

A REVALUATION OF THE NAPOLEONIC HISTORY
PAINTINGS OF ANTOINE-JEAN GROS

DISSERTATION

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School of The Ohio State University

By

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* * * * *

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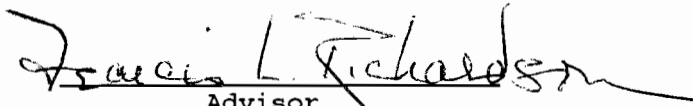
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CHAPTER I
PARIS & ITALY, 1771-1800

Neither of Gros's early biographers. J. B. Delestre, who had been his student, or J. Tripier Le Franc, a friend of his later years and one of the early founders of the Society for the History of French Art, says much about the artist's pre-1800 political orientation, but this is not at all surprising since neither writer became acquainted with Gros until later in his life--after 1822. Both writers simply present the general assumption that the artist was a moderate Royalist like his parents and their neighbors the celebrated portraitist, Madame Elizabeth Vigée-Lebrun and her picture-dealer husband, Jean-Baptiste.¹

In this chapter I hope to establish the probability that Gros was a Republican rather than a Royalist. The point of this exercise is that if it can be shown that the artist was a strong supporter of the ideals of the French revolutionaries, then his later disenchantment with the growing imperialism of Napoleon, which (I hope to show in following chapters) manifested itself in a critical visual dialogue in his imperial paintings, would be more plausible.

From an early age, Gros's aesthetic tastes had already begun to diverge from that of his artist parents. They were miniature painters. Family taste, reflected in Gros's father's rather substantial art collection, was focused on the work of Baroque and Rococo masters. The

¹Jean-Baptiste Delestre, Gros, sa Vie et ses Ouvrages (Paris, 1867), 23; J. Tripier Le Franc, Histoire de la vie et de la mort du Baron Gros, Le Grand Peintre (Paris: Jules Martin, 1880), 144.

sales catalog of 1778 listed 63 paintings and 21 drawings. Of these, especially numerous were works by Carle Van Loo and Jean Honoré Fragonard.²

Though the young Gros assiduously copied from his parents' collection and shared the love of Rubens held by his neighbor, Madame Vigée-Lebrun, his earliest works indicate his preference for the new style of Neo-Classicism.

The earliest extant drawing by Gros is one that Delestre dated to 1779, when Gros was only eight years old (Private collection, Paris; Plate I).³ According to Delestre, the drawing represents Gros's mother, dressed in antique costume, approaching an altar on which rests a heart and over which hovers an energetic cupid. Gros's youthful intentions are not altogether clear, but his source was likely a work such as Joseph-Marie Vien's Selling of Cupids (Fontainebleau, Château; Plate II), shown in the Salon of 1763.

Four years later Gros was taken to the annual Salon by his father who intended for his son to choose one of the artists whose work was on display there as his painting and drawing instructor. Gros's wholehearted choice was the artist of the Neo-Classical entry, Andromache Mourning Hector (École des Beaux-Arts, Paris), Jacques-Louis David. Gros did not actually enter David's studio until 1785, when David returned from Rome with his masterwork, The Oath of the Horatii (Musée du Louvre, Paris). Gros's choice for his instructor again reflected his preference for the Neo-Classical style of painting.

²Pierre Rosenberg, Fragonard (New York: Abrams, 1988), 181-182; 284. Rosenberg describes what is still known of this collection and illustrates some of the Fragonard works once owned by Père Gros. The Petit Palais (Dutuit Collection) owns a copy of the 1778 sales catalog. As regards the collection, see also: J. Tripier Le Franc, Histoire, 19; Delestre, Gros, 7.

³Delestre, Gros, 23; Tripier Le Franc, Histoire, 23.

If one cannot establish a direct correlation between Republicanism and Neo-Classicism, the movement's growing purity and use of moral themes from the heroic Roman past clearly meshed well with the reforming mood of the age of Enlightenment. Though Neo-Classicism predated the Revolution, it was the style most readily adaptable and most often employed for revolutionary statements. In particular, it was used by David who, Diane Kelder claimed, "...fused the moralistic and the antiquarian into a powerful political broadside."⁴

Just the fact of being a student in David's studio, regardless of David's ability to pioneer the new style, would have been an education in radicalism for the young Gros. In fact, Gros's parents expressed concern for their son's safety due to his association with the rebellious David.⁵ In the studio the passionate David could not always limit his commentary to mere aesthetics; sometimes he expressed his feelings regarding the contemporary political scene, and often he lashed out against the Academy, calling it a "terrible school" and likening it to an "antiquated wig shop."⁶

Even before he acquired his own studio, David had been a rebellious sort, long chafing under the restrictions of the Academy. By 1785 he declared that with his Oath of the Horatii, he had "left off making a

⁴Diane Kelder, Aspects of Official Painting and Philosophic Art 1789-1799 (New York: Garland, 1976), 62. For an exploration of other styles associated with the Revolution see: Ronald Paulson, Representations of Revolution, 1789-1820 (New Haven: Yale University, 1983). See also: Jack Lindsay, Death of the Hero: French Painting from David to Delacroix (London: Studio, 1960), 53.

⁵Delestre, Gros, 23.

⁶E. J. Delécluze, Louis David: Son École et son Temps, notes de Jean-Pierre Mouillesseaux (Paris: Macula, 1855, c. 1983), 57.

picture for the king" in order instead to paint one for himself.⁷ The Revolution turned David into a major spokesperson for reform in the visual arts, a part he played with great conviction.

Of course, that Gros was a student in David's studio during the early years of the Revolution when David was actively engaged in his reform battle against the Academy does not in any way prove that Gros shared David's Republican faith; as we shall see, though, other reasons indicate that he did indeed share David's convictions, and many of David's students did join the Republican ranks.

David Dowd's examination of records related to heated debates in the Academy over reform issues in August of 1789 revealed that already two-fifths of the membership was Republican. He also noted that as the Revolution continued on its leftward course, most strongly committed Royalists became *émigrés*, as did Elizabeth Vigée-Lebrun, who spent the entire Revolution in exile.⁸

There were, of course, numerous French art students in Italy at this time, but they were students at the French Academy at Rome and were not listed as *émigrés*. Authors who have contended that Gros was a Royalist state that anti-Republican sentiment was the reason for the artist's Italian journey of 1793-1800.⁹ This is, however, not the case. Gros was never listed as an *émigré* and his two major biographers claim that he was run out of town by a jealous rival, the painter François Gérard. According to Charles Blanc, in late January of 1793 Gros was relaxing in

⁷David stated this in a letter sent to the Marquis de Bièvre from Rome on August 28, 1785. The letter is reprinted in: Marie-Catherine Sahut & Régis Michel, David l'art et le politique (Paris: Gallimard, 1988), 139-140.

⁸David Lloyd Dowd, Pageant Master of the Republic: Jacques-Louis David and the French Revolution (Freeport, New York: Library Press, 1969, c. 1948), 128.

⁹Louis Hautecoeur, L'Art sous la Revolution et L'Empire en France, 1789-1815 (Paris, 1933), 158.

the company of a few friends at the Café des Cruches on the Rue Saint-Louis when the conversation was suddenly interrupted by the abrupt arrival of Gérard, a new member of the Revolutionary Tribunal. With the cold and calm air of an inquisitor, François spoke these words:

Puisque tu vas émigrer, Gros, voudrais bien, avant de sortir de France, me rendre les portefeuilles que je t'ai prêtés.¹⁰

These words, spoken in public by a member of the Revolutionary Tribunal, were said to be enough cause for arrest and possibly execution.¹¹

Delestre related a similar story to the one Blanc told Tripier Le Franc, but his version was less specific:

Un de ses condisciples lui ayant dit imprudemment dans un lieu publique: "Eh bien, l'on répond le bruit que tu vas émigrer."¹²

Fearful of arrest, Gros decided to leave for Italy and requested David's aid in obtaining a passport which was issued to him on January 26, 1793. Due to irregularities in the passport papers, Gros was delayed in southern France until the end of March. During this delay, the young artist sought portrait commissions in the cities of Nîmes, Montpellier, and Cette.¹³

By the end of March Gros had a full set of travel papers but delayed his departure and did not arrive in Genoa until May 19, 1793. Gros had

¹⁰Tripier Le Franc, Histoire, 74. Tripier Le Franc stated that he heard this story from his contemporary, Charles Blanc, the author of a Grammaire des arts et dessin that was used by a number of instructors, among whom was David. This story is also told by Blanc in his: Histoire les peintures français au dix-neuvième siècle (Paris: Cayville Frères, 1845), 324-5.

¹¹James A. Leith, The Idea of Art as Propaganda in France, 1750-1799: A Study in the History of Ideas (Toronto: University of Toronto, 1965), 112-113. According to Leith, these types of denunciations were quite common.

¹²Delestre, Gros, 23. Delestre contended that this particular incident was the cause of Gros's "réserve soupçonneuse."

¹³Tripier Le Franc, Histoire, 82.

met a rich Genoese in Marseilles, Jean-Georges Meuricoffre, a Swiss banker who had Frenchified his name and had moved to Genoa from Naples in 1789 as a consequence of anti-French sentiment in that city. His wife, Celeste Coltellini, once a celebrated singer, enjoyed presiding over salons for the cultured elite. These friendly connections and the fact of anti-French sentiment in cities like Rome must have been reason enough for Gros to make the decision to reside in Genoa.

Gros's first impression of his new home city was overwhelmingly negative:

Il faisait un temps abominable; je courus les églises ne connaissant personne. Je vis beaucoup de mauvais tableaux, beaucoup de saintes, tous martyrs ou martyrisées. Personne ici n'aime les arts.¹⁴

With the help of a guide book of the city, Gros was able to locate some galleries which housed works by such artists as Rubens, Titian, Raphael, and Van Dyck, but it was difficult to spend time seeing the works because one had to "entrer par une porte et sortie par l'autre."¹⁵

Part of Gros's negativism must certainly have been due to his abrupt and unsettling rupture from family, friends, and country. Yet Genoa must have truly been a heavy disappointment to him. Genoa did not have the artistic heritage of either Florence or Rome, being primarily a center of commerce rather than of art. There were, however, some artistic treasures within the city.

Probably one of the finest works of art in Genoa was Peter Paul Rubens's The Miracles of St. Ignatius of Loyola of 1620 which was located in a chapel of Sant'Ambrogio. Gros found the work so impressive that he

¹⁴From a letter of May 19, 1793 which is reprinted in: Phillippe Bordes, "Gros en Italie: Lettres, une allegorie revolutionaire, et un portrait," Bulletin de la société de l'histoire de l'art française (June 1978): 221-231. All of Gros's letters from Italy are reprinted in this article. Tripier Le Franc and Delestre cite excerpts from these letters in their biographies of Gros.

¹⁵Ibid.

visited the chapel almost daily.¹⁶ Coincidentally Rubens's theme of saintly healer surrounded by the afflicted will become a major theme for Gros in later works as Napoleon at the Pest House at Jaffa of 1804 and Napoleon at the Battle of Eylau of 1808 (Musée du Louvre, Paris).

Also located in Genoa was Pierre Puget's celebrated sculpture of Saint Sebastian (Plate III) which must have left its imprint on Gros, for one finds echoes of the saint's elegant falling posture in Gros's painting of Sappho at Leucadia of 1801 (Musée du Baron Gérard, Bayeux) and echoes of Sebastian's pathetic expression in Gros's rendition of the battle-weary Napoleon in his Napoleon at the Battle of Eylau.¹⁷

Hoping to escape the stagnation of Genoa, as well as to seek portrait commissions to revive his deplorable financial condition, Gros set off for Florence almost immediately. Once in Florence, Gros lost hope, for there were already a number of French artists installed in the city and they were fully in command of the portrait trade. Borrowing money, Gros quickly returned to Genoa where he tried to make arrangements to return to France.¹⁸

This was only the first of several attempts by Gros to return to France. On this occasion he was aided by the efforts of François Cacault, the representative of the French Republic in Florence. In a letter of June 13, 1794 to Madame Gros in Paris, he stated that he had covered Gros's current debts in Florence and that he had made arrangements through

¹⁶Delestre, Gros, 26. A smaller and more famous version of this by Rubens is located in Vienna. Though Gros does not mention Van Dyck in his letters home, he could also have seen numerous portraits by this artist in Genoa. Van Dyck's Genoese portraits are discussed by Christopher Brown, Van Dyck (Oxford: Phaidon, 1982), 85-99.

¹⁷Klaus Herding makes a convincing case for Puget's Saint Sebastian being inspired by the portraiture of Alexander the Great in his: Klaus Herding, Pierre Puget: Das Bilderrische Werk (Berlin: Mann, 1970).

¹⁸Delestre, Gros, 27; Tripiet Le Franc, Histoire, 91.

a friend in Genoa to finance Gros's return trip to France.¹⁹ Nothing, however, came of these efforts.

It is conceivable that the extraordinary turn of events in Paris may have hindered Gros's plans to return to France. By the summer of 1794, public sentiment against the puritanical Robespierre had reached its peak. Now everything Robespierre did seemed to provoke the ire of the populace and "the Incorruptible" seemed to be losing all support. Arrested in late July, Robespierre, failing in his own suicide attempt, was guillotined the following day. David, arrested very soon thereafter as a supporter of the then very unpopular leader, was hardly in any position to aid his former student.

One may note here that not only did Gros receive assistance from the Representative of the French Republic in Florence, he also was looked after by the French envoy in Genoa, Citizen Villars, who commissioned a Republican signboard from Gros in October of 1794 after his return to Genoa from Florence.²⁰ It seems unlikely that Republican government officials would be so solicitous of the French artist's welfare if he did not share their general Republican outlook.

Actually, this signboard was not Gros's first Republican assignment. In 1793 David obtained work for Gros with a bookseller who, along with numerous other publishers at the time, was issuing portraits of the representatives of the new National Assembly for sale to an eager public.²¹ Gros is known to have executed at least one portrait of

¹⁹Tripier Le Franc, Histoire, 96. This letter has also been reprinted in Bordes's article on "Gros en Italie." The letter is now part of the collection of the Foundation Doucet.

²⁰Tripier Le Franc, Histoire, 98; Delestre, Gros, 30. Both of these authors state that the commission came from Citizen Lachèze, but Gros's letter of October 24 states that Citizen Villars is the commissioner. This letter is reprinted in Bordes, "Gros en Italie," 239.

²¹Tripier Le Franc, Histoire, 47; Delestre, Gros, 23.

Robespierre.²² The original drawing by Gros of Robespierre does still exist and is now in the collection of the Bibliothèque Nationale (Plate IV); it was engraved by Beljambe and was part of the series issued by the publisher, Jabin.²³ In Gros's drawing one can recognize the characteristic features of Robespierre, such as the broad forehead and the prominent nose. There is nothing negative in Gros's presentation of his subject; here Maximilien appears in a very advantageous light, full of youth and vitality.²⁴

As popular as or perhaps even more in demand than these mass-circulated portraits of Revolutionary heroes were portraits of Liberty. Especially current in Italy and France were emblematic Revolutionary signboards displaying personifications of Liberty which were used by Republican diplomats at home and abroad. In 1793 Anne-Louis Girodet, Pierre Pequignot, and Louis Lafitte made new escutcheons for the Consulate and the French Academy at Rome to replace those destroyed in anti-French riots. In Florence, J. B. Wicar also painted a Liberty escutcheon for Citizen Cacault and chose the more sedate version of Liberty--seated and wearing long drapery. According to Bordes, Gros may well have seen and have subsequently been influenced by Wicar's work during his visit to Florence.²⁵ Gros's actual escutcheon has disappeared, but several drawings

²²Ibid.

²³This work is reproduced in: David P. Jordan, The Revolutionary Career of Maximilien Robespierre (New York: Fress, 1985).

²⁴For other less flattering images of Robespierre, see the reproductions in: Jordan, Revolutionary Career of Robespierre.

²⁵Bordes, "Gros en Italie," 225.

for such an escutcheon, and one oil study at Versailles, still exist (Plate V).²⁶

Gros informed his mother of this commission in a letter of October 20, 1794: "Je vais peindre l'escusson de la Republique pour le Citoyen Villars, nouvel envoyé en cette ville."²⁷ Both Tripier Le Franc and Delestre stated that the signboard was painted for Citizen Lachèze, but Villars had already replaced him as the French envoy in Genoa, as Gros had noted in his letter.²⁸

In the same letter of October 20 Gros informed his mother that progress on the signboard was being delayed because his patron, Villars, was having trouble deciding if he wanted the patriotic figure to be a female or if he would rather substitute a figure of Heracles. Gros stated his preference for the former.

In his monograph on Liberty imagery, Maurice Agulhon distinguished between two types of female Liberty images, that of the "tomboy" and a formal figure, seated and dressed in a long robe.²⁹ Gros's Liberty is clearly of the "tomboy" variety with her athletic costume and pose. Agulhon made no ideological distinctions between these two versions of the Liberty figure, but others have done so. According to Warren Roberts:

The crystallization of popular imagery into these two generic types is a useful index of the tensions within the Revolution

²⁶The sketches are divided between the collections of the Cabinet des Dessins of the Louvre and the private collection of François Delestre in Paris. Some of these sketches are reproduced in Bordes' article on Gros in Italy.

²⁷The entire letter is reproduced in: Phillipe Bordes, "A. J. Gros en Italie (1793-1800): Lettres, une allegorie revolutionnaire et un portrait," Bulletin de la société de l'histoire de l'art français (Juin 1978): 221-244.

²⁸Tripier Le Franc, Histoire, 98; Delestre, Gros, 30.

²⁹Maurice Agulhon, Marianne into Battle: Republican Imagery and Symbolism in France, 1789-1880, trans. Janet Lloyd (Cambridge, Mass.: Cambridge University, 1981), 16.

in the period of 1789-92. The active allegorical type is inherently dynamic and represents a belief that further struggle is needed before the Revolution can be completed. By contrast, the sedate allegorical type projects a different version of the Revolution, one of finality and completion.³⁰

Whether one agrees with Roberts or not, Gros was seeking a very severe mode for his image of Liberty for he told his mother that he sought "une énergie lacedomienne si propre à caractériser la révolution française."³¹ One year later David would present a much softer female typology in his "Greek style" rendition of The Intervention of the Sabine Women (Musée du Louvre, Paris; Plate VI).

Not only was Gros's Liberty severe in appearance, but his paint application complied as well; so much so that this work was rejected in the 1936 Gros show at the Petit Palais as not being authentic. The curators, according to Bordes, considered that the style was too severe to be by the same artist who painted Bonaparte at Arcole in 1796 (Château de Versailles).³²

Not only did Gros accept specifically Republican commissions, but he also adopted standard Republican fashions, these being perhaps just as important symbolically as the standard emblems of Revolution such as the liberty tree or the tricolor. In the early portrait of Gros, now at the Musée de Versailles; Plate VII), one sees the artist dressed as a

³⁰Warren Roberts, Jacques-Louis David, Revolutionary Artist: Art, Politics, and the French Revolution (Chapel Hill & London: University of North Carolina, 1989), 70.

³¹This letter of October 20, 1794 is reprinted in Bordes, "Gros en Italie," 229.

³²Bordes, "Gros en Italie," 225.

citoyen.³³ Alan Wintermute had these remarks to make concerning this portrait:

As is the case with David's Self-Portrait at the Louvre, Gérard's Portrait of Gros is identified not by his occupation as a painter, but as a *citoyen*, a man of the new France. Both Gros and Gérard were associated with the revolutionary legislature in the early years, Gros because of his portrait drawings of the members of the National Assembly and Gérard through membership in the Committee of General Security, a post secured by David. The high, wide-brimmed black hat worn by Gros is in evidence in many portraits of Republicans during the revolutionary period; it was a virtual identification badge among the *bons patriotes* until about 1800, when it seems to have fallen from fashion.³⁴

Gros's next portrait (Plates VIII & IX) was created as a portrait exchange/parting gesture with Anne-Louis Girodet in 1795. Girodet, four years Gros's senior, had entered David's studio at the same time as Gros, just after David returned from Rome with his Oath of the Horatii. Girodet had been studying in Rome, Naples, and Venice prior to passing through Genoa on his way back to France, being at this time in an extreme state of ill health.³⁵ The Meuricoffre's personal physician helped to nurse the sick painter back to health.

Gros's portrait is similar to Girodet's in terms of scale and disposition of the figure on the canvas, but there most similarities end. Although Girodet was four years older than Gros, in his self-portrait Gros appears much older and extremely world-weary. Even more curious than his ponderous expression is the antique toga-like costume he wears.

³³Controversy surrounds both the date of this portrait and its authorship. It was long considered to be a self-portrait by Gros but evidence has been uncovered to support the idea that it is rather a portrait of Gros by François Gérard. For a summation of the evidence and a bibliography regarding this, see: Alan Wintermute, ed., French Art during the Revolution (New York: Colnaghi, 1989), 218.

³⁴Wintermute, ed., French Art, 216-217.

³⁵Tripier Le Franc, Histoire, 98; Delestre, Gros, 31. Both portraits are now at the Musée de Versailles.

Two possible suggestions come to mind as a way of placing this portrait into an understandable context. The first suggestion is that Gros was a member of some local Jacobin club whose members adopted antique costume. According to Bordes, the French republican consul in Genoa, Citizen Villars, who had commissioned the Republican signboard from Gros, was an ardent Jacobin and "ses éloges Spartiate lui valurent d'être appelé Villars-Plutarque."³⁶ Did the Jacobins in Genoa do more than adopt Roman names? David had just the previous year made costume designs for the French deputies that reflected an antique aesthetic (PLate X). Here David had envisioned the deputies wearing Roman buskins and short tunics and a cloak fastening on the shoulder *à l'antique*. Thus far, though, there is no documentation that Gros was a member of a Jacobin society in Genoa or that any of the Jacobins in Italy wore antique clothing.

A second possible explanation for the artist's antique apparel is that he was seeking greater aesthetic purity *à la grècque* in the manner of such later artist groups as the Primitives in France or the Nazarenes in Germany. After all, he did express the desire to find a pure Lacedaemonian style in his Liberty signboard. According to Levitine, however, the Primitives did not really emerge as a viable entity until 1798, when Maurice Quai strolled the streets of Paris in his long flowing robes.³⁷ Perhaps these notions were already in the air, for if one looks more closely at Girodet's self-portrait in this exchange, one finds that he too is wearing a "toga" under his cape. This was noted by George Levitine, who independently reached similar conclusions regarding the portrait: "In this portrait, Girodet makes one think of the esoteric

³⁶Bordes, "Gros en Italie," 223.

³⁷Georges Levitine, "The Prmitifs and their Critics in the Year 1800," Studies in Romanticism (Summer 1962): 209-219. For these artists also see: Friendlaender, David to Delacroix, 46-50.

followers of Maurice Quai...the Christ-like bearded self-portrait of Gros in Versailles gives the same impression."³⁸

Not only do Gros's commissions, his style of dress, and the content of his letters home to France suggest a Republican outlook, but also his circle of acquaintances indicate a person of liberal political sympathies. Gros's relations were amiable with the French Republican representatives in Florence and Genoa. They loaned him money, looked after his welfare, and commissioned works of art from him. It was the new French consul, M. Villars (who replaced Lachèze) in late 1795 who set in motion Gros's famous encounter with Bonaparte who was fast becoming a Republican hero through his successful leadership in the Italian campaign. Villars introduced the artist to Charles Faypoult de Maisoncelle, then the Minister Plenipotentiary of the French Republic, and Gros became a frequent visitor. One afternoon in June of 1796 Gros was conversing with Madame Faypoult and learned that Josephine was to visit them soon. Gros, in hopes of painting a portrait of the dashing Republican general, asked to make her acquaintance.³⁹

When Josephine did reach Genoa, Gros was introduced by Madame Faypoult. Pleased with Gros's sketches, Josephine asked the young artist to come to Milan to meet her husband. Bonaparte insisted that Gros take up residence in the Serbelloni Plaace where he and Josephine resided and was given an audience the next day for a brief portrait sitting.⁴⁰ Gros

³⁸Georges Levitine, Girodet-Trioson: An Iconographical Study (New York: Garland, 1978), 331.

³⁹Delestre, Gros, 32; Tripier Le Franc, Histoire, 120.

⁴⁰Gros speaks of this in a letter of December 6, 1796 which is now part of the collection of the Cabinet des Dessins at the Louvre. The letter is also reprinted in: Bordes, "Gros en Italie," 241.

was able to obtain another somewhat longer sitting thanks to Josephine, who held the impatient general on her knees.⁴¹

Out of these brief portrait sketching opportunities, Gros was able to develop his portrait of Bonaparte at Arcole (Musée du Louvre, Paris; Plate XI). In his discussion of this portrait, Tripier Le Franc also mentioned that Gros was an eyewitness to the actual fighting at Arcole, recording all that he saw in his sketchbooks.⁴² This work was in several collections (Coutan, Hauquet, Milliet) before its bequest to the Louvre in 1883. This work is a sketch for the larger version of the subject at Versailles (Plate XII). Two sketches of the large version are extant.⁴³

Arcole was a major battle in Bonaparte's Italian campaign. According to W.G.F. Jackson, Bonaparte's Italian campaign fell into two halves. The first half consisted of the defeat of the Austro-Piedmontese armies holding northern Italy, thus allowing the French invasion of the fertile plains of Lombardy. The second phase consisted of Bonaparte's repulsion of four Austrian counterattacks. The Battle of Arcole was part of this second phase.⁴⁴

By the time of the second phase of the campaign, war weariness and a desire for peace had overtaken the Parisian populace. The Directory recognized the necessity for seeking peace, yet felt they could place themselves in a much better bargaining position if they took Mantua; thus

⁴¹Tripier Le Franc, Histoire, 132.

⁴²Tripier Le Franc, Histoire, 132. Susan Siegfried contends that Tripier Le Franc romanticized Gros as a painter/soldier but she does not elaborate. See her, "Naked History: The Rhetoric of Military Painting in Postrevolutionary France," Art Bulletin 75 (June 1993), 237.

⁴³These sketches are reproduced in: Corrado Maltesse, "Un Ritratto di Bonaparte e un Disegno di Antoine Gros," Bolletino d'Arte 44 (1959): 231-236. One sketch is in Paris in the Castaine Collection; the other is in Cantalupo in the Camuccini Collection.

⁴⁴W.C.F. Jackson, Attack in the West: Napoleon's First Campaign Re-read Today (London: Eyre & Spottiswood, 1953), 170-202.

the city was put under siege. Immediately the Austrians sent two armies to raise the siege of the city. In an attempt to cut off the Austrian general's advance from the rear, the French tried to cross the Alpone river opposite Arcole. The bridge there (which still stands) was strongly held by the enemy rear guard and had resisted all attacks. Bonaparte, indignant at the hesitation of his soldiers, seized the standard himself and planted it on the bridge.⁴⁵ Now electrified, the grenadiers advanced and had gotten as far as the middle of the bridge when they came under extremely heavy fire. What happened then is far removed from the legend that described Bonaparte as seizing the flag under a hail of grapeshot and advancing boldly across the bridge, followed by the men with whom he would conquer the world. Bonaparte himself set the record straight by telling Las Cases that, caught under fire, the men panicked, and he fell down in the scuffle.⁴⁶ Not wanting to leave their general behind, the men grabbed Bonaparte both by his hair and his arms and dragged him along in their flight through the dead and the dying. In this frantic rush Bonaparte fell off the bridge and tumbled into the muddy marshes, half-submerged among the enemy. The general was saved by a rapid charge of grenadiers which provided a diversion while Bonaparte was fished out of the river. Eventually, after two more days of fighting and heavy casualties, the French were able to gain control of the bridge and village, forcing an Austrian retreat. Gros's sketch is said to capture the dramatic moment

⁴⁵Actually General Augereau was the first person to stream across the bridge in hopes of rallying the sluggish troops; then following Augereau's lead, Bonaparte followed suit. This is why there are prints and at least one painting of Augereau on the bridge at Arcole. See: John L. Connolly, Jr., "Bonaparte on the Bridge: A Note on the Iconography of Passage," in Consortium on Revolutionary Europe Proceedings 1985 (Athens, Ga.: University of Georgia, 1985): 47-55. Napoleon admits this version also, see: Napoleon Ier, Correspondance (Paris, 1858-1869), 2:119.

⁴⁶Les Cases, Memoirs of the History of France during the Reign of Napoleon, Dictated by the Emperor at Saint Helena to the Count de Montholon (London, 1823), 3:343-344.

when Bonaparte grabbed the standard to lead the charge, saying: "Qui m'aime, me suit."⁴⁷

In the Louvre version of Bonaparte at Arcole one sees a half-length Bonaparte set against a very stormy background. Bare-headed, his uniform is that of a general of the Republic: a dark blue jacket embroidered in gold thread with a red collar which opens on a black cravat covering up a white shirt. Head turned to the left, the young general has a facial expression of firm determination.

Comparing Gros's portrait with Appiani's portrait sketch of Bonaparte of the same year (Pinacoteca de Brera, Milan; Plate XIII), one sees a surprising similarity in terms of the general disposition of the head and the facial features. Gros's Bonaparte, however, has that "lean and hungry look" compared to Appiani's well-nourished general. There is an edge to Gros's Bonaparte; both the features and the glance are razor sharp. The thin lips are strongly pursed and the nose has been likened to an eagle's beak. While a gentle breeze seems to ripple the elegant coiffure of Bonaparte in Appiani's sketch, the general's matted hair in Gros's portrait sketch twists wildly around his face.⁴⁸ Less wild, but equally sharp-featured and lean is Gros's well-known profile sketch of Bonaparte at the Louvre (Plate XIV). Moreover, Gros's interpretation of Bonaparte at Arcole actually corresponds quite closely to a contemporary eyewitness accounts of Bonaparte's actual physical appearance during the battle. Jackson quoted one eyewitness to the battle: He {Bonaparte} was

⁴⁷Tripier Le Franc, Histoire, 133. This is the only author whose account of the battle recounts these particular *bon mots* on the part of Napoleon. Tripier Le Franc stated that he took his account of the battle from the historian Thiers, but Thiers' published accounts of the Napoleonic age begin with the year 1800 and hence do not recount the Battle of Arcole. Thiers does, however, recount the events of the Battle of Arcole in his History of the French Revolution, vol. 4, but he does not give the account claimed by Tripier Le Franc.

⁴⁸This wind-blown coiffure is picked up by Girodet in his famous portrait of Chateaubriand.

pale and emaciated, just skin and bones, his eyes burning with a constant fever."⁴⁹ By 1812, when David painted his famous Portrait of Napoleon in his Study (Musée du Louvre, Paris), the lean warrior had undergone a metamorphosis into the pudgy bureaucrat.

This would not be the only metamorphosis that Bonaparte would undergo. He would also be transformed from a Republican general into an Imperial autocrat. One will see these changes documented in Gros's Napoleonic paintings, but in 1796 Bonaparte still retained some Revolutionary idealism and was able to inspire the same in others such as the youthful Gros.

Though the Louvre version of Arcole is done in a *Rubeniste*-inspired style, the source for Bonaparte's pose, according to Sara Lichtenstein, was Marcantonio Raimondi's engraving after Raphael's Massacre of the Innocents (Metropolitan Museum, New York; Plate XV). Lichtenstein plausibly saw Bonaparte's pose as a reversal of the pose of the soldier in the right foreground of Raphael's work.⁵⁰ A work in Genoa that also borrows this pose from Marcantonio's print after Raphael is Francesco Zambelli's floor mosaic of The Massacre of the Innocents at San Lorenzo, something Gros must have passed over countless times.

Gros, besides being in contact with numerous officials of the French Republic in Italy such as Bonaparte, Cacault, and others also had contacts with non-French patriots. During Gros's stay in Florence, from June 1793 until May 1794, he made the acquaintance of his first student, the Polish patriot Julien-Ursyn Niemcewicz (1757-1841). This Polish writer was a

⁴⁹Jackson, Attack in the West, 81. For similar eyewitness accounts of Bonaparte's physical appearance, see: Joe H. Kirchberger, The French Revolution and Napoleon: An Eyewitness History (N.Y.: Facts on File, 1989), 170-177. According to Jean Tulard, Bonaparte knowingly cultivated such an image. See: Jean Tulard, et al. Histoire de Napoléon par la peinture, (Paris: Belford, 1991), 9.

⁵⁰Sara Lichtenstein, "The Baron Gros and Raphael," Art Bulletin 60 (March 1978), 133.

dedicated advocate of the Polish reform movement for which he suffered both imprisonment and exile. Niemcewicz served on the Polish reform parliament of 1788-1792. In 1790 he wrote what was to become a very popular political satire on conservative opposition to the reform parliament, The Deputy's Return. In addition to writing other political tracts, Niemcewicz, who had spent some time in exile in America, also translated a number of works of English literature into Polish. After a very full and active life, Niemcewicz spent his last years in Paris where he again renewed his acquaintance with Gros.⁵¹

Niemcewicz left Florence to return to Poland in March of 1794 to again aid the military leader of the Polish reformers, Thaddeus Kosciuszko, then launching his second campaign against Russian interference with Polish reforms. The Poles unfortunately were defeated by the forces of Catherine II the Great, and both Niemcewicz and Kosciuszko were captured and imprisoned in St. Petersburg from the late Spring of 1794 until 1796, when the new Czar, Paul I, released them.⁵²

In between insurrections a number of the Polish freedom fighters exiled themselves in Italy, as did Niemcewicz, and hence his encounter with Gros in Florence. The Polish reform movement was in part inspired by the French Revolution and it is not surprising that a number of these exiled Poles in Italy joined the French Republican forces under Bonaparte. In 1796 Bonaparte promised the Poles that after the war in Italy he would lead French forces against the Russians in order to re-establish an independent Poland. At the end of the Italian campaign the successful

⁵¹For a discussion of a portrait that Gros painted of this Polish writer during their second encounter in Paris in 1833, see: Jan Bialostocki, "Gros et Niemcewicz," Gazette des Beaux-Arts 64 (1964): 362-372. David also painted a Polish patriot, Count Stanislas Kos Potocki in 1781 (Museum Narodowe, Warsaw).

⁵² W.F. Reddaway, et al., eds., The Cambridge History of Poland: From Augustus II to Pilsudski (1697-1935) (New York: Octagon, 1978), 210-212.

general, however, forgot all about his promises to the Poles in his flurry of preparations for his Egyptian campaign. Again the Poles would trust in Napoleon, and in 1801 a large Polish unit was sent to battle the rebellion of Toussaint L'Ouverture in San Domingo. Yellow fever took the lives of nearly all the Poles and the island was lost to France.⁵³ Through his association with Niemcewicz, Gros met other patriots of democratic principles, among them the celebrated Italian tragic poet, Vittorio Alfieri, then recently retired, and his frequent companion, the beautiful Comtesse Albany who obtained for Gros the commission to paint the portrait of Stanislas Malackowski, then President of the Polish Diet.⁵⁴

At the time that Gros met Vittorio Alfieri, the writer was forty-four years old and had already written nineteen tragedies as well as many poems and a political treatise on tyranny. Through his lyrics and dramas he helped to revive the national spirit of Italy and so earned the title of "Precursor of the Risorgimento." A Paris edition of Alfieri's tragedies appeared in 1789. These Alfierian tragedies, exalting liberty and assailing tyranny, were employed as propaganda by the French Republicans and their Italian supporters. Vittorio himself was in Paris with the Countess at the time of the outbreak of the Revolution as he was then overseeing the French publication of his plays. Ironically several unpleasant encounters with frenzied working-class crowds soured Alfieri's view of the Revolution and turned him into a strong supporter of

⁵³The New Encyclopedia Britannica, 15th ed. Micropaedia, vol. 6 (Chicago, 1990), 6:937:3a.

⁵⁴Delestre, Gros, 27. Delestre stated that he knew of this portrait only via a sketch. Tripier Le Franc, Histoire, 93. Tripier Le Franc stated that he also knew of the portrait only via the sketch in Gros's studio. The sketch is in a private collection in Paris. This sketch, now in a private collection in Paris, is reproduced (Fig. 2) in: Bouchot-Saupique, Jacqueline, "Deux Albums de croquis de la jeunesse de Gros," Archives de l'Art Français 22 (1959): 297-307.

constitutional monarch with a very limited suffrage.⁵⁵ At the time in his life that Gros met the celebrated author, the latter was very absorbed in staging and directing his own theatrical productions using local amateur actors of whom he was quite proud.⁵⁶ Perhaps Gros may have seen a production of Alfieri's Timoleon (1788), which furnished the subject of a major composition that Gros worked on the 1790's.⁵⁷

Alfieri's play was closely based on Plutarch's account of the two fifth-century B.C. Corinthian brothers, Timoleon and Timophanes. Both brothers served frequently in the city's military, Timoleon in the infantry and Timophanes in the cavalry. The younger Timoleon was modest, patriotic, and of a gentle temperament, except in the presence of tyrants. Though an able and brave soldier, the elder Timophanes's fatal flaw was his passion for absolute power; thus one expects--and gets--a clash of opposites. The clash came when Timoleon returned unexpectedly to Corinth, having successfully waged a war of liberation against the tyrannical ruler of Syracuse. In his absence his brother Timophanes overstepped his temporary military command to seize the reins of government and declare himself absolute ruler of Corinth. Unable to persuade his brother to repent of his ambitious act, Timoleon had his brother murdered by enlisting the aid of Aeschylus, his kinsman and brother to the wife of Timophanes and a certain diviner named Orthagoras.

Alfieri was not the only author to be inspired by Plutarch's account of the tragic story of the fifth-century B.C. Greek brothers. The

⁵⁵Charles R. Miller, Alfieri: A Biography (Williamsport, PA.: Bayard, 1936), 234.

⁵⁶Ibid.

⁵⁷In his memoirs, Alfieri only mentioned two plays by name, Saul and Bruto Primo, that were staged the year of Gros's stay in Florence. This, of course, does not exclude the possibility that others were staged but not mentioned in the memoirs. See: Vitorio Alfieri, The Life of Vittorio Alfieri, trans. by Sir Henry AcAnally (Lawrence: University of Kansas, 1953), 242-243.

revolutionary songwriter and playwright, Marie-Joseph Chénier, had also composed his own version of the Plutarchian story, but the play was denounced by members of the Committee of Public Safety as not being revolutionary enough and performances were banned. After Robespierre fell from power, the play was revived with a great deal of fanfare and was billed as being a condemnation of Robespierre and his radical coterie, though this was seemingly not the author's intention, for he was said to have written the play in part to prove his patriotism to radical critics.⁵⁸

In Gros's sketch of the Death of Timophanes (Musée du Louvre, Paris; Plate XVI), the artist has chosen the death scene from the final act of the play. Plutarch describes the action in this way:

After a few days, then he {Timoleon} returns to his brother with this company, all three of them surrounding and earnestly importuning him upon the same subject, that now at length he would listen to reason, and be of another mind. But when Timophanes first began to laugh at the men's simplicity, and presently broke out into rage and indignation against them, Timoleon stepped aside from him and stood weeping with his face covered, while the other two, drawing out their swords, dispatched him in a moment.⁵⁹

With so many literary sources at hand--there is also a play by La Harpe, and the Abbé Barthélemy included a popular version of the story in his Voyage de jeune Anacharsis en Grèce of 1788--it is difficult to be certain just which one(s) was the major inspiration for Gros. If one

⁵⁸The standard source on Chénier is: Alfred Jepson Bingham, Marie-Joseph Chénier: Early Political Life and Ideas (1789-1794) (New York: George Banta, 1939) and also: Marvin Carlson, The Theater of the French Revolution (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University, 1966); A. Lieby, Étude sur le Théâtre de Marie-Joseph Chénier (Paris: Société Française, 1901), 148. For newer interpretations see: Jesse L. Scott, "Directing a Revolution: Marie-Joseph Chénier, Playwright," in Consortium on Revolutionary Europe Proceedings 1989: 325-340; Jesse L. Scott, "Marie-Joseph Chénier: A Politicized Playwright," in Consortium on Revolutionary Europe, Proceedings 1987: 151-161; Stanley Mellon, "The Two Chénier Brothers: André and Marie-Joseph," in Consortium on Revolutionary Europe, Proceedings 1988: 556-569.

⁵⁹Plutarch's Lives, The Translation called Dryden's Corrected and Revised by A.H. Clough, vol 2, (Philadelphia: J.D. Morris, 1924), 55-56.

compares the final death scene of the three authors, Plutarch, Chénier, and Alfieri, Gros's sketch conforms most closely to Plutarch's version of the story, for it is the only version with two assassins, Aeschylus and Orthagoras. Gros's sketch is also closer to Plutarch (and Alfieri) in the anguish shown by Timoleon; Chénier's Timoleon has little remorse.⁶⁰

In view of the fact that in the 1790's so many artists and writers invoked the moral lessons of classical history to comment on contemporary politics, it is reasonable to assume that Gros was adhering to this practice.⁶¹ Yet, it is difficult to be exact about precise contemporary references in Gros's sketch due to complicating factors.

Robert Rosenblum has suggested that Neo-Classical paintings of the exploits of Timoleon and Timophanes were likely related to anti-Robespierre sentiment, the kind of sentiment that was associated with the revival of Marie-Joseph Chénier's play of Timoleon after Robespierre's fall from power in the summer of 1794. This may indeed be the case with a 1796 painting of Timoleon at Syracuse (Musée des Beaux-Arts, Tours) painted by Jean-Joseph Taillasson which Rosenblum discusses, but it seems highly unlikely that celebrating the fall of Robespierre would still be an issue of concern in 1798 (and in Genoa), when Tripiet Le Franc claimed that Gros's work was begun.⁶²

⁶⁰Edgar A. Bowering, ed., The Tragedies of Vittorio Alfieri (Westpoint, Conn.: Greenwood, n.d.); Marie-Joseph Chénier, Théâtre de M.J. Chénier, vol. 2, (Paris: Foulon, 1818), 130-202.

⁶¹For example, see: James Henry Rubin, "Painting and Politics: J.L. David's Patriotism, or the Conspiracy of Gracchus Babeuf and the Legacy of Topino-Lebrun," Art Bulletin 58 (December 1976): 547-568; Phillipe Bordes, "Les Arts après la Terreur: Topino-Lebrun, Hennequin et la peinture politique sous le Directoire," Revue du Louvre 29 (1979): 199-211.

⁶²Tripiet Le Franc, Histoire, 160; Delestre, Gros, 60. Delestre does not offer a precise date, only stating that the work was done during the Italian stay.

One painting that Rosenblum did not mention in the Timoleon genre was a 1791 painting, The Death of Timoleon (Musée Fabre, Montpellier), by Charles Meynier.⁶³ Clearly this painting of 1791 could not be a veiled allusion to the fall of Robespierre. Régis Michel suggests the allusion was to Louis XVI.⁶⁴ In any case, Louis was no longer the tyrant in 1798, nor was Robespierre, but one need not seek a specific contemporary reference for the tyrant being slain, for the fact is, the story in general, with or without a topical reference, would be a likely theme for a republican artist.⁶⁵

One cannot help but wonder what, if anything, is to be made of the resemblance between Gros's composition and David's Lictors Bringing Brutus the Bodies of his Sons of 1789 (Musée du Louvre, Paris; Plate XVIII).⁶⁶ In each, a pillar or column just off center provides a separation point between conflicting emotional stagings. The brooding Brutus on the left in David's canvas is replaced by the anguished Timoleon on the right of Gros's sketch. Both are in close proximity to symbols of their respective cities. The trio of sorrowing females, encased between antique chairs in David's composition, has been replaced by Timophanes and his two assassins

⁶³This painting is signed and dated. It is discussed and reproduced in: Régis Michel, "Meynier ou la métaphore parlementaire: Essai sur La Sentence de Ligarius," Revue du Louvre 37 (1987): 188-200.

⁶⁴Ibid, 195.

⁶⁵The issue of dating is complicated by the fact that if Gros did do the work in 1798, then he reused figures from earlier sketches. A figure from his sketch books that Rubin identified as Cato was used for the figure of Timophanes (Plate XVII). See: James Henry Rubin, "Gros and Girodet," Burlington Magazine 121 (November 1979): 716-721.

⁶⁶It is not just the composition that is similar but also the subject matter. An ancient leader chooses to execute his own blood relations in order to preserve a more democratic state; the Roman Brutus kills his sons, the Corinthian Timoleon, his brother.

in Gros's work.⁶⁷ In both a hand gesture forms the link between the two sides of the composition; the mother's gesture in David's canvas is assumed by Timophanes in the Gros sketch.

Thus one can see that Gros, despite the Royalist political orientation of his parents, came to espouse more liberal beliefs. At an early age his artistic preferences diverged from the courtly Rococo and Baroque styles in painting so well represented in his parents' art collection. Instead, he focused his attention on the clarity and purity of the new moralizing style of Neo-Classicism. His choice for an art instructor also reflected his preference for the new style, since he chose David, the most accomplished practitioner of the style, to be his teacher.

Gros not only learned the foundations of the art of painting from David but he was also exposed to an education in radical politics in David's studio, a type of education that was not available in the *ateliers* of other less radically politicized masters. If Gros had been the Royalist that his biographers assume he was, why would he remain in David's studio despite repeated urging on the part of his parents to find another instructor? Most likely Gros liked the heady atmosphere there and had no desire to move to safer quarters.

Another common misconception regarding Gros is that his abrupt departure from Paris was precipitated by his aversion to the leftward turn of the Revolution, yet both Delestre and Tripier Le Franc tell a different story, that of Gros being forced to flee the capital due to the manipulations of a jealous rival then serving on the Committee of Public Safety. Though Gros spent eight years of the Revolution in Italy, nowhere was he ever officially listed as an *émigré*, a course of action adopted by

⁶⁷Herbert sees this compositional split, at least in David's painting, as stemming from the work of Giotto. See: Robert L. Herbert, David, Voltaire, Brutus and the French Revolution: An Essay in Art and Politics (New York: Viking, 1973), 40.

most strongly committed Royalists. Nor is it logical that Gros would have made repeated attempts to return to revolutionary Paris if he had left that city to escape the Revolution.

In addition to these repeated attempts to return to revolutionary Paris, Gros also showed republican preferences in the commissions that he accepted, as for example his drawings for Beljambe's engraved series of portraits of representatives of the National Assembly, his Liberty escutcheon painted for Citizen Villars, or his sketch for The Death of Timophanes.

