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THEORY, PRACTICE, AND COMPETITION IN THE VISUAL ARTS: THE FORTUNES OF THE PARAGONE IN FRENCH AND BRITISH NINETEENTH-CENTURY ART

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Abstract

My topic springs from many years of studying the paragone, which is the ‘comparison’ or rivalry between the arts, such as that between poets and painters, painters and sculptors, or aesthetic theorists and visual artists. Typically artists have been motivated to participate in the paragone during crises, such as changes to the hierarchy of the arts, shifting aesthetic theories, cultural and social changes to the artist's status, personal doubt, or political activism and patriotic endeavours. This dissertation addresses the lack of scholarship addressing the paragone's survival in the nineteenth century.

Rapid changes to the nineteenth-century art world contributed to the paragone's significance in this century especially. The shifting aesthetic theories and ideologies of the Royal Academy of Fine Arts, the *Académie des beaux-arts,* and the *École des beaux-arts* resulted in the great instability of artistic genres, and waning respect for traditional artistic institutions, such as the Salon, thereby affecting both professional and public opinion regarding art's value. Moreover, the intensification and rise of art criticism made visual artists vulnerable to writers in increasingly threatening ways. As well, the writings of aesthetic theorists represented a trend that affected the paragone's survival in the nineteenth century; there was an increasing movement in aesthetic theory, beginning in late eighteenth century, to impose either ideological or practical limits on the arts. This movement escalated rebelliousness amongst certain artists, who sought to prove their clever genius and the superiority of their art forms, by breaking their supposed limits.

Through my analysis of hegemonic artistic practice, my research has led to the discovery of motifs or subjects that are often evidence of the paragone manifested in a particular piece. My dissertation will begin with an examination of the proliferation of the *beau idéal*, or mastery of the human figure's ideal representation in painting or sculpture, which was, (since the Renaissance), indicative of artistic skill, and remained a signifier of artistic supremacy in early to mid-nineteenth-century art. Since antiquity, the mythological account of Narcissus, (the young man who falls in love with his own image, because of his astounding beauty), has represented the power of masculine beauty to entrance its viewers. This tradition, which paralleled the cult of male beauty propagated in Greek art, was inherited by nineteenth-century artists in the form of the *beau idéal*.

Even though portrayals of the *beau idéal* recurred throughout the nineteenth century, the early preference for male figures was matched, by the mid-nineteenth century, to greater interest in the female nude. In particular, the Pygmalion myth became emblematic of the ultimate mastery of the nude figure in art; Ovid's account of Pygmalion in his *Metamorphoses* epitomised the crux of the paragone debate at this time. In this myth the sculptor Pygmalion, symbolic of the archetypal artist, creates a figure of a woman that in turn represents the ultimate artistic creation; she is so beautiful that he entreats Venus to bring her to life. This myth speaks to the image's power over the viewer, and therefore to the power of the visual arts. The final subject explores the legacy of Gustave Moreau's versions of Salomé, which engendered a host of competitive responses to his portrayal of this subject, such that Salomé became a signifier of artistic rivalry, as much as she was of the *femme fatale*. I will also explore a new interpretation of Salomé that emerged in the nineteenth century that heightened her visual and iconic impact on viewers. The narrative features of the Salomé subject made it an ideal source for paragonising artists. As a symbol of sensual and material beauty, she mirrored the material and decorative nature of the Aesthetic and decadent movements in the arts at this time.

My research offers an interpretational tool that may be used by other scholars with respect to the examination of individual artists or writers, while providing a basis for further studies in this framework. Demonstrating the topic's ultimate potential is one of the most important scholars in the field: W.J.T. Mitchell. In his *Iconology: Image, Text, Ideology*, Mitchell addresses the paragone's importance to scholarship, and shows how its fundamental concerns continue to be played out by successive generations of artists, even in technological media, which is an indication of its relevance to a broad range of study in the humanities, including not only art history but theory and criticism, western literature, film studies, and the fine arts. My dissertation, however, focuses on the actual implementation of a paragonising artistic theory in artworks throughout the nineteenth century. In so doing it strengthens scholarly understanding of the themes, artists, and works addressed, while demonstrating the importance of acknowledging artistic competition.

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Acknowledgements

Although these acknowledgements will inevitably fall short of what they should be, I would like to briefly credit both the personal and professional sources of support for this dissertation. To begin, I am grateful to my husband David, and to my family, especially my mother and grandfather, for their encouragement and the many sacrifices that they have made, in order for me to complete my degree.

Professionally, I have been honoured to work with Dr. Brian Curran, whose unfailing support as the chair of my dissertation committee has made this project possible. The complexity and uniqueness of my topic demanded an advisor who possessed a great familiarity with a vast span of art historical knowledge, as well as sensitivity to the theoretical and historical nuances of the paragone debate. Dr. Curran's contribution to this project has made it into something of which I can proud. The rigour and dedication of Dr. Curran's own scholarship will continue to serve as a reliable model for my own scholarship, as I endeavour to pursue new research interests.

Along with Dr. Curran, I was fortunate to have an unusually accomplished, involved, and supportive panel of advisors. Drs. Neely, Walters, and Porter were exceptional in their willingness to encourage my research interests, and to ensure my success in the doctoral art history program at PSU. Each member of my committee exhibited such professionalism, ethics, and commitment to the integrity of academia, such that I could not have asked for a better group of advisors.

I must also acknowledge the editorial contributions of Dr. Melissa Geiger, and the support of the Department of Fine Arts, Foreign Languages, and Humanities at the Louisiana State University Shreveport, where I currently teach as Assistant Professor of art history. I also benefited from a few helpful research suggestions from Dr. Elizabeth Prettejohn, who is a leading scholar in nineteenth-century art history.

Additionally, I would like to thank the many organisations where I conducted research, as well as the dutiful efforts of their representatives. In England, for instance, these organisations include the Royal Academy of Arts in London, the Birmingham Museum of Art, the Manchester Art Gallery, the Fitzwilliam Museum, and the Victoria and Albert Museum. In France, I benefited from the archives at the Musée d'Orsay, the

Musée du Louvre, the Musée Gustave Moreau, and the INHA, among others. The Research Library of The Getty Research Institute in Los Angeles, California must also be thanked for granting access to many of its rare documents and archives, and for approving the citation of two archives in this project, including the appendix written by Pierre-Narcisse Guérin.

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In sum, I extend my sincerest thanks to all of the individuals and organisations tied to this project.

Introduction

As the title suggests, this study focuses on the paragone, which is the rivalry between the arts. This rivalry began in classical antiquity, and that tradition has prompted and informed the theoretical and practical relationship between the arts ever since. During the Renaissance, visual artists responded to the widely held belief that the literary arts were superior to their own, and participated in literary and other disputations over which medium could best express the glory of God and nature. The debate was generally inconclusive and continued in various permutations into the nineteenth century and beyond. While the paragone tradition has been well-acknowledged in Renaissance art historical scholarship, its post-Renaissance continuation has not been documented as well, nor adequately identified, even in scholarship that focuses on competition or inter-arts relationships.

To date, no study has existed that adequately addresses the paragone's evolution in the nineteenth century; it is this surprising omission that my dissertation confronts. For quite some time, there has been considerable scholarly interest in word and image relationships, but my approach is distinctive in that it deals with a competitive relationship exclusively, and considers paragonising relationships in the nineteenth century, in relation to the broader context of the paragone's history. This historical dimension can hardly be avoided, since many nineteenth-century artists, even including some who ardently professed their modernity, were receptive to the legacy and interpretation of Renaissance masters, whom they admired on their own terms and for their own ends.[1]

A paragonising artist can be one of any era or discipline, and is not limited by tradition or the so-called 'canon' of art history. Very simply, a paragonising artist is an artist who takes a competitive approach to artistic production, in theory, practice, or both. Some competitive artists are only mildly devoted to the concept of competition, and often

[1] Some sources that deal with the legacy of the Renaissance in the nineteenth century include the following: Michael Levey, "Botticelli and Nineteenth-Century England," Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes 23:3-4 (1960): 291-306; S. Lichtenstein, "Delacroix's Copies After Raphael: I," Burlington Magazine CXIII:822 (Sept. 1971): 528-33; Lene Østermark-Johansen, Sweetness and Strength: The Reception of Michelangelo in Late Victorian England (Aldershot: Ashgate, 1998); Martin Rosenberg, Raphael and France: The Artist as Paradigm and Symbol (University Park, PA: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 1995). A primary source on the issue may be found in Walter Pater, The Renaissance: Studies in Art and Poetry, ed. Donald L. Hill (Berkeley, London, and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1980).

simultaneously espouse a ‘sister arts’ approach, whereby the qualities of other art forms are celebrated. On the other hand, paragonising approaches reach the opposite extreme, with artists who are so competitive that they cultivate hostile relationships with, or opinions about, other artists or media. So, in using the term ‘paragonising’ I mean a competitive, inter-arts approach.

In contrast to many recent explorations of word-image relations, as well as traditional comparative studies of the arts, the paragone scholar studies how and why an artist competes to prove or elevate the status of his or her art. This rivalry, and the form it takes, is unique to any given artist engaging in the debate, and can be of considerable utility in any broader effort to understand his or her art. There are many issues of interest to the paragone scholar. For instance, tracking the motives of artists who seek to raise the status of their art, and therefore engage in the paragone, is central to my research. Typically artists have engaged in the paragone during crises, including changes in the hierarchy of the arts, shifting aesthetic theories, cultural and social changes to the status of the artist, personal doubt, political activism, or patriotic endeavours. For this reason, the socio-historic context in which artists live and work is pertinent to the evaluation of their motivation to compete.

My study also offers a methodological model, or interpretational framework, that may be useful to other scholars, with respect to the study of individual artists or writers. Once the parametres of the paragone are made clear, it emerges as a distinct methodology. It can be an important device that aids in appreciating many choices a particular artist might make, with regards to such things as subject matter or stylistic modes of artistic practice. Nevertheless, it is not mutually exclusive to other methodologies, whether theoretical, socio-historical, or otherwise. Since an understanding of the paragone at any point in history requires consideration of earlier contributions to the debate, including literary contributions, these will be considered when appropriate. As we shall see, the writings of Dante Alighieri (ca. 1265-1321), Leonardo da Vinci (1452-1519), Gotthold Ephraim Lessing (1729-81), the Abbé Jean-Baptiste Dubos (1670-1742), Antoine-Chrysostome Quatremère de Quincy (1755-1849),

to mention just a few, contributed to, and expanded upon the forms of the debate, as it took shape in the period under consideration here.[2]

Paragone studies demand both a familiarity with a broad variety of disciplinary approaches, and an acute sensitivity to the historical context of the debates. It is this combination that may have kept the paragone out of the forefront of post-Renaissance art historical study; still, there has been significant research in this area. One of the most important contributors in this field is W.J.T. Mitchell. In his Iconology: Image, Text, Ideology, Mitchell demonstrates the paragone's importance to scholarship, and theorises that its fundamental concerns continue to be played out by successive generations of artists, even in technological media, which is an indication of its potential relevance to a broad range of study.[3]

Rapid changes in the nineteenth-century art world contributed to the significance of the paragone in this century especially. The changing aesthetic theories and ideologies of the *Royal Academy of Arts* (London), the *Académie des beaux-arts* (Paris), and the *École des beaux-arts* (Paris and Rome), contributed to the great instability of artistic genres, and shifting respect for traditional artistic institutions, such as the Salon, thereby affecting both professional and public opinion regarding art's value. Since the French academy was a model that was emulated by most other academies throughout Europe and Britain, it will serve as the central paradigm for academic doctrine that bears relevance to the concerns of competitive artistic practice. As we shall see, academic institutions often espoused and rejected theories or practices that encouraged the survival of the paragone under their institutional umbrellas. It will become clear that these institutions often contradicted themselves, by supporting popular aesthetic theories in which the visual arts were not superior, while at the same time devising educational programs that were designed to promote the visual arts, as the most important media of their day. In a parallel development, the evolution of the art critic into a poet made visual artists vulnerable to writers in increasingly threatening ways. For these reasons, the writings of critics and aesthetic theorists will often be consulted throughout the dissertation. The

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[2] Full names and dates of artists and other individuals will be provided only at first mention.

[3] W.J.T. Mitchell, Iconology: Image, Text, Ideology (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1986). One of the more recent examinations of competition in the arts may be found in Marc Gotlieb, "The Painter's Secret: Invention and Rivalry from Vasari to Balzac," The Art Bulletin LXXXIV:3 (Sept. 2002): 469-490.

number of instances of the paragone 'at work' in the nineteenth century, which I have already documented, indicates its relevance in investigating these artists, writers, and their works.

I will begin with an exploration of some of the highlights of the paragone debate, which will aid in understanding how artists in the dissertation are linked through personal association, and shared aesthetic theories or socio-historical influences. The artists have been carefully chosen to highlight the diversity of the paragonising tactics that an artist might use to further his or her social status, or painting or sculpture's status in the continually evolving hierarchy of the arts. As well, we will examine the most crucial social, historical, or theoretical developments that would lead to the continuation of the paragone at this particular point in art's history.

In the course of my studies, it has become evident that certain motifs and subjects in nineteenth-century painting and sculpture are particularly potent indicators of paragonising approaches to the arts. Of these motifs, the mastery of the *beau idéal*, (or ideal nude), the mythologising of artistic creation in the form of the Pygmalion and Galatea narratives, the depictions of the dancing Salomé, including the apparitions of John the Baptist, and the theme of Medusa functioned especially well as signifiers of the competitive dialogue waged between painters, critics, poets, sculptors, and book illustrators. The proliferation of the *beau idéal*, or mastery of the human figure's ideal representation in painting, provided a strong indication of artistic skill, and therefore bespoke artistic supremacy, especially in early to mid-nineteenth-century painting. This has been acknowledged by such scholars as Thomas Crow, Abigail Solomon-Godeau, and Alex Potts.[4] Still, the idealised nude has not yet been sufficiently considered as a

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[4] On the issue of male nude representations in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries see: Abigail Solomon-Godeau, Male Trouble: A Crisis in Representation (London: Thames and Hudson, 1997), or the more brief study, "The Other Side of *Vertu*: Alternative Masculinities in the Crucible of Revolution," Art Journal (Summer 1997): 55-61. Also pertinent are works by Alex Potts, Flesh and the Ideal: Winckelmann and the Origins of Art History (London and New Haven: Yale University Press, 1994), and "Images of Ideal Manhood in the French Revolution," History Workshop Journal 30 (Autumn 1990): 1-21. For Thomas Crow see "Observations on Style and History in French Painting of the Male Nude, 1785-1794," Visual Culture: Images and Interpretations, eds. Norman Bryson, Michael Ann Holly, and Keith Moxey (Hanover and London: University Press of New England, Wesleyan University Press, 1994): 141-68, and Painters and Public Life in Eighteenth-Century Paris (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1985). For an examination of the male nude from the perspective of homosocial culture in England see Colin Cruise, "'Lovely Devils:' Simeon Solomon and Pre-Raphaelite Masculinity," Re-framing the Pre-Raphaelites: Historical and Theoretical Essays, ed. E. Harding (Aldershot: Scolar, 1996): 195-210, and Michael Hatt's

paragonising theme, which, I will show, is one of its most important dimensions. In the second chapter, I will examine the connection between aesthetic theories ascribing gender to the arts, and contemporary painters who tried to prove the virility and masculinity of their profession, either through theorisation, the depiction of the nude, or the manipulation of the supposed theoretically 'masculine' properties of painting, such as its intellectuality, sublimity, skill, subject matter, and style. In order to frame this complicated issue, which touches upon a myriad of scholarly issues, I will examine the nude in the context of Narcissus-like representations. Artists have long been drawn to the Ovidian narrative of Narcissus, which perfectly embodied the challenge of creating the nude in art. Narcissus represented, for many artists, the very origin of painting, the reason for which will be explained in the second chapter. Naturally, artists who concerned themselves with the competitive features of their art often ruminated on its origins and perceived limits. Consequently, I will take into account the significance of reflections, mirrors, ideal beauty, and other themes associated with this legend.

Consideration of the themes to which paragonising artists have been drawn also has revealed that Ovidian subject matter offered an exceptional variety of points of interest. This brings us to the theme and subject of the dissertation's third chapter, which examines Ovid's account of Pygmalion and the Image in his *Metamorphoses*, as a story that addresses the crux of this rivalry, and which was employed by visual artists to express the superior status of painting or sculpture in the hierarchy of the arts. For instance, painters who depicted the sculptural figure in the midst of her metamorphosis challenged not only the poetic and temporal nature of its literary sources, but also the sculptor's ability to evoke the supernatural transformation as powerfully as could a painter. Several nineteenth-century artists who tackled the Pygmalion subject in this competitive spirit will be treated in this context, including Anne-Louis Girodet-Trioson (1767–1824), Sir Edward Burne-Jones (1833-98), George Frederick Watts (1817-1904), and Jean-Léon Gérôme (1824-1904). I will explore both painted and sculptural

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"Physical Culture: The Male Nude and Sculpture in late Victorian Britain," After the Pre-Raphaelites: Art and Aestheticism in Victorian England, ed. Elizabeth Prettejohn (New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press, 1999): 240-256. And finally, Alison Smith, "Masculinities in Victorian Painting," Art History 20:4 (Dec., 1997): 629-631. Referencing the *beau idéal* by name is Annie Becq, "Esthétique et politique sous le Consultat et l'Empire: le notion de beau idéal," Romantisme 51-54 (1986): 22-37; and also R. Michel, Le Beau idéal ou l'art du concept, exh. cat. (Paris: Musée du Louvre, 1989).

treatments of this theme, which will draw out the ramifications of Ovid's stories for artists working in diverse media.

In the fourth chapter of this study, I will argue that the popularity of Salomé subject matter in the latter half of the nineteenth century similarly represented a competitive approach to artistic production. Specifically, the legacy of Gustave Moreau's (1826-98) representations of Salomé engendered a host of competitive responses to his portrayal of this subject, such that Salomé became a signifier of artistic rivalry, as much as she was of the *femme fatale*. Too often misread or ignored in scholarship is the volley of Salomé subject matter between painters, illustrators, and writers of both French and British origin, which demonstrates the considerable artistic exchange between these two nations at the end of the nineteenth century. I will address how and why French artists and writers chose the theme of Salomé to engage in the paragone debate, and how they encouraged others, especially across the English Channel, to meet this artistic challenge. Additionally, my research has revealed an important conflation of the identities of Medusa and Salomé in the nineteenth century, which transformed the latter subject into an even more loaded tool in the manipulation of subjects for the paragone debate.

The study of the paragone in the nineteenth century is made especially fertile by artists like Moreau, who still looked to Renaissance masters, such as Leonardo, Michelangelo Buonarroti (1475-1564), and Raphael Sanzio (1483-1520), who were central to the flourishing of the paragone in the Renaissance, and competed with each other through their subject matter, writings on aesthetic theories, and display of artistic virtue. During research for my Master's thesis, I discovered that Moreau, and his compatriot Eugène Delacroix (1798-1863), methodically borrowed the paragonising tactics that they believed were employed by Leonardo and Michelangelo in their rivalries with other artists.[5] In this regard, I examined specific subject matter from Moreau's work, style of painting, and aesthetic theory, in order to ascertain his approach to the paragone. Nevertheless, there was no room in my Master's thesis to assess Moreau's influence on the broader debate--in other words, how other artists or writers took a

[5] Sarah J. Lippert, Gustave Moreau and the Paragone: The Legacy of the *Ut Pictura Poesis* Tradition in the Work of a Nineteenth-Century Painter, M.A. Thesis. (London: The University of Western Ontario, 2002). See also Lippert, "Gustave Moreau's Dying Poets: A Message to the Art Critic," Images and Imagery: Frames, Borders, Limits--Interdisciplinary Perspectives, eds. Corrado Federico, Leslie Boldt-Irons, and Ernesto Virgulti (New York: Peter Lang Publishing, Inc., 2005): 45-78.

competitive approach to their own art, in response to the paragonising challenge manifested in his work. Similarly, the scope of the thesis did not explore Moreau's reaction to these later critical and artistic responses to his work. In sum, this dissertation illuminates the continued instances of the paragone in nineteenth-century France and England. In reaching this objective, it generates a more comprehensive understanding of the artists who engaged in the debate, and the subjects that were exploited towards these ends.

Chapter 1

A Brief History of the Paragone

Antiquity

Before we begin with a synopsis of the paragone's history, it is necessary to acknowledge that the following provides a critically brief summary of the highlights of artistic competition in art and theory since antiquity. It is beyond the scope of this work to provide a complete history, nor is it necessary to discuss all of the most important examples of the debate in theory and practice, in order to appreciate the trajectory of its history. Rather, I have highlighted certain works and theories that seem to me to demonstrate the nature of the debate leading up to the nineteenth century. It must also be kept in mind that this introduction does not necessarily correlate to the nineteenth-century examples of the paragone that will be examined in the upcoming chapters. Discussion of artists, ideas, and trends in the history of the paragone leading up to the nineteenth century is, therefore, not meant as a claim that any of the artists being examined were familiar with the history of the paragone discussed in this chapter. Where appropriate, I will address an artist's familiarity with this history on a case by case basis in subsequent chapters.

As I have already established, the paragone may be defined generally as the rivalry between the arts. While artists did not take up the *paragone* in great numbers until the Italian Renaissance, its history began in antiquity. For instance, in sixth-century Greece, Simonides of Ceos, according to both Cicero and Plutarch, became the first ancient writer to compare poetry and painting. Simonides viewed poetry and painting as two different expressions of essentially visual imagery, and his famous epigram "painting is mute poetry and poetry is a speaking picture" provided the basis for the theory of the sister arts.[6] This theory was founded on the premise that the arts of painting and poetry shared similar objectives and content, although they differed in their means and manner of expression.[7] Correspondingly, later theorists endorsed the correspondences between

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[6] Both Plutarch and Cicero credited Simonides with this contribution. In the De Gloria Atheniensium Plutarch quoted Simonides. Other ancient writers to subsequently compare the arts include Cicero (Tusculans), Longinus (On the Sublime), Plato (The Republic), and Aristotle (Poetics). Henryk Markiewicz, "*Ut Pictura Poesis*...A History of the *Topos* and the Problem," New Literary History 18:3 (Spring 1987): 536.

[7] Rensselaer W. Lee, "*Ut Pictura Poesis*: The Humanistic Theory of Painting," The Art Bulletin 22 (1940): 197. This article provides a summary of the evolution of *ut pictura poesis* from antiquity on, including an examination of the aesthetic theory that accompanied and influenced the *ut pictura poesis* tradition. For an

the arts, and often ignored their unique strengths. Writing in the first century CE, the poet Horace recorded the equally famous statement '*ut pictura poesis'* or 'as is painting so is poetry,' in his Epistle to the Pisos.[8] Horace's maxim provided the basis for an almost infinite series of comparisons between the sister arts, and became the root of most subsequent theories regarding the nature of the arts and their relationship to one another.[9] Throughout history, many artists, poets, and writers have challenged the theory of the sister arts, which refused to acknowledge one art as superior to another, (especially in the relationship between painting and poetry). When differences between the arts were observed by proponents of the sister arts theory, painting was often described as being dependent upon poetry. Therefore, artists and writers who believed in the sister arts approach generally tried to harmoniously coexist with one another, believing that the arts were naturally meant to emulate each other. In contrast, paragonising artists or writers typically rejected this singular identity, and took a competitive approach to proving the merits of their art, even sometimes emulating another art as an attempt to rival that art form. The sister arts and paragonising approaches are often complicated, nevertheless, by the fact that imitation often begins, both in art and life, as the greatest compliment, and many competitive artists were first motivated by great admiration for those with whom they may have chosen to compete.

Scholars such as Rensselaer Lee and Henryk Markiewicz suggest that neither Simonides nor Horace probably intended for these little sayings to have had such an impact on inter-arts relationships, inasmuch as we can guess their intentions. But these ancient thinkers were not the only ones to address the arts as part of an epistemology. For instance, Plato (ca. 428/427–348/347 BCE) and Aristotle (384-322 BCE) both

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extended view of the study by the same author, see *Ut Pictura Poesis*: The Humanistic Theory of Painting (New York: Norton, 1967). See also Paul and Svetlana Alpers, "*Ut Pictura Noesis*? Criticism in Literary Studies and Art History," New Literary History 3:3 (Spring 1972): 437-458. See also David Scott, Pictorialist Poetics: Poetry and the Visual Arts in Nineteenth-Century France (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988).

[8] Horace, The Art of Poetry,: The Poetical Treatises of Horace, Vida, and Boileau, ed. Albert S. Cook, trans. Howes, Christopher Pitt, William Soames (Boston: Ginn and Company, 1892): 27.

[9] Markiewicz, "*Ut Pictura Poesis*" 535. Although it is likely that Horace never intended for his expression to mean that the arts should imitate each other's content and means of expression, his statement nevertheless remained the justification for those who encouraged this sister arts approach to the doctrine of *ut pictura poesis*. For instance, Abbé Jean Baptiste Dubos's Réflexions critiques sur la poësie et la peinture (Paris: Pissot, 1770) was peppered with references to Horace, who was treated as an authority on the nature of the arts. See also Wesley Trimpi, "The Meaning of Horace's *Ut Pictura Poesis*," Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes 36 (1973): 1-34.

considered the nature of the arts within their complex theories, (although neither philosopher felt the arts important enough to address as his primary subject). Plato, like Simonides, set up a competitive relationship between the arts, where he consigned the visual arts to the lowest level of creative production. In fact, according to Plato, there was virtually no creative dimension to the visual arts at all. Because he contended that the material world was merely a reflection of an ideal, immaterial, and unseen reality, those who imitated the material world, such as painters and sculptors, were reduced to 'imitators,' (in the most pejorative sense of the word), and were, essentially, liars. Plato's artist merely copied an imperfect material imitation of an ideal form.[10] On the other hand, Aristotle's assertion that beauty could reside in material form lent credence to the artist's aim of creating beautiful artworks. But even Aristotle, in his Poetics (IX, 1-3), held that poetry was more philosophical, because it dealt with truths, rather than just natural fact.[11] Since truth was generally the ultimate goal of such epistemologies, poetry would have been more respected, even in Aristotle's system. In sum, the ancient artists were esteemed enough that some of them are still known by name to us today, such as Apelles (ca. 332-329 BCE), Praxiteles (ca. 4th century BCE), and Polykleitos (ca. late 5th to early 4th centuries BCE), even though they were not as famous as the rhetoricians of their day. Likewise, the first efforts to record art's history originate in antiquity, such as Pliny the Elder (23-79 CE), who preserved the story of Apelles in his Natural History.[12] While these ancient theories demonstrate that inter-arts concerns were already under consideration at this time, in Chapters 1 and 2, I will also address the accounts of visual

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[10] Plato, Great Dialogues of Plato, trans., W.H.D. Rouse, ed., Eric H. Warmington and Philip G. Roush (New York: Mentor, 1984). See Book X of the Republic for Plato's discussion of artists. See also Rupert Lodge, Plato's Theory of Art, (New York: Russell and Russell, 1975). Plato describes the senses, through which the visual arts are perceived, as untrustworthy. He writes: "Take our perceptions then. I can point to some of these which do not provoke thought to reflect upon them, because we are satisfied with the judgement of the senses. But in other cases perception seems to yield no trustworthy result, and reflection is instantly demanded…" From Plato, Republic*: Book V*, trans. Francis M. Cornford (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1945): 238-9.

[11] For Aristotle's discussion of imitation and the arts see Poetics, The Basic Works of Aristotle, ed. R. McKeon, trans. Ingram Bywater (New York: Random House, 1941): 1459^{a}28. For an analysis of Aristotle's theory of the arts see Garry Hagberg, "Aristotle's "Mimesis" and Abstract Art," Philosophy 59:229 (Jul., 1984): 365-371. See also Samuel Henry Butcher, Aristotle's Theory of Poetry and Fine Art, with a Critical Text and Translation of the Poetics (New York: Dover, 1951). For theories of art in general see works such as Moshe Barasch, Theories of Art: From Plato to Winckelmann (New York: New York University Press, 1985).

[12] Apelles and Pliny will be discussed at length in the next chapter.

artists competing with one another in antiquity, and how these legends shaped the paragone.[13]

The Medieval Era

Evidence of the changing status of the artist during Dante's era is evident in the traditional views of artists and art up until the Proto-Renaissance. In the medieval era, the notion of '*ut pictura poesis'* was still prevalent, and poetry, (as a rhetorical art), was generally upheld as the superior art form, based on the notion that it required intellect and learning to appreciate, whereas the visual arts did not. The visual arts were considered beneficial to the lower classes, which were predominantly illiterate, and could therefore gain from religious or morally didactic images. This difference in purpose between literary and visual art was also reflected in their modes of production. It was appropriate for visual art to appeal to the lower classes, since all visual art is in some way produced through physical labour; whereas the mental labour of writing was associated with the intellectual pursuits of the literate and educated elite.[14]

The outbreak of a full-blown paragone later in the Renaissance was inspired by a series of circumstances in medieval society, which nurtured such controversies. Prior to the fifteenth century, with the exception of luminaries such as Giotto di Bondone (ca. 1267-1337), as evidenced by his appearance, along with Cimabue, in Dante's text, relatively few artists enjoyed individual acclaim, and even fewer were known by name. In general, a pious and humble approach to art-making made the celebration of individual accomplishment uncommon. For the most part, the artist was considered a tool through which the creative power of God worked, so most artists were not particularly inspired to take personal credit for their own work. In addition, the strength of the guild system, and the continued treatment of artists as craftsmen, made it more difficult for an artist to 'break out' on his or her own. A guild, being akin to a modern union, protected its members, educated them, lined up work, and therefore offered a measure of security. Education within the guild system also focused on practical training, rather than

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[13] An examination of how Aristotle and Plato's theories were absorbed into Renaissance theory and the paragone is discussed at length throughout Leatrice Mendelsohn's book, *Paragoni*: Benedetto Varchi's *Due Lezzioni* and Cinquecento Art Theory (Ann Arbor, Mich.: UMI Research Press, 1982).
[14] Markiewicz, "*Ut Pictura Poesis*" 536. See Augustine, In Ioannis Evangelium, 24.2.

theoretical or intellectual learning. However, members had to pay dues, subordinate themselves to the guild's hierarchy, and refuse work independent of the guild. The system of apprenticeship, and the terrifying prospect of competing with a guild for jobs, made an independent career challenging. Slowly this situation started to change as the guild system became increasingly restrictive and less popular.[15]

Even though he was not primarily concerned with the arts, Dante presented a version of divine truth in his epic poem the The Divine Comedy (ca. 1310), which tangentially addressed the status of medieval artists.[16] Essentially, he prophesied the paragone debate that would become prominent during the Italian Renaissance, as he chastised those who put too much faith in visual imagery: "O ye proud Christians, wretched and weary, who, sick in mental vision, put trust in backward steps" (*Purgatorio*, Canto X).[17] In another passage, he undermined the fame and success of Proto-Renaissance artists, (indeed the very phenomenon of artistic virtue), whom he felt relied on the fickleness of celebrity, by saying: "O empty glory of human powers!...Cimabue thought to hold the field in painting, and now Giotto has the cry, so that the other's fame is dim," (*Purgatorio*, Canto XI). Dante, like Horace, believed in the didactic function of poetry, and its instructive value.[18] As a poet, Dante demonstrated in his writings a bias against the visual arts, and especially that of painting. In particular, Dante's criticism of celebrities mirrored the shifting status of the artist at this time. The medieval artist would be better described as a craftsman or a physical labourer, but during the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, artists were increasingly developing careers based on recognition of their own names, modes of working, and accomplishments. Thanks to his popularity in the Renaissance, Dante

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[15] Richard Turner, Renaissance Florence: The Invention of a New Art (Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall, 1997): 47-67.

[16] Another scholar of inter-arts relationships who discusses the early impact of Dante is James Hall in his book The World of Sculpture: The Changing Status of Sculpture from the Renaissance to the Present Day (London: Chatto & Windus, 1999): 10-14. Hall's approach focuses on sculpture specifically, and addresses the history of sculpture from antiquity to the present, rather than just the nineteenth century. As a scholar of the status of sculpture, Hall's approach necessarily shares a lot with mine, such as by looking at the way that the arts were theoretically limited, the history of the paragone, the important figures in the debate, and the methods of artistic competition.

[17] Dante Alighieri, The Divine Comedy, trans. Carlyle-Okey-Wicksteed (New York: Vintage Books, 1959): 251. The significance of these passages to the paragone was brought to my attention by Dr. James Miller of The University of Western Ontario.

[18] Lee, "Theory of Painting" 228. For Leonardo's interest in Dante see Charlotte F. Johnson, "Leonardo and Dante," American Imago XXIX (1972): 177-185. For Michelangelo's interest in Dante see Bernadine Barnes, "Metaphorical Painting: Michelangelo, Dante, and the 'Last Judgment,'" Art Bulletin (March 1995): 65-81.

became one of the figures with whom visual artists chose to compete, in order to surpass his fame and genius. Naturally, these artists were spurred on by the magnitude of Dante's epic poem, which threatened to remain the definitive and all encompassing version of a sacred vision, describing God and heaven in enviable detail. Many of the artists that I will examine had read or studied Dante's epic poem; moreover, the figure of Dante enjoyed renewed popularity throughout the nineteenth century, especially amongst the Romantics in France, and the Pre-Raphaelites in England.[19]

The Renaissance

The transition to the early Modern era marks the dramatic shift from studying anonymous artists to celebrities. Many circumstances contributed to this shift, from the rise of secular patronage, to the growth and spread of humanism. With such a degree of change, it is not surprising that the paragone was most profoundly impacted by Renaissance history, and so, we will delve into this history in somewhat greater depth.

The paragone helped Renaissance artists to raise themselves up out of the medieval craft or guild system, and to achieve personal rather than collective acclaim. Poetry was not yet accepted as a 'liberal art' in the early Renaissance, but its literary character made it comparable to rhetoric, which was established as a liberal art. The ancient belief in poetry's ability to express philosophical ideas contributed to its alignment with the more esteemed rhetorical arts.[20] As a result, when painters or their advocates tried to vie with poets for cultural status, they often emphasised painting's intellectual demands, and the didactic value of its subject matter. Increasingly throughout the Renaissance, individual artists and theoreticians began to publicly debate the paragone. Artists became keen to use ancient theory to raise their social status and/or the status of their art, which coincided with a new interest in writing artistic treatises, usually involving a defence of the merits of one's art, as well as methods to exploit its most

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[19] Aida Audeh,"Rodin's *Gates of Hell*: Sculptural Illustration of Dante's Divine Comedy," Rodin: A Magnificent Obsession (London: Merrell Holberton Publishers, 2001): 93-126. Audeh observes that Dante had been revived in the writings and art of the Romanticists, and came to be viewed in France as the archetype of artistic genius. See also James H. Rubin, "Delacroix's Dante and Virgil as a Romantic Manifesto: Politics and Theory in the Early 1820s," Art Journal 52:2 (Summer 1993): 48-58.
[20] Lee, "Theory of Painting" 203.

valued goals and attributes. For instance, Cennino Cennini's (ca. 1370-1440) type of artistic treatise, titled Il libro dell'arte of 1437, was concerned with the practical modes of artistic production. It would be eclipsed by more theoretical treatises, such as those by Leon Battista Alberti (1404-72) and Leonardo. Still, the roots of the humanistic version of the artist were present in Cennini's early-Renaissance treatise. Cennini encouraged artists to approach their work as though they were professionals in "theology, philosophy, or other theories."[21] The obsession that would grip art-theorists into the Post-modern era is also found in his writings, which is his recommendation that artists should be instructed by nature. Cennini wrote: "Mind you, the most perfect steersman that you can have, and the best helm, lies in the triumphal gateway of copying nature. And this outdoes all other models; and always rely on this with a stout heart, especially as you begin to gain some judgment in draftsmanship."[22] Cennini's focus on drawing and nature would become the staple of the European academic systems.

Despite the strengthening of the sister arts theory throughout the Renaissance, which sought parallels between painting and poetry, it was clear that painting was still considered a craft rather than a liberal art. This resulted in the visual arts remaining relatively low in the hierarchy of the arts, creating a situation that incited Renaissance artists seeking public attention, and the allegiance of wealthy patrons, to endeavour to change this hierarchy, so as to make the visual arts on par with the liberal arts. The hierarchy of the arts was not codified, but was based on writings and social practices that addressed the value of art and artists to society. However, the liberal arts were solidly established in the later Middle Ages, and included the following: grammar, dialectic, rhetoric, geometry, arithmetic, music, and astronomy, although these would be modified later to include fields such as poetry.[23] Many Renaissance artists resented their exclusion from these noble realms of intellectual endeavours. For example, Leonardo addressed this specific issue, saying, "[P]ainting is to be preferred to all other occupations, because it embraces all the forms that are and are not found in nature. It is to be more praised and exalted than music, which is only concerned with pitch…Therefore, seeing that you have

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[21] Cennino d'Andrea Cennini, The Craftsman's Handbook: Il Libro dell' Arte, trans. Daniel V. Thompson, Jr. (New York: Dover Publications, Inc., 1933): 16.
[22] Cennini, The Craftsman's Handbook 15.
[23] Mendelsohn, Varchi 43.

placed music amongst the liberal arts, either you should place painting there or remove music."[24]

Around 1435-36, Alberti wrote a treatise titled On Painting, which offered guidance to Renaissance artists in their efforts to achieve greater notoriety and respect. Alberti advised artists to produce 'history painting,' which was founded upon *istoria*, or narrative.[25] Alberti's goal was to elevate the painter's social status, by encouraging him to produce intellectual and philosophical subjects, rather than leaving these subjects to the philosopher or poet. Through his treatise, Alberti responded to changing views of artists and other 'cultural producers,' who were being increasingly celebrated, as a result of the popularity of Renaissance humanism. Correspondingly, his ideas reflect the intellectual trends of his day. Alberti's treatise also challenged painting's lesser status, by devising numerous techniques to bring about its celebration. His advice could be very specific, even coaching painters on how many figures to put in a painting, and how to treat the painting as an illusionistic window into the visible world.[26] In order for artists to raise their status from craftsmen to liberal artists, Alberti recommended a broad education in the arts and letters. According to Alberti, it was essential that painters become extremely well-versed in learned subjects, mathematics, and the scientific application of colour.[27] Moreover, a painter was to produce didactic and socially relevant works, so as to give artists a moral and eminent social function.

Alberti's treatise was so influential that history painting remained the most esteemed genre well into the twentieth century, and its popularity in the Renaissance helped to raise the status of painters, and that of painting in the hierarchy of the arts. By the time that academies of art were being founded in sixteenth-century Italy, history painting had become the central goal of academic painters, (meaning members of official artistic institutions), who wanted to hold the highest level of achievement in the visual arts. In

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[24] Leonardo on Painting, trans. Martin Kemp and Margaret Walker, intro. and ed. Martin Kemp (London and New Haven: Yale University Press, 1989): 37.

[25] Alberti's first version of the treatise, titled On Painting, was written in Latin, but he clearly intended it to be used by artists, because the second version was in the vernacular Italian: the Della Pittura of 1436.

[26] Leon Battista Alberti, On Painting, trans. Cecil Grayson, intro. and notes Martin Kemp (Penguin Classics, 1991).

[27] A study that addresses the education of the Renaissance artist is Charles Dempsey, "Some Observations on the Education of Artists in Florence and Bologna During the Later Sixteenth Century," Art Bulletin 62 (1980): 552-69.

sum, Alberti became one of the most influential figures to raise the artist's status from mere craftsman to celebrity. However, despite the considerable impact of his treatise, Alberti unwittingly made painting dependent on poetry, by insisting on the pre-eminence of *istoria*, or narrative.[28] For Alberti, art could become more prestigious if it concerned itself with the most respected narratives of Christian and antique sources, and if the artist studied nature, as part of God's creation, to represent these grand subjects.[29] This meant that artists were consigned to an imitative role--imitating both the word and the natural world.

Another aspect of the paragone debate in the Italian Renaissance was reflected in the struggle of artists to develop individual styles, in order to achieve personal rather than collective acclaim, and to set each apart from the lesser craftsmen, who were trained to work alike. Also, the humanist interest in the individual, and the belief in his or her importance in the world, brought about the recognition of, and appreciation for, the individual artist. For instance, Giorgio Vasari's Lives of the Most Excellent Painters, Sculptors, and Architects (c. 1550), which celebrated individual artists, attests to the success that artists achieved in promoting personal genius.[30]

Artists were eager to fight for a higher status in Renaissance society, as increased secularisation and the spread of humanism took hold. The rise of secular and civic patronage of the arts and letters, throughout the Renaissance, testifies to these trends. Patrons, including guilds, wealthy families, rulers, and the church, seeking to display their 'magnificence,' competed with one another to commission the most impressive and prestigious artworks and buildings. Even though artists were often pawns in this system of patronage, it provided a way for them to attain even more renown, as a patron could

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[28] Alberti, On Painting 93. Alberti writes: "As the most important part of the painter's work is the 'historia,' in which there should be every abundance and beauty of things…"

[29] Alberti, On Painting 91. In Alberti's opinion, the artist must choose the best examples from nature: "So let us always take from nature whatever we are about to paint, and let us always choose those things that are most beautiful and worthy."

[30] Giorgio Vasari's The Lives of the Artists, trans. Julia Conaway Bondanella and Peter Bondanella (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991), in which he documented the success of the most popular artists of the period, reflected this new respect for the individual artist in its biographical methodology. In focusing on biographies, he emphasised the growing appreciation for intellect, virtue, genius, and skill in visual artists, thereby contributing to their rising social status. A modern Italian edition has appeared in Le vite de' più eccellenti pittori, scultori e architettori, ed. Carlo Ludovico Ragghianti (Milan: Rizzoli, 1942-9). For a study on some of Vasari's theories see Frederika H. Jacobs, "Vasari's Vision of the History of Painting: Frescoes in the Casa Vasari, Florence," Art Bulletin 66 (Sept., 1984): 399-416.

laud the artist's accomplishments as his or her own. So there was a paragone of sorts amongst patrons too, as they began to commission works that would reflect their virtue, and similarly rival the splendour of other commissions. One of the most famous examples of this complex set of dueling relationships, and one that demonstrates the nature of the paragone in the Renaissance between visual artists, was in the competition for the commission of the bronze doors for the Baptistery in Florence in 1401. Indeed, this competition contributed greatly to the theme of rivalry in the history of Renaissance art and architecture. On this occasion, the finalists, who were Lorenzo Ghiberti (1378-1455) and Filippo Brunelleschi (1377-1446), both submitted bronze panels depicting the *Sacrifice of Isaac*, with the winner securing what would turn out to be nearly a career's worth of work on the Baptistery's doors. When Ghiberti, who was relatively untrained in the process of bronze casting, won the competition against the more experienced bronze master Brunelleschi, the latter was said to have been so put out that he abandoned sculpture altogether.[31] Accounts of the bitterness between these artists became a cliché of paragonising legends thereafter.

As Rona Goffen explains in her book Renaissance Rivals, the revival of antiquity in the Renaissance also contributed to the boon in paragonising activity. Goffen theorises that because the revival of antiquity drove artists to imitate the ancients, this in turn led to a desire to rival these illustrious fathers of art, and for artists to surpass one another in imitating their predecessors.[32] Likewise, the sense of rediscovery that pervaded cities like Renaissance Rome made it feel as though, even if it may not have been always historically the circumstance, that antiquity was being reborn in the artworks of a new

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[31] Ghiberti and Brunelleschi apparently disagreed on the results of the competition. In his Commentaries, Ghiberti claimed that he won the competition, but defenders of Brunelleschi would contend that he voluntarily withdrew from the commission, preferring not to work with Ghiberti. Turner, Renaissance Florence 40-41. For more on the competition see Vasari's chapters on Ghiberti and Brunelleschi from the Lives 85-8, 115. The rivalry did not end there, as Brunelleschi was commissioned by the *Opera del Duomo* to build the dome for the Duomo, (Sta. Maria del Fiore), which literally overshadowed the Baptistery where Ghiberti's doors would be installed. Turner, Renaissance Florence 69-72. Also occurring at this time was the lengthy process of filling the niches of Orsanmichele in Florence with statues, representing each of the guilds in the city. The variety of media and styles, including marble, bronze, Gothic, and Renaissance features, testifies to the fact that the guilds were competing, based on their resources, for the prestige of commissioning the most impressive works in Florence.

[32] This thesis is discussed throughout Rona Goffen, Renaissance Rivals: Michelangelo, Leonardo, Raphael, Titian (London and New Haven: Yale University Press, 2002). For another examination of Leonardo's competitive approach see E. Panofsky, The Codex Huygens and Leonardo's Art Theory (Studies of the Warburg Institute, XIII) (London: Warburg Institute, 1940).

breed of competitive artists, who were keen to investigate and acknowledge their ability to reflect antiquity in their works.[33] In his Lives, Vasari likened the return to the antique style in the arts to an epiphany, observing that many antique monuments had long been readily available for such a discovery to be made, but it was the attitude towards them that changed:

> Before then [1250], during the years after Rome was sacked and devastated and swept by fire, men had been able to see the remains of arches and colossi, statues, pillars, and carved columns; but until the period we are discussing they had no idea how to use or profit from this fine work. However, the artists who came later, being perfectly able to distinguish between what was good and what was bad, abandoned the old way of doing things and started once again to imitate the works of antiquity as skillfully and carefully as they could.[34]

On the other hand, Vasari later implied that the early Renaissance artists did not have enough examples from antiquity to fully bring art back to the perfection that it had achieved in antiquity. It was only in the art of the final phase, in his progression of Renaissance style, that art was able to rival that of antiquity. The desire to mimic antiquity was fuelled by the ongoing unearthing of antiquities. In the preface to Part 3 of his Lives, Vasari listed several ancient works that Renaissance artists had rediscovered, including the *Laocoön*, a *Hercules*, the *Belvedere Torso*, a *Venus*, an *Apollo*, and a *Cleopatra*, which he mentions were also described by Pliny.[35] Supposedly, these were the greatest examples left by the ancients, and they rose from the soil like a phoenix out of the ashes in the Renaissance. By alleging that ancient art was perfect art, Vasari identified the revival of antiquity as the defining discovery that led 'modern' artists to finally possess the best examples, by which Renaissance art could be judged.[36] Clearly

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[33] On this expansive issue see Leonard Barkan, Unearthing the Past: Archaeology and Aesthetics in the Making of Renaissance Culture (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1999).
[34] Vasari, Lives, preface to part 1.
[35] Vasari, Lives 279.
[36] Vasari, Lives 297. He wrote:

> The artisans who followed them succeeded after seeing the excavation of some of the most famous antiquities…which exhibit in their softness and harshness the expressions of real flesh copied from the most beautiful details of living models and endowed with certain movements which do not distort them but lend them motion and the utmost grace. And these statues caused the

Vasari was responding to trends that had already taken root; yet, his text heightened the artist's dependence on the ancients. The only artist to surpass the ancients, according to Vasari, was Michelangelo, because he was able to combine the best of antique and modern art in his own work. Of course, the rivalry between Renaissance artists and those of antiquity was only a short leap to the rivalry that this would foster amongst contemporary figures, who competed with each other to surpass antiquity.

Further escalating the paragonising fervour in the Renaissance was Benedetto Varchi (1502-65), who called for a public disputation on the merits of the arts. His writings, which were later published as the Due Lezzioni (1550), are studied by Leatrice Mendelsohn, who has carefully dissected Varchi's 'call to arms.'[37] Varchi nurtured the paragone debate by asking high profile figures, such as Leonardo and Michelangelo, to write letters defending the merits of their art, which he intended to publicly debate; Varchi's intentions and the results of this event will be discussed shortly.[38]

Artists did not just respond to the paragone artistically, as we have seen with Cennini. The first major Italian Renaissance paragonising text was Leonardo's treatment in his treatise on painting, which he worked on throughout his career. After Leonardo's death, the theoretical treatise remained unfinished, but parts of it were disseminated throughout the sixteenth century under the title the Codex Urbinas.[39] Leonardo became the first Renaissance artist to leave behind a documented theoretical approach to the paragone, wherein he advocated painting's supremacy over poetry and sculpture.[40] In 1651, Leonardo's treatise, having been illustrated by Poussin, was published in Italian and

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> disappearance of a certain dry, crude, and clear-cut style which was bequeathed to this craft through excessive study…

With regards to models for painters to follow, and the qualities that set Raphael apart, Vasari cites Apelles and Zeuxis as the exemplars of the best in the art of painting:

> Raphael of Urbino, who studied the efforts of both the ancient and modern masters, taking the best elements from them all; and, by assimilating them, he enriched the art of painting with the kind of complete perfection reflected in the ancient works of Apelles and Zeuxis and his work equalled theirs.

Lives 280. Alberti also discussed such figures. On Painting 93.

[37] See Benedetto Varchi, Opera di Benedetto Varchi (Trieste: Lloyd Austriaco, 1859).

[38] See Varchi's Due Lezzioni, and Mendelsohn's study on Varchi *Paragoni*.

[39] Leonardo's student and heir Francesco Melzi organised his master's writings into this manuscript, which was widely circulated throughout the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Leonardo on Painting 1-2.

[40] For a synopsis of Leonardo's contribution to the paragone see Mendelsohn, Varchi 38-9, 44-5.

French, and was re-published in both French and English in the nineteenth century, thereby rejuvenating interest in the Renaissance master's theories.[41]

Leonardo's text tackled centuries of western thinking that maintained painting's inferiority to poetry, and was the first serious challenge to the sister arts tradition. Leonardo defended painting as the highest art form amongst the arts, and his rebellious sentiments were voiced when he reversed Simonides's famous epigram to say "If you assert that painting is dumb poetry, then the painter may call poetry blind painting."[42] The Della Pittura included numerous arguments supporting painting's superiority over all other art forms, based on its comparative difficulty in execution, the intellectual skill required of a talented painter, the superiority of the sense of sight over that of hearing, and the greater expressive ability of visual, rather than auditory, stimuli to affect an individual. These theories were also manifested in his work, as Leonardo created paintings that were designed to rival sculpture, reflecting his personal rivalry with Michelangelo, (who identified himself as a sculptor, despite his skills in painting, poetry, and architecture). For example, Leonardo contended that the fact that the sculptor needed to exert himself more physically in his work was evidence that he was more akin to a craftsman, and less intellectual and refined than the painter.[43] Leonardo may have had his rival in mind when formulating these arguments, since Michelangelo was notoriously unkempt and unconcerned with his appearance.[44]

Artists in the sixteenth century, like Leonardo, predominantly justified the status of the visual arts by emphasising their scientific qualities, relating the importance of painting and sculpture to their respective ability to imitate nature in art, through mathematic and empirical investigation.[45] Empirical study, typically believed to be based

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[41] A new edition, including Poussin's illustrations, was recently published in Leonardo da Vinci, A Treatise on Painting, trans. John Francis Rigaud (Mineola, NY: Dover Publications, Inc., 2005).
[42] Leonardo on Painting 20.
[43] See Leonardo on Painting 38-45.
[44] Ascanio Condivi, The Life of Michelangelo, ed. Hellmut Wolhl, trans. Alice Sedwick Wolh (University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1999): 106. According to Condivi, in his biography of Michelangelo, the artist often slept in his clothes, and would wear them out until they fell apart, because, though he was wealthy enough, he chose to live the humble life of a poor man.
[45] For scholarship on the issue of art as science since the Renaissance see Martin Kemp, The Science of Art: Optical Themes in Western Art from Brunelleschi to Seurat (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1990). For nature in Renaissance art see Jan Bialostocki, "Poussin et le 'Traité de la Peinture' de Leonardo," Actes du colloque international Nicolas Poussin Colloques Internationaux, Sciences humaines, ed. André Chastel (Paris: CNRS, 1960): 133-9.

upon using the eye to perceive the natural world, was therefore dependent on the sense of sight, which helped Leonardo to justify comparing the merits of the senses, as poetry is experienced through the ear, and painting through the eye. Correspondingly, if the eye is superior to the ear, then painting must be superior to poetry. Leonardo's arguments to uphold the power of the eye over the ear were numerous, and many pivoted on the idea that the eye can perceive in an instant what the ear must receive over time. To put it another way, it takes time to express through words in a sequence, for an idea to be conveyed, but the painter can communicate an idea instantaneously, through just seconds of visual comprehension. Another way to name this might be that a literary narrative unfolds over time, (ponderously in Leonardo's opinion), but a painting can be appreciated in one glorious moment. Whereas Leonardo asserted that the ear could be used to study the sciences, or the natural world, the eye, drawing from an Aristotelian respect for the material, was necessary for the study of anatomy, optics, perspective, proportion, etc. In this way, Leonardo equated painting with the liberal arts, which included scientific endeavours, because the painter must rely on an understanding of science, in order to portray the world. Also, the eye is superior to the ear, because it is the sense that most impacts an individual's heart and emotions. This assumption led to one of Leonardo's strongest arguments for the art of painting, which was that the painter can portray something in such a way that the viewer is instantly stricken by its iconic power. For Leonardo, the icon was purely visual, and it was the most powerful image possible.

> Painting moves the senses more rapidly than poetry…And if you were to describe the image of some deities, such writing would never be venerated in the same way as a painted goddess, since votive offerings and various prayers will continually be made to such a picture. Many generations from diverse regions and across the eastern seas will flock to it, and they will beg succour from such a painting but not from writing.[46]

While many scholars have identified Michelangelo as the archetypal artist who argued for the divine origin of artistic genius, it is actually true that both Leonardo and Michelangelo supported this view. Leonardo stated, "Sometimes I will deduce effects from causes and at other times causes from effects, adding also my own conclusions,

[46] Leonardo on Painting 30.

some of which do not arise in this way but may nonetheless be formulated—if the Lord, light of all beings, deigns to illuminate my discourse on light."[47] While Leonardo pursued the study of nature empirically, he contended that it is through this empiricism and understanding of nature that one approaches love and understanding of God. Speaking of 'hypocrites' who criticised painters for studying nature on religious holidays, Leonardo wrote:

> These people reprove painters who on feast-days study things which relate to a true understanding of all the forms found in the works of nature and who solicitously contrive to acquire an understanding of these things to the best of their ability. But let such repressers be silent for this is the way to understand the maker of so many wonderful things and the way to love so great an inventor, for in truth great love is born of thorough knowledge of the beloved…[48]

Leonardo's famous *Mona Lisa*, (ca. 1503-16, also called *La Gioconda*), exemplifies many of the painter's paragonising approaches to the art of painting.[49] Although the portrait genre would otherwise be considered less impressive than history painting, for Leonardo, the image's power lay in its intended audience. In his treatise he explained:

> And if the poet claims that he can inflame men to love...the painter has the power to do the same, and indeed more so, for he places before the lover's eyes the very image of the beloved object (and the lover) often engages with it...which he would not do were the same beauties placed before him by the writer; and so much more (does painting) conquer the minds of men, to love and fall in love with a painting, (even) when it does not portray any living woman.[50]

Leonardo's quote makes room for any possible identification of the portrait's subject. If she is Lisa Gherardini, the wife of Francesco del Gioconda, who was possibly the original patron, then she is the beloved. Yet if she is not a living person, she becomes even more

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[47] Leonardo on Painting 29.
[48] Leonardo on Painting 195.
[49] Leonardo da Vinci, *Mona Lisa*, 1503-6, oil on wood, 77 x 53 cm, Musée du Louvre, Paris, France.
[50] Leonardo on Painting 118. A study specifically on Leonardo's writings may be found in C. Pedretti, The Literary Works of Leonardo da Vinci: A Commentary to Jean Paul Richter's Edition (Oxford: Phaidon, 1977); as well as I. Richter, Paragone: Comparison of the Arts by Leonardo da Vinci (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1949).

captivating. For Leonardo, the viewer could fall in love instantaneously with the subject, and certainly many people have fallen in love with this famous painting. Renowned for depicting the emotions and psychology of his figures, the intimate, and still relatively new, trend of depicting female sitters facing the viewer works to the painter's advantage, as her emotional availability, and the subtle nuances of her depiction, made her hold more power over the viewer. French nineteenth-century artists would have had plenty of access to the work, because it had become a staple of the nation's collection of authentic Italian paintings. It likely entered the estate of the French government when it was acquired by Francis I, who had invited Leonardo to France for the final years of the latter's life. Subsequently, the work became part of the collection shown at the Louvre, where it was displayed in the nineteenth century.[51]

The famous portrait also demonstrates the characteristic *sfumato* technique, aerial perspective, and highly developed *chiaroscuro* that became the hallmarks of Leonardo's work, and part of his arsenal in the battle to raise painting's status. These stylistic features were not simply for aesthetic effect, but rather illustrated the artist's careful study of nature and the sciences. Luba Freedman and Claire Farago have both examined the optical effects in Leonardo's work. Freedman determines that Leonardo's use of *chiaroscuro* and colour was exemplary of his scientific study of optics and light.[52] For her part, Farago links Leonardo's *sfumato* to his scientific evaluation of aerial perspective, and study of nature.[53] *Sfumato*, *chiaroscuro*, and aerial perspective were all used characteristically in *La Gioconda*. The mysterious mountainous background adds to the figure's mystery, and creates more interest than would a typical horizon line. In addition, *chiaroscuro* highlights the folds in the figure's clothing, uniting her as microcosm to the macrocosm, by echoing these winding patterns in the rivers and

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[51] Vasari, Lives 294. Vasari, in his biography of Leonardo, reports that the *Mona Lisa* could be found at Fontainebleau in the possession of the French king Francis I.

[52] Luba Freedman, "The Blurred Horizon in Leonardo's Painting," Gazette des beaux-arts (129:1540): 181-94.

[53] For a comprehensive examination of Leonardo's paragonising activities and theories see Claire Farago, Leonardo da Vinci's Paragone: a critical interpretation with a new edition of the text in the Codex Urbinas (Leiden, New York: E.J. Brill, 1992). Other sources on Leonardo's competitive artistic practice include the following: John Shearman, "Leonardo's Colour and *Chiaroscuro*," Zeitschrift für Kunstgeschichte XXV (1962): 13-47; Shearman, "Maniera as an Aesthetic Ideal," Studies in Western Art: Acts of the Twentieth International Congress of the History of Art (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1963): 200-21.

landscape behind her. Leonardo's perspectival illusionism remained a hallmark of paragonising works into the nineteenth century. In sum, these features of Leonardo's painterly style reflected his scientific study of nature, making him equal, in his view, to a practitioner of the sciences. He made this intention clear when he declared:

> You say that a science is correspondingly more noble to the extent that it embraces a more worthy subject, and accordingly, that a spurious speculation about the nature of God is more valuable than one concerned with something less elevated. In reply we will state that painting, which embraces only the works of God, is more worthy than poetry, which only embraces the lying fictions of the works of man.[54]

An equally significant trend that contributed to the rivalry between artists was the rise of artistic biographies. Vasari's Lives, which we have already discussed, demonstrated the interest in the 'celebrity' of artists, and how carefully they were compared. Other sixteenth-century biographies, such as Ascanio Condivi's (1525-74) authorised biography of Michelangelo, or Benvenuto Cellini's (1500-71) Autobiography, were likewise part of this development. In these accounts of artists's lives, the rivalries and confrontations between artists are often documented, including those between Leonardo and Michelangelo, or Raphael and Michelangelo. Often patrons would hold competitions for commissions, in order to draw out the rival relationships between artists; believing that rivalry was an inherently positive phenomenon, as it motivated artists to create magnificent works, in support of the patron's interests.

Possibly spurred on by his personal rivalry with Leonardo, Michelangelo was another Renaissance artist who participated in the paragone.[55] Although the treatise that Michelangelo intended to write on the arts was never realised, his paragonising arguments have filtered down to us through his poems, and in the writings of others. Possibly inspired by Neo-Platonic philosophy, Michelangelo argued that a sculptor's inspiration was of divine origin. Michelangelo supported the notion that creativity was borne out of the artist's intellect, which would become a central tenet of the paragone

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[54] Leonardo On Painting 32-3.
[55] Vasari claims that the two competed in his Lives 430. He names others, including Bramante as competitors as well (439).

debate in the nineteenth century.[56] This idea would be revealed in a famous poem that Michelangelo gave to Varchi.

When Varchi called for artists and writers to send him letters defending the merits of their arts, Michelangelo chose to defend the art of sculpture. The publication of Varchi's Due Lezzioni was based on two lectures that the author delivered before the *Accademia Fiorentina* in 1547. These lectures demonstrate that, by the mid-sixteenth century, the paragone had become not just a central component of Renaissance artistic practice, but also an important theoretical approach to the creative process. Varchi was not neutral in the paragone debate. Mendelsohn, in her study of Varchi's theories, notes that Varchi and Michelangelo's arguments for sculpture's superiority coincided with a brief moment when sculpture reigned in the hierarchy of the arts.[57] In his first lecture, Varchi championed the art of sculpture, and specifically that of Michelangelo, by responding to a sonnet that Michelangelo had written, (which was called *Non ha l'ottimo artista alcun concetto...*), in order to answer the call that Varchi had sent out to artists and writers.[58] Perhaps challenging Leonardo's support of painting over poetry and sculpture, Michelangelo devised an artistic theory based on sculpture's superiority over the other arts.[59]

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[56] Studying Michelangelo's theory of the arts, Clements cites the artist saying:

> As a faithful guide for my vocation, beauty was given me at/ birth, which is a beacon and mirror for me in both arts; if any/one thinks otherwise, his opinion is wrong. This alone bears the/ eye up to those lofty visions which I am preparing here below/ to paint and sculpt.
> If those of rash and stupid judgement attribute to sense that/ beauty which stirs and bears to heaven every whole *intelletto*, it follows that infirm eyes do not pass from the mortal to the/ divine, nor even eyes fixed firmly on those heights where it is/ a vain hope to ascend without possessing grace.

Cited in Robert J. Clements, Michelangelo's Theory of Art (New York: Gramercy Publishing Company, 1961): 14.

[57] Mendelsohn explains Varchi's bias throughout her *Paragoni*.

[58] For Michelangelo's writings see Complete Poems and Selected Letters of Michelangelo, trans. Creighton Gilbert, ed. Robert N. Linscott (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1963). The first stanza of the sonnet reads: "The best of artists never has a concept/ A single marble block does not contain/ Inside its husk, but to it may attain/ Only if hand follows intellect.//" Cited in f.n. 121 in Condivi, Michelangelo 145. In Italian it is: Non ha l'ottimo artista alcun concetto,/ Ch'un marmot solo in se non circonscriva/ Col suo soverchio, et solo a quello arriva/ La man, che ubbidisce all'intelletto.// Cited in Mendelsohn, Varchi 103.

[59] Howard and Shirley G. Hibbard, Michelangelo (Boulder, CO and Oxford: Westview Press, 1985): 278. In 1547 Michelangelo wrote the following to Varchi:

Because, in the nineteenth century, Michelangelo was perceived to have defended the intellectual nature of artistic production, it is important to outline how this theory was later interpreted.[60] Michelangelo's poem described something called the *concetto*, by which he meant the immaterial creative idea in the artist's mind. From the immaterial idea, the artist, like God, creates by giving shape to the idea in material form. In this way, Michelangelo seemed to illustrate the sculptor's virtue and intellect, as the sculptor ekes the *concetto* or artistic vision out of earthly matter. A clever illustration for the divine origin of artistic genius may appear in Michelangelo's *Creation of Adam*, from the Sistine Chapel in Rome (c. 1510).[61] Adam, representative of all humankind, is about to be transformed by God's touch, such that the figures become a metaphor for the transference of God-like divine genius from God himself to the artist/man. Since antiquity, artistic creation had been equated with god-like creative powers, as the artist, like a god, creates something from nothing. So, the *Creation of Adam* perfectly encapsulates, even if unintentionally, Michelangelo's theory of art, proving that the origin of all creativity and genius is a mental and divinely bestowed gift. The relevance of this

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> In my opinion painting is to be considered the better the more it approaches relief, and relief is to be considered the worse the more it approaches painting: and therefore I used to feel that sculpture was the lantern of painting, and that there was the difference between them as between the sun and the moon.

Michelangelo then goes on to explain that he has come to see painting and sculpture more like equals, since he had read Varchi's discussion that the two are the same. We may question Michelangelo's earnestness here, since he continues by insulting those who have claimed that painting is more noble than sculpture. The passage of Varchi's response to which Michelangelo probably refers is this:

> I hold as certain, that substantively sculpture and painting are one art only, and consequently equally noble in relation to each other. [In support of] this point I present the reason alleged above, that is, that the arts are recognized by their 'ends' [*fine*] and all those arts that have the same ends are essentially one and the same, although in 'accidentals' they may differ. Now everyone confesses that not only the end is the same, that is the artificial imitation of nature, but also the principle, that is, *disegno*.

Cited in Mendelsohn, Varchi 132.

[60] Michelangelo appealed especially to Romantic artists, who saw in the stereotype of his melancholic and divinely-gifted persona an equivalent of their own new visions of the artist's role in society. The impression that Michelangelo was an intellectual was left by considerable attention that was drawn to his poetry. For example, John S. Harford published a life of Michelangelo in 1857 that included English translations of his poetry. Østermark-Johansen, Sweetness and Strength 12, 41.

[61] Identification information for each major work will be listed in the footnotes corresponding to its first mention in the dissertation. Michelangelo, *Creation of Adam*, ca. 1510, fresco, 280 x 570 cm, Sistine Chapel, Rome, Italy. Vatican Collections. On the issue of divine knowledge and the *Creation of Adam* see the controversial theory of A. Meshberger, "An Interpretation of Michelangelo's *Creation of Adam* Based on Neuroanatomy," Jama-Journal of the American Medical Association 264:14 (Oct. 1990): 1837-41.

theory will be central to my discussion of the Romantic conception of the creative genius, in the early nineteenth century.

Michelangelo's competitive nature is seen elsewhere in the Sistine Chapel. While he did not argue for painting's supremacy in the hierarchy of the arts, it is quite possible that Michelangelo's *Last Judgement*, which was commissioned by Pope Paul III (ca. 1536-41), challenged not only poetry through a manifestation of Dantesque imagery, but also endeavoured to surpass the numerous highly respected painters who had already participated in painting scenes on the walls of the Sistine Chapel, including Raphael and Perugino.[62] It is not difficult to imagine why so many egos, being represented in one relatively small space, would naturally incite rivalry. But Michelangelo, who would be solely credited with the success of the *Last Judgement*, had the opportunity to surpass even his own work, (already completed on the Sistine Ceiling).

To begin, Michelangelo based his vision of this apocalyptic event on Dante's writings, as well as on the Bible. Condivi observed that Michelangelo could often be found reading Dante's works.[63] A last judgement based upon Dante's epic poem had already been undertaken by Luca Signorelli (1445-1523) at the Brixio Chapel in Orvieto (ca. 1504), where he depicted numerous apocalyptic scenes. Dante himself was even incorporated into this cycle. For his version, Michelangelo portrayed the mythological figure of Charon, who convoys the damned in his barque over the River Styx, sports demonic glaring eyes, as described by Dante. But Michelangelo's imagery rivals Dante's poem, through its phantasmagoric representation of Dante's vision.[64] Even though Michelangelo's version drew from countless others before him, the combination of Dantesque imagery with the visionary depiction of the event exemplifies Michelangelo's exceptional ambition. So, Michelangelo, in his lesser but dutiful capacity as a painter to the pope, offered a divine vision, rivaling that of Dante, whose work was already respected as an epiphany. It would seem that it was despite Dante's warnings against the

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[62] Barnes, "Metaphorical Painting." See also Judith Dundas, "The Paragone and the Art of Michelangelo," Sixteenth-Century Journal 21:1 (Spring 1990): 87-93. Michelangelo, *The Last Judgement*, 1534-41, fresco, 13.7 x 12.2m, Sistine Chapel, Rome, Italy.
[63] Condivi, Michelangelo 19.
[64] Vasari, Lives 474. Vasari claimed that Michelangelo "took particular delight in reading the vernacular poets, especially Dante, whom he loved and imitated in his conceits and inventions." See Barnes, "Metaphorical Painting" 65-81.

fleeting fame that Michelangelo and other Renaissance masters would become so well-known, and such exemplary figures in the paragone debate.

The Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries

In the wake of the Italian Renaissance, the artist's fame and virtue reached its height in grand sixteenth-century programs, whose patrons often demanded increasingly esoteric subject matter, combined with extraordinary illusionism. Still, despite the new-found status and appreciation for the artist, the paragone continued to be played out in subsequent generations. For instance, in 1637 Charles Alphonse du Fresnoy (1611-65) wrote his poem *De arte graphica,* (published in 1667), wherein he exclaimed: "Let poetry be like painting; and let painting resemble poetry; let them compete with each other and exchange their tasks and names; one is called mute poetry, the other shall be known as speaking painting."[65] This poem demonstrates the extent to which painting and poetry were being likened to one another as sister arts, following the Renaissance. Theorists even argued that the formal elements of painting such as colour, line, and composition were comparable to those of poetry, such as words and verbal composition.[66] It was seen as the mandate of both arts to express the depths of human emotion, through expressive means at the disposal of either the painter or poet. So, the original doctrine of *ut pictura poesis*, which implied the inherent similarity of the arts, in purpose but not in form, was extended to include the latter. But the sister arts theory could be abused. Du Fresnoy's poem indicates that at times the goal of resembling one another made the competition between painting and poetry into an attempt to subsume each other, obviously in an effort to make the other art irrelevant. Theoretical approaches to the arts continued to crop up throughout the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, as the medieval guild system continued to be phased out by academies across Europe, which provided institutions to support the individual artist's education and promotion, just as Alberti had wanted.

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[65] Quoted in Markiewicz, "*Ut Pictura Poesis*" 537. The poem was well-known, and was translated and published in England by John Dryden in 1695, and Daniel Defoe in 1720.
[66] Lee, "Theory of Painting" 202.

Another trend developed in the eighteenth century, whereby theoreticians set out to define the natural limits, or qualities, of the arts. Some of these treatises included Roger de Piles's (1635-1709) Cours de peinture par principes (1708), Dubos's Réflexions critique sur la poésie et la peinture (1719), Antoine Coypel's (1661-1722) On the Excellence of Painting (1721), and James Harris's (1709-80) Treatise Concerning Music, Painting, and Poetry (1744).[67] Leonardo's contribution was revived and disseminated with the seventeenth-century publication of his treatise, which included illustrations by Nicolas Poussin (1594-1665).[68] Still, poetry remained more prestigious than painting, since it was consistently argued that it could better express abstract or immaterial ideas, while painting was limited to the study of the natural and material world.[69] The French eighteenth-century theorist Dubos called attention to yet another widely held belief regarding the limits of the arts, which emphasised the temporal limitations of painting. He wrote:

> La composition Poëtique d'un tableau, c'est l'arrangement ingénieux des figures inventé pour rendre l'action qu'il réprésente plus touchante et plus vraisemblable. Elle demande que tous les personnages soient liez par une action principale, car un tableau peut contenir plusieurs incidens, à condition que toutes ces actions

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[67] Markiewicz, "*Ut Pictura Poesis*" 538. Other works by Roger de Piles that could be consulted are his Dialogue Upon Colouring of 1673, and the "Remarks on the *De Arte Graphica*, 1668," Art in Theory 1648-1815, eds. Charles Harrison, Paul Wood, and Jason Gaiger (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, Ltd., 2000): 166-170.

[68] For an examination of the treatise see Jan Bialostocki, "Poussin et le 'Traité de la Peinture' de Leonardo," Actes du colloque international Nicolas Poussin: Colloques Internationaux, Sciences humaines, ed. André Chastel (Paris: CNRS, 1960): 133-9. The same scholar also considered the impact that this work had on Poussin himself in "Une Idée de Léonard réalisée par Poussin," La Revue des arts IV (1954): 131-6. See also Anthony Blunt, "Poussin's Notes on Painting," Journal of the Warburg Institute 1:4 (Apr. 1938): 344-351; and see "Poussin Studies - I: Self-Portraits," The Burlington Magazine for Connoisseurs 89:553 (Aug. 1947): 218-26. Another scholar to examine Poussin's competitive objectives as a painter is E. Cropper. See "Poussin and Leonardo: Evidence from the Zaccolini MSS," Art Bulletin 62:4 (1980): 570-83; Cropper and Charles Dempsey, Nicolas Poussin: Friendship and the Love of Painting (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996), and the article therein: "On the Experience of Light And Color: Poussin, Padre Zaccolini, Cassaiano dal Pozzo, and the Legacy of Leonardo" 145-74; Cropper, "Perception and Deception: Poussin's Mirrors," Cleveland Studies in the History of Art 4 (1999): 76-95. See Dempsey, "The Classical Perception of Nature in Poussin's Earlier Works," Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes 29 (1966): 219-249. Consult also Xavier De Salas, "Poussin and Leonardo," The Burlington Magazine 110:788 (Nov. 1968): 633-639; and Todd Olson, Poussin and France: Painting, Humanism, and the Politics of Style (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2002); Thomas Puttfarken, "Poussin's Thoughts on Painting," Commemorating Poussin: Reception and Interpretation of the Artist, eds. Katie Scott and Geneviève Warwick (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999): 76-95.

[69] Roy Park, "*Ut Pictura Poesis*: The Nineteenth-Century Aftermath," The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism 28 (1969): 161.

> particulières se réunissent en une action principale, et qu'elles ne fassent toutes qu'un seul et même sujet.[70]

While it may at first seem that painting has been given the upper hand in Dubos's comparison of the arts, he clearly placed painting in the natural realm, based on its ability to arouse the passions, rather than the intellect, and in this manner, aligned it with an uneducated and non-intellectual audience. Dubos stated that "La peinture emploie des signes naturels dont l'énergie ne dépend pas de l'éducation...C'est la nature elle même que la peinture met sous nos yeux."[71] The 'natural' had, in the eighteenth-century writings of those influential figures such as Jean-Jacques Rousseau (1712-78), been linked with feminine, and passionate, or irrational properties. So references to painting's supposed femininity were also to be found in poetic and critical writings, which we explore much further in the next chapter.[72]

Despite these early attempts to differentiate between the two arts, it was not until his highly influential text Laocoön: An Essay on the Limits of Painting and Poetry of 1766, that Lessing, the eighteenth-century theorist, sought to create non-competitive spheres for the arts. Lessing's work was significant to inter-arts relationships, because it was one of the most important theoretical contributions to the paragone and *ut pictura*

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[70] Dubos, Sur la peinture 255. My translation:

> The poetic composition of a painting, is the ingenious arrangement of figures designed to render the action that they represent the most touching and realistic. This demands that all of the characters be linked to the principal action, because a painting can only incorporate many moments, on the condition that all of the particular actions are united by a principal action, and that they make up but a single and homogeneous subject.

My translations have been provided for conveying the general meaning of the quotes, and are not meant to serve as a definitive reference for the English translation of the original texts.

[71] Dubos, Sur la peinture 376. My translation: "Painting makes use of natural signs that do not require education to understand…It is nature herself that painting submits before our eyes."

[72] For instance, in an examination of Honoré de Balzac's (1799-1850) paragonising position towards painting, Alexandra K. Wettlaufer finds that his prosaic writings suggest that painting is artificial, (which was a remnant of the Platonian belief in art as deceptive imitation), fatal, and feminine. Wettlaufer, "Girodet, Endymion, Balzac: Representation and Rivalry in Post-Revolutionary France," Word and Image 17:4 (Oct.-Dec. 2001): 408. See also the longer study Pen vs. Paintbrush: Girodet, Balzac, and the Myth of Pygmalion in Postrevolutionary France (New York: Palgrave, 2001). Wettlaufer cites Balzac's La Maison du chat-qui-pelote (1829) and Le Chef-d'œuvre inconnu (ca. 1831) in her study of a paragonising relationship between Girodet and Balzac in the early nineteenth century. Since Wettlaufer treats the paragonising relationship between Girodet and Balzac at length, with regards to the Pygmalion subject, this will not be dealt with in my dissertation, which will focus on the role of Girodet's treatment of Pygmalion in the art world at large, as well as the significance of the myth to the historicity of the paragone.

poesis traditions since the Renaissance, and because it synthesised and responded to a history of inter-arts relationships since antiquity. As we shall see, often paragonising tactics involve the efforts of artists to appropriate the power of the art being rivaled, such as the manifestation of poetic qualities in paintings. For Lessing, these were transgressive tactics, degrading to both painting and poetry, in that each sought to behave inappropriately like the other. Lessing leveled his own criticism at the havoc that art criticism and other writers were causing, in forcing the arts to behave inappropriately by breaking their own limits:

> Indeed, this spurious criticism [art criticism] has to some degree misled even the masters of the arts. In poetry in has engendered a mania for description and in painting a mania for allegory, by attempting to make the former a speaking picture, without actually knowing what it could and ought to paint, and the latter a silent poem, without having considered to what degree it is able to express general ideas without denying its true function and degenerating into a purely arbitrary means of expression.[73]

Using these distinctions, Lessing cleaved the sister arts tradition in two, by establishing separate laws and objectives for painting and poetry. Lessing's text represented the first comprehensive attempt to define the limits of the respective arts. One of the basic justifications for Lessing's system of limits was that, because of the sequential nature of words, and the actions expressed through them, poetry belonged to the realm of time. While painting, because of its ability to depict illusionistic space and 'bodies in space,' was spatial.[74] The time versus space distinction provided a basis for determining painting and poetry's innate properties. Time and space were opposed through comparison with other unequal qualities in binary thought, such that poetry became temporal, masculine, cultural, contemplative, sublime, and capable of expressing complex intellectual subjects; whereas painting was feminine, natural, sensual, beautiful,

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[73] Gotthold Ephraim Lessing, Laocoön: An Essay on the Limits of Painting and Poetry, trans. Edward Allen McCormick (Baltimore and London: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1984): 5.

[74] Lessing, Laocoön 40. Dubos had already observed the temporal limitations of painting, (although in a much less codified manner); he declared that, "Le Peintre qui fait un tableau..., ne nous représente sur la toile qu'un instant de l'action." Quoted by Michael Fried, "Toward a Supreme Fiction: Genre and Beholder in the Art Criticism of Diderot and his Contemporaries," New Literary History 6:3 (1975): 552. My translation: "The painter who creates a painting represents but one instant of the action on the canvas."

and limited to a single narrative moment.[75] In Lessing's system, painting was feminised, despite the painter's belief in its masculine vigour. As much as the principle of binary thought may be contested in our own day, it is necessary to acknowledge its importance to understanding previous eras, when it was considered an acceptable form of logic. Clearly, Lessing was not an impartial arbiter between the arts, as he routinely associated poetry with culturally superior attributes. Mitchell contends that it is Lessing's bias as a German writer, that prompted him to categorise painting as a foreign, (and most likely French), uncontrollable, and less effectual 'sister' to poetry. In Lessing's system, painting always trespasses into poetry's domain, making it an aberrant 'other.'[76] In deciphering Lessing's system, and its numerous prejudices, Mitchell concludes that the theorist has even gone so far as to ascribe genders to the arts, whereby the visual arts are feminised, and the poetic arts are masculinised.[77]

Although Lessing's theories were intended to be applied in practice to the arts, even though Lessing's paragonising text was influential, poets and artists were not entirely willing to implement all of his rules and suggestions for artistic production. Most of Lessing's limits, (and those in systems like his), where the visual arts were diminished in status, were at odds with typical academic instruction, given the investment of these institutions in painting and sculpture's prestige. Rensselaer Lee proposes that Lessing's limits were simply too strict; they invited transgression, particularly by painters, whom he denied any claim to humankind's thoughts and emotions.[78] But for Lessing, these limits were necessary to ward off the iconic power visual imagery. He maintained that: "The plastic arts in particular--aside from the inevitable influence they exert on the character of a nation--have an effect that demands close supervision by the

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[75] These associations would have relied on already established binary oppositions in eighteenth-century thought. Mitchell, Iconology 107. Mitchell interprets Lessing's hierarchical system by considering his biased position as a writer within the debate.
[76] Mitchell, Iconology 107.
[77] Mitchell, Iconology 109-111. Mitchell reminds readers that Lessing's system was in response to that of Burke, although Lessing never acknowledged this debt, according to Mitchell. Mitchell also provides a table that breaks down the divisions between poetry and painting, identifying painting with the following: space, natural signs, narrow sphere, imitation, body, external, silent, beauty, eye, and feminine. Poetry on the other hand is: time, arbitrary (man-made) signs, infinite range, expression, mind, internal, eloquent, sublimity, ear, and masculine. For Lessing's descriptions of painting as limited to the realm of beauty see Laocoön 15, 23, 104, 111-112.
[78] Lee, "Theory of Painting" 215.

law."[79] This statement reveals Lessing's latent iconophobia, as he demonised the power of imagery, making it a threatening and uncontrollable force.[80] For Lessing, and many of his contemporaries, poetry and painting's limits were not just practical matters, but moral ones. Since opposing qualities in Lessing's system were not of equal value, the ascription of these qualities to each art demonstrated the belief in inherent virtues and vices belonging to each. Writing in the early nineteenth century, De Quincy also identified art's moral responsibilities: "Every art is therefore, both morally and physically, restricted to unity of object in its imitation, and unity of subject in its work." [81] One must assume that, like Lessing, De Quincy, who was secretary of the academy in Paris, and who wrote prolifically on his theory of education and other topics in academic life, would consider an artist's disregard for the limits of his or her art form to be immoral.

Lessing and De Quincy were part of a growing trend whereby theoreticians publicly debated the merits of the arts. When Lessing's Laocoön was published in French in 1802, its translator, Charles Vanderbourg, wrote in the introduction that Lessing's treatise might incite competitive reactions. He also called for heightened attention in France to the theory of the arts, by which he meant aesthetic theory, saying that the French needed to catch up to this growing branch of European scholarship. In his view, the best reaction that the translation could achieve would be for those who read Lessing's text to combat his theories, by writing their own treatises on the arts. Vanderbourg included the following in his introduction to the new translation:

> [I]l nous est peut-être permis d'espérer que dans l'état où il paroît, il réveillera l'attention du public sur la théorie des arts, et qu'il donnera naissance à d'autres traités destinés à étendre les idées de Lessing, ou à les combattre. Tel est ordinairement le sort des livres qui font penser, et ce n'est pas leur moindre

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[79] Lessing, Laocoön 14. Mitchell asserts that Lessing's paragone is in part motivated by a national rivalry, because Lessing has come to view France as a degenerate culture, in comparison to Germany. He concludes that Lessing's theory of the visual arts is primarily based on his view of French art, and therefore his nationalistic rivalry taints his theorisation of the arts. Mitchell, Iconology 110. I have otherwise not addressed national rivalry, except with respect to the treatment of Salomé, as motivation for the paragone, due to the expansiveness of this issue.

[80] Mitchell, Iconology 112-113.

[81] Quatremère de Quincy, An Essay on the Nature, the End, and the Means of Imitation in the Fine Arts, trans. by J. C. Kent (London and New York: Garland Publishing Inc., 1979): 59. The original translation dates to 1837.

> mérite. Ce seroit au moins la récompense la plus flatteuse que le traduction pût obtenir de son travail.[82]

Vanderbourg was right, because Gottfried von Herder's (1744-1803) treatise Sculpture: Some Observations on Form and Shape from Pygmalion's Creative Dream (1778), was carefully crafted as a rebuttal to Lessing's treatise, which lumped sculpture in with painting, under the label of the visual arts, and was motivated by Herder's great esteem for sculpture as a distinct and celebrated medium within visual media. Due to the close analysis of Herder's theories in the third chapter, I will limit my comments to his treatise at this stage.

In his call for combative responses, Vanderbourg acknowledged the contentiousness of Lessing's treatise, with regards to the artistic tradition in France; and in so doing he recognised the forcefulness of Lessing's rules. Vanderbourg wrote:

> [I]l [Lessing] cherche à déterminer les limites respectives des deux arts, à prouver que les règles de l'un ne sont pas toujours les règles de l'autre, et à établir des règles nouvelles, puisées dans la nature même de la peinture et de la poésie, et confirmées par l'exemples des anciens.
>
> Nous ne connaissons point d'ouvrage didactique plus propre que celui-çi à désigner au poète et à l'artiste les écueils nombreux qu'ils doivent éviter, en s'imitant...[83]

Whether a student of the arts had ever read Lessing's treatise or not, by the end of the nineteenth century, these limit-imposing aesthetic theories had become so familiar that most artists would have been introduced at some point to their general principles. They

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[82] Lessing, Laocoön x. My translation:

> It might be possible for us to hope that apparently it [Lessing's text] will reawaken the public's attention to the theory of the arts, and it will give birth to other treatises that will be destined to expand Lessing's ideas, or to combat them. Because this is ordinarily the kind of book that makes one think, and this is not its least merit. This will be the most flattering reward that this translation could offer the work.

[83] Lessing, Laocoön vi. My translation:

> He [Lessing] seeks to determine the respective limits of the two arts, proving that the rules of one are not always the rules of the other, and establishing new rules that are formed on the nature of painting and poetry themselves, which are confirmed by the examples of the ancients.
>
> We know of no other didactic work that is more properly designed to show poets and artists the many stumbling blocks they must avoid, in imitating…

had, moreover, been re-circulated by nineteenth-century writers, such as Charles Blanc (1813-82) in his Grammaire des arts du dessin (1867).

In addition to inheriting the burden of these artistic limits, eighteenth-century French artists were motivated to engage in the paragone, due to changes in the official institutions of the arts. In France, when the monarchy fell in 1789, so too did the *Académie royale*, and the security of official patronage, which added to art's precarious position. When Jacques-Louis David (1748-1825) reformed the academy under the banner of Republicanism, he encouraged artists to become paragons of Republican virtue. These changes meant that artists were more dependent on the bourgeois consumer's taste, and the public's regard for art's value, in order to thrive. Moreover, the Salon and the academy became increasingly conceived as public institutions, which gave less power to the artist and more power to bourgeois tastes, and the public's ever-changing fancy. As a governmentally funded institution, the Salon also came to be public property, and bound to serve the people rather than a monarch. All this instability created an environment ripe for the paragone.

Another issue that complicated the status of artists was that, irrespective of the potential fame that individual artists could achieve, the old medieval issue of artistic production's identification with trades continued to plague eighteenth-century artists. The switch from annual to biennial Salons in the mid-eighteenth century was intended not only to lessen the pressure of annual critical responses on artists, but also to dispel the impression that painters were mere craftsmen, churning out new works each year, of poor quality, just to fill the Salon. Hence, the longer interval between Salons was instituted, in order to encourage better quality work.[84]

The paragone of the Renaissance similarly retained its grip on eighteenth-century artists. Alberti's suggestions for the history painter's education were still felt when students of Paris's *École* were required to take courses in the following: geometry, perspective, anatomy, poetry, fables, history, and geography. Additionally, they were expected to contribute to the academy's intellectual experience by attending conferences

[84] Richard Wrigley, The Origins of French Art Criticism: From the *Ancien Regime* to the Restoration (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993): 42.

and lectures.[85] Jean Locquin, who was a historian of the academy, defined the academic history painter was as follows: "[L]e Peintre d'Histoire est un artiste lettré, d'intelligence cultivée, qui s'est familiarisé avec les grands poètes, avec les principaux historiens, anciens et modernes..."[86] Locquin's account of the academic approach to antiquity at the end of the eighteenth century offers important insight into the competitive objectives of both the institution and its members. Within the academic systems there were also distinctions being made between different types of artists, thereby bolstering an atmosphere of rivalry. French academicians were expressing concern over the hierarchy of painterly genres, which Michael Fried considers symptomatic of painting's falling status, compared to sculpture, music, and poetry, due to reaction against the popular, though often criticised, Rococo movement.[87] The lowest genres were considered more akin to a craft, while the highest genre was reserved for the most intellectual and gifted painters. Typically, still-life and landscape paintings were in the least prestigious categories. Portraits and genre subjects, (scenes of everyday, often domestic life), were somewhat more respected, as they involved human subjects.[88] Finally, in the tradition of Alberti, history paintings, or mythological, Biblical, and allegorical subjects, were most esteemed. It was also believed that history painting, which had to include human figures, could produce the most gratifying aesthetic experience, due to the human body's naturally greater beauty, in comparison to non-human subjects. Denis Diderot (1713-84), who was

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[85] Jean Locquin, La peinture d'histoire en France de 1747 à 1785: études sur l'évolution des idées artistiques dans la seconde moïtié du 18 siècle, facsimile of the 1912 edition from Paris, Laurens (Paris: Arthéna, 1978): 82. Locquin is an important primary source on nineteenth-century academic theories and practice in France.

[86] Locquin, La peinture 82, 87. My translation: "The history painter is a man of letters, and of cultivated intelligence, who is familiar with the epic poets, with the principal historians, [and] the ancients and the moderns…" Another useful examination of the instructional practices of the French academy, and the impact of studying the antique in academic systems, is found in Paul Duro, "The Lure of Rome: The Academic Copy and the *Académie de France* in the Nineteenth Century," Art and the Academy in the Nineteenth Century, eds. Denis, Rafael Cardoso and Colin Trodd (New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press, 2000): 133-149. And also Carl Goldstein, Teaching Art: Academies and Schools from Vasari to Alpers (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996).

[87] Fried, "Toward a Supreme Fiction" 582. Throughout the article, Fried also addresses the paragonising relationship between drama or theatre versus painting in the eighteenth century.

[88] André Félibien, Conférences de l'académie royale de peinture et de sculpture pendant l'année 1667 (Paris: F. Leonard, 1668). Sir Joshua Reynolds both addressed the genre of the arts in their writings. See Reynolds, Discourses on Art: Sir Joshua Reynolds, ed. Robert R. Wark (London and New Haven: Yale University Press, 1997). See also Paul Duro, "Giving up on History? Challenges to the Hierarchy of the Genres in Early Nineteenth-century France," Art History 28:5 (Dec., 2005): 689-711.

one of the first celebrity art critics of the eighteenth century, justified the human figure's importance, saying:

> Because flesh is more beautiful than the most beautiful of draperies. Because the body of a man, his chest, arms and shoulders, and the feet, hands, and throat of a woman are more beautiful than the richest of the materials with which they might be covered. Because their execution is more difficult, requiring greater skill...and by using nudes the scene is rendered more remote, bringing to mind a simpler, more innocent age, more primitive moral values that are better adapted to the imitative arts.[89]

Herder also contended that the body is always the best subject, and is the thing in art that teaches us the most about nature.[90] In addition to taking on the noble nude, what separated the history painter, or the artist, from being a mere craftsman was not just his or her subject matter, and the skill to render it, but also his or her social function.[91] Clearly, history painters were held to different standards than genre painters, the latter seeming to intensify painting's commercialisation and commodification. This perception stemmed from the fact that the lower subjects were actually more lucrative, because artists could

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[89] Denis Diderot, Diderot on Art - I: The Salon of 1765 and Notes on Painting, trans. John Goodman, intro. Thomas Crow (London and New Haven: Yale University Press, 1995): 228. See also Lessing, Laocoön 39, and Félibien in "Preface to the Seven Conferences" 112.

[90] Johann Gottfried Herder, Sculpture: Some Observations on Shape and Form from Pygmalion's Creative Dream, Edited, translated, and introduction by Jason Gaiger, (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 2002): 87.

> Whatever subtle laws of *well-being* and *well-formedness*, or *proportion* and *disproportion*, are discovered in *optics* and the arts of *arrangement*, these all find their great model in the *human form* and in *human beauty*: this noble work is everywhere the favored and most characteristic product of Mother Nature.

[91] A writer for Sur la peinture explained:

> The Artisan makes his wellbeing completely dependent on riches and he ensures his social existence only by their consumption. The Artist has as a spur only public esteem: he does good only in the coin of honour. The virtue of the latter is not vulgar or obvious; it requires moreover an extraordinary courage and intelligence. It may be that the Artisan, who pays no attention to public opinion, believes himself an independent agent because he acts. On the contrary, he is simply a rough cog in a machine that is propelled by some directing power. Properly speaking, the Artisan is the matter of the state, the Artist is its spirituality.

Quoted by Crow, Painters and Public Life 232.

cater to wealthy middle and upper class patrons, without having to rely on a few big commissions or purchases from official institutions.[92]

To identify the place that new academicians would occupy in the system, in order to be accepted to the *Académie*, artists were required to submit an acceptance piece, the genre of which would determine their academic rank. Only history painters could hold the most respected positions within the academy, could be appointed court painters, or could hold important awards.[93] In 1668 André Félibien (1690-95) explained how the different genres of art are based on subject matter, and situated history painting at the hierarchy's apex.[94] Despite the continued regard for history painting, genre painting increased in popularity and influence throughout the eighteenth century. This resulted from the seventeenth-century's growing art market, which heightened concern for history painting's degeneration, and nurtured the fear that the educated, esteemed, and intellectual history painter--a breed borne of the Renaissance--would soon be extinct.[95]

To complicate matters, history painters and genre painters, being so segregated by the academic system and public expectations, were equally competitive with one another. Many critics, for example, extolled the virtues of the lesser genres. Interestingly, Diderot claimed in his writings to see the merits of genre scenes, to the degree that he considered them on par in difficulty and social value with history paintings. He even suggested that genre paintings could be poetic, and the product of genius and truth. Nevertheless, when Jean-Baptiste Greuze (1725-1805), who was a well-known genre painter, tried to submit a history painting as his acceptance piece to the academy, which demonstrated ambition for a status higher than what he had accomplished in his career, Diderot was amongst

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[92] Andrew McClellan, "Watteau's Dealer: Gersaint and the Marketing of Art in Eighteenth-Century Paris," The Art Bulletin 78:3 (Sept., 1996): 439-453.

[93] Jon Whiteley, "Art, hiérarchie et Révolution française," Majeurs ou mineurs—les hiérarchies en art, ed. Georges Roque (Nîmes: Éditions Jacqueline Chambon, 2000): 68.

[94] See Félibien's Des Principes de l'architecture de la sculpture, de la peinture, et des autres arts qui en dépendent, and Félibien, Entretiens sur les vies et sur les ouvrages des plus excellens peintres anciens et modernes (Paris: Pierre Le Petit, 1666).

[95] Whiteley, "Révolution française" 67. After 1789, for fear of artists pandering to commercial rather than artistic rewards, artists were encouraged not to paint self-portraits and miniatures, which were believed to be evidence of an artist's shameful commercialisation. Wrigley, Origins 44. But this effectively meant that artists could not promote themselves as individuals. Therefore, in order to heighten one's prestige, the painter's only recourse was to advance the status of painting in general.

those who condemned the work, and Greuze's ability to hold such a status.[96] In sum, the discourse surrounding the status of the arts and the other genres in France was central to understanding the development of the paragone in the eighteenth century.

The Nineteenth Century

The paragone in the nineteenth century was primarily shaped by the foundations of the issues that were laid in the previous century. The nineteenth century was also the period of greatest ongoing change in academies and their systems.[97] The changes that occurred in the academic systems of Europe and Great Britain were significant, and profoundly relevant to the rise of the paragone in the works of many artists. Since I treated the historic aspect of these changes at length, as they pertain to the development of competition in the arts, in my Master's thesis, I will only refer to these issues when necessary to explain specific artists. Patricia Mainardi, Albert Boime, and Frances Yates's studies of academic systems are all of considerable merit in this field of scholarship.[98]

While the political system of France oscillated back and forth between monarchy, empire, and other forms of government throughout the nineteenth century, artists became increasingly suspicious of the government-run academy, and its wisdom with regards to holding exhibitions, judging works to be shown in the Salon, and upholding the calibre of artistic achievement deemed suitable for the nation. Even though the Salon had been the primary exhibition venue until the early nineteenth century, by the late 1840s it became increasingly clear that artists were unhappy with the status quo. A famous example of

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[96] Diderot, Notes on Painting 229-231. For a study of Greuze's attempt to be accepted as a history painter, see Eik Kahng "*L'Affaire Greuze* and the Sublime of History Painting," Art Bulletin 86:1 (March 2004): 96-113. For Diderot's writings see such works as the following: Notes on Painting, Essai sur la peinture, his Letter on the Blind for the Use of Those who can See (1749), and the Salons of 1763, 1765, 1767.

[97] The evolution of the academy in the nineteenth century is a well-documented issue, which has been dealt with by such scholars as Albert Boime, The Academy and French Painting in the Nineteenth Century (London: Phaidon Press Ltd., 1971); "The Prix de Rome: Images of Authority and Threshold of Official Success," Art Journal 44 (Fall 1984): 281-9; "The *Salon des Refusés* and the Evolution of Modern Art," The Art Quarterly 32 (1969): 411-26; "The Teaching Reforms of 1863 and the Origins of Modernism in France," Art Quarterly 1 (1977): 1-39.

[98] See the following for Patricia Mainardi: "The Death of History Painting in France, 1867," Gazette des beaux-arts (Dec. 1982): 219-26; The End of the Salon: Art and the State in the Early Third Republic (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993). And for early Academic history, Frances Yates, The French Academies of the Sixteenth Century (London: The Warburg Institute, 1947).

this is, of course, Gustave Courbet's (1819-77) decision to hold his own 'Pavilion of Realism' (1855) outside the academy's exhibition, upon learning that his works had not been accepted. Many other artists also chose to show their works 'on the fringe,' establishing venues like the *Salon des refusés*, which was first held in 1863, which included Edouard Manet (1832-83), and the Impressionists, who held independent exhibitions throughout the 1870s. Additionally, in response to increasing pressure to become more inclusive throughout the century, the size of the exhibitions held by the academy continued to increase, to the point that by the late nineteenth century there were grave concerns being expressed about its, by then, open-door policy. It had become possible for thousands of artworks to be shown in a single exhibition, thereby giving the general impression that the artworks had not been chosen based on quality, but rather on their ability to be sold to the masses. Many of the artists considered in this dissertation, such as Moreau and Burne-Jones, often chose to exhibit in smaller private galleries, demonstrating the failure of the academies, both in France and England, to provide satisfactory exhibition policies. In order to comprehend the magnitude of these changes on specific artists, it is helpful to examine each individual's unique response to these changing circumstances and practices in the art world.

One of the few nineteenth-century artists to have been directly linked to the paragone in art historical scholarship is Delacroix. Building on the work of George Mras, in my Master's thesis I examined Delacroix's position on the status of the arts, in the context of the continued popularity of Lessing-like limits in the academy throughout the Romantic period.[99] As well, I considered Delacroix's reaction to changing aesthetic theories amongst Romantic artists, poets, and musicians, which would be felt for the rest of the nineteenth century, and to the ever-increasing power of the art critic. For instance, the art critic Charles Baudelaire (1821-67) considered Delacroix the true *peintre-poète*, which was a term that he applied favourably, meaning the ability to capture poetic nobility in a visual medium. However, Baudelaire was not without his own literary bias,

[99] An exceptional primary source on Delacroix's theory of the arts is The Journal of Eugène Delacroix, ed. Hubert Wellington, trans. Lucy Norton (London: Phaidon Press Ltd., 1995). The earliest work on Delacroix's paragone was conducted by George Mras. For his scholarship see Eugène Delacroix's Theory of Art (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1966), and "*Ut Pictura Musica*: A Study of Delacroix's *Paragone*," Art Bulletin 45 (Sept. 1963): 266-71. For my examination of Delacroix, see Lippert, Gustave Moreau Chapter 2.

which is evident in his statement that: "The best account of a painting can be a sonnet or an elegy."[100] As both an art critic and theorist, Baudelaire interjected himself into the paragone tradition, which is especially evident in his Salons and the essay *The Painter of Modern Life* (1863), wherein he took it upon himself to advise painters on what to paint and how.[101] In Baudelaire's essay, he addressed the new expectations regarding artistic theory and production. For instance, David Scott notes that changing opinions regarding the artist's status, and the nature of creative inspiration, encouraged writers and visual artists to believe in the innate, and almost supernatural, source of the artistic creative drive, in both the written and visual arts, as Delacroix did. The issue of the creative impulse, and the broadening of the definition of the word 'artist' to include writers, contributed to the Romantic conception of artistic genius. The writings of Baudelaire and Delacroix provide evidence of this obsessive concern for the Romantic notion of artistic genius. Writing of his creative impulse Delacroix says,

> There is something in me that is stronger than my body, which is often given new heart by it. In some people this inner power seems almost non-existent, but with me it is greater than my physical strength. Without it I should die, but in the end it will burn me up—I suppose I mean my imagination, that dominates me and drives me on.[102]

These words epitomise the very definition of the tortured Romantic creative genius, which Delacroix glamourises and mystifies through his words.

The budding aesthetic theories of the eighteenth century continued to carve deeper trenches between nineteenth-century writers, or art critics, and visual artists. For example, evolving ideas about the nature of artistic inspiration led to new problems in aesthetic theory. Throughout the Romantic era, poetry was equated with music, more often than it was with painting, since both poetry and music were considered immaterial

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[100] Quoted from Baudelaire's Salon (1846) by Robin Spencer in "Whistler, Swinburne and Art-for-art's sake," After the Pre-Raphaelites: Art and Aestheticism in Victorian England, ed. Elizabeth Prettejohn (New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press, 1999): 63. Another source focusing on Baudelaire and Delacroix is Elizabeth Abel, "Redefining the Sister Arts: Baudelaire's Response to the Art of Delacroix," The Language of Images, ed. W.J.T. Mitchell (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1980): 27-58.

[101] Charles Baudelaire, Art in Paris 1845-1862: Salons and Other Exhibitions Reviewed by Charles Baudelaire, ed., trans., Jonathan Mayne (London: Phaidon Press, 1965). See also The Painter of Modern Life and Other Essays, ed., and trans., Jonathan Mayne (London: Phaidon Press Inc., 1995).

[102] Delacroix, The Journal 6.

art forms, and were comparable in their temporal composition. The Romanticists judged the merits of the arts based on their ability to prove the divine inspiration of artists, and on their respective dependence upon material or sensual form. The less material an art form, like music, the higher it was esteemed. This prejudice towards the material was a vestige of Plato, yet the Christian tradition likewise supported a celebration of the non-physical. Music's immateriality made it transcendent; consequently, the merits of painting and poetry were often judged on their ability to be like music.[103]

At this time, the sister arts tradition was revived in a new Romantic version of *ut pictura poesis*, wherein it was acknowledged that the arts were distinct from one another, even if they were united in expressing the artist or poet's imagination. For the Romantics, the genius of artistic imagination became more important than the artist's learnedness and training. Nevertheless, poetry remained superior to painting, due to its greater level of immaterial abstraction.[104]

Another factor in nineteenth-century paragone history is that, increasingly throughout the century, art exhibitions were written about in Salon reviews, arts and culture periodicals, and in newspapers. Resulting from the Salon's expanding popularity and influence, it became more frequent for critics to write prosaic ekphrases on works shown in Salons or other venues. Tensions in this arena were already surfacing in the eighteenth century, when Salons were held annually from 1737-48, (with some exceptions), and then biennially from 1751-91. The switch from an annual to biennial program was prompted by the negative critical responses artists had been receiving each year. Artists found this intense criticism unsupportable, to the degree that the Salon of 1749 was cancelled.[105] The problem lay in the perception that these critical ekphrases were often construed as attempts on the critic's part to demonstrate his or her own poetic genius, thereby surpassing the visual work he or she might have been describing.[106] So, artists were at the poet's mercy with regards to the public's impression of their work, and the success of their work in the artistic community. Despite the fact that this trend was

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[103] See Mras, "*Ut Pictura Musica*" 266-71.
[104] For Delacroix's ruminations on the theory of the imagination, and the supremacy of music, see Delacroix The Journal. This source is peppered with these references.
[105] Wrigley, Origins 41-42.
[106] For a look at this kind of ekphrasis see Kahng "*L'Affaire Greuze*" 96-97. Kahng discusses Diderot's competitive ekphrasis of Jean-Honoré Fragonard's *Coresus and Callirhoe* (1765).

begun by famous eighteenth-century critics, such as Diderot, the scale of such criticism was unprecedented in the nineteenth century. The predominance of the art critic gave writers new power over painters and sculptors. Their heightened vulnerability to the critic caused many artists to feel that they were being unjustly victimised, by the often negative critiques.[107] As such, the empowered art critic could often 'smell the fear,' and negatively influence the success of an artist's career. Delacroix's feelings towards the art critic bespeak the angst that many artists like him felt at this time. In his journal he wrote:

> Precious realm of painting! That silent power that speaks at first only to the eyes and then seizes and captivates every faculty of the soul! Here is your real spirit; here is your own true beauty, beautiful painting, so much insulted, so grievously misunderstood and delivered up to fools who exploit you. But there are still hearts ready to welcome you devoutly, souls who will no more be satisfied with mere phrases than with inventions and clever artifices. You have only to be seen in your masculine vigour to give pleasure that is pure and absolute.[108]

Moreover, many of the so-called art critics were in actuality poets in their own right, who often derived their own poetic subject matter from the visual arts. Overall, the nineteenth-century painter was experiencing a new kind of vulnerability to the poet and the written word. Adding to this sense of vulnerability was the increase in popular media, such as photography, book illustration, and periodicals, all of which challenged the relevance of the more conventional media in modern life.

While the paragone was an especially lively debate during the nineteenth century, it has been argued that as long as there are changes in the art world, there will be new reasons for rivalries and tensions between the arts to increase, or at least continue. Mitchell chronicles the validity of many of the paragonising texts upon which much of the debate has been centred. He rightly points out that the paragone is an ongoing struggle that recurs over time without resolution. Mitchell suggests that the artistic impulse itself is a competitive one, and that this competition is perpetually exacerbated by the preponderance of theorists, whose motives are often prejudiced.[109] If artists and

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[107] See Wrigley, Origins.
[108] Delacroix, The Journal 39.
[109] Mitchell, Iconology 98.

theorists represent cultural trends, then the arguments for the superiority of an art form, in Mitchell's analysis, are important to scholarship in all areas, because they represent broader concerns from every aspect of cultural production.[110] If one agrees with Mitchell, the study of the paragone becomes not just the examination of how one artist or writer rivals others, but how his or her concept of that rivalry has been shaped by the cultural influences on his or her life and art form.

