirs et d'affaires avec le célèbre Durcet et le président de Curval...*) is soon raised to an objective status through another, more mutually binding linkage:

"Depuis de six ans ces quatre libertins, qu'unissait une conformité de richesses et de goûts, avaient imaginé de resserrer leurs liens par des alliances où la débauche avait bien plus de part qu'aucun des autres motifs qui fondent ordinairement ces liens."

Debauchery, then is the binding Law across which they are united; it, above all else, institutes their society. Analogous we might say, and with Lacan, to the Kantian moral law. Then follows a restructuring of kinship ties which both disentangles the normative order of relations and institutes a specifically Sadean ethnology. Sade's theoretical theses of both the desirability of incest, and the desirability of universal prostitution, are figuratively demonstrated. This is effected through an exchange of daughters, who are described as already 'soiled goods'; but simultaneously "*les trois pères* (the fourth will be added), *voulant chacun conserver leurs droits, convinrent, pour les étendre encore davantage, que les trois jeunes personnes, uniquement liées de biens et de nom à leur époux, n'appartiendraient relativement au corps pas plus à l'un des trois qu'à l'autre, et également à chacun d'eux...*"<sup>47</sup> Thus the possibility of incest is maintained at the same

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<sup>47</sup>*120 Journées*, p.17.

time as is the free exchange of commodities<sup>48</sup>. Throughout all this the links between the four masters are gradually ever consolidated. Sade does not press the point, but we will have noticed that the four libertines necessarily *surrender* their *exclusive* property rights (over the bodies of their own wives) in order to institute a certain egalitarian fraternity. Communistically, the possibility of any one libertine to usurp an other's privilege is denied.

The process of social formation is narrated through an increasing objectification, in the very language of contractual legalism. First they are *intimement liés* merely through feeling, or sympathy...then they are to *resserrer leurs liens* through the marriage ties and attendant `rights'...now (after the marriage `ceremonies') they are described as "*l'association de nos quatres amis*", and only when, on their return to Paris, the *association n'en devint que plus stable*, are they nominated by Sade as a *société* ("*la société avait fait une bourse commune...*", p.18). A form of `Fraternity', in the form of common rights and parity before the Law, is thus instituted within the first three pages of *120 Journées*; and the passage from informal *amitié* to a contractual fraternal society is thereby effected.

Furthermore, *two* `fraternal' structures are created here, in a relation of complementarity; the four masters and their slaves<sup>49</sup> create such a simple complementarity that we could

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<sup>48</sup>I say `commodities' because we are not primarily dealing here with the question of gender, but rather of structural relationships between `fraternity' and the master/slave relation. Later Sade will suggest, through the bishop, that when it comes to the pleasures of despotism, a person of the same sex will do just as well, if not better. During a brief discussion of whether *un garçon vaut mieux qu'une fille*, the exchange takes place: "*Oui, dit Curval, mais ce despotisme, cet empire, ce délice, qui naît de l'abus qu'on fait de sa force sur le faible...- Il s'y trouve tout de même, répondit l'évêque. Si la victime est bien à vous, cet empire que, dans ces cas-là, vous croyez mieux établi avec une femme qu'avec un homme, ne vint que de préjugé, ne vint que de l'usage qui soumit plus ordinairement ce sexe-là à vos caprices que l'autre. Mais renoncez pour un instant à ces préjugés d'opinion, et que l'autre soit parfaitement dans vos chaînes: avec la même autorité, vous retrouvez l'idée d'un crime plus grand, et nécessairement votre lubricité doit doubler.*" Sade, *120 Journées*, p.227.

<sup>49</sup>during these arrangements Curval says: "*Nous autres libertins, nous prenons des femmes pour être nos esclaves*", *ibid.* p.16.

argue that hierarchy is, in fact, all but abolished in the new social order of 120 Days. The only way for Sade to figure this radical egalitarianism is by effectively de-ontologizing the slaves, thus prohibiting the possibility of a master/slave dialectic which Hegel will posit as the pre-condition of transcendence. In the Introduction, the slaves/wives are therefore effectively written out of the Law, so that within the Law, that which binds subjects to each other, all subjects are indeed perfectly equal.<sup>50</sup> The slaves (wives) are not even subjects *under* the Law, since they have not even the rights of a victim's speech; which is to say that the Law instituted here is impervious to the possibility of its own perversion. The Sadean juridical sentence can never be waylaid.<sup>51</sup> Sade does not enter into the self-destructive games of censorship.

At one stroke, then, Sade institutes a society in which the Law is a guarantor of fraternity, and the *distinctions* upon which hierarchy is premised are abolished. Thus where the master/slave relation is often seen as the paradigmatic image of *inequality* (the precondition of a Hegelian *aufhebung*), I have instead chosen to emphasize the radical reduction of hierarchical distinction in the Sadeans social construct of *120 Journées*. If hierarchy consists of "a system in which grades of status or authority rank one above the other" (OED), we are arguing that clearly there is none in this ordering of bodies.

The Sadean fraternal bond is now raised to a principle through the Law, whereas before (or outside), fraternity existed only in the form of a surreptitious and 'secret' affinity, the disavowal of which was enabled by the separatist system of social hierarchy. By withdrawing the distinctions of hierarchy Sade projects a radical form of fraternity<sup>52</sup>

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<sup>50</sup>the sacrifice, or de-ontologisation, of the slave, thus prevents the community of masters from a *dependency* upon their slaves; Rousseau pointed out the mutual dependence, i.e. non-freedom, of the master-slave relation in the *Discourse on Equality*. See, *Rousseau's Political Writings*, Ritter/Bondanella (eds.), Norton and Company, New York and London, p.42.

<sup>51</sup>Barthes notes that "There is but one trait the libertines themselves possess and never share, in any form whatever: speech", Barthes, p.31.

<sup>52</sup>there are, however, multiple references to hierarchy in the external world - the one Sade is writing from, and the one which exists outside the walls of Silling. The 'heroes' social origins are repeatedly specified and there is a more or less overt polemic running

although even here, I would argue that Sade tends to level relations in the outside world (the world of the storytellers' stories), through the equal logic of desire which motivates the powerful and the powerless. For example, Sade describes the orgasmic pleasure in learning that one has been convicted to death, but also the same pleasure in the convicting - the Duc says to Curval "vous ressemblez beaucoup aux gens de votre robe, dont on prétend que le vit dresse toujours, chaque fois qu'ils condamnent à mort." (p.246).<sup>53</sup> It would seem, then, that despotism is not the order which a revolutionary bourgeois notion of fraternity must ward off, but is instead the necessary condition for a more rigorous and transparent 'fraternity': one raised to an objective socially binding principle.<sup>54</sup>

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through the whole concerning the hypocrisy upon which differential hierarchy is established.