Gros not only accepted republican-inspired commissions, his choice of associates also reflected republican sympathies. Two of the most dedicated patriots of liberty at the time, Niemcewicz and Alfieri, were his friends. Gros was also acquainted with, and helped by, numerous representatives of the French Republic in Italy such as Citizen Cacaault or Citizen Villars. Gros may also have been a member, like Villars, of the local Jacobin society in Genoa as suggested by the toga he wears in his self-portrait of 1795. For all of these reasons, it seems fair to assume that Gros was a Republican.

CHAPTER II
PARIS, 1800-1803

Gros, who had been away from Paris for over seven years, was finally able to return in October of 1800 after having survived the Austrian siege of Genoa. It is likely that Bonaparte's gradual consolidation of power in the French capital after his clumsy but successful *coup d'état* in November of 1799 provided a favorable climate of return for Gros, the artist who had stamped French consciousness with the image of Bonaparte charging across the bridge at Arcole.

As he was too late to prepare for the Salon of 1800, Gros sent two works to the 1801 Salon: the large oil sketch for Bonaparte at Arcole (Musée du Louvre, Paris; Plate XI) and Sappho at Leucadia (Musée du Baron Gérard, Bayeux; Plate XIX).¹ These works, in addition to Gros's other major work of this time period, his large oil sketch of The Battle of Nazareth (Musée des Beaux-Arts, Nantes; Plate XX), are instructive for the light they shed on two different, yet related, issues.

The first issue concerns the standard contention that Gros was an artist constantly torn between two conflicting styles, one more painterly and realistic, the other more idealistic and classical. For example, Léon Rosenthal's assessment was typical:

En 1802 {sic} Gros exposait, à la fois, le portrait de Bonaparte à Arcole et Sapho au rocher de Leucade. Cette

¹The painting measures 122 by 100 cm. and is signed and dated on the rock: "Gros 1801." A sketch, which was formerly in the Madame Carbonnet Collection, exists for this painting. The work was engraved by Jean-Nicolas Laugier.

double exposition peut-être regardé comme le symbole de son oeuvre double, dont une partie releva de l'art classique, tandis que l'autre dérivait des préoccupations de la réalité présente.²

Thomas Brumbaugh, correctly I feel, traced this traditional assessment of the artist back to Gros's first biographer, J.B. Delestre:

All later accounts of Gros' remarkable life, are, of course, drawn from Delestre. The artist is there first shown in the conventional manner familiar to students of modern art. He is characterized as the first Romantic painter, torn between his allegiance to the Neoclassicism of his teacher, David, and a passion for Rubens and Michelangelo. His melancholy, even unstable temperament, and a reluctant involvement with contemporary events caused him great spiritual suffering, "cette angoisse morale du génie," and was inevitably to lead to conflicting directions in his art, and his tragic suicide as well.³

The reason most frequently cited for this stylistic dualism, as Brumbaugh also noted, is that Gros felt he owed a moral allegiance to David's classical style whereas his natural inclinations were best served by a more romantic style.⁴ It is my position that this account of Gros is accurate only after 1816. In 1816 David, exiled to Brussels, entrusted the direction of his school and the education of his students to Gros. Gros took upon this assignment with an overdeveloped sense of duty to David, seeing himself as a surrogate for the aging painter. Though Delestre was correct in his characterization of Gros during the Restoration era, he was mistaken in projecting this image of the artist backward into the Revolutionary period and the Napoleonic empire, thus confusing the way that Gros's earlier work has been interpreted.

²Léon Rosenthal, La peinture romantique: essai sur evolution de la peinture française de 1815 à 1830 (Paris: Thorin, n.d.), 28.

³Thomas B. Brumbaugh, "An Unpublished Letter of Baron Gros," Gazette des Beaux-Arts 71 (February, 1968), 123.

⁴For this kind of assessment, see: Friedlaender, David to Delacroix, 60-66. Sara Lichtenstein has convincingly shown that Gros could borrow from both traditions in one painting. See her: "Baron Gros and Raphael," Art Bulletin 60 (March 1978): 126-138.

Sappho at Leucadia has until recently long been seen as an example of a classical work from Gros's early career in which he timidly copied David's style and hence produced a mediocre painting.⁵ The first part of this chapter will be devoted to a reevaluation of Gros's Sappho, wherein I will argue that the painting, far from being an uninspired imitation of David's Neo-Classicism is, rather, a visually captivating painting that is stylistically inspired not so much by David as by the new Parisian avant-garde of 1800: *Les Primitifs*. The tradition of Gros as the often servile follower of his mentor, David, is paralleled in the literature by a similar appraisal of his relationship with the Emperor Napoleon.⁶ In this chapter I will reassess Gros's relationship to David and in subsequent chapters his relationship to Napoleon.

The latter part of this chapter will be devoted to an examination of Gros's other major work from this period, The Battle of Nazareth (Musée des Beaux-Arts, Nantes), in which it will be shown that Gros once again made significant stylistic departures from David. The painting is also Gros's first large-scale Napoleonic commission and his first painting of Napoleon's Egyptian Campaign.

Sappho at Leucadia was a commission from General Jean-Joseph Paul Augustin Dessolles (1767-1800), who served in the Army of Italy from 1796-1800. Why exactly the general chose--if he, in fact, did so--this particular subject is uncertain. Perhaps the general was an admirer of the lyric poetry of the seventh-century B.C. poet, Sappho. It is known though

⁵The first modern source to treat the painting in a more favorable light was the exhibition catalog: French Painting, 1774-1830: The Age of Revolution. This exhibition of November 1974 through September 1975 was sponsored by the Detroit Institute of Art, the Metropolitan Museum of Art, and the Réunion des Musées Nationaux. Lemonnier, in his 1928 monograph on Gros, is even more scathing than Rosenthal in his assessment of this painting (see note #16). Other authors pass over this painting so quickly that one assumes they view it as being unimportant in Gros's oeuvre.

⁶For this assessment, see, for example: Friedlaender, David to Delacroix, 65.

that Dessolles was both interested in and conversant with art; for Gros described him thus:

...je vis le Général Dessolles le chef d'état major qui a de l'amitié pour moi qui aime beaucoup les arts, dont nous parlons souvent ensemble.⁷

Historically, Sappho was said to have been married to Cercolas, a wealthy man from the island of Andros. The tradition that she was banished with other aristocrats and went to Sicily for a time is generally regarded as true; most of her life, however, was spent at Mytilene on the island of Lesbos. The narrative of Gros's painting, however, is taken from Ovid's Heroides. According to Ovid's fictional account of the poet's life, Sappho had a tragic love affair with a strikingly handsome, but faithless, boatman named Phaon. The two lovers would meet nightly in a cave among the hills behind Mitylene and spend the night wrapped in each other's arms while the nightingales sang in the tree tops outside. Shortly, however, young Phaon grew tired of Sappho's mature attentions and secretly boarded a merchant ship headed to Sicily. Unable to accept her loss, Sappho returned nightly to the cave hoping for the reappearance of her lover. Finally, hearing that Phaon had sailed to Sicily, Sappho set out to find him. At length she reached the southern end of the island of Leucas.⁸ This island was said to be the site of a famous rock:

There is a white rock which stretched out from Leucas to the sea and towards Cephallenia, that takes its name from its whiteness. The rock of Leucas has upon it a temple of Apollo, and the leap from it was believed to stop love. From this it was said that Sappho first, in pursuit of the haughty Phaon, urged on by maddening desire, threw herself from its farseen rocks...⁹

⁷From a letter dated to May 13, 1799 from Gros in Italy which is reprinted in Baumbaugh, "Letter," 124. The letter is paraphrased in Delestre, Gros, 48.

⁸Arthur Weigall, Sappho of Lesbos: Her Life and Times (N.Y.: Garden City, 1932), 300-310.

⁹Strabo, The Geography of Strabo, trans. by H.R. Jones, (London: Heineman, 1968), 10.

This is just the episode from the Sappho story that Gros had chosen to illustrate. The heroine, after offering a final libation to Apollo, here stands on the brink of the Leucadian rock, dramatically silhouetted against a moonlit sky.

Stylistically, the painting is strangely evocative. At first glance, the painting is so dark that the viewer has trouble detecting any precise color at all. Gradually one becomes aware of a blue-green sea and a blue-violet sky. In fact, a kind of lavender haze envelops the entire painting. Emerging out of this foggy haze are the luminous reflections cast by the light of the moon. Though the effect of these reflections is more poetic than naturalistic, Gros was said to have made nocturnal study trips to investigate the visual effects of moonlight:

...il retrouve le général Dessolles, pour qu'il esquisse Sappho à Leucate. Beaux clairs de lune génois au bord de la mer, qui virent le jeune inspecteur aux revues agiter un mouchoir au souffle de la brise pour observer l'effet devant lui servir pour l'exécution de la tunique légère qui enveloppe le corps de Sappho.¹⁰

Certainly one must acknowledge that Gros's time was well spent, for Sappho's tunic is a *tour de force* of transparent luminosity. Apparently, Gros himself was quite proud of the efforts that he took with the painting:

Sa Sappho était pour lui un tableau du genre élevé, un sujet antique, où il s'imaginait avoir développé entièrement toute sa science et son talent.¹¹

One wonders if Gros was not also influenced by his friend Girodet's moonlit painting of The Sleep of Endymion (Musée du Louvre, Paris; Plate XXI) which he could have seen upon his return to Paris in 1800. The painting was executed in Rome in 1791 and first shown in the Salon of

¹⁰Raymond Escholier, La peinture française au XIXe siècle: De David à Géricault (Paris: Librairie Floury, 1941), 7. Escholier does not cite a source for this account.

¹¹Delècluze, Louis David, 290.

1793. It was highly praised and Girodet refused numerous offers to sell the work; he kept it with him all his life. He continued to exhibit the painting almost yearly so that it became like a commercial sign for the artist and he even did not hesitate to sign a letter to Gérard "Endymion."¹² According to Barbara Stafford, Girodet also had some scientific interest in moonlight and kept himself informed of contemporary studies concerning phosphorescence.¹³ Like Girodet's hovering figure of Eros, Gros's Sappho is picked out from the surrounding darkness by a luminously glowing contour line.

Despite Gros's effort to provide a scientifically accurate rendition of moonlight, this aspect of his painting was singled out for criticism. One disgruntled critic insisted that "this is not the way that Vernet, that great magician, expressed moonlight."¹⁴ Other critics complained that Gros's color was not true to nature, being either "too blue" or "too green."¹⁵ Lemonnier, who was extremely negative in his own assessment of Gros's Sappho, also quoted from some of the more unfavorable Salon reviews, for example:

...tableau trop vert, qui fait penser que le peinture était gris...{or}...le tableau appartient à l'auteur, je le crois bien!¹⁶

Several critics reproached Gros for not respecting historical verisimilitude. A critic from the Mercure de France announced: "The head

¹²Levitine, Girodet-Trioson, 117.

¹³Barbara Stafford, "Endymion's Moonbath: Art and Science in Girodet's Early Masterpiece," Leonardo 15 (Summer 1982), 193.

¹⁴Geneviève Lacambre, "Sappho," in French Painting 1774-1830, 464. Quoted from the Journal des Arts, des Sciences et de Littérature, no. 156, 426.

¹⁵Ibid.

¹⁶Henri Lemmonier, Gros: Biographie Critique (Paris: H. Laurens, 1928), 24.

of Phaon's lover resembles an Egyptian rather than a Greek.¹⁷ Two other reviewers insisted that Sappho's leap took place during the day rather than at night and faulted the artist for this oversight.¹⁸

Of course, had Gros portrayed it as a daytime scene, all of his evocative moonlight effects would have been precluded, and it is possible that Gros may have accorded a particular significance to moonlight. James Henry Rubin, in his investigation of Girodet's The Sleep of Endymion (1791) and eighteenth-century moonlore, has suggested that Girodet used moonlight allegorically for the inspirational immortality of the poet: "Almost unwittingly, Girodet's Endymion anticipated the image of the poet or the artist as visionary dreamer."¹⁹ Rubin also noted that Girodet was certainly not the first to make use of this imagery, for Edward Young in his Night Thoughts spoke of the figure of Endymion as having come under the poetic influence of the moon; Endymion became, in certain respects, a substitute for the dreaming poet inspired by the moon. Gros was thoroughly familiar both with his friend Girodet's work and with Young's popular Night Thoughts, having made sketches inspired by the poem during his stay in Florence.²⁰ Certainly in the context of eighteenth-century moonlore, a moonlit night would be a most fitting locale for Sappho.

The cited strictures, however, did not represent a majority view among Gros's contemporaries. In general, many of the critics were favorable towards Gros's effort. Landon found: "Le dessin est gracieux,

¹⁷Lacambre, "Sappho," 467.

¹⁸Ibid.

¹⁹James Henry Rubin, "Endymion's Dream as a Myth of Romantic Inspiration," Art Quarterly 1 (Spring 1978), 78.

²⁰Gros's sketches inspired by Young's Night Thoughts are in his two extant sketchbooks from his stay in Italy. These sketchbooks are in the collection of the Cabinet des Dessins of the Louvre. The sketches are discussed by: Paul Joannides, "Some English Themes in the Early Work of Gros," Burlington Magazine 117 (December 1975): 716-721.

l'expression touchante, et le pinceau facile."²¹ Though never precisely stated in reviews, part of the reason for the popularity of Gros's painting--according to La Décade Philosophique, it was placed at the entrance of the exhibition--was that stylistically it was *au courant*.

Gros must have looked closely at what was then David's latest major statement, his Intervention of the Sabine Women of 1795-1799 (Plate VI). Gros's figure of Sappho is directly inspired by one of David's Sabines--the Sabine dressed in a golden yellow tunic who raises her child high above the chaos of the ensuing struggle. Here, in light of current taste, Gros has softened his earlier "Greek style," which was so much harsher in his allegorical figure of the Republic.

Gros, however, did not look only to David for inspiration, he also was open to the influence of the avant-garde of the period, *les Primitifs*, who flourished from 1797 until about 1804. Most of the members of this small sect, led by Maurice Quai, were former students of David who harshly criticized his Sabines, though it obviously was a major foundation for their style. To them it seemed that David had not taken his stylized refinements far enough, for they "sought for a pure abstract line as far as possible with any disturbing chiaroscuro."²²

Actual works of art by this small and short-lived (1797-1804) sect of artists are few in number.²³ The group's spiritual leader, Maurice Quai, died at age thirty. Most of what is known of the group is recounted by Etienne Delécluze in his Louis David, son École et son Temps (1855). Delécluze was a friend of Quai's and of Charles Nodier, who for a brief

²¹C.P. Landon, Annales du Musée et de l'École Moderne des Beaux-Arts, vol. 3, (Paris, 1800-1809), vol. 3, 63.

²²Walter Friedlaender, From David to Delacroix, Trans. by Robert Goldwater, (Cambridge: Harvard University, 1952), 47. See also: George Levitine, "The Primitifs and their Critics in the Year 1800," Studies in Romanticism (Summer 1962): 209-219.

²³Friedlaender, David to Delacroix, 45.

time was a member of *les Primitifs*.²⁴ According to Delécluze and Nodier, the group sought an even greater archaism and abstraction than David had achieved in his Sabines. To them his Sabines was not pure enough and still smacked of the Rococo. They aspired to the purity of Greek and Etruscan vase painting, the line drawings of John Flaxman, and the "primitives" of the *quattrocento*.²⁵

Though none of the canvases of Quai or Nodier survive, one can get some idea of their work through the paintings of other artists who were members of the group or who were influenced, as was Gros, by their ideas without themselves being formal members of the group. Jean Broc was one member whose paintings are extant.²⁶ His Death of Hyacinth (Musée de Poitiers) (Plate XXII), which appeared in the Salon of 1801, is close in style and effect to Gros's Sappho at Leucadia. Here again one senses the planar clarity of Greek vase painting and of popular illustrations of John Flaxman in the strongly silhouetted figures, whose illuminated contours particularly resemble those of the Sappho.

François Gérard, though not a formal member of the group, found inspiration, as did the *Primitifs*, in Flaxman's outline drawing and Etruscan vase painting in his Cupid and Psyche (Musée du Louvre, Paris) (Plate XXIII), a painting which resembles Gros's Sappho in its stylized silhouetting of the figures in an evocative landscape. Ingres, too, emphasized silhouette and reduced chiaroscuro in his Jupiter and Thetis of 1811 (Musée Granet, Aix-en-Provence).

²⁴Delécluze, Louis David, 70-80. In 1803 Nodier wrote a seditious poem entitled La Napoleone which resulted in his imprisonment for 36 days and subsequent exile to Besançon where he was put under local police surveillance. See: Richard Oliver. Charles Nodier: Pilot of Romanticism, (N.Y.: Syracuse University, 1964), 34-38.

²⁵Ibid.

²⁶For Broc, see: George Levitine, The Dawn of Bohemianism: The Barbu Rebellion and Primitivism in Neoclassical France (University Park & London: Pennsylvania State University, 1978), 116.

Thus one can reassess Gros's Sappho at Leucadia very differently than did either Lemonnier or Rosenthal.²⁷ The painting can no longer be seen as a timid and dry imitation of David's style. Though Gros did borrow some of the essentials of his figure of Sappho from one of David's Sabines, he transformed her stylistically under the influence of both Girodet and the Primitives.

Gros also moved away from David's very public image of the prevention of civic conflict to the very private image of suicide. Gillet even called the work a presentiment of the artist's own later suicide:

...qui prend un sens de pressentiment, si on le rapproche de la détresse et un suicide obscur de la nuit du Bas-Meudon.²⁸

Actually, according to Robert Rosenblum, the search for subjects of extreme emotions of love and desperation were part of what he called "a more passionate pulse" that first emerged about 1800. If Rosenblum is correct then one can again see Gros as an initiator in terms of both subject matter and treatment rather than as David's timid and hesitant follower:

In Gros's picture of 1801, the poetess, after her final libation, is silhouetted like a Greek maenad against a weird luminary drama of moonlight, dark clouds and shimmering sea, a nocturnal ambiance of ghostly mystery that would be no less appropriate for the Ossian illustrations being painted in the same year by Gérard and Girodet.²⁹

Gros's next major commission of 1801 was for a very different kind of painting: a commemoration of The Battle of Nazareth (Musée des Beaux-Arts, Nantes; Plate XX). In the oil sketch, which was all Gros was able to execute of this project, he uses a painterly style to render this

²⁷The painting thereafter continued to be ignored. It was not until the French Painting 1774-1800: The Age of Revolution exhibition of 1975 that the work was given serious consideration.

²⁸Louis Gillet, "À l'Exposition Gros," Revue de Deux Mondes 33 (1936), 920.

²⁹Rosenblum, "Napoleonic Painting," in French Painting 1774-1830: The Age of Revolution, 166.

episode from Bonaparte's Egyptian Campaign of 1798-1801. The campaign was conceived of as a means to cut British trade routes to India and to make Egypt a permanent French colony. Though militarily the campaign proved to be an embarrassing failure, much of the French public was chauvinistically willing to believe official propaganda to the contrary, and exotic Eastern subjects began to capture the imagination of the French public.

The Egyptian enterprise began in early July of 1798 when the French took Alexandria by storm. Later that same month the French decisively defeated the Mameluke army of Murad-Bey and Ibrahim-Bey at Embabeh (The Battle of the Pyramids).³⁰ While Bonaparte was organizing a colonial administration in Cairo and overseeing his famous institute of scholars, it was learned that the British fleet had destroyed the French fleet moored in Aboukir Bay and that Turkey had now entered the war on the side of the British.

Anticipating and heading off a combined Anglo-Turkish-Mameluke attack was the major impetus for Bonaparte's Syrian campaign of 1799.³¹ Bonaparte hoped to defeat Ahmed Pasha, the Mameluke governor or Djezzar of Syria, before any British and Turkish forces arrived. Ahmed Pasha ("The Butcher") was a fierce old man of Bosnian birth who had been a Mameluke slave before obtaining the post of governor. He lived at Acre where the crusader castle of Richard Coeur de Lion still stood, though in a poor and dilapidated condition.³²

³⁰The Mamelukes ruled Egypt under the nominal suzerainty of the sultan of the Ottoman Empire. Tallyrand was supposed to go to Constantinople on a personal embassy to persuade the Sultan that France was occupying Egypt only in light of Turkish interests. As it turned out, he never went on this mission.

³¹The so-called Syrian campaign of Bonaparte was fought, not in Syria proper, but in Palestine, that is, in modern Israel and the Lake Tiberias district of Jordan.

³²Christopher Lloyd, Illustrated Sources in History: The Nile Campaign (N.Y.: Barnes & Noble, 1973), 74.

By the time Bonaparte reached Acre, the British squadron under Sir Sidney Smith was already there. Accompanying Smith was his French emigré friend, Le Picard de Phéipeaux, an engineer of genius and a former classmate of Bonaparte's at the École Militaire. Bonaparte tried to save his siege artillery, which was arriving by sea, from falling into British hands, but his attempts were unsuccessful. By the time the French reached Acre, Ahmed Pasha was already in possession of his artillery and soon Turkish reinforcements arrived by sea. In addition to all these misfortunes, there was a serious outbreak of the plague, so that by mid-May Bonaparte was forced to raise the siege of Acre and begin the long retreat back to Cairo.

The Battle of Nazareth occurred on April 5 of 1799 while the French were still trying to penetrate Acre. While Bonaparte was besieging Acre, a ring was forming around him. Ahmed Pasha had addressed appeals to the warlike mountaineers of Nablus and to the pashas of Aleppo and Damascus. On April 5, 1799, while on a reconnaissance mission in the area, General Junot eventually repulsed a cavalry force of Turks several times the size of the French forces (If, however, Kléber had not arrived soon thereafter with reinforcements, the outcome might have been far less positive).

It seems that Bonaparte was eager to seize upon one of the very few military successes of the dismal desert campaign; for the dust of battle had barely settled before he was laying detailed plans to commemorate the event in paint:

Bonaparte ordered that a medal worth 500 louis should be offered for a competition for the best picture to commemorate the feat. The staff were to get the artists brought with the army of Egypt to sketch the many dresses of the tribes who had fought and to send these to the Minister of the Interior at Paris, Milan, Florence, Rome and Naples and to fix the date of the competition. Reading this one imagines one has turned

over too many leaves and come to the full time of the Empire...³³

It was, however, not until March of 1801 that specific conditions were established for the execution of the painting. The commission was to be awarded to the artist chosen by a fifteen-member jury.³⁴ The jury was presided over by Vien and included both David and Junot. In December the sketches presented by twenty artists were examined by the jury. The judges unanimously declared Gros the winner and commissioned him to complete the final painting.

The announcement of the winner seems to have provoked a controversy in the contemporary press.³⁵ According to the painter Chéry, writing in no. 109 of Le Journal des Bâtiments Civils, des Monuments et des Arts:

On the day of the judgment of this contest Général Junot arrived with saber in hand, declared that the prize had to be awarded to Citizen Gros. The jury, astonished by this new method of judging, was obliged to yield.³⁶

Whether Junot actually tried to influence the jury in such a bizarre fashion or whether the story is a gross exaggeration by a disappointed loser is hard to say with absolute certainty. Initially the story reported by Chéry seems too silly to be believed, yet if it were true it would help explain Bonaparte's sudden cancellation of the project. Gros it seems had finished laying out the whole composition on the final canvas

³³Ramsay Weston Phipps, The Armies of the First French Republic, vol. 4, (London: Oxford University, 1926), 400.

³⁴For more details about this jury, see: Susan Locke Siegfried, "Naked History: The Rhetoric of Military Painting in Postrevolutionary France," Art Bulletin 75 (June 1993): 235-258.

³⁵For this controversy also see: Siegfried, "Naked History," 246-248.

³⁶Quoted in: Jean Lacambre, "The Battle of Nazareth," in French Painting 1774-1830, 469. A similar assertion was made in no. 135 of the same journal by a different author.

and had just completed painting Junot's face when the order to stop was delivered by Vivant Denon.³⁷

The standard explanation for Bonaparte's abrupt termination of the project is that the First Consul became extremely jealous of Junot and feared giving him more public attention and thus aborted the whole painting project.³⁸ It seems odd, however, that Bonaparte would be jealous of Junot, whom he had just promoted to Division General and who had been one of his most loyal companions. This promotion hardly coincides with feelings of jealousy. Nor do any of the standard biographical sources hint at any such controversy.

Delacroix also doubted the standard interpretation, stating that it was: "...Peu probable que Bonaparte, vainqueur de l'Europe et de l'Egypte, ait pu se sentir importune par la gloire de Junot."³⁹ It does, however, make much more sense for Bonaparte to have cancelled the commission due to negative publicity over Junot's bully-boy tactics. Bonaparte was extremely sensitive to negative propaganda and exerted ever more and more control over the popular press and publishing world to ensure the illusion of absolute harmony under his benign rule.⁴⁰

³⁷Tripier Le Franc, Histoire, 198.

³⁸Quite typical is the account given by Lemonnier, Gros, 31. Lemonnier contended that he heard this account from Vivant Denon.

³⁹Eugène Delacroix, "Peintures et sculptures modernes, III: Gros," Revue des Deux Mondes 23 (September 1, 1848), 266. Pierre Lelièvre, "Gros, Peinture d'Histoire," Gazette des Beaux-Arts 15 (1936), 293. This author also disputed the jealousy theory, though he erroneously contended that bad press over Bonaparte's behavior at Jaffa made the Jaffa commission more pressing. Almost two years, however, intervened between the two commissions.

⁴⁰For Napoleon's control of the media, see: Robert Holtman, Napoleonic Propaganda (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University, 1950). It is also possible that the commission was cancelled due to the French loss of Egypt to Britain. British forces landed in March of 1801 and final negotiations for the departure of French troops were concluded in October.

The potential for negative publicity was increased by the apparent popularity of the sketches of three other artists with the French public--those of Hennequin, Taunay, and Caraffe. One anonymous critic in Le Moniteur Universel of September 28, 1801 contended that David had intended to vote for the completion of all four paintings.⁴¹ Perhaps righteous indignation over the apparent intimidation by Junot prompted Hennequin to declare that he intended to carry out the completion of his project at his own expense.⁴²

The location of Hennequin's composition is unknown and hence no comparisons can be made with the sketch by Gros. The two artists would, however, compete again for the commission for the Battle of Eylau in 1808. In this case the sketches of both artists are extant and Gros's work is obviously the more effective.

Nicolas Taunay's oil sketch of The Battle of Nazareth (Private Collection, Paris; Plate XXIV) can be compared to Gros's sketch. A quick glance assures the viewer that Gros's work is far superior in both conception and execution. Gros's unique composition reflects the spontaneity of the encounter, while Taunay's soldiers seem subject to the laws of compositional rhetoric. Taunay used an obvious central focus by placing the mounted Junot in front of a triangular mass of fighting figures at whose apex puffs of smoke billow skyward.

Though both Gros and Taunay present a general picture of battle with a large cast of characters, the viewer can still focus on individual anecdotal incidents. Taunay's portrayal of them, however, lacks both the emotional conviction and the exotic dash that one finds in Gros. For example, the foreshortened dead Turk to the right of center in Taunay's

⁴¹Lacambre, "Nazareth," 469.

⁴²Ibid.

sketch looks more like an overweight bureaucrat taking a snooze than a fallen Eastern warrior.⁴³

Taunay also seems to have adhered more closely to the historical facts of the actual battle. In Taunay one witnesses typical French battle squares, under the mountain ridge to the left. This geometric formation of tightly positioned artillery soldiers presented a deadly screen of steady gun-fire to the isolated cavalry charges of the Turks and Mamelukes. It was really not so surprising that the French were victorious despite being outnumbered. Gros, however, presents the scene as one of dramatic hand-to-hand combat.

Though the final version of the painting was never completed, Gros's remaining oil sketch is still a feast for the eyes. According to Delacroix, here Gros: "...s'y montre un maître complet."⁴⁴ Gros's vision of the battle is a panoramic one of fierce struggle waged under the sultry heat of the late afternoon sun. The scope is large enough to give the viewer a sense of the vast sweep of the encounter, but the medium range of vision allows the artist to focus on individual incidents of emotional intensity. In the middle ground to the left of center, one sees Junot on a white horse with a saber in one hand and a gun in the other. He has just shot one Turk, who tumbles out of his saddle into the arms of his black servant, and is in the act of stabbing another Turk who approaches from behind. Behind Junot and his aide-de-camp, several mounted Turks are blown to the ground by the French artillery and form a whirling knot of twisted limbs. In front of these figures, a fanatically brave Turk charges suicidally towards the French artillery, at the same time that a young French grenadier hesitates momentarily prior to plunging his saber

⁴³Siegfried considers that Taunay uses an arsenal of stock motifs. See her, "Naked History," 246.

⁴⁴Delacroix, "Gros," 656. The painting measures 135 by 195 cm. and is signed "Gros, an X" on the rock in the lower right foreground.

blade into the extended neck of a Turk who picturesquely falls toward the viewer. These dramatic episodes capture the viewer's attention and make the act of war seem much less abstract than it does, for example, in a painting like François-Joseph Watteau's The Battle of the Pyramids of 1799 (Musée de Valenciennes).

Initially Gros had been timid about entering the competition but was urged to compete by both Junot and Denon.⁴⁵ After Gros received the commission, Junot and Denon supplied the artist with extracts of official army bulletins and correspondence from the Egyptian campaign, as well as various plans and maps made of the battlefield.⁴⁶ This *réportage* tradition, beginning here with the Napoleonic commissions, provides a prototypical working method that will later be picked up by Théodore Géricault in preparation for his Raft of the Medusa of 1817-1819 (Musée du Louvre, Paris).

Despite his having access to all this dry factual information, Gros's conception retained a sense of freshness and spontaneity and was one where heroics and exoticism took precedence over the facts. Or as Rozet Saint-Genest remarked at the time:

As for me, I was captivated from the first glance, I thought I was dreaming and still at the opera, in that fairyland temple, where Noverre used to enchant us in the chivalric ballet of Adèle de Ponthieu.⁴⁷

According to Delécluze, the brilliance of the color and the boldness of the brushwork, as well as the general sense of disorder that existed in

⁴⁵Tripier Le Franc, Histoire, 190.

⁴⁶These materials are now part of the collection of the Musée de Nantes. There are also documents and battlefield sketches in Collection F. 21 of the Archives Nationales.

⁴⁷Lacambre, "Nazareth," 470. Quoted from: Le Journal des Arts, 5 Nivoise, an X, no. 175, 9.

the composition, was so different from the current mode of battle painting that it attracted a good deal of attention.⁴⁸

One assumes that Delécluze is making a mental comparison of Gros's work to the latest statement of battle painting: David's Intervention of the Sabine Women of 1799 (Plate VI). In every respect, in Wöfflinian terms, David's work reflects the classical formula, while Gros's work adheres to the Baroque. Or as Eitner noted:

In organizing this animated panorama, Gros followed the example of Rubens, arranging his composition not in symmetrical groupings, as in David's Battle of Romans and Sabines, but in surging streams of brightly colored masses.⁴⁹

As he did in his Bonaparte at Arcole, Gros turned again to Rubens for inspiration. Thus far it appears that Gros found *Rubenisme* more appropriate than classicism for contemporary battle painting. It is also clear that Gros was still able to make very independent departures from David, for he clearly rejects David's battle format.

The Baroqueness of his composition must have been the reason that several reviewers of the Salon claimed that Gros was trying to revive the traditions of the earlier eighteenth century. According to the critic Rène: "It seems at this moment that a destructive genius is trying to resuscitate the erroneous systems of the Van Loos and the Bouchers."⁵⁰ Or as Rozet Saint Genest noted: "What eye..has not immediately seen how close this very witty sketch is to our great masters of this genre: Parrocel, Cozette, and Cazanova?"⁵¹

⁴⁸Delécluze, Louis David, 209. For criticism on this point see: Siegfried, "Naked History," 246-247.

⁴⁹Lorenz Eitner, An Outline of Nineteenth-Century European Painting: From David through Cézanne (N.Y.: Harper & Row, 1986), 36.

⁵⁰Lacambre, "Nazareth," 469. Quoted from: Le Journal des Batiments Civils, 29 Frimare, an X, no. 135, 431.

⁵¹Lacambre, "Nazareth," 469. Quoted from: Le Journal des Arts, 30 Frimaire, an X, no. 173, 396.

Yet Gros may also owe a debt to the masters of Renaissance battle painting. Gros seems to have been stimulated by Giulio Romano's fresco of The Battle of Constantine from the Sala di Costantino at the Vatican. At first glance the two works (Plate XXV) seem totally dissimilar, but like Giulio, Gros organizes his composition around three different horses. The central portion of each composition--though in Gros it is left of center--is dominated by the hero on his horse moving off to the right in profile view, though the battle action to the left of this is spearheaded by a horse which plunges back into the composition at a strong diagonal. To the right and behind the hero, a third horse initiates a long loop of figures filling the right side of the canvas. Gros was probably also familiar with Rubens's copy of an earlier engraving after Leonardo's Battle of Anghiari, for the motif of interlocking equestrians--Junot and his opponents--is strongly reminiscent of the famous Renaissance composition.

One also wonders if perhaps Gros had seen one of the early battle canvases of the American artist, John Trumbull; more specifically either his Death of General Warren at Bunker's Hill (Yale University Art Gallery) or his Death of General Montgomery at Quebec (Yale University Art Gallery), both of 1786 (Plates XXVI & XXVII). The American artist had brought both recently completed paintings along with him on his second visit to Paris in the late summer of 1786.⁵² It was on this visit that Trumbull made the acquaintance of Madame Vigée-Lebrun. He became a frequent visitor to her soirées and they remained firm friends for life, having been born less than a year apart and sharing a similar reverence for the art of Rubens.⁵³ The year before, on another visit to Paris,

⁵²Irma B. Jaffe, John Trumbull: Patriot-Artist of the American Revolution (Boston: N.Y. Graphic, 1975), 96.

⁵³Theodore Sizer, "John Trumbull," Art Quarterly (Summer 1952): 151-152.

Trumbull had met David, who he stated, "...became and continued my warm and efficient friend."⁵⁴

That Gros's then two most important artistic contacts in Paris, David and Madame Vigée-Lebrun, were in contact with Trumbull in 1786 opens at least the possibility that Gros, too, may well have been exposed to the works of the American artist. Though he was only about fifteen years old at the time, Gros had clearly been seriously studying and copying from other artists since the age of eight.

What exactly then is it about Gros's sketch of The Battle of Nazareth that calls to mind the early battle paintings of Trumbull? In his early battle paintings of the deaths of Warren and Montgomery, Trumbull used a technique very similar to that which John Constable used in his mid-century landscape paintings and which has come to be known as "Constable's snow." In order to achieve a sense of the sparkle of sunlight, Constable put quick flecks and daubs of pure white paint over the surface of his canvas in areas where he wanted to give the impression of the reflection of light. Trumbull was not necessarily concerned to render reflections of light through his use of this method, though thick daubs of white paint do give the sense of a reflective surface in his Death of General Montgomery. More effective is the artist's use of tiny splashes of thick paint to render various accessories of the military uniform such as the buttons, shoulder insignia, and the like. The surface sparkle generated by this technique is certainly eye-catching, while it generates a sense of immediacy and spontaneity which one also finds in Gros's Nazareth.

Also reminiscent of Trumbull's efforts are the astonishing atmospheric effects that Gros is able to achieve in the painting of his

⁵⁴Theodore Sizer, ed., The Autobiography of Colonel John Trumbull Patriot-Artist, 1756-1843 (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University, 1953), 93.

battle sky. While, for instance, Trumbull's sky in his Death of General Warren is a pyrotechnical combination of fire and smoke billowing above the fighting at a strong diagonal, Gros's sky suggests that the smoke of the battle circulates through an oppressively hot and heavy air which creates an enveloping haze. This oppressive haze almost totally obscures the fighting in the further distance as it hovers sinisterly over the struggle in the foreground.

If Gros drew inspiration for this sketch both from his famous predecessors, Renaissance and eighteenth-century, and perhaps from his contemporary, Trumbull, his own legacy to future generations of artists was significant. Théodore Géricault paid a thousand francs for the right to have the picture copied by P.F. Leloux, Jules-Robert Auguste made several studies from the groups of struggling men, and Delacroix studied the sketch at some length.⁵⁵

Of particular note to Delacroix, in his comments on Gros's painting, was the way that Gros could capture on canvas the intense vitality of horses. Delacroix's praise of this impressive ability was profuse and he enthusiastically stated that he found Gros's rendition of horses far superior to that of even Rubens. To Delacroix, Gros's horses seemed to "respirer l'amour du danger et de la gloire."⁵⁶ Gros's superior skills in this area stemmed from an early childhood fascination with these animals. The young Gros would spend hours observing the activities of the horses lodged in the Duc d'Orléans' stable across the street from the Gros family lodgings:

Depuis l'âge le plus tendre, le jeune Gros passait presque tous ses moments de récréation à l'une des fenêtres, et se

⁵⁵Donald A. Rosenthal, Orientalism: The Near East in French Painting, 1800-1880, An Exhibition at the Memorial Art Gallery at the University of Rochester, 1982. The Leloux copy was given to the Avignon Musée in 1836 by Horace Vernet.

⁵⁶Delacroix, "Revue," 656.

plaisait à voir aller et venir les écuyer du duc...aussi sa conversation habituelle et préférée se portait principalement sur les allures diverses des chevaux de selle ou de carross qui dans la journée avaient le plus frappé sa jeune imagination.⁵⁷

Géricault was perhaps an even more avid horse enthusiast than Gros and it seems logical that he would look to Gros, as he often did, for inspiration in this matter. Gros's influence seems perhaps most obvious in Géricault's famous Salon entry of 1812: The Charging Chasseur (Portrait Équestre de M. D.***) (Musée du Louvre, Paris; Plate XXVIII). According to Lorenz Eitner:

Neither Guérin nor Vernet had taught Géricault to paint such a picture, his masters and inspiration were Gros and Rubens. The debt to Rubens is large, but hard to measure since something of Rubens's style had come to Géricault through the work of Gros...The example that stood before him as he worked on the Chasseur was not the Gros of 1812 but the earlier, more vigorous painter of The Battle of Aboukir (1806) and of Eylau (1808). The closest relative of the Chasseur's raging horse is the horse that carried Murat in The Battle of Aboukir. The resemblances between their heads are very close, yet there are unmistakable differences in expression and execution even here. Géricault's work already shows the marks of his individuality; it goes beyond Gros in its expressive vehemence and, at the same time, in the delicacy and complexity of its colors.⁵⁸

It seems, though, that one could go back even further in Gros's oeuvre than Eitner has suggested, to Gros's Battle of Nazareth, to seek Géricault's initial inspiration for his Charging Chasseur. If one combines the dramatically twisted figure of Junot in the left middleground of Gros's Battle of Nazareth with the nervous chestnut horse in the lower lefthand corner of the painting, one has a very close approximation of the horse and rider in the Géricault painting.

In his Battle of Nazareth, Gros was not only an influence on the early Géricault but was also one of the initiators of the Orientalist

⁵⁷Delestre, Gros, 18.

⁵⁸Lorenz Eitner, Géricault: His Life and Work (London: Orbis, 1983), 35.

craze in painting that blossomed in France upon Bonaparte's return from Egypt.⁵⁹ Recently, the whole issue of Orientalism has been examined in light of the fact that its flowering was closely associated with the apogee of European colonialist expansionism in the nineteenth century. For example, Donald Rosenthal, in a recent catalog on Orientalism, summarized Edward W. Said's critical definition of Orientalism as being:⁶⁰

...a mode for defining, classifying, and expressing the presumed cultural inferiority of the Islamic Orient: In short, it is a part of the vast control mechanism of colonialism, designed to justify and perpetuate European dominance.⁶¹

Though Rosenthal acknowledged Said's study, and in part, agreed with it, he concluded his summary of the issue with his assertion that "no attempt will be made at a re-evaluation of its political uses."⁶² Linda Nochlin, however, provided her own re-evaluation in a review of this exhibition at the University of Rochester by examining a number of works from the show--especially those by Delacroix and Gérôme--in light of the issues of political domination and ideology.⁶³

For example, Nochlin sees Jean-Léon Gérôme's Snake Charmer, painted in the late 1860's (Clark Art Institute, Williamstown, Mass.), as a visual document of nineteenth-century ideology couched in what she calls its style of "would-be transparent naturalism." According to Nochlin, the photographic style of realism gives the viewer the strong illusion of

⁵⁹For other considerations of Gros as an innovator in battle painting see: Siegfried, "Naked History," 250-256.

⁶⁰Donald A. Rosenthal, Orientalism: The Near East in French Painting, 1800-1880 (University of Rochester, Memorial Art Gallery, August 27-October 17, 1982).

⁶¹Rosenthal, Orientalism, 9. See also: Edward W. Said, Orientalism (N.Y.: Vintage, c. 1978, 1979).

⁶²Ibid.

⁶³Linda Nochlin, "The Imaginary Orient," Art in America (May 1983): 119-131; 186-191.

authenticity while the iconography is, in many ways, a projection of the artist's fantasy world, a fantasy world in which the western artist is prone to see his eastern counterpart as backward and culturally inferior. Nochlin also states that Gérôme's canvas permits the viewer only a tantalizing rear view of a naked boy holding a snake. The fullness of this dangerous performance is denied to the viewer but not to the picturesque crowd of natives who gather on the floor, entranced by the boy's performance.

According to Nochlin, Gérôme offers his western viewers the representation of an atemporal land untouched by modernity or the presence of the West; a place where eroticism (snake handling, nudity, and a colorful cast) and mystery (our obstructed view) co-exist with corruption, idleness and neglect. This idleness and neglect is highlighted by the cracked tiles in the floor; Nochlin refers to them as an example of "architecture moralisée":

...these people--lazy, slothful and childlike, if colorful--have let their cultural treasures sink into decay. There is a clear allusion here, clothed in the language of objective reportage, not to the mystery of the East, but to the barbaric insouciance of Moslem peoples, who quite literally charm snakes while Constantinople falls into ruins.⁶⁴

Gros, however, was, on the evidence of this painting, not prone to see the French as superior to (and hence justified in controlling) his eastern counterparts. Certainly his Turks and Mamelukes are picturesquely colorful and certainly they are the obvious losers in this battle, as it is mostly their dead or dying bodies that litter the sand. Yet if one looks closely at the foreground episodes of the painting, one sees that the French soldiers look like adolescents compared to their Eastern adversaries. They are much smaller in scale than their oriental opponents and lack the heroic musculature that the dying Turks display. Was Gros

⁶⁴Nochlin, "Imaginary Orient," 123.

somehow subconsciously in sympathy with these Eastern warriors? Was he identifying with the romantic "other?" It is also curious that the star performer, Junot, has been pushed to the far left middleground while the center foreground becomes an open stage for noble Turks and Mamelukes: the fanatically brave Mameluke rider who charges into a bevy of French riflemen, the dying Turk who offers his sword to his French enemy, and the unfortunate Turk whose massive white neck is dramatically exposed to his French executioner above.⁶⁵

Susan Locke Siegfried interprets the content of these vignettes differently, seeing rather a glorification of the common French soldier (this glorification resulting from the new citizen army of the Revolution) via *traits de courage* and *traits d'humanité* (a pamphlet tradition, begun during the Revolution, of glorifying courageous deeds and humanitarian actions of the common soldier):

Including these episodes {those not stated in the government program} was Gros's own idea, and their theme of French humanitarianism was placed prominently in the foreground; they are, in fact, the first thing one sees. The group on the left presents the mythic Orientalist scene of decapitating helpless captives, while in the center the "respect" and compassion of the French for their prisoners is exemplified by a captain who protects a surrendering Turk from the gunshot of a French soldier.⁶⁶

Rather than interpreting the group action on the left as "the mythic Orientalist scene of decapitating helpless captives," one can understand it in a diametrically opposite way. While the Turk on the far left raises his saber above a French soldier's head, the French soldier plunges his blade into the enemy's heart, hardly the response of a "helpless captive." Below this group a Turk, in his death agony, spasmodically clutches the hair of the French soldier before him, as his saber tumbles from his

⁶⁵For Siegfried's explanation of Junot's placement see her, "Naked History," 252.

⁶⁶Siegfried, "Naked History," 252. Siegfried relies on a review from the Moniteur of October 10, 1799 for her description of these episodes.

lifeless right hand; he is dying rather than making any last ditch effort to behead the enemy. His death pose is heroic in its strength and grace. It is the Frenchman, clutching nervously for the falling weapon, who mistakenly fears decapitation.

The central scene of the painting can also be understood differently. It is true that a French captain nobly protects a surrendering Turk from being slain by a French soldier. Yet if the captain's gesture is humane, surely then the soldier's gesture is not, and Gros thus portrays the common soldier as capable of treachery.

Perhaps Gros would have adjusted these contrasts (of Frenchman and oriental) in his final canvas, but one will never know with absolute certainty, for shortly after he began work on the final canvas the notice came that the commission had been cancelled. Denon arrived at Gros's studio a few days later to inform him that he would be financially compensated for his efforts, but that he was not at liberty to go into any details regarding the cancellation. It was not until April 1, 1803 that Gros again heard from Denon.

It is not, however, unreasonable to assume that Gros would have maintained these contrasts in his final canvas, for in his works of 1804-1810, Gros would continue to ennoble the Eastern "other" and in my view by so doing to develop a critique of Napoleon's military ventures.

CHAPTER III
JAFFA, 1803-1804

"No doubt when I mentioned the name Brutus," Corinne remarked, "You fastened on this painting with all your soul; but you could have seen it without guessing the subject and that antiquity is almost always found in historical paintings. Does it not mix the tension of a riddle with the pleasures of the arts which are meant to be so easy and clear?"