Aside from the work of Mras, which is now almost fifty years old, the only major contribution to paragone studies in the nineteenth century has been that of Alexandra Wettlaufer. In her book Pen vs. Paintbrush: Girodet, Balzac, and the Myth of Pygmalion in Post-revolutionary France, and her article on Girodet's *Endymion*, Wettlaufer offers a seminal analysis of the paragone in the work of Girodet.[111] Aside from this dissertation, these are two of the few nineteenth-century studies of artistic rivalry that actually properly identify the phenomenon using the term paragone. Wettlaufer's book opens with a brief description of the history of the paragone, which in a few pages summarises the highlights of the debate. This history ends with Leonardo, and does not adequately acknowledge the paragone in the several hundred years leading up to the late eighteenth century.[112] Wettlaufer does not sufficiently identify the need for paragone studies in the nineteenth century, nor its potential to provide a recognisable methodology in art history, (which is perhaps not her concern as a scholar of comparative literature). Nonetheless, she does acknowledge that despite the many examinations of word-image relationships, few scholars have shown interest in analysing the theoretical relationships between rivals in artistic production, even though this is greatest in the nineteenth century. As in my own work, and that of Mras, Wettlaufer considers the nineteenth century the culmination of the paragone, due to the social circumstances that put the artists in precarious social and political circumstances, which will be addressed at greater length in Chapter 2.[113]

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[110] Mitchell, Iconology 49.

[111] Wettlaufer, Pen vs. Paintbrush. Wettlaufer, "Girodet, Endymion, Balzac" 401-11. Wettlaufer has also explored other aspects of literary and artistic rivalry in nineteenth-century France. See "The Sublime Rivalry of Word and Image: Turner and Ruskin Revisited," Victorian Literature and Culture. 28.1 (2000): 211-31. "Balzac and Sand: Sibling Rivalry and the Sisterhood of the Arts in Le *Chef-d'œuvre inconnu* and *Les Maîtres mosaïstes,"* George Sand Studies 18 (2000): 65-85.

[112] Wettlaufer, Pen vs. Paintbrush 4-7. This introduction to the history of the paragone is in Wettlaufer's book limited primarily to a mention of such figures as Plato, Hesiod, Alberti, the history of the liberal arts, Leonardo, Lessing, and Mitchell.

[113] Wettlaufer, Pen vs. Paintbrush 4-5.

Like Mras, Wettlaufer recognises in Baudelaire a fear that the arts of the nineteenth century were trying to supplant one another, and she concludes that it is in the competitive relationship between Balzac and Girodet that this phenomenon is most self-consciously pronounced.[114] Wettlaufer's analysis of this relationship leads her to argue that the Pygmalion subject offered the perfect narrative for artists to engage in this kind of rivalry.

The methodology of Wettlaufer's book, nevertheless, deserves some attention. It often seems that the author relies upon sweeping, simplistic, and often out-dated art historical tenets, which is most evident in her extensive reliance on Mainardi, for instance. Wettlaufer also tends to support the 'traditional equals bad' versus 'avant-garde equals good' mode of thought.[115] Like Wettlaufer, I will consult the changing social status of the nineteenth-century artist, the role of Ovid and the subject of Pygmalion in the nineteenth century, the importance of the nude, the history of the academy, the rise of the art critic as contentious figure in the art world, and the issue of art versus craft. Even if her conclusions regarding the appeal of the myth are in many ways different than those that I will present, Wettlaufer's work in this area has provided an invaluable analysis of the paragone in the nineteenth century, and demonstrates the promise of this methodological approach.

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[114] Wettlaufer, Pen vs. Paintbrush 1-2.

[115] Pen vs. Paintbrush 31. This approach is made evident in Wettlaufer's choice of words, such as her reference to artists being "mired in the discourses of the past…" Exemplifying the overly-generalised, or one-dimensional claims is her contention that Jacques-Louis David, for instance, was a paragon of anti-conservatism, despite his extensive connections to aristocracy, both before and after the French Revolution. Another misleading comment regarding David is that he was a rebel within the academic system, and became emancipated from aristocratic patronage, without acknowledging that he was later named Director of the academy, and relied upon Napoleonic patronage during the latter half of his career. David is also touted as exemplary in his 'democratic' teaching approach, by offering moral, practical, and intellectual 'instruction' to his students, even though this was a standard expectation of academic and studio training throughout the history of such institutions (35-6). Similar grandiose claims include the notation that all artists before the Revolution were subservient to, and dependent upon, the academy, despite the well-known rebelliousness of the Rococo masters against the perceived strictures of a Louis XIV academic regime (35). Finally the comparison of Neoclassicism versus Romanticism is also simplified.

A Brief Note on Methodology in Nineteenth-Century Scholarship

Readers who accept the value of studying the paragone in the nineteenth century are also likely to be scholars who have been liberated from the cliché of the assumption that literary or narrative art in the nineteenth century is *merely* academic. Yet another such cliché is that the academic is irrelevant and uninteresting to those scholars concerned with Modernity, given that inter-arts studies often deal with artists working in self-consciously narrative modes of expression. Though many artists who did and do not rely on literary or other artistic precedents for their works may, in fact, be involved with inter-arts concerns, it is also the case that a central issue for paragonising scholars is to study the relationships between the textual and visual arts. Yet amongst scholars who study the conventional and over-used canon of Modern artists, there may be a biased aversion to literary or narrative art. More recently, it has been shown that there is no rational connection to be made between the literary and the academic, or the Modern and the anti-academic. The basis for much of this out-dated Modernist scholarship has been rooted in the legacy of figures such as Clement Greenberg (1909-94), whose writings quickly convinced many that academic and literary art were one and the same, as well as turning these terms into derogatory ones.

However, the pursuit of a more expansive analysis has revealed that the Modern and academic are not necessarily paradoxical, and that the definition of Modernism in nineteenth-century art must be ameliorated, and recognised as something much broader and defined with less bias. In so doing, scholars must be careful not to take on this approach, in an effort to include their own interests in the false authority of Modernism and its scholarship. An example of the more evolved view of the academic and the Modern may be found in an article by Paul Barlow, where he discusses the legacy of Greenberg's assignment of the academic to the realm of kitsch, and where he notes the necessity of this distinction in Greenberg’s pursuit of creating the more desirable category of non-official Modern art. In his own words, Barlow states that:

> In fact, what Greenberg attempts to do is to claim *both* an equation of 'academicism' with industrial capitalism, and of good taste with the ethics of political radicalism. In other words, Greenberg implies that the pleasure to be had

> from the avant-garde is the affective form of a libertarian social conscience. Likewise, the enjoyment of academic art is both an aspect of false consciousness and a subjection to cultural forms in which alienating or oppressive structures and processes are implicit. This claim that there is something both truer and freer in avant-garde practice has been very widely repeated, and continues to be found in the work of T.J. Clark and Charles Harrison, among others....Many other art critics and historians have taken the equation 'academic=reactionary=bad' and 'avant-garde=radical=good' for granted in discussion of nineteenth-century art.[116]

This sort of binary thinking results from the desire to create 'an other' for the purpose of creating 'a better,' and certainly scholars are no less prone to competition with the artists that they study, than the critics and figures of an artist's own time. While typical of nineteenth-century thought, which is why these binary oppositions will be so important in the works of the artists we discuss, it should not be the guiding force in directing how scholars of Modernism work today.

These issues concern us, because the methodology employed for this study is based upon the more up-to-date and historicised view of Modernist studies, since an evaluation of the paragone in this context reveals how significant a competitively motivated artistic impulse could be to the creation of a Modern work. For instance, our examination of Moreau and Burne-Jones will reveal that each was 'Modern' in a variety of ways, many times even fitting in with the traditional conception of Modernism by supporting anti-academic initiatives. Despite these realities, especially in the classroom, these figures are all too often still lumped into the realm of insignificant, conservative, and academic art, assuming that these are automatically the properties belonging to artists

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[116] Paul Barlow, "Fear and Loathing of the Academic, or just what is it that Makes the Avant-Garde so Different, so Appealing?" Art and the Academy in the Nineteenth Century, eds. Rafael Cardoso Denis and Colin Trodd (New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press, 2000): 15-32.
Barlow also explains the typical connection drawn between the literary and the academic, saying:

> ...[T]he Modernist discourse...closely connects the terms 'academic' and 'illustrative,' as evidenced in...the writings of many critics who identify the academic with what are often termed 'literary' tendencies, by which is meant a painting's reference to dramatic action suggestive of psychologically engaging events. The painting which 'conjures up' a scene rather than explores its own internal visual structures and effects is deemed literary or illustrative. This judgement is explicit in Greenberg, and it provides the justification for his list of names (22).

As consulted in Barlow, see Clement Greenberg, Collected Essays and Criticism, vol. 1: Perceptions and Judgements 1939-1944, ed. J. O'Brian (Chicago and London: John O'Brian: Books, 1986).

who worked in literary subject matter and figural depictions.[117] In Moreau's case, for instance, one of his central concerns was for the purely formal, or the depiction of what he called the *arabesque* and *l'art pur* (pure art), which has been considered a traditionally Modern concern.[118] However, he has been disqualified by Modernist scholars as numbering amongst the ranks of Modern artists, thanks to his late-in-life willingness to take on an academic teaching position, and to the generally narrative meaning of his works.

Why should such prejudices in scholarship go unchallenged? Again, they have not, and scholars such as Barlow and Elizabeth Prettejohn have shown that revisions to the established canons of Modernism are both necessary and possible. Disturbingly, these prejudices appear to be considerably stronger in the field of art history than they have in other disciplines. Barlow draws comparisons to the fields of musicology and literary studies, to underscore the fact that it is primarily in art history that such illogical principles, regarding the primacy of avant-garde, have been upheld; and ironically, it is often the same scholars who support this logic, who also espouse trendy theoretical methodologies that otherwise oppose the absolute meaning of binary logic. Equally ironically, it is mainly in 'academic' art history where the 'academic' issue of the nineteenth century has remained a problem, since there is no real equivalent to this distinction with regards to the other arts.[119] Indeed, as Barlow so eloquently and astutely observes, "What is necessary now is a dissolution of the academic versus avant-garde split as it is currently used and understood: as a means to equate avant-garde identity with aesthetic legitimacy."[120] That is not to say that the issues related to the evolution of the academy or the avant-garde will not be considered here as cultural forces and institutions; however, it does mean that non-historicised judgements of twentieth and twenty-first-century scholarship, regarding the worth of studying certain artists or eras, will not be supported in this text.

Despite the fact that absolute objectivity is no longer considered possible in the Post-Modern milieu of contemporary academic methodology, and that logic based on

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[117] Barlow, "Fear and Loathing" 15-32.
[118] Peter Cooke, Gustave Moreau: Painter-Poet, Ph.D. Diss., (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995): 215.
[119] Barlow, "Fear and Loathing" 25.
[120] Barlow, "Fear and Loathing" 28.

socially conditioned binary thought has also been equally deconstructed, it remains true that to understand the nineteenth-century discourse, aesthetic theory, artistic practice, and socio-historical context, we must fully grasp and acknowledge the paradigms and beliefs that existed before the triumph of Modernism and its aftermath.

One final comment remains to be made about the usefulness of art history in examining the paragone. There is obviously an inherent bias, or perhaps competition, that occurs when using words to decipher the arguments of artists, who are themselves using the visual arts to engage in the debate. In the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, artists did not distinguish between art historians and art critics, (Delacroix and Moreau are both examples of this). As a result, the history of art history is inextricably bound up in the competitive world out of which the art critic was borne. The reality of this fact means that acknowledging the paragone, for some scholars today, is at some level threatening, and creates an intrinsically uncomfortable awareness of duplicity or contentiousness, because as we question the validity of those who usurp the legacy of an artwork with words, this author included, we must also question the authenticity of the art historian as a verbal contributor to the debate, if not the entire discipline. An extreme example of this phenomenon may be found in Post-Modernist art history, where the mania for critical theory has engendered a virtual denial of the artwork itself, which proves the point that some art historians prefer not to compete with the art object at all; rather, they attempt to leave their own legacy in rhetorical devices, and occasionally in convoluted and nearly impenetrable arguments. Therefore, it must be recognised, before moving on with my own analysis of the subjects to be considered, that the art historian plays in the same sandbox with art critics, philosophers, musicians, and artists, all of whom are vying for supremacy in the debate, and for the grandest legacy, whether visual or verbal.

Chapter 2

The Archetype of Beauty:

The Meaning of Narcissus and the Birth

of the *Beau idéal*

Introduction: The Myth and the Poet

When Ovid (43 BCE - 17 CE) wrote his Metamorphoses (ca. 2-8 CE), he explored, in nearly every way possible, the potential for the temporal nature of the written word to imaginatively portray the process of transformation, which narrates the passage of time. His text recounted dozens of narratives, each bringing to life the physical and spiritual metamorphoses of mythological personas and creatures. During its long and prestigious afterlife, the Metamorphoses became one of the most celebrated sources of pagan legend, inspiring artists and writers, from the Renaissance to the present day, to pillage its stories for challenging, and often inherently paragonising, subjects.

In the context of the paragone, Ovid's plethora of stories of transformation stood as the consummate declaration of the poet's power over the temporal in art. A. Griffin suggests that the Metamorphoses represented many years of writing in Ovid's career, during which he explored themes of love. The culmination of this work in the Metamorphoses would have been part of his effort to attain a quintessential humanist desire: fame. Given that the best way to be immortalised in ancient Rome was to produce an epic literary work, Griffin views Ovid's text as the embodiment of the poet's ambitions.[1] He additionally observes that Ovid was more of a 'visual artist' than the other Latin poets, because he insisted on breathtaking detail in an elaborate panorama of mental imagery.[2] As we will explore throughout the next few chapters, artists generally seek to compete with the best examples of artistic genius, such as an ancient poet, since one must choose a worthy opponent, in order to be deemed a victor in the arts and the paragone. Another scholar of Ovid's tales, who argues that these narratives were especially relevant to the visual arts, is Douglas F. Bauer. He contends that the main theme of the Metamorphoses is the alteration of the stone image, and that part of Ovid's objective was to celebrate the arts in general.[3] If indeed, as Griffin argues, Ovid was seeking to compete with the artists and authors of his own day, then his repeated use of the stone image makes sense, because one of the most popular art forms of Roman

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[1] Alan H. F. Griffin, "Ovid's 'Metamorphoses,'" Greece and Rome, 2nd Series 24:1 (Apr., 1977): 61.
[2] Griffin, "Ovid's 'Metamorphoses'" 68.
[3] Douglas F. Bauer, "The Function of Pygmalion in the Metamorphoses of Ovid," Transactions and Proceedings of the American Philological Association 93 (1962): 2-9, 14. Bauer lists examples of the theme of the stone image from many different books in the Metamorphoses.

antiquity was marble sculpture. I would argue that the poet's intentions lie somewhere between these two analyses, such that Ovid may have very well been celebrating the visual arts, but that readers were expected to conclude that the greatest of all of the arts was poetry, and its greatest practitioner Ovid. Artists would be especially drawn to Ovid's account of Pygmalion, due to the fact that he altered all previous versions of the subject to transform the King of the Cypriots into a sculptor, thereby offering the first Pygmalion narrative to centre on the issue of artistic creation.[4]

Ovid's fame was secured in his own day, but how well was he known in the modern era? Ovid's history in France and England began hundreds of years before the nineteenth century.[5] It was through Italy that Ovid was passed on to the rest of Europe, and many of the stories from the Metamorphoses were represented in Italian Renaissance art. Paul Barolsky argues that Ovid was actually so popular in the visual arts of the Renaissance that his Metamorphoses became a veritable metaphor of the artistic process, whereby the artist transforms mere matter into a product of artistic virtue.[6] Ovid eventually also became a popular source in France and England. In the case of France, Ovid's narratives took the stage especially in the early sixteenth century, when various versions of moralised copies of the Metamorphoses were disseminated.[7] The first version, however, most likely dates to the fourteenth century.[8] In England, Ovid enjoyed great popularity in the seventeenth century, when many new editions were released.[9]

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[4] Bauer, "The Function of Pygmalion" 16.

[5] An early review of Ovid's impact in Europe is found in William Brewer and Brookes More, Ovid's Metamorphoses in European Culture (Books 6-10) (Boston: The Cornhill Publishing Company, 1933).

[6] See Paul Barolsky, "As in Ovid, So in Renaissance," Renaissance Quarterly 51:2 (Summer, 1998): 451-474. See also Leonard Barkan, "Living Sculptures:" Ovid, Michelangelo, and the Winter's Tale," ELH 48:4 (Winter, 1981): 639-667.

[7] For an examination of Ovid's popularity in the Renaissance see Ann Moss, Ovid in Renaissance France: A Survey of the Latin Editions of Ovid and Commentaries Printed in France Before 1600: Warburg Institute Surveys VIII, ed. J. B. Trapp (London: The Warburg Institute, University of London, 1982).

[8] Carla Lord, "Three Manuscripts of the Ovide moralisé," The Art Bulletin 57:2 (Jun., 1975): 162. For a review of moralised Ovid publications see R. H. Lucas, "Mediaeval French Translations of the Latin Classics to 1500," Speculum XLV (1970): 225, 242-244. See also J. Adhémar, Influences antiques dans l'art du moyen age français (London: Warburg Institute, 1939). Biographies of the Roman poet also began to appear during the medieval era. See Fausto Ghisalberti, "Mediaeval Biographies of Ovid," Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes 9 (1946): 10-59. For an examination of the early impact of Ovid in French literature see Sun Hee Kim Gertz, "Echoes and Reflections of Enigmatic Beauty in Ovid and Marie de France," Speculum 73:2 (Apr., 1998): 372-396. Alison Goddard Elliot, "Ovid's 'Metamorphoses:' A Bibliography 1968-1978," The Classical World 73:7 (Apr.,-May 1980): 385-412.

[9] H. C. Marillier, "The English "Metamorphoses:" A Confirmation of Origin," The Burlington Magazine for Connoisseurs 76:443 (Feb., 1940): 60. For an examination of Ovid in the tapestry tradition of England

Thereafter, as it is now widely acknowledged, Ovid became a favourite subject in the arts of both England and France.

Not surprisingly, the temporal act of transformation was both feared and revered by visual artists, since only the best and brightest could convincingly portray something that was generally considered to fall outside of the capabilities of the visual arts. Famous triumphs in depictions of transformation are easy to identify, such as Gianlorenzo Bernini's (1598-1680) *Apollo and Daphne*, completed for Cardinal Scipione Borghese (1576-1633) in 1622, where Daphne transforms into a tree just as Apollo captures her.[10] Other Baroque artists who turned to Ovid for subjects of transformation were Poussin and Michelangelo Merisi da Caravaggio (1571-1610), both of whom painted the story of Narcissus. While these artists opted for different moments of the narrative--Caravaggio showed Narcissus gazing at himself in the reflective pool, and Poussin captured Narcissus dying beside the pool--each included the infamous watery surface, which Ovid so carefully described. The story, according to Ovid, went this way:

> There was a clear pool, with shining silvery waters, where shepherds had never made their way; no goats that pasture on the mountains, no cattle had ever come there. Its peace was undisturbed by bird or beast or falling branches. Around it was a grassy sward, kept ever green by the nearby waters; encircling the woods sheltered the spot from the fierce sun, and made it always cool.
>
> Narcissus...lay down here...he was enchanted by the beautiful reflection that he saw. He fell in love with an insubstantial hope, mistaking a mere shadow for a real body. Spellbound by his own self, he remained there motionless, with fixed gaze, like a statue carved from Parian marble. As he lay on the bank, he gazed at the twin stars that were his eyes, at his flowing locks, worthy of Bacchus or Apollo, his smooth cheeks, his ivory neck, his lovely face where a rosy flush stained the snowy whiteness of his complexion, admiring the features for which he was himself admired. Unwittingly, he desired himself, and was himself the object of his own approval, at once seeking and sought, himself kindling the flame with which he burned. How often did he vainly kiss the treacherous pool, how often plunge his arms deep in the waters, as he tried to clasp the neck he saw!

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see Wendy Hefford, "The Chicago Pygmalion and the 'English Metamorphoses,'" Art Institute of Chicago Museum Studies 10 (1983): 92-117.

[10] For a discussion of Bernini's statue and its relation to the sensual experience of art see Andrea Borland, "Desiderio and Diletto: Vision, Touch, and the Poetics of Bernini's *Apollo and Daphne*," The Art Bulletin 82:2 (Jun., 2000): 309-330. For the problem of movement in art, which Bernini's statue so poignantly addresses see E.H. Gombrich, "Moment and Movement in Art," Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes 27 (1964): 293-306. Gianlorenzo Bernini, *Apollo and Daphne*, 1622-5, marble, Villa Borghese, Rome, Italy.

> But he could not lay hold upon himself. He did not know what he was looking at, but was fired by the sight, and excited by the very illusion that deceived his eyes. Poor foolish boy, why vainly grasp at the fleeting image that eludes you? The thing you are seeing does not exist: only turn aside and you will lose what you love. What you see is but the shadow cast by your reflection; in itself it is nothing.
>
> No thought of food or sleep could draw him from the spot. Stretched on the shady grass, he gazed at the shape that was no true shape with eyes that could never have their fill, and by his own eyes he was undone.[11]

We must diverge for a moment from the main topic of this chapter to acknowledge the battle cry that Ovid, as a poet, had delivered to all artists. In this respect I will provide an analysis of what I perceive to be the attractive or contentious aspects of Ovid's story, as it may have been received by visual artists. First, it is not difficult to detect in Ovid's writing the lingering scent of Plato's disdain for the artist's works as mere shadows and lies.[12] Ovid made it perfectly clear that Narcissus's fate was the consequence of the image's extremely deceptive capabilities; the eyes were at fault, and therefore the fruit of vision also, as Narcissus was "fired by the sight, and excited by the very illusion that deceived his eyes." Narcissus's beautiful reflected image was an "insubstantial hope," a "shadow," and "treacherous." And yet, it was the perfection of this very image that made it so enthralling; and as a result, Ovid asserted that the better the image, the more dangerous it must be. It is hardly necessary for us to connect the vision of this image to the visual arts, since Ovid did this for us. Throughout the tale of Narcissus's love affair with his likeness, Ovid compared both the reflection, and the mortal boy, to the splendor and form of a marble sculpture, with such references to Narcissus as "a statue carved from Parian marble," and "hands as white as marble."[13] A point made by Griffin is relevant here too. Because the gods were shown in marble form, Ovid likens Narcissus's beauty to that of a divine being.[14] The reference to a 'fixed gaze'

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[11] Ovid, Metamorphoses, trans., Mary M. Innes (London: Penguin Books, 1955): 85-86.

[12] For Plato's discussion of how artworks are even more removed from truth than the matter in the world, see *Book X* of his Republic. It is worth mentioning here that Plato was involved in his own paragone, since he resented the growing fame of visual artists in his own day, even to the extent of banning them from the Republic for their deceit, and therefore his defense of philosophy as the highest art form was surely designed to construct a hierarchy of the arts, in which he reigned at the top.

[13] Ovid, Metamorphoses 86-87.

[14] Griffin, "Ovid's 'Metamorphoses'" 64. Refer to pages 63-5 for the rest of Griffin's analysis of Ovid's myth of Narcissus.

likewise recalls the immobile nature of marble, and its inability to free the narrative from a single moment or action. In truth, Narcissus's legend was a flawless recipe for iconophobia, (or creating fear of the image); the eyes lie; aesthetic beauty is the medium for the trickery, and gazing upon the deception leads to death. According to his analysis of the Renaissance interpretation of the Narcissus myth, Barolsky notes that Ovid's Narcissus was viewed as the archetypal painter.[15] But if this is the case, then Ovid's view of the painter cannot be without negative connotations.

Narcissus's influential reflection also parallels another ancient fable concerning the Medusa legends. In Ovid's text, the young hero Perseus was able to use the severed head of the once beautiful, but eventually indescribably ugly, Medusa as a weapon.[16] Those who glanced in her direction instantaneously expired, due to what their eyes beheld.[17] The subject of Medusa's simultaneously stunning and petrifying iconic authority will be dealt with later. For now, we must consider that, indubitably, the paragonising import of Ovid's narrative did not escape the attention of artists, who would have recognised in Ovid's story the enormous challenge that he put forth.

Narcissus as the Ideal Challenge

In almost all cases, the portrayal of Narcissus provides the perfect vehicle for a demonstration of artistic virtue, in both technical skill and clever intellect, but only because of the great challenge that it presents. To depict Narcissus in the non-temporal art of painting or sculpture, one must select the most emblematic moment of the myth—the one that manifests the image's iconic power, such that it can bring about both a torturous love of the thing represented, and death. More specifically, it was for painters that this narrative would become the most alluring; because, it was only in painting that the reflective pool could be illustrated. Undeniably, the creation of the "perfect reflection" has always been a central preoccupation of many painters, as can be seen in countless works. This has taken the form of artists, such as Caravaggio, who studied the

[15] Barolsky, "As in Ovid" 453.
[16] Ovid, Metamorphoses, Book IV 110-15. The passages will be consulted at greater length in Chapter 4.
[17] Cristelle L. Baskins, "Echoing Narcissus in Alberti's "Della Pittura,"" Oxford Art Journal 16:1 (1993): 30. Though the iconophobic force of the Medusa image is a well-known aspect of this legend, Baskins also argues for a connection between the Narcissus and Medusan stories.

luminous effects in glass vases, which he recreated in exquisitely realistic detail. Or, it can take the form of a distorted, but captivatingly illusionistic reflection, such as Parmigianino's (1503-40) *Self-Portrait in a Convex Mirror* (ca. 1524).[18] The title basically explains what the painting represents, but it does not mention that the artist placed his hand so close to the mirror's surface that it appears in extraordinary distortion, but in accordance with the scientific effects of the mirror. Mastery of the reflective surface has been, to this day, a staple of the painter's training and evolution, such that the persuasive reflection remains a decisive declaration of technical achievement in a two-dimensional surface, evidenced by thousands of studies, over the decades, typically undertaken by students of all ages, depicting glass vases and still-lifes.

Another facet of the reflection made it an important tool in the paragone debate. Irrespective of the technical skill required to master the reflection in a two-dimensional medium, the reflection itself was truly the first celebrated image in the history of humanity. Before there was art, there were reflections. And just as they were in the story of Narcissus, these reflections were in pools of water, not in finely wrought glass or obsidian mirrors, bestowed upon humanity by nature herself. Alberti perpetuated the association of Narcissus with the birth of painting when he wrote the following in his treatise On Painting (1436): "Consequently I used to tell my friends that the inventor of painting, according to the poets, was Narcissus, who was turned into a flower; for, as painting is the flower of all the arts, so the tale of Narcissus fits our purpose perfectly. What is painting but the act of embracing by means of art the surface of the pool?"[19] Thus, the reflection became the iconic image, the first illusory deception in the history of images, and the first method through which human beings beheld an insubstantial and elusive form of human beauty. So the reflection, especially one that was cast in water, as it was in the Narcissus story, was the archetypal image and the first painting, thereby making God the first artist, because he created the natural world. Obviously, given that reflections are created through light illuminating a surface, the virtuoso treatments of

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[18] Parmigianino, *Self-Portrait in a Convex Mirror*, ca. 1524, oil on wood, 24.4 cm wide, Kunsthistorisches Museum, Vienna, Austria.

[19] Alberti, On Painting 61. For an examination of the origin of painting and the reflection see F. Frontisi-Ducroux and J-P. Vernant, Dans l'œil du miroir (Paris: Odile Jacob, 1997): 200-242.

light, shade, and *chiaroscuro* would likewise become preoccupations of competitive artists.[20]

Of course, artists were similarly drawn to the mental image that Ovid himself conjured of Narcissus. But how does an artist try to match that spectacular mental image? How beautiful and picture-perfect did the human figure have to be, in order to induce a lovesickness culminating in death? Only the most iconically desirable image could propel someone into a perpetual gaze resulting in starvation and dehydration-induced fatality, as it did for Narcissus, who foolishly refused to desert the reflective pool and the image to which he had joined himself. By iconic, I mean an image that is so powerful that it can induce idolatry, love, and even fear in the viewer.

By highlighting the transient attribute of the reflection, Ovid clarified that the image has an ephemeral disposition, as opposed to the unvarying and enduring quality of words, which once memorised, as many ancient rhetoricians did, were nearly indestructible. The feature that coupled Narcissus to his reflection was his gaze, just as the quality that rendered an image iconic was its capacity to grip the observer in a virtually trance-like stare. So, three challenges were presented to the visual artist, who would dare to attempt an illustration of the myth recounted in Ovid's legend. The first was to create a figure worthy of archetypal beauty, given that the writer defined Narcissus's physical perfection, by comparing him to Apollo or Bacchus, thereby making him the first *beau idéal*. The second was to create a reflection that could challenge the real thing, in terms of its ephemeral documentation of God's creation, and Ovid's description of it. The third was to render a composition and artistic representation that could make viewers believe in the image's iconic power.

We have seen that there were two main features of the Narcissus tale that became emblematic of the paragone debate: the reflection, and the *beau idéal*. We will now turn to the former. Since the reflection's history in painting is simply too vast to treat in an exhaustive manner, it is compulsory to focus on those artists who are of import to our topic, and those who created works that exemplify the nature of the problem. Of course the story of Narcissus's love affair with the image has been not only of interest to art

[20] In Wettlaufer's article "Girodet," she explores the role of light and competition, and again in her book (Pen vs. Paintbrush 60).

historians, because it deals with the idea of the birth of the image, but it continues to be studied by literary scholars, such as Dennis Patrick Slattery, who finds that it addresses the origin of the word or the voice in the literary tradition. For instance, Slattery has shown that, from the writer's perspective, Narcissus's journey of transformation began with the spoken word, manifested in the trapped and pathetic figure of Echo, who could never initiate speech with Narcissus, and whose love for him therefore went unnoticed. To be sure, Narcissus's enlightenment, or the discovery that his beloved was actually his own image, was facilitated through uttering words to illuminate the problem. Narcissus needed to speak to his image, and to himself, in order to ascertain his identity, although this realisation arrived too late, as Narcissus was no longer capable of unscrambling himself from the image by the time that he recognised its true nature.[21] In other traditions, independent from the Narcissus context, the word has also been celebrated. For instance, the origin of the word is aggrandised in the Christian tradition, based on the first chapter of the *Gospel of John*, where the word begins with Christ, who represents the *Logos*, thereby likening the spoken or written word to truth, reason, and divine authority. In the same way, in Ovid's mythological tale, it is the spoken word that represents truth, logic, and reality.

The Narcissus myth, like other Ovidian narratives, has, likewise, become a fascinating focus for art theorists. For instance, as we have seen, Narcissus's story was re-fashioned by Alberti in his treatise, wherein he concluded that painting was, by its very definition, a reflection, or a mirror. To master the reflection, was, then, to triumph in painting itself, and to propel one's art into the history of such efforts. Notwithstanding the endlessly intriguing ramifications of this myth, Alberti's theories have had radical, and sometimes negative, implications for the art of painting. Baskins observes that in Alberti's account of Narcissus, he conflated the flower that Narcissus became with the reflective surface, thereby enforcing the idea that Narcissus 'invented' the flower. If the flower was a feminine, beautiful, and fleeting object of the viewer's gaze, then, as Baskins rationalises, Alberti's comparison solidified the connection between reflections and painting's feminine nature. Painting, like the reflection and flower, is ephemeral, to

[21] Dennis Patrick Slattery, "Speaking, Reflecting, Writing: The Myth of Narcissus and Echo," *The South Central Bulletin* 43:4 (Winter 1983): 127-8.

be looked at, and a necessarily beautiful entity.[22] This kind of comparison would persistently feminise painting in the eyes of later aesthetic theorists, which in the patriarchal society of Renaissance Italy made painting inferior to more masculine intellectual pursuits.

Nonetheless, Alberti's notion of the mirror as a metaphor for the artist was shared by others as well. Leonardo similarly held this opinion, which had become a well-known Renaissance notion. For instance, Leonardo, wrote the following: "The painter's mind should be like a mirror which transforms itself into the color of the thing it has as its object, and is filled with as many likenesses as there are things placed before it."[23] In his study of painted reflections, Olszewski explores the fact that there was an alternative positive subtext for the mirror, in that it was not seen as a singularly limited object of reflection, capable of merely mimicking; rather, the mirror, like the artist, could amplify, manipulate, and frame. He cites the example of Parmigianino's *Self-Portrait*, wherein the painter proved his artistic skill, as we have discussed, by crafting a highly distorted reflection of himself in a curved mirror.[24] In this way, Parmigianino confirmed his pre-eminence as a painter, by choosing to imaginatively replicate the natural world in his art, and by discerning which distortion would prove the most fascinating.

Nineteenth-century French painters did not have to dig deep into their history to find another faultless master of reflective illusions for a role model. One of the most heralded artists in the foundation of French academic painting was Poussin. Because he was upheld as the archetype of a good 'academic' French painter, well into the late nineteenth century, a brief appraisal of his strengths is appropriate. An overview of this eminent figure's œuvre promptly exposes the lengths to which Poussin went, in order to validate painting's rightful standing at the zenith of the hierarchy of the arts. Poussin's celebrated *Self-Portrait* (1650) exemplifies the most multifaceted and potent models of self-promotion in the history of self-portraits.[25] It is the consummate self-portrait,

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[22] Baskins, "Echoing Narcissus" 25, 29.
[23] Quoted in Edward J. Olszewski, "Distortions, Shadows, and Conventions in Sixteenth-Century Italian Art," Artibus et Historiae 6:11 (1985): f.n. 1. Also found in Leonardo on Painting 205. For in depth studies of Leonardo's paragonising practices and theories see Rona Goffen, Renaissance Rivals. See also Farago, Leonardo da Vinci's Paragone.
[24] Olszewski, "Distortions" 101.
[25] Nicolas Poussin, *Self-Portrait*, ca. 1650, oil on canvas, 78 x 94 cm, Musée du Louvre, Paris, France.

showing Poussin holding his painting tools, standing in his studio in front of a works that he has completed. He looks out at the viewer with confident professionalism. Just as Renaissance artists, such as Leonardo, dwelled on the importance of the eye to the painter or artist, so too did Poussin take up this convention here. The work includes a view of a painting of a woman, who is herself the personification of Painting; she bears on her forehead the artist's eye, also emblazoned on Alberti's personal medal of the fifteenth century. Like his predecessors Leonardo and Alberti, Poussin's scientific approach to painting was designed to confirm its intellectuality, and the artist's role as a purveyor of truth through scrutiny of the natural world, which of course was best perceived through the sense of sight.

Of particular interest, with regards to Poussin, is the attention that this artist paid to portraying reflective surfaces in his works. One of the forms of reflection that re-emerged habitually in Poussin's works was the mirror, or glassy, watery surfaces. For example, the *Landscape with a Calm* (1650-1), *Narcissus and Echo* (1627-8), and *The Finding of Moses* (1638), all integrate watery surfaces that, in some instances, nearly dominate the compositions in which they appear.[26] This type of reflective surface, though, was outnumbered by his many works in which the metal surface occurs. In fact, as Jonathan Unglaub shows in his article "Poussin's Reflection," the artist customarily situated armour, and other reflective surfaces, noticeably at the picture plane, thereby thrusting his artistic proficiency in the viewer's face, just as Caravaggio did with his still-lifes. One of Poussin's favourite literary sources, which he commonly pillaged for painterly subject matter, was Torquato Tasso's Gerusalemme liberata, (which was an epic poem that was first published in Italian in 1581). According to Unglaub, much of Tasso's narrative included allusions to armour, making it a logical focus for Poussin.[27] Poussin, having been concerned with demonstrating the painter's pre-eminence, would have naturally seized upon any opportunities to visually outdo the poetic description of aesthetically intricate elements. Accordingly, Poussin allotted great significance to

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[26] Nicolas Poussin, *Landscape with a Calm*, 1650-1, oil on canvas, 38 3/16" x 51 9/16" Getty Center, Los Angeles, U.S.A. Poussin, *The Finding of Moses (Moïse sauvé des eaux)*, 1638, oil on canvas, 94 x 121 cm, Musée du Louvre, Paris. France. Poussin, *Echo and Narcissus*, 1627-8, oil on canvas, 0.74 x 1.0m, Musée du Louvre, Paris, France.

[27] Jonathan Unglaub, "Poussin's Reflection," Art Bulletin, 86:3 (Sept., 2004): 506.

reflections of armour in his paintings of Tasso's narrative. As one would expect of a paragonising artist, Poussin's reflections were not plain mirror images; more exactly, they were nothing less than the most sophisticated representations of artistic virtue in the treatment of reflective surfaces. Unglaub proposes that, like Parmigianino, Poussin distorted the armour's reflective surface, so as to better herald his creative genius. This is most evident in the reflection of Erminia's hand and dress on the sword's surface, which she hoists into mid-air in Poussin's *Tancred and Erminia* (ca. 1635). Even more stunning is the reflection of a face in the cuirass worn by Vafrino.[28]

It should be taken into account that Poussin meticulously analysed Leonardo's writings when he studied and illustrated the Renaissance artist's paragonising treatise on painting. Unglaub proposes that the optical illusions and reflective armour in *Tancred and Erminia* were, in fact, by-products of Poussin's interest in Leonardo's theories on the portrayal of light and shade, as expounded in his treatise. Just as Leonardo accentuated optical effects as the qualities exclusive to painting, both in his writings and works, so too Poussin chose to foreground painting's unique and most impressive properties in his works.[29] Reflections, then, since the dawn of painting, have persisted as emblems of superlative skill in this medium.

The Role of Shadows and the Birth of Painting

Shadows, by their very nature, comprise one half of the reflection, since the other half is light. In his article, Edward Olszewski draws attention to the significance of shadows in the early theorisation of painting, which leads us to another competitive tool in the visual arts.[30] Particularly in painting, shadows could be manipulated to show the great persuasiveness of an artistic medium, since the projection of a shadow onto a surface was yet another metaphor for the dawn of painting. Shadows were connected to the birth of painting by ancient sources, such as Pliny the Elder, who described the birth

[28] Unglaub, "Poussin's Reflection" 506. Nicolas Poussin, *Tancred and Erminia,* ca. 1630, oil on canvas, 98 x 147 cm, St. Petersburg, Hermitage Museum, Russia.
[29] Unglaub, "Poussin's Reflection" 509-10.
[30] Olszewski, "Distortions" 104-124.

of painting from shadows in his Natural History (ca. 77 CE). The fifth chapter of Book 35 opens with Pliny recounting the origin of painting:

> We have no certain knowledge as to the commencement of the art of painting, nor does this enquiry fall under our consideration. The Egyptians assert that it was invented among themselves, six thousand years before it passed into Greece; a vain boast, it is very evident. As to the Greeks, some say that it was invented at Sicyon, others at Corinth; but they all agree that it originated in tracing lines round the human shadow.[31]

The crux of the fable was that a young Corinthian maiden, (who was the daughter of a man named Butades and came to be known as Dibutade, although she is not named by Pliny), fell in love with a man, and fashioned the first 'painting' when she traced his profile on a wall from his shadow.[32] Even though some accounts describe her as 'drawing' rather than painting the outline, since drawing was considered, from the Renaissance onward, to be the foundation upon which all painting was built, drawing may be understood to represent painting. Her father, Butades, who was a potter, then made the first sculpture by building up the drawing into a relief using clay.[33] In this way, the story established a correlation between painting and femininity, as it was the daughter who recorded the two-dimensional image. Sculpture, in this scenario, was imbued with greater masculine vigour and permanence, since her father transformed the fragile painting into the more impressive and substantial sculpture.

Myths dealing with the origin of painting were, naturally, appealing to artists and theorists concerned with the status of the artist, since the more illustrious the origins of

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[31] Pliny the Elder, The Natural History, ed. John Bostock (London: Taylor and Francis, 1855): 6228. For his part, in his Institutes of Oratory, Quintilian mentioned that Zeuxis advanced art by discovering light and shade. Book 12, Chapter 10, Part 4. Posted by Lee Honeycutt, Iowa State University, 6 October, 2008. <http://www2.iastate.edu/~honeyl/quintilian/12/chapter10.html>.

[32] For the legacy of Dibutade in the Modern era see Alexandra Wettlaufer "Dibutades and her Daughters: The Female Artist in Post-Revolutionary France," Nineteenth-Century Studies 18 (2004): 9-38.

[33] In Chapter 43 we learn about the role of Butades and his daughter:

> On painting we have now said enough, and more than enough; but it will be only proper to append some accounts of the plastic art. Butades, a potter of Sicyon, was the first who invented, at Corinth, the art of modelling portraits in the earth which he used in his trade. It was through his daughter that he made the discovery; who, being deeply in love with a young man about to depart on a long journey, traced the profile of his face, as thrown upon the wall by the light of the lamp. Upon seeing this, her father filled in the outline, by compressing clay upon the surface, and so made a face in relief, which he then hardened by fire along with other articles of pottery.

Pliny the Elder, The Natural History 6283-4.

his art were, the more prestigious the artist could become. Accounts of these origins were likewise useful in determining the inherent strengths and weaknesses of each art, whether sought out by practitioners or theorists. In addition to the Dibutade version, other narratives included those of Apelles and Zeuxis, as the first renowned artists from antiquity. In this account, Zeuxis was a fifth-century painter, while Apelles was a fourth-century painter. The former featured in a famous account from Pliny regarding the competitive streak amongst ancient Greek artists, thereby indelibly connecting the origin of the arts to artistic fame and rivalry. Zeuxis offered a stellar role model for paragonising artists, due to his supposed involvement in one of the first public artistic competitions.[34] According to Pliny, Zeuxis entered into a competition with another artist named Parrhasius, so as to determine which was more accomplished. Both artists triumphed in completing paintings whose deceptions were flawless, the former creating an illusion of grapes that birds attempted to eat, while the latter tricked Zeuxis with a painted curtain.[35] This literary account verifies how intimately connected the origins of

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[34] For an analysis of the survival of the Apelles and Zeuxis stories into the Renaissance, and how the narrative was exploited by Vasari for competitive purposes, for example, see Michiaki Koshikawa, "Apelles's Stories and the 'Paragone' Debate: A Re-Reading of the Frescoes in the Casa Vasari in Florence," Artibus et Historiae 22:43 (2001): 17-18, 20. For more information on Vasari, Koshikawa cites Jacobs, "Vasari's Vision" 399-416.

[35] Pliny recounts the following tale about Zeuxis, which verifies that artists in antiquity were perceived to be in competition with each other:

> There is a story, too, that at a later period, Zeuxis having painted a child carrying grapes, the birds came to peck at them; upon which, with a similar degree of candour, he expressed himself vexed with his work, and exclaimed--" I have surely painted the grapes better than the child, for if I had fully succeeded in the last, the birds would have been in fear of it." Zeuxis executed some figures also in clay, the only works of art that were left behind at Ambracia, when Fulvius Nobilior transported the Muses from that city to Rome. There is at Rome a Helena by Zeuxis, in the Porticos of Philippus, and a Marsyas Bound, in the Temple of Concord there.
>
> Parrhasius of Ephesus also contributed greatly to the progress of painting, being the first to give symmetry to his figures, the first to give play and expression to the features, elegance to the hair, and gracefulness to the mouth: indeed, for contour, it is universally admitted by artists that he bore away the palm. This, in painting, is the very highest point of skill. To paint substantial bodies and the interior of objects is a great thing, no doubt, but at the same time it is a point in which many have excelled: but to make the extreme outline of the figure, to give the finishing touches to the painting in rounding off the contour, this is a point of success in the art which is but rarely attained. For the extreme outline, to be properly executed, requires to be nicely rounded, and so to terminate as to prove the existence of something more behind it, and thereby disclose that which it also serves to hide.

Pliny the Elder, The Natural History 6252. For an account of Zeuxis from Quintilian see Book 12, Chapter 10, Part 3 from the Institutes of Oratory.

the arts were with the concept of deception, (and we must once again remind ourselves that the medium is the message—Pliny is a writer, just like Ovid).

For his part, Apelles was hailed as the greatest painter of the ancient world, and according to Pliny he was responsible for creating an unsurpassed and captivating depiction of Venus, who was a Roman equivalent to the Greek goddess Diana or Artemis. Michiaki Koshikawa, studying Pliny's account of Apelles's accomplishments, asserts that images of Diana or Venus later became emblematic of artistic rivalry, because Apelles had raised the bar so high.[36] Many figures associated with the arts would return to these accounts of the ancient artists, to explore the origins of the arts. For example, Alberti and Leonardo also referred to the legendary origins of painting in their treatises, while such narratives would continue to be passed down through the ages, by such figures as Félibien in his De l'origine de la peinture et des plus excellens peintres de l'antiquité, and Diderot in his contributions for the Encyclopédie.[37]

In the case of Dibutade, even if somewhat fanciful in its mythical qualities, the story of the first painter, discovering her art through tracing shadows, would lead some Renaissance artists to experiment with shadows in preparatory drawings, even if this

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[36] Koshikawa, "Apelles's Stories" 19-20. Pliny described the creation of a beautiful female figure by Apelles with the following account in Book 35, Chapter 36:

> In fact, Apelles was a person of great amenity of manners, a circumstance which rendered him particularly agreeable to Alexander the Great, who would often come to his studio. He had forbidden himself, by public edict, as already stated, to be represented by any other artist. On one occasion, however, when the prince was in his studio, talking a great deal about painting without knowing anything about it, Apelles quietly begged that he would quit the subject, telling him that he would get laughed at by the boys who were there grinding the colours: so great was the influence which he rightfully possessed over a monarch, who was otherwise of an irascible temperament. And yet, irascible as he was, Alexander conferred upon him a very signal mark of the high estimation in which he held him; for having, in his admiration of her extraordinary beauty, engaged Apelles to paint Pancaste undraped, the most beloved of all his concubines, the artist while so engaged, fell in love with her; upon which, Alexander, perceiving this to be the case, made him a present of her, thus showing himself, though a great king in courage, a still greater one in self-command, this action redounding no less to his honour than any of his victories. For in thus conquering himself, not only did he sacrifice his passions in favour of the artist, but even his affections as well; uninfluenced, too, by the feelings which must have possessed his favourite in thus passing at once from the arms of a monarch to those of a painter. Some persons are of opinion that Pancaste was the model of Apelles in his painting of Venus Anadyomene.

Pliny the Elder, The Natural History 6258-9.

[37] Robert Rosenblum, "The Origin of Painting: A Problem in the Iconography of Romantic Classicism," The Art Bulletin 39:4 (Dec., 1957): 279-81. For the Dibutade story see Félibien, Entretiens sur les vies 106.

tactic was not without controversy. According to Olszewski, artists like Cellini often studied shadows within a studio setting, in order to find inspiration in the shapes, while others, such as Leonardo, claimed that due to the inherently untruthful quality of shadows, the painter should not rely upon them for training or preparatory devices.[38] Leonardo's objection stemmed from the fact that he viewed the changeable shadow as deceptive and unscientific. This objection reflected his concern to elevate painting's status by promoting its empirical, objective, scientific, and truthful attributes. Fundamentally, Leonardo's Aristotelian line of reasoning was that art was of cultural value, because it reflected the truths of nature, as mediated and reasoned by the scientist-painter. Leonardo was in the minority in his distrust of shadows though, which nevertheless became one of the hallmarks of illusion in both painting and sculpture. In the course of the next several chapters, our dialogue will address the many ways in which artists manipulated shadows in their quest to create a competitive artistic product.

The Legacy of Narcissus's Reflection in the Nineteenth Century

The reflection's iconographic symbolism, as a mark of artistic virtue, would continue to be exploited by eighteenth and nineteenth-century artists.[39] At the turn of the nineteenth century, a considerable interest in depicting reflections was exhibited amongst the painters in David's circle of Neoclassical painters. The terribly competitive atmosphere of David's school offered the perfect venue to sustain such concerns. A specific example appears in the work of Jean-Germain Drouais (1763-88). In the *Dying Athlete* of 1785, Drouais portrayed a reclining nude warrior fighting death.[40] This powerful scene, boasts gleaming metallic surfaces, such as the large shield, generating

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[38] Olszewski, "Distortions" 106-7. The author includes in his article the engraving by Agostino Veneziano entitled *The Academy of Baccio Bandinelli* of 1531, demonstrating the use of both sculptures and shadows in training draughtsmen in a studio. Likewise, he reproduces Pierfrancesco Alberti's engraving *A Painter's Academy in Rome* of 1625, which illustrates a painting studio full of assistants and trainees working from sculptures casting shadows. See also Thomas Da Costa Kauffman, "The Perspective of Shadows: The History and Theory of Shadow Projection," Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes 33 (1975): 258-87. And Charles Dempsey, "Some Observations on the Education of Artists in Florence and Bologna During the Later Sixteenth Century," Art Bulletin 62 (1980): 552-69.

[39] For a critical examination of the idea of illusion and mimesis in art see Frank Anderson Trapp, "The Emperor's Nightingale: Some Aspects of Mimesis," Critical Inquiry 4:1 (Autumn, 1977): 85-103.

[40] Jean-Germain Drouais, *Dying Athlete (Soldat romain blessé),* 1785, oil on canvas, 1.25 x 1.82 m, Musée du Louvre, Paris, France.

tremendous visual interest in Drouais's mastery of reflective surfaces.[41] These effects surface in an even more sophisticated form in Drouais's *Marius prononcer à Minturnes* (1786).[42] This scene depicts the story of a young Roman soldier in an austere antique setting, about to deliver the terrible news that a military hero is to be executed. Here, the helmet's reflection, placed noticeably on the table, quotes a similar feature in David's *Oath of the Horatii* (1784).[43] The young protégé's desire to prove his skill, by mimicking his master, is also shown in Drouais's efforts to quote other virtuoso features of David's works. In the same painting, Drouais employed forced perspective, using similar tiles that appear in David's works, while he also referenced the hem of the Horatii father's drapery on the figure of Marius. There are too many examples to address in this chapter, but these two works demonstrate that reflective surfaces were common features of paintings by competitive French Neoclassicists.

Reflections were also a preoccupation for an artist whose work we will be studying in depth: Burne-Jones. As will be explored in the third chapter, Burne-Jones devoted years of his life to capturing the Pygmalion myth, telling of a sculptor who created the most beautiful figure of a woman in history. Upon completing the task Pygmalion fell in love with the statue. The sculptor was fortunate that Venus, the goddess of love, mercifully transformed the statue into a real, living creature. Burne-Jones portrayed the story using two series of four paintings, in order to represent the metaphoric image of 'life-like' art, in the form of the metamorphosed statue. But for now, I would like to explore Burne-Jones's connection to the artistic challenges presented by the myth of Narcissus. In his painting of *The Mirror of Venus* (1877), Burne-Jones incorporates not one reflection, but seven, as he depicts a group of idealised beautiful women gazing at themselves in a reflecting pool.[44] Since the women face the viewer, their mirror-like images are also visible in the surface of the water. The painting gives no indication of a real or imagined setting, as the pool is located in a plain outdoor

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[41] Simon Lee, "Jean-Germain Drouais and the 1784 *Prix de Rome*," The Burlington Magazine 130:1022 (May, 1988): 361-365.
[42] Jean-Germain Drouais, *Marius at Minturnae (Marius prisonnier à Minturnes),* 1786, oil on canvas, 2.71 x 3.65 m, Musée du Louvre, Paris, France.
[43] Jacques-Louis David, *Oath of the Horatii (Le Serment des Horaces)*, 1784, oil on canvas, 3.3 x 4.25m, Musée du Louvre, Paris, France.
[44] Edward Burne-Jones, *The Mirror of Venus*, 1870-6, oil on canvas, 47 1/4" x 78 11/16" or 1.2 x 2.0 m., Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation Museum, London, England.

landscape. In truth, the subject of Venus and her maidens gazing at themselves is, in its masterful treatment, Burne-Jones's unique adaptation of the Narcissus narrative. Kate Flint has pointed out that Burne-Jones's maidens are not individualised figures; instead, they constitute a group of figures that stands for the idea of beauty itself.[45] In essence, the women embody types, like studies of ideal feminine beauty, and are differentiated primarily through their poses and colouring. In this way, the young women are comparable to Narcissus, who himself was described by Ovid as an archetypal beauty. They also parallel Narcissus in their great absorption in their own reflections.

On another level, it could be argued that the very act of looking at works of art in Burne-Jones's day was itself a form of Narcissism, which Flint discusses in her analysis of *The Mirror*. When spectators attended exhibition events, they were often equally as captivated by their own reflections, which were beheld in the glass covering the works, as they were by the artworks themselves, making the experience of spectatorship, or looking at artworks, a form of Narcissism.[46] Viewers of works like *The Mirror* would have explored, in this way, a parallel universe that mimicked their own actions; they would have peered at the art object in the same manner that the women look at their own reflections.

In addition to reflective watery surfaces, Burne-Jones painted numerous reflections in armour and metal, which was often featured in his portrayals of knights and their accoutrements. One example appears in the knight seated prominently at the picture plane in *Le Chant d'Amour* (1868-77).[47] The knight is located on the ground to the left of the composition, and gazes at the young woman playing a musical instrument at the centre of the painting. Here, the setting is dull and dusk-like, and a gentle diffused light

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[45] Further, Flint observes that the women's likeness to one another underscores Burne-Jones's treatment of them as generically feminine and intentionally denied individuality. The fact that the subject was relatively free of direct narrative associations prompted some reviewers to suggest that it was the perfect representation of beauty itself, as Flint realised in her discovery of a critical review in *The Globe*. Flint also notes that this painting was seen by Oscar Wilde in May of 1877, when he attended its first showing at the Grosvenor Gallery, which he reviewed in the *Dublin University Magazine*. The importance of Wilde in this examination of the paragone will be addressed in the final chapter. Kate Flint, "Edward Burne-Jones's *The Mirror of Venus*: Surface and Subjectivity in the Art Criticism of the 1870s." After the Pre-Raphaelites: Art and Aestheticism in Victorian England, ed. Elizabeth Prettejohn (New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press, 1999): 152, 154-5.

[46] Flint, "*The Mirror of Venus*" 154.

[47] Edward Burne-Jones, *Le Chant d'Amour*, 1868-77, oil on canvas, 45" x 61 3/8" or 114.3 x 155.9 cm, The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York City, U.S.A.

pervades the background of a utopian medieval village, setting off dramatic glints of reflected light, which create volume and visual interest in the knight's armour. In order to amplify the mesmerising effect of the reflections in armour, Burne-Jones also often opted to show the armour in very dark greys and blacks, the drama and integrity of which forces the viewer to pay attention to the skillfully painted passages. We find this manner of depiction yet again in the knight's armour of *The Merciful Knight* (1863), where Christ bends forward from his cross to embrace the metal-clad knight kneeling before him in prayer.[48]

Another one of the most captivating reflections in Burne-Jones's work is one in which the figures are themselves, one could say Narcissistically, captivated by their own likenesses. In his eighth painting for the Perseus cycle entitled *The Baleful Head* (1884-8), the painter again took upon himself the challenge of illustrating an ancient text, in which Ovid recounted the escapades of Perseus, including his quest to kill Medusa.[49] As in the two Pygmalion series, the subject was borne out in a narrative sequence, and broke free from the temporal restrictions of his art. His painting was the visual counterpart of William Morris's poem called "The Doom of King Acrisius" from the Earthly Paradise (1896). The specific passage from which the scene is taken reads:

> May I not see this marvel of the lands/ So mirrored, and yet live? Make no delay,/ The sea is pouring fast into the bay,/ And we must soon be gone."/ "Look down", he said,/ "And take good heed thou turnest not thine head."/ Then gazing down with shuddering dread and awe,/ Over her imaged shoulder, soon she saw/ The head rise up, so beautiful and dread,/ That, white and ghastly, yet seemed scarcely dead/ Beside the image of her own fair face,/ As, daring not to move from off the place,/ But trembling sore, she cried: "Enough, O love!/ What man shall doubt thou art the son of Jove;/ I think thou wilt not die." Then with her hand/ She hid her eyes, and trembling did she stand/ Until she felt his lips upon her cheek;/ Then turning round, with anxious eyes and meek,/ She gazed upon him, and some doubtful thought/ Up to her brow the tender colour brought.[50]

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[48] Edward Burne-Jones, *The Merciful Knight*, 1863, watercolour, bodycolour, and gum, 39 1/2" x 27 1/4" (100.3 x 69.2 cm), Birmingham Museums and Art Gallery, Birmingham, England.

[49] One of the few scholarly interpretations of this scene, and examination of this cycle, is found in Liana de Girolami Cheney, "Edward Burne-Jones's 'Andromeda:' Transformation and Mythological Sources," Artibus et Historiae 25:49 (2004): 221-2. Ovid's account of the myth will be discussed in Chapter 4.

[50] Passage from William Morris's "The Doom of King Acrisius," I, The Earthly Paradise. 5 vols. (London: Longmans, Green, 1896): 276-77. Edward Burne-Jones, *The Baleful Head: Perseus and Medusa Series*, 1884-8, oil on canvas, 61" x 55 1/4" or 154.9 x 140.3 m, Staatsgallerie Stuttgart, Germany.

The *Perseus* series consumed a good chunk of the artist's career, as he never completed all of the paintings intended for it, even though it was an ongoing project over ten years of his life. Originally commissioned in 1875, the series was intended to adorn the home of Arthur Balfour in London. Actually, two versions of the series were made at this time; one is the cartoon series in gouache, now being housed at the Southampton City Art Gallery, while the second is the final series in oil on canvas, presently located at the Staatsgallerie in Stuttgart.[51] As with the Pygmalion series, the two versions demonstrate some considerable differences.

The final scene in the account of Perseus's escapades is especially impressive, because of the mirror-like reflection of the three faces peering into the watery surface. We witness a moment in Perseus's adventure when he pauses to allow Andromeda to look upon the face of Medusa, whom he has already beheaded. The two stand on opposite sides of a still fountain. Perseus holds the head of Medusa in the air, such that her reflection appears in the undisturbed water below, while Andromeda leans over to see Medusa's reflection, as well as her own. Like a Manet or Edgar Degas (1834-17) painting, the reflection is not genuine; in other words, we see more of the faces in the reflected surface than we should. But this is just one of the painting's features that makes it so enticing. The work has a simplistic composition that enhances the straightforward declaration of the image's power. Irrespective of the narrative context, the subject forthrightly reflects the Narcissus theme, because of the strength and perfection with which the painting and reflection are imbued. Perseus presents Medusa's head to Andromeda, which he grips in his left hand. According to the legend, it is vital to mediate between the viewer and the head, and to employ a reflection to gaze at Medusa, because looking upon her face, which has lethal apotropaic powers, is a guarantor of death. We will discuss the importance of the Medusa myth in the context of the paragone in the final chapter, but it is important to draw attention to the deftly fashioned reflection at this point in our examination.

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[51] See Cheney, "Andromeda" 197-227. This article will be discussed in Chapter 4. For general sources on the artist see Sir Edward Coley Burne-Jones, Burne-Jones Talking: His Conversations 1895-1898 Preserved by his Studio Assistant Thomas Rooke, ed. Mary Lago (London: John Murray, 1982). Stephen Wildman, Edward Burne-Jones: Victorian Artist-Dreamer (New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1998).

First, however, we must look at how the reflection operates in Morris's narrative. The curious Andromeda wants to see the face of the woman who had become so dreaded in the ancient world. Perseus instructs her to look upon the reflected face, never daring to glance upon the bona fide visage. The iconophobia derived from Medusa's fearful countenance will be relevant soon, but at this point it is the allure of the reflected image that concerns us. Upon viewing Medusa's ghastly morbidity, Andromeda becomes absorbed by her own "fairness." She is the new Narcissus, and nurtures even greater admiration for her own beauty, due to its foil in the mirrored portrait of the horrible Medusa. She then proceeds, in Morris's poem, to gaze upon the face of her lover Perseus, who is equally enrapt by Andromeda's comeliness, as the two share a physical and spiritual connection. In Burne-Jones's depiction, Andromeda is absorbed in the faces that she beholds in the mirror image. Even though viewing Medusa's head is the main objective in the plot, it is not Medusa's face that is most clearly defined in the glassy surface. Rather, the viewer gets the clearest picture of Andromeda; she is characteristically idealised, like the other young women in Burne-Jones's works. She is an object of beauty for the viewer's delectation, as much as for Perseus, or even herself, as it is her face that we are meant to focus upon. For his part, Perseus seems almost entirely disinterested in examining Medusa. Of course, he already had plenty of opportunities to see her in this manner, yet, it would seem that this is not the only reason for his disinterest. Perseus gazes at the lovely Andromeda, and his eyes are directed towards her reflection, just as he seems to be lifting his eyes to kiss her. The spiritual bond between the two figures is elucidated through their clasped hands, which practically speaking would be awkward, given that Perseus must use his other hand to hold up Medusa's heavy head; it would be much more natural to lean at least one hand on the side of the pedestal.

Evidently, Burne-Jones chose to divest the entire area around the reflection from any kind of physical interruption or distraction. Perseus and Andromeda are purposefully positioned behind the pedestal, so that they do not interfere with the reflection's mesmerising potential. The perspective, likewise, is distorted, in order to afford a better view of the reflected faces. Even though awkward perspectival compositions were generally typical of early Pre-Raphaelite works, given that figures such as Dante Gabriel

Rossetti (1828-82), who was Burne-Jones's mentor, often mimicked the unique perspectival qualities of early Renaissance and medieval art, Burne-Jones exploited it here to accentuate the reflection's centrality—it is literally tipped up for the viewer to inspect. Notably, Burne-Jones did not incorporate distorted perspective in all of his scenes, though it is most apparent in this scene, relative to the other works in the series.

Burne-Jones's concern for reflections appeared in other types of subjects as well. A curious addition to the painter's first scene of the second version of the Pygmalion series, now at the Birmingham Museum of Art, called *The Heart Desires* (1875-8), shows the sculptor standing pensively in his studio, while contemplating his next masterpiece, and perhaps his loneliness.[52] This addition takes the form of a mirror in the background of the artist's studio, set over a highly reflective floor, which itself mirrors the sculptural female figures of the Three Graces in the background. These reflective features heighten the spatial and textual qualities of the scene.

Another intriguing facet of the Pygmalion series is the hemispherical orb that the artist tackled in certain scenes. The orb manifests a myriad of allusions in Burne-Jones's work. Most importantly, it is demonstrative of innate artistic skill. To appreciate this meaning, we must look far before Burne-Jones's time to explore the artistic tradition in which the orb played a part. In Vasari's life of Giotto, he told us that Giotto achieved enviable acclaim in his own lifetime, even to the point that Pope Benedict IX himself sent an emissary to evaluate the work of this increasingly famous Tuscan artist. Vasari explained:

> He [the courtier] moved on to Florence, and having gone one morning to Giotto's shop while the artist was at work, he explained the pope's intentions and how he wanted to evaluate Giotto's work, finally asking him for a small sketch to send to His Holiness. Giotto, who was a most courteous man, took a sheet of paper and a brush dipped in red, pressed his arm to his side to make a compass of it, and with a turn of his hand made a circle so even in its shape and outline that it was a marvel to behold. After he had completed his circle, he said with an impudent grin to the courtier: 'Here's your drawing.' The courtier, thinking he was being ridiculed, replied: 'Am I to have no other drawing than this one?' 'It's more than sufficient,' answered Giotto, 'Send it along with the others and you will see whether or not it will be understood.' .....As a result, the pope and many of his

[52] Edward Burne-Jones, *The Heart Desires*: *Pygmalion and the Image*, 1875-8, oil on canvas, 39" x 30" or 99.1 x 76.2 cm, Birmingham Museum and Art Gallery, Birmingham, England.

> knowledgeable courtiers realized just how far Giotto surpassed all the other painters of his time in skill.[53]

So as we can see, since the Renaissance, the unaided realisation of the perfect circle or sphere had come to denote innate and unsurpassable artistic talent. And this continued in the nineteenth-century, perhaps even self-consciously, since Burne-Jones was known to have owned and consulted a copy of Vasari's text.[54] Undoubtedly, the practice of generating mathematically precise geometrical forms had been a staple of academic training, especially with regards to the mastery of one-point perspective; thus, it is in this context of proving legendary skill that Burne-Jones's orbs may be evaluated.

Still, it was not merely the production of a glimmering ideal circle that made this motif appear frequently in Burne-Jones's works. Orbs were hybrids of three of the most difficult challenges of working in the two dimensional medium of painting. First, the orbs are mathematically perfect spheres, (at least to the naked eye). Second, the orbs are volumetric, and the reflective light across their surfaces proves their three-dimensionality. Third, the orbs are transparent, offering the alarmingly difficult challenge of simultaneously depicting all sides of the sphere. In Burne-Jones's works, one glimpses the other side from within the transparent orb itself. A superior example of this motif is *The First Day of Creation,* from the six *Angels of Creation* (ca. 1870-6).[55] Here, an angel carries an orb containing two orbs within its walls. The shimmering light casts itself across the orb's outer surface, and creates a complex series of reflections, shadows, and spatial relationships on its interior. An even more challenging orb is depicted in *The*

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[53] Vasari, Lives of the Artists 22. Pliny provided a similar account of the importance of drawing when he described the ability of Apelles in this medium. See Book 35, Chapter 36 of the Pliny the Elder, The Natural History 6256-7.

[54] G. Burne-Jones, Memorials of Edward Burne-Jones: Volume 1:1833-67 (London and New York: MacMillan and Company, Ltd., 1904): 170. This anecdote appears in the chapter covering the years 1857-8, (chapter 9), of a biography of the artist written by his wife Georgiana. The dating of this detail indicates that it was quite early on in his career that Burne-Jones was known to have consulted this source. It reads: "This delighted Edward, and he detained Mary while he took down his Vasari and read to her of the old Italian painter…"

[55] Edward Burne-Jones, *The First Day of Creation*: *Angels of Creation*, 1870-6, watercolour, gouache, shell gold and platinum paint on linen-covered panel, 40 1/4" x 14 3/16" or 102.3 x 36 cm, Fogg Art Museum, Boston, U.S.A.

Sixth Day from the same series, where the *beau idéal* figures of Adam and Eve inhabit, in miniature form, the interior space of the large orb being held by one of the figures.[56]

Obviously, the orb held substantial visual power for Burne-Jones, because it could be stylistically manipulated to corroborate his skill as a master of illusion. But, Burne-Jones's orbs also possess narrative significance, given that they often appear in scenes dealing with the divine, whether Christian or mythological in context. It is in this light that I contend that the half orb in *The Soul Attains*, from the Birmingham collection's *Pygmalion and Image Series*, should be viewed.[57] The scene captures Pygmalion kneeling before the animated Galatea, who appears nude while her maker clasps her hands. Quite prominently, a large half-transparent sphere projects from the interior wall of the domestic space, in which the scene occurs. As the final image in the series, it is the culmination of the tale, when Pygmalion is finally both physically and spiritually united with his beloved. According to the Ovidian legend, Venus, who was responsible for Galatea's transformation in the first place, watched over the marriage between Pygmalion and Galatea. Burne-Jones does not show Venus in physical form in the painting; however, the orb, as a motif associated with the divine throughout the artist's œuvre, demonstrates that Venus is indeed watching over her devoted followers, and proudly presides over the love-bond that she herself created. This interpretation is bolstered by the eye-like resemblance that the half-orb exhibits. A dark pupil-like centre is visible, while the periphery of the orb is lighter, or whiter, in colour. As with an eye, the coloured features are recessed, while the transparent part is raised. Also similar to a living eye, the artist did not omit the sparkling glint of light, which gives it vitality, even though no obvious light source is apparent in the scene.

If my assessment of the orb in Burne-Jones's *Pygmalion* is valid, then the artist elevated the eye to the all-seeing omniscient eye of the divine itself. The orb or circle, in many different traditions, ranging from ancient Rome to the early Modern era, has been a symbol of the perfection of God or the divine. The fact that this belief about the circle was still held in the nineteenth century is evident in the words of Cyprien Desmarais, who

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[56] Edward Burne-Jones, *The Sixth Day of Creation*: *Angels of Creation*, 1870-6, watercolour, gouache, shell gold and platinum paint on linen-covered panel, 40 1/4" x 14 3/16" or 102.3 x 36 cm, Fogg Art Museum, Boston, U.S.A.

[57] Edward Burne-Jones, *The Soul Attains*: *Pygmalion and the Image*, 1875-8, oil on canvas, 39" x 30" or 99.1 x 76.2 cm, Birmingham Museum and Art Gallery, Birmingham, England.

was a theorist on the *beau idéal*, and who identified the circle as a symbol of the harmony of God's creation: "Je me représente l'harmonie céleste comme un rayon du feu, sorti de la main de Dieu; il traverse l'espace en formant mille ondulations, et rentre, après un long circuit, dans le foyer dont il est émané. La ligne circulaire est donc, selon nous, l'image la plus fidèle par laquelle l'esprit de l'homme se représente toutes les harmonies."[58]

A second-generation Pre-Raphaelite, Burne-Jones may have derived his interest in Narcissistic reflections from the works of Rossetti, whose primary claim to fame was his role as a founding member in the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood. The group's main objectives were to return art to a more naïve and uncorrupted style than that supported by the Royal Academy. The Pre-Raphaelites reveled in borrowing modern revisions of old narratives, such as Arthurian legends, which generated a type of artistic production that was especially sensitive to inter-arts relationships. Rossetti is a particularly interesting figure, due to his own personal paragone, in which his poems and paintings rival one another.[59] Along with his colleague and close friend William Morris (1834-96), Burne-Jones sought out Rossetti's company and guidance early in his career.[60]

New research has revealed that Rossetti's late works depicting half-length views of women by themselves or in a group, such as his *Venus Verticordia* (1864-8), strongly resonate with the principle of Narcissistic gazing and reflections.[61] These works have customarily been upheld as exemplary of the burgeoning pin-up style of late nineteenth-

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[58] Cyprien Desmarais, Du Beau idéal ou méditations sur le principe poètique de la littérature et des arts (Paris: C.A. Malo, 1821): 47. I would like to thank the staff at the archive centre of the Musée du Louvre for helping me to locate and examine the original publication of this rare treatise. My translation:

> I will represent the celestial harmony like an elementary ray of fire, coming from the hand of God; he crosses space in a thousand undulations, and renders, after a long route, in the centre from which he emanates. The circular line is therefore, according to us, the most faithful image by which the spirit of man can represent all harmony.

[59] On Rossetti's poetry and writing see Joan Rees, The Poetry of Dante Gabriel Rossetti: Modes of Self-Expression (Cambridge, London, and New York: Cambridge University Press, 1981). Letters of Dante Gabriel Rossetti, vols. 1 and 2, ed. Oswald Doughty and John Robert Wahl (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1965). Paul Franklin Baum, Rossetti: Poems, Ballads, and Sonnets (New York: Doubleday, 1987). Stephen J. Spector, "Love, Unity, and Desire in the Poetry of Dante Gabriel Rossetti," ELH 38:3 (Sep., 1971): 432-458.

[60] Aside from their social engagement, amongst their professional collaborations was The Oxford and Cambridge Magazine (London: Bell and Daldy, 1856), in which Morris, Rossetti, and Burne-Jones put together articles for the publication.

[61] Dante Gabriel Rossetti, *Venus Verticordia*, 1864-8, oil on canvas, 38 5/8" x 27 ½", Russell-Cotes Art Gallery, Bournemouth, England.

century female depictions, where artists catered to upper-middle-class male patrons for the purpose of captivating the male gaze. But simultaneously, these same works likely incorporate a female gaze as well. Alastair Grieve suggests that the cropped view, primping activities, and feminine objects, which accompany many of Rossetti's depictions of sensual women, could imply that the women, when presumably looking out desirously at the viewer, in fact Narcissistically gaze at themselves in front of a mirror.[62] Since women combing their hair, and primping in general, had become a fetishistic motif in Victorian England, the theme of Narcissus would be quite detectable to contemporary viewers.[63] It is likely, then, that these painted women demonstrate a new Narcissus, where their utter absorption in the aesthetic traits of their own appearance, mimics the lethal beauty of Narcissus's object of affection.

Another good example of this phenomenon may be found in Rossetti's *Monna Vanna* of 1866.[64] The painting depicts a Venetian beauty adorned with objects of comparably enticing sensuality, such as luxurious fabric, feathers, jewels, hair, and flowers. While Rossetti revised the painting's title several times, upon completion it was named *Monna Vanna*, denoting a woman of vanity. Probably the single most familiar iconography in the western tradition associated with vanity is the mirror, which in *vanitas* still-life paintings, and paintings of meditating saints, implied both the passage of time and the transitory nature of earthly-bound beauty, such as that found in a young woman, a musical performance, a blossoming flower, or an entrancing reflection in a glass.[65] So once more, the concept of vanity, which Rossetti himself introduced into the painting's title, suggests that the picture plane is itself the surface of a mirror, and we, like the

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[62] Alistair Grieve, "Rossetti and the Scandal of Art for Art's Sake in the Early 1860s." After the Pre-Raphaelites: Art and Aestheticism in Victorian England, ed. Elizabeth Prettejohn (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1999): 17-35.

[63] Algernon C. Swinburne and William M. Rossetti, Notes on the Royal Academy Exhibition (London: Camden and Hotten, 1868): 46. Swinburne illuminated the nature of this fetish in his description of Rossetti's paintings, including the *Lilith*, with the following verse: "She excels/ All women in the magic of her locks;/ And when she winds them round a young man's neck/ She will not ever set him free again."

[64] Dante Gabriel Rossetti, *Monna Vanna*, 1866, oil on canvas, 889 x 864 mm, Tate Gallery, London, U.K.

[65] On the *Monna Vanna* see Robert Upstone, The Pre-Raphaelite Dream: Paintings and Drawings from the Tate Collection (London: Tate Publishing, 2003): 157. For an examination of how the *vanitas* theme came to be associated with women at their toilette, and women in general see Elise Goodman-Soellner, "Poetic Interpretations of the "Lady at Her Toilette" Theme in Sixteenth- Century Painting," The Sixteenth Century Journal 14: 4 (Winter 1983): 426-442. For more on the theme of transient beauty, and the sixteenth-century Venetian painting that Rossetti was known to be emulating, see Brian D. Steele, "In the Flower of Their Youth: "Portraits" of Venetian Beauties ca. 1500," The Sixteenth Century Journal 28:2 (Summer 1997): 481-502.

woman portrayed, are transfixed by her beauty. In this way she too becomes a female counterpart to the Narcissus myth, but one that is suitable for the modern Aesthetic movement.

Rossetti's focus on this subject likewise demonstrates the transition in the late nineteenth century towards an increase in the proliferation of female objects of beauty, while those of men declined. For our purposes, we will have to restrict our look at Rossetti to the manner in which his work touches on the topic of Narcissus, but surely further scholarship remains to be done on the competitive features of his written and visual work. One scholar who has begun to deal with this self-instigated competition in Rossetti's work is J. Hillis Miller, whose comparison of Rossetti's poetry and painting exposes a considerable degree of concern for the mirroring of subject matter from one medium to another.[66] Miller's discussion of Rossetti's *Lady Lilith* (1868), demonstrates that the artist also completed scenes of Narcissistic self-absorption, where the mirror literally appears as part of the scene, rather than just being implied in the pictorial surface.[67] Lilith sits in a room with a window and a mirror, presumably by herself, while she languidly combs her hair. The painting has a poetic counterpart in Rossetti's poem *Body's Beauty*. Miller concludes that the complex relationship between Rossetti's poems and his paintings may best be identified as a mirroring relationship, where both the poem and the painting expound on, and echo, one another. Nevertheless, the paired works do not provide accurate reflections, as each adds or detracts from the 'mental' picture. The painted version of *Lilith*, for example, complicates the notion of gazing in a mirror, by adding another mirror on the wall, which reflects an outer world that is not described in the poem.[68]

The fact that this feature was identified by contemporary viewers as a mirror, and not a window or a painting, is revealed by Algernon Charles Swinburne (1837-1909), who provided an extensive ekphrasis of the work after he attended its exhibition in

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[66] J. Hillis Miller, "The Mirror's Secret: Dante Gabriel Rossetti's Double Work of Art," Victorian Poetry 29:4 (Winter, 1991): 333-4.
[67] Dante Gabriel Rossetti, *Lady Lilith*, 1868, oil on canvas, 37 ½" x 32", Delaware Art Museum, Wilmington, U.S.A.
[68] Miller, "The Mirror's Secret" 336.

1868.[69] Swinburne's words, recorded in his Notes on the Royal Academy Exhibition of 1868, also reveal that he recognised a true Narcissistic theme in Rossetti's *Lilith*:

> Of evil desire or evil impulse she has nothing; and nothing of good. She is indifferent, equable, magnetic; she charms and draws down the souls of men by pure force of absorption, in no wise willful or malignant; outside herself she cannot live, she cannot even see: and because of this she attracts and subdues all men at once in body and in spirit. Beyond the mirror she cares not to look, and could not.[70]

A competitive aspect of Rossetti's work is also underscored by the fact that his seemingly straightforward genre scenes of women in their boudoirs belie the allegorical meaning with which these figures are imbued. Each may be interpreted as a personification of *vanitas*-like themes, such as love, sin, or life, death, and time.[71] In fact, Miller proposes that virtually all of Rossetti's literary and visual works deal in some way with the "lover and beloved meeting face to face in a perfect match."[72] If this is true, then all or most of Rossetti's works are varied embodiments of Narcissus and the image. One could even argue that the entire advent of the Aesthetic movement, in which Rossetti played a considerable role, was essentially a product of the Narcissus myth.

The principle of the Aesthetic movement was to allow one's senses to become hedonistically absorbed in all things sensual, but especially the visual. And there were often many public and fictional 'characters' in this movement, such as Dorian Gray, Oscar Wilde (1854-1900), and Des Esseintes, all of whom were undone by their obsession with the appearance of things, whether in the form of acting out the dandy lifestyle, or by seeking escape in a world of illusion. In this way, the Aesthetic movement became both the product and producer of a new generation of Narcissus figures, all of whom shared in the damaging consequences of the power of the visual arts over the viewer. This issue will be dealt with further in the final chapter, where our

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[69] Swinburne wrote: "Outside, as seen in the glimmering mirror, there is full summer." Notes 46.
[70] Swinburne, Notes 46.
[71] Miller, "The Mirror's Secret" 337.
[72] Miller, "The Mirror's Secret" 338-40. As poetic examples of this kind of subject matter, Miller cites poems such as *The Mirror*, and *Willowood.*

discussion will turn to the relationship between Aubrey Beardsley (1872-98) and Wilde, for instance.

Whether in the form of an orb, armour, a mirror, or water, the reflective surface remains a symbol of artistic virtue, and of both learned and innate proficiency in the arts. On the one hand, the reflection has become emblematic of the mastery of light and shade, while on the other, it signifies the humble genesis of the arts themselves, and the illustrious tradition that has ensued from those beginnings. In their arsenal of paragonising techniques, sometimes both consciously and unconsciously exploited, artists have manipulated reflections to declare the mastery of their art, for as long as the arts have existed.

Narcissus as *Beau idéal* and the Cult of Male Beauty

If shadows, reflections, and mirrors were synonymous with the birth of painting, the Narcissus tale likewise educates us on the chief place of the human form in art. We are not speaking of just any human form, but the grandest union of beauty and the divine in the corporeal, or in other words, the *beau idéal*. The competitive import of the *beau idéal* is, perhaps, best examined in light of both the theoretical and stylistic masculinisation of painting that took place in Neoclassicism at the end of the eighteenth century.[73] In this section of our study, we will consider both the theoretical and social circumstances that prompted the Neoclassicists's interest in defending, and/or proving, painting's masculinity.

First, we must remind ourselves of the state of painting at this time. During the latter half of the eighteenth century, French painting entered a period where it was subjected to an unprecedented degree of scrutiny, which corresponded to the monarchy's promotion of the academy as a cultural institution. Governed by the *Académie royale*, French painters were churning out Rococo style works, appealing to middle and upper-class patrons alike, and genre subjects that were popular with bourgeois consumers.

[73] Scholars such as Crow, Wettlaufer, and Solomon-Godeau have all acknowledged the masculinisation of painting in Neoclassicism, but my approach is distinctive in that it deals at length with masculinisation through the combating of aesthetic theory.

Jean-Honoré Fragonard's (1732-1806) *Happy Accidents of the Swing* (1766-67) typifies the Rococo style's pastel colours, impressionistic brushwork, and erotic, or voyeuristic subject matter.[74] Here the artist captured a young woman flying through the air on a swing, wearing a ruffled and voluminous pink dress, which contrasts with the soft green garden setting around her. Behind her is a man, possibly her husband, who may be pushing her on the swing, while another man hides in the shrubs in front of her. Its patron, Baron de Saint-Julien, had asked the artist to be shown secretly catching a glimpse under his mistress's billowing skirt. For an increasingly vocal number of critics, the Rococo focus on eroticism and illicit love seemed to imply the typically titillating, but morally bankrupt, values of a spoiled and parasitic aristocracy. This frivolous subject matter was rebuked by groups like the *philosophes*,[75] as well as Salon critics, who often failed to see its social merit, and advocated a return to a more morally instructive art.[76]

Similar attacks were levelled at men and women who epitomised the *ancien régime*. Aristocratic men were accused of being pampered like women, while women of the *ancien régime* became infamous for their participation in intellectual circles as *salonnières*, artistic patronage, and as subjects of Rococo works, all of which bolstered the impression that the *ancien régime* and its art were feminine.[77] These trends emerged at the same time, and to a certain extent in tandem, with a growing political and social movement questioning an absolute monarchy's traditional patriarchal power in an age of Enlightenment. Spurred on by pre-Revolutionary politics and social instability, among other things, by the 1780s French painters ushered in many masculine qualities into their work. Most notably, the shift from Rococo to Neoclassical painting styles saw an

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[74] Jean-Honoré Fragonard, *Happy Accidents of the Swing,* 1767, oil on canvas, 83 x 66 cm, Wallace Collection, London, U.K.

[75] Albert Boime, Art in an Age of Revolution 1750-1800 (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1987): 47.

[76] Diderot, Diderot on Art 224. In particular, this well-known eighteenth-century art critic declared the art of painters working in the subject matter and style of François Boucher, and others like him, as exemplary of this kind of immoral practice. In reality, however, the Rococo painters appealed greatly to the upper middle class patrons, who fantasised about life as aristocrats. So, these scenes of aristocratic decadence rarely approached reality, especially since many members of the eighteenth-century nobility struggled financially, despite their land holdings and titles.

[77] Solomon-Godeau, Male Trouble 205-6. Some women who were notorious for their power at court, in the arts, and in intellectual circles were royal mistresses Mme de Pompadour and Mme du Barry, and the Austrian Queen of France Marie Antoinette. For a brief discussion of the patronage and representation of Mme de Pompadour see Boime, Art in an Age of Revolution 16-17. Donald Posner, "Mme de Pompadour as a Patron of the Visual Arts," Art Bulletin 72 (1990): 74-105.

upsurge in subject matter depicting nude male heroes, and a drastic conversion from a feminine to masculine style, which are labels that were in keeping with the views of the time, even if they would not be the same terms that scholars use today. Art historians such as Crow and Solomon-Godeau have explored these trends by considering various issues, such as the monarchy's reformist efforts to support more serious history painting, men's political and social visibility in the French Revolution, or the possible homosocial and Platonic culture of academic life, which was possibly fostered by shared political goals amongst David's followers.[78] These are certainly valid approaches to the problem, but there is room for an additional, and not mutually exclusive, understanding of these changes.

We should certainly consider the practical and broader theoretical circumstances that may have instigated these changes. As we have seen, Lessing's Laocoön was part of a theoretical movement in eighteenth-century aesthetics, which tried to classify each art according to limits or regulations. Indeed, the very term 'aesthetic' was borne out of this movement, being used for the first time by a German theorist in 1735.[79] Lessing's work was significant for thinking about inter-arts relationships, because it synthesised and responded to a history of inter-arts associations since antiquity. While the impact of aesthetic theory in the eighteenth century has often been acknowledged in art historical study, and in the history of ideas, the actual practical implementations of Lessing's ideology in the works of individual artists has not been so well-developed. Elizabeth Prettejohn explains the development of aesthetic theory at this time:

> Aesthetics in its earliest stages as a philosophical discipline was radical and oppositional, closely associated with the Enlightenment political ideals of liberty and equality, and resolutely opposed to aristocratic cultural traditions that prescribed rules and precepts for the arts. But in an atmosphere of growing

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[78] For an examination of these issues see Solomon-Godeau's, Male Trouble. See also Crow's Emulation: Making Artists for Revolutionary France, (London and New Haven: Yale University Press, 1995), and Boime's, Art in an Age of Revolution. David is well-known for his involvement in extreme activism in the French Revolution, as well as being the leader of what has come to be known as Neoclassical painting at this time in France. Developments in Neoclassical style were also occurring in England, perhaps even before the French trend, although scholarship typically focuses on the French contribution.

[79] Gaiger's "Introduction" in Herder's Sculpture 7. Gaiger attributes the first modern use of the term "aesthetics" to Alexander Gottlieb Baumgarten (1714-62), who, as a German philosopher, used it in his Meditationes philosophicae...(1735). Gaiger adds that the origin of the term is from the Greek *aisthesis*, meaning sensation or perception.

> intellectual freedom the new discipline began to flourish in the German universities.
> By the late eighteenth century, then, aesthetics was an area of study inasmuch as it was taught in universities.[80]

The important point for our purposes is that the discipline of aesthetic theory, like that of art criticism, became a significant force in eighteenth-century intellectual activity, and due to its confrontational nature, it naturally antagonised artists who were impacted, or expected to be, by these theories. While Prettejohn contends that these theories liberated artists from academic policies, in many ways, they were simply providing a new set of rules, being so laden with concepts of limits and definitions to be applied to the arts, and which, as will be shown, were often in direct opposition to those of official artistic organisations across Europe and Britain. Many of the aesthetic theorists and academic writers were primarily concerned with the portrayal of the human figure in art. In this first chapter, we must address the reasons for the centrality of the human figure in art, in order to grasp the significance of the *beau idéal* in artistic practice and criticism. For instance, we will consider how the figure's inclusion or omission governed the hierarchy of the arts, the theoretical gender of each art form, and the concepts or themes that were invested in the figure.

Masters of history painting, the genre in which the human figure appeared in grand narrative contexts, became the key players in this quest for ideal beauty.[81] The history painter's status was determined by the necessity to master the human figure, not just by the intellectual, lofty, and moral subject matter it represented. Since the Renaissance, the human figure's representation had been considered the most effective tool for the expression of human thought, spirit, and emotion in art. In her assessment of

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[80] Elizabeth Prettejohn, Beauty & Art: 1750-2000 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005): 40-41. On the changing theories over art's history see: Moshe Barasch, Theories of Art: From Plato to Winckelmann (New York: New York University Press, 1985). Other examples, aside from some of those already mentioned, such as Dubos, Lessing, Winckelmann, Diderot, and Herder, of the growing phenomenon of eighteenth-century aesthetic theory may be found in the writings of figures such as the following: Edmund Burke, A Philosophical Inquiry into the Origin of our Ideas of the Sublime and the Beautiful (1757). Étiènne Bonnot de Condillac, Treatise on Sensations in Molyneux's Question, trans. Michael J. Morgan (1754). Roger de Piles, Cours de peintures par principes (1708). Immanuel Kant, Critique of Judgement (1790). Anton Raphael Mengs, Reflections on Beauty and Taste in Painting (1762).

[81] For a study of the importance of the genres and the nude in the French system see André Fontaine, Les Doctrines d'art en France: Peintres, amateurs, critiques de Poussin a Diderot (Geneva: Slatkine, 1970).

the early use of the female model in nude studies, Joanne Bernstein claims that the study of both the female and male nude were promoted by Alberti in his treatise On Painting, wherein he advocated the principle of variety, including recommendations that the painter work from both the male and female, clothed and nude, figure. Even though Bernstein acknowledges that the earliest use of the female model cannot be documented as yet, she observes that prolific evidence, through the survival of sketches, suggests that it had become common practice after the 1460s.[82] Of course, the primacy of the figure in art had already been established by ancient writers such as Pliny, and the Roman writer Marcus Fabius Quintilianus (ca. 35 – ca. 100), whose discussion of art's history emphasised the noble nude, and the depiction of gods and heroes.[83] But in the French system, at least until the nineteenth century, it had become an unlegislated rule that the nude models should be male, which obviously would have contributed to the greater popularity of the male nude leading up to the nineteenth century. It was due to this circumstance that the reputation of female models was first denigrated, because in order to work from the female nude artists often had to hire disreputable women, or women with whom they retained a personal connection.[84]

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[82] Joanne Bernstein, "The Female Model and the Renaissance Nude: Durer, Giorgione, and Raphael," Artibus et Historiae 13:26 (1992): 49-50. The use of the female model, though dating to the fifteenth century, remained a socially unacceptable practice, given that most of these women were assumed to be of low character, even prostitutes or courtesans, as Bernstein explains. This remained the status quo until the ban on female models for study was lifted from the French Academy in 1759, when it first allowed the draped female model (61). See also Solomon-Godeau, Male Trouble 189-92.

[83] Quintilian, Institutes of Oratory, Book 12, Chapter 10, Part 7.

> Zeuxis gave the human body more than its natural fullness, thinking that he thus added to its nobleness and dignity, and, as it is supposed, adopting that idea from Homer, whose imagination delighted in the amplest figures, even in women. Parrhasius was so exact in all his figures that they call him the legislator of painting, since other painters follow, as a matter of obligation, the representations of gods and heroes just as they were given by him. Painting flourished most, however, about the reign of Philip and under the successors of Alexander, but with different species of excellence, for Protogenes was distinguished for accuracy, Pamphilus and Melanthius for judgment, Antiphilus for ease, Theon of Samos for producing imaginary scenes, which the Greeks call φαντασίαι *(phantasiai)*, and Apelles for genius and grace, on which he greatly prided himself. What made Euphranor remarkable was that while he was among the most eminent in other excellent attainments, he was also a great master both of painting and statuary.

Pliny's description of the evolution of marble sculpture presented the argument that artists were successively improving upon the figure, such as in the works of Phidias and Praxiteles. Book 4, Chapter 36 of Pliny the Elder, The Natural History 6308-6323.

[84] Candace Clements, "The Academy and the Other: Les Grâces and Le Genre Galant," Eighteenth-Century Studies: Special Issue: Art History: New Voices/New Visions 25:4 (Summer 1992): 474-6. See also Edgar Peters Bowron, "Academic Life Drawing in Rome, 1750-1790," Visions of Antiquity:

Depiction of the nude eventually became academic painting's highest goal, to the degree that a work featuring the nude figure was called an *académie peinte*. The theoretical significance of this paramount feature in art was often pointed out by art critics. For instance, Diderot observed that the believable and beautiful depiction of human flesh was one of a painter's greatest tests.[85] The justification for the human figure's importance in art was founded not only on the perceived difficulty of its representation, but on ancient and modern treatises that reinforced the human body's aesthetic significance.[86] Crow, for example, mentions that "Plato's Symposium describes the contemplation of the beautiful ephebe...by the mature citizen (*erastes*) as a potential means for leading the mind upward from the realm of the sensual to an understanding of universal good."[87] The mastery of the human figure in drawing instruction was also a flagship calling of the French academy. Its provision of live drawing classes represented one of the most celebrated aspects of its curriculum.[88] Correspondingly, the human figure's masterful representation in a didactic context became history painting's *raison d'être*.

Nevertheless, in early to mid-eighteenth-century France it was in large part genre painters, who depicted everyday people in non-mythological or historical contexts, such as Greuze, who flourished. His *The Village Bride* (1761) exemplified this type of contemporary domestic, bourgeois subject matter.[89] A small theatre of figures occupies centre stage, with the blushing bride and groom in the middle. Beside the bride are her sisters and mother, while the father and a notary sit on the side with the groom. This is a humble setting, but we are made to believe that the affection in the family, and the modest lifestyle that its members lead, is enough to make them happy. Here, the painter

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Neoclassical Figure Drawings, eds. Richard J. Campbell and Victor Carlson (Los Angeles: Los Angeles County Museum of Art, Minneapolis: The Minneapolis Institute of Arts, 1993): 73-86.

[85] Diderot, Notes on Painting 199. Solomon-Godeau similarly addresses the importance of the ideal nude throughout her book, but specifically see Male Trouble 185.

[86] For example, Lessing proposed that the best art was that that limited itself to the representation of beautiful bodies in space, just as the ancient Greeks had done. Lessing Laocoön 12.

[87] Thomas Crow, "Observations" 151, 158.

[88] Clements, "The Academy and the Other" 474.

[89] See Emma Barker, "Painting and Reform in Eighteenth-Century France: Greuze's 'L'Accordée de Village,'" Oxford Art Journal 20:2 (1997): 42-52. David J. Denby, Sentimental Narrative and the Social Order in France, 1760-1820 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994). Jean-Baptiste Greuze, *The Village Bride (L'Accordée de village*), Salon of 1761, oil on canvas, 0.92 x 1.17 m, Musée du Louvre, Paris, France.

relies upon familial relationships at the time of a daughter's betrothal to evoke a sentimental reaction in the viewer. These types of subjects were popular, due to demand created by the growing bourgeois class, and its ability to identify with such scenes. On the other hand, the waning supremacy of history painting was bemoaned as evidence of the deterioration of French culture, given how closely history painting had come to be identified with the visual arts in France. No matter how fashionable amongst a growing bourgeois art market, genre subjects, showing everyday people in often banal settings, were simply not considered capable of communicating the glory of the nation, regardless of how moral or instructive their messages might be.[90]

Dubos helped to explain this circumstance, and the limitations of the lesser genres, whose subjects were not always of significant interest: "La plus grande imprudence que le Peintre ou le Poëte puissent faire, c'est de prendre pour l'objet principal de leur imitation des choses que nous regarderions avec indifférence dans la nature."[91] Dubos contested that still-life, landscape, and genre subjects were only remarkable insofar as painters could impress the viewer with technical skill, while the human figure in history painting was much more intellectually gripping, and able to promote contemplation. Likewise, he revealed a bias against non-history painters, who were to be valued as artisans for skill, but not for intellect or artistic genius.[92] Diderot supported the position that the painter should try to do more than dazzle the viewer with they eye, saying, "Si l'effet s'arrête aux yeux, le peintre n'a fait que la moindre partie du chemin."[93] These theoretical positions signaled the growing disinterest in the sensual appreciation of decorative Rococo works depicting frivolous subjects, in favour of the intellectual contemplation of serious subjects, the latter being considered a definitively

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[90] Boime, Art in an Age of Revolution 24-5, 40-44. See also Mainardi, "The Death of History Painting."
[91] Quoted by Fried, "Toward a Supreme Fiction" 547. My translation: "The greatest mistake that the painter or poet could make, would be to take those things that we regard with indifference in nature as their primary object of imitation."
[92] Dubos wrote: "Les Peintres intelligens ont si bien connu...que rarement ils ont fait des paysages déserts & sans figures. Ils les ont peuplez, ils ont introduit dans ces tableaux un sujet composé de plusieurs personnages dont l'action fut capable de nous émouvoir & par conséquence de nous attacher," Sur la poësie et sur la peinture 49. My translation: "The intelligent painters have known this… they rarely made deserted landscapes without figures. They populated them, and introduced to these canvases a subject composed of many characters for which the action is capable of moving us, and by consequence we become attached to them."
[93] Quoted by Fried, "Toward a Supreme Fiction" 549. My translation: "If the effect ends with the eyes, then the painter has only gone down a meagre part of the path."

masculine activity. For academics, what placed history painters on a level more comparable to poets was the assertion that their genre depended upon invention and imagination for its success. Diderot also expounded on this when he wrote the following: "[T]he history painter's work is infinitely more difficult than that of the genre painter...The genre painter has his subject incessantly before his eyes; the history painter has either never seen his or has seen it only for an instant. And then the one is an imitator pure and simple, a copyist of ordinary nature, while the other is, so to speak, the creator of an idealized, poetic nature."[94] Because history painting was by definition the only genre that held the potential for intellectual or philosophical import, and in exceptional cases even 'poetic' expression, the renewed interest in it, and concern for its status at the end of the eighteenth century, may partly have been rooted in an effort to reaffirm French painting's masculinity and superiority, at a time when its cultural value was itself being questioned, and when conventional history painting was being criticised for its supposedly feminine style and intellectually barren subject matter.

It is important to distinguish here between the gender of the object and that of the artist. A theoretical trend that developed throughout the eighteenth century, in conjunction with the theories regarding proper roles for men and women, involved the idea of the masculine artistic genius. These theories likened the production of artworks to masculine reproduction, making it the cultural equivalent of women's natural capabilities in physical reproduction.[95] Yet even this stereotype of the masculine creative genius would have been problematic for artists, because within the hierarchy of the types of cultural products that one could undertake, literary art remained more masculine than visual art, and therefore painting or sculpture was still relatively feminine, and occupied a

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[94] Diderot, Notes on Painting 227.

[95] Mary D. Sheriff, "Passionate Spectators: On Enthusiasm, Nymphomania, and the Imagined Tableau," The Huntington Library Quarterly: Enthusiasm and Enlightenment in Europe, 1650-1850 60:1/2 (1997): 66-7. Sheriff cites Michel de Montaigne as one of the proponents of this concept, as his ideas became popular amongst other figures such as Rousseau in the eighteenth century. See Montaigne, "Of the Affection of Fathers for Their Children," in The Complete Essays of Montaigne, trans. Donald M. Frame (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1958): 293. For more on Montaigne and Pygmalion see Patrick Henry, "Pygmalion in the Essais: 'De l'affection des pères aux enfants,'" The French Review 68:2 (Dec., 1994): 229-238. See Mary Sheriff for the issue of gendered artistic production in her book The Exceptional Woman: Elisabeth Vigée-Lebrun and the Cultural Politics of Art (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996). This is also an exceptional source regarding the structure of the hierarchy of the genres in the French academy, and how artists were impacted by this organisation of the genres, including the masculine view of history painting.

fragile status in both aesthetic theories, such as Lessing's Laocoön, and in the changing political and social sphere of pre to post-Revolutionary France. In order to understand the Neoclassical move towards the masculine in painting, we must consider how ascriptions of gendered qualities to the arts became a motivating factor for those who engaged in the paragone debate at this time, and the other circumstances that contributed to the vulnerability of artists at this time.

As I have explained in the first chapter, the state of the academies and exhibition venues, throughout the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, is a vast topic that has been very well studied, by accomplished scholars such as Yates, Boime, and Mainardi.[96] For this reason, I will summarise here the central points relevant to this study, but it must be acknowledged that these issues represent an extensive array of scholarly concerns in art history. Another factor that was contributing to painting's precarious position was the growing criticism that both artists and non-artists leveled at the institutions upon which painting depended. Mounting concern for the artist's role in serving the public coincided with the Republican agenda to democratise public institutions, which included the academy and the Salon. Prior to the Revolution, history painting operated as the monarchy's ideological mouthpiece; it endorsed politically propagandistic and morally instructive subject matter. The Salon's apparent association with the monarchy went beyond the king's role as official patron. From 1737 to the fall of the monarchy, the Salon had been opened on August 25th, which was the king's 'name day.' What is more, exhibitions were held in a royal building or venue, and the presiding monarch offered

[96] On the history of the academies and exhibition practices see the following: Academies, Museums and Canons of Art, ed. Perry Gill, (London and New Haven: Yale University Press in association with the Open University, 1999). Jean Adhémar, "L'enseignement académique dans l'atelier de Girodet," Bulletin de l'art français ancien et moderne 6 (1933): 123-59. Art and the Academy in the Nineteenth Century, ed. Rafael Cardoso Denis and Colin Trodd, (New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press, 2000). Boime, The Academy and French Painting. Boime, "The Prix de Rome." Boime, "The *Salon des Refusés*" 411-26. Boime, "The Teaching Reforms of 1863" 1-39. Crow, Painters and Public Life. Carl Goldstein, Teaching Art. G.D. Leslie, The Inner Life of the Royal Academy with an Account of its Schools and Exhibitions, Principally in the Reign of Queen Victoria (London: The Royal Academy, 1914). Patricia Mainardi, "The Death of History Painting" 219-26. Christopher Newall, The Grosvenor Gallery Exhibitions: Change and Continuity in the Victorian Art World (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995). Nikolaus Pevsner, Academies of Art Past and Present (Cambridge: 1940). Wrigley, Origins. Yates, The French Academies.

additional events to heighten interest in the affair, such as concerts in the Tuileries. As well, royal insignia were prominently printed on the exhibition catalogue's frontispiece.[97]

So as not to lose history painting as a politically propagandistic asset, its production continued to be supported under the revised Republican academy, and subsequent forms of government following the Revolution.[98] Nevertheless, the instability of these often short-lived and volatile political systems hampered any gains that were made in history painting prior to the Revolution. This transition would later be characterised as an era in which chaos and propaganda reigned, at the expense of poetically inspired history painting. Napoleon's regime, according to many, similarly impeded a full recovery of the genre of history painting, since artists in his employ were bound by the duties of official patronage, to the point that history painting of this era was described by some as being little better than military reportage.[99]

Ironically, it was precisely during the era of France's greatest doubt in its artistic future that the English Royal Academy was trying to model itself upon the French system. The Royal Academy was founded under King George III in 1768, under the guidance of such figures as Sir Joshua Reynolds (1723-92) and Sir Frederick Leighton (1830-96), both of whom served as Presidents. Of course, like the French, the English looked to Italy as a cultural model.[100] A frank acknowledgement of this relationship is provided in one of Leighton's addresses to the academy:

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[97] Wrigley, Origins 43. For more on official patronage of the *ancien régime* see Barthélemy Jobert and Richard Wrigley, "The 'Travaux d'encouragement': An Aspect of Official Arts Policy in France under Louis XVI," Oxford Art Journal 10:1(1987): 3-14.

[98] For an examination of history painting and the academy's role in pre to post-Revolutionary France see: Mainardi, The End of the Salon. See also Carol Duncan, "Fallen Fathers: Images of Authority in Pre-Revolutionary French Art," Art History.
4 (June 1981): 187-202.

[99] De Quincy, "Éloge historique de M. Girodet, peintre. Lue à la séance publique de l'Académie royale des beaux-arts, le samedi Ier octobre 1825." Recueil de notices historiques lues dans les séances publiques de l'Académie royale des beaux-arts à l'institut, (Paris: A. le Clerc, 1834): 316-318.

[100] Many of the sources in this dissertation dealing with the revival of the antique address this issue, but for Reynolds's interest in particular, as an example of the early direction of the academy, see Giovanna Perini, "Sir Joshua Reynolds and Italian Art and Art Literature. A Study of the Sketchbooks in the British Museum and in Sir John Soane's Museum," Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes 51 (1988): 141-168. For more on the history of the Royal Academy and English art see William Vaughan, British Painting: The Golden Age from Hogarth to Turner (London: Thames and Hudson, 1999). Joseph A. Kestner, "Poynter and Leighton as Aestheticians: The Ten Lectures and Addresses," Journal of Pre-Raphaelite and Aesthetic Studies 2:1 (Spring 1989): 108-20

> And if, further, this dominant instinct of the beautiful is not in our own time found in any western race in its fullest force…there is yet one modern nation in our own hemisphere in which the thirst for artistic excellence is widespread to a degree unknown elsewhere in Europe; a people with a sense of the dignity of artistic achievement, as an element of national greatness, an element which it is the duty of its government to foster and to further, and to proclaim before the world, is keen and constant; I mean, of course, your brilliant neighbours, the people of France. Here, then, are standards to which we may approach to see how far, all allowance being made for any signs of improvement in things concerning art, we yet fall short, as a nation, of the ideal which we should have before us.[101]

The fact that Leighton's address dates to the late nineteenth century, (1888 in this case), reveals that the supremacy of the French system had remained preeminent in England more than a century after its official inception. Leighton, himself a painter, as well as a sculptor, also testifies to the fact that similar tensions existed in England between literary and visual artists, as they did in France:

> The inadequacy of the general standard of artistic insight is here seen in the fact that to a great multitude of persons the attractiveness of a painted canvas is in proportion to the amount of literary element which it carries, not in proportion to the degree of aesthetic emotion stirred by it, or of appeal to the imagination contained in it—persons, those, who regard a picture as a compound anecdote and mechanism, and with whom looking at it would seem to mean only another form of reading.[102]

And so we see that problems, tensions, and rivalries flourished in the art world in both England and France. Contributing to the general angst over the French academy's national role were critics, who chastised its traditional teaching methods, which were supposed to bring about new generations of history painters. For instance, in his Notes on Painting, which was written in conjunction with his Salon review of 1765, Diderot condemned the academy's methods of training students to imitate the model. He believed that this approach not only deprived new history painters of originality, but also

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[101] Presidential Address Delivered by Sir F. Leighton, Bart., P.R.A, at The Art Congress, held at Liverpool, December 3, 1888 (London: William Clowes and Sons, Ltd., 1888): 13-4.
[102] Presidential Address 19.

prevented potentially gifted painters from emerging from what he viewed as a traditional and mediocre institution.[103]

The academy's members and students also pushed for reforms in academic instruction and policy. Prior to his control over the 'Revolutionised' academy, David, as a young history painter in pursuit of status and acclaim, expressed his frustration in what he felt was the academy's denigration of painting to a mere craft, through the enforcement of unenlightened teaching methods.[104] Crow concludes that, despite David's involvement in Revolutionary politics, his early aspirations included a keen desire for nobility, which may have fostered his resistance to academic regulations.[105] This class-conscious concern also suggests that David would have been profoundly invested in the painter's status in the hierarchy of the arts. The generally rebellious spirit that David and his followers fostered towards the academy was likewise manifested towards other artists and art forms, in the form of the paragone.

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[103] Diderot, Notes on Painting 195-196. Refer to these passages for Diderot's advice on better ways to train painters using the human model.

[104] The following excerpt from David's writings, commenting on the typical manner of studying the figure from life in academic training, is quoted in Crow, Painters and Public Life 230:

> ...What time you will lose in forgetting those poses, those conventional movements, into which the professors force the model's torso, as if it were the carcass of a chicken...They will doubtless teach you to do your torso, teach you your *métier* in the end, because they make a trade out of painting. As for me, I think as little of that *métier* as I think of filth.

[105] Painters and Public Life 231-232. For a more in depth study of David and his followers's involvement in radical behaviour towards the traditional academy see Crow, "French Painting of the Male Nude." David's participation in the French Revolution, and subsequent governments, included the radical Jacobin party, as well as having been involved in making ephemeral designs for the Festival of the Supreme Being, and other events that took the place of traditional Christian holidays. On the issue of David's class Crow writes:

> For a man of David's background, given the unchallenged social values of the time, it would have been impossible to imagine his chosen career as a *métier*; he would have to have seen it as a somehow "noble" enterprise. And like the radical writers with whom we have been concerned, he saw an academy as an obstacle to that ambition, though for a somewhat different reason. The Academy of Painting, with its reputedly mercenary and small-minded membership.., still had about it the fatal scent of the artisan class. David, in choosing a career in painting, had taken what threatened to be a step downward from the status his family had achieved (they had groomed him for law, medicine, or architecture). He had, therefore, for all his success in the academic system, to distance himself from what the Academy represented. ...We find this rigid distinction between the artisan and the artist constantly reiterated by the dissenting unofficial critics; and always a certain notion of nobility, one linked to a public political role, is the basis for that distinction.