<sup>53</sup>but all this only ensures that the formulation of Sadean bonds within Silling and in the text appear to be by contrast both more rigorous and more transparent. This withdrawal is done in many detailed ways. One of these is to project a simple master/slave division (two parallel fraternal ranks) which refuses the former ethical connotations of criminal/victim. The relational positions allotted by Sade to his protagonists in *120 Journées* have nothing to do with their 'interior' vice or virtue; the aesthetic well-functioning of the 'machine' merely require their structural, perfectly complementary relation. Elsewhere (Seminar 7: 1959) Lacan suggests that 'somasochistic' relation can indeed be likened to a "certain free space". Lacan writes "Analysis clearly shows that the subject detaches a double of himself, which is made inaccessible to destruction, in order to make him a support for what must be called in this case - borrowing a term from the domain of aesthetics -the games of pain. For it is a matter here of the same region as that where the phenomena of aesthetics frolic, a certain free space. And here lies the conjunction between the games of pain and the phenomena of beauty, never underlined." cited in Johnathon Scott Lee, *Jacques Lacan*, 1990, p.130-1. For one historical-political precedent for this separation of power from ethics - in Montesquieu's *Lettres Persanes* - which is exemplified through the power structure of the seraglio, see Gearhart (1984), p.113.

<sup>54</sup>therefore the Sadean notion of 'fraternity' as articulated in *120 Journées*, is in advance of the under-formulated pre-revolutionary discourse on *fraternité*. Marcel David - drawing from dictionary definitions - notes that the pre-revolutionary notion is vague, comingling Christian brotherhood associations with an Enlightenment ethics of *bienfaisance/bienveillance*, David (1987),p.17-22. Whichever the emphasis, this pre-revolutionary notion of *fraternité* detracts from the centralizing unifying powers of the monarch. Its antiauthoritarianism is made explicit and more rigorously articulated by Rousseau; however Rousseau's extinction of the figure of the leader through the incarnation of sovereignty in the General Will sets up a problem which both Sade and



In a later text, *La Philosophie dans le boudoir* (1795), this legalistic notion of fraternity is rehabilitated and refracted through a newly empowered revolutionary rhetoric of *fraternité*. Sade's 1785 demonstration of fraternity within a closed and separated society (Silling) is now extended to the generality; whereas in *120 Journées* the free space of fraternal association depended on separation from the community, in order to avoid a potential contamination (we are reminded here of Émile's education away from the 'corrupting' city) now the concept, with the aid of the Revolution - in the form of the inserted pseudo-revolutionary pamphlet *Français, encore un effort* - is raised to the status of an inclusive social principle, and proposed as the structuring glue of the entire community.<sup>55</sup> The problem which is addressed in this pamphlet, which apparently issues from *hors de texte*, is precisely that of how to reconcile a communistic 'fraternity' with the prerogatives of the 'master' upon which, Sade had demonstrated in *120 Days*, the rigorous Law depends. How then to strengthen the bonds in a Republic, in the form of a rigorous principle of universality, without a universal ban on the figure of the 'master'? Or, in the terms of Freud's *Totem and Taboo*, how to constitute a 'band of brothers' without the constitutive absence of the Father?

Sade's answer is twofold. On the one hand he proposes a universal enjoyment of women's bodies (equally applying to all and every woman - "j'ose assurer en un mot que l'inceste devrait être la loi de tout gouvernement dont la fraternité fait base"<sup>56</sup>); and on the other hand the 'criminality' which proscribes the universal access to all other objects of desire ('stealing', 'sodomy') is to be voided, so that liberty (formerly despotism) will consist in lack of constraint and in the reduction of paternalistic laws. Sodomy has a privileged place in this polemic. What is most striking for our purposes is how sodomy, of precisely the

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David confront in their respective inclusions of the figure of the master/leader.

<sup>55</sup>although we should note that the place where the Sadean notion of 'fraternity' is reiterated is the *same* place. Sade absorbs the outside - the revolutionary discourse - into his own thought. It comes to him, not he to it. Klossowski remarks on inside/outside in the Sadean text, "What gives Sade's text its disturbing originality is that through him this outside comes to be commented on as something produced within thought." *op. cit.*, p.42.

<sup>56</sup>Sade, *La Philosophie dans le boudoir*, p.138.

institutionalized sort which David encounters in the theme of Sparta<sup>57</sup>, reflects the revolutionary notion of *fraternité* through a lengthy digression on the historical evidence of its classical eroticization, in the form of *la sodomie*.<sup>58</sup>

It is precisely at this point where Sade and David intersect. For have we not shown how in David's *Leonidas* analogous to Sadean master/slave relations, there is neither a desired *unity* between leader and people (Leonidas and his troops), nor the possibility of a dialectic; but instead a positive suspension of this question of the relation between the radically egalitarian fraternal embrace - this chain - and the figure of the notionally 'free' master/leader? We would argue, then, that the very instabilities in the concept of fraternity drives both counter-systemic works.<sup>59</sup>

### Fraternal chains in *Leonidas*

But, where we have delineated the clear formulation of a new 'fraternal' model of social relations in *120 Days* - and one which is not contrary to a master/slave relationship, but its ideal condition - David's picture is anything if not equivocal on the matter. If I have argued that the fraternal embrace in *Leonidas* is a sign of fast disappearing radical communitarianism<sup>60</sup>, now the 'perversification' of the social bond we have described as articulated in Sade seems to throw light on *Leonidas*' abiding quality of strangeness. Initially we might say that if Sade "takes the expressed principles of the Revolution apart and subjects them to intense scrutiny", and if he "reveals the points of tension in

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<sup>57</sup>ibid. p.131.

<sup>58</sup>ibid., pp. 139-143, for Sade's defense of "la sodomie".

<sup>59</sup>Mona Ozouf notes that the concept of fraternity was both indeterminate and all-pervasive during the Revolution. Unlike liberty and equality its legal status was always vague: "there was no equivalence of status between liberty and equality on the one hand and fraternity on the other. The first two were rights, the third a moral obligation." Hence, "from the very first use of the term, it seems that fraternity, the ultimate goal of the Revolution, was open to interpretation". It is this very quality of unfixity, I would argue, which provides the ground for its 'perverse' retropings in David and Sade. Ozouf, op. cit. p. 694-696.

<sup>60</sup>for the sociohistorical conditions of this intention, supra chapter 3.

revolutionary ideology"<sup>61</sup>, David, in *Leonidas*, intends to undo that tension, and to re-fetishize the revolutionary principle of *fraternité* long after its privileged historical moment. And if Sade resorts to the rhetorical strategy of a *reductio ad absurdum* in order to deconstruct the notion of fraternity, David gathers up the multitude of semantic accretions by then inherent in the notion of fraternity (including the Sadean sodomitical one) and expressly *fails* to synthesize them. We must note that this failure is nothing at all to do with David's waning artistic powers, but everything to do with the fracturing of the concept - fraternity, or the Law. David's failure is a testament to the deconstructive success of the Sadean critique.

With the work of the restitution of the fractured and complicated concept of 'fraternity' there necessarily inheres, by 1799, its immanent critique, or its radical potential (depending on one's view of it) - namely, in the figure of sodomy.