Corinne to Oswald in
Madame de Staël's Corinne,
or Italy

Until recently, Gros's major work of 1804, Bonaparte Visiting the Pest-Stricken at Jaffa (Musée du Louvre, Paris; Plate XXIX), has been interpreted as a fairly straightforward as well as quite successful example of Napoleonic propaganda. This was certainly the opinion of Gros's first biographer, J.B. Delestre:

Le héros de Jaffa est sans peur dans ce domaine de la mort: c'est un autre champ de bataille qu'il affronte pour sauver et non détraire; sa personne paraît hors d'atteinte; tout est excentrique dans son geste noble et assuré. C'est l'apôtre de la bienfaisance disant avec foi: Sois guéri.¹

The most celebrated modern interpretation in this vein was that made by Walter Friedlaender in 1940 when he equated Bonaparte's touching gesture in this painting with that of a *Roi Thaumaturge*; Gros thus, in his view,

¹Delestre, Gros, 90. The full title of the painting in that year's Salon catalog was: Bonaparte, général en chef de l'armée d'Orient au moment où il touche une tumeur pestilentielle en visitant l'hôpital de Jaffa.

propels one to see the Emperor as the possessor of this ancient power of kingship.²

In a long article of 1968 on Gros's painting of Jaffa, the authors, Mollaret and Brossollet, seemed to give strong support to Friedlaender's thesis. Therefore, the conclusion of their article, wherein they provided a last-minute iconographic assessment of the painting based on the ritual of French masonry, was surprising because it was not clear how the two interpretations, that is, masonry and sacred kingship, coincide:

Nous suggérons qu'une "clef" pourrait être fournie par le rituel de la franc-maçonnerie: Bonaparte gaucher? Non, mais simplement dans la position du 4eme point de "l'attouchement du maître" suivant le rite écossais: "main gauche sur épaule droite" pour signifier "qu'il donne les conseils dictés par la sagesse et la charité."³

More recently, Heinrich Brunner has argued that there is nothing concrete within the painting which recalls the ritual of the laying on of hands of the French kings; all the action can convey is only a general sense of sacredness. More particularly, Brunner sees Bonaparte's gesture as conveying his wish to be seen as "a caring father," as an humanitarian patriarch to his soldiers to whom he renders food and medical treatment. Brunner therefore sees this as being within the tradition of paintings highlighting the benevolence of the ruler, such as in Joseph-Marie Vien's Marcus Aurelius Distributing Food and Medicine of 1765 (Musée de Picardie, Amiens).⁴

²Walter Friedlaender, "Napoleon as Roi Thaumaturge," Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institute, IV (1940/1941): 139-141.

³Mollaret, H. & J. Brossollet, "A Propos des Pestiférés de Jaffa de A. J. Gros," Jaarboek van het Koninklijk Museum voor schone kunsten Antwerpen, 1968, 305.

⁴Manfred Heinrich Brunner, Antoine-Jean Gros, Die Napoleonischen Historienbilder (Diss. Bonn, 1974), 152-155; 175-180.

One of the first historians briefly to suggest that the content of the painting was something other than a flattering homage to the future Emperor was Jack Lindsay, who observed that:

Gros showed Bonaparte just touching the bubo with his fingertip...so much for the historic scene. But it is the hell of the setting that dominates...At a blow he arrives at mastery of his method, with its need to show the human anguish under the shadow of glory. Bonaparte's deliberate heroism remains in his small set face gathering the light; but the human reality festers and heaves in the surrounding darkness. A great new vision has been brought into art.⁵

Very similar to Lindsay's comments on Gros's Jaffa was this short passing comment made by Paul Joannides:

Yet together with the dazzlingly successful effort to exalt Napoleon, the painting achieves a quality of tragedy which raises it above its propagandistic function and makes it a moving depiction of mortal suffering.⁶

More extensive than either Lindsay's or Joannides's suggestion that Gros's painting of Jaffa undercuts Bonaparte's visit to the plague-stricken because the colossal dead bodies in the foreground of the work undercut the general's actions in the middleground was a 1979 thesis written by Alexander Fyjis-Walker. Fyjis-Walker, besides offering comments similar to those of Lindsay and Joannides, extended his discussion to include a full analysis of Gros's Jaffa and Eylau wherein he claimed that Gros used incoherent iconographical sources and schemes and that in this incoherence a criticism of Napoleon was implicit. For example, he saw the touched plague victim as also being analogous to Christ in Michelangelo's Last Judgment in the Sistine Chapel and concluded:

The soldier as Christ is another example of Gros' instinctive insistent sympathy with the victim. To find the victim as hero in militaristic propaganda, the victim glorified in a

⁵Jack Lindsay, Death of the Hero: French Painting from David to Delacroix (London: Studio, 1960), 117.

⁶Paul Joannides, "Some English Themes in the Early Work of Gros," Burlington Magazine 117 (December 1975), 784.

painting intended to obliterate the memory of thousands of victims is suspiciously ambivalent.⁷

A similar reading was offered by Norman Bryson; however, Bryson sees this "disturbance or incoherence in the image" as part of the realism of the image, realistic precisely because it is provisional and incomplete:

It is not difficult to find documentary evidence to account for what seems like Gros' disaffection with Napoleon; and once the documents are on the table it cannot be long before the explanation is complete. Such explanation is necessarily reductive, not because it has got hold of the wrong documents but because it is an EXPLANATION; that is, the projection of knowledge into the existential field of ignorance.⁸

Whereas Fyjis-Walker views Gros's use of contending iconography as an indication that Gros was allowing his negative feelings regarding Napoleon to enter into his commissioned work (actually Fyjis-Walker continually implies that Gros had negative feelings towards Napoleon but never explicitly states this, rather he uses the phrase "Gros's inherent sympathy with the victim") to enter into his commissioned work. Bryson, in contrast, argues that neither we today nor Gros himself could know all that his image embodied at the time of its creation. For this reason Bryson feels that the dialectic in Gros's work can never be explained, for to explain it would be one more example of art historians overdetermining the content of works of art.

I agree with Bryson that there is a dialectic in Gros's work but I do not concur that seeking an explanation for this dialectic is an exercise in the falsification of history; otherwise I would hardly be writing this dissertation. All history is imperfect and subject to continual revision; it is not a philosophical theorem. The main objective

⁷Alexander Fyjis-Walker, Some Uses of Iconography around 1804 (Unpublished M. Phil. Thesis, Courtauld Institute of Art, 1984), 96. A similar position was taken by Norman Bryson in an unpublished talk given at The Ohio State University on April 6, 1987.

⁸Norman Bryson, "Representing the Real: Gros' Paintings of Napoleon," History of the Human Sciences 1 (1988), 100.

of this chapter, therefore, is to extend much further the line of reasoning suggested by Linday's, Joannides's, Bryson's, and Fyjis-Walker's remarks; but first some historical background is necessary.

According to Tripier Le Franc, Gros remained in a state of bewilderment over the abrupt termination of the Nazareth project. One wonders if an attempt to visit Josephine later that year, ostensibly to show her a new painting, was more truly an attempt to seek some kind of explanation for the cancellation of his commission, or at least some kind of reassurance as to his standing with the First Consul. Josephine's crisp response could hardly have been encouraging: "C'est particulièrement au Salon des tableaux qu'elle le verra avec plaisir."⁹ Tripier Le Franc also assumed that Gros's decision not to show this particular work at the next Salon was an intended snub to Josephine on Gros's part.¹⁰

In his biography of Gros, Tripier Le Franc stated that Bonaparte offered Gros the Jaffa commission at Josephine's insistence after it had already been promised to Pierre Guérin.¹¹ If so, perhaps Josephine fell prey to guilt after Gros's snub. Mollaret and Brossollet, following Michaud's account, contended that Bonaparte's mother intrigued to give Guérin the commission after it had already been offered to Gros. The reason they offered for this petty intrigue was Madame Mère's jealousy of a daughter-in-law whom she would not accept as her son's wife.¹²

Whoever precisely was assigned the commission to do the painting did not seem to matter to Napoleon, who himself cared little as long as the

⁹Tripier Le Franc, Histoire, 200.

¹⁰Tripier Le Franc, Histoire, 201.

¹¹Tripier Le Franc, Histoire, 205.

¹²Mollaret & Brossollet, "A Propos," 269.

subjects he proposed eventually were painted. On the other hand, Bonaparte did court one artist, David. David had been expressly sought out and urged to accompany Bonaparte to Egypt, although he declined; and later, under the Empire, David was singled out and named First Painter. Clearly Napoleon knew of David's reputation and he sought to attach to his person the celebrated practitioners in different fields of endeavor; he also wooed the renowned sculptor, Canova. According to Bonaparte's Minister of the Interior from 1802-1804, Jean-Antoine Chaptal, who was himself very interested in art:

Napoleon did not care for the arts, probably because nature denied him the sensibility to appreciate their merit. Nevertheless, he always appeared to interest himself in the arts. He did this for political reasons in order to demonstrate his broadmindedness. The Emperor gave commissions but was indifferent as to the manner of execution, because he lacked the taste to judge for himself, and being unable to appreciate any particular artist, he was disposed to believe the one he trusted the best.¹³

It seems that Napoleon was content that Gros have the commission.

Upon its receipt, Gros was reassigned to his old studio space at Versailles and set to work on one-half of the giant canvas previously used for The Battle of Nazareth. It took him close to six months to complete the final painting.¹⁴ Yet instead of welcoming a steady stream of visitors to his studio as he had during the Nazareth commission, Gros kept his studio door tightly closed and worked completely alone.¹⁵ One wonders about this sudden change in working procedure. Perhaps Gros simply needed the privacy for personal reasons; after all his rheumatism had begun to

¹³Cited in: Warren Roberts, Jacques-Louis David Revolutionary Artist: Art, Politics, and the French Revolution (Chapel Hill & London: University of North Carolina, 1989), 137. For other observations on Napoleon's disinterest in aesthetics, see: Cecil Gould, Trophy of Victory: The Musée Napoléon and the Creation of the Louvre (London: Faber & Faber, 1965), 42-43. Also see the conclusion of my dissertation.

¹⁴Tripier Le Franc, Histoire, 207; Delestre, Gros, 85.

¹⁵Tripier Le Franc, Histoire, 207.

bother him again. Then again, perhaps Bonaparte had let it be known that fraternizing with the historical participants, as he had with Junot and others during the Nazareth commission, was frowned upon. Or did Gros only imagine some displeasure from Bonaparte? Whatever the exact situation, this withdrawal and sharp change in behavior suggests at least the possibility of some kind of conflict.

With his new Jaffa commission Gros was once again chronicling an event from Bonaparte's Egyptian Campaign. The actual historical events of Jaffa occurred approximately one month prior to Junot's engagement at the Battle of Nazareth. It was on their way to Acre that the French arrived before the city of Jaffa on March 3, 1799. Both the walled city and the citadel were defended by a strong Turkish force, as well as by part of the population. On March 7 the French began the assault on the city and within a few hours the city was in French hands. Once inside the city the French troops bayoneted men, women, and children well into the bloody night. The next day some 3,000 Turkish troops who had taken refuge in the citadel finally surrendered when they were promised their lives by two of Bonaparte's *aides de camp*. Bonaparte was furious with his aides' decision, feeling that he could not spare the guards and food to keep these prisoners alive. He ordered a mass execution which went on for four full days. Eyewitness accounts of the sea-side massacre are filled with sickeningly gruesome details. For example, Citizen Peyrusse left this account:

The soldiers had been carefully instructed not to waste ammunition, and they were ferocious enough to stab them with their bayonets. Among the victims, we found many children who, in the act of death, had clung to their fathers. This example will teach our enemies that they cannot count on French good faith, and sooner or later, the blood of these 3,000 victims will be upon us.¹⁶

¹⁶La Jonquière, C. de, L'Expédition en Egypte, 1798-1801 (Paris, 1899-1907), vol. 4, 278. La Jonquière cites numerous other eyewitness accounts as well.

On March 8, the second day of the massacre, plague broke out in the city. Some of the local inhabitants and the French soldiers saw this outburst of plague as a retribution from God upon the murderous French.¹⁷ The numbers of those both contracting and dying from the plague mounted daily. The fear became so great among the French soldiers that some who fell prey to the symptoms committed suicide rather than go through the painful stages of the deadly disease.¹⁸ The head doctor, Dr. René Desgenettes, made efforts to reduce panic by referring to the epidemic as "the fever of the bubo." This, however, proved futile for everyone knew that the multitude of convulsive deaths could only be due to the plague.

It was in order to counteract the mounting fear rapidly spreading amongst his troops that Bonaparte entered the plague hospital on the 11th of March. Probably the most accurate account of what actually occurred on this visit was provided by Dr. Desgenettes:

Le général parcourut les deux hôpitaux, parla à presque tous les militaires, et s'occupa plus d'une heure et demie de tous les détail d'une bonne et prompte organisation; se trouvant dans une chambre étroite et très encombrée, il aida à soulever le cadavre hideux d'un soldat dont les habits en lambeaux étoient souillés par l'ouverture d'un bobon abscedé.¹⁹

A crayon study at the Louvre (Plate XXX) and an oil sketch at the Isaac Delgado Museum in New Orleans (Plate XXXI) correspond closely to the doctor's description.²⁰ In both, one sees Bonaparte just to the left of a central window in a narrow, crowded room. The general helps an oriental orderly move an unconscious plague victim whose plague sores ooze. To the

¹⁷Christopher Herold, Bonaparte in Egypt (N.Y.: Harper & Row, 1962), 273-275. Herold cites numerous eyewitness accounts.

¹⁸Herold, Bonaparte in Egypt, 278.

¹⁹René Desgenettes, Histoire Médicale de l'Armée d'Orient (Paris: Croullebois, 1802), 50.

²⁰Also see: A. Fyjis Walker, "A Drawing for Gros's Pest House at Jaffa," Burlington Magazine 127 (September 1985): 120-122.

right of Bonaparte, a concerned aide tries to intercede. Delestre identifies this figure as Desgenettes, but this may be only on the basis of the final painting.²¹ The plague-stricken form a ring around the central action while a blind-folded figure, a victim of ophthalmia, attempts to stagger in through the open doorway from the right.²² According to Delestre, who describes this sketch at some length, the plague victims (from left to right) represent the three major stages of illness through which a plague victim passes: chills, vomiting, and excessive thirst.²³

The Louvre drawing for a long time remained the property of Hippolyte Larrey, who was the son of the Napoleonic surgeon accompanying Bonaparte to Egypt and who was later a prominent figure in Gros's 1808 painting of Napoleon at the Battle of Eylau (Musée du Louvre, Paris). The drawing bears the following remarks by Hippolyte:

Ce dessin de Gros est la véritable scène historique ou la première esquisse de son chef d'oeuvre. Il représente le général Bonaparte relevant de ses propres mains le cadavre d'un pestiféré, pour ranimer le moral abattu de ceux qui l'entourent. Tous semblent effrayés de son action, lui seul est calme, comme l'emprime sa figure. Cette scène est plus digne de la gloire du grand homme que la substitution d'une attitude plus noble en apparence à l'elan vrai d'un courage sublime.²⁴

In late May Bonaparte and his troops would again pass through Jaffa on their long march back to Cairo after being forced to abandon their attempts to penetrate the defenses of Saint Jean d'Acre. On this visit to Jaffa, however, Bonaparte's behavior was much less heroic. Although

²¹Delestre, Gros, 87.

²²Ophthalmia was an inflammation of the eye prevalent in the Near East. The inflammation could be severe enough to cause temporary or even permanent blindness.

²³Delestre, Gros, 86.

²⁴This drawing is now part of the collection of the Cabinet des Dessins of the Louvre.

accounts differ somewhat as to details, most contemporary reports state that at this time Bonaparte suggested to Dr. Desgenettes that the most severely ill of the plague-stricken--those who could not be transported with the rest of the French forces--be given poison, in part as a form of mercy killing. Desgenettes was personally offended by the general's suggestion and is said to have screamed biblical verses in Latin at the top of his lungs in indignant protest against this suggestion.²⁵

After Desgenettes's forceful refusal, Bonaparte then obtained laudanum from Hadj Mustafa, a Turkish physician from Constantinople, who had arrived in Jaffa shortly after its capture by the French. The poison was then administered to the fifty remaining victims by Royer, the chief pharmacist. Whether intentionally given an insufficient dose or not, "seven poor wretches" still remained alive when the British later entered the city.²⁶ A great deal of acrimonious debate was generated by these events. According to Herold:

A silly literature of controversy grew up around this episode. Dr. Larrey formally accused Desgenettes of lying when Desgenettes published the facts in later years, and idolaters of Napoleon tend to deny the whole story. Against them stands the testimony of Bourrienne, Jacques Miot, Marshal Manmont, the engineer Martin, Kléber, Desgenettes, Sergent François, and at least a half dozen others. Bonaparte himself, in his version of the campaign, attenuates rather than denies these assertions: the poison, he says, was placed beside the patients before the French evacuated Jaffa, so that they could take it voluntarily to avoid falling into the hands of the Turks. It is difficult to see why this question has generated so much passion; even if Bonaparte did order the mercy-killing of two or four dozen hopeless plague patients, surely this action was more defensible than the massacre of several thousand prisoners of war, which he had ordered at Jaffa ten weeks earlier.²⁷

²⁵F. Charles-Roux, Bonaparte: Governor of Egypt, trans. by E.W. Dicks, (London: Methuen, 1937), 317. Herold gives a similar account in: Herold, Bonaparte in Egypt, 306.

²⁶Herold, Bonaparte in Egypt, 308.

²⁷Herold, Bonaparte in Egypt, 308.

The later poisoning controversy apart, both Napoleon and the British tried to manipulate the presentation of these events to their respective publics for propaganda purposes. For Napoleon, the plague became a handy excuse for his failure in Egypt. On May 27th Bonaparte reported the following in a letter to the Directory:

The occasion seemed to favor the capture of Acre, but our spies, deserters, and our prisoners all reported that the plague was ravaging the city and that every day more than sixty persons were dying of it...If the soldiers had entered the city...they would have brought back into camp the germs of that horrible evil, which is more to be feared than all the armies in the world.²⁸

Actually Bonaparte was unable to take Acre because his siege artillery, sent from Alexandria by ship, was captured by the British before it could reach the French.²⁹

Again, on June 29, 1799, Bonaparte used the plague as an excuse for his failures in Egypt. On this day Bonaparte convened the first session of the Institute of Egypt since his departure for Syria. He called the meeting to make a report on the bubonic plague in Syria. "The committee's purpose, he clearly hinted, was to blame the failure of his campaign on it."³⁰ Dr. Desgenettes, an obvious choice for appointment, was not nominated to serve on the committee. Desgenettes was able to maintain his composure during this slight but he exploded when Bonaparte "...allowed himself some cheap witticisms at the expense of the medical profession."³¹

²⁸Cited in: Herold, Bonaparte in Egypt, 307.

²⁹The French had been lucky to reach and land safely in Egypt without a British attack. There would, however, be no more nautical good fortune for the French. In early August of 1798 the British made a surprise attack on the French fleet moored at Aboukir Bay and destroyed the greater part of the French fleet.

³⁰Herold, Bonaparte in Egypt, 317.

³¹Herold, Bonaparte in Egypt, 317. See also: Victoires, conquêtes, désastres, revers et guerres civiles des Français de 1792 à 1815 (Paris, 1816-1819), vol 10, 313.

After this indignant outburst, Desgenettes's request to return to France was refused by Bonaparte. The doctor was to stay in Egypt until the French capitulation of 1801. Apart from this, though, Napoleon never took any action against Desgenettes.

The fact that Napoleon took no action against Desgenettes, unlike Madame de Staël, may be attributed to the fact that Desgenettes did not publish anything critical of the Emperor during the latter's lifetime. It was only in 1836, in his second edition of memoirs entitled Souvenirs de la fin du dix-huitième siècle et du commencement du dix-neuvième, ou memoires de R.D.G., that Desgenettes discussed Bonaparte's second visit to the plague hospital and the stormy meeting of the Institute.³² It seems clear that Gros was familiar with the doctor's 1802 Histoire Medicale de L'Armée d'Orient, as it provided the setting for Gros's early sketches. Could Gros also possibly have made the acquaintance of Desgenettes and learned the full truth?

The doctor, after all, was resident in Paris between 1801 and 1804, and was a noted authority on the plague, having studied it since he first joined the medical staff of the French republican army in 1793. His library on the subject of the plague was one of the most extensive in France. As well as being acquainted with noted British and Italian scholars of the plague, Desgenettes published several articles on the disease during his professorship at the Val-de-Grâce medical hospital in Paris (1801-1804; 1812-1823). Desgenettes was also, according to Michaud, close friends with General Kléber, one of Bonaparte's most vocal critics:

Quand Bonaparte eut quitté l'Egypte, Desgenettes demeura avec Kléber, son héros de prédilection et son ami. Et même, quand

³²René Desgenettes, Souvenirs de la fin du dix-huitième siècle et du commencement du dix-neuvième, ou Mémoires de R.D.G. (Paris, 1854-1865), vol. 2, 499.

Desgenettes revint à Paris, la statue de Kléber occupa constamment une place d'honneur dans sa bibliothèque.³³

If through promotions, military bulletins, committee reports, newspaper censorship and the like, Napoleon was able to manipulate French public opinion regarding his Egyptian campaign, he had no power over what was published in Britain concerning his invasion of Egypt. At the time of the invasion, Bonaparte was roundly caricatured for his Egyptian campaign; yet Jaffa was not initially a subject for ridicule and scorn. According to Ashton, it was the British fear of invasion in 1803 that precipitated a preoccupation with what occurred in Jaffa during the French campaign in Syria. As Ashton noted:

But when in 1803, this country was in fear of invasion, it {the poisoning at Jaffa} was brought up and used with great effect in stimulating patriotism.³⁴

British broadsides and satires of 1803 alluding to either the French massacre of Turkish troops at Jaffa or Bonaparte's alleged poisoning of plague victims at Jaffa are much too numerous to cite in full. A few representative examples should suffice to indicate the basic tenor of British journalism at the time.

One broadside of 1803, a parody of a criminal-wanted poster, called for a twenty thousand pound reward for:

Napoleon Bonaparte, alias Jaffa Bonaparte, alias Opium
Bonaparte, alias Whitford Bonaparte, alias Acre
Bonaparte....³⁵

³³Joseph François Michaud, Biographie Universelle, vol. 14, (Paris, 1835-1856), 496-499.

³⁴John Ashton, English Caricature and Satire on Napoleon (London: Chatto & Windus, 1884), 73. Also by referring to the subject index in Mary Dorothy George's Catalogue of Political and Personal Satires Preserved in the Department of Prints and Drawings in the British Museum, Vol. 8, (London: British Museum, 1978), which is arranged chronologically, one can see that British satire concerning Jaffa did not start until 1803 and that this was the major year for its production, as it tapered off thereafter.

³⁵Ashton, English Caricature, 163.

Another parody of 1803 acclaimed:

Most wonderful wonder of wonders:

Just arrived, at Mr. Bull's Menagerie, the British Lane, the most renowned and sagacious man tiger, or ourangoutang called:

NAPOLEON BONAPARTE

He has been exhibited through the greatest part of Europe...He has a wonderful faculty of speech...He proves, incontrovertibly that the strongest poisons are the most sovereign remedies for wounds of all kinds; and by a dose or two, made up in his own way, he cures his patients of all their ills by the gross....³⁶

Also popular at this time with the British public were R.K. Porter's widely-circulated anti-invasion broadsides. One print was entitled Bonaparte Massacring Three Thousand Eight Hundred Men at Jaffa (Plate XXXII). This plate, according to Mary Dorothy George, derives from the highly colored description of the French invasion of Egypt, A History of the British Expedition to Egypt, by Sir Robert Wilson, first published in 1802.³⁷

Bonaparte was especially outraged with the contents of Wilson's account and the book became the subject of protest by Talleyrand to the British diplomat in France, Whitworth, in which Wilson's book was described as "a work ...filled with the most atrocious and disgusting calumnies against the French army and its general."³⁸ Wilson, who was actually a Lieutenant under Sir Sidney Smith during the British expedition against the French in Egypt, concluded his account of the poisoning affair at Jaffa in this way:

³⁶Ashton, English Caricature, 201. Also see: A.M. Broadly & J. Holland Rose, Napoleon in Caricature, 1795-1821 (London: John Lane, 1911); John Grand-Carteret, Napoleon en Images: Estampes Anglaises (Paris: Firmin-Didot, 1985); Catherine Clerc, La Caricature contre Napoléon (Paris: Éditions Promodis, 1985).

³⁷George, Catalogue, vol. 8, 177.

³⁸George, Catalogue, vol 8, 177. Cited from: Parliamentary History, XXXVI, 1319.

...since the idea can scarce be entertained that the commander of an army should order his own countrymen to be deprived of existence, when in a state which required the kindest consideration. But the annuals of France record the frightful crimes of a Robespierre, a Carriere, and historical truth must now recite one equal to any which has blackened its page.³⁹

It was not solely the British who questioned Bonaparte's heroism in Egypt, but the French had also become skeptical. An anonymous French caricature which circulated in 1802 (Plate XXXIII) shows Bonaparte on a stage, complete with the three Great Pyramids, sprinkling sand from a side-show display of his Egyptian campaign upon the audience below. Bonaparte's real intentions, however, are revealed by the royal crown which protrudes from his apron pocket. His ambitions are also exposed in the glimpse backstage offered by the artist. Here one sees his assistants busily engaged in decorating a royal throne. When Napoleon was later declared Emperor:

On représenta le second et le troisième consuls accroupis sur un chandelier. Bonaparte était en milieu d'eux, les couvrant chacun d'un éteignoir et leur disait: "Bonsoir Messieurs."⁴⁰

In light of all this negative propaganda against Bonaparte, especially the numerous British satires directed against the poisoning at Jaffa, one can reasonably assume that the desired purpose for the official commission was to combat this negative publicity.⁴¹ Certainly Gros's early sketches (Plates XXX & XXXI) for the project--discussed previously--show Bonaparte in a more favorable light, that is during his first visit to the plague hospital at Jaffa.

Gros's final conception of the event, in contrast, appears quite different to the eye in terms of both the setting and the action of the

³⁹Sir Robert Wilson, A History of the British Expedition to Egypt (London: Roworth, 1802), 74.

⁴⁰Clerc, Caricature contre Napoléon, 132.

⁴¹Mollaret & Brossollet, "A Propos," 281. These authors also see the painting as an attempt to stem negative British propaganda, but they do not develop this thesis in any way.

major protagonist. In the early sketches the figures occupy the confines of a dark narrow chamber. The city is visible only through a small centrally located window. In the final canvas the figures occupy a sunlit courtyard with a full view, oddly enough, of the outside approach to the city of Jaffa behind them. Through the arcade to the right one even catches a glimpse of a ship at sea. Instead of the austerity of the barely indicated architecture of the early sketches, the final painting is filled with picturesque orientализing/gothicizing architecture. Through the arcades of this architecture filters the warm sunlight of a late afternoon. Within the confines of this new expansion of space, the beautiful colors and textures of the clothing of the French soldiers and the oriental medical assistants are a feast for the eyes.

In addition to making these amendments, among others, to the setting, Gros also altered the actions performed by Bonaparte. Rather than modestly struggling to help an orderly move the limp body of an unconscious plague victim, Bonaparte, without physical exertion, merely lightly touches the bare chest of one of the stricken.

Before considering the ramifications of these changes, we should take up the issue of who, precisely, effected these changes. Often it has been assumed that Dominique Vivant Denon, appointed Bonaparte's Director General of Museums in September of 1802, intervened to solicit a more flattering rendition of the future Emperor. For example, Norman Schlenoff contended that:

The Jaffa {final version} is presumably the brainchild of someone who participated in the campaign; most probably Denon who in addition to portfolios of drawings, had free access to notes, books, documents, and material about to go into books.⁴²

⁴²Norman Schlenoff, "Baron Gros and Napoleon's Egyptian Campaign," in Walter Cahn, ed., Essays in Honor of Walter Friedlaender (N.Y.: J.J. Augustin, 1965), 160.

Though Schlenoff is correct in regard to Denon's extensive collection, it is also true that Vivant Denon did not participate in the Syrian wing of the Egyptian campaign and hence was never actually in Jaffa. Rather than going west from Cairo with Bonaparte, Denon accompanied General Desaix on his campaign in southern Egypt. Of course, Gros could have made use of Denon's extensive collection for details of Eastern costume and the like. One cannot, however, necessarily equate lending an artist materials with dictating an iconographic program. Brossollet and Mollaret, like Schlenoff, also considered that Gros's initial conception changed due to intervention on the part of Denon; something grander was needed for the man who would be crowned Emperor on December 2, 1804.⁴³

Twentieth-century biographies of the museum director are of little help in the effort to pinpoint the involvement of Denon in the commission. The only documentation they cite is for subject lists of projected paintings compiled by the Emperor and Denon and also the documentary materials compiled for competitive commissions like the Nazareth project, or later the Eylau commission. But Jaffa was not a competitive commission.⁴⁴

Nor are Gros's biographers particularly helpful in clarifying the issue of Denon's involvement in the iconographic scheme of the commission. Delestre merely stated:

Gros fit en quelque sorte, sous la dictée du directeur général des musées une première esquisse toute différente de celle qu'il exécuta ensuite et qui obtint l'entière approbation de Bonaparte et du public.⁴⁵

⁴³Mollaret & Brossollet, "A Propos," 294.

⁴⁴For Denon see: Jean Chatelain, Dominique Vivant Denon et le Louvre de Napoleon (Paris: Perrin, 1973); Pierre Lelièvre, Dominique Vivant Denon (Paris, 1942).

⁴⁵Delestre, Gros, 207.

From reading Delestre, one would assume that Denon oversaw the initial conception, as in the New Orleans sketch, but that Gros used his own ideas for the final conception of the event, which won approval from Bonaparte after the fact.

Tripier Le Franc was also imprecise concerning the issue of official involvement in the iconographic program of Jaffa. He merely stated that Denon discussed this project with Gros. What this discussion involved is not cited. Tripier Le Franc also noted that Bonaparte gave his approval to several sketches.⁴⁶

However, if an elaborate iconographic program had been worked out between Gros and Denon, one would expect some indication of this fact in a letter concerning the opening of the Salon of 1804 that Denon wrote to Napoleon, who was on campaign in Germany. Denon's comments, however, are of a very broad and general nature regarding Bonaparte's generous action and comely appearance:

Il y a un tableau, au Salon, qui captive l'intérêt de tout le monde. Comme il représente une action de votre vie et un genre de courage qui, parmi les héros, vous caractérisera dans l'histoire, je crois de mon devoir de vous en rendre compte. C'est le tableau de Gros représentant Votre Majesté visitant et touchant les malades à l'hôpital militaire de Jaffa...Vous y êtes représenté noblement avec la sécurité d'une âme élevée qui fait une chose par le sentiment de son utilité. Votre costume est admirable, votre ressemblance très animée et très historique. Tous ce qui vous environne est si ému de confiance et d'espoir que ces sentiments éloignent déjà l'horreur que peut inspirer une scène où est représenté tout ce que la nature a de plus affreux...⁴⁷

Again, Denon's statements reflect only a very generalized notion about the iconography of the Jaffa painting. What he states is only the broad concept that Napoleon looks impressive and performs actions of an heroic nature, so much so as to eclipse the potential horror of the scene. The

⁴⁶Tripier Le Franc, Histoire, 207.

⁴⁷Mollaret & Brossollet, "A Propos," 270. The full letter is cited in this article. The rest of the letter is concerned with Gros's style of painting.

tenor of his comments suggest only a limited involvement with the artist and he takes no credit for the conception.

Denon's letter to Napoleon also brings up the issue of the exact nature of Bonaparte's gesture in the plague hospital. All that Denon notes is that Bonaparte performed an heroic action in touching the sore of a plague victim. It was Delestre who went further than Denon and suggested that Bonaparte was approaching the status of a miracle worker:

..tout est excentrique dans son geste noble et assuré. C'est l'apôtre de la bienfaisance disant avec foi: Sois guéri.⁴⁸

This train of thinking was extended in 1940 by Walter Friedlaender arguing in a famous article that Bonaparte was to be seen as the new *Roi Thaumaturge* curing his ailing subjects with a magical touch.⁴⁹ Friedlaender cited Marc Bloch as his main source for the development of this reading.⁵⁰ Oddly enough, however, Bloch's descriptive citations of the actual performance of the ceremony always refer to a laying-on of hand(s) rather than a finger touch. Repeated references to "Par le simple attouchement de leur mains" abound in the text. Also, according to Bloch, the laying on of hands was only the first half of the ceremony. This act was followed by the king making the sign of the cross. A witness to this ceremony performed by Louis VI described it thus:

La vertu divine accorda cet homme parfait une très grande grâce: celle de guérir les corps; de sa très pieuse main touchant les plaies des malades et les marquant du signe de la sainte croix...⁵¹

⁴⁸Delestre, Gros, 90.

⁴⁹Walter Friedlaender, "Napoleon as *Roi Thaumaturge*," Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes IV (1941), 140.

⁵⁰Marc Leopold Bloch, Les Rois Thaumaturges: Etude sur le caractère surnaturel attribué à la puissance royale particulière en France et en Angleterre (Paris: Armand Colin, c. 1924, 1961).

⁵¹Bloch, Les Rois, 36.

An engraving of the late sixteenth century by P. Firens subtitled Henry IV, King of France and of Navarre, touches the Pest-stricken (Bibliothèque Nationale, Estampes; Plate XXXIV) shows the king in the act of healing by putting his entire right hand on the forehead of a kneeling supplicant. An English print of 1684--Bloch equates the ceremonies of the two nations--by Robert White entitled Charles II, King of England, Touching the Plague-stricken (Frontispiece of J. Browne, Charisma Basilikon) (Plate XXXV), shows the king holding the head of a stricken victim with both hands. Other images cited in Bloch's appendix conform to this same iconography. Thus if Gros wanted to allude specifically to the traditions of ancient kingship, why did he envision a finger-touching gesture rather than a laying-on of hand(s) gesture? Perhaps presenting the Emperor as *Roi Thaumaturge* was not his intention. Or, if it was, he nonetheless undercuts the aura of healing by allusions to a Doubting Thomas. In his 1952 monograph, even Friedlaender himself stated that Napoleon's gesture was not unlike that of a Doubting Thomas: "Immovable and invulnerable, in a gesture comparable to that of the doubting Thomas of many an Italian picture, he touches the sore on the breast of the sick man." ⁵²

Though Friedlaender cites no specific Italian work, most images of this episode from the saint's life involve relatively standard iconography.⁵³ In Verrocchio's Christ and Saint Thomas (Orsanmichele, Florence), Thomas is on the left of the viewer and reaches with his right hand, his two index fingers extended, towards a wound just under Christ's right breast. Christ raises his right hand and pulls back his robe with his left hand to facilitate Thomas's investigation. Verrocchio's Thomas

⁵²Friedlaender, David to Delacroix, 63.

⁵³Friedlaender cites some specific examples of doubting Thomases in his: Caravaggio Studies (N.Y.: Schocken, c. 1955, 1969), 161.

never actually touches Christ. Gros of course would have seen this famous image on the exterior wall of Or San Michele while living in Florence, and probably many times.

According to Charles Seymour, Jr., one of Verrocchio's sources was Bicci di Lorenzo's painting of Christ and Saint Thomas in the Florentine Duomo (Plate XXXVI).⁵⁴ Here Thomas, again on the viewer's left, inserts the tips of his index fingers into Christ's wound as Christ again facilitates Thomas's exploration by pulling back his robe with his left hand and placing his right hand behind Thomas's shoulder.

Other Italian images consisting of a Doubting Thomas on the viewer's left reaching his hand towards Christ and touching or inserting two index fingers into Christ's wound include: Signorelli's Doubting Thomas (Loreto, Cathedral), Giovanni Toscani's Christ and Saint Thomas (Galleria dell'Accademia, Florence), and Cima's Incredulity of Thomas, a center panel of an altarpiece now in the collection of the National Gallery in London.⁵⁵

All of these images, as well as Gros's central group in Jaffa, show the figure on the left with his two index fingers in, on, or near the wound in the breast of the figure on the right. The figure on the right facilitates this touching by holding his robe (or shirt) with his right hand and lifting his left hand clear of the action. Though Gros's Bonaparte reaches with his left hand and hence reveals his complete wardrobe to the viewer, all the essential basics of the Doubting Thomas

⁵⁴Charles Seymour, Jr., The Sculpture of Verrocchio (Greenwich, Conn.: N.Y. Graphic Society, 1971), 59.

⁵⁵Some of these works are reproduced in: Andrew Butterfield, "Verrocchio's Christ and St. Thomas: Chronology, Iconography and Political Context," Burlington Magazine (April 1992): 225-233.

image are present and hence it is likely that many viewers made the association of a Doubting Thomas with the central group in Jaffa.⁵⁶

Can one be both devout healer and skeptical doubter? The miracle worker connotations of the gesture conflict with those of a Doubting Thomas. One expects a miracle worker to be filled with steadfast devotion and to owe his healing powers to an unshakable and absolute faith. Thus one cannot be both miracle worker/*Thaumaturge* and skeptic at the same time, not, that is, if one wants to keep the people's faith.

Fyjis-Walker also sees the image of saintly healer and doubting skeptic as co-existing in a dialectical relationship in Gros's figure of Bonaparte at Jaffa:

The emphasis has shifted from narrative to iconography; Bonaparte is presented equivocally as St. Thomas, as Christ healing the sick or raising the dead and as a king touching for scrofula...thus the image invites the spectator's critical judgment...The image is no longer incontrovertible or definite...In spite of its public contexts and indeed in defiance of its propagandistic purposes, it appeals to the personal feeling of religious doubt and awe, to the personal emotions of love, fear and revulsion; it demands in fact an intense privacy of response.⁵⁷

It is also extremely curious to note that Bonaparte's touching gesture, that is, the disposition of fingers, is almost a replication of the hand gesture of Bonaparte in a British anti-Bonaparte caricature. James Gillray's caricature of Bonaparte's *coup d'état* of November 10, 1799, first published on November 21, 1799, is now part of the print collection of the British Museum (Plate XXXVII). Here the general reaches out, *adlocutio*-style, toward the fleeing council members during his *coup d'état*. The print is not totally unrelated to Gros's Jaffa, for it was,

⁵⁶For images where Christ guides Thomas's hand see: Albrecht Dürer's Small Passion, Incredulity of Thomas cited in : Friedlaender, Caravaggio Studies, 163.

⁵⁷Fyjis-Walker, Uses of Iconography, 106; 98; 93.

in fact, Bonaparte's opportunistic departure from Egypt that made possible his timely seizure of power back in Paris.⁵⁸

Before continuing with this line of thought, that is, exploring Gros's use of an iconography designed to invoke critical associations, two preliminary questions need to be considered. First of all, was Gros himself capable of assuming the role of critic, and, secondly, how could a painting critical of Napoleon, who was a stern censor of anti-government propaganda, be exhibited openly at the Salon?

Actually political caricature was not new to Gros, to whom it seemed to come naturally, if one is to believe Stendhal's account of the artist in the opening chapter of his The Charterhouse of Parma:

In May 1796, three days after the entry of the French {into Milan}, a young painter in miniature, slightly mad, named Gros, afterwards famous, who had come with the army, overhearing in the great Caffè dei Serni (which was then in fashion) an account of the exploits of the Archduke, who moreover was extremely stout, picked up the list of ices which was printed on a sheet of coarse paper. On the back of this he drew the fat Archduke; a French soldier was stabbing him with the bayonet in the stomach, and instead of blood there gushed out an incredible quantity of corn. What we call a lampoon or caricature was unknown in this land of crafty despotism. The drawing, left by Gros on the table of the Caffè, seemed a miracle fallen from heaven; it was engraved and printed during the night, and the next day twenty thousand copies of it were sold.⁵⁹

Though none of the standard sources mention a print such as that described by Stendhal, this does not necessarily mean that Stendhal presented an altogether false picture of Gros. Even if Stendhal used the Gros passage in his Charterhouse of Parma to signify that, "Le pouvoir appartient à quiconque sait manipuler les représentations avec le plus

⁵⁸For more on Gros and British satire see the concluding chapter. It is also interesting to note that in another British caricature, an illustration from George Cruikshank's Life of Napoleon published in London in 1815 (Plate XXXVIII), Bonaparte is gesturing toward the pharmacist designated to administer poison to the French plague victims at Jaffa with a hand gesture almost identical to Bonaparte in James Gillray's print.

⁵⁹Marie-Henri Beyle, The Charterhouse of Parma, trans. by C.K.S. Moncrieff, (N.Y.: Liveright, 1944), 5.

d'astuce," as Ann Jefferson has claimed, he was still a novelist who frequently mixed fiction and autobiography.⁶⁰

Stendhal did in fact know Gros; he met Gros for the first time in Milan in early June of 1800, the day after the French victory at Marengo. Both young men were actually in similar situations, that is, both were employed by the French army in Italy, but strictly out of economic necessity, for both sought to distinguish themselves in the arts, Stendhal as a writer and Gros as a history painter. Stendhal even became obsessively enamored of Gros's former girlfriend, Angela Pietragrua, who later became Stendhal's mistress when he returned to Milan eleven years later.⁶¹

Though Stendhal could not have known Gros in 1796, the year chosen to open his Charterhouse of Parma, he certainly knew him by June of 1800 and, of course, long before he actually wrote the novel. It is not improbable that at some time during his posting in Milan in 1800 Stendhal could have actually seen Gros fluently scribbling political caricatures at one of the local cafés. Perhaps Stendhal had a faded memory of Gros doing just as he stated in his novel, but then embellished his recollections (specifying the type of paper used and claiming that the drawing was subsequently engraved and printed and sold in large quantities) to serve his fictional intentions.

Though Stendhal is known to have drawn heavily from his own biography for events in his novels, he never claimed that his facts were precise nor did he brag about the accuracy of his memory. "It is the

⁶⁰Ann Jefferson, "Représentation de la politique de la représentation: La Chartreuse de Parme," Stendhal Club 26/27 (Janvier 1985): 200-213.

⁶¹Wallace Fowlie, Stendhal (N.Y.: Macmillan, 1969), 10; Stendhal, Journal, vol 4 (Paris: Le Divan, c. 1811, 1937), 295; Paul Arbelet, La Jeunesse de Stendhal, vol. 2 (Genève: Slatkine, 1974), 125.

emotional memory that he asks us to trust," Brombert claims.⁶² Or as Margaret Tillet noted regarding Stendhal's accuracy: "One is given the inimitable truth rather than the reproducible fact."⁶³

Thus even though the precise anecdote Stendhal recounts of Gros in The Charterhouse of Parma may not be fact, it is not unreasonable to conjecture that Stendhal has still given the reader a fairly accurate accounting of the artist at this time, that is, as one who spent his leisure in the local cafés caricaturing the current political scene.

According to some, Gros also, in his Jaffa, used his lampooning skills in his portrayal of General Bessières, one of Bonaparte's aides-de-camp at the time of the Egyptian campaign.⁶⁴ Tripier Le Franc contended that Gros deliberately represented the general in an unfavorable light. The two men had known each other in Italy--Bessières was said to have fought heroically at Arcole--but when Gros later encountered the general back on the streets of Paris, Bessières publicly snubbed Gros and the artist promised to avenge himself. In his biography of Gros, Tripier Le Franc stated that he had heard the story by word of mouth and hence questioned the artist as to the truth of the matter. Gros replied that he indeed meant to belittle the general in his painting, citing art historical precedents for this particular practice:

...J'ai donc fait comme Buonarotti, qui, dans son Jugement dernier, a condamné à une triste immortalité Biagio de Cesena, le maître des cérémonies du pape Jules III; comme David, qui, pour punir la belle Mme. Récamier d'un moment d'impatience, lui refusa de terminer son portrait; comme Girodet, qui a peint l'actrice Mlle. Lange en Danäe; comme Fragonard, qui, s'étant brouillé avec Mlle. Guimard, la danseuse, au moment où

⁶²Victor Brombert, Stendhal: Fiction and the Themes of Freedom (N.Y.: Random House, 1968), 11.

⁶³Tillet, Stendhal, 33.

⁶⁴Tripier Le Franc, Histoire, 214.

il la peignait en Terpsichore, a changé son gracieux portrait en celui de Némésis la furibonde.⁶⁵

Though Tripier Le Franc never states specifically which figure is Bessières, one assumes that he is the figure directly behind Bonaparte, who covers his mouth with his handkerchief in a rather mincing way. Yet Mollaret and Brossollet identify the shadowy figure who turns back toward the black porters as General Bessières; the closer figure they identify as General Berthier.⁶⁶ Portraits of these officers (Plates XXXIX & XL) show Bessières to be tall, thin, and sharp-featured; while Berthier was shorter and stouter with rounded features. Thus the tall, thin figure directly behind Bonaparte looks to be General Bessières rather than the stout Berthier.

Mollaret and Brossollet argue against Tripier Le Franc's contention that Gros meant to represent Bessières in an unfavorable light:

Toujours selon une tradition, Gros aurait peint Bessières se détournant avec terreur et se bouchant le nez, pour se venger d'une ancienne vexation, d'un salut mal rendu. Le fait que, non seulement Bessières, mais également Berthier et tout le groupe des officiers de droite se masquet aussi le nez écarte cette explication.⁶⁷

It is true, as these authors state, that several figures perform this protective gesture; which is, as they also state, characteristic iconography in plague paintings since the fourteenth century.⁶⁸ It is, however, Bessières, if one accepts Tripier Le Franc's statements, who is singled out for scrutiny and regardless of whether the gesture is typical

⁶⁵Tripier Le Franc, Histoire, 214.

⁶⁶These authors cite Dargenty in his: G. Dargenty, Les artistes célèbres: Le Baron Gros (Paris: J. Rouan, 1887), 25 as their source, but Dargenty does not state which of the two figures is General Bessières either; all he says is that both are present.

⁶⁷Mollaret & Brossollet, "A Propos," 299.

⁶⁸See: H.H. Mollaret & J. Brossollet, "La peste, source méconnue d'inspiration artistique," Jaarboek Koninklijk Museum voor Schone Kunsten, Antwerpen, (1965): 3-112.

or atypical iconography in plague paintings, he still looks effete and cowardly. If Gros could satirize "one of Napoleon's few real friends," could he not also criticize Napoleon himself?⁶⁹

Next one has to ask how could a machine-scale painting critical of the Emperor be shown in the Salon and receive such enthusiastic praise? One traditional way for artists to evade the censors was through the use of allegory.⁷⁰ David had chosen the allegorical mode--admittedly thinly disguised--for his Intervention of the Sabine Women of 1795-1799 (Musée du Louvre, Paris). Here the ancient story of the Sabine women serves as a cover through which one reads David's commentary on the current political scene in Directory Paris.⁷¹ As David used ancient history to elucidate contemporary history, Gros, too, in my view, would elucidate the present by allusions to the past.⁷² According to Littré's Dictionnaire, allegory is defined as:

Saying something other than one appears to say. A kind of continuous metaphor, a species of discourse presenting a

⁶⁹This description of Bessières was quoted in: David G. Chandler, ed., Napoleon's Marshals (N.Y.: Macmillan, 1987), 63.