Prior to the rise of David and his school, because of the growing popularity of the Rococo *petit genre*, the perceived degeneration of history painting was judged as a cultural disaster, and the academy was the institution that was to be held accountable for this embarrassment.[106] An anonymous critic of the Mémoires secrèts lamented this decline at the time of the Salon of 1771:

> With the appearance of wealth we are destitute. In effect, if one subtracts from the present exhibition the portraits, the minor genre pictures which can bestow glory neither on the nation nor on the artist, and the pictures in the more grand manner which are not worth the effort required to look at them or are only mediocre or contain some excellent qualities overwhelmed by enormous failings, this superb collection, which dazzles at first sight, soon collapses into nothing.[107]

The critic identified the predominance of non-history paintings not just as a deficiency in the academy, but also as shameful to the nation itself, which underlines the considerable perceived interdependence of artistic achievement in history painting and national pride. To remedy the situation, critics called for an upsurge in the severity and number of un-official critical responses to the Salons, and in works produced by the academy's members and students.[108] Not surprisingly, this mandate was more threatening than inspiring to painters, who were still balking at their vulnerability to art critics, and licking their wounds following the initial rashes of public critiques. Popular literature describing the arts also increased throughout the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, such as the pamphlets that were disseminated at the Salon.[109] A primary source of conflict lay in the fact that while critics often praised artists and the art of painting in their reviews, many, in their primary capacity as writers and often poets, maintained a belief in their inherent

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[106] Fried, "Toward a Supreme Fiction" 544.
[107] Quoted by Crow, Painters and Public Life 176.
[108] Crow, Painters and Public Life 179. Crow again cites the Mémoires secrèts of 1773:

> The excessive solicitude of the government for the *amour-propre* of the contestants has led to the smothering or enfeebling of useful critiques that might have been made of their works and put before the eyes of the public. Unquestionably this has been among the principle causes of the decay of which everyone complains. The excessive and undiscriminating praise with which one is successively besotted in the periodicals distributed under state auspices could only serve to spoil budding talents, encourage mediocrity, and perpetuate wretched taste.

[109] Bernadette Fort, "Voice of the Public: The Carnivalization of Salon Art in Prerevolutionary Pamphlets," Eighteenth-Century Studies, Special Issue: The French Revolution in Culture 22:3 (Spring 1989): 368-394.

feeling of superiority over visual artists. For instance, writing on painting's nature Diderot declared:

> Oh my friend, what an art is painting! I capture in one line what the painter barely manages to rough in over the course of an entire week. It's his misfortune to know, see, and feel just as I do, yet be incapable of rendering things to his satisfaction; despite these feelings prompting him onwards, to misjudge his capacities and so spoil a masterpiece: he was, without his realizing it, at the very limits of art.[110]

So, Diderot actually publicised his belief that painters were unable to fully express the human spirit, and in the impotence of the medium in general to express the intellectual complexity of the literary arts. Likewise, he betrayed his belief in the natural limits of the arts, with painting's boundaries being disadvantaged compared to the poet or writer. Certainly, critical responses such as this would have only heightened the friction between writers and painters, and would have encouraged a paragonising response to the challenge, which was acknowledged even by figures within the academy. For instance, De Quincy, (who was the *Perpetual Secretary to the Academy of Fine Arts*, in his capacity as both an architect and a sculptor), published a treatise titled: An Essay on the Nature, the End, and the Means of Imitation in the Fine Arts (Paris: 1823), wherein he supported many of the limits and regulations of other influential art critics.[111] As De Quincy observed, despite the artistic limits set by eighteenth-century theorists, there lingered the impression amongst artists that the best art would be the one that could subsume, thereby making irrelevant, all of the other arts, or become the archetypal *Gesamtkunstwerk*. According to De Quincy, artistic competition was an illicit, tempting, and fool-hardy challenge--one that could only result in the immoral and illegitimate trespassing of one art upon another.[112] He even went so far as to suggest that "by trenching on the properties of another" art, an art "loses its own, and by aiming to be

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[110] Diderot, Notes on Painting 201.
[111] For an examination of De Quincy's place in the academic institutional changes in France see Yvonne Luke, "The Politics of Participation: Quatremère de Quincy and the Theory and Practice of 'Concours publiques' in Revolutionary France 1791-1795," Oxford Art Journal 10:1 (1987): 15-43.
[112] De Quincy, An Essay 49. The original translation dates to 1837. Indeed, De Quincy wrote that not only were these transgressions morally flawed, but each and every transgression could only the result of error on the part of the artist. An Essay 39.

both, becomes neither."[113] De Quincy's insistence on limits, and the prohibitions that he mandated for potential transgressors, should be seen as symptomatic not only of the great impact that treatises such as those of Lessing and Dubos had had on artistic practice and theory, but also of the necessity to offer such warnings. His treatise, which appears to be preoccupied with warnings to the transgressive artist, broaches an important question. What offenses were already taking place that would prompt writings like those of this academician, in addition to the flurry of theories attempting to impose ideological and practical boundaries on the arts?

Artists clearly had to respond to both the theoretical and social changes that were impacting them so profoundly. This was not easy, because on the theoretical front alone, the feminisation of the visual arts, especially painting, had been interwoven into a complex web of associated precepts. Like the human body itself, the visual arts were gendered through their ability to possess certain intrinsic properties of either masculinity or femininity. Painting's requirement to be beautiful, (being therefore purely aesthetic instead of intellectual), and not sublime, was the one aspect of Lessing's system that most convincingly identified its theoretical gender, and which painters most frequently contested. Yet many other theorists agreed with Lessing; for instance, Dubos also supported this principle, claiming that painters could not adequately illustrate the sublime.[114] Likewise, Diderot wrote in his Letters on the Blind (1749) that beauty could only be perceived through sight, or in other words, a blind person could never truly know or experience beauty. Diderot insisted that beauty was a fundamental expectation of the visual arts, making it unnecessary to those arts not reliant upon sight, such as poetry, philosophy, or art criticism. Across the Channel, similar theories regarding the primacy of beauty in art were still being taught in the Royal Academy, almost a century after Lessing's treatise. In describing the aims of art Leighton stated the following:

> Let an atmosphere be generated among you in which the appetite for what is beautiful and noble is whetted and becomes imperative, in which whatever is ugly and vulgar shall be repugnant and hateful to the beholder, and assuredly what is beautiful and noble will, in due time, be furnished to you, and in steadily

[113] De Quincy, An Essay 28.
[114] Kahng, "*L'Affaire Greuze*" 104.

> increasing excellence, satisfying your taste, and at the same time further purifying it and heightening its sensitiveness.[115]

Yet pursuit of the beautiful in art was not a straightforward issue, which Prettejohn explores in her work Beauty & Art, which highlights the complex nature of this issue. Nineteenth-century artists, especially, were confronted with two different modes of beauty in art. One was the assumption that ideal beauty could be manifested in the depiction of the object, the best being the *beau idéal*; the second type arose from German aesthetic theory, wherein beauty would be created in the mind of the viewer, through portrayals of ideas, forms, and other intangible thoughts, which could be transferred between the artist and viewer through the artwork.[116]

Typically, however, beauty always played second fiddle, no matter how it was manipulated, to the sublime. Artists and writers alike have coveted a claim to the sublime since Longinus wrote his first-century CE treatise On the Sublime, which Edmund Burke (1729-97) regenerated in his The Sublime and the Beautiful (1757). The issue became more central to aesthetic theory in the eighteenth century, when the sublime grew to be a common subject in writings on the arts.[117] By this point, the sublime had become a 'catch-word' denoting the work of a creative genius. Though it peppered critical responses to artworks, the sublime also emerged as a central preoccupation of theorists, and writers on aesthetic issues, who pointed to Longinus's stipulation that the sublime could be attained through the expression of original artistic genius.[118] Therefore, by trying to manifest the sublime in their work, both literary and visual artists were staking a claim to artistic genius. But the sublime, for Lessing, was poetry's ultimate goal, so as a paragonising tactic, artists motivated by his treatise, others like them, and by the very principle of imposed artistic limits, endeavoured to demonstrate the sublime in the visual arts.

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[115] Presidential Address 15.
[116] Prettejohn, Beauty & Art 67-8. Prettejohn cites the following German thinkers as having considerable popularity in nineteenth-century France: Winckelmann, Immanuel Kant, Friedrich Wilhelm von Schelling, Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, and Arthur Schopenhauer.
[117] Kahng, "*L'Affaire Greuze*" 99, 105. Partly contributing to the sublime's popularity in France was the 1674 translation by Nicolas Boileau-Despréaux of Longinus's treatise. Kahng also provides a useful description of how the sublime was defined in eighteenth-century France.
[118] Lee, "Theory of Painting" 221.

A clear definition of the sublime at this time is problematic, given how expansive the discourse had become; nevertheless, it was generally associated with extreme emotional or spiritual experiences, arrived at through intellectual or divine activity.[119] Sublimity was clearly assigned, in poetry versus painting 'regulations,' to the realm of the written word; Dubos noted this when he wrote, "....[C]e qu'elle fait dire du sublime, par rapport à la situation du personnage qui parle, il est trés-rare que le Peintre puisse l'exprimer assez intelligiblement pour être entendu."[120] Although also denied the potential to secure sublimity in Lessing's system, the best history painting, according to artists themselves, was believed to be that which expressed the sublime, or provoked a sublime experience in the viewer. It is at this juncture that we can begin to examine how artists exploited their artworks, in order to demonstrate the supremacy of their art, which often occurred by tackling restrictive aesthetic theories.

The Sublime Nude: Defining the *Beau idéal*

There were several tools that painters developed to capture the sublime in their art. To begin with, it was believed that the human figure's perfect representation could be an unswerving path to sublime art. This was made apparent in the words of Athanase Detournelle, who was the editor of To Arms and to Arts! (1794), and who advised students on how to study the figure when he recommended that "[A] lesson taken before the beautiful figures [of classical sculpture] would contribute more to their progress than their slavishly copying the school model...in that...in resting in a contemplation attached to contours, forms and expressions, one gives to one's genius the sublime *Élan* that leads to immortality."[121] Until the early nineteenth century, it was exclusively the male nude's

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[119] In his "Essay on the Theory of Painting" (c. 1725) Jonathan Richardson attempted to define the sublime, but ultimately described it in vague and inexplicable concepts; "When we see the Sublime it Elevates the Soul, gives her a higher Opinion of herself, and fills her with Joy, and a Noble kind of Pride, as if herself had produc'd what she is Admiring. It Ravishes, it Transports, and creates in us a certain Admiration, mix'd with Astonishment. And like a Tempest drives all before it. [...]" "Of the Sublime," Art in Theory: 1648-1815: An Anthology of Changing Ideas, eds. Jason Gaiger, Charles Harrison, and Paul Wood (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, Ltd., 2000): 410.

[120] Dubos, Sur la poësie et sur la peinture 78. Also quoted in English by Kahng, "*L'Affair Greuze*" 104. My translation: "We can say of the sublime, by its relationship to the situation of the character who speaks, that it is very rare that the Painter can express it intelligently enough to be heard/understood."

[121] Quoted by Crow, "Observations" 158.

representation, and not the female, that was upheld as the ultimate artistic challenge. For instance, academic instruction involved intense scrutiny of the male rather than the female nude.[122] As I have mentioned, this was in part because the female model was expected to be a person of low character. Consequently, it was not uncommon to depict female figures from male models in academic paintings.[123]

Despite this biased convention, until the era of Neoclassicism, when they would temporarily lessen in popularity, female nude representations proliferated as much as those of the male. In general, the artist's skill was judged on his or her ability to represent not just a plausible figure, but an ideal classicising body in perfect proportions, or the *beau idéal*.[124] In his Considérations sur les arts du dessin (1823), De Quincy described the challenge of painting a nude: "...[T]he perfection of the model is a chimera of the imagination. Art can only realize this chimera through the reunion of all the beauties dispersed in the individuals of the species."[125] Theoretically, the male nude embodied greater nobility and prestige than the female. This was because, as we have seen, since the Renaissance especially, the human body had been viewed as the noblest subject in the arts, because God created man in his image; correspondingly, it was believed that contemplation of the human body could lead to greater understanding of the divine. Obviously, because Adam, and not Eve, was the original human, the male form was assumed to be more akin to the semblance of God, and therefore was closer to the divine than the female. This Christian context may have also sanctified the nude, reducing its erotic context somewhat, which I will address again shortly.

Even though it was clearly founded on the ideal representation of the human figure, like the sublime itself, the definition of the *beau idéal* is exceptionally challenging

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[122] Solomon-Godeau, Male Trouble 99. See this source for a more detailed discussion of the unequal treatment in the French academy of male versus female models, as well as Solomon-Godeau's examination of the nude's role in unstable masculine identity throughout the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries.
[123] Locquin, La Peinture d'histoire en France 79-80.
[124] Solomon-Godeau, Male Trouble 197-198.
[125] Cited in Solomon-Godeau, Male Trouble 186, 188. De Quincy added:

> You delude yourself curiously when you take the study of the model for the study of nature. The model is of course within nature but it doesn't follow from that that nature is in the model. Nature is the species, the model is only an individual of the species. Obviously, this study cannot be confined to a single individual, at least insofar as this individual is not granted every beauty and every perfection….Nature, in its generation of beings is exposed to too many accidents.

to pin down. The use of this term was at once so ubiquitous in aesthetic theory, art criticism, and academic writings, and so specific, according to each use, that it was undoubtedly relevant to a great number of interests. A tremendously valuable source, for our purposes, is a treatise written on the subject in the early nineteenth century. In 1821, Cyprien Desmarais divulged the great variety of ways in which the *beau idéal* played a part in the visual arts. One of the main points put forth in this treatise is the fundamental relevance of the *beau idéal* to the spiritual component of an artwork. For instance, the author wrote:

> On dirait que le pinceau de l'artiste a été formé des débris de ce sceptre dont Dieu frappa l'abîme du chaos quand il voulut travailler à la création. En voyant le tableau de la résurrection du Lazare, il nous semble que nous assistons nous-mêmes au spectacle de cette résurrection; et nous sommes presque tentes de nous demander lequel fut plus puissant, ou du Christ qui a fait le miracle, ou du peintre qui en a conservé le souvenir d'une manière si magique.[126]

According to Desmarais, the artist shares in God-like creative authority, and is the best tool at humanity's disposal to perceive divine power in the tangible world.[127] Of course, Desmarais was not inventing this notion of divinely inspired art. As discussed in the first chapter, the most potent example of divine inspiration was manifested in theories regarding Byzantine icons. It was also a popular theme in the humanistic context of the Renaissance. The root of this notion is found in the Vasari's Lives:

> Thus, the first model from which issues the first image of man was a mass of earth, and not without reason, for the Divine Architect of Time and Nature, being all perfect, wished to demonstrate in the imperfection of His materials the means to subtract from them or add to them, in the same way that good sculptors and painters are accustomed to doing when by their imperfect drafts to that state of refinement and perfection they seek…

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[126] Desmarais, Du Beau idéal 168. My translation:

> We can say that the artist's brush was formed from the debris of the sceptre with which God touched the edge of chaos when he wanted to begin working on creation. In seeing the painting depicting the resurrection of Lazarus, it seems that we ourselves assist in the spectacle of that resurrection; and we are almost tempted to ask ourselves who is more powerful, Christ who created the miracle, or the painter who preserves the memory of it in a magical manner.

[127] Vasari, Lives 3-4.

> [T]he origin of these arts was Nature herself, that the inspiration or model was the beautiful fabric of the world, and that the Master who taught us was that divine light infused in us by a special act of grace which has not only made us superior to other animals but even similar, if it is permitted to say so, to God Himself.

For the modern era, this seems to be a most shocking, nearly sacrilegious, claim regarding the divinity of the artist. It touches on the central issues that will concern artists throughout the nineteenth century, including the divine origin of artistic genius, the priestly role of artists in an increasingly secular society, and the spiritual intensity of art itself. Desmarais also posited an intriguing point, which is that our souls are like mirrors; and these mirrors reflect the images around us. He explained it thus: "Car notre âme est semblable à ces miroirs d'optique qui recueillent les images des objets, et les reproduisent avec des teintes plus douces et des nuances plus délicates."[128] In this scenario, all images, whether actually reflections or not, act as mirrors to the soul, and are therefore sharing in some way with the original image created by Narcissus when he leaned over the reflective pool.

Elsewhere in his treatise, Desmarais offered yet another insight into the appeal of the *beau idéal*. As an artist himself, he used his definition of the *beau idéal* to counter the limits set by aesthetic theorists. For artists, the *beau idéal* could have been attractive more for the theoretical precepts that it signified, than its manifestation as a human figure in art. These principles included, for instance, the fact that pro-artist theorists aligned the *beau idéal* with culture, rather than nature. Desmarais, who had himself been a practicing artist in David's studio, defended this principle with these words: "Le beau idéal est caché dans le sanctuaire le plus profound de notre intelligence: nous en cherchions vainement le type dans les espaces qui se découvrent à nos yeux: Dieu le tient en réservé derrière le rideau de l'immortalité."[129] An argument, therefore, was being made that artists, like poets or philosophers, occupy the province of culture, in lieu of nature, and accordingly are purveyors of masculine intellect, and not merely feminine

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[128] Desmarais, Du Beau idéal 46. My translation: "Therefore our spirit may be likened to the optical mirrors that collect the images of objects, and reproduce them with the most soft colours and delicate nuances."

[129] Desmarais, Du Beau idéal 52. My translation: "The *beau idéal* is hidden in the most profound sanctuary of our intelligence: we search in vain for the perfect example in the space that we discover through our eyes: God holds it in reserve behind the curtain of immortality."

beauty. Additionally, Desmarais cited the importation of the Renaissance-borne *beau idéal* into France's artistic tradition, as evidence of the arrival of culture in the face of barbarism.[130]

If artists judged the *beau idéal* to be a product of culture, itself being discerned through human intelligence, it follows that it was also a barometre of human morality, since it is through our wisdom or intellect that moral virtue is expressed. Desmarais described the moral essence of the *beau idéal* saying: "Qu'est-ce donc que le beau idéal en peinture? C'est l'emploi de tout ce que notre nature physique a de plus énergique, pour exprimer notre nature morale: c'est le spectacle continuel du triomphe de la vertu sur les passions: c'est enfin le portrait de la physionomie humaine, peint dans des grandes circonstances de la vie."[131] Moreover, the ability to perceive the *beau idéal* is viewed as evidence of the artist and viewer's own moral virtue and refined mental faculties:

> Reconnaissons que, comme tout ce qu'il y a de grand et de noble descend du Dieu, c'est au pied de la divinité qu'on doit, pour ainsi dire, porter notre berceau. C'est-là que nous recevons les premières leçons de vertu; c'est-la que nous éprouvons pour la première fois ces émotions pures, qui rendent toutes les facultés de notre âme propres à gouter le charme du beau idéal.[132]

Thus we see that, according to Desmarais, the ability to perceive the *beau idéal* is God-given, and the virtue expressed in it, through the divinely inspired, and himself God-like artist, comes from God. Indeed, Desmarais argued that the physical manifestation of the *beau idéal* reflected the morality and character of the individual it depicted—the body must be beautiful so as to show man's potential for goodness, and the pursuit of the *beau*

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[130] Desmarais explains that: "Après cette époque [de Léon X], le beau idéal, destiné comme une autre étoile polaire à guider les hommes à travers les ténèbres de la barbarie, ne se montrait que par intervalles aux yeux des peuples: l'ignorance s'empressait de couvrir d'un nuage épais son orbe lumineux." Desmarais, Du Beau idéal 97. My translation: "After this epoch [of Leo X], the *beau idéal*, destined to become another polar star to guide men through the darkness of barbarism, being shown only in gaps to the eyes of the people: ignorance hurried itself to cover the luminous orb like a thick cloud."

[131] Desmarais, Du Beau idéal 172. My translation: "What then is the *beau idéal* in painting? It is the use of all that our physical nature possesses that is the most energetic, to express our natural morality: it is the continuous spectacle of the triumph of virtue over the passions: it is finally the portrait of the face of humanity, painted in the grand circumstances of life."

[132] Desmarais, Du Beau idéal 59. My translation:

> We must recognise that all that is noble and grand comes from God; it is at the feet of the divine that we must, so to speak, bring our cradle. It is there that we receive the first lessons of virtue; it is there that we test for the first time these pure emotions, which render all of the faculties of our own soul able to enjoy the charm of the *beau idéal*.

idéal makes the artist like a priest, because he or she provides role models, both physically and spiritually, for the people.

If we once again consult Ovid's narrative of Narcissus, we will discover how he offered us the archetype of what the *beau idéal* should be, and how closely Narcissus resembles the figural depictions of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. First, Narcissus's story is contemporary with his transition from boyhood to manhood. This pivotal moment for the young man's physical and emotional development renders him the perfect subject for the representation of the *beau idéal*. Simply as a point of comparison, in terms of seeing that other artists also saw the logic of combining gendered features to show adolescence, it is interesting to note that, in the Renaissance, artists had long used the male figure's effeminisation as a way to signify its youth, and the fleeting moment of a young man's life when he possesses both masculine and feminine attributes. A work such as Donatello's fifteenth-century bronze *David* is exemplary of how the artist balances these traits to evoke this delicate moment of masculine maturity. This work, which was still in Florence in the nineteenth century, was studied by Moreau, and those in his circle with whom he was traveling, such as Degas. Moreau in fact copied works by Donatello while in Florence, including the *St. George*, (March, 1859), and the bronze *David* (1858).[133] Because he and Degas were traveling together at that time, it is possible that Degas also studied these works.[134]

Like David, Narcissus's story takes place when he was a young man on the cusp of adulthood. Perhaps, then, the depiction of androgynous figures in art may, in some cases, be intended to reflect this delicate transformation in both the physical and emotional development of the heroic youthful male. In order to achieve this androgyny, the artist is at liberty to conflate ideal female and male attributes into a single human form. Since Ovid maintained that Narcissus was the ultimate stunning example of beauty in corporeal form, this tale, among others, bolstered the impression that the ephebic body possessed an ideal beauty that was unlike the conventionally masculine or female specimens that otherwise exist in everyday life.

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[133] Donatello, *St. George*, ca. 1415-17, bronze (original), 6'5" tall, Orsanmichele (original), Museo Nazionale del Bargello (present location), Florence, Italy. Donatello, *David*, ca. 1440s, bronze, 1.58m, Museo Nazionale del Bargello, Florence, Italy.
[134] Phoebe Pool, "Degas and Moreau," The Burlington Magazine 105: 723 (Jun., 1963): 254.

Since its inauguration in 1666, the *Académie de France* in Rome, founded as a school for the most promising young artists in the nation, had been charged with nurturing and guiding the future representatives of the French school. It was to reach this objective of training artists to create figures, being of greater beauty than nature herself could produce, that the French academy's program in Rome set requirements for its students, which specifically trained them to master the *beau idéal*. The *académie peinte* was a painting in which an artist would portray a single nude male figure, and was intended to be a visible bench-mark in the advancement of a young painter's career.[135] As a publicly funded institution, (first through the monarchy and then the French Republican and successive governments), students who had been granted the honour of winning the *Prix de Rome*, and the corresponding education provided in Rome, were expected to demonstrate the value of the nation's investment in their education, through such things as the *académie peinte.* Consequently, a great amount of expectation was placed on the shoulders of these young artists, and their success was considered a measuring stick of France's cultural supremacy.

Due to the great emphasis placed on the production of an *académie peinte,* it is important to discuss the conflicting ideologies that this tradition encouraged. In Paul Duro's article on the subject, he delves into the problematic objectives that the *académie peinte*, and the educational program of the academy in Rome, supported. On the one hand, the *académie peinte* allowed a student to verify that the nation's investment in his education had been well-spent, for instance by relying on this project to offer evidence of his ability in invention and artistic genius. On the other hand, the same young artist was being indoctrinated into the belief that all contemporary art had to, in some way, be informed by or even directly copied from nature. The problem here is that it is nearly impossible, or at least a contradiction, to be both a copyist and an inventor. Besides, Duro explains, the historicism of the nineteenth century was part of the problem. In a century that would be marked by a series of stylistic and cultural revivals, whether Greek, Egyptian, medieval, Roman, or otherwise, nineteenth-century artists were being trained to view the art of their own day as inferior to, or of lesser interest than, the art of the past. Duro also draws attention to the ways in which the students were exploited as a matter of

[135] De Quincy, "Éloge historique" 314.

political policy. Copying from the antique was necessary for the sake of providing France with good copies of the originals, which were otherwise not in its ability to possess. Though the academy and the monarchy tried to purchase original antique works from Italy, this pillaging was eventually outlawed by the Pope, unless express permission had been given for such an exchange.[136] The result was that the program of the *Académie de France* in Rome was tailored to force students to copy works in Italy, which would then be sent back to France.[137] While the *académie peinte* was not a copy per se, it was certainly the outcome of many years of copying, and for this reason, these works generally appeared to stylistically mimic the perfect ideal of the human figures that were still extant in ancient works. Regardless, completing an *académie peinte* was only one of the requirements of the French academy's Roman program. In the second-last year, it was mandatory for each student to deliver a copy of a masterpiece from a previous era.[138] Regarding academic procedures, Duro has noted the problematic aspect of this requirement, and especially the fact that the copy had to be completed one year before the final submission of an original history painting. How could students be expected to graduate so quickly from replication to originality? Yet it was for this reason that, in his role as a professor of the school, Jean-Auguste-Dominique Ingres (1780-1867) advised, unsuccessfully, that a programmatic change should be implemented, so that the copy would be an early requirement, and the original work a later requirement.[139] From the perspective of the government, it was better to uphold the submission of the copy towards

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[136] On the celebration of antiquity in academic systems at this time see Richard J. Campbell, "Visions of Antiquity from Mengs to Ingres," Visions of Antiquity: Neoclassical Figure Drawings, eds. Richard J. Campbell and Victor Carlson (Los Angeles: Los Angeles County Museum of Art, Minneapolis: The Minneapolis Institute of Arts, 1993): 15-46.

[137] Duro, "The Lure of Rome" 134. That the purpose of the stay in Rome was to learn to copy is expressed in a letter from Colbert to Nicolas Poussin, (who was being asked to direct it), quoted in Duro's article:

> Because it still seems necessary for young people of your profession to spend some time in Rome in order to form their taste and style from the originals and examples of the greatest masters of Antiquity and the last centuries...His Majesty has resolved to send each year [to Rome] a certain number [of students]...under the tutelage of an excellent master who can direct them in their studies and give them the good taste and style of the ancients, and who will point out to them, in the works they will copy, those beauties, secret and almost inimitable, that escape the attention of the majority (136).

[138] Duro, "The Lure of Rome" 138.

[139] Duro, "The Lure of Rome" 141.

to the end of the student's education, because this timing would be more likely to result in superior reproductions, for the nation's growing inventory of non-French masterpieces.

The virtual enslavement of the students to replicating other artists's works naturally fostered a healthy sense of frustration and rebellion against the manipulation of their skills in this manner. Occasionally this would inspire new innovation, such as David's pillaging of Roman sculptural examples in the efforts to satisfy his appetite for the antique.[140] The practice of copying from the male model and the antique, or at least plaster copies of the antique, is illustrated in Jean-Henri Cless's *The Studio of Jacques-Louis David in 1804* (ca. 1804).[141] Nevertheless, copying was more often than not a matter of duty, being justified through the rationalisation that only through imitation of the best masters of the past could an experienced artist find his way to become an original creator in his own right. But Duro suggests that this justification was more an ideal than the reality, since, in practice students were encouraged to duplicate the existing works as faithfully as possible, while those who introduced personal creativity into the copies were chastised for taking such creative license. Duro also proposes that it was because of the great emphasis placed on copying, which often dated to an artist's earliest education, that a correlation was assumed to exist between copying the Old Masters and artistic conservatism, which remains an erroneous assumption in art historical analysis today. As a result, we must concede that, in the nineteenth century, many artists believed that they could be creative and innovative, while still incorporating aspects of past works into their projects.[142]

The emphasis on imitation in the French system would also be taken up by leaders of the English academic tradition. It is in the words of Reynolds that we discover a clear explanation of how copying or imitating was expected to engender originality in new artistic production. Each Discourse written by Reynolds was delivered at the annual meeting when students were awarded prizes, and as such was seen as promoting the best principles that the academy could offer, and were deemed to be representative of official academic policy. Reynolds took his role as a theoretical and practical advisor to the

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[140] Jacques de Caso, "Jacques-Louis David and the Style 'All' antica'," The Burlington Magazine 114:835 (Oct., 1972): 686-690.
[141] Jean-Henri Cless, *The Studio of Jacques-Louis David in 1804*, ca. 1804, pencil and ink, 46.2 x 58.2 cm, Musée Carnavalet, Paris, France.
[142] Duro, "The Lure of Rome" 136-8, 146-7.

students very seriously. The Discourses, which were delivered from the years 1769-90, had far reaching effects; some were even published in other languages, such as French, German, and Italian.[143] Apparently, Reynolds grasped the dangers inherent in the process of imitating other artists, because he warned against the fact that 'bad,' or uninspired, reproductions would inevitably bring with them charges of plagiarism, whereas the 'good' or genius copies would be applauded. Reynolds addressed this point, saying:

> We come now to speak of another kind of imitation; the borrowing of a particular thought, an action, attitude, or figure, and transplanting it into your own work: this will either come under the charge of plagiarism, or be warrantable, and deserve commendation, according to the address with which it is performed...It is generally allowed that no man need be ashamed of copying the ancients: their works are considered as a magazine of common property, always open to the publick, whence every man has a right to take what materials he pleases; and if he has the art of using them, they are supposed to become to all intents and purposes his own property.[144]

So it appears, in order to reach the rank of genius, one first needed learn how to be subservient to the outstanding ability of another. This smacks of a sort of rite of passage, where the young artist pays his dues, by paying homage to the work of greater masters, before he can be allowed to prove himself worthy of joining their ranks.

Equally interesting in Reynolds's theories is his apparent appreciation for, and even promotion of, the sense of competition that imitation of other artists inevitably induced:

> It must be acknowledged that the works of the moderns are more the property of their authors; he, who borrows an idea from an ancient, or even from a modern artist not his contemporary, and so accommodates it to his own work, that it makes a part of it, with no seam or joining appearing, can hardly be charged with plagiarism: poets practice this kind of borrowing, without reserve. But an artist should not be contented with this only; he should enter into a competition with his original, and endeavour to improve what he is appropriating to his own work. Such imitation is so far from having any thing in it of the servility of plagiarism, that it is a perpetual exercise of the mind, a continual invention.[145]

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[143] Robert R. Wark, "Introduction," Discourses on Art: Sir Joshua Reynolds, ed. Robert R. Wark (London and New Haven: Yale University Press, 1997): xiii-xiv.
[144] Reynolds, Discourses on Art 106-7.
[145] Reynolds, Discourses on Art 107.

Reynolds's recommendations were a veritable advertisement for the paragone tradition. First, he glamourised imitation by claiming that such borrowing, if done properly, was an intellectual victory. He was touching on the heart of why the paragonising impulse drew so many artists in. Put simply, it provided a superior method of establishing oneself in a long line of artistic accomplishment. Second, Reynolds pointed out that this kind of competitive emulation was already commonplace in the literary arts, so artists should be at liberty to engage in this practice as well. Only visual artists should ideally compete with the borrowing practices of poets, who always tried to surpass the original literary source. His final comment, that such competitive imitation was an exercise of the mind, reveals why the paragonising impulse was irresistible to some artists; it was a transparent declaration of the artist's status, as an intellectual instead of a craftsman.

Notwithstanding Reynolds's encouragement of a paragonising methodology for artistic production, he espoused the same anti-competition theories that were elsewhere having a great impact on the arts. This may be seen in his contention that rules did in fact exist in the arts, and that they were to be unequivocally followed: "I would chiefly recommend, that an implicit obedience to the *Rules of Art*, as established by the practice of the great MASTERS, should be exacted from the *young* Students." He continued with the following statement:

> Every opportunity, therefore, should be taken to discountenance that false and vulgar opinion, that rules are the fetters of genius. They are fetters only to men of no genius...How much liberty may be taken to break through those rules, and, as the Poet expresses it, *To snatch a grace beyond the reach of art*, may be a subsequent consideration, when the pupils become masters themselves. It is then, when their genius has received its utmost improvement, that rules may possibly be dispensed with. But let us not destroy the scaffold, until we have raised the building.[146]

In this passage, it is apparent that Reynolds recognised the paradox of his own position, and reached a compromise by claiming that although rules exist to be followed, one may, with an appropriate degree of genius and training, learn how to flout them properly. In this way, he acknowledged the preponderance of aesthetic theory in the eighteenth

[146] Reynolds, Discourses on Art 17. Taken from Discourse I of 1769.

century that promoted rules and limits corresponding to each art; nevertheless, he offered an escape route for his promising young students, such that his primary role as an artist, rather than a theoretician, revealed its ultimate allegiance. Upon examination of Reynolds's later teachings, however, it becomes quite obvious that his theories were perpetually evolving, (which is natural given than they were issued over decades); nevertheless, it is noticeable that Reynolds was absorbing many ideas, which were then prevalent in aesthetic theories, yet with little consistency. For example, Reynolds later claimed, in Lessing-like terms, that the arts should not trespass onto one another's fields of production:

> I believe it may be considered as a general rule, that no Art can be engrafted with success on another art. For though they all profess the same origin, and to proceed from the same stock, yet each has its own peculiar modes both of imitating nature, and of deviating from it, each for the accomplishment of its own particular purpose. These deviations, more especially, will not bear transplantation to another soil.[147]

The way to reconcile such contradictions is to understand that when Reynolds promises his students that, with a sufficient degree of genius and training, they may proceed to shirk the rules of their art, he is not referring to rules pertaining to the limits of each specific art. In other words, the artist may break the rules, but only if those rules do not encourage inappropriate masquerading as another art form.[148]

Reynolds's insistence on artistic freedom, rather than the strictures set down by theorists, or philosophers, is discernable in his dismissal of Plato's accusation that artists merely deceptively imitate. In Discourse XIII, Reynolds offers a comparison of the arts, in order to demonstrate that painting and sculpture were, in fact, more true to nature than poetry, thereby denying Plato's position. In Reynolds's view, poets are much more prone to deception than visual artists, because they are less dependent upon nature to produce their art. According to Reynolds, the poet is never obliged to rely upon nature to create

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[147] Reynolds, Discourses on Art 240. This passage was from Discourse XIII of 1786.

[148] These same concerns were voiced by a later President, Leighton, in one of his discourses for the Royal Academy. He concurred with Reynolds, saying "[I]t cannot be the foremost duty of art to seek to embody that which it cannot adequately present, and to enter into a competition in which it is doomed to inevitable defeat." Discourse: Delivered to the Students of the Royal Academy: On the Distribution of the Prizes, 1881 by Sir Frederick Leighton, P.R.A. (London: Printers to the Royal Academy, W.M. Clowes and Sons, 1881): 19.

his art, whereas the painter and sculptor had to study it devotedly to produce anything of worth.[149] Additionally, Reynolds proposed that because the literary arts must be mediated through other art forms, such as opera, they are artificial in the extreme, making the sense required to perceive these arts more artificial than the sense of sight.[150] Despite the fact that Reynolds elsewhere chastised theoreticians for endeavouring to cast the arts according to certain roles or aims, he himself participated in this phenomenon, by offering his own comparison of the arts in one of his discourses. In sum, the issues of copying and studying from nature were as hotly debated in the English academy as they were in France.

The Problem with the Sublime for History Painters

Let us now examine the actual results that could be derived from copying and studying nature, and the processes that were essential to the rise to the *beau idéal* and the sublime in art. We have already seen that the eighteenth-century French painter was faced with a monumental conundrum. This was the problem that traditionally the best painting was history painting, and the best history painting, according to those on the side of artists, had to provoke a sublime experience in the viewer. Moreover, artists were expected to master originality by rigourous copying of ancient and Old Master works. Despite these pronounced objectives, in the most influential and pervasive aesthetic theory, painting was not as capable, if at all, as poetry to manifest the sublime, or to surpass the sublimity of the ancients. Painters were even morally prohibited from

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[149] Reynolds, Discourses on Art 232-5. According to Reynolds:

> [I]n regards to Painting and Sculpture. Our elements are laid in gross common nature, an exact imitation of what is before us: but when we advance to the higher state, we consider this power of imitation, though first in the order of acquisition, as by no means the highest in the scale of perfection.
> The very existence of Poetry depends on the licence it assumes of deviating from actual nature, in order to gratify natural propensities by other means...It sets out with a language in the highest degree artificial, a construction of measured words, such as never is, nor ever was used by man...When this artificial mode has been established as the vehicle of sentiment, there is another principle in the human mind, to which the work must be referred, which still renders it more artificial, carries it still further from common nature, and deviates only to render it more perfect (234).

[150] Reynolds, Discourses on Art 235.

attempting to usurp poetry's sublime, intellectual, philosophical, masculine, and expressive characteristics, which a flurry of eighteenth-century writers claimed were outside of painting's 'natural' limits. Despite this paradox, it is clear that many painters sought to achieve these 'poetic' qualities in their art, and to push painting's supposed limits to the breaking point, in order elevate their own status, or the reputation of painting in general.

Our first example addresses the nature of both the *beau idéal* and the sublime as tools in the paragone debate. Interest in the male nude and a self-conscious leap towards the status of history painter were mutually expressed in Drouais's *académie peinte*, *The Dying Athlete*. In his letters to David, Drouais communicated an exceptional interest in using the works required by the academy to prove the magnitude of his creative genius. Perhaps it was for this reason that he submitted his *Marius prononcer à Minturnes* to the Academy in Paris, instead of the anticipated and required entry of an *académie peinte*. Unfortunately, for Drouais, instead of being unanimously impressed, many of its viewers were taken aback by the emotional violence that they perceived in the scene.[151] The work was considered to be the most successful entry in the history of the *académie peinte* submissions, which set the bar very high for the rest of David's students.[152] As an ambitious young painter in the up-and-coming new school of Neoclassicism, Drouais was keen to prove his status as a history painter, and tried to 'show-off' by creating a poignant narrative where no narrative was necessary for this element of the program. He made his single nude a virtuous hero of antiquity, identified by the large antique shield and sword that accompany him. The figure partially reclines, as he clutches the bleeding wound on his leg, which emits a mere trickle of blood, while resisting, by refusing to lie down completely, the weakness brought on by death. As such, the figure is ennobled by his suffering, though the wounds are barely visible, so as not to disturb its beauty, which Baroque art historians typically identify as characteristic of French reticence.[153] The dark

[151] Milovan Stanić, "Pygmalion révolutionnaire," Revue d'esthéthique 17 (1990): 92.
[152] Lee, "Drouais" 361. This was quite a feat, since the history of the tradition began with the first students in Rome in 1666. For more on Drouais see Jean-Germain Drouais 1763-1788, exh. cat. (Rennes: Musée des beaux-arts de Rennes, 1985).
[153] Crow, "Observations" 151-2.

background and severe, non-descript setting intensify the emotional isolation and sacrifice of the lonely dying hero.

The painter's treatment of light, subdued natural colours, and clear lines accentuates the figure's masterful shape, and his own skill at manufacturing it. Moreover, the subject matter and pose of Drouais's dying hero were taken from some of the most iconic and eloquently narrative versions of famous single figures from antiquity, such as the Roman *Dying Gaul* (ca. first century BCE), thereby situating the painter and his work in an illustrious lineage.[154] Like Poussin's painting, the antique work shows a semi-reclining heroic nude warrior in the throes of death. The *Dying Gaul* became part of the papal collection of Clement XII (1652-1740), when it was known to be in Rome. When Napoleon Bonaparte (1769-1821) invaded Italy at the end of the eighteenth century, he made it one of his primary objectives to enrich France's cultural heritage, by importing famous works as spoils of war. In the case of the *Dying Gaul*, it was turned over to Napoleon during his campaigns in Italy. The work remained in France until 1819, during which time it was accessible to the public in the collection of the Musée du Louvre.[155] Even though Drouais's painting predated the acquisition of the work into the French collection by two years, he had been in Rome before 1797, as part of his tenure as a winner of the *Prix de Rome*.[156]

Drouais's painting exemplifies the inextricable relationship that was drawn between history painting, the male nude, and the artist's social status. It was with the *académie peinte* that potential young history painters could prove their worth, but the limitations of a single non-narrative nude made this a considerable challenge. To capitalise on the opportunity to show his work in public, Drouais focused on the nude's physical perfection, while exploiting the virtue of the mortally wounded hero, thereby elevating his figural study to the status of history painting. Certainly Drouais was neither

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[154] Anonymous, *Dying Gaul*, ca. 1st century BCE Roman copy after bronze original ca. 230-20 BCE, marble, Capitoline Museums, Rome, Italy.
[155] Napoleon acquired it as part of the Treaty of Campoformio in 1797. Francis Haskell and Nicholas Penny, Taste and the Antique: The Lure of Classical Sculpture 1500-1900, cat. 44 (London and New Haven: Yale University Press, 1981): 224. For more on the revival of and interest in antique sculpture in the eighteenth century see A. Potts, "Greek Sculpture and Roman Copies I: Anton Raphael Mengs and the Eighteenth Century," Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes 43 (1980): 150-173.
[156] Lee, "Drouais" 361-365.

the first nor the last to do this; nonetheless, the self-sacrificial warrior subject lent the work more than a minor narrative meaning, given the intellectual trends of the Enlightenment, the celebration of antiquity, and the pre-Revolutionary nationalistic significance of such a subject, (clearly Drouais did not have foreknowledge of the Revolution). Drouais presented a topic that would have struck the hearts of those nurturing the burgeoning Enlightenment interest in antique Republican ideology, as well as the desire for devotion to one's nation.

A Style to Match an Objective:
The Paragonising Motives for the Neoclassical Masculinisation of Painting

We have observed that there were many theoretical and institutional principles that artists had to combat, if they were to demonstrate that painting could manifest the sublime of masculine genius, which was theoretically, at least, firmly planted in the territory of the literary arts. It appears that they were successful, because Neoclassicism departed from preceding eras, in ways that were not lost on its viewers.[157] Subsequent critics and academicians would look back upon this shift as a triumphant moment in the history of French painting, when the school of David departed from the prevailing Rococo methods. In his eulogy of David's student Girodet, who began his career in a style almost identical to that of his master, De Quincy reminisced that

> À dix-huit ans, il [Girodet] entra dans l'école de David, que le tableau du *Serment des Horaces* venoit d'indiquer comme la plus propre à conduire, par l'étude du dessin, au but principal de la peinture, qui, long-temps distraite de ses nobles emplois par les futilités du mauvais goût d'un demi-siècle, étoit déchue du rang où le règne de Louis XIV l'avoit élevée en France. Dé la mort du grand Roi, avoit daté la décadence de l'art…Tout diminua peu à peu; toutes les dimensions s'amoindrirent; le joli remplaça le beau, et les galleries se changèrent en boudoirs.[158]

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[157] It is important to note here, as was explained with reference to the tradition of binary opposition-based logic in the introduction, that the discussion of loaded terms, such as feminine and masculine, are being referenced according to the perception of these attributes in their original context, and not on the current approach to such terms that are deemed acceptable in contemporary methodologies, which would necessarily resist any 'logical' classification of masculine and feminine according to agreed upon characteristics.

[158] De Quincy, "Éloge historique" 310-11. My translation:

Here, De Quincy acknowledged that the aims of painting are concurrent with those of design or drawing, and that these aims are part of what makes painting a noble art. Of course De Quincy had the benefit of hindsight when evaluating the impact of the Neoclassical movement, and his own bias towards the Rococo is certainly evident. Nevertheless, his words are still useful in demonstrating that a change was indeed observed, even if the instigators of the new style were probably not, at the time, aware of how influential their ideas would become. Additionally, he confirmed that Girodet, following in the footsteps of his master, was amongst those associated with inaugurating this shift in taste.[159]

One of the tactics that David perhaps drew upon to bring about this change was to claim himself as the new Poussin. David's linear style, reduction of compositional elements to the most important figures, and mathematically simple, however calculated, treatment of illusionistic space, were all features reminiscent of the seventeenth-century French painter Poussin, who was also a competitor in the paragone. Nearly since its inception, the academy had upheld Poussin, in theoretical and critical writings, as the exemplar of the classically trained 'sublime' painter. Naturally, by the mid-eighteenth century, when history painting was feared to be in decline, academicians and critics became even more focused than usual on a return to Poussinesque conventions, since he was one of, if not the most, respected history painter in France. David and the Neoclassicists were similarly inspired to return to a Poussinesque aesthetic in search of the sublime, critical acclaim, and the regeneration of history painting. But what exactly was it that made Poussin's works sublime? In examining critical responses to Poussin's work, Kahng concludes that his works were deemed sublime, due to their ability to play on the viewer's heartstrings, and because they employ straightforward, but powerful

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> At the age of eighteen, he entered the school of David, for which the painting *Serment des Horaces* came to signal what is more proper, through studying the principle of drawing, which is the main purpose of painting, which, for so long had been distracted from its noble purposes by the frivolities of the poor taste of the preceding half century, and had fallen from the rank to which it had been elevated in France during the reign of Louis XIV. The decadence of art has dated to the death of the great king…Diminished little by little, all of its magnitude has been reduced; beauty replaced by prettiness, and the galleries turned into boudoirs.

[159] De Quincy, "Éloge historique" 311-2.

compositions,[160] which are also demonstrably quintessential components of David's works.

However, David must have been aware that only the most skillful appropriation of Poussinesque modes of working would convince critics of his sublime genius, and that there was some risk in attempting to reach this objective. It is pertinent, then, to briefly examine a famous incident that preceded David's rise to glory, and which illustrates exactly why the hierarchy of the arts, and the pursuit of the sublime, was so integral to the status of artists at this time. In 1769, Greuze submitted his *Septimius Severus Reproaching his Son Caracalla* to the Salon, which was intended to serve as his acceptance piece to the academy.[161] The horizontal composition shows Septimius in his bed, having sat up to angrily address his son, who stands with his back turned to his father at the end of the bed. The scene takes place in an austere antique architectural setting, in a palette of grey and dark tones.

Since Greuze had made a name for himself in genre scenes, his submission of a history painting was judged, probably fairly, as an attempt to bypass the lesser status of genre painter, thereby making him eligible for a more respected title: history painter. This tactic was necessary, since the artist's rank was assigned according to the genre of his acceptance piece. While Greuze enjoyed popularity, and supportive critical responses to his genre scenes, many received his *Septimius* with hostility, and even shock.[162] In her article, Eik Kahng endeavours to decipher the elusive rationale that lay behind the negative reception of Greuze's painting, while also investigating the status of the sublime in aesthetic theory, academic policy, and artistic ambition, and the importance of the *beau idéal* in history painting. Kahng's conclusion is that Greuze was motivated to attempt sublime painting, whose potential was recognised within the academy to be limited to history painting, because of "an originally dramatic conception of the sublime," that was threatening the hierarchy of painterly genres, and creating a new level of ambition in painters throughout the eighteenth century, which especially focused on a disturbing

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[160] Kahng, "*L'Affair Greuze*" 100.
[161] Jean-Baptiste Greuze, *Septimius Severus and Caracalla (Septime Sévère et Caracalla*), 1769, oil on canvas, 124 x 160 cm, Musée du Louvre, Paris, France.
[162] For a look at some of the critical responses to Greuze's other work see Diderot Salon of 1765. For another study of Greuze's failure to achieve history painter status see Jean Seznec, "Diderot et L'Affair Greuze," Gazette des Beaux-Arts 47 (May 1966): 339-356.

collapse in the boundaries between history and genre painting.[163] Hyacinthe Rigaud (1659-1743), who was a former portraitist of Louis XIV (1638-1715) and his court, actually achieved the goal of receiving a higher rank than portraitist, when in 1702 he became the first artist to simultaneously receive the titles of both genre painter and history painter within the academy.[164] Unfortunately for Greuze, his reputation was not so unshakeable that he could become the second artist to pull this off.

Because it relied upon techniques that he honed in genre rather than history paintings, Greuze's painting was judged to be transgressive, which was the reason that *Septimius* failed in its critical reception.[165] In addition, Greuze rejected conventional thinking by depicting an "oral moment" of Caracalla's story, which theorists considered impossible to properly portray in a non-verbal medium.[166] In order for the viewer to decipher the narrative depicted, the painter needed to express, in a visual idiom, the dialogue passing between father and son. According to Kahng, who also ties the artist's quest for the sublime to aesthetic theorists such as Dubos, Greuze boldly chose to depict this "oral moment," so as to demonstrate the sublime in painting. In aesthetic theory only verbal expression, or concepts that were rooted in the original poetic or literary accounts of the story, held the potential to accurately express sublime ideas. Nonetheless, ambitious painters often chose to make visible the complex expressions of a verbal subject, and this became a typical paragonising tactic, which could be relied upon to upstage the authority of an original literary source. As a result, when David chose to depict a verbal oath in the *Oath of the Horatii*, in the wake of the Greuze debacle, it was an even braver act, and bespoke his determination to manifest the sublime in his work, and challenge painting's conventional limits.[167]

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[163] Kahng, "*L'Affair Greuze*" 98. For more on Kahng's investigation of the sublime at this time see 104-6.
[164] Stephan Perreau, Hyacinthe Rigaud: 1659-1743: Le peintre des rois, preface by Xavier Salmon (Les Presses du Languedoc, 2004): 33-9.
[165] This argument is made over the course of the article. Kahng, "*L'Affair Greuze*" 96-113. Greuze's history painting seems to have been objectionable, because it exploited features that had become hallmarks of his genre paintings. For instance, the domestic setting, (even if antique), the heavy reliance on physical gestures of the figures to tell the story, the highly individualised facial features, the heavily clothed rather than nude figures, and the narrative's involvement with family drama and relationships were all qualities that he relied upon to convey genre subjects.
[166] Kahng, "*L'Affair Greuze*" 99, 104.
[167] Kahng, "*L'Affair Greuze*" 98-108. This might, in part, explain why David would have emulated Greuze's unfortunate work in his *Socrates*. According to her thesis in "*L'Affair Greuze*" Kahng likewise claims that in his *Oath*, *Socrates*, and *Death of Brutus* (1789) David was trying to create sublime painting.

Since the sublime was a masculine property in aesthetic theory, its deliberate incorporation into painting aided the advance of a reformed, anti-feminine and anti-Rococo style. This must have been a somewhat esoteric tactic, which would only have been recognisable to the best-informed members of his art world elite. However, French Neoclassicism could be readily appreciated for its masculine properties, irrespective of the viewer's background. Many critical reviewers of the new style relied upon a distinctly masculine vocabulary to describe what they were seeing, such as the phrase "style sévère," or 'severe style.'[168] The Neoclassical painters cultivated flawless and imperceptible brushwork, exacting organised compositions, bold and 'serious' colours, and the foregrounding of masculine heroes. The new style was hailed as precise, and therefore rational and masculine, unlike the popular, colourist Rococo style, which critics described in terms that were then identified with feminine qualities, such as expressionistic, passionate, beautiful, soft, and sensual.

While the Neoclassicists were rejecting the Rococo tradition, it is often forgotten that the Rococo masters had themselves rebelled against the highly finished or classicising painterly style, and emphatically propagandistic subject matter, of Baroque art under the reign of Louis XIV. Nevertheless, their artistic integrity had fallen into question due to their clientele. By appealing to middle and non-official upper-class patrons, the Rococo painters were perceived by many to be courting the lucrative possibilities of a wider, but less prestigious, art market. Additionally, the Rococo masters experimented with loose brushwork, sometimes even creating what their detractors called unfinished works. So it is understandable that David's ambition would force him to depart so abruptly from the Rococo style, which was then being identified with less prestigious patrons, genres of subject matter, and painterly skill. Consequently, David pursued work for official and aristocratic patrons, and heavily didactic subject matter, which was the antithesis of the art-for-art's sake approach of the *petit genre* Rococo painters.

Taken as a whole, David's methods seemed to purvey fundamental truths, and unwaveringly legible morality; every action and visual element was clearly laid out

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Fried also identifies this work as a monument to David's ambition to promote status and acclaim as a history painter. Fried, "Toward a Supreme Fiction" 546.

[168] Stanić, "Pygmalion" 91.

before the viewer. The Davidian style also harkened back to the Renaissance, when the importance of draughtsmanship, or *disegno* (design), had been valued as the most elementary ingredient in the work of a gifted and intellectual artist.[169] In this way, Neoclassicism's linearity rekindled respect for the principle of *disegno*, and highlighted David's skill as a draughtsman. Indeed, Crow has argued that David's effort to produce paintings with a 'licked surface,' or showing no visible brush strokes, may have resulted from his desire to avoid any association between painting and craftsmanship. By 'hiding' the brush work, David and his students prevented viewers from noticing the intense physical labour involved in creating such works, and therefore distanced themselves from any association between themselves, and the money-making craft of the Rococo masters.[170]

Robert Rosenblum, in his investigation of the legends about the origin of painting in the nineteenth century, points out that the Neoclassical artists may have also implemented a definitively linear style to draw a link between their work and the presumed origins of their art in antiquity. Remember that in one of the accounts of the origin of painting, the first 'painting' by Dibutade was an outline of a shadow. By virtue of this ancient legend, the harsh, yet simple, method of Neoclassicism was ennobling, because it reminded viewers of this grand tradition. According to Rosenblum, the legend was clearly still known amongst the Neoclassicists, because David's arch rival, Jean-Baptiste Regnault (1754-1829), treated the subject in his decorations for the *Grand cabinet de la reine* at Versailles in 1785, which was commissioned by Louis XVI (1754-93).[171] Regnault's painting called *L'Origine de la peinture, ou Dibutade traçant le portrait de son berger* was paired with a Pygmalion subject, which similarly dealt with the ancient origins of art.[172] Regnault's Dibutade leans, with Michelangesque torsion, to outline the shadow of her lover on a stone wall, while the young man faces the viewer.

Retreating to the innate qualities and mythic roots of their art, the Neoclassicists perhaps intended to cleanse painting of its perceived degradation. Rosenblum also

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[169] Diderot, Notes on Painting f.n. 3, 196.
[170] Crow, Painters and Public Life 240.
[171] Rosenblum, "The Origin of Painting" 285.
[172] Baron Jean-Baptiste Regnault, *The Origin of Painting (L'origine de la peinture, ou Dibutade traçant le portrait de son berger*), 1786, oil on canvas, 105 x 140 cm, Cabinet de la reine, Versailles, France.

identifies an example of this kind of subject matter in the work of one of David's students. Girodet dealt with the topic in both his epic poem titled *Le peintre,* and in an illustration of the Dibutade legend, (now lost), which was recreated in an anonymous engraving by the same title (n.d.).[173] The composition shows Dibutade's lover seated in profile, casting a shadow upon the torch-lit room. A little putto-like Cupid holds the torch, while with his other hand he supports the drawing arm of the artist. This is paralleled in the poem, as Girodet made Cupid the iconographic feature representing the divine origin of artistic genius, which similarly guides Dibutade.[174] This Romantic conception of artistic genius will be relevant in our study of Girodet's *Pygmalion and Galatea* (1819), where Cupid likewise serves as the source of divinely appointed creative abilities.[175] This trope would be satirised by artists such as Honoré Daumier (1808-79), who poked fun at this Romantic tale of the origin of the arts, in one of his two caricatures of the Dibutade story called *Penelope's Nights* (1842), which according to Rosenblum irrevocably demystified any lingering affection for the subject in the arts of the nineteenth century.[176] This cartoon does not show a classical idealised beauty with a handsome young lover. Rather, the heroine is a life worn, possibly 'working woman,' who reclines in a most unladylike manner, appreciating the fruits of her labours upon the

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[173] Engraving after Anne-Louis Girodet-Trioson by N. Dupent, *Dibutade*, n.d.

[174] Rosenblum, "The Origin of Painting" 286. The author quotes a section of Girodet's epic poem *Le peintre*, which is useful for our purposes as well. In the first song Girodet writes:

> Oui, c'est lui [Cupid] qui, jadis, dans l'antique Argolide,/ D'une jeune beauté guida la main timide,/ Lorsque, d'un tendre amant, son doigt sûr et léger,/ Arrêta sur le mur le profil passager/ Qu'y dessinait sans art une ombre vacillante./

My translation:

> Yes, it is him [Cupid] who, in the ancient Argolide,/ Of a young beauty guides the timid hand,/ Such that, a tender lover, with a sure and light finger,/ Captures on the wall the fleeting profile/ Who draws without art a waffling shadow./

The original text in found in Girodet's *Le peintre: poème en six chants*, which was published in Oeuvres posthumes de Girodet-Trioson, peintre d'histoire; suivies de sa correspondence; précédées d'une notice historique, et mises en order par P.A. Coupin. Tome premier. (Paris: Jules Renouard, Libraire, M DCCC XXIX): 48.

[175] Anne-Louis Girodet-Trioson, *Pygmalion and Galatea* (*Pygmalion et Galatée)*, 1819, oil on canvas, 253 x 202 cm, Musée du Louvre, Paris, France.

[176] Rosenblum, "The Origin of Painting" 290. Daumier also produced a parody of the Narcissus subject in his *Narcissus* from the Histoires anciennes of 1841-3, which is reproduced in Solomon-Godeau, Male Trouble 225. Honoré Daumier, *Penelope's Nights*, ca. 19th c., lithograph, Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, Massachusetts, U.S.A.

wall. In her drawing, the viewer finds a bumbling 'hero,' who does not possess the noble profile one would expect to see in ancient art.

So, for the Neoclassicists, the skill involved to create monumental paintings in a highly finished manner, which Salon critics carefully scrutinised, was evidence of painting's artistic vigour, and the painter's gift for *disegno*. Yet, perhaps more importantly, this painterly style was perfectly suited to convey the paternalistic moral import of heroic subject matter, and *exemplum virtutis*. A third piece of evidence that the Neoclassicists employed to demonstrate painting's masculinity was to assert its contribution to culture rather than nature, which depends upon the communication of intellectual, moral, didactic, and political themes. For instance, in *Socrates Grasping the Hemlock* (1787), David depicted the philosopher preparing to take his own life, rather than question the democratic assembly's authority, by challenging the validity of its sentence.[177] David's composition, based closely on Poussin's *Septimius*, shows the semi-draped hero on a bed of sorts, reaching for the hemlock proffered by one of his followers, and holding up his arm in the commanding attitude of an orator. Socrates is surrounded by a group of devoted followers, who express, in their bodily gestures, the tragedy of the moment. The scene is set in a quintessentially severe setting, with dark, classicising architecture, and a prison-like gate in the distance. Socrates was a tragic hero, whom David portrayed as a role model, due to his intellect, wisdom, and political virtue. His followers, who are all male, respond to the event in dignified but intense sorrow, creating a palpable pathos. Carol Duncan links this cultivation of pathos in Neoclassical paintings to an effort to promote references to the sublime and artistic expression in critical reviews of the works, which paralleled a rise in the number of subjects featuring relationships between men, and virtuous, if flawed, male authority figures.[178]

As Duncan points out, this subject matter bespoke a variety of fraternal-type relationships between eighteenth-century men. For instance, Socrates's role as teacher

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[177] Jacques-Louis David, *Socrates Grasping the Hemlock*, 1787, Oil on canvas 51 x 77 1/4 in. (129.5 x 196.2 cm), The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York City, U.S.A.

[178] Duncan, "Fallen Fathers" 36-37. Other works by David that feature pathos-driven relationships between central figures, or between the figures and the viewer are: *The Lictors Returning to Brutus the Bodies of his Sons* (1789), *Oath, Belisarius* (1781), and *Death of Marat* (1793). Drouais's *Marius at Minturnae* (1786) could also be viewed in this context.

and mentor paralleled the government's leadership over the people, a father's rapport with his son, or a master artist's connection to his students. The painting's pathos illustrates David's tendency to depict a story's most sublime moment, and to paint the figures in an idealised but expressive manner. In academic aesthetic theory, it was believed that one way to incorporate the sublime into painting was to depict moments from narratives that caused emotional intensity, or turmoil and pathos; this could be accomplished compositionally through creating visual tension, and powerful physical relationships between the figures. In other words, the cathartic experience of inner conflict led to the sublime, Enlightenment, and moral virtue, which raised painting to the level of ancient tragic drama, and made it, and its maker, indispensable to the public good.[179]

In David's work, the viewer empathises with the difficulty that Socrates's most devout follower experiences, as he proffers the philosopher the deadly poison; his discomforting sorrow is expressed in his very sinews, contorted musculature, and tortured pose. David exploited every figure's pose and actions to provide a range of conviction and emotion from grief to stoicism. And yet, Lessing had warned that complex emotional expression and intellectual subject matter in painting were doomed to fail, in view of the fact that painting's main purpose was to manifest visible beauty.[180] Lessing also warned that, "The greatest effect [of painting] depends on the first glance, but if this forces us into laborious reflection and guessing, our desire to be moved is immediately cooled...woe to him if he has sacrificed beauty for expression!"[181] As well, Dubos claimed that if a painter endeavoured to depict human expressions, he or she should limit him or herself to simple and legible emotions, which must not disturb figural beauty, since only poetry could convey a complex expression of emotion.[182] Dubos defended this limit when he wrote, "Un Poëte peut nous dire beaucoup de choses qu'un Peintre ne sçauroit nous faire entendre. Un Poëte peut exprimer ceux de nos sentimens & celles de nos pensées qu'un Peintre ne sçauroit rendre..."[183]

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[179] Duncan, "Fallen Fathers" 36-37.
[180] Lessing, Laocoön 15.
[181] Lessing, Laocoön 64.
[182] Dubos, Sur la peinture 84-85.
[183] Dubos, Sur la peinture 76-77. My translation: "A poet can tell us lots of things that a painter cannot let us hear. A poet can express certain feelings and certain thoughts that a painter cannot render."

Therefore, in the concern to show works of intellectual and emotional complexity, Neoclassical painters challenged prevailing theoretical limits. Irrespective of the subject matter, David's style is itself expressive; it makes use of strong lines, bold primary colours, and dramatic use of *chiaroscuro*; so the Neoclassical aesthetic was suitable for such moral, heroic, and paternalistic subject matter. In *Socrates*, the pictorial moment conveys the philosophical and political import of Socrates's beliefs, thus proving painting's potential for imparting expressive and intellectual subject matter. Not only did David dare to show the moment of Socrates's final words, which the dramatic figural gestures nullified, but he chose the sublime moment when the actual act of suicide was about to take place. The tension created between the cup held forth by Socrates's follower, as Crow sees it, and the philosopher's near grip on it, is almost unbearable.[184] It is evident that the course of tragic events has been set in place, and must reach its inevitable outcome. In this way, David emulated the greatest sculptors of Classical Greece, who chose the climax of the action for its emotional and narrative potential to affect the viewer.[185] He also fulfilled Dubos's advisement that the greatest painters, who were limited by virtue of their medium to a single moment in the story, would know according to the gift of genius how to choose the most impressive moment, and would often represent the narrative at a point that had not hitherto been depicted.[186] For example, David's *Oath* depicts a moment that was not recounted in the story's contemporary literary origins.[187] As such, it became the first painting to illustrate this

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[184] Crow, Painters and Public Life 244.

[185] Polykleitos's *Doryphorus*, and Myron's *Discus Thrower* were both fifth-century Greek sculptures exemplifying the Classical Greek tradition of representing the figure at the mid-action point of movement, or captured at a point where action had begun, but was not yet complete.

[186] Dubos, Sur la peinture 210-11. Dubos wrote: "Comme un tableau ne réprésente qu'un instant d'une action, un Peintre né avec du génie, choisit l'instant que les autres n'ont pas encore saisi, ou s'il prend le même instant, il l'embellit de circonstances tirées de son imagination qui font paroître l'action un sujet neuf. C'est l'invention de ces circonstances qui constitue le Poëte en peinture." My translation: "Since a painting represents but one moment of the action, a painter born with genius, chooses the moment that the others have not yet seized, or if he takes the same moment, he embellishes the circumstances torn from his imagination that will make the action appear like a new subject. It is invention in these circumstances that makes a poet in painting."

[187] Kahng, "*L'Affair Greuze*" 111. The literary version of the legend stems from Livy's History of Rome (Book I), but had more recently been treated in Corneille's Les Horaces (1639). The narrative moment David chose to depict in the *Oath* was not a part of Corneille's play. The subject recounted the conflict between Rome and Alba, and between two families representing these peoples, which were the Horatii and the Curatii. The conflict was to be resolved through a deathly battle between the two families, but they were tragically linked through family relations and marriage. Overall the story had come to symbolise national duty, or love of the fatherland, as well as familial piety. Boime, Art in an Age of Revolution 394.

particular scene. In fact, the entire premise of taking an oath had never been part of the narrative. In sum, David orchestrated the devices of painting: gesture, colour, composition, subject matter, and the theoretical value of the figure, in order to render the words themselves unimportant, and to secure the public's view of him as a genius in the art of the sublime, and masculine, powers of painting.

Not everyone accepted the new masculine style that was supported by the French Neoclassicists. Many critics chastised the lack of affectation, and sensitivity to colour, and light, which they felt epitomised David's work. Viewers asked the same types of questions that some people still pose today; if art is going to be ugly, is it still art? For example, Pierre-Paul Prud'hon (1758-1823) wrote of Drouais that: "...he follows the manner of M. David in avoiding everything that might fascinate and dazzle the eyes of those who lack a fine and delicate sensibility..."[188] Prud'hon's observations on the new style reflect a keenly felt rejection of the sensitivity, soft colours, and gentility of typical Rococo style, which still had many supporters. Still, this new style was not limited to artists who have been identified with a political or theoretical agenda. Indeed, there was a conscious departure from French art's supposed effeminacy prior to the Revolution. This departure is quite obvious in Fragonard's dramatically altered style, illustrated in his *The Stolen Kiss* (ca. 1790), in which he awkwardly tried to force the reformed style onto a still frivolous and titillating subject.[189] The painting captures a young woman, apparently alone in her dressing room, leaning dramatically towards an open door, through which her lover, having burst into the room from a hidden doorway, reaches to embrace her. The clandestine lovers, sensuous fabrics, and erotic undertones of the story mirror the very features that were hotly criticised in many Rococo paintings. Nonetheless, it shows Fragonard's attempt to masculinise his style at the Revolution's height. Gone are the delicate pastel colours, the fantastic gardenscape, the cherubic statues of mischievous *putti*, and the loose brushwork.

It should be noted, however, that the evolution towards what was then deemed a more masculine style did not necessarily mean that women were correspondingly excluded from the sphere of artistic production under this new banner of aesthetic, social,

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[188] Quoted by Crow, Painters and Public Life 251.
[189] Jean-Honoré Fragonard, *The Stolen Kiss*, 1790, oil on canvas, 45 x 55 cm, The Hermitage Museum, St. Petersburg, Russia.

and political reform. In point of fact, as Gen Doy shows, David's followers included several accomplished female students, who participated in history painting alongside the male students. Through an examination of the history of David's studio, Doy demonstrates that the pursuit of a virile, masculine style in the Neoclassical era did not mean that there was an exclusively homosocial atmosphere nurtured in David's studio, where some of his female students must have been present on a regular basis. In spite of this, the participation, or even presence, of David's female followers has often been overlooked in scholarship that addresses the masculinity of the Neoclassical style.[190] This female component of David's sphere did not negate the importance of pursuing the masculinisation of painting as a theoretical aesthetic ideal. Frankly, women are just as capable as men of producing the so-called stereotypical features of masculinity, (and perhaps some did, just to prove their ability to compete with the men). At least in David's studio, female artists may have been encouraged to work in the same mode as the men, since the goal was to advance painting, not necessarily a particular gender of artist.

But there was indeed a conscious belief, amongst many of the members of the public, that masculine and feminine styles did exist in the arts. A quote from a critic writing for Coup de Patte, speaking of the work of the successful, but paradoxically female, eighteenth-century academic painter, Elisabeth-Louise Vigée-Lebrun (1755-1842), contested the assumption that only male artists could provide the people with examples of exceptional works:

> [T]he heart of women lack the essential qualities to follow men into the lofty region of the fine arts. If nature could produce one of them capable of this great effort, it would be a monstrosity, the more shocking because there would be an

[190] Gen Doy, "Hidden from Histories: Women History Painters in Early Nineteenth-Century France," Art and the Academy in the Nineteenth Century, ed., Rafael Cardoso Denis and Colin Trodd (New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press, 2000): 72. One example of this exaggeration in scholarship on David occurs in Wettlaufer's work, where she relies on the stereotype of David's studio as a strictly homosocial environment, which she describes as "A hotbed of oedipal rivalries, David's studio stood as a microcosm of the republican dream of an all-male world of political, intellectual, emotional and professional homosocial bonds; a world predicated on the deliberate absence of the female." Her aim is to conclude that Girodet, as a participant in this environment, sought the "desirous male gaze…from his master and from his fellow pupils." Pen vs. Paintbrush 55-6. The manipulation of the passive female figure in David's works is certainly an obvious theme, but it does not follow that Girodet was interested in the same techniques, or for the same motives, and it clear from Doy's work that the myth of the homosocial Davidian studio has been greatly exaggerated, but with one exception. As Solomon-Godeau points out, the program in Rome did not accept women, who were exempt from applying to the *Prix de Rome*, ensuring that the academic culture in Rome was much more homosocial than the studio system in Paris. Male Trouble 93

> inevitable opposition between her physical and mental/moral (morale) existence....So the vast field of history, which is filled with vigorously passioned objects, is closed to those who would not know how to bring to it all the expressions of vigor.[191]

In practical terms, it was easier for male artists to promote the cause of history painting, because they alone could earn grants and positions towards their academic education, such as the *Prix de Rome*; therefore, female artists often had to turn to the profitable genres of portraiture, in order to fund their education and livelihood in the arts.

The fact that the pursuit of the ideal nude depiction was not limited to either gender is revealed in the statistics that "Regnault had thirty to forty women students in a studio supervised by his wife at the time of the Revolution, and by 1813 three studios in Paris are mentioned as having nude life-drawing facilities for women--those of David, Regnault and P.N. Guérin."[192] David's student Angélique Mongez (1747-1835) is a good example of how female artists were encouraged to perfect the nude as seriously as their male counterparts, as seen in her *Perseus and Andromeda* from the Salon of 1806. The level of finish that Mongez utilised in the male nude is also perceptible in a mere chalk drawing depicting *Theseus and Pyritöus* (1806).[193] Doy observes that *Theseus* demonstrates perfection of both the male and female nude, the latter being otherwise rarely seen in *Prix de Rome* entries by male artists, due to the fact that female models were not allowed to be used for this purpose.[194] The artist apparently had something to prove. She combines five figures with two horses in a wild, but carefully choreographed, panorama of narrative action.

Even as David sponsored women in his studio, his work often gave the impression of treating women in general dismissively. For instance, in the *Oath*, David depicted the

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[191] Quoted by Sheriff, The Exceptional Woman 191.
While contemporary art critics would often comment on the inherent 'masculine' or 'feminine' qualities of a given artist's work, based on his/her gender, the identification of these qualities was so heavily based on binary logic and social prejudices as to be almost completely illogical. See Sheriff's study for further analysis of this issue.
[192] Doy, "Hidden from Histories" 73. Doy adds that commissions for history paintings were limited at the turn of the nineteenth century, making it even more competitive for any students to earn a living through this genre of painting.
[193] Marie-Joséphine Angélique Mongez, *Theseus and Pyritöus Clearing the Earth of Brigands, Deliver Two Women from the Hands of their Abductors*, 1806, chalk on paper, 59.44 x 74.93 cm, Minneapolis Institute of Arts, Minnesota, U.S.A.
[194] Doy, "Hidden from Histories" 76-7.

Horatii sisters as wilting, pathetic figures, who virtually melt into the background. Not only are they relegated to the composition's outer edge, but their inward grief and collapsing positions separate them emotionally and physically from the central action, which is the group of heroic men.[195] His separation of men and women into divergent roles may reflect the influence of Rousseau, who was a popular Enlightenment figure, notable for promoting the idea that men were to be active in the public sphere, while women were to function in the private sphere. This culture versus nature distinction, being promoted in such texts as the *Discourse on the Origin and Basis of Inequality Among Men*, might have been a convenient tool for David, since his Enlightened viewers would have readily recognised the importance of men and women serving different social purposes, whether in life or in a painting. Likewise, this opposition between male and female forces in David's work allowed him to use the women as a foil for the men's virtue and strength. The painting's male heroes were figures with whom a specifically male viewer could have identified, and who represented the nation's potency and virtuosity in an enlightened nation. The politically sensitive subject matter of such Neoclassical works was intended for a male audience, since politics and national duty, being elements of public life, were considered male concerns.[196] Like the women in David's painting, whose sorrow and interests were insignificant compared to the looming political power struggle, French women were expected to stay out of politics, as we have discussed. When it was suspected that a woman was enjoying undue influence in a political capacity, such as Queen Marie Antoinette (1755-93) over Louis XVI, or a king's mistress over a king, that woman was often judged as a malignant and transgressive participant in the intellectual and political sphere. So, whatever the motives for its promotion amongst male and female artists, painting's masculinisation at the end of eighteenth century would have been primarily designed for male viewers.[197]

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[195] Crow, Painters and Public Life 236, 252.
[196] Wettlaufer, "Girodet" 402.
[197] This was also observed by Wettlaufer, "Girodet" 402.

The Curse of Artistic Legacy: Finding a Way to Compete on your Own

Creating the archetypal figure of beauty, or the *beau idéal*, was certainly something that David and his students endeavoured to master. Yet it was also astoundingly tricky for his protégés to follow in the footsteps of such an influential leader. This was clearly the case for Girodet, who was even accused of requiring his teacher's assistance to complete his paintings, since his technique was so true to that of his master. Girodet, like Drouais, had been nurtured in the politically rebellious and artistically competitive milieu of David's studio.[198] Also, Girodet had the arduous task of attempting to better Drouais, who was David's favourite student, but who had tragically died at an early age, giving rise to considerable angst over the future of the Neoclassical movement.[199] Girodet was known to have harboured a rivalry with both Drouais, especially after he exhibited his *Dying Athlete*, as well as Baron François-Pascal-Simon Gérard (1770-1837).[200] Like Drouais and David, Girodet shirked academic policies when possible, but he diverged from their influence by initiating a painterly approach that departed from his predecessors's then illustrious Neoclassical mode.[201] According to Crow, Girodet was perhaps even more politically rebellious than Drouais, though both tried to work outside of academic expectations. Being David's protégé, Girodet carried the scars of hostile critiques, and the lukewarm reception of his work in the public sphere, which his contemporaries acknowledged as a motivating force in his work. Girodet was not immune to these critiques, and took them personally enough, it would seem, to believe that he had to demonstrate his artistic merit throughout his career.

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[198] For studies of David and his followers see Crow, Emulation, and Painters and Public Life. See also Étienne J. Délécluze, Louis David, son école et son temps: souvenirs (Paris: Didier, 1855). Edouard Pommier, "Winckelmann et la vision de l'antiquité classique dans la France des lumières et de la révolution," Revue de l'art 83 (1989): 9-20. Solomon-Godeau, Male Trouble. Georges Wildenstein, "Les Davidiens à Paris sous la Restauration," Gazette des Beaux-Arts VI:LIII (April 1959): 237-54. An examination of the works on paper by David's students is available in Arlette Sérullaz, Gérard, Girodet, Gros: David's Studio (Paris: Musée du Louvre, 2005).

[199] Crow, "Observations" 151. This rivalry was evident in their competitive approach to the *académie peinte*. For a comparison of how Girodet's *Endymion* is the antithesis stylistically and thematically of Drouais's *Athlete*, see pages 152-154.

[200] Pierre Alexandre Coupin, Notice nécrologique sur Girodet: Peintre d'histoire, membre de l'institut, officier de la légion d'honneur, chevalier de l'ordre de Saint-Michel (Paris: L'imprimerie de Rignoux, 1825): 4, 6.

[201] Wettlaufer also credits the departure in Girodet's style from strict Neoclassicism to his desire to forge a rupture with David's popular style (Pen vs. Paintbrush 40).

For example, according to his own contemporaries, Girodet was keen to disprove his detractors. Having been raised under the twilight of the eighteenth century, he was surely aware of the power that critics and theorists, such as Diderot, and the art historian Johann Joachim Winckelmann (1717-68), held in the art world. Madame la Princesse Constance de Salm (1767-1845), in her poetic eulogy of Girodet, stated the following: "Naguère encore il nous disais ses peines./ L'astre du jour vingt fois a terminé son cours;/ Il était là, blessé par des critiques vaines;/ Mais les mêlant à de sages discours./"[202] Girodet, also turned his pen on the critics in his own writings, such as in the letter to M. Boher, in which the painter complained about the excessive and foolish critical responses to certain of his works. He lamented that:

> J'ai exposé au dernier salon de peinture un tableau dont les journaux vous ont rendu compte. L'espèce de succès qu'il a obtenu et qui a surpassé mon attente, a été l'occasion d'éloges et de critiques diverses. Les journaux se sont fait une guerre de parti à son sujet, comme si la politique y eût dû entrer pour la moindre chose. Je ne vous en parlerai pas, puisque d'autres en ont tant et trop parlé…/Je ne sais si, Lorsque vous vintes à Paris, j'eus le plaisir de vous offrir une petite brochure en vers, relative à de sottes critiques dont j'avais été l'objet, lors de l'exposition de 1806, où parut mon tableau d'une scène du Déluge. Je ne me pique pas non plus d'être homme de lettres, mais quelquefois *facit indignation versum*. La colère a été mon Apollon. Aujourd'hui je suis plus calme et je ne chercherai pas à venger Pygmalion des impertinences que l'on m'a addressés à son sujet.[203]

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[202] Mme La Princesse Constance de Salm, Sur Girodet (Paris: Firmin Didot et Arthus Bertrand, 1825): 7-8. De Salm elaborated on Girodet's work, and claims that it succeeded in achieving the sublime. My translation: "Just a short time ago he was telling us of his troubles./A star of his day had twenty times finished its course;/ He was there, wounded by his useless critics;/But mixing them up in wise discussions./"

[203] "Lettre de M. Boher et la réponse de M. Girodet," Miscellaneous Papers Regarding A.L. Girodet (1819) (Research Library, The Getty Research Institute, Los Angeles, California, 2003.M.41): 6-9. My translation:

> At the last salon for painting I revealed a painting, which the newspapers would have reported to you. The kind of success that it obtained, and that surpassed my expectations, was the occasion of praise and various criticisms. The newspapers waged war on its subject, as if politics should have counted in the least. I will not speak to you of it, since others have too much…/I don't know if, when you arrive in Paris, I will have the pleasure of offering you a small brochure in verse, regarding the foolish criticisms of which I've been the subject, since the exposition of 1806, where my painting of the *Deluge* appeared. I no longer burn to be a man of letters, but sometimes *facit indignation versum*. Anger was my Apollo. Today I am more calm, and I will not seek to avenge *Pygmalion* from the impertinences that were directed at me due to its subject.

With these words Girodet revealed that the motivation and inspiration for his dalliances in writing were, in fact, rooted in his rage towards the critics of his paintings, which confirms the sense of rivalry that Girodet felt with his critics, and with writers in general. Anger, he claimed, was indeed his muse—his Apollo. In this he shared a commonality with Leonardo, who was similarly motivated by his anger at painting's status in his time, only in his case it was regarding painting's exclusion from the liberal arts. Actually, Girodet had even read Leonardo's treatise, and seemed as familiar with the latter's writings as with his paintings.[204]

Despite his detractors, Girodet's reputation was founded upon his proficiency in representing the *beau idéal,* in both male and female form, such as in *The Dead Christ Supported by the Virgin* (1789).[205] Christ reclines against a sarcophagus-like object, in front of his mother, while both figures are set beneath a vast, solemn, and dark background. In this work, a small bit of drapery, strewn more for decorative effect than for modesty, covers the body of Christ, and reflects the perfection of God in its unblemished, pristine state. We intrude upon this solemn and intimate moment between the Madonna and her son, shown before the greyish pall of death has set in, such that Christ appears more like an ivory-coloured marble statue of Apollo or Adonis, than the fallen Nazarene carpenter. The poignant postures of these figures bear the marks of both David and Michelangelo. For her part, the Madonna bends forward, her head covered in grief, mimicking the attitude of the female figure, which is similarly captured in the throes of sadness, in David's *Lictors Returning to Brutus the Bodies of his Dead Sons* (1789).[206] The linear simplicity of Girodet's scene, as well as its primary colours, (even if typical for the Madonna), recalls the quintessential Neoclassical Davidian palette. Christ's body, in its reclining form and restraint, also resembles Michelangelo's *Pietà* (1499), itself speaking with an equal economy of iconography and embellishment.[207]

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[204] Wettlaufer, Pen vs. Paintbrush 88.
[205] Anne-Louis Girodet-Trioson, *Dead Christ Supported by the Virgin*, 1789, oil on canvas, 335 x 235 cm, Saint-Victor Church , Montesquieu-Volvestre, France.
[206] Jacques-Louis David, *Lictors Returning to Brutus the Bodies of his Dead Sons (*Les Licteurs rapportent à Brutus les corps de ses fils*)*, 1789, oil on canvas, 3.23 x 4.22m, Musée du Louvre, Paris, France.
[207] Michelangelo Buonarroti, *Pietà*, 1499, marble, 174 × 195 cm, St. Peter's, Rome, Italy.

Unusually, Girodet's Christ is much less supernatural than the mythological deities that appear in conventional religious paintings of the eighteenth century. The light here is more akin to the *tenebroso*, or unseen and divine light source, of Caravaggio, than it is the Romantic mystical light that will become more pervasive throughout Girodet's career. Perhaps in this case, the artist wished to emphasise Christ's humanity, rather than his Godly nature, given that his mystical treatment of light often hinted at the presence of the divine. Evidently, Girodet had not yet shifted to a more Romantic portrayal of light at this early stage in his career, when he remained more obviously under the influence of his Neoclassical master. We can now begin to assess the tactics that were unique to Girodet's approach to the paragone, as they decisively depart from those of the Neoclassical school.

Tactical Illumination: Endymion and Light

If shadows, reflections, and the *beau idéal* were not challenging enough to depict in painting, using standard conditions, such as natural daylight, the recreation of nighttime scenes was infinitely more demanding. Girodet's focus on light was natural for an artist trained in the academy, which had taught *chiaroscuro* since its inception, and for one exposed to the antiquities and works of the Renaissance, while studying at the French academy in Rome.[208] The Renaissance traditions, such as drawing from sculptures in dimly-lit studios, continued in the nineteenth-century curriculum, as painters were taught to use both sculptures and live models when studying light and shade, as evidenced by Cless's painting. Irrespective of this firmly cemented tradition, Girodet's œuvre reveals an extraordinary number of works depicting challenging nocturnal subjects.

Girodet's *Danaë* (1798) is one such nighttime scene.[209] As with *Endymion*, the viewer is confronted with a woman of ideal proportions, illuminated spectacularly, but gently, from one side by the moonlight. Stars hover in the black sky behind the figure, as her ephemeral veil billows in the moonlight. A putto holds up a mirror, while a dazzling

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[208] See Jon Whitely, "Light and Shade in French Neo-Classicism," The Burlington Magazine 117:873 (Dec., 1975: 768-773. Diderot also discusses *chiaroscuro* at length throughout Notes on Painting.
[209] Anne-Louis Girodet-Trioson, *Danaë*, 1798, oil on canvas, 170 x 87.5 cm, Museum des Bildenden Künste, Leipzig, Germany.

treatment of still-life objects adorns the foreground, as flowers of all types lie in profusion around the figure's feet. Every detail is meticulously delineated in the moonlight, including the shimmer of pearls, and other jewels. To add to this overwhelming display of painterly facility, the angle of the mirror is bizarrely turned, heightening the obvious challenge of rendering the reflection in a believable fashion. Girodet also portrayed an equally famous version of a woman gazing in a mirror in another work called *Mademoiselle Lange as Danaë* (1799), but which was actually a portrait that captured Mademoiselle Anne-Françoise Elisabeth Lange (1772-1816) in the guise of this mythological character.[210] The portrait aspect of the painting does not, however, detract from the enticing composition, which presents the young woman clutching a hand-held mirror, admiring her own *beau idéal* proportions and visage. In this case, the oval shaped composition and gold frame echoes the gold-framed mirror that the figure clutches in the painting, reminding us once again that the pictorial surface is a mirror, just as it was for Narcissus. Further, the novel representation of Danaë holding a mirror also connects her to the Narcissus tradition, especially since Lange was a beautiful actress of questionable morality, and who therefore could convincingly be cast as a mirror-loving and vain woman.[211]

Of course a discussion of Girodet's handling of light would not be complete without mentioning his depictions of Ossian legends for Napoleon, such as *The*

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[210] Sylvain Bellenger, "Painting as Vengeance," Girodet 1767-1824, exh. cat. (Paris: Éditions Gallimard, Musée du Louvre Éditions, 2006): 272-81. The excerpt deals with the scandal that the painting caused at the Salon, and the identity of Mademoiselle Lange, who was a notorious woman who entertained multiple suitors in French society, some of whom were symbolically, and unflatteringly, represented in the second version of the portrait, which was renamed with the mythological context. After Mlle Lange publicly insulted the original, Girodet removed the painting from the Salon, replacing it with the second vengeful version. See also George Levitine, "Girodet's New Danaë," Minneapolis Arts Bulletin (1969): 69-77. For more on Danaë as an archetype of the sensual woman see Madlyn Millner Kahr, "Danaë: Virtuous, Voluptuous, Venal Woman," The Art Bulletin 60:1 (Mar., 1978): 43-55. Anne-Louis Girodet-Trioson, *Portrait of Mademoiselle. Lange as Danaë*, 1799, oil on canvas, 60.33 x 48.58 cm, Minneapolis Institute of Arts, Minneapolis, U.S.A.

[211] Bellenger, "Painting as Vengeance" 276-7. In her analysis of Girodet's paintings of Danaë, Wettlaufer concludes that these paintings represent part of Girodet's fear of the sexually threatening woman, and view of the woman as an icon of the commercialism of art as prostitute (Pen vs. Paintbrush 71-7). Unfortunately there is no evidence to support this claim, even if the theory might be considered for these two paintings, and the author relies heavily on her own speculative psychological analysis of Girodet's state of mind regarding Lange, women, and the public at large, in order to come to her conclusions.

Apotheosis of French Heroes (1801).[212] The most distracting, yet unifying, feature of the Ossian scenes is the treatment of light, which evokes a mystifying supernatural aura that perfectly suggests a fantasy otherworld, where the French heroes are embraced in an unimaginably exquisite and shimmering afterlife. The growing independence of Girodet's style is readily observed in his increasing unwillingness to reduce his gods and goddesses to merely idealised men and women. In his mature career, Girodet's heroes are represented as supernatural and ephemeral beings. They occupy realms unknown to the common man, such that confronting them makes one feel as if he or she is the company of the gods.

Another example titled *The Ghost of Hector Appearing to Aeneas* (before 1825), (treated in several drawings and sketches), exemplifies how the artist manipulated the most peculiar and imaginative luminary effects to formulate a genuinely preternatural scene.[213] Hector is positioned in a radical, quintessentially Romantic diagonal, and swoops in upon the interior space, in which Aeneas lies in his bed, to the point that Hector's hair rises upwards in an almost entirely vertical direction. His feet do not touch the ground, and his body levitates in mid-air. Sketches of the subject reveal a blurry treatment of the spiritual entity, heightening both its otherworldliness and ease of movement, as it is finally unencumbered by its mortal coil. In the monotone version, white highlights intensify the powerfully eerie vision, such that almost all of the objects in the room have a ghostly quality. The oil sketch is no less dramatic, as Girodet substituted the moonlit background for a fiery cityscape, which bleeds into Aeneas's bedchamber through the highlights in Hector's ethereal figure.[214] While the subject is a ghostly apparition in a dream, which warrants such a treatment, no other artist could have shown more ingenuity in capturing the supernatural, and the manipulation of bodies in light.

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[212] Anne-Louis, Girodet-Trioson, *The Apotheosis of French Heroes who Died for their Country during the War of Liberty* (*L'Apothéose des héros français morts pour la patrie pendant la guerre de la Liberté),* 1802, oil on canvas, 1.0 x 1.0m, Musée national du château du Malmaison, France.
[213] Anne-Louis Girodet-Trioson, *The Ghost of Hector Appearing to Aeneas (The Dream of Aeneas)*, ca. early 1800s, brown and gray wash heightened with white, 23.9 x 32.1 cm, Musée du Louvre, Paris, France.
[214] Anne-Louis Girodet-Trioson, *The Ghost of Hector Appearing to Aeneas (The Dream of Aeneas)*, sketch, ca. early 1800s, oil on canvas, 29 x 34 cm, Musée Girodet, Montargis, France.

The supernatural quality of Girodet's experiments with light remains the most compelling in his image of Diana as light. In 1793, Girodet exhibited his *académie peinte*: *The Sleep of Endymion* at the French Salon.[215] Like Drouais, Girodet was out to make a splash. For Wettlaufer, *Endymion* illustrates Girodet's attempt, even this early in his career, to declare his competitive and rebellious agenda.[216] The work embodies concerns that would engross the artist throughout his life, such as the desire to assert painting's superiority over poetry, to appropriate poetic attributes, to demonstrate a familiarity with the *paragone*, and even further, to put together an art form greater than either painting or poetry alone: in other words, the *Gesamtkunstwerk*.[217] Since the work arrived late to the Salon, it was not included in the Salon *livret*, thereby contributing to the confusing situation that continues to this day regarding the painting's title. The aforementioned title is the one most often cited today, but a variety of alternative titles circulated in the critiques and publications that documented the work after its initial exhibition. For instance, it was also referred to during Girodet's lifetime as *Diane et Endymion* and *Sommeil d'Endymion*. It is possible that this former title, including the reference to the figurally absent Diana in the painting, better highlighted its clever inclusion of the goddess, and would have made the theme more readily identifiable. Indeed, my analysis will depart from some of the most recent efforts to analyse the work, including those of Solomon-Godeau and Wettlaufer, in that I interpret the work based on the assumption that Diana is present, and not absent, in the painting, (which I will discuss shortly).

In *Endymion*, light is itself the icon of both the supernatural apparition, and the artist's accomplishment in painting. According to one version of the ancient Greek legend, (the myth varies), Selene (Diana), the goddess of the moon, petitioned Zeus, who

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[215] Anne-Louis Girodet-Trioson, *The Sleep of Endymion*, 1791, oil on canvas, 77 15/16 x 102 3/4 in. (198 x 261 cm), Musée du Louvre, Paris, France.

[216] Wettlaufer, Pen vs. Paintbrush 39. The author points out that Girodet's rebelliousness mirrored that of David, as the former had even petitioned the academy to devise his own curriculum, and categorically rejected the academy's efforts to impose its teachings. See also Whitney Davis, "The Renunciation of Reaction in Girodet's Sleep of Endymion," Visual Culture: Images and Interpretations, eds. Norman Bryson, Michael Ann Holly, and Keith Moxey (Hanover and London: Wesleyan University Press, 1994): 168-201. Davis provides alternative explanations of Endymion's sexuality, as well as the issue of temporality in Girodet's version, than those presented here, although I share many of his concerns.

[217] Wettlaufer, "Girodet" 405-6. For the manipulation of Endymion's myth to reflect beliefs about artistic genius see James H. Rubin, "Endymion's Dream as Myth of Romantic Inspiration," Art Quarterly (Spring 1978): 47-84.

was possibly Endymion's father, to place him in an eternal ageless sleep. Having fallen in love with him, Selene could then visit him nightly to gaze upon his exquisiteness, which resulted in Endymion fathering fifty daughters with the goddess.[218]

In order to meet the requirements of the *académie peinte*, Girodet limited his composition to one main figure, and one subsidiary figure.[219] Girodet's manipulation of the required piece was addressed by De Quincy in his eulogy: "M. Girodet sut, d'un morceau d'étude, faire un tableau d'histoire, et d'un essai de jeune homme, un ouvrage de maître. Déjà pénétré des beautés du style poètique et des formes idéales de l'antique, il n'avoit pas moins étudié, chez les maîtres de l'harmonie et du clair-obscur, une autre partie de la poètique du peintre."[220]

Upon viewing the work, Girodet's contemporaries readily understood that he was using a run-of-the-mill educational requirement to outstrip his predecessors. P.A. Coupin, who compiled Girodet's writings for posthumous publication, explained that this challenge was part of Girodet's intention: "[E]t les professeurs de l'ancène académie auxquels les productions de David avaient déjà montré quelle était la route qu'il fallait suivre pour arriver au beau, demeurent stupéfaits en voyant dans le premier ouvrage d'un jeune homme ce qu'un sentiment vif de la belle antiquité et la poésie des arts peuvent produire de plus enchanteux."[221] Given the ironically paramount importance of Diana in this painting, is it also possible that Girodet was bestowing upon himself the title of the new Apelles? Apelles, in fact, became a popular figure in the early nineteenth century, when the relationship between Alexander as patron, and Apelles as artist, was revived to mirror that between Napoleon and his artists.[222] Was he the new master of Diana, as the ancient artist had been? In making Diana such an ingenious 'figure' in his work, was he

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[218] For ancient sources on Endymion see Pausanias, Pliny, Apollodorus, Apollonius Rhodius, Virgil, Ovid, Hesiod, Hyginus, and others.
[219] De Quincy, "Éloge historique" 314.
[220] De Quincy, "Éloge historique" 314. My translation: "M. Girodet, in a study piece, created a history painting, an essay of the young man, and a masterpiece. Already infused with the beauties of the poetic style and the ideal forms of the antique, he nevertheless studied, according to the masters of harmony and clarity, another aspect of the poetic nature of painting."
[221] Coupin, Notice nécrologique 4. This source was also consulted at the Getty Research Centre in Los Angeles. My translation: "And the professors of the old academy, where David's works had already shown the direction to follow in order to arrive at the ideal, were stupefied to see the first work of a young man capture the living feeling of beautiful antiquity and poetry in art of the most enchanting kind."
[222] Wettlaufer, Pen vs. Paintbrush 93. For more on Girodet's interest in Apelles and his poetry, as well as a discussion of Girodet's own poetry, see pages 91-3.

demonstrating that he, in a new post-Neoclassical manner of painting, had initiated a new beginning for the art of painting?

The body of Endymion takes up the entire horizontal breadth of the composition, while Cupid bends lush foliage away from him, in order to grant the goddess an unimpeded view of her beloved. Diana, then, is shown only as rays of light, even though earlier representations depicted her in anthropomorphic form, such as in Pierre Subleyras's (1699-1749), *Diana and Endymion*, (1740).[223] Subleyras shows the conventional approach, where Endymion reclines in his sleep under the loving gaze of an idealised Diana. Perhaps only observable firsthand, Girodet's painting casts a gentle and seemingly three-dimensional light, creating a haunting apparition over Endymion's body. Not only do the moonlit misty vapours form a distinguishable crescent moon above Endymion's body, but also, these same vapours appear to be shaped like arms, literally caressing the parallel-shaped curvature of his torso. This inspired composition recalls Correggio's (1489-1534) *Jupiter and Io* (1531-2), where the artist similarly manipulated the physicality of the clouds that Jupiter inhabits, as he ephemerally wraps around his corporeal lover.[224] Girodet's manifestation of Diana in this fashion, which relied upon the most transitory qualities of light and mist, results in one of the most mystical representations of a divine figure in painting's history. While Diana is iconographically illustrated by the moonlight, as viewers would expect, it is nevertheless surprising to discover that her crescent moon and supernatural presence are literally right in front of your eyes. The light itself would have little impact, without the narrative and intellectual elements that it exposes. Indeed, the work's appeal did seem to hinge on recognition of these very features, as we are told in a biography of Girodet in 1822: "[S]on premier tableau a fixé sa réputation, c'est celui de *Diane et Endymion*. Rien de plus ingénieux, rien de plus suave que cette composition, où l'on voit le jeune chasseur carressé pendant son sommeil par les rayon de Diane, qui se glissent à travers le feuillage écarté par

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[223] Pierre Subleyras, *Diana and Endymion*, 1740, oil on canvas, 73.5 x 99cm, National Gallery, London, England.

[224] Anton Raphael Mengs (1728-79) mentioned Correggio, naming him as an example of the ideal in painting for eighteenth-century artists. Although a German Neoclassicist, his ideas would have trickled into France through his close working relationship with Winckelmann, who was the favourite theorist of the French Neoclassicists. Potts, "Greek Sculpture" 150-73. Antonio Allegri Correggio, *Jupiter and Io*, ca. 1532, oil on canvas, 64 x 28," Kunsthistorisches Museum, Vienna, Austria.

l'Amour."[225] According to this reviewer, Diana is not missing; she is right in front of your eyes.

Nevertheless, the exclusion of the traditional corporeal female figure from Girodet's version has been interpreted by Solomon-Godeau as a deliberate effort to remove the female figure from the rhetoric of Neoclassical figural depictions, such that the author subsequently interprets Diana's presence as absence.[226] Wettlaufer similarly concludes that Diana is absent from the painting, and therefore that Girodet is deliberately eliminating the feminine, and refusing to illustrate a desirous female gaze. This results in her homoerotic reading of the work, and the assumption that Girodet is consciously excising the female nude from the painting, in response to his homoerotic yearnings, personal fear of women, and the negative view of women that had been cultivated in the arts and culture of eighteenth-century France. Wettlaufer supposes that Diana's representation was closely tied to the *ancien régime*, and therefore to unnatural domineering women, who were so reviled at this time.[227]

The first problem with this interpretation is that this is the only work by Girodet in which the female figure is 'removed' in this way, and therefore it should not serve as the central example of his view of women as a whole, or more sweepingly of French Revolutionary society at large, given that he painted women as often as men in the rest of his works. Secondly, I contend that Diana's presence as light does not exclude her from the painting, but offers an ingenious alternative to her typically more corporeal, and even less divine, form. It is also difficult to reconcile the contention that the erasure of Diana 'denies' the female gaze, in favour of a male one, when the entire subject matter of the scene is about making Endymion available for the surprisingly present Diana, and her

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[225] A.V. Arnault, A. Jay, E. Jouy, and J. Norvins, Biographie nouvelle des contemporains, ou dictionnaire historique et raisonné de tous les hommes qui, depuis la révolution française, ont acquis de la celebrité... (Paris: L'Imprimerie de Plassan, 1822): 170-1. The authors also compared Girodet to Michelangelo, due to his similar ability to produce in both the spheres of poetry and the visual arts (172). My translation: "His first painting secured his reputation, which was the *Diana and Endymion*. Nothing was more ingenious, more sweet than this composition, where we see the young hunter caressed during his sleep by the rays of Diana, who glides through the foliage parted by Eros/Cupid."

[226] Solomon-Godeau, Male Trouble 65-91.

[227] Wettlaufer, Pen vs. Paintbrush 45, 49. Wettlaufer's argument, which draws considerably from that of Solomon-Godeau, even goes so far as to posit that Girodet excludes the feminine to the point of making Endymion pregnant (57). Her theory relies, in part, on the idea that Diana, as an icon of the *ancien régime,* was somehow more prevalent in the eighteenth century. However, she does not acknowledge Diana's preeminence in art historical tradition since antiquity, and especially following the Renaissance.

gaze. Wettlaufer herself quotes a passage from Girodet's own writings that supports this view. Speaking of his *Endymion*, he refers to Diana, (necessitating that we understand her to be present), and says that the moonlight is "where all the heat of passion resides."[228] If the moonlight is the heat of passion, and Diana is moonbeam, then it is Diana's heterosexual passion that is being foregrounded, therefore problematising an interpretation of the work as a declaration of homoerotic desire.

There are, in fact, other reasons for the substitution of Diana's body with light. In addition to instilling in his required assignment both narrative and poetic interest, Girodet's use of light foregrounded his exceptional and unique abilities at portraying its effects in a nocturnal setting. The moonlight is integral to creating a dramatically extensive range of dark to light. As I have mentioned, the mastery of *chiaroscuro,* (or treatment of light and shade), was then judged to be one of painting's most essential illusionistic devices.[229] According to Diderot, a sublime effect could be created through contrast, but only in very exceptional cases.[230] The degree of contrast between brilliant and darkly mysterious passages in *Endymion*, which relies upon such a sophisticated production of *chiaroscuro,* aspires to sublimity. C*hiaroscuro* was also used to create pictorial unity, which had become the central concern of both critics and painters in the reactionary movement against the Rococo style, given that anti-Rococo critics chastised the lack of sophisticated *chiaroscuro* in this earlier style.[231]

In addition to experiencing the sublime through light, *Endymion's* viewers were meant to vicariously experience this effect through contemplating Endymion's ecstatic dream state. The premise of the work is to reveal the iconic, the revelatory, and the magical. The viewer witnesses one of those legendary and elusive moments when the gods bless mortals with their magnificent presence. This apparition is experienced through the recognition that Diana is in the light itself. Furthermore, Girodet's contemporaries, including Desmarais, testified to the belief that the contemplation of such aesthetic beauty, as exemplified in the light and *beau idéal* elements of the painting, were capable of leading to the viewer's sublime union with the divine, as he or she is

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[228] Cited in Wettlaufer, Pen vs. Paintbrush 58.
[229] Wettlaufer, "Girodet" 406.
[230] Diderot, Notes on Painting 223.
[231] Fried, "Toward a Supreme Fiction" 560-61.

spiritually transported out of the earthly realm, into the company of the gods. The author divulged, in the following explanation, how this Neoplatonic-resembling objective could be realised through contemplation of the *beau idéal*: "Car dans ces espèces d'émotions, dont nous ne pouvons pas déterminer le caractère, notre âme tend vers l'infini. Elle s'agrandit donc au sein de cette extase. Or, chaque fois que notre âme s'étend, elle monte vers le ciel: elle aborde la frontière de l'empire idéal, et sort de la sphère étroite des pensées terrestres."[232] The revival of Neoplatonism throughout the nineteenth century was an effective tool in convincing others of the artist's importance in society. In Neoplatonic thought, absorption in aesthetic beauty leads to union with the divine, because the viewer's reverie allows his or her spirit to escape the harsh realities of the earthly realm, and be elevated into the presence of the creator of that realm. Neoplatonism, therefore, grants the maker of such earthly beauty a central role in preserving the spiritual well-being of modern viewers.[233] Indeed, Girodet's works are veritable recipes for such Neoplatonic distraction. Perhaps it was to ensure this result that Girodet was so concerned with the painting's luminescent quality; he even tried to intensify its sheen by blending olive oil into his paint.[234]

So, as we have seen, Girodet made a name for himself in representing light, the supernatural, and the sublime. But were these ephemeral effects typically believed to lie within the province of painting? Diana's immateriality, and Girodet's other supernatural figures or depictions, defied Lessing's position that painters should not represent supernatural, invisible forces, which he contended should be incorporated exclusively in poetic expression. Lessing's position on this was clear:

> Size, strength, and swiftness--qualities which Homer always has in store for his gods in a higher more extraordinary degree than that bestowed on his finest heroes--must in the painting sink to the common level of humanity...For that reason it has always been a source of surprise to me to see this poetic expression actually used and a real cloud introduced in the painting, behind which the hero

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[232] Desmarais, Du Beau idéal 41. My translation: "Because with these kinds of emotions, of which we cannot determine the character, our soul strains towards the infinite. It expands within this ecstasy. Now, each time that our soul stretches, it is lifted towards the heavens: it approaches the frontier of the empire of the ideal, and escapes the narrow sphere of earthly thoughts/concerns."
[233] For an examination of Neoplatonic revival in the nineteenth century see Sherry L. Ackerman, Behind the Looking Glass (New Castle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2008).
[234] Wettlaufer, "Girodet" 402.

> stands hidden from his enemy as behind a screen. This was not what the poet intended. It exceeds the limits of painting, for in this case the cloud is a true hieroglyphic, a mere symbol, which does not render the rescuer invisible, but says to the spectators: you must imagine for yourselves that he is invisible. It is no better than the scrolls that issue from the mouths of figures in old Gothic paintings.[235]

Moreover, Lessing asserted that painting's iconic potential should be controlled, and once again that painting could not be sublime. As well, Girodet challenged one of the most basic tenets of limit imposing artistic theories--this was the allegation that painting was merely capable of representing a split-second moment of a narrative's temporal unfolding.[236] Dubos supported this notion as well:

> Je réponds en second lieu qu'une Tragédie renferme une infinité de Tableaux. Le Peintre qui fait un Tableau du sacrifice d'Iphigenie ne nous réprésente sur la toille qu'un instant de l'action. La Tragedie de Racine met sous nos yeux plusieurs instans de cette action, & ces differens incidens se rendent reciproquement les uns les autres plus pathetiques. Le Poëte nous presente successivement pour ainsi dire cinquante Tableaux qui nous conduisent comme par dégrez à cette émotion extrême, laquelle fait couler nos larmes. Cinquante Scénes qui font dans une Tragedie doivent donc nous toucher plus qu'une seule Scéne peinte dans un Tableau ne sçauroit faire. Un Tableau ne représente même qu'un instant d'une Scéne. Ainsi un Poëme entier nous émut plus qu'un Tableau, bien qu'un Tableau nous émeuve plus qu'une Scéne qui representeroit le même évènement, si cette Scéne étoit détachée des autres, & si elle étoit luë sans que nous eussions rien vû de ce qui l'a précédé.[237]

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[235] Lessing, Laocoön 68-69.

[236] Lessing, Laocoön 23. Wettlaufer also discusses Girodet's probable familiarity with Lessing's time versus space distinction, and the importance of the latter's poetry versus painting divide, however she fails to include the beauty versus the sublime component of Lessing's system, which was also surely a central concern for the artist and his contemporaries. Pen vs. Paintbrush 86.

[237] Sur la peinture 384-5. My translation:

> I respond in the second case that a tragedy contains endless paintings. The painter who creates a painting of the sacrifice of Iphiginia represents but one moment of the action. The tragedy of Racine puts before our eyes many moments of this action, and these different incidents reciprocate with the others to render them more moving. The poet, in other words, presents us with fifty paintings successively, which guide us by degrees towards the most extreme emotion, which will make the tears flow. Fifty scenes that make up a tragedy must therefore touch on more than the single scene that a painting must represent. A painting represents but one moment of the scene. In this way, an entire poem moves us more than a scene that will represent the same event, if that scene could be separated from the others, and if it was read without having seen what preceded it.