For David's picture is as 'perverse' in its configuration of the social bond - although inadvertently - as was Sade's. Certainly his choice of Sparta as the privileged site of a discourse on fraternity can be seen to be highly contentious, insofar as it expressly contradicts the post-thermidorean rehabilitation of the family as source of the unity of the nation, and promotes a process of affective association which is in no small part based consolidated through institutionalized pederasty.<sup>62</sup> If the sodomitical relations implicit in his source texts are translated by David into more acceptable relations between senior and junior soldiers, or, in the one instance the father-and-son motif in David's own *explication*, when it comes to the painting itself the sodomitical gesture is there pervasive. So that, although we may have chosen as a point of departure the comparison of two 'sodomitical chains', I would now suggest that the David<sup>isn't</sup> detail of the fraternal oath-taking can be taken as a site of an attempted metonymic containment; insofar as its inadequately suppressed sodomitical semantics is actually dispersed across the entire canvas. And we may add that this is to mortifying effect, insofar as the picture depicts a society not about

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<sup>61</sup>Hunt (1992), "Sade's Family Politics", p.128.

<sup>62</sup>supra. p.137, note 29.

to reproduce itself.<sup>63</sup> *Leonidas*, in this reading, is paradoxically both highly homophobic and nevertheless highly reliant on the radical counter-systemic homosexualization of the figure of *fraternité*, which was articulated in Sade. This 'perverse' reiteration of *fraternité* in *Leonidas* represents both the real historical failure of its radical potential - in the form of the rearticulated 'chain' - and the possibilities of its restitution.<sup>64</sup>

If *le beau* and *fraternité* are comingled in *Leonidas* as its dominating terms, then the painting's incoherences may now be understood as the inevitable effect of a double instability in the very terms it employs and obsessively seeks to recreate.

The relation between Sadean sodomy and homoeroticism in David comes to seem far more fluid when seen in the light of the problematic of the instability of the political signifier. We have here emphasized that there is no original sodomitical *act* which is then discretely inserted into the text, retaining its original transgressive meaning; rather I suggest the sodomitical chain is semantically transformed during the Revolution to maintain the possibility of the figurability of a free space. And as such the homoeroticism in *Leonidas* may be understood in terms of the slippage of the political signifier. Such a slippage only comes to be admissible in order to ward off the greater evil of the irretrievable loss of the threatened signifier of political freedom - *le peuple*.

#### The group and libidinal ties

Yet *Leonidas* does not simply represent - in a perverse mode - the fractured concept of fraternity. It also, as we have proposed, poses problems about the relation between those

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<sup>63</sup>the only signal for regeneration in the picture is the testamentary inscription which is being carved on the rocky heights on the far right of the picture, which represents History. But where the bodies are glowingly lit, the inscription is shrouded in a sceptical darkness. The problem of paternity is therefore not at all clearly resolved in the picture, although it is certainly, and perversely, posed.

<sup>64</sup>see, for the linking of political signifiers with the notion of phantasmic investment and phantasmic promise, Butler, p. 191-195, and Žižek, p.126.

`fraternal' subjects and the leader. How does the painting represent the failure of a political identity? If we have so far considered this problem largely in sociohistorical terms - in terms of a specific post-revolutionary historical problem with the politics of representation - now we may further consider that failed relation as a relation of *desire*. Moreover, as it turns out in *Leonidas* of a *perverse* desire. What are the effects of such a failure of politics, not only on the relation between people and leader, but also on the internal bonds which constitute *le peuple* itself; the ties *within* the group? Returning to *Leonidas* how does desire - David's and his traumatized culture's - come to derogate the formal poetic requirement of *unité d'action*? How, precisely, does the question of love enter into, indeed determine, the skewed formal relations - the discontinuous chains - of David's painting? Freud approached the question of the libidinal determinants of the structure of groups in his 1921 paper, *Group Psychology and the Analysis of the Ego*.

If we consider Winckelmann's phantasmic projection of an ideal self as being in a state of "blissful self-sufficiency", what happens when this narcissistic ideal male nude is inserted into a collectivity?<sup>65</sup> This is, in not too dissimilar terms, the question Freud poses for a psychoanalytic re-formulation of 'Crowd Psychology'. Freud asks, what is the nature of the change which comes about in the 'self-sufficient' individual subject once implicated in the dynamic of the group? What is the peculiarity of this *libidinal tie*?<sup>66</sup>

Freud suggests that the formation of a group requires, as a secondary process, the *renunciation* of a primary narcissism; and in this Freud is close to Rousseau's cynicism as to the irreducibility of self-love. Close, too, to Rousseau in his proposition of a fundamental empathy between persons, as a basis for commonality, which he now presents through the notion of *identification*. Where Freud perhaps differs from Rousseau, though, is in his manner of understanding this *identification*, not only as intersubjective, but also as *constitutive* of the personality - it is, for Freud, the earliest expression of an

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<sup>65</sup>Potts, 1994, pp. 145-154.

<sup>66</sup>Freud is in no doubt that psychoanalysis can illuminate the problem of 'crowd psychology' through the so far 'missing' element of love: "a group is clearly held together by a power of some kind: and to what power could this feat be better ascribed than to Eros, which holds together everything in the world?", Freud, *Group Psychology*, Standard Edition, p.92.

emotional tie with another person, and therefore the earliest intimation of a society, or civilization.<sup>67</sup>

Yet for Freud, identification requires a certain transference of power, a renunciation of narcissistic self-sufficiency; which we might think of, in political terms, as a sacrifice of sovereignty. In the essay, *Group Psychology*, Freud introduces a certain metapsychological distinction into the concept of the 'ego'; he distinguishes between the 'ego' and the 'ego-ideal'. He then proceeds to identify the 'ego-ideal' with the figure of the leader, which is but a projected part of the subject's ego. Freud is insistent on the structural importance of the figure of the leader, incarnation of the ego-ideal, in group psychology. The 'loving' relation between the individual and the leader is in fact, a precondition of the group tie.

For the individual in the group desire works in two directions. What Freud calls the "artificial groups", those which are highly organized, developed - for instance the Church and the army - are bonded through the illusion of an all-loving (loving all the individuals in the group with an *equal* love) leader, or chief. "It is to be noticed", Freud writes, "that in these two artificial groups each individual is bound by libidinal ties on the one hand to the leader (Christ, the Commander-in-chief) and on the other hand to the other members of the group."<sup>68</sup> This formulation of the circuits of desire at once takes us away from a simplistic notion of the Napoleonic totalitarian command as an enforcement on passive, i.e. disinterested, subjects. Instead, we might now think of the napoleonic command, or injunction, as effected by a combination of direction and 'love', or, what amounts to the same thing for Freud, hypnosis. The command does not, then, simply ensure devotion to the leader, but, crucially, love between the people. Furthermore, it will be noted that the identifications between people and leader, and people and people, are of a different type. Love between people and leader consists in a projection of the ego-ideal onto the leader.<sup>69</sup> Love between people, on the other hand, is secured - almost incidentally - as an effect of

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<sup>67</sup>Laplanche/Pontalis, *Identification*, p.205.

<sup>68</sup>Freud, *Group Psychology*, Standard Edition, p.44.

<sup>69</sup>the earliest familial manifestation of this being a son's admiration for his father.

the *commonality* of the object/leader.