⁷⁰Angus Fletcher, Allegory: The Theory of a Symbolic Mode (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University, 1964); Stephen J. Greenblatt, ed., Allegory and Representation (Baltimore & London: John Hopkins, 1981); Craig Owens, "The Allegorical Impulse: Toward a Theory of Postmodernism," in Beyond Recognition: Representation, Power, and Culture, ed. Scott Bryson, et al. (Berkeley, University of California, 1992); Brian Wallis, ed., Blasted Allegories: An Anthology of Writings by Contemporary Artists (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT, 1987).

⁷¹For David's Sabines see: Brookner, David, 136-145; Schnapper, David, 184-195; Ewa Lajer-Burcharth, "David's Sabine Women: Body, Gender and Republican Culture under the Directory," Art History 14 (September 1991): 397-429.

⁷²For this type of allegory see: Peter Burke, The Fabrication of Louis XIV (New Haven: Yale University, 1992), 28; Linda Nochlin, "Courbet's Real Allegory: Rereading The Painter's Studio," in Sarah Faunce & Linda Nochlin, eds., Courbet Reconsidered (N.Y.: Brooklyn Museum, 1988), 17-29; Hélène Touissant, "The Dossier on The Studio by Courbet," in Gustave Courbet, 1819-1877 (London: Arts Council of Great Britain, 1978), 249-285.

literal sense but intended, by way of comparison, to convey another sense which is not expressed.⁷³

Quite similar to the above definition of allegory is that of Craig Owens:

Simply put, allegories are texts which say one thing and mean another. This occurs when any writing suggests a second level of meaning lying behind the text, so to speak, or when one piece of writing is read through another, as when the New Testament is read through the Old. Like the storyteller, the allegorist does not invent images, but confiscates them. He lays claim to the culturally significant, poses as its interpreter. And in his hands the image becomes something other...he adds another meaning to the image.⁷⁴

Thus, in accordance with both of the above definitions, one can see that there are at least two different texts at work in Gros's Jaffa. In the literal sense his painting is a representation of Bonaparte's first heroic visit to the Pest House at Jaffa on March 11th, but Gros also eludes to a second text, a text Napoleon had no wish to publicize, his second visit to the plague hospital in late May. Or one can see Gros's use of allegory as a form of the dialectic, where opposites co-exist, as did Fyjis-Walker and Bryson.⁷⁵

Not only does Gros represent one historic visit while alluding to another later visit, he also represents generic types, that is, French soldiers dying of the plague in Syria, who at the same time refer to figures from past history (such as Brutus and Belisarius), literature (such as Ugolino and his sons), and art (such works by David as his Brutus, his Oath, and his Death of Marat). It is through these veiled references that Gros voices his criticism of Imperial politics. This method of giving the figures in his painting an evocative significance that goes beyond the obvious is not unlike Courbet's later "real

⁷³Emile Littré, Dictionnaire de la langue française, vol. 2, (Paris: J. Pauvert, 1936), 317.

⁷⁴Owens, "Allegorical Impulse," 204.

⁷⁵For the similarity between allegory and the dialectic, see: Julian Roberts, Walter Benjamin (London: Macmillan, 1982), 143.

allegory", The Painter's Studio, Real Allegory, Summing up a Phase of Seven Years in my Artistic Life (Paris, Musée d'Orsay; Plate XLI) of 1855. The figures on the left side of this canvas, according to Hélène Touissant, in addition to representing generic types such as a Jew, a cleric, a ragpicker, etc. also refer to specific figures in French politics and recent history, and in so doing, provide commentary on government of Napoleon III.⁷⁶

With Gros's allegory the viewing public either did not see beyond the glittering surface, or if they did, they were astute enough to realize that remarking upon this fact could be dangerous. Censorship of the press was in full force under the new regime and one usually uttered the expected niceties. Those, like Madame de Staël, who continually flaunted their independence, suffered the consequences. For the loquacious writer, exile was the price she paid for her heroics. In that she was a profound lover of her native capital city with its rich cultural life, Madame de Staël's exile was a harsh fate indeed. Others, like the poet Théodore Desorgues, who exercised his talents at Napoleon's expense, were confined to mental hospitals.⁷⁷

Also, it was not at all unusual, no matter what the reason, for the allegorical subtexts of paintings simply to go unnoticed by the press. For example, mention could be made of the Chevalier Féréol de Bonnemaison's canvas of A Young Woman Surprised by a Storm (Brooklyn Museum), which appeared in the Salon of 1799. Helen Weston has

⁷⁶Touissant, "Dossier," 246. Also see: Klaus Herding, Courbet To Venture Independence, trans. by John William Gabriel (New Haven & London: Yale University, 1991), 45-60; Jennifer Montagu, "The Painted Enigma and French Seventeenth-Century Art," Journal of the Warburg & Courtauld Institutes 31 (1968): 307-355.

⁷⁷For the fate of other critics of the Empire see my conclusion. For Desorgues, see: Michael David Sibalis, "Un aspect de la légende noire de Napoléon: Le mythe de l'enfermement des opposants comme fous," Revue de l'Institut Napoléon, no. 153 (1991): 9-24.

convincingly argued that this image of young woman caught at night under a tree in a thunderstorm is an allegory of Innocence caught in the terrifying storms of the Revolution; yet, as Weston stated:

Parallels to the contemporary situation in France do not seem to have been drawn by the critics in 1799; they concentrated on praising the wonderfully diaphanous drapery and the artist's refined palette and on criticizing details of the girl's anatomy.⁷⁸

Numerous other examples like this could be cited; one of the most famous perhaps being Courbet's Studio of the Painter. Though Courbet did himself call the painting "a real allegory" in the full title to the work, contemporary critics paid little notice (except for Champfleury's brief complaints that Courbet was engaged in this tiresome mode of painting, that is, allegory).⁷⁹ Only modern scholars have attempted to unravel Courbet's allegory. Hélène Touissant has, I think, very aptly and convincingly identified the mysterious figure in the left foreground of Courbet's Studio of the Painter as a *braconnier* in the general sense, but more specifically as Napoleon III. She also convincingly argued that nearby objects in the painting, as well as nineteenth-century French slang related to the word *braconnier*, remind the viewer that the Emperor, Napoleon III, had betrayed his youthful associations with the Republican cause (not unlike his namesake).⁸⁰ Touissant concluded by noting that:

All of this is plain to see, but at the time when the picture was shown nobody could have said so without incurring disagreeable consequences.⁸¹

⁷⁸Helen Weston, "Bonnemaison," in Alan Wittermute, ed., 1789: French Art During the Revolution (N.Y.: Colnagi, 1989), 103.

⁷⁹Champfleury is quoted in: Hélène Touissant, "The Dossier on The Studio by Courbet," in Gustave Courbet, 1819-1877 (London: Arts Council of Great Britain, 1978), 272.

⁸⁰Ibid.

⁸¹Touissant, "The Dossier," 266.

Having taken up these questions (which we shall consider further in the conclusion), we can now return to a discussion of Gros's use of visual and associative devices to voice his protest against imperial politics. First of all, it seems curious that Gros chose to dress the star plague victim who receives his general's beneficent touch in the uniform of a sailor.⁸² It is true that this plague victim's pantaloons are most colorful and attract attention in the compositional sense, yet it must also be true that any educated observer cognizant of the actual historical facts of the Egyptian campaign would feel a negative power in nautical imagery. Every maneuver of the French navy in Egypt had spelled disaster. As stated previously, almost the entire French fleet harbored at Aboukir Bay had been surprised and destroyed by the British shortly after the arrival of the French expedition. Just as disastrous to the later Syrian phase of the campaign was the British seizure of French ships carrying siege artillery for the planned assault on St. Jean Acre.

Not only does the sailor's uniform evoke nautical associations, but so does the inclusion in the final Louvre version of the painting (and the Chantilly sketch) of a view out to sea through the arcade at the right. This view seems to include the edges of the port coastline as well as two ships on the horizon. The inclusion of these ships in the final version of the work calls to mind the seizure of the French siege artillery by the British off Cape Carmel. The artillery was then used by the Turks against the French at the siege of Acre.

The French lack of siege artillery probably also some part to play in the rapidly rising rate of plague-stricken; for it is difficult to avoid flea bites if one is spending weeks sweating in dirty trenches such as those within which the French fought at Acre. Adequate artillery might have made a speedy victory possible. The sacrifice of human life due to

⁸²Delestre, Gros, 89; Tripiet Le Franc, Histoire, 213.

the ineptitude of the French navy is certainly not a major theme of Gros's painting, but the prominent sailor's uniform and the distant view of ships could certainly be taken as alluding to it.

It seems eminently fitting that Géricault should derive his starving victims of shipwreck on The Raft of the Medusa (Musée du Louvre, Paris; Plate XLII), also victims of an incompetent and inhumane Navy, from Gros's crazed figures of the plague-stricken. This coastal imagery also calls to mind the grisly massacre of March 7-10 when Bonaparte ordered the killing of some 2,500 prisoners. To some the memories of this shocking event were quite vivid:

The next morning, all the Moroccans were taken to the sea-shore, and two battalions began to shoot them down. Their only hope of saving their lives was to throw themselves into the sea; they did not hesitate, and all tried to escape by swimming. They were shot at leisure, and in an instant, the sea was red with blood and covered with corpses. A few were lucky enough to reach some rocks. Soldiers were ordered to follow them in boats and finish them off...⁸³

The painting also encourages concern as to the eventual fate of the stricken sailor whom Bonaparte touches.⁸⁴ The idea of Bonaparte the healer is undercut, in addition to the ways previously cited, by the fact that the pose of this sailor is repeated (with minor variations) in the

⁸³Herold, Bonaparte in Egypt, 277. Quoted from: La Jonquière, L'Expédition en Egypte, vol. 4, (Paris, 1798-1801), 271.

⁸⁴Tripier Le Franc explained the gesture of this plague victim as being one of naiveté. Tripier Le Franc, Histoire, 213:

...que de naiveté, que de natural dans le geste de ce moribond, qui, par habitude et par respect militaire, porte la main droite à sa tête, pour saluer son général en chef, bien qu'il ait la tête découverte et le corps tout nu!

Noted independently by this author, but also cited by Friedlaender (Friedlaender, "Roi Thaumaturge," 139) is that this gesture is derived from Perino del Vago's 1529 fresco of The Fall of the Giants in the Palazzo del Principe in Genoa where Gros for a time had a studio. Neither Friedlaender nor his source, Stanley Meltzof, elaborated on these associations. Lee Johnson contended, however, that the gesture was derived from a painting of The Resurrection of Lazarus attributed to Bonifazio de' Pitati which had been removed from the Church of San Luigi dei Francesi in Rome in 1802 and brought to Paris in 1803 or 1804. See: Lee Johnson, "A Copy after Van Dyck by Géricault," Burlington Magazine (December 1970), 794.

pose of the crazed plague victim in the lower left hand corner of the painting. This second victim, however, seems to be in a much later stage of the disease and experiencing chills, for his body is enveloped up to the eyes in a heavy blanket. His clenched fist and the tense movement of his body suggest that he is experiencing great pain and is rapidly approaching death. This sequential repetition of an unusual pose suggests that the standing sailor will eventually come to share the same experience, that is, death from the plague, as his blanketed counterpart.⁸⁵ This imagery of death and despair is further expanded by the tormented nudes in the foreground. They seem to exist in a kind of hopeless inferno. As Eitner has stated:

The gigantic nudes agonizing in the foreground are reminiscent both of the damned in Michelangelo's Last Judgment and of Dante's Ugolino.⁸⁶

Like Eitner, Joannides also briefly noted these associations with Dante's Inferno:

...the figures who cluster together in the lower left corner, form a clear Ugolino group...he must have felt the subject with particular force, given his harrowing personal experiences during the siege of Genoa...The particular treatment of the group returns to Reynolds in its depiction of apathy and despair and the derivation from Michelangelo--the pose of Aminadab used for the seated figure--provides added force when used for one of those who await the light of Napoleonic grace.⁸⁷

⁸⁵This same type of device was later used by Goya in his famous Napoleonic painting of The Third of May, 1808, completed in 1814 (Museo del Prado, Madrid) (Plate XLIII). In Goya's work, the Christ-like pose of the spotlight peasant before the firing squad is repeated in the pose of the dead man sprawled out bloodily in the left-hand corner.

⁸⁶Lorenz Eitner, An Outline of 19th Century European Painting: From David through Cézanne, vol. 1 (N.Y.: Harper & Row, 1986), 35. Other references to Michelangelo are in: Friedlaender, "Napoleon as Thaumaturge," 63; Lichtenstein, "Raphael and Gros," 129; Delestre, Gros, 89; Tripier Le Franc, Histoire, 215. This author describes the setting as being a "hécatombe humaine."

⁸⁷Joannides, "English Themes," 784. See also: Nicolas Penny, ed., Reynolds (London: Royal Academy of Art, 1986), 52.

Joannides here noted Sir Joshua Reynolds as an indirect source for Gros's tormented plague victims, and Gros did make sketches in Italy from prints after Reynolds's 1773 painting of Count Ugolino and his Children in the Dungeon (Knole, Kent; Plate XLIV).⁸⁸ Gros again returned to the Ugolino theme in 1804, the same year he was finishing his monumental canvas of Jaffa. In a sketch, now known only in the reproduction in Delestre's biography of Gros (Figure 27 in Delestre), the blind Ugolino is groping over the dead bodies of his sons (Plate XLV). The pronounced horizontal format and the arch overhead strongly recall Flaxman's drawings of the same subject.⁸⁹

Though this 1804 drawing seems to have no bearing on the figural composition for Gros's Jaffa, it does confirm that the Ugolino story was in the artist's mind at the time. If one agrees that the figures in the left-hand corner of Gros's Jaffa constitute an Ugolino reference, then what is the nature of the reference?⁹⁰

Dante's Inferno was extremely popular with French readers (and artists such as Rodin and Carpeaux) and especially singled out for praise were the episodes of Paola and Francesca and Ugolino and his sons.⁹¹ In his Inferno, Dante first encountered Ugolino in Traitor's Hell where his punishment was cannibalism throughout eternity. His victim was Archbishop Ruggeri. Historically the two men betrayed each other in local Pisan wars

⁸⁸Gros's Italian Ugolino sketches are dated to 1793/1794 by Delestre.

⁸⁹Tripier Le Franc, Histoire, 226; Joannides, "English Themes," 783.

⁹⁰The "Ugolino group" is absent in Gros's two early sketches and does not appear until the pen and ink sketch. For this sketch see: A. Fyjis Walker, "A Drawing for Gros's Pest House at Jaffa," Burlington Magazine 127 (September 1985): 620-622.

⁹¹Michael Pitwood, Dante and the French Romantics (Genève: Librairie Droz, 1985), 35-36 (Racine & Voltaire), 128-130 (Stendhal), 87 (Chateaubriand & Mm. de Staël), 89-90 (artists such as David, Gros, Delacroix, Rodin and Carpeaux).

of the thirteenth century. Most likely the clergyman suffered the worse fate both because he tarnished the honor of his office and because he also tortured Ugolino's innocent sons. Dante considered both Ugolino and the Archbishop to be exemplars of the sin of treachery, for he placed them in *bolgia* IX of his Inferno, the circle reserved for traitors. This last circle of hell, comprised of the frozen lake of Cocytus, was designated by Dante as the place for the worst of sinners since it was "the dismal hole on which all the rocks converge and weigh; the bottom of the whole universe."⁹²

The reader first encounters Ugolino in Canto XXII of Dante's Inferno. The count is introduced as a disembodied head frozen in the icy lake just above the Archbishop's head which Ugolino gnaws feverishly. While crunching the bones of the hapless Ruggeri, Ugolino recounts his horrendous experiences to Dante and Virgil in Canto XXXIII.

The count was part of the local ruling clique in thirteenth-century Pisan politics. Forced to rule jointly with his grandson, Nino Visconti, Ugolino ambitiously desired to rid himself of his co-ruler. To facilitate his plans to banish Nino, Ugolino enlisted the aid of the Pisan Archbishop, Ruggeri. Ugolino's plot, nevertheless, was revealed by his own duplicitous ally, Ruggeri, resulting in the subsequent incarceration of Ugolino, his two sons (Anselm & Gaddo), and his two grandsons (minus Nino) in the prison tower.⁹³

One day, while listening for the jailor to bring food, Ugolino heard the loud sounds of the doors being nailed shut below and realized that he

⁹²Piero Boitani, "Inferno XXXIII," in Cambridge Readings in Dante's Comedy. Ed. Kenelm Foster & Patrick Boyde (London: Cambridge University, 1981), 72.

⁹³Historically there were two sons and two grandsons locked in the tower but Dante refers to them collectively as "sons." These events occurred in 1288 when Dante was twenty-three years old. See: John S. Carroll, Exiles of Eternity: An Exposition of Dante's Inferno (London: Hodden & Stoughton, 1903), 442-450.

and his sons now faced starvation. With this horrible knowledge, Ugolino was frozen into a catatonic state and could not speak for a whole day so great was his shock. In fear for their father, the children offered up their own flesh for his survival. This was the moment Reynolds chose for his depiction of the story. During the fifth and sixth day, the children succumbed to death, while Ugolino, having gone blind, lingered on. The Canto ended with the image of the crazed father groping blindly over the emaciated bodies of his children and with the horrific suggestion that perhaps Ugolino actually gave in to cannibalism. The last line of the Canto reads: " Then hunger proved more powerful than grief (33:75)."

Were the associations between the story of Ugolino and his sons and Bonaparte and his pest-stricken soldiers merely those of a generalized horrific suffering? Probably not. After all Bonaparte had sacrificed his "sons" to his overweening ambition for political power as Ugolino had betrayed Nino. Ugolino's hunger to survive had been so great that he even, it seems, fell prey to cannibalizing his own sons.⁹⁴

On the night of August 17 at 3 a.m. only Bonaparte, Bessières, and a handful of chosen others were among the favored few to escape. The young general returned to Paris at a very opportune moment, just in time to participate in a somewhat bungled, yet successful, coup. Many of those who were not so fortunate as to escape from the desert sands of Egypt saw Bonaparte as a treacherous leader. First among the disgruntled was Jean-Baptiste Kléber, whom Bonaparte made commander-in-chief upon his own departure from Egypt. Kléber was not indifferent, but rather actively hostile, to Bonaparte's ambitions, and felt that the French army was wasting away in Egypt and should be brought back to France. Bonaparte,

⁹⁴Boitani, " *Inferno*," 83-84. Boitani cites a Renaissance chronicle that explicitly states that cannibalism did indeed occur. See: P. Villari, ed., *Cronica Fiorentina compilata nel sec. XIII in I primi due secoli della storia di Firenze*, vol. 1 (Firenze, 1898), 250.

however, followed his destiny and left his men with Kléber. Kléber only learned of his appointment after Bonaparte's departure for France and the unexpected news made him furious. According to Herold, Bonaparte had fled, leaving Kléber "...to face the music and pay the bills."⁹⁵

It is clear that many other French soldiers, both officers and members of the rank and file, shared Kléber's critical view both of the campaign in general and of Bonaparte's timely escape; but it was Kléber, the new commander, and a caustic satirist, who exercised his wit unstintingly at Bonaparte's expense.⁹⁶ According to Herold:

His sallies about the "Hero," the "Almighty," made the rounds of the officer corps, as did his caricatures, which he sketched with a quick and gifted hand.⁹⁷

Kléber never made it back home to Paris; he was assassinated in the early summer of 1800 by a Muslem, Soliman Aleppan.⁹⁸ Kléber's untimely death was a stroke of good luck for Napoleon, for one would think that Kléber was not a critic who could be silenced. But if Kléber never made it safely back to France, others in time did--the French capitulated to the British in early 1801--and many, or at least some, of them must have nursed views of Napoleon similar to those of their former commander, Kléber.

⁹⁵Herold, Bonaparte in Egypt, 341. Also see: Henry Laurens, Kléber en Egypt, 1798-1800, 2 vols. (Paris: Insitut Français d'Archéologie Orientale, 1988) and Paul Fregosi, Dreams of Empire: Napoleon and the First World War, 1792-1815 (London: Hutchinson, 1989). Herold quotes extensively from eyewitness accounts of troop dissatisfaction with Bonaparte as does La Jonquière, one of the French rank and file, in his: L'Expédition en Egypte, 1798-1801 (Paris, 1899-1907).

⁹⁶For letters of French soldiers in Egypt sent to the Directory in Paris, see: M. Dorothy George, English Political Caricature 1793-1822 (Oxford, Clarendon, 1959), 47; 50-51.

⁹⁷Herold, Bonaparte in Egypt, 346.

⁹⁸For details of the assassination and subsequent murder trial, see: Herold, Bonaparte in Egypt, 362; 365-367.

Besides associations of imprisonment, another association with the Ugolino theme is that of cannibalism. In Canto XXXIII, Dante had suggested that an insanely intense hunger drove Ugolino to abandon all humane principles and actually devour the remains of his own sons. To the Romantic writer, Stendhal, this episode was one of the most terrifying in all of literature, and he insisted that "le plus grand malheur qui puisse arriver à un père est celui d'Ugolin."⁹⁹

Stendhal seemed to possess a reservoir of sympathy for Ugolino; he insisted that he would only translate this Canto if he himself were in an extreme state weakened by hunger after fasting.¹⁰⁰ It is nevertheless quite unlikely that the French troops remaining in Egypt had much sympathy for their "father" who had so opportunistically abandoned them to the arid sands and pestilences of Egypt. Though Bonaparte by his act of desertion did not literally consume his "sons;" he left them to be devoured by the forces of nature and disease, or poison in the case of the pest-stricken who remained at Jaffa. Was this not the same thing that later happened to the occupants of Géricault's Raft of the Medusa (Musée du Louvre, Paris)? These men were simply cut adrift at sea by their commanders who were also anxious to return to France. It seems most appropriate that Géricault should draw inspiration for his suffering sailors from Gros's plague victims. Surely Géricault must have sensed the innate similarities in their disparate situations.

It can also be noted that Géricault, too, made use of a Ugolino group: "The hooded father holding his dead son bears more than a passing

⁹⁹Jules C. Alciatore, "Stendhal and the Ugolino Episode," Italia 31 (March 1954), 200.

¹⁰⁰Ibid.

resemblance to Ugolino."¹⁰¹ In addition to the public indignation over the action of the naval authorities concerning the Medusa, accounts also circulated concerning actual cannibalism on board the raft; thus the image was doubly appropriate for Géricault.

In concluding this discussion of Gros's use of the Ugolino motif, brief mention should also be made of Frances Yates's study of the importance and popularity of this story from Dante for the nineteenth-century European audience. One intriguing conclusion Yates reached was that:

Roughly speaking, it may be said that the European Ugolino craze coincides with the trend of that epoch towards liberalism. The steady stream of nineteenth-century English translations of the Ugolino episode become more intelligible when we realize that the Count represented the suffering of the enslaved under tyrants, with which liberal England must deeply sympathize.¹⁰²

Unfortunately Yates offers no evidence that the image of Ugolino and his sons bears the same associations with Liberty in France as they did in England. A French contemporary print, however, shows Napoleon presiding over a pile of dead bodies, among them is the body of the Duc d'Enghien, and the caption below reads: "Le nec plus ultra du cannibalisme" (Plate XLVI).¹⁰³ A later French print, circulated in 1813, shows Napoleon, Gargantua-like, devouring his soldiers and eliminating puppet rulers for the European nations (Plate XLVII).¹⁰⁴

¹⁰¹Sarah Symmons, "Géricault, Flaxman, and Ugolino," Burlington Magazine 115 (1973), 672. For similar observations see: Benedict Nicolson, "The Raft from the Point of View of Subject Matter," Burlington Magazine (August 1954), 248; Lorenz Eitner, Géricault's Raft of the Medusa (London: Phaidon, 1972), 45.

¹⁰²Frances A. Yates, "Transformations in Dante's Ugolino," Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institute XIV (1951): 92-117.

¹⁰³This print is in the collection at the Bibliothèque Thiers in Paris.

¹⁰⁴This print is in the collection at the Musée Carnavalet in Paris (petit caton 35, chemise C). It is reproduced in: Clerc, Caricature, 152.

Gros's hooded figure of the seated melancholic, in addition to suggesting Ugolino imagery, also calls to mind David's image of Brutus in his painting, Lictors bringing Brutus the Bodies of his Sons (Musée du Louvre, Paris; Plate XVIII), which was shown in the Salon of 1789. First of all, in both paintings the seated "brooders" are located in almost the exact same spot on the canvas; that is, near the lower left-hand corner. Also both brooders address the audience rather than absorbing themselves in the drama at hand. Each of these figures as well is buried in deep shadow, a deep shadow that contrasts with the other lighted areas of the composition. Behind each of these figures, servants are seen carrying the dead away on biers--Brutus's own sons in David's painting and dead French soldiers in Gros's painting. In both works the deeply shadowed brooder is seen in strong contrast to brightly illuminated figures who occupy an oval of space off center to the right of the canvas. Finally, in both works a slumped figure closes off the right side of the painting. In David's painting it is the weeping female servant, while in Gros's work it is the dying army doctor. Clearly Gros is evoking David's painting of Brutus. Whether consciously or subconsciously, the associations are still made. Just what then do these associations signify? One could imagine a number of possible interpretations.

Brutus, like Ugolino, was a complicated figure who could provoke both awe and terror. As Herbert noted in his detailed analysis of David's painting of Brutus:

Brutus' execution of his own sons was so terrifying an act that he was a figure to be feared and David made his contemporaries feel this, as well as his brooding isolation.¹⁰⁵

Ugolino, crazed by his hunger, feeds on the dead flesh of his own offspring while Brutus calls for the execution of his offspring in fear of

¹⁰⁵Robert L. Herbert, David, Voltaire, Brutus and the French Revolution: An Essay in Art and Politics (N.Y.: Viking, 1973), 41.

their revival of monarchy. Bonaparte, too, sacrificed his "offspring", as previously mentioned, by poison and by desertion. Thus the first association that could be made between the two works is the association of a father who sacrifices his sons under uncommonly stressful circumstances. This then is a radically different interpretation than Brunner's concept of the "caring father," which certainly exists within the painting but is dialectically undercut by the more negative associations evoked through the Brutus and Ugolino imagery. Or perhaps Gros's allusion to Brutus was to a hero who went to frightening extremes to fight against the revival of monarchy; the kind of figure many of Gros's contemporaries and, in my view, Gros himself wished would emerge to check Bonaparte's imperial ambitions.

Herbert has established that the figure of Brutus came to be associated with the concept of Liberty during the Revolutionary Period. Images of Brutus became almost as standard a figure for Liberty as female personifications had been.¹⁰⁶ What could the function of this subtle intertextual reference be?

Were allusions to personifications of Liberty meant to remind the Emperor that he had long ago sworn to uphold Republican principles?¹⁰⁷ Why was he no longer content with the Republican office of First Consul? Even being elected First Consul for life had not satisfied his ambitions. It began to appear that Napoleon's appetite for power could never really be quenched. There is a certain irony in the fact that the dead bodies carried away from the plague hospital were not rebels against the Republic like Brutus's sons, but rather soldiers of the Republic who died in a

¹⁰⁶Herbert, David, 74-81.

¹⁰⁷Napoleon was not officially crowned Emperor until early in December of 1804, but he was declared Emperor by a *sénatus-consulte* in May, 1804. See: James Matthew Thompson, Napoleon Bonaparte (London: T.J. Press, 1988), 191.

campaign Herold later described as nothing more than "an exercise in image building {for Bonaparte}." (This view is also expressed in the 1802 French cartoon discussed previously showing Bonaparte sprinkling sand from the stage).¹⁰⁸

The Brutus-Ugolino-Thinker figure also functions critically in terms of his relationship to the spectator of this elaborate spectacle of beneficence. Rather than being absorbed in the drama of the heroic general's visit to the plague hospital, this gloomy figure ignores the action taking place within the canvas. Two other figures follow suit: Dr. Desgenettes, located to Bonaparte's left, and the victim of ophthalmia, who staggers in on the right-hand side of the canvas. The frontal gazes of these three figures in the final canvas break the self-referential fiction of the spectacle being played out.

The fact that these three figures engage the spectator rather than fully enter the painted fiction reminds this writer of techniques used by Jean-Luc Godard in his 1967 film entitled Week-end (a version of this technique, though the written word rather than the visual image, more contemporary to Gros would be Diderot's Jacques le fataliste). At three different times during this film, Godard interrupted the narrative fiction to allow certain figures to address the audience directly. For example, at one point in the film two garbage collectors, one black and one North African, stop to calmly discuss the issue of revolution with the audience. James Roy MacBean's comments on the film seem appropriate. He contrasts these figures' calm and reasoned direct address to the audience, which is presented in a very understated way, to the lavishly excessive (and frequently violent) presentation of the "standard" narrative and concluded:

¹⁰⁸François Furet, "Napoleon," in A Critical Dictionary of the French Revolution, trans. by Arthur Goldhammer (Cambridge, Mass.: Belknap, 1989), 278.

...by pushing spectacle to the utmost, he attempts to demonstrate the inadequacy of spectacle; he questions both the spectacle and the society that promotes spectacle.¹⁰⁹

By not taking part in Napoleon's grand spectacle of healing, Gros's figures of Desgenettes, the blindman, and the brooder undermine it, calling in question its authenticity.

The painting that comes to mind as a possible precedent for Gros's confrontative figures is another plague painting, David's Saint Roch interceding with the Virgin for the Plague-stricken at Marseilles (Musée des Beaux-Arts, Marseilles; Plate XLVIII), which was shown in the Salon of 1781 and then sent to the city of Marseilles. The painting, which commemorated the plague of 1720 that caused thousands of deaths in Marseilles, was a commission passed on to David from Vien.

The painting was sent to Marseilles in 1782 and hung in the public health office there, where Gros could easily have studied it at length in 1793 while he awaited proper documentation to enter Italy. On the whole, the painting was quite a success for the young David. Particularly noticed by all reviewers was David's frontally reclining plague victim who fills the lower third of the canvas. Diderot, in his Salon review, warned the viewer:

Try to look for a long time, if you are able, at this diseased youth who has lost his mind and seems to have become enraged; you will soon flee from this picture of horror.¹¹⁰

Vien was said to have made similar remarks: "The expression is so moving one can hardly bear to look at it."¹¹¹

This enraged victim with his open mouth and accusing glance seems to almost literally attack the viewer. His wrath is so forceful that it

¹⁰⁹James Roy MacBeab, "Godard's Week-end, or the Self-Critical Cinema of Cruelty," Film Quarterly 22 (Winter 1968/69), 41.

¹¹⁰Denis Diderot, Salons, edited by J. Seznez & J. Adhémar, vol. 4 (Oxford, 1957-67), 377.

¹¹¹Schnapper, "Saint Roch," in French Painting 1774-1830, 362.

drowns out the heavenly spectacle above. He clearly knows that the tender intervention above will not prevent his painful death; he has no doubt that his destination is a deep grave.¹¹²

As stated previously, two other figures in Gros's canvas confront the spectator directly. One of these figures is the ophthalmiac, or blindman. Clearly his presence is historically accurate. According to many the two most prevalent diseases of the East were dysentery and trachoma, or ophthalmia. Ophthalmia, if inadequately treated, can lead to blindness. At the time of Napoleon's campaign, the disease was attributed to the consequences of night air. In his memoirs of the campaign, La Jonquière quoted a Colonel Lanquier as having stated:

The strongest rainfall in France does not get you as wet as the night dew does here. And it so happens that, on every march requiring more than three nights, one may be sure that one-third of the men will be incapacitated for some time because of an eye ailment.¹¹³

What if there are other interpretive levels to this blindman than the obviously historical? Many viewers could have associated the blindman with biblical episodes of Christ healing the sightless, and thus have seen Bonaparte as the miracle-worker, even if this blindman's sight is not restored.¹¹⁴ Though biblical associations of Christ's power of restoring sight are quite positive, other more negative associations could have occurred to the contemporary viewer. In the popular literature of the

¹¹²Albert Boime, Art in the Age of Revolution, 1750-1800, vol. 1 (Chicago & London: University of Chicago, 1987), 160. Boime interprets this painting as a conflict between social classes: "...a division between the stricken poor and the immunized rich." Pierre Chaussard, Le Pausanias Français (Paris: Buisson, 1806), 150. Surprisingly, this author saw David's reclining plague victim as bearing his impending death very stoically: "Il se résigne à la mort qu'il voit venir avec une fermeté stoïque."

¹¹³Quoted in: Herold, Bonaparte in Egypt, 161. The disease is actually an infection caused by a nonfilterable virus very widespread in Egypt. It still remains one of the major health problems of Egypt.

¹¹⁴Gros's figure is, in part, derived from the figure of Elymas in Raphael's cartoon for The Blinding of Elymas.

time, the oculist, the restorer of sight, was often seen as a scheming charlatan. Probably the most celebrated of these Satanic oculists was Coppola in E.T.A. Hoffmann's Der Sandman, published in 1816. Yet the likes of Coppola appeared in French fiction prior to this date:

In verse, in the novel, but more especially on the popular stage, the years from 1760 to 1830 were to witness a profusion of blind young lovers and beloveds, sometimes curable by potions or other magical remedies, but generally requiring the services of an oculist to restore their sight. The eye surgeon was to prove an ambiguous figure in this literature, sometimes a virtuous hero of enlightened science, sometimes a vain old schemer, sometimes an out-and-out charlatan.¹¹⁵

Depending upon the cultural background of the viewer, other associations may have been possible--these suggestions are, however, purely speculative. The narrator of Châteaubriand's 1801 best seller, Atala, was the blind Natchez Indian, Chactas. He was the prototype of the blind seer in the tradition of Homer and Ossian, whose works were also quite popular with the reading public at this time. In Châteaubriand's novel, Chactas, though in certain respects an admirer of France, uses his voice to criticize French colonialism. In the preface to the first edition of Atala, Châteaubriand contended that:

Toutes les tribus indiennes conspirent après deux siècles d'oppression, pour rendre la liberté au Nouveau-Monde, me parurent offrir un subject presque aussi heureux que la conquête de Mexique.¹¹⁶

Could viewers have been reminded of Châteaubriand's blind anti-colonial seer; especially at a time when Napoleon was again voicing plans to conquer Egypt and build an eastern empire?

Gros's blindman could also have triggered associations with the legendary Belisarius, a very popular subject in late eighteenth-century

¹¹⁵William R. Paulson, Enlightenment, Romanticism, and the Blind in France (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University, 1987), 73.

¹¹⁶Chateaubriand, Atals-Renée, Les Natchez (Extraits) (Paris: Larousse, 1941), III.

French painting. The subject was chosen by Durameau for the Salon of 1775, Vincent for the Salon of 1777, Peyron for 1799, and David for the Salon of 1781. Belisarius was a Byzantine general who served loyally under the Emperor Justinian and won major victories all over the ancient world. Disturbed by the growing popularity of his successful general, the Emperor willingly sustained the accusations brought against the general by envious rivals; thus he ordered Belisarius punished by being blinded. Disgraced and maligned, the general was forced to survive by begging.

The story of Belisarius became a prime example of royal ingratitude for those holding liberal political views. Both Montesquieu and Gibbon took up the theme and increased its growing popularity. Probably the most famous literary work inspired by this story was Marmontel's Belisare published in 1767.¹¹⁷ This moralizing romance was condemned by the Sorbonne because of the author's plea for religious toleration. According to Boime, Marmontel, through his figure of Belisarius, saw himself as a concerned spokesperson to the sovereign, then Louis XV, pleading for enlightened authority, religious tolerance, and social reform for a France that was severely exhausted after the Seven Year's War. Boime and Lindsay both contend that the 1759 unfairly tried case of the Comte de Lally, Baron Tolendal came to be associated with the fate of Belisarius.¹¹⁸ Lally-Tolendal was a French commander who served in India and was accused of sedition and conspiracy against the king. The charges against him caused a huge public outcry. Even Voltaire joined the public and the ill-fated commander's son in their protest against the injustice of Lally-Tolendal's sentence. He was convicted of treason and beheaded after a long imprisonment. It was actually, however, not until 1781 that the

¹¹⁷Albert Boime, "Marmontel's Belisaire and the Pre-revolutionary Progressivism of David," Art History 3 (March 1980): 81-101.

¹¹⁸Lindsay, Death of a Hero, 38; Boime, Art in an Age of Revolution, 168-172.

loyal commander's sentence was officially reversed and his name was publicly vindicated.

If Boime and Lindsay are correct in their contention that the story of Belisarius was seen as a parallel to the contemporary political scene at that time, then it is quite possible that political analogies would again be made if a similar situation occurred. A similar situation did present itself in 1804.

In June of 1804, two plots against Napoleon's life were discovered. The first one was Royalist and led by Georges Cadoudal; while the second implicated the staunchly Republican soldiers, Pichegru and Moreau. Napoleon initially became convinced that the royal Duke of Enghien, a Condé living in neutral Baden, was the rallying point of the Royalist plot. When further information proved beyond a doubt that the duke was innocent of complicity, Napoleon still remained determined to be rid of his rival.

In the early dawn of the 15th of March, the duke was seized from his estate and taken to the medieval fortress at Vincennes. After a secret and summary trial, he was shot on the morning of the 21st in the castle moat beside his already dug grave. A contemporary engraving shows the duke stoically receiving his blindfold from a French soldier just prior to his execution (Plate XLIX). Rose's summation of the aftereffects of the Duke of Enghien's execution reflects standard opinion:

The execution of the Duc d'Enghien is one of the most important incidents of this period, so crowded with momentous events. The sensation of horror which it caused can be gauged by the mental agony of Madame de Rémusat and others who had hitherto looked on Bonaparte as the hero of an age and the savior of his country.¹¹⁹

The summary execution of the innocent duke created great ferment in the salons of the day, but among the outraged no one lifted a finger in

¹¹⁹John Holland Rose, The Life of Napoleon I, vol. 1 (N.Y.: Macmillan, 1901), 427.

public protest except for the writer, Châteaubriand, who upon hearing the news immediately resigned his diplomatic post. Though Châteaubriand was the only person of note to stage a public protest against Napoleon's injustice, many who had been the Emperor's ardent supporters could never look upon him with the same favor again. The Duke of Enghien's execution privately engendered a great deal of sympathy. He was like the falsely accused Belisarius. Belisarius, however, only lost his livelihood and his sight; the duke lost his life.

The third and final figure who confronts the viewer is the figure of Dr. René Desgenettes, located between Bonaparte and the dazed sailor. Initially one sees the doctor's actions--he lightly touches Bonaparte's upper arm as if to stay his hand--as being very protective of his superior. Yet, if he wants so much to shelter Bonaparte, why does he concern himself with the viewer? It is almost as if he wanted to engage the viewer in conversation. Certainly the doctor had some things that he wished to communicate to the French public concerning the Egyptian campaign, as discussed previously, but he was astute enough to keep his comments out of the print medium until after Napoleon's fall from power.¹²⁰

It seems likely that Desgenettes, however, would have shared his true feelings regarding the eastern campaign verbally with a few trusted friends, or possibly even more openly at salon gatherings. Anyone who knew of the campaign from the doctor's perspective and could empathize with it would have to see the irony in Gros's painting of Napoleon in the plague hospital; one moment he was the fearless healer of the sick and the next moment their executioner.

¹²⁰Desgenettes seems to have been a last minute addition to the final painting. He is not present even in the large oil sketch at Chantilly. In his place in this sketch is a soldier, or even perhaps Dr. Saint Ours, who has reddish-brown hair and a rather Neanderthal face.

The figure of Desgenettes is also part of a group that serves to undercut the propagandistic function of the painting. The curious visual fact exists, which may or may not have been conscious on the part of the artist, that the central group of Bonaparte, Bessières, Desgenettes, and the stricken sailor form a flaccid parody of David's heroic spectacle of determination, The Oath of the Horatii of 1785 (Musée du Louvre, Paris; Plate L). Instead of the resolute bonding of the three Horatii brothers, whose muscular gestures thrust upward with emphatic force toward the stoic face of their stern father; one is confronted with the loose but hieratic association of Bonaparte, who forms the forward apex of a backward-reaching pyramid with Bessières and Desgenettes. The forceful unity of gesture dissolves in Gros's central group, wherein Bessières covers his nose in self-protective isolation while Desgenettes gestures indecisively to stay Bonaparte's hand. While the general does seem to carry out the task at hand with a bit more resolution, his hesitant touch seems perfectly timid in comparison to those in the Oath. The removal of his glove implies to me that the general desires not to soil his wardrobe, hardly the stuff that heroes are made of. Gros also replaces the stern Horatii patriarch with the fumbling body of the crazed plague victim. Gros may not even have been totally conscious of the parody he created here, but when Jaffa is seen in comparison to David's Oath, the central group of Napoleon and his entourage seem like bumbling fools filled with timidity and uncertainty in comparison to the noble Horatii brothers.¹²¹ The Roman brothers fought for what seemed a noble cause, to die for their city; the Egyptian campaign, however, might have been thought hardly worth dying for.

¹²¹For the importance of gesture in early nineteenth-century art see: Dorothy Johnson, "Corporality and Communication: The Gestural Revolution of Diderot, David, and The Oath of the Horatii," Art Bulletin (March 1989): 92-113.

Another more obvious analogy between Gros's painting and David's Oath of the Horatii is the use of the divided composition, or the composition of contrast. In both the Oath and the Brutus, David contrasted, with all the visual means at his disposal, the men versus the women. The result of these visual contrasts was that, if one accepts the theory of Thomas Puttfarcken:

By placing the women in the brightest light and Brutus in the darkest shadow, David did not simply abandon the unity of effect, but also the idea that the learned painter has to present the general public with a ready-made and unequivocal didactic message. The Brutus offers two conflicting *foci* between which our interests and our sympathies are divided. It is an authoritative *exemplum virtutis* imposed upon a passive public as a model to contemplate and follow; it is a scene of unresolved conflict and moral choice.¹²²

In Gros the contrast is not between male and female representing, among other possible interpretations, public duties versus private concerns, but rather the contrast is between official fiction, or what one might call the spectacle of propaganda versus a grim reality. Here Bonaparte and his entourage, who form a light-catching oval just to the right of center, are contrasted with the plague-stricken soldiers who line the lower edges of the canvas.

The warm illumination picks out the sparkle of the gold embroidery in the French uniforms and the bright colors of Bonaparte's sash and plume, as well as the splendid color combinations of the surrounding figures. Especially picturesque is the kneeling oriental doctor dressed in golden yellows, orange-reds, and olive greens. The painting, now covered by years of grime, must have been even more radiant in terms of color.

¹²²Thomas Puttfarcken, "David's Brutus and Theories of Pictorial Unity in France," Art History IV (September 1981), 301. Thomas Crow also addressed the issue of David's use of the divided composition in a paper presented at the 1990 CAA Convention in New York City.

The razzle-dazzle effect of this central group is in sharp contrast to the dinginess which seems to cling to the feverish bodies of the plague-stricken below.¹²³ The reddish-brown *chiaroscuro* that envelopes their sickly frames in deep shadow is broken by dull green shadows. Only their blood-rimmed eyes loom out of the darkness. The reclining plague victim who steadies his upper body on one arm in order to gaze at the scene taking place behind him, seems almost to be looking into another world so great is the contrast between misery and privilege.

One last contrast that Gros makes is in terms of figural scale. For example, the plague victims are, in most instances, larger in scale than are Bonaparte and his entourage. The dazed sailor is well over a head taller than Bonaparte, while the the kneeling nude and the reclining plague victims would reach beyond the column capitals if standing. Spatial considerations can clearly not account for such discrepancies in scale. Was this then simply carelessness on the part of the artist? Delacroix, in an analogous case, seemed to think so.¹²⁴ Delacroix was careful in rendering the scale of his foreground figures in his 1830 canvas of The 28th of July, Liberty Leading the People (Musée du Louvre, Paris), for he felt that the large scale of the foreground figures in Gros's Eylau distracted attention from the main event.¹²⁵

Delacroix is correct in detecting that the over-scaled victims in the foreground of Gros's Eylau do distract from the ceremony taking place beyond them, but is he correct in interpreting this fact as a clumsy technical oversight by the artist? Gros did the same thing in his earlier

¹²³This effect is even more pronounced in the smaller version of this painting, which may be a copy by Gros's student, A. Debay. This work is in the collection of the Museum of Fine Arts in Boston (Plate LI).

¹²⁴Delacroix, "Gros," 266. Actually Delacroix was referring to Gros's 1808 canvas of Napoleon at the Battle of Eylau (Musée du Louvre, Paris), but the same holds true for both works. See p. 95, below.

¹²⁵Ibid.

oil sketch of The Battle of Nazareth (Plate XX), in his Jaffa, and elsewhere, as we shall see. This, it seems, is Gros's way of making the victim more heroic in the viewer's eye.

Only one reviewer, Chéry, took notice of Gros's scale discrepancies (among other things) in a very long, carping critique that appeared on the 16th of Brumaire. At first one assumes that the finicky writer was merely engaging in unsportsmanlike nitpicking over minor technicalities. On second thought one wonders if perhaps behind the writer's complaints, lies the recognition that something was amiss in this Napoleonic spectacle of beneficence. He introduces his commentary with a scathing indictment of those he satirically calls "le comité du couronnement;" that is a group of those Salon-goers positively inclined towards Gros's painting who seemed to have celebrated their enthusiastic approval long into the night over numerous drinks at a café near the Salon. That 'riff-raff" like this should have anything to say about art was a gross indignity to this disgruntled reviewer:

Combien il est amer de voir des maroufles altérés ou mourants
de faim trancher ainsi du mérite d'un Salon!¹²⁶

Could this "riff-raff" have been the liberal opposition to Napoleon? With such meager information, one can only speculate.