Diderot agreed with Lessing and Dubos on these matters. In his directions on the limits of painting to be respected by painters, Diderot claimed that a scene should evoke but a single instant, and there were to be no puzzling or enigmatic elements of its depiction. Notes on Painting 220-221.

In *Endymion*, Girodet chose to depict an eternal sleep, or an ambiguous, never-ending moment of the story, such that he trespassed into poetry's temporal territory, refusing to limit the scene to a specific instant. This could, in fact, be any night, in an infinite number of nights when Diana reunited with her love.

Of course the story of Endymion offered Girodet the opportunity to capture a superlative example of the *beau idéal,* since Endymion must have been extraordinarily beautiful to have become the goddess's obsessive object of desire. The importance of this issue has recently been overshadowed in scholarship by those concerned with the figure's effeminacy. Although some scholars have tried to suggest that Girodet's relatively softer and more diffused approach to his subjects, and the androgyny of his figures, are evidence of the artist's supposed homosexuality, it is important to acknowledge that the perception of beauty, masculinity, and femininity changes over time, and what modern viewers may describe as being feminine, may actually not have been considered as such by people of other eras. Using the same line of reasoning for Endymion, coupled with the assumption that Diana is not present in the painting, some scholars have concluded the Endymion is also gay.[238] The words of Girodet's

[238] The most logical comment that I can make about the enforcement of a connection in art historical scholarship between androgyny or effeminisation and homosexuality, is that throughout history there have been many eras where a stereotypically more 'feminine' male appearance has been fashionable. Because these discussions often accompany examinations of both Girodet and his Endymion, I will address this issue here.

To use a popular cultural reference as a point of comparison, 'hair band' rockers of the 1980s, with their wild manes of hair and lavish make-up, the 'gilt' appearance of eighteenth-century aristocrats, or the idealised youthful male figures of the Renaissance, all offer prime examples of moments in history when western culture has preferred this less masculine type of masculinity, either for fashionable or cultural reasons. There is no logical conclusion, therefore, that these were eras when there were suddenly more gay members of society, or amongst artists as a group. It would be more reasonable to say that at times gay artists, patrons, or viewers may have had a fluctuating impact on popular culture, and that these fluctuations may have predisposed viewers and artists to prefer a figural appearance that might also have had homoerotic appeal. Still, amongst contemporary viewers, and even scholars, the fashion for changing feminine and masculine qualities in the past is often misinterpreted as evidence of the artist's sexuality, or of society's at large. Such interpretations often leave little room, either, for the fact that relationships between men and women have changed over time, and the ways that individuals express themselves to each other in such relationships changes accordingly.

Additionally, the presumption that a gay artist is somehow more prone to be consumed with his or her sexuality, and to therefore express it in his or her art, is of decreasing relevance the farther back you look in history, since patronage prior to the nineteenth century generally prohibited the expression of such personal interests in art. Moreover, it is prejudicial towards the gay artist to somehow assume that he or she is nothing more than his or her sexuality, and that therefore all of his or her works should be interpreted in the context of the artist's sexuality. This is not the tactic that is taken with heterosexual artists, whom

contemporaries fail to support this interpretation. For example, De Salm wrote an epic poem upon Girodet's death, which specifically praised the artist's masculine vigour, which reads: "S'il succombe, on conçoit ses superbes travaux;/ On est frappé de sa mâle énergie./"[239] It must also be remembered that even though there was a proliferation of ideal male nude depictions in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, it is not necessarily the case that within a particular artist's œuvre this same trend will be discovered. In Girodet's case, he treated both men and women in highly sensual and idealised ways, and typically both were equally eroticised. It would seem that the overall principle to his approach to the human body was not to focus on one or the other gender, but to portray each figure with the ultimate care for what would have then been considered ideal aesthetic beauty, and most importantly, beauty that is unattainable in real life, since neither his female nor his male figures approach nature's reality. Furthermore, students of the French academy had been indoctrinated into the belief that the ideal nude

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scholars usually do not reduce in character or motivation to mere sexual preference. Further, it is irrational to suppose that just because an artist represents the figure of the same sex in an attractive, or even erotic context, that the artist is necessarily expressing his or her own sexual preference. Are we to assume that every male artist who depicts an idealised male nude is creating a homoerotic image?

In sum, in the absence of documentary evidence, scholars working on deceased artists should be sensitive to the limits of a biographical methodology. For those seeking biographical information in this case, it was noted by Girodet's colleagues that he had explained to them that he never married, because he could not have been a good husband, given that he worked too long hours, and was too devoted to his art to support a family. While this is scant evidence, since it derives from comments of those in Girodet's circle, who may have had their own motives for presenting Girodet in a certain light, in the absence of any other data on this issue, it should be considered as part of a biographical consideration of the artist's choices. It should also be noted that it was increasingly popular throughout the nineteenth century for artists to remain unmarried, since married life was believed to provide too many logistical problems for a serious artist, which is discussed by De Quincy in his "Éloge historique." Moreover, this trend was linked to the increasingly Romantic view of the artist as a priestly figure in society, thereby making the 'monastic,' or at least single, life commonplace for artists at this time.

For her part, Wettlaufer reads the Endymion as homoerotic, based on two additional points, which are that it includes the male *putto* figure, and is supposedly intended for male viewers (Pen vs. Paintbrush 44). Aside from the fact that women made up a good contingent of all Salon audiences, the *putto* alone does not provide enough evidence for such a reading. The male *putto* was a commonplace in impending love scenes between heterosexual couples, and as Diana is present, he is a harbinger of her erotic union with Endymion, even if she is the form of light instead of corporeal. Wettlaufer also fails to explain why this painting necessarily indicates Girodet's supposed homosexuality, when later she discusses his heterosexual desire for his female nudes, and personal relationships with women. As such, Wettlaufer's compositional analysis of the *Endymion* relies on unsubstantiated, and often contradictory, compositional analysis.

[239] De Salm, Sur Girodet 4. My translation: "If we succumb to our conception of these superb works;/ we are struck by its male energy." It must be acknowledged, however, that as a supporter of Girodet offering a public statement to honour him in death, De Salm's honesty may be questioned. The issue of Girodet's sexuality is discussed in Solomon-Godeau, Male Trouble 70-1. Here the author concludes that although Girodet was known to have a relationship with a woman named Julie Simons-Candeille, she finds that there is not enough evidence to determine Girodet's, and therefore Endymion's, sexuality resolutely.

was necessarily divested of all prurient possibilities, by virtue of its nearly sacred role in the production of morally instructive images.[240] Endymion's androgyny testifies to the fact that Girodet was not purely imitating the model; he was creating the *beau idéal*--a figure that could not possibly exist, but nevertheless appears before the viewer like a magical vision, owing to the painter's genius.

When evaluated in the context of the debate over the artist's dependence on the model versus genius, which was a central issue in academic theory from the seventeenth through nineteenth centuries, the purpose of the *beau idéal* becomes quite apparent. A truly gifted artist was supposed to be able to study from nature, or in other words real living models; however, the use of the model in the artwork was not supposed to be obvious. According to the logic of the academicians, and their predecessor, the Italian Baroque theorist named Gian Pietro Bellori (1613-96), if an artist duplicated a model's exact likeness, the representation would constitute evidence of the artist's lack of genius and creativity. By contrast, a gifted artist was expected to be able to improve upon nature, and to refine the model's natural attributes, such that the end result would resemble neither a real person, nor an average specimen of humanity.[241] If viewed as a tool in this objective, the effeminate male *beau idéal* may be interpreted as an emblem of the artist's genius, because this type of figure was an aberration of nature, and at the same time a sublime manifestation of the beauties of both sexes in one form, possibly even reflecting the masculine and feminine properties of God himself. The following quote from Desmarais's treatise on the *beau idéal* substantiates the fact that it was theoretically linked to God's creation of man in his image: "L'homme cherche vainement autour de lui et dans le spectacle de la vie réelle le modèle qu'il poursuit: ce n'est que dans le sentiment souvent vague et confus, mais toujours indestructible du beau idéal, qu'il en aperçoit la céleste image."[242] Another important point, regarding Girodet's work, is that even though he was known for mastering the *beau idéal* in both male and female figures, over time, history has remembered him for his most famous first masterpiece, the

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[240] Solomon-Godeau, Male Trouble 194.
[241] Bellori and his description of copying from nature, which he recorded in his Lives on the Modern Painters, Sculptors and Architects (1672), is included in the upcoming chapter.
[242] Desmarais, Du Beau idéal 82. My translation: "Man searches in vain around himself and in the spectacle of real life the model that he should pursue: it is only in the vague and confused feeling, but always of the indestructible *beau idéal*, that he can perceive this celestial image."

Endymion, making it seem as though he was only concerned with the male nude. Girodet's main concern would have been to know if his viewers had judged this work a success, because then he likely would have believed that his viewers had been forced to accept that the art of painting, whose sensorial illusions can make visible perfection and the sublime, reigned in the hierarchy of the arts.

Girodet as a 'Poet in Painting'

Girodet's own work as a poet, and his intense study of the relationship between the two arts, even made him the subject of an article written by Alexandre Levain in 1860, called "Girodet considéré comme écrivain." In this article, Levain claimed that Girodet's desire to master the poetic nurtured an extraordinary obsession with the *ut pictura poesis* tradition begun by Horace.[243] It was likely for this reason that he often took on monumental projects devoted to illustrating epic poems, such as the legends of Sappho and the Aeneid, even, in some cases, serving as the translator for some of these renowned literary works.[244] With respect to his paintings, Girodet revealed that he believed himself to have accomplished a superior poetic version of the Endymion myth, while he celebrated having earned the coveted nick-name of *'peintre-poète'* amongst his peers.[245] The title, 'Poet in Painting,' was one that critics and theorists frequently cited to compliment the most accomplished history painters; ultimately, its use reveals that the poet continued to be privileged over the painter, (poets were not typically referred to as

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[243] Alexandre Levain, "Girodet considéré comme écrivain," Bulletin de la Société d'émulation 12 (1860): 15. Another scholar to consider Girodet's motivation for mastering the poetic in painting is Wettlaufer. While Wettlaufer touches on Lessing and the masculinisation of painting in this context, by referencing the idea of injecting poetic masculinity into the *Pygmalion*, for example, her focus is more on the psychological biographical approach to artists such as Girodet (Pen vs. Paintbrush 50, 125). She also identifies beauty as being an inherently masculine attribute for artists at this time, which is not supported in aesthetic theory, such as that of Lessing (Pen vs. Paintbrush 54). However, her approach does acknowledge that Girodet was devising artistic methods to push the limits of painting. For instance, she delves into the issue of Girodet's efforts to implement the poetic in painting, even if she fails to acknowledge that the poetic was a central component of the history painting tradition since the Renaissance (Pen vs. Paintbrush 83).

[244] Girodet illustrated and translated for the project Sappho, Bion, Moschos. Recueil de compositions, dessinées par Girodet, et gravées par M. Chatillon, son élève; avec la traduction en vers, par Girodet, de quelques-unes des poesies de Sappho et de Moschos; et une notice sur la vie et les œuvres de Sappho, par M. P.A. Coupin (Paris: A. Firmin Didot, M DCCC XXIX).

[245] Wettlaufer, "Girodet" 405, and f.n. 17, 410. Refer to this source for a fuller explanation of Girodet's own references to himself as a poet in painting.

‘Painters in Poetry’). Significantly, artists concerned with their prestige, and painting's status in the hierarchy of the arts, seemed to revel in being given this title in critical writings and reviews. This corroborates the circumstance that painters continued to have to prove themselves equal to, if not greater than, the poet. In the case of *Endymion*, the unprecedented depiction of Diana as moonbeam introduced viewers to the young Girodet’s clever genius, as he managed to eloquently communicate a visual metaphor in the manner of a poetic one.

The painting may have also intentionally attempted to rival and surpass Winckelmann's celebrated ekphrasis of the Greek *Apollo Belvedere* (ca. fourth century BCE), as his specific description of this work, which Winckelmann viewed as the ultimate achievement in visual art, corresponds remarkably to Girodet's depiction of Endymion.[246] Like Endymion, Apollo is a lone nude male figure in the blush of youth, exhibiting similar feminine and idealised qualities. In the nineteenth century, the *Apollo Belvedere* helped to rekindle the appeal of classicism, due to its importation into France by Napoleon in 1797. Since Girodet had been in Rome from 1789 to 1793, when the statue was still in the Cortile del Belvedere, he would have had every opportunity to know about the work, even before it was exported to France.[247] A print of Napoleon showing off the sculpture was even produced at the time.[248] The sculpture was brought home as a new treasure for the French people. A sense of rivalry with Winckelmann would have been natural amongst many artists of Girodet’s day, given the theorist’s contention that the greatest art had already been achieved by the sculptors of ancient Greece. His master David had become interested in Winckelmann’s writings through De Quincy, and naturally would have passed this fascination along to his students. While Endymion's spectacular androgyny has continued to perplex scholars, Wettlaufer's justification of it as a visual representation of Winckelmann's description of the *Apollo* is

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[246] Original in bronze by Leochares, *Apollo Belvedere*, original Greek from ca. 350-25 BCE, marble (original in bronze), Vatican Museums, Vatican City, Italy.
[247] Bruno Chenique, “Biography,” Girodet: 1767-1824, exh. cat. (Paris: Éditions Musée du Louvre, 2006): CDROM.
[248] Darcy Grimaldo Grigsby, Extremities: Painting Empire in Post-Revolutionary France (Yale University Press, 2002): 73-4. The anonymous engraving reproduced herein is now held at the Bibliothèque Nationale, Cabinet des Estampes, Paris. It is titled “Eh bien messieurs!—deux millions!” (Well then sirs!—Two million!).

convincing.[249] Girodet's diffused, but dramatic, light perfectly delineates the youthful, woman-like, supple, soft, and somnambulist state that Winckelmann evoked in his poetic account of *Apollo*. If inspired by Winckelmann, Girodet was attempting to create an original work that could surpass the writings of one of the most influential authors on antique art. Since Winckelmann's ekphrasis was itself based on a famous sculpture from antiquity, which was widely copied by virtually every artist since the Renaissance, Girodet produced a vision, in his own painting, that was meant to eclipse a powerful icon of the perfect male form, which would have been well-known to his colleagues and the public.

This appropriation of the *Apollo* and its famous ekphrasis also constituted a challenge to antiquity, which Girodet's classically trained colleagues would not have failed to recognise. The degree of difference between the typical linear and grey-toned severity of the Neoclassical style, and Girodet's luminescent otherworldly style, aided Girodet in portraying Endymion in accordance with Winckelmann's description of a dreamy apparition. One final comment must be made, which is that the Apollo and Girodet's Endymion both share the features that were integral to Ovid's description of Narcissus. Each work captures the ideal in marble, or marble-like splendour, and the elegance of the youthful male on the cusp of maturity.

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[249] Wettlaufer, "Girodet" 403. Wettlaufer quotes Winckelmann's ekphrasis of the *Apollo*, which reads:

> ...[A]lways with delicate, round limbs, and the full, expanded hips of the female sex...The forms of the limbs are soft and flowing...with scarcely any indication of the bones and cartilages of the knees, just as these joints are formed in youths of the most beautiful shape, and in eunuchs.....who, as if between sleeping and waking, half rapt in a dream of exquisite delight, is beginning to collect and verify the pictures of his fancy; his features are full of sweetness....

"Girodet" 403. For more discussion of androgyny as a political and cultural signifier in works by David and his followers see Solomon-Godeau, Male Trouble. For more on Winckelmann's impact on art history see Alex Potts, Flesh and the Ideal: Winckelmann and the Origins of Art History (London and New Haven: Yale University Press, 1994).

Conclusion

Thus far, we have seen that the human body, and its manipulation in the visual arts, had a profound impact on the paragone, and the role that perfecting the human body could have on the artist's status. The myth of Narcissus, in particular, has long been a metaphor for the materialisation of the visual arts in western culture. Just as Narcissus happened upon his image for the first time, artists over the centuries have likewise discovered the image's illusory and magical properties. Moreover, Narcissus, as the archetypal beauty, offered a perfect marriage between the dawn of the visual arts, and the birth of the *beau idéal*, since both would become, even if legendary in origin, the battleground for ambition in the arts. Although the treatment of the nude in this chapter addresses only a thimble-full of the punchbowl volume of issues that exist with regard to studying the nude in art history, we must move on, since Narcissus, or the *beau idéal*, was just one of the themes that artists exploited, in order to compete, and to empower themselves.

Chapter 3

Pygmalion and Galatea:

Invigorating the Icon of Divine Genius

The Emergence of the Female Nude and the Quest to Enliven Art

Aestheticism and the art-for-art's sake movements reached their heights towards the end of the nineteenth century, when a growing interest in a purely aesthetic sensual experience coincided with an increase in interest in the female nude, which had been mounting for decades, corresponding to the rise of the bourgeoisie.[1] One of the reasons for this correlation may be found in the ideologies of those who espoused these movements. In Théophile Gautier's (1811-72) preface to his novel Mademoiselle de Maupin (1835-6), he wrote that "Nothing is really beautiful unless it is useless; everything which is useful is ugly...pleasure seems to me the goal of life and the only worthwhile thing in the world. God has ordained it, He who created women, perfumes, light, beautiful flowers, good wines, frisky horses..."[2] Gautier intended to persuade his readers that the pursuit of pleasure is the only worthwhile pastime in life, and that aesthetic beauty is the greatest means to experience that pleasure. As an example of a useless and aesthetically captivating thing, he cited beautiful women. Despite the obvious and disturbing sexism of this remark, the theory of beauty is what concerns us here. Gautier, as an observer of the growing industries that had the potential to generate every manner of merchandise to beautify people's lives, reveals for us how plainly the female figure was equated with materialism, and equally how quickly it was matching the singular popularity that the male nude tradition had enjoyed in industrialised nations, such as England and France. By the mid-nineteenth century, just as everyday beauty was becoming available to the bourgeoisie, in the form of cheaply-made decorated objects, so too was the female figure solidifying itself as yet another object of prettiness to be purchased. Even if Gautier, in his pseudo-Kantian manner, professed that beauty must coincide with lack of utility, the principle that consumers should be surrounded by beauty in daily life became the crux of the art-for-art's sake and Aesthetic movements, both of which greatly contributed to the commercialisation and democratisation of beauty, as aesthetic features were soon applied to every object in the sphere of humankind.

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[1] Solomon-Godeau, Male Trouble 43.
[2] Quoted in Grieve, "Rossetti and the Scandal" 17.

Gautier's additional comment that "beauty...is visible Divinity," would also become a very popular idea in the latter half of the nineteenth century.[3] Many artists, such as Moreau, Burne-Jones, Rossetti, and others, would come to view themselves in an almost priestly way. That is to say that in lieu of an unfulfilling existence in an expanding secular world, the artist could position himself as the agent capable of satisfying the individual's need for the divine, by virtue of his ability to provide beauty in material form.

Even though this chapter marks a transition from the dominance of the male nude in the Neoclassical tradition to an increased emphasis on the female nude, this mounting interest by no means meant that the male nude became extinct.[4] Rather, the occurrences of both became more equal, with varying degrees of popularity throughout the nineteenth century. As we shall see in the final chapter, the female nude will remain firmly entrenched in the arts by the end of the nineteenth century. What is of interest, however, are the reasons for which the male and female nudes became less or more popular at various times, and how these fluctuations operated within the paragone tradition.

Ovid's Pygmalion

Perhaps the most effective subject to communicate the iconic potential of the female figure in the nineteenth century was the story of Pygmalion and Galatea, which is once again found in Ovid's Metamorphoses (Book X).[5] There are four notable examples of painters who undertook the subject in the nineteenth century; the first is Girodet; the second is Burne-Jones; the third is Gérôme; and the last is Watts. An examination of

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[3] Quoted in Grieve, "Rossetti and the Scandal" 17. Rossetti, who was Burne-Jones's role model, was supposedly of the same mind as Gautier, according to Swinburne, who claimed that Rossetti's art-for-art's sake interests were rooted in Gautier's principles (18).

[4] Hatt, "Physical Culture" 240. It is too often alleged that it was only the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries in which the male nude was popular, just as it is an exaggeration to say that female nudes were completely abandoned in this time period. For more on the social masculine ideal at this time see Martin Myrone, Bodybuilding: Reforming Masculinities in British Art, 1750-1810 (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2005).

[5] For an examination of Ovid's text as a literary work, and his treatments of Narcissus and Pygmalion see Philip Hardie, Ovid's Poetics of Illusion (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002). On Pygmalion especially, consult Bauer, "The Function of Pygmalion" 1-21. Consult Griffin, "Ovid's 'Metamorphoses'" pages 65-9 for an analysis of the Pygmalion theme in Ovid, as well as Bauer, "Function of Pygmalion" 13-21.

these artists, each demonstrating an unusual devotion to, or obsession with, the subject, will help us to grasp the central theoretical and practical challenges in representing this myth. But first, a glance at the literary source, read in this case through my eyes, as a scholar looking for what may have prompted visual artists to respond either negatively or positively to this myth, reveals the reasons for its popularity amongst visual artists.

> [W]ith marvelous artistry, he [Pygmalion] skillfully carved a snowy ivory statue. He made it lovelier than any woman born, and fell in love with his own creation. The statue had all the appearance of a real girl, so that it seemed to be alive, to want to move, did not modesty forbid. So cleverly did his art conceal its art. Pygmalion gazed in wonder, and in his heart there rose a passionate love for this image of a human form. Often he ran his hands over the work, feeling it to see whether it was flesh or ivory, and would not yet admit that ivory was all it was. He kissed the statue, and imagined that it kissed him back, spoke to it and embraced it, and thought he felt his fingers sink into the limbs he touched...He dressed the limbs of his statue in woman's robes, and put rings on its fingers, long necklaces round its neck...All this finery became the image well...Pygmalion then placed the statue on a couch...and called it his bedfellow.

Having prayed to Venus to fetch him a wife, who could be as splendid as the maiden that he had accomplished in marble, Ovid's story continues:

> When Pygmalion returned home, he made straight for the statue of the girl he loved, leaned over the couch, and kissed her. She seemed warm: he laid his lips on her again, and touched her breast with his hands--at his touch the ivory lost its hardness, and grew soft: his fingers made an imprint on the yielding surface...The lover stood, amazed, afraid of being mistaken, his joy tempered with doubt, and again and again stroked the object of his prayers. It was indeed a human body! The veins throbbed as he pressed them with his thumb. Then Pygmalion of Paphos was eloquent in his thanks to Venus. At long last, he pressed his lips upon living lips, and the girl felt the kisses he gave her, and blushed. Timidly raising her eyes, she saw her lover and the light of day together. The goddess Venus was present at the marriage she had arranged and, when the moon's horns had nine times been rounded into a full circle, Pygmalion's bride bore a child...[6]

[6] Ovid, Metamorphoses, Book X, 231-2. The ancient writer Apollodorus also narrated the story of Pygmalion; however it was decidedly Ovid's version that was more well-known in the nineteenth century. See also f.n. 91-3 from Chapter 2.

The commonalities between the poetic version of Narcissus and that of Pygmalion are rather effortless to identify, since Ovid reiterated so many of the elements from our first legend, regarding love and the image, in the Pygmalion myth. Several themes are detectable in Ovid's approach to the discussion of the iconic image. Once again, he emphasised the ivory material of the statue, only in this case he spoke of a real statue, instead of the living figure that Narcissus beheld. His focus on the figure's ivory substance has something to do with the beauty and purity that it possessed. Later, the name Galatea would be used to name the statue, as *Galateia* stands for milk-white in Greek.[7] The pristine, unmarred, and ivory traits of Ovid's figures, whether Narcissus or the Image, symbolise the purity of each subject, as perceived by its viewer.

Also reminiscent of Ovid's account of Narcissus is the way that both narratives depend upon compulsive gazing behaviour, cast as an activity that is infused with the potential for fatality. In the case of Narcissus, the protagonist succumbs to his obsession for the image of his beloved; but Pygmalion's story concludes more happily. Venus intervenes, so that Pygmalion does not have to spend his life alone, never being able to discover a wife who could live up to his artificial fantasy of the flawless woman. What makes Pygmalion more worthy of being saved in this way is not clear, since Ovid insisted in both accounts on framing the image as a vicious deception, insidiously shattering the hero's grip on reality and reason. Pygmalion's madness is recounted in such mesmerising detail that readers are even made privy to the actions performed clandestinely upon the statue. These rituals, involving the acting out of human habits, such as sleeping, dressing, and exchanging embraces, force the reader to question Pygmalion's common sense.[8] But for supporters of the visual arts, the power of deception, or 'convincing illusion,' was what made the visual arts superior. For instance, Varchi, in his defence of sculpture, wrote that "It is certain that a figure in relief has more of truth and of the natural in regard to substance than a painting. This is demonstrated by the figure of

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[7] Liana de Girolami Cheney, "Burne-Jones: Mannerist in an Age of Modernism," Pre-Raphaelite Art in its European Context, eds., Susan P. Casteras and Alicia Craig Faxon (Madison and Teaneck: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, London: Associated University Presses, 1995): f.n. 8.

[8] Wettlaufer also acknowledged this treatment of the artist in Ovid's text, observing that Ovid portrays Pygmalion as illogical and idolatrous, being seduced by his own creation, and controlled by his passions and lust. Wettlaufer, Pen vs. Paintbrush 9.

Pygmalion and all the ancient idols, which were in relief so as to be better able to deceive men."[9]

In many ways, Pygmalion's story is even more foreboding than the story of Narcissus, in terms of the perils of visual imagery.[10] Because Narcissus was victimised by the deception of his reflection, which he believed to be his beloved, his behaviour is somewhat excusable. Narcissus was a young man, not fully developed intellectually, and certainly not equipped to handle the distrustful and distressing intensity of the visual arts, and is unable to grasp that the image is not physical. But what is Pygmalion's defence? As the artist, the image's ability to deceive Pygmalion is considerably more sinister and treacherous than that responsible for manipulating Narcissus. If, for instance, Pygmalion had merely been a viewer of the work, we might understand how he could mistake the false image for the real thing. But he fashioned the image himself, seeing it progress from a mere block to a simulation of a live woman, such that he should not have been so deluded by, and obsessed with, a statue of his own making. This myth illustrates that the well-crafted and divinely inspired image is so commanding, iconic, seductive, and perilous, that it can distort our perception of reality, history, or even ourselves, and lead to obsessive conduct.

It is also significant that Ovid refers consistently to the figure of Galatea as *the image*; or in other words, an it, an object, a thing. The statue epitomises the ultimate image, and encapsulates the most persuasive characteristics of a visual medium. By labeling the figure as 'the image,' Ovid aligns it with art itself, thereby setting down a dare to artists working in visual media. Who can create an artwork of such perfection that it could rival the image's potency in Ovid's story, or that it could convince us that Pygmalion's abnormal reaction to his creation was in fact reasonable? Galatea, therefore, is an icon of the iconic in art; she stands for another impossible goal. This goal would be perpetuated by the earliest of art theorists and critics, such as Vasari, who in his Lives implemented many of the features of Ovid's Pygmalion tale into ekphrases of

[9] Cited in Mendelsohn, Varchi 121.
[10] For her analysis of Girodet's Pygmalion in the critiques of 1819, Wettlaufer notes that critics of the Pygmalion subject often promoted the association of the artist with madness and the artwork with idolatry. Pen vs. Paintbrush 130.

contemporary works, such as Leonardo's *Mona Lisa*, or Michelangelo's *Pietà*.[11] In so doing, Vasari glamourised the theme of transformation as part of the artistic process. Renaissance artists were also able to apply the moralised meaning to the story, which transformed it into an analogy of God's ability to improve humanity.[12]

In her analysis of the provocative aspects of Ovid's tale, Wettlaufer similarly argues that Ovid's version of Pygmalion is especially appealing to artists, because it offers the perfect metaphor for the creative process. She notes that of all the Ovidian stories, Pygmalion is the only one that transforms something inanimate into a living thing, and that this process of enlivening the image has been irresistible to artists.[13] Like most scholars of the nude, the paragone, or the history of the academy, Wettlaufer also addresses the importance of the nude as a tool in artistic competition, as well as its place in defining the hierarchy of the genres in subject matter.[14]

But it would seem that with each re-telling of Ovid's tale, the sculpture's ideal beauty escalated to an even more impracticable state. In a study of the revival of the Pygmalion myth in eighteenth-century France, J.L. Carr analyses the ways in which André-François Boureau-Deslandes (1690-1757), in his Pigmalion, ou la statue animée (Paris: 1741), expands upon the myth, giving Venus a more pronounced role in the story. This version holds that the goddess Venus appeared to Pygmalion in a dream, directing him to undertake an effigy of her own self in marble. Venus assures him that she will instruct him to create an appropriate likeness, since this would otherwise be a frighteningly nerve-racking request.[15] In this scenario, Galatea becomes not only the

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[11] Barolsky, "As in Ovid" 453.
[12] Wettlaufer, Pen vs. Paintbrush 11.
[13] Wettlaufer, Pen vs. Paintbrush 9.
[14] Wettlaufer, Pen vs. Paintbrush 32-3.
[15] J.L. Carr, "Pygmalion and the *Philosophes*: The Animated Statue in Eighteenth-Century France," Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes 23:3/4 (July-December 1960): 239-42. There were, as well, other productions incorporating the Pygmalion story in eighteenth-century France. Houdar de la Motte included the story in an *opéra-ballet* of 1700, while Ballot de Sovot adapted the former's work for a section of Jean-Philippe Rameau's Pygmalion in 1748. Given that my goal is to address the paragonising treatments of Pygmalion, I will not be providing a compendium of all forays into the subject, in all of the arts across time. However, for an overview of Pygmalion's adaptation in all of the arts (music, literature, visual art), from across the ages see Andreas Blühm, Pygmalion: The Iconography of its Artistic Myths Between 1500 and 1900 (Bern: Verlag Peter Lang, 1988). This author also ties the Pygmalion subject to the paragone, though his treatment of its nineteenth-century context is more limited, and does not exclusively deal with competitive relationships.

absolute embodiment of feminine human beauty, but she also possesses the unimaginable allure of the most beautiful and sensual goddess in the pantheon of the gods.

In Ovid's tale, the salvation from obsession that Venus grants to Pygmalion leads to a surprisingly erotic description of requited love, acted out between the sculptor and his work. Griffon notes that the story of Pygmalion had existed in various forms before the time of Ovid, and that these were especially 'crude and titillating' legends. This leads him to the conclusion that Ovid 'cleaned up' the tale, by avoiding explicit sexuality.[16] Nevertheless, nineteenth-century readers, and actually readers of any age, cannot ignore the lingering eroticism in Ovid's version, which, even if slightly censored, still retains its essential character. While this fantasy-come-to-life brings the story to its satisfactory conclusion, the writer's emphasis on the erotic acts performed by Pygmalion upon the image compels us to question the sculptor's character. Is Ovid, for instance, implying that Pygmalion's obsessive desire for the image is somehow the product of the physicality of his artistry? If the poet, as an intellectual, is responsible for didactic, moral, and intellectual instruction, then the sculptor or artist, by contrast, is cast in the role of physical creator. Here the bias of the writer again reveals itself. Pygmalion, as an artisan or craftsman, no matter how skilled, is limited to creating a product that arouses physical lust, and not sublime spiritual transcendence, or divine knowledge. For example, Ovid repeatedly narrates the story in tactile terms. Hands, fingers, stroking, kisses, limbs, throbbing veins, tender skin, warm flesh--Pygmalion's interaction with the sculpture is consistently described in conspicuously physical terms. The narrative culminates in the statement that nine months following their hasty marriage, over which Venus presided, Pygmalion's bride gave birth to a child. Of course this detail verifies the physical consummation of the lovers's relationship, and demonstrates the sexually climactic end to Pygmalion's saga of lustful longing, which plagued him up to this point. In light of this, the visual arts are made profane, because the love of the image ends in a sexual and physical relationship, rather than an intellectual or spiritual one.

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[16] Griffin, "Ovid's 'Metamorphoses'" 69. The author explains that Ovid was reinterpreting the more overt sexual imagery in the description of the legend from Philostephanus's Kypriaka of the third century BCE (70). For more on the obscurity and nature of other ancient accounts see Helen H. Law, "The Name Galatea in the Pygmalion Myth," The Classical Journal 27:5 (Feb., 1932): 337.

In this context, Venus's intervention is in her capacity as the goddess of profane love, which is notably distinct from many other types of representations in the history of art and literature, depicting her as a sacred figure capable of inspiring divine love, and elevating one's moral fibre through contemplation of her divine, but chaste, beauty. In sum, Ovid emphasised the sensual nature of the visual arts, by inscribing the statue within the sphere of erotic rather than sacred love. Is this a lesson about the nature of the visual arts and their social value, or is Ovid equally trying to seduce us with his erotic writing? It is probably both, since his narratives regarding images frequently involve similarly iconophobic rhetoric. The eroticism of Ovid's tale did transcend the ages, and some scholars have interpreted its revival in the eighteenth century as evidence of the growing interest in defining Pygmalion and the Image's story along the lines of sexual creation, (Pygmalion producing the image), and sexual desire, (the Image desiring her lover). Although this reading of male and female sexuality and sexual identity in the eighteenth century is beyond our scope, it adds an interesting layer of meaning to the popularity of the Pygmalion subject in the eighteenth century.[17]

Based on an interpretation of the original vocabulary in Ovid's writing, Griffin notes that Ovid addressed the statue's moral, as well as physical, beauty.[18] The artistic challenge of creating the ideal drew artists to the Pygmalion subject. This was also the conclusion of Wettlaufer, whose analysis of Girodet's *Pygmalion* addresses the importance of mastering the nude both physically and poetically.[19] Artists responded in varying manners to this task. Most artists avoided the subject of Pygmalion and Galatea, being fearful of the great obstacle presented by endeavouring to bring such an iconic image into existence. This is borne out by the fact that no sculptural examples of Pygmalion and Galatea were attempted, (at least that are known), in the medieval era, or

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[17] For the most pertinent analysis of this theory see Sheriff, "Passionate Spectators" 51-83. Sheriff cites the following as part of the scholarship on the erotic interpretations of Pygmalion over the ages. See Leonard Barkan, The Gods Made Flesh: Metamorphosis and the Pursuit of Paganism (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1986). See also J. Hillis Miller, Versions of Pygmalion (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1989).
[18] Griffin, "Ovid's 'Metamorphoses'" 67.
[19] Wettlaufer, Pen vs. Paintbrush 2. On Girodet's *Pygmalion* see pages 101-36.

in the Renaissance before the seventeenth century.[20] The first artists to tackle the subject were actually painters, not sculptors, such as the High Renaissance artist Bronzino, (who was officially known as Agnolo di Cosimo, 1503-72).[21] On the other hand, artists who depicted the subject were seen as having taken on a nearly insurmountable responsibility, and one which often had the potential to define their careers. The artists who accepted Ovid's challenge were faced with the problem of showing, in the non-temporal media of the visual arts, the temporal process of transformation.[22] A final challenge lay in the decision whether or not to include the goddess Venus in the narrative, whose renowned beauty and divine nature made her one of the most popular and iconic subjects in the arts since antiquity.

The fact that Galatea is born as a sculptural figure lends the myth great weight to sculptors, especially since the myth implies that the most iconic image is one that takes its form in ivory or marble, and not in paint. But competitive painters may have chosen the subject precisely in order to make plain that the painter, not a sculptor, is best able to present the viewer with the most stunning images in the visual arts. As we shall see, painters also experimented with the temporal aspects of the narrative, often interrupting the statue's metamorphosis from marble to human flesh in a series of moments. For sculptor's, the metamorphosis narrative must have been viewed as too difficult to achieve, since there is only one notable attempt at the subject by an eighteenth-century sculptor: Étiènne-Maurice Falconet's (1716-91) *Pygmalion aux pieds de sa statue qui s'anime/ Pygmalion at the feet of his statue which is enlivening* (1763).[23] The marble statue presents a nude Galatea perfectly poised in the *contrapposto* pose, looking down upon Pygmalion. The sculptor crouches in wonder below his statue, already enlivened, while Cupid peers around Galatea's leg to witness his reaction. In this case, the original

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[20] Stuart Currie, "Secularised Sculptural Imagery, the Paragone Debate and Iconic Contextual Metamorphoses in Bronzino's Pygmalion Painting," Secular Sculpture 1300-1550 (Stamford: Shaun Tyas, 2000): 240.

[21] Bronzino's relevance to this study and subject matter will be discussed shortly.

[22] Wettlaufer also acknowledged this problem, observing that both painters and sculptors would have been at a disadvantage to the writer when trying to show change or movement. Pen vs. Paintbrush 19.

[23] Carr, "Pygmalion and the *Philosophes*" 247. According to Carr, the success of Falconet's work was largely due to Diderot's public support of the work. Falconet also wrote a treatise titled Réflexions on Sculpture (1761), which verifies, yet again, that the artists choosing to work on the Pygmalion subject were especially sensitive to aesthetic theory and the status of the arts. For an additional reading of Falconet's *Pygmalion* see Sheriff, "Passionate Spectators" 63-5. Étiènne-Maurice Falconet, *Pygmalion aux pieds de sa statue qui s'anime,* 1763, marble, 83 cm tall, Musée du Louvre, Paris, France.

title, (it is now known as *Pygmalion and Galatea*), demonstrates that Falconet was attempting to show the figure already animated, or in the process of coming to life. However, the statue, by virtue of its monochromatic material, cannot actually portray such a transformation to human-like flesh. Falconet's decision to create a pure white Galatea was informed by his conviction that the purity of white marble must in all cases be defended, even when the subject matter necessitated a different approach. He refused to accept that colour could play any role in the art of sculpture.[24] Falconet's work, which was a success, was however quickly subsumed by an ekphrasis. Diderot's review of the work, according to Wettlaufer, demonstrates how quickly one of the only sculptural attempts at the subject in the eighteenth century was appropriated back into the literary tradition from whence it came. She argues that Diderot cleverly provided a narrative ekphrasis that reminded viewers of the temporal and Ovidian contexts of the story, in order to demonstrate the supremacy of the writer in telling this particular tale.[25] Perhaps it was also because of this predatory artistic response that painters were much more likely to attempt the subject in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, and that writers and composers were the bravest in this regard.[26]

The Romantic Pygmalion of the Eighteenth Century

Notable reincarnations of Pygmalion's story appeared throughout the ages, leading up to the eighteenth century. In the medieval epic called the Roman de la rose, according to M. Thut, Jean de Meun, (who was one of its two known authors), dealt with the themes of both Narcissus and Pygmalion, making each demonstrative of the conviction that images are false, and that absorption in visual imagery is emblematic of

[24] Emmanuelle Heran, "L'Évolution du regard sur la sculpture polychrome," La Revue du Musée d'Orsay 48-14: 18 (Spring 2004): 63.

[25] For Wettlaufer's analysis of the relationship between Falconet's sculpture and Diderot's ekphrasis see Pen vs. Paintbrush 19-22. See also Sheriff, "Passionate Spectators" 64-5. For Diderot's account see "Salon of 1763" in Salons, 4 vols., eds. J. Seznec and J. Adhémar (Oxford: 1963): 245.

[26] Wettlaufer lists the main contributions in eighteenth-century writings or musical compositions, including: La Motte's *Triomphe des arts* (1700), Rameau's *Pygmalion* (1748), Condillac's *Traité des sensations* (1754), and Rousseau's *Pygmalion, scène lyrique*. In painting, the examples for the eighteenth century include Jean Raoux's *Pygmalion amoureux de sa statue animée* (1717), François Lemoyne's *Pygmalion voyant sa statue animée* (1729), Jean-Baptiste Deshays's *Pygmalion et Galathée* (1749), Jean Monnet's *Pygmalion et Galathée* (1762), and Jean-Honoré Fragonard's *Pygmalion au pied de sa statue* (undated), as well as those to be discussed here, such as Boucher, Lagrenée, Regnault, Girodet, and Gauffier.

folly. This competitive attitude from the writer is also supported by passages in which the text rivals the extreme visual effects of gems and other aesthetic ornamentation. Furthermore, the author of the Roman made Pygmalion less integral to the miraculous outcome of the statue's animation, and instead credited Venus as the source of its metamorphosis, as we have seen was the case with Boureau-Deslandes.[27]

As I will discuss with regards to Girodet and some of his contemporaries, some eighteenth-century versions of Pygmalion's story reflect a growing interest in the aspect of the myth that emphasised the divinely inspired artist, to the point that, as we will discover in the upcoming critiques on the subject, Venus was even described as guiding the hand of the sculptor in creating her effigy. Theoretically, however, belief in this level of divine inspiration leads to a very slippery slope. If the objective is to show the divinity of the artist, art, and artistic inspiration, then one must guard against a too literal view of divine guidance. Because if the artist is merely a physical tool for the divine, operating without personal invention, then he is no more involved in creating the art object than the Byzantine painters who were responsible for 'writing' *archerotopoie*. In the latter case, the icon was believed to have been painted by God, for the sake of bestowing an object of devotion upon pious worshipers. As such, the artist would not even sign his work, since it was essentially God's handiwork.[28] This theoretical dilemma is perhaps best illustrated in François Boucher's (1703-70) *Pygmalion et Galathée* (1767).[29] In this painting,

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[27] M. Thut, "Narcisse versus Pygmalion. Une lecture du *Roman de la Rose*," Vox romanica 41 (1982): 119, 123-4. For more on the history of artistic creation and theology see Milton C. Nahm, "The Theological Background of the theory of the Artist as Creator," Journal of the History of Ideas 8:3 (June, 1947): 363-72.

[28] The tradition of viewing some icons as alternatives for sacred texts documenting the lives of the saints may be found in Nancy Patterson Ševčenko, "The 'Vita' Icon and the Painter as Hagiographer," Dumbarton Oaks Papers 53 (1999): 149-65. For an analysis of the viewer's perspective of the Byzantine icon see Charles Barber, "From Transformation to Desire: Art and Worship after Byzantine Iconoclasm," The Art Bulletin 75:1 (Mar., 1993): 7-16.

[29] The painting by Boucher was commissioned by Catherine II to contribute to the Russian collection of the Academy of Fine Arts in St. Petersburg. It is now part of the Hermitage collection. No singular extensive study of Boucher's *Pygmalion* exists to my knowledge. For a recent evaluation of Boucher, especially in the context of eighteenth-century art criticism, see Rethinking Boucher, ed. Melissa Hyde (Los Angeles: Getty Publications, 2006). See also Françoise Joulie, "La Collection du François Boucher," L'artiste collectionneur de dessin : I : de Giorgio Vasari à aujourd'hui, ed. Catherine Monbeig Gonguel (Paris: Salon du Dessin, 2006): 129-40. Jo Hedley, François *Boucher*: Seductive Visions, exh. cat. (London: Wallace Collection, 2004). G. Brunel, François Boucher (New York: Rizzoli, 1986). Boucher is also treated in Norman Bryson, Word and Image: French Painting of the Ancien Régime (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983). François Boucher, *Pygmalion et Galathée*, 1757, oil on canvas, 329 x 230 cm or 129,3" x 90,4", The Hermitage, St. Petersburg, Russia.

Galatea stands at the centre of the composition. She is the anchor of the design; yet more importantly, she is the transitional figure between Pygmalion, who represents the human realm, and the divine being embodied by the group of Venus and her attendants, hovering above Galatea. Boucher's Pygmalion is portrayed in a fearful, supplicant posture, in adoration of the animated statue and the supernatural entourage accompanying her. Venus, who tenderly supports Galatea, looks on from above in an attitude of complete control, as benefactor of the beautiful statue. Boucher even manipulated the colour and composition to unequivocally segregate Pygmalion from the supernatural; he is relegated to the dark fleshly portrayal in a corner of shadows.

Louis-Jean-François Lagrenée (1725-1805) also tackled the subject in painting. Though an accomplished artist, Lagrenée's *Pygmalion et Galatée* (1781) attempted neither the height of the metamorphosis, nor the supernatural, which we will see were the two most talked-about features of Girodet's later effort.[30] Lagrenée's version is compositionally similar to Falconet's, by showing Galatea looking down upon a reverential Pygmalion, with Cupid behind her. The interior setting is plain, and there is no indication of Venus or the supernatural, other than the *putto*-like Cupid. The perceived link between Pygmalion's story and the origin of the arts is reflected in an earlier version of the subject that Lagrenée completed, as part of a series relating to the theme of artistic inspiration for the Duc de Liancourt, which was shown at the Salon of 1773. Lagrenée's earlier version called *La peinture: Apelle amoureux de la maîtresse d'Alexandre* (1772) displayed the counterpart to Pygmalion and Galatea, by illustrating Apelles 'in love' with the mistress of Alexander the Great, while a third painting celebrated Orpheus, by depicting Pluto returning Eurydice to the great poet.[31]

Despite the reluctance of these artists to focus on the metamorphosis, with respect to the illustration of Galatea or the Image, the writings of critics reveal a central focus on the concept of animation, and its link to magic.[32] The connection to magic was

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[30] Louis-Jean-François Lagrenée, *Pygmalion et Galatée*, 1781, oil on canvas, 59.4 x 48.9 cm, Detroit Institute of the Arts, Detroit, U.S.A. Lagrénée also completed a painting called *Pygmalion* (1777) in the Museum of Foreign Art at Sinebrychoff, Helsinki.

[31] For a more detailed analysis of Lagrénée see Antoine Schnapper, "Louis Lagrénée and the Theme of Pygmalion," Bulletin of the Detroit Institute of Arts 53: 3-4 (1975): 112-7.

[32] Carr, "Pygmalion and the *Philosophes*" 241. Wettlaufer, touches on the association of the work with magic, though not in a paragonising context. She does, however, deal with the issue of Galatea's animation

engendered by the notion of a statue or image coming to life. Specifically, the animation of the inanimate was a challenge as old as time, being comparable to the alchemist's quest to turn crude matter into gold. This was a fascination of many Renaissance scholars, such as Giordano Bruno (1548-1600), who became interested in animation, which he believed was derived from talismanic Hermetic magic originating in ancient Egypt.[33] But what purpose does the magical potential of Pygmalion's story hold for artists and theorists? Very simply, it exaggerates the iconic aptitude of the image; Galatea is not only like a goddess, one might gaze at her in quiet anticipation of witnessing a magical transformation, evoked through some unseen supernatural energy.

Animation and Pygmalion's story were overtly linked when one of the art theorists to emphasise animation in art began to include the concept in his writings. The ability to animate a figure had been hailed throughout art's history, such as when Vasari recounted his tale of Pygmalion, in which he applied the term *vivezza* to denote a work that possessed 'the quality of life.' In his brief examination of Vasari's version of Pygmalion, Barolsky contends that, in essence, many of the works discussed in Vasari's Lives are variations of the Pygmalion myth, because a considerable number of his examples rely on the idea of breathing life, or *vivezza*, into the work of art, in order for it to be successful. Barolsky also agrees that Ovid's Pygmalion is a decidedly lustful creature, the story being so laden with erotic descriptions, and that naturally, Vasari, well before our nineteenth-century artists, also tried to rescue Pygmalion, as the archetypal artist, out of this physical quagmire, by providing passages that testify to his intellect and spirituality. Barolsky suggests that Vasari accomplished this task by equating Pygmalion's creative power with that of God, saying that Galatea received the "breath of life," or "*fiato e spirito*," just as God had given to Adam.[34] In her study of Winckelmann's conception of beauty in art, Prettejohn discusses the admiration that he

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at length, having drawn from many of the popular primary sources on the painting, as other scholars of the work, including myself, have done. Pen vs. Paintbrush 121.

[33] The term Hermetic comes from the figure of Hermes Trismegistus, who was supposedly a famous magician, sage, and scholar of the ancient Egyptian world, who wrote the texts the Corpus Hermeticum and the Asclepius. No scholar has been able to prove the existence of such an author for the texts, even though the texts were preserved into the modern era, as part of a great intellectual heritage dating to antiquity. For more on the Hermetic tradition in the Early Modern era, when it was particularly popular, see Frances Amelia Yates, Giordano Bruno and the Hermetic Tradition (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1964, 1978).

[34] Paul Barolsky, "The Spirit of Pygmalion," Artibus et Historiae 24:48 (2003): 183-4.

had for artists who 'brought something to life,' and by extension could revitalise both the viewer's body and spirit. Winckelmann's ekphrasis of the animated *Venus*, for example, surely derived some of its imaginative description of a visceral awakening, in both viewer and statue, from Ovid's poetic narration. Prettejohn isolates two exemplary passages from Winckelmann's ekphrases of ancient works, in which he described the artist's ability to facilitate such an awakening, and even to metamorphose both the figure and the viewers.[35] First, she cites Winckelmann's description of the ancient Greek *Apollo Belvedere* (ca. 4th century BCE); Winckelmann wrote:

> My breast seems to enlarge and swell with reverence, like the breasts of those who were filled with the spirit of prophecy, and I feel myself transported to Delos and into the Lycaean groves,—places which Apollo honoured by his presence,--for my image seems to receive life and motion, like the beautiful creation of Pygmalion. How is it possible to paint and describe it![36]

Of course this last statement is likely a rhetorical comment.

Because the *Apollo* had been considered the definitive manifestation of perfect beauty in art, it may be fairly assumed that the idea of 'bringing something to life' was also inextricably linked to expectations of iconic beauty in art. Prettejohn also quotes Winckelmann's ekphrasis of the *Venus de' Medici* (copy from ca. 1st century BCE), which similarly demonstrates his focus on the idea of transformation:

> The Medicean Venus, at Florence, resembles a rose which, after a lovely dawn, unfolds its leaves to the rising sun; resembles one who is passing from an age which is hard and somewhat harsh—like fruits before their perfect ripeness—into another, in which all the vessels of the animal system are beginning to dilate, and the breasts to enlarge, as her bosom indicates,--which, in fact, is more developed than is usual in tender maidens. The attitude brings before my imagination that Laïs who instructed Apelles in love. Methinks I see her, as when, for the first time, she stood naked before the artist's eyes.[37]

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[35] Prettejohn, Beauty & Art 29-30.
[36] Johann Joachim Winckelmann, The History of Ancient Art, volume II, trans. G. Henry Lodge, M.D. (Boston: James R. Osgood and Company, 1872): 313.
[37] Winckelmann, The History of Ancient Art 92-3. *Venus de' Medici*, 1st century copy of Greek original, marble, Uffizi, Florence, Italy

Notable in this quote, is the fact that Winckelmann correlated the animation of the figure to the earliest known history of art, by referring to Apelles and the tradition of representing the figure from the model.[38]

However, Winckelmann was not the only critic to focus on the theme of animation. M. Kératry, in speaking of Girodet's *Pygmalion*, imagined Pygmalion's response to the miracle: "Sans doute le sculpteur Pygmalion était réduit à cet état cruel et doux à la fois, lorsque les dieux, touchés de son amour, suivant les chroniques grecques, se décidèrent à douer de sentiment le marbre, œuvre sublime, œuvre ravissante de ses mains."[39] One of Girodet's contemporaries, and a fellow student of David, wrote that amongst the qualities that signified genius was the ability to animate. In his handwritten and undated essay called "Sur le génie," Pierre-Narcisse Guérin (1776-1833), who was Girodet's rival, praised the latter's *Déluge* (1806) for being an example of genius in modern art.[40] Guérin, in his essay on the matter, endeavoured to define that genius, and how makes such works feasible. He explained that genius is apparent when the artist's idea is expressed with minimal complexity. For example, artists using literary narratives could demonstrate genius by simplifying the temporal features of the story into its most evocative moments, or making the viewer feel as if a miracle might appear at any moment.[41]

Naturally, writers or critics who felt threatened by the power that magically animated works gave to visual artists were opposed to these objectives. For instance, Carr, quoting François-Marie Arouet Voltaire (1694-1778), mentions that eminent

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[38] Prettejohn, Beauty & Art 29-30.
[39] M. Kératry, Annuaire de l'École française de peinture, ou lettres sur le Salon de 1819 (Paris: Libraire Maradin, 1820): 235. My translation: "Certainly the sculptor Pygmalion was reduced to this simultaneously cruel and sweet state, when the gods, touched by his love, according to the Greek chronicles, decided to endow the marble, sublime work, ravishing work of his hands, with feeling."
[40] Anne-Louis Girodet-Trioson, *Déluge*, 1806, oil on canvas, 147 x 114.9 cm, Musée Girodet, Montargis, France.
[41] Pierre-Narcisse Guérin, "Sur le génie," Pierre-Narcisse Guérin, Miscellaneous Papers, 1815-33 (Research Library, The Getty Research Institute, Los Angeles, California, 2003.M.41): 2. This document can be found in the appendix.

literary figures, such as Voltaire and Diderot, were not willing to accept these icon-producing beliefs, and questioned such theories of animation.[42]

Sculpture and Aesthetic Theory at the Beginning of the Modern Era

Before delving into the competitive examples of Pygmalion in the nineteenth century, we must first assess the place of sculpture in the hierarchy of the arts, and its perceived strengths and weaknesses. In assessing the nature of the *beau idéal*, we have already confronted legends concerning the divine origins of the arts, which made them so illustrious. Again, sculpture was most likened to the divine act of creation, because the sculptor, more than the painter or writer, crafted something tangible, physical, and part of the material world. Remember Vasari's words on the subject, where we find one of the reasons that sculpture was so renowned in the Renaissance. Since Vasari was himself a painter, he was careful to clarify that painters create in the same way as sculptors.[43]

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[42] Quoted by Carr, "Pygmalion and the *Philosophes*" (250), Voltaire wrote the following in his *Lucrèce*:

> Il y a longtemps que je suis surpris que ni Epicure, ni aucun de ses sectateurs, n'aient pas considéré que les atomes qui forment un nez, deux yeux, plusieurs nerfs, un cerveau, n'ont rien de plus excellent que ceux qui forment une pierre; et qu'ainsi il est très absurde de supposer que tout assemblage d'atomes qui n'est ni un homme, ni une bête, est destitué de connaissance. Dès qu'on nie que l'âme de l'homme soit une substance distincte de la matière, on raisonne puérilement, si l'on ne suppose pas que tout l'univers est animé; et que comme il y en a qui n'égalent point les hommes, il y en a aussi qui les surpassent. Dans cette supposition, les plantes, les pierres, sont des substances pensantes.

My translation:

> It has been a longtime since I was surprised that neither Epicurius, nor any of his representatives, have not considered that the atoms that form a nose, two eyes, many nerves, a brain, have nothing more excellent than those that form a stone; and therefore it is very absurd to suppose that the whole assemblage of atoms that is neither a man, nor a beast, can be lacking knowledge. The moment that we deny that the spirit of man is a distinct substance from matter, we reason childishly, if we do not suppose that the whole universe is animated; and that because there are some that do not equal men, there must also be some that surpass them. In this supposition, the plants, and stones are thinking substances.

[43] Vasari, Lives 3-4. The Italian version appears as Le Vite de' piu eccellenti architetti, pittori, et scultori italiani, da Cimabue insino a' tempi nostri (Firenze: Torrentino, 1550). The quote below is also found in the previous chapter, but is included again below for convenience:

> Thus, the first model from which issued the first image of man was a mass of earth, and not without reason, for the Divine Architect of Time and Nature, being all perfect, wished to demonstrate in the imperfection of His materials the means to subtract from them or add to them, in the same way that good sculptors and painters are accustomed to doing when by adding or

Nevertheless, the account of divine artistic invention, as an act of adding to or taking away from matter, reveals that sculptors were equated with God's creative ability.

Because Greek art had survived in the nineteenth century largely in the form of sculpture, by glorifying Greek art, Winckelmann created a heightened interest in sculpture as well. This threatened painting, since it appeared that the finest art had already been attained in sculpture. Moreover, ancient artists continued, since the Renaissance, to be upheld as the most accomplished in the history of humanity, making their successes in sculpture even more influential. In addition to Winckelmann's writings, and Lessing's famous Laocoön, Herder's treatise Sculpture, attempted to define the attributes, limits, and promise of the medium of sculpture. Having met Lessing, Herder wrote his Critical Groves with Lessing's treatise in mind. Herder was also tied to the French tradition, having spent time discussing theoretical issues with such eminent figures as Diderot, and having studied the royal collection of sculpture at Versailles.[44] Due to the fact that Herder's aesthetic theory was known in France, and was based on the Pygmalion subject, it will serve as a key touch-point for this chapter.

Herder was well-versed in French culture, having studied, in advance of a trip to Paris in 1769, in order to immerse himself in French art and literature. It was following Herder's passing that Sculpture gained considerable momentum in European aesthetics.[45]

> subtracting from their models, they bring their imperfect drafts to that state of refinement and perfection they seek…/ I am convinced that anyone who will discreetly ponder this matter will agree with me, as I said above, that the origin of these arts was Nature herself, that the inspiration of the model was the beautiful fabric of the world, and that the Master who taught us was that divine light infused in us by a special act of grace which has not only made us superior to other animals but even similar, if it is permitted to say so, to God Himself.

[44] Gaiger in Herder, Sculpture 2. On Herder's treatise see Simon Richter, Laocoön's Body and the Aesthetics of Pain: Winckelmann, Lessing Herder, Moritz, Goethe (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1992). Elena Agazzi, "Corpo e actio : un rapporto problematico : alcune riflessioni sulla Plastik di Herder," Neoclassico (Venezia) 4 (1993): 24-35. Jeanne Bouniort and Michael Podro, "Un traité de Herder: Plastik," Histoire de l'histoire de l'art : tome 1 : de l'Antiquité au XVIIIe siècle, ed. Edouard Pommier (Paris: Klincksieck, Musée du Louvre, 1995): 327-43. For more on Diderot's aesthetic theory see Disconnected Thoughts on Painting, Sculpture, and Poetry (1781). Robert Norton, Herder's Aesthetics and the European Enlightenment (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1991).

[45] Gaiger in Herder's Sculpture 2-6. Another French theorist of interest to Herder was Condillac. See Étienne Bonnot, Abbé de Condillac, "Essay on the Origin of Human Knowledge," in Philosophical Writings of Étienne Bonnot, Abbé de Condillac, 2 vols., trans. Franklin Philip, (Hillsdale, NJ., and London: 1987). For more on Herder's biography see Robert Thomas Clark, Herder: His Life and Thought (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1955). For more on Herder's affinities with France see Self-direction and political legitimacy: Rousseau and Herder, ed. F.M. Barnard (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1988). On his reception in Germany see Herder-Rezeption in Deutschland: eine ideologiekritische

The impact of Herder's theories is difficult to assess, given that they so closely drew from those such as Winckelmann, Rousseau, Johann Wolfgang von Goethe (1749-1832), and others, who were similarly popular in France and England throughout the nineteenth century.[46]

Jason Gaiger contends that, even though Herder strove to classify the varying attributes of the arts, one of his main objectives was to warn aesthetic theorists against engaging in rule-making for the arts, even if this was a pervasive phenomenon in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.[47] Herder was responding to the growing concentration on defining the limits of the arts, which is evidenced by the fact that the term 'fine arts' was newly inaugurated in the eighteenth century, to separate the literary from the visual arts.[48] Herder also hoped to rescue sculpture from the relatively low position it occupied in the hierarchies of influential theorists, such as Diderot. For instance, Herder was not willing to accept that beauty, as Diderot had suggested in his Letters on the Blind, could only be experienced through sight. Beauty, in Herder's system, is detectable through other senses as well, including touch. These concerns reflected Herder's primary goal to carve out an independent role for sculpture from that of painting.[49]

Herder also tried to combat the pervasive view of sculpture as a merely material art. Galatea's ties to the sensuality of art also attracted attention to the eighteenth-century ideas about sculpture. In the Marquis de Saint-Lambert's (1716-1803) account, Galatea is borne not out the corporeal animated by human thought, but by her plunge into the experience of sensual pleasure.[50] This catapult into bodily experience is entirely in

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Untersuchung, ed. Bernhard Becker (St. Ingbert: Röhrig, 1987). Herder Today: Contributions from the International Herder Conference, Nov. 5-8, 1987, Stanford, California, ed. Kurt Mueller-Vollmer (Berlin and New York: W. de Gruyter, 1990).

[46] On Herder's reception in Europe in the nineteenth century see G.A. Wells, Herder and After: A Study in the Development of Sociology (Gravenhage: Mouton, 1959).

[47] Gaiger in Herder's Sculpture 10.

[48] Gaiger in Herder's Sculpture 16. Gaiger credits Kristeller with providing the first substantial study of this phenomenon. Another source regarding sculptural aesthetic theory, and even the myth of Pygmalion and Galatea, was Étiènne Bonnot de Condillac's Treatise on Sensations of 1754, which was based on the Ovidian narrative. It was, for instance, read by Girodet, whose painting on the subject will be discussed shortly. I have chosen to focus on Herder's analysis, due to its ties to Lessing.

[49] Gaiger in Herder's Sculpture 14.

[50] Carr quotes a passage from Saint-Lambert, reading as follows: "Par le plaisir la statue animée/ Ouvre les yeux et voit le jour et son amant.../ Son âme est sans idée, et n'a que des désirs,/ Ses premiers sentiments ont été des plaisirs." "Pygmalion and the *Philosophes*" 249. My translation: "Through pleasure the

keeping with her role as a symbol of art itself, and her fundamental identification as 'The Image,' because the visual arts are in material form, and can only be perceived through sensual experience, which had become one of the defining themes of post-Renaissance aesthetic theory. In fact, most aesthetic theories, dealing with the value of different of artistic media, were founded upon the system of sensual experience that corresponded to each art. In conjunction with Carr's analysis, then, it is apparent that the popularity of aesthetic theory in the eighteenth century was paralleled by new explorations of the Pygmalion myth, which emphasised the role of the image as a sensual object. For example, Rousseau's Galatea discovers her own existence by touching herself and her maker.[51]

In order to rescue Pygmalion and his art of sculpture from this physical realm, to which Ovid, and other eighteenth-century writers, had ascribed it, Herder endeavoured to promote touch to the apex of the hierarchy of the senses. His primary metaphor is a theoretical interpretation of Pygmalion's story, which he subsequently linked to a new hierarchy of the arts, in which the art of sculpture reigned supreme. Herder's passion for sculpture conflicted with the limits within which sculpture had been inscribed in eighteenth-century aesthetic theory. These limits were, for Herder, doubly incorrect, because not only were they improperly drawn, but they also inappropriately mixed sculpture in with other visual arts, such as painting. He explained the issue in the following words:

> I have discovered that the more something is *proper* to a particular art form, and the more *native* it is to the most powerful effects of that art, the less it can be simply carried over and applied to a different art form without the most dreadful consequences...The two art forms are regarded not as sisters or half-sisters but simply as a *doubled unity*, and no nonsense is said about the one that is not also imposed on the other. From this arises that miserable criticism, that wretched attempt to impose *censorious* and *restrictive* rules...[52]

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animated statue opened her eyes/ and saw the day and her lover/ Her spirit is without thought, and holds only desire/ Her first feelings were pleasure."

[51] Ewa Lager-Burcharth, "David's Sabine Women: Body, Gender and the Republican Culture Under the Directory," Art History 14 (Sept., 1991): 55. See J.-J. Rousseau, Pygmalion, scène lyrique (1762): Œuvres complètes II (Paris: Gallimard, 1964).

[52] Herder, Sculpture 42-3. Further evidence of Herder's irritation with theories that force sculpture and painting to occupy the same realm is offered in his statement that, "[R]ecently, certain crude people have treated these very different arts as if they were one and the same" (57).

Herder's insistence on the individuality of sculpture led him to devise a theoretical system that diverted sharply from Lessing's, whose main objective was to compare literature to visual images. For example, in his Laocoön, Lessing manipulated a binary system of thought to separate textual and visual representations. This system is built upon the fundamental separation of time and space in Lessing's model, and it was to this system that Herder added a tertiary category called force, which he branded the corollary of the body. In this formula, time corresponds to sound, surface to space, and body to force.[53] Sculpture is planted within the realm of force, making it unfettered by, and superior to, those of painting and poetry, or time and space.

In his revision of the hierarchy of the senses, Herder positioned sculpture and touch at the apex of these systems. It is no longer sight, or even intellect, that lures a man out of Plato's cave into that of true knowledge; instead, this is accomplished through the sense of touch, which is necessary to understand the physical.[54] The physical is made possible by realising the artistic concept in material form. Like Michelangelo's theory of the *concetto*, Herder envisioned a process of artistic creation, wherein the idea first takes shape in the artist's mind. As it was for Michelangelo, this theory assured that the sculptor would be respected in his capacity as an intellectual, and not as a mere craftsman.[55]

Herder's theoretical approach also mirrors the thinking of Leonardo, who argued for the superiority of painters, saying that they are not merely artists, but are scientists,

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[53] Herder, Sculpture 44.

[54] Herder, Sculpture 36-7. Herder stated: "An ophthalamite with a thousand eyes but without a hand to touch would remain his entire life in Plato's cave and would never have any *concept* of the properties of a physical body." He added:

> The light that strikes my eye can no more give me access to concepts such as solidity, hardness, softness, smoothness, form, shape, or volume than my mind can generate embodied, living concepts by independent thinking...The more we are able to take hold of a body as a body, rather than staring at it and dreaming of it, the more vital is our feeling for the object, or, as it is expressed in the word itself, our *concept* of the thing.

[55] For the original poem in which the *concetto* is described see Michelangelo Buonarroti, The Poetry of Michelangelo, an Annotated Translation, trans. James M. Saslow (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1993): 151. The poem was written for Vittoria Colonna in 1544, and it was made known to Varchi, who absorbed the principle of the artist's intellect from the poem, because it could be used to bolster the prestige of the sculptor. George Bull, Michelangelo: A Biography (New York: MacMillan, 1998): 341. See also David Summers, Michelangelo and the Language of Art (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1981).

who draw routinely from such scientific fields as optics, anatomy, and mathematics.[56] For Herder, the individual who learns about the world through the sense of touch is akin to a scientist studying natural phenomena, using mathematics and physical sciences.[57] Unlike Leonardo, however, Herder proposed that it is the sense of touch that leads to a truthful experience of the world, rather than the sense of sight. In his own words he stated that "[I]n all of these cases *sight* is but *an abbreviated form of touch*. The rounded *form* becomes a mere *figure*, the *statue* a flat *engraving*. Sight gives us *dreams*, touch gives us *truth*."[58]

As part of his tactics, Herder latched onto a particularly grand parallel, like that of Vasari's, between the art of sculpture and divine creativity:

> How noble is the entire structure that stands before us, revealing its *face*, its *brow*, and its *chest*, as it strides forward upon its legs. We are *made wonderfully great*, our *bones* have been *numbered and ordered* with care, *our nerves woven together*, and our *veins* made into torrents of life. We are *made from clay, poured out like milk and curdled like cheese*; we are clothed with skin and *the breath of God gives us life*. Our form...has been modeled and shaped... and it receives its form from the stirring forces of the bestower of all shape.[59]

It was to this legend of the aggrandised origin of artistic talent, and of God as the first sculptor, to which sculptors would cling in hopes of competing with the arts of painting and poetry. Cheney draws attention to the fact that Vasari also argued for the seemingly divine genesis of artistic genius, using the phrase *furor poeticus*.[60] He claimed that "Many painters...achieve in the first design of their work, as though guided by a sort of inspirational fire, something of the good and a certain measure of boldness, but afterwards, in finishing it, the boldness vanishes."[61] Herder was not alone in his conviction that artistic genius is transmitted through the divine; but, he even went a step further when he postulated that the divine inhabits the sculptural work itself, connecting

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[56] I have not been able to determine if Herder had read Leonardo's treatise, however the comparison is useful in showing the consistency of competitive tactics in both practice and theory across the arts.
[57] Herder, Sculpture 37.
[58] Herder, Sculpture 38.
[59] Herder, Sculpture 76. Here the writer combined passages from the Old Testament book of Job 10:9-11, 33: 4-6. The notion of God fashioning man out of clay possibly dates to the prehistoric age, but it was clearly a thriving legend when Herder recounted it in his treatise Sculpture.
[60] Quoted in Cheney, "Burne-Jones" 109.
[61] Quoted in Cheney, "Burne-Jones" 109. See also Liana de Girolami Cheney and Sonia Michelotti Bonetti, "Bronzino's *Pygmalion and Galatea*: *l' antica bella maniera*," Discoveries 24.1 (2007).

both the object and the artist to creative supernatural, power.[62] Explaining that the object itself has a purpose in divine creation, Herder stated that: "*One* spirit has flowed into the statue: it guides the hand of the artist who forms the work and makes it into a unity." Herder also claimed that iconic power can inhabit a sculpture:

> Even today, we can experience a feeling of this sort in a quiet museum or a coliseum of gods and heroes; if we are alone and approach the statues with devotion, they can, unnoticed, come to life and carry us back to the times in which everything that now exists only as mythology and statues was living truth. The God of Israel knew the extent to which he had to protect his sensuous people from images and statues: as soon as an image was made, the daemon that animated it was also present to the senses of the people, and idolatry was inevitable.[63]

Herder even hypothesised that idolatry of sculptural figures is nothing less than inevitable, since sculpture, more than any other art form, mimics the living or supernatural entity with which a viewer may so desperately long to communicate, as was the case with Pygmalion and his subject. Herder's defence of the image's iconic power depends upon a belief in its divine source and life-like potential; only unlike Lessing, Herder cast the iconic potential of sculpture as a positive, instead of a negative, attribute. This contradiction is typical in paragone debates; often the very things that artists claim make their art superior, are the things that are used to attack it from the perspective of theorists and writers.[64]

Just as he was evidently determined to attack what he saw as the dismissiveness of aesthetic theorists towards sculpture, Herder was also irritated by the attempts of art critics to translate the power of sculpture into words:

> ...[A] person cannot be made to understand, either by these words or by the words of others. For what is so uncommonly *certain* and *definite* in a sculpture is that, because it presents a *human being*, a fully *animated body*, it speaks to us as an

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[62] Herder, Sculpture 80.
[63] Herder, Sculpture 92.
[64] A useful point of comparison is helpful here. For example, in feminist theory of the twentieth century, feminists could not agree upon which approach could most benefit women. Would it be better to celebrate the qualities that make a human being feminine, and in doing so admit the differences between men and women? Or, would it be better to pretend that there are no differences, or that women possess all the qualities of both sexes? In the same way, the paragonising artist often rejects or accepts the qualities inherent to his/her art, or conversely, attempts to exaggerate and capitalise on them.

> *act*; it seizes hold of us and penetrates our very being, awakening the full range of responsive human feeling.[65]

Yet in order for Herder to substantiate sculpture's position in this third realm, it was necessary to use limits, even though he simultaneously chastised such methods. He advised us that sculpture deserves its own category, separate from painting, in aesthetic theory, because it cannot, and should not, achieve in visual form those attributes that are best left to the painter.[66] So what is it that Herder believed sculpture should imitate? Here we must return to the idea of animation.

> What sculpture should create, and what it has succeeded in creating, are forms in which the living soul animates the entire body, forms in which art can compete in the task of representing the embodied soul--that is to say, gods, human beings, and noble animals...A sculpture before which I kneel can embrace me, it can become my friend and companion: it is present, it is there.[67]

Unlike Lessing, Herder did not limit the sculptor to the realm of natural phenomena; however, he insisted that the entity depicted take bodily form, whether supernatural or mortal. Additionally, these bodies are to be unclothed. The rationale here is somewhat rudimentary; Herder called drapery an absurd contrivance.[68] Another limit that he set for sculpture, is that it should not include depictions of free-flowing hair, excessive decoration, or polychrome effects; nor should it take multi-media form. In sum, the sculptor should strive to reproduce the noble simplicity and calm grandeur of antique sculpture, as suggested by Winckelmann. Colour would be an especially abhorrent application in sculpture, since colour was, for Herder, a characteristic attribute of

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[65] Herder, Sculpture 80-1.

[66] Herder, Sculpture 44. In the following passage, Herder identified those things that he contended are more suitable for painting:

> Sculpture creates *in depth*. It creates *one* living thing, an animate *work* that *stands there* and endures. Sculpture cannot imitate shadows or the light of dawn, it cannot imitate lightning or thunder, rivers or flames any more than the feeling hand can grasp them. But why on this account should these subjects be denied to the painter? The painter follows another law, possesses different powers and a different vocation; why should he not be able to paint the *great panel of nature* in all its different *aspects*, in its *vast, beautiful visibility*? And with what magic he does so!

[67] Herder, Sculpture 45.

[68] Herder, Sculpture 47.

painting.[69] Like Winckelmann, Herder contended that good sculpture is timeless, and unmarred by the trends of the passing of the ages. On the other hand, painting is merely a mirror of its day, therefore necessarily reflecting the inevitably inferior taste of post-antique societies.[70]

In addition to his ambivalence towards rules, at times Herder disclosed a latent hostility towards certain types of painting. His descriptions of what constitutes bad painting closely match the very movement from his own day that propelled painting to the heights of academic acclaim: Neoclassicism. In two passages Herder exclaimed that painters who imitate the nude, sculptural quality of the antique style are guilty of producing figures of utter ugliness and nakedness, (not nudity). Nudity, for Herder, belongs to sculpture, which is proven in the role that this older art played in antiquity, where the bare human form was mastered and venerated. For its part, painting is doomed if it imprudently tries to imitate the antique in this way.[71] Painting's potential is simply curtailed by its incapacity to represent the infinite, (or to be sublime), and it should never attempt through physical size, or other methods, to approach the skill of portraying the infinite that correctly belongs to poetry and sculpture.[72]

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[69] Herder, Sculpture 55-6. The issue of polychrome sculpture in the nineteenth century will discussed towards the end of the chapter.

[70] Herder, Sculpture 60-1. This position was explained in the statement that:

> The forms of sculpture are as constant and eternal as pure and simple human nature; the forms of painting are an image of their age and vary in accordance with history, peoples, and times....A statue, then, is a *model of good form*, and Polykleitos's *Canon* remains the most enduring law of any human legislator...Just as there is one region of the earth in which beautiful proportion is a product of *nature*, so God gave to one people of this region the space, time, and leisure to divine and *give shape* to things that would remain permanent monuments for all subsequent ages and peoples. In the full exuberance of their youth, the Greeks felt their way toward *works* that were complete and pure and beautiful...They stand like lighthouses in the tempestuous ocean of time, and the sailor who steers by them will never lose his way.

[71] Herder, Sculpture 51. In the following passage, Herder's description of certain types of painting reveals something quite similar to the trends of Neoclassical painting. First he wrote the following of his contemporaries: "The painter is required to turn out sculptures with his brush and to embellish them with color as the true taste for antiquity would have it" (44). He later added:

> It surely required minds of great refinement to suggest that painting should imitate vast masses of naked flesh, and even wet drapery, so as to come closer to its elder and beloved sister, sculpture, and become antique. As a result, painting is made naked and stiff and ugly rather than attaining what its sister achieves with nudity and wet drapery.

[72] Herder, Sculpture 94-5.

Just as it was for the competitive painters of the *beau idéal*, sculptors who endeavour to prove the merits of their art are charged by Herder to pursue the sublime as their primary goal. As one would expect, this directive is quickly followed by an explanation that the sublime in sculpture will make the viewer shudder with awe, as the sculpture seems to come to life before his or her very eyes.[73] But even Herder's devotees faced a fundamental problem, which is the claim, (also supported by Lessing and Winckelmann), that sculpture had reached its apogee in antiquity. Of course, this fueled the belief amongst nineteenth-century painters that unlike sculpture, painting could still reach its golden age of maturity. For instance, the Romantic painter Delacroix, for whom music and painting were quintessentially modern, claimed that they needed refinement to reach their full potential. To reach this goal, Delacroix, like his Renaissance predecessors, routinely copied from sculptural works. In his Écrits sur l'art, Delacroix explained his motives:

> On peut dire de la peinture, comme de la musique, qu'elle est essentiellement un art moderne.[...] Dans la sculpture, au contraire, il semble que les anciens aient fait tout ce qu'on peut faire: ils ont produit des ouvrages parfaits, et ces ouvrages sont des modèles dont il est bien difficile de s'écarter à cause de la rigueur des lois qui fixent les limites de l'art.[74]

In addition to his interest in studying the masters of sculpture, such as Michelangelo, (whom he actually considered more a painter than sculptor), Delacroix set out to uncover a type of painting that would match the perfection of ancient sculpture.[75]

Despite Winckelmann and Herder's celebration and promotion of sculpture in their writings, they opened the door to some tricky theoretical and practical issues.

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[73] Herder, Sculpture 91. He stated unequivocally: "The art of sculpture...must necessarily first dedicate itself to everything that is great, sublime, and extravagant, awakening terror and awe rather than love and sympathy."

[74] Quoted in Michele Hannoosh, "Delacroix and Sculpture," Nineteenth-Century French Studies 35:1 (Fall 2006): 95. My translation:

> We can say of painting, like music, that it is essentially a modern art.[…] In sculpture, by contrast, it seems that the ancients did all that we could do: they produced perfect works, and these works are models that it is very difficult to deviate from because of the rigour of the laws that determine the limits of art.

[75] Hannoosh, "Delacroix and Sculpture" 97. Delacroix was keen to educate himself about sculpture, even though he was a painter. For instance, Hannoosh notes that Delacroix had read Diderot's Salon de 1765, and Reynold's tenth Discourse, both of which incorporated sections addressing sculpture.

Winckelmann, for example, touched on the issue in his text: "La couleur contribue à la beauté, mais elle n'est pas elle-même la beauté. Comme la couleur blanche est celle qui reflète avec la plus grande clarté les rayons de la lumière, un beau corps va être d'autant plus beau, qu'il sera plus blanc." [76] Winckelmann's advocacy of white marble sculpture was perceived by some to cause the stagnation of subsequent eras of sculptural production. There were many proponents of the traditional adherence to the white appearance of antique works, but it was also readily acknowledged that the originality of sculpture had been waning throughout the nineteenth century. Outspoken art critics, such as Baudelaire, lamented the boring and predictable blanched appearance of modern sculpture.[77] As we will explore towards the end of this chapter, the rediscovery of polychrome sculpture in the ancient tradition would irrevocably alter the course of nineteenth-century sculpture.[78] In sum, sculpture occupied a precarious position in the nineteenth-century hierarchy of the arts, and one that could be exploited by painters to rise through its ranks.

The Long-Awaited Manifesto: Girodet's *Pygmalion et Galatée*

A work that addresses competition with both writers and sculptors, and one of the first attempts at Pygmalion in the nineteenth century, is Girodet's *Pygmalion et Galatée*, which was shown at the Salon of 1819 in Paris (Figure 1).[79] Upon reaching artistic maturity, Girodet was no longer viewed as simply a follower of David. Upon his death, he received one of the most elaborate and well-attended funerals in Parisian history, (for someone of his station), and in his eulogies by fellow artists, such as Antoine-Jean Gros

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[76] Quoted in Heran, "Sculpture polychrome," 63. My translation: "Colour contributes to beauty, but it is not itself beauty. Because the colour white is that which reflects with the greatest clarity the rays of light, a beautiful body will be much more beautiful if it is whiter."
[77] Heran, "Sculpture polychrome" 64.
[78] For the changing trends in the history of sculpture see Hall, The World as Sculpture.
[79] Like the *Endymion*, the *Pygmalion* painting was also referred to in contemporary criticism by other titles. De Quincy called it *Pygmalion amoureux de sa Statue* (*Pygmalion in Love with his Statue*). "Éloge historique" 327. For more on the Salon of 1819 see Étienne J. Délécluze, "Les Beaux-arts: Salon de 1819," La Minerve française 8: 170; and Dussault, "À Girodet," Moniteur universel (November 7, 1819): 1425; and T.B. Éméric-David, "Beaux-arts: Salon," Moniteur Universel (Nov. 15, 1819): 1455.

(1771-1835), he was hailed as a master of equal accomplishment as David.[80] The controversial aspects of his career fit well with the general spirit of ambition and rivalry that also epitomised him as an artist. Girodet's contemporaries, such as De Quincy, who will be consulted on the matter shortly, noted that he was a perfectionist, and that he relied upon a vast amount of preparation and natural gifts to prove the merits of his work.

As is often typical for competitive artists, it was one of Girodet's celebrated final works that was the most ambitious of his career. An anonymous critic of Girodet's *Pygmalion* began by explaining that the painting was famous before it even left the studio.[81] Its most striking feature was, of course, the treatment of light. The painting glows from within, just like his *Endymion*. The commonalities between the two paintings are not unexpected, since *Pygmalion's* patron, Giovanni Battista Sommariva, commissioned the painting, due to Girodet's unwillingness to sell him the *Endymion*.[82]

Girodet's signature luminosity harmonises with the scene's quiet and intimate setting. The artist portrayed the subject in a simple way, by limiting the composition to Pygmalion and his statue. Cupid hovers in mid-air, forming a physical link between the figures, and implying transference of emotion or feeling. The only other figure in the scene is a partial view of the statue of the goddess Venus to the left; although her representation is in such deep shadow that she is surely not meant to be a focal point. It must have been a conscious decision to represent Venus as a statue, and not a living goddess, because she stands in a niche with incense burnt before her, and is adorned with the crown and trappings of sacred offerings, as an idol would appear. In her hand rests a dove, the colour of which contrasts with the monotone grey that covers the goddess's weathered marble surface. In the background are a hazy temple-like structure, the rolling hills of an idyllic landscape, a cloudy blue sky, the man-made splendour of a marble floor, precious incense burners, and sculptural reliefs.

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[80] Sylvain Bellenger, "'Too Learned for Us:' The Destiny of a Poet-Painter," Girodet: 1767-1824, ed. Sylvain Bellenger (Paris: Gallimard, Musée du Louvre Éditions, 2006): 15-7. For a primary account of the funeral see Délécluze's diary. Wettlaufer also discusses Girodet's funeral and its role in forming his legacy. Pen vs. Paintbrush 37.

[81] Anonymous, Description du tableau de Pygmalion et Galatée, exposé au Salon par M. Girodet, (Paris: Les Marchands de nouveautés, 1819): 3. For an examination of the work's reception amongst Italian artists consult Chiara Savettieri, "Il avait retrouve le secret de Pygmalion: Girodet, Canova e l'illusione della vita," Studiolo: revue d'histoire de l'art de l'Académie de France à Rome 2 (2003): 14-42.

[82] Wettlaufer, Pen vs. Paintbrush 102.

In order to captivate his viewers, Girodet emphasised the features of the myth that made it the most enchanting, such as the conviction that we are witnessing a magical transformation. Just as the goddess Diana is the source of Endymion's illumination in the earlier painting, the light falling on Galatea suggests that she is the object of divine favour. This implies that while the statue of Venus stands to the left, the supernatural light falling on Galatea highlights the act of metamorphosis, which is occurring through the invisible presence of the deity that is actually responsible for her transformation. It is also possible that Cupid, as an emissary for his mother, could be the bearer of the light source. That the light is not natural is elucidated by the fact that it comes from the left, where the buildings would otherwise occlude any natural light from falling upon the figures. Moreover, the illuminated portion of the composition creates an orb-like effect surrounding Galatea; a sharp transition from a dark to light smoky haze is quite visible behind Pygmalion. A clever addition also sits at Galatea's feet in the form of an incense burner, dispensing a smoky haze that frames her and wafts into the background. The haze adds to the feeling of a magician's performance, where at the sound of the magic words the object appears or disappears in a poof of smoke.

Apparently Girodet's effects were persuasive to some viewers. One of them claimed that the whole sanctified atmosphere lent the work a supernatural charge, which gave Galatea's miraculous awakening more credence. This critic described the effect in the following way: "Au moment du prodige, une auréole brillante paraît sur la tête de la déesse, et une lumière surnaturelle se répand dans tout le sanctuaire et forme, avec la fumée des parfums, le fond du tableau, sur lequel se détache, avec une magie surprenante, la figure de Galatée."[83] The painter's contemporaries reported that he even turned to unconventional methods to bring about unusual light effects in his work. Aside from the olive oil, (employed for the *Endymion*), Girodet often painted at night, and actually had a special lamp made for him, so that he could create bizarre luminary conditions in his studio. In fact, one of Girodet's students fashioned a mobile lamp, which recreated the appearance of moonlight. The lamp and this technique were recorded for posterity by a

[83] Description du tableau de Pygmalion 4-5. My translation: "At the moment of the miracle, a brilliant halo appeared over the head of the goddess, and a supernatural light spread throughout the sanctuary forming, with perfumed smoke, the background of the painting, out of which the figure of Galatea emerges with amazing magic."

student of Girodet; François-Louis Dejuinne's (1786-1844) painting *Portrait de Girodet poignant 'Pygmalion et Galatée*,' was shown at the Salon of 1822, only three years after the real painting appeared (Figure 2).[84] At the centre of the composition is the custom-made lamp, which illuminates the unfinished canvas of Pygmalion. Girodet, in the act of painting, is observed by his patron seated to the left. Behind Girodet sits a female model, compositionally opposite to the ancient statue of Venus in the other corner of the room. On the back wall of the studio hangs the *Endymion*, and through the window is a moonlit sky.

This unusual reportage of the making of a modern masterpiece testifies to the extent of the painting's success, and its legacy in French culture. The documentation of the master at work echoed the tradition of depicting Apelles or Dibutade in this same way. It also supplies further evidence that Girodet was intentionally mimicking sculpture for the bottom half of Galatea, since a copy of the *Venus de' Medici* appears in the scene, along with a live model. Dagorne observes that the violin in the studio was probably included to remind viewers that Girodet was an accomplished musician, or a 'Renaissance man,' and interested in seeking harmony between the arts.[85]

In my view, the violin is clearly the counterpart to the lyre, which accompanies Pygmalion in Girodet's famous painting. It demonstrates that Girodet is multi-talented, but most importantly, it places him within the lineage of artistic geniuses dating back to the likes of Apollo or Orpheus. Apollo, as a poet and musician himself, carried a lyre, in the event that he would be joined by his Muses, who would surely inspire him to triumph artistically. Due to the popularity of Apollo and Orpheus in nineteenth-century French art, the lyre would have been readily interpreted in this context by contemporary

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[84] The scene situates the painting's artist and patron, Giovanni-Battista Sommariva, in Girodet's studio, making it an unusual painting within a painting, where both the original and second work are 'captured' in the making. Richard Dagorne, "Le portrait de Girodet poignant *Pygmalion et Galatée* de François-Louis Dejuinne trouve sa place a Montargis," La Revue du Louvre et des musées de France 57:2 (2007): 17. For more on Girodet's teaching see Adhémar "L'enseignement académique " 123-59. François-Louis Dejuinne, *Portrait de Girodet poignant 'Pygmalion et Galatée*,' 1822, oil on canvas, 65 x 54,5 cm, Musée Girodet, Montargis, France.

[85] Dagorne, "Le portrait de Girodet" 17-18. Wettlaufer also concludes that the violin and the lyre are intentionally aligned, only her assessment is based on a complex and somewhat Freudian psychological analysis of the relationships between the figures in the painting. Pen vs. Paintbrush 109.

viewers.[86] In Pygmalion, the location of the lyre behind Pygmalion unequivocally associates this iconographic detail with him. Correspondingly, we are meant to understand that Pygmalion has been inspired by the god of the arts, and that his creative genius is akin to divine creation, and must surely be a gift of Apollo.[87] The piety of Girodet's sculptor obviously makes him deserving of such a gift, as he has recently made offerings to Venus, whose incense still burns. Pygmalion also takes on a supplicant and pious posture, approaching Galatea as if she too were a goddess.

In Dejuinne's reportage, the *Endymion* appears in the half-lit back wall of Girodet's studio, and the trappings of a working artist are strewn about, likely to show the intensity of Girodet's concentration. Dejuinne also staged some interesting comparisons to the *Pygmalion* composition. The moonlit view through the window in the background, when compared to the illuminated lamp in the foreground, forces us to confront the assertion, or at least the possibility, that Girodet has captured nature; perhaps he is even better at portraying the effects of nature than nature herself. The parallel between Pygmalion and Girodet is also not lost on the viewer, given that Dejuinne rendered Girodet in a mirror-image pose to that of his Pygmalion. Both artists are hunched over facing each other, allowing Dejuinne to declare Girodet as the 'new' Pygmalion, and the new genius of the modern day, just as Pygmalion was in his own time. The setting of Dejuinne's painting, strangely enough, acts as a foil to that in the original painting. In a review of Girodet's work, the students of David reported that it was ambiguous as to whether or not Pygmalion was in his studio or in a temple for Venus.[88] The confusion lay in the fact that typically Pygmalion was shown at work, or surrounded by some of the practical accoutrements of a sculptor's studio. While the ambiguity in Girodet's version removed Pygmalion from the realm of physical labour, out of which artists, and especially sculptors, had fought to extricate themselves since the Renaissance, this

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[86] Apollo also played an interesting role in Alberti's fifteenth-century treatise on sculpture titled *De statue*, in which Alberti projects the birth of sculpture onto the idea of tree trunks, corresponding to another Ovidian myth of metamorphosis: Apollo and Daphne, as Daphne is herself turned into a tree, in order to escape capture by the lustful sun god. The association of Apollo with the invention of sculpture has not been a well-developed issue in scholarship, however. Baskins, "Echoing Narcissus" 25.

[87] Girodet's incorporation of the lyre in other contexts, such as for his figure of *Spring*, or an engraved frontispiece after the Didot edition of Virgil's Aeneid, depicting *Virgil Crowned by the Muses*, suggests that he also viewed the lyre as a symbol of renewal and fertility, such as the fertility of the artist's creative powers.

[88] Lettres à David sur le Salon de 1819, par quelques élèves de son école (Paris: Pillet Ainé, 1819): 179.

departure was confusing to some viewers.[89] So, when Dejuinne faithfully documented Girodet's own studio, he set up a stunning contrast; Pygmalion is in the realm of genius, fantasy, and the gods, while Girodet occupies the land of the living and working artist. This contrast highlights how artfully Girodet created his illusion, because the intensely real studio shown in Dejuinne's scene testifies to Girodet's Pygmalion-like genius, given that he was able to transform the harsh realities around him when he made the painting into a spectacle of the divine.

Returning to Girodet's original *Pygmalion*, the most compelling illustration of the divine source of artistic genius is conveyed through the small figure of Cupid, whose physical connection between the two figures implies the transmission of an electric or magical force, as he levitates between the lovers, seemingly about to place each figure's hand in the other's. As such, Venus's emissary is a font of spiritual energy, magic, and love. This feature was also recognised by the painting's first viewers at the Salon of 1819. M. Kératry recorded the following:

> [O]n jette les yeux sur un petit Amour, tel qu'en dessinait Cipriani, qui, d'un côté, prend une des mains de Galatée (non pas celle qu'un sentiment de pudeur avait portée à la hauteur de la gorge), et de l'autre, se saisit du bras de Pygmalion. Voilà le lien de la composition.
>
> Cet Amour tout nu, dont les ailes sont peu apparentes, car il est venu pour serrer des nœuds durables, se soutient naturellement par l'action même à laquelle il se livre. En suspens entre la statue et l'artiste, foyer de lumière pour tous les deux, il éclaire principalement celle-ci, dont le corps se dessine avec harmonie sur un nuage de vapeurs qui s'élève du trépied, où le délire de la passion dépose chaque jour l'encens réservé aux immortels. Charmante allegorie! c'est le contact de l'amour qui, comme le feu de l'étincelle électrique, a donné l'ame à la statue! [90]

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[89] The decision to avoid a studio context in the representation of Pygmalion is typically viewed as an attempt to extricate art from the realm of craft. Wettlaufer is another scholar who has also come to this conclusion. Pen vs. Paintbrush 113.

[90] Kératry, Salon de 1819 237-8. My translation:

> [W] cast our eyes on a little Cupid, such as one that Cipriani would draw, who, on one side, takes the hands of Galatea (not the one that she raises to the height of her throat in an attitude of modesty), and with the other, he seizes Pygmalion's arm. This is the composition's link.
>
> This nude Cupid, whose wings are hardly apparent, because he has come to tie lasting knots, naturally supports the action that he has come to deliver. Suspended between the statue and the artist, he centres the light on both, primarily illuminating the one whose body is drawn with the harmony of a cloud of vapours, and elevates the tripod, where the delirium of passion provides each day the incense reserved for the immortals. Charming allegory! It is the contact with love that, like the fire of an electric spark, gave life to the statue.

The importance of this motif is also underlined by its reappearance in Girodet's illustrations for the Odes d'Anacréon. In the illustration *Sur la colombe*, Girodet repeated the portrayal of a Cupid-like figure as a physical, but divine, suspended link between the poet and nude statue of a female goddess.[91]

In addition to Girodet's unique and virtuoso handling of light in the *Pygmalion*, the work exhibits many other conventions, used by paragonising artists to give visible form to their artistic virtue. Beginning with the more incidental aspects of the scene, Girodet decorated the composition with well-placed objects that prove his painterly skill. At the right corner of the space lies a breathtaking portrayal of a bouquet of roses, which draws attention to the relief scenes that adorn the base of Galatea's pedestal. These scenes cleverly evoke the subject of the birth of Venus, by representing a nude maiden reclining on the waves in a tumult of billowing drapery, just as she appears in the famous Roman fresco in the *House of Venus* at Pompeii (ca. 1st century CE).[92] The Venus in the reliefs is attended by *putti* riding dolphins and playing instruments, announcing the birth of the goddess of love and beauty. Surely Girodet intended to draw a correlation between the relief subject and the narrative in his painting. Both refer to miraculous births of icons of feminine beauty. The scenes also acknowledge Venus's role in Ovid's story.[93]

Just inches from these *trompe l'œil* relief scenes is a golden urn standing on the pedestal beside Galatea, over which appears a highly illusionistic reflection on its base. In addition to these vignettes of artistic virtue, Girodet decorated the scene with an

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[91] See Odes d'Anacréon avec LIV compositions par Girodet, traduction d'Amb. Firmin Didot (Paris: De Firmin Didot Frères, 1864): 18. This work was not simply an exercise in illustration for Girodet. As is well known, Girodet endeavoured to rival other writers by creating his own poetry. In this publication not only did Girodet write the first poem called *Sur la lyre*, but he also penned a total of thirty-seven poems. In general, the illustrations throughout the epic poem appear to present a manifesto of depictions of both male and female nudes. A plethora of *beau idéal* figures in a variety of creative poses and figural combinations appear throughout, making it a good example of the fact that he created the *beau idéal* in both male and female figures. For a primary source account of Girodet's poetry and writing see Alexandre Levain, "Girodet considéré comme écrivain" 11-21. Girodet, *Sur la colombe*, print published posthumously in Odes d'Anacréon avec LIV compositions par Girodet, traduction d'Amb. Firmin Didot, ca. 1800 (Paris: De Firmin Didot Frères, 1864), located at the Getty Research Centre, Los Angeles, California.
[92] Anonymous, *Venus Anadyomenes*, ca. 79 CE, fresco, House of Venus, Pompeii.
[93] One final note on the relief is that a similar scene regarding the life of Venus appears on Bronzino's *Pygmalion and Galatea* of the sixteenth century, but Bronzino's portrays a moment from the story of Paris offering Venus the golden apple. Currie, "Secularised Sculptural Imagery" 248.

elaborately patterned marble floor, thereby convincing us of his perfect grasp of illusionistic perspective. The smoke wafting out of the incense burner also heightens the scene's visual complexity, because it necessitates capturing the setting in varying layers of visibility. Of course the most gripping proof of Girodet's skill is found in the figure of Galatea herself. As few other artists had done, he portrayed the narrative at its climax, seizing the moment of Galatea's metamorphosis caught in mid-transformation. Being true to the original account in Ovid, the supernatural treatment of light emphasises the statue's ivory surface and pristine skin. Towards this end, Pygmalion's rosy and more robust flesh offers a foil to the semi-transformed Galatea. In Galatea's body, the transition from marble to human flesh is nothing less than masterful. At her feet the young woman exhibits the unnatural sheen of ivory marble, exuding an immovable solidity.[94] Between her feet and thighs is a gradual and believable transition to Galatea's enlivened upper body. Her demure pose and humble attitude imply that, upon realising her spiritual awakening, the young maiden expresses an appropriate level of modesty. The raised hand also firmly plants her in the *Venus pudica* tradition, and highlights the painting's role in a long history of such depictions, thereby positioning Girodet among the ranks of the most celebrated ancient and Renaissance masters of the female *beau idéal*, such as Apelles, Praxiteles, Botticelli, and others. Contemporary critiques of Girodet's painting reveal that viewers did connect Galatea to Venus, and that many admired the challenge of creating a Galatea that would be worthy of this goddess. For instance, the critic Kératry demonstrated his familiarity with the eighteenth-century amendments to the myth, such as that of Rousseau, wherein Galatea was a recreation of Venus, when he observed the following:

> Les statues existant déjà, consacrée par les suffrages des artistes et l'admiration des siècles: c'est la *Vénus de Médicis*. Pygmalion pourrait aussi bien l'avoir faite, que Cléomènes, auquel on l'attribue; et nous levons M. Girodet de s'en être emparé. D'ailleurs il se l'est rendu propre en lui donnant la vie. C'est la même pureté de formes; c'est la même grâce de contours: la tête seule est changée, parce qu'il fallait que Galatée prît la place de Vénus.[95]

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[94] While the statue was made of ivory in Ovid's tale, most nineteenth-century viewers, who were used to seeing white marble at the Salon, would have probably not differentiated between the two media.
[95] Kératry, Salon de 1819 235-6. My translation:

Galatea, then, was baptised the new Venus for modern viewers.

The accolades that Girodet garnered for his new version may have been rooted in its balance of new and old, having kept many popular features of the story. Many of *Pygmalion's* iconographic and compositional features had been manipulated by earlier French artists, at least in the work of those who represented a similar moment of the narrative. For example, a notable precedent was completed in 1797 by the French painter Louis Gauffier (1762-1801). His *Pygmalion and Galatea* was intended for English viewers, since Gauffier had been forced into exile during the French Revolution.[96] This painting, which pre-dated Girodet's by about twenty years, exhibits some of the qualities for which Girodet's painting was so famous. It is possible for Girodet to have taken an interest in the work, since Gauffier had been a fellow student in David's studio.[97] Gauffier's composition similarly includes burning incense before Galatea's pedestal, a mid-transformation bodily form, and an astonished Pygmalion. Likewise, Cupid floats in the scene, and flowers are strewn in the foreground. A dove, again symbolic of Venus, descends in front of her supernatural cloud, but because it is alone it looks much more like the dove of the Holy Spirit than a pagan symbol, which Gauffier may have intended. However, Gauffier's scene is more closely tied to the eighteenth-century visual depictions than is Girodet's, most notably by the prominent place of Venus in the scene, who is hovering above Galatea, stealing centre stage. This goddess is unmistakably the bearer of power here, and not the artist. Gauffier also included a lyre, but added a butterfly above Galatea's head to symbolise metamorphosis. Despite the success of

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> The statues existed already, consecrated by the suffering of the artists and the admiration of centuries: it is the *Venus de Medici*. Pygmalion could just as well have done it as Cléomènes to whom it is attributed; and we lift up M. Girodet for having taken hold of this. Moreover, he made it unique in giving it life. There is the same purity of forms, the same graceful contours: only the head is changed, because it was necessary that Galatea take the place of Venus.

[96] Louis Gauffier, *Pygmalion and Galatea*, 1797, oil on canvas, 67.5 x 51.2 cm, Manchester City Art Gallery, Manchester, England.

[97] Jacques de Caso, "Girodet," The Art Bulletin 51:1 (March 1969): 85-8. Gauffier, interestingly enough, had been bettered by Drouais when both of them competed for awards within the French academy during their tenure in Rome. For more on this competitive relationship see Lee, "Drouais" 364. Scholarship on Gauffier is minimal, and no extensive singular studies of the Pygmalion exist to my knowledge, but for more on his connection to David see Annaottani Cavina and Emilia Calbi, "Louis Gauffier and the Question of J.-L. David's 'Vue présumée du jardin du Luxembourg,'" The Burlington Magazine 134:1066 (Jan., 1992): 27-33. See also R. Crozet, "Louis Gauffier (1762-1801)," Bulletin de la société de l'histoire de l'art français, 1941-1944 (1947): 100-13.

Gauffier's work, it is easy to see why Girodet's painting has ultimately remained more famous. The reason lies in the fact that Gauffier was relying upon a stylistically more Neoclassical mode, which was essentially less suitable for the subject. The severity of the colours, and the cold and pretentious studio space, evoke neither the miraculous nor the supernatural. Girodet's scene, on the other hand, demonstrates his increasingly Romantic tendencies, which were much more appropriate for the subject, given that the whole myth of the artistic creative genius, and the spiritual response that it could engender in the viewer, had been reborn in the Romantic era.

Another precedent, which was possibly known to Girodet, was Jean-Michel Moreau le jeune's (1741-1814) *Pygmalion* engraving (1783).[98] Moreau le jeune was a court artist before the Revolution, an academician, and an accomplished painter and engraver. He was commissioned to illustrate Rousseau's play, which was published with the engravings in 1775.[99] In an analysis of the engraving, Sheriff argues that the artist was deliberately departing from the text, by portraying a Galatea that is perhaps a little more self-confident than how she is described in Rousseau's play.[100] Sheriff likewise reviews the contributions of the eighteenth-century versions of Pygmalion, noting that it was at this time when artists began to place Pygmalion within a studio, which draws the myth closer to its status as a metaphor for the aesthetic experience, and the creative artistic process.[101] Girodet does not suggest a studio as much as he does a temple setting. Given that he produced engravings for inclusion in Rousseau's play, and the fact that

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[98] Jean-Michel Moreau, *Pygmalion*, 1783, print from *Pygmalion, Scène lyrique de M. J.J. Rousseau* (Paris: A. Berquin, 1775).

[99] See M. Berquin, Arnaud Berquin, Droüet, Jean-Michel Moreau, dit Moreau le Jeune, Jean Michel Moreau, Clément-Pierre Marillier, Nicolas Delaunay, Nicolas Ponce, Jean-Jacques Rousseau, Pygmalion: scene lyrique de Mr. J.J. Rousseau (Paris: J. Lemonnyer, 1775). See also Marie Joseph François Mahéraut, L'Œuvre de Moreau le jeune: Catalogue raissonné et déscriptif (Paris: Adolphe Labitte, 1880).

[100] Mary D. Sheriff, Moved by Love: Inspired Artists and Deviant Women in Eighteenth-Century France (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004): 197. For Sheriff's analysis of Moreau le jeune's scenes of Pygmalion see pages 196-200. Sheriff also addresses these illustrations in "Passionate Spectators" 78-80. For another analysis of Moreau le jeune's Galatea see Joan B. Landes, Visualizing the Nation: Gender Representation and Revolution in Eighteenth-Century France (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 2001): 143-6. See also Caroline Ascott, "Venus as Dominatrix: Nineteenth-Century Artists and their Creations," Manifestations of Venus: Art and Sexuality (Manchester and New York: Manchester University Press, 2000): 109-25, 209-10.

[101] Sheriff, Moved by Love 158-9. Sheriff's text, especially chapters 4 and 5, provides a useful account of some lesser known eighteenth-century versions of Pygmalion, which are beyond the scope of this topic, especially with regards to her investigation of the Pygmalion theme in the characterisation of eighteenth-century actresses and theatrical culture.

Girodet was deliberately engaging with Rousseau's version, which we will discuss shortly, the likenesses between Girodet's painting and the earlier illustration are not unexpected.[102] Both show the incense, pedestal, Cupid, flowers, and intimate sculptor to statue composition. In this case, what set Girodet's work apart was primarily its ambitiousness. Only Girodet's version presents the figure of Galatea in life-size grandeur, and only here do find a luminous spiritual effect miraculously pervading the space.

Girodet's critics perceived these departures to be quite calculated. The painting was given considerable critical attention, in part it seems, because it was viewed as the manifesto of Girodet's career. Indeed, it post-dated the *Endymion* by enough time that a come-back of sorts would have been long anticipated. However, it was precisely because of the earlier work's success that Girodet had had considerable difficulty in completing one that could match the former's fame. According to his contemporaries, Girodet suffered from one-hit-wonder syndrome, meaning that he felt quite acutely the burden of generating another 'masterpiece' throughout the mature decades of his career. Having peaked so early with his *académie peinte*, the critics were reluctant to declare any of his mature works comparable in their success and ambition to the famous *Endymion*. De Quincy described the challenges that Girodet faced at this time:

> Cependant ceux qui savoient ce qu'une composition aussi légère avoit coûté de temps et de tourmens à l'artiste; qui savoient que, trois fois le tableau effacé pendant six années, avoit autant de fois subi l'épreuve d'une création nouvelle, ne pouvoient s'empêcher de plaindre l'auteur *d'Endymion*, réduit à faire regretter dans *Pygmalion*, après trente années, la veine heureuse et facile d'où avoient coulé ses premiers essais. Ceux-là surtout que l'amitié avoient rendus confidens plus intimes d'une ambition ennemie de sa gloire, attribuoient aux causes que nous avons exposées cette disposition de mécontentement de lui-même, qui portoit M. Girodet à se méfier de ses forces, à calomnier son talent, à se forger des obstacles, et surtout à redouter les jugemens publics. Qui de ses amis n'a pas su, pendant qu'il faisoit ou refaisoit son tableau de *Galatée*, sous l'influence de quelles craintes fut conçu, en finit par voir le jour, cet enfant, qui auroit dû être celui du plaisir, et quelles anxiétiés accompagnèrent son introduction dans le monde?[103]

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[102] For more on the analysis of Rousseau see Louis Marin, "Le moi et les pouvoirs de l'image: Glosse sur Pygmalion, scène lyrique (1772) de J.-J. Rousseau," Modern Language Notes 107 (September 1992): 659-72. See also, Sheriff, "Passionate Spectators" 64-6.

[103] De Quincy, "Éloge historique" 328-9. My translation:

Evidently, then, Girodet struggled with this work, to the point that he was erasing it, redoing it, refusing to give up on it, and was tortured by the expectations of his peers. The fact that the patron commissioned the work as a substitute for the *Endymion* made this personal struggle a public one as well.