Panic, or breakdown, in a community is the result in this formulation of the *disintegration of libidinal ties*. The loss of the leader need not necessarily end in breakdown, since the 'ego-ideal' may be represented by an abstract idea (such as the General Will), a 'secondary leader'; nevertheless Freud believes that a certain severing of the libidinal link between people and leader is the precondition for social fragmentation.<sup>70</sup>

Following this, we cannot, then, propose for example that so long as Napoleon succeeded in overcoming the external threat to France, he could be ensured of the people's love. According to a Freudian understanding the disaster of the Russian campaign was not the determining event of Napoleon's fall, but only accompanied an existing disintegration of the love tie between the leader and the people. His *absence* may have determined the fall more than his failure.<sup>71</sup>

Yet if we now turn to David's painting we will find that it does not quite conform to Freud's rather Hobbesian version of the fragility of group ties - and their propensity to disintegration. Rather *Leonidas* articulates an extreme ambivalence. For while the leader is central - though less, as we have seen, than *ideal* - he neither integrates the group, which is made up of discontinuous sub-groups, nor does he represent the group in a state of disarray - we find everywhere a continual local re-linking, which is the 'homoerotic' bonding; relations of love subsist. While the painting attests to the historical *necessity* of the leader - be it Robespierre or Napoleon - David *withdraws* the (his) ideal-ego from the figure of the hero, and proposes, through this detail of the chain, another theory - or a phantasy - of a group psychology, wherein libidinal ties within the group subsist without an incarnation of the Law - the ego-ideal.

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<sup>70</sup>Freud is insistent that the group does not fragment as the result of a 'real' external threat; as long as the libidinal tie remains external threat is tolerable: "The loss of the leader in some sense or other, the birth of misgivings about him, brings on the outbreak of panic, though the danger remains the same; the mutual ties between the members of the group disappear, as a rule, at the same time as the tie with their leader.", Freud, *Group Psychology*, p.96-7.

<sup>71</sup>supra. p.166-7, 'Le peuple as jilted lover'.

If, in 'Group Psychology' Freud emphasized the ways in which chains are affectively constituted through the ego-ideal which is the leader, or the Law; and the ways in which they are immediately broken up ('panic') through the dissolution or absence of the Law, we might however now ask: how does psychoanalysis offer a way of understanding the possibility of the desiring subject's *escape* from the Law? How does the psychoanalytic method itself classically seek to trace just those 'perverse' wishes which the Law prescribes as *indisible*? Here we return to the dialectical relation between censorship and subject, and the possibility of the subject's *jouissance*; a *jouissance* which, we will say, may be historically articulated in this figure of the sodomitical chain, and which inhabits a space of *phantasy*.

### Censorship and the perverse

For Freud, the locus from which censorship is put into effect in the subject is precisely that differentiated part of the ego, which he calls the *ideal ego*; and which, in his account of group psychology, Freud located in the projected figure of the leader.<sup>72</sup> The censoring authority attempts to ensure the impossibility of any disruption between the injunction and its ideal effect, as well as the disruption of the fragile identification ('love') upon which the functioning of the circuit of desire in the group depends. Such is the normative function of the 'ideal ego', or the ideal *per se*.

Yet those paradoxical chains, both David's and Sade's, escape these ideal circuits of desire; and, indeed project a different 'love'. Furthermore, they are precisely an effect of an historical censorship, since both *120 Journées* and *Leonidas aux Thermopyles* were

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<sup>72</sup>the 'ego-ideal' links the subject to the outside world, through this censorship function. Freud ascribes to it "self-observation, the moral conscience, the censorship of dreams, and the chief influence in repression". It bears the traces of narcissistic self-sufficiency, but it also "gradually gathers up from the influence of the environment the demands which that environment makes upon the ego and which the ego cannot always rise to." *ibid*, p.110.



committed in conditions of secrecy and imprisonment.<sup>73</sup> Let us take our analogy further, and suggest that the perversity of their form may be explained in the way of a *dream distortion*.

It must not be thought that, under the conditions of censorship, those chains in themselves reveal a truth which the censoring authority must then obscure. Nor must we assume the clear separation of powers - the censor and the censored. In the first place, the censoring activity effectively ensures that the 'truth' cannot be told; "It lies in the very nature of every censorship that of forbidden things it allows those which are *untrue* to be said rather than those which are true".<sup>74</sup> On the second point, Freud reminds us that the work of censorship involves less a simple antagonistic relation, in which two protagonists - censor and censored - fight out that 'truth', either suppressing or revealing 'it'; than a *dynamic relation*, which determines form, be it a cultural formation, or a dream.<sup>75</sup> This dynamic relation, primarily within the subject, consists in a dialectic between the ego and the ego-ideal. While the one is continually producing prohibited wishes, the other - agency of the censor - is continually prohibiting them. Yet if we now take, as an historical instance, this ideal ego to be manifested in the Napoleonic censoring apparatus, and that ego located in the intersubjective space which we are here designating Sade/David, what, we may ask, is this dynamic which produces the 'infernal' of Sade's pornographic chain, and the

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<sup>73</sup>it may be objected that this elision of the two authors' great differences in relation to authority is insupportable, given the bare facts of Sade's incarceration and David's official privileges (not to speak of physical freedom) during the Empire; nevertheless, the two works under consideration have a similar anti-hegemonic intention *at the time of their respective makings*. And if imprisonment seems retrospectively to be the condition of Sade's *120 Journées*, secrecy is the condition of David's *Leonidas*. The works' structural relation to power is, I would argue, similar enough, as is the authors' intense personal counter-systemic investment in the works.

<sup>74</sup>Freud, *The Interpretation of Dreams*, Penguin Freud Library, p.567.

<sup>75</sup>Freud, 'The Censorship of Dreams', in *Introductory Lectures in Psychoanalysis* (1916), Standard Edition, p.140. Similarly, censorship does not always *reduce* the possibilities of articulation, but increases them: "...in considering the suppressed and suppressing agencies, we must not regard their relation as being exclusively one of mutual inhibition. Just as much regard must be paid to cases in which the two agencies bring about a pathological effect by working side by side and intensifying each other.", *Interpretation of Dreams*, p.618.

`incoherence' of David's fraternal chain? How do these chains come to figure a *perversity*, or a paradox, without nevertheless attaining the status of a revealed truth?

Sade reveals a clear-eyed consciousness of the `dynamic relation' which the work of censorship involves; he also, we shall see, charts its particular historical mutating form under the Terror - and, in doing so, gives us a clue to his own solution.