Yet according to W. Scott Haine, the café was a locus for republican politics. In a recent article Haine quoted a scene from Victor Hugo's Les Misérables wherein the protagonist, Marius, begins to question his pat political assumptions after exposure to the politics of the radical left in a Latin Quarter café.¹²⁷ Haine has documented the fact that nearly

¹²⁶Ch. Y {Philippe Chéry}, "Le Salon," Journal des Batiments Civils, des Monuments et des Arts, 16 Brumaire, An XIII. Also reprinted in: Mollaret & Brossolet, "A Propos," 274-279.

¹²⁷W. Scott Haine, "Café Politics in Paris: 1789-1851," in Consortium on Revolutionary Europe, Proceedings 1988 (Athens, Ga.: University of Georgia, 1988): 305-319.

every political group had its own café and that, by the time of the First Empire, the police had developed a vocabulary to describe café politics. The Empire's undercover agents routinely referred to "political cafés" and "café politicians."¹²⁸ Though such politics were not initially taken seriously by the police, by 1800, according to Scott, the police attitude hardened and a number of repressive measures were enacted to control these establishments.¹²⁹

After sneering at Gros's café-frequenting audience, the critic next stated that the purpose of Gros's painting should be to show Bonaparte quieting the plague-stricken soldiers by entering the lazaret and touching one of them, yet he insists that the artist had not fulfilled this purpose. In essence, one could infer that what the reviewer is really trying to assert but is afraid to say in a straightforward manner is that Gros's purpose was to paint an unabashedly propagandistic work which he clearly did not do. As Chéry stated: "Nous disons donc que M. Gros est loin de son sujet et nous allons essayer de le prouver."¹³⁰

Also particularly offensive to this reviewer was Gros's treatment of the plague-stricken. He strongly criticized these figures on the basis of their being technically inept, that is, he ridiculed the scale and proportions of these figures. Most damningly, he sneered that they were "academic." I wonder if perhaps what really and truly riled Chéry was that these powerful figures undercut the propagandistic function of the painting.

In conclusion, brief mention can also be made of one other curious fact concerning Gros's complex master work. The pathetic figure of the French doctor who expires along with his patient in the lower right-hand

¹²⁸Ibid, 308.

¹²⁹Haine, "Café Politics," 309-313.

¹³⁰Ibid.

corner of Gros's canvas is not one of the French doctors who was actually present on the Syrian wing of Bonaparte's Egyptian campaign.¹³¹ These doctors included René Desgenettes, Dominique Larrey, and a Dr. Saint Ours, who did actually die from the plague at the Jaffa hospital. The figure in Gros's painting, however, is probably not Saint Ours as Mollaret and Brossollet suggest but rather Dr. Mascllet, who by all standard accounts, was a close personal friend of Gros.¹³² One assumes that Gros must have met Mascllet somewhere in Italy, perhaps even in the city of Milan where plague broke out in 1796.¹³³

After serving on Bonaparte's medical staff in Italy, Mascllet was included on the medical staff of the Egyptian venture; however, he never left the city of Alexandria either to go south to Cairo or east to Jaffa, but rather headed the medical staff there under General Kléber. In fact,

¹³¹Obviously only those knowledgeable regarding Bonaparte's medical staff or close personally to Gros would understand this reference fully.

¹³²Mollaret & Brossollet, "A Propos," 300. Mollaret and Brossollet are the only authors who identify the dying physician as St. Ours; those authors who do name the dying doctor, refer to him as Mascllet, as did Le Franc. Tripiet Le Franc, Histoire, 213. Le Franc does not elaborate as to why he identified this figure as Mascllet. Dr. Mascllet's letters from Alexandria to Dr. Larrey in Syria are preserved in the Larrey Collection at the Département des Manuscrits de la Bibliothèque Nationale (N.A.F. 5879). This information is cited in: Mollaret et Brossollet, "A Propos," 300. These authors also note that in the margin of one of Mascllet's letters to Larrey in Syria, someone--presumably Dominique, or his son Hippolyte--wrote: "Lettre de Mascllet (Mort de la peste). C'est lui qui figure sur le tableau des pestiférés de Jaffa." Yet the same collection also contains a letter from Dr. St. Ours on which on which very similar comments have been made: "Officier de santé, mort de la peste à Jaffa. On le voit sur le tableau de Gros." Charles Blanc in his, Histoire des Peintures Français au Dix-Neuvième Siècle (Paris: Gauville Frères, 1845), 337, described Gros's portrait of Mascllet in the Jaffa canvas in this way: "Sa figure a cela d'intéressant que c'est comme un portrait de Gros lui-même, car Mascllet ressemblait d'une manière frappant à ce peintre, dont il était l'ami intime."

¹³³Brunner, Napoleonischen Historienbilder, 168. Brunner makes mention of another plague painting; one done in Italy by Louis Lafitte entitled Bonaparte Visiting the Plague Hospital at Milan (1796/1797). Unfortunately the whereabouts of the painting are unknown.

Masclet never would leave Alexandria; he died there of the plague just prior to the French evacuation of Egypt in 1801.¹³⁴

If Masclet were a particularly close friend to Gros, as Charles Blanc and Tripier Le Franc have stated, mourning for him may have involved feelings of resentment toward Napoleon, who had left his troops in a hopeless situation while he returned to France to stage a coup. Thus Gros may have found some consolation in creating a personal homage to his courageous friend right under the nose of Napoleon above. Masclet is depicted, in truth, as a kind of martyr and calls to mind David's painting of The Death of Marat of 1793 (Musée du Louvre, Paris). Rather than slumping over his writing desk, Gros's Masclet leans on the body of a plague patient in a dangling-arm/secular-piétà pose much like that of Marat. While David created a Revolutionary martyr in Marat, Gros created his Napoleonic counterpart.¹³⁵

In conclusion, one can see that the standard reading of Gros's Jaffa as a straightforward example of propaganda for the Emperor can be called into question on a number of levels. First of all, Gros, as a Republican, could well have been concerned over Bonaparte's growing ambitions. In late 1803 Bonaparte was laying ambitious plans for both his imperial coronation and an invasion of England. Though the French press was under heavy censorship, no such controls could be levied on the British journals and newspapers that circulated in the French capital. British caricaturists, like James Gillray and George Cruikshank, found a favorite target for their satire in the exploits of "Boney," especially his "poisoning" of the pest-stricken at Jaffa. It has been shown that Gros

¹³⁴J. Henry Dibble, Napoleon's Surgeon (London: Heineman, 1970), 38.

¹³⁵Warren Roberts, David, 234-235. This author suggests that David at this time was also turning a critical eye towards Napoleon in his 1805 painting of Le Sacre (Musée du Louvre, Paris). Among other assessments, Warren claims the real hero of the painting to be the Pope.

developed an interest in this genre of art, which he may well have learned to appreciate through David. It is even possible that Gros may have derived his "healing touch" gesture of Bonaparte in Jaffa from Gillray's famous caricature of Bonaparte's *coup d'état*. After all, Bonaparte's rise to power became a reality only after his very opportune departure from the Egyptian scene.

Yet Gros could hardly voice his complaints through something as obvious as the caricature. With such tight censorship control in Paris, Gros had to be oblique in his critical commentary. Hence he drew on such resources as allegory, hidden parody, and compositional contrasts.

Gros's allegory is, necessarily, not of an obvious kind. It relies on visual allusions to images whose connotations *vis-à-vis* Napoleon are at best ambiguous and in many cases are strongly pejorative. The heroics of Napoleon's healing touch, for example, can be thrown into doubt not only by the possible reference to British prints but also because the gesture recalls, as Fyjis-Walker noted, Doubting Thomas imagery. The contradictory associations of the gesture thus call the nature of the action into doubt.

Gros also undercut the spectacle of Empire by suggesting, through visual allusion, past signs of a provocative nature. For example, the brooder in Gros's Jaffa bears strong similarities to David's Brutus, a potent image in post-revolutionary France, as was also all imagery associated with the stories of Ugolino and Belisarius. Gros's central group also evokes the famed Horatii from David's masterwork, but in such a way as to make a mockery of the staged scene taking place.

Those who were most critically familiar with the actual historical events of the campaign--such as veterans and their families, those who had access to the British press, and the liberal opposition in Paris--would be the viewers most likely to recognize the irony inherent in this visual re-

creation of Napoleon's famed visit(s) to the plague-stricken, but even for the historically uninitiated, Gros's treatment could raise serious doubts about the action taking place.

For example, the compositional and stylistic contrasts between the wretched plague victims and Bonaparte and his retinue are noticeable and would not have been missed by the critical viewer. They are the kind of contrasts that David used in such paintings such as St. Roch and Brutus. In Gros's Jaffa the contrasts provoke such oppositional associations as underprivileged/privileged, death/good health, reality/fiction, sincerity/cynicism and serve to undermine the aura of miracle-working by suggesting the activities of a charlatan.

There are several glimpses in the literature on Gros that, taken together, suggest that he found café society very congenial. Stendhal presented him as using this arena to scribble caricatures against the Austrians in Italy. Later the critic Chéry complained that Gros's favorite supporters haunted the pubs near the Salon and behaved like "riff-raff." Delacroix was to characterize the crowds who wanted to view Gros's sketch for The Battle of Nazareth as a rowdy lot who in their excitement trampled the lilac bushes under foot.¹³⁶ Delécluze, as well, criticized Gros's propensity for the pubs:

Placé par son talent dans la classe des hommes éminents de son époque, Gros eut le tort, et il en éprouva tous les inconvénients, de mener un genre de vie en contradiction avec le rang élevé qu'on lui assignait parmi les hommes de talent. Marié, maître d'une belle fortune qui lui eut fourni tous les moyens de s'entourer...il vivait de la manière la plus étrange, passant presque tous ses moments de loisir à jouer aux dames avec les obscurs habitués d'un café.¹³⁷

Finally, this is not the only canvas where Gros will use such an arsenal of critical devices to voice his protest against imperial

¹³⁶Delacroix, "Gros," 259.

¹³⁷Delécluze, David, 300.

politics, for he will employ similar means to express his disillusionment with Napoleon's Prussian campaign of 1806/1807 in his Napoleon at the Battlefield of Eylau of 1808 and with Napoleon's Peninsular War of 1807-1812 in his The Capitulation at Madrid of 1810, and to again voice his discontent with the Egyptian campaign in Murat at Aboukir of 1806 and in The Battle of the Pyramids of 1810.

CHAPTER IV
ABOUKIR, 1806

Quelle fête, quelle ivresse, quel tourbillon de couleurs, dans ce radieux Aboukir! On oublie la bataille, pour ne plus penser qu'à la féerie. Quel bouquet, quelle iris quelle tapisserie éblouissante de Tancrèdes et de Saladins, quel pêle-mêle, quel tournoi de Giaours et de Pachas!
Gillet

Early in 1805 Gros, fresh from his success at the Salon of 1804, was again requested to commemorate an event from the Egyptian campaign. One of Bonaparte's most dashing generals, Joachim Murat, wished to celebrate his heroics at the Battle of Aboukir, fought on July 14, 1799, and hence requested that Gros undertake the commission. The Battle of Aboukir (Château de Versailles; Plate LIII) appeared in the Salon of 1806.¹ Tripiet Le Franc provided the following details concerning the commission:

Murat se sentit encore plus grand que d'habitude, et conçut le projet de faire immortaliser aussi son fait d'armes et celui de ses troupes, en commandant à Gros, au commencement de l'année 1805, la représentation de cette bataille. Gros accepte avec joie la mission et le programme qui lui sont donnés. Il fait d'abord une importante esquisse peinte de sa composition et cette composition étant trouvée par Murat aussi juste que superbe, Gros se prépare à faire en grand sa nouvelle bataille.²

¹The full Salon title was: Charge de Cavalerie, exécutée par le général Murat, à la bataille d'Aboukir en Egypte.

²Tripiet Le Franc, Histoire, 230. The sketch Tripiet Le Franc mentioned is now part of the collection at the Detroit Institute of Art.

Delestre also noted that Murat commissioned the painting, but he claimed that Murat did this in order to celebrate his being appointed as the Grand Duke of Berg and Clèves. He must have been mistaken, for Murat did not receive this appointment until mid-1806, which would contradict Tripiier Le Franc's account and also the painting's exhibition in the Salon of 1806. The only extant documentation related to the commission, a letter Gros wrote to Denon in November of 1805 requesting the use of some oriental objects, supports Le Franc's earlier date.³

Manfred-Heinrich Brunner neatly solved this dating problem by proposing that Murat's commissioning of this painting was connected to his commissioned advancement of February 1, 1805; when, in a letter from the Emperor to the Senate, Murat was named Grand Admiral, one of the six major positions of the new Empire. This appointment also raised Murat to the rank of prince and made him a member of the Senate. He gave an acceptance speech on February 4, 1805 and his appointment was reported in all the Parisian newspapers. The descriptions of these events in Le Moniteur for the week of February 4th are especially detailed. At this same time Murat also became a Grand Officer of the Legion of Honor. These honors brought Murat a large income, more than a million francs a year, and he established himself and his family in very elaborate surroundings. Thus, as Brunner convincingly argued, Murat could very well have commissioned the painting in 1805.⁴

³Delestre, Gros, 103. Franc reproduced this letter in full on p. 231. Whether or not Gros collaborated with Denon on this particular painting is unknown. All one knows is that Denon provided Gros with materials. For a similar opinion see: Susan L. Siegfried, "The Politics of Criticism at the Salon of 1806: Ingres' Napoleon Enthroned," in Consortium on Revolutionary Europe, Proceedings 1980 (Athens, Ga.: University of Georgia, 1980), 80.

⁴Brunner, Napoleonischen Historienbilder, 212-213. Murat also later commissioned, c. 1808, another painting from Gros, which never went beyond the oil sketch stage. The Battle of Capri is now located at the Bibliothèque Thiers in Paris. For an extensive discussion of this work see: Thomas W. Gaehtgens, "Antoine-Jean Gros' 'Einnahme von Capri',"

None of the standard sources discuss the issue of the possibility of such a commission inciting the jealousy of Napoleon, who was present and in full command during the battle.⁵ Perhaps the issue of Napoleonic jealousy was raised in regards to Junot's starring role in The Battle of Nazareth only because the commission was canceled so abruptly. According to Delestre, Gros had initially planned to include Napoleon, mounted on his horse, surveying the scene from atop a distant hill; but had finally decided to exclude him altogether rather than portray him in such a subordinate role.⁶ General Baron Louis-François Le Jeune, however, in a painting exhibited in the Salon of 1804, did portray Napoleon in the starring role as the victorious general to whom the Pascha capitulates in his The Battle of Aboukir (Musée de Versailles; Plate LIII).⁷

Though Napoleon and Murat would later quarrel, their relationship in 1805 was a relatively amiable one. If not much of an intellectual strategist, Murat was an extremely brave soldier who always distinguished himself in battle. He served with distinction in all of Napoleon's major campaigns. He had also been helpful in Napoleon's rise to power. On the

Pantheon 35 (1977): 29-40. The Louvre owns Gros's 1811 equestrian Portrait of Murat, which Gaetgens noted has a view of Capri in the background.

⁵Delacroix, "Peintures Modernes," 662. Delacroix did remark that a friend of Gros's told him that Gros, at the opening of the Salon that year, heard rumors that Napoleon was displeased by his omission from the painting and that Gros became very upset until calmed down by Josephine. No other sources mention this secondhand information and it is impossible to say whether what Delacroix was told was fact or fictionalized gossip.

⁶Delestre, Gros, 111.

⁷Like Charles Langlois and Bacler d'Albe, Le Jeune was a "soldier-artist". He took part in several campaigns in Belgium and, in 1794, in Holland. In 1795 he became an aide-de-camp to General Berthier. In 1807 he followed the Prussian campaign and witnessed the battle of Eylau. His sketch of the battle (Cabinet des Dessins, Louvre) was used as a model for the famous competition that Gros won. Le Jeune's memoirs give no indication, however, that he was ever in Egypt. There are entries for Le Jeune in the exhibition catalogs entitled: All Banners Wave and French Painting, 1789-1830.

night of October 4, 1795 when Bonaparte had been assigned to protect the Convention, it was Murat who rescued the cannons from the artillery park before the insurgents could get to them, thus enabling Bonaparte to fire his celebrated "whiff of grapeshot." Murat, with Bonaparte's brother, Lucien, was also instrumental in saving the day for Bonaparte during his precarious coup of the 18th of Brumaire. For his loyalty and bravery, Murat received his full share of honors and promotions. On May 19, 1804, his name was second on the list of eighteen newly created Marshals of the Empire and in July of 1808 he was named King of Naples.⁸

Characteristically, Murat fought with bravery at Aboukir; in fact, it was his decisive cavalry charge that turned the tide of the battle for the French. In a letter sent to the Directory immediately after the battle, Bonaparte gave full recognition to Murat's efforts:

Le gain de cette bataille est dû principalement au général Murat. Je vous demande pour ce général de division; sa brigade de cavalerie a fait l'impossible.⁹

The historical circumstances of the battle are as follows. The battle was waged shortly after Bonaparte and his decimated forces returned from Jaffa. While Bonaparte had been in Syria, General Desaix had pacified Upper Egypt, while Generals Dugua and Poussielgue had more or less kept order in Cairo. This relatively stable state of affairs was shattered on July 14, 1799, when the French received word that a Turkish fleet had arrived off the shores of Alexandria with forces estimated at close to 15,000 men.

On the previous day close to 9,000 Turkish troops had embarked off the coast of Aboukir Bay. There was a French redoubt just east of the

⁸For Murat see: Owen Connelly, Napoleon's Satellite Kingdoms (N.Y.: Collier-Macmillan, 1965); David G. Chandler, ed., Napoleon's Marshals (N.Y.: Macmillan, 1987); Jean Tulard, Murat ou l'éveil des Nations (Paris: Hachette, 1983).

⁹ Cited in: Delestre, Gros, p. 104.

small village of Aboukir. The Turks stormed this and massacred its 300 defenders and captured a French fort at the top of the peninsula. The Turks occupied the village and set up camp, but curiously made no further offensive moves:

What their commander, Mustafa Pascha, Seraskier of Rumelia--a venerable, white-bearded man--expected to accomplish in this manner remains a mystery. The position he chose was strong, but all he could do in it was wait to be either driven out or starved out.¹⁰

While the Turks sat still, the French moved. By July 24, Bonaparte had already gathered close to 10,000 French troops in the vicinity of Aboukir, and plans to attack the next day were set. Most historical accounts relate that on the eve of the battle Bonaparte summoned Murat to his tent and excitedly exclaimed: "Cette bataille va décider du sort du monde!" Murat, a bit taken aback by this ambitious assertion, replied: "Au moins du sort de l'armée."¹¹

The French attacked early the next morning. They were met with a strong Turkish defense which consisted of three successive lines of troops stretching across the neck of the peninsula, which allowed only a direct frontal attack. Yet, at the same time, the Turks were in a rather perilous position as their only means of retreat was into the small fort at the tip of the peninsula or out into the sea.

The decisive moment for the the French came shortly after noon when Murat sensed a weakness in the center of the Turkish line. He immediately ordered a lightening-quick cavalry charge which was so forceful that his men reached the fort within minutes. With this penetration of the Turkish line, the battle became a rout. By early afternoon the sea was red with blood and the battle was over. Some 2,500 Turks took refuge in the fort

¹⁰Herold, Bonaparte in Egypt, 313.

¹¹All Murat sources previously cited mention this account which stems from the memoirs of the Commissioner of War, Jacques Miot.

and refused to surrender as news of the massacre at Jaffa had already reached their ears. They held out for over a week and half had died when the ghostly remainder finally surrendered.

In the closing moments of the battle, it was Murat who captured the Turkish commander-in-chief, the white-bearded Pasha of Rumelia, Kincai Mustapha. Earlier in the battle he had wounded Murat's lower jaw with a pistol shot; but Murat knocked the weapon out of the Pasha's hand with his sabre, slicing off two of the Pasha's protruding fingers. Fortunately, Murat had his mouth open at the time--Bonaparte was said to have quipped that for once it was to good purpose--and the bullet passed behind the tongue and severed the top of the epiglottis, which the wounded man spat out. No important artery was injured and there was no haemorrhage.¹²

Gros, in fact, chose not to represent the unsavory puncturing of Murat's jaw. Joachim is fully intact astride a nervous white charger just off the left center of the canvas. He rides heroically above the swarming mass of combatants that surround him and is the obvious focal point of the composition. Yet what seemed to captivate most Salon critics in 1806 was the family group of Pasha and son to Murat's right. Just to the left of center, dressed in a pink cape, is the Pasha's son who offers his father's scimitar with his right hand in submission to Murat, while with his left he tries to stay further action on the part of his fearless father, who furiously tries to snatch one of his fleeing Mamelukes.

Turks and a black man have joined the flight. One Turk who has been wounded on the left side of his foot clutches desperately at one of his fleeing comrades who appears to be brushing him aside. Sprawling headfirst in the central foreground of the canvas one finds a Turk whose arms have become entangled in the reins of his horse. The dust coming up

¹²James Henry Dible, Napoleon's Surgeon (London: Heinemann, 1970), 41.

from the heels of his boots indicates that his horse is dragging him to a watery death. Just back beyond this unlucky Turk one can also glimpse two nude black servants. One helps support the Pasha's falling body while the second is entangled with the reins and limbs of the Pasha's stumbling horse.

To the left of Murat, the battle still rages. In the foreground Colonel Beaumont, one of Murat's aide-de-camps, is in the act of sabering a Turk who has tumbled backwards over some pieces of British artillery. The basket slung around this Turk's shoulder is open just far enough to give the viewer a gruesome glimpse of the severed head of Adjunct General Le Turque, who was killed in the first charge.¹³

Behind Beaumont and the Turk, a French dragoon is pushing his sword blade into the throat of a Moslem. Beyond this, Colonel Duvivier, hit by a cannon ball, is succumbing. Officer Guibert, another one of Murat's aides-de-camp, was also killed at the battle by cannon fire. He is represented synecdochically only by his swordbelt held in the hands of a Turk as it is torn to pieces by random gunfire. Beyond this the figures are so dense that it is impossible to identify full figures with any clarity.

In the background, shimmering in the hot afternoon sun, is the citadel of Aboukir with its minarets and ramparts and the camp of the Pasha, obscured by the smoke of the raging battle. The sea is filled with pink and white Turkish turbans. Beyond this one also sees puffs of smoke and flame coming from the British ships of Sydney Smith. According to

¹³Severing the heads of the enemy dead was a Turkish practice and one for which rewards were given. One simply collected one's booty of heads in a basket for later counting. The battle action is described in: Delestre, Gros, 104-106 and by Gros himself in the 1806 Salon Catalogue. This is cited in full in: Pierre Chaussard, Le Pausanias Francais: Etat des Arts du Dessin en France (Paris: Buisson, 1806), 74-79. For his severed heads, Gros may also have been inspired by the severed heads in Giulio Romano's Battle of Constantine fresco. Girodet extended the tradition in his 1810 painting, The Revolt at Cairo (Musée de Versailles).

Gros's description, the Turkish canonniers aboard the British ships fired on their own fleeing troops in order to stay their flight, thus killing hundreds of their own men.¹⁴

Though Gros followed General Berthier's official report rather closely, he departed from the historical facts in two respects. In actuality the Pasha's son was not nearly so filled with filial piety as Gros portrayed him, for when it became clear that the French were winning, he sought refuge in the peninsular fort with some 2,000 others and did not emerge until a week after the actual battle. Nor was the Pasha so fearless as Gros portrayed him on canvas, for immediately after being wounded by Murat, he retreated to his tent to seek medical assistance. It was here in his tent, rather than on the field of battle, that he surrendered to Murat.¹⁵

In addition to Berthier's report, Gros probably also consulted Vivant Denon's publication of 1802 entitled: Voyage dans le Basse et la Haute Egypte. In fact, the first and exceedingly lavish edition of Denon's work contained Berthier's official reports interspersed between Denon's chatty text and numerous plates of drawings and engravings.¹⁶ According to Delestre: "Il {Gros} a procédé comme pour Nazareth: C'est sur le plan des lieux, mis en perspective."¹⁷ Thus Gros may well have consulted Denon's plan of The Battle of Aboukir. In this ink and watercolor, Denon has defined the geography of the peninsula and marked

¹⁴Gros mentioned this in his Salon catalogue description: "Les canonniers turques mitraillent leur propres troupes, et la mer est couverte de turbans."

¹⁵Herold, Bonaparte in Egypt, 190; 78. Brunner, Napoleonischen Historienbilder, 190.

¹⁶A full set of plates from the lavish first edition is part of the collection of the British Museum in London.

¹⁷Delestre, Gros, 11.

out the troop formations. Little flattened commas ruffling the surface of the sea represent the fleeing Turkish forces.¹⁸

It is also clear from a letter that Gros wrote to Denon on November 9, 1805, that he made use of Denon's extensive collection of oriental objects:

Monsieur:

J'ai très grand besoin d'avoir dans mon atelier les étoffes, les housses et les armes d'orient que vous m'avez offert de me prêter avec tant d'obligeance, que je n'ai nul scrupule de vous envoyer, ce matin un commissionnaire sans {vous} avoir prévenu à l'avance. Un artiste a un avantage incalculable à peindre, le plus possible, d'après nature; une étude ne remplace pas l'objet lui-même...¹⁹

Gros's use of Denon's collection is obvious from the finished canvas. The realistic detailing on the guns, the swords, and the costumes could never have been achieved without the use of actual artifacts or detailed illustrations.²⁰

For example, Gros's detailed knowledge of Turkish attire is reflected in the fact that the Pasha's son wears a *cahouq*, a rigid cylindrical cap with flutes, over the top of his turban. The artist also displays his knowledge of Turkish military accessories by the fact that

¹⁸James Thompson, The East, Imagined, Experienced, Remembered: Orientalist Nineteenth Century Painting (Dublin: National Gallery of Ireland, 1988), 21. This author suggests that Denon's drawing of The Battle of the Pyramids (Plate xii in his Voyages...) was an influence on Gros's battle painting. Clearly Denon was drawing on the 18th-century traditions that Gros did for The Battle of Nazareth.

¹⁹Tripier Le Franc, Histoire, 231. Gros himself seems to have owned only a few oriental objects. The 1835 sales catalogue of his studio upon his death listed only one entry, number 433: "vetemens arabes et turcs; gibernes et fontes de mameloucks".

²⁰Brunner, Napoleonischen Historienbilder, 383; notes 458 & 459. According to Brunner, drawings now in the Delestre collection in Paris indicate that Gros also studied illustrations in such published sources as: Costumes orientaux inédits, dessinés d'après nature en 1796, 1798, 1802... Paris, 1813; Turquie d'Europe, costumes et moeurs, v. 2. The Bibliothèque Nationale in Paris owns copies of these works. According to Brunner, Gros's drawings reflect a particular fascination with turbans and head coverings.

the Turkish soldier caught in the tangle of figures just below the Pasha's son extends a bright red rod at arm's length. This rod is called a *toug* and was a traditional symbol of military command which was carried into battle before a military leader. On campaign as many as seven to eight of these rods were carried before the Sultan, while two were traditionally carried before a Pasha.²¹ The precise detailing of the costumes, especially the tunics and robes of the Pasha and his son, and of the artillery, such as the gun strapped over the shoulder of the clinging Turk in the right foreground, also indicate the use of actual objects as models.

As for the landscape elements, which are certainly of lesser priority to Gros, Brunner has suggested that Gros turned to François Le Jeune for help. Brunner stated that Gros's treatment of the terrain, his choice of viewpoint, and his rendition of the fort complex evince an influence from Lejeune's 1804 sketch:

Was insbesondere die Ansicht der Festung betrifft, so hat sich Gros auf die Genauigkeit der von Lejeune 1804 im Salon ausgestellten "Esquisse de la bataille d'Aboukir" verlassen. Überhaupt scheint er der eindrucksvollen Terrain wiedergabe lejeunes in der Wahl des Blickpunktes verpflichtet zu sein.²²

Gros has chosen the same viewpoint as Lejeune with the tip of the peninsula stretching back into the distance off to the left center of the canvas. Gros, however, much like Giulio Romano in his Battle of Constantine frescoes, has greatly contracted the space of the painting, eliminating most of the middleground. The landscape seems of little interest to Gros, for he has also eliminated the desert flora which Lejeune took such care to render. In fact, precision of historical detail is the hallmark of Lejeune's painting style. Not only does one feel that

²¹Raoul Brunon, "Les Mameluks D'Egypte," in Jean Tranie et J.C. Carmigniani, Bonaparte; La Campagne D'Egypte (Paris: Pygmalion, 1988), 271-275.

²²Brunner, Napoleonischen Historienbilder, 191.

one has been presented with an accurate picture of the desert terrain, but one also senses that all the battle formations and troop movements have been indicated with historical precision. Lejeune was, of course, not only a painter but also a soldier.

In addition to Lejeune's work, Gros must also have been familiar with Denon's engraving of The Battle of Aboukir (Musée de l'Emperi, Salon-de-Provence; Plate LIV). Denon's general distribution of fort, ships, and sea are similiar to both Lejeune's and Gros's. While he has chosen the same incident as Lejeune to emphasize, when the wounded Pasha is taken before Bonaparte, he puts more emphasis on the fleeing Turks who are fired upon by their own men, as Gros also did. Thus it is likely that Denon's engraving had some influence on both Lejeune's and Gros's battle canvases.

Besides these contemporary aids, Gros was clearly also looking back to famous battle paintings of the past. Rather than turning to the 18th-century tradition as he had for his The Battle of Nazareth; this time Gros looked further back to sources from the Renaissance and Baroque traditions, as well as perhaps once again finding inspiration in British sources. The work that comes to mind first as an inspiration for Gros's The Battle of Aboukir is Giulio Romano's 1517-1520 The Battle of Constantine fresco (Plate XXV) in the Vatican, which Gros most likely saw when he was in Rome (If not, numerous prints of the celebrated battle scene were in circulation). Lichtenstein summed up the similarities quite concisely:

In any case, Gros seems to have had some good means and a strong incentive to study the mural by Raphael and Giulio...Much in the sketch makes one think of Raphael: the general distribution of space, with over half occupied by a fighting crowd and the rest by the sky; the motif of the calm equestrian rider, placed off center and parallel to the picture plane, with a nude victim before him; the alignment of the soldiers in helmets receding to the left; and the body of water, with a horse swimming in it, to the right. Even Raphael's device of 'locking' the composition with the long diagonal of the imperial lance, which crosses the horizon, recurs in The Battle of Aboukir...Not all of Raphael's

imitators went back to the great work directly, but Gros appears to have done so in order to counterbalance and correct the excesses of other contending sources, the abandon of Rubens, the melodrama of Pietro da Cortona, the almost irrational deliberation of Le Brun, and the anecdotal picturesque effects of lesser painters.²³

A less obvious source for Gros's desert battle scene was suggested by Fyjis-Walker. This author proposed that Benjamin West's sketch for Death on a Pale Horse (Plate LV), shown in Paris in 1802, was a central influence on Gros.²⁴ Actually there are three oil sketches for the final 1817 version of West's painting. The Philadelphia Museum of Art owns the 1787 and the 1802 oil sketches, while the 1796 sketch is at Petworth House in Sussex, England. It is still debated which one of these oil sketches West took with him to Paris.²⁵ The sketches are, however, quite close in their general layout and iconography so that the issue of exactly which one was taken to Paris need not be of particular concern here.

In West's sketch, Death rides forward on a horse in the mid-left center, while figures are fleeing frantically toward the right. Scattered below the hooves of Death's charger are the tangled bodies of the dead, the dying, and the plague-stricken. The sky beyond the figures is charged with apocalyptic lightning. In an account of 1808, West described his intention:

²³Lichtenstein, "The Baron Gros," 131. Others who note Giulio as a source are: Chaussard, Le Pausanias Français, 79; Friedlaender, David to Delacroix, 64; Frederick Hartt, Giulio Romano, vol. 1, (New Haven: Yale University, 1958), 48. Brunner, Napoleonischen Historienbilder, 198. Brunner, however, sees Gros's primary influence as coming from the battle paintings from the Alexander cycle of Charles Le Brun. For LeBrun's paintings see: Donald Posner, "Charles LeBrun's Triumphs of Alexander," Art Bulletin 41 (September 1959): 237-246.

²⁴Fyjis-Walker, Iconography, 127. He had no time to develop his observation, only stating: "I would only suggest that the painting was of central importance for Aboukir."

²⁵For this debate see: Fiske Kimball, "Benjamin West au Salon de 1802," Gazette des Beaux-Arts 7 (1932): 403-410. Kimball believes that the 1802 sketch was taken to Paris, while the Robins Sales Catalogue of 1829 implies that he took the Petworth version.

This subject is intended to express the triumph of Death over all things...Its object is to express universal desolation; to depict all the methods by which a world may be destroyed.²⁶

One can cite a number of similarities between West's apocalyptic vision and Gros's desert battle. First of all the compositions are quite similar. In both works the action expands from a central figure on a white charger located just to the left of center. The emphasis is on large, active figures who dominate the middleground, while the dead and the dying litter the foreground. Little attention is given to spatial expansion behind the figures; the work seems to expand out toward the viewer, rather than recede back away from him/her.

Gros may also have admired the dynamism and colorism in West's sketch that recalled Rubens. According to Allen Staley:

The visual affinities of West's Death on a Pale Horse are not with depictions of the same related subjects, but with the hunting scenes of Rubens. The pale horse and his rider are descendants of a horse and rider in Rubens' Wolf and Fox Hunt (Metropolitan Museum, N.Y.).²⁷

Gros, who had himself experienced the horrors of war in Italy, may also have been attracted to the vision of war that West presented with its strong emphasis on death, destruction, and pestilence. While Giulio Romano, in his Battle of Constantine, offered the viewer the message that good (or might?) would triumph over evil, West's message is concerned only with the immense horror of war. In Gros's painting we are assured that Murat will be the victor, but the carnage in the foreground of Gros's painting is so striking and the native peoples are so compellingly realized that victory rings a rather hollow note.

²⁶La Belle Assemblée, IV (1808), 55. Cited in: John Dillenberger, Benjamin West: The Context of his Life's Work with Particular Attention to Paintings with Religious Subject Matter (San Antonio: Trinity University, c. 1977), 89.

²⁷Allen Staley, Benjamin West: American Painter at the English Court (Baltimore Museum of Art, 1989), 88.

West had brought his apocalyptic sketch to Paris in 1802 while on a trip to see the new treasures of art that Bonaparte had brought to Paris. Though West's name does not appear in the *livrets* of the Salon that year, various eye-witness accounts state that his work was on display at the Salon. According to the September 24, 1802, entry in Joseph Farington's journal, West told him that he had been presented to Bonaparte at the Salon by the Minister of the Interior. Bonaparte addressed West to say that: "...il s'était plu à Paris, et pour exprimer son approbation quant aux merites de la peinture."²⁸ Farington also noted that West attended a dinner that included Denon and several artists such as Gérard and Vincent. Though Farington does not mention Gros, one can still assume that even if Gros did not actually meet West, he nonetheless saw and admired West's provocative composition.

The main study for Gros's The Battle at Aboukir is a large oil sketch at the Detroit Institute of Art (Plate LVI). Though much smaller in scale than the final canvas at Versailles, this sketch coincides closely with the final work in terms of iconography and composition. It is, however, much more spacious and more freely painted. Paul Grigaut's description is apt:

The most fruitful {qualities which transcend realism} is perhaps the excellence of Gros' technique, with its thick impasto and slashing brushstrokes which remind one of Fragonard, some of whose works Gros had seen in his own home and at Mme. Vigée-LeBrun's.²⁹

²⁸Cited in: Kimball, "Benjamin West," 404.

²⁹Paul Grigaut, "A Romantic Sketch by Baron Gros: Murat at Aboukir," Bulletin of the Detroit Institute of Art 29 (1949/50): 6-11. The sketch measures 34 3/4 by 54 1/2 feet and is signed on the rock in the left-center foreground. See also: Tripiet Le Franc, Histoire, 230; Delestre, Gros, 105. There is also a sketch for Murat's horse at the Musée des Beaux-Arts in Besançon and a copy at the Louvre. There are also two other sketches erroneously attributed to Gros for this canvas. For a good description of these see: Brunner, Napoleonischen Historienbilder, 193. I also consider that a sketch in the Cabinet des Dessins at the Louvre, # 27027, is a sketch for Gros's "Aboukir." One figure especially looks like a study for the Pasha.

Gros's painting received mixed notices at the Salon that year. Critics found some things to admire in Gros's composition, but at the same time they found fault with such things as his composition and his use of color. Gros, however, received almost unanimous praise for his inclusion of the Pasha and his son, his one departure from the actual historical circumstances. Lemonnier's excited appreciation was quite similar to remarks made by Salon reviewers in 1806:

C'est d'ailleurs une {Pasha and son group} des plus vivantes et une des plus vraiment dramatiques qu'il ait peintes.³⁰

Charles Landon felt Gros's battle painting was unique, in part, due to his inclusion of this father and son group:

Cette intention puissée dans un des plus beaux sentiments de la nature, l'amour filial, fait infiniment d'honneur à M. Gros; et l'on doit observer que les peintures de batailles négligent trop souvent d'en offrir de semblables parmi les scènes d'horreur qu'ils ont à retracer.³¹

Landon contended that Gros derived his "invented moral message," that is, the noble actions of Pasha and son, from Neo-Classical history painting. Thus it seems Gros was able to combine deftly the realism of contemporary history with the *exemplum virtutis* of old.

Critics also, for the most part, praised Gros's treatment of Eastern peoples. One frequently repeated anecdote related that the Turkish ambassador visited the Salon that year and stopped to praise Gros's canvas by exclaiming that even if the figures were stripped nude and without their characteristic costumes, he would still be able to recognize their nationality, so subtle were the artist's characterizations.³² Chaussard's comments were characteristic:

³⁰Lemonnier, Gros, 37. Among numerous others to praise this group were: Delestre, Gros, 107; Tripier Le Franc, Histoire, 232; Chaussard, Le Pausanius Français, 74.

³¹Charles Landon, Annales de Musée et de l'Ecole Moderne des Beaux-Arts, vol. 13, (Paris, 1807), 12.

³²Tripier Le Franc, Histoire, 235; Delestre, Gros, 112.

Ces Français, ces Albanais, ces Turcs, donc les traits ne diffèrent pas moins entr'eux que leur armes, sont tellement reconnaissables, que chaque individu de ces nations croit y reconnaître les types particuliers de son espèce.³³

Also praised by Salon critics was Gros's treatment of the horse. Dargenty was particularly profuse in his praise of Gros's ability to capture the spirit of a horse caught in the midst of battle:

L'horreur de ces mêlées, où s'engagent une innombrable série de duels est prodigieusement augmentée par la présence des chevaux. La fureur de ce paisible animal, poussée par les cris et la foule au paroxysme de l'exaltation...³⁴

Delestre seemed particularly impressed by the expressive contrast he saw in Gros's horses:

Le cheval français est plein d'ardeur et de fierté. Le cheval arabe est accablé par la fatigue; il ne peut aller au delà de cette place où trop d'obstacles l'arrêtent, et il courbe son col sous le pied de son glorieux rival.³⁵

Singled out for particular praise by Delacroix (who, however, also criticized several aspects of the composition) was Gros's use of especially telling details. This ability is perhaps the one he admired most in Gros's work for he remarked upon it frequently:

Gros a osé faire de vrais morts, de vrais fiévreux, je parle toujours des belles parties de ses ouvrages, et dans ces parties on ne lui a jamais assez su de gré de naïveté singulière et en même temps de l'audace de certaines inventions qui semblent interdites à la peinture, mais dont l'effet est immense quand la tentative est heureuse. Il sait peindre la sueur qui inonde la croupe de ses chevaux au milieu de la bataille, et presque l'haleine enflammée qui sort de leurs naseaux; il vous fait voir l'éclair du sabre au moment où il s'enfonce dans la gorge de l'ennemi. On a vu quel parti il sait tirer d'un détail qui peut sembler trivial ou inutile, au profit du terrible ou du pathétique par l'accent particulier qu'il sait lui imprimer.³⁶

³³Chaussard, Le Pausanias Français, 77.

³⁴Dargenty, Gros, 32.

³⁵Delestre, Gros, 108.

³⁶Delacroix, "Peintures Modernes," 659. Brunner also discusses what he calls Gros's use of "intéressant" details such as the unwinding turban of the Turk on the right or the knotted shirt of the reversed Turk on the

Though Delacroix was captivated by Gros's unique brand of realism, he nonetheless was disconcerted, as were other critics, by Gros's use of chiaroscuro:

Il pousse même le dédain ou l'ignorance peut-être de certains moyens d'effect jusqu'au point de manquer à des conditions très importantes de l'art. C'est surtout dans les oppositions de la lumière et de l'ombre que ses tableaux se ressentent le plus et La Bataille d'Aboukir justifie particulièrement cette critique. Il ne met pas assez d'air entre ses groupes, ses fonds sont insignifiants et ne fuient pas assez...C'est l'art des sacrifices en un mot, de tous le plus rare, c'est celui qui consiste à ne pas tout dire et à ne pas tout montrer.³⁷

Chaussard made similar criticisms:

Les objets ne se détachent point par opposition d'ombre et de lumière. On n'y trouve pas même l'emploi des dégradations, des nuances intermédiaires; les couleurs les plus vives y éclatent à côté les unes des autres, et se détachent sur un fond vigoureux, ou tous les tons se repoussent à la fois et s'allient. L'artiste s'est donc ouvert dans cette partie de l'art une route qui n'est qu'à lui.³⁸

These devices that Gros used, such as limited chiaroscuro and contraction of background recession, which Delacroix suggested were due either to disdain or ignorance, and which Chaussard contended were unique to Gros, were really stylistic devices made use of by *Les Primitifs* and other artists such as Ingres, Girodet, and Broc. As stated previously, Gros was receptive to these stylistic innovations in his canvas of Sappho at Leucadia, and he appears to have continued to make use of them in his The Battle of Aboukir.

Gros's compositional treatment also came up for censure. Many reviewers were annoyed by Gros's tangled arrangement of fighting cavalry

left. See: Brunner, Napoleonischen Historienbilder, 206. Rosenthal also commented on Gros's use of detail:

Gros aimait le détail réel d'une passion qui ne reculait ni devant le répugnant, ni devant l'horrible...Sur les champs de bataille, il aimait à amonceler les cadavres décomposés par la mort. Rosenthal, La Peinture Romantique, 29.

³⁷Delacroix, "Gros," 660.

³⁸Chaussard, Le Pausanias Français, 78.

men and Turks seen to the left and behind Murat and below Murat's charger. Dargenty's use of the adjective *grouillant* seems particularly appropriate for this section of the canvas as does Lemonnier's observation that it made one "...penser à celles des jeux de patience."³⁹ Chaussard contended that here the viewer could not match bodies to heads or horses to riders and the result was mass confusion. All the great masters, he puffed, knew how to make order out of disorder; as for example did LeBrun in his Alexander battle paintings.⁴⁰

Also criticized in that year's reviews was Gros's odd choice of a rose-hued tonality for the canvas. Lemonnier said he had to agree with other critics concerning this quality:

C'est bien en effet le 'coloris rosé' une tonalité général à la fois brillante et froide, une touche raide et sèche, qui frappent désagréable l'oeil à la première vue du tableau.⁴¹

Chaussard also disliked this quality and compared the canvas unfavorably to Gros's The Pest House at Jaffa in this respect.⁴² One wonders what Gros's intentions could have been here. Without any documentation, one can only speculate. Perhaps he felt the warm overall tonality helped evoke a kind of sultry exoticism.

This rose tonality is not a feature of the Detroit sketch, wherein the colors glow with a great deal of purity. The Turkish costumes of red-brown and blue are especially intense in contrast to the background which

³⁹Dargenty, Gros, 34; Lemonnier, Gros, 37.

⁴⁰Chaussard, Le Pausanias Français, 82. This review is probably what provoked Girodet into a long defense of Gros's painting wherein he compares Gros's battle painting to LeBrun's Battle of Arbela and finds LeBrun lacking in all respects. Girodet's comments are reprinted in full in: Delestre, Gros, 113-116. Girodet later used a tangled composition somewhat similar to Gros's in his 1810 painting of The Revolt at Cairo (Musée de Versailles).

⁴¹Lemmonier, Gros, 36.

⁴²Chaussard, Le Pausanias Français, 83.

is rendered in pastels of blues, blue-greens, and pinks. Gillet's description of the colors as being those of a "fairyland" seems particularly appropriate when one views the soft tinted blue-green sea littered with pink turbans.⁴³

Mention should be made of one final criticism leveled at Gros's canvas, and one criticism that his works often invoked; that is, his use of scale. As Landon noted:

Ce qui frappe d'abord à la vue de ce tableau magnifique, c'est l'aspect colossal des figures qui, sur le premier plan, ont jusqu'à neuf pieds de proportion. Cette grandeur des objets nuirait peut-être à l'ouvrage, si tout n'y faisait reconnaître un de ces rares talens qui doivent surmonter tous les obstacles, et qui s'élèvent toujours à la hauteur des entreprises les plus difficiles.⁴⁴

Once again Gros's foreground victims dominate in terms of scale, and the viewer's eyes must first pass over these aggressively dominant figures before settling on the centralized Murat. One is continually made aware that the side effects of victory are death and destruction. Even further back, the scale of the vanquished orientals is greater than that of the French. The nude black slave tangled up below the hooves of Murat's charger is over two heads taller than Murat. Again, as in his Battle of Nazareth, Gros may have instinctively seen the oriental as more heroic than the Frenchman; as a kind of Rousseauian noble savage.⁴⁵

Thus one can see Gros's The Battle at Aboukir as functioning in a similar fashion to that of his The Battle at Nazareth or his The Pest House at Jaffa. Certainly Murat is the calm hero on a fiery steed with his sword drawn back in a pose much like Alexander in Lebrun's The

⁴³Gillet, "À l'Exposition Gros," 920.

⁴⁴Landon, Annales, 11.