Much of the *Pygmalion's* critical acclaim rested upon its apparent relationship to literary sources, which seems to have been part of the reason for its success. In his study of the painting, James H. Rubins examines the *Pygmalion* in terms of its relationship with Rousseau's Pygmalion, scène lyrique (1762).[104] Rubins observes that many critics linked it to Rousseau's story, to the point that some even quoted Rousseau in their ekphrases of the *Pygmalion* and its figures.[105] It is notable that Rousseau was the first of any artist or

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> However those who knew what a composition as light as this cost in time and torment to the artist; who knew that three times the painting was erased over six years, and many times submitted to the trials of a new creation, and it could not prevent *Endymion's* maker from complaining, reduced to regret in the *Pygmalion*, after thirty years, the easy and successful luck from which his first works were produced. It was those especially, whose affection made them the most intimate confidants of an ambition that was the enemy of his glory, which could be attributed to the causes that we've already exposed, such as that disposition of malcontentedness with himself, which M. Girodet forcefully mistrusted, and slandered his talent, created obstacles, and primarily caused him to fear public judgement. Who amongst his friends did not know, during the time that he was making and re-making his Galatea, under the influences of the fears that were conceived, finished by seeing the day, this prodigy, that should have been one of pleasure, and what anxieties accompanied its introduction into the world?

[104] James H. Rubin, "'Pygmalion and Galatea': Girodet and Rousseau," The Burlington Magazine 127:989 (Aug., 1985): 517. Aside from Rousseau's treatment, further proof of the literary and musical artists's interest in the subject is also evidenced by the opera by Luigi Cherubini (1760-1842) called *Pimmalione*, which was performed in Paris in 1809 to Napoleon and his wife Josephine. For a scholarly examination of this work see: Margery Stomne Selden, "Pygmalion: A Little-Known Opera by Cherubini," Performing Arts Review 11:1 (Dec. 1981): 94-101. For a look at Rousseau's work see J. Waeber, "Pygmalion et J.-J. Rousseau: Un grand poète, qui serait en même temps un peu musicien," Fontes artis musicae 44:1 (1997): 32-41. See also: Marin, "Le moi et les pouvoirs de l'image" 659-72. Henriette Beese, "Galathée à l'origine des langues: Comments on Rousseau's Pygmalion as a Lyric Drama," Modern Language Notes (MLN) 93:5 (1978): 839-851. Readers may also be interested in the text called Ourika, written by Mme de Duras in 1823, in which she reverses the Pygmalion myth so that Galatea is turned back into stone. See D. Dimauro, "Ourika, or Galatea Reverts to Stone," Nineteenth-Century French Studies 28:3-4 (2000): 187-211.

[105] Rubin, "Girodet and Rousseau" 519. For more on Rousseau's version of the subject see Raymond Court, "Le *Pygmalion* de Rameau et le *Pygmalion* de Rousseau: un mythe au défi d'une révolution esthétique," Analyse musicale 35 (Mar., 2000): 68-71. An anonymous writer, who reviewed the work upon its initial exhibition, similarly corroborated the fact that Girodet's contemporaries connected his painting to Rousseau's play. Anonymous, Examen critique et impartial du tableau de M. Girodet (*Pygmalion et Galathée*) (Paris: Boucher, Imprimeur, successeur de L.G. Michard, 1819): 11.

writer in Europe to give the statue the name Galatea.[106] Consequently, when Girodet became the first artist to use the name Galatea in the title of a painting, he called attention to the fact that he was creating a work that related to Rousseau in some way. According to Rubins, Girodet's penchant for rivalry led him to challenge Rousseau's version, by producing a work that integrates Neoclassicism's beauty and perfection with the new Romantic concern for artistic imagination and creativity.[107] Girodet may have been spurred on by Rousseau's apparent lack of support for the idealised view of the artist as a divine creator of supernatural beauty, because in his play, Rousseau did not portray Pygmalion as an instrument of divine agency, and in fact undermined this theory altogether.[108]

Rousseau's less than noble view of the artist was rooted in several facets of his literary depiction of Pygmalion. To begin, Rubins maintains that Rousseau's Pygmalion does not view Galatea as a separate entity or lover; she is another version of his own self: "My heart yearns to leave my body in order to warm hers [the statue's]. In my delirium I feel as if I can project myself beyond myself; I feel as if I can give her my life and animate her with my soul. Ah! let Pygmalion die in order to live in Galatea."[109] And Ewa Lager-Burcharth even goes so far as to say that the whole play is about the relationship between Pygmalion and the version of himself that he sees in the image.[110] What is striking about Rousseau's version is its thematic likeness to Ovid's myth of Narcissus. Like Narcissus, Pygmalion adores what he views as a better version of himself. Wettlaufer similarly concludes that Rousseau's narrative has Narcissistic overtones.[111] In this scenario, the statue is not actually a distinct entity awaiting its

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[106] Law, "The Name Galatea" 341. The first use in England dates to William S. Gilbert's play called Pygmalion and Galatea of 1871. Law concludes that there is no known source for the naming of the statue in the European tradition, although she has carefully researched all appearances of the name in the western tradition.
[107] Rubin, "Girodet and Rousseau" 517.
[108] Sheriff, "Passionate Spectators" 66. Refer to this article for an in depth analysis of the use of the Pygmalion subject throughout the eighteenth century to address the theme of enthusiasm in artistic viewership, and the theoretical equation made in eighteenth-century France between artistic production and biological progeny.
[109] Quoted in Rubins, "Girodet and Rousseau" 518.
[110] Lajer-Burcharth, "Pompadour's Touch" 54. Refer to this article for a fascinating analysis of how eighteenth-century portraiture constituted an elaborate form of Pygmalionism.
[111] Wettlaufer, Pen vs. Paintbrush 15. While Wettlaufer views this Narcissistic element in Rousseau's play as an indication of the artist's willingness to sacrifice himself to his art, my interpretation is that is much

unique spirit, because in fact it is truly a mirror of, or receptacle for, the artist. Rousseau's Pygmalion is therefore a fatal creature, who wishes to end his own life, in order to be reunited through spiritual inhabitation with the statue. No matter how earnest his love for the statue, this dangerous and maddening desire necessitates bringing about the end of one's own existence, at least in its natural form, and is therefore morbid, foolish, and rooted in deceit, as was Narcissus's love for his image.

Nevertheless, the impact of Rousseau's version was profound, and it became the primary literary point of comparison for the Pygmalion subject in the visual arts, next to Ovid's, in the minds of viewers.[112] In examining the literary portrayals of Pygmalion in the eighteenth century, Wettlaufer found that writers were also trying to improve upon nature by creating Galatea as the perfect woman. Her discussion involves an extensive overview of the role of desire in the story, and Galatea's part as an object of lust in Rousseau's play, for example. To counter Rousseau, some artists responded by purifying Pygmalion, emphasising his spiritual, rather than lustful, experience.[113] The issue of physical or sexual desire in the Pygmalion story has been dealt with extensively in Wettlaufer's book, so I will limit my comments on the matter. Essentially, Wettlaufer proposes that a crisis of masculine identity, as we have already discussed with regards to Solomon-Godeau's theories in Chapter 1, caused both writers and artists to be drawn to the Pygmalion story. She views the statue as demonstrative of the type of woman that male viewers desired, casting her as a beautiful, silent, and sensual creature.[114]

Some of Girodet's contemporaries, who were assuming a connection between the painting and the play, latched onto the notion that Pygmalion was indeed deluded. A curious poetic passage, which was included in an 1819 critique of the work, contains the following verses in the voice of Pygmalion: "O Venus! je te rends hommage,/ semble dire

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more morbid and negative. The view of Pygmalion's statue as a second self is also discussed in Burcharth, "Pompadour's Touch" 54.

[112] Wettlaufer, Pen vs. Paintbrush 16. Wettlaufer notes, for example, that Rousseau was so popular that his Pygmalion was even translated into German half a dozen times in the forty years following its initial publication.

[113] Wettlaufer, Pen vs. Paintbrush 19.

[114] Wettlaufer, Pen vs. Paintbrush 23-30. While I do not agree with her arguments, Wettlaufer offers a unique reading of the painting, wherein she finds that it embodies Girodet's attempts to woo the king, and to express his own feelings towards women, by depicting Galatea as a repressed, mindless, and subordinated woman (116-7). Even though her arguments are interesting, they are often based on sweeping statements regarding historical or social circumstances, which are then applied to Girodet personally, without sufficient presentation of scholarly or archival evidence to support such readings.

Pygmalion;/ Si Galatée est ton image,/ Anime ma création./ Séduit par l'objet que j'admire,/ Mon esprit trompe-t-il mes yeux?/ Que vois-je! Ce marbre respire!/ Amour! tu comble tous mes voeux."[115] Another critic of Girodet's *Pygmalion* also related the myth to idolatry and deceit: "Cette autorité est celle de Rousseau qui on vêtu Galathée, et qui mêne à trouvé dans cette circonstance un heureux incident pour faire ressortir les gradations par lesquelles Pygmalion passe d'une admiration excessive à l'amour, à l'idolâtrie dont il finit par être possède pour le chef-d'œuvre de son génie."[116]

Despite the negative implications of Rousseau's version, other critics did try to root out a theoretically positive representation of the arts in his account, by virtue of its lack of interest in the physical labour or materialism of artistic production. But to what force was Galatea's creation attributed? Rubins observes that critical reviews of Girodet's version relied upon adulatory comments that presupposed a non-laborious, and even magical genesis for his painterly powers.[117] Such a de-emphasis on the material act of painting in reviews of the work demonstrates that Girodet convinced many viewers of the intellectual and divine nature of artistic production, despite the theoretical ambivalence of Rousseau's artist.

Having reviewed the importance of animation to the arts in theoretical and critical debates, we must assess whether or not Girodet's Galatea rose to meet these expectations. Critiques of Girodet's painting focused on Galatea's animation, demonstrating the great import of this feature to the work's success.[118] One of Girodet's critics was quick to herald this triumph in his work:

> Le moment choisi par le peintre, est celui où la statue commence à s'animer; déjà le sang circule, la tête, les bras et le torse respirent, déjà la vie, tandis que les jambes sont encore d'albâtre. Étonnée de ce changement subit, la nymphe porte la

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[115] Description du tableau de Pygmalion 8. My translation: "O Venus! I pay tribute to you,/ says Pygmalion;/ If Galatea is in your image,/ bring my creation to life./ Being seduced by the object of my admiration,/ My spirit deceives my eyes?/ What do I see! The marble breathes!/ Love/Cupid! You heighten all my wishes."

[116] Examen critique 11. My translation: "This authority is that of Rousseau who clothed Galatea, and who discovered in this circumstance a happy incident to highlight the degrees by which Pygmalion passes from an admiration excessive to love, to idolatry and finishing by being possessed by the masterpiece of his own genius."

[117] Rubin, "Girodet and Rousseau" 519.

[118] For Wettlaufer's analysis of the issue of animation and time in both the literary and visual depictions of Galatea see Pen vs. Paintbrush 122-4.

> main gauche à son cœur comme pour y chercher la cause de ces palpitations si nouvelles pour elle.[119]

In the same critique, we find an intriguing recreation of Louis XVIII's (1755-1824) response to the work, which the king had apparently asked to see. The illusion of animation, coupled with Galatea's iconic representation, was supposedly so convincing that the king himself exclaimed: "En vérité, je crois qu'elle va descendre à l'instant même de son piédestal!"[120]

Aside from its perceived *vivezza*, still another aspect of the work's critical reception is of interest to us. Rubins reports that the critic Étienne-Jean Délécluze (1781-1863) admired Girodet's painting due to its "advocacy of the metaphysical *beau*."[121] Prior to the nineteenth century, mastery of the *beau idéal* was believed to have been based upon the artist's cultivation of good judgement, through rigourous academic training. Under the new tenets of Romantic aesthetic theory, which gave precedence to the mind's imaginative unlearned creative genius, artists were still expected to master the *beau idéal*, but through an altered ratio of training to dependence upon imaginative genius. Such a theoretical concern is apparent in the following critique of Girodet's painting:

> Il y a vraiment quelque chose de magique dans cette composition pleine de feu, de verve, de génie et de ce sentiment exquis du beau idéal, dont a dû se sentir pénétré celui qui a osé s'imposer la tâche effrayante de peindre ce qui n'existe pas, ce qui n'a pas pu exister, par conséquent de produire des effets qu'il ne pouvait chercher que dans sa seule imagination, puisque la nature ne lui en offrait nulle part le modèle.[122]

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[119] Description du tableau de Pygmalion 4. My translation:

> The moment that the painter chose, is the one where the statue begins to be animated; already the blood flows, the head, the arm and the torso breathe, already life, even while the legs are still alabaster. Stunned by this subtle change, the nymph raises her left hand to her heart as if to find the cause of these new palpitations that are so new to her.

[120] Description du tableau de Pygmalion 7. My translation: "In truth, I believe that she will descend this moment from her pedestal!"

[121] Rubin, "Girodet and Rousseau" 520.

[122] Examen critique 4. My translation:

> There is truly something magical in this composition full of fire, of eloquence, of genius and the exquisite feeling of the *beau ideal*, which must have felt penetrated by that which dared to self-impose the terrifying task of painting that which does not exist, that which could never have existed, as a result of producing effects that can only be found in the imagination, since nature offers him no model.

This excerpt reveals that by 1819, the female nude had become equally valid in demonstrating the *beau idéal*, and how intimidating it was to attempt.

Girodet's critics also picked up on the competitive interplay that inherently existed as a result of the painter's decision to illustrate a sculpture and its sculptor; this was judged as an act of triumph over the more material art of sculpture. Girodet must have intended this, because he was bent on surpassing the ancients in both his painting and poetry. One critic went into great detail, praising Girodet for his ability to give the immobilised block of marble life through his paintbrush:

> Ce n'était point l'image de la mort que présenter ce bloc qui s'était sous le ciseau d'un statuaire. Il respirait anime sous le ciseau d'un statuaire. Il respirait, il répondait autour de lui la chaleur et la vie. Demeuré marbre sous le pinceau du peintre, il eût accuse l'impuissance de celui-ci; il eût démenti la passion de l'artist grec pour le chef-d'œuvre de ses mains; ou, tout au moins, il eût fait dégénérer cette passion, devenue sublime par le prodige qui la couronne, en une folie digne sans doute de pitié, mais non de cette pitié généreuse que Vénus daigner signaler par le plus grand miracle dont l'imagination puisse admettre possibilité.
> Les formes de la statue devant rester les mêmes, sans expression ne pouvant acquérir qu'une nuance presqu'il ne lui manquait que le souffle divin pour que l'illusion qui caressait Pygmalion devînt une réalité; il n'y avait que le coloris et le mouvement qui pussent distinguer le chef-d'œuvre du sculpteur, démeuré un miracle d'art, et ce même chef-d'œuvre, devenue un miracle de la Toute puissance divine.
> Or, le mouvement n'était pas à la disposition du peintre, et le coloris ne pouvant se montrer sans faire disparaître le miracle, par conséquent sous glaçer le sujet tombé, dès-lors, au-dessous même des sujets les plus vulgaires, puisqu'il n'offre pas une action, et que, réduit à deux personages entraînes l'un vers l'autre sans effort ou sans résistance, il ne se prêtait plus qu'à une composition académique plus ou moins savante, mais dénuée de toute chaleur poétique et de tout génie d'invention.
> Concluons de ces observations que rien n'égale la difficulté du sujet…[123]

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[123] Examen critique 5-7. My translation:

> It had not been an image of death that the block presented and that was under the knife of the statue. It breathed in animation under the knife of the statue. It breathed, it responded around him with the warmth of life. Becoming marble under the brush of the painter, he had accused this one of powerlessness; he challenged the passion of the Greek artist for a hand-made masterpiece; or, more or less, he diminished that passion, becoming sublime by the genius that crowned him, in a madness, worthy without doubt, of pity, but none of that generous pity that Venus deigned to signal with the greatest miracle that the imagination could make possible.

This critic's focus on the faux-sculpture theme, presented by depicting this subject in painted form, offers many clues as to why the work was so successful, and illuminates a basic fact about the paragone as a whole. Very plainly, in any instance where one art form is seen to deliberately copy another, that art form is considered to be extending itself beyond its natural strengths. Such an effort heightened the perceived difficulty of the artwork. For this precise reason, paragonising artists have often been drawn to the illusionistic challenges of copying another art form, such as the sixteenth and seventeenth-century obsession with *quadratura*, which ensued following Michelangelo's completion of the Sistine ceiling, because if done well, the critics would be compelled to acknowledge the artist's triumph over excessive difficulty in artistic production. As the critic indicated in his review, Girodet elected to treat the most difficult subject, and the result was that he had convincingly portrayed sculpture in painting.[124]

Due to the fact that mimicking another art form necessitates challenging the limits of one's art, it is understandable that the same anonymous critic also commented on the ways in which Girodet's painting surpasses its limits. For instance, he noted that movement is not normally visible in painting; regardless, Galatea's temporal metamorphosis is convincing. Another critic compared the work to the verbal arts, by implying that the painting can speak: "Il ne faudrait donc un tableau avec des parôles, comme l'artiste français en a fait un avec des couleurs...Girodet a transporté le marbre sur la toile; d'un même coup il a dompté deux élémens rébelles, et je ne suis pas Rousseau

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> The forms of the statue must remain the same, without expression it could not acquire the nuance that it lacked, such that the illusion that Pygmalion caressed could become a reality with a divine whisper; there was but the colour and movement that could distinguish the masterpiece of the sculptor, which would become a miracle of art, and this same masterpiece would become a miracle of all divine power.
> Otherwise, movement was not part of the abilities of the painter, and the colour could not be revealed without making the miracle disappear, and the subject would consequently be paralysed, there then, over the same subjects of the greatest vulgarity, for which no action was offered, and which, reduced to two figures straining towards each other, without effort of resistance, it would not be more than a skillful academic composition, but stripped of all of its poetic warmth and all of its genius of invention.
> We may conclude from these observations that nothing could equal the difficulty of this subject…

[124] For an examination of a famous example of illusionistic painting and *quadratura* see Joseph Polzer, "The Anatomy of Masaccio's 'Holy Trinity,'" Jahrbuch der Berliner Museen 13 (1971): 18-59.

pour reproduire du tels prestiges!"[125] So the *Pygmalion* succeeded in impressing its viewers, by exceeding the limits of its medium, which was achieved with the semblance of speech, magic, animation, and the presentation of the physical in two-dimensional form. As much as painting can, it approached the *Gesamtkunstwerk*.

In sum, it is in Girodet's version of Pygmalion that we find the quintessential manifestation of the Romantic theory of artistic genius. The technical features of Girodet's methods place him in the paragonising tradition of his Neoclassical predecessors, while the emphasis on genius and the supernatural forecasted the Romantic concern for spirituality in art, which was progressively more sought out in the industrialised and materialistic life of modern Europe. Girodet's Pygmalion is a moral, and spiritually enlightened entity, in accordance with the Romantic quest for union with the spiritual and the divine.

The Burne-Jones Saga: *Pygmalion and the Image*

The next artist must be considered in the context of his native tradition. Unlike France, England's official institutions, and unofficial public interest, had not consistently supported the nude figural tradition in the arts, and certainly did not promote it as the most hallowed communicator of moral virtue. In fact, this tradition, which many viewed as a neglected art form in Great Britain, had become a central point of contention in the latter half of the nineteenth century. As I will discuss shortly, due to the weaker history of the nude in England, its depiction was often scrutinised more carefully, and criticised more disparagingly, than it would have been by continental viewers.[126] English artists

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[125] My translation: "It must therefore be a speaking picture, that the French artist has accomplished with colours. Girodet has transported the marble on the canvas; in the same glance he creates two rebellious elements, and I am not Rousseau to copy such prestige." It is of note that an engraving of Girodet's painting was used as the frontispiece to the author's publication on the Salon of 1819, highlighting the critic's belief in the work's superiority over all other submissions of that year. Kératry, Salon de 1819 240.

[126] For more on the nude in nineteenth-century England see W. Sickert, "The Naked and the Nude," Walter Sickert: The Complete Writings on Art, ed. A.G. Robins (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001). Consult Chapter 6 "Icons of Womanhood," from Shearer West, Fin-de-siècle (New York and Woodstock: The Overlook Press, 1994): 86-103. More generally see Lynda Nead, The Female Nude: Art, Obscenity and Sexuality (London and New York: Routledge, 1992). Also by Nead, Myths of Sexuality: Representations of Women in Victorian Painting (Oxford: Blackwell, 1988). Marcia Pointon, Naked Authority: The Body in Western Painting 1830-1908 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990). Elaine Showalter, Sexual Anarchy: Gender and Culture at the Fin-de-Siècle (New York: Viking, 1990).

had enjoyed great support in the areas of genre painting, portraiture, and landscape. Figures such as William Hogarth (1697-1764), Reynolds, and others furthered the causes of these otherwise lesser genres, especially since they were more lucrative in Great Britain's art market than history painting would have been at this time.[127] But throughout the century, and especially under Leighton's directory, the Royal Academy became increasingly fashioned after its older French counterpart.[128] As we saw in the first chapter, Leighton's discourses reveal that he adamantly sought to metamorphose the English system into a semblance of the French system. Leighton's critics even acknowledged a distinctly French academic style in his own works.[129] Critics were correct in concluding that Leighton's work had been informed by a diverse background, given that he was well-traveled, and had studied outside of England.[130]

Familiarity with the French style was facilitated by such events as the London International Exhibition of 1862, where French academic works could be readily

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On methodology of the nude see Griselda Pollack, "Women, Art and Ideology: Questions for Feminist Art Historians," Woman's Art Journal 4:1 (Spring - Summer, 1983): 39-47.

[127] For more the genres of art in the English tradition see: John Bonehill, "British Art History and the Royal Academy," Oxford Art Journal 31:2 (2008): 292-4. Brian Allen, "Rule Britannia: History Painting in Eighteenth-century England," History Today 45 (June 1995): Questia, www.Questia.com. Lawrence Lipking, The Ordering of the Arts in Eighteenth-Century England (Princeton, N.J., Princeton University Press, 1970). William Sandby, The History of the Royal Academy of Arts from Its Foundation in 1768 to the Present Time (London: Longman, Roberts, and Green, 1862). Governing Cultures: Art Institutions in Victorian England, eds. Paul Barlow and Colin Trodd (Burlington, VT: Aldershot, Ashgate, 2000). For a collection of essays on academic related issues see Art and the Academy. As a case study of G.F. Watts in the context of the growth of history painting in nineteenth-century England see Colin Trodd, "Before History Painting: Enclosed Experience and the Emergent Body in the Work of G.F. Watts," Visual Culture in Britain 6:1 (2005): 37-57, 130-132.

[128] The Royal Academy was founded in 1768 under the reign of King George III in England. Its first President was Sir Joshua Reynolds. For more on Leighton and the academy see Frederick Leighton: Antiquity, Renaissance, Modernity, ed. Tim Barringer (London and New Haven: Yale University Press for the Paul Mellon Centre for Studies in British Art, 1999).

[129] In particular, Leighton was compared with the French Academic painter William-Adolphe Bouguereau (1825-1905), whose work had been available to English viewers at such venues as the Exposition Universelle of 1878, and later to Gérôme. Elizabeth Prettejohn, "Leighton: The Aesthete as Academic," Art and the Academy in the Nineteenth Century (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2000): 34-41. For further evaluation of contemporary criticism associating Leighton with the French Academic style the author cites D.S. MacColl, "Academicism and Lord Leighton," Saturday Review (6 March, 1897): 241. Prettejohn also identifies MacColl as one of the critics who supported a positive avant-garde versus negative academic stereotype in his writings.

[130] Elizabeth Prettejohn, "Leighton" 49. The author tells us that Leighton undertook the more typical French education abroad, by studying in Frankfurt (1846-52), moving on to Rome (1852-55) and finally staying in Paris for a time (1855-58). See also E.I. Barrington, The Life, Letters, and Work of Frederick Leighton (Reprinted from the 1904 edition, 1973). With a collection of fourteen essays on the artist, this text provides one of the most extensive recent scholarly treatments of Leighton. See Frederic Leighton. Lord Leighton: Eminent Victorian Artist, exh. cat., (London : Royal Academy of Arts; New York : Abrams, 1996).

analysed by the English. In England, the 'academic' was generally aligned with the 'foreign,' or a more theoretical or learned quality than that which typified English art. In trying to bolster the theoretical foundation of the English system, its leaders often turned to theorists already being celebrated in France. For example, both the English and French academic institutions were aware of Lessing's theories. Henry Howard, for instance, who was a Professor of Painting at the Royal Academy (1833-47), supported Lessing's ideas in his own role as an educator.[131] Still, the agenda of emulation was not always supported. The otherness of the academic tradition in England possibly helped to inspire competition between English and French artists, seeing that those artists working in England may have felt threatened by the supposed authority of a foreign culture and its monolithic artistic institution. Evidence for this kind of response to Leighton's pro-French direction of the Royal Academy may be found in the opinions of those who felt that he was mutating British art into something unnatural and foreign.[132] Certainly, by the end of the century, many English critics had become quite vehement in their hostility towards the authority of French artistic culture. Of course, the nineteenth century began with England and France embroiled in an ongoing contentious relationship, demonstrated by the heated animosity during wars between the two nations, especially the Napoleonic wars. Ironically, it was precisely when England was looking to France as a role model that the staples of the French system, such as academic instruction in figural and history painting, were falling under attack.

It was into this heated and contentious shifting concoction of British art that Burne-Jones was thrust. While he chose a difficult path, he did share something in common with the academy, which was the desire to be respected by the French. For example, his contemporaries claimed that he spoke about wanting to please his fellow

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[131] Michaela Giebelhausen, "Academic Orthodoxy Versus Pre-Raphaelite Heresy: Debating Religious Painting at the Royal Academy, 1840-50," Art and the Academy in the Nineteenth Century, eds. Rafael Cardoso Denis and Colin Trodd (New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press, 2000): 165. The author cites H. Howard, A Course of Lectures on Painting, Delivered at the Royal Academy of Fine Arts (London: Henry G. Bohn, 1848).

[132] Prettejohn, "Leighton" 49. She cites as an example Leslie, The Inner Life, which should be consulted for more discussion of the academy's nationalistic politics. On the policies of the Royal Academy see also Gordon Fyfe, "Auditing the RA: Official Discourse and the Nineteenth-Century Royal Academy," Art and the Academy in the Nineteenth Century, eds. Denis, Rafael Cardoso and Colin Trodd (New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press, 2000): 117-132.

French artists, despite the differences in taste between the French and the English.[133] Due to the fact that Burne-Jones was a 'second-generation' Pre-Raphaelite, having sought out the companionship and guidance of figures such as Rossetti, it is once again appropriate to compare his ambitions as an artist to those of the original members of the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood, all of whom struggled in their relationships with the Royal Academy and its authority.[134] Burne-Jones fell under the same influence as the early Pre-Raphaelites, for instance, by turning to Ruskin as a mentor and teacher.[135] When the Brotherhood was initially founded it was a reactionary faction against the alleged tyranny of the Royal Academy, and the laws that were supposed to govern artistic production. Their name alone, which was secretively unveiled in 1850, was viewed as a declaration of the group's anti-academic stance, (they used the initials 'PRB' in lieu of actual signatures on their works during an academic exhibition), because Raphael was upheld in academic theory to be the measure of all that should be pursued in artistic production, as he was in France. Raphael had been endorsed as the archetype of artistic good taste and accomplishment since the Renaissance, and a pro-Raphael stance persisted in the French Academy of the eighteenth century, thereby influencing the English Academy.[136]

Many leaders in the arts promoted Raphael's style in their own works and schools. For example, Joseph-Marie Vien (1716-1809), who became the main up-and-coming artist of the French system under the reign of Louis XVI (1754-93, r. 1774-92), even being made director of the Academy in 1775, was known to have studied Raphael's works in Rome, at the same time that he was promoting the reform of history painting and artistic institutions with the king's support. Vien enjoyed a sizeable influence over

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[133] Robert de la Sizeranne, "Sir Edward Burne-Jones, Bart. A Tribute from France," Magazine of Art (1898): 520.

[134] The Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood was founded in 1848 by the following members: Dante Gabriel Rossetti, James Collinson, William Rossetti, John Everett Millais, Frederic George Stephens, Thomas Woolner, and William Holman Hunt. The official Brotherhood was short-lived and many other figures soon became associated with the group, often being known as 'second-generation Pre-Raphaelites,' such as Walter Crane, William Morris, Burne-Jones, and even Aubrey Beardsley (for a short time).

[135] The relevance of Ruskin's Lamp of Beauty will be addressed in the final chapter. For a closer evaluation of Ruskin's relationship to his students, including Burne-Jones, see Lenore Beaky, "John Ruskin: The Patron as Pygmalion," The Journal of Pre-Raphaelite Studies 1:1 (1980): 45-52. Refer to this article for an intriguing evaluation of Ruskin's efforts to transform his students and colleagues into better versions of themselves, as though a Pygmalion figure of his own life.

[136] It should be remembered, however, that not all French artists unanimously supported Raphael, which is evidenced by Falconet, whose criticisms of Raphael were quite extensive. Martin Rosenberg, Raphael and France 137-8. See also Francis Haskell, "The Old Masters in Nineteenth-Century French Painting," Art Quarterly (Spring 1975): 55-85.

the fledgling artist David, who was brought to Rome, after winning the *Prix de Rome,* to work under Vien's tutelage. It was while in Rome that David had an epiphany of sorts, and, in his own words, he abandoned the affected style of the French school for the ideal beauty of Raphael. He was aided in this effort by such figures as De Quincy, with whom he traveled to Naples in 1779. The fervour of the Revolution could not diminish Raphael's popularity in France, where both copies and original works were preserved, even in the face of such great turmoil. Support for the Renaissance master, and the 'Frenchness' of Raphael may also be seen in the great efforts made by Napoleon to import Raphael's works, in addition to masterpieces of all eras.[137] In the case of David, his interpretation of Raphael was mediated through Poussin, who himself made Raphaelesque style a central pursuit in his work.[138] A good number of Raphael's paintings were prominently displayed in the *Musée Napoleon*, which bespeaks the role that these works played in indicating the richness of France's cultural 'property' under Napoleon's rule.

The systematic importation of 'good' culture, as opposed to the 'native French' style, resulted in much copying of the works by French artists and considerable fanfare in the popular periodicals. Evidently, Raphael's supremacy as a model for French artists relied heavily upon his close alignment with the artists of antiquity, because artists saw a parallel between the work of ancient Roman artists and this Renaissance Roman painter.[139] Rosenberg has also shown that the absorption of Raphaelesque themes and principles continued in later generations of nineteenth-century painters, including Delacroix and Ingres, who, though divided from each other stylistically, sought out Raphael's guidance in discovering their own modes of working. For his part, Ingres

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[137] The works of Raphael that were imported by Napoleon included the *Madonna da Foligno, Saint Cecilia, the Coronation of the Virgin, Portrait of Leo X, Portrait of Julius II, Madonna della Sedia, Madonna dell'Impannata, Vision of Ezekiel, Madonna del Baldacchino,* and *The Transfiguration*. These were added to the national collection's existing works, including the *Saint Michael*, and the *Belle Jardinière*. Rosenberg, Raphael and France 149-50.

[138] Rosenberg, Raphael and France 134-5, 148. Rosenberg quotes David, who described this shift in his style in the following way: "Little by little I began to forget the bad French forms which always issued from my hand, and what I made began to take on the character of the antique; for this is what I mainly applied myself to. I intermingled my work, I drew after Domenichino, after Michelangelo, and above all, after Raphael." Rosenberg also reminds us that David had probably read some of Winckelmann's texts, in which Raphael is discussed.

[139] Rosenberg, Raphael and France 141, 150-2. For a look at such opinions in the eighteenth century see Charles Watelet and Pierre-Charles Levesque, Dictionnaire des arts de peinture, sculpture et gravure, 5 vols. (Paris: L.F. Prault, 1788-92).

reclaimed the figural types and linear simplicity of Raphael's work, while Delacroix respected Raphael's dignity, creativity, and balance of colour, even if he insisted that Raphael was not without fault.[140]

In England, due to the deference to the French system, and the academic reverence for Raphael, anti-Raphael sentiment was equated with anti-academic teaching.[141] This spirit of rebellion was manifested in the artists who gravitated to the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood's principles well after it had dissolved, such as Burne-Jones and Morris. They too would see themselves as reformers of the arts, and were unwilling to accept the responsibility of producing those genres and media sanctioned by the Royal Academy and its exhibitions. For his part, as a young artist Burne-Jones avoided the typical route to success in English art, which was through the Royal Academy. Instead of studying at its school, and exhibiting with the institution, he sought the guidance of Rossetti, who taught him on an informal basis; additionally, he joined the private academy of J.M. Leigh. He inherited from Rossetti the fear that the academy would drain him of his creative potential, by forcing antique paradigms upon the fledgling artist.[142] Also like Rossetti, he harboured a keen dislike for art critics, and a desire to exhibit his works using what he called 'rebellious' or unconventional means, in order to try to avoid the pitfalls of such criticism. His sensitivity to the vulnerability of artists to critics is apparent in the following statement:

> Ah, the critics, my friend. They should be thoroughly conversant with the teachings and practice of painting; but in any case, they, like exhibitions, must be fatal to the artist, and prevent the good from coming out! Until he is forty no artist can tell what is in him, so that criticism can but harm him, and after he is forty criticism cannot touch him—so you see how disturbing an element the critic is.[143]

Even though he preferred to undertake artistic instruction through private means, Burne-Jones did have an academic educational background, as he had enrolled at Oxford University in 1852, where he studied such subjects as Greek and philosophy. His

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[140] Rosenberg, Raphael and France 169-182.
[141] Giebelhausen, "Academic Orthodoxy" 172.
[142] Debra N. Mancoff, Burne-Jones (San Francisco: Pomegranate, 1998): 19-20.
[143] Quoted in M.H. Spielmann, "In Memorium," Magazine of Art (1898): 528.

notebooks are full of extensive notes on logic, dialectics, grammar, and rhetoric, revealing that he was a well-educated student.[144]

Many of the second-generation Pre-Raphaelites banded together under mutual rebellion and devotion to noble causes. Burne-Jones, Morris, and others such as Walter Crane (1845-1915), would endeavour to revive medieval craftsmanship in stained-glass and tapestry, for instance, in an effort to revolutionise how art was experienced and enjoyed, believing that art designed for the home was much more beneficial to humankind than that intended for the official exhibition space.[145] It is clear that Burne-Jones sacrificed an easy road to success within England's official artistic system when he aligned himself with Rossetti, because this association brought him closer public criticism, merely by association. Joseph Comyns Carr wrote that: "Holman Hunt, Rossetti, Burne-Jones, Ford Madox Brown…knew nothing at that time of academic honour, and their work, if it was submitted for official judgement, was either coldly received or was treated with a spirit of active hostility."[146] Perhaps because of such criticism, Burne-Jones would become a regular exhibitor at the Grosvenor Gallery, which was a private venue in London, designed to bring alternative and more international art forms to the sophisticated art world.

It is in this context of working outside of convention that Burne-Jones's art must be evaluated, since it is clear that he held an unusual interest in the nude's expressive and symbolic aptitude. In fact, Burne-Jones succeeded in establishing a reputation as a painter of the nude, despite many attacks on his licentious distortions and Michelangesque mannerism. Such disapproval may be found in the words of an anonymous English critic who commented on them, saying:

> As to the value…of this art, and of the poetry which is its companion, we most seriously protest against it (with a reverence for its genius and a tenderness for its beauty) as unmasculine, and—what is worse from a purely artistic standpoint—

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[144] Sir Edward Burne-Jones Oxford Notebook (107-1) and another Oxford Notebook from 1853 (1070-4), both held at the Fitzwilliam Museum in Cambridge, England.

[145] William Morris, Hopes and Fears for Art (Boston: Robert Brothers, 1882): 112-5. The Gothic revival of the Pre-Raphaelites is also discussed throughout Tim Barringer, Reading the Pre-Raphaelites (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1999).

[146] Quoted in Colleen Denney, "The Role of Sir Coutts Lindsay," Pre-Raphaelite Art in its European Context, ed. Susan P. Casteras and Alicia Craig Faxon (Cranbury, N.J., London, England, and Mississauga, Canada: Associated University Presses, 1995): 72.

> self-consciously imitative; nay, unintelligently imitative, for this is not classical, this is not mediaeval, feeling and thought; it is fresh strenuous paganism, emasculated by false modern emotionalism.[147]

Unlike many English academicians, Burne-Jones regularly chose to integrate nudes into his works, even when the symbolic, iconographic, or narrative meaning did not necessitate such a depiction. Indeed, like Girodet, Burne-Jones exploited every opportunity to depict his own personal brand of *beau idéal*. Even when Burne-Jones did clothe his figures, many often appear in a strange hybrid form of a simultaneously nude and covered state. These depictions permitted the artist to maneuver the body for effect, despite when the covered body was preferred, or narratively unavoidable. His reputation in nude depictions even spread to France, where critics credited him with having inaugurated a Botticelli-esque female nude into the modern tradition.[148] Given that Botticelli's nudes could be characterised as exaggerated in their gracefulness and idealisation, the comparison is understandable, because Burne-Jones's nudes also conform to a particularly graceful and idealised type. Exemplifying this aspect of his art is *The Rock of Doom* (1884-8).[149] Here we have the best of both worlds. The female figure offers a pleasing representation of the ideal nude, while the male figure appears in a virtually 'painted-on' costume. The reflective surface of the figure's upper body is akin to armour, but the overall outcome is more like a nylon sheath, where every ripple of the figure's musculature is exposed through the translucent costume. Similar painted-on costumes pepper many other works by Burne-Jones, such as the portrayal of the seated female figure of the Beggar Maid in *King Cophetua* (1884).[150]

Another controversial facet of Burne-Jones's nudes was their appearance at a time when the overall value and decorum of the nude in England was being questioned. In her

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[147] Quoted in Denney, "Lindsay" 75.
[148] Denney, "Lindsay" 71.
[149] Edward Burne-Jones, *The Rock of Doom: Perseus and Andromeda Series*, 1884-8, oil on canvas, 61" x 55 1/4" or 154.9 x 140.3 m, Staatsgallerie, Stuttgart, Germany.
[150] Some have drawn a connection between the story of Cophetua and that of Pygmalion, since in both cases a process of transformation is wrought on a young woman, in order to make her a suitable lover. Since the alignment of these two stories was not pervasive in the nineteenth century, it will be sufficient for our purposes to observe that both the artists and viewers may have seen in this painting a similar subject to the one that concerns us, and that the *Cophetua* painting was considered one of Burne-Jones's most successful paintings, due to its high profile international exposure, having been hailed in both England and France as a masterpiece. Edward Burne-Jones, *King Cophetua*, 1884, oil on canvas, 115 1/2" x 53 1/2" or 2.9 x 1.4 m., Tate Gallery, London, England. La Sizeranne, "Burne-Jones" 520.

article, Alison Smith explains that it was in 1885 when the nude's much-debated acceptability reached a boiling point. In a cartoon entitled *The Model "British Matron*" (1885), Edward Linley Sambourne (1844-1910) depicted the leader of the anti-nude movement, John Callcott Horsley (1817-1903), dressed as a British matron and standing before an antique female nude, represented as the *Venus de' Medici*. Horsley opposed not only the effect that the nude could have on the public, but also the practice of hiring inevitably lower class women to pose as nude models.[151] The intensity of the nudity controversy was certainly a product of the relative weakness of the tradition in England. The Royal Academy had simply not emphasised study of the nude to the same degree as it had been enforced in other institutions, such as that in France, at least until the nineteenth century.[152] Consequently, its artists were not as likely to feature the nude in their works, making the public much less conditioned to view the nude in a strictly aesthetic, rather than erotic, context.[153] The concern over the rising nudity trend also corresponded to the growing popularity of Aestheticism, wherein art itself was being mutated into a religion. In Aesthetic circles, and amongst many independent artists of the late nineteenth century, the growing secularism and materialism of modern society had given root to the notion that art could supplant the role of religion, by becoming an all encompassing lifestyle, suitable for catering to a non-religious-specific spirituality. Paradoxically, the artist was being divested of his responsibilities as a purveyor of morality, and as a didactic instructor to the masses. For opponents of the new trends it appeared as though art was becoming ever more immoral, or at the very least amoral.

As we have touched on, another reason that the nude had been neglected in England was due to the relatively lesser interest in history painting nurtured by its artists. Genre painting, requiring clothed figures, was typically more prevalent, so it was less critical that artists study programmatically from nude models. In France, by contrast,

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[151] Alison Smith, "The 'British Matron' and the Body Beautiful: The Nude Debate of 1885," After the Pre-Raphaelites: Art and Aestheticism in Victorian England, ed. Elizabeth Prettejohn (New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press, 1999): 217-8.

[152] For a chronological review of the Royal Academy see Sidney C. Hutchison, The History of the Royal Academy: 1768-1968 (New York: Taplinger Publishing Company, 1968).

[153] Richard Shone, "The Victorian Nude: London," The Burlington Magazine 144:1186 (Jan., 2002): 45. Refer to this article for a review of the exhibition *Exposed: The Victorian Nude*, held at The Tate in London in 2002. This is one of many critical reviews of the exhibition in which comments were rather negative, due to the impression that the exhibition failed to answer new questions about the history of the nude in art, rather than just pandering to old stereotypes.

history painting remained much more common, even if it was diminishing in popularity, by French standards, throughout the century. Therefore, nudes were expected in the regular Salon fare, and the French public was naturally predisposed to accept nudity as part of the artistic-viewing experience. Evidence of change in the English system began as early as the late 1860s, according to Smith, when artists started to study the female nude from antique sculptures, which was a shift that was intended to make the whole issue of immoral gazing at real nude women moot.[154]

A turning point that prompted many English artists to look to France as a role model, in cultivating the nude and history painting, was the *Exposition Universelle*, the first of which was held in Paris in 1855.[155] A branch of the first exposition for the fine arts was attended by almost a million visitors, and offered an international stage for artists to display their works. Naturally, the academy's jurists controlled which works would be shown at the expositions. These events brought together artists from across Europe and Britain, and provided a venue that invited comparison and competition between the arts of different nations. Even if the French were leery of their representation at these events, British artists were being exposed to the vigour of the French tradition, which depended so strongly on the figural nude. According to Smith, artists in England, especially those in the Royal Academy, had realised by the latter half of the nineteenth century that to be competitive with their French rivals they were going to have to support the figural tradition in their own programs. Perhaps as a result, some leaders in artistic education began endorsing a French approach to training, including Edward J. Poynter (1836-1919), in his capacity as Director of the National Art Training School at South Kensington, in his Ten Lectures (1879).[156] Similarly, young artists became progressively more interested in obtaining their training abroad at institutions that more closely reflected the French system.

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[154] Smith, "The 'British Matron'" 219.

[155] For an evaluation of the significance of the International Expositions see the following: Baudelaire, Art in Paris. Étienne J. Délécluze, Les Beaux-arts dans les deux mondes en 1855: Architecture, sculpture, peinture, gravure (Paris: Charpentier, 1856). L'Exposition Universelle de 1867 illustrée. Publication internationale autorisée par la commission impériale (Paris: 1867). Mainardi, "The Death of History Painting," and The End of the Salon. H.D. Rodee, "France and England: Some mid-Victorian Views of One Another's Painting," Gazette des Beaux-Arts (Jan. 1978): 39-48.

[156] Edward J. Poynter, Ten Lectures on Art (London: Chapman and Hall, 1879).

Smith discusses the curious way that the Greek figural ideal, having been so entrenched in the French system, now became the ultimate goal in selecting models for artists, and even in promoting a healthy physical ideal for modern female viewers.[157] This latter issue made the appearance of the female *beau idéal* slightly more justifiable in England, due to the growing perception that the public display of the perfected Greek woman would inspire female viewers to aspire to a healthy body type, which could be more conducive to reproduction and the survival of the British people.[158] But this concern for healthy role models also meant that many non-ideal types were condemned, such as Rossetti's representations of women, including *Lilith*, who was interpreted by critics as glorifying a woman of ill-constitution, perhaps even a carrier of venereal disease, and of obvious materialistic and sensual tendencies.[159] There was considerable controversy at this time regarding which body type should be promoted, in order to support healthier images of women. One aspect of this debate, for example, was over the ill effects of the corset. The nude female figure, being corsetless, and otherwise the picture of health, could have been upheld as a practical social, as well as an aesthetic, ideal.

But fashion was only the outer problem of women's health and body image at the time, as the idea of the 'New Woman' had generated great angst, in *fin-de-siècle* culture, over the roles and appearances of women in the public sphere. The 'New Woman' represented many different concepts at this time, but she was, for example, described as a physically masculine woman, who had the gall to ride a bike, smoke in public, read salacious novels, and avoid maternal and spousal roles, in favour of working and other inappropriate behaviour.[160] This angst resulted, in part, from two opposing social movements. Following the explosion of Darwin's theory of evolution onto the scientific scene, both scientists and the public became obsessed with the concept of natural

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[157] For more on the study of the model see E. Borzello, The Artist's Model (London: Junction Books, 1982).
[158] Smith, "The 'British Matron'" 220. For further information on the role of women's appearance in Victorian England see Helene E. Roberts, "The Exquisite Slave: The Role of Clothes in the Making of the Victorian Woman," Signs 2:3 (Spring 1977): 554-69.
[159] Kate Flint, "Moral Judgement and the Language of English Art Criticism, 1870-1910," Oxford Art Journal 6:2 (1983): 63. For an analysis of Lilith as a version of the evil or aberrant woman in Victorian England see West, Fin-de-siècle 94.
[160] West, Fin-de-siècle 86-8. See also Showalter, Sexual Anarchy.

selection, the assumption being in England, for instance, that if 'degenerate' types of individuals were supported by society, then this would lead to the failure of the English culture as a whole. But rather than concerning themselves about the fate of their nation, proponents of the 'New Woman' were instead seen to be throttling the English people towards extinction, by refusing to behave responsibly according to proper gender roles, and by fighting for political and social rights.[161] Fears also abounded regarding the view of women's sexuality. As Shearer West argues, all of these discourses were plagued by contradiction. For instance, women were portrayed at once as being without sexuality, while also being sexually insatiable. Naturally, these concerns bled over into the debates regarding homosexuality, which was similarly viewed as a culprit in social degeneracy.[162]

Also contributing to the general angst over the female nude in England was the fact that, by the 1870s, female students had begun entering the Royal Academy in unprecedented numbers. This was, in part, due to increasing commercial demand, because the more commodities that were produced, the more talent was needed to decorate those commodities.[163] Because women had largely been trained in what were deemed 'decorative arts,' such as needlepoint, and watercolours, for example, there would have been a perceptible correlation between the commodification of art, and the infiltration of women into the system, again supporting the connection between art and femininity.[164] As expected, the inequalities that female artists had suffered in other institutions, such as the French system, were now reenacted in the evolving system of the Royal Academy; just as female students in the French system had not been afforded the

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[161] West, Fin-de-siècle 86, 99-100. For more on the political debate over women see Susan Kingsley Kent, Sex and Suffrage in Britain 1860-1914 (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1987). Ludmilla Jordanova, Sexual Visions: Images of Gender in Science and Medicine Between the Eighteenth and Twentieth Centuries (Madison: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1989). Joseph Kestner, Mythology and Misogyny: The Social Discourse of Nineteenth-Century Subject Painting (Madison: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1989).

[162] West, Fin-de-siècle 89-91.

[163] Laurel Lampela, "Women's Art Education Institutions in Nineteenth-Century England," Art Education 46:1 (Jan., 1993): 64. This demand resulted in the founding of *The Female School of Design* in 1843, being renamed *The Royal Female School of Art* in 1862. The fact that even the titles of these institutions were defined by gender demonstrates how carefully male and female artistic pursuits were separated, and treated differently, in England at this time. See C. Yeldham, Women Artists in Nineteenth-Century France and England, volume 1 (New York: Garland, 1984). S. MacDonald, The History and Philosophy of Art Education (London: University of London Press, Ltd., 1970). Diane Radycki, "The Life of Lady Art Students: Changing Art Education at the Turn of the Century," Art Journal 42:1 (Spring, 1982): 9-13.

[164] Lampela, "Women's Art Education" 65.

right to study from the nude in life drawing classes, so too were the Royal Academy's women prevented from accessing such training through official venues. The right to study from the draped figure was granted in 1847 by the *Society of British Artists*.[165] However, women were not allowed to become art students at the Royal Academy until 1862. Once the gates were opened, 139 female students were accepted by the year 1879.[166] This would have naturally been very threatening to those opposed to the involvement of women in the arts, as well as the male artists who were now witnessing women win prizes and other distinctions within the academic system. The debate over the decorum of female artists depicting figures in art even made it necessary for the academy's female students to devise a petition, just so that they could earn the right to study from a partially draped figure.[167] Opposition to this type of initiative was provided within the academy, by participants in the purist movement, such as Horsley, who went so far as to disguise his identity in publicly published letter-writing campaigns, supposedly with the primary objective of protecting the female models and artists from further moral degradation.[168]

The nude's appearance in public exhibitions was also opposed. In at least one case, the passion of an anti-nude-in-art protestor led to the destruction of actual artworks; Albert Moore's *White Hydrangea* was scratched when it was exhibited in 1885 at the Royal Academy's summer exhibition. Perhaps even more shocking, Smith reports that later that year an entire collection of one hundred and thirty nude studies were stolen after having been submitted by the academy's students for a competition.[169] Despite all of this, the nude prevailed, as it continued to acquire a following, and as artists like Burne-Jones persisted in maintaining the nude's place in the exhibition spaces.

The ideal classicising nude became an especially important goal for ambitious British painters, notably in the 1870s, because it was through the perfect mastery of this

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[165] Lampela, "Women's Art Education" 67.
[166] Enid Zimmerman, "Art Education for Women in England from 1890-1910 as Reflected in the Victorian Periodical Press and Current Feminist Histories of Art Education," Studies in Art Education 32:2 (Winter, 1991): 111. See also A. Callen, Angel in the studio: Women artists of the arts and crafts movement, 1870-1914 (New York: Pantheon Books, 1979).
[167] H. Cliff Morgan, "The Schools of the Royal Academy," British Journal of Educational Studies 21:1 (Feb., 1973): 100.
[168] Alison Smith, The Victorian Nude (Manchester and New York: Manchester University Press, 1996): 227-233.
[169] Smith, The Victorian Nude 227.

kind of nude that these artists could declare their skill on the world stage. This tradition also stemmed from the Academy's promotion of drawing from casts of ancient sculptures, which it adopted due to the prolific use of this training technique in academies across Europe, such as that in France. A hierarchy existed with regards to this kind of study, in that one graduated from studying casts to being allowed to enter life drawing classes.[170] It was in concomitance with these new initiatives, Smith concurs, that the Pygmalion subject gained appeal in Britain at this time, as artists were looking for ways to demonstrate their talent for rendering the nude. Likewise, the myth of the male creative genius endured in England, as it did in France, because the fantasy of the masculine genius, capturing his ideal woman, could not be better represented than in this story. Smith cites the examples of Sir John Tenniel's (1820-1914) *Pygmalion and the Statue* (1878) and Edward Armitage's (1817-96) *Pygmalion's Galatea* (1876) as works that contributed to the new-found interest in the nude subject in England; and she includes Sir Lawrence Alma-Tadema's (1836-1912) *A Sculptor's Model* (1877) in the category of 'male artist/female creation' scenes, indicating the parallels between these two subjects.[171]

What is interesting, is that British artists, academicians, theorists, and others were quickly plunged into the central debate over the nude's representation that had plagued the French academy since its inception; artists were chastised for both representing the body too beautifully, and for not purifying nature's examples enough, by procuring an anonymous ideal. Such a debate was also famously expounded in Bellori's recriminations of Caravaggio's working methods, wherein he documented the famous theoretical rivalry between the naturalists and the classicists in the Southern Baroque tradition.[172] Some criticised those who drew too heavily from the ideal proportions of

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[170] Morgan, "The Schools" 94-5. Review this article for an analysis of the structure and organisation of the Royal Academy.

[171] Smith, "The 'British Matron'" 220-1. For more on Alma-Tadema see R.J. Barrow, Lawrence Alma-Tadema (London: Phaidon Ltd., 2001). Vern G. Swanson, The Biography and Catalogue Raisonné of the Paintings of Sir Lawrence Alma-Tadema (London: Garton and Co., 1990). Lawrence Alma-Tadema, *A Sculptor's Model*, 1877, Oil on canvas, 77 x 33 7/8," private collection.

[172] Of Caravaggio, Bellori wrote: "Caravaggio in our times was too naturalistic; he painted men just as they are…" Bellori explained that the artist should imitate the original perfection of God's creation, which appeared in his mind before it was manifested in physical form on earth. He stated: "[T]he noble painters and sculptors imitate that first creator, and form in their minds also an example of superior beauty and, reflecting on it, improve upon nature until it is without fault of colour or of line." Quoted from the Lives

late classical Greek art, which certain British critics associated with the French and Roman systems, both of which were viewed as susceptible to excess and decadence. Ironically this kind of criticism, which was leveled at Alma-Tadema's painting, was often contemporaneous with critics who found the nude's depiction too individualised or dependent upon the model. Even so, *A Sculptor's Model* became so controversial and much-discussed that it helped to generate heightened fascination with the nude; this interest culminated in 1885, when more nudes were exhibited in England than ever before.[173] A brief description of the work reveals why it was contentious. The model stands facing the viewer, her arms raised above her nude body, while she adjusts her hair. The scene is cropped, such that her nude body makes up almost the entire surface of the painting. Behind the model, the sculptor stands gazing up at the young woman. He is not in the act of sculpting, because the base of the sculpted figure is visible behind a plant, off to the side of the imagined space, meaning that his gaze seems more lustful than practical. As such, the sculptor's gaze mirrors the viewer's gaze, making the sensuality of that gaze unavoidable.

Despite all of these debates, in Burne-Jones's case, it appears that he reached the goal of securing at least the respect of the French for his nudes. La Sizeranne stated that:

> The great characteristic of Burne-Jones's figures to me, is that their structure is a survival of the Renaissance, their attitudes Pre-Raphaelite; their bodies are healthy, powerful, almost athletic, but their movement is languid, hesitating, weary, and ecstatic. French symbolical painters are not akin to him because, as a rule, they paint pale emaciated angular creatures, more or less borrowed from the primitive schools. He never sacrificed beauty of form to achieve expression. And for this reason, in spite of the lapse of years, he will always be a great master, not merely in the eyes of those who value psychology in art, but also to those who adore pure beauty.[174]

We have seen that in the myriad of ways in which Burne-Jones treated the nude, he may be credited for considerable bravery in its depiction at this time, which was still

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on the Modern Painters, Sculptors and Architects (1672) in Art History and its Methods: A Critical Anthology, commentary and selection by Eric Fernie (London: Phaidon Press Limited, 1995): 63-4.

[173] Smith, "The 'British Matron'" 222-6.

[174] La Sizeranne, "Burne-Jones" 520. This same critic also praised the artist's mastery of metallic surfaces, and reflections in general.

uncharacteristic of Victorian art. Like Girodet, Burne-Jones typically sought an ideal nude that obviously surpassed nature, making it a greater testimony to his genius. On the whole, unlike Girodet, Burne-Jones's nudes are neither typical nor generic *beau idéal* figures. Liana De Girolami Cheney has considered the possibility that Burne-Jones was deeply interested in Mannerist modes of representation, and shared with his sixteenth-century predecessors a desire to warp the realistic proportions of the human figure, in an effort to go beyond the limits of nature.[175] Correspondingly, Burne-Jones's own statements reveal a Platonic interest in providing the viewer with something that is better than reality. He explained it this way: "I mean by a picture, a beautiful romantic dream of something that never was, never will be--in a light better than any light that ever shone--in a land no one can define or remember, only desire."[176] It must be recognised, nonetheless, that Plato would never have considered an artistic imitation capable of such a goal.

With this in mind, we can focus upon one of the projects that consumed a good portion of the artist's career, and one of the most ambitious representations of the Pygmalion myth in the nineteenth century. Each of Burne-Jones's two series consists of four scenes, both capturing a narrative development from the beginning to the end of the story. The earlier of these, created around 1868-70, became part of the Joseph Setton Collection in Paris.[177] Its present location is no longer known, making it available only through photographic reproductions. The second series is part of the collection at The Birmingham City Art Gallery, and dates to 1878.[178] Burne-Jones's devotion to this subject began just prior to the nude's sensational growth in England, one series of which was contemporary with the Tenniel and Armitage paintings on the subject. As well, Burne-Jones laboured on illustrations for the same narrative in Morris's Earthly Paradise, which was never completed with Burne-Jones's illustrations, but which demonstrates the degree of his commitment to the subject, and helps us to understand the genesis of the

[175] Quoted in Cheney, "Burne-Jones" 103-4.
[176] Quoted in Cheney, "Burne-Jones" 104.
[177] Sir Edward Burne-Jones, Joseph Setton Collection in Paris, *Pygmalion and the Image*, 1868-70, oil on canvas, dimensions unknown, private collection, Paris.
[178] Sir Edward Burne-Jones, *Pygmalion and the Image Series*, 1875-8, oil on canvas, 39" x 30" or 99.1 x 76.2 cm, Birmingham Museum and Art Gallery, Birmingham, England.

project.[179] Perhaps it was fortuitous that Morris did not publish the text, because in this particular relationship Burne-Jones was the illustrator, and his final series was considerably independent of the literary source. In each case, the narrative is divided into similar moments, and the same four titles are used in both painted series, each unfolding in the same order: *The Heart Desires*, *The Hand Refrains*, *The Godhead Fires*, *The Soul Attains*. In *The Heart Desires*, both versions introduce the subject with the appearance of the sculptor Pygmalion in his studio; he stands in steadfast contemplation.

The most extensive analysis of Burne-Jones's *Pygmalion* cycles appears in Cheney's article.[180] As such it is an invaluable resource, because the Pygmalion subject has not been the singular study of any other scholarly work. Cheney's article focuses, in particular, on the Renaissance connections between Burne-Jones's work and that of Bronzino, noting that both were interested in artistic rivalry. However, the nineteenth-century paragonising context is not addressed, and her visual analysis of the work differs from that offered in this chapter.

In *The Heart Desires*, through the open doorway pass women from the town who peer in on the lonely artist, who is oblivious to their interest, gaze, or presence as he contemplates his work. In the Parisian version, a sculptural group of women in the studio seems to be alive and watching, while in the Birmingham version we find the Three Graces in marble stasis. For the second scene, Pygmalion once again inhabits his studio; but he has now nearly completed the figure of Galatea. The Parisian version offers a more finished state for the figure, since no debris accompanies the end product, as it does in the Birmingham scene. It is with the third scene that the two versions diverge considerably. The earlier version shows *The Godhead Fires* as the climactic moment when Galatea has come to life, and Pygmalion, realising this, kneels before her in awe of her now *bona fide* physical beauty. But in the later version, this same scene shows the goddess Venus awakening the statue; it leans towards the divinity as it takes its first unsure step off of the podium upon which it was made. The change in the narrative sequence between the two versions allows the story's climactic resolution to appear in the final scene of the later version, instead of in the third scene. In the Parisian *The Soul*

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[179] See William Morris, The Earthly Paradise: A Poem (Oxford: Oxford University, 1871).
[180] Cheney, "Burne-Jones" 103-116.

Attains, Venus steadies or embraces Galatea in the final moment of the narrative. In both scenes where Venus is present, she is accompanied by her attribute of doves, symbolising love. Yet in the later series, the last scene culminates in the adoring act of Pygmalion, who has descended on his knees before his now living Galatea.

The title of Burne-Jones's work is also significant in revealing the symbolic function of Galatea. In fact, she is not actually Galatea, since none of the titles refer to her in this way, even though contemporary viewers would have done so, because the name Galatea had become well-known in the public sphere. In naming her 'the Image,' Burne-Jones spelled out for us that it was the Pygmalion of Ovidian or ancient fame that he was reincarnating, because in these early versions of the story, as we have discussed, the name Galatea had not yet been instated for the statue. Generally speaking, Galatea is named when the artist represents her either in the process of transformation, or post-metamorphosis. However, if the artist depicts just the statue before animation, then it will usually be dubbed 'the image.' Remember that as late as the latter half of the eighteenth century, artists were still using the 'Image' name, or simply 'the statue.' It was not until Rousseau adopted the name that it became common. In the visual arts, the two works to follow Rousseau's example were Girodet's *Pygmalion*, and Laurent Péchaux's *Pygmalion et Galatea* (1785).[181]

Like Girodet, Burne-Jones sought to emulate the effects of another art form, in order to furnish viewers with a technically and morally superior hybrid. This, for instance, is a technique exploited in Bronzino's (1503-72) *Pygmalion and Galatea*, (ca. 1529-30).[182] Bronzino offers a scene set in the Italian countryside, in front of a sculpted

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[181] Meyer Reinhold, "The Naming of Pygmalion's Animated Statue," The Classical Journal 66:4 (April-May 1971): 317-9. The playwright, named François Martin Poultier d'Elmolte, copied Rousseau in using the name for his scène lyrique *Galathée* (1795), which was a sequel to Rousseau's play. Reinhold notes that although Rousseau's play was quite famous, many English writers and artists did not follow suit in naming the statue. For example, neither William Morris, nor Burne-Jones used the name Galatea. For the purpose of this study, I have chosen to refer to the statue as Galatea, for the most part, in order to avoid confusion, and because many contemporary viewers would have identified her as such.

[182] Cheney supposes that because Burne-Jones travelled extensively throughout Italy, including Florence, where Bronzino's work was located in the nineteenth century, that he must have seen Bronzino's painting. She does not, however, provide any other evidence of Burne-Jones having seen this work exactly. For more on Burne-Jones's Italian travels, again, see Christian, "Burne-Jones's Second Italian Journey." Evidence of his copying of Italian masters is found in sketchbook No. 342, as Cheney indicates, at the Victoria and Albert Museum in London. Through my own examination of this sketchbook it was quite apparent that Bronzino was drawn to the High Renaissance masters, given that many scenes were after

altar to Venus, upon which offerings have been placed. Pygmalion, on his knees, gazes up at the already enlivened Galatea, who stands several feet away. Galatea looks away from Pygmalion and instead meets the viewer's gaze. Stuart Currie, in his analysis of Bronzino's approach to the paragone, concluded he illusionistically painted sculptural figures, so as to prove painting's superiority, which can mimic nature, and the other arts as well, (poetry, architecture, and relief, for example).[183] Bronzino may have been following in the illustrious footsteps of Michelangelo, who likewise took this approach to painting, albeit for different reasons. In Michelangelo's case, his paintings imitated sculpture, in order to demonstrate painting's subservience to sculpture, because he considered the latter art his true calling. Michelangelo also excelled in *quadratura*, or painted illusionistic architecture, as seen on the Sistine Ceiling (1508-12).

The competitive motives of these two artists must have caught the attention of Varchi, who invited both Bronzino and Michelangelo to write letters in support of their art. Bronzino's response was to defend painting by pointing out sculpture's limitations.[184] Stuart also observes that the extreme linearity of Bronzino's painterly style, which has too often been assessed as merely evidence of his Florentine training, reflects his letter to Varchi. He argued that the uniqueness of painting relies upon its ability to capture outlines from nature, which he contended is as much the property of painting as it is of sculpture.[185] In Burne-Jones's work, the sculptural quality of his nudes is manifested in their pronounced *chiaroscuro*, and their general likeness to Bronzino and Michelangelo's style. And like Bronzino and Girodet, who painted the relief scenes on Galatea's pedestal, Burne-Jones included painted sculptures in Pygmalion's studio, such that these meta-media paintings become a paragonising effort to produce a *Gesamtkunstwerk*. Ironically, Burne-Jones was simultaneously praised by his contemporaries for both reviving the purity of Renaissance style, and introducing a completely modern aesthetic to late nineteenth-century art.[186]

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figural motifs by Michelangelo**.** Agnolo Bronzino's *Pygmalion and Galatea*, ca. 1529-30, tempera on wood, 81 x 64 cm, Uffizi Gallery, Florence, Italy.

[183] Currie, "Secularised Sculptural Imagery" 237. Bronzino's painting was given the title *Pygmalion and Galatea* in later centuries, after the name Galatea had come into use.

[184] Currie, "Secularised Sculptural Imagery" 239. Refer once again to Mendelsohn's study.

[185] Currie, "Secularised Sculptural Imagery" 239.

[186] La Sizeranne, "Burne-Jones" 519-20.

Burne-Jones also succeeded in manipulating another limit of his art, which was its temporality. Each scene in the Pygmalion series encapsulates the most poignant and pivotal moments of Ovid's narrative. In all three cases, (the two painted series and the proposed woodcut illustrations), many moments are required to be read in sequence. This attempt flew in the face of conventional aesthetic theory, which expected painters to acknowledge their art's limitations and select a single moment accordingly. Cheney agrees that Burne-Jones's sequential story-telling reflects his idea that paintings could be 'read.' If Burne-Jones was drawn to Pygmalion's story, due to an idealised regard for artistic and moral virtue, then the sequential format serves it best. By showing both the temptations before the making of Galatea, (such as the women outside his studio), and the divine intervention afterwards, the series better expresses the myth as an allegory of the artist's moral virtue, and shows how Pygmalion's piety triumphs over "moral failure."[187]

In examining Burne-Jones's versions, we must assess which theoretical approach he relied upon to explore Pygmalion's character and skill. Like Girodet, Burne-Jones firmly casts Pygmalion in a much more virtuous light than did Ovid, since Venus's favour is interpreted as a sign of the artist's morality. Once again, the revival of Neoplatonism helps to 'clean up' the situation. Should we view Pygmalion's contemplation of Galatea's beauty as a tool for divine transcendence, then a sacred purpose helps to dispel the profanity implied in other readings. To help us see the virtue in Pygmalion, Burne-Jones labelled the panels, so as to guide the viewer towards a positive conclusion. Pygmalion's ultimate reward is possible, only through the self-sacrifice that he has already demonstrated; he shuns the comforts of marriage, suffering a presumably celibate life, while he keeps the faith that fate will reward him with the wife that he deserves. In the first scene, *The Heart Desires*, Pygmalion mourns the life that he could be leading; he is lonely and removed from the outdoors, and the company of the women, seen through the open door. The series culminates in *The Soul Attains*, which reveals that Pygmalion's reward is to have a pure heart and pious spirit; he has been elevated and transformed by love, not by his lust.

It was entirely in keeping with the revival of Neoplatonism in the nineteenth century that an extreme concern arose for both the social and ideological tensions

[187] Cheney, "Burne-Jones" 109-10, 114.

between the physical or material and the spiritual or immaterial.[188] Burne-Jones shared Moreau's interest in what both artists perceived to be the degradation of their respective societies.[189] Moreau also owned a reproduction of one of Burne-Jones's works, and the two artists were compared in international reviews. In both his life and work, as we will see in the final chapter, Moreau viewed the dichotomy between the physical and the spiritual as the central moral issue of his day. It epitomised all of the more specific realities that confronted him in nineteenth-century France. Industrialism, commercialisation, immorality, materialism, and hedonism were the evils to be fought. Burne-Jones, having been so close to the first generation Pre-Raphaelites, was equally preoccupied with these same circumstances in England. He and his colleague Morris espoused such movements as Christian Socialism, in an effort to reform art and society, and to encourage a spiritual and moral rebirth amongst their fellow men. This objective was a well-known corollary of the Arts and Crafts movement that they helped to launch, by recreating medieval arts in a new modern aesthetic, using Morris's Kelmscott Manor as their headquarters.[190]

Considered in this context, the Pygmalion myth fits perfectly into the struggle between materialism and spirituality, in both England and France at this time. This may be why the Pygmalion subject was so important to Burne-Jones, as he endeavoured to carry out his duties as an artist and spiritual leader. By the eighteenth century, the myth had become associated with the transition from the material to the spiritual, as Galatea's transformation literally involves the injection of spirit and human ethos into the plain marble block. By the nineteenth century, this association had become more firmly

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[188] The pre-eminent source on Platonism in the nineteenth century is Walter Pater's Plato and Platonism: A Series of Lectures (London: Macmillan, 1893). The revival of Neoplatonism in the nineteenth century was encouraged by the publication of such texts as Jean-Charles Lévêque's La Science du beau, ses principes, ses applications, son histoire (1852), Vacherot and Jules Simon's Dieu, patrie, liberté (1883), and other writings by Théodore Jouffroy and Victor Cousin. For more on this phenomenon in France see Robert Goldwater, Symbolism (New York: Icon Editions, Harper and Row, 1979), and Henri Dorra, Symbolist Art Theories (Berkeley, London, and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1994).

[189] For more on the contact and friendship between these two figures see Robin Ironside, "Gustave Moreau and Burne-Jones," Apollo 101:157 (March, 1975): 173-82. Another exploration of their shared interests is found in Léonce Bénédite, L'Idéalisme en France et en Angleterre: Gustave Moreau & E. Burne-Jones, originally published in 1899 in Revue de l'art ancient et moderne (Paris: Rumeur des Âges, 1998).

[190] For a review of the Arts and Crafts initiative see Aymer Vallance, "The Arts and Crafts Exhibition Society at the New Gallery, 1893," The Studio: Vol. 2 (October, 1893): 3-27.

embedded into the story, and was fully primed to be connected to new ideas, regarding the social and economic struggle between the material and spiritual.

Central to the concerns of the Christian Socialists, and for Burne-Jones and Morris in particular, was the notion that modern individuals had been systematically alienated from both life and art, through the mechanisms of modern capitalism and secularism. Morris and Burne-Jones argued that the creation of beautiful, well-crafted objects could provide a spiritual outlet for the average viewer.[191] The struggle between alienating materialism and spiritual rejuvenation is detectable in the disquieting sense of loneliness in Burne-Jones's figures, but which is tempered in other instances by powerful spiritual connections between figures, or between the figures and the viewer. One such example is *The Godhead Fires*. Upon reviewing studies for the two series, I came across a drawing inscribed *Studies for Arms of Venus and the Image in the Picture 'The Godhead Fires;' from the 'Pygmalion and the Image's Series'* dated 1868-79.[192] It is comprised solely of the intertwined arms of the two female figures in the scene. Obviously, this is challenging to portray in a two-dimensional medium; yet, the striking effect is that the two figures are one, or at least extensions of one another. The intertwining arms must have been meant to symbolise unity, or likeness between the female characters. Whether or not Burne-Jones was aware of the French plays in which Galatea was supposed to be made in the image of Venus, another theme may have been on his mind. The pairing of these two figures, face to face, makes them like mirror images of one another, such that once again we confront the theme of Narcissus. This effect is heightened by the similar physiognomic features that Galatea and Venus share. In the beginning of the series, Venus appears with blue eyes and light brown hair, which Galatea exhibits after her metamorphosis, down to a matching hairstyle. Their likenesses were more pronounced between the Parisian and the Birmingham version of *The Godhead Fires*. In the Parisian scene, Venus is clothed, making her more obviously separate from the Image. In the later Birmingham version, Venus is covered in a

[191] William Morris, The Decorative Arts: Their Relation to Modern Life and Progress, ed. F.-A. Schmidt-Künsemüller (Osnabrück: Otto Zeller, 1975) : 26. See also William Morris, The Aims of Art, ed. F.-A. Schmidt-Künsemüller (Osnabrück: Otto Zeller, 1975).
[192] This work on paper (962f.11) is held at the Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge, England.

virtually non-existant transparent piece of drapery, which draws her closer to being a mirror image of the statue from head to toe.

The relationship between the two figures rivals and revises one of the most renowned images in the history of art, which is Michelangelo's *Creation of Adam* from the Sistine Chapel. Michelangelo portrayed God the Father about to bestow upon Adam the divine spark of human spirit. Burne-Jones's painting illustrates an equally climactic moment between a supernatural creator and a mortal entity. Surely the reaching motions between the goddess and her creation, (she causes Galatea to be born in spiritual form), would have reminded contemporary viewers of Michelangelo's famous and celebrated scene; moreover, the hands of Galatea and Venus are remarkably akin to those in the *Creation of Adam*. In each case it is a metaphysical spiritual transmission that viewers witness. Galatea and Venus behold in each other a perfect semblance of themselves. What has happened here is that Burne-Jones has metamorphosed the myth of Narcissus from being one of death and deception, to one of life and spiritual awakening. In the physically intertwined arms of the figures, and in the fulfillment of Galatea's transformation, that profoundly human desire for union with the divine is being answered. Instead of seeing in her image a confusing lie, Galatea experiences the perfect understanding, love, and attention of her maker. Is this not what we also long to see brought to fruition in Michelangelo's *Creation*? In this way, Burne-Jones moralised the myth of Narcissus, giving it a positive spin.

It must be remembered that paragonising artists learned from each other, and that a common tactic was to mimic the paragonising tactics or works from past masters. In Burne-Jones's case, his studies after Michelangelo and incorporation of Michelangesque features into his work are too numerous to itemise.[193] Yet it is clear that Burne-Jones succeeded in elevating himself to the ranks of Renaissance masters, as this was evidenced

[193] A good example of this is the work on paper (962f.16) from the Fitzwilliam Museum called *Study for Andromeda in Perseus Series, "Rock of Doom."* In this case, Burne-Jones borrowed the strips of fabric that appear in such works as Michelangelo's *Slaves*, where these strips appear to bind the figure. For both artists this feature may have had Neoplatonic symbolism. Other drawings after Michelangelo may be found in the sketchbooks by Burne-Jones, which he kept while traveling throughout Italy, held at the Victoria and Albert Museum in London, England. For more on his exposure to the Renaissance masters see J. Christian, "Burne-Jones's Second Italian Journey," Apollo III (Nov. 1987): 334-7. For the study of Michelangelo in general at this time see Østermark-Johansen, Sweetness and Strength.

in reviews made by contemporary critics who equated his emphasis on compositional harmony and line with Renaissance style.[194]

As a young and inexperienced student, Burne-Jones, along with Morris, once entertained the idea of becoming a man of God. Instead, perhaps after meeting his future wife, he resigned himself to using art for the public good. Perhaps this is why French viewers, for example, were stunned by the difference between Burne-Jones's work and those of his contemporaries, because in comparison with the luxurious and materialistic style of European art on display, Burne-Jones's paintings, such as *King Cophetua*, spoke to the soul through the story of a simple beggar maid. Robert de la Sizeranne, recounting his experience of this work wrote: "Standing in front of 'King Cophetua,' it seemed as though we had come forth from the universal Exhibition of Wealth to see the symbolical expression of the Scorn of Wealth."[195] Fernand Khnopff elucidated the alignment that critics drew between Burne-Jones's works and spiritual transcendence:

> How perfectly delightful were the hours spent in long contemplation of this work of intense beauty…The spectator was enwrapped by this living atmosphere of dream-love and of spiritualised fire, carried away to a happy intoxication of soul, a dizziness that clutched the spirit and bore it high up, far, far away, too far to be any longer conscious of the brutal presence of the crowd, the mob of sightseers amid whom the body fought its way out again through the doors.[196]

Burne-Jones's aims were personally ambitious, and his works epitomised what it meant to manipulate the iconic and emblematic, in pursuit of a superior art form. It was in this context that the Pygmalion subject lent him the perfect vehicle to illustrate his vision of the artist in late nineteenth-century society, and the standard of ideal beauty to which such an artist could aspire. Using these subjects as vehicles for the expression of beauty, he was able to make an impact at home and abroad as a painter of spiritual transcendence, and one who provided an escape from the ugly materialism of modern life. So perhaps he fulfilled his priestly ambitions after all.

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[194] Flint, "*The Mirror of Venus*" 156. See also Fernand Khnopff, "A Tribute from Belgium," The Magazine of Art (1898): 518-9.
[195] La Sizeranne, "Burne-Jones" 513, 515. The author states that Burne-Jones succeeded in achieving, "the exhibition of the soul."
[196] Khnopff, "A Tribute from Belgium" 522.

Jean-Léon Gérôme and the Struggle between Painting and Sculpture

Just as Burne-Jones was compelled to revisit the Pygmalion and Galatea narrative in many major works, so too would Gérôme find it necessary to undertake the subject several times. Some of Gérôme's most famous works are, in fact, his two well-known paintings *Pygmalion and Galatea*, (not including a third that is now lost), and a sculpture of the same name that is now at the Hearst Castle in San Simeon, California.[197] As I will be discussing throughout this next section, Gérôme's work as a sculptor has received little attention in art historical scholarship. The preeminent scholar of Gérôme's sculptures is Gerald Ackerman, whose monograph and articles on these works will be discussed shortly. Unfortunately, the sculpture at Hearst Castle does not seem to have figured into any studies devoted to it, which may be a result of its relative inaccessibility, as it is not incorporated into a more convenient museum or gallery collection.

Gérôme's quest to master this iconic subject motivated him to go a step beyond Burne-Jones, who never undertook the work in sculptural form. But it was as a painter that Gérôme made a name for himself in the competitive art world of nineteenth-century France. Just as Girodet and other paragonising artists typically felt that they had suffered undeservedly at the hands of their detractors, Gérôme too was the target of undesirable criticism, and even controversy. One instance is of particular note. In 1868, the painter was forced to remove *The Execution of Marshall Ney* from the Salon, due to its perceived politically inflammatory nature.[198] This dramatic composition shows the executed man

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[197] Some preliminary sources to mention on Gérôme include La Vie et l'œuvre de Jean-Léon Gérôme (Les Orientalistes, Vol. 4), (Art Creation Realization, 2000). Gerald M. Ackerman, The Life and Work of Jean-Léon Gérôme: with a Catalogue Rsaisonné (London and New York: Sotheby's Publications, 1986). Others will be discussed shortly.

[198] Ney's execution was one of the most troubling events to follow the fall of Napoleon's second regime, after the 100 days, to the Bourbon Monarchy. As one of a group of Marshalls called to service under Napoleon's regime, Ney's execution was perceived to be an unfair attack upon Napoleon's loyal supporters. Gérôme had also bestowed a second title on the work, which was *Le 7 décembre 1815*, thereby exposing his expectation that viewers would celebrate the work's nationalistic import, just as Goya's *Third of May 1808* had been received by the Spanish decades earlier. Both paintings revived political executions, to bring to light the resilience of their countrymen. Gerald M. Ackerman, Jean-Léon Gérôme: monographie révisée: catalogue raisonné mis à jour (Paris: ACR Édition, 2000): 82. For more on the Bonaparte era and the arts see Albert Boime, Art in an Age of Bonapartism: 1800-1815 (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1990). See also Christopher Prendergast, Napoleon and History Painting (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1997), and Robert Rosenblum, "Painting Under Napoleon, 1800-1814," French Painting 1774-1830: The Age of Revolution (Paris: Réunion des Musées Nationaux, 1975):

lying in the foreground in the middle of a street. The armed executioners are marching into the distance, having completed their task. Apparently, Gérôme misjudged the work's reception, expecting that it would please the Bonapartes, when in fact it offended them. Other viewers believed it to be a flagrantly propagandistic effort at self-promotion in support of the Bonapartes, especially in light of his recent and prestigious acceptance as an honorary member of the *Légion d'honneur*, which was bestowed upon him in 1867. This earned Gérôme a reputation for political ambition, eventually making him the focus of caricatures in such publications as the Décès célèbres. And as we shall see in the next chapter, Gérôme, like his contemporary Moreau, had to confront the ongoing debates regarding the appropriate relationship between literature and the arts. Moreau, who happily accepted the title of 'poet in painting,' which he was christened by his supporters, had to reconcile with himself the objections of his detractors, who accused him of being too dependent upon literary subject matter.

In Gérôme's case, he was even accused of tackling subjects that, however clever, were judged to be too complex in their literary nature, given the limits of painting.[199] Leeman contends that Gérôme was highly sensitive to these accusations, but that he would not give in to such criticism, believing in his right to portray unconventional narratives with unswerving truth and complexity, as he did in his *Jérusalem*, also shown at the Salon of 1868.[200] Here, the majority of the scene is a dramatic landscape featuring a hostile desert. The only figures are so far into the distance that they are incidental to the scene. This second painting was attacked due to the obscurity of its shadows, since they conceal the central narrative; but the artist argued that he was true to the subject, and had visited this historical location, gauging first hand the effects of light and topography.[201] Perhaps even more pertinent to his paragonising interests and the defence

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161-173. Jean-Léon Gérôme, *Le 7 decembre 1815, neuf heures du matin: L'Exécution du maréchal Ney, (The Execution of Marshall Ney)*, 1868, oil on canvas, 64 x 103.5 cm, City Art Gallery, Sheffield, England.

[199] Fred Leeman, "Shadows over Jean-Léon Gérôme's Career," Van Gogh Museum Journal (1997-8): 93-5. Leeman is translating a quote from Théophile Gautier in his review of the "Salon de 1868" from the Moniteur Universel (May 1868): 1-2.

[200] Jean-Léon Gérôme, *Consumatum est. Jérusalem,* 1867, oil on canvas, 81.3 x 146 cm, Musée d'Orsay, Paris, France.

[201] Leeman, "Shadows" 97. For excerpts of his biography, and a review of its contents, see Ackerman, "Jean-Léon Gérôme, à cinquante ans, dresse le bilan de sa propre carrière: son autobiographie, rédigée en 1874," Bulletin de la société d'agriculture, lettres, sciences et arts de la haute saône 14 (1980). For more on Gérôme and his contemporaries at this time see Théodore Duret, Les Peintres français en 1867 (Paris:

of painting, Gérôme argued against the painting's critics saying: "[L]es peintres avaient le droit d'écrire l'histoire avec leur pinceau aussi bien que les littérateurs avec leur plume, ce qui était juste."[202]

Gérôme's artistic success did not come easily; as with most paragonising artists, he felt he had something to prove. In the early 1840s, he undertook the conventional trip to Italy and then enlisted in the academy's school for training as a painter. Unfortunately, his official education in the school did not help him to win the *Prix de Rome*, which he lost in 1846. The tide changed for him when he began to secure prizes at the Salon for various works, and gained support in the court of Napoleon III (1808-73) for his history paintings. Like Delacroix, he also made some unconventional journeys to more exotic places than the typical 'Grand Tour' undertaken by the average artist, such as Turkey and Egypt.[203] This exposure to the east nurtured his fascination with Orientalising subjects, for which he became well-known.[204] Throughout his career, he garnered international acclaim, even earning an honorary position in England's Royal Academy, which was conferred in 1869. Over the duration of his career, he exhibited at the Salon and other official venues, and worked for both official and private patrons. Despite the notable success that Gérôme achieved, he remained plagued by certain accusations. Many critics commented on the apparent lack of emotion or sentimentality in his works, even comparing the abnormal dryness of his figures to the shocking lack of feeling displayed in Gustave Flaubert's (1821-80) scandalous heroine Madame Bovary, (from the novel by the same name of 1857). What these critics perceived to be unemotional and insensitive in his work was actually, in Gérôme's eyes, demonstrative of his exacting approach to Realism, which precluded the possibility of emotional distortion for the sake of effect. On the other hand, due to Gérôme's extremely well-researched and hyper-historical

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Dentu, 1867). Helène Lafront-Couturier, Gérôme (Paris: Herscher, 1998). For more on this controversial Salon appearance see Gautier, "Salon de 1868" 1-2.

[202] Quoted in Ackerman, Gérôme 82. My translation: "Painters have the right to write history with their paint brushes as much as the writers do with their pens; this is only fair."

[203] For more on the artist's interest in non-western traditions see Émile Galichon, "M. Gérôme. Peintre ethnographe," Gazette des beaux-arts 24 (Feb. 1868): 151.

[204] For one of many examinations of Orientalism see Gérard-Georges Lemaire, The Orient in Western Art, pref. by Geneviève Lacambre (Paris: Könemann, 2001). Frederick M. Boher, Orientalism and Visual Culture : Imagining Mesopotamia in Nineteenth-Century Europe (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003). Jill Beaulieu and Mary Roberts, Orientalism's interlocutors: painting, architecture, photography (Durham, NC: London: Duke University Press, 2002). John Goodman and Christine Peltre, Orientalism and Art (New York, London, Paris: Abbéville, 1998).

preparation, some critics complained that his works were rife with historical detail, but bereft of didactic content, which may have stemmed from the Néo-Grec approach, of which Gérôme was a leading figure. This was a movement in which the artists chose genre-like or anecdotal subjects from antiquity, instead of grand well-known narratives, making the subjects seem awkwardly grandiose given their surroundings.[205]

Still, Gérôme's supporters reveled in his meticulous painting style, to the degree that his works were even said to compete with photography. As with his Neoclassical predecessors, Gérôme's tactics attested to his skill by eliminating all trace of the artist's hand, which, like the 'licked surface' of an Ingres painting, gave the paradoxical impression of exhibiting, simultaneously, both unsurpassed laborious devotion to the task, and an effortless genius-borne talent. In his study of Gérôme's work, Leeman explains that the artist's unforgiving realism involved a fascination with the play of shadows in both real and photographic circumstances. At the time, photography could document shadows as they appeared in nature, however, the artist could manipulate shadows for effect, and make them as convincingly efficacious as those in a photograph.[206]

Besides the controversial aspects of his career, personal ambitions, and interest in the Pygmalion subject, Gérôme's virtual obsession with self-representation also makes him an obvious participant in the paragone debate. It is not merely the number of such representations, in Gérôme's case, but also their complexity. For instance, the *End of the Séance* (1886) shows the artist putting away his tools, while the model drapes a piece of fabric over herself.[207] Her mirror image, in the form of the nearly complete sculpture, shown in an identical pose as the model, stands facing the viewer. Similarly, in *Le travail du marbre* (1895), of which there were two finished versions, we witness the artist

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[205] Ackerman, Gérôme 88-9. For some primary critiques see Ernest Chesneau's chapter called *Peinture d'histoire*, from his Les Nations rivales dans l'art (Paris: Librairie Académique Didier et Cie, 1868); also generally relevant is Chesneau's, "Art and the Nude," The Education of the Artist (London: Cassell, 1886). See also Émile Zola's salon critiques. Ackerman, "The Néo-Grecs, A Chink in the Wall of Neoclassicism," French Academy, Classicism, and its Antagonists (London and Toronto: Associated University Presses, 1990): 168-95.
[206] Leeman, "Shadows" 91-3.
[207] Jean-Léon Gérôme, *End of the Séance,* 1886, oil on canvas, 48.3 x 40.5 cm, private collection.

in the act of sculpting a seated figure from a model, which is also almost complete.[208] He studies closely the nude female model seated immediately beside the statue. Surrounding the figures are the trappings of the artist's studio, including two sculptures and a painting of the artist's own making, masks hang from the shelves, and props are strewn about, which are known to have been used in other works. In all of these scenes, the artist is a self-portrait, and the works that he sculpts are, in fact, ones that he had already finished as a sculptor. In the *Séance*, the model poses for the sculpture *Omphale*, just as in the *Model* she poses for the *Tanagra* (1890).[209] Viewers are invited to draw a parallel between Gérôme and Pygmalion in the *Model,* by virtue of the inclusion of his own painting *Pygmalion and Galatea* on the back wall of the studio.[210] Notwithstanding the obvious commonalities between the two scenes, the painter's pride in his two Pygmalions is apparent in the decision to show a different version in each of the two studio scenes. So viewers are reminded of the artist's previous triumphs, and that, whether as a painter or sculptor, he is accomplished enough to claim himself as the new Pygmalion.

The theme of self-documentation is both self-aggrandising and Narcissistic.[211] It continues in *Mon Portrait* (1902), wherein Gérôme toils over his polychrome statue *Nu assis en tailleur* (1895), and in his *Autoportrait terminant La joueuse des boules*, where he sculpts his 1902 marble version of *La Joueuse de boules* (1902).[212] In the former, Gérôme's paintings surround the artist and his model, forming a panorama of his work as a painter. In each self-portrait, a complex interplay of illusion is formulated, where pre-existing works are replicated for the sake of yet another appearance. By documenting his successes, Gérôme gives us the impression that he has attained such prestige that even the views of his unfinished works are to be cherished.

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[208] Jean-Léon Gérôme, *Le travail du marbre*, **(***Working in Marble or The Artist Sculpting Tanagra)***,** 1895, oil on canvas, 50.5 x 39.5 cm, Dahesh Museum of Art, New York, Tennessee, U.S.A. Jean-Léon Gérôme, *Le Travail du marbre or Le Modèle de l'artiste*, 1892, oil on canvas, 51.4 x 38.7 cm, Haggin Museum, Stockton, California, U.S.A.

[209] Jean-Léon Gérôme, *Tanagra*, 1890, polychrome marble, 152 x 67 x 70 cm, Musée d'Orsay, Paris, France.

[210] Sunanda Sanyal, "Allegorizing Representation: Gérôme's Final Phase," Athanor 15(1997): 40.

[211] An alternative study, which addresses the relationship between artist and model in such depictions is found in France Borel, Le modèle ou l'artiste séduit (Geneva: A. Skira, 1990).

[212] Jean-Léon Gérôme, *Mon Portrait*, 1902, oil on canvas, unknown dimensions, lost. Jean-Léon Gérôme, *Autoportrait terminant la Joueuse de boules*, 1902, oil on canvas, 59.3 x 43.9 cm, private collection.

An overriding theme of these self-portraits is of instruction and artistic practice, which corresponds to Gérôme's background as a professor for the *École des beaux-arts*, which he considered an integral component of his career. As a teacher, Gérôme made a name for himself as an opponent to the *avant-garde* groups in the last quarter of the nineteenth century. For example, he was, famously, part of the faction that opposed Manet's efforts to exhibit at the Salon, leading to the establishment of the *Salon des réfusés* as a reactionary event.[213] He was also in the habit of taking his promising students to distant locations, such as Israel, Egypt, other places in north Africa. Due to the emphasis on working from the model, Gérôme's scenes of self-representation promote the educational principle that students should emulate their master and become Realists, working only from the things that they have witnessed first hand, or have before them. The repetitive recreation of the studio bespeaks the artist's insistence upon the rigours of a controlled creative practice, unlike the *en plein air* process being undertaken by his Impressionist rivals.

Another example of a subject in Gérôme's œuvre with both paragonising and pedagogical value is *Phryne devant l'Aréopage* (1861).[214] Judith Ryan, in her analysis of the literary and artistic treatments of the Phryne narrative in the late nineteenth century, suggests that this painting exhibits a keenly modern self-conscious awareness in its maker. Phryne's legend originates in Greek antiquity, when she was reported to have been a phenomenally beautiful courtesan. She was so beautiful, in fact, that she was reputed to have posed for Praxiteles, who sculpted one of the most famous female nudes in history: the *Aphrodite of Knidos*. Therefore, viewer's often associated Phryne with Venus or Aphrodite. Other accounts contend that she became the inspiration for Apelles's painting called *Aphrodite Anadyomene*. In terms of her story's link to literary or visual paragonising subject matter, Phryne was reinterpreted throughout the nineteenth century by both writers and painters. For example, in his poem called *Lesbos*, which was

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[213] Sanyal, "Allegorizing Representation" 41. Gérôme was a member of the Academic jury that rejected Manet's paintings in 1863. For more on the *Salon des Refusés* see Albert Boime, "The *Salon des Refusés* and the Evolution of Modern Art" The Art Quarterly 32 (1969): 411-26. And for Gérôme's position on teaching and traveling in artistic practice see Boime, "The Teaching Reforms." See also Boime, "Gérôme and the Bourgeois Artist's Burden," Arts Magazine 57:5 (Jan., 1983): 64-73.
[214] Jean-Léon Gérôme, *Phryne devant l'Aréopage*, 1861, oil on canvas, 80 x 128cm, Kunsthalle, Hamburg, Germany.

published in the Fleurs du mal (1857), Baudelaire created a Narcissistic Phryne, because she loved women of similar and equal beauty to herself, rather than men.[215] Throughout the nineteenth century, Phryne became entangled in a series of inter-arts appearances, similar to the volley of Salomé subject matter at this time. This is not surprising, given that her story had come to symbolise the rivalry between sculpture and poetry, which was itself escalating.[216] Even though the history of Phryne's representation was not quite popular enough to include in this project, it is helpful to see that Gérôme was evidently in the habit of choosing paragonising subjects.

A quick look at Gérôme's *Phryne* exposes some of the ways in which this work signals paragonising issues. In this panoramic scene of an ancient classical judicial setting, Phryne stands nude to the left, while her advocate rips off her drapery. The scene replicates an event from Phryne's life when she was put on trial for sacrilegious behaviour. According to legend, she escaped a guilty verdict when either she, or her defender, tore open her clothes to expose her incomparable beauty. Along the opposite side of the room sit the innumerable officials waiting to render judgement. At the very centre of the room stands an idol, which faces the viewer. The figure of Phryne is striking, due to its sculptural quality, more than its painterly animation or *vivezza*. Phryne's hard white flesh makes her look like the statue of Aphrodite for which she supposedly served as the model, and undermines her resemblance to a living creature. Her prominent position on a large slab of stone, which projects into the interior space, is more akin to a museum pedestal than a courtroom, and the idol or figurine beside her makes the two seem like part of an exhibition display. Phryne's story, centering on spectatorship and the male gaze, parallels the relationships involved in artistic creation, such as that between a model and an artist, or a viewer and a sculpture.

The fact that Gérôme portrayed the moment of Phryne's unveiling is the main reason that the painting has been dismissed in Modernist scholarship, the assumption being that it constitutes shameless pandering to the male gaze, in its obviously titillating qualities. However, in contemporary reviews of the work, which were mixed, Ryan finds that it was much more hotly debated by contemporary critics, than one would have

[215] Judith Ryan, "More Seductive than Phryne: Baudelaire, Gérôme, Rilke, and the Problem of Autonomous Art," PMLA 108:5 (Oct., 1993): 1130-1.
[216] Ryan, "More Seductive than Phryne" 1133.

expected, if indeed the work had merely stood for academic eroticism. Indeed, this work pre-dates Manet's *Olympia* (1863), in its attempt to highlight the debate over the nude versus naked female figure in nineteenth-century art.[217] This was because some critics claimed that the woman's embarrassment obviously removed her from the canon of idealised nudes in the history of art, and thrust her into the category of nakedness. Because Phryne violently turns away from the leering panel of male viewers, throwing her arm across her face in order to hide her shame, she cannot be 'nude' because she is an unwilling object of the gaze. In general, nude figures, even if shy or coy, are comfortable in the eye of the beholder, as their beauty becomes a source of pride and confidence. In Gérôme's time, it was acceptable for nude figures to be demure, even shy, modest, and timid, but it was not acceptable to exhibit fear or shame. In the painting, the statue beside the 'real' figure, and the presence of a sash with the phrase 'the beauty' beside Phryne, are proof of the possibility that, rather than catering to the cult of aesthetic beauty in nineteenth-century France, Gérôme was actually criticising it.[218] In effect, Gérôme was parodying the Aestheticist obsession with beauty, at the expense of all moral concerns or personal dignity. Phryne's portrayal as an object of the gaze shattered the expected distance between viewer and subject, and brought to light the collapse of morality in society and the art world, by contrasting the immoral lustful viewers, addicted to female beauty, with Phryne's resistance to her involvement in such immorality. Her discomfort similarly undermines the artificiality of the nude-to-viewer relationship, wherein the viewer is comfortably separated from the subject.[219]

Gérôme's treatment of Phryne may have also directly engaged in a rivalry with contemporary literature. An interesting and possibly competitive relationship exists between Baudelaire's poem *La Beauté* from Les Fleurs du Mal, and Gérôme's *Phryne*.[220]

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[217] One of the most famous analyses of Manet's *Olympia* is in T.J. Clark, The Painting of Modern Life (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1989). See also Eunice Lipton, Freidrich Otto, Griselda Pollock, "Manet's *Olympia*," Art Journal 52:4 (Winter 1993): 87-91. Sharon Flescher, "More on a Name: Manet's *Olympia* and the Defiant Heroine in Mid-Nineteenth-Century France," Art Journal 45:1 (Spring 1985): 27-35. Edouard Manet, *Olympia*, 1863, oil on canvas, 130.5 x 190 cm Musée d'Orsay, Paris, France.
[218] Ryan, "More Seductive than Phryne" 1134-5, 1137.
[219] Scholars of Gérôme's works have not provided any completely convincing explanations as to why some of his works seem to support the tradition of the male gaze, while others undermine it, as in this case.
[220] La beauté is quoted and translated in Ryan, "More Seductive than Phryne" 1133-4.

Unfortunately, the poem has perplexed scholars for quite some time. Some contemporary readers felt that the subject was based on Phryne, interpreting it as a poem in the voice of the statue for which Phryne may have modeled, primarily because of the first line, which reads "Je suis belle, ô mortels, comme un rêve de pierre,/" (translated and cited in the previous f.n.). The reference to a beautiful entity resembling stone merits this interpretation. Ryan, however, offers a new reading that more convincingly identifies the narrator as an artist's model, who describes her experience in trying to hold a pose, so that the lines of the composition will not be disturbed. Over the course of the poem, the narrator degenerates into an object-like creature and increasingly feels like the statue for which she is modeling; she becomes trapped, rigid, and without personality.[221] This possible transformation from model to statue also conjures up a reverse-Galatea-like incarnation, where Galatea is returned to her pre-transformation and immobile state. Given that other writers had treated the reverse Galatea subject, Baudelaire may have intended to conflate these two figures, making the poem a representation of both Phryne and Galatea types. This would explain, as well, why the poem may have attracted Gérôme's interest.

Another feature that aligns the Phryne subject to that of Galatea is that both portray a moment of recognition in which the female figure discovers that she has become the object of the gaze. In reviewing Bronzino's *Pygmalion*, Currie observes that this Renaissance Galatea turns towards the viewer, instead of Pygmalion, as her awakening corresponds to the exact moment in which she realises that she is the object of

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Je suis belle, ô mortels! Comme un rêve de pierre,/ Et mon sein, où chacun s'est meurtri tour à tour,/ Est fait pour inspirer au poète un amour/ Eternel et muet ainsi que la matière.// Je trône dans l'azur comme un sphinx incompris; J'unis un cœur de neige à la blancheur des cygnes;/ Je hais le mouvement qui déplace les lignes,/ Et jamais je ne pleure et jamais je ne ris.// Les poètes, devant mes grands attitudes,/ Que j'ai l'air d'emprunter aux plus fiers/ monuments,/ Consumeront leurs jours en d'austères études;// Car j'ai, pour fasciner ces dociles amants,/ De purs miroirs qui font toutes choses plus belles:/ Mes yeux, mes larges yeux aux clartés éternelles!//

I am beautiful, O mortals, like a dream of stone, and my breast, where all have been wounded one by one, is designed to inspire the poet with love as eternal and mute as matter. I sit in majesty in the azure like an enigmatic sphinx; I combine a heart of snow with the whiteness of swans; I detest movement that disturbs lines, and I never weep and never laugh. Confronted with my grand poses, which seem to be modeled on the proudest of monuments, poets will consume their days in austere study; for, to captivate these docile lovers, I have perfect mirrors that make everything more beautiful: my eyes, my huge eyes with their eternal brilliance!

[221] Ryan, "More Seductive than Phryne" 1133-4.

Pygmalion's gaze, as well as the viewer's, the latter underscoring the fact that she was originally conceived as an artwork.[222] With respect to Galatea, her spiritual birth is defined by this realisation. Phryne also exhibits this same awareness, only in her case, her acknowledgment of the gazes all around her is so upsetting that she tries to shield herself from them. This theme of self-consciousness in the face of the gaze was one that Gérôme treated many times, including in the *Vente d'esclaves à Rome* (*Sale of the Slaves in Rome,* 1884), where we witness a female slave being sold to members of a group of men, below the platform upon which the slave stands, nude and vulnerable.[223] Both scenes include an older man, who has apparently demanded that the slave de-robe, as her drapery lies conspicuously on the ground beside her, while she shields her eyes from the audience in her embarrassment. In the first scene, the figure is shown from the front, while facing the viewer and her audience. The second work by the same name was completed two years later, and portrays the figure from behind, thereby positioning the viewer in a more sympathetic location, as we can better appreciate the intimidating faces of her onlookers from the slave's perspective. In both cases, the viewer must confront his or her inclusion in the painting's spatial illusionism, as in each he or she is just as engaged in the gaze as the spectators below. Despite their similarities, judging from the fact that the first was exhibited by itself in the Salon, each was sold to a different patron, and their dimensions were dissimilar, it is unlikely that the works were conceived as pendants.

So, let us now turn to the works in which Galatea's identity is undisputed. The first Pygmalion works to concern us here are the two paintings completed by Gérôme around 1890. [224] It had been over seventy years since Girodet unveiled his famous version at the Salon of 1819 when Gérôme attempted the subject. In one of the paintings, the viewer stands behind Galatea, witnessing Pygmalion rushing forward to kiss and embrace the sculptural figure in the midst of her metamorphosis. Both scenes take place

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[222] Currie, "Secularised Sculptural Imagery" 242.
[223] Jean-Léon Gérôme, *Vente d'esclaves à Rome*, 1884, oil on canvas, 92 x 74 cm, Hermitage, St. Petersburg, Russia. Jean-Léon Gérôme, *Vente d'esclaves à Rome*, 1886, oil on canvas, 64 x 57 cm, The Walters Art Gallery, Baltimore, U.S.A.
[224] Jean-Léon Gérôme, *Pygmalion et Galatée/ Pygmalion and Galatea*, 1890, oil on canvas, 94 x 74 cm, Private Collection. Gérôme, *Pygmalion et Galatée/ Pygmalion and Galatea*, 1892, oil on canvas, 87.5 x 86.6 cm, The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York City, U.S.A.

in the sculptor's studio. The second shows the opposite view point, looking at the back of Pygmalion. Unlike Burne-Jones, or even Girodet, Gérôme opted to portray the arresting moment when Pygmalion embraces Galatea. If Gérôme had intended, as many other paragonising artists had before him, to secure the greatest emotional impact in the viewer as possible, then he made a good choice in representing the kiss. But unfortunately, this also poses a great dilemma for Gérôme, who is limited by the obscurity that a kiss necessitates. In other words, their physical proximity means, as many movie directors would surely appreciate, that facial expressions are almost completely lost, and with them the import of the features that the artist typically relies upon to express emotion.

It is this compromise that may have obliged Gérôme to consider the subject from two different vantage points, as well as in sculptural form. In order to compensate for the loss of facial expression in his figures, Gérôme eked out of the composition as much bodily expression as possible. In the painted versions, Galatea's contortion is extreme, as she strains in an impossible curve, bending to meet Pygmalion's kiss. This pose is slightly more successful and exaggerated in the version where Galatea's back faces the viewer, because the depressive trajectory of her spine and buttocks accentuates the dramatic curving diagonal of her posture. Still, it is also in this painting that Pygmalion is most concealed. Galatea's arm, in all three works, is dramatically raised in a sharp triangle, showcasing a dynamic gracefulness that artfully evokes her impassioned state. For his part, Pygmalion lunges in Galatea's direction, exhibiting the profundity of his passion. Movement is also insinuated through their dance-like hold, because the reaching and encircling actions emulate waltzing couples. Pygmalion's swirling drapery and uplifted feet further convey the movements of a body that is absolutely absorbed in desire. By contrast, Galatea remains firmly and torturously rooted to her marble base, making her the captive of her former self. The visceral quality of these scenes demonstrates that Gérôme took a different tack than his predecessors. Instead of fighting the physicality of Ovid's Pygmalion, Gérôme turned it to his advantage, converting the story's blatant, but hitherto problematic, eroticism into the most gripping part of the narrative's visual potential.

Even though Gérôme depicted the figures in the most climactic moment of their union, (at least that which could be shown publicly without eliciting accusations of pornography), the works exhibit some important precedents that place them very self-consciously within the tradition of Pygmalion representations. By quoting only part of these former versions, Gérôme advertised his intent to surpass all that had come before. One notable similarity between Girodet's version and that of Gérôme's is the floating Cupid, (he only appears in the painting where Galatea does not face us), who hovers in a supernatural cloud overlooking the lovers. Unlike Girodet, who made Cupid a significant physical and symbolic bridge between the two figures, Gérôme extracted Cupid from this role, preventing him from interrupting the couple's intimacy. While he may not have known Burne-Jones's works first hand, like Burne-Jones's series, Gérôme's versions portray statues in Pygmalion's studio. In the scene where Galatea faces the viewer, a female figure in the background raises a cloth in front of her, eluding identification as either real or sculptural, even though she resembles statues in the artist's body of work.

Aside from these echoes of previous versions, Gérôme's works de-emphasise the supernatural aspect of the metamorphosis. Cupid is present, yet he has the air of a decorative nuance, instead of an important iconographic element. Another notable alteration is that Venus does not figure prominently in any of Gérôme's versions. Even if she is implied through her son, Venus is not integral to the narrative. The goddess's representation was an essential compositional feature in the works of both Girodet and Burne-Jones, so why did Gérôme not include her? We will come back to this question shortly. Another omission is that the breezy quality of Girodet's incense-infused dream-like atmosphere is utterly banished in Gérôme's versions, which no longer transport us to a fantasy-like realm, akin to that imagined on Mount Olympus. The colours do not echo the soft, ephemeral attributes of Galatea herself, since Gérôme plants his figures in a firmly-rooted earthly space. Perhaps somewhat less romantic than Girodet's palette, Gérôme's colour choice does serve a distinct purpose; the dark background propels Galatea's ivory figure towards the viewer, striking a dramatic contrast between the unearthly figure, and the mortal world that she is about to inhabit. There is even somewhat of a grotesque, and surely rough, quality about Pygmalion's studio. The wooden platform upon which Galatea stands, the studio's drearily-lit interior, and the

morbid masks, which haunt the recesses of the space with disturbingly vacant eyes and gaping mouths, all provide a shocking contrast to the purity of Galatea's flesh. Even in Burne-Jones's work, which gives more of an indication of a real artist's studio, having pieces of broken statuary set against the tile floor, the studio does not offer a comparable reality to that of Gérôme. The central difference is that Gérôme removed his figures from the antique world, and transformed them, just as medieval artists did when illustrating ancient subjects, into figures of nearly contemporaneous circumstances. Because Pygmalion wears a generic costume, Gérôme's studio could belong to any age, making it much more likely for viewers to associate Pygmalion with a modern artist as much as an ancient one.

Even if these differences seem superficial, they lie at the heart of a significant statement that Gérôme's paintings communicate regarding the artist's role in creation. Unlike the Pygmalion of Girodet or Burne-Jones, who derives his powers from Venus's divine intervention, Gérôme's Pygmalion is entirely independent and self-sufficient in his quest to bring the perfect image to fruition. No apparent offerings have been made at the feet of a statue, no incense has been burned, and no prayers have been said. This Pygmalion is a dauntingly dynamic creature, who daringly snatches for himself the beauty that he has masterfully formed with his own hands. As such, we are led to suppose that it is Pygmalion's desire, and not divine intervention, that actually wills Galatea's metamorphosis into being. Instead of denying the material realm in which artists work, Gérôme exploited it for his own benefit, which was appropriate, given that as a Realist, Gérôme had cast aside the fantasies of the Romantic era, and had come to grips with the harsh realities of modern life, and its industrialised, materialistic, and secular nature at the end of the nineteenth century.