### The Terror and the unsayable

The revolutionary critique of ancien régime codes of *politesse*, or decency, does not make Sade a supporter of the Revolution. Between the ancien régime's dependence on God and the Terror's pathetic reiteration of God as the *Etre Supreme* - "*la nouvelle imposture*"- there is for Sade no free space. In an important letter, edited and introduced by Phillippe Sollers, of December 1793, Sade criticizes the revolutionaries' fear of the body, their censoring iconoclasm, strict rationalization<sup>76</sup>, and ensuing love of abstraction and allegory; at least ancien régime christianity had some *stuff* to pervert.<sup>77</sup> Sade also decries in the same letter the loss of regulatory - and censoring - *bienséances* in classical language, which had its subversive complement in linguistic, hence material, blasphemy: the revolutionary language has now foreclosed the power to disrupt, it manages to be both vulgar and prudish.<sup>78</sup> Thus we find Sade *regretting* the cultural restrictions which require

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<sup>76</sup>"En somme, l'Etre Supreme veut `selectionner ses corps' et les prendre pour ainsi dire, à la base. C'est une expression de tri. Peut-être en viendra-t-il un jour à les fabriquer de toutes pièces, à les produire sans mémoires, sans passé, incultes, obéissant immédiatement à sa voix de fer", Sollers, p.33

<sup>77</sup>"Dites de ma part au Saint-Père que, chimère pour chimère, la sienne, quoique parfaitement hypocrite et risible, a au moins l'avantage d'avoir peuplé les sanctuaires des bacchanales les plus plaisantes de l'histoire. Pas un luxurieux ne s'y trompe, et je regrette souvent les heures délicieuses que j'ai passées à Florence ou à Naples, devant toutes ces nudités convulsives, offertes. J'ai admiré Michel-Ange et Bernini, je n'adorerai pas des bustes à bonnets phrygiens ou des colonnes trouquées de faux temples.", letter from Sade written to Cardinal de Berniers, 7 decembre 1793, in Sollers (1992), pp.25-26.

<sup>78</sup>"du programme hébertiste qui consiste...à dégrader la langue...on se parle par borborygmes, le galimatias est roi. L'usage incessant et démocratique du mot `foutre', par exemple, présage bien l'interdiction de la chose par l'abus du mot. On dira sans cesse des obscénités pour en rendre la réalisation impossible." *ibid.* p. 35.

censorship - so-called ancien régime hypocritical moral values - through the loss of a system of differences and distinctions which, in neoclassical poetics, once allowed the possibility of sophisticated, urbane subtlety, and individualistic perversion. To be able to "parler de choses basses avec élégance et de distractions grossières avec distinction", required from the spectator/reader a detached appreciation of the the words' semantic undecidability, and, insofar as the slippages of meaning do not require to be spelled out, pre-revolutionary neoclassical poetics allowed at least for the recuperation of homosexuality, or sodomy, as a stylistic exemplar of 'le bas'.

Now Sade's own *oeuvre* is the best testament to this loss of the veil, or the gauze,<sup>79</sup> and in Sade we find that he is thus decrying the historically transformed conditions of his own exemplary writing. So that although Sade here is in danger of sounding simply like a plaintive aristocrat *manqué*, in fact he perspicaciously traces the (very recent) historical transformation of linguistic usage and the gradual, imperceptible, loss of even the thinkability of a free space, which notionally underlies 'revolutionary freedom', or 'liberty of expression'. "La philosophie", the possibility to think spaces of freedom, now condemned as a "luxe de nobless", is overtaken by the "hymne collectif" and "l'enthousiasme", which is now become "une obligation quotidienne".<sup>80</sup> If there has been a radical social revolution by 1793, Sade suggests that the levelling tendency when applied to neoclassical poetics, while pretending to have overcome social contradictions within language - the veil, or gauze, now cedes to 'transparence'<sup>81</sup> - only points to a foreclosure of cultural complexity, and ultimately the collapse of the power to shock, or even simply critique. 'Le bas', in apparently taking over the whole sociolinguistic field - as 'sans-culottes' ideology, exemplified by Père Duchesne, would have it - only robs the former of its potential critical edge. The possibility of the 'prohibited wish' is thus reduced, its antinomous dialectical relation to the Law effectively halted. Sade's letter is a trenchant critique of the ideology of revolutionary communitarianism as a 'mass', or *group* society,

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<sup>79</sup>therefore, since veiling is the aesthetic condition of eroticism, Barthes notes that there is in fact no eroticism in Sade, Barthes, p.9.

<sup>80</sup>ibid. p.38.

<sup>81</sup>e.g. as in Saint-Just's insistence on a common linguistic laconicism.

and his oeuvre is paradoxically both the obsessive recall of the fast disappearing neoclassical 'bas', and the final blow to neoclassical poetics, and its system of sociolinguistic distinctions.

*Le bas* is analagous to *le laid*, and if we remember the gradual proscription of the latter in neoclassical post-revolutionary poetics, we will also appreciate the formal restrictions - sociological too - under which David was labouring in the *Leonidas*.<sup>82</sup>

If we take note of Sade's criticisms of revolutionary language concerning the loss of a free space, and David's increasing alienation from the Napoleonic propogandist machine - both therefore working in condition of foreclosed expression - we may perhaps see in their respective distorted chains the only possible articulation of resistance. And if that form of resistance, under the name of sodomy, has so far been understood in terms of the 'perverse', this may be only another way of referring to a necessary *strangeness* which is the effect of the mechanisms of censorship. Freud distinguishes three types of effect of censorship on (dream)form: *omission* - which may result in a manifest gap, or discontinuity; *modification* - an effect of *a posteriori* censorship which results in allusion, circumlocution, or obscurities; and an entirely *fresh grouping of the elements*, which results in the unrecognizable, often apparently senseless.<sup>83</sup>

If the first type clearly conforms to that gap in the text which we discovered in Madame Dacier's text in our first chapter, the second and third types, I would suggest, conform to the effect of the sodomitical/fraternal chain - both that of the 'perversity' of the Sadean chain, and of the apparent 'strangeness' of the Davidian chain. This is a matter, then, of

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<sup>82</sup>David's desires are contradictory: he demonstrably assumes the foreclosed *pur grec* style, but - as we have seen in the self-censored figure of Hercules - only as the consequence of a necessary repression. On the suppression of affect - the 'glacial' quality of *pur grec* - as a consequence of a conflict of psychic forces, see Freud, *Interpretation of Dreams*, p.604-5.

<sup>83</sup>*Introductory Lectures*, p.139-140.

the necessity of displacement under historically censorious conditions.<sup>84</sup> The so-called 'perversity' of the chain is then the outcome of what Freud terms *considerations of representability*; the importance of which we raised in our introduction.<sup>85</sup> Freud writes of the dream-work which produces distorted form and the maintenance of the prohibited wish:

"It does not think, calculate or judge in any way at all; it restricts itself to giving things a new form. It is exhaustively described by an enumeration of the conditions which it has to satisfy in producing its result. That product, the dream, has above all to evade the censorship, and with that end in view the dream-work makes use of a *displacement of psychical intensities* to the point of a transvaluation of all psychical values. The thoughts have to be reproduced exclusively or predominantly in the material of visual and acoustic memory-traces, and this necessity imposes upon the dream-work *considerations of representability* which it meets by carrying out fresh displacements."<sup>86</sup>

The complex dynamic articulated by Freud both describes an object - the elusive dream - and charts the circuitous journey the psychoanalytic analysis must take. The task for Freud is to *re-connect* the chains of memory and association through the analysis, bypassing or eluding the repressive chains of the Law/ego-ideal. In Freud's own procedure of 'writing up' the analysis gaps and silences are therefore paradoxically indicative of heightened affect, the place where desire is most likely to be found.<sup>87</sup> If the notion of the Freudian dream provides a model for opening the possibility of re-connecting unheard-of, 'incoherent' chains of desire, then we may consider that coincident, now perhaps resonant, double silence of late 1814 as one historical instance of its procedures.