⁴⁵Brunner, Napoleonischen Historienbilder, 201. Brunner interprets this differently. He said that though his idea goes beyond Gros's intention, the picture allows for the interpretation that Gros wished to emphasize the oriental as a slave holder.

Crossing of the Granicus.⁴⁶ Yet Murat is so stoic as to actually be boring. Such must have subconsciously been the opinion of that year's Salon critics; for if they mention Murat at all, it is in a very summary fashion; it is the exotic easterners, especially the Pasha and his son, who captured their imagination. The counterparts of the conquered, dead, and dying are the plague-stricken in Gros's The Pest House at Jaffa, as discussed previously. On the evidence of Aboukir, Nazareth, Jaffa, and Eylau, Gros had an instinctive sympathy with the victim and, as well, as a Romantic's fascination with the exotic Other.

The fate of Gros's canvas after the Salon is somewhat cloudy, but Murat did take it with him when he assumed power in Naples. When Murat fell from power--he was shot and killed in October of 1815--the canvas was rolled up and stored in the palace attic. In his journal, Stendhal recounted this peculiar incident of 1824:

Lorsque quelques curieux étaient admis à la voir {Gros's canvas}, le concierge la déroulait et les visiteurs marchaient dessus pour distinguer les différents épisodes.⁴⁷

In 1825 Gros, with the help of Chaptal fils, was able to buy back the canvas from the next King of Naples for 14 million francs.⁴⁸ According to Tripier Le Franc, Gros retouched the canvas and sold it to the Louvre in 1833.⁴⁹ A copy of this work (by Soulié), along with Gros's Battle of Eylau and his Pest House at Jaffa, were exhibited in the

⁴⁶Robert Herbert, "Baron Gros's Napoleon and Voltaire's Henri IV," in Francis Haskell, ed., The Artist and Writer in France: Essays in Honor of Jean Seznec (Oxford: Clarendon, 1974), 59.

⁴⁷Cited in: Lemmonier, Gros, 36.

⁴⁸Delestre, Gros, 116; Tripier Le Franc, Histoire, 423.

⁴⁹Tripier Le Franc, Histoire, 245.

October 1830 Exhibition for the Profit of the Wounded of July.⁵⁰ The exhibition was organized by Naigeon and was authorized by the Grand Referendary of the Chambre des Pairs. A brief notice explaining the exhibition stated that here one would see "les chefs d'oeuvre représentant les faits mémorables de l'armée française" from works which were "conservés religieusement à la Direction Générale des Musées."⁵¹

The contemporary artists exhibited in this show, according to Briere, "sont assez obscurs pour la plupart."⁵² Briere also listed the other Napoleonic works included in this show. In addition to Gros's three paintings, such works as François Gérard's The Battle of Austerlitz of Musée de Versailles, 1810), Girodet's Napoleon Receiving the Keys to Vienna (Musée de Versailles, 1808), and J.B. Regnault's Death of General Desaix (Musée de Versailles, 1800) were exhibited.⁵³

Gros's original canvas of Aboukir (not the copy by Soulié) was later (in 1833 after its purchase by the State) displayed with several other paintings in Louis Philippe's new Salle du Sacre, the new gallery at Versailles which was dedicated to Napoleon.

Michael Marrinan has convincingly argued that Louis-Philippe, who personally supervised the selections of his architect/redecorater at Versailles, Frédéric Nepveu, conceived the room as an iconographic whole

⁵⁰Gaston Briere, "L'Exposition du Luxembourg au Profit des Blessés de Juillet," Bulletin de la Société de l'Histoire de l'Art Français (1918/1919): 246-250.

⁵¹Ibid, 247.

⁵²Briere, "Exhibition of the Wounded," 249.

⁵³Briere, "Exhibition of Wounded," 247-250.

in which an underlying logic dictated the choice and sequencing of the images in the rooms.⁵⁴

Though Louis-Philippe was fully aware of the growth of Napoleonic enthusiasm in France after the ex-Emperor's death in 1823 on the island of St. Helena, the Napoleon Louis Philippe chose to enshrine in the new gallery was a very self-serving one.

The paintings chosen for the new gallery were: David's Consecration of the Emperor Napoleon of 1805-1807 (Musée du Louvre, Paris) and his Oath of the Army made to the Emperor of 1808-1810 (Musée National du Château de Versailles), Gros's Battle of Aboukir (Musée National du Château de Versailles, 1806), and Antoine-François Callot's The Eighteenth of Brumaire (Musée National du Château de Versailles, 1801).

According to Marrinan the two Davids "unambiguously record and aggrandize the pomp and splendor of Napoleon's investiture as Emperor of the French in 1804."⁵⁵ While Callot's allegory reminds the viewer of Napoleon's unsavory *coup d'état* and Gros's Aboukir puts Napoleon's Empire into realistic perspective because:

Napoleon's victory at Aboukir was tarnished from the very beginning by suspicions that he placed personal ambition before the good of his men. Gros's picture in the Salle du Sacre reopened this question in a new context. It also reminded the visitor to Versailles that Napoleon had won this victory (like all the others) with the heroic assistance of many brilliant generals.⁵⁶

Marrinan offers no such iconographic analysis as a rationale for the inclusion of Gros's Aboukir in the Exhibition for the Profit of the Wounded of 1830, rather seeing its inclusion there as part of the Orléans

⁵⁴Michael Marrinan, Painting Politics for Louis-Philippe: Art and Ideology in Orleanist France, 1830-1848 (New Haven & London: Yale University, 1988), 151-153.

⁵⁵Marrinan, Painting Politics, 152.

⁵⁶Ibid.

dynasty's attempt to woo, or at least not oppose, "the flowering of Bonapartist sympathy just after the July Revolution."⁵⁷

However Alfred de Musset's comments upon seeing Gros's works at the Exhibition for the Profit of the Wounded of 1830⁵⁸ suggest his recognition of Gros's critical dialogue:

Who is this M. Gros, a classicist, a romanticist, a Florintine like the former, a follower of Raphael like the latter, or a Venetian like such a one? What is his picture? Is it pretentious, is it a systematic production, or a compilation? It is Bonaparte and the plague-stricken people of Jaffa; it is nature, living, terrible, majestic, superb. He has seen his hero, he has kept this stern head in his mind throughout his entire picture; he has dipped his pencil in the brilliant colors of an angry sky; he painted as Homer sang.⁵⁹

In conclusion, though Gros's Aboukir contains no Bonaparte (and this in itself is critical according to Marrinan), it is nonetheless, one of Gros's major Napoleonic battle paintings depicting the Egyptian campaign. And as in other works of this type from Gros's oeuvre, the artist's sympathies clearly are engaged by the Eastern "other", or in the case of Jaffa by French victims of the plague; victims alike of Napoleonic imperialism.

⁵⁷Marrinan, Painting Politics, 146.

⁵⁸Though many accounts of the July Revolution propagate the myth that those wounded were a strong cross-section of French society (as in Delacroix's Liberty Leading the People (Musée du Louvre) of 1831), studies indicate that the vast majority of those on the barricades were skilled artisans. See: H.A.C. Collingham, A Political History of France, 1830-1848 (London & N.Y.: Longman, 1988).

⁵⁹Alfred de Musset, The Complete Writings of Alfred de Musset, trans. by Mary W. Artois, vol. 9 (N.Y.: Edwin Hill, 1907), 12. This article originally appeared in Le Temps on October 27, 1830.

CHAPTER V
Eylau, 1808

...the modern muse will look at things with greater breadth of vision. It will feel that everything in creation is not beautiful from the standpoint of mankind, that the ugly exist beside the beautiful, the misshapen beside the sublime, good with evil, darkness with light.

Victor Hugo, Preface
to Cromwell

After his success at the Salon of 1806, Gros occupied himself solely with portraiture. In mid-1807, while working on a full-length portrait of André Masséna, which was destined for the Hall of Marshals at the Tuileries, he was contacted by a flustered Denon. The minister expressed dismay over Gros's absence from the Imperial painting competition for the Battle of Eylau, which had recently been advertised in several Parisian newspapers.¹ Only after considerable nagging on Denon's part did Gros relent and agree to enter the competition.² Neither of Gros's early biographers offered a reason for Gros's reluctance to take part in the competition. Brunner did, however, offer a plausible speculation for this omission on the part of Gros. He suggested that Gros, now a celebrated artist after his success in the 1804 Salon, could hardly be expected to

¹The notice appeared in the Journal de Paris of April 2, 1807 and the Moniteur of the same date.

²Franc, Histoire, 251; Delestre, Gros, 129.

enter competitions in order to gain official commissions.³ In fact, one wonders if Denon's inclusion of the following passage in his letter of March 17 to the contestants was a way to smooth any ruffled feathers he may have caused Gros, for its inclusion is otherwise superfluous:

Le peintre de l'hôpital de Jaffa aurait tout naturellement pu être chargé de l'exécution de ce tableau ayant déjà si bien traité un sujet de ce genre; mais le Directeur Général aurait cru faire tort au corps entier des peintres s'il n'avait proposé à tous de s'exercer sur un aussi grand objet. Il a donc demandé à sa Majesté la permission de leur proposer d'en faire chacun une esquisse qui sera jugée par la 4e classe...⁴

Perhaps Denon intended all along to give Gros the commission, but realized that a public competition would bring the Emperor's "victory" to more prominent national attention. Actually, Eylau was the low-point of the Emperor's Prusso-Russian campaign of 1806/1807. The battles fought previous to Eylau had resulted in numerous Prussian defeats, which had allowed the French to take control of Berlin and begin to dictate the fate of the German states. The frightened Prussian king, Frederick William III, even took refuge with the Tsar. Though successful against the Prussian forces, the French found battling the Russians to be an altogether more difficult task.

The Russians were evasive and followed a scorched earth policy, thus making supply shortages a major area of concern for the French. In addition to the problem of dwindling supplies, Napoleon was faced with

³Brunner, Napoleonischen Historienbilder, 250.

⁴Pascal Griener, "L'Art de persuader par l'image sous le Premier Empire: A propos d'un concours officiel pour la représentation de Napoléon sur le champ de bataille d'Eylau," Ecrit-Voir (1984) No. 4, 20. Pierre Lelièvre reproduces a shorter version of this letter from the Collection Deloynes at the Cabinet des Estampes which both he and Griener acknowledge as faulty. See: Pierre Lelièvre, "Napoléon sur le champ de bataille d'Eylau par A. J. Gros," Bulletin de la société de l'histoire de l'art français (1955), 53. This version of the letter does not mention Gros at all. All the authors until Griener have quoted the Deloynes version of the letter, hence no one has remarked on the inclusion of this reference to Gros until now.

brutal weather conditions and prolonged marches, conditions inappropriate for the lightning warfare he excelled at.

Though the Russians had been a frustratingly elusive foe, the two armies finally confronted each other at Eylau on the night of February 7, 1807. The major engagement took place the next day in frigid temperatures and in a blinding snowstorm. General Augereau's corps lost its way in the blizzard and was totally destroyed, and the Russian offensive nearly broke through the center of the French line. The situation was only rectified by an enormous cavalry charge under the direction of General Murat. As darkness closed in, both sides withdrew. Neither side could claim a victory, but the French had suffered much greater losses than their Russian foes.

The Russian commander, General Bennigsen, however, though he had at least 60,000 organized effectives and a two-to-one advantage in artillery, had no food or munitions to continue the fight and felt he could not justify a second day's fighting, the risk being too great for his men, and hence, at midnight, he began to retreat from the area. The next morning the French were able to take possession of the bloody battlefield, but they no longer had the strength to pursue the Russians. This was, said Thompson,

A battle *fort sanglante*, fort chaude, in which French troops for the first time ran away, and in which victory could only be claimed because Napoleon remained in possession of the field.⁵

According to the Napoleonic military historian, David Chandler, Eylau was the nearest thing to a defeat Napoleon had experienced since his repulse

⁵Thompson, Napoleon Bonaparte, 340.

before Acre in 1799.⁶ Marshal Ney concisely summed up the end result of Eylau when he declared: "Quel massacre et sans résultat!"⁷

The huge losses suffered at Eylau without any ensuing victory caused great demoralization in the French forces. Even Napoleon temporarily lost heart:

The whole setting amid frosts and blinding snows, and the psychological conditions of the warfare, were of a most depressing kind, and had a particularly noticeable effect upon Napoleon. Immediately after the battle, at two o'clock in the morning, he took up the talk of peace. Tired out as he was he sent "just a word" to Talleyrand.⁸

The "word" sent to Talleyrand was a letter from Napoleon stating that he was ready to accept peace overtures from Prussia and Russia and he even suggested a certain Memel as the French representative.⁹

Going into winter quarters at Osterade, however, Napoleon quickly regained his resolve and rechanneled his energy into finding an antidote for the sinister rumblings in Paris. According to the Austrian chargé d'affaires in Paris at the time, the city was in a state of general panic.¹⁰ Napoleon was obviously concerned about negative opinion in Paris and in numerous letters to Josephine he fumed against press coverage of the campaign in the capital. In a typical letter of this period to the Empress he declared:

As for Eylau I have said time and again that the bulletin exaggerated the losses...As for the letters that some officers may write, it must not be forgotten that they do not know what

⁶David G. Chandler, Dictionary of the Napoleonic Wars (N.Y.: Macmillan, 1979), 147.

⁷F. Lorraine Petre, Napoleon's Campaign in Poland: 1806-1807 (London: Sampson Low, 1901), 161.

⁸H. Butterfield, The Peace Tactics of Napoleon, 1806-1808 (Cambridge: University Press, 1929), 63.

⁹Correspondence de Napoleon Ier, t. xiv, no. 11, 786.

¹⁰English Historical Review, XVI, 1901, 515.

is going on in the army any more than the people who walk in the garden of the Tuileries know what is going on in the cabinet.¹¹

The officers' letters to which Napoleon refers in this case are those of young members of the Council of State, like Barante, who had expressed a very disturbing evaluation of the French at Eylau. By this time Napoleon also knew that General Bennigsen, in his report to the Czar, had claimed a Russian victory at the Battle of Eylau. This extremely embarrassing news became the talk of the town in Parisian salons and some even tried to make capital out of the situation to revive the liberal forces of opposition.¹²

Napoleon was not only concerned with dissension in Paris, but also with the discord that grew daily amongst his own men and officers at Eylau. Eylau was probably the bloodiest battle up to that time ever fought in Europe. The deaths were staggering; some 20,000 Russians and about 25,000 Frenchmen lost their lives. The morning after the encounter the battlefield was literally piled full of mounds of corpses of both men and horses strewn and tangled amidst the wreckage of artillery caissons and wagons. Large patches of blood had stained the white blanket of snow a dirty red. Chief Surgeon Percy gave an horrific account of the aftermath of the battle:

Never were so many corpses crammed into so confined a space. The snow was everywhere stained with blood; the snow which had already fallen, and that which continued to fall, began to hide the cadavers {corpses} from the aggrieved eyes of passers-by. Where there were clumps of fir trees, behind which the Russians had fought, corpses were piled in heaps.

¹¹Correspondence de Napoleon Ier, t. XV, no.12, 361; Butterfield, Peace Tactics, 135.

¹²Maurice Guerrini, Napoleon and Paris: Thirty Years of History, Trans. by Margery Weiner, (N.Y.: Walker, 1970), 166-170; for Bennigson's report see: Rapport de Bennigsen, Annexe 6, Memoires de Bennigsen, t. II, 251. Napoleon refuted Bennigsen's report in the Bulletin 59 of the Grand Army.

Thousands of muskets, caps, and breastplates were scattered along the road, or in the fields.¹³

A similar account was provided by Chasseur of the Imperial Guard, J.B. Barrès:

The countryside was covered with a dense layer of snow, pierced here and there by the dead, the wounded, and débris of every kind; in all directions the snow was soiled by wide stains of blood, turned yellow by the trampling of men and horses...The wounded of both nations were being removed with the aid of Russian prisoners, which lent a little life to this scene of carnage...In short, no matter where one looked one saw nothing but corpses, and beheld men dragging themselves over the ground; one heard nothing but heartrending cries. I went away horror-struck.¹⁴

While surveying the battlefield on the 9th, Napoleon was furious to see that soldiers of the 43rd corps had draped their imperial eagle standard with black crepe. Napoleon shouted at them: "Occupons-nous de les venger, et non de les pleurer, car les larmes ne conviennent qu'aux femmes."¹⁵ He not only saw things he felt were defeatist, he also heard defeatist talk.¹⁶

¹³Percy, Memoires, Paris, 1904; cited in: D.C. Wright, Napoleon and Europe (London & N. Y.: Longman, 1984), 110.

¹⁴Jean-Baptiste Barrès, Memoirs of a French Napoleonic Officer, Chasseur of the Imperial Guard, Edited by Maurice Barrès and trans. by Bernard Miall, (London: Greenhill, 1988), 102.

¹⁵General Comte de Saint-Chamans, Memoires du Général de Saint-Chamans, ancien aide-de-camp du Maréchal Soult (Paris, 1896), 59. Also cited in: Jean Thiry, Napoléon Bonaparte: Eylau, Fiedland, Tilset (Paris: Berger-Leuvault, 1964), 83.

¹⁶For a history of this campaign see also: F. Lorraine Petre, Napoleon's Campaign in Poland, 1806-1807: A Military History of Napoleon's First War with Russia (London: Sampson Low, 1901); Owen O'Connolly, Blundering to Glory: Napoleon's Military Campaigns

In addition to all these worries, Napoleon's medical supply system at Eylau had also been totally inadequate and had led to desertions in his medical support staff:

The medical supplies that supported the services were farmed out to entrepreneurs and they failed miserably at Eylau. The entire corps of assistants and nurses, with the supplies, were far behind, and the wounded at Eylau were cared for solely by the officers. Percy had agitated for a major reform, and renewed his pleas at Eylau. The battle and its aftermath decimated his service de santé, and the low morale led to desertions. Napoleon promised reforms but did not carry them out.¹⁷

Immediately after Eylau, then, circumstances seemed particularly dismal for Napoleon; not only were many of his own soldiers disgruntled and rebellious, but his critics in Paris were gaining a toe-hold. Clearly a little imperial propaganda would be beneficial. Thus on April 2, 1807 a notice from Vivant Denon appeared in several Parisian journals announcing a competition for a painting of the Emperor visiting the battlefield of Eylau the day after the "victory."

This five-paragraph notice outlined Napoleon's itinerary at Eylau for the reader. At noontime he was to have ridden along with the princes Murat and Berthier in review past his troops over the blood-soaked snow. During the review, the medical services were in evidence, caring for the wounded, both French and Russian. The concerned Emperor was to have stopped before several of the wounded to offer his condolences and concern, even to the wounded enemies. The notice concluded with the melodramatic contention:

Une jeune hussard Lithuanien auquel un boulet avait emporté le genou, avait conservé tout son courage au milieu de ses

(Wilmington, Del.: Scholarly Resources, 1987).

¹⁷Robert Herbert, "Baron Gros's Napoleon and Voltaire's Henri IV," in Francis Haskell, ed., The Artist and Writer in France: Essays in Honor of Jean Seznec (Oxford: Clarendon, 1974), 61. Herbert's source was: Paul Triaire, Dominique Larrey et les campagnes de la Revolution et de l'Empire, 1768 - 1842 (Tours, 1902), 93f; 423.

camarades expirants. Il se soulevé à la vue de l'Empereur. "César, lui dit-il, tu veux que je vive; eh bien! Qu'on me guérisse, je te servirai fidèlement comme j'ai servi Alexandre."¹⁸

The announcement in the newspaper was not the only literary documentation available to the aspiring contestants. Denon's brief letter of March 17, mentioned previously, also informed the contestants of a sketch of the battlefield made in conjunction with a detailed descriptive legend, which was placed on reserve at the Musée Napoléon for their use. Unfortunately the sketch has disappeared, but the descriptive legend survives, as it was published in Le Journal de l'Empire of May 22, 1807.¹⁹

These notes describe the terrain, the weather conditions, the general set-up of the village of Eylau, the costumes of Napoleon and his officers, the general appearance of the requisite Lithuanian supplicant, and other selected details. One assumes that these notes, numbered one to thirteen, corresponded to numbers placed on the lost drawing. The similarities in the surviving competition entries support this supposition, as Herbert and others have noted.²⁰

It almost seemed as though Denon had planned things in such an exhaustive way that nothing was left to the creative imagination of the participants. Perhaps Denon realized how patronizing this may have seemed to the contestants and concluded his letter of March 17 with last-minute reassurances of artistic freedom.

¹⁸The notice is reprinted in full in: Griener, "L'Art de Persuader," 9. This author also provides a detailed textual analysis of the competition dossier.

¹⁹This legend is reprinted in: Herbert, "Baron Gros," 72 and Griener, "L'Art de Persuader," 20.

²⁰Herbert, "Baron Gros," 73. It is not entirely certain who exactly executed this drawing; for a good summary of the latest opinion, see: Richard Campbell, "Charles Meynier's Preliminary Study for Napoleon on the Battlefield of Eylau," Master Drawings (Spring 1980), 37.

The exhibition of competition sketches opened on May 22, 1807, at the Galerie d'Apollon. Unlike the Nazareth competition, there was no division of opinion in the press on the winning entry.²¹ The jury, presided over by the painter Vincent, assembled on July 13 and voted Gros's painting the winner on the first ballot. Second and third places went to Charles Meynier and Charles Thévenin respectively. The fact that Denon had urged Gros so strongly to compete, and the fact that Gros was so reluctant to enter the contest, strongly suggest that Gros would simply have been given the commission if the contest had not served a very useful propaganda function. A similar conclusion was reached by John McCoubrey, who stated:

The attendant publicity, like the program for the painting, was undoubtedly for purposes of propaganda, and it would seem that the exhibition of competition works was held as much with this end in view as to insure the best realization of the theme.²²

Not surprisingly Gros's competition sketch, a recent acquisition of the Toledo Museum of Art (Plate LVII), is clearly superior to the other extant competition sketches, such as Charles Meynier's second prize sketch (Musée Nationale, Versailles; Plate LVIII).²³

Gros's competition sketch is actually quite similar to Meynier's sketch in terms of the iconographic layout. Both sketches contain a mounted Napoleon surrounded by his entourage in the middleground, dead bodies in the foreground, and the battlefield and the village of Eylau in the background. Clearly, however, Meynier's nude bodies seem very

²¹Brunner, Napoleonishen Historienbilder, 556. This author lists all the newspaper citations.

²²John Walker McCoubrey, "Gros' Battle of Eylau and Roman Imperial Art," Art Bulletin (June 1961), 135. See also: Herbert, "Baron Gros' Napoleon," 62.

²³This sketch was once falsely attributed to Gros. M. Boris Losskey reattributed the painting to Meynier. See: Ziesniss, "Napoleon at Eylau," 213-220.

inappropriate for these weather conditions, and it is not surprising that the jury unanimously chose Gros's sketch²⁴ Gros's final painting, now at the Louvre (Plate LIX), appeared in the Salon which opened on October 14, 1808.²⁵ One is immediately struck by the resemblance in general plan to Gros's earlier painting of Napoleon at the Pest House at Jaffa. The Emperor is performing humanitarian actions slightly off-center in the middleground while the foreground is filled with dead and dying bodies. Rather than the sultry and exotic Middle East setting, however, the environment reflects a bitter Northern winter.

Napoleon is dressed imperially in grey velvet trimmed with fur and sits astride a golden-colored horse. Directly across from Napoleon's calm horse is Joachim Murat, dressed in rich green velvet, who reins in his restless horse. Forming a "V" back from Napoleon are his Marshals. On Napoleon's right from front to back are Berthier, Bessières, and Caulaincourt, and to his left from Murat back are Davoust and Soult.²⁶

Between the requisite saluting Lithuanian hussar and Napoleon are four sycophantic Russians, one of whom, kneeling in the snow, reaches forward to kiss the eagle emblem on Napoleon's saddle (as Brunner noted on

²⁴ Herbert, "Baron Gros," 63. According to Herbert, J. B. Debret's composition was the easiest to correlate with the numbered notes that accompanied the guide drawing. This author also suggested that popular broadsides of the time reflected the lost competition drawing made for the contestants. For Gros's sketch, now at the Toledo Museum of Art, see: Eric Turquin, "Le Victoire selon Gros," Connaissance des Arts (January 1988), 70-75. There is a third version of Eylau at Versailles. It is a copy of the painting by Gros's student, Mauzisse. For this see: Franc, Histoire, 261.

²⁵ The full Salon title for the painting was: Champ de bataille d'Eylau. Le lendemain de la bataille d'Eylau. L'Empereur visitant le champ de bataille, est pénétré d'horreur à la vue de ce spectacle. S.M. fait donner des secours aux russes blessés. Touché de l'humanité de ce grand monarque, un jeune chasseur Lithuanien lui en témoigne sa reconnaissance avec l'accent de l'enthousiasme. Dans le lointain on voit les troupes françaises qui bovouaquent sur le champ de bataille, au moment où S.M. va en passer la revue.

²⁶These identifications are those of Delestre. Delestre, Gros, 132.

p. 241, the other entries do not include this figure). In front of these figures, the Lithuanian is presented by Surgeon Percy while another French medic bandages his leg.

The left foreground corner is filled by a sickly-looking wounded Russian who seems disturbed by the ministrations of a French medic who lifts his protective cover. To the left of this pallid figure is a central pile of corpses. On the bottom a French dragoon, with his characteristic helmet, still clutches a French flag. At the top of the pile lies a dead Russian whose abandoned, ice-encrusted bayonet was one of the realistic details Delacroix admired so much.²⁷ A second Russian in this pile is still alive and motions with an outstretched arm towards the central group.

The right corner of the painting is again filled with wounded Russians and French medics; some Russians react negatively to this aid, while others accept it.

Behind this group of six figures are several snow-covered cannons, and beyond them a wounded Russian grenadier is being forcibly boosted astride a horse by two chasseurs de la garde. To the right of this unhappy Russian are seen two galloping French cavalry guards who lead one's glance into the snow-covered distance past an abandoned horse who makes vain efforts to lift his dying body. Beyond this stretch long lines of Russian prisoners and French troops who occupy the church grounds and cemetery around the burning city of Eylau.

Certainly, at first glance, Gros's canvas would seem to comply with the prescribed propaganda. Napoleon is touring the battlefield both as victor (that is, possessing the field) and as humanitarian; and here Napoleon's humanity even extends to providing extensive medical treatment to the enemy. Those, however, like Surgeon Percy and returning veterans

²⁷Delacroix, "Gros," 266.

of the campaign, who were familiar with the actual facts of the campaign, would have known that the prescribed iconography was a fiction. The surgeon, in his memoirs, expressed his constant frustration with the lack of needed medics and supplies. Clearly the French did not even have the capabilities to take care of their own wounded, let alone the thousands of Russian wounded. Percy also stated that there were, ironically, specific orders from Napoleon not to treat any of the wounded enemy.²⁸

It is not only certain of Gros's audience who could have turned a critical eye on this spectacle of beneficence, but also the artist himself, who, in my view, once again undercuts the expected progaganda with subtle contradictions. Again the artist generates compositional contrasts that weaken the initial rhetoric of Imperial beneficence. For example, a strong triangle--just left of center--is formed by the gesturing Napoleon at its apex and the two ministering French medics positioned in either corner. In opposition to this "triangle of beneficence" is a competing inverted triangle of wounded enemies whose apex is formed by the suspicious Russian grenadier in the lower left. The triangle stretches back to the protesting Russian grenadier being mounted on a horse in the right middle ground and to the saluting Lithuanian on the left side. One could call this the "triangle of opposition", for both Russian grenadiers are clearly wary of Frenchmen bringing medical assistance while the requisite *pièce* of Imperial progaganda--the Lithuanian--is actually looking straight past the Emperor back into the space occupied by the mounted Russian grenadier who twists and looks back toward the Lithuanian. Thus rather than surrendering to the conqueror--this can even call into question whether there was indeed a French victory--the Lithuanian seems to be reaffirming his native loyalties.

²⁸Baron Percy, Journal des campagnes du Baron Percy publié d'après les manuscits inédits, avec une introduction par M. Émile Longin (Paris: Plon-Nourrit, 1904), 172.

It is not just compositional contrasts that Gros uses to set up his critical dialogue. The artist also establishes a contrast between the gesturing Napoleon and the saluting Lithuanian. The Lithuanian is young, vital, and handsome and his gesture to his retreating comrade is full of strength despite the fact that he has been seriously injured; his blood-filled boots have already stained the surrounding snow. His left hand placed over his heart emphasizes his sincerity. Kneeling beside him is French surgeon Percy who gestures down to his leg wound while trying to catch the Emperor's attention.

The Emperor, however, does not recognize his Chief Surgeon; he looks at no one. Not even the sycophantic Russians who cluster around his feet merit his attention. He also raises his right arm, but at whom and for what purpose is uncertain. Various people have interpreted this Imperial image differently. The most standard was that of Delestre:

Elle {his expression}, en effet, sublime, cette physionomie impériale, où se reflètent une compassion profonde, une sincère abnegation personnelle de toute idée de triomphe au mépris des lois saintes de la confraternité parmi les hommes.²⁹

Lelièvre, while remarking on the ambiguity of the image, concluded that it was a "compromis habile entre le réalisme anecdotique du chroniqueur et la transfiguration hagiographique."³⁰ Rosenblum stressed the Christ-like sense of the image:

Like a new Christ...The Christian flavor of this healing of the sick is made more explicit by the crucifixes (at eye level in the right hand corner) that are administered to the expiring enemies...³¹

²⁹Delestre, Gros, 132

³⁰Lelièvre, "Gros," 53.

³¹Rosenblum, Romanticism, 97; Friedlaender, From David to Delacroix, 141. This author again suggests the Thaumaturge image.

In a more secular light, Zieseniss stressed the idea of a conquering humanitarian:

Il choisit de paraitre sous les traits d'un vainqueur, certes, mais d'un vainqueur conscient des souffrantes de ses soldats et plein de pitié.³²

Other authors have noted what they feel to be similarities in the image of Napoleon to representations of specific humanitarian rulers from past history: Robert Herbert with Henry IV and John McCoubrey with Trajan.³³

Slightly different from these fully positive interpretations of the meaning of Napoleon's expression and gesture is Heinrich Brunner's contention that the imagery emphasizes Napoleon as a patriarchal monarch.³⁴ Brunner made this comparison because of the imploring Russians who kneel at the oblivious Emperor's feet and humbly beseech his mercy.

Though Brunner did not seem to see any implied criticism in Gros's depiction of Napoleon in this particular light, clearly those viewers who held strong Republican sympathies might well have seen this as an appropriate illustration of the concept that power corrupts, for Napoleon is like some potentate to whom supplicants grovel and beg, though he does not even notice their existence. In fact one old Radical, Cortona, who had presided over the Directory of the Roman Republic, summed it up rather well when at the Salon of 1809 he saw David's Le Sacre hanging just opposite Gros's Eylau: "Sacre and Massacre: There it is, complete in two volumes."³⁵

³²Zieseniss, "Gros," 218. See Delacroix for similar comments: Delacroix, Gros, 663.

³³See notes 17 and 22.

³⁴Brunner, Napoleonischen Historienbilder, 275-276.

³⁵Lindsay, Death of the Hero, 122.

It is not just the groveling Russians to whom the Emperor is oblivious; he is also unaware of everyone around him, including another wounded Russian who reaches up to him from the central pile of bodies, though only Napoleon's horse seems to notice the gesture. Echoing Napoleon's oblivion, his horse side-steps an abandoned corpse. The Emperor may be imploring heaven for help, but in so doing he is unresponsive to the reality by which he is surrounded. His pose is almost a reversal of that of the saluting (Horatii-like) Lithuanian below him, but in comparison Napoleon looks frail and pasty-faced and uncertain.

The distracted Emperor is part of a second compositional system of conflicting triangles which also serve to emphasize Gros's critical dialogue. The Emperor serves as the apex of the upper triangle whose sides are formed by three mounted marshals moving back on either side. The second system is the triangle of dead bodies in the center foreground.

The contrast between these two systems is not only in the fact that Napoleon and his entourage of Marshals are alive, healthy, and well-dressed;³⁶ but also, as Fyjis-Walker has noted, that the figures of the Emperor and his marshals are painted very tightly--with "academic delicacy,"³⁷ while the dead are rendered in a very broad stroke; and this is like Gros's treatment of officers versus plague victims in his earlier Jaffa.

It is not just the broad handling of these frozen blood-splattered corpses that draws the viewer's attention, but also their scale and placement in the composition. If the picture is hung slightly above eye level, the viewer looks up through this pile of corpses into the

³⁶When this canvas was exhibited in the Exhibition for the Wounded of 1830, critics remarked on Murat's excessive finery in the midst of such carnage. See: A.J. Délecluze review in L'Artiste of 1832. Actually the same criticism can be made of all the marshals, and the Emperor as well.

³⁷Fyjis-Walker, Some Iconography, 113.

theatrical spectacle above. Fyjis-Walker's comments seem particularly appropriate here:

Gros brings together the two forces of journalism {the massive deaths} and allegory {he as the great humanitarian} that feed the art of the period, and makes them confront each other.³⁸

Or in a similar vein, Lindsay noted: "In Gros's manner the enlarged bodies closer to the front repudiate the rhetoric of glory."³⁹

Yet again the large scale of these figures drew critical remarks from Salon observers.⁴⁰ Once again the artist was charged with technical ineptitude. Gros must have meant to create these scale discrepancies purposefully or else he would have heeded the Salon criticism to which he was continually subjected on this issue. Clearly he meant the viewer to be immersed in the reality of the horror that had taken place at Eylau.

It was not just the scale of these figures that disturbed some of the critics, but also the fact that these figures were so unidealized. Part of this sense of brutal reality comes from the rough way that they are rendered with the brush, but, more important, few viewers had previously been confronted so directly with death in painting (except for Gros's Jaffa).⁴¹

Particularly convincing is the visualization of the three central bodies as frozen blocks of dead flesh whose skin has turned an icy blue. Delacroix was hypnotized by the reality of war conveyed through the centrally located abandoned rifle whose bayonet is covered with frozen

³⁸Fyjis-Walker, Some Iconography, 123.

³⁹Lindsay, Death of the Hero, 127. See also Brunner, Napoleonischen Historienbilder, 255.

⁴⁰Delestre, Gros, 134; Franc, Histoire, 257; Charles Landon, Le Salon de 1808, 45; Delacroix, "Gros," 661.

⁴¹Henri Focillion, Le Peinture au 19e siècle, le retour à Antique, le Romantisme (Paris, 1927), 46; Victorin Fabre, "Revue," Mercure de France (December 30, 1808), 459.

crystals of blood; one can also be unnerved by the rifle's placement, resting against the dead Russian's thigh. It is placed in such a location so as to bring the thought of castration to mind, a kind of metaphor for the whole massive slaughter.⁴²

Actually the French successes at Friedland, which concluded the costly campaign, helped to silence some of the anti-war criticism in Paris, as did Napoleon's successful negotiations at Tilsit with Czar Alexander I. Yet this brief hiatus would not last long and soon the French would again be embroiled in more Imperial wars, the most disastrous in Russia. In fact, Lemonnier aptly noticed that this painting of Eylau seemed to be a kind of symbolic prediction of the coming French retreat from Russia.⁴³ Eventually war-weary Frenchmen began, as Honour aptly noted:

...to identify themselves with the fallen figures in the foreground of Gros' picture rather than with the magnanimous Napoleon, the swaggering Murat, and the plump self-satisfied furclad Marshals who constitute the central group. The process can be clearly traced in the work of Théodore Géricault.⁴⁴

⁴²The police were ordered to survey the 1808 Salon exhibition and their bulletins cite the excessive carnage in the paintings on view. See: Lanza de Laborie, Paris sous Napoléon, vol. 2 (Paris, 1905-13), 379 and Pierre Lelièvre, Vivant Denon (Paris, 1942), 114.

⁴³Lemonnier, Gros, 104.

⁴⁴Hugh Honour, Romanticism (N.Y.: Harper & Row, 1979), 39.

CHAPTER VI
INTO THE RESTORATION, 1810-1835

To Gros's biographers and posterity, Eylau was Gros's last major Napoleonic history painting.¹ Nothing, according to Delacroix, could ever quite compare to Gros's "big three": Jaffa, Eylau, and Aboukir.² Friedlander's assessment of Gros's work echoed Delacroix's:

...but even Gros's contemporaries already found his works either very good or very bad. For us this last hard predicate must often stand, and we can assent to the superlative only for a few of his best works.³

Some authors posit Napoleon's fall from power as the reason for Gros's change in style. This was certainly Friedlaender's theory, that is, that the prosaic and corpulently gouty restored Bourbon, Louis XVIII, was unable to inspire the artist, that he needed rather the exploits of the glorious Napoleon to muster any sense of heroics in paint.⁴ Or as Dargenty claimed: "L'Empire avait fait Gros, sa chute le tua."⁵ Gros's style and techniques, though, began to change several years before Napoleon fell from power. This change is apparent in Gros's two entries for the Salon of 1810, The Battle of the Pyramids (Musée de Versailles; Plate LX) and The Capitulation of Madrid (Musée de Versailles; Plate LXI).

¹The biographers referred to are: Lemonnier, Dargenty, Tripier Le Franc and Delestre. Even if they do not explicitly state this, their lack of interest in paintings after Eylau implies this.

²Delacroix, "Gros," 265.

³Friedlaender, David to Delacroix, 66.

⁴Friedlaender, David to Delacroix, 62.

⁵Dargenty, Baron Gros, 51.

The Battle of the Pyramids was commissioned in 1809 by the Senate to hang in the Assembly Hall. When the painting was later moved to a larger wall space at Versailles, Gros was asked to paint two side panels to increase the total size of the work (the panels were eventually finished by Auguste Debay, a student of Gros's).⁶ Gros chose to include Kléber in one panel even though Kléber stayed north at Alexandria and was never present for this particular battle. With all Gros's acquaintances in the army and his ready access to military information, it hardly seems possible that Gros could have been unaware of Kléber's actual whereabouts during the campaign. It is conceivable that he purposely chose to honor one of Napoleon's greatest critics despite his absence from the battle; after all, Gros had included the portrait of his dying friend, Dr. Masclet in his painting of Jaffa even though Masclet was still back in Alexandria with Kléber.

The Battle of the Pyramids was Gros's final painting dealing with the Egyptian Campaign of 1798-1801. The battle itself, though, was one of the first battles of the military campaign, having been fought on July 24, 1798. After the French landed successfully at Alexandria in late July, they began a long and grueling march south towards Cairo, leaving Kléber behind to establish a garrison in the north. Near the village of Embaba, actually several miles from the Pyramids, the exhausted French were met by the dazzling sight of Murad Bey and his colorful Mameluke warriors lined in formation beside the Nile. The sight of the potential booty represented by bejeweled Mameluke sabers and gold daggers revived the sagging spirits of the French troops, and with their superior weapons and organization, they were able to rout the enemy.

Rather than representing the actual battle as he had in Aboukir, Gros chose to depict another Napoleonic fiction and again undercut it.

⁶Tripier Le Franch, Histoire, 285.

The popular myth associated with the Battle of the Pyramids was that Bonaparte, just prior to the start of battle, had uttered these words to the generals clustered around him: "Soldiers! Remember forty centuries of history look down upon you!"⁷ Bonaparte may have thought this and perhaps have even spoken these words to whomever was near him at the time; but it is very unlikely that anyone else hearing these words would, if they did indeed understand Bonaparte's intent, care much about his epic historical ambitions, especially given the amount of discontent among the rank and file at the time.⁸ Herold had these wry comments to make concerning this episode:

It is doubtful whether, in the evening of July 21, 1798, the French soliers encamped at Embaba were aware that they had fought one of the most famous battles in history, with forty centuries looking down upon them. But they were fully aware of having won a fabulous amount of loot.⁹

In Gros's visualization of events, Bonaparte is the central figure in a swirling and rather congested composition. Surrounded by his generals, he reaches out and points back towards the Pyramids, which are faintly visible in the distance, to voice his famous *bons mots*. Surprisingly this pre-battle episode is combined Masaccio-like with the post-battle results: pleading and dead Mamelukes, slaves, and indigenous peoples who gesture from the right-hand foreground and once again seem more heroic (if quite theatrical) than some of their French counterparts.

⁷This version of events can be traced back to Napoleon himself (Corresponance, XXIX, 450) and hence is suspect to many authors. Thiers used this version of events (M.A. Thiers, The History of the French Revolution, trans. by Frederich Shobert, Vol. 4 (N.Y.: Appleton, 1870) 278). A number of recent historians, however, find Bonaparte's version of events suspect, especially since they claim that the Pyramids cannot be seen from Embaba. See for example: Herold, Bonaparte in Egypt, 95; Connelly, Blundering to Glory, 55.

⁸For the state of discontent among the French troops at this time see Chapter Three.

⁹Herold, Bonaparte in Egypt, 99.

As in his other campaign paintings, Gros contrasts the bitter realities of war in the foreground to the Napoleonic fiction above.

Oddly enough Bonaparte is pictured much as he must have looked in 1810, as quite ordinary and even pudgy, rather than as the lean and energetic figure he actually was during the Egyptian campaign. His pose, with head and arms swinging in opposing directions, is almost a pastiche of his very first painting of Bonaparte, Bonaparte at Arcole. Here, though, the general's gesture is stiff and feeble and conveys none of the *élan* of the earlier painting. While motioning to the right, Bonaparte gazes back across his right shoulder with a bewildered expression, perhaps because of his inability to capture the attention of any of his generals. Murat, despite having just reined his horse back to avoid a collision with Bonaparte, does not even look at his commander but rather is shown in full profile, seemingly lost in his own thoughts. Bessières (in the far left corner), as well, appears more involved with his own activities than the pronouncements of Bonaparte, in fact so self-involved is he, that he is on the verge of crashing into the back side of Murat's horse!

The lack of communication between commander and troops is also seen between the French army and the indigenous peoples. In fact the disparate glances of the various groups--Bonaparte in the center, the officers to his left and right, and the native peoples--rarely meet so that one is left without a sense of an organized whole, a sense that Bonaparte's claim of inspiring his troops prior to this battle--"Remember forty centuries of history look down upon you!"--was just self-serving fiction.

Another fiction that Bonaparte propagated regarding the Egyptian campaign was his sensitivity to native peoples, traditions and customs. He expressed this through frequent references to Allah and the Koran in his proclamations and once even donned turban and caftan--much to the

consternation of his associates--to meet the Divan of Cairo.¹⁰ Yet in Gros's canvas the native peoples emote and gesture but to no avail; Bonaparte is oblivious to them. According to Blanc, Gros referred to the central trio of warriors (an Ethiopian, a Mameluke and a Turk) as a "trophy".¹¹ One assumes the artist was referring to the Roman iconographic tradition of representing captured peoples, often bound and seated under the legs of the Emperor's horse, as a symbol of conquest.¹² This reference to imagery of subjugation contradicts Bonaparte's professed magnanimity.

In terms of style, there are small passages of the painting that are finely rendered, especially the tangled body of the dead Ethiopian in the center foreground and the profile of Bonaparte's white charger (who seems more inspiring than Bonaparte), but on the whole the canvas lacks the palpable sense of atmosphere that Delacroix so admired in Gros's earlier work and the painting is without a doubt strikingly inferior to Gros's previous battle paintings.¹³

Gros's other historical entry for the 1810 Salon, The Capitulation at Madrid (Musée de Versailles), was a commission from the Minister of the Interior.¹⁴ The work commemorated one of the few French successes of the ill-fated Peninsular War of 1807-1812. In 1807 Napoleon was still quite

¹⁰For more on this subject see: Herold, Bonaparte in Egypt, 136-163.

¹¹Blanc, "Gros," 360.

¹²For the evolution of this type of Roman iconography see: Richard Brilliant, Roman Art from the Republic to Constantine (N.Y.: Phaidon, 1974) 114-119.

¹³M. Guizot, Études sur les beaux-arts en général (Paris: Didier, 1852), 23. This author had a very different impression of the Ethiopian in Gros's canvas: "...parmi les trois Arabes ou Nègres qui sont sur le devant, il y en a deux d'une vérité rebutante; les figures même qui devraient avoir de la grandeur en manquent..."

¹⁴Delestre, Gros, 142; Tripiet Le Franc, Histoire, 279.

intent on pushing forward his commercial blockade of the British and wanted full control of Spain and Portugal to better enforce his Continental System. Spain had been a rather untrustworthy ally since 1795, while Portugal was openly hostile and traded freely with the British.

In 1807 Napoleon was in a position to send troops south into the Spanish peninsula. The campaign ran smoothly at first. The French quickly marched into Portugal, took control of Lisbon, and sent the Portuguese royal family fleeing in great haste. The French, however, had never anticipated the fanatical Spanish resistance that was generated by the foreign invasion of their homeland.

One of the most inspired, though clearly futile, Spanish stands against French interference in their country was the spontaneous rebellion that erupted in the streets of Madrid on May 2, 1808. It was precipitated by the French removal of the last member of the Spanish royal family from the palace at Madrid. As the carriage approached that would carry the young prince north, Spanish frustrations were unleashed in citywide fighting. A special target of attack for the Spanish resistance fighters were the Mamelukes, brutal fighters, who had become a standard contingent of the French army ever since Bonaparte's Egyptian campaign of 1799-1801. This brief rebellion was immortalized in Goya's famous canvas of 1814, The Attack on the Mamelukes in the Puerta de Sol on May 2, 1808 (Museo del Prado, Madrid; Plate LXII).

Yet within a matter of hours after the outbreak of fighting within the Spanish capital, the French were able, by quick mobilization of their cannons, to restore order in the city. Early the next morning anyone suspected of collaboration in the rebellion was shot before a firing squad. The brutality of the whole campaign and the summary executions carried out by the firing squads outraged the Spanish people and from that

point on Napoleon had a fierce guerilla war to contend with throughout the entire peninsula.

Even liberal Spanish nobles, staunch supporters of the French Enlightenment, were swept into the irresistible tide of rebellion against the invading French. The gentle Joseph Bonaparte was not the most appropriate official to manage affairs in the volatile atmosphere of Madrid and to make matters even worse, the British, under the future Duke of Wellington, entered the campaign in full force.