Gérôme and Polychrome Sculpture:
A Monstrosity or a Glorious Return to Antiquity?

As we have observed, Gérôme did not just work in painting; the self-competing tendencies of the meta-artist, such as Rossetti, may also be found in Gérôme's exploration of sculpture as a complementary medium. The very fact that Gérôme attempted to work in more than one artistic medium is further evidence of his competitive streak. Since the Renaissance, artists who demonstrated skill in more than one medium were more revered than those who mastered just one. For example, in Vasari's Lives he positioned Michelangelo at the apex of achievement in Renaissance art, and primarily for this reason:

> But the man who wins the palm among artists both living and dead, who transcends and surpasses them all, is the divine Michelangelo Buonarroti, who reigns supreme not merely in one of these arts but in all three at once. This man surpasses and triumphs over not only all those artists who have almost surpassed Nature but even those most celebrated ancient artists themselves, who beyond all doubt surpassed Nature: and alone he has triumphed over ancient artists, modern artists, and even Nature herself, without ever imagining anything so strange or so difficult that he could not surpass it by far with the power of his most divine genius…And not only in painting and colouring, categories which include all the shapes and bodies, straight and curved, tangible and intangible, visible and invisible, but also in bodies completely in the round, and through the point of his chisel and his untiring labour…brought these three most noble arts to their final stage of development with such wondrous perfection that one might well and safely declare that his statues are, in every respect, much more beautiful than those of the ancients.[225]

We may deduce from comments like this that an artist's foray into a new medium often signified, over the ages, an extreme competitive bent, and a desire to attain a prestige comparable to that of the ultimate paragonising artist: Michelangelo. Even though Vasari's writings were well-known in the nineteenth century, the academic system, by virtue of its insistence on forcing artists to choose a genre and medium, made it seem as if mastering more than one art form indicated unusual talent.[226]

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[225] Vasari, Lives 281-2.

[226] Examples of other nineteenth-century artists who accomplished this task include Frederick Leighton and Edgar Degas. For the latter see Théodore Reff, Degas Sculptures: Catalogue Raisonné of the Bronzes (Torch Press and International Arts, 2002). Also for Degas see Richard Kendall, "Striking a Blow for Sculpture: Degas' Waxes and Bronzes," Apollo 142:402 (Aug., 1995): 2-5. For Leighton see David J. Getsy, Encountering the male nude at the origins of modern sculpture : Rodin, *Leighton*, Hildebrand, and

It was considerably late in his career that Gérôme turned to formal sculpture, exhibiting his first large-scale work called *Gladiators* at the *Exposition Universelle* in Paris in 1878. Already successful as a history painter, Gérôme began to experiment with monumental sculpture, the subjects for which were often plucked from the roster of those that he had already undertaken in paintings. Apparently unfettered by the expectation of sculpture's classical 'purity,' having not been formally trained as a sculptor, Gérôme tended towards unusual forms, such as intermingling different media, including metals, jewellery, and other interesting surfaces besides marble and bronze.[227] He did, however, have a history in sculpture; he was known to execute wax models using small three-dimensional groups as jumping off points for his painterly compositions. When all was said and done, it was apparent that by the end of Gérôme's career, he had truly established a reputation as a sculptor, having completed over seventy ambitious pieces, many of which were shown at the Salon, or constituted official commissions.[228]

Nineteenth-century sculptors consulting Ovid's myth of Pygmalion, so as to inspire their own works, would surely have been spurred on by a particular passage in the story. According to Ovid, Pygmalion's desperate desire for Galatea to be mortal led him to dress and adorn the statue. This detail, describing the application of superfluous colour and texture on the marble statue's surface, could have inspired sculptors to attempt polychrome effects in their works. With respect to Gérôme's artistic methodology, polychrome perfectly matched his objectives. In investigating the artist's work in sculpture, Ackerman asserts that Gérôme was essentially as much of a Realist in sculpture as he was in painting. Except that this posed considerable ideological and practical problems, because sculpture's prestige in the nineteenth century continued to be founded upon its capacity to perpetuate the idealism of antique sculpture. Modern

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the negotiation of physicality and temporality, ed. Antoinette Roesler-Friedenthal (Berlin: Gebr. Mann, 2003). See also Philip Ward-Jackson, "Leighton's Sculptural Legacy: London," The Burlington Magazine 138:1119 (Jun., 1996): 417-418.

[227] Gérôme turned to colleagues for training in sculpture, such as his close friend, the sculptor Eugène Fremiet. That Gérôme considered Fremiet his teacher is evidenced by the fact that he signed a sculpture that was exhibited at the Salon as the student of Fremiet. Gerald M. Ackerman, "Gérôme's Sculpture: The Problems of Realist Sculpture," Arts Magazine 8 (Feb., 1986): 83.

[228] An important point must be made about the scholarship on Gérôme's sculpture. If it had not been for the laborious research of Ackerman, who was the first scholar to document every sculpture in Gérôme's body of work, scholars would not know the artist today for his work in sculpture. See Ackerman, "Gérôme's Sculpture" 82-89.

polychrome sculpture was controversial, and its rediscovery threatened critics, teachers within the academies, and theorists, who routinely celebrated the purity of ancient works, which, even if they had once been polychrome, were by the time of their discovery divested of most decoration.

The earliest event to draw attention to polychrome in the nineteenth century was the publication of De Quincy's treatise on the history of such works. It went by the typically long French title of: Le Jupiter Olympien, ou l'art de la sculpture antique considéré sous un nouveau point de vue; ouvrage qui comprend un essai sur le gout de la sculpture polychrome, l'analyse explicative de la toreutique et l'histoire de la statuaire en or et ivoire chez les grecs et les romains, avec la restitution des principaux monuments de cet art et; la démonstration pratique ou le renouvellement de ses procédés mécaniques.[229] The treatise's publication in Paris in 1814 continued the custom of looking back to the works of antiquity, but it was controversial because De Quincy addressed practices in polychrome techniques that had otherwise been ignored in the French system. Prior to this treatise, it was generally not acknowledged that ancient sculptors used colour to enliven their works, but with his text this became public knowledge.[230]

In De Quincy's view, antique polychrome works had been mainly ignored by modern artists, because they were considered of lesser value than their more pure monochrome counterparts. He alleged that this was because coloured sculptures maintained stronger ties to a more savage or child-like culture, perhaps since individuals of lesser sophistication were more easily duped by the life-like quality of coloured figures. It was the mixture of sculptural relief with colour that made the artist's illusion complete, so polychrome became the height of imitation in the arts of antiquity.[231] In De Quincy's own words:

> A cette époque, et dès que l'on sentit le besoin d'indiquer, dans les premier signes dont on a parlé, les qualités des objets, la couleur obtint le second rang après la

[229] My translation: The Olympian Jupiter: Or, the Art of Ancient Sculpture Considered under a New Point of View, A Work that Comprises an Essay on the Taste for Polychrome Sculpture, An Explanatory Analysis of the 'toreutique' and the History of Ivory Statues Created by the Hands of the Greeks and the Romans, with a Reproduction of the Principal Monuments of this Art, and a Practical Demonstration or the Renewal of these Mechanical Processes.
[230] Gaiger in Herder's Sculpture 15 (f.n. 27).
[231] The painted reliefs were, indeed, more 'accepted' by modern theorists and artists than tinted sculpture-in-the-round.

> forme, et bientôt elle s'associa aux figures de relief ou de ronde-bosse. Cette association fut par-tout l'ouvrage uniforme de l'instinct. La couleur des corps vivants, quelque imparfaite qu'on la suppose, est pour l'œil d'un sauvage ou d'un enfant l'image de la vie. Le mélange du relief et du coloris leur fait un illusion complète.[232]

De Quincy warned that these painterly-sculpted combinations were deceptively and dangerously more powerful than any other art form, which was an issue of great significance to the paragonising artist, who might be looking for new ways to increase visual impact of works on viewers. He added:

> C'est contre les pareilles statues peintes que s'élève aussi le prophète Ezéchiel, lorsqu'il reproche aux Israélites d'avoir adoré les images des Chaldéens et des Égyptiens. Cette pratique, si propice à l'idolâtrie, parait en avoir tellement favorisé l'établissement, que quelques écrivains, fondés sans doute sur la réciprocité d'action qui existe entre les signes et les idées, ont semblé croire que ces statues, au lieu d'être l'effet de la superstition, en avaient été la cause. Ils ont prétendu que jamais des tableaux n'auraient fait d'idolâtres, et que jamais il n'y eut d'idoles en plate peinture, comme ils l'appellent, pour le distinguer de la peinture mêlée au relief.[233]

In this way, De Quincy hypothesised that the painted figure had enjoyed a long tradition as an object that essentially caused superstition and idolatry. Such images had been

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[232] Antoine Quatremère de Quincy, Le Jupiter Olympien… (Paris: Firmin Didot, l'Imprimerie de l'Institut, 1814): 2-3.
My translation:

> In that era, and since we've been aware of the need to identify it, in the first signs that were spoken, the quality of the objects, colour obtained the second rank after form, and soon it was associated with relief figures or in the round. This association was everywhere the uniform work of instinct. The colour of living bodies, as imperfect as it may be, is in the eye of a primitive or a child the image of life. The mix of relief and colour made a complete illusion.

[233] De Quincy, Le Jupiter Olympien 5. My translation:

> It was against these same painted statues that the prophet Ezekiel stood, when he reproached the Israelites for worshiping the images of the Chaldeans and Egyptians. This practice, so prone to idolatry, seemed to so favour the establishment, that some writers, based surely on the reciprocal action that exists between signs and ideas, believed that these statues, instead of being the result of superstition, had been the cause. They supposed that paintings had never been idolatrous, and that there never were idols in flat painting, which they identified, to distinguish it from painting made in relief.

justifiably condemned since the earliest days of God's people, due to their propensity to deceive men.

Polychrome works were also negatively viewed based on their association with technical or industrial art, rather than fine art. The technical difficulties that artists confronted in undertaking these works, and the expertise that they required, led to the assumption that such multi-media experiments were mostly attempted by technologically handy craftsmen, being less appealing to creatively-minded artists.[234] There is reason to believe that Gérôme himself identified sculpture as a more technical kind of skill. For instance, in his *Bellona* (1892), which was a single, commanding mythological figure, he revived the use of chryselephantine, being a well-known ancient medium, combined with mixed media. Critics of these works tended to give them the classification of craft over fine art, and Gérôme himself explained that he was particularly proud of his sculptures, due to the technical achievement to which they attested.[235]

Given the great tradition of viewing the Greeks as the originators of the best in western art, especially in the wake of Winckelmann's writings, as we have seen, it is to be expected that De Quincy attributed the debut of the 'savage and duplicitous' polychrome tradition to the Egyptians, more willingly than he did to the Greeks.[236] It was theorised that the Egyptians had been the first to nurture the practice of idolatry, and that they instructed the Greeks on how to craft sculpted and painted figures for such purposes. De Quincy even claimed that some of the most savage eastern civilisations were so captivated by their painted figures, that they would ritualistically re-paint a sacred statue on a weekly basis, making the application of colour a form of worship in itself.[237] It was only because they were infected with this eastern superstition that the Greeks adopted such a practice, according to De Quincy. Despite its dubious origins, De Quincy clarified

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[234] The association of polychrome with the industrial arts was furthered by the fact that a large number of such works appeared under the banner of Art Nouveau, where the works were small, affordable, and often industrially reproduced. Agnès Bourguet, "Problématique de la sculpture polychrome dans les années 1880-1920," Annales d'histoire de l'art et d'archéologie de l'Université libre de Bruxelles 6 (1984): 125.
[235] Ackerman, "Gérôme's Sculpture" 85. The ivory portions of the *Bellona*, for the limbs and head, were carved by other sculptors hired by Gérôme.
[236] For more on the issue of what constituted the 'western classical' tradition see Jon Whiteley, "The Origin and the Concept of 'Classique' in French Art Criticism," Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes 49 (1976): 268-75.
[237] De Quincy, Le Jupiter Olympien 5.

that the Greeks altered the polychrome convention, which they had learned from the Egyptians, into a more palatable and safe form of sculpture; for instance, they turned to colour to delineate reliefs and non-marble statues, such as small wooden figures.

Most of De Quincy's analysis of the polychrome tradition is replete with technical and historical descriptions of its application in the Greek tradition. In an effort to develop an unbiased viewpoint, he argues that the apparent strangeness of these works to modern eyes was rooted in the fact that the French school had singularly pursued the imitation of only one kind of Greek sculpture: monotone ivory and marble nude figures. As a result, artists of his day harboured a prejudice towards the many other types of Greek art that were generated in antiquity.[238] De Quincy's objectives seem contradictory. On the one hand, he made a case for the 'otherness' of polychrome, while on the other he lamented the ignorance of modern artists towards it. This paradox is rooted in De Quincy's desire to see sculpture rejuvenated, and returned to a state of glory in the French system. He hoped that his treatise would resuscitate a stagnant and imitative form of artistic production, even if the methods were controversial and experimental.

De Quincy was also careful to draw the distinction between merely colouring works, and actually painting them. He claimed that the impact of polychrome sculpture was that it was the ultimate amalgamation of painting, not colouring, and sculpting. In the present, the potential for this combination to supercede each art's individual possibility is what could have rendered it irresistible to both artists and viewers. Additionally, he pointed out a divergence of circumstances in the modern era from those of antiquity. De Quincy stated:

> Les anciens en effet séparèrent beaucoup moins qu'on ne se le figure, dans leurs travaux, le plaisir des yeux de celui de l'esprit; c'est-à-dire, que la richesse, la variété et la beauté des matières, qui sont la parure des ouvrages de l'art, furent chez eux bien plus intimement réunies qu'on ne le pense, ou beau intrinsèque ou à la perfection imitative qui sans aucun doute en sont le principal mérite.[239]

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[238] De Quincy, Le Jupiter Olympien 29.
[239] De Quincy, Le Jupiter Olympien 31. My translation:

> The ancients, in effect, separated much less than we would have guessed, in their work, the pleasure of the eye from the pleasure of the spirit; that is to say, that the richness, the variety and beauty of materials, which is the property of works of art, are themselves more intimately reunited

So, De Quincy concluded that ancient artists were interested in the pursuit of beauty, and pleasing the spirit, more than they worried about the separation of diverse skills or materials.

Besides De Quincy's ostensibly ambivalent 'defence' of polychrome, other events made it a debatable issue as well, such as the discovery of what were called Tanagra statuettes in the region of Boetia, Greece in the late 1860s, (and they continued to be unearthed throughout the former ancient world in the 1870s).[240] As well, there were discoveries that contributed to renewed awareness of an antique polychrome tradition in the nineteenth century; for example, the *Augustus of Primaporta* was discovered in 1863, and the sculptures from the *Mausoleum of Halicarnassus* in 1856. Even more attention was brought to the issue when conferences on whether or not to use polychrome in sculpture were held in Dresden and Berlin in the 1880s, the results of which were disseminated in France through reports in the Gazette des beaux-arts.[241] Other polychrome examples, even from the most celebrated eras of art history, such as ancient Greece, were available to study in Paris at the *Musée du Louvre*. Some of these included coloured marble statues of Athena, and a copy of the Hellenistic *Old Fisherman*, both of which may have inspired the pre-eminent polychrome sculptor of the nineteenth century: Charles-Henri-Joseph Cordier (1827-1905), who was one of the first French artists to begin exhibiting such works, as he did at the Salon of 1857. The entrée of polychrome into the Salon merited some positive responses. Gautier claimed that Cordier had succeeded in introducing originality to an art form that generally was not treated in any innovative manner at that time. Notwithstanding its apparent innovation, because polychrome was typically popular in times of prosperity and excess, as J. Durand-

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than we would think, or more intrinsic or perfectly imitative, which is without a doubt their principal merit.

[240] For more on the Tanagra statues see Guy Ducrey, "Tanagra ou les anamorphoses d'une figurine béotienne à la fin du XIXe siècle," Anamorphoses décadentes: l'art de la défiguration 1880-1914 : études offertes à Jean de Palacio, eds. Isabelle Krzywkowski and Sylvie Thorel-Cailleteau (Paris: Presses de l'Université de Paris-Sorbonne, 2002): 207-24. See also the catalogue for an exhibition held at the Musée du Louvre from 2003-4 called Tanagra. Mythe et archéologie, exh. cat., (Paris, R.M.N, 2003).

[241] Heran, "Sculpture polychrome" 68. For additional scholarship on polychrome sculpture see The Colour of Sculpture: 1840-1910, exh. cat. (Zwolle: Waanders, 1996).

Revillon points out, it was frequently berated as merely decorative, or even excessive.[242] For instance, in the nineteenth century, interest in polychrome first coincided with growing disapproval for the excesses of Napoleon III's Second Empire, and then later with the height of Aestheticism and Art Nouveau decoration, all of which were perceived to be eras of decadence.

Demonstrating the complexity of the debates, polychrome was frequently placed within a hierarchy of acceptability, based on the type of polychrome being employed in any given work. It was considered less offensive to produce 'natural polychrome,' meaning sculptures made of materials that were coloured by virtue of their composition, from various coloured stones, such as purple porphyry and black, green, and red marbles, because this brand of polychrome was widely known to have been undertaken by the ancients. In contrast, the application of colour to the material was considered much more misleading, and contrary to the laws of decorum in art. In her study of the history of polychrome, Emmanuelle Heran identifies Charles Blanc as one of 'artificial polychrome's' greatest adversaries, which he expressed in his widely read Grammaire des arts du dessin.[243] Debates ensued throughout the nineteenth century as to the certainty that artificial polychrome had been completed by the ancients. These debates were fuelled by the fact that so many famous antique works had never been found, such as the statue of *Athena Parthenos*. Even in the face of mounting evidence to the contrary, skeptics were often so vehement in their denial of this antique tradition that Heran labels them chromophobes, and in some cases even chromoclasts.[244]

As a rule, critics of polychrome formed the overwhelming majority, and their objections centred on two main issues. First, they opposed the trespassing of the art of painting into the realm of sculpture, or vice versa. Second, they claimed that the entire phenomenon of coloured sculpture was in some way dishonest. In view of these controversies, we may surmise that Gérôme must have been drawn to polychrome for specific and important reasons. Perhaps it was because the application of colour, texture,

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[242] Jeannine Durand-Revillon, "Un promoteur de la sculpture polychrome sous le Second Empire: Charles-Henri-Joseph Cordier (1827-1905)," Bulletin de la Société de l'histoire de l'art français (1982): 181-98. For a more elaborate discussion of this rebirth of polychrome in nineteenth-century France see this article, and James Hall, The World as Sculpture.
[243] Heran, "Sculpture polychrome" 63-4.
[244] Heran, "Sculpture polychrome" 67.

or mixed media to sculpture made it more realistic than idealised monochrome works, which people otherwise expected to see. His Realist objectives had always been difficult to navigate, given that true Realism flew in the face of the academy's promotion of the ideal, where artists were supposed to improve on the model. In order to temper this struggle over idealisation versus nature, Gérôme hired the most exquisite models that he could find, typically relying on one nearly perfect model, who posed for many of his works.[245]

The appearance and methods of the application of colour in antique polychrome were resuscitated when Gérôme deliberately employed a form of encaustic for his sculptures, where the tint is combined with a waxy substance. Like the ancients, he tinted only the hair, eyes, mouth, and jewellery of his figures. Despite the public's introduction to these works through the reports of recent discoveries, it would still have been quite a spectacle to see such a life-like and life-size modern tinted work at the Salon. The ancient Tanagra statues were usually small, coloured figures of women, which were identified with a formerly unknown tradition of realism in ancient Greek sculpture. Having found an illustrious precedent for realism in the antique tradition, it is understandable that Gérôme, as a Realist, would undertake the *Tanagra*, which was exhibited at the Salon of 1880, apparently as an ode to this intriguing discovery. The statue is a nude young woman, who sits with perfect posture, with one hand outstretched, upon which one of the artist's already completed sculptures is replicated. Unfortunately, the *Tanagra* has lost most of her colouring, having been dramatically eroded over the course of time. Ackerman notes that with works like the *Tanagra*, Gérôme once again collapsed the expected separation between naked and nude in nineteenth-century sculpture, because the original colour dramatically heightened the illusion of reality.[246] Later, he would revisit polychrome sculpture in many other works, such as his *La Joueuse de boules ou la danseuse aux trois masques* (1902), which was also shown at the Salon. A disturbingly lifelike, bust-length portrait of the famous British actress Sarah

[245] Ackerman, "Gérôme's Sculpture" 82, 84.
[246] Ackerman, "Gérôme's Sculpture" 84, 89.

Bernhardt (1844-1923) is also part of Gérôme's polychrome sculpture experiment (ca. 1895), proving that he did garner some support for this initiative.[247]

Despite the boldness of such works as the *Tanagra*, the critics were not silenced. Unfortunately for Gérôme, his lightly tinted works were criticised both for being coloured, and for not being coloured enough. In the latter case, some critics averred that his technique left the colour so inconsequential that it would be imperceptible in only a few years.[248] Disapproval is obvious in the words of Paul Leroi, when he critiqued one of Gérôme's tinted sculptures, saying:

> La polychromie … elle exerce, grâce à M. Gérôme, de cruels ravages. Que cet artiste expose […] des sculptures peinturlurées, dorées, astiquées, enrichies même de pierres précieuses […] tout ce cabotinage est affaire du gout frelaté dont on n'est point tenu d'avoir cure. On hausse les épaules et l'on passe à de véritables œuvres d'art.[249]

This argument should sound familiar, as we have encountered this kind of iconophobia before. It seems that the use of artificial polychrome was unsettling, even shocking, because it propelled sculpture into a realm of illusionistic power that it could not otherwise reach. This is precisely the reason that De Quincy associated polychrome statues with savage cultic rites, and it is why polychrome sculpture was more often feared than praised in the nineteenth century. That the artist was willing to make himself vulnerable to such objections speaks to Gérôme's level of ambition, because as a self-respecting paragonising artist, he sought to overwhelm his viewers with the most stunning illusion possible.

For us, the most interesting example of Gérôme's polychrome work was the life-size marble *Pygmalion and Galatea* sculpture, which was shown at the Salon of 1892.[250]

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[247] Jean-Léon Gérôme, *Portrait of Sarah Bernhardt,* ca. 1895, polychrome marble, 67.7 cm tall, Musée d'Orsay, Paris, France.
[248] Heran, "Sculpture polychrome" 68-9.
[249] Quoted in Heran, "Sculpture polychrome" 68, 70. My translation:

> Polychrome…it exercises, thanks to M. Gérôme, cruel devastation. This artist exposes painted gold and polished sculptures, even embellished with precious stones…all these histrionics are of corrupt taste for which there is no cure. We shrug our shoulders and we move on to real works of art.

[250] Jean-Léon Gérôme, *Pygmalion and Galatea*, 1892, polychrome marble, 198 cm, Hearst Castle, San Simeon, California, U.S.A.

The figural group is comprised of Pygmalion and Galatea, once again in their intertwined embrace. It is disappointing that the sculptural version, which we must remember is now at Hearst Castle in San Simeon, California, was stripped of what little polychrome tint had been left, when it was installed at this location, (perhaps supporting the chromoclast theory). This revision to the work utterly deprives viewers of its main objective, which was to illustrate the transformation of Galatea in sculptural form, in a manner that had not been hitherto attempted. Originally the statue was coloured on the upper part of Galatea's body, leaving her lower body marble-white.[251] Unquestionably, the function of the polychrome was to solve the perennial problem that sculptors confronted when tackling Pygmalion's story. If the sculptural figure of Galatea is not coloured in some way, then no amount of sculptural illusion can convey her transformation plausibly, because bare white marble will never look like anything other than what it is, no matter what form, texture, or composition is applied.[252] It is only through the application of polychrome effects that the artist can make the statue's metamorphosis even remotely believable. Of course the three-dimensionality of the work also combines two views of Gérôme's Pygmalion paintings into one whole, which may have prompted his interest in the work in the first place.

While some of Gérôme's scholars interpret his foray into the realm of polychrome as demonstrative of his sisterly arts approach to both art forms, assuming that he viewed them as equitable counterparts, there are other conclusions that may be reached. Could it be that Gérôme was attempting to prove that only through the painter's intervention can sculpture equal painting's illusionistic potential? It can at least be concluded that, in branching out into multi-media art forms, the artist was demonstrating to his critics that his art, even in hybrid form, could surpass that of his rivals, because he offered the *Gesamtkunstwerk,* in a form that was *à propos* of the recently unearthed antiquities.

A couple of paintings, both of which illustrate concepts in aesthetic theory, will help to unravel whether or not Gérôme was benignly supporting both sculpture and painting, or whether he considered one better than the other. They might also explain his motivation to depict himself as a sculptor, (rather than a painter), in his self-portraits, and

[251] Ackerman, "Gérôme's Sculpture" 85.
[252] This was also noted by Sanyal, "Allegorizing Representation" 39.

his interest in polychrome so late in life. It is not an image of self-representation, but Gérôme's work called *Painting Breathing Life into Sculpture* (1894) helps to solve this puzzle.[253] In this scene we have another artist's studio, in which a female painter sits at a table to the left, while painting small sculptures, (about half a dozen statuettes are finished, and others wait for their colour to be applied). Through an open window, patrons of the studio have approached to talk to another woman inside the studio. Most importantly, the painting reenacts the creation of polychrome works. That this is supposed to be occurring in antiquity is implied through the Latin title that the artist initially bestowed upon the painting: *Sculpturae vitam insufflate pictura*, which is obviously intended to illustrate that Gérôme's adaptation of polychrome was ripped from antiquity.[254] The painted figures carefully strewn about the perimetre of the studio resemble paintings and sculptures from both art's history, and the artist's œuvre.[255]

Heran supposes that Gérôme came up with this subject, in order to provide an example of how polychrome could be made to work in the service of sculpture, by offering a breath of originality to a floundering art form. This interpretation relies on the assumption that Gérôme's concern for the status of sculpture was rooted in a sincere desire to elevate its stature at this time.[256] However, the fact that the polychrome sculptures are actually more life-like when recreated in this painting, than they would be in person, (they all have a somewhat creepy 'awareness' of their existence), reveals that the painter is herein affirming the ultimate superiority of painting over sculpture, and that sculpture is only enlivened when the painter deigns to embellish its otherwise lacklustre appearance.

In this context, the disturbing line up of identically posed statuettes on the painter's table illustrates another truth about nineteenth-century sculpture, which is that it was losing its authority as a medium of originals. Many sculptors at this time, such as

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[253] Jean-Léon Gérôme, *Painting Breathing Life into Sculpture/Sculpturae vitam insufflate pictura*, 1893, oil on canvas, 50.2 x 69.2 cm, Art Gallery of Ontario, Toronto, Canada.
[254] Ackerman, "Gérôme's Sculpture" 85.
[255] Amongst Gérôme's works we see the *Tanagra*, (seated in profile against the wall to the right), *Nu se dévoilant* (ca. 1900, appearing as the nude lifting the red drapery over her head on the top shelf), and *Bellona* (1892, possibly the figure on the bottom shelf in the left corner wearing a helmet). Other canonical figures, such as *Leda and the Swan*, also accompany the entourage of figures.
[256] Heran, "Sculpture polychrome" 69.

Auguste Rodin (1840-1917), were in the habit of using models to produce multiple originals, such as bronze castings from clay, plaster, or marble works. To a painter, this might seem like a grotesque shortcut in artistic production, which ultimately denies any of the 'originals' from retaining the magical aura of the artist's hand or *concetto*.[257] Similarly, the repetitive line up of *Hoop Dancer* (ca. 1890) figures, which was one of Gérôme's early sculptures, bespeaks the ease with which multiples were made. It is as if they are, in factory-like facility, being readied for sale on the streets of the ancient world, or metaphorically, modern Paris. I view this as the artist's testament that painting is much more demanding than sculpture. This fits with our understanding of Gérôme as both a teacher and a painter in the academic system; it was the labour intensive and calculated working and training process that he had lobbied to preserve. In fact, many of his students complained that his methods were too traditional, and did not allow for teachings that were not then supported by the *École*.[258]

Another repetitive compositional feature of *Painting Breathing Life* is the ancient Greek theatrical masks, which had become standard elements in Gérôme's recreations of artist's studios. According to Sanyal, these relate to the artist's focus on the problems of representation in both sculpture and painting.[259] Such masks had been iconographically paired with many concepts over the course of art's history, including the allegorical representation of fraud.[260] The masks underscore the theme of falseness, represented in the array of multiple 'originals' in polychrome sculpture. Yet this falseness need not be negative, as it also connotes illusion, and therefore the artistic gift of illusion in any medium. The mask's connection to the much beloved ancient art form of Greek tragedy likewise comments on the place of painting in the modern world, as the new eminent art

[257] Gérôme could not have been ignorant of the multiple production possibilities of sculpture, because he too engaged in this practice with his own sculptural pieces. For more on his techniques see Ackerman, "Gérôme's Sculpture."
[258] Sanyal, "Allegorizing Representation" 41-2.
[259] Sanyal, "Allegorizing Representation" 41.
[260] For a discussion of the iconography of the mask, in the tradition of French art, as an emblem of death and deception see Janina Michalkowa, "Autour de Poussin," Bulletin du Musée national de Varsovie 17:4 (1976): 107-124.

form of its day.[261] Certainly the prominent eye on the shield and the foregrounded eyes of the masks hauntingly comment on the power of illusion in painting.

Even though this interpretation of *Painting Breathing Life* may seem confusing, because it sounds like a contradiction to want to prove inferiority in an art form that one practices, if its practitioner believes one of them to be more esteemed than the other, it is in fact based on famous precedents. We should be reminded that while Michelangelo was a painter, poet, architect, and sculptor, he adamantly maintained the superiority of the last of these art forms. In the same way, Leonardo, also being a painter, architect, sculptor, and inventor, upheld painting as the most elevated art form. And in each case, that did not mean that either artist was any less willing to give up being perceived as a master in any art form that he undertook. Michelangelo's work on the Sistine Ceiling is a testament to his efforts in this regard, while Leonardo's never completed equestrian monument for Ludovico Sforza (1452-1508) was meant to herald his skills as a sculptor throughout the Renaissance world.[262] Merely in the interest of acknowledging that paragonising artists often implement the same logic to defend their art, rather than claiming influence, one final parallel may be drawn between Gérôme and Leonardo.[263] In his analysis of the former's realistic approach to painting, Ackerman determines that Gérôme's methodology was based on a highly researched and intellectual approach to art-making, which was founded upon scientific study of the material world, rather than personal expression.[264] All of this was also true for Leonardo, who declared himself a scientist-painter, for the very same reasons.[265]

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[261] For the association between Greek tragedy and theatrical masks see David Wiles, Mask and Performance in Greek Tragedy: From Ancient Festival to Modern Experimentation (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007).

[262] Although the paragonising approaches of both Michelangelo and Leonardo were discussed in the first chapter, readers may once again refer to Goffen, Renaissance Rivals. For Leonardo and patronage in Milan see Luke Syson, "Leonardo and Leonardism in Sforza Milan," Artists at court : image-making and identity : 1300-1550, ed. Stephen Campbell (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004): 106-23. Dario O. Covi, "The Italian Renaissance and the Equestrian Monument," Leonardo da Vinci's Sforza Monument Horse: The Art and the Engineering, ed. Diane Cole Ahl (London: Associated University Presses, 1995): 40-56.

[263] Though I have not been able to determine if Gérôme read Leonardo's treatise, the text was popular enough in France by the end of the nineteenth century that it is likely that he was at least familiar with its main ideas. The publication of Leonardo's works in France will be dealt with in Chapter 4.

[264] Ackerman, "Gérôme's Sculpture" 89.

[265] For more on the scientific methodology of artistic production since the Renaissance see Kemp, The Science of Art.

My interpretation of Gérôme's theory of the arts is bolstered by another work in which the art of sculpture is commented upon, in the same manner as *Painting Breathing Life into Sculpture*. In the *Atelier de Tanagra* (1893) once again a young woman painting small statuettes sits before us.[266] The greater materialism and lower status of sculpture is revealed in the inclusion of the 'sales pitch' scene. While the young woman works on her little *Hoop Dancer,* again accompanied by the theatrical masks, another young woman tries to sell a statue to visitors in the studio, one of whom is carefully examining the works on display. There are no paintings in this work, perhaps because Gérôme has deliberately omitted painting from the realm of commercialism and mass production. The setting's exotic eastern flair, with dappled light coming in through the grilles over the windows, and patrons of the studio clad in Oriental dress, further situates sculpture in a realm of 'otherness,' in correspondence with De Quincy's writings. We must recall that while De Quincy's treatise drew attention to polychrome, even remarking on some of its merits, he unequivocally stipulated that polychrome sculpture tempted the less civilised and more exotic societies of the world, usually in the form of idol worship, which was demonstrative of sculpture's popularity amongst the less cultured, educated, and enlightened masses. In Tanagra's studio, many of the polychrome sculptures, (and they are all polychrome, except for the unfinished work in the painter's hand), are displayed like idols upon pedestals and in hierarchical poses. Here, again, are the numerous artistic quotations scattered throughout the studio. The statue that Tanagra, (the character), is in the act of painting is another *Hoop Dancer*.[267] Meanwhile, *Tanagra,* (the statue), appears on the wall facing the viewer, just as the coloured figure of Gérôme's female personification of the seated *Corinthia* (1904) perches atop a pedestal, (he completed a second version in a silver patina).[268]

From the works that we have examined, a distinct theme becomes palpable in Gérôme's œuvre. This is the interactive and self-referential nature of all of the artist's works, and the fact that he tactically wove them together in a web of replication. By

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[266] Jean-Léon Gérôme, *Atelier de Tanagra*, 1893, oil on canvas, 65.1 x 91.1cm, private collection.
[267] Jean-Léon Gérôme, *The Hoop Dancer*, ca. 1890, gilt bronze, H. 9 ¼" x W. 4 ½" x L. 4 ½", Indiana University Art Museum, Indiana, U.S.A.
[268] Jean-Léon Gérôme, *Corinthe*, Salon of 1904, polychrome plaster, 47.5 cm tall, Musée d'Orsay, Paris, France. Gérôme, *Corinthe*, gilt bronze, 73.66 x 186.69 cm, private collection.

depicting already completed works in newer ones, and by purposefully 'placing' the same model, studio props, and sculptural models over and over again in many scenes, Gérôme succeeded in converting his entire œuvre into a grand series—one that told a much more personal and ambitious story than the mere narratives that they represented individually. This is the story of the artist's career, and his advancement from a student to a teacher, and then a leader in the academy. The scheme is in full harmony with Gérôme's paragonising impulse; as a competitive artist he would never want his viewers to forget that he was a master of many works, a master in more than one medium, and a consummate professional. Likewise, he repeatedly proved that his realism and illusionistic facility were so great that he could effortlessly propagate illusions of illusions, or paintings and sculptures within paintings. The tendency towards repeating themes or subjects is also a trademark feature of the competitive artist, because it bespeaks the determination to revisit an idea until it is captured in its most refined form. Finally, through comparison with Gérôme's own working methods, understanding that he never abandoned the use of the model, and the scientific approach to artistic production, his *Pygmalion and Galatea* works, combined with his scenes of artistic practice, impart a lesson to artists that Gérôme never forgot, even towards the end of his career. This lesson is that the artist must be a student of nature, and that in seeking to understand, and ultimately represent, nature the artist becomes one with her. Galatea and Pygmalion's embrace is the most poetic visual metaphor for the union that the Realist artist must seek in the relationship between nature and his own creations.

George Frederick Watts and Another Galatea

Gérôme was not alone in his quest to test the limits of both painting and sculpture, because he had his counterpart across the English Channel in Watts, who would also be devoted to studying Galatea's representation, and was Gérôme's exact contemporary, even passing away in the same year.[269] Watts had a background that was similar to Gérôme's, in that he too was traditionally trained, and had enrolled in the Royal

[269] For more biographic information on Watts see Mary S. Watts, George Frederic Watts: The Annals of an Artist's Life. 2 vols. (London: Macmillan, 1913).

Academy in 1835, which was followed by the requisite tour of Italy. He sought the affirmation of the academy throughout his career, and in 1867 he was officially made an academician. Making his bread and butter as a portrait painter, Watts's greatest interests were in 'poetic' or allegorical paintings, which he typically exhibited in small private galleries.[270] Also like Gérôme, Watts was in the habit of producing sculptural maquettes for his paintings, and then later in life began to experiment with exhibiting finished sculptures. He had had some formal training in sculpture, under the tutelage of the sculptor William Behnes (1795-1864). According to his contemporaries, Watts resented the typical structure of the Royal Academy, and probably also his financial dependence upon the less illustrious genre of portraiture, and aspired to more exalted ones.[271]

A competitive approach in Watts's artistic practice is easy to detect, and was reflected in the words of his essay "The Present Conditions of Art," (1880). Therein, he claimed that "It is art that corresponds to the highest literature, both in intention and effect, which must be demanded for our artists, poems painted on canvas, judged and criticised as are the poems written on paper."[272] According to Barbara Bryant, Watts was so eager to differentiate his works from typical narrative painting that he labeled them 'symbolical,' announcing their elevation above merely literary works. Watts was elected as an academician, but he remained at odds with this monolithic institution for most of his career, being especially disconcerted with its exhibition practices, which eventually forced him to turn to alternative venues, such as the Grosvenor Gallery in London, where like-minded artists, including Burne-Jones and Moreau, would also show their work. Even though Moreau will be a central focus of the next chapter, we must address his relevance with regards to Watts where appropriate. Watts and many of his French contemporaries maintained an unsettled relationship with the whole process of exhibiting works to the public.[273] Watts was actually one of the first artists to exhibit at the Gallery's inaugural show in 1877.

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[270] Barbara Bryant in "G.F. Watts at the Grosvenor Gallery 'Poems Painted on Canvas' and the New Internationalism," The Grosvenor Gallery: A Palace of Art in Victorian England (London and New Haven: Yale University Press, 1996): 126.
[271] Bryant, "G.F. Watts" 112.
[272] Quoted by Bryant, "G.F. Watts" 109.
[273] Bryant "G.F. Watts" 109, 112. Nevertheless, Watts eventually became one of the most successful exhibiting artists in history. Throughout the nineteenth century, as a general rule, artists did not receive retrospective exhibits until shortly after their deaths. But in 1880 Watts was granted an exclusive

Unconventional exhibition choices, like choosing private shows instead of public venues, were not uncommon amongst paragonising artists. Many resented the lack of control, regarding where and how one's works were shown, which would otherwise result from showing with official institutions, where an unacceptable vulnerability to both the public and art critics persisted. On the whole, smaller exhibitions gained in popularity amongst these artists, who no longer wanted to compete with the dozens of others being represented in the customary exhibition venues, where works were crammed in alongside one another. Crowding in the Royal Academy's exhibitions in England was as common as it was in the Salon, so the public institutions that supported such exhibition practices inevitably became the target of artists's criticisms.

Like Burne-Jones, Watts shared an interest in creating sequential works. Many of his paintings were intended to be exhibited in series, such that they could suggest the narrative evolution usually found in poetry.[274] Indeed, an important personal and professional connection existed between the two similarly-minded artists, at least in terms of the paragone. Watts exhibited with Burne-Jones at the Grosvenor Gallery, and had painted the latter's portrait in 1870. In France, the critic Edmund Duranty drew parallels between Burne-Jones and Watts, identifying the former as a leader in a new Pre-Raphaelite movement, and Watts as one of his followers. The French were not very familiar with Rossetti's work, due to his rejection of conventional exhibition venues in England, and his refusal to exhibit his works formally in France, thereby making Burne-Jones seem like a leading figure. This opinion was certainly cemented when Burne-Jones was granted the highly prestigious *Légion d'honneur* award for his *Cophetua*, shown at the Exposition of 1889. One of his contemporaries even dared to declare that Burne-Jones was obviously superior to Rossetti as both a painter and a draughtsman.[275]

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exhibition for his work at the Manchester Institution. Additionally, this was followed in 1881 by a show devoted to him at the Grosvenor Gallery, which had been one of the most important exhibition venues in his career. It was also "the first full retrospective exhibition of a living British artist," according to Bryant (126-7). So, Watts was successful in achieving a measure of the distinction for which he hoped during his lifetime. For more on the history of the Grosvenor see Newall, The Grosvenor.

[274] Bryant, "G.F. Watts" 112.

[275] Khnopff, "A Tribute" 524. Khnopff, who as a Symbolist painter in Belgium, wrote: "Of all the men who rallied around Dante Rossetti it must be confessed that the painter of 'The Six Days of Creation,' of 'The Mirror of Venus,' of 'The Golden Stairs,' has produced the noblest and completest work."

Nonetheless, Rossetti was known as a poet in France, and some even compared him, as a literary figure, to Baudelaire.[276]

The French had had access to Pre-Raphaelite works since the Exposition of 1855, when the original Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood received mixed reviews from Parisian artists and critics.[277] It did not have nearly the impact, in terms of making the French familiar with these artists, as did Chesneau's L'art et les artistes modernes en France et en Angleterre (1864). In subsequent years, for those who had not seen Pre-Raphaelite works at the Expositions of 1867, or 1878 in Paris, they were well-covered in the French publication the Gazette des beaux arts. The successive expositions in France and elsewhere played a significant role in escalating the paragone for certain artists. For example, a Parisian critic claimed that the new battleground between the French and the British was no longer on the plains of a battlefield, but in the artistic exhibits of the international expositions.[278]

Additional conceptual links were drawn between the French and English traditions, when Burne-Jones and Moreau exhibited at the same show at the Grosvenor, which Colleen Denney supposes was part of the Gallery's deliberate effort to publicise the Symbolic parallels between these two traditions.[279] In the end, the French exposure to the Pre-Raphaelites was so drawn out that the original brotherhood seemed hardly significant, and Burne-Jones became unanimously the most renowned figure of the group, at least in the periodicals and reviews that were being published in France.[280] The Grosvenor also aided in promoting interest in the personalities and nuances of individual artists, because it glorified their eccentricities, instead of homogenising them through the

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[276] Susan P. Casteras, "The Pre-Raphaelite Legacy to Symbolism," Pre-Raphaelite Art in its European Context, ed. Susan P. Casteras (Cranbury, N.J., London, England, Mississauga, Canada: Associated University Presses, 1995): 34-7.
[277] Amongst the group's detractors were Charles Blanc and Théophile Thoré. Casteras, "Pre-Raphaelite Legacy" 34.
[278] Marcia Pointon, "From the Midst of Warfare and its Incidents to the Peaceful Scenes of Home: The Exposition Universelle of 1855," Journal of European Studies xi (1981): 237-8.
[279] Denney, "Lindsay" 70-1, 73.
[280] Jacques Lethêve, "La Connaissance des peintres Préraphaélites en France, 1855-1900," Gazette des beaux-arts (May-Jun. 1959): 322. For more on the artistic awareness of the French and British for each other's art see Mary Ball Howkins, "French Critical Response to British Genre Paintings in Paris, 1850-1870," Journal of European Studies xxi (1991): 111-128. Edith Hoffmann, "Burne-Jones and the Pre-Raphaelite Influence, in Paris," The Burlington Magazine 114: 830 (May, 1972): 354-7. Robert Upstone, "Burne-Jones. Birmingham and Paris," The Burlington Magazine 141:1150 (1999): 50-2.

academic system.[281] The Grosvenor's agenda reflected the growing desire of those in the art world to assess an artist's life's work, in lieu of simply examining individual works, amongst many others by different artists. Due to the Gallery's support of idiosyncratic artistry, those who competed, in order to distinguish their work from the rest, could exploit a venue that would help, instead of hinder, their efforts to stand out from the crowd.

The Gallery also ideologically facilitated connecting the work of paragonising artists. For example, it brought together British artists such as Watts, Burne-Jones, Rossetti, and others; additionally, it served as a vital link between Britain and France. In her article on Watts's affiliation with the Gallery, Bryant exposes its relationship to other institutions then involved with the arts of France. She explains that cooperation was supported between the Gallery's endeavours, and those of the French publication L'Art: Révue hebdomodaire illustrée, which was an internationally recognised periodical on the arts, though intended primarily for French readers. Lindsay, who was a director at the Gallery, solicited the involvement of Joseph Comyns Carr (1849-1916), who had already been acting as the English director of this French publication when he accepted the post of assistant director at the Gallery. Bryant also reports that a professional alignment between these entities must have been intended, since the Grosvenor was located directly beside the English headquarters for *L'Art*. The French publication's alliance with the Grosvenor lent it an international notoriety, which in turn led to increased opportunities for French artists to exhibit in England. This alliance generated heightened artistic exchange, because English artists were consequently better known in France through the publication. For example, Bryant cites the case of Watts, who became popular amongst the French Symbolists in the wake of the attention that L'Art showered upon him, following his initial appearances at the Grosvenor in the late 1870s.[282]

Watts was also characteristic of many paragonising painters, in that he aspired to be a respected history painter. His subjects mirror those of the artists we have already considered. For instance, he treated the female *beau idéal* in *Psyche* of 1880, and one of

[281] Bryant, "G.F. Watts" 115.
[282] Bryant, "G.F. Watts" 116-118.

Moreau's favourite subjects in his *Orpheus and Eurydice* of 1879.[283] Like Delacroix, he found inspiration in Dante, evidenced by his *Paolo and Francesca* of 1879. However, it was the strained relationship between metamorphosis in sculpture, versus metamorphosis in painting, that became the focus of works that were shown in London in the 1860s. It is known that Watts's favourite source of inspiration, regardless of which medium he was exploring, was the collection of Elgin Marbles, (taken from the *Parthenon* in Athens), then housed in the National Gallery, London. Consequently, even when not working in sculpture, Watts's works commonly dealt with issues more pertinent to sculpture than to painting, such as the principle of three-dimensional movement in space. This feature of his work probably resulted from his tendency to model in clay when preparing for painted works.[284]

As we have already seen, the convention of drawing or painting from sculpture had long been an established component of academic curricula since the Renaissance. Still, most students would not have publicly cited a famous sculpture as the basis for one of their works, given that this kind of blatant dependence on a greater antique example would have been too intimidating. But, in 1868, when Watts showed his painting called *The Wife of Pygmalion, a Translation from the Greek*, at the Royal Academy Exhibition in London, he deliberately publicised its sculptural origins.[285] The painting illustrates Galatea post-metamorphosis, which her coloured eyes and human flesh make abundantly clear. She is shown in a bust-length, frontal pose, with her head slightly turned away from the viewer. Her upper body is partially draped, and her hair is fashioned in a pseudo-Greek style. Watts reported that he had painted his bust of Galatea directly from

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[283] Orpheus will be discussed further in Chapter 4. For more on Moreau and Orpheus see Peter Cooke, "L'Image et texte. L'*Orphée* de Gustave Moreau. La peinture et sa 'notice,'" Revue du Louvre: La revue des musées de France 43:3 (June 1995): 66-72. And on Orpheus and artistic symbolism see Dorothy M. Kosinski, Orpheus in Nineteenth-Century Symbolism (Ann Arbor, Mich.: UMI Research Press, 1989), and "Orpheus in the Context of Religious Syncretism, Universal Histories, and Occultism," Art Journal 46 (Spring 1987): 9-14. D.P. Walker, "Orpheus the Theologian and Renaissance Platonists," Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes 16 (1953): 100-12. George Frederick Watts, *Orpheus and Eurydice*, 1879, oil on canvas, 22" x 30", Forbes collection, London and New York.

[284] R.E. Gutch, "G.F. Watts's Sculpture," The Burlington Magazine: Special Issue Commemorating the Bicentenary of the Royal Academy (1768-1968) 110:789 (Dec., 1968): 693-4. In a review of the progression of Watts's career as a sculptor, Gutch identifies 1866 as the year in which Watts completed his first sculptural piece; this is notwithstanding the dating of his *Medusa*, which the author establishes as being inappropriately dated to the early 1840s.

[285] George Frederick Watts, *Wife of Pygmalion, a Translation from the Greek*, 1868, oil on canvas, 26.25" x 21", Buscot Park, Oxfordshire, England.

an ancient statue of a goddess, which had been salvaged from the group of Arundel Marbles in Oxford. This phrase 'translation from the Greek,' according to Prettejohn, indicates the literal transformation from the subject matter in ancient Greek sculpture to a modern painting. If so, the idea of metamorphosis becomes just as important to the process of artistic creation, moving from one medium to another, as it does to the narrative transformation of Galatea, which would perfectly suit Ovid's text. In this way, Watts made the ancient marble sculpture newly relevant to modern viewers; this was apparently an important objective for the artist, who, like Burne-Jones and Moreau, believed in using art for spiritual enlightenment.[286]

Critics who discussed the work's illustrious inspiration directly quoted its sculptural precedent, and given the comparison that the artist invited in his title: "a translation from the Greek," this seems both fair and intended. Ironically, the deliberate challenge to ancient sculptors, elicited by Watts may have backfired, being that some critics were not willing to confirm that he had surpassed the antique. In the Notes on the Royal Academy Exhibition, 1868, William Michael Rossetti (1829-1919) penned the following ekphrasis of Watts's work for *Part I*:

> This is one of the few works of poetic elevation in the gallery: it is beautiful with a noble beauty, which one hardly knows whether rather to call womanly or impassive. It rests midway between coldness and warmth, without being lukewarm. It should be added that the merit is not exclusively Mr. Watts's, the head being truly 'a translation from the Greek,' i.e., adapted from the fine antique bust pointed out not long ago for admiration among the Arundel Marbles in Oxford.[287]

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[286] Elizabeth Prettejohn, "Between Homer and Ovid: Metamorphosis and the 'Grand Style' in G.F. Watts," Representations of G.F. Watts: Art Making in Victorian Culture, eds. Colin Trodd and Stephanie Brown (London: Ashgate Publishing Ltd., 2004): 53-5. Refer to this article for more on Watts's study of the Elgin marbles and the classical ideal in England at this time. Prettejohn also sees in Watts's work a preoccupation with the Ovidian theme of transformation, which she believes may have informed his keen interest in the potential to spiritually transcend the material realm. See also Ian Jenkins, "G.F. Watts's Teachers: George Frederic Watts and the Elgin Marbles," Apollo 120:271 (Sept., 1984): 176-81. Richard Jenkyns, The Victorians and Ancient Greece (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1981). See also Alison Smith, "G.F. Watts and the National Gallery of British Art," Representations of G.F. Watts: Art Making in Victorian Culture, eds. Stephanie Brown and Colin Trodd (Burlington, VT: Aldershot, Ashgate, 2004): 153-68.

[287] Rossetti, Notes 12.

Other critics responded with less ambivalence, and even acknowledged the work's role in the so-called sister arts tradition. In *Part II* of the publication, Swinburne offered a decidedly more adulatory ekphrasis of Watts's painting:

> Returning from the Academy I find two pictures impressed on my memory more deeply and distinctly than the rest. First of these--first of all, it seems to me, for depth and nobility of feeling and meaning--is Mr. Watts' *Wife of Pygmalion*. The soft severity of perfect beauty might serve alike for woman or statue, flesh or marble; but the eyes have opened already upon love, with a tender and grave wonder; her curving ripples of hair seem just warm from the touch and the breath of the goddess, moulded and quickened by lips and hands diviner than her sculptor's. So it seems a Greek painter must have painted women, when Greece had mortal pictures fit to match her imperishable statues. Her shapeliness and state, her sweet majesty and amorous chastity, recall the supreme *Venus of Melos*. In this 'translation' of a Greek statue into an English picture, no less than in the bust of Clytie, we see how in the hands of a great artist painting and sculpture may become as sister arts indeed, yet without invasion or confusion; how, without any forced alliance of form and colour, a picture may share the gracious grandeur of a statue, a statue may catch something of the subtle bloom of beauty proper to a picture.[288]

The *Bust of Clytie*, which Swinburne's critique also addressed because it appeared in the same exhibition, was likewise a testament to Watt's great admiration for ancient sculpture, given that it was adapted from the famous marble head in the Townley Collection of marbles.[289] This work was at the British Museum in London at the time that Watts treated the subject twice, in bronze and marble.[290] The nearly identical versions show the bust of a young classicising woman twisting dramatically. The figure is cupped by leaves at the bottom of the bust, like the petals of a flower. Regarding the title, Watts seems to have rather deliberately revised the work, keeping the name of the

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[288] Swinburne, Notes 31-2. For more on Swinburne's aesthetic theory see T.E. Connolly, Swinburne's Theory of Poetry (Albany: State University of New York, 1964).
[289] George Frederick Watts, *Bust of Clytie*, 1868, bronze, 2'9" tall, Royal Academy, London, England.
[290] The marble version of *Clytie* was also shown at the Exhibition of 1868, though in an unfinished form, while the bronze version (1868-78) was shown at the Grosvenor Gallery in 1881-2. A marble version is now at Guildhall Gallery in London, while a bronze version is at the Manchester City Gallery. As a case study, for more on the antique collections available to sculptors see Mark Roskill, "Alfred Gilbert's Monument to the Duke of Clarence: A Study in the Sources of Later Victorian Sculpture," The Burlington Magazine, Special Issue Commemorating the Bicentenary of The Royal Academy (1768-1968) 110: 789 (Dec., 1968): 699-704.

ancient source, so that viewers would grasp that this was a new translation.[291] This adaptation of the ancient Ovidian source has been discussed by Prettejohn at length in her article on the subject. She similarly concludes that Watts implemented a Michelangesque twisting motion in his version of the figure.[292] But it most clearly recalls the ancient sculpture at the British Museum. By virtue of the bust length figure, and the cropped arms, Watts's statue mimics the appearance of antique sculptural fragments, as they would be seen in the nineteenth century.

Returning to Swinburne's artful review, it illuminates a parallel movement in English art criticism, which echoed the tendency of French art critics and poets to write ekphrases that would poetically appropriate, or very nearly subsume, the works that they were describing. While Swinburne was effusive in his praise, he employed conspicuously poetic vocabulary to bring life to the static figures. Given that he openly revealed his sensitivity to the ways in which the arts can surpass, or intermingle with, one another, it is reasonable to suggest that he offered an ekphrasis that may have been intended to outdo both the painting and the sculpture. Swinburne's sensitivity to inter-arts dynamics is reiterated in another passage on Watts's *Bust of Clytie*, wherein he commented that it had been partly inspired by Michelangelo.[293] Swinburne drew attention to inter-arts issues, and specifically the painting's relationship to sculpture:

> Before I pass on to speak of any other painter, I will here interpolate what I have to say of Mr. Watts's *Bust of Clytie*. Not imitative, not even assimilative of Michel Angelo's manner, it yet by some vague and ineffable quality brings to mind his work rather than any Greek sculptor's. There is the same intense and fiery sentiment, the same grandeur and device, the same mystery of tragedy. The colour and the passion of this work are the workman's own. Never was a divine legend translated into diviner likeness. Large, deep-bosomed, superb in arm and shoulder, as should be the woman growing from flesh into flower through godlike

[291] Prettejohn, "Between Homer and Ovid" 58-9.
[292] Prettejohn, "Between Homer and Ovid" 58-9.
[293] Swinburne's comparison of the sculpture with the work of Michelangelo is probably based on two aspects of the sculpture that mimic the work of the Renaissance master. First, the twisting pose is reminiscent of Michelangelo's *figura serpentinata* representations in such works as the *Victory*, as well as the painted figures in his Sistine Chapel cycle. Second, the work may in fact have been intended to appear unfinished, since this unfinished state was a characteristic feature of many of Michelangelo's sculptural works, such as the *Slaves*, for example. For more on Watts's sculpture see Stephanie Brown, "Indefinite expansion: Watts and the Physicality of Sculpture," Representations of G.F. Watts: art making in Victorian culture, eds. Colin Trodd and Stephanie Brown (Aldershot: Ashgate Publishing, 2004): 83-106.

> agony, from fairness of body to fullness of flower, large-leaved and broad of blossom, splendid and sad-yearning with all the life of her lips and breasts after the receding light and the removing love--this is the Clytie indeed whom sculptors and poets have loved for her love of the Sun their God. The bitter sweetness of the dividing lips, the mighty mould of the rising breasts, the splendour of her sorrow is divine: divine the massive weight of carven curls bound up behind the heavy straying flakes of unfilleted hair below; divine the clear cheek and low full forehead, the strong round neck made for the arms of a god only to clasp and bend down to their yoke. We seem to see the lessening sunset that she sees, and fear too soon to watch that stately beauty slowly suffer change and die into flower, that solid sweetness of body sink into petal and leaf. Sculpture such as this has actual colour enough without the need to borrow of an alien art.[294]

As both a sculptor and a painter, Watts must have been acutely aware of the strengths of each art. For the bust, Watts chose the pivotal moment of Clytie's transformation, capitalising on the ability to show movement and torsion in three dimensions, which perfectly suited Clytie's plight. In Ovid's tale, Clytie is a young woman who falls in love with the sun god Apollo. In her state of unrequited love, Clytie degenerates into a sunflower, imitating its behaviour as she strains to follow the trajectory of the sun. The passage describing the love affair between Apollo and Clytie was appealing to artists, because it contained all of the necessary ingredients for a visually iconic image. The first is the feminine version of the *beau idéal*, which is represented by Leucothoe, or Clytie's rival for Apollo's love, (she was a woman more beautiful than any other). Ovid described her, saying, "She [Leucothoe] was the daughter of Eurynome, who had been the fairest beauty in the land of perfumed spices…" The second ingredient is the spectacle of the divine apparition, as Apollo exposes his full supernatural splendour to a wide-eyed Leucothoe, by masquerading in the form of Leucothoe's mother, in order to gain access to the girl. After declaring his love, "The sun waited no longer, but returned to his true shape, and to his wonted brilliance. Leucothoe, though frightened by the unexpected sight, was overcome by his magnificence, and accepted the god's embraces without a murmur." The third ingredient is the temporal process of conversion, as Clytie is altered by her maddening grief. Upon reporting the lovers's indiscretion,

[294] Swinburne, Notes 35-6.

which incited the wrath of Leucothoe's father, Clytie is spurned by Apollo and becomes transfixed to the earth as a sunflower.[295]

In both painted and sculptural versions, Watts portrayed Clytie at the height of her transformation. Sculpture was better suited to at least certain aspects of the story, because its depiction in bronze or marble was more able to convey the torsion and movement of Clytie's tortured state. Also, Gutch observes that it is in the sculptural version where we see the figure's fleshly quality, such as the skin that creases and pulls around her neck and underarm.[296] In sculptural form, Clytie's metamorphosis bespoke a greater artistic deftness, since the artist was able to draw more attention to the physical intersection of flower and human form.

Surprisingly, even though Watts's attempt to rule in both the painterly and sculptural fields at the exhibition may have been perceived as somewhat grandiose, Swinburne actually congratulated the artist, noting that Watts had respected the strengths of each art, by limiting colour to painting, and by not borrowing from 'an alien art' to achieve the greatest effects in sculpture. Was Swinburne reacting to the new phenomenon of polychrome, and casting an admonishment on those who would resort to such a level of inter-arts intermingling? This we may never know. In any case, Watts observed this limit, and claimed that his bronze version was successful, because it manipulated texture and light, in the same way that colour is manipulated in painting. It is even possible that Watts was the first artist to theorise that the sensory experience of colour in painting could somehow be equated with texture and light in sculpture.[297] Swinburne, perhaps aware of Watts's theory, supported Watts's observance of the different attributes of the arts, even though he dabbled in more than one type.

Watts shared other affinities with the paragonising artists that we have already considered. Surely, Watts wished to place himself in the context of those artists who had taken on the most challenging and iconic subjects. This is seen in Watts's painting *Orpheus and Eurydice*, also taken from Ovid. The story of Orpheus was a great draw for painters concerned with the poetic in painting. Like Apollo, Orpheus was associated mythologically with the origin of the arts, being the archetypal poet or musician, who,

[295] Ovid, Metamorphosis Book IV, 199-101.
[296] Gutch, "Watts's Sculpture" 694.
[297] Gutch, "Watts's Sculpture" 694.

with his lyre, created music and verse worthy of the best antique tradition. His poetry and music were so enchanting that he was credited with having brought civilization to humankind.

Orpheus, and the story involving Eurydice, was a recurrent theme throughout the nineteenth century, especially in the work of Moreau, such as his *Orpheus* (1865) and *Orpheus at the Tomb of Eurydice* (1891).[298] For Watts, Orpheus and Eurydice represented less the complexities of depicting a literary narrative, and more the idea of grief and loss itself. Having lost Eurydice once to the underworld, and then again because he looked back at her while trying to rescue her, Orpheus's story was one of gut-wrenching lovesickness. Moreau's scenes dwell on the idea that Orpheus, being at one time the greatest poet of the ancient world, was effectively silenced by his grief. For Moreau, Orpheus's silence symbolised the silencing of the great era of ancient poets. So a new era called for a painter, rather than a poet, to rectify the loss of civilisation that had returned in the nineteenth century, by virtue of the rise of industrialisation, urbanisation, and secularisation.[299] In Watts's painting, shown at the Grosvenor Gallery in 1879, he employed figural exaggeration to express human emotional agony. Orpheus's horror at the loss of his love is manifested in his body's twisting pose, again reminiscent of Michelangelo, which winds itself from front to back, as he struggles in vain to save Eurydice from the underworld. Indicative of her hopeless fate, Eurydice is a lifeless body; she falls backwards, in what would be a devastatingly painful movement, if not for her seeming lack of consciousness. This painting, as Bryant also observes, exemplifies Watts's attempt to create what he called painted poems, because he simplified the narrative by focusing on its emotional drama and psychological complexity, rather than its iconographic and narrative layers.[300]

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[298] For more on Ovid's portrayal of the subject see Charles Segal, "Ovid's Orpheus and Augustan Ideology," Transactions and Proceedings of the American Philological Association 103 (1972): 473-494. Gustave Moreau, *Orpheus*, 1865, oil on panel, 154 x 99.5 cm, Musée d'Orsay, Paris, France. Moreau, *Orpheus at the Tomb of Eurydice*, 1891, oil on canvas, 173 x 128 cm, Musée Gustave Moreau, Paris, France.
[299] Lippert, Gustave Moreau 74-6. For an analysis of the origin of Orpheus's story in Ovid see Bauer, "Function of Pygmalion" 11.
[300] Bryant, "G.F. Watts" 124.

Orpheus, as the archetypal poet or artist, represented an entire tradition of artistic production, which was still heralded in the nineteenth century as the greatest to have ever existed. Winckelmann had a part to play in this, because his writings, and those of later nineteenth-century art historians, would result in a glossy and nostalgic view of ancient artists, including poets. Watts, like Moreau, was one of those visual artists who endeavoured to place himself in this tradition, envisioning his contribution to the legacy of the antique poets as a grand continuum in the production of art or poetry. Like so many of their contemporaries, Watts and Moreau saw themselves in this continuum, due to a certain practical reality; hardly any artworks from ancient painters had survived into the nineteenth century. The lack of ancient Greek painting in the nineteenth century meant that painters could forge new paths, and break free from merely copying the masters of antiquity, as sculptors, architects, poets, playwrights, and philosophers were all encouraged to do. With no real example to follow, the nineteenth-century painter could assert that a new art form was obviously needed to replace those already mastered in antiquity, given that it was then being proposed that the glory days of ancient art had long since passed.

Put very simply, if figures such as Winckelmann were correct in suggesting that the best art had been achieved by Greek artists, then evidently the hundreds of years of artistic production that had followed had sufficiently proven that no amount of time or effort was going to allow artists, who were working in well-known ancient media, to surpass their predecessors. Who could really be expected to one-up Praxiteles? And the only reason that Renaissance artists, such as Michelangelo, had been able to approach this was because they had emulated the perfect essences of ancient art so devotedly. What, then, was there left to do in sculpture or poetry? It could likewise be argued that painting had yet to reach its zenith, and this was a noble problem to rectify. Consequently, there was a fundamental view amongst ambitious, or competitively-minded, painters that the recreation of ancient artistic glory need not entail a resurrection of ancient poetry, or even sculpture; it was now the era for painting, and for the reemergence of ancient artistic virtue, in the form of a modern and more relevant art.

To return to Watts's *Orpheus and Eurydice*, it is notable that the magnitude of Orpheus's loss is the work's focus. The impossibility and tragedy of the situation is

encapsulated by the figure of Orpheus, who dramatically, almost horizontally, reaches for Eurydice, who tumbles away from him, lifeless, and already lost. It draws attention not just to the personal loss of the mythological hero, but also to the nostalgic grief that modern individuals could feel for the loss of such a perfect era of artistic production. Orpheus not only symbolises the loss of the perfection of antiquity, but also the promise of an innovative and equally glorious replacement: the modern painter, who would function as the social and cultural leader that ancient poets had been in their day. Like Girodet, Watts favoured subjects that expressed the nostalgic loss of great past artists, shown in such works as *The Genius of Greek Poetry* (ca. 1881), which parallels the same subjects in Moreau's scenes of Apollo, Orpheus, Hesiod, the Greek Muses, Sappho, and the dying poet.[301] For instance, Girodet illustrated an entire publication for Sappho, in addition to completing many studies in painting, while Moreau undertook the subject repeatedly in various media, typically showing Sappho launching herself from the cliffs. A quintessential dying poet scene is portrayed in Girodet's *Desespoir de Sappho* (published 1829), wherein Sappho clutches her lyre, as she sits on the edge of a cliff overlooking a seascape.[302] Like Orpheus's fatal end, (he is dismembered by frenzied Bacchic Maenads while in the prime of his life), her loss mirrors the end of the ancient artistic tradition.

Further evidence for the commonalities of paragonising subject matter may be found in a pair of paintings that Watts completed, which was intended to be a pendant display of the feminine *beau idéal*. Though the *Daphne* is now lost, *Psyche* and *Daphne* were shown in 1880, and stood for the artist's growing interest in a nearly narratively bankrupt approach to figural painting.[303] According to Bryant, instead of focusing on a

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[301] On the theme of Moreau's dying poets see Lippert, Gustave Moreau 74. George Frederick Watts, *The Genius of Greek Poetry*, 1881, oil on canvas, 53 x 66 cm, Harris Museum and Art Gallery, Preston, England.

[302] Anne-Louis Girodet-Trioson, *Desespoir de Sappho,* ca. early 1800s, print from Sappho, Bion, Moschus: recueil de compositions, dessinées par Girodet ; et gravées par Chatillon, son élève ; avec la traduction en vers par Girodet de quelques-unes des poésies de Sappho et de Moschus ; et une notice sur la vie et les oeuvres de Sappho par P.A. Coupin (Paris : Chaillou-Potrelle ... , 1829), Getty Research Centre, Los Angeles, U.S.A.

[303] Watts was not alone in challenging the assumption that the female nude needed to be justified through some sort of narrative context. Prettejohn cites Albert Moore's *A Venus* (1869) in this context, proving that English artists like Moore were looking to ancient Greek sculpture for inspiration in depicting the female nude, however the painting, in this case, is entirely without narrative or iconographic justification.

literary narrative, Watts would endeavour to capture the emotion that each character embodied. For example, Psyche becomes a personification of loss, reflecting her eternal separation from her beloved Cupid.[304] The figure of Psyche is tragic, in a way that could certainly be described as poetic; however, the tradition seems more akin to the *académie peintes* of the French academic system. Though not affiliated with the French Academy, Watts's figures, being divested of iconographic and narrative context, except for their titles, perfectly suited the French requirements of the lone nude figural painting.

Watts did not limit himself to the female nude; a perfect example of his skill in painting the male nude is found in his *Endymion* (ca. 1870-2).[305] The painting takes up the very subject that had been so closely associated with the male *beau idéal* since the late eighteenth century. Characteristic of his symbolic, instead of literal, approach, Watts boiled the scene down to two figures, excluding any real sense of a setting, Cupid, or any other extraneous figures. Even though it is much less narrative than Girodet's version, Watts's work does share some features with its famous precedent. To recall, Girodet manifested his Diane in a crescent moon-shaped misty light, which emanated in a caressing form from the rays descending through the utopian forest setting. Watts also relied upon a clever method to portray his smitten goddess; in his case, Watts shaped Diana into a crescent moon, as she bends over Endymion to embrace him, resulting in an elliptical shape created by the two figures against the dark background. Also like Girodet, Watts depicted his goddess in a more supernatural, rather than human, manner. Even though she takes a corporeal form, she hovers over her sleeping lover in a gravity-defying feat of supernatural power, making her comparably divine to Girodet's goddess. Demonstrating his knowledge of the *beau idéal* tradition into which he was entering, Watts arranged Endymion in a reclining pose at the picture plane, and chose to show the male figure unclothed, just as Girodet, and even Guérin, had previously done.

Elizabeth Prettejohn, "Walter Pater and Aesthetic Painting," After the Pre-Raphaelites: Art and Aestheticism in Victorian England, ed. Elizabeth Prettejohn (New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press, 1999): 44-5. George Frederick Watts, *Daphne*, 1879-82, marble, 711 x 610 x 381 mm, Tate Britain, London, England.

[304] Bryant, "G.F. Watts" 124.

[305] George Frederick Watts, *Endymion,* 1870-2, oil on canvas, unknown dimensions, John and Julie Schaeffer Collection, Sydney, Australia.

A striking difference exists, nevertheless, between Watts's work and those of his predecessors. Bryant is correct in observing that Watts often obscured the faces of his figures for the sake of effect.[306] Unlike Girodet's depiction of the impossibly serene visage of Endymion in the midst of his slumber, Watts emphasised the physicality of his figures, by denying viewers the greater narrative legibility of a facial expression. In this way, Watts produced works that necessitated contemplation, in order to peel away the layers of symbolism, much like reading a book. Instead of a quick glance upon Endymion or Diana's face, the viewer must examine the expressions evoked by the bodily postures, and the compositional dynamism of each scene. Upon inspection, in the case of his *Endymion,* Watts even went so far as to provide a degree of uncertainty, with regards to the ways in which the figures make physical contact. Diana is nose to nose with Endymion, but does she actually kiss him? Diana hovers over Endymion, but does her leg, enveloped in swirling drapery, really brush his knee? Diana's hand is visible behind Endymion's tilted head, but does she clasp her own veil, or his hair? All of these obscurities require the viewer to visually delve into the painting's illusionistic spatial recesses, and to spend more time in front of Watts's works, than he or she would perhaps spend in front of other works in the exhibition. Like Moreau, Watts devised his works to be revealed over time, just as Moreau's works demand a careful and lengthy reading of the profusion of iconographic and painterly detail, which dominates nearly every inch of his paintings's surfaces.

Like so many of the paragonising artists of his day, Watts's works embodied the principles of artistic rivalry, in the unique circumstances of the shifting art world of late nineteenth-century London. Like most competitive artists, Watts manipulated his exhibition practices, choice of narratives, metamorphosising subjects, and production of the *beau idéal,* to design works that could testify to the value of a new and more innovative type of history painting at this time

[306] Bryant, "G.F. Watts" 126-7.

Conclusion

In depicting Pygmalion's story, artists strove to find the tools necessary to convince viewers of the strengths of visual media. The relationship between Galatea and her maker offered a treasure trove of artistic possibilities, as artists mapped their aesthetic theories onto this relationship. Excluding the examples by Gérôme, the prominence of the supplicant portrayals of Pygmalion, in most versions, also speaks to a metaphorical meaning for the subject bearing great significance to the paragone. In the versions by Boucher, Lagrénée, Girodet, and Burne-Jones, Pygmalion is consistently shown like a pious devotee of the iconic Galatea, implying that he is worshiping her. Because Galatea, or the image, stands for beauty itself, the story of Pygmalion and Galatea becomes a model for the relationship between any viewer and any artwork, and the idea that the world should fall, with gratitude, at the feet of those who can produce such beauty: artists. Pygmalion, descended on his knees before the artwork, becomes a model for the reverence one should have for all inspired artworks. However, things will not be so straightforward in our third theme, in which we will truly confront the desperate, treacherous, and even fatal consequences of the iconic in art.

Chapter 4

Salomé or Medusa:

The Place of the Apparition in Artistic Rivalry

Why Salomé?

The subject of Salomé represents another dimension of the evolution of the paragone into the latter half of the nineteenth century. Her character originates from Biblical accounts of King Herod's court at the time of Christ. King Herod imprisoned John the Baptist, who was a prophet and the cousin of Jesus of Nazareth. Herod's wife Herodias, having formerly been the wife of his brother, then sought revenge on the Baptist for denouncing her marriage. She tricked Herod into executing the Baptist, by coercing the king into agreeing that, after her daughter danced for him, he would give her anything that she requested. Herod agreed, and the Baptist was beheaded when Herodias's daughter asked for the Baptist's head on a platter. In the Biblical accounts (Matthew 14:1-12 and Mark 6:14-29), the daughter of Herodias was never named; however, ancient historians deduced, using records regarding Herod's government, that her name was Salome, therefore she was known in the nineteenth century by this name.[1]

This story, being so full of immorality, attracted the attention of writers and artists alike, towards the end of the nineteenth century, and especially amongst the so-called 'decadents.' Various narrative revisions of the story were developed in the nineteenth century, such as Atta Troll (1841) by Heinrich Heine (1797-1856), in which the author heightened the violent content. Other reincarnations occurred in Gustave Flaubert's (1821-80) Salammbô (1862) and Herodias (1877). Stéphane Mallarmé (1842-98) also treated the subject in Les Fleurs (1864), Scène (1869), and in later versions, such as Hérodiade (ca. 1896). He altered the narrative by creating a hybrid *femme fatale* that united the mother and daughter into one woman, whom he named Hérodiade.[2] Due to

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[1] The figure of Salome was identified by the Jewish historian Flavius Josephus. Lyn Bolen, "Tradition and the Avant-Garde in Moreau's *Salome*," Athanor 7 (1988): 33. Refer to this article for a brief review of the popularity of the story since the time of Christ. To the best of my ability I have preserved the accents in this name as they appear in scholarship and in different traditions. So apparent inconsistencies in the use of the accent are dependent upon its use in various circumstances.

[2] Katherine C. Kurk, "The Lily, the Rose, and the Lotus: An Erotic Bouquet in Mallarmé's Hérodiade," Publications of the Missouri Philological Association 6 (1981): 23. For more on Mallarmé's Hérodiade see Sylviane Huot, Le 'Mythe d'Hérodiade' chez Mallarmé: Genèse et évolution (Paris: A.G. Nizet, 1977). Huot examines the role that Wilde played in the development of Mallarmé's treatments of the Salomé subject after the play was written in 1891. She concludes that Mallarmé was most inspired by Wilde's version, more than perhaps any other treatment (196-7). For more on the characterisation or depictions of Salomé leading up to the nineteenth century see Martha Levine Dunkelman, "The Innocent Salome," Gazette des beaux-arts 133:1563 (1999): 173-80. "Salomé aux cent visages," L'Art et les artistes XI (Apr.,

their own admitted interest in Moreau's depictions, and because of the extensive scholarship that already deals with the literary relationships between these previous contributions, our focus will be on Joris Karl Huysmans's (1848-1907) treatment of the subject in his novel À Rebours (1884), and Wilde's play Salomé (1892).

Salomé, celebrated today as the ultimate symbol of decadence, in both nineteenth-century England and France, has been evaluated in scholarship in very sensational terms. Many 'hot topics' have been brought forth from this subject in art historical scholarship, including the appeal of the *femme fatale*, and all of the concerns that issue from depictions of the evil woman, such as gender and sexual politics in Europe and Great Britain. Not the least of these concerns is the fascination with decadence in England and *fin-de-siècle* France. Despite how well-covered these scholarly issues are, the entanglement of artistic responses, revisions, and revivals of Salomé in visual and literary media, has resulted in considerable inconsistency in the attribution of artistic influences, and gaps in scholarship, such as the lack of interest in seeing Salomé outside of her role as a decadent *femme fatale*.[3] For these reasons, my research will not delve into this area of scholarship that has been so popular, but will explore, instead, the other meanings that Salomé may have held with regards to the paragone.[4] To begin, I will address the reception of the pre-eminent visual artist who created the most famous version of the subject, and whose work also seems to have spawned many other treatments: this is Gustave Moreau.

Moreau's interest in Salomé has frequently been characterised as an abnormal or obsessive fascination with the evil woman, as an outward expression of personal or social

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1910): 3-15. Lloyd James Austin, "Mallarmé and the Visual Arts," French Nineteenth-Century Painting and Literature (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1972): 241-243. For an examination of Flaubert's version see Chapter 8 of Victor Brombert's, The Novels of Flaubert: A Study of Themes and Techniques (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1966). See also David Allen King, Salome: A Mulit-Dimensional Theme in European Art: 1840-1945, diss., (University of Northern Colorado, 1986).

[3] To investigate the cultural and artistic significance of the *femme fatale* in nineteenth-century culture see the following sources, including Bram Djikstra's Idols of Perversity: Fantasies of Feminine Evil in *Fin-de-siècle* Culture (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986). Elliott Gilbert's "Tumult of Images: Wilde, Beardsley, and Salome," Victorian Studies (Winter 1983): 133-159. West's *Fin de Siècle*. Virginia M. Allen, The *Femme Fatale*: Erotic Icon (New York: The Whitson Publishing Company, 1983). Patrick Bade, Femme Fatale: Images of Evil and Fascinating Women (New York: Mayflower, 1979). Michel Décaudin, "Un mythe, '*fin de siècle*': Salomé," Comparative Literature Studies 9 (1967): 109-117. For the treatment of the *femme fatale* theme in Moreau's work see Henri Dorra, "The Guesser Guessed: Gustave Moreau's *Oedipus*," Gazette des Beaux-Arts 6:81 (Mar. 1973): 134-135.

[4] For this reason, I have once again provided references to major art historical areas of research when important issues are touched upon.

misogynistic beliefs, or as evidence of his own personal espousal of decadence. Despite the relevance of these concerns, as I have just acknowledged, studies of Moreau's Salomés have often overlooked an important factor concerning his interest in this subject, which is the artist's paragonising artistic theory, and the painting's meaning in the context of his œuvre, which may be understood through his extensive writings and contemporary critical reviews. As a general rule, scholarship on Moreau's Salomé paintings has recognised that she represents the materialism and decadence of late nineteenth-century France. In spite of this, most of these studies seem to claim, without consultation of Moreau's other works or writings, that he was somehow promoting the principles for which Salomé stood in decadent culture, when in fact it was the opposite. For Moreau, Salomé was a cautionary symbol, and a fable to warn viewers about the immorality of decadence and materialism, although this is an inherently paradoxical position. Moreau may very well have understood that his high-minded moral messages might draw greater interest if packaged in appealing and sensual forms. Considerable and well-documented forces existed to make such a figure useful to an artist like Moreau.

As Solomon-Godeau has shown, and as we have touched on, the shift from the early nineteenth-century emphasis on the male *beau idéal* evolved over the century into greater preoccupation with the female figure, exemplified by the popularity of those such as Salomé. This shift coincided with the perceived growing materialism of society, as the female figure in art was transformed into yet another object for consumption. In general, the association between art and commercialism had been growing throughout the century. This was expressed by a critic writing for *La Parisienne*, who lamented that, "Quite definitely, the central marketplace of painting has had its day. Nothing could be more unfashionable, more vulgar, more sickening than this immense bazaar on the Champs-Elysées, where exhibits of vehicles, cheeses, and pictures follow one after another."[5] The reasons behind this opinion are many. On the one hand, the visual arts in prevailing aesthetic theories, such as that of Lessing, had been classified as female in gender, whereas the literary arts belonged to the realm of masculine cultural production.[6] Like

[5] Cited in Mainardi, End of the Salon 136. In 1857 the official Salon was moved to the Palais de l'industrie on the Champs-Elysées, which was originally built to house the 1855 Exposition universelle.
[6] See Lessing and Mitchell, as discussed in the first chapter. See also Anne Higonnet, "Writing the Gender of the Image: Art Criticism in Late Nineteenth-Century France," Genders 6 (Nov. 1989): 60-73.

women, artworks were meant to be passively gazed upon by the active viewer; they were collected, just as one might 'collect' mistresses or female lovers.[7] Due to the alignment of attractive women with beautiful goods, both came to signify the extreme materialism of late nineteenth-century industrialised Europe and Great Britain. As we will learn, Salomé's story came to be associated with the material, sensual, and aesthetic nature of art. Her persona, more than perhaps that of any other female heroine, most perfectly expressed the connection between women and materialism, because Salomé's fate was determined by her role in being an object of the gaze, just like an artwork.[8] Salomé's ability to seduce King Herod with a dance became emblematic of the seductive powers of the visual arts, and as such could be exploited to demonstrate the power of visual imagery over the written word. For this reason, the narrative features of the subject made it an ideal source for paragonising artists.

This chapter will examine the rivalry between painting, popular illustrators, and art critics, some of whom also called themselves novelists and playwrights, who engaged with the Salomé subject to compete in the paragone. Beginning with Moreau, I will examine the repetitive interplay of Salomé narratives amongst French and British artists. Since the connections between these artists, including Moreau, Wilde, Beardsley, and Huysmans, are already documented in scholarship, my focus will be on the aesthetic and theoretical relationships.[9]

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[7] For a variety of approaches on the issue of the male and female gaze see Laura Mulvey, "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema," Screen 16:3 (Aug. 1975): 6-18. Linda Nochlin, Representing Women (New York: Thames and Hudson, 1999). Bonnie Zare, "Rossetti's Venus and Burne-Jones's Mermaid: Invitations to Dialogue," Journal of Pre-Raphaelite Studies 12 (Spring 2003): 7-22. Stephen Kern, Eyes of Love: The Gaze in English and French Paintings and Novels, 1840-1900, Picturing History Series (London: Reaktion, 1996). Mary Deveraux, "Oppressive texts, resisting readers, and the gendered spectator: the 'New' Aesthetics," Feminism and Tradition in Aesthetics, eds. Peggy Zeglin Brand and Carolyn Korsmeyer (University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1995): 121-41. Edward Snow, "Theorizing the Male Gaze: Some Problems," Representations 25 (Winter 1989): 30-41. R. Baldwin, "Gates Pure and Shining and Serene: Mutual Gazing as an Amatory Motif in Western Literature and Art," Renaissance and Reformation 10 (1986): 23-48. Richard Dellamora, Masculine Desire: The Sexual Politics of Victorian Aestheticism (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1990).

[8] Brad Bucknell also correlates Salomé to a symbol of the visual. "On 'Seeing' Salomé," ELH 60:2 (Summer, 1993): 503.

[9] For more on the appeal of Salomé in the nineteenth century, and the artistic connections between the artists who treated the subject see Décaudin, "Un mythe." Jacqueline Guisset, "Salomé au XIXe siècle: rapports entre littérature et arts plastiques," Annales d'histoire de l'art et d'archéologie V (1983): 67-82. Patricia Rossworm Kellogg, The Myth of Salome in Symbolist Literature and Art, diss. (New York: New York University, 1975). Jules Laforgue, "Salomé," Moralités légendaires (Paris: Mercure de France, 1964). Jane Marcus, "Salome: The Jewish Princess was a New Woman," Bulletin of the New York Public

Gustave Moreau and the Reinvention of Salomé

It might be said that Moreau nearly single-handedly revised and regenerated the Salomé narrative for the nineteenth-century art world. Like so many of his other subjects, Moreau repeated it in many different paintings, under diverse names. And even if Salomé depictions had been popular since the early Modern era, they were nowhere near as famous or celebrated as his works became. Salomé, under his hand, appeared in Salons and galleries in England and France, contributing to Moreau's reputation as an artist of decadent characters and an ultra-sensual style. It is the great attention paid to Moreau's versions of this subject that will make him the anchor of this chapter.

Despite the international success and popularity of these works, Salomé did less for Moreau than he did for her. Even though his portrayals of her became the inspiration for countless artistic responses in both literature and the visual arts, her relative ubiquity has left the public, including contemporary scholars, with an overly simplified impression of his artistic interests. Moreau claimed that he featured Salomé in his works, to send a message about the dangers of immorality and excess in the modern world. While he certainly professed to have grand moral objectives, the consistency of his sensual style across his entire œuvre would suggest that he was just as susceptible to the allure of pure aesthetic beauty, as much as any other viewer or artist. Moreau would probably have justified this feature of his work, by suggesting that such celebration of sensual aesthetic beauty is acceptable, as long as it serves a higher purpose in some way. Salomé's story lent itself well to the idea that the beauty of art could be manipulated to teach moral lessons. Moreau's Salomé, nevertheless, was quickly identified, by both his contemporaries and art historians, with the sexual exploitation of the female figure, for the purposes of sensationalising the Salon experience. The result belied Moreau's belief

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Library (Autumn 1974): 95-113. Jean Psichari, "Salomé et la décollation de St Jean-Baptiste," Revue de l'histoire des religions 72 (1915): 131-140. S comme Salomé: Salomé dans le texte et l'image de 1870 à 1914 (Toulouse: University de Toulouse, 1983). Ragnar von Holten, "Le développement du personnage de Salomé à travers les dessins de Gustave Moreau," L'Œil 79-80 (Jul.-Aug. 1961): 44-51, 72. Helen Grace Zagona, The Legend of Salome and the Principle of Art-for-art's-sake (Geneva: F. Droz, 1960). Ewa Kuryluk, Salomé and Judas in the Cave of Sex: The Grotesque, Origins, Iconography, Techniques (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1987). Anne Hudson Jones and Karen Kingsley, "Salome in Late Nineteenth-Century French Art and Literature," eds. Miles L. Chapell and Thomas C. Niemann, Studies in Iconography 9 (1983): 107-127. Anne Hudson Jones and Karen Kingsley, "Salome: The Decadent Ideal," Comparative Literature Studies 18 (1981): 344-352.

that aesthetic beauty could serve a higher purpose, as long as it did not solely pander to lust and immorality.[10] By virtue of the undeniable allure of Moreau's style of painting, she ended up standing for the exact thing that he was trying to combat. For this reason, artists who took up the theme, and were inspired by his works, tended to glorify the principles that he opposed, and as such misappropriated his work.

One must always question the objectivity of an artist's statements; however, a comparison of his writings, in conjunction with those of his contemporaries, and the social and historical circumstances of his day, brings to light some glaring inconsistencies in scholarship on Moreau. His popularity in the nineteenth century has been passed down into the twentieth century to many scholars, who, across diverse disciplines, often herald his work as the perfect example of an artist who celebrated and promoted decadence, and a malicious view of women, in the nineteenth century. These analyses typically ignore the complexities of the historical context, and evidence that leads to alternative interpretations.[11] In the writings that Moreau compiled towards the end of his life, and which have been published in the book Assembleur des rêves, he lamented that his works were routinely mocked and, in his view, misinterpreted in art criticism, and often caricaturised in popular media.[12] For these reasons, he felt that he had had to fight for recognition and success throughout his career. Professional or personal adversity, as we have seen, was, and remains, the perfect ingredient in nurturing a sense of competition in an artist. Consequently, because these events shaped his attitude towards the necessity of competing in the art world, I will recount here the personal and professional challenges that could have contributed to Moreau's ambition, and his interest in engaging in the paragone debate.

Also, since Moreau provides the foundation for this chapter on Salomé, it is relevant to briefly discuss some of the pertinent aspects of his background. To begin, his

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[10] It is documented in his writings that Moreau expressed disgust for the purely erotic works being shown by some of his contemporaries at the Salon. Cooke, Gustave Moreau 124.

[11] Some examples of some sensationalist or superficial approaches include Ragnar von Holten, L'art fantastique de Gustave Moreau (Paris: Jean-Jacques Pauvert, 1960). Sayeeda H. Mamoon, Flowers of Androgyny: The Garden of Salomé in *Fin-de-siècle* Art and Literature, diss, (Indiana University, 1996). Jeffrey Meyers, "Huysmans and Gustave Moreau," Apollo 99:143 (1974): 39-44.

[12] Caricature of Gustave Moreau's *Orpheus*, ca. 1865, copy from 'Gustave Moreau' archives at the Musée d'Orsay, Paris. Caricature of Gustave Moreau's *Hercules and the Lernaean Hydra,* and *Salomé*, ca. 1870s, copy from 'Gustave Moreau' archives at the Musée d'Orsay, Paris, France.

father Louis Moreau had been a scholar of the arts, and amassed an impressive library that he eventually bequeathed to his son. Consequently, according to Pierre-Louis Mathieu, Gustave became the owner of the most impressive personal library of any artist of his day.[13] Louis also seems to have left his son with an obsessive concern for the ideal in art, which may have been nurtured by Louis's own art theories, which were published in 1831 under the title Considérations sur les beaux-arts. After receiving a university degree, Gustave entered the French academy's *École des beaux-arts* in 1846. In the following several years, he unsuccessfully attempted twice to win the *Prix de Rome*, which would have allowed him to study in Italy. These were bitter losses for Moreau, to the degree that he left the school in Paris after the second failure in 1849. He would be reminded of this early disappointment when he finally applied for acceptance to the academy in 1882. He failed to be selected for admission, by losing to the same artist who beat him in the *Prix de Rome* competition: this was Gustave Boulanger (1824-88). Six years later he replaced Boulanger as one of the academy's elected members, only ten years before Moreau's death. Even though Moreau was invited at that time to be a professor in the academy, he initially declined. Nevertheless, he reluctantly took up the post in 1892, only after promising a dying friend that he would replace him as a professor in the academy.[14] Thus, we can see that Moreau's tenure as an academician was both hard won and brief.

Having lost the *Prix de Rome*, Moreau educated himself on the artistic treasures of the western tradition, and independently undertook an extensive stay in Italy, often meeting up with fellow artists with whom he was friends, as well as traveling with his parents. His Italian voyage extended from 1857 to 1859, and was replete with excursions to copy masters and works from across Italy. Amongst his friends were Henri Rupp (1837-1918), Eugène Fromentin (1820-76), Degas, Jean Lorrain (1855-1906), and

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[13] For more on Moreau's library see: Pierre-Louis Mathieu, "La bibliothèque de Gustave Moreau," Beaux-arts (Apr. 1978): 155-162.

[14] Geneviève Lacambre, Gustave Moreau: Between Epic and Dream, exh. cat. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1999): 290-4. For more on Moreau's role as a professor at the academy see Philip Hotchkiss Walsh, The Atelier of Gustave Moreau at the École des Beaux-Arts (France), diss., (Boston: Harvard University, 1995).

Gérôme.[15] Moreau's role models were Delacroix, Théodore Chassériau (1819-56), who died tragically at a young age, Michelangelo, and Leonardo. In his personal life, he remained close to his parents. Following his father's death, Moreau's mother became a 'business manager' of sorts, such as by keeping records of artworks that were purchased and commissioned. As for his romantic interests, he came very close to marrying a young woman in the 1850s. This relationship ended abruptly, after which Moreau began a close relationship with another woman named Alexandrine Dureux (1836-90), which lasted throughout his career until her death.[16] Evidence shows that his decision not to marry was encouraged by his mother, who mentioned in a letter to her son that marriage would have detracted from his ability to pursue a career as an artist.[17] As we have seen with Girodet, this attitude was not uncommon, because the demands of supporting a family were too great for many artists to risk, if they were serious about devoting their resources to a career. In Moreau's case, his devotion to his art took on priestly overtones, which we have already seen was shared by figures such as Burne-Jones. For his part, Moreau explained his role in society as someone who could spiritually administer to the people of France: "C'est cette essence insaisissable pour l'esprit, seule appréciable pour l'âme et le cœur, cette essence divine qui seule fait le grand artiste, seule le rend maître des âmes, des esprits."[18] As a Christian, even though he harboured great disappointment in organised religion, Moreau espoused the theory that the artist could serve the spiritual needs of the people better than the church.[19]

Working so hard without the academy's support, Moreau's reputation as an artist grew slowly, if steadily, affording him a reliable living. While Moreau exhibited

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[15] Some of these relationships may be reviewed in publications of correspondence, such as Pierre Moisy and Barbara Wright, Gustave Moreau et Eugène Fromentin: Documents inédits (Quartier Latin, 1972). Gustave Moreau and Jean Lorrain, Correspondance et Poèmes (Paris: Réunion des Musées Nationaux, 1998).

[16] For an explanation of Moreau's private life and his romantic interests see Pierre-Louis Mathieu, "Gustave Moreau amoureux." L'Œil (Mar. 1974): 30-35. Here Mathieu draws on documentary evidence to determine that Moreau was heterosexual, that Alexandrine was the love of his life, and that the two were devoted to one another.

[17] Lacambre, Gustave Moreau 280.

[18] Assembleur des rêves: Écrits complèts de Gustave Moreau, pref. Jean Paladilhe, ed. Pierre-Louis Mathieu (Fontfroide: 1984): 148. My translation: "It is this elusive essence for the spirit, appreciable alone for the spirit and the heart, this divine essence that alone makes the great artist, and by itself renders him the master of souls and spirits." See also A.D.R. 65. Around 1885, the poet Robert de Montesquiou (1855-1921) described the art of Moreau as subscribing to a dogmatic religion of beauty. Gustave Moreau par ses contemporains, eds. Bernard Noël and Frédéric Chaleil, (Paris: Les Éditions de Paris, 1998): 79.

[19] Cooke, Gustave Moreau 81.

throughout the 1850s at the Salon, (his final Salon appearance was in 1880), including the *Exposition Universelle* of 1855, he did not achieve significant renown until he unveiled his *Oedipus and the Sphinx* at the Salon of 1864, which portrayed a young man confronting the female sphinx from Greek mythology, as she forces him to solve a riddle to avoid certain death. Upon its exhibition, it was purchased for Prince Napoleon (1856-1879), and earned Moreau a medal at the Salon. Medals like these were significant distinctions, because medal winners were subsequently exempt from submitting future works to the Salon Jury, thereby granting them a greater degree of artistic license, (Moreau would win again in the following year, and a third time in 1869). By 1875, he earned the rank of *Chevalier* in the *Légion d'honneur*, (being promoted to *Officier* in 1882), which of course was also won by Gérôme.

Still, Moreau's successes were tempered with personal set-backs. In 1870, he served in the Franco-Prussian war, but was relieved of duty after suffering paralysis in one of his arms, which did not correct itself for quite some time. Moreau seems to have soldiered on despite this physical ailment, continuing to work throughout the following year, including through the disastrous events ensuing from the fall of the Commune government, which rocked Paris in 1871.[20] Moreau was part of the recovery efforts, when artists and citizens of France were called upon to return her to her former glory, by showing off the nation's cultural wealth at international exhibitions.

In my earlier studies, I concluded that these turbulent life experiences caused Moreau to manipulate the style and subject matter of his art, so as to make painting the superior art form of its day, which necessitated a paragonising approach. In his mind, painting's stature lay in its potential to provide viewers with a vehicle for the transcendence of modern life's evils. As such, Moreau portrayed the paradoxes and turmoil of modern life in themes, such as those in the Salomé narrative, which reflected

[20] Lacambre, Gustave Moreau 282-5. For more on the artistic response to the Prussian siege of Paris and the Commune government and its demise from 1870-1 see A. Darcel, "Les Musées, les arts et les artistes pendant la Commune," Gazette des Beaux-Arts 5:2 (1872): 50-51. Hollis Clayson, Paris in Despair: Art and Everyday Life Under Siege (1870-71) (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 2002). Albert Boime, Art and the French Commune: Imagining Paris After War and Revolution (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1995). J. and E. Goncourt, Paris Under Siege, 1870-1871: From the Goncourt Journal, ed. G.J. Becker (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1969). J. Kaplow, "The Paris Commune and the Arts," Revolution and Reaction: The Paris Commune 1871, eds. J. Hicks and Robert Tucker (Amherst: 1973): 144-167. John Milner, Art, War and Revolution in France: 1870-1871: Myth Reportage and Reality (London and New Haven: Yale University Press, 2000).

what he felt were socially relevant tensions between materialism and spirituality, sensuality and intellectuality, and femininity and masculinity. The theme of spirituality versus materialism was prevalent in the majority of subjects that he treated, including the *Oedipus and the Sphinx* (1864), and *Hercules and the Lernaean Hydr*a (ca. 1869-76), which similarly present moral battles between good and evil.[21] In the latter painting, the hero Hercules, whom the French considered a 'founder' of France, faces the seven-headed Hydra. As with the *Oedipus*, these works testify to the themes of violence and transcendence in Moreau's œuvre.

What first drew my attention to Moreau, with regards to the paragone, was the apparent similarity between his paragonising tactics of those of Renaissance masters. These similarities help to explain Moreau's continued interest in narrative and figural art, even when he was coming under attack from many of his contemporaries for being too literary, some of whom, such as the Impressionists, argued that portraying the experiences of modern life were more important than clinging to overused narratives and the nude.[22] But Moreau actually felt that he was addressing modern issues, by revising age-old iconography for a nineteenth-century world. Ironically, while some Modernist scholars persist in labeling Moreau's work as derivatively academic or 'traditional,' many of his contemporaries reveled in what they perceived to be his radically modern approach. But in his writings and art, it is readily apparent that Moreau looked to the Old Masters unapologetically. For instance, Moreau explained his interest in Michelangelo and Leonardo when he wrote the following:

> It is because I have these lofty ideas that I give to my scenes an inclusive and mysterious character which astonishes and stupefies so many brainless people. It is because of this continual meditation that I manage to express without realizing it, yet in a striking manner, this indefinable something that emerges from great works of genius: the Sistine Chapel and certain works by Leonardo.
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> It is because it is so deep in me that it takes me so long to bring out this ideal; and to find the formula for it, that demands infinite pains.
> [The ideal] lies in the pose, in the choice of movement, in the style, the expression, in the religious and great details of arrangement.

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[21] A.D.R. 60-61. Gustave Moreau, *Œdipus and the Sphinx*, 1864, oil on canvas, 206.4 x 104.8 cm, The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, U.S.A. Moreau, *Hercules and the Lernaean Hydr*a, 1869-76, oil on canvas, 179.3 x 153 cm, The Art Institute of Chicago, Chicago, U.S.A.
[22] Cooke, Gustave Moreau 9, 13.

He continued:

> To be modern does not consist of searching for something outside of everything that has been done…It is on the contrary, a question of coordinating all that the preceding ages have brought us, to make visible how our century has accepted this heritage and how it makes use of it. Do not fear to rely on the masters: you will never get lost.[23]

Like Leonardo, Moreau educated himself on the natural world. Throughout his adult life he worked at the *Musée d'histoire naturelle* in Paris, where he often secured commissions to paint studies of animals and birds, as well as holding student cards so that he would have authorisation to study the displays.[24] He shared Leonardo's Aristotelian concern for studying nature firsthand, and for taking a scientific approach to the natural world. Leonardo was nothing less than an icon of artistic accomplishment for Moreau, with whom he identified as a French artist. Leonardo, having been 'adopted' by Francis I at the end of his life, was wholeheartedly embraced as part of the French tradition. This is evident in Moreau's words: "Léonard de Vinci: costumes et compositions tout imaginatifs. Jugement tout français. Sans cesse et toujours cette préoccupation de l'esprit français: être ému par le sujet, par la passion, par le cœur."[25] Moreau owned a copy of Leonardo's treatise Della Pittura, which continued to gain popularity throughout the nineteenth century.[26] This copy was given to him as a gift from his father in 1860, which was notably very early on in his career.[27] The treatise had enjoyed a long history in France, having been published in French with illustrations by Nicolas Poussin in 1651 in Paris.[28] Given that Poussin was one of the most venerated artists in France, well into

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[23] Cited in Julius Kaplan, The Art of Gustave Moreau: Theory, Style, and Content (Ann Arbor, Michigan: UMI Research Press, 1982): 10-11.
[24] Lacambre, Gustave Moreau 284.
[25] A.D.R. 203. My translation: "Leonardo da Vinci: completely imaginative costumes and compositions. Entirely French judgement. Obsessively and always, that preoccupation of the French spirit: to be moved by the subject, by passion, by the heart."
[26] Musée Gustave Moreau library inventory.
[27] Larry J. Feinberg, "Gustave Moreau and the Italian Renaissance," Gustave Moreau: Between Epic and Dream, exh. cat. (Chicago: The Art Institute of Chicago, 1999): 6, 11. Moreau's edition was edited by Rafaëlle du Fresne and was published in Naples in 1733.
[28] Another edition appeared in 1883 having been arranged by Jean Paul Richter under the title The Literary Works of Leonardo da Vinci. Amongst scholars, considerable interest in Leonardo's writings erupted in 1872, when copies of his writings began to be disseminated to scholars. Bernard Barryte, "The Anthony J.

the nineteenth-century, many artists would certainly have been drawn to the treatise, if only to examine Poussin's illustrations.

In my Master's thesis, I examined the considerable similarities between Moreau and Leonardo, determining, for instance, that Moreau emulated many of the paragonising techniques employed by the Renaissance master. For example, one of the commonalities was that both Moreau and Leonardo often created androgynous figures; Moreau may have even cultivated this feature in his work, in large part, because it was a way for him to approach what he saw as the perfection of Leonardo's figures.[29] Interest in Leonardo also grew at the turn of the nineteenth century, when Napoleon Bonaparte, following his Italian campaigns, brought some of Leonardo's notebooks and works of art back to France in 1796.[30] Moreau studied the optical effects in Leonardo's work, appropriating in some instances his *sfumato* technique, obscured horizons, mountainous or rocky backdrops, and diffused light. In other words, he emulated the Renaissance master's ability to capitalise on the properties unique to painting, in the quest for the iconic, or in other words, the ambition to create an image that would have the impact of a sacred icon.[31]

But Moreau had diverse tastes, and his work also demonstrates his espousal of Michelangelo's competitive tactics.[32] In particular, he was drawn to what he called Michelangelo's somnambulistic figures, such as the *Dying Slave* (ca. 1513-15), which he retained a copy of in his studio, as a plaster cast of the figure's head.[33] He based several works on this cast, such as the *Dying Poet Borne by a Centaur* (ca. 1890).[34] The appeal

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and Frances A. Guzzetta Collection of Leonardo da Vinci," University of Rochester Library Bulletin 44 (1994): http://www.lib.rochester.edu/index.cfm?PAGE=3457, Aug. 1, 2008.

[29] For details regarding Moreau's study of Leonardo's androgynous figures see Feinberg, "Renaissance" 8.

[30] James E. Housefield, "The Nineteenth-Century Renaissance and the Modern Facsimile: Leonardo da Vinci's Notebooks, from Ravaisson-Mollien to Péladan and Duchamp," Le XIXe siècle renaissant, eds. Yannick Portebois and Nicholas Terpstra (Toronto: Centre for Reformation and Renaissance Studies, 2003): 74. For a history of Leonardo's treatise in Europe see Kate Trauman Steinitz, Leonardo da Vinci's Trattato della Pittura: Treatise On Painting (Copenhagen: Munksgard, 1958). There is also a forthcoming publication on the subject: Re-Reading Leonardo: The Treatise On Painting Across Europe 1550-1900, ed. Claire Farago (Ashgate, 2009).

[31] For a fuller comparison of Leonardo and Moreau's works see chapter three of Lippert, Gustave Moreau.

[32] Lippert, Gustave Moreau. For more on Moreau's interest in Michelangelo see Odile Sébastiani-Picard, "L'Influence de Michel-Ange sur Gustave Moreau," La Revue du Louvre et des musées de France 27:3 (1977): 140-52.

[33] Michelangelo, *Dying Slave*, 1513-6, marble, Musée du Louvre, Paris, France.

[34] Sébastiani-Picard, "Michel-Ange" 144. Gustave Moreau, *Dying Poet Borne by a Centaur*, ca. 1890, watercolour on paper, 33.5 x 24.5 cm, Musée Gustave Moreau, Paris, France.

of Michelangelo's somnambulists lay, for Moreau, in the way that he imagined them to be in the throes of Neoplatonic ecstasy and union with the divine. Moreau explained this saying:

> Toutes les figures de Michel-Ange semblent être fixées dans un geste de somnambulisme idéal…Trouver l'explication de cette répétition presque générale dans toutes ces figures du caractère du sommeil. Donner les raisons de cette rêverie absorbée au point de les faire paraîtres toutes endormies ou emportées vers d'autres mondes que celui que nous habitons. Sublimité de cette combinaison plastique. Moyens puissants d'expression dans cette combinaison unique: le sommeil dans l'attitude.[35]

The extent of Michelangelo's Neoplatonic interests may be debated.[36] Still, his aims and his art were certainly described in the nineteenth century in Neoplatonic terms.[37] In my Master's thesis, I evaluated the similarities between Moreau and Michelangelo's competitive approaches to the arts, determining that Moreau espoused Michelangelo's notion of the *concetto*, as well as the idea that the ideal in art brings one closer to the divine.[38] Like Leonardo, Michelangelo glorified the sense of sight,

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[35] A.D.R. 197. My translation:

> All of the figures of Michelangelo seem to be fixed in an attitude of ideal somnambulism…Find the explanation of this almost general repetition in all of the figures in the attitude of sleep. Give the reasons of this absorbed reverie at the point of making them seem completely asleep or transported towards other worlds than those that we inhabit. The sublimity of this plastic combination. The means of this powerful expression are in this unique combination: it is the attitude of sleep.

Julius Kaplan also explored Moreau's interest in Neoplatonic philosophy and figures in his article "Gustave Moreau's *Jupiter and Semele*," Art Quarterly 33:4 (1970): 393-414.

[36] See Erwin Panofsky, Idea: A Concept in Art Theory (Charlestown: South Carolina Press, 1972); and Clements, Michelangelo's Theory 5-9. Michelangelo was familiar with the commentary on Marsilio Ficino's Symposium. Clements also quotes Michelangelo, noting the Neoplatonic resonance of his words: "Every beauty which is seen here below by persons of perception/ resembles more than anything else that celestial source from/ which we are all come; nor can we on earth have any other/ foretaste of its beauty or other fruits of heaven; and he who/ loves you loyally transcends to God and death is made sweet."

[37] For Michelangelo's image in the nineteenth century see Østermark-Johansen, Sweetness and Strength.