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<sup>84</sup>Freud combines the concepts of modification and re-arrangement under the term 'displacement'.

<sup>85</sup>supra. p.6.

<sup>86</sup>*Interpretation of Dreams*, p.650-51.

<sup>87</sup>see, for example, the *Liebesdienste* dream of 1916-17, in Freud, *Interpretation*, p. 224, footnote 1.

## Conclusion

In this chapter I have attempted to bring together a *work*, David's *Leonidas*, with a problematic, that of the manifestations of the Law and the possibilities of its derogation. It is possible, I have presumed, to examine these two radically distinct sets of materials *through each other*. The disposition of bodies in David may illuminate the workings of the 'Law'; while the discourse on the Law may open out the meaning of the work of art, providing a theoretical support to read its *enchainements*.

If the general effect of abiding strangeness in *Leonidas* can be allied to a notion of perversity, the detail of the 'chain' with which we started, combined with the counter-hegemonic representation of the command and its effects - articulated in the incoherent disposition of bodies across the canvas - may be conceived as an effect of censorship; and as an antidote to the ideal - but, in fact, fracturing chain of command which the authoritarian 'voice' of Napoleon instigated. And if the structure of Napoleonic command conforms closely to the Lacanian model of the moral law - the disembodied radio-like voice of Napoleon through the daily 'ordre du jour' and through his hieratic representation *as Law* - the aspect of failure in *Leonidas* can better be understood through the Freudian notion of group libidinal ties and the possibilities of their disintegration. In either case, I have argued, the 'sodomitical' figure of the chain in Sade and David introduces a 'perversification' of the 'chain of command' as it was historically articulated in its dominant ancien regime, Imperial *and* revolutionary formulations. Such a perversity, however, arises less *per se* from a transgressive figure of a sodomy which represents the absolute dissolution of humanity - absolute Evil - than from a strategic reiteration of a form which is imminent within the Law, indeed the form through which the law is traditionally cognized - the 'chain of being'. Both Sade and David - like Sade and Kant - meet upon this ground, I have argued, which is principally concerned with the revolutionary rearticulation of the Law's form which also happens to be the form of a homosexual *jouissance*.

Yet we have necessarily had to *isolate* the chains from their chaotic contexts in order to determine a possible point of *jouissance* - hence the two 'details' with which we began.

But if this reconfiguration - or distortion - is doomed to failure, precisely because it can now only represent the loss of a loss, the very instability of the political signifier and its promise of `identity', then we might ask where lies the integrative positivity which allows David *in the first place* to articulate that loss, which is not even now the future of an illusion, but the illusion of future? I would suggest finally that this positivity is to be found in the very excess of the failed language of neoclassicism, which is the contradictory and perverse un-laconic richness of the painting.<sup>88</sup> A richness not especially located in the representation of the ideal male nude itself, but in the florid accoutrements which everywhere bind the picture more securely than all the bodies which cannot connect, precisely that which the fraternal gesture in *Leonidas* offers both persistently and uselessly, the wreaths - or chains - of flowers.

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<sup>88</sup>supra. p.136, note 26.

## Conclusion

If feminism has long since opened up the possibility of studying the female body as a social construction, teaching us that the body has a history (and a history *in art history*) then we are simply completing its task by applying its insights to the *male* body and masculinity. And yet perhaps it is only when feminist methodology is duly applied to the male body that it comes against its *own* unspoken assumptions, or against the limitations imposed by its own historical necessities. One of those assumptions is to do with the relation between sexual difference and power. If we now recognize that discourses of sexual difference are thought *a priori* to their inscription on bodies - that masculinity and femininity are not necessarily located in the bodies of men and women respectively, or even principally in bodies *per se* - then the maintenance of the separation of male and female bodies both within the feminist art-historical text, and as it structures the division of labour *between* feminist scholars studying those representations of men and of women, becomes theoretically untenable. At the same time, the maintenance of the antinomy (masculine/feminine) tends to project a dialectical history when it is brought into line with an assumption that masculine/feminine positions invariably equal the differential power positions of Phallus/lack. And yet, not least in art history, such distinctions have proved obstinate.

This has been especially clear in the recent study of eighteenth-century homoeroticism. Even here, where we might expect such distinctions to begin to break down - both historically and theoretically - essentialist presuppositions about masculinity have projected the homoerotic body as always and still in a position of phallic mastery. The *fin de siècle* 18th/19th century homoerotic male nude has thus come to be understood as related - if not exactly dialectically - to women's absence from representation. This not only maintains the transhistorical identification of a masculinity/Phallus; it effectively writes out the possibility of applying feminist insights of the social constructedness of gender to the male body, since in this reading of homoeroticism the male body is always *about women*. The trouble with this continual fixture on the dialectic between Phallus and lack is that a lot is missed out of the account. If once politically desirable, it is now historically thin. So what exactly is left out?



In the first place, the very contingency of the body *per se*. Even if we realize that it is from the social that the materiality of the sexed body is inscribed onto male and female bodies apparently 'naturally' but really arbitrarily; and that masculinity and femininity have a historically shifting relation to women's and men's bodies, still it is the *body itself* which in this reconceptualization remains not subject to history, always the same thing. And to that extent our gender readings have not taken the insight of the constructedness of the body far enough. It is towards a recognition of this fact that in our Chapter two, on the Kantian reconceptualization of the body, we have attempted a beginning of a more fundamental historicization of the body. And to that extent the reconsideration of the *beau idéal* should be seen as this thesis' central theoretical support.

On the other hand our last chapter *David/Sade* is equally informed by the epistemological shifts which continually re-place or displace the body in history. Indeed, if that last chapter is informed by a philosophy which is now fully implicated in a 'linguistic turn', the 'signifying chain' and the *enchaînement* of bodies in Sade and David ought to become now ontologically indistinguishable; so much so that I am quite aware that to focus on 'the male nude', as an exemplification of a 'perverted chain' in *David/Sade*, may simply denote a form of nostalgia for the body's once radical otherness.

Secondly, what is missed out in the framing of the problem of homoeroticism within the Phallus/lack structure, is the possibility of a relation of desire outside this model; 'homosexuality', for example, or in Leeks' terms, a "jouissance...beyond the phallus" (supra. p.55, note 5). Yet if we leave a peculiarly heterosexist obsession with masculine/feminine difference, only to rush headlong into a gay art history which now seeks its deliverance by differentiating between *sexualities*, we may equally be in danger of ignoring the historicity of the gay subject position itself, which now produces those different differences. Still *politically* the insistence on differences of sexuality is no less important than a feminist agenda; and, in the study of homoerotic imagery it needs to be taken into account.