Disgusted with French losses in the protracted guerilla wars and frustrated with his brother Joseph, Napoleon himself headed south from Paris in November of 1808. By December the Emperor was gaining control over the rebellious Spanish soldiers in Madrid. On the afternoon of December 3, Napoleon sent out a surrender offer to the Spanish and promised them clemency, but if the offer was not accepted by early the next morning, Napoleon swore to have all Spanish troops remaining in the city shot. That afternoon the Spanish called for a cease-fire and sent two representatives, General Don Tomás de Morla and Don Fernando de la Vera, the governor of Madrid, to parley with the French. On December 4, after heavy cannon fire the previous night, city officials finally capitulated to the French.

After receiving the capitulation of the city, Napoleon rapidly headed back north to Paris, for he had heard rumors of a plot to put Murat in power in the French capital should he be killed in Spain. As he had exited Egypt, so he exited Spain. The French were eventually expelled from the peninsula by the Spanish and their British allies when the French became embroiled in the Russian campaign.

According to Tripier Le Franc, Gros's canvas depicts the Spanish delegation who came to Napoleon's tent in the early morning hours of

December 4, 1808, in order to seek reconciliation with the French.¹⁵ On the right side of the canvas, under the imperial tent, are grouped Napoleon, Berthier, and possibly Bessières.¹⁶ The center of the canvas is occupied by the Spanish delegation headed by Don Fernando del Vera. On the far right the city of Madrid can be faintly seen in the far distance through the still-smoking wicks of the French cannoneers.

The main exchange taking place in this painting is that between Napoleon, dressed in his famous bicorn hat, and the Spanish governor whose gesture of bowed head and downthrust arms is one of humiliation and misery.¹⁷ Napoleon, in contrast, seems impatient of the whole ceremony taking place for his posture is that of one arm gingerly cocked on his hip as he nervously toys with the key in his hand and taps his foot in the sand. Below Napoleon's impatient right hand are the clasped hands of two Spanish monks whose faces are totally buried from view by their expansive black cowls. While the gesture of Don Fernando is one of acceptance, however abject, the two Spanish delegates seen behind his shoulder look distrustful with their furtive glances as if to cast suspicion on the reliability of coming to terms with the French.¹⁸

When one compares Gros's capitulation painting with others of this genre it is, in contrast, really quite a peculiar picture. Certainly one of the most noted, though not the most typical, capitulation pictures is

¹⁵Tripier Le Franc, Histoire, 279. Boime feels that Gros's canvas depicts the parley of the 3rd rather than the capitulation of the 4th. See his: Albert Boime, Art in the Age of Bonapartism, 1800-1815 (Chicago & London: University of Chicago, 1990), 301.

¹⁶Both Delestre and Tripier Le Franc identify Berthier but not the second aide.

¹⁷Tripier Le Franc, Histoire, 280. The author describes the general as receiving grave reproaches from Napoleon humbly and confusedly, as a man who knows his error and is making excuses.

¹⁸Boime interprets the painting differently; see Age of Bonapartism, 302.

Velasquez's The Surrender of Breda of 1634 (Museo del Prado, Madrid; Plate LXIII). Here Justinus of Nassau hands over the keys of the city of Antwerp to the victorious general of Spain, Ambrogio Spinola. Velasquez has presented victor and vanquished on an equal plane of chivalrous dignity. Though the Spanish general stands almost a head taller than his Dutch counterpart, one still feels that here the victors are treating the conquered with dignity and respect.

When one examines Gros's depiction of the victorious Napoleon in comparison to the victorious Ambrogio Spinola, Napoleon seems like a tactless victor indeed. Napoleon appears ill-tempered, impatient, and condescending rather than chivalrously concerned to spare the feelings to the defeated. Count de Miot's description of Napoleon's demeanor at this time (actually a week prior to the December 4th capitulation) seems like an apt verbal accompaniment to Gros's portrait:

...he spoke to them all (his brother Joseph and a Spanish delegation) with great animation, expressing himself alternately in French and Italian, according as he thought he could best make himself understood. But the greater part of what he said was unintelligible to them...and he was excessively annoyed. He complained bitterly of the conduct of the Spanish people, who had stupidly failed to see the advantages of the changes he had introduced into their political system. He was especially bitter against the monks...I am here with the soldiers who conquered at Austerlitz, at Jena, and at Eylau. Who can withstand them? Certainly not your wretched Spanish troops, who do not know how to fight...¹⁹

It is not only Napoleon's brusque manner that seems lacking in tact. The French guard stationed behind the Spanish governor has such a foppish and inappropriate expression on his half-hidden face that one feels the absence of French diplomatic amenities. As he did in Jaffa, Gros may be using another anti-Napoleonic caricature by James Gillray as a source. Gillray's aquatint, The Hand-Writing on the Wall (British Museum, London Plate LXIV), first published in August of 1803, resembles Gros's Madrid in

¹⁹Memoirs de Count de Melito, vol. 2 (Paris, 1881), 273.

the inclusion of a diminutive "Little Boney" (actually all the French are a bit smaller than their Spanish counterparts in Gros's Madrid, as was the case in his Nazareth and Jaffa as well), a centrally-placed foppish grenadier, and gesturing hands that lead to a smoke-filled space at the upper left corner. Gillray's print makes reference to the feast of Belshazzar, a Babylonian despot, recounted in the Book of Daniel. Belshazzar's banquet was interrupted by the appearance of a cryptic message on the wall, which was interpreted by Daniel as a warning to Belshazzar that because of his tyranny his kingdom would fall to others. Clearly an analogy can be made to Napoleon whose Empire would soon be divided amongst the European allies while he suffered exile.²⁰

The focal point of the canvas rather than being the Emperor is the noble Don Fernando. Attention is also directed away from Napoleon back to the battlefield by dramatic arm gestures of several Spaniards. It appears that the French cannoneers are standing ready to light their cannons should Napoleon give the order. Hence the Emperor is shown as one who negotiates by threats and intimidation rather than by diplomacy. As in Gros's other works the viewer's sympathy rests with the victims of the Napoleonic wars as in Gros's other works.

Gros has, however, overdone his sympathies somewhat by depicting some of the capitulating Spanish with excessive sentimentality and extremely hyperactive poses, even by nineteenth-century standards. Especially irritating is the pose of the Spanish *majo* in the foreground who leads our eye into the composition. Lemonnier felt that with this,

²⁰For David's use of Gillray see: Karen Domenici, "James Gillray: An English source for David's Les Sabines," Art Bulletin 65 (September 1983): 493-495.

Gros, "...en a fait des traites de mélodrame."²¹ One could also fault Gros's depiction of native peoples in his Battle of the Pyramids, for here his portrayal of the family trio in the far right corner is overly sentimental--the heroic body of the old man, the facial expression and ideal nudity of the son, and the picturesque beauty of the daughter. By overstating his case, that is, the virtuosity of the native people; Gros creates a sense of melodrama.

Also unsettling in these paintings of 1810 are Gros's bizarre renditions of the French, which sometimes are so blatant as to border on caricature (the foppish grenadier in Madrid or the colliding generals in Pyramids). These qualities, coupled with Gros's use of a drier brush (a pronounced move away from the painterly qualities so admired in his earlier works), suggest perhaps a growing cynicism and a general weariness regarding the production of these types of paintings.

Gros's public paintings were already showing signs of decline four years before Napoleon actually fell from power. The situation, nonetheless, had changed for Napoleon as well. Although the Emperor managed to contain Spanish resistance in 1809, this was only a temporary condition. The Spanish, with the help of Wellington's forces, eventually forced a French withdrawal in 1813. Napoleon's Russian campaign would prove even more disastrous for Napoleon and the French, so that:

By 1812, the lean, hard-driving, general of 1809 was a fat, middle-aged sedentary ruler. He was out of shape and out of touch with his army. Except with his family, Napoleon had become short-tempered, impatient of any disagreement, foul of language, and generally tyrannical.²²

²¹Lemonnier, Gros, 116. Guizot again had a very different response to these figures: "Le mouvement des Espagnols qui l'accompagnent, et qui, les yeux fixés sur l'Empereur pour obtenir la grâce de leur patrie, étendent les bras en arrière vers les canonnières pour arrêter le bombardement, est d'un grand effet...Guizot, Etudes, 21. His only complaint in regards to the treatment of the Spanish, was that they looked like lower-class people.

²²Connelly, Blundering to Glory, 158.

Not only was Napoleon ill-tempered and tyrannical to his fellow countrymen, but he had involved them in constant warfare. Not just the French, but all Europeans were growing tired of war and the endless hardships of a wartime economy. What had once been small pockets of resistance to Napoleon continued to expand and after the dismal retreat of the French from Russia, the discontent in Paris could not be contained. By the time Napoleon abdicated on April 6, 1814, hardly a French person mourned, so exhausted were they of being the fuel for Napoleon's grand ambitions.²³ Some who failed Napoleon just prior to his abdication would again support him during the 100 Days, but their support was short-lived and they deserted him as soon as it was likely he would again have to resign.

In 1814 the majority of French people supported a change in leadership and many, among them Benjamin Constant and Madame de Staël, felt that the restored Bourbon, Louis XVIII, would be a much less tyrannical ruler than Napoleon. In some respects he was. Napoleon's popularity continued to sink, with a brief respite during the 100 Days, until his death on St. Helena started a wave of sympathy that would really never abate; in fact, the old Emperor became a cult figure to many now that from the grave he could never again manage the French nation.²⁴

Gros, ever empathetic with the victim, must in 1812 have sympathized in part with the embattled Emperor, for his harsh criticism of Napoleon is less noticeable in a painting commissioned in 1812 by the Minister of the

²³This is the view of Philip Mansel in his Louis XVIII (London: Blond & Briggs, 1981). For similar assessments; J. M. Thompson, Napoleon Bonaparte (London: Basil Blackwell, 1988); Jean Tulard, Napoleon: The Myth of the Savior (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1984); Leo Gershoy, The French Revolution and Napoleon (N.Y.: Appleton-Century-Crofts, 1964).

²⁴For an account of the Napoleonic cult during the Restoration see: Martin Meisel, "Napoleon, or History as Spectacle," in Realizations: Narrative, Pictorial, and Theatrical Arts in Nineteenth-Century England (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University, 1983): 201-228.

Interior and entitled The Meeting of Francis II and Napoleon I after the Battle of Austerlitz of December 4, 1805 (Musée de Versailles; Plate LXV). Delestre stated that the topic of the painting was chosen to correspond to a contemporary rapprochement between France and Austria. One assumes he was referring to the Treaty of Alliance signed on March 14.²⁵

Unlike Gros's other campaign paintings, here the foreground is free of bloody corpses and other reminders of the horrors of war. The action staged seems more prosaic and less theatrical: Francis II advances towards the French Emperor who extends his right hand. To the right a young groom restrains Napoleon's horse, while in the left middleground a French officer prevents the local inhabitants from advancing further. The lack of obvious critical commentary--actually it seems shoved to the background, i.e., the locals in the cemetery, the implication being that the local population has been greatly reduced by Napoleonic warfare--and seemingly straightforward presentation of events may be why the composition seems rather static, or as Tripier Le Franc noted: "Au premier aspect, cette composition a paru monotone, trop simple et trop froid."²⁶

Though Gros is somewhat less critical of the Emperor in this scene of Austro-French reconciliation, he never softened enough to sign the Additional Act as David had done during the 100 Days and thus, rather than spend the Restoration in exile as David would do, Gros painted for both Louis XVIII and Charles X.

Louis XVIII, according to Philip Mansel, was an altogether different ruler from Napoleon I. He was a moderate, pacific king, willing for the most part to honor the gains of the Revolution. He tried to be charming and flattering to all the different factions, though at times blatantly a

²⁵Delestre, Gros, 172-173.

²⁶Tripier Le Franc, Histoire, 307.

hypocrite; his behavior was appreciated all the more for the contrast that it offered to the insults and tantrums of Napoleon I.²⁷ Whereas Napoleon had been aloof, arrogant, and inaccessible to the ordinary citizen, Louis made strong efforts to stroll in the haunts of the middleclasses which delighted the average citizen.²⁸

Louis, however, never had the rapport with the French army that was one of Napoleon's strengths, though Napoleon had clearly pushed it to the breaking point with all of his wars and reckless military gambles. To a French people who had been through all the vicissitudes of Revolution and Empire, "someone {Louis XVIII} so old and fat and calm was really reassuring in the tense, insecure atmosphere of 1814-1815."²⁹

When Napoleon approached Paris during the One Hundred Days of March 20-June 22, 1815, Louis took actions very characteristic of his personality; he retreated, for he had no wish to embroil France in a civil war or become a prisoner and undignified pawn in future negotiations. He also doubted if his troops would want to fire on fellow Frenchmen. All in all, his decision was a smart, but unexciting, one.

Gros's best historical work from the Restoration commemorates Louis's departure which took place at midnight on March 19, 1815. All day long the Tuileries had been crowded full of citizens anxiously awaiting news of the latest developments. By that evening the crowds had all disappeared. A little after 8:00 p.m. Louis came out of his apartments to inform the commander of his household troops, Marshal Marmont, that he would be departing at midnight. Shortly after that hour, Louis emerged from his suite of apartments into the dimly lit hallway where he was

²⁷Mansel, Louis XVIII, 211.

²⁸Ibid, 212.

²⁹Mansel, Louis XVIII, 217.

greeted by members of his household staff, National Guard troops, and members of his personal staff who would escort him to safety in Belgium.

François Gérard, serving as Premier Peintre du Roi, was the obvious choice to commemorate the event on canvas, but he declined and suggested his old rival, Gros.³⁰ The painting, King Louis XVIII leaving the Tuileries on the night of March 20, 1815 of 1816-1817 (Musée de Versailles; Plate LXVI), was shown to admiring crowds at the Salon. Delacroix praised the painting, calling it "un des plus beaux ouvrages modernes."³¹ In particular Delacroix admired Gros's skill in conveying the dramatic effects of nighttime lighting and the air of animated confusion that reigns.

Here for the first time in many years Gros provides an unequivocal presentation of events. The stout, old king, having just emerged from his apartments, occupies center stage. He is surrounded by members of the National Guard and members of his own personal staff. According to one eyewitness, one of the national guardsmen was so overcome with emotion that he fell to his knees weeping. Gros has included him below and just to the right of Louis.³² Mournful servants crowd the staircase on the right and convey their regrets to their departing sovereign. To his supporters, Louis was said to have uttered these words: "Mes enfants, épargnez-moi, j'ai besoin de forces. Je vous reverrai bientôt. Retournez dans vos familles."³³

In Gros's painting all participants are willingly united in the drama at hand. No one opposes or undercuts the event as occurs in Gros's

³⁰Tripier Le Franc, Histoire, 342.

³¹Delacroix, "Gros," 267.

³²Mansel, Louis XVIII, 226; Delestre, Gros, 212.

³³Harold Nicolson, Benjamin Constant (New York: Doub, 1974), 228.

Napoleonic canvases, for here the situation shown is well within the realm of the believable (other than the fact that Louis has shed countless pounds). Louis does not propose to raise the dead and heal the sick (while in reality ordering their murder, as Bonaparte did at Jaffa), he does not publically mourn those he sacrificed on the battlefield (as Napoleon at Eylau), nor did he scheme to conquer the world or change forever the face of history.

Though in this painting of Louis's departure one can admire, as Delacroix did, Gros's nocturnal lighting effects, one is nonetheless struck by the presence of the same defects, a lack of palpable atmosphere and an awkward display of figural theatrics (here the guard who falls at Louis's feet). Dargenty had no kind words for this work: "C'est un tableau décousu et banal. Je n'y vais ni dispositions ingénieuses ni traits intéressants."³⁴

Even duller is Gros's second commission from the Restoration government, The Embarkation of the Duchess d'Angoulême à Pauillac (near Bordeaux) on 1 April, 1815 (Musée de Bordeaux; Plate LXVII) of 1817. Shown in the Salon of 1819, the work commemorates another event just prior to the 100 Days, the departure of Louis's niece from southern France in the wake of approaching French troops.

Marie-Thérèse Charlotte was the daughter of Louis XVI and Marie Antoinette. Though imprisoned with her parents during the Revolution, she escaped their fate and was released in 1795. Thereafter she stayed near her uncle, the future Louis XVIII, and at his urging married his nephew, the Duke of Angoulême. During the 100 Days, the Duke was called from Bordeaux to take over the leadership of Royalist forces near Nîmes. In his absence the Duchess tried to rally Royalist forces stationed in

³⁴Dargenty, Baron Gros, 52.

Bordeaux, but eventually was forced to escape via ship as Napoleonic forces were approaching under General Clausel.

In Gros's canvas the Duchess, having exhausted her supply of white ribbons, is extending the white plume from her hat to the crowd who have gathered to witness her departure. Stationed just left of center in a white dress, she is surrounded by a trio of females, the Duchess of Sérant, the Duchess of Dumas, and the Countess of Agoult. Her male escorts are the vicounts, Mathieu de Montmorency and Agoult.

Salon critics had few kind words for this work. Several complained that the painting had no palpable sense of atmosphere (what Delestre referred to as Gros's "dry brush").³⁵ They also criticized the work's lack of compositional unity and its spatial congestion.³⁶ Several reviewers thought that the partial nudity of the boatmen was an unintentional sign of disrespect to the Duchess.³⁷ Only Delacroix found something to admire in this work, the treatment of the Duchess's face, but he still concluded that, "il n'y a dans l'ensemble de ce tableau, dont la disposition est vulgaire ni l'animation ni la force qui font de depart de Roi."³⁸

The subject and tripartite composition (from top to bottom) brings to mind Rubens's The Arrival of Marie de Medici at Marseilles, 3 November 1600 of 1622-5 (Musée du Louvre, Paris; Plate LXVIII). Gros's composition, though, seems maladroit in comparison for, rather than the dynamic swirling rhythms that climax in the figure of Marie de Medici, the rhythm in Gros's painting is erratic with figures kneeling and standing,

³⁵Delestre, Gros, 273; Tripier Le Franc, Histoire, 349.

³⁶Tripier Le Franc, Histoire, 349; Delestre, Gros, 213.

³⁷ibid.

³⁸Tripier Le Franc, Histoire, 349.

looking and leaping (and colliding) in several disparate directions. In addition to the disunity of the composition the figures are spatially congested to an uncomfortable degree, especially on the right side of the canvas. Rather than Rubens's earthy and boisterous sea nymphs, one is confronted with two artificially posturing semi-nude sailors.

Given Gros's politics, it is unlikely that he could muster much enthusiasm for Louis XVIII, and surely much less for the Duchess who made no secret of her pronounced Royalist outlook; perhaps a profound weariness explains, in part, Gros's lackluster performance in most canvases from 1810 until his death in 1835 (though an occasional portrait from this later period reminds one of the brilliance of his earlier paintings, as for example portraits of Comte Fournier-Sarlovèze of 1811 (Musée du Louvre, Paris) and of Joachim Murat at Capri of 1812 (Musée du Louvre, Paris). The 1811 commission to paint the main cupola of Sainte-Geneviève (now the Panthéon) with scenes of great epochs in French history, represented by Clovis and Clotilde, Charlemagne and Hildegarde, Saint Louis and Marguerite, and Napoleon and Marie-Louise, must have been a tiresome project for the work was repeatedly suspended and recommenced, subject to all the changes in French government after Napoleon's first exile.³⁹

Tripier Le Franc, Dargenty, and Lemonnier attribute much of the blame for Gros's decline to two factors, an unsuccessful marriage and an over-developed sense of duty towards David. In July of 1809 Gros, after months of pressure from Denon and others, finally married at the age of thirty-eight. According to Lemonnier: "Gros s'était marié ou plutôt

³⁹For the correspondance associated with this commission, see: Philippe de Chennevières, "Décorations du Panthéon," Gazette des Beaux-Arts 23 (1881): 158-174.

avait été marié par ses amis."⁴⁰ His wife Augustine Dufresne, eighteen years his junior and the daughter of a Parisian *agent de change*.

Tripier Le Franc formed an extremely negative opinion of Augustine during his friendship with Gros in the 1830's. He characterized her as cold, insensitive and unsupportive.⁴¹ She seems to have developed into a woman of ultra-conservative values to the point where Le Franc claimed that she was involved in "exaggerated religious practices."⁴² Certainly Gros's liaison with Françoise Simonier, who bore Gros a daughter, Cécile, in 1827, could hardly have improved his relationship with the childless Madame Gros.⁴³ Delécluze censored Gros at this time in his life for: "...vivait de la manière la plus étrange, passant presque tous ses moments de loisir à jouer aux dames avec les obscurs habitués d'un café."⁴⁴ One would assume that Gros frequented the café for two reasons: to escape Madame Gros and to seek out more congenial companions. Delécluze, being of a more conservative political persuasion than Gros, would probably not share Gros's liking for the free flow of liberal political views aired in the neighborhood café.

Gros left to posterity one rather peculiar visual record of his union with Augustine Dufresne in his Portrait of Madame Gros (Musée des Augustins, Toulouse; Plate LXIX) of 1822-1823. In this painting Augustine, stationed close to the picture plane, occupies center stage.

⁴⁰Lemonnier, Gros, 79; Tripier Le Franc, Histoire, 276.

⁴¹Tripier Le Franc, Histoire, 278. This author claims that Delestre was fully aware of Gros's unhappy married life but avoided discussing unpleasantness in his biography of the artist, especially so in this case, one would think, since Madame Gros commissioned Delestre's biography.

⁴²Tripier Le Franc, Histoire, 432-433.

⁴³For Gros's marital affairs also see: Lemonnier, Gros, 79-81. According to this author the marriage was so stressful that friends were urging a separation.

⁴⁴Delécluze, Louis David, 330.

In her left hand she grasps one of her husband's sketchbooks and her right hand rests on the railing of the stairway. It appears that she is ready to descend the stairs, having just visited her husband at work on his canvas of Francis I and Charles V visiting Saint Denis of 1812 (Musée du Louvre, Paris). Augustine hardly seems to fit the stereotypical role of inspiring muse, but rather looms over her diminutive husband (in the background to the left) with an air of assured authority, dominating not only the canvas but the entrance to and from his studio. Gros pictures himself outscaled by a bust of David which rests on a table top next to the staircase. Of this work Tripier Le Franc noted: "Cette scène de famille n'offre quelque intérêt que parce qu'elle est faite par Gros, qu'il y joue un rôle, et que sa femme y tient le première place."⁴⁵ In Gros's representation of himself he appears diminished by both his wife and his former instructor.

Not only did Gros's relationship with his wife have a negative influence on his work, but so did, according to Gros's biographers, his relationship with David. Tripier Le Franc contended that exile changed David's character; the thoughtful mentor became the jealous rival and the counsel given became "...the monomania of an old man."⁴⁶ Dargenty spoke of David's influence on Gros as "...si funeste influence."⁴⁷

The altered relationship that Tripier Le Franc speaks of began in February of 1816 when David, having both voted for the death of Louis XVI and signed up with Napoleon upon his return from Elba, went into exile in Brussels. Upon his departure David entrusted both the instruction of his pupils and the direction of his School to Gros.

⁴⁵Tripier Le Franc, Histoire, 376.

⁴⁶Tripier Le Franc, Histoire, 361.

⁴⁷Dargenty, Baron Gros, 54.

Gros took on this task with an extremely overdeveloped sense of duty. Tripier Le Franc quoted Delécluze as remarking that Gros "...eût dû sacrifier à cette fonction même sa qualité de peintre, pour prendre cette du professeur le plus assidu."⁴⁸ Dargenty claimed that Gros became like a little boy in that his only desire seemed to be to please David.⁴⁹ Perhaps Gros's exaggerated sense of duty to David was due in part to a sense of guilt for not sharing David's Belgian exile. Gros, in fact, began a zealous campaign to bring David back from his Brussels exile, but David had no intention of ever returning to Paris. Brookner's assessment of the situation between the two aging artists seems particularly apt:

David found himself superficially reconciled to his new life {his exile} but deeply resentful towards those who had not chosen to share it. Above all he remained ambivalent to such friends who persisted in agitating for his return to France. He remained stubborn in his quasi-Napoleonic exile.⁵⁰

David became like Socrates, preferring to suffer in exile rather than offer false apologies to the authorities. He seemed to take a grim satisfaction in his refusal to comply with Gros's efforts to facilitate his return to Paris.⁵¹

David's correspondance with Gros during 1816-1825 is somewhat disconcerting and even painful to read. In his exile David became overly proud of his own talents and unjustly censorious of Gros. Where previously he had been supportive and appreciative of his students' talents he now became scornful of them and dogmatic in his thinking. Consisting of several letters written over a period of roughly ten years,

⁴⁸Tripier Le Franc, Histoire, 33.

⁴⁹Dargenty, Baron Gros, 58.

⁵⁰Brookner, David, 177.

⁵¹For the correspondance between Gros and David during the Restoration period see: Daniel & Guy Wildenstein, Louis David: Documents complémentaires au catalogue complet de l'oeuvre (Paris, 1973).

the correspondance maintained one basic refrain: David continually admonished Gros to "abandon trivial modernity and search Plutarch for noble themes."⁵² In another letter David advised Gros that: "You are too devoted to your art to confine yourself to futile subjects and *tableaux de circonstance*."⁵³ In these letters David was discrediting the very things that had made Gros's paintings so successful with the art world and with the general public.

Clearly Gros heeded David's advice as to subject matter, for the titles to his works from the 1820's and 1830's reveal his influence: Bacchus and Ariadne of 1822 (National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa; Plate LXX), Amor Stung by a Bee Complains to Venus of 1833 (Musée des Augustins, Toulouse; Plate LXXI), Acis and Galathea of 1835 (Walter P. Chrysler Collection, New York City), and Hercules and Diomedes of 1835 (Musée des Augustins, Toulouse; Plate LXII).

Though David had recommended specifically such Plutarchian heroes to Gros as Alexander, Themistocles, Camillus, Scaevola, and Regulus, neither he nor Gros were choosing them. David's only late venture into this heroic vein was to finish his canvas of Leonidas at Thermopylae in 1814 (Musée du Louvre, Paris); thereafter he painted more erotic themes in such canvases as Cupid and Psyche of 1817 (Cleveland Museum of Art, Cleveland), Telemachus and Eucharis of 1818 (Paul Getty Museum, Malibu), and Mars Disarmed by Venus of 1824 (Musée du Louvre, Paris).

These late mythological works by David and Gros have been assessed as generally inferior in execution and grossly lacking in critical

⁵²See David's letter of November 1819 which is reprinted not only in Wildenstein's Documents but also in Sahut & Michel, David, 147 and Tripiet Le Franc, Histoire, 361.

⁵³From a letter of June 22, 1820 which is reprinted in Wildenstein and in Brookner, David, 182.

judgment.⁵⁴ For example, the most maligned of all of David's late works was his Apelles and Campaspe of 1813-1814 (Musée de Beaux-Arts, Lille) which Jean Adhémar characterized as "close to ridiculous" while Warren Roberts classified it as "a work that belongs more to the world of nineteenth-century kitsch."⁵⁵ Lemonnier's passing response to Gros's late work was likewise derogatory:

Il faut avouer que L'Acis et Galaté était d'une insignifiante douloureusement banale et Le Diomède d'une outrance qui avait presque chose de caricatural.⁵⁶

Dargenty's remarks were even more cursory: "{L'oeuvre de Gros} était d'ordre inférieur, ne méritait pas qu'on s'y arrêtât longtemps..."⁵⁷ Brookner, although she found these late works by David to be "curiously lacking in character," did not however consider them "lacking in interest."⁵⁸ Her final appraisal of the aging David was that he had finally surrendered his Plutarchian morals. According to her David's final work, Mars Disarmed by Venus, was, "a rather uneasy surrender to facile temptation, a temptation both erotic and pictorial. The 'ought' is nowhere in sight."⁵⁹

Yet it still seems difficult to accept that the curmudgeonly David, who had obstinately refused to return to Paris despite numerous efforts on

⁵⁴For David's late work, see: Brookner, David, 177-189; Antoine Schnapper, David (N.Y.: Alpine, 1980), 294-302; Friedlaender David to Delacroix, 32; and note # 61. For Gros's late work, see: Daniel Ternois, "Dessins inédits de Gros au Musée Lyonnais des Arts Decoratifs," Revue du Louvre 25 (1975): 23-32; Thomas W. Gaehtgens, "Bacchus and Ariadne by Antoine-Jean Gros," National Gallery of Canada Bulletin #2 (1978/1979): 63-79.

⁵⁵Roberts, Jacques-Louis David, 213.

⁵⁶Lemonnier, Gros, 88.

⁵⁷Dargenty, Baron Gros, 54,

⁵⁸Brookner, David, 184.

⁵⁹Ibid.

the part of Gros and others to facilitate his repatriation, would suddenly give in to all he had previously opposed in painting. For this reason I find appealing, if not absolutely convincing, Robert Warren's thesis that David's late erotic mythologies are bitter parodies:

While David again entered into dialogue with the past in Cupid and Psyche he did so with utterly different results than before. His intention was not to heroize or idealize, but to deflate, to parody...The Psyche who lies so serenely, so contentedly, has just been had, so to speak, by the grinning youth who is about to leave the bed and knock her to the floor. David has ingeniously parodied the Cupid and Psyche myth and--at the same time--parodied the nudes of Ingres, his former student.⁶⁰

To Roberts, then, David's interjection of greater realism into the ideal world of myth was purposeful and satirical rather than an embarrassing display of kitsch.⁶¹

One is tempted to extend the interpretation Roberts gives to David's late mythological works to Gros's late work as well. This, though, is problematic, especially since Gros was quite disturbed by David's use of realism in his mythological paintings, a genre where the figures are traditionally idealized. In fact, Gros was so upset that he even admonished David for his unidealized representation of Cupid in David's Cupid and Psyche of 1817: "...son caractère {Cupid's} est un peu faunesque et ses mains un peu brunes et surtout pas assez blaireautées."⁶² Unlike David, Gros continued to use more idealized figures in his late mythological work. In comparing the figures in David's Mars Disarmed by Venus and the Three Graces of 1822-1824 (Musées Royal des Beaux-Arts,

⁶⁰Roberts, Jacques-Louis David, 179.

⁶¹For a positive assessment of David's late work, see: Dorothy L. Johnson, "Some Work of Noble Note: David's Colère d'Achille Revisited," Gazette des Beaux-Arts 104 (December 1984): 223-230. In this article Johnson sees no irony or parody in David's late work, however, it seems that she may have altered her opinion of David's late work. For this, see: Robert Rosenblum, "Reconstructing David," Art In America (May 1990), 257.

⁶²Cited in: Sahut & Michel, David, 124.

Brussels; Plate LXXIII) to Gros's Mars Crowned by Victory, painted in 1827 as part of a set of frescoes on the ceiling of the Louvre for the Room of Egyptian Antiquities (Plate LXXIV), one finds the foreground figures of Mars and Venus in David's work to be idealized, as are all the figures in Gros's fresco. It is the unidealized portrait-like faces of the three graces in the background of Mars Disarmed that creates a sense of disturbance, which Roberts interprets as a major contributing factor for parody.

Although Gros's very last work, Hercules and Diomedes, was said by some to be his satirical revenge against his critics--who were becoming more and more numerous and vituperative--Tripier Le Franc denied that this was ever the artist's intention.⁶³ Delestre, Delacroix, Lemonnier, and Dargenty all claim that Gros painted Hercules and Diomedes to silence his critics with a strong demonstration of his talents.⁶⁴

All of Gros's biographers contend that comments in the press, like being labeled a "dead man," were very disturbing to him.⁶⁵ Unfortunately the response to his Hercules and Diomedes at the 1835 Salon was just as severe: "L'un des artistes les plus illustre de l'École française, Monsieur le baron Gros, vient de mourir à l'âge de soixante-cinq ans."⁶⁶

Many were bewildered as to why Gros chose "such an inconceivable subject." Five years previously his Napoleonic canvases of Jaffa and Eylau had elicited the same admiration at the Exhibition for the Wounded of July, 1830 as they had when first exhibited at the Salons of the early

⁶³Tripier Le Franc, Histoire, 506. Tripier Le Franc does not identify these people, only calling them "quelques personnes." For the drawings associated with this painting, see: Ternois, "Dessins inédits," 29-32.

⁶⁴Delestre, Gros, 290; Dargenty, Baron Gros, 290; Lemonnier, Gros, 87; Delacroix is quoted in: Tripier Le Franc, Histoire, 503.

⁶⁵Ibid.

⁶⁶Journal des débats, 27 June, 1835. Cited in Lemonnier, Gros, 88.

1800's. Gros, however, had turned down an 1834 government commission to paint a Battle of Jena, stating that he must no longer occupy himself with "des sujets plus analogues à l'étude de l'art."⁶⁷ Already in 1824, speaking at Girodet's funeral, Gros denigrated his earlier work:

I accuse myself of having been one of the first to have given the bad example, which has since been followed, in not imparting to the subjects that I chose that severity that our master recommended and which he never ceased to demonstrate in his own work.⁶⁸

The subject of Hercules and Diomedes is taken from the Labors of Hercules. Diomedes was a Thracian king who fed his herd of mares on human flesh. Hercules journeyed to Thrace to stop this atrocious practice and was able to tame these man-eating horses by feeding Diomedes to them. After sailing back to Argos with the mares, Hercules set them free and dedicated them to Hera. One could surmise that Gros was again painting political allegories by using Hercules, long a symbol of the Republic during the Revolution and Empire. After all Delacroix had used a female Liberty in his Liberty Leading the People of 1831 (Musée du Louvre, Paris).

There are, though, stronger reasons to suspect that this work was instead a demonstration piece of Davidian aesthetic precepts (at least as interpreted by Gros). Gros intended that the work be acquired by a museum school or academy as a teaching tool for young painters, hence the nude academic figures based, at least the figure of Hercules, on antique sculpture. With this subject he could also demonstrate his skill in

⁶⁷Lemonnier, Gros, 83.

⁶⁸Delecluze is cited in: Brookner, David, 180.

painting horses. He was especially hopeful that the museum in Toulouse, his native town, would acquire the painting, which it did.⁶⁹

In assessing Gros's Hercules and Diomedes Charles Blanc noted that this last canvas by Gros was hardly inferior to Gros's other late work, yet:

...lancée en plein romantisme, ou moment où l'école française réagissait contre le classique, où personne ne voulait entendre parler de David, pas même d'Ingres, Le Diomede parut une monstruosité.⁷⁰

By devotedly espousing David's late style, Gros set himself sharply apart from the artistic trends that he himself had done so much to foster.⁷¹ In so doing he alienated himself from those he could have inspired and brought upon himself harsh criticisms.⁷² This acrimonious rejection of his late work coupled with all of his other worries and disappointments led Gros to take his own life in shallow waters of the Seine near Meudon on the morning of June 25, 1835; a sad end for the painter of the

⁶⁹Gros wrote a letter to this museum requesting their acquisition of this painting for teaching purposes. It is reprinted in: Benjamin Fillon & J.J. Guiffrey, "Antoine-Jean Gros, peinture d'histoire. Documents inédits," Nouvelles Archives de l'Art Française (1878): 343-370.

⁷⁰Blanc, Histoire des peintures, 348. One could also compare Gros's mythological works to those of David and Ingres; Gros's has none of the realism of David's and none of the elegance of Ingres's.

⁷¹Ironically, also exhibited in the 1835 Salon was a work by Boissard de Boisdeniers, a former student of Gros's, entitled Episode from the Retreat from Moscow (Musée de Rouen). The painting depicts a French soldier, sheltering behind a broken wheel and a dead horse, waking to find his companion also dead. In the distance more soldiers march across the plain. The painting almost seems like a close-up shot of Gros's Eylau.

⁷²Tripier Le Franc, Histoire, 503; 507. This author relates that Gros also received anonymous letters "des plus insolentes et des plus indignes." I agree with Sells who thinks that: "It is difficult to believe that the motivation of the author, or authors, was purely aesthetic." See his: "The Death of Gros," Burlington Magazine 116 (1974): 266-270. I also wonder if Gros inherited some of David's many enemies in the Academy when he took over for David in Paris. Concerning David's enemies: Delécluze, Louis David, 128.

Napoleonic masterworks, Jaffa and Eylau.⁷³

⁷³For Gros's suicide and the related documents see: Sells, "Death of Gros," 266-270.

CONCLUSION

Gros was very much a product of his age. Being a witness to the French Revolution and spending some of his most formative years in the *atelier* of the revolutionary David, he adopted the republican politics of the majority of his contemporaries. Traditionally, however, Gros had been characterized as sharing the royalist socio-political outlook of his parents. This tradition stems from the writing of Gros's two major biographers, Jean Tripiier Le Franc and Jean-Baptiste Delestre.¹

These authors, however, did not meet Gros until the Restoration era. By this point Gros had already painted his major works and was well past his ascendancy in the art world. His views, like those of many people in their later years, were becoming increasingly conservative and he was even said to have roundly criticized Delacroix's Scenes from the Massacre at Chios of 1824 (Musée du Louvre, Paris) (a work much influenced by his own Battle of the Pyramids) as being "a massacre of painting."² In fact, after David's voluntary exile to Brussels in 1816, Gros began to see himself as a surrogate for the aging David, whose students he promised to instruct in David's absence.

Yet if one examines Gros's early career in detail it is quite possible to reach different conclusions from those of his biographers.

¹Tripiier Le Franc, Histoire, 144; Delestre, Gros, 23.

²Lee Johnson, The Paintings of Eugène Delacroix: A Critical Catalog, vol. 1 (Oxford: Clarendon, 1981), 87. According to Johnson, Gros was first quoted by Alexandre Dumas in a lecture of December 10, 1864. The text of this lecture is preserved in the manuscript collection at the Bibliothèque Nationale.

Most of the artist's surviving correspondence is from his Italian stay of 1794-1800. Practically every one of these letters is addressed to his mother in Paris. The letters provide an outline of some of the major events and people in Gros's life at the time and reveal his attitudes towards them. Both biographers had access to the artist's letters, which were long in the collection of the Delestre family in Paris, but both biographers were rather selective in what they quoted for their readers, especially Delestre, who deleted significant portions of the text from the letters quoted in his biography. Why neither author noticed, or at any rate publicized, Gros's positive attitude toward the Revolution is hard to determine. Maybe they were more interested in chronology rather than content, or maybe they had no wish to deal with views that differed from their own basic assumptions. Or perhaps, in the political climate of their own times, they did not wish to expose their hero to reproach.

The only scholar ever to question Gros's politics was Philippe Bordes, who examined Gros's activities in Italy in a 1978 journal article.³ The major thrust of Bordes' article was certainly not to question the accuracy of the statements made by Tripier Le Franc and Delestre concerning Gros's political affiliations, but in the course of reading through all of the artist's Italian correspondence Bordes came to the same conclusion that I have, that is, that Gros's personal attitudes were very supportive of the French Revolution rather than opposed to it.

In Chapter One I examined Gros's apprenticeship in Paris and his Italian sojourn to make a strong case for his being a Republican rather than a Royalist in political outlook. For example, it is clear that Gros gravitated to David's circle from an early age. Later, when he was old

³Phillipe Bordes, "Gros en Italie: Lettres, une allegorie revolutionnaire, et un portrait," Bulletin de la société de l'histoire de l'art français (Juin 1978): 221-231.

enough to understand the political implications of his choice, he remained with David, then a major figure of the political left.

Nor is it true that Gros left Paris to escape the leftward turn of the Revolution. Though both of his biographers convey this assumption they both, nonetheless, relate the same factual circumstances for his abrupt departure: that Gros was forced to flee the capital due to the manipulations of a jealous rival, François Gérard, then serving on the Committee of Public Safety.⁴ Though Gros spent eight years of the Revolution in Italy, nowhere was he ever officially listed as an *émigré*, a course of action adopted by most strongly committed Royalists. Nor is it logical that Gros would have made repeated attempts, as he did, to return to revolutionary Paris if he had fled that city to escape the Revolution. In addition to repeated attempts to return to revolutionary Paris, Gros also showed republican preferences in the commissions that he accepted and in his choice of friends, as I demonstrated in Chapter One.

Chapter One attempted to dispel one misconception about Gros, that is, that he was a Royalist; Chapter Two is, in part, an attempt to dispel another common misconception about the artist, that is, that he was a slavish follower of his mentor's David's Neo-Classical style, even though his own natural inclinations were best served by a more romantic style. Careful examination of the oft-overlooked Sappho at Leucadia, makes it clear that Gros, in this work, both borrowed from David--the pose of Sappho is taken from one of David's Sabines--and also from some of David's

⁴Gérard seems to have had a predilection towards intrigue, for he earlier revealed Girodet's use of a hollow cane to sneak in drawings during Academy competitions, thus forcing Girodet's exclusion from the contest. Quoted in: Georges Bernier, Anne-Louis Girodet (Paris: Jacques Danase, n.d.), 10. Bernier uses P.A. Coupin as his source: Oeuvres posthumes de Girodet-Trioson peintre d'histoire. Suivies de sa correspondance précédées d'une notice historique et mises en ordre par P.A. Coupin (Paris: Jules Renouard, 1829).

most vocal critics, *les Primitifs*, who were the Parisian avant-garde of 1800.

Thus rather than being timid and derivative in his work, one can see Gros as aptly choosing a style appropriate to his subject matter and then confidently borrowing from the apposite sources. Gros's Sappho is a work that indicates that Gros was fully aware not only of the traditions of the recent past but also of the very latest in contemporary art.

Showing Gros to be Republican in his socio-political outlook and his own man in the art world help set the stage for the major contention of this dissertation, that is, that Gros's Napoleonic history paintings, rather than being a glowing tribute to the French Emperor, are rather paintings that are critical of the Emperor's imperial ambitions and foreign wars.

This dissertation is the first comprehensive development of this hypothesis. Other scholars have made some tentative comments in this vein. For example, both Jack Lindsay and Paul Joannides consider Gros's Napoleon at the Pest House of Jaffa to be suspect as a propaganda work because the huge bodies of the plague victims steal the show from Bonaparte and his entourage in the middleground.⁵ A more extensive development of the idea of the anti-propagandistic nature of Gros's major work was offered by Alexander Fyjis-Walker in a 1984 thesis from the Courtauld Institute. The last third of Fyjis-Walker's thesis involved an examination of the use of critical iconography in Gros's Jaffa and Eylau (the rest of the thesis was devoted to David and the impact of the French Revolution on the arts). In his introduction Fyjis-Walker insisted that his thesis allowed for: "...no space more than the sketchiest account of

⁵Lindsay, Death of the Hero, 117; Joannides, "English Themes," 784.

the historical context of Gros's work. My treatment is impressionistic in the extreme."⁶ Fyjis-Walker also contended that his thesis would demonstrate that: "Gros, in painting Napoleon at Jaffa and at Eylau, created works that, in the midst of public intentions and acclaim, remain subjective, private, and dialectical."⁷ What Fyjis-Walker felt was subjective and private in these two major works by Gros was Gros's rendering of the dead and dying with such instinctive sympathy as almost to accuse Napoleon of great cruelty in allowing this state of affairs.

Fyjis-Walker supported his argument by citing several examples of Gros's use of the dialectic in his iconography. For example, Gros, according to Fyjis-Walker, gives the viewer a double message in his imaging of Bonaparte's activity in The Pest House at Jaffa, that of both saintly healer, a Christ or a *Roi Thaumaturge*, and of a skeptical doubter, a Doubting Thomas.⁸ This dialectic creates uneasiness and uncertainty in the viewer and hence the image, rather than functioning as pure propaganda, becomes critical in nature. I support Fyjis-Walker's basic hypothesis, though I do not necessarily concur with, or perhaps totally understand, the examples he used of critical iconography (except for the example cited above). I have also been able, in a full-length dissertation, to treat fully the historical and artistic context of Gros's work.

An approach similar to that of Fyjis-Walker was taken by Norman Bryson in a talk given at the Ohio State University on April 6, 1987. In this lecture Bryson examined works by David and Gros (specifically Jaffa and Eylau). According to Bryson, David was able to use dialectical

⁶Alexander Fyjis-Walker, Some Uses of Iconography around 1804 (Unpublished M. Phil. Thesis, Courtauld Institute, 1984), 18.

⁷Ibid.

⁸Fyjis-Walker, Iconography around 1804, 96.

imagery that the viewer could eventually synthesize: the modern martyr Lepelletier and the antique hero Hector co-exist in his destroyed Portrait of Lepelletier; the religious martyr, Christ, and the revolutionary hero, Marat, in his The Death of Marat; and co-existing in his Sabines are references to pre-Thermidorian and post-Thermidorian society. However, with Gros's imagery, according to Bryson, the gap is so great that a synthesis was no longer possible.

Though the complete text of Bryson's talk has not been published, his commentary in his Vision and Painting: The Logic of the Gaze contains some of the same material presented in his lecture. In speaking of Gros's Eylau, Bryson had this to say:

Gros will also develop to an extreme where the intelligibility of the image is directly threatened, a contradiction between discursive intent and figural reality: Napoleon at Eylau officially celebrated the Emperor's victory, but the emphasis given to the colossal, agonized figures of dead and dying soldiers in the foreground belies the official purpose, and the contradiction cannot be resolved at a textual level (Gros cannot accuse the Napoleonic adventure of cruelty or misguidedness).⁹

More recently, however, Bryson has explained this "disturbance or incoherence" in the imagery of Gros as a part of the realism of the image, realistic precisely because it is provisional and incomplete:

It is not difficult to find documentary evidence to account for what seems like Gros' disaffection with Napoleon; and once the documents are on the table it cannot be long before the explanation is complete. Such explanation is necessarily reductive, not because it has got hold of the wrong documents but because it is an EXPLANATION; that is, the projection of knowledge into the existential field of ignorance.¹⁰

⁹Norman Bryson, Vision and Painting: The Logic of the Gaze (New Haven & London: Yale University, 1983), 143. Bryson also refers the reader to chapter nine of his: Word and Image: French Painting of the Ancien Régime (Cambridge: Cambridge University, 1981). Here Bryson considers Manet to be using dialectical imagery in his Olympia, where the image is both odalisque and prostitute. For Manet, see his Vision and Painting, page 145.

¹⁰Norman Bryson, "Representing the Real: Gros' Paintings of Napoleon," History of the Human Sciences 1 (1988), 100.