[38] For further discussion of Moreau's Neo-Platonic philosophy see Kaplan, The Art of Gustave Moreau 8-10. Moreau's own words also reveal his Neoplatonic beliefs about the role of art:

> Eh bien moi, je trouve une partie très morale à un bloc mutilé antique, me représentant un sublime fragment du corps humain. Cela élève l'esprit et déjà l'amène plus près des idées de religion et de morale…

describing it in sacred terms: "Make of my entire body one single eye, nor let there be then any part of me not taking pleasure in thee!"[39] I also determined that Moreau similarly reinvented Michelangelo's contemplative figures, for example, by reinterpreting *The Creation of Adam* in his *Hesiod and the Muse* (1858) and related compositions, where both scenes portray figures waiting to be enlivened by a divine spark of inspiration, through the compositional link between their hands.[40] Moreau's scene shows a seated and languid looking Hesiod, facing the female muse, who reaches towards him as if to awaken him from a reverie. In the end, Moreau was certainly not exceptional in his admiration for these Renaissance artists. However, he was unique in his methodical appropriation of their competitive tactics and theories.

Salomé's Forerunner: Orpheus as the Archetypal Artist and Poet

My focus in this chapter will be on Salomé, but I must first address the forerunner of this theme, both in terms of its subject matter and style. Any examination of Moreau's work cannot ignore the role that his *Orpheus* (1865) played in supporting competition in the arts.[41] We have already examined the importance of Orphic subjects as a theme about the loss of the ancient tradition, but we have not discussed its famous motif, which was developed by Moreau. Very simply, the theme that made his Salomé scenes unique was first borne in this painting, as it featured the severed head. Moreau's 'splash' at the

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> Je veux quand je m'addresse à une jeunesse matérialiste et anti-spiritualiste sans respect pour l'art comme pour la religion, je veux, dis-je, l'amener par le spectacle des yeux à comprendre le bien, ceci me paraît un enseignement suffisant.

My translation:

> And for me, I find a very moral part in a mutilated antique block, which to me represents a divine fragment of the human body. It raises the spirit and already sends it closer to the ideas of religion and morality…
> When I address myself to a young materialist and anti-spiritualist with as little respect for art as for religion, I want, I say, to send him by the spectacle of the eyes to comprehend the good, this to me seems a sufficient education.

A.D.R. 65.

[39] Cited in Clements, Michelangelo's Theory of Art 35.

[40] See chapter three of Lippert, Gustave Moreau. Gustave Moreau, *Hesiod and the Muse*, 1858, mixed media on paper, 37.6 x 29 cm, National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa, Canada.

[41] Gustave Moreau, *Orpheus*, 1865, oil on panel, 154 x 99.5 cm, Musée d'Orsay, Paris, France.

Salons of the mid-1870s did much to establish his success and notoriety, but it was actually with his *Orpheus* that he began to accrue the kind of fame to which he aspired.[42] Shown at the Salon of 1865, it was presented again at the *Exposition des beaux-arts* of 1866, at the *Exposition universelle* of 1867, and additionally at the 1879 International Exhibition in Munich. The work was so successful, (it was even parodied), that a cult following of fledgling poets were reported to have made pilgrimages to see the painting, in hopes of deriving some sort of creative spark from having looked upon it (Figure 1). As a result, the painter's 'trademark' quickly became the motif of the severed head. The caricature of the picture, as well as a poem based on the painting, are exemplary of the ways in which Moreau's work was routinely appropriated by critics, writers, and artists throughout his career.[43]

The strikingly unusual painting illustrates the story of the god of the arts, Orpheus, who is dismembered by frenzied bacchic maenads. In Moreau's version, a young Thracian woman discovers his head attached to his lyre. She stands beside the river, holding the head in her arms, while she gazes down at the serene face in quiet contemplation. Perhaps never before in public memory had this motif been portrayed so powerfully and prominently. It would increasingly become one of the often borrowed themes in the visual arts for the rest of the nineteenth century, especially in the work of the Symbolist painters, such as Odilon Redon (1840-1916), who was a great admirer of Moreau. This Thracian woman, looking down upon the face of a disembodied head of a dead man, is actually the precursor to the Salomés of the 1870s. Orpheus is as direct a quote as possible of the traditional representations of Salomé with the head of the Baptist, quietly looking down upon the famous platter. In many lesser known versions of the Salomé narrative, Moreau later portrayed this traditional subject directly, but his innovative reinterpretation of the motif, transforming it into the Orphic narrative, is what made his *Orpheus* such a standout and memorable feature at the Salon.

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[42] To consult additional scholarship on Moreau's treatment of Orpheus in the context of his aims as a history painter see Cooke, "L'Image et texte" 66-72.

[43] Jean Lorrain, wrote the poem called *Un Maître sorcier* to introduce his review of Moreau's work in the periodical L'Événement 6.093 (Nov., 20, 1888). In Lorrain's case he was actually a friend of Moreau, and introduced him to Huysmans in June of 1885. Lorrain—Moreau, Correspondance 42.

The theme of *Orpheus* was likewise popular with artists who were concerned with the hierarchy of the arts. For instance, Leighton's *The Triumph of Music* (1856) depicts Orpheus in his role as a musician, and demonstrates the potential for music to affect all listeners.[44] Leighton supported the nineteenth-century paradigm that music was superior to the other arts, due to its universality, (not being dependent on culturally specific iconography or language), and his work celebrated Orpheus's supremacy. Moreau would not have agreed with the position of music in Leighton's hierarchy of the arts, but Leighton's painting does help to demonstrate the fact that the Orphic subject matter was naturally associated with such a hierarchy, and therefore the idea of competition. In order to understand Orpheus's appeal to competitive artists, I shall once again consult Ovid. In the following narrative, Orpheus, having lost his new bride to a snake-bite, descends into the underworld to beg for the life of his love:

> As he sang these words to the music of his lyre, the bloodless ghosts were in tears: Tantalus made no effort to reach for the waters that ever shrank away, Ixion's wheel stood still in wonder, the vultures ceased to gnaw Tityus' liver, the daughters of Danaus rested from their pitchers, and Sisyphus sat idle on his rock. Then for the first time, they say, the cheeks of the Furies were wet with tears, for they were overcome by his singing. The king and queen of the underworld could not bear to refuse his pleas. They called Eurydice.[45]

Orpheus, as a "divinely-born poet," then seated himself on a hill, where he played his lyre to assuage his grief. His music and poetry were so beautiful that the trees bent towards him, and a sacred entourage of creatures gathered around him.[46] Because of the glorification of his abilities in Ovid, Orpheus came to represent, like Apollo, a divine artist, who manipulated his poetry and music to woo his listeners with his creative inspiration. Orpheus came to be known as a meta-artist, or in other words, an artist gifted in many modes of expression. He could even transform the very inanimate objects of nature with his bewitching music. If indeed Orpheus emotionally transformed those who

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[44] Elizabeth Prettejohn, "Walter Pater " 56. Frederick Leighton, *The Triumph of Music: Orpheus by the Power of his Music Redeems his Wife from Hades*, 1855-6, n.d., Leighton House Museum, London, England.
[45] Ovid, Metamorphoses, Book X 226.
[46] Ovid, Metamorphoses, Book X 227-8.

were jaded by the tragedies of human history, certainly he had to be an exceptionally talented being.

In addition to Ovid's poetic version of Orpheus, the mythic figure also came to represent marvelous contributions to humanity. As the archetypal artist, the inventor of the lyre, and the charmer of nature, Orpheus was described as having brought civilisation to humanity.[47] This is just one of the reasons that he appealed to Moreau, who saw his own generation as one equally in need of 'civilisation.' Being dismayed by the immorality of his contemporaries, Moreau recognised in Orpheus an archetype of what was needed in his own day. The only difference was that Moreau did not see Orpheus as the saviour of his people; instead, he believed that a modern painter like himself could create a civilising art. As we have seen, it was for this reason that Moreau focused on the end of Orpheus, either through his dismemberment, or through his grief regarding the death of Eurydice, which ultimately led to his demise.

As outlined in the previous chapter, Orpheus's death serves two purposes in Moreau's œuvre. First, it celebrates the archetypal divinity of the artist as a creative figure in society, and likewise honours the contributions of great, ancient poets, in the golden age of human existence. Second, it reveals that a new type of artist is now required to provide for humanity, as had those of antiquity.[48] It must be remembered that Orpheus brought more than a mere abstract civilising or moralising influence to his followers; he also brought practical skills to humanity, in the form of agriculture and medicine, for instance. He was also part of a lineage of individuals, through whom sacred knowledge had been passed.[49] Yet, despite the seemingly great respect that

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[47] Kosinski, Orpheus 9-10. This theme was a popular subject in nineteenth-century painting, as we have seen with Watts, Leighton, and Moreau.
[48] Lippert, "Gustave Moreau" 46-78.
[49] Kosinski, Orpheus 9-10. Kosinski cites Ficino's description, (De Immori Anim., XVILL 386), of how sacred knowledge had been passed down through the ages:

> In things pertaining to theology there were in former times six great teachers expounding similar doctrines. The first was Zoroaster, the chief of the Magi; the second Hermes Trismegistus, the head of the Egyptian priesthood; Orpheus succeeded Hermes; Aglaophamus was initiated into the sacred mysteries of Orpheus; Pythagorus was initiated into theology by Aglaophamus; and Plato by Pythagorus. Plato summed up the whole of their wisdom in his letters.

For Kosinski's analysis of Moreau's versions of Orpheus see Orpheus 81. As well as Kosinski's "Orpheus in the Context of Religious Syncretism" 9-14.

Moreau held for these poets, a pervasive theme of silence invades his works.[50] Moreau's silencing of the poet, through the many death scenes of ancient poets in his works, underscores the need for a comparable modern artistic genius, and illustrates the tremendous potential of art to shape society, which was something Moreau hoped he himself would be able to accomplish.[51]

In his capacity as a sage, it is well known that, in the nineteenth century, Orpheus was also described as an initiate into the Hermetic arts, and other ancient secret knowledge. Additionally, Orpheus was the kind of mystic figure that appealed to Moreau, because Orpheus had been associated with founding both Apollonian and Dionysian cults, even though these actions would be his undoing. After Eurydice's death, Orpheus spurned his female admirers, including the Thracian mænads, preferring instead to take young boys as lovers. For spurning these advances, according to some accounts, Orpheus dismembered by the jealous mænads. Their anger was also motivated by their perception that Orpheus had insulted Dionysus, by making offerings to Apollo.[52] Moreau focused on the solitary grieving Orpheus, when he was in love with a woman, and on his fatal end while admired by a young Thracian woman.[53] As Mathieu has shown, Orpheus's appeal increased over the course of Moreau's life, because he too suffered the loss of a great love when his beloved companion, Alexandrine, died. This event most likely prompted his re-visitation of the Orpheus subject in *Orpheus at the Tomb of Eurydice* (1891), in which grief has brought the poet to knees, as he mourns Eurydice in front of a mausoleum. Orpheus, then, may had held personal meaning for Moreau, and reflected those things that may have been lacking in modern life.[54] This sentimental theme of loss was even palpable to Ary Renan, who was a late nineteenth-century art critic. Renan stated that "For the painter, for us, for tradition, Orpheus is the

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[50] Cooke, "L'Image et Texte" 71.
[51] Lippert, "Gustave Moreau" 46-78. See also Peter Cooke, "L'Image et texte" 66-72. This is especially important with regards to the theme of silence in Moreau's work, and his admiration for the antique poets. See also Cooke, "History Painting as Apocalypse and Poetry: Gustave Moreau's *Les Prétendants*, 1852-1897, with unpublished documents," Gazette des beaux-arts 5:127 (Jan. 1996): 27-48.
[52] Ovid, Metamorphoses 246-8. From Book XI.
[53] This is not to suggest, however, that Moreau deliberately chose not to represent subjects with homosexual content or implications, since he did depict the subject of Ganymede, who was a young man beloved by the god Jupiter. Similarly, he was not deterred by Sappho's homosexuality when he chose to portray her in many works.
[54] Mathieu, "Moreau Amoureux" 30-35. For Moreau's explanation of his Orpheus figure see A.D.R. 111. The meaning of *Orpheus at the tomb of Eurydice* is also explored in Cooke's "L'Image et le texte" 66-72

first and great poetic victim, the inspired apostle who matures the face of the world. What dies with him is civilizing art."[55]

Moreau and the Paradox of Salomé

Apparently recognising the potential of the disembodied head theme for further manipulation, Moreau revised it to triumph again at the Salon. The *Apparition* (1874-6, watercolour) and *Salomé Dancing before Herod* (1874-6, oil) were both exhibited at the Salon of 1876, in a group of paintings that comprised the maximum number of works that the Salon rules would accept by one artist.[56] I should also mention that another *Apparition*, undertaken in the same time period, was completed in oil, although it was never shown at the Salon.[57] In compiling such a showing of works for the Salon, Moreau was making a statement about his place in the Parisian art world. In 1877, the watercolour version of the *Apparition* was shown again at the Grosvenor Gallery. Both paintings from the Salon of 1876 were presented in 1878 at the *Exposition universelle* in

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[55] Kosinski, Orpheus 194. In his commentary on Orpheus and Eurydice, Moreau wrote the following:

> Le chantre sacré n'est plus. La grande voix des étres et des choses est éteinte. Le poète est tombé inanimé au pied de l'arbre désseché aux branches frappées de mort. La lyre délaissée est suspendue à ces branches gémissantes et douleureuses. L'âme est seule, elle a perdu tout ce qui était la splendeur, la force de douceur; elle pleur sur elle-même, dans cet abandon de tout, dans sa solitude inconsolée; elle gémit et sa plainte sourde est le seul bruit de cette solitude de mort…
>
> Le silence est partout…Seules les gouttes de rosée tombant des fleurs d'eau, font leur bruit régulier et discret. Ce bruit plein de mélancolie et de douceur. Ce bruit de vie dans ce silence de mort.

My translation:

> The sacred song is finished. The grand voice of beings and things has died out. The poet is fallen and inanimate at the feet of the withered tree with branches struck by death. The neglected lyre is suspended from these moaning and sorrowful branches. The soul is alone, and she has lost all splendour, the strength of softness; she cries by herself, in complete abandon, in inconsolable solitude; she groans and her muffled cry is the only sound of this solitude of death…
>
> Silence is everywhere…Only the rose drops fall from the water flowers, and make their regular and discrete sound. This sound is full of melancholy and softness. The sound of life in the silence of death.

A.D.R. 111.

[56] Gustave Moreau, *The Apparition*, 1874-6, watercolour, 106 x 72.2 cm, Musée du Louvre, Paris, France. Gustave Moreau, *Salomé Dancing before Herod*, 1874-6, oil on canvas, 144 x 103.5 cm, The Armand Hammer Museum of Art and Cultural Center, Los Angeles,

[57] Gustave Moreau, *The Apparition*, 1874-6, 1897, oil on canvas, 142 x 103 cm, Musée Gustave Moreau, Paris, France.

Paris, where they had been called upon to represent the nation's abundance of artistic genius.[58] We recall that in the Biblical account of St. John the Baptist's beheading by King Herod, he is seduced by the dance of his wife's daughter. Having promised to grant any request in return for her erotic entertainment, Salomé demands the Baptist's head on a silver platter, according to her mother's wishes. However, Moreau chose to shock Salon viewers by refusing to emulate previous interpretations of the story, which typically captured Salomé carrying the Baptist's head on a charger, post-execution, such as in Bernardino Luini's (1480-1532) *Salomé with the Head of John the Baptist* (ca. 1500), which we have already seen, was cleverly revised in Moreau's *Orpheus*.[59]

Moreau exaggerated and manipulated Salomé to go far beyond earlier portrayals. Prior to the nineteenth century, depictions of Salomé generally cast her as mortal, beautiful, and seductive or commanding even, but no tradition existed of visualising her as a semi-divine force of evil—one that could hover weightlessly on tiptoes in an illusion of spilt blood, while conjuring through force of will the fatal vision of her mother's evil intent. And never before had the Baptist's head been shown as a gravity-defying apparition. No artist had ever deviated so boldly from the Biblical narrative. Viewers of the sizeable *Salomé Dancing* witness an ethereal Salomé, holding a captivatingly sensual pink lotus flower, while her other arm is extended, pointing towards an empty space. At the centre, in the background sits Herod on his throne, while an executioner stands to the right. Herodias is behind her daughter, in the depths of the immense, phenomenally opulent and decorative palace interior.

To ascertain the reception of this work, it must be recognised that Moreau's *Salomé* was a decidedly paragonising work, and that it presented a number of special challenges to the art critic. For Moreau, as for many artists, art critics were a plague in the art world, as they licentiously appropriated and misinterpreted his works. He made this opinion known in his writings:

> Aux bavards, aux critiques de profession, cette désolante dissection des lois, des conditions de l'art. Et combien d'effroyables erreurs, de niaiseries, de contre-

[58] Lacambre, Gustave Moreau 287-8. Refer to this source for a recent and expansive exhibition catalogue of Moreau's works.
[59] Bernardino Luini, *Salomé with the Head of John the Baptist*, 1525-30, oil on canvas, 42 x 55 cm, Kunsthistorisches Museum, Wein, Germany.

> sens, à chaque mot, à chaque phrase. Et la raison de cela et la cause de cette facilité pour les critiques à écrire, à pérorer, à bavarder sur cette terrible question, c'est justement leurs insuffisances de vue, leurs insuffisance de sentiment, leurs insuffisance d'amour profond et vrai.
> …Winckelmann, Diderot, Gautier, et tutti quanti.
> Et quelles erreurs effroyables dans ces jugements contemporains! Quelle ignorance navrante avec l'audace insolente, c'est à confondre![60]

In addition to the usual jabs to which artists were expected to subject themselves in the Parisian exhibition system, Moreau came under particularly harsh and persistent scrutiny. This was a direct result of the popularity of his motifs, and the inspiration that others took from them, in both visual and literary media. Considerable critical attention was paid to the artistic responses to his work, with individual critics frequently 'taking sides' in the supposed controversies. One example involved the critic Gustave Coquiot (1865-1926), who wholeheartedly supported the novelist and art critic Huysmans, instead of Moreau, even though the former would make a name for himself as an admirer of the latter, and re-adapt Moreau's Salomé in his own writings. In one of his commentaries, published in 1924, Coquiot wrote the following in his Des Gloires déboulonnées:

> C'est pourquoi je professe pour la peinture de Gustave Moreau une incoercible aversion…
> Et voilà l'œuvre d'un sacre peintre qui, en leguant son hotel et ses huiles à l'État, a tenu a perpétuer son nom! Voilà l'œuvre, à propos de laquelle Huysmans a bousculé en tas les plus miroitantes de ses épithets! Quelle pitié!

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[60] A.D.R. 146. My translation:

> To the gossips, to the professional critics, this distressing dissection of laws, and the conditions of art. And how many appalling errors, foolishness, of nonsense, with each word, with each sentence. And the reason for this is the cause of that aptitude for the critics to write, to hold forth, to chatter about this terrible question, which is rightly their deficient views, their deficient sensitivity, their deficient deep and true love…Winckelmann, Diderot, Gautier, and the whole lot of them.
> And what appalling errors in their current judgement! What upsetting ignorance with insolent audacity, it is confounding!

For a look at the issue from the perspective of art critics see James Kearns, "The Writing on the Wall: Descriptions of Painting in the Art Criticism of the French Symbolists," Artistic Relations: Literature and the Visual Arts in Nineteenth-Century France, eds., Peter Collier and Robert Lethbridge (London and New Haven: Yale University Press, 1994): 239-252. And Michael Marlais, Conservative Echoes in *Fin-de-Siècle* Parisian Art Criticism, (University Park, PA.: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 1992).

> Mais ce triste peintre que fut Gustave Moreau n'a fait que du coloriage. Il a, dans des architectures folles, accumulé des gemmes, piquant, sertissant des accessories ridicules.[61]

To combat the intrusiveness of his critics, Moreau employed numerous devices to stump them; his ambiguous symbolism, subject matter altered from its textual source, the vague or non-descript titles of his works, and his refusal to comment on them, were all devices designed to impede critical commentaries.[62] According to the critic Gautier, Moreau succeeded in this objective by creating enigmatic subjects.[63] Similarly, his emphasis on painting's decorative and purely aesthetic properties, such as colour and the arabesque, thwarted critical reviews by accentuating an area of painting that poetry could not reproduce well in words. Moreau also resisted providing explanations to his own work, as a response to a mystified patron reveals. Léopold Goldschmidt, who had purchased Moreau's *Jupiter and Semele* (1894-5), had the nerve to beg the artist for some explanation of the painting's subject matter.[64] This was not an unfair request, given that this particular painting incorporates literally hundreds of iconographic details, all peculiar to Moreau's personal symbolism. Nonetheless, Moreau replied with the following letter:

> Here is what you desire. I have at last complied. Please do not present this to anyone as my doing. I have already suffered far too much in my life as an artist from the idiotic and absurd opinion that I am too literary for a painter. Nothing that I have written here for you, to please you, needs to be expressed or explained in speech. The meaning of this painting for anyone who has the slightest idea how to read a plastic creation is extremely lucid and clear. It is vital in a work of imagination that one love, dream a little, and not make do, in the name of

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[61] Gustave Moreau par ses contemporains 19-20. My translation:

> It is why I profess for the painting of Gustave Moreau an uncontrollable aversion…
> And there the work of a sacred painter who, in leaving his hotel and his oils to the state, managed to perpetuate his name! There is the work, that Huysmans overturned in heaping upon it the most sparkling of his epithets! What a pity!
> But the sad painter that is Gustave Moreau made only of colour. There is, in the foolish structures, piled up with gems, prickly, set with ridiculous accessories.

[62] Cooke, Gustave Moreau 233-238. Cooke observes that even when offering writings to explain his works, Moreau made use of a number of poetic devices in his writings, such as the use of metaphors, similes, hyperbole, sound repetition, and sound-patterning. Cooke's work offers one of the only critical examinations of Moreau's writings.

[63] Gustave Moreau par ses contemporains 27.

[64] Gustave Moreau, *Jupiter and Semele*, 1889-95, oil on canvas, 212 x 118 cm, Musée Gustave Moreau, Paris, France.

> simplicity and clarity, with naivety or with a simple, nauseating ABC. It would be deplorable that this admirable art [painting] manage to express so many things, so many noble, ingenious and sublime thoughts, that this art whose eloquence is so forceful, should find itself reduced to photographic translations or paraphrases of vulgar facts…I owed you a little explanation, for on your behalf I have just emerged from a deliberate silence that alone pleases me today.[65]

For his Salomé scenes, the artist's unique style of painting lent the subject new interest, and his unusual symbolism contributed to its intrigue. Moreau's typical approach was to produce relatively large canvases, depicting perfect representations of the *beau idéal*, brought to life by some of the most finely detailed passages in the history of art. These academically-informed techniques were enriched by a love of surface detail, and a profusion of often obscure, but always prolific, iconography, both of which were frequently inscribed over the painting's surface like writing. Using jewel tones and shimmering effects, Moreau also excelled in mystifying viewers with scenes of Romantic haziness, and a range of delicate to violent emotion. When he exploited these techniques for representations of Salomé, it seemed that an artist had finally applied a style that perfectly married the subject's inherent decadence with an atmosphere of almost mystical corruption. Dripping with exquisite vestments, Salomé was adorned with the trappings of material excess, and became emblematic of the terrible fate awaiting those who abandon morality for the pursuit of hedonistic desires. In his notes, Moreau offered the following description of Salomé:

> Cette femme qui représente la femme éternelle, oiseau léger, souvent funeste, traversant la vie une fleur à main, à la recherche de son idéal vague, souvent terrible, et marchant toujours, foulant tout aux pieds, même des génies et des saints…C'est l'emblème de cet avenir terrible, réservé aux chercheurs d'idéal sans nom, de sensualité et de curiosité malsaine…Cette femme ennuyée, fantasque, à nature animale…[66]

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[65] Cited in Pierre-Louis Mathieu, Gustave Moreau, trans. Tamara Blondel, Louise Guiney, and Mark Hutchinson (Paris and New York: Flammarion, 1994): 233. See also A.D.R. 145-147. For scholarship on the *Jupiter and Semele* see Lippert, Moreau 103-9, and Kaplan, "*Jupiter and Semele*" 393-414

[66] My translation:

> This woman who represents the eternal woman, flighty bird, often fatal, going through life with a flower in hand, in pursuit of a vague ideal, often terrible, and always walking on her feet, like geniuses and saints…It is the emblem of this terrible future, reserved for seekers of a nameless ideal, of sensuality and of unhealthy curiosity…This bored woman, fantastic, of an animalistic nature…

Paradoxically, the viewer's lengthy contemplation of Moreau's bejeweled, princess-like, idealised figure, and the fantastic depiction of Herod's palace, was intended to promote a kind of Neoplatonic spiritual transcendence of the material world, through the experience of aesthetic beauty.[67]

But, it is only upon very close and lengthy exploration that the full complexity of Moreau's painting reveals itself. For this reason, it is understandable that, according to reports, poets and Salon-goers became enraptured by his works. To appreciate Moreau's decision to package his message about the dangers of materialism and immorality in this way, we must return to some of the ideas then being espoused in the art-for-art's sake movement, which Moreau, surprisingly, opposed. In Swinburne's Chronicle of Tebaldeo Tebaldei, (1861), which was never published, he wrote: "A beautiful soft line drawn is more than a life saved; and a pleasant perfume smelt is better than a soul redeemed."[68] Swinburne meant that Aestheticism had superceded morality, and that feminine beauty had become a symbol of modern evil. Remember that in Moreau's day the exploitation of the female figure for aesthetic purposes had become so prolific, and so tied to the materialism of the day, that its very depiction in a highly sensual style smacked of the immorality and excesses of contemporary society. This trend was perfectly encapsulated in the work of Rossetti, who, towards the end of his career, began to depict women with no real narrative context or purpose, such as the *Monna Vanna*. Rossetti's Monna is enveloped by luxurious fabrics, jewellery, and sensual objects. These women, as I discussed in chapter one, are conceived, almost literally, as aesthetic objects and devoid of any moral or social function.

Grieve claims that Rossetti's pin-up style female figure had a famous precedent from the Venetian Renaissance, which became a source of inspiration when G.P. Boyce commissioned a portrait from Rossetti of a prostitute named Fanny Cornforth (1835-

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A.D.R. 78-9. This quote has often been taken out of context by scholars who assume that Salomé represented Moreau's personal view of women in general, rather than a particular theme that he was trying to convey. In the quote, he is referring to the kind of woman that Salomé represents, not all women. Equally relevant is that he portrayed many 'good' female figures, such as Galatea, Sappho, Helen, and the Muses. Additionally, he employed female personifications to represent positive attributes.

[67] This is discussed throughout my Master's thesis, Lippert, Gustave Moreau. For more on the transcendence of Aestheticism see W. Hamilton, The Aesthetic Movement in England, (London: Reeves and Turner, 1882).

[68] Quoted Grieve, "Rossetti and the Scandal" 19.

1906), (who incidentally became one of Rossetti's mistresses). This precedent was Giovanni Bellini's (1430-1516) *Saint Dominic* (1515). Grieves's claim is substantiated by the fact that Bellini's painting had come into the South Kensington Museum's collection in 1856 in London, and shares many compositional and stylistic similarities with Rossetti's painting. In a letter to Boyce, Rossetti himself openly admitted that he was working in the Venetian manner.[69]

This artistic lineage demonstrates the potential shock-factor of art-for-art's sake, and of the sensual female figure as an icon of immorality. Essentially, Rossetti substituted a learned saint with an object of lust, in the disturbing form of a prostitute. What could better illustrate that immorality was no longer the artist's concern? Rossetti selected a Venetian painter, who came from a tradition where the sensual depiction of the nude female had gained legendary popularity, as a role model.[70] Evidently, in the decade preceding Moreau's forays into the Salomé subject, the female figure had already become tied to the purely sensual concerns of the art-for-art's sake movement, which the French had heard about through artistic periodicals, such as the Gazette des beaux-arts, even if Rossetti remained largely unknown. Consequently, when Moreau was planning how to express the dangers of materialism and sensual hedonism, the female figure had already become a natural choice.

To emphasise sensuality and materialism in his *Salomé Dancing*, and to convince the viewer of his technical virtuosity as a painter, Moreau decorated this highly illusionistic scene with dozens of reflective orbs on chandeliers and pedestals, glittering jewels, and brilliant metallic surfaces. Also striking is the portrayal of light throughout the composition. In the recesses of Herod's palace, light pierces through the otherwise shadowy space to create the impression of three-dimensionality. Light is similarly

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[69] Grieve, "Rossetti and the Scandal" 21-3. The author also notes the preponderance of artistic borrowing going on at this time. For instance, there appears to be a paragonising situation between Rossetti and Swinburne, which will be the subject of a future project, as it does not fit into the parameters of this dissertation. For instance, Grieve explains that Swinburne used the term synaesthesia to refer to poetry that can suggest colour and perfume through its verse (29). In this way, Swinburne was trying to appeal to senses that were traditionally considered outside the bounds of poetry. For more on Rossetti and Venetian art see Miller, "The Mirror's Secret" 333-49. Virginia M. Allen, "'One Strangling Golden Hair": Dante Gabriel Rossetti's *Lady Lilith*," The Art Bulletin 66:2 (June 1984): 285-94. Herbert Cook, "Some Venetian Portraits in English Possession," The Burlington Magazine for Connoisseurs 8:35 (Feb., 1906): 338-344.

[70] Grieve also claims that Rossetti's interest in the Venetian School was reflected in a sonnet that he wrote in 1849, based on Giorgione's painting the *Fête Champêtre* (ca. 1508-9). "Rossetti and the Scandal" 23.

manipulated to draw attention to the main figure of Salomé, who is rather unrealistically illuminated on her upper body, thereby accentuating her pale and unblemished skin. Throughout the composition the light both hides and reveals, all at the artist's discretion. This should remind us of the enigmatic contrasts between light and dark in Girodet's nocturnal scenes. The illuminated portions are perceived first, while the features and figures in shadow become unveil themselves more gradually. Being somewhat relatable to music or poetry, the artist's use of light and shade directs the viewer, like poetic verses, or lines of music, which are revealed in a certain order at the determination of the writer or composer. Other impressive features include the sensual flowers placed prominently at the picture plane for the viewer's benefit. Equally impressive is the range of application of paint; Moreau proved himself have synthesised the skills of the schools that dominated French painting throughout the nineteenth century. As a self-proclaimed follower of Delacroix, he exploited broadly applied patches of paint in the characteristically expressive power of the Romantic style, whereas his unfathomably detailed passages testify to his skill as a refined painter, capable of reproducing the most precise licked-surface effects in the tradition of Neoclassical painting.[71] In this way, Moreau positioned himself as the rival to, and successor of, the most powerful schools of painting in France: Romanticism and Neoclassicism.

This eclecticism is apparent in virtually all of the Salomé scenes. The representations of Herod's palace, for instance, amalgamate many different sources of inspiration, from medieval sculpture and *ars sacra* to Byzantine jewellery, and iconography from Hindu, Egyptian, Christian, and other pagan traditions.[72] Salomé's costume is typically such an eclectic mélange that she does not belong to any era. Moreau set his work outside the bounds of identifiable schools, (even if his critics would often try to pin him into one category), by continuing the tradition of the *beau idéal*, while incorporating some of the most abstracted and painterly passages in the art of his

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[71] Lacambre, Gustave Moreau 179, 181.

[72] Moreau's eclecticism has been well-documented. See the following: "Gustave Moreau et le Japon." Revue de l'art 85 (1989): 64-75. Rae Beth Gordon, "Aboli Bibelot? The Influence of the Decorative Arts on Stéphane Mallarmé and Gustave Moreau," Art Journal 45 (Summer 1985): 105-112. Feinberg, "Moreau and the Italian Renaissance" 5-14. Geneviève Lacambre, "Gustave Moreau and Exoticism," Gustave Moreau: Between Epic and Dream, exh. cat. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1999): 15-21. Bucknell also notes that Moreau's depictions of Salomé do not belong to any specific era, and therefore she is outside of the bounds of time. "On 'Seeing' Salomé" 512.

day. This latter part of his style he called *l'arabesque* and *l'art pur*, by which he meant the manipulation of pure painterly form for the sake of visual effect. He maintained that a love of purely plastic art must be combined with the noblest aspirations of the spirit and of thought; otherwise it is merely dead art.[73] Still, this meant that despite his interest in the human figure, Moreau would be one of the boldest experimenters in abstract modes of artistic production. That he succeeded in making an impression, by virtue of this eclecticism, is apparent in the words of Huysmans, who described Moreau's paintings in the following manner:

> C'est qu'en effect ses toiles ne semblent plus appartenir à la peinture proprement dite. En sus de l'extrème importance que M. Gustave Moreau donné à l'archéologie dans son œuvre, les methods qu'il emploie pour rendre ses rêves visibles paraissent empruntées aux procédés de la vieille gravure allemande, à la ceramique et à la joaillerie; il y a de tout là-dedans, de la mosaïque…de la broderie patiente des anciens âges et cela tient aussi de l'enluminure des vieux missels et des aquarelles barbares de l'antique Orient.[74]

In addition to synthesising a range of painterly traditions, Moreau also excelled in telling stories. The Baptist's floating head does not appear in *Salomé Dancing*, but it nevertheless foreshadows the climax of the narrative. Salomé's mother stands in the shadows of the palace, watching her daughter dance in fulfillment of her request. The placement of this figure is somewhat startling. By making Herodias part of the dimly-lit background, the viewer does not immediately notice this architect of the Baptist's demise. Instead, reflecting her conniving nature, Herodias deceptively and insidiously evades the centre stage.

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[73] A.D.R. 175.

[74] J.K. Huysmans, "Excerpt from l'Art Moderne," Gustave Moreau par ses contemporains 38-9. My translation:

> In effect, his canvases do not seem to belong to painting, properly speaking. In addition to the extreme importance that M. Gustave Moreau gave to archaeology in his work, the methods that he employs to render his dreams visible seem to borrow from old German engravings, from ceramics and from jewellers; there is everything in it, from mosaic…the patient embroidery produced in the ages of old, and it also retains the illumination of the old missals, and the barbaric watercolours of the ancient Orient.

Moreau's Temporal Painting

Moreau's writings reveal his desire for art to serve a higher goal in society, beyond providing audiences with a beautiful and satisfying material object. According to Moreau, it is not just any art form that can achieve this goal. Painting, above all, most powerfully influences and inspire its viewers.

> Expliquer un jour l'éloquence merveilleuse de cet art muet…Démontrer d'une façon sensible et absolument erréfutable comment toutes les formes de la pensée humaine…se trouvent toutes dans des œuvres des maîtres muets…Quelle admirable trouvaille que celle de l'artiste peintre qui le premier aura rencontre l'éloquence éternelle de ce langage muet, qui aura prouver, le sublime inventeur, le savant, le divin artiste, que tout l'homme peut s'exprimer dans cette langage du symbole, du mythe et du signe. Ô noble poésie du silence vivant et passionné, bel art que celui qui, sous une enveloppe matérielle, miroir des beautés physiques, réfléchit également les grands élans de l'âme, de l'esprit, du cœur, et de l'imagination, et répond à ces besoins divins de l'être humain de tous les temps. C'est la langue de Dieu.[75]

Believing wholeheartedly in his art's potential to affect social and spiritual change, Moreau resisted any suggestion that his art had limits, even mocking the principle of limits in the arts: "Les règles son les règles, utiles et respectables, indispensables à connaître, mais faites, toujours, pour être violées d'une certaine façon par le génie."[76] The overwhelmingly complex iconography, and intricately portrayed painterly detail, of Moreau's style defied the most important rule in prevailing limit-imposing theories, as supported, for example, by Lessing, Dubos, and the famous French

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[75] A.D.R. 183-184. My translation:

> Explain one day the eloquence of this silent art…Demonstrate in an appreciable and irrefutable way how all of the forms of human thought…are found in their completeness in the works of silent masters…What admirable work of this the painter artist who was the first to discover the eternal eloquence of this silent language, which must be proven, the sublime inventor, the savant, the divine artist, that all men can express in this language of symbols, of myth, and of signs. O noble poetry of silence, living and passionate, beautiful art that can, under a material envelope, mirror the physical beauties, and reflects equally the great outbursts of the soul, of the spirit, of the heart, and of the imagination, and responds to the divine needs of human beings in all ages. It is the language of God.

[76] A.D.R. 212-213. My translation: "Rules are rules, useful and respectable, indispensable to be familiar with, but created, always, to be violated in some way by genius."

theorist De Piles, who in his *Cours de peintures par principes*, claimed that a painting should be instantaneously understood in a single glance, due to its inability to convey temporality.[77] Many of Moreau's Salomé paintings used a device that challenged painting's supposed temporal limitations. Moreau would have been familiar with Lessing's theory of the temporal and spatial limits of poetry and painting, through Charles Blanc's Grammaire des arts du dessin, which he had read. In this text, Blanc communicates the basic tenet of Lessing's space and time distinction between the arts of painting and poetry.[78] So Moreau would have viewed the temporal in painting as a defiant position with respect to these aesthetic theorists. In *Salomé Tattooed* (1874), a curious and most remarkable aspect of the work refuses to let viewers absorb the scene in a single glance.[79] It is characteristic of the other Salomé scenes in that the female figure dances in Herod's palace. What is unique, however, is the pictographic 'writing' superimposed over the illusionistic space, assembling an almost hieroglyphic inscription. The complexity of this pictorial layer adds an intensity and temporality to the work, which is created by the viewer's need to 'read' the profusion of symbols.

To demonstrate the temporality of his work, Moreau manipulated features of other works as well. Being the first to represent the Baptist's head as a floating supernatural vision, he defied painting's temporal limits by conflating narrative moments between the dance and its fatal end. In the right portion of the *Salomé Dancing* composition, a physically intimidating male servant brandishes a sharp, sparkling, and impressive sword with a rope, which is obviously intended to be used in the upcoming beheading. In all of the versions of the Salomé works where this manservant appears, such as in both versions of Moreau's *Apparition*, the figure is depicted wearing a bright red toga of sorts, surely symbolising his bloody task as executioner. Additionally, the floor's red surface, upon which Salomé dances, also foreshadows the violent act that is about to be performed.

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[77] Gaiger in Herder's Sculpture 18-19.

[78] Cooke, Gustave Moreau 252-253. Blanc writes, "Sans doute, le paroxisme des passions ne lui [la peinture] est pas interdite. Mais combien il est plus habile de le faire deviner que de le peindre! […]. Il lui courent, plutôt que de montrer les dénouments tragiques, de les annoncer en indiquant dans l'action présente le moment qui précede et le moment qui va suivre." My translation: "No doubt the heights of passion is, for the painter, not prohibited. But how is he more able to guess than to paint! {…}. He rushes more often to show the tragic ends, to announce them in indicating the present action, the moment that precedes, and the moment that will follow."

[79] Gustave Moreau, *Salomé Tattooed*, 1874, oil on canvas, 92 x 60 cm, Musée Gustave Moreau, Paris, France.

The resulting effects give the illusion that Salomé is dancing in a giant pool of blood. A single attempt at this motif might allow us to dismiss this feature as accidental, but its inclusion in every painting that Moreau completed on the subject confirms its intentional and grotesque symbolism. The blood red pigment, in a truly Delacroixesque manner, is scattered throughout the composition, creating a horrifically unified scene. In the *Apparitions*, which are the only versions with the Baptist, this violent feature is paralleled in the supernaturally hovering, decapitated head, which does not correspond to any known narrative account of the story.

Another temporal feature arises in the double portrayal, because the two paintings exhibited at the Salon of 1876 may be read as an unfolding narrative. *Salomé Dancing* reveals the beginning of the narrative, as the title suggests with Salomé in the midst of her dance, while the *Apparition* secures its finality, showing the already executed Baptist. Curiously, however, the works, which seem to have been conceived as pendants, given their nearly identical dimensions, were not actually placed together at the Salon. As Bryant indicates, the different media divided them; *Salomé* appeared in the gallery for oil paintings, and the *Apparition* was consigned to the watercolour section.[80] Despite these ingenious temporal features, Salomé herself is oddly static in these scenes. We understand that she is supposed to be in the middle of a dance, even as the figure levitates impossibly, and in defiance of gravity on the tips of her feet. Although one piece of her veil extends behind her, there is no other suggestion of movement in the figure, despite what the title implies.[81] Her confounding stasis suspends her in time, despite her dance, making her less human and more like a supernatural apparition, even if it is more difficult to pinpoint the exact moment that the scene represents in the story.

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[80] Bryant, "G.F. Watts" 120.

[81] The floating and static qualities of Moreau's Salomé figures were also observed by Robert C. Schweik, "Oscar Wilde's *Salome*, the Salome Theme in Late European Art, and a Problem of Method in Cultural History," Twilight of Dawn: Studies in English Literature in Transition, ed. O.M. Brack, Jr. (Tucson, The University of Arizona Press, 1987): 127.

Salomé and the Iconographic Significance of the Dangling Eye

The history of the paragone is peppered with instances where visual artists promoted the theory that the eye was more powerful than the other senses, in order to defend the supremacy of their arts. As we have seen, the most famous example of this is found in the writings of Leonardo, whose hierarchy of the senses provided the foundation for his comparative evaluation of the arts.

The eye and its powers play a prominent role in Moreau's œuvre, which even takes on iconographic significance. A haunting example of this symbolism is found the *Salomé Tattooed*. Here, strangely decorative and oddly placed Egyptianising 'eyes' have been inscribed over Salomé's body. To be specific, there are two large eyes painted over her bare abdomen, prominently placed amongst other symbols and decoration. These eyes may have been intended to associate Salomé with the gaze, and with the power of visual beauty to attract the attention of the spectator's eye, especially when beheld by the male viewers at the Salon, whom perhaps she may have seduced. In the *Apparition,* the most horrifying feature of the floating head is not actually its grotesque corporeality, but its animated and terrifying stare, which is leveled at Salomé herself. Also disconcerting is the way that Salomé's own eyes are closed in *Salomé Dancing*. Perhaps this implies deep involvement in the dance, as she reaches for something imagined or anticipated, rather than physically real. Salomé's closed eyes likewise mimic a Michelangesque somnambulistic state, and helped to clarify the role that she plays in this scene of aesthetic opulence. Put simply, the whole painting depicts a complex iconography of looking, or of the eye, which illustrates Moreau's argument for the power of sight over the other senses. Salomé's eyes are closed, because she holds our attention as the greatest apparition of aesthetic beauty in the scene. She need not look, given that she is the object that is to be looked upon. In fact, in all the works where the Baptist is absent, Salomé's eyes are closed, possibly alluding to a mental vision in her mind. It is only when the Baptist's head appears before her, such as in both of the *Apparitions,* that Salomé's eyes open, so as to meet his gaze.

In showing Salomé's eyes as both opened and closed, in sequence, if the two paintings are conceived as pendants, Moreau illustrated another tradition in aesthetic theory. According to Dubos, the visual arts could clearly 'paint' a picture that was perceptible through physical optical effects. However, another kind of image could be painted in the mind. The poet, using a more complex form of symbolic signs to convey his message, could express ideas that would appear in the mind's eye. The overt connection to the mind is important here, because Dubos was underscoring the firmly established notion that poetry is a more intellectual form of communication.[82] Salomé's vision of the eye corresponds to her open eyes, while her closed eyes correlate to a vision in the mind's eye. Perhaps in illustrating both traditions, Moreau demonstrated that he was able to 'paint' both like an artist and a writer. In this context, the pictographic writing inscribed over *Salomé Tattooed* testifies to Moreau's ability to 'write' an image in painting.

The theme of looking in Moreau's Salomé paintings can continue to be unraveled. It is reiterated by figures who are spellbound by her. For example, both Herod and the manservant peer surreptitiously, if involuntarily, at Salomé with sideways glances. The indirectness of their gaze indicates its illicitness, and perhaps the danger of allowing oneself to be enthralled by such excessively seductive beauty. Likewise, Herodias and the female musician also look at her, even if they lack the lustful undertone that is discernable in the male figures. Yet perhaps most emblematic of this iconography of looking are the many pairs of eyes that litter the composition. Julius Kaplan also observes that Moreau's works are filled with faces, eyes, and orbs, which are hidden in the detail of his paintings.[83] Moreau transformed inanimate masks, statues, and other pictographic faces into living beings. The profusion of eyes and faces is discernable in his *Study for the Decorative Motifs in the Apparition* (ca. 1874-6), where an altar-like structure is superimposed with innumerable faces and pairs of eyes from humans, animals, and birds.[84] Even when one expects to see eyes and faces in works like these, it is often disconcerting. For example, in Moreau's seated figure of Herod, unless my

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[82] Angelica Goodden, "Painting for the Eye and Painting for the Mind: Correspondances of the Arts in Eighteenth-Century France," Oxford Art Journal 7:1 (1984): 3.
[83] Kaplan, "*Jupiter*" 397.
[84] Gustave Moreau, *Study for the Decorative Motifs in the Apparition,* 1874-6, work on paper, Musée Gustave Moreau, Paris, France.

imagination is running away with me, captures two faces in a *Study for the Apparition* (ca. 1874-6).[85] Here, the fatal consequences of immorality are illustrated in King Herod's melting, skeletal double-face, whose hood, piled above his real face, creates the disturbing illusion of a death mask. Whether decorative or figural, the eyes in Moreau's paintings appear to be alive, emphasising the idea of being watched, and perhaps some unknown apotropaic force.

The repetitive hidden eyes and glances in these works are not only directed at Salomé, but also towards the viewer, who is shocked to discover a gaze being leveled at him or herself from inside the illusionistic space. For instance, in *Dancing Salomé*, the herms above Herod's throne, and the figures in the statue of Diana of Ephesus, appear to be alive as they meet the viewer's gaze, some even having distinctly coloured eyes. But perhaps the most obvious sign of this outward theme of looking is the large disembodied blue eye that hangs from a bracelet on Salomé's extended arm. This is obviously an important detail, since it is prominently attached to the most important figure in the scene. The eye, shown in profile, is open and faces away from the princess. In this way, it acts as a stand-in for Salomé's gaze, and demonstrates that even though her eyes are closed, she sees everything, (and everyone), and longs for the vision of the Baptist perceived in her imagination. No other symbol in Moreau's work could so clearly illustrate the power of the eye, and the importance of this iconography to his œuvre, and to Salomé. As a result, it is something of a mystery that so charged an iconographic feature has so far eluded the watchful eyes, no pun intended, of the painting's critics, and scholars of the work.

The Magic of the Gaze

In addition to enlivening his figures with mysterious gazes, the animation of the inhuman creatures in these scenes corresponds to the magical potency that Moreau employed, in order to lend them greater mystery and vitality. We touched on the issue of magic and animation in the previous chapter, but because the eye has often been

[85] Gustave Moreau, *Study for the Apparition*, 1874-6, work on paper, Musée Gustave Moreau, Paris, France.

connected to magic and the supernatural, we must now diverge briefly to address the origin of the magical arts, and related traditions, in France's history. Since the Renaissance, it had been well known that the Egyptian magicians attempted to animate their statues using magic. For instance, in the 1460s Cosimo de' Medici commissioned Marsilio Ficino (1433-99) to translate the Greek Corpus Hermeticum, then attributed to Hermes Trismegistus, into a more accessible Latin.[86] On Ficino's authority, and his ancient and patristic informants, this legendary Egyptian sage was believed to have passed sacred truths and wisdom to Moses, Plato, and the Greeks.[87] More importantly for our purposes, the Hermetic tradition had become entrenched in France. King Francis I's (1494-1547) patronage of Hermetic texts and subject matter in the arts reflected his acceptance of the humanist interest in ancient Egypt, and the knowledge of these ideas in France as early as the sixteenth century. It is known that both Francis and his beloved mother Louise de Savoie (1476-1531) were interested in astrology, the Cabala, and Hermeticism. For instance, in 1520 the king commissioned the astrologer Jean Thenaud to provide him with a copy of the Hermetic manuscript known as the Cabale métrifiée, in which Francis's portrait was included. The text echoed similar interest in Hermetic subjects at Italian humanist courts.[88] The Hypnerotomachia Poliphili (1499), which was a widely admired Renaissance novel written by Francesco Colonna (ca. 1433-1527), offered a treasure trove of 'modern' hieroglyphs and Egyptianising imagery through iconographic subjects and drawings.[89] Its famously well-received French translation of 1546 appeared at the close of Francis's reign. Likewise, Andrea Alciati's (1492-1550) Emblemata, (published in Paris in 1543), also drew from the hieroglyphic tradition to create a new genre of symbolic images. Sponsoring the spread of these treatises, both

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[86] Erik Iversen notes that "Ficino's Hermetic translations appeared in eight editions before 1500, and saw no less than 22 editions between 1471 and 1641." The Myth of Egypt and its Hieroglyphs in European Tradition (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1961): 61.

[87] Rudolf Wittkower, Allegory and the Migration of Symbols (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1975): 115.

[88] Cabalist and astrological influences under Francis I have been established by Anne-Marie Lecoq. The king also commissioned the *Libellus Enigmatum* from Francis Demoulins, amongst several other astrological texts. In addition, it was not uncommon to see astrological iconography in decorations for royal entries, or in art at court. See Cox-Rearick, Collection 270. François de Montmorency gave the king a manuscript entitled *Petit traité de Alkimie tourné de langue hébraïque en langue françoyse*. Francis also apparently turned to Jean Thenaud to instruct him on the Cabala. Anne-Marie Lecoq, "Un Portrait 'kabbalistique' du roi de France vers 1520," Société historique d'art français (March, 1981): 15.

[89] Iversen, Myth of Egypt 70. Colonna (1433-1557) first published his text in Venice in 1499. The *Poliphili* was published in French in 1546, but Francis had his own copy in Italian, inherited from his mother Louise de Savoie, which dated to 1515. Myth of Egypt 80.

Francis and his immediate predecessor Louis XII (1462-1515) were credited with importing the hieroglyphic tradition into France.[90] Hieroglyphic mysticism was similarly evoked by the enigmatic presence of Egyptian statues at Fontainebleau, images of which found their way into Renaissance iconography. For example, it was held that the Egyptian sphinxes guarded temples, in order to protect the sacred mysteries that ancient priests practiced in these locations. Camillo, drawing from Plutarch, identified the function of the sphinx thus when he wrote, "Mercurius Trismegistus says that religious speech, full of God, is violated by the intrusion of the vulgar. For this reason the ancients...sculptured a sphinx on their temples..."[91] The belief that ancient Egyptian priests had actually animated their statues through magical practices likely influenced the sphinx's identification with guardianship. Renaissance scholars knew the ancient accounts of Egyptian priests, who wielded magic power to imbue inanimate statues, or talismans, with spiritual bodies, by drawing on divine or demonic powers from the cosmos.[92] Ficino discussed this practice in his writings, drawing on the celebrated passages in the Hermetic Asclepsius that described the making of gods in ancient Egypt. Clearly, a viewer's belief in the efficacy of this practice would make it possible for the art object to exert considerable influence over him or her.[93] In sum, the magical arts had enjoyed a long history in France, and even in the highest circles of the monarchy.

Interest in ancient and exotic cultures throughout the nineteenth century, combined with the general growing secularism of the western world, meant that it was increasingly popular to study the magical arts. Hermeticism and occultism were revived by some of the Symbolists towards the end of the nineteenth century, including poets and

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[90] Iversen, Myth of Egypt 75, 80.

[91] Quoted by Frances Yates from Camillo's *Idea del Theatro*, The Art of Memory (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2001): 151.

[92] In the Corpus Hermeticum the power of statues is described as follows: "The bodiless are reflected in bodies, and bodies in the bodiless, that is to say, the physical world is reflected in the mental and the mental in the physical. That is why you should worship the statues, because they contain the forms of the mind of the cosmos." Quoted in Clement Salaman, "Echoes of Egypt in Hermes and Ficino," Marsilio Ficino: His Theology, His Philosophy, His Legacy, eds. Michael J. B. Allen, Martin Davies, and Valery Rees (Boston, Cologne, Leiden: Brill, 2002): 127.

[93] Portions of this research on Francis I were delivered in the paper "Egypt and Hieroglyphic Culture at Fontainebleau: Francis I as Pharaoh," which was presented at the annual *Sixteenth-Century Studies Conference*, held at Toronto, Ontario, October 28-31, 2004. I would like to thank Dr. Brian Curran for his advice and guidance during the preparation for this paper on Francis I. For more on antiquity in the Renaissance see Curran, The Egyptian Renaissance: The Afterlife of Ancient Egypt in Early Modern Italy (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2007).

artists who were interested in Neoplatonism, and the metaphysical nature of art.[94] In fact, at the height of Moreau's career, a veritable explosion of interest in the occult and Hermetic traditions was occurring amongst certain groups in France, such as the Rosicrucians. Moreau did not join this or any other group, even though he was invited to do so.[95] But, he did nurture an interest in sacred and mystical knowledge from antiquity. Moreau's exploration of occultism has been established by Dorothy Kosinski in her article.[96]

The tradition of magical animation, which began with the use of talismans and other pictographic symbols, possibly manifests itself in Moreau's work. Let us consider the panther at the lower right corner of the *Salomé* composition. While the panther's black silhouette may at first be mistaken for a sphinx-like statue, upon more careful observation it is clear that the creature is alive. The motif is repeated in the same manner in *Salomé Tattooed*. Moreau's panther, with its deceptive silhouette, illustrates the trickery involved in this magical tradition, and reminds us of the sculpture's potential to come to life. So in the same way that many viewers expected Galatea to become animated through magical forces, viewers of Moreau's paintings were left with a similarly evocative expectation of animation in his pictures, even if the objects to be animated were more deceptively hidden and peppered throughout the composition. Moreau's Salomé is herself tied to Egypt, including the eyes over the tattooed version, as well as the lotus, which had many connections to other cultures, but especially that of Egypt. Moreover, the collection of studies, which he bequeathed to the state upon his

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[94] Because this is a very well-developed field of scholarship, I will limit my comments on this phenomenon. For relevant studies see the following: Alain Mercier, Sources ésoteriques et occultes de la poésie symboliste (1870-1914) (Paris: A.G. Nizet, 1969, 1974). Jean Pierrot, Decadent Imagination, 1880-1900 (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1981). Robert Pincus-Witten, Occult Symbolism in France: Joséphin Peladan and the Salons de la Rose-Croix (New York and London: Garland Publishing Inc., 1976). Vyacheslav Ivanov and Thomas E. Bird, "Symbolism," Russian Review 25:1 (Jan., 1966): 24-34. Linda Dalrymple Henderson, "Mysticism and Occultism in Modern Art," Art Journal 46:1 (Spring 1987): 5-8. Natasha Staller, "Babel: Hermetic Languages, Universal Languages, and Anti-Languages in *Fin-de-siècle* Parisian Culture," The Art Bulletin 76:2 (June 1994): 331-54. H.R. Rookmaaker, Synthetist Art Theories: Genesis and Nature of the Ideas on Art of Gauguin and his Circle (Amsterdam: Swets & Zeitlinger, 1959). David Allen Harvey, Beyond Enlightenment—Occultism and Politics in Modern France (DeKalb: Northern Illinois University Press, 2005).

[95] Oreste F. Pucciani, "The Universal Language of Symbolism," Yale French Studies: Symbol and Symbolism 9 (1952): 27-35.

[96] Kosinski, "Orpheus" 9-14.

death, includes many examinations of Egyptian sculptures, motifs, symbols, and figures.[97]

The depiction of Salomé certainly brought Moreau a great degree of notoriety towards the end of the century. In some instances, the appropriations of his work would have been flattering, while in others he would have been loath to be associated with these endeavours. Unfortunately for Moreau, one central fact about being an artist at this time was that you could not control the 'press' or other attention that you might receive, following the exhibition of your works to the public. In Moreau's case, the most influential response to his Salomé paintings was that of Huysmans. While this brought fame to Huysmans, it opened the doors for Moreau's motifs to be appropriated by other artists, whose aims did not match his own declared objectives.

It is true that many misinterpreted Moreau's interest in the Salomé subject, but in comparison with his declared artistic aims, it becomes apparent that her depiction fulfilled all that he had been trying to achieve:

> Le grand art est l'art des hautes conceptions poétiques et imaginatives--art improprement appelé pour la peinture Peinture d'histoire--, ce qui est un non sens, car le grand art ne prend pas ses éléments, ses moyens d'action dans l'histoire. Il les prend dans la poésie pure, dans la haute fantaisie imaginative, et non dans les faits historiques à moins de les allégoriser (symboliser).
> Cet art est souverain. Il est de tous les temps de l'humanité avec des variantes et des nuances infinies des âmes, mais il est immuable dans son essence, dans les grandes lignes de son caractère et dans son but qui est d'éléver l'être humain jusqu'à l'idée et à la conception divine et de lui donner la plus haute, la plus noble jouissance qui se puisse rencontrer sur la terre.
> Or cet art, qui est de tous les temps, reflète inévitablement le ton general des âmes au moment même ou il se produit. C'est là sa seule façon d'être moderne, comme on dit. Il n'a rien à faire avec les mouvements…[98]

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[97] For example, the following are Egyptian motif studies: *Study of Three Egyptian Sculptures, Study of a Mummy, Study of an Egyptian Head in Profile, Study for Ornamental Egyptian Motifs, Architectural Study of an Egyptian Temple, Study of a Female Egyptian Bust, Study for Egyptian god Horus, Study of Two Egyptian Statues*, and many more. These studies have been digitally catalogued on Joconde: Catalogue des collections de musées de France, http://www.culture.gouv.fr/documentation/joconde/fr/pres.htm.

[98] A.D.R. 162-163. My translation:

> Great art is an art of lofty poetic and imaginative ideas—an art that is improperly named for the history painter—it is a nonsensical name, because great art does not take its elements or the manner of its action from history. It takes it from pure poetry, from highly imaginative fantasy, and not from the facts of history, unless it is to allegorise them (symbolically).

And so we see that Moreau's goal of creating art for all eras, and of all styles, in order to be modern, is reflected in the eclecticism of his iconography, the mélange of foreign stylistic influences, the fascination with mystical traditions imported into France as early as the Renaissance, and even in the variability of his own painterly style. From this, we can understand that Salomé represented everything he wanted art to communicate, both in terms of its subject matter and style. He insisted upon operating outside the bounds of the styles of his day. And, evidently he succeeded, since his work has never been satisfactorily or conclusively assigned to any 'ism' of the nineteenth century.

Huysmans Immortalises Salomé

One of the most well-known fans of Moreau's *Apparition* was a fictional character named Jean des Esseintes, who was propelled into French culture under Huysmans's pen, in his novel À Rebours or Against the Grain (1884).[99] Huysmans, having seen the *Apparition* in person at the *Exposition universelle* of 1878, wrote an elaborate ekphrasis of the painting, making the work even more notorious, because it became part of novel's plot, wherein the main character, Des Esseintes, admired it for its decadent appeal. Huysmans wrote:

> Le chef décapité du saint s'était élevé du plat posé sur les dalles et il regardait, livide, la bouche décolorée, ouverte, le cou cramoisi, dégouttant de larmes. Une mosaïque cernait la figure d'où s'échappait une auréole s'irradiant en traits de lumière sous les portiques, éclairant l'affreuse ascension de la tête, allumant le globe vitreux des prunelles, attachées, en quelque sorte crispées sur la danseuse.

> This art is sovereign. It is from all of the times of humanity, with the infinite variants and nuances of souls, but its essence is immutable, in the grand lines of its character and in its purpose, which is to elevate a human being to the idea and conception of the divine, and to give him the highest and the most noble use that he can encounter on earth.
> Otherwise, this art, which is from all ages, inevitably reflects the general tone of the spirits at the moment that it is produced. It is the only way to be modern, as we say.
> It has nothing to do with movements…

[99] The English translation did not appear until 1922.

> D'un geste d'épouvante, Salomé repousse la terrifiante vision qui la cloue, immobile, sur les pointes; ses yeux se dilatent, sa main étreint convulsivement sa gorge.[100]

Huysmans was an admirer of Moreau's works, and the two had met in 1885 through their mutual friend Lorrain.[101] But by the time that they had met, À Rebours had already become one of Huysmans's most successful works. From Moreau's perspective, it must have seemed that the art critics were again preying on his work, because Huysmans had become one of the most influential art critics of his day. He was, by this time, already associated with the decadents and Symbolists in both France and England, with whom Moreau did not want to be identified. That said, the inventory of Moreau's library reveals that he owned a copy of the novel in which his work featured so prominently.[102] Only one year before the release of the novel, Huysmans had published a compilation of his critical reviews of Salons and exhibitions under the title L'Art moderne (1883).[103] This means that by the time that his novel reached the public, Huysmans had already established a name for himself as an art critic. Even if the literary attention to his artworks increased their popularity, Moreau could not have helped but to worry that Huysmans's words might come to inevitably rival his works in the public sphere. Indeed, scholars agree that Huysmans irrevocably transformed Salomé into his own vision of

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[100] Huysmans, "Chapitre V," À Rebours (Paris: Au Sans Pareil, 1924, 1997): http://cage.ugent.be/~dc/Literature/ARebours/ARebours05.html, (digitised by Denis Constales), Sept. 1, 2008. English translation provided from J.K. Huysmans, Against the Grain, intro. Havelock Ellis, pref. by J.K. Huysmans, trans. no longer copyrighted (New York: Dover Publications, 1969): http://www.ibiblio.org/eldritch/jkh/r05.html, Sept. 1, 2008.

> The decapitated head of the Saint had risen up from the charger where it lay on the flags, and the eyes were gazing out from the livid face with its discoloured lips and open mouth; the neck all crimson, dripping tears of gore.
>
> A mosaic encircled the face whence shone an aureola darting gleams of fire under the porticoes, illuminating the ghastly lifting of the head, revealing the glassy eyeballs, that seemed fixed, glued to the figure of the dancing wanton.
>
> With a gesture of horror, Salomé repulses the appalling vision that holds her nailed to the floor, balanced on her toe tips; her eyes are dilated, her hand grips her throat convulsively.

[101] Lacambre, Gustave Moreau 292.
[102] Musée Gustave Moreau library inventory, Paris, France.
[103] For more on the art criticism of Huysmans and his contemporaries see Kearns, "The Writing on the Wall" 239-52. See also Marlais, Conservative Echoes.

decadence, which would then lead to many more appropriations.[104] Unfortunately, Jeffrey Meyers, who has produced the only study that focuses exclusively on the two figures, never addresses what Moreau actually thought of Huysmans, and nor does he adequately explore the potential for points of contact between the two. These glaring omissions, in an article dedicated to comparing the two figures, correspond to the general unfamiliarity with Moreau's life and work that pervades the article. It would appear, however, that Moreau was silent about Huysmans specifically, even though he was quite vehement towards art critics in general. Moreau's disinterest in publicly commenting on Huysmans may have stemmed from the fact that the latter was so effusive in his praise of Moreau that the painter was put in a genuinely awkward position.

Despite his admiration for Moreau, much like Diderot before him, who had similarly 'supported' artists through his pen, Huysmans at times professed his steadfast conviction that the pen was greater than the paintbrush. For example, notwithstanding the admiration that he expressed for Moreau, Huysmans revealed his belief in literature's ultimate superiority over painting when he described painting as "[C]et art qui franchissait les limites de la peintre, empruntait à l'art d'écrire ses plus subtiles évocations."[105] It is true that Huysmans could be complimentary, even adulatory towards painters, including Moreau, but a tinge of condescension sometimes lingered in his words, such as when he praised Moreau for his charming and bizarre paintings, which gave the sensation of being *almost* being like a poem.[106] The competitive relationship between Huysmans and Moreau is evidenced by the highly imaginative and supplementary nature of his ekphrases, and the fact that Huysmans's writing style mirrored Moreau's expressive painterly style. Both, for instance, were devoted to the depiction of sensual detail in their respective media. Still, it is unavoidable that essentially Huysmans hijacked Moreau's famous painting, and attempted to rival its expressivity in his novel's descriptive passages. Huysmans dwelled not only on the painting's visual qualities, but on other senses excluded by virtue of its visual medium, including exotic smells, musical sounds, and the temporal and sensual movements of

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[104] Meyers, "Huysmans and Moreau" 44.
[105] Cited in Cooke, Gustave Moreau 5. My translation: "This art that crosses over the limits of the painter, borrowing from the art of writing its most subtle evocations."
[106] J.K. Huysmans, Art Moderne (Paris: G. Charpentier, 1883): 39.

Salomé's dance. Part of his description, which exaggerates the sensual experience of the scene, reads:

> Autour de cette statue, immobile, fixée dans une pose hiératique de dieu hindou, des parfums brûlaient, dégorgeant des nuées de vapeurs que trouaient, de même que des yeux phosphorés de bêtes, les feux des pierres enchâssées dans les parois du trône; puis la vapeur montait, se déroulait sous les arcades où la fumée bleue se mêlait à la poudre d'or des grands rayons de jour, tombés des dômes.
>
> Dans l'odeur perverse des parfums, dans l'atmosphère surchauffée de cette église, Salomé, le bras gauche étendu, en un geste de commandement, le bras droit replié, tenant à la hauteur du visage un grand lotus, s'avance lentement sur les pointes, aux accords d'une guitare dont une femme accroupie pince les cordes.
>
> La face recueillie, solennelle, presque auguste, elle commence la lubrique danse qui doit réveiller les sens assoupis du vieil Hérode; ses seins ondulent et, au frottement de ses colliers qui tourbillonnent…[107]

Another notable feature of Huysmans's ekphrasis is that he expands upon, and embellishes, the painting's narrative content, by describing things that simply are not present, or are not perceptible. One example is the inclusion of a passage regarding King Herod in *Salomé Dancing*, where Huysmans described the tetrarch's intimate features, including his wrinkles, his beard, and his clothing, which are all fairly obscure in the actual painting. For instance, the novel includes the following description of Herod:

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[107] Huysmans, Against the Grain.

> Round about this figure, that sat motionless as a statue, fixed in a hieratic pose like some Hindu god, burned cressets from which rose clouds of scented vapour. Through this gleamed, like the phosphoric glint of wild beasts' eyes, the flash of the jewels set in the walls of the throne; then the smoke rolled higher, under the arcades of the roof, mingling its misty blue with the gold dust of the great beams of sun-light pouring in from the domes.
>
> Amid the heady odour of the perfumes, in the hot, stifling atmosphere of the great basilica, Salomé, the left arm extended in a gesture of command, the right bent, holding up beside the face a great lotus-blossom, glides slowly forward on the points of her toes, to the accompaniment of a guitar whose strings a woman strikes, sitting crouched on the floor.
>
> Her face wore a thoughtful, solemn, almost reverent expression as she began the wanton dance that was to rouse the dormant passions of the old Herod; her bosoms quiver and, touched lightly by her swaying necklets…

> Au centre du tabernacle surmontant l'autel précédé de marches en forme de demi-vasques, le Tétrarque Hérode était assis, coiffé d'une tiare, les jambes rapprochées, les mains sur les genoux.
>
> La figure était jaune, parcheminée, annelée de rides, décimée par l'âge; sa longue barbe flottait comme un nuage blanc sur les étoiles en pierreries qui constellaient la robe d'orfroi plaquée sur sa poitrine.[108]

À Rebours's wide dissemination and popularity attracted attention to Moreau, but detracted from his singular vision of Salomé, and her symbolic message about modern life. It may be questioned how well the artist would have received the incorporation of his works into Huysmans's manual of decadence, especially since the book's hero, Jean des Esseintes, became emblematic of the archetypal decadent, who reveled in moral bankruptcy, sensual gratification, and a love of the artificial; this would have been exactly the kind of behaviour that Moreau found so disconcerting in modern life. Regardless, Moreau might have been pleased by Huysmans's admission that Moreau's art appeared to have escaped painting's 'natural' limits. In the novel, Huysmans again rather condescendingly remarked: "Never had the poverty of chemical pigments been able thus to set down on paper such splendours of precious stones...Gustave Moreau was a pupil of no man...[his art] crossed the last frontier-lines of painting, borrowing from literature its most subtle suggestions."[109] This is somewhat of an underhanded compliment, since the comment begins with the reminder that painting is merely a collection of material media, and is certainly not the source of immaterial transcendence offered by music or poetry. So we see that Huysmans drew attention to the most innovative and competitive elements of Moreau's work, thereby contributing to its paragonising legacy.

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[108] Huysmans, À Rebours. The English translation from Huysmans is from Against the Grain:

> In the centre of the tabernacle surmounting the altar, which was approached by steps in the shape of a recessed half circle, the Tetrarch Herod was seated, crowned with a tiara, his legs drawn together, with hands on knees.
>
> The face was yellow, like parchment, furrowed with wrinkles, worn with years; his long beard floated like a white cloud over the starry gems that studded the gold-fringed robe that moulded his breast.

[109] Quoted from Huysmans's Against the Grain in Geneviève Lacambre, Gustave Moreau: Magic and Symbols (New York: Harry N. Abrams, Inc., 1997): 109-111.

But in the end, it is difficult to get around Huysmans's ambivalence towards the visual arts, as a writer. On the one hand, he venerated Moreau's accomplishments, and immortalised them in writing. On the other hand, his writings are peppered with comments regarding the limits of painting, and condescending statements about the abilities of artists like Moreau. My interpretation of this ambivalence is that Huysmans indeed considered himself, as a writer, to be superior to visual artists, but his famous obsession with Moreau was rooted in the feeling that for once he felt painting had surpassed its limits by portraying, in a visual medium, a motif that writers would struggle to match. It is fitting that his main character Des Esseintes would note that it was incomprehensible that all of the writers in history had never managed to capture the exaltation and grandeur of the dancing Salomé as Moreau had done; perhaps this was Huysmans's jealousy speaking through the character Des Esseintes.[110]

Unfortunately, Huysmans's work has too often been interpreted as the literary equivalent to Moreau's paintings. This is the case in Meyers's study on their relationship, where the author focuses almost exclusively on a 'personality' comparison between the two figures. More problematically, Meyers's article reveals huge gaps in knowledge about Moreau's work, and includes clichéd and unsubstantiated claims about the artist, as well as some leaps in logic. For instance, Meyers claims that Salomé was a personally obsessive theme in Moreau's life, which is supposedly evidenced by his comment that she was the dominant subject in the overwhelming majority of his œuvre. But in reality, she was represented fewer times than many other themes, such as Sappho, the dying poet, and Orpheus, for instance, all of which were repetitively treated. His interpretation also seems dated, since he deciphers Moreau's paintings by assuming that interest in the *femme fatale* is, without question, a homosexual obsession, reflecting fear of women for instance, taking this as evidence that both Huysmans and Moreau were gay.[111] Despite the preponderance of information that disproves this theory in Moreau's case, it is rather biased and stereotypical to assume that gay men hate women, or have necessarily problematic relationships with women. As I have discussed, scholars have already established that Moreau maintained rewarding, loyal, and loving relationships

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[110] Huysmans, À Rebours. As well, Bucknell notes that Huysmans's character, Des Esseintes, was captivated by the animated figures in Moreau's works. "On 'Seeing' Salomé" 512.
[111] Meyers, "Huysmans and Moreau" 39-44.

with the two most important women in his life: his mother and his love Alexandrine. Finally, Meyers's analysis reads Moreau's Salomé depictions as though they reflect the artist's reaction to earlier narrative and visual precedents, without actually offering any specific information about which works or features he could have been borrowing.

Salomé or Medusa?

In discussing Moreau's versions of Salomé, and by analysing the many artistic responses to his work, it becomes clear that something unusual about his treatment of the theme made it especially spellbinding for its viewers and his successors. This aspect, in fact, would even be parodied in contemporary caricatures, which is the true sign of success; it is the disembodied head. Yet the only scholarship to address this unusual feature in Moreau's work typically concludes that such depictions, such as the *Apparitions*, were shocking, because Salomé normally carried the Baptist's head on a platter. We have explored the origins of this motif for Moreau and Orpheus, but other layers of meaning may also be stripped away to fully grasp its significance. Throughout my study Moreau's Salomés, I have realised that much of her impact lay in her ability to command the viewer's attention, and in a new trend that Moreau cemented. This trend is an unspoken, if quite obvious, conflation of Salomé and the mythical figure of Medusa. Moreau's conflation of the two characters may have derived from Ovid's account of Medusa in his Metamorphoses, which offers a strikingly parallel image to Salomé, who holds out her hand towards the Baptist's decapitated head, in the form of Perseus raising Medusa's head. Before the nineteenth century, the most famous depiction of this Ovidian subject was the bronze *Perseus and Medusa* by Benvenuto Cellini (1500-71), which was a Medici family commission that was first displayed at the Loggia dei Lanzi in the Piazza della Signoria in Florence (1554).[112] It has remained at this location, barring removals

[112] For more on the intriguing political context of this work, in connection to its Medicean patronage see Corinne Mandel, "Perseus and the Medici," Storia dell'arte 87 (1996): 168-87. Cellini discussed the making of this statue. See Benvenuto Cellini, Autobiography, trans. and intro. George Bull, (London: Penguin Books, 1998). Moreau may also have known of Antonio Canova's *Perseus and Medusa* (1804-6). However, I have been unable to find any links between the two artists as of yet, and the overt similarities between their works is also less apparent. For more on Canova's *Perseus* see "The Tarnowska *Perseus* by Canova," The Metropolitan Museum of Art 26:4 (Dec., 1967): 185-191. For more on Canova see

for restoration, until the present day, making it almost impossible for Moreau not to have seen the work when he was studying Italian masterpieces in Florence's Galleria Uffizi in 1858. He would have had to have passed by the statue while working in this part of the city.[113] This stunning statue captures Perseus, the heroically muscular nude, clutching the gruesomely severed head of Medusa, which he raises above his own head with his left arm. Perseus, like Donatello's *David*, looks down upon the viewer in a classic victor over vanquished motif, because the body of Medusa lies at his feet. The mangled flesh of Medusa's neck hangs over the statue's base, matched by the bloody twisted flesh that still dangles from her head above. In his right hand Perseus grasps the sword with which he killed Medusa, which is held aloft, as though a threat remains. The trailing flesh is matched by that of the Baptist in the *Apparitions*, suggesting a possible link between Cellini and Moreau's work.

As one of the respondents to Varchi's call for a debate on the merits of the arts, it is known that Cellini was deeply involved in the paragone debate of the sixteenth century. A contemporary of Vasari, Cellini promoted the superiority of sculpture over painting, and placed considerable emphasis on the role of *disegno,* or drawing, in the sculptural process. It has already been established by Frederika H. Jacobs that Cellini, amongst many of his contemporaries, was not only interested in the theoretical debate over the paragone, but in the practical application of these theories to artistic production.[114] The *Perseus*, being such a public work in Renaissance Florence, stood as evidence of Cellini's ambitions in sculpture. If Moreau was inspired by Cellini, this offers further evidence that the paragonising masters of the nineteenth century emulated those of previous eras.

Christopher M. S. Johns, Antonio Canova and the Politics of Patronage in Revolutionary and Napoleonic Europe (Berkeley, London, and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1998). Benvenuto Cellini, *Perseus and Medusa*, 1545-54, bronze, 18' or 320 cm tall, Loggia dei Lanzi, Florence, Italy.

[113] Moreau clearly had taken note of Cellini, whom he mentions in his writings along with Michelangelo, while praising these Renaissance masters. Sébastiani-Picard, "Michel-Ange" 140. The Musée d'Orsay's explanation of the *Apparition* mentions that the head of the Baptist may have been inspired by Cellini's *Perseus and Medusa*, but no extensive comparative analysis is offered, nor it is suggested that Salomé could be Medusa as well. See Musée d'Orsay, http://www.musee-orsay.fr/en/collections/works-in-focus/graphic-arts/commentaire_id/the-apparition-11024.html?tx_commentaire_pi1%5BpidLi%5D=848&tx_commentaire_pi1%5Bfrom%5D=845&cHash=2b0a5f4d5f.

[114] Frederika H. Jacobs, "An Assessment of Contour Line: Vasari, Cellini and the Paragone," Artibus et Historiae 18 (1988): 139-151.

So who is Medusa? She originates from a number of ancient narrative traditions, some of which identify her as one of three sisters, called the Gorgons, who were immortals borne to chthonic monsters, (their names were Euryale and Stheno, and while they were immortal, Medusa was not).[115] Yet Medusa did not begin her life in such a negative way. Her story began as a phenomenally beautiful sea nymph, who was raped by Poseidon in the temple of Minerva (also known as Athena). In her fury, Minerva transformed Medusa into a terrifying figure with snakes for hair, becoming capable of turning the men who looked upon her ugliness into stone. In her transformed state, Medusa joined her sisters and became the third Gorgon. Her story ends with her decapitation by Perseus, who, as the son of Danæ and Jupiter, was sent on a quest to kill her. Minerva/Athena and Hermes aided Perseus in his mission, which he completed by cunningly using a mirror to slay Medusa, so that he would not perish while trying to slay her.

One of the most well-known accounts of this subject comes from Ovid in Book IV of his Metamorphoses. Due to the popularity of Ovid in nineteenth-century French history painting, and because, as Corinne Mandel observes, this was the source that furnished the poetic inspiration for Cellini's *Perseus*, it is the Ovidian source that I will cite.[116]

> There is a place beneath the chill slopes of Atlas that is securely shut away behind a mass of solid rock. At the entrance to this spot dwelt two sisters, the daughters of Phorcys, who shared the use of a single eye. Perseus had managed by his skill and cunning to get hold of that eye, by interposing his hand when it was being transferred from one sister to the other. Then, by remote and pathless ways, through rocky country thickly overgrown with rough woods, he reached the Gorgon's home. Everywhere, all through the fields and along the roadways he saw statues of men and beasts, whom the sight of the Gorgon had changed from their true selves into stone. But he himself looked at dread Medusa's form as it was reflected in the bronze of the shield which he carried on his left arm. While she and her snakes were wrapped in deep slumber, he severed her head from her shoulders.[117]

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[115] Medusa appears in such sources as Pindar, Pausanias, and Apollodorus. For a review of her representation in literature see Marjory B. Garber and Nancy J. Vickers, The Medusa Reader (New York and London: Routledge, 2003). Jerome J. McGann, "The Beauty of Medusa: A Study in Romantic Literary Iconology," Studies in Romanticism 11 (1972): 3-25.
[116] Mandel, "Perseus" 168.
[117] Ovid, Metamorphoses (Book IV) 114-5.

Ovid, through Perseus's voice, then recounted the story of Medusa's life before she had taken this terrible form:

> Medusa was once renowned for her loveliness, and roused jealous hopes in the hearts of many suitors. Of all the beauties she possessed, none was more striking than her lovely hair. I have met someone who claimed to have seen her in those days. But, so they say, the lord of the sea robbed her of her virginity in the temple of Minerva. Jove's daughter turned her back, hiding her modest face behind her aegis: and to punish the Gorgon for her deed, she changed her hair into revolting snakes. To this day, in order to terrify her enemies and numb them with fear, the goddess wears as a breastplate the snakes that were her own creation.[118]

As with the other passages from Ovid that have been so pertinent to my discussion, I must take a moment to evaluate the aesthetic theory that Ovid's narrative supports. To begin, Medusa's story is obviously akin to that of Narcissus. Like Narcissus, Medusa commences her life with immeasurable beauty. She attracts the attention of all of those around her, and conflict arises as a result, due to the great number of her unsatisfied admirers. Her beauty, like that of Narcissus, ultimately leads to her demise, because she cannot avoid the advances of the powerful sea god. In addition to making visual beauty the cause of fatal circumstances, Ovid also metamorphosed the beautiful into the repugnant. The reader soon realises that the mental image of Medusa's most beautiful attribute, her hair, becomes the most reviled source of her ugliness. It also becomes the most dangerous, as it is transformed into a shape of literally petrifying horror: writhing venomous snakes. Ovid preyed upon some of the greatest of human fears in correlating the indescribably beautiful to the equally incomprehensibly ugly. Are we not all afraid that beauty might disguise something deadly? Medusa was undone by her beauty, and her most beautiful attribute was a deceptive forerunner for one of the most horrible narrative depictions in ancient mythology.

In metamorphosing from an icon of beauty to an icon of ugliness, Medusa became so visually arresting that the very sight of her was fatal. In many ways, Medusa's story is the ultimate form of the iconophobia, which is consistent with the other Ovidian narratives that we have examined. The message is simple: you look, you die. Even

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[118] Ovid, Metamorphoses (Book IV) 114-5.

before Perseus divulged the origins of Medusa's ugliness, Ovid provided a distinctly grotesque depiction of the eye. The curious account of a single eye shared between the daughters of Phorcys, (who were also known as the Graiae, or grey-haired women), which they must pass back and forth between them, in order to see, demonstrates that unknown and unsettling forces are aligned with sight. And, even though their circumstance is actually dependent upon lack of sight, the overriding imagery emblazoned upon the reader's mind is that of a disembodied eye, being shared of all things. What is more revolting than sharing body parts? The disembodied eye, which Perseus is supposed to steal, is a grotesque concept that must have been intentionally described. In so doing, Ovid linked the sense of sight to fear and revulsion.

Still another aspect of Ovid's narrative bears relevance to the themes now under consideration. First, we find that, once again, a reflection is essential to the story. In order to escape the fatality of Medusa's visage, Perseus must exploit the trickery of a reflection, provided in the bronzed surface of his shield. We are not told how true that reflection is, however it certainly could not have been too mirror-like, given that a bronze shield is both a curved and coloured surface, which is a fact borne out by Caravaggio's depiction of the subject in the seventeenth century.[119] In this case, the deception saved Perseus from a horrible fate; then again, the overall message is the same as in the Narcissus narrative, since the reflection's functionality is firmly rooted in its ability to deceive.

The connection between the visual and death is reiterated in Ovid's reference to statues along the path that Perseus travelled. We are told that all of the people who saw Perseus pass, while holding Medusa's head, were turned into statues lining the roadways and filled the fields, just as statues actually would have appeared in ancient garden paths and public areas. Even if Ovid was not trying to account for the birth of sculpture, his story implied that sculptures were being made by the effects of Medusa's fearful ugliness. This was not a noble form of sculpture; rather, these were the morbid results of a terrifying power, making the sculptural products to which Ovid referred a by-product of something repulsive and grotesque. If the reflection, as discussed in chapter one, may be taken to mean a painting, and the statues on the roadways to mean sculpture, Ovid has

[119] Caravaggio's *Medusa* (1597, oil on canvas, 60 x 55 cm) is now at the Uffizi in Florence.

provided us with an allegory of the two visual arts, each in its own way entirely horrific, and surely delivered with an undertone of moralising intent about visual imagery.

But how does this relate to Salomé? In examining Ovid's account of Medusa, the reader is struck with one repetitive image: the hero Perseus holding up Medusa's decapitated head. In Moreau's scenes, he represents a female figure 'holding up,' albeit through supernatural force, the disembodied head of the Baptist.[120] Here the roles are reversed. The head is from a heroic martyr, while the figure calling it into being is a corrupt and evil heroine. These two women also share a form of supernatural power, which in Medusa's case, according to Ovid, originates from Minerva. However, Salomé lacked such power in conventional depictions. In order for Salomé to be as powerful as Medusa, she would have to be inducted into the ranks of supernatural beings, which is exactly what Moreau accomplished, by conflating her with Medusa. Salomé's otherworldly nature became one of the most celebrated aspects of her depiction by nineteenth-century artists and writers. Like Medusa, Moreau's Salomé becomes a supernaturally lethal harbinger of death, which is evidenced by her involvement in the demise of a saint.

Another look at Moreau's Salomé, reveals those features that made her seem like more than a mere mortal. For instance, in most of his versions, Salomé hovers on the tips of her toes, being somehow emancipated from the forces of gravity. She defies common understanding, because she is both moving and static, while perfectly poised. As I have pointed out, in the *Dancing Salomé* the seductress carries before her a mystic eye, possibly akin to the magical or apotropaic eyes from Egyptian, or even Greek influences. Being surrounded by figures of supernatural character, such as the statues of goddesses and animated sphinxes, it appears that the entire court of Herod's palace has been magically enlivened through Salomé beauty, and perhaps magical abilities. Finally, in the *Apparitions* she calls forth a supernatural image, foreshadowing her reward, by commanding the apparition of the Baptist's already severed head. Salomé lifts her arm towards the Baptist, usually with a lotus in her hand. In the nineteenth century, the lotus was perceived as a source of magical power, and consequently endows Salomé with a

[120] The Medusan theme was also connected by his contemporaries to Moreau's *Hercules and the Lernaean Hydra*, wherein he portrayed the mythical monster in a multi-snake headed form. "Salon de 1876," Zigzags 1 (Apr., 30, 1876): 10.

strength and power that did not otherwise match her place in the story.[121] Even though the executioner awaits the final moment of the dance, so that he can meet the demands of Salomé's reward, he is not the one who holds the power of life and death; it is Salomé who commands the viewer's attention, and initiates the tragic chain of events. Salomé's mother was actually the person seeking revenge against the Baptist, but as we have already observed, Herodias is not much more than a footnote in any of these paintings, being relegated to the shadows in the background. Herodias is neither the object of the viewer's attention, nor that of her husband Herod. In sum, Salomé has herself been metamorphosed from a weak mortal to a supernatural goddess, with the potential, through her beauty and seductiveness, to take the lives of others. Indeed, nineteenth-century viewers would have agreed, including those critics who referred to Moreau's Salomé as a goddess.[122]

The myth of Medusa also gave birth to another powerful icon in the history of art and culture; the Gorgon symbol became an apotropaic symbol, used by the Greeks to ward off evil.[123] In Moreau's *Salomé Dancing,* a large Gorgon-like mask appears to stare out at the viewer from the centre of the composition, located below Salomé's right elbow. Additionally, other smaller masks hang off her dress, and a large face appears in relief, directly below Herod's throne. These details offer further evidence of Moreau's iconology of looking. This is why the painting's title, the *Apparition,* is so important, because an apparition is a vision of something that is typically supernatural and surprising. In Moreau's case, it also connotes a ghostly vision, since the head of the Baptist is like a spectral visitation, confirming the horror of what Salomé and her mother conspired to do. The title's reference to an apparition similarly demonstrates a parallel between Moreau's work and Girodet's *Endymion*; both scenes confront viewers with the supernatural. Even if Moreau used the word 'apparition' in the painting's title to refer to

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[121] The lotus, being famously used in Egyptian iconography, was an exotic flower that conjured the decadence of supposedly 'primitive' and mysterious cultures. For instance, Huysmans called the flower the sceptre of Isis, and the sacred flower of India and Egypt. À Rebours.

[122] Huysmans in À Rebours, and the poet Julian del Casal (1862-93), in his poem Salomé, both referred to Moreau's Salomé as a goddess. Gustave Moreau par ses contemporains 21, 44.

[123] Given the magical context of Moreau's paintings, he may have intended to connect this eye to the traditions of antiquity. For more on the apotropaic and magical powers of the eye in these traditions see S. A. Callisen "The Evil Eye in Italian Art," The Art Bulletin 19:3 (Sep., 1937): 450-462. Amica Lykiardopoulos, "The Evil Eye: Towards an Exhaustive Study," Folklore 92:2 (1981): 221-230.

the Baptist's head, it may also reflect what the viewer witnesses in Salomé herself. Moreau has created a Salomé, who is so beautiful and otherworldly that she is as miraculous and captivating as any ghostly or imagined entity. So without her conflation with Medusa, Salomé alone did not possess the apotropaic or supernatural power to grip her viewers. It was only when she was imbued with this awe-inspiring status that she became more than a young temptress. By virtue of this conflation, the Biblical Salomé was inserted into the Ovidian tradition of metamorphosis. It need hardly be mentioned that both are obviously *femme fatales par excellence*.

The appeal of the apparition to artists like Moreau lay in its theoretical potency. For instance, Herder contended that an apparition is dependent upon the sublime; it is the result of the experience of the infinite. In his words: "We conceive everything *infinite* as *sublime*, and everything sublime must, so to speak, reveal *infinity*; it should reproduce that apparition in which 'a spirit passed before him, the hair on his flesh stood up, and an image stood before his eyes; he could not recognize its form and he heard a voice.'"[124] This *terribilità*, which was a common feature of the Baroque sublime, was perfectly manifested in Moreau's work, inexplicable apparition of the Baptist. In addition to her new powers, Moreau's Salomé defends the primacy of the sense of sight. Even though the seductress and the material excess associated with her were dangerous, these forces could be controlled and directed by a clever artist, such as Moreau, who sought to use his art to teach the world about the dangers of modern life. Given the popularity of Moreau's novel hybrid figure, it is not surprising that many of the artists who responded to his portrayal also picked up on the revision to the severed head motif. However, the inherently paradoxical nature of Moreau's approach, (in other words, using evil, the material, the seductive, and the sensational, in order to combat these very things), would be picked apart in less reverent approaches to the subject, as we will see.

One final question remains, however, which is this: how can Salomé be Medusa, if it is the Baptist's head, and not Salomé, that operates as the overtly Medusan component of the motif? The answer is that Moreau appropriated and redirected Ovid's account, by evoking Medusa's transformation in a manner that had never been attempted. You see, Salomé and the Baptist are both Medusa! Salomé, in her *beau idéal* state, is the

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[124] Herder, Sculpture 93.

incarnation of Ovid's renowned beauty, such that the Baptist's head shows the climax of Medusa's transformation into an icon of ugliness. Therefore, suspended in time, Medusa/ Salomé faces herself, offering yet another incarnation of Narcissus, and the irrefutable and stunning import of an image. So, like Girodet before him, Moreau illustrated the Ovidian theme of metamorphosis with a stunningly shocking spark of artistic inspiration. We will now turn to an investigation of how this original revision to an age-old narrative was received and reinterpreted by Moreau's followers and rivals.

Medusa in England

In the third chapter, I addressed some of the ways that the contemporaries of Moreau and Burne-Jones drew many parallels between the two artists. And it was shown that an important site of artistic exchange linked the two artists, who shared a professional venue when Moreau exhibited his *Apparition* at the Grosvenor Gallery's first show. The two were also frequently compared in popular and critical reviews, making it appear as though they were working towards the same or similar goals.[125] In her study of the Grosvenor's first exhibition, Bryant suggests that both the inclusion and reception of Moreau's work were, on the surface at least, rather unexpected. Not only did Moreau have relatively few connections with the London art scene, his eccentric work was not even touched upon in the critical commentary on the exhibition. It was, however, very well-received in the publication L'Art, which reproduced an engraved version of *Salomé*, and other drawings and studies on the subject.[126] In the very same year of this exhibition, Burne-Jones set to work on the first of two major series called *Perseus and Medusa*. Here again, this series, now held at the Southampton City Art Gallery in

[125] Bénédite's text is a good example of such a comparison, as well as a review of Moreau by the then leader of the Rosicrucians in Paris, for whom Moreau was a great source of inspiration. See Sar Péladan, "Gustave Moreau," L'Ermitage: Revue artistiques et littéraire 1 (Jan., 1895): 29-34.

[126] Bryant, "G.F. Watts" 120. Moreau's work was shown in the East Gallery, entry 35, along with the oil paintings, rather than with the watercolours, according to the author. She also indicates that Moreau's address for the exhibition was curiously listed as that of the L'Art offices, perhaps suggesting that he was invited by Carr to show his painting at the Grosvenor, given that the painting had already received great acclaim at the Salon of 1876. Bryant also points out that it has not been concluded which version of Moreau's *Apparition* was actually exhibited at the Grosvenor. Although the watercolour was the one shown at the Salon, the one at the Grosvenor was displayed with the oil paintings, rather than the watercolours, so the possibility exists that one of Moreau's oil versions was exhibited instead of the one generally presumed to have been shown. For more on the Gallery see Newall, The Grosvenor.

England, was produced in gouache on paper, and comprised five scenes. A second series in oil was completed between 1882-4, and is now at the Staatsgallerie in Stuttgart. Like Moreau, Burne-Jones sought informal training, by undertaking trips to Italy to copy the works of the Old Masters. Burne-Jones made two such excursions, including visits to Florence, where he, like Moreau, would have seen Cellini's *Perseus*.[127]

No scholarship has yet examined the possible connection between Moreau's *Apparition* and Burne-Jones's *Perseus*, but it is an important one that deserves more attention than I can give it here. Nevertheless, I will discuss the relevance of Burne-Jones's series to the motifs that we have been addressing. If not directly motivated by having seen Moreau's severed head motifs, Burne-Jones's interest in the Medusa subject is at the very least significant in demonstrating that the two artists, both of whom were competitive in their professional endeavours, were drawn to the same subjects, which deal with the supremacy of the sense of sight, and the iconic in visual media. For our purposes, it is the conceptual similarity between the two approaches that bears the most relevance.

In the first chapter, we examined the importance of Burne-Jones's final image for the Perseus series called *The Baleful Head*, which depicted the climactic moment of Morris's narrative, recounting how Perseus showed Andromeda the head of Medusa in a reflection.[128] We considered, for instance, how the reflection, and the centrality of the iconic image in the work, conveyed Burne-Jones's interest in these powerful purveyors of paragonising iconography. Despite the great commitment that the artist made to this project, very little scholarship has been devoted to these cycles. The exception is the article by Liana de Girolami Cheney.[129]

Cheney's objective, in her study of Burne-Jones's treatment of the Perseus subject, is to track his absorption of previous treatments of the narrative. As well, Cheney considers the meaning of Andromeda with regards to Burne-Jones's personal life. Burne-Jones's initial forays into this subject matter appeared in the illustrations that were supposed to accompany Morris's recounting of the Perseus story in "The Doom of King

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[127] For more on his Italian travels see Christian, "Burne-Jones's Second Italian Journey" 334-7.
[128] See Chapter 2: "The Legacy of Narcissus's Reflection in the Nineteenth Century."
[129] Cheney, "Andromeda" 197-227.

Acrisius," which were published in the Earthly Paradise.[130] In her analysis, Cheney proposes that the Perseus myth fit well with Burne-Jones's interests in ancient mythology, which was piqued by his study of the Elgin Marbles at the British Museum.[131] Burne-Jones's study of Botticelli's paintings at the Uffizi gallery, during his trips to Italy, is also cited as a factor in his approach to the portrayal of Andromeda. For instance, Cheney proposes that Burne-Jones, spurred on by Pater's Neoplatonism, saw the Perseus myth as a metaphor for the spiritual triumph over the material, with Perseus representing the former, and Andromeda the latter.[132] While Cheney's exploration of the Neoplatonic and moralising implications of Burne-Jones's cycle is convincing, and certainly consistent with his history of high-minded spiritual objectives, the biographical methodology is less successful. For instance, Cheney identifies the figure of Andromeda as a *femme fatale* figure, and a stand-in for a woman with whom Burne-Jones was having an affair, named Maria Zambaco. Unfortunately, however, this interpretation relies extensively on Cheney's non-theoretical psychoanalysis of Burne-Jones. Moreover, she makes many unsubstantiated claims about Burne-Jones's feelings, with regards to both Andromeda and Zambaco, and her conclusions are based upon insufficient scholarly evidence.[133] Nevertheless, as the only in depth examination of the Perseus cycles, Cheney's article is invaluable to scholarship on these works. Let us now look at them in closer detail.

The first scene, titled *The Call of Perseus,* shows Minerva/Athena giving Perseus the mirror that he will use in his clever attack.[134] The scene reveals many of the competitive techniques that we have already detected in this artist's work, which he employed to demonstrate the superiority of his art. A considerable degree of technical

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[130] Cheney, "Andromeda" 197, 221. The author also points out that Rossetti's poem "Aspecta Medusa" of 1865 may have had similarly made an impact upon Burne-Jones.
[131] Cheney, "Andromeda" 218, 225. The author cites Smith's The Victorian Nude 139, as the scholarly source for Burne-Jones's study of the Elgin Marbles. In 1871, Burne-Jones also examined Etruscan antique sculptures in the tombs at Perugia, where Medusa was represented apotropaically on the *sarcophagi*. On the English study of these antiquities see: Frank M. Turner, The Greek Heritage in Victorian Britain (London and New Haven: Yale University Press, 1984). Sam Smiles, The Image of Antiquity in Ancient Britain and the Romantic Imagination (London and New Haven: Yale University Press, 1994). Fani-Maria Tsigakou, The Rediscovery of Greece (London: Thames and Hudson, 1981).
[132] Cheney, "Andromeda" 202.
[133] Cheney, "Andromeda" 217.
[134] Edward Burne-Jones, *The Call of Perseus*, 1884-8, oil on canvas, 61" x 55 1/4" or 154.9 x 140.3 m, Staatsgallerie, Stuttgart, Germany.

virtuosity is portrayed in the reflective surfaces, such as the stream that runs into the viewer's space, and the goddess's accoutrements, including the mirror, the sword, and her metal helmet. As well, two idealised male nudes highlight the artist's mastery of the figure, just as the clothed figures exhibit the familiar wet-drapery and translucent technique, which provided a highly sensual and idealised form underneath a swathe of ethereal fabric. Of all of these features, perhaps the most important is the mirror, because it will become Perseus's most precious weapon.

Burne-Jones also demonstrates his mastery of the female figure, by manipulating a technique that, as I have discussed, would subsequently be so well-used by Gérôme in his two versions of *Pygmalion and Galatea*. Like Burne-Jones, Gérôme created two paintings of the same subject, in order to convince the viewer of his mastery of all sides of the human form in painting. In the successive images *The Rock of Doom* and *The Doom Fulfilled*, Burne-Jones placed Andromeda in two different positions; she is seen from the front in one, and from the back in the other.[135] It would be peculiar to display two moments so tightly linked, unless the artist's rationale was to slow down the narrative to demonstrate his mastery of the female nude.

Also intriguing is that Medusa does not appear in her morbid terrible form in either series. Instead, Burne-Jones manifested the fatal heroine's beauty, rather than her ugliness, as a recurring motif in his series. The justification behind this artistic choice would appear to be the same as that for Moreau's treatment of Salomé. In the latter's work, his *femme fatales* are wrapped in beautiful physical forms, demonstrating their devastating allure. Like Moreau, Burne-Jones rejected the use of ugly figures in his narratives, deciding to show Medusa in the beautiful form that she was reputed to have possessed before her transformation. Even when we see her as a severed head in the final scene, Medusa does not take a terrifying form.

Just as disturbing as Moreau's disembodied heads, Burne-Jones cultivated a new motif in his Perseus series. This motif is the counterpart, if you will, to Moreau's. While Burne-Jones did depict the severed head, he also portrayed the headless body. Perseus

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[135] Edward Burne-Jones, *The Rock of Doom*, 1884-8, oil on canvas, 61" x 55 1/4" or 154.9 x 140.3 m, Staatsgallerie, Stuttgart, Germany. Burne-Jones, *The Doom Fulfilled*, 1884-8, oil on canvas, 61" x 55 1/4" or 154.9 x 140.3 m, Staatsgallerie, Stuttgart, Germany.

faces the viewer, having just decapitated Medusa. Her body still sits upright in the foreground, even though her head is already in Perseus's outstretched arm. In *The Death of Medusa* the head in Perseus's hand is almost an afterthought, being relegated to the outer perimetre of the composition.[136] By contrast, the headless body takes centre stage, and is made even more peculiar due to the figures of Pegasus and Chrysoar, which are the progeny of Medusa, which are being borne out of her headless neck in this scene. A second version of the scene also shows a headless body in the foreground, as does the painting for the series in oil.[137] In shifting the emphasis onto the body, in lieu of the disembodied head, Burne-Jones rejuvenated the subject matter, capitalising on the motif's popularity, without being entirely dependent on another artist's invention, however much he may have admired that artist. As it was for Moreau, Cellini's *Perseus* may have inspired Burne-Jones's inclusion of the headless body, because, as we have seen, the bronze statue includes this disturbing figure, lying prominently at the hero's feet, even overhanging the statue's pedestal.

One of the most curious panels is *Perseus and the Graiae* from the 1877 series.[138] Here Burne-Jones illustrated the exceptionally odd passage from Ovid's tale, which we have already discussed, wherein the three 'gray-haired' sisters pass one eye between them.[139] Even though Perseus successfully steals the eye, the artist has shown the sisters in a state of blind ignorance. They do not know that Perseus stands over them in a predatory pose. The crumpled postures of the sisters, and the foreboding colours in the scene, are especially unsettling. Being caught in the process of passing the eye, they are without sight, and are almost inhuman, blending into the threatening environment around them, hunched over in animal-like defensive postures. The three sisters, reaching for one another, and with two of them turned against us, becomes a perversion of the Three

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[136] Edward Burne-Jones, *The Death of Medusa I*, 1882, mixed media on paper, 1169 x 1245 mm, Southampton City Art Gallery, Southampton, England.
[137] Edward Burne-Jones, *The Death of Medusa II*, 1882, mixed media on paper, 1365 x 1525 mm, Southampton City Art Gallery, Southampton, England.
[138] Edward Burne-Jones, *Perseus and the Graiae*, 1884-8, oil on canvas, 61" x 55 1/4" or 154.9 x 140.3 m, Staatsgallerie, Stuttgart, Germany.
[139] The alternate version incorporated a Latin inscription at the top, which the classical scholar Richard Claverhouse Jebb (1841-1905) adapted from the Ovidian tale. In a study of a representation in Greek vase painting the author elaborates on the ancient origins of the narrative about the Graiae. See John H. Oakley, "Perseus, the Graiae, and Aeschylus' Phorkides," American Journal of Archaeology 92:3 (Jul., 1988): 383-391.

Graces motif dating to antiquity. In hiding all but one of their faces, in turning their backs to us, and in crouching in this inhuman manner, Burne-Jones shows that to be blind is to be desperately crippled, and perhaps 'weighted down' in the Neoplatonic sense. It is also highlights one of the most monstrous aspects of Ovid's account, which is the fleshly body part being transferred from one figure to the next. Surprisingly, Burne-Jones has found a way to turn Ovid's iconophobia on its head. In Burne-Jones's world, to be blind is to be grotesque, evil, and animalistic.

Oscar Wilde and Cultural Impurity: Aesthete or Decadent?

If Moreau's interest in Salomé as an icon of dangerous female beauty was couched in a desire to teach a moral lesson, why did she become a celebrated icon of decadence, instead of a cautionary figure, as he claimed to have intended? Part of the answer lies in the fact that she appealed so strongly to British artists, where the depiction of the sensual female nude had reached a boiling point in the 1880s. Many differences separated the French and British traditions, but they shared in the general enthusiasm for artistic borrowing at this time. It has even been shown that certain theorists and critics in late nineteenth-century England viewed artistic adaptation as an indispensable and viable part of the artistic process. Walter Pater (1839-94) was one of the voices in the English art world who promoted this ideology, as an art critic and Aesthete. Pater was associated with the Pre-Raphaelite circle, and especially with the painter Simeon Solomon (1840-1905). As well, Pater was apparently familiar with Rossetti's paintings and interests, and possibly belonged to a group of individuals who were given private access to the artist's works. As a prolific writer on the arts, Pater's own words speak to his interest in paragonising issues. According to Pater, "All art constantly aspired towards the condition of music."[140] This comment reveals Pater's awareness of the paragone debate going on in his own day, and of his recognition of the fact that artists and poets were equally vying with music to create the ultimate art form.

A unique aspect of Aestheticism is what Prettejohn calls the Aestheticist code. In analysing the sphere of Pater's social and artistic influence, Prettejohn identifies an

[140] Cited in Prettejohn, "Walter Pater" 38-40.

extreme intertextuality or artistic referencing that became entrenched in the Aestheticist modes of production. Accordingly, Aestheticist works end up referencing each other, rather than the real world, creating a contained and closed system of artistic relationships, which is also a perfect way to describe the treatments of Salomé that came to the fore at this time. Artists who were engaged in this kind of borrowing typically rejected the academic principle that artists should study nature, and instead turned their focus to other artists's works, and the principles of art in general.[141] What makes this so interesting, in the context of the paragone, is that such pervasive quoting of works from both literary and visual sources creates an environment where the perceived limits of the arts are pressed to the extreme. This accommodates the many translations through different media that the subjects must undergo, which the Aesthetes called synaesthesia, meaning that the arts must synchronise themselves to one another.[142]

Motivated by the principle of synaesthesia, which was an idea that both Swinburne and Baudelaire promoted, the code of Aestheticism was in many ways an encoded competition, devoted to creating the ultimate *Gesamtkunstwerk*. By producing works that drag with them a host of artistic references, spanning from antique to contemporary art, the artist can expand the limits of a single work into a meta-work.[143] Many critics supported this hybridisation of the arts in their writings. For instance, John Ruskin (1819-1900), who had ties to both the Pre-Raphaelites and their Aesthetic descendents, having once critically supported them, commented that:

> Painting, or art generally, as such, with all its technicalities, difficulties, and particular ends, is nothing but a noble and expressive language, invaluable as the vehicle of thought, but by itself nothing…Speaking with strict propriety, therefore, we should call a man a great painter only as he excelled in precision and force in the language of line, and a great versifier, as he excelled in precision and force in the language of words. A great poet would then be a term strictly and in precisely the same sense, applicable to both, if warranted by the character of

[141] Prettejohn, "Walter Pater" 47-9.
[142] Prettejohn, "Walter Pater" 41.
[143] Pater may also have felt a sense of rivalry as an Englishman against the 'invasion' of modern French art. This sentiment would have arisen from his disinterest in French art depicting modern life, and as Prettejohn tells us, this made him directly opposed to ideas supported by Charles Baudelaire. Prettejohn, "Walter Pater" 50-1.

> the images or thoughts which each in their respective languages conveyed…[O]ne of the most perfect poems or pictures (I use the words as synonyms)…[144]

Naturally, literary figures like Ruskin, Pater, and Swinburne were profoundly interested in the ekphrastic tradition, which involves metamorphosing a visual work into a literary masterpiece. Pater was especially famous for his poetic description of Leonardo's *Mona Lisa,* which appeared in his book The Renaissance (1873).[145] The intricacies of inter-arts relationships also engendered what Prettejohn calls the double-distancing of the subject. Put simply, the Aestheticist who employed this sort of multi-layered distancing was removing his subject from nature by placing a mediating layer of historical and artistic tradition between the 'real' world and that seen in the final work. This technique threatened to add an ever more perverse level of deception to the work of art, at least according to Platonic theory.[146] Since artists removed their subjects from nature by depicting the real world, which is already a weak substitute for the perfect forms in the immaterial realm of ideas, in Plato's system, the Aestheticist is even more deceptive, because his subject is based on looking at other art works. Heightening the likelihood that consistent borrowing of other works would engender artistic rivalry, it is important to point out that Pater and other Aestheticists complicated matters further, by refusing to identify the works that they might have been referencing; sometimes these references are made clear, and at other times they are disguised.[147] Obviously, in refusing to acknowledge a visual source, those writers could encourage a strong, possibly often bitter, rivalry with the artists being 'quoted.'