The problem with recent attempts to do so is precisely that they presuppose a gay sensibility which is not subject to history. And as art-historians it may no longer be

tenable for us simply to re-link a series of 'homoerotic' images which conform to a modern desire. While this gives us no reason to abandon the task of historicizing homosexuality - not least in its eighteenth-century forms - we need to develop theoretical bases and methods, more sophisticated than those we presently possess. To this end, I have attempted, in Chapter 1, through the study of a long-term shift in one motif, to determine the historically shifting representability of homosexuality, with a particular eye on the subtle relation between absence and presence in the changing homoerotic image. If this procedure only begins to suggest the ways in which homosexuality was lodged and re-lodged in the neo-classical text, it may form the basis for future studies, and open out ways of re-thinking homoeroticism as it is articulated in the visual image.

While this procedure of reading historically for the homosexual might appear to set a limit to the opportunities for an identificatory gay *jouissance* in relation to homoerotic imagery, still it has been one of my intentions to explore the possibilities of the *positive* connotations of the late-eighteenth and early-nineteenth-century homoerotic image; and this through a consideration of the essential *iterability* of the homoerotic figure. By re-reading the context of David's great homoerotic *Leonidas* - by placing it within a different chain of events - we have simultaneously restored its historical dimension, and its phantasmic promise. If David's masterpiece stands as the repository of both the histories of the philosophical *beau idéal* and of the histories of our present preoccupations with sexual difference, it has seemed necessary to begin to analyze, and even dismantle, those constructs through it. In its insistent demonstration of *difference* David's painting is peculiarly prone to those essentialist understandings of masculinity which still underwrite the interpretation of the homoerotic image. Yet paradoxically by focusing on this image of exclusive masculinity we are forced to recognize the limitations of an isolated dialectical gender reading; and this because *Leonidas* throws up its own typologies and distinctions.

If no longer theoretically tenable, then, the study of the social construction of masculinity through the male body might still prove *provisionally* necessary. And this if only because it still remains the cultural figure wherein our notions of masculinity are lodged. So that if we have here chosen to focus on the male body it is only in order to cast it off from its

`natural' moorings - masculinity and the body *per se*. Which is only to begin the task of rigorously applying to the image of the male body the radical insights of feminism.

## Appendix 1

### Chronology of Anacreon's presence in France to 1810

- 1554 Henri Estienne returns to France from Italy with a manuscript of the works of pseudo-Anacreon, which he publishes in the same year in Greek, with his own latin translation
- 1556 second latin translation by Helie André, published in Paris
- 1556 six months later translation into French verse by Remi Belleau, *Les Odes D'Anacréon teien, traduite de grec en francois par Remi Belleau, ensemble quelques petites hymnes de son invention*
- 1559 Jean Begat (avec musique de Renvoisy)
- 1670 Du Four de La Crespellière, translation, *Les Odes amoureuses, charmantes, et bacciques des poetes grecs. Anacréon, Sapho et Théocrite*
- 1681 Anne Le Fevre (Mme. Dacier), translation *Les Poesies d'Anacréon et de Sapho*
- 1684 Longepierre, translation *Les Oeuvres d'Anacréon et de Sapho, contenant leurs Poésies, et les galanteries de l'ancienne Grèce*
- 1697 Bayle, articles 'Anacréon' and 'Bathyllus', *Dictionnaire historique et critique*
- 1704 La Fosse, translation *Traduction Nouvelle des Odes d'Anacréon Sur l'Original Grec*
- 1712 François Gaçon (pseud. Le Poète Sans Fard), translation *Les Odes d'Anacréon et de Sapho*
- 1758 Poinciset de Sivry, translation *Anacréon, Sapho, Moschus, Bion, Thyrthee, etc. traduit en vers Français*
- 1773 Moutonnet-Clairfons, translation *Anacréon, Sapho, Bion et Moschus, Traduction Nouvelle en Prose suivi de la Veillée Des Fêtes de Venus Et d'un choix de Pièces de différens Auteurs*
- 1794 J.-B. Gail, translation *Odes, inscriptions, épitaphes, épithalames et fragments d'Anacréon, traduits en français*
- 1795 Anson, translation *Odes D'Anacréon, Traduction Nouvelle en Vers*

- 1799 S.P. Merard Saint-Just, translation *Imitation en Vers Français des Odes D'Anacréon, suivi de poésies diverses*
- 1803 Lachabeaussière, translation *Poésies Galantes et Gracieuses d'Anacréon, Bion, Moschus, Catulle et Horace, Imitée en vers Français et soumise, pour la plupart, au Rythme musical*
- 1810 J.B. De Saint-Victor, translation *Odes d'Anacréon Traduites en Vers Sur le Texte de Brunck* (with plates by Girodet)

## Appendix 2

Paint my beloved Bathyllus according to my prescription: make his hair shine, dark beneath but with the ends lightened by the sun; add curling locks falling freely in disorder and let them lie where they wish. Let his soft dewy forehead be garlanded with eyebrows darker than snakes. Let his black eyes be a mixture of ferocity and serenity, taking their ferocity from Ares, their serenity from beautiful Cythere, so that he may inspire terror and also hopeful suspense. Make his downy cheek as rosy as an apple, and, if possible, add a blush like that of Modesty. I do not yet know how you are to make his lip soft and full of persuasion: but let the wax itself have everything, talking silently. After his face make an ivory neck finer than that of Adonis. Give him the chest and two hands of Hermes, the thighs of Polydeuces, the belly of Dionysus; above his soft thighs, thighs with raging fire in them, put a simple member that already desires the Paphian. But your art is grudging: you cannot show his back; that would have been better. Why should I describe the feet? Take your fee, as much as you ask. Take down this Apollo and create Bathyllus; and if ever you come to Samos, paint Phoebus from Bathyllus.

Loeb translation, 'Greek Lyric', vol.II, 1988,p.185

### Appendix 3

Introducing Sapho, Saint Just writes, "Le sage de Teos n'est pas le seul qu'on ait calomnie":

"O fille de Scamandronyme,  
On a voulu flétrir ton nom,  
Comme tel pédant anonyme,  
Insulte aux moeurs d'Anacréon  
Qui des princes obtint l'estime!  
Ah! sans ton illustre renom,  
Dans l'art que les soeurs d' Appolon  
Professent sur la double cime,  
On ne t'eût jamais fait un crime,  
Digne épouse de Cercola,  
De l'amitié douce et sublime,  
Chaste, sur-tout, qui te brûla  
Pour Anagore et Congila.  
Et certes, on ne t'appela  
Du mot latin de Mascula,  
Qu'à cause de ton grand courage  
Héroïque, tout Masculin.  
Qui te fit braver le destin,  
Et non pour ton libertinage;  
Ton cœur n'y fut jamais enclin.

Plutarque et Socrate le sage,

Même quelques savans en us,  
Te donnent un joli visage,  
Et de ton sexe les vertus,  
Et je les en crois davantage,  
Autorisé par la raison,  
Que le contraire temoignage  
De Martial et de Nazon.

Je sais bien que, d'amour malade,  
Pour le beau, pour l'ingrât Phaon,  
Sapho fit le saut de Leucade:  
Ne pouvant s'en faire chérir,  
Et d'aimer seule, malheureux,  
Amante tendre et vertueuse,  
Elle prépara de mourir.