I agree with Bryson that there is a dialectic in Gros's work but I do not concur that seeking an explanation for this dialectic is an exercise in the falsification of history; otherwise I would hardly be writing this dissertation. All history is imperfect and subject to continual revision. I definitely agree with the broad general thesis of both Bryson and Fyjis-Walker, that is, that the dialectical nature of the iconography in Gros's Jaffa and Eylau undercuts the requisite Napoleonic propaganda. The examples of critical iconography I choose to explore, however, differ from the choices made by these two scholars.

Unlike Fyjis-Walker and Bryson, Heinrich Brunner did examine *all* of Gros's Napoleonic history paintings, not just Jaffa and Eylau, and compiled extensive documentation relative to them. Brunner, though, reached very different conclusions than did Fyjis-Walker, Bryson, or myself. This is in part due to our using different sources--for example, Brunner does not cite authors such as Bryson, Fyjis-Walker, Said, or Nochlin--and in part due to our interpreting the same sources differently. On the whole Brunner, although he sees the propaganda in Gros's historical works to be more muted than had traditional scholars--here I am thinking especially of Delestre, Tripier Le Franc, Friedlaender, Hautecoeur--still agrees in the main with these authors.

The dissertation has given me the format to explore two issues that Bryson and Fyjis-Walker did not address (Fyjis-Walker because he characterizes his study as "impressionistic in the extreme" and Bryson because he sees such explanations as reductive) and that Brunner had no need to address given his outlook. These questions are: how could Gros criticize the Emperor and continue to live and work peacefully in Paris and secondly, why did Gros want to criticize the Emperor in the first place?

As an answer to the latter question I have already proposed that Gros's republican political convictions would have been a valid reason for his criticisms of Napoleonic ambitions. If Gros were indeed a Republican it is quite possible that he would be disillusioned with the direction Bonaparte's career had taken. The passionate and idealistic general evolved into the imperious and cynical Emperor. There were many contemporaries of Napoleon who felt that his growing personalization of power had put an end to the proper functioning of regular political institutions within France and that personal and civil liberty had disappeared. Among these contemporary critics one could cite: Madame de Staël, Benjamin Constant, Topino-Lebrun, General Kléber, Dr. Desgenettes, J.B. Say, J.M. Chénier, Bara, and in Vienna, Beethoven. Present-day scholarship also, in many cases, adopts this critical stance.¹¹

If one agrees that Gros had a personality capable of criticism and a reason to be critical of Napoleon, then one is faced with the question: how could Gros have openly voiced his displeasure? After all, the Napoleonic press was heavily censored.¹² By 1810 only four journals still had licenses to publish in Paris and they all were mouthpieces of the government.¹³ Napoleon had put an end to Madame de Staël's Salon du Bac by exiling her from Paris, and those caught talking seditiously by

¹¹See: Jean Tulard, Napoleon: The Myth of the Savior, Trans. by Teresa Waugh, (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1977, C. 1984); Irene Collins, Napoleon and his Parliament, 1800-1815, (London: Edward Arnold, 1979); Geoffrey Ellis, The Napoleonic Empire, (London: Macmillan Education, 1991). Ellis's book is a series of bibliographic essays on recent Napoleonic scholarship. For the predecessors to Ellis's volume, see: Pieter Geyl, Napoleon For and Against, Trans. by Olive Renier, (New Haven: Yale University, 1949) and David H. Pinkney, Napoleon, Historical Enigma, (St. Louis: Forum, 1978).

¹²For censorship under Napoleon, see: Robert B. Holtman, Napoleonic Propaganda, (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University, 1950); André Cabinis, La Presse sous le Consulat et L'Empire, (Paris: Société des Études Robespierristes, 1975).

¹³Ellis, Napoleonic Empire, 34.

Napoleon's secret police were arrested and in some cases sent to the scaffold. In 1801 this was the fate of the French artist, François Jean-Baptiste Topino-Lebrun, a former student of David, and of the Roman sculptor, Giuseppe Ceracchi. The police reports claimed that these artists had plotted to stab the First Consul in his box at the opera. Ellis, in his discussion of this "Dagger Conspiracy" of 1800 claimed that the affair was: "...café talk blown up by the police."¹⁴

Two years later, in 1802, the legislature was purged of all dissenting voices, thus making the body a rubber-stamp committee for the First Consul's wishes.¹⁵ Clearly Napoleon was not moving in the direction of greater democracy and greater freedoms for the French people, and he used all available means at his disposal to discourage liberal protest (or indeed, protest of any kind).¹⁶

In such a restricted atmosphere how could Gros venture to actually criticize the Emperor? I have tried to suggest plausible answers to this question in Chapter Three of my dissertation by examining, on the one hand, the nature of those commissioning the paintings and, on the other, the techniques used by Gros to avoid easy detection of his message.

First, I have suggested, using observations by Napoleon's contemporaries, that the Emperor had little knowledge of, or interest in, the Fine Arts except insofar as they served to glorify his person and his reign. This was the decided opinion of the Emperor's Minister of the Interior from 1800-1804, Comte Jean-Antoine Chaptal, whose portrait Gros

¹⁴Ellis, Napoleonic Empire, 98.

¹⁵Collins, Napoleon and his Parliament, 56-57; Thomas D. Beck, French Legislators, 1800-1834: A Study in Quantitative History, (London & Berkley: University of California, 1974), 27-43.

¹⁶Robert J. Goldstein, Political Repression in Nineteenth-Century Europe, (London: Croon Helen, 1983), 93. According to this author the Napoleonic regime was one of the most repressive in French history.

painted in 1824.¹⁷ Chaptal claimed that Napoleon viewed the arts with the mind of a political opportunist rather than with the eyes of a connoisseur, and in his memoirs Chaptal described a visit that he made to the annual Salon with the First Consul. According to the Comte, Bonaparte only feigned interest in the exhibition and rushed their small party of viewers through the rooms of paintings in great haste so that one could only glance briefly at the art works.¹⁸

E.J. Delécluze characterized Bonaparte's response to art in much the same way as Chaptal. He describes a visit made by Bonaparte to David's studio in 1798 thus:

Le seul sentiment qui perçait sur sa physionomie était une certaine impatience, comme celle que l'on éprouve quand on sent que l'on dépense son temps inutilement.¹⁹

The only encounters with Bonaparte in Italy that Gros recounted in his letters home to his mother in Paris reflect much the same behavior on the general's part. Bonaparte agreed to give Gros a portrait sitting shortly after Gros arrived in Milan in 1796 but Bonaparte was so impatient with the whole undertaking that Gros claimed he hardly had time to mix his colors.²⁰ One could surmise that Napoleon was not a viewer who lingered over the iconographic and formal intricacies of Gros's commissions, giving them only the most cursory glance, and so could be counted on to see the paintings as conveying the expected imperial message.

In Chapter Three I have argued that others have assumed too much control over imagery on the part of Napoleon's museum director, Vivant

¹⁷In this portrait Chaptal is holding a copy of his celebrated Memoires. The portrait is in the collection of the Cleveland Museum of Art.

¹⁸Jean-Antoine Chaptal, Mes Souvenirs sur Napoléon, (Paris, 1893), 270.

¹⁹Delécluze, Louis David, 202.

²⁰Tripier Le Franc, Histoire, 143; Delestre, Gros, 34.

Denon. I recently became aware of another author who concurs with my assessment and who offered the following information in a 1980 journal article dealing with an 1806 Ingres' portrait of Napoleon Enthroned (Musée de l'Armée, Palais des Invalides, Paris):

Controls over Napoleonic imagery were eliminated beginning with the Salon of 1804 when Denon sent the instructions to one of his aides (Archives du Louvre, Correspondance des Directeurs, AA5, 28 fructidor an XII, 72), indicating that the personal consent of Napoleon was Denon's formula for screening political imagery, and he employed it with discretion. Works submitted by reputed artists were generally exempted from inspection but Ingres was subjected to a particularly stringent studio examination because he was a complete unknown.²¹

Even if Gros could pass his work under the lax inspection of both Denon and Napoleon, and even if the highly censored Napoleonic press was unlikely to raise controversial issues, Gros would still need to be cautious. Thus whether one characterizes Gros as using imagery that is dialectical in nature (Bryson, Fyjis-Walker) or presented in the allegorical mode (as I have suggested), the result is much the same, that is, the artist can offer up the expected official discourse at the same time that he covertly criticizes it. To cite one example, I have suggested that with the potent figure of the brooding plague victim in Gros's Jaffa the artist has also prompted viewer references to such figures as Brutus and Ugolino, and by so doing, raised the issue of the patriarch's sacrifice of his "sons" on his Egyptian adventure (see Chapter Three).

In Chapter Three I show Gros to have made use of other effective methods of conveying his critical message. For example, crucial figures in his masterworks break the narrative of the expected official discourse by addressing the spectator and ignoring the Napoleonic spectacle being

²¹Susan L. Siegfried, "The Politics of Criticism at the Salon of 1806: Ingres' Napoleon Enthroned," in Consortium on Revolutionary Europe, Proceedings 1980 (Athens, Ga., 1980), 80.

staged, offering up an alternative voice opposed to the requisite imperial propaganda. In Jaffa these figures would be the plague victims, Dr. Desgenettes, and the blindman. Other figures function in a similar manner in paintings such as Eylau; these figures are the saluting Lithuanian and the Russian dead, dying, and wounded (see Chapter Five).

Gros also expressed his message through compositional and other formal methods. He used all his formal skills to make decided contrasts setting Napoleon and his staff against the plague victims in Jaffa, the Russians in Eylau, and the native peoples in such works as The Capitulation of Madrid (Musée de Versailles) and The Battle of the Pyramids (Musée de Versailles) (see Chapter Six).

Gros also employed the technique of making subtle textual references to other famous paintings (and quite possibly caricatures) of which only the visually literate could have been aware. This is a technique which was employed to great advantage by such artists as Édouard Manet and Francisco Goya. Fred Licht's telling description of the basic effect of Goya's quotation to Velasquez' Las Meninas of 1656 (Museo del Prado, Madrid) in his Portrait of the Royal Family of Charles IV of 1800 (Museo del Prado, Madrid) serves equally well for Gros:

He not only makes art out of art, but he reveals the process instead of hiding it. He forces us to superimpose our memory of another painting unto his own work by collating--instead of absorbing--the borrowed elements. In this way, comparison with a prototype becomes an integral component of the significance of the work, instead of merely being an incidental homage paid to the earlier artist.²²

In Chapter Three I have argued that in his painting of Jaffa, Gros quoted such past works as David's Lictors bringing Brutus the Bodies of his Sons of 1789 (Musée du Louvre, Paris) and his Oath of the Horatii of 1785

²²Fred Licht, ed., Goya in Perspective, (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1973), 162.

(Musée du Louvre, Paris) to create critical comparisons in the mind of the viewer.

It is also possible that Gros used famous anti-Napoleonic British caricatures in much the same manner. Gros may have developed an interest in this art form through his associations with David and Girodet, both admirers of British caricature.²³ These British sources would have been available to Gros through an English circulating library which was established in Paris in 1802, soon after the Peace of Amiens of March 27, 1802 (which lasted only until May of 1803).²⁴

Gros may have borrowed Napoleon's finger-touching gesture in the Jaffa from a Gillray satirical print of 1803 (see Chapter Three). In this print, Gillray shows Bonaparte reaching out towards the fleeing council members during his *coup d'état* of 1799. Bonaparte's expeditious return from Syria facilitated his timely arrival in Paris where he shortly thereafter staged his *coup d'état*. If Gros were consciously (or even unconsciously, using a bank of visual images) quoting from Gillray's anti-Napoleonic prints (I have also suggested a Gillray print as a source for Gros's Capitulation of Madrid), this surely suggests that Gros's attitude toward the Emperor was hardly one of unmixed reverence.²⁵

Gros's friend Girodet was known not just for his interest in the work of British satirists, but also for creating his own satirical works. Girodet's scandalous second painting of the celebrated French actress, Madmoiselle Lange as The New Danaë in the Salon of 1800, was the most

²³For Girodet, see: James Henry Rubin, "An Early Romantic Polemic: Girodet and Milton," Art Quarterly 35 (Fall 1992): 210-238; James Henry Rubin, "Aesthetic Subversion of Politics in Girodet's Riots at Cairo," in Consortium on Revolutionary Europe Proceedings 1980 (March 1980): 95-105.

²⁴Notices were listed in the Journal des Debats of II Prairial an X. This information was cited in: Rubin, "Girodet and Milton," 214.

²⁵For an interesting analysis of the role of the subconscious in art, see Norman Bryson's examination of the paintings of Greuze in his, Word and Image: French Painting of the Ancien Régime.

famous of this type of work in Girodet's oeuvre.²⁶ Gros cited this painting by Girodet, as well as works by the Great Masters which were similar (in that they satirize a contemporary of the artist), as antecedents for his negative portrayal of General Bessières in Jaffa (see Chapter Three). If Gros could satirize one of Napoleon's closest associates, why not Napoleon himself?

By the time Gros assumed the role of painter to the restored Bourbon, Louis XVIII, he no longer had any reason to work in allegorical or dialectical modes. In Gros's King Louis XVIII leaving the Tuileries on the night of March 20, 1815 of 1816-1817 (Musée de Versailles, Paris) all participants are willingly united in the drama at hand; no one opposes or undercuts the central scene being staged. There is no need for Gros to undermine the events being portrayed as he did in his previous Napoleonic canvases, for here the situation shown is well within the realm of the believable; Louis does not propose to raise the dead and heal the sick (while in reality ordering their murder as Bonaparte did at Jaffa), he does not publicly mourn those he willingly sacrificed on the battlefield (as Napoleon did at Eylau), nor did he scheme to conquer the world or change forever the face of history, but rather he merely retreated from a situation in which he felt that his presence would be troublesome and unproductive, that is, Napoleon's return from Elba.

Finally, in the concluding chapter I examined Gros's artistic decline, which has traditionally been equated with Napoleon's fall from power in 1814. Gros's painting skills, however, were clearly slumping as early as 1809/1810, as evidenced in paintings such as The Battle of the

²⁶For this painting, see: Mario Praz, "Girodet's Mlle. Lange as Danaë," The Minneapolis Institute of Art Bulletin 58 (1969): 64-68; George Levitine, "Girodet's New Danaë," The Minneapolis Institute of Art Bulletin 58 (1969): 69-77.

Pyramids (Musée de Versailles) or The Capitulation at Madrid (Musée de Versailles).

With Napoleon safely exiled to St. Helena, Gros no longer needed to do battle with the Emperor on canvas, and transferred his energies to a zealous campaign to bring David back to Paris from his 1816 Brussels exile. Unfortunately David had no intention of ever returning to Paris (if this return entailed any kind of apology on his part) and seemed to take a grim pride in his exile, hence Gros's efforts on his behalf were hardly appreciated.

As a consequence of David's exile Gros also took over the direction of David's pupils and school. It is only now (and not earlier as indicated by traditional sources like Delestre) that Gros *does* adopt an extremely overdeveloped sense of duty towards David and even heeds David's call to abandon "trivial modernity" for themes from mythology.²⁷ These late mythological works understandably elicited harsh criticisms from Gros's contemporaries, and by devotedly epousing David's new precepts, Gros set himself sharply apart from the artistic trends that he had done so much to foster, even referring to Delacroix's Massacre at Chios as a "massacre of painting."²⁸ Though Delestre was correct in his characterization of Gros during the Restoration era, he was mistaken in projecting this image of the artist backward into the Revolutionary period and the Napoleonic empire, thus confusing the way that paintings like Jaffa and Eylau have been interpreted. This dissertation has attempted to re-examine Gros and his oeuvre and to see Gros's major Napoleonic paintings in a new light.

²⁷For The correspondance between Gros and David at this time, see: Daniel & Guy Wildenstein, Louis David: Documents complementaires au catalogue complet de l'oeuvre (Paris, 1973).

²⁸See note #2 of this chapter.

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Plate I. A.J. Gros, Gros's Mother à la Grecque (Private collection, Paris)



Plate II. Joseph-Marie Vien, The Selling of Cupids (Fontainebleau, Château)

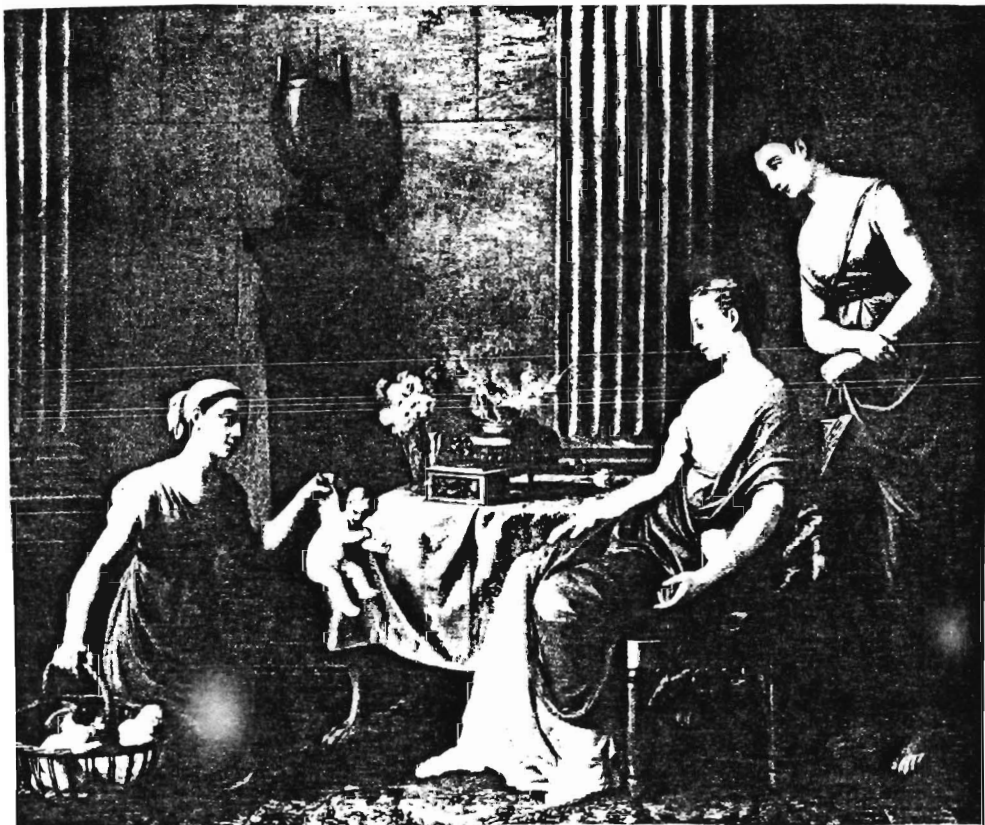


Plate III. Pierre Puget, Saint Sebastian (S. Maris de Carignano, Genoa)



Plate IV. A.J. Gros, Portrait of Robespierre (engraved by Beljambe)
(Bibliothèque Nationale)

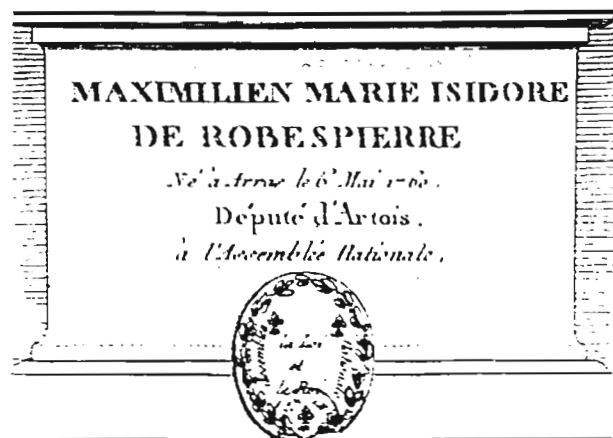


Plate V. A. J. Gros, Liberty (Musée de Versailles)



Plate VI. J. L. David, The Intervention of the Sabine Women (Musée du Louvre)



Plate VII. François Gérard, Portrait of Gros (Musée de Versailles)



Plate VIII. A. J. Gros, Self-Portrait (Musée de Versailles)



Plate IX. A. L. Girodet, Self-Portrait (Musée de Versailles)



Plate X. J. L. David, Costume Designs (Cabinet des Dessins, Musée de Louvre)



Plate XI. A. J. Gros, Bonaparte at Arcole (Musée du Louvre)



Plate XII. A. J. Gros, Bonaparte at Arcole (Musée de Versailles)



Plate XIII. Andrea Appoani, Portrait of Bonaparte (Pinacoteca de Brera, Milan)



Plate XIV. A. J. Gros, Portrait of Bonaparte (Cabinet des Dessins, Musée du Louvre)



Plate XV. Marcantonio Raimondi, after Raphael, Massacre of the Innocents
(Metropolitan Museum, New York)



Plate XVI. A. J. Gros, The Death of Timophanes (Musée du Louvre, Paris)



Plate XVII. A. J. Gros, Study for Cato (Cabinet des Dessins, Musée du Louvre)

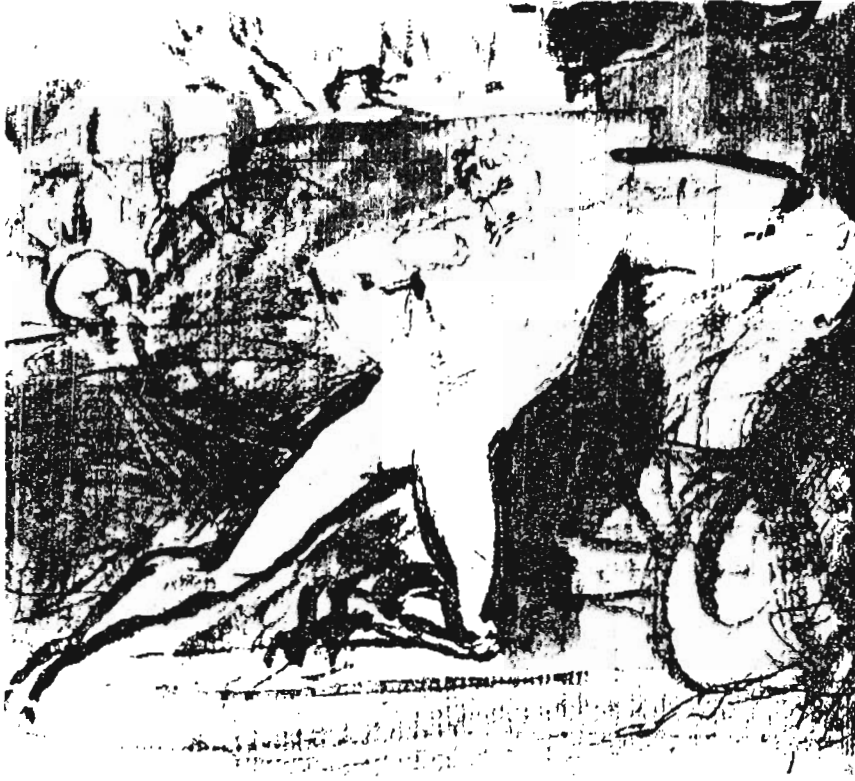


Plate XVIII. J. L. David, Lictors bringing Brutus the Bodies of his Sons
(Musée du Louvre, Paris)



Plate XIX. A. J. Gros, Sappho at Leucadia (Musée du Baron Gérard, Bayeux)



Plate XX. A. J. Gros, The Battle of Nazareth (Musée des Beaux-Arts, Nantes)



Plate XXI. A. L. Girodet, The Sleep of Endymion (Musée du Louvre, Paris)



Plate XXII. Jean Broc, The Death of Hyacinth (Musée de Poitiers)



Plate XXIII. François Gérard, Cupid and Psyche (Musée du Louvre, Paris)



Plate XXIV. Nicolas Taunay, The Battle of Nazareth (Private collection, Paris)

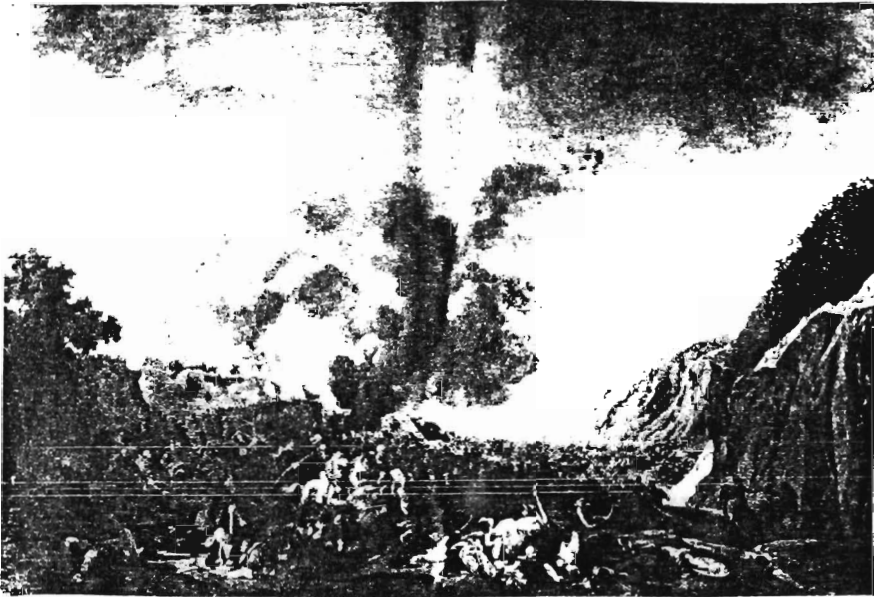


Plate XXV. Giulio Romano, The Battle of Constantine (Sala di Costantino, Vatican)

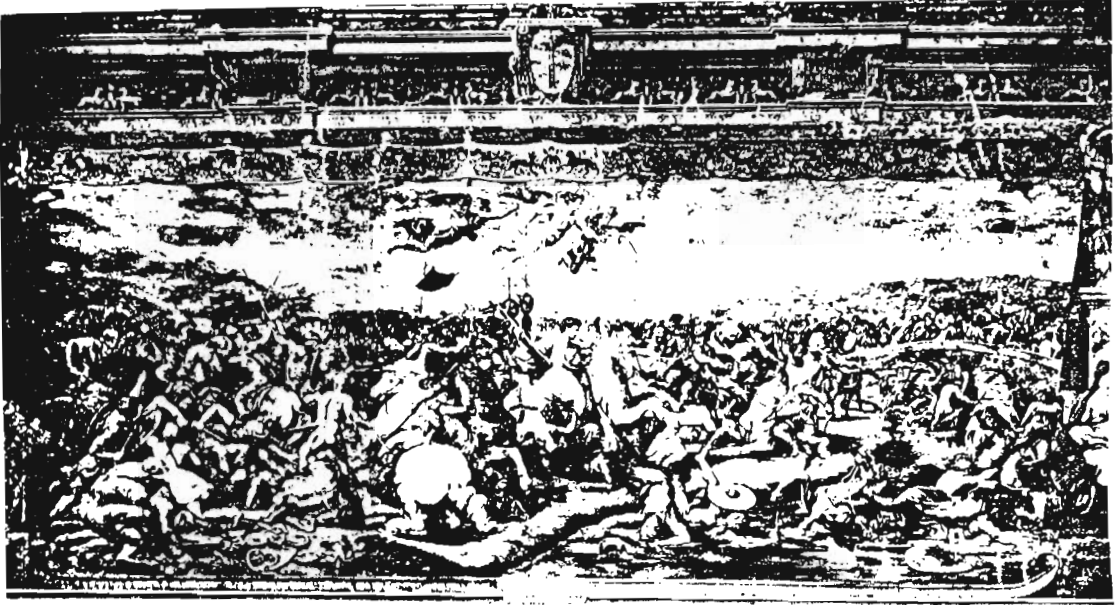


Plate XXVI. John Trumbull, The Death of General Warren at Bunker's Hill
(Yale University Art Gallery)



Plate XXVII. John Trumbull, The Death of General Montgomery at Quebec
(Yale University Art Gallery)

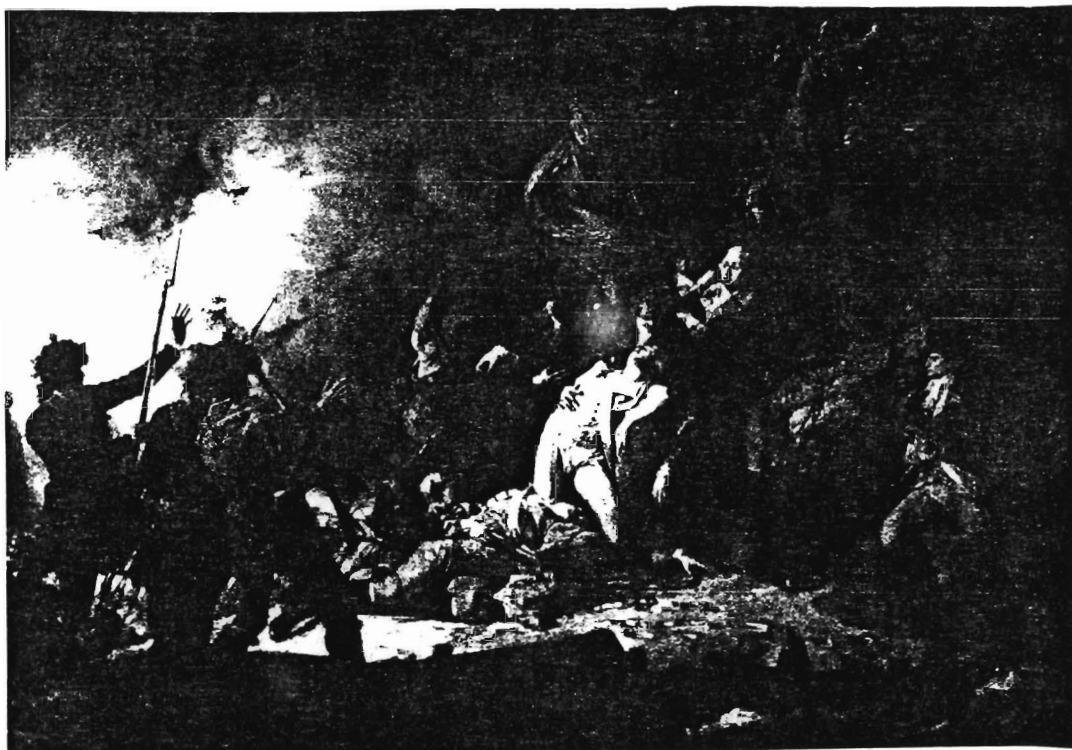


Plate XXVIII. Théodore Géricault, The Charging Chasseur (Musée du Louvre, Paris)



Plate XXIX. A. J. Gros, Bonaparte Visiting the Plague-Stricken at Jaffa
(Musée du Louvre, Paris)



Plate XXX. A. J. Gros, Study for Jaffa (Cabinet des Dessins, Musée du Louvre)



Plate XXXI. A. J. Gros, Oil sketch for Jaffa (Isaac Delgado Museum, New Orleans)



Plate XXXII. R. K. Porter, Bonaparte Massacring Three Thousand Eight Hundred Men at Jaffa (British Museum, London)



XXXIII. Anon. Boney on Stage (Musée Carnavalet, Paris)



Plate XXXIV. P. Firens, Henry IV, King of France and of Navarre, Touches the Plaque-Stricken (Bibliothèque Nationale, Cabinet des Estampes)

REPRESENTATION AU NATUREL, COMME LE ROY TRESCHRESTIEN
HENRY IIII ROY DE FRANCE ET DE NAVARRE TOUCHE LES PLAQUEVOILLÉS



Un premier Regne de France carde

[Faint, illegible text, likely bleed-through from the reverse side of the page.]

Plate XXXV. Robert White, Charles II, King of England, Touching the Plague-Stricken (Frontispiece of J. Browne, Charisma Basilikon)



Plate XXXVI. Bicci di Lorenzo, Christ and Saint Thomas (Duomo, Florence)



Plate XXXVII. James Gillray, Boney's Coup d'État (Print collection, British Museum)



EXIT LIBERTÉ à la FRANÇOIS! — or — BUONAPARTE closing the Place of Equality, at St Cloud on Paris Nov 10 1793.

Plate XXXVIII. George Cruikshank, Boney Poisons the Plaque-Stricken (Print collection, British Museum)

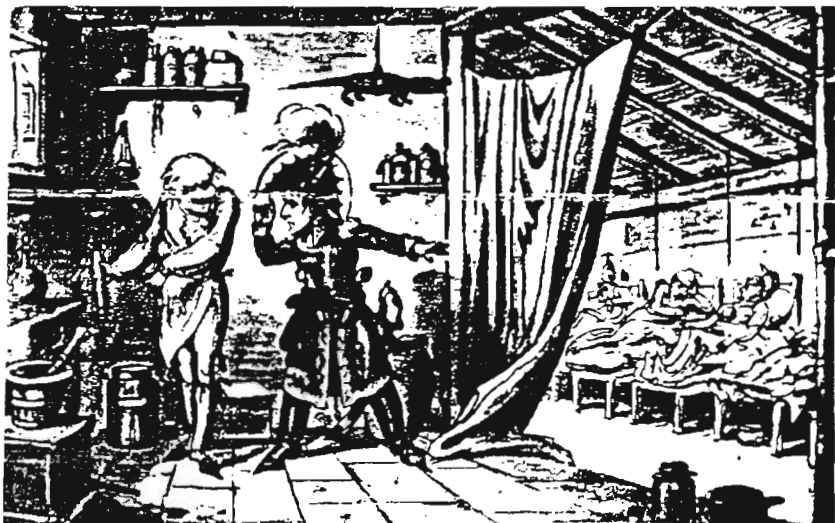


Plate XXXIX. A. J. Gros, Portrait of General Berthier (engraved by H. Davidson) (Collection of the Prince of Wagram)



Plate XL. Edmond Hédouin, after Riesener, Portrait of General Bessières
(Musée de Versailles)

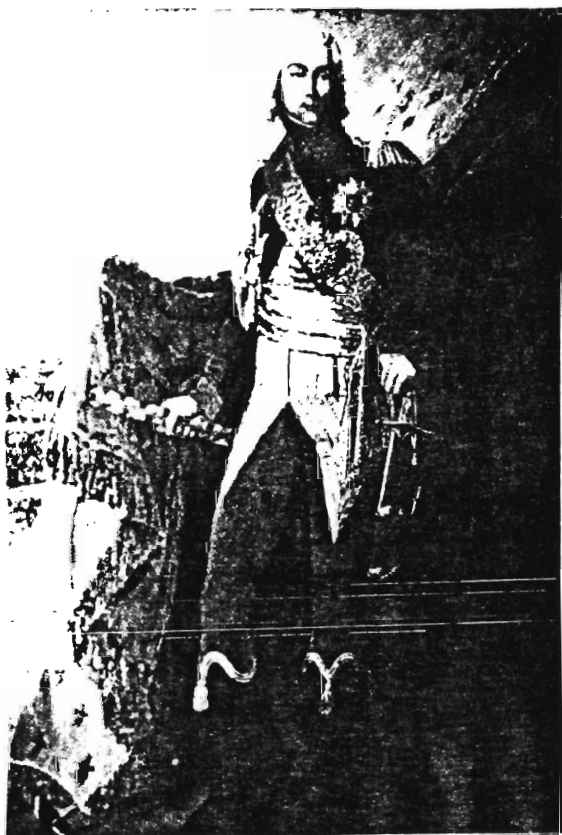


Plate XLI. Gustave Courbet, The Painter's Studio (Musée d'Orsay, Paris)



Plate XLII. Théodore Géricault, The Raft of the Medusa (Musée du Louvre, Paris)



Plate XLIII. Francisco de Goya, The Third of May, 1808 (Museo del Prado, Madrid)

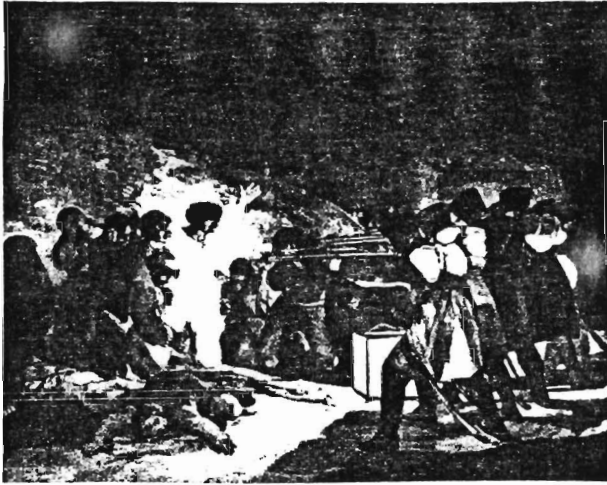


Plate XLIV. Sir Joshua Reynolds, Count Ugolino and his Children in the Dungeon (Knole, Kent)

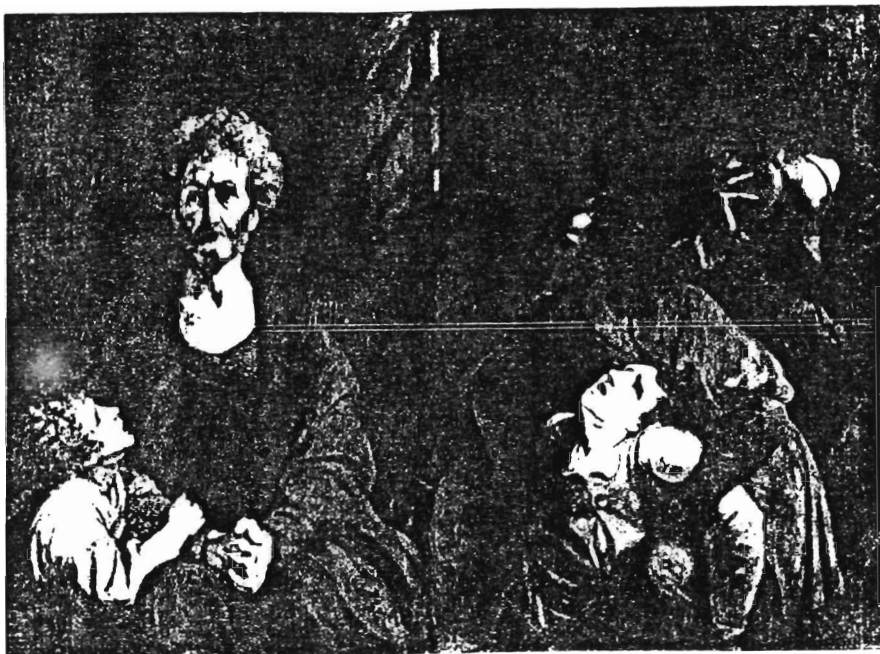


Plate XLV. A. J. Gros, Sketch for Ugolino and his Sons (Figure 27 in Delestre)



Plate XLVI. Anon., Le nec plus ultra du cannibalisme (Bibliothèque Thiers, Paris)



Le Nec plus ultra du Cannibalisme

Plate XLVII. Anon., Boney on the World Globe (Musée Carnavalet, Paris)

L'Empire C'est tout qui nous sommes,
 Cherchant toujours nouveaux exploits:
 Mangez par un drapeau mille hommes,
 Et ne parlez jamais des Rois.



Plate XLVIII. J. L. David, Saint Roch interceding with the Virgin for the Plaque-Stricken at Marseilles (Musée des Beaux-Arts, Marseilles)



Plate XLIX. Anon., Execution of the Duc d'Enghien (Cabinet des Estampes, Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris)

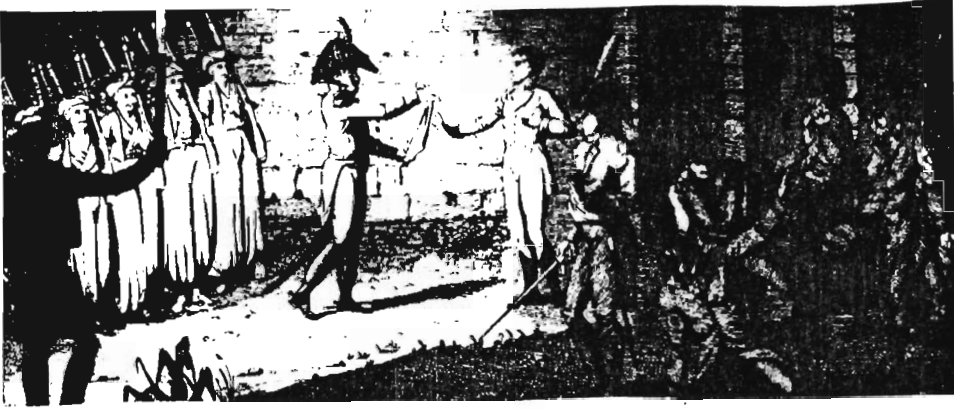


Plate L. J. L. David, The Oath of the Horatii (Musée du Louvre, Paris)

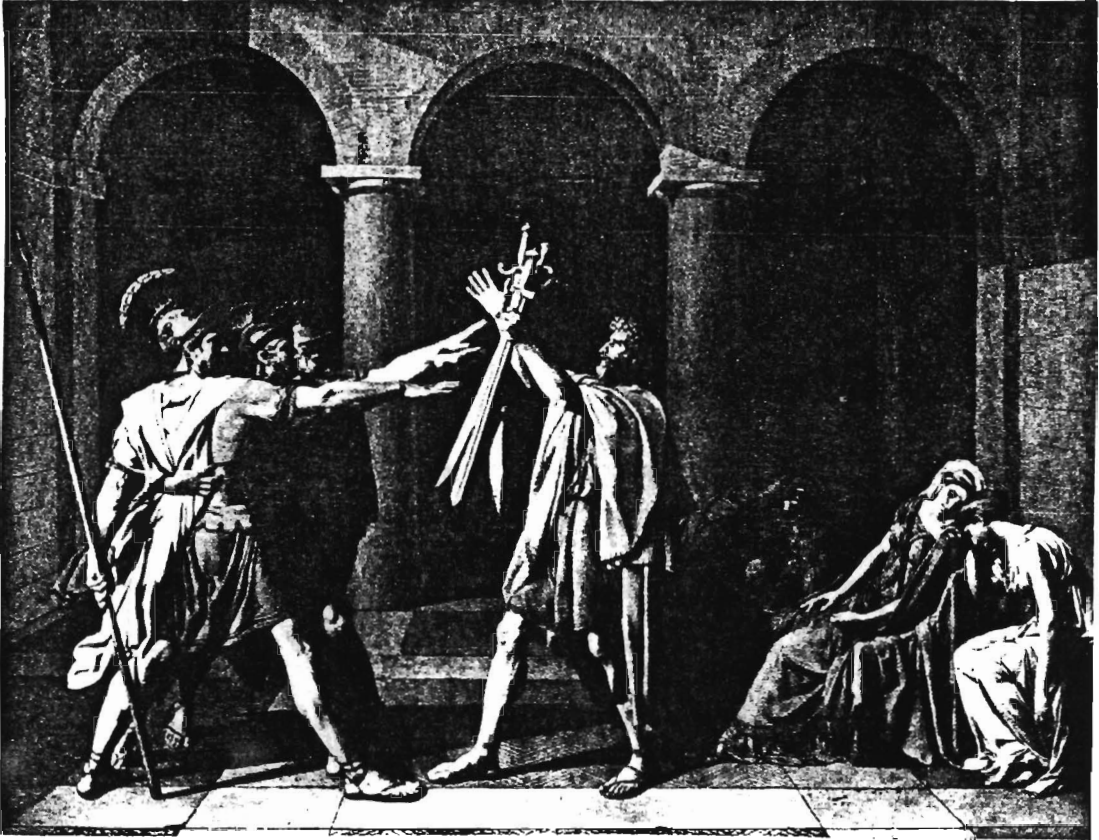


Plate LI. A. J. Gros (?), Bonaparte at the Pest House at Jaffa (Museum of Fine Arts, Boston)



LII. A. J. Gros, The Battle of Aboukir (Château de Versailles)



Plate LIII. Baron Le Jeune, The Battle of Aboukir (Musée de Versailles)



VICTOIRE
D'ABOUKIR
Le 25 août 1799. Le général Bonaparte vainc le commandant en chef des Anglais, le général Clarke, dans la bataille d'Aboukir.

Plate LIV. D. V. Denon, The Battle of Aboukir (Musée de L'Emperi, Salon-de-Provence)



Plate LV. Benjamin West, Death on a Pale Horse (Philadelphia Museum of Art)



Plate LVI. A. J. Gros, The Battle of Aboukir (Detroit Art Institute)



Plate LVII. A. J. Gros, Napoleon on the Battlefield at Eylau (Toledo Museum of Art)



Plate LVIII. Charles Meynier, Napoleon on the Battlefield at Eylau (Musée Nationale, Versailles)



LIX. A. J. Gros, Napoleon on the Battlefield at Eylau (Musée du Louvre, Paris)



Plate LX. A. J. Gros, The Battle of the Pyramids (Musée de Versailles)



Plate LXI. A. J. Gros, The Capitulation of Madrid (Musée de Versailles)



LXII. Francisca de Goya, The Attack on the Mamelukes in the Puerta de Sol on May 2, 1808 (Museo del Prado, Madrid)



Plate LXIII. Diego Velasquez, The Surrender of Breda (Museo del Prado, Madrid)



Plate LXIV. James Gillray, The Handwriting on the Wall (British Museum, London)



Plate LXV. A. J. Gros, The Meeting of Francis II and Napoleon after the Battle of Austerlitz (Musée de Versailles)



Plate LXVI. A. J. Gros, King Louis XVIII leaving the Tuileries on the Night of March 20, 1815 (Musée de Versailles)



Plate LXVII. A. J. Gros, The Embarkation of the Duchess d'Anjou (Musée de Bordeaux)



Plate LXVIII. Peter Paul Rubens, The Arrival of Marie de Medici at
Marseilles (Musée du Louvre, Paris)



Plate LXVIX. A. J. Gros, Portrait of Madame Gros (Musée des Augustins, Toulouse)



Plate LXX. A. J. Gros, Bacchus and Ariadne (National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa)



Plate LXXI. A. J. Gros, Amour Stung by a Bee Complains to Venus (Musée des Augustins, Toulouse)



Plate LXXII. A. J. Gros, Hercules and Diomedes (Musée des Augustins, Toulouse)



Plate LXXIII. J. L. David, Mars Disarmed by Venus and the Three