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[144] John Ruskin, The Lamp of Beauty, Writings on Art, ed. Joan Evans (London: Phaidon Press Ltd., 1995): 1.

[145] See Walter Pater, The Renaissance. For Pater's interest in Platonism see his book Plato and Platonism. For a discussion of the ways in which Pater's ekphrasis references previous ekphrases of the *Mona Lisa* see Prettejohn, "Walter Pater" 48-9. See also Paul Barolsky, Walter Pater's Renaissance (University Park and London: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1987). And D. Carrier, "Baudelaire, Pater and the Origins of Modernism," Comparative Criticism 17 (1995): 109-21. Joseph A. Kestner, "Constructing the Renaissance: Leighton and Pater," Journal of Pre-Raphaelite Studies 2:1 (Spring 1993): 1-15. For more on Aesthetic literature see L. Chai, Aestheticism: The Religion of Art in Post-Romantic Literature (New York: Columbia University Press, 1990). R.L. Stein, The Ritual of Interpretation: The Fine Arts as Literature in Ruskin, Rossetti, and Pater (Cambridge, MA and London: Harvard University Press, 1975).

[146] Pater, and the Aesthetic artists and writers with whom he was associated, were reintroduced to Plato through Pater's own writings on the subject. This was the Plato and Platonism: A Series of Lectures (1893).

[147] Prettejohn, "Walter Pater" 50-1.

It is into the *milieu* of artistic borrowing and synaesthetic artistic design that Wilde enters our story. This Irishman made a career for himself in England as a playwright. Wilde has gone down in the history books as one of the most notorious figures of *fin-de-siècle* culture, in part due to his imprisonment, after being convicted for what was then deemed lewd behaviour with other men. But, prior to this scandal, Wilde's work enjoyed great success, and he fraternised with the celebrated artists and writers of his day. His role models, although sometimes tempestuously, included Pater and Abbott McNeil Whistler (1834-1903), and it is thanks to his admiration for the work of Moreau, and his fellow novelist and art critic Huysmans, that Wilde makes his appearance in this project. In 1891, Wilde set himself up in Paris to write his play Salomé in French. The resulting work was perceived to be so immoral that it was banned in England, following the French publication of 1892, on the grounds that it depicted religious characters inappropriately.[148] As a result, even though an English translation of the play was written, the play was never performed in England during Wilde's lifetime. It did, nevertheless, enjoy a successful run in Paris. When publishers John Lane and Elkin Matthews decided to publish their English translation of the play, which appeared two years later, they hired a young artist to illustrate the project named Aubrey Beardsley, who became an acquaintance in Wilde's circle.

The New Artist is an Art Critic

In addition to writing plays and novels, Wilde declared himself an art critic, even writing an essay on the matter, wherein he defended the critic's right to be called an artist. As an art critic, Wilde's writings reveal many issues that would irk artists of his day. For instance, Wilde subjected his readers to reviews, not of the artists and their works, but of the aesthetic experience of the exhibition space. In his 1877 review of an exhibition at the Grosvenor Gallery, Wilde concentrated on the atmosphere, not the art:

> The walls are hung with scarlet damask above a dado of dull green and gold; there are luxurious velvet couches, beautiful flowers and plants, tables of gilded wood and inlaid marbles, covered with Japanese China and the latest 'Minton' globes of

[148] Jeffrey Wallen, "Illustrating *Salome*: Perverting the Text?" Word and Image 2 (Apr.,-Jun., 1992): 128.

> 'rainbow-glass', like large soap-bubbles, and, in fine, everything in decoration that is lovely to look on, and in harmony with the surrounding works of art.[149]

Granted, the Grosvenor, as a private gallery, was such a novelty at this time, and provided such a departure from traditional exhibition practices, that only a completely negligent critic would fail to address these features. Nonetheless, Wilde's review reduced the 'works of art' to mere decorative objects within a generally pleasing aesthetic environment. These works were to him no more deserving of the critic's gaze than the pieces of furniture and plants that adorned the exhibition space. While this love of detail was clearly in keeping with the Aesthete's tastes and priorities, it certainly underlines the critic's control over whether or not to make the art works any more important than these other objects. He made it clear to his readers that he, as the writer or critic, was in control, and that it would be only through his will that the artworks would themselves speak. So his involvement in art criticism could have made him a suspicious figure amongst visual artists.

A considerable amount of scholarship has been devoted to Wilde's relationships with other writers and artists. His connections to Beardsley and Pater, for example, have fascinated many scholars.[150] As a quintessential follower of synaesthesia, Wilde mired himself in the inter-arts associations of his day. The two aspects of these relationships that most concerns us, however, are his response to the versions of Salomé in the works of Moreau and Huysmans, and his declaration of superiority over all other arts, in his capacity as an art critic. In any case, Wilde would be a notable figure in any assessment of the paragone at this time, thanks to the pointed and deliberately controversial tone of his writings and theories.

As an art critic, Wilde went so far as to argue that the meaning of an artwork was of no importance, because an art critic was better equipped to produce a work of greater

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[149] Quoted by Flint, "*The Mirror of Venus*" 154.

[150] For example, see Richard Ellman, Oscar Wilde (Auckland, London, New York, and Ontario: Penguin Books, 1988). Refer to pages 317-20 for Wilde's rivalry with Whistler and his interest in Mallarmé. See pages 317-20 for Wilde's rivalry with Whistler over Mallarmé.

beauty and artistic creativity than the painter or sculptor ever could do.[151] Wilde explained this position in his essay, "The Artist as Critic":

> [S]o the critic deals with materials that others have, as it were, purified for him, and to which imaginative form and color have been already added. Nay, more, I would say that the highest Criticism, being the purest form of personal impression, is in its way more creative than creation, as it has least reference to any standard external to itself, and is, in fact, its own reason for existing…Certainly it is never shackled by any shackles of verisimilitude…I am always amused by the silly vanity of those writers and artists of our day who seem to imagine that the primary function of the critic is to chatter about their second-rate work.[152]

In capitalising 'Criticism,' Wilde made it an official term, and supported its status as an art form, by claiming that actual artistic production, or 'creation' as he calls it, is less creative than Criticism. He elevated Criticism to the highest position in the hierarchy of the arts, on the premise that any art form, (which is essentially every other art form), that is based on nature, or 'verisimilitude,' somehow imprisons creativity by serving this obligation. Moreover, he contended that beauty is writing's objective, which had hitherto been considered painting's *raison d'être*. Wilde espoused Lessing's time versus space distinction between poetry versus painting, but he took it a step further, declaring the poet's right to represent the human figure, which had been painting's undisputed domain. As he put it, "Movement, that problem of the visible arts, can be truly realized in Literature alone. It is Literature that shows us the body in its swiftness and the soul in its unrest." He also declared that: "Those who live in marble or on painted panel know of life but a single exquisite instant, eternal indeed in its beauty, but limited to one note of passion or one mood of calm. Those whom the poet makes live have their myriad emotions of joy and terror, of courage and despair, of pleasure and of suffering."[153] In light of these opinions, it is reasonable to expect that Wilde's own literary works would, in some measure, rival the art forms that he had already put in their place.

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[151] Oscar Wilde, Collected Works of Oscar Wilde (Herfordshire, U.K.: Wordsworth Editions Ltd., 1997): 838. For more on the milieu of art criticism in England at this time see the following: R. Peters, The Crowns of Apollo: A Study in Victorian Criticism and Aesthetics (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1965). Elizabeth Prettejohn, "Aesthetic Value and the Professionalisation of Victorian Art Criticism," Journal of Victorian Culture 2:1 (1997): 71-94.
[152] Wilde, Collected Works 839.
[153] Wilde, Collected Works 838.

Is Wilde's Salomé French or English?

As we begin our look at Wilde's work, a central point arises, which is the issue of nationalistic association. One of the curious aspects of paragone studies is that a study of artistic competition often finds itself mired in nationalistic rivalry. This is another reason why Wilde was so controversial. Even though he was from Ireland and lived in England, he disturbingly espoused so-called French traditions, both in his lifestyle and work. Consequently, the extent of his national identity, which he deliberately eroded by courting French culture, became a sore point for many English critics. In our study, the association of French or English artists with national treasuries of art, or national disasters, reveals how intertwined artistic rivalry and national identity can be.

Nowhere is Wilde's courting of French culture more evident than in the circumstances that surrounded his play Salomé. But perhaps most telling is the fact that Wilde intended for the first English production of the play to be performed in French. The francophile affiliation of both the playwright and his play was proclaimed openly on the frontispiece, which reads: Salomé: A tragedy in one act, translated from the French of Oscar Wilde, pictured by Aubrey Beardsley. The fact that the work was not originally written in English was also highlighted in the dedication, which reads, "Dedicated to Lord Alfred Bruce Douglas (the translator of my play)."[154] Moreover, the title and its yellow binding were intended to resemble the typical packaging of French novels, which were bound in yellow paper.[155]

The Frenchness of Wilde's play was a necessary component of the work, to the extent that he wanted to be seen as participating in the interplay of Salomé representations at this time. Without this French mystique, if Wilde's Salomé had been merely a British production, he would not have been as able to insert his version into the tradition begun by Moreau, and carried on by Huysmans and others. He also relied upon the caché of the French tradition, as it was perceived in England, in order to align his work with the decadence of French Salomé depictions. At first, Wilde was admired for

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[154] Douglas was actually Wilde's lover. Oscar Wilde, Salomé: A Tragedy in One Act: Translated from the French of Oscar Wilde, Pictured by Aubrey Beardsley (Boston and London: Copeland and Day, and Mathews and John Lane, 1894).
[155] Aileen Reid, Beardsley (London: PRC Publishing, 2001): 21.

his association with other Aesthetes and their interests, having been a close follower of Pater, for instance. But Wilde's persona, and those associated with him, soon came to represent what was perceived to be devolution from Aestheticism to decadence.[156] This shift is theoretically and conceptually complicated; however, a simple way to explain it is that the 'decadents' abandoned the Aestheticist Neoplatonic principle that material beauty could be manipulated to engender spiritual transcendence. Instead, the 'decadents' were perceived to be promoters of an extreme version of art-for-art's sake, whereby art need serve absolutely no social, moral, didactic, or higher purpose.

The transition from Aestheticism to decadence seemed to parallel the scandals of Wilde's own life. Michael Hatt reminds us that it was following Wilde's trial that the cult of physical culture, endorsing masculine strength and a heterosexual ideal, gained the most support. Additionally, Wilde and the Aesthetic movement were both associated with degeneracy, deviance, the abnormal, and the feminine.[157] Wilde's own behaviour was parodied for its seemingly feminine and gay nuances, which of course were based on extremely insensitive stereotypes about homosexuality at this time. For instance, a repetitive theme in the description, or caricature, of Wilde and Aestheticism is the theme of posing. Posing, according to Hatt, was an essential aspect of the Aesthete's behaviour.[158] This brings us full circle, as we again confront the theme of iconophobia. Wilde and other Aesthetes were criticised by their opponents for exhibiting an unhealthy obsession with personal appearance. Wilde's meticulous self-grooming even went so far as to carefully choose a floral appendage—the lily—to embellish his methodically put-together outfits. In the conservative mainstream of Victorian society, fashion, personal appearance, delicate *objets d'art*, and other beautifying features of everyday life, were assumed to be female interests. Women were the objects to be looked at, the makers of the beautiful home, and the source of delicacy and beauty in everyday life. Therefore, Wilde, and other artists who became bound up with such feminine concerns, were naturally considered aberrant. Men who posed, in other words, were behaving like women, and as such, could not expect to further the health and welfare of the people as a

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[156] Margaret Armour, "Aubrey Beardsley and the Decadents," Magazine of Art 20 (1896): 11.
[157] Hatt, "Physical Culture" 247-9.
[158] Hatt, "Physical Culture" 249-50. For examples of references to posing with regards to Wilde and the Aesthetes see page 249.

whole.[159] The critic's expectation was that the excessive posing of the Aesthetes could only result in their ultimate demise, and even the degeneration of their civilisation if left unchecked. In these ways, Wilde had embroiled himself in an artistic world of controversy and change, well before he had even begun to work on his play.

The dandy lifestyle was also characterised by an unhealthy obsession with material beauty. Since Aestheticism treated art as a religion, Wilde was then a perverse form of a priest. The fact that Wilde delighted in making the sacred profane, and in seeing himself, in his role as an art critic and writer, as an imparter of truths, is evidenced by the symbol that he chose to represent himself. Wilde manipulated the symbolism of the lily in the western tradition, to bespeak his role as a messenger in the modern era. He was even caricaturised in conjunction with this iconography, such as the cartoon called *How Utter* (ca. 1882), showing Wilde in one of his notoriously well-put-together Aesthetic 'costumes.' Prior to Wilde's notoriety, the lily's iconography had been revived in Pre-Raphaelite paintings, and in Cruise's opinion, it was precisely because of the lily's art historical and cultural associations that the iconographically-laden flower served the writer so well. Having been a symbol of the Virgin's purity, innocence, and femininity, Wilde may have selected the flower to be his personal emblem, because it would be a covert way to highlight his individual sexuality and complex sense of gender as a gay man in Victorian England.[160]

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[159] West, Fin-de-siècle 71. Such feminising of one's outer appearance was perceived to be part of the danger of the androgyne in the 1890s. West explains that the androgyny of an aesthetic ideal, such as that of the early nineteenth century, was seen to have been perverted into a physical androgyny, which scientists assumed was a primarily homosexual practice. As such, the appearance of the feminised man began to signal social degeneration, and the unhealthiness of the nation. See Ari Adut, "A Theory of Scandal: Homosexuality and the Fall of Oscar Wilde," The American Journal of Sociology 111:1 (July 2005): 213-48.

[160] Colin Cruise, "Versions of the Annunciation: Wilde's Aestheticism and the Message of Beauty," After the Pre-Raphaelites: Art and Aestheticism in Victorian England, ed. Elizabeth Prettejohn (New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press, 1999): 168, 171-2. Refer to this article for a complete evaluation of Wilde's use of the lily, and the themes and sources that lilies were associated with at this time. Cruise offers the examples of Rossetti's *The Girlhood of the Virgin Mary* (1849) and his *Ecce Ancilla Domini* (1850). Another example may be found in Burne-Jones's *Annunciation* (1862). For more on the issue of homosexuality amongst the Aesthetes see L. Dowling, "Ruskin's Pied Beauty and the Constitution of a 'Homosexual Code,'" Victorian Newsletter 75 (1989): 1-8. Alison Smith, "Masculinities in Victorian Painting," Art History 20:4 (Dec. 1997): 629-631. On the issue of this kind of 'otherness' see F. Mort, Dangerous Sexualities: Medico-Moral Politics in England since 1830 (London and New York: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1987).

According to the *Gospel of John*, the lily was given to the Madonna by the angel Gabriel, when he delivered the news that Christ's nature as the Word would soon be incarnated into flesh.[161] Wilde evidently saw himself like the lily, since he too brought a new message to his readers. Wilde's francophile nature also found expression in this emblem. The lily, as a symbol of the French nation in the form of the *fleur-de-lis*, as well as its association with the cult of the Virgin in France, may have similarly implied his cultural impurity, being a member of English culture who espoused French decadence. Still, Wilde's celebrated ambiguity prevents us from making a concrete cultural association, since the lily was also the symbol for Florence. Wilde would certainly have known this, given the revival of early Renaissance style and culture at this time. To complicate matters even further, it may be that the symbolism that Wilde himself associated with the lily changed over time.[162]

An Ode and a Challenge: Wilde's Salomé

Wilde's competitive approach to the visual arts may be seen in his play Salomé, which the British public seems to have deemed, from the outset, to be a project of dismissive quality.[163] Wilde's most effective tool in challenging the merits of the arts is the rhetoric of iconophobia that is woven throughout Salomé. Iconophobia, or fear of the image, is commonly employed by writers to rival visual artists, serving to make fearful both the object beheld and the act of looking. Therefore, iconophobia often demonises the visual arts, and aligns the sense of sight with weakness. In Wilde's Salomé, looking, or being looked at, defines sexual and power relationships. Sylvian Huot explains that the action in the play unfolds as a series of glances, gazes, or incidents of looking. For example, a portion of dialogue reads: "The Tetrarch has a sombre look. - Yes; he has a sombre look. - He is looking at something. - He is looking at some one. - At whom is he

[161] Cruise, "Versions of the Annunciation" 177.
[162] Cruise, "Versions of the Annunciation" 179-81.
[163] My examination of the play focuses on the competitive features of his approach, but scholarship on Wilde and this work is extensive. For more on Wilde's play see Richard Ellman, "Overtures to Salomé." Oscar Wilde: A Collection of Critical Essays, ed. Richard Ellman (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Twentieth-Century Views, 1969). For the issue of illustration see Edward Hodnett, Image and Text: Studies in the Illustration of English Literature (London: Scolar Press, 1982).

looking?"[164] Wallen also identifies a theme of looking in the play, which manifests itself as a divide between those who are obsessed with words, and those obsessed with images. He adds that the figures in Beardsley's scenes reiterate the theme of looking by partaking of gazes between themselves and the viewer, which we will discuss shortly.[165] In so doing, Wilde's play becomes a modern paragone, where the characters fight for the supremacy of the senses, and therefore the arts to which they correlate.

Supporting this iconophobia is the fact that, in the play, vice is defined through illicit lustful glances, while the terrible is manifested in Herod's quaking eyelids and the black holes of the Baptist's eyes. Wilde's Salomé describes the Baptist's eyes as "black caverns where dragons dwell."[166] A foreboding tone pervades the dialogue, as each glance brings the plot closer to the Baptist's terrible beheading. The danger of looking, (and beauty's uncontrollable power), are embodied in characters that die, such as Salomé, her Syrian admirer, and the Baptist, after falling prey to a lustful gaze, or conversely, becoming the object of such a gaze. Wilde deliberately connected the unhealthiness of this obsessive gazing to Herod's incestuous desire for his niece, and to descriptions of his gaze. Salomé says: "I will not stay. I cannot stay. Why does the Tetrarch look at me all the while with his mole's eyes under his shaking eyelids? It is strange that the husband of my mother looks at me like that. I know not what it means. In truth, yes I know it."[167] Another exchange reads: The Young Syrian: "How beautiful is the Princess Salomé to-night!" The Page of Herodias: "You are always looking at her. You look at her too much. It is dangerous to look at people in such fashion. Something terrible may happen."[168] Salomé's fatal beauty embodies the dangerous strength of her aesthetic beauty, such as that in visual art; consequently, she stands for vice, the image, and a carefully constructed iconophobia. At the play's conclusion, Herod becomes the consummate iconophobe. He declares: "I will not look at things, I will not suffer things to look at me. Put out the

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[164] Huot, Le Mythe 198. This is also discussed by Bucknell, who tracks the emphasis on looking and the gaze in the versions by Huysmans and Wilde, noting the iconophobia in the work of the latter. "On 'Seeing' Salome" 515-6. Bucknell expands the argument to include the idea that Salomé is an artist in Wilde's play, although this argument is not adequately substantiated or explained. "On 'Seeing' Salome" 518-9.
[165] Wallen, "Illustrating *Salome*" 124-5.
[166] Wilde, Salomé 50-51.
[167] Wilde, Salomé 38-39.
[168] Wilde, Salomé 26.

torches! Hide the moon! Hide the stars! I begin to be afraid." Earlier Herod had proclaimed, "Your beauty troubled me...I have looked at you too much. But I will look at you no more. Neither at things, nor at people should one look. Only in mirrors should one look, for mirrors do but show us masks."[169] Mirrors, then, conceal through deception, while the real thing is too terrible to behold without an intervening medium. Nicholas Joost and Franklin E. Court also make an interesting point regarding the role of the mirror, which is that Herod, being afraid of reality, has turned to the false image of the mirror, in order to deny Salomé's real identity. By viewing Salomé through a mirror, Herod sees her as the woman he wanted her to be, in other words his lover, instead of his young step-daughter and niece.[170] The mirror, synonymous as ever with the painted image, is a lie, just as it was in the story of Narcissus.

As a foil to the dangers of the sense of sight, Wilde associated the character of the Baptist with the word and with music, through descriptions of him as an incorporeal lyrical voice. In this way, the text, the word, and the ear are ennobled through their identification with a holy prophet. And the ear's primacy over the eye is foregrounded by Salomé's insatiable desire to hear John speak, since his saintly utterances lend the word moral and truthful authority. Salomé exclaims: "Speak again, Jokanaan. Thy voice is wine to me....Speak again! Speak again, Jokanaan, and tell me what I must do."[171]

Even as Wilde characterises looking and sight as immoral, he attempts to rival the success of Moreau's work, by borrowing its most recognisable and enticing features. The contrast between Moreau's exquisite painterly style, and his Baroque penchant to depict blood and guts, was idiosyncratic to his œuvre. Wilde provides a similar contrast, dwelling on both beauty and the grotesque. For instance, he includes the Baptist's beheading, in addition to monstrous bloodthirsty references, such as blood-drinking gods from Nubia, and people slipping in pools of blood around the dead.[172] These references

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[169] Wilde, Salomé 108, 119.
[170] Franklin E. Court and Nicholas Joost, "*Salomé*, the Moon, and Oscar Wilde's Aesthetics: A Reading of the Play," Papers on Language and Literature 8 (Fall 1972): 98-101. The authors also convincingly argue that the moon is a stand-in for Salomé in the play, adding to the sense that the visible is not the same as reality or truth. They also observe that Wilde was competing with music as much as with visual art in his play, because he based some of the plot and character descriptions on Richard Wagner's *Tristan und Isolde* (1857).
[171] Wilde, Salomé 52.
[172] Wilde, Salomé 31. One example is as follows:
The Nubian:

fall outside of the conventional Biblical narrative, thereby demonstrating the writer's independence and creativity, while parodying Moreau's macabre details, which were also highlighted in Huysmans's ekphrases. From Huysmans, who was in turn taking from Moreau, Wilde borrowed Salomé's paleness, describing it repeatedly as an attribute that attracted Herod's attention. Replacing the iconographic identification of Moreau's Salomé figures with a lotus flower, Wilde instead likened her to Narcissus. The Young Syrian says: "She is like a Narcissus trembling in the wind...She is like a silver flower."[173] This is a notable substitution, given that Narcissus, in such iconophobic rhetoric, symbolises death. By switching the lotus for the Narcissus, Wilde associated fatality with succumbing to the power of visible beauty. This sense of Narcissism is reiterated in the words of Salomé, who demands the following of the Young Syrian:

> ...You will do this thing for me, Narraboth. You know that you will do this thing for me. And tomorrow when I pass in my litter by the bridge of the idol-buyers, I will look at you through the muslin veils, I will look at you, Narraboth, it may be I will smile at you. Look at me, Narraboth, look at me. Ah! you know that you will do what I ask of you. You know it well.....I know that you will do this thing.

The passage continues as the Baptist chastises Herodias for succumbing to the temptations of her lustful eyes: "Where is she who having seen the images of men, painted on the walls, the images of the Chaldeans lined in colours, gave herself up unto the lust of her eyes, and sent ambassadors into Chaldea?"[174] Also like the Salomé of Moreau's paintings and Huysmans's *ekphrases*, Wilde's *femme fatale* is festooned with veils, and dances barefoot.

> Salomé: I am waiting until my slaves bring perfumes to me and the seven veils, and take off my sandals. [Slaves bring perfumes and the seven veils, and take off the sandals of Salomé.]
> Herod: Ah, you are going to dance with naked feet. 'Tis well! 'Tis well. Your little feet will be like white doves. They will be like little white flowers that

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> The gods of my country are very fond of blood. Twice in the year we sacrifice to them young men and maidens; fifty young men and a hundred maidens. But it seems we never give them quite enough, for they are very harsh to us.

[173] Wilde, Salomé 39.
[174] Wilde, Salomé 46.

> dance upon the trees...No, no, she is going to dance on blood. There is blood spilt on the ground. She must not dance on blood. It were an evil omen.[175]

Evidently, Wilde was drawn to Moreau's works, having seen them while in Paris, and a comparison reveals many similarities. Like one of the critics from the Salon of 1876, Wilde must have been captivated by Salomé's veil-festooned dance. The Salon critic judging Moreau's work even imagined the temporality of her dance: "Salomé danse en rhythmant ses pas avec grace, et lance, décuple ses provocations félines sous un pose décente. Tout l'intérêt se concentre sur cet être qui voile ses charmes pour mieux accoître la puissance."[176] In Wilde's play, he drew attention to Salomé's veils, recalling the famous diaphanous quality of Moreau's partially-clothed Salomés. There is also a corollary in the play for the locked gaze that Salomé and the Baptist share in Moreau's *Apparition*, which consummates her desire for the prophet, because Wilde's Salomé is equally absorbed in the severed head's appearance. In the play, Herod searches in vain to understand her desire to behold such an object. Herod: "...The head of a man that is cut from his body is ill to look upon, is it not? It is not right that the eyes of a virgin should look upon such a thing. What pleasure could you have in it? None. No, it, it is not what you desire."[177] But Salomé ignores him, and commands the Baptist's gaze in death, just as in Moreau's painting, declaring "Open thine eyes! Lift up thine eyelids!... Art thou afraid of me...?"[178]

In addition to these narrative similarities, Wilde and Moreau's versions share an element of the grotesque, or the perverse. The perversity of Wilde's climactic moment is apparent when the lily's symbolism is taken into consideration. Cruise notes that in Salomé's final speech she describes the Baptist saying, "[your body] was a garden full of doves and of silver lilies," which he interprets as a parody of the sacred Annunciation, since the dove of the Holy Spirit, and the Madonna's lily, are both implied.[179] Salomé's lust for the Baptist contaminates these sacred symbols, since it is in the description of the

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[175] Wilde, Salomé 101.
[176] "Le Salon de 1876." My translation: "Salomé dances with rhythm and with steps of grace, and hides, increasing them tenfold, her feline provocations under a modest pose. All our interest is concentrated on this being who veils her charms to increase her power."
[177] Wilde, Salomé 107.
[178] Wilde, Salomé 117.
[179] Cruise, "Versions of the Annunciation" 182.

Baptist's physicality that these words are being used. Further, Cruise suggests that Salomé confronts the Baptist, so that Wilde could invert typical feminine and masculine roles, by revealing her unnaturally aggressive desire. The pictorial confrontation of Salomé and the Baptist had been cemented decades earlier in works by Moreau and others; but, Wilde gave Salomé's desire a voice, making her an aberrant, lustful woman, and shifting Herodias's desire onto her daughter. The direct connection between the two works is also apparent in Wilde's line "She must not dance on spilt blood," because, of course, this is exactly what almost all of Moreau's dancing Salomés do.

When Wilde's play was finished, he began plans to have it performed in London. We must remember that opposition began almost immediately, and the play was banned from performances in England until the twentieth century. For this reason, the play garnered quite a reputation for sensationalism, which was heightened by the fact that the obviously immoral French did not ban the play, and allowed it to be performed. Wilde succeeded then, even if unintentionally, in making his Salomé surpass the notoriety of previous writers and authors, as a result of the great attention paid to the issue of its censorship. Likewise, he triumphed in his efforts to write himself into the history of French culture, and to challenge the sanctity of English art, by borrowing the immoral characters, style, and methods of the illustrious French artists and writers, who had already made Salomé so famous.

Beardsley Confronts Wilde

The conflation of Salomé and Medusa in Moreau's work became the foundation for later treatments of the theme, by such artists as Beardsley, who both honoured and mocked Moreau's version in his illustrations for Wilde's play Salomé.[180] Beardsley

[180] The table of contents and publication included the following images by Beardsley in the subsequent order:

i) *The Woman in the Moon*
ii) *The Peacock Skirt*
iii) *The Black Cape*
iv) *A Platonic Lament*
v) *Enter Herodias*
vi) *The Eyes of Herod*
vii) *The Stomach Dance*
viii) *The Toilette of Salome*

apparently showed promise as an artist from childhood, having sold his first drawing at the age of eleven. However, it was also from a very young age, seven years old, that Beardsley suffered from tuberculosis, which may help to account for his early fascination with morbidity.[181] As a youth he dabbled in all of the arts, but it was not until around 1891 that he began to meet famous artists of his day, including Burne-Jones and Whistler, that his career began to take off. Beardsley's working and personal relationship with Wilde is a common feature of scholarship on both men. This does not mean, however, that this scholarship is either exhaustive or conclusive. It is generally agreed that Beardsley became part of Wilde's social circle, but the two were never more than awkwardly cordial with one another.[182] The tone of their artistically competitive relationship is perfectly summed up in Wilde's own words, when he publicly declared "I invented Aubrey Beardsley."[183] They began their association with apparent admiration for one another's work; but, Beardsley's appetite for mockery, for making caricatures of Wilde in his own works, as well as his imaginative and unfaithful approach to illustrating Wilde's writings, prevented any deeper friendship from developing.

When Wilde went to Paris to work on Salomé, Beardsley also decided to undertake a trip to France, arriving in May of 1893. There he would have had every opportunity to visit the museums and collections of Paris. It is known that he indeed saw Moreau's works at some point, due to a letter of 1896, in which he praised Moreau's works.[184] It is also well known that he shared Wilde's interest in Huysmans. In Against Nature, the main character, Des Esseintes, lives in an over-the-top Aesthetically designed home, which includes paintings by Moreau. Beardsley, in emulation of Des Esseintes

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ix) *The Dancer's Reward*
x) *The Climax*

This table of contents was a crucial inclusion, since the titles of the works help the reader to identify the figures, and because the illustrations were not themselves titled. By providing titles, Beardsley created his own textual commentary on the play, because the titles do not necessarily correspond to actual references in the play, and often imply alternative layers of meaning than the text alone.

[181] Reid, Beardsley 6-7.

[182] Reid, Beardsley 20. Some of these figures in the social group included Robert Ross, Max Beerbohm, Frank Harris, and William Rothenstein, according to Reid.

[183] Stanley Weintraub, Aubrey Beardsley, Imp of the Perverse (University Park, PA.,: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1976): 65.

[184] The Letters of Aubrey Beardsley, eds. John Duncan, Henry Maas, W.G. Good (Rutherford, N.J.: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 1970): 218-9. On November 29, 1896 he wrote: "I have just received *The Pageant*, two of Moreau's (*Oedipus* and the *Hercules*) are perfectly ravishing. I often think of *your* Moreau, one of his most beautiful works." He was referring to André Raffalovich's watercolour version of Moreau's *Sappho*.

and his lifestyle, decorated his own home in the style described in Huysmans's novel.[185] Following his association with Wilde's play, Beardsley, being another self-proclaimed francophile, cleverly aligned himself with Wilde's emulation of the French, and with popular literature in France, when he, as art editor, joined Henry Harland (1861-1905) to create the periodical The Yellow Book, which was also published by John Lane and Elkin Matthews. Unfortunately for Beardsley, it was his public association with Wilde that was the most destructive force in his short career. The two had become so indelibly linked, both following the same lifestyle as Aesthetes, that when Wilde was brought to trial for indecency in 1895, it meant that the art world associated with him also came under scrutiny. Reid points out that upon his arrest, one headline read "Arrest of Wilde, Yellow Book under his arm." Even though the book was a French novel, and not the periodical for which Beardsley was the artistic editor, the association resulted in the latter losing his editorial position for the publication, and additionally his primary source of income. According to Reid, even though there was never any evidence to associate Beardsley with a homosexual lifestyle, his connection to Wilde made the public suspicious of his morality and sexuality.[186] Because Beardsley was sickly, it is quite possible that he was not healthy enough to engage in sexual relationships.

But, to an enraged public, there would have been an obvious parallel, if an illogical one, between the supposed immorality of Wilde's actions, and the indecency of Beardsley's pictures, even if the latter may have been parodying the supposed homosexual qualities and lifestyle of his rival. Beardsley's reputation could not be salvaged, because he had developed a name for himself creating, in his own words, "obscene drawings," though he converted to Catholicism in 1897. He may have converted in anticipation of his impending death, although, his faith never wavered before his death in 1898.[187]

Other relationships offer evidence that Beardsley was professionally involved in the artistic *milieu* of the artists that we have been examining, such as Burne-Jones and Watts. Beardsley was acquainted with Watts, and in 1891 he met Burne-Jones, thereby

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[185] Reid, Beardsley 20. Beardsley's home was on Cambridge St. in London.
[186] Reid, Beardsley 25.
[187] Reid, Beardsley 26.

linking him to two of the most eminent artists in England at that time.[188] A letter written by Beardsley indicates that Burne-Jones was quite encouraging of his work, and that Beardsley greatly admired the successful artist, calling him 'the greatest living artist in Europe.'[189] An interesting aspect of the letter reveals, however, one of the things that bothered the public about the way in which Beardsley worked. Burne-Jones credited, according to Beardsley, the young artist with creating greatly accomplished drawings; but, he naturally assumed that Beardsley's ultimate goal was to become a painter, and that these drawings were merely the predecessors of grander original paintings. Despite his apparent skill, Beardsley never developed it into a career in painting. Instead, he chose to produce 'drawings' as original works, which could then be mass-produced. Outside of Burne-Jones's interest in manuscript illumination, which he explored through his work with Morris for the Kelmscott Press, he would never have limited his career to illustration alone, since this would not have earned him the respect that he craved as an artist.

Beardsley, then, carved a difficult path for himself, since he endeavoured to be respected and successful in the art world, by way of a medium that was considered more of a craft than an art. His dilemma, in some ways, mirrors the challenges faced by artists throughout the nineteenth century, as the standards for a 'finished,' 'high art' product changed over time. Delacroix, for example, was accused of producing sketches instead of completed paintings, because of his loose brushwork. This accusation would again be

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[188] Reid, Beardsley 8-9.

[189] Reid, Beardsley 8-9. Reid reproduces a letter by Beardsley that recounts his first meeting with Burne-Jones. Portions of it read:

> ...Burne-Jones, who escorted us back to his house and took us into the studio, showing and explaining us everything. His kindness was wonderful as we were perfect strangers, he not even knowing our names.
>
> ...I can tell you it was an exciting moment when he first opened my portfolio and looked at the first drawing...After he had examined them for a few minutes he exclaimed, "There is no doubt about your gift, one day you will most assuredly paint very great and beautiful pictures....All are full of thought, poetry, and imagination. Nature has given you every gift which is necessary to become a great artist, I seldom or never advise anyone to take up art as a profession, but in your case, I can do nothing else."
>
> And all of this from the greatest living artist in Europe. ...The Oscar Wildes and several others were there. All congratulated me on my success, as "Mr Burne-Jones is a very severe critic."
>
> "You must come and see me [Burne-Jones] often and bring your drawings with you. Design as much as you can...Every one of the drawings you have shown me would make beautiful paintings."

leveled at the Impressionists, and others. So Beardsley, by refusing to work in media of greater esteem in the hierarchy of the arts, set himself up for controversy and competition. Moreover, the broad outreach of Beardsley's mainstream media increased the threat of his influence, because he was poised to conquer the growing literate populace, possibly having even greater exposure to the public than the so-called fine artists.[190]

Beardsley fits very well with the other paragonising artists that I have considered. We have already observed that a distinguishing feature of these types of artists was that their hubris, or faith in their art, often led them to believe that they were 'meta-artists'--or in other words, that they could produce high-quality works in more than one medium. As I have noted, while it is more rational to assume that an artistically creative person may be inspired and skilled to work in a diverse range of media, it is in large part due to the codification of genius and artistic limits of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries that has left us with the belief that an artist is usually only gifted in one medium. Like Girodet, Michelangelo, Rossetti, Watts, Leonardo, and Gérôme, Beardsley considered himself a poet as well as a visual artist. As a youth he dabbled in writing plays, and continued to write for periodicals throughout his career.[191]

By virtue of his unusually provocative iconography, his refusal to work in mainstream 'high art' media, and his deliberate quotations of other artists's subject matter and style, Beardsley seemed to challenge the entire art world of late nineteenth-century England. To examine the root of the controversy, created by Beardsley's pictures, we can look to some of his quintessentially unconventional scenes. For example his illustrations for the English version of Wilde's play were so controversial, requiring censorship in some cases, that they incited an infamous competitive relationship between playwright and illustrator. Lorraine Janzen Kooistra has carefully studied how Beardsley challenged Wilde's text, concluding that he was familiar with Wilde's artistic theory, and that his illustrations intentionally turned the tables on Wilde. In so doing, Beardsley proved that the artist could take as much license as the art critic, by treating the literary

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[190] Bridget Elliott, Aubrey Beardsley (London: Academy Editions, 1995): X.
[191] Reid, Beardsley 7-8. For instance, he wrote the essay "A Confession Album" in 1890 for the periodical Tit Bits.

subject as inconsequential to his own creative inspiration.[192] Elliott Gilbert also explores the manner in which Beardsley's text rivals and relates to Wilde's play, determining that Beardsley was hardly offering respectful or faithful images.[193] Wilde was certainly irked by the strangeness of Beardsley's illustrations for his play, especially given that he was not granted artistic authority over the images before they were published.[194] So let us turn to an examination of Beardsley's approach to illustration.

Beardsley's Artificiality

One aspect of Beardsley's work that made it contradictory to Moreau's lofty social pursuits was its perceived artificiality. A look at other works, which the young artist completed as an illustrator, helps to reveal the consistency of his inconsistency as an artist, and the subversiveness of his approach to illuminating the literature that he was hired to illustrate. To establish the tradition of illustration in which Beardsley began his career, we can look to the trend in the Arts and Crafts movement of the time, and Beardsley's early work with such eminent figures as Morris and Burne-Jones. In mid-century Britain, many artists like Morris, who was the leader of the Arts and Crafts movement, and writers like Ruskin, advocated a turn away from the moral depravity of materialism, secularism, and greed, which they believed the industrial revolution had caused. Beardsley participated in this endeavour by agreeing to illustrate a new edition of Thomas Malory's Morte Darthur (1485) for the publisher J.M. Dent, who turned to Beardsley, because he was then at the very beginning of his career, and had not yet developed a name for himself as an artist of salacious imagery. After a chance meeting, events were set in place to bring the commission to Beardsley, since Dent was looking for an alternative to the much more expensive services of Burne-Jones, who was his first choice.[195] Due to the likeness of Beardsley's early designs to those of Burne-Jones and

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[192] Lorraine Janzen Kooistra, The Artist as Critic: Bitextuality in *Fin-de-Siècle* Illustrated Books (Aldershot, England: Scolar Press and Bookfield, VT.: Ashgate Publishing Company, 1995): 132.
[193] Gilbert, "Tumult of Images" 133-159.
[194] Shearer West, "The Visual Arts," The Cambridge Companion to *Fin-de-siècle*, ed. Gail Marshall (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007): 148.
[195] Weintraub, Beardsley 31. The author provides a comprehensive account of how Beardsley received the commission from the publisher J. M. Dent, after having been introduced to him in a bookshop.

Morris, Dent must have thought that Beardsley was a safe choice for the intended illustrations, which were to glorify and idealise the medieval style for modern viewers.

The Morte Darthur, in the context of the medieval revival that had spread across England throughout the nineteenth century, was expected to appeal to the Victorian love of an idealised and utopian view of the medieval era, as the moment when the great traditions of the English people took root, and when people lived in perfect harmony with God and nature.[196] Burne-Jones and Morris, in their collaborations at Kelmscott Manor, endeavoured to revive a medievalising style in art, having been inspired by their own travels across Europe to see the medieval monuments, and by contemporary writings, such as Ruskin's Stones of Venice (1850).[197] Ruskin's text glorified the Gothic style of Venetian architecture, and more importantly the medieval Venetian society in general, thereby advocating a revival of early modern sensibilities and lifestyles. So when Dent commissioned the new edition of Malory's text, he would have done so in the spirit of those such as Ruskin, Burne-Jones, and Morris, who would have promoted the medieval style as a tool in bringing about a return to more innocent, devout, and chivalric ideologies.[198] Unfortunately for Dent, Beardsley's penchant for stylistic experiment meant that the early images for the text were medievalising, but those towards the latter part of the project became increasingly eclectic, and departed from the medieval ideal that was expected to pervade all of the illustrations.[199] Beardsley's refusal to maintain a pure and sanctified chivalric theme demonstrates his rebellious approach to the illustration of literary sources, and the competitive relationships that existed between his images and the text. With respect to the Morte Darthur, the sense of rivalry is seen in the artist's almost satirical treatment of the medieval heroes and themes, where knights

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[196] See the article in press by Lippert, "The Answer may be Found in the Middle Ages: A Look at Some Artistic Perceptions of the Middle Ages in the Nineteenth Century," *Millennium, Madness, and Mayhem: Eschatology East and West*, ed. Christopher Beall (Warren, PA: Shangri-La Publications).
[197] See John Ruskin, The Stones of Venice, ed. J.G. Links (DeCapo Press, 2003).
[198] For studies of the medieval revivalism of Ruskin, the Pre-Raphaelites, and their circle see the following: Barringer, Reading the Pre-Raphaelites. Charles Eastlake, A History of Gothic Revival (London: Longmans, Green, 1872). Debra N. Mancoff, The Arthurian Revival in Victorian Art (New York and London: Garland Publishing Inc., 1990). Morris, The Decorative Arts and The Aims of Art. Edward Norman, The Victorian Christian Socialists (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987). Lindsay Parry, "The Tapestries of Edward Burne-Jones," Apollo 102 (Nov. 1975): 324-328. James Patrick, "Newman, Pugin and Gothic," Victorian Studies 24 (Winter1981): 185-207. Muriel A. Whitaker, Arthur's Kingdom of Adventure (Totowa, N.J.: Barnes and Noble, 1984).
[199] Joseph Pennell, "A New Illustrator: Aubrey Beardsley," The Studio 1 (1893): 14.

exhibit the silhouettes of corseted women, and presumably demure medieval women take on an unsettling aggression and androgyny.[200] Something must have gone wrong in the project, with respect to the public and the publisher's expectations of the end-result, because Beardsley was attacked for what many critics labelled the 'decadence' of his work.

The study of decadence is an expansive and contentious issue in contemporary aesthetic and critical theory, and is an area of scholarship that is far too vast to summarise here.[201] However, in my discussion of the subject, I will address its historicism and perceived qualities in the nineteenth century, rather than the many conflicting theories about what constitutes decadence, according to contemporary scholarship and critical theory. The issue of decadence in the nineteenth century is relevant to my investigation of the Salomé subject, since this figure, in large part because of Beardsley, came to represent decadence for many at this time. One of the best sources on the topic is Max Nordau's (1849-1923) Degeneration of 1892, which offers an explanation of what the author believed to be the quintessentially decadent features of modern life.[202] As a primary example of decadence, Nordau cites Huysmans's novel, and the lifestyle of its main character Des Esseintes. Other literary figures who were accused of supporting this decadent trend were Baudelaire, Zola, and Gautier, all of whom were, incidentally, also art critics.

The title of Huysmans's novel actually advertises one of the central beliefs about decadence at this time, according to Nordau, which was that it was artificial. Artifice was considered to be the opposite of nature; hence the title 'against nature.' The artificiality of the decadent lifestyle was exemplified by the kind of life that Des Esseintes led, which was one of abnormal habits and unnatural tendencies, including the avoidance of

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[200] See Muriel A. Whitaker, "Flat Blasphemies: Beardsley's Illustrations for Malory's Morte Darthur," Mosaic 8:2 (1975): 67-76.

[201] For approaches to the issue of decadence see the following: Barbara Spackman, "Interversions," Perennial Decay, eds. Liz Constable, Dennis Denisoff, and Matthew Potolsky (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1999): 35-49. Matei Calinescu, Five Faces of Modernity: Modernism, Avant-Garde, Decadence, Kitsch, Postmodernism (Durham: Duke University Press, 1987). Richard Jenkyns, Dignity and Decadence: Victorian Art and the Classical Inheritance (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1992). Philippe Jullian, Dreamers of Decadence: Symbolist Painters of the 1890's (New York and Washington: Praeger Publishers, 1971). John R. Reed, Decadent Style, (Athens, Ohio: Ohio University Press, 1985).

[202] The German edition was then followed in 1895 by the English version, which was published out of London.

fellowship with real people, preferring painted figures in artworks, and even avoidance of the basic necessities of life, such as eating and sleeping. Des Esseintes also shunned a moral and meaningful life as a contributor to society, by instead reveling in the mundane details of the artworks, and the stylised objects with which he adorned his house. Huysmans's character became so popular that he, along with his supposedly decadent colleague Flaubert, inspired a cult-like following of up-and-coming writers, who became obsessed with a decadent style of writing. In addressing what he perceived to be pervasive social and moral decline in modern Europe, Nordau aligned Des Esseintes with his creator, thereby claiming that it was in fact Huysmans who promoted an artificial and immoral lifestyle.[203] Such views, and the popularity of Huysmans's novel, made it seem to the English that decadence was an inherently French invention. Of course, the greatest fear on the northern side of the English Channel was that the stain of decadence would soon reach its shores.

The English inheritance of the supposedly French decadent style was perfectly exemplified in Wilde's work and lifestyle. When Wilde published his most famous novel, The Picture of Dorian Gray (1890), readers were introduced to an English version of Des Esseintes, who took the name of Dorian Gray. One of the main premises of Wilde's novel is that Gray had fallen under the mystical and inexplicable influence of a 'yellow book.' It was surely no coincidence, once again, that French novels were published with yellow covers. So even though Huysmans's novel is not named as Gray's favourite text, it would have been understood by contemporary readers to be the famously decadent French novel. Moreover, Gray's lifestyle mimicked that of Des Esseintes, as he became a slave to an artwork, only in this case it was, ironically, his own portrait. By virtue of the obvious similarities between these two works, and because Wilde himself was publicly acting out a Des Esseintes lifestyle, Nordau also attacked him for promoting social degeneration. For instance, Nordau wrote the following:

> The ego-mania of decadentism, its love of the artificial, its aversion to nature, and to all forms of activity and movement, its megalomaniacal contempt for men and its exaggeration of the importance of art, have found their English representative among the 'Aesthetes,' the chief of whom is Oscar Wilde.[204]

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[203] Max Nordau, Degeneration trans. unknown from the 2nd Ed. (London: Heinemann, 1913): 299.
[204] Nordau, Degeneration 317.

Of course, Wilde had obviously associated himself, in the most enthusiastic way, with artificiality. And, we must remember that in his own writings, addressing the art critic as artist, he celebrated the art critic's independence from nature. It is quite possible that Beardsley's artificiality, which he too came by 'naturally, became a particularly useful tool when illustrating Wilde's play, because he could heighten this quality in his work, so as to satirise Wilde's high-minded theoretical apology for his writing style.[205]

Beardsley began to become the focus of anti-decadent rhetoric, as many of his illustrations for major projects were published in advance of the manuscript in the popular media. For example, illustrations for both Salomé and the Morte Darthur were included in the premiere issue of the periodical Studio in 1893, and in The Yellow Book. Such illustrations were generally perceived to herald the revival of the sister arts tradition, or the intermingling of the arts as a whole, as book illustration had experienced a boon in popularity, with its increasing appeal to the newly literate masses.[206] Beardsley's independent artistic spirit was evident from the start. A critic identified, as one of its salient features, that "[I]n The Yellow Book the principle seems to be that one kind of contribution should *not* be made subordinate to another; the drawings and the writings are, in fact, independent."[207] Such critics lambasted Beardsley's eclecticism, accusing him of mixing and matching artistic influences like pairs of socks. A small few did, however, revel in this eclecticism. For instance, Beardsley's editor for The Studio, Joseph Pennell, was one of the few to praise Beardsley's *mélange* of stylistic influences:

> [T]hough Mr. Beardsley has drawn his motifs from every age, and founded his styles--for it is quite impossible to say what his style may be--on all schools, he has not been carried back into the fifteenth century, or succumbed to the limitations of Japan; he has recognized that he is living in the last decade of the nineteenth century…[208]

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[205] For more on Beardsley's artificiality and decadence see Chris Snodgrass, "Beardsley's Oscillating Spaces: Play, Paradox, and the Grotesque," Reconsidering Aubrey Beardsley, ed. Robert Langenfeld (Ann Arbor and London: U. M. I. Research Press, 1989): 22. And Elliott, Aubrey Beardsley XVII.
[206] Wettlaufer cites the rise of illustrated periodicals as part of this phenomenon. One of these, called L'Artiste, even went so far as to offer a platform, upon which artists of different media could act out their rivalries. Pen vs. Paintbrush 140-2.
[207] Philip Gilbert Hamerton, "The Yellow Book: A Criticism of Volume I," The Yellow Book 1:2 (1894): 179.
[208] Pennell, "A New Illustrator" 14.

Still, as Bridget Elliott argues, it was difficult for Beardsley's critics to take him seriously, precisely because of the inconsistency of his style.[209] He could not even stick to one style in the same project, such as the Morte Darthur. The critic Margaret Amour noted, "Mr. Beardsley has a trick of superimposing one style on another--Japanese on mediaeval, mediaeval on Celtic. That does not matter as long as he has the genius to unify…"[210]

Eclecticism had apparently become a trademark of decadence. In her examination of the issue, Barbara Spackman explores the emphasis on description in Huysmans's novel, as well as the nature of these descriptions. She observes that Huysmans too created an eclecticism of sorts in his work, by giving in to a mania for description, in order to satisfy all of the senses.[211] So, the diversity of Huysmans's decadent writing style was mirrored in Beardsley's layering of artistic styles. Wilde was also guilty of this diversity, by borrowing and blending the literary approaches of Huysmans, Pater, and other French writers into his own writing.[212]

In Beardsley's case, because his critics could not hold him to one stylistic standard, they resorted to an attack on the decadent impurity of his style, which as we have seen, was also leveled at Wilde. Other artists of the time, including Moreau and Burne-Jones, were equally eclectic in their style and iconography; but, these artists, working in more conventional fine arts media, managed to escape comparably intense criticism. This artistic eclecticism bespeaks that of the nineteenth century in general, which we have already seen, was a century of revivalism. But eclecticism becomes competitive when it results from intense artistic appropriation. In demonstrating such a diverse range of stylistic ability, such eclectic techniques allowed artists to proclaim their superiority, and that of their respective media, in capturing these varied influences.

In addition to devoting himself to stylistic inconsistency, Beardsley expanded the divide between art and nature, creating scenes of the imaginative and the grotesque.

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[209] Elliott, Aubrey Beardsley XIV.
[210] Armour, "The Decadents" 10.
[211] Spackman, "Interversions" 40.
[212] Charles Bernheimer, "Unknowing Decadence," Perennial Decay: On the Aesthetics and Politics of Decadence, eds. Liz Constable, Dennis Denisoff, and Matthew Potolsky (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1999): 61.

Beardsley himself admitted, "Of course I have one aim--the grotesque. If I am not grotesque, I am nothing."[213] Interestingly, the current definition of the grotesque almost perfectly matches Nordau's definition of degeneracy, which he claimed was "a morbid deviation from an original type."[214] The grotesque continues to be defined as a distortion that results in ugliness and revulsion.[215] Apparently Beardsley reached his goal, which a critic of his work confirmed: "As a feast of fantastic and eerie conceptions, some of rare beauty and not a few wrought with grotesque *diablerie*, it will delight (or exasperate as the case may be) all who take an interest in the applied arts."[216] There was, certainly, an extensive repertoire of grotesque identities in Beardsley's works, some of which Chris Snodgrass identified, including hermaphrodites, androgynes, *pierrots*, and fetuses.[217] Because all of these characters were deviations from the expected *beau idéal*, or even the social norm, they represented a radical departure from nature.

Beardsley became an expert at manipulating these grotesque figures, to achieve the greatest sarcastic effect. In the Morte Darthur, which is a tale of grand chivalric knightly heroes, it is the androgyne, being the epitome of anti-masculine heroism, which is the most common. On the other hand, in Salomé, where one expects to see figures worthy of both male and female desire, the scenes are invaded by hermaphrodites, and other controversial entities. By resisting sexual classification, the androgyne limits the viewer's ability to fit the figure into a normal category of good or evil, or male or female. Two chapter headings from Salomé (1893-4) illustrate this kind of ambiguity.[218] Here a hermaphroditic Pan-like figure graces the beginning of the play, and is accompanied by a disturbingly androgynous angelic figure. In each image, both the identity and the purpose of the figures are unclear, making them uncomfortably grotesque in the eyes of

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[213] Whitaker, "Flat Blasphemies" 74. Whitaker reports that Beardsley made this statement in an 1897 interview for The Idler.
[214] Nordau, Degeneration 16.
[215] Collins Concise Dictionary and Thesaurus, New Edition (London: HarperCollins Publishers, 1995) 415. For an examination of the theoretical nature of the grotesque see Snodgrass, "Oscillating Spaces" 28. See also P.H. Rathbone, Realism, Idealism and the Grotesque in Art: Their Limits and Functions (Liverpool: 1877).
[216] "New Publications: Le Morte Darthur by Sir Thomas Malory, Illustrated by Aubrey Beardsley," The Studio 2 (1894): 184.
[217] Snodgrass, "Oscillating Spaces" 28.
[218] Aubrey Beardsley, Salome, *Frontispiece*, 1893-4, Ink on paper. Censored Version of Salomé Frontispiece, 1893-4, Ink on paper.

unsuspecting viewers.[219] Because the original design was so shocking, Beardsley was required to create a censored version.

An image that emphasises the more playful side of Beardsley's glorification of the grotesque is the border and heading for Chapter I, Book II of the Morte Darthur. Here, a group of lively satyr-like figures engage in various activities, while entangled in the border's thorny design. The humourous facial expressions are at once countered by the disturbing anatomical presence of breasts. Typically, in Greek mythology satyrs were extremely sexually aggressive male creatures.[220] Yet, despite their masculine muscular bodies and wily expressions, the artist portrayed them as more or less decidedly female. So, the history of associating these mythological figures with male sexual aggression makes their female anatomy aberrant.[221]

Seeking an excuse for this new brand of English decadence, the English naturally blamed the French for such a move towards the grotesque, which is evidenced by the connections that were drawn in the popular media between Beardsley's decadence and the French Rococo style. The British saw the Rococo era as a French-driven movement; therefore decadence was a perversion of English Aestheticism, just as the Rococo corrupted the Baroque. Beardsley in fact contributed to his alignment with the Rococo, by completing illustrations for The Rape of the Lock of 1896, which he primarily portrayed in a revival of French eighteenth-century style. Still, this does not entirely explain why critics made this association. An anonymous critic writing for the London Figaro of April 20, 1893, wrote the following of Beardsley's style:

> The drawings are flat blasphemies against art. Burne-Jones I admire and the oddities of Japanese draughtsmanship I can appreciate but when a man mixes up impotent imitations of Burne-Jones at his very worst with pseudo-Japanese

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[219] For an examination of the changing views towards gender and sexuality in nineteenth-century culture see the following: Showalter, Sexual Anarchy. Alison Smith, The Victorian Nude: Sexuality, Morality and Art (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1996). Linda Gertner Zatlin, Aubrey Beardsley and Victorian Sexual Politics (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1990). Camille Paglia, Art and Decadence from Nefertiti to Emily Dickinson (New York: Vintage Books, 1990). Linda Nochlin, Women in the Nineteenth Century (New York: New Press, 1997).

[220] Marcin Fabiański, "Correggio's "Venus, Cupid and a 'Satyr'." Its Form and Iconography," Artibus et Historiae 17:33 (1996): 161.

[221] For more on the fantasy and grotesque characters in Beardsley's work see Snodgrass, "Oscillating Spaces" 19-52. And Weintraub, Imp of the Perverse.

> effects, and serves up the whole with a sauce of lilies and peacock feathers, I think it is only charitable to think that the author of all this rococo business has a twist in his intellects.[222]

The critic in question was responding to the second issue of The Studio in 1894, which had released several Morte Darthur images with *The Peacock Skirt* from Salomé.[223] The complete edition of Wilde's text with Beardsley's illustrations was similarly identified as quintessentially decadent:

> Those who dislike Mr. Beardsley's work will be happy in the possession of the documentary evidence to support their opinion, while those who find it the very essence of the decadent *fin de siècle* will rank *Salome* as the typical volume of a period too recent to estimate its actual value, and too near to judge of its ultimate influence on decorative art. All collectors of rare and esoteric literature will rank this book as one of the most remarkable productions of the modern press.[224]

Having inherited an emphasis on decoration from Aestheticism, decadence was considered, like the Rococo, to be an extreme form of the decorative. Despite the efforts of Morris, and the Arts and Crafts Society, the connection remained entrenched between the decorative arts and the feminine, since these art forms were initially produced mainly by women in the domestic sphere.[225] The shell-like motifs, soft pastel colours, and excessive surface decoration of the Rococo style, all shared a feminine quality, according to nineteenth-century artists and critics.[226] Lingering contempt in England for the Rococo style is clear in the words of R. A. Stevenson, addressing the shift from the Baroque to Rococo style: "The great decorative panel of Italy expired in a trick of piled-up limbs, wagging beards, flaunting drapery, and artificially balanced blocks of colour. Its decorative principle became a cheap receipt, and real art fled from the pompous inflation of curly wiggery which ensued."[227] The writer for The Studio shows us that Beardsley's work was aligned with the decorative arts, rather than the fine arts, revealing that

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[222] Whitaker, "Flat Blasphemies" 67.
[223] Whitaker, "Flat Blasphemies" 67.
[224] The Studio 2 (1894): 185.
[225] This connection is elaborately played out in the article by Vallance, "The Arts and Crafts" 3-27.
[226] Jan Thompson, "The Role of Woman in the Iconography of the Art Nouveau," Art Journal 31 (1971-72): 160.
[227] R. A. Stevenson, "The Growth of Recent Art," The Studio 1 (1893): 8.

Beardsley was unhappily assigned a lower level in the hierarchy of the arts in Victorian society.

These attacks on style were not as superficial as they might at first seem. In reality, critics of both decadence and the Rococo were sometimes responding out of an actual fear for the degeneracy of their countrymen, if not all of humankind. For example, parallels were drawn between the morality and lifestyle of the Rococo era and decadent societies. The Rococo period represented the swing of the pendulum towards decadence; critics expected the perceived manifestation of decadence in the nineteenth century to be motivated by the same indulgences and desires as the similarly excessive Rococo.[228] Blaming either the Rococo or decadence on a foreign country was just another way to reinforce its foreign quality and otherness. For instance, Beardsley's notorious peacock motif, which he used in many different works, although inspired by a trip to James Whistler's home in London, was much more comfortably traced to the description of Moreau's Salomé paintings in Huysmans's novel, than to Whistler, who had become a celebrated member of English society.[229]

But no matter who was blamed for inventing decadence, the immorality of art was Nordau's central concern. He argued that the theory of art-for-art's sake was simply a crutch, allowing decadent writers and artists to behave criminally. He contended that art could never be its own amoral end, because an artist relies upon influencing the public, in order to sustain an income.[230] For this reason, Nordau chastised what he believed to be the glorification of evil in decadent art:

> Existing vice does not satisfy them; they invent, they rival each other in seeking for, *new evil*, and if they find it they applaud each other. Which is worst, the Sabbath-

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[228] See Kenneth McConkey, "A Walk in the Park: Memory and Rococo Revivalism in the 1890s," English Art 1860-1914: Modern Artists and Identity, eds. David Peters Corbett and Lara Perry (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2000): 100-15.

[229] Weintraub, Imp of the Perverse 66. Weintraub also tells us that when Beardsley visited France in 1892 he admired the work of eighteenth-century French artists, and particularly the humourous eroticism of their work, including their hermaphroditic-looking figures. Weintraub, Imp of the Perverse 29. It is not surprising that the British also blamed the French for Beardsley's Japonisme. Zatlin explains that the French liked the 'low' Japanese style and were not nearly as shocked by its sexual content as the British were. Criticism of the Japanese style also stemmed from western prejudice. Linda Gertner Zatlin, Aubrey Beardsley's Japonisme, and the Perversion of the Victorian Ideal (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997): 23.

[230] Nordau, Degeneration 325.

> orgies of the body or those of the mind, of criminal action or of perverted thought? To reason, justify, to apotheosize evil, to establish its ritual, to show the excellence of it--is this not worse than to commit it? To adore the demon, or love evil, the abstract or the concrete term of one and the same fact. There is blindness in the gratification of instinct, and madness in the perpetration of misdeeds; but to conceive and theorize exacts a calm operation of the mind which is the *vice suprême*.[231]

Nordau also claimed that the decadent always rejects mainstream opinions, perhaps to associate its supporters with socially deviant groups, which increasingly gave credence to minorities, (such as women, homosexuals, and ethnic groups, all of whom were already rallying for rights in Victorian society). But as Michael Riffaterre observes, decadence was by no means always marginal; many so-called decadent works were popular and part of mainstream culture.[232] As we have discussed, the ability of easily reproducible decadent media to affect the masses was what made it so threatening. Elliott explains that several factors contributed to Beardsley's threatening popularity, such as the rise of a working class with increased purchasing power, the increase of literacy in Britain, and the mass-production of images, enabled by new printing technology.[233] It was the unbridled power of popular culture that increased rivalry between Beardsley and his 'fine art' contemporaries, as his medium competed with the reach of the 'fine art's in more limited, if elite, audiences. Additionally, despite his apparent alignment with French culture, Beardsley's illustrations in popular periodicals were often encoded with specifically English cultural references, taken from the dance halls and other dubious locations, in order to create an audience of 'in-the-know' viewers in his native England.[234]

Many of Beardsley's critics shared Nordau's view of the decadents. Armour's adjectives, employed to explain Beardsley's work, clearly implicate Beardsley as one of

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[231] Nordau, Degeneration 298.
[232] Michael Riffaterre, "Decadent Paradoxes," Perennial Decay: On the Aesthetics and Politics of Decadence, trans. Liz Constable and Matthew Potolsky, eds. Liz Constable, Dennis Denisoff, and Matthew Potolsky (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1999): 65. As examples of mainstream decadence Riffaterre suggests: Gautier's Comédie de la Mort N.D., and Baudelaire's Les Fleures du Mal of 1868.
[233] Elliott, Aubrey Beardsley X.
[234] Bridget Elliott, "Covent Garden Follies: Beardsley's Masquerade Images of Posers and Voyeurs," Oxford Art Journal 9:1 (1986): 38-48. Refer to this article for more on the interpretation of Beardsley's unique imagery, and his pop culture references.

the immoral decadents, (as far as she is concerned); she even went so far as to identify him as the 'chief purveyor' of the decadents.[235] For example, she wrote:

> The Decadents supply stronger food, but they mix it with a poison that makes it perilous to follow…Art-for-art's sake is sound doctrine. The first concern of pictorial art is with line and colour. It has no more to do with preaching than a sunset. *Non*-moral it may be as much as it pleases, but *im*moral never. The moment it becomes immoral it does concern itself with ethics, and denies the principle of beauty in its moral manifestation.[236]

Written a year after Nordau's English publication of Degeneration, Armour's critique contended that while non or amoral art may have its place, immoral art is another matter, which should be of concern to society at large. Most of Beardsley's critics acknowledged the 'genius' of his formal designs, but compliments of this nature were inevitably followed by an attack on either the artist's personal behaviour, or the subject matter of his work.

Beardsley's art also came under attack, due to increasing concerns about not just the health of the art world, but of British society in general. Among other scientific discoveries, Charles Darwin's (1809-82) theory of evolution, put forth in On the Origin of Species by Means of Natural Selection, or the Preservation of Favoured Races in the Struggle for Life of 1859, had sparked grave concerns regarding the nation's racial and cultural progress. Altruism was taken to a new level; now individuals were responsible for the welfare of themselves, their society, and their race.[237] The creative progeny of artists soon came to be judged as if it was physical offspring, and if decadent art was to be the new generation, then clearly it could extinguish the cultural legacy of the English

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[235] Armour, "The Decadents" 9.

[236] Armour, "The Decadents" 11. Other critics like Hamerton attacked the morality of Beardsley's art, as well as the figures therein:

> There seems to be a peculiar tendency in Mr. Beardsley's mind to the representation of types without intellect and without morals. Some of the most dreadful faces in all art are to be found in the illustrations…There is distinctly a sort of corruption in Mr. Beardsley's art so far as its human element is concerned…

Hamerton, The Yellow Book 187.

[237] West, Fin-de-siècle 71.

race, if not the race itself.[238] Decadence appeared to be the proverbial illness that would wipe out the English. The critic Margaret Armour made this comparison in her article:

> We have had as much corruption (decadence) before, followed by the most austere purity. England has wonderful recuperative powers. She has been sick to death a dozen times, but never dreams of dying…Why not hoist the Decadents altogether off our shoulders and saddle them on to France? She has a nice broad back for such things, and Mr. Beardsley won't be the last straw by many. Let us hug ourselves on our iron constitution, and the clean bill of health we should have, but for the tainted whiffs from across the Channel that lodge the Gallic germs in our lungs…That art like Beardsley's, so excellent in technique and so detestable in spirit, wakes more repugnance than praise--proves us a nation stronger in ethics than in art.[239]

It is interesting to note that France was perceived to be somehow naturally decadent, and that it had managed to draw England in, when, according to Armour, the British people would normally not have participated in such a thing. The affectations of illness were associated with decadence too. Des Esseintes provided the template for the unhealthy decadent; he suffered a lack of appetite, weak constitution, slept all day, and never went outdoors. Likewise, Beardsley lived the life of a convalescent, though never recovering from his illness.

A decadence that came to be defined by biological degeneracy, and a lack of altruism, essentially modernised the age-old view of decadence as a form of self-indulgence. In Degeneration, Nordau correlated the perceived self-indulgences and excesses of decadence, to the instinctual behaviour governed by the unconscious mind of the individual. Essentially, Nordau suggested that when animal instincts, (originating in the unconscious mind), govern one's conscious life, (conditioned by societal norms), the result is the irresponsible gratification of the senses, including sexual desire.[240] If one were to leave excessive indulgences of decadent behaviour unchecked, then any number

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[238] Liz Constable, Perennial Decay: On the Aesthetics and Politics of Decadence, trans. Liz Constable and Matthew Potolsky, eds. Liz Constable, Dennis Denisoff, and Matthew Potolsky (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1999): 5.
[239] Armour, "The Decadents" 11-12.
[240] Nordau, Degeneration 312-313.

of possibilities could occur: obesity, perversion, moral depravity, and even death.[241] Beardsley's chapter heading of the satyrs illustrates both the excess and depravity of decadent sexuality. Typically in ancient Greek, Roman, as well as Renaissance and Baroque art, satyrs were shown participating in various forms of bacchanalia. One classic example is Annibale Carracci's (1560-1609) *Triumph of Bacchus* of 1597-1601, in which the satyrs lead the party for Bacchus's wedding.[242] These indulgent romps were marked by excessive consumption of food, wine, and sex. Bacchus, the god of wine and excess himself, usually presided over these festivities, where participants indulged every desire of the flesh. The thorny brambles in which Beardsley's satyrs play no doubt associated pain with sexual desire.[243] Indeed, the whip-like vines suggest flagellation and sadism.[244] This sort of playfulness also came under attack, such as in the comments of a critic for Punch:

> The erotic affairs that you fiddle aloud/ Are as vulgar as coin of the mint;/ And you merely distinguish yourself from the crowd/ By the fact that you put them in print…/ For your dull little vices we don't care a fig,/ It is this that we deeply deplore;/ You were cast for a common or usual pig,/ But you play the invincible bore.[245]

Beardsley's use of the satyr as a mythological 'high art' reference, to convey the basest of human animal instincts, demonstrates the type of decadent self-indulgence irritated his critics. Beardsley's viewers were also unnerved by the feeling that there were hidden meanings, or at the very least, ambivalent messages in his works.

Nordau himself commented on this, saying: "The decadent snob is an anti-social Philistine, suffering from a mania for contradiction, without the smallest feeling for the work of art itself."[246] The paradoxical messages and troubling contradiction of

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[241] Bernheimer, "Decadence" 50. Bernheimer reminds us that Huysmans's and Des Esseintes's favourite novel was Émile Zola's La Faute de l'Abbé Mauret N.D., in which sex is portrayed as mere animal instinct and was ultimately fatal.
[242] The Age of Correggio and the Carracci, exh. cat. (New York: The Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1987). The Drawings of Annibale Carracci, (Washington: The National Gallery, 2008).
[243] Whitaker, "Flat Blasphemies" 74.
[244] Snodgrass, "Oscillating Spaces" 34.
[245] "To Any Boy-Poet of the Decadence," Punch 9 Jun. 1894: 276. It is worth observing that in this case, and it was not isolated, the art critic employs a poetic response to criticise Beardsley's images. The cleverness of the message is in itself participating in artistic rivalry.
[246] Nordau, Degeneration 307.

Beardsley's works flew in the face of Victorian thinking. As clear distinctions between the social classes and the genders began to erode in Victorian society, the collective anxiety over transgressed boundaries made it increasingly important to be able to classify things clearly.[247] Even discussing Beardsley's works was risky, because in claiming to have understood the erotic jokes and compositional trickery, they immediately implicated themselves as decadents. For example, it was assumed that those who attended the French plays, being performed in London, had been inducted into decadent knowledge and tastes.[248] According to a critic for Punch, it was the 'Decadents' who "Nightly they gathered at any of the Theatres where the plays of Mr. Wilde were being given."[249] By creating this circle of insiders, Beardsley and other decadents increased the aura of fear and paranoia surrounding decadent art and literature. As such, the expectation of hidden meaning in Beardsley's work contributed to the public's curiosity, making his influence seem all the more dangerous.

Beardsley and the Body Ugly

Another inflammatory issue for Beardsley's critics was his seeming transformation of the human figure into a decrepit and deviant creature, including his depictions of Salomé. Whether or not viewers and readers liked the depictions of Salomé by Moreau or Wilde, or not, they had, at the very least, come to expect that she would be a perfect embodiment of the *beau idéal*. By not following this mandate, Beardsley would suffer radical attacks upon his character.[250] Many of Beardsley's critics chastised the ugliness of his figures. One of his most vehement critics, Armour, dwelled on the grotesque aspects of Beardsley's style, in her review of his work for the Morte Darthur and The Yellow Book:

> A certain grossness, which revolts one even in his treatment of inanimate things, gets free rein in his men and women…There is hardly an adjective in the

[247] Zatlin, Japonisme 28.
[248] Riffaterre, "Paradoxes" 173.
[249] Punch (Feb., 2, 1895): 58.
[250] For a discussion of the themes in British art criticism in the nineteenth century see Flint, "Moral Judgement" 59-66.

> dictionary too ugly to sling at the hectic vice, the slimy nastiness of those faces…Beardsley is a Decadent, and must do as the Decadents do: he must gloat upon ugliness and add to it; and when it is not there he must create it…To be a devout Decedent, too, you must not only be wicked; you must be worse--as Punch would say--you must be vulgar.[251]

While Beardsley's figures certainly failed to match traditional viewers's expectations, regarding the human figure's representation, the degree of disgust expressed over their ugliness suggests that he even rebelled against traditional expectations of the visual arts in general.[252] By contrast, Moreau tried to deploy paradoxes in his art to teach moral and ethical lessons. In *fin-de-siècle* culture, the creation of beauty had become art-for-art's sake's central objective, justifying the Aesthetic movement, with which Beardsley himself was associated, since he fraternised with its luminaries. But Beardsley even rejected the assumption that visual art had to be beautiful, and consequently defied centuries of artistic tradition, including the presiding movements of the day, thereby freeing himself from the conventional limits of the visual arts. Critics also blamed Beardsley for promoting the irreparable and disastrous rupture of nature and art, which is evident in the words of a critic for Punch: "And Beardsley shows us now the nude;/ It would not shock the primmest prude,/ Or rouse the legislature./ An unclothed woman, ten feet high,/ Could not make anyone feel shy;/ She's "art," she is not nature."[253] In Beardsley's world, artists were no longer expected to justify their aesthetic choices, and they were not beholden to the 'rules' about improving on nature's examples, such as working from the model, antique sculpture, or plaster casts.

Still more critics of the Morte Darthur and Salomé manuscripts criticised the manner in which he took artistic license, and deviated from nature:

> But all the same, you need not maim/ A beauty reared on Nature's rules;/ A simple maid *au naturel*/ Is worth a dozen spotted ghouls/…Howe'er it be, it seems to me,/ It's not important to be New;/ New art would better Nature's best,/ But Nature knows a thing or two./…Are there no models at your gate,/ Live,

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[251] Armour, "The Decadents" 10. Aymer Vallance, an early supporter of Beardsley, also cited his work as decadent in his article "The Invention of Aubrey Beardsley," The Magazine of Art 30 (1898): 367. Here Vallance commented specifically on the grotesque image of *Iokanaan*.
[252] For more on this issue see Henry Ladd, The Victorian Morality of Art: An Analysis of Ruskin's Esthetic (New York: R. Long and R. R. Smith, Inc., 1932).
[253] "Literature and Art," Punch 9 Mar. 1895: 118.

> shapely, possible and clean?/ Then by all means bestrew your scenes/ With half the lotuses that blow, Pothooks and fishing-lines and things,/ But let the human woman go.[254]

Given that Beardsley's work conjured an anti-*beau idéal*, it became the opposite of Moreau's objectives. Except for some gory details that served a specific didactic purpose in his paintings, Moreau refrained from depicting ugly figures, by allowing moral ugliness to cloak itself in the beautiful veneer of his idealised figures, and in the over-the-top sensuality of his paintings.[255] As conventional as it may seem for Moreau to have insisted on portraying the *beau idéal*, his approach to the concept was similarly unconventional. As we have seen, Moreau's figures actually defied the time-honoured expectation that outward beauty should correlate to inner morality. Moreau allowed the beauty of his 'evil' figures to cast a veil over the deception of evil in modern life. In this regard, he shared something with Beardsley, whose critics similarly chastised him for rejecting the expectation that heroes and heroines should be both moral and beautiful. As a critic for The Yellow Book put it:

> There seems to be a peculiar tendency in Mr. Beardsley's mind to the representation of types without intellect and without morals. Some of the most dreadful faces in all art are to be found in the illustrations (full of exquisite ornamental invention) to Mr. Oscar Wilde's "Salome."…There is distinctly a sort of corruption in Mr. Beardsley's art so far as its human element is concerned, but not at all in its artistic qualities, which show the perfection of discipline, of self-control, and of thoughtful deliberation at the very moment of invention.[256]

Beardsley's 'immoral' figures were a hot topic in late nineteenth-century England, where sexual politics made the nude's representation a still much-debated and loaded issue. Hatt asserts that despite the scholarly emphasis on the male nude's appeal to gay artists and viewers in the 1880s and 90s, it was actually concern over the female nude and heterosexual desire that became the focus critics and the public. Male nudes had not been particularly controversial in England, while the female nude became a favourite target of purists and moralists. This concern over the proper sexual conduct of

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[254] "Ars Postera," Punch 21 (Apr., 1894): 189.
[255] Lippert, Gustave Moreau 64.
[256] Hamerton, The Yellow Book 187. The critique dates to 1894.

women, (in both art and society), possibly explains why the *femme fatale* appealed to artists with a rebellious nature.[257] If true, then artists such as Wilde and Beardsley, who were drawn to more sensational subjects, successfully exploited Salomé's story of illicit lust for a sacred figure, as a kind of parody of the debates over sexuality and gender roles that had been going on for years. The transgressive undertones that still remained at the end of the nineteenth century, regarding the female nude, in England at least, would have provided appealing aspects for competitive artists who wanted to draw attention to their works, and garner public interest in both themselves and their art forms. In other words, for an ambitious artist who was willing to exploit controversy to achieve fame, 'no press was bad press.' While female nudes were considered a potentially corrupting force, even upon the minds of enlightened and educated artists who studied them, the male nude was upheld as a refining and morally edifying image for the average middle-class home. This view, Hatt suggests, may have been supported by the British love of athletics, where physical discipline was identified with moral discipline, such that the athletic and vigourous nude, which was much preferred at this time, could be looked to as a role model for both mind and body.

The cult of this healthy, athletic, masculine ideal reached its height in the 1890s, as a way to temper distress over the belief that the English were a civilisation in decline, both morally and in terms of scientific evolution.[258] In this context, it serves to look at the personal, and even physical, attributes of a figure like Beardsley. He was known for his tall, lanky, pale, and generally weak appearance, which was routinely exploited in caricatures, such as that from the February 2, 1895 edition of Punch.[259] The caricature shows Beardsley wearing a ridiculous feminine concoction of ruffles and ribbons, clearly

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[257] Hatt, "Physical Culture" 241. Refer to this article for an analysis of Frederic Leighton and the New Sculpture Movement, which began in the 1870s in England and successfully revived the ideal treatment of the male nude in British sculpture.

[258] Hatt, "Physical Culture" 243-4. Hatt cites Leighton's *Athlete Wrestling with a Python* (1877) as an example of the preference for this kind of vigourous masculine nude. The perfect living exemplar of this ideal was Eugene Sandow, depicted by Henry van der Weyde in 1890, who publicly celebrated his perfect physique, which was compared to the marble athletes of ancient sculpture. His life story was evocative of the ideal path for young boys, as he faced health challenges as a youth, and then grew to overcome them, having been inspired by the antique marbles that he had seen in Rome as a youth (43-44). For a look at the issue in art criticism see T.E. Morgan, "Reimagining Masculinity in Victorian Criticism: Swinburne and Pater," Sexualities in Victorian Britain, eds. Andrew H. Miller and James Eli Adams (Indiana: Indiana University Press, 1996): 140-156.

[259] Anonymous Caricature of Aubrey Beardsley, Punch, volume 108, February 5, 1895.

mocking the fashionable costume of Aesthetes such as Beardsley, Wilde, and their circle. In the caricature, Beardsley pulls a cart with the title The Yellow Book. If Beardsley viewed his weakened, tubercular-self as a poor example of the masculine ideal, it follows that his revelry in distorting the masculine ideal could have stemmed from these personal circumstances. His impoverished male physique made him the perfect critic of the stereotypes to which he could never live up.

Of all the ways in which Beardsley's critics found his work offensive, it was his apparent 'disrespect' for the integrity of the text that garnered him real enemies. For instance, he often added his own material, including entirely new scenes, narrative vignettes, and even new characters to the narrative. In Salomé, he undermined the text's authority by illustrating events that Wilde did not emphasise or describe, as evidenced in the *Toilette of Salomé II*, in which a grotesque creature has entered Salomé's boudoir to help her with her toilette.[260] The illustration shows the young woman posing, primping, and looking into a mirror Narcissistically, which can be linked to Wilde's reputation as a posing-Aesthete, consumed with his appearance. Beardsley also introduced characters or features that do not exist in the text, such as his many fetuses, hermaphrodites, and other inhuman, bizarre monsters.[261] Otherwise, Beardsley was prone to representing figures in such a way that contradicted their textual description. Salomé is often, for example, not shown as an alluring and youthful specimen of seductive femininity. Instead, she is frequently a surprisingly erect, tall, powerful, and unattractive young woman. An overriding theme of ambiguity also pervades the illustrations, which destabilises the image's assumed dependence on the text. This ambiguity is created through sexually ambiguous or hermaphroditic figures, vague and ill-defined spatial relationships between figures, a host of humourous behaviour and sexual innuendo, and a *mélange* of inexplicable Beardsleyesque iconography.

It is also obvious that Beardsley mocked Wilde's iconophobic tale through the fetishism of looking in his images. His grotesque and diabolical monsters distract the viewer from the main characters, offer a bevy of voyeuristic activity, and undercut

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[260] Aubrey Beardsley, Salomé, *Toilette of Salome II*, 1894, Ink on paper.
[261] Schweik has also observed these radical departures in the illustrations from Wilde's text. "Oscar Wilde's *Salome*" 128-9.

Wilde's calculated iconophobic warnings against lustful gazes. In the *Original Cover Design* showing a bouquet of peacock feather tips resembling eyes, Beardsley introduced the most significant iconographic element to both the textual and illustrated story.[262] Peacock feather tips standing for eyes, was a symbol that Beardsley had used in other works, to introduce the theme of looking. In the aptly titled *The Eyes of Herod* the peacock feathers make up the princess's headdress, identifying her role as object and purveyor of the lustful gaze, while an actual peacock appears at her feet.[263] Herod is the voyeur, peering illicitly at the semi-clothed Salomé from behind a curtain. Also part of this iconography of looking are the masks being carried or worn by various figures, and some intermediary figures that make eye contact with the viewer, directing his or her attention to the image rather than the text. Beardsley's illustrations have the first and final say in this book, since his abstract biomorphic design decorates the front cover, and an illustration that is not even included in the table of contents graces the final page. *The Curtain* shows Salomé being placed in a coffin by grotesques; and no text appears on the opposite page to illuminate the context.[264]

The destabilising imagery continues in the *Platonic Lament,* showing a grieving androgyne bending over the deceased, the figures are completely de-spacialised; one of them hovers, the caricature of Wilde floats in the clouds, another is levitating, a tree stands in mid-air, and none of the feet of any of the figures are shown, removing any suggestion of a ground line.[265] The title clearly mocks the high-minded spirituality of Neoplatonic Aestheticism. For *Enter Herodias*, Beardsley caricaturised the play itself, as he depicted yet another cartoon of its author, identifying him by the attribute of the play, which he carries.[266] The scene shows Herodias, a page, and a fetus facing the viewer, while a costumed Wilde points towards the group from the foreground. This was one of the revised scenes for the play, since the publisher John Lane did not approve of the page's exposed genitals, which the censored version covers. Given the prominent inclusion of Wilde in the scene, who points towards the erect penis of the fetus, it is

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[262] Aubrey Beardsley, Salomé, *Cover*, 1894, Ink on paper.
[263] Aubrey Beardsley, Salomé, *The Eyes of Herod*, 1894, Ink on paper.
[264] Aubrey Beardsley, Salomé, *The Curtain*, 1894, Ink on paper.
[265] Aubrey Beardsley, Salomé, *The Platonic Lament*, 1894, Ink on paper.
[266] Aubrey Beardsley, Salomé, *Enter Herodias*, 1894, Ink on paper.

understandable that he too opposed the illustration.[267] The copy of the play in Wilde's hand completely deconstructs the very illusion that Beardsley's images were requested to fulfill, when he was hired to illustrate the text. Here the title also provides a vulgar if comical layer of meaning. "Enter Herodias" could be a play on words referring to sexual penetration, which would explain why the monster beside Herodias bears an erection-like protrusion. This would not have been out of character for Beardsley, who employed a personal symbol to 'sign' his works that also implied penetration.[268] It is equally possible that the title served as a theatrical notation, marking the entrance of the character onto the stage. Yet this would have been similarly antagonistic, in forcefully reminding the viewer of the inherent awkwardness in reading a play, rather than seeing it performed. Otherwise, the scene serves no narrative purpose with respect to the text, except to highlight the artificiality of the author's vision, which can only come to life in visual recreation, whether on the stage or by the artist's hand.

Further suspicious behaviour is invoked in *The Eyes of Herod*, where the king's facial features are virtually identical to those of Wilde, such that Beardsley equated the author with the lascivious, lustfully gazing king. The artist perhaps felt that this was an appropriate comparison, since Herod fell prey to the hedonism of his court, while Wilde indulged in the profligacy of his Aesthetic lifestyle. Moreover, both Herod and Wilde harboured what were then considered unhealthy sexual desires, the former in the form of incest, and the latter through homosexuality.

Beardsley also upsets Wilde's artistic equilibrium by upstaging the scandalously decadent play with even more overtly salacious details in the imagery. For instance, only Salomé and her monstrous attendant appear in *The Toilette of Salom*é, but anecdotal details hint at the kind of lifestyle that these characters live. The decadence of Herod's court is given a modern equivalent, as Beardsley titled many of the books on Salomé's bookshelf, according to what were considered the most provocative texts in the late nineteenth century. These include the following: The Golden Ass, by Manon Lescaut, Les Fêtes bachantes, by the Marquis de Sade, and Zola's Nanna. The location of these

[267] Brian Reade, "Enter Herodias: Or What Really Happened?" Bulletin of the Los Angeles County Museum of Art 22 (1976): 62.
[268] Reid, Beardsley 19.

books in Salomé's boudoir indicates that she, like the play itself, has been corrupted by their decadent influences.

The Climax

Beardsley's compendium of titillating and subversive imagery reaches its zenith in the final scene of Wilde's play, called the *Climax.* The title reveals quite clearly Beardsley's intent. He created two versions of the *The Climax*, one bearing the French title *J'ai baisé ta bouche Iokanaan (I Kiss your mouth Iokanaan)*, both of which show the pivotal moment of the play when Salomé clutches the blood-dripping head of the Baptist, both of them floating in the air.[269] In this climactic moment between the two central characters, the union of Salomé and the Baptist is consummated not by a glance, as in Moreau's work, but by the kiss for which Wilde's Salomé so longed. Beardsley does not neglect to include Moreau's famous lotus flower, nor the blood dripping from the Baptist's head. Beardsley's Salomé is not a delicate flower who faints at the sight of blood. Instead, she is so perverse that the still bleeding flesh does not deter her lust; perhaps she is even drawn to it.

Beardsley's focus on the sexually aggressive Salomé may have been based on Wilde's version, which Richard Dellamora argues was most controversial because of the inappropriately overt sexual desire of its main female character.[270] This lustful and fatal depiction of Salomé was supported in Wilde's play, since the writer chose to abandon the Biblical account, making Herodias's daughter a young woman full of predatory passion for the prophet, and who desperately demands his execution. Court and Joost claim that Wilde was the first to portray Salomé as a predator.[271] However, as we have seen, Moreau's conflation of Salomé with Medusa certainly results in a predatory *femme fatale*, long before Wilde. Like Moreau, Wilde made Herodias incidental to the narrative, and

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[269] Aubrey Beardsley, Salomé, *The Climax*, 1894, Ink on paper. Beardsley, Salomé, *J'ai baisé ta bouche Iokanaan*: *Design for The Climax*, 1894, Line block print.
[270] Richard Dellamora, "Traversing the Feminine in Salomé," Victorian Sages and Cultural Discourse: Renegotiating Gender and Power, ed. Thaïs E. Morgan (New Brunswick and London: Rutgers University Press, 1990): 247. The author also addresses other 'unacceptable' forms of desire in the play, such as Wilde's portrayal of homosexual desire between two male characters.
[271] Court and Joost, "Salomé, The Moon" 102.

transferred the sensuality and fatality of the story to her daughter. So, it would seem that Wilde was actually echoing Moreau's distortion of the narrative.

But as we have already noted, unlike Moreau, Huysmans, and Wilde's *femme fatale*, Beardsley's Salomé is disconcertingly unattractive. In the *Climax*, all of her captivatingly sensual and beautiful adornments are boiled down to a severe and relatively sinister linearity. It is also significant that Beardsley's depictions of Salomé become progressively less attractive throughout the play, which parallels Medusa's transformation from beautiful to ugly, as envisioned by Moreau in the *Apparition*. Beardsley's figure is aggressive, unsexed, and intimidating. Her masculinised image conveys the discomforting gender ambiguity for which Beardsley was criticised, as well as the castrating power of the unnaturally aggressive *femme fatale*.

The two *Climax* scenes confirm that an overwhelming aesthetic decorative beauty no longer offers the promise of Neoplatonic anagogy. Instead, Beardsley's reductive decorative features revel in an erotic and orgasmic symbolism, which negates Moreau's efforts to demonstrate the inherent evil of lust and materialism. For instance, the bubble-like decoration at the top left of the *Climax* is the same motif that is used to depict the pubic hair on the breasted-satyr, gracing the book's frontispiece. Wallen also offers the intriguing suggestion that Beardsley used the Baptist's decapitation to allude to the death of Neoplatonism, because the head, or the mind in Neoplatonism, is the source of contemplation, and the instrument that interprets sensory experience. Beardsley may have seen that Neoplatonism had become a veritable crutch to the Aesthetes, including Wilde.[272] As well, Wilde was irritated by Beardsley's minimalist Japanese aesthetic, since he intended the play to be set in a Byzantine context, being similar to the settings in Moreau's scenes.[273]

It seems that Moreau and Beardsley did have one important belief in common, which was that the visual was more powerful than the verbal. With the understanding that the Baptist represented the authority of the word over the eye in Wilde's play, it may be that Beardsley, in perhaps a more comical manner, was similarly silencing the word. Both Orpheus and the Baptist were prophetic figures valued for their sacred words.

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[272] Wallen, "Illustrating Salome" 130-1.
[273] Kooistra, The Artist as Critic 131.

Consequently, by silencing them through decapitation, each artist—Moreau or Beardsley—asserted his superiority and control over such poetic and commanding literary figures. While Moreau's version nostalgically honours the loss of Orpheus and the Baptist, Beardsley has moved to parodying the pre-existent traditions of the subject. Just because Moreau and Beardsley were united in their efforts to assert the superiority of the visual artist, this does not mean that both of them were not equally competitive with others in their own fields. For Beardsley, there was an additional motivation to prove his equality with, and ultimately superiority over, the so-called fine artists, since he was working in a medium that had not yet been afforded the status of high art, either in the public realm, or in the minds of his fellow artists.

Still other commonalities tie Beardsley's Salomé to Moreau's tradition. Like Moreau, Beardsley manipulated his Salomé scenes to emphasise her supernatural properties, even if, in his case, this effort took on a rather mocking tone. In *The Climax*, Salomé defies gravity, and in effect, lifts herself into the air through some sort of super-mortal force. Her hair floats upwards against the forces of gravity, even though Salomé herself seems to be statically floating in one spot, (rather than falling, which would be the only other explanation for such a depiction). This is an exaggeration of how Moreau had treated his gravity-defying Salomés. Beardsley, as was his general practice, provided no real ground line or spatial reference point in his compositions. On the one hand, the puddle-like surfaces in the black area at the bottom of the illustration imply a liquid kind of surface, while on the other, the strange curvature of this same black region, which creeps up the side of the image, and is covered with bizarre *cilia*-like protrusions, undermines any real suggestion of *terra firma*.

Another departure in Beardsley's depiction is that he disrupted the physical distance between Salomé and the Baptist in Moreau's scenes, drawing it closer to Ovid's narrative, wherein Perseus clutches Medusa's head like a trophy. *The Climax* depicts this more literally than do Moreau's versions, heightening the repulsive nature of the motif. Gilbert notes that Beardsley's depiction of the Baptist's head is a thinly-veiled allusion to Medusa, commenting especially upon its snake-like tendrils.[274] Beardsley's allusion to

[274] Gilbert, "Tumult of Images" 159.

the black snakes was based on Wilde's use of this reference to describe the Baptist's hair in his play, which may have reminded readers of Medusa.[275] However, no scholarship on either Moreau or Beardsley, that I know of, has gone so far as to also identify Salomé as a Medusan entity. Yet it is actually Beardsley's Salomé, as an icon of renowned ugliness, who invokes Medusa, albeit a Medusa after her transformation from icon of beauty to icon of revulsion. The wild, snake-like tendrils of Salomé's black hair, and her predatory hawk-like features, are quintessentially Medusan. Beardsley's tendency to make his male and female figures look alike draws his *Climax* even closer to Moreau's *Apparitions*, because it is even more possible that Salomé and the Baptist both function as Medusa, and Narcissus types, due to their unisex likeness.[276]

Beardsley also seized upon the Gorgon theme in Moreau's scenes; one of the most disconcerting features about Beardsley's Salomé is her piercing stare, as she tries to 'connect' with the object of her lust, and fixates upon his closed eyes, commanding them to open and to look upon her. In this way, Beardsley mocks the theme of looking in Moreau's iconic work, while similarly managing to take a bite out of Wilde's fetishistic glances. The cutting nature of Beardsley's parody lays in his ability to hone in on the greatest weakness in Moreau's theory of the arts. We have already addressed the fact that Moreau's approach was inherently paradoxical. Because Moreau attempted to implement sensuality, in order to point out the inherent fallacies of materialism, which is experienced through the senses, Beardsley may have considered Moreau's work hypocritical. And in mocking Moreau, the icing on the cake was that he was necessarily taking Wilde down a notch too, because Wilde's play was so obviously indebted to the particularly sensual vision that Moreau had envisioned. So Beardsley's illustrations tackled his competitors in both the fine and literary arts.

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[275] Bucknell, "On 'Seeing' Salomé" 518.

[276] While not identifying Salomé as Medusa, or elaborating on the theme of Narcissus, Bucknell does note that Wilde's version of Salomé seems to see something of herself in Jokanaan, and that this is reflected in Beardsley's *Climax*, where the likeness between the figures creates a mirrored gaze. "On 'Seeing' Salomé" 517-8.

Conclusion

In our final analysis of Beardsley's work, it is not just through his perversion of the Salomé subject that he undermines Moreau's lofty spiritual messages and social agenda. Rather, his entire œuvre, which became so emblematic of the immorally decadent culture that Moreau was trying to combat, managed to overshadow the legacy of Salomé's message, as promoted by Moreau. Beardsley certainly was able, whether his viewers liked his work or not, to create a broad and diverse interest in his illustrations. And it seems that he succeeded in rivaling the text, as evidence by the words of a writer for the magazine the Studio:

> To the publishers, whose enterprise made such a luxurious edition possible, to the artist, who has put so much of himself into it, the public should be grateful. For, like or dislike it, it will be long before a book so interesting and unconventional issues from the press, and one is left eagerly awaiting the remaining portion of the work.[277]

For Beardsley's viewers to be so anxiously waiting his illustrations, rather than the texts that they were intended to adorn, he must have produced something of great novelty and intrigue in the art world. Beardsley provides an example for the upcoming century, when the pictorial would continue to eclipse the verbal in the popular and technological media of the twentieth century.[278] Our last example of Salomé at the close of the century typifies the trajectory of her participation in the arts. She began as an icon of decadence, and emerged triumphant as an icon of artistic rivalry.

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[277] The Studio 2 (1894): 184.
[278] For Beardsley's legacy in book and popular illustration see Colin White, "Thomas Mackenzie and the Beardsley Legacy," The Journal of Decorative and Propaganda Arts, Illustrated Book Theme Issue 7 (Winter 1988): 6-35.

The Place of Memory and Visual Culture in the Paragone: A Conclusion

If a tree falls in the forest and nobody hears it, did it actually fall? Despite the nonsensical nature of this age-old phrase, similar questions might be posed of art. If a work is made and not seen by anyone but the artist, did it ever really exist in the history of an art work? If a work is viewed by an art virgin, or in other words, someone who has never seen another art work in his or her life, will it still possess the potential to astound a viewer? If a work is isolated from its place in art's history, can it truly be appreciated? All of these questions bring us to a central issue in the history of art, which has determined the trajectory of the so-called 'canon' of great works across time, as well as the direction of scholarship across the ages. This issue is the place of artistic competition in the making, exhibition, and reception of an art work. While many of the issues that I have addressed have been acknowledged in art historical scholarship to varying extents, the concept of artistic competition, as it pertains to the whole apparatus of nineteenth-century visual culture, had not been adequately addressed.

My contention that there is such a thing as a paragonising methodology is based on the fact that most artists do not operate in a vacuum. Whether they are happy about it or not, artists of the twenty-first century carry with them all of the images that have gone before them. While the idea of images competing for the viewer's attention has become commonplace in the technological media of the last century, the issue of visual memory was just as much a concern in the nineteenth century, when novels, prints, and new popular art forms seemed to offer as exponential a growth in new images as our digital media do today. Relatively speaking, it must be remembered that the average viewer, prior to the era of television, movies, and the internet, was far less bombarded by a proliferation of popular imagery in everyday life. The nineteenth-century viewer was, as we are today, more exposed to a great number of images than in any era before, thanks to the rise of Salon culture, which had gained prominence in the eighteenth century, as well as the emergence of private galleries, the increasingly lucrative engraving tradition, international expositions, illustrated novels, popular periodicals, newspapers, and even poster art. But because the new media of the nineteenth century were largely limited to

the form of artworks and their reproductions, artists of the nineteenth century could count on a certain degree of impact upon viewers. These circumstances made nineteenth-century artists aware that their success in the public sphere, and amongst patrons, depended upon their ability to command the public's attention long enough to make an impression, and to sustain that impression in the collective memory, as viewers encountered both new and older works in exhibition venues and popular media. This demonstrates a central fact in the study of the paragone, which is that it depends upon the existence and cultivation of a visual memory in both the artist and the viewer. Visual memory, in this case, means the memory bank of images that human beings carry with them through life.

Many scholars have studied aesthetic theory, inter-arts relationships, even rivalries between certain artists. But these studies have too often ignored the historical context of the paragone, and the participants have not been adequately linked to this tradition. Even within the study of the paragone in the Renaissance, which is the one era where the debate has been most well-documented, as Frederika Jacobs notes, there remains a persistent rupture between theory and practice. Often the paragonising theories of artists are examined, such as the writings of Leonardo, without actually looking to see how these theories were put into effect in specific artworks. One of the few exceptions is the work of Rona Goffen. In nineteenth-century scholarship, the same problem has existed, only in a more dire form, since the tradition of the paragone has not even been satisfactorily identified as a phenomenon. I hope that this project represents a small step towards rectifying this circumstance. Of course, part of the problem for research in this area is that for each artist the method, theoretical justification, and motivation for engaging in the paragone is unique. Moreover, the process of examining these artists is further complicated by the question of whether or not a particular artist was aware of the paragone tradition, or is simply engaging in rivalries for personal, or more generally careerist, reasons.

By identifying themes that represented battleground subjects for the paragone debate in the nineteenth century, I have endeavoured to bridge the gap between theory and practice in paragone studies, and demonstrate that certain subjects and methods were more appealing than others to competitive artists, who counted on the fact that previous

versions of the subject were still extant in the public's visual memory. I have been able to shed light on the appeal of such themes as the *beau idéal* or Narcissus, Pygmalion, and Salomé, as well as expanding our understanding of the artists who depict them. It is my hope that this project will provide a model for future scholarship in the area of paragone studies, by demonstrating that it is a methodology, above all, rather than an argument in and of itself. By considering the competitive aspect of the artistic impulse, and the possible historical contexts for this competition, scholars may discover many other techniques and themes that may have been similarly employed for this purpose across the history of art.

We began our look at successful competition in the arts, its reliance upon memory, and the modes of its involvement in almost all levels of artistic production, including the *académie peinte*, which was exemplary of this phenomenon. Since the French academy's students generally studied the same models and specimens from antiquity and later eras, which had been preserved in Rome, and in the nation's own collection at the *Musée du Louvre*, each student was developing the same rolodex of visual examples to follow, out of which, paradoxically, their unique inventiveness was expected to materialise.[1] Artists throughout the nineteenth century, including beyond France, continued to experience this challenge. Each in his or her way had to confront the problem of comparison. Every time an artist exhibited a work, this question was posed: to which previous masters would his or her style be compared? And also, to which earlier masterpieces would his or her works be compared? This psychological burden was heightened by the fact that art critics had made such comparisons commonplace, and even went to far as to 'compare' new works to their own creative adaptations. In many ways then, it is reasonable to wonder how important the comparative process is in artistic production. Do we not, as art historians, often teach through comparison? In doing so, we promote the idea that artists are in competition with one another, long after they have left the world. We might even ponder how terrifying the artistic process really is, if indeed artists must consider the responsibility of such a legacy. But one thing remains clear in my analysis of competitive approaches to

[1] I owe this idea of a memory bank to Dr. Jeanne Porter, who pointed out that artists seem to possess an unusual ability to remember motifs, figures, and artworks, which they then often reinterpret or 'quote' in their own work.

the arts in the nineteenth century, which is that the competitive impulse was perhaps not as intimidating as it should have been, because it was woven into the fabric of artistic production. It was a foundational principle in aesthetic theory, academic practice, avant-garde practice, the selection of subject matter, and the exhibition of works. The paragone touched almost every aspect of the art world. As a result, it might even be asked if the act of artistic creation, in and of itself, is not also an act of competition. Artists compete first with their own vision or *concetto*, in trying to bring it into material form, and then with every other image, once that work takes shape. Whether readers agree that the paragone methodology is useful or not, I would not go so far as to say that all works should be considered in this context. The individual concerns of artists are so varied that their motivations and methods should not be pigeon-holed in this way. Nevertheless, considering the role of artistic competition should be recognised as a useful tool in conjunction with other methodological approaches.

This study represents merely the tip of the iceberg when it comes to acknowledging the role of rivalry in art's history. I think it is fair to say that the place of memory in the paragone and art history is so profound that it is too often taken for granted. Nevertheless, the role of memory in the successes of nineteenth-century artists was ineradicably marked by the circumstances of the moment. To recreate that experience will always be an insurmountable challenge, since our own memories of works today, being clouded with the visual culture that has develop into the twenty-first century, decisively alters our understanding of any work that predates our own time, and our determination of how that work compares, or rivals, all of the other images that have been indelibly impressed on our collective consciousness.

Appendix

Author: Pierre-Narcisse Guérin

Title: "Sur le génie." Pierre-Narcisse Guérin, Miscellaneous Papers, 1815-33

Source: Research Library, The Getty Research Institute, Los Angeles, California (861183)

Date: Undated, handwritten document.

Un grand écrivain a dit: "le génie est l'aptitude à la patience." Définition aussi éloignée du don précieux qui en est l'objet qu'il y a de distance entre ceux qui le poursuivent et celui qui l'a reçu: car tandis que la patience cherche le génie trouve. S'aptitude à la patience ou, plus simplement, le perseverance est le plus sür chemin de la perfection, mais la perfection n'est pas le génie. Sa pensée de Buffon ne nous présenterait donc qu'un moyen de suplier le génie. Si le génie pouvait être remplacé, et non la définition de cette faculté d'une organisation supérieure, âme des eriations humaines, et que son étymologie même nous indique comme un puissance génératrice. De grands hommes nous ont montré le génie dans leurs ouvrages; plusieurs ont leuté vainement de le définir. Sans doute parcequ'il est, aussi que le principe de notre être, indéfinissable. Mais si l'essence de ce don du ciel échappe à la pensée, l'examen de ses résultats pourra nous conduire à pénétrer le secret de sa force. C'est en suivant la route que nous trace votre éloquent et ingénieux interprete, Messieur, c'est en séparant, ainsi qu'il vient de le faire avec

[pg 2]

une rare précision, toutes les qualités auxiliaires dans génie du génie lui même que nous arriveront, sinon à le connoître, du moins à ne pas le confuse avec tout ce qui n'est pas lui et que notre vénération isolant, pour ainsi dire, cet Être mysterieux au milieu de son brillant cortège ne rapportera qu'à lui seul le culte et les hommages qui lui sont dûs...Ecartons-donc un moment le circle des qualités tributaires du génie et, les abandonnant à elles mêmes, laissons l'imagination, l'esprit, la fécondité errer sans guide ou sur la foi d'une inspiration souvent [trampense] pour ne nous occuper que de l'actions de cette faculté inconnue, mais supérieure, qui d'un vaste coup d'œil embrasse, choisit,

anime, coordonne et confie à la simplicité l'expression de la force et la grandeur de ses vastes conceptions. Mais cette simplicité toujours si noble, si grande, si forte par l'extreme concision de son langage, en devenant l'organe du génie ne vient elle pas nous en révéler la secret? et qu'est-ce autre chose en effet que ce don précieux sinon la faculté de trouver l'expression la plus simple aux combinaisons les plus étendües? L'examen des ouvrages dans lesquels nous reconnaissons la présence du génie nous fournirait au besoin mille exemples de cette puissance de la simplicité qui [émane] de lui s'il ne suffisait de rappeller quelques uns de ces mots fameux

[pg 3]

de les vers admirables dans lesquels il se montre pour aussi-dire, à découvert. [Tels dont], dans Virgile, le sublime apparut ravi nantes, devenir le germe d'un des plus beaux tableaux qui existent, et le *quos ego* de Neptune irrité. Dans Corneille et Racine ce [qu'il mourut], du vieil Horace; vous y serez ma fille! D'Agamemnon cachant ses pleurs; qui te l'a dis? L'harmione furieuse; l'admirable moi de Médée qui se suffis à sa vengeance et tous d'autres traits qu'il serais trop long de citer. Si nous considérons de quelle force de combinaisons chacun de ces mots viens nous apporter le résultat; tout ce qu'il renforme; tout ce qu'il nous revéle de la situation dans laquelle il est placé; tout ce qu'il éveille enfin dans la pensée nous n'hésiterons pas à prononcer qu'en effet l'action du génie est la faculté de trouver la plus simple expression des situations les plus fortes, des combinaisons les plus étendües. Considerons-nous les sciences? elles nous montrerons les inventions où se retrouve le plus s'empreinte du génie marqués en même temps du cachet d'une extreme simplicité. Mais pourquoi chercher ailleurs des exemples que les ouvrages qui resortissent naturellement à nos connaissances et sous l'objet habituel de notre admiration nous fournissent en abandance? une seule des immortelles productions du Poussin ne nous peut-elle pas servir

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de [preuve] après avoir été notre guide dans l'importante question qui nous occupe? Jetons les yeux sur le Déluge, sur cet austère chef-d'œuvre où le talent se cache et se fond, pour ainsi dire, dans cette faculté créatrice qui nous montre dans toute leur horreur les funérailles de la nature. J'ai des qualités qui souvent usurpent les droits du génie eussent-pû s'emparer de cette grand et effrayante scène. L'imagination y eut multiplié des

épisodes et d'esprit des contrastes dans lesquels le pathétique eut redoublé ses efforts. La fécondité nous eut reproduit cette confusion du mélange des êtres que le danger rassemble et la science, le gout, le talent eussent déployé toutes leurs ressources pour nous peindre la force, la beauté, la grace devenant la [praie] du gouffre toujours croissant des ondes. L'énergie, la forgue eussent soulevé les flots contre le ciel en courrons et peut-etre Dieu lui même eut assisté à sa vengeance. Mais, rien de tout cela. Un ciel qui pèse sur les eaux et qui la [fondre/foudre s'ellome] avec effort; un soleil sans chartés; une barque oû quelques hommes luttent encore contre les flots; un arbre, un rocher, un reptile, seul restes des vignes de la nature, et une dernière famille changée d'eschaler le dernier soupir du genre humain, tels sous les éléments dont se compose cette immense catastrophe que la main du génie a partout frappé d'une muette

[pg 5]

horreur. Ah! que fait-il d'avantage! eh! qui donc après avais réfléchi sur cet immortal ouvrage, après l'avoir bien senti, ne sera pas [tenté] de se dire: J'ignore le génie mais je saurais douter le secret de sa force ne soit tout entier dans la simplicité de ses moyens.

Notes:

Page numbers refer to the handwritten pages of the essay.

Underlined words are those that were underlined by hand by the author.

Words in square brackets are those that were not completely legible.

Spelling and grammar were preserved in the author's original format (no corrections were made in transmission).

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