L'homme, ni la femme légère,  
(Incontestable verité)  
Ne changent point de caractère,  
Et meurent ce qu'ils ont été.  
Monsieur d'Elboeuf, duc imbécile,  
Bulgare, s'il en fût jamais,  
Mourut, non l'ami de Bathyle,  
Mais dans son lit, s...s un laquais.  
Raucour, la femme tribade,  
Fidelle toujours à ses goûts,  
Pour Depontis (n.), et moins pour nous,  
Ne fera la saut de Leucade."

(n) Sa maîtresse dans ce moment-ci



#### Appendix 4

"Through long observation and consummate experience, by means of a taste, an instinct, a kind of inspiration vouchsafed only to rare geniuses, and perhaps a project, natural to idolators, to elevate man above his condition and impress a divine character upon him, a character from which all that is contentious in our paltry impoverished, shabby and miserable lives had been excluded, they began to develop a sensitivity to these great changes, to the most extreme deformities and the most intense suffering. This was the first step, one that really affected only the general mass of the animal system, or a few of its main parts. With the passage of time, in an advance which was slow, tentative, , painfully groping, by means of a muffled, obscure notion of analogy acquired through an infinitude of successive observations since lost to memory but whose effects remain, the recasting was effected on lesser parts, and then on still lesser parts, and after these on the very smallest ones, such as fingernails, eyelids, eyelashes, and hair, ceaselessly, and with an astonishing circumspection, effacing the changes and deformities worked by corrupting nature, either at the point of origin or through circumstantial necessity, becoming more and more distant from portraiture, from the false line, to rise to the true ideal model of beauty, to the true line; a true line, and an ideal model of beauty, which existed only in the heads of Agassiz, Raphael, Poussin, Puget, Pigalle, Falconet, and their like; an ideal model of beauty, a true line, of which lesser artists have but an incomplete notion, gained to exposure to the antique or to their works; an ideal model of beauty, a true line which the great masters cannot inspire in their students however rigorous their course of instruction; an ideal model of beauty, a true line enabling them to rise playfully to the formulation of chimeras, sphinxes, centaurs, hippogryphs, fauns, and all other polyglot beings; from which they can descend to produce various portraits from the life, caricatures, monsters, grotesques, according to the dose of deceit required by their composition and the effect they wish to produce, such that it's almost meaningless to query the acceptable limits of deviation from the ideal model of beauty, the true line; an

ideal model of beauty, a true line that is non-traditional, and that all but vanishes with the man of genius, who over a certain period shapes the spirit, character and taste of the productions of a people, a century, a school; an ideal model of beauty, a true line that the man of genius will calibrate in accordance with the climate, government, laws, and circumstances into which he was born; an ideal model of beauty, a true line that becomes corrupt, that disappears, and that can perhaps only be solidly re-established among a given people through the return to a barbaric state".<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Diderot On Art, vol. II. pp. 12-13, translated by John Goodman, Yale University Press, 1995.

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Fig. 1



94 ΑΝΑΚΡ. ΜΕΛΗ.  
 Ἰνα τις τὸ μὲν Φωβῆται,  
 Το δ' ἀπ' ἐλπίδος κρεμῆται.  
 Ροδινὴν δ' ὅτοια μῆλον  
 Χυοίην τρέιει κρείνη.  
 Ερύθημα δ' ὡς αὐ αἰδῶς  
 Δύναται βαλεῖν, ποιήσω.  
 Τὸ δὲ χεῖλος ἐκέτ' οἶδα  
 Τί μοι τρόπον ποιήσεις.  
 Απαλόν, γέμον τε Πειθοῦς.  
 Τὸ δὲ πᾶν ὁ κηρὸς αὐτός  
 Ἐχέτω λαλῶν σιωπῆ.  
 Μέγα δὲ πρόσωπον ἔσω.  
 Τὸ δ' Ἀδωνίδος παρήλθον,  
 Ἐλεφάντινος τράχηλος.  
 Μεταμάχων δὲ ποιεῖ  
 Διδύμας τε χεῖρας Ἑρμοῦ,  
 Πολυδεύκεος δὲ μηροῦς,  
 Διοῦσίνην τε νηδῶν.  
 Απαλῶν δ' ὑπερθε μηρῶν,  
 Μιρῶν τὸ πῦρ ἐχόντων,  
 Ἀφελῆ ποιήσον αἰδῶ.  
 Πισφίην θέλασαν ἤδη.  
 Φθοερεὴν ἔχεις δὲ τέχνην,  
 Ὅτι μὴ τὰ νῶτα δεῖξαι  
 Δύνασαι τὰ δ' ἦν ἀμείνω.  
 Τί με δεῖ πόδας διδάσκειν;  
 Λέβε μισθὸν ἴσσον εἶπας  
 Τὸν Ἀπόλλωνα δὲ τᾶτον  
 Καθελῶν, ποιεῖ Βαθυλλον.  
 Ἦν δ' ἐς Σάμον ποτ' ἔλθας,  
 Γράφε Φοῖβον ἐκ Βαθυλλῆ.

ANACR. ODE XXIX. 95  
 soient couvertes d'un petit poil follet, &  
 peu près comme celui que l'on voit sur  
 les coings nouvellement cueillis. Donne-  
 lui tout autant que tu pourras, d'un cer-  
 tain rouge qui vient de pudeur. Pour sa  
 bouche, je ne sçay pas bien de quelle ma-  
 niere tu la feras : Il faut qu'elle soit toute  
 pleine d'agrémens & de persuasion. En-  
 fin, pour te dire tout en un mot, il faut  
 que ce Portrait soit éloquent dans son si-  
 lence. Fais-lui le visage grand. J'oublois  
 de te dire de luy faire le cou plus blanc que  
 l'ivoire, & comme celui du bel Adonis.  
 Fais-lui l'estomac & les reins de Mercure.  
 \* \* \* \* \*  
 Mais tu as un art bien envieux du  
 plaisir des gens, de ne te permettre  
 pas de laisser voir les épaules, qui n'est  
 pas pourtant ce qu'il y a de moins beau.  
 Qu'est-il nécessaire de te dire de quelle  
 maniere tu feras ses pieds ? Dis prompte-  
 ment ce qu'il te faut pour cet ouvrage ; &  
 de cet Appollon que voilà, fais-en Ba-  
 thylle : si tu vas jamais à Samos, de Ba-  
 thylle tu feras Appollon.

R E-

Fig. 3



Fig.4





Fig. 5



Fig. 6



Fig. 7



Fig. 8



Fig.9



Fig. 10



Fig.11

Les principales armes des Grecs  
Spartiates sont le pique et le  
bouclier; je ne compte pas  
l'epée qui n'est qu'une  
espece de poignard qu'il  
porte a sa ceinture; C'est  
sur le pique qu'il fonde  
ses esperances; il ne la  
quitte presque pas, tant  
qu'il est a la mees.

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X. 8.

Fig. 12





Figs. 13, 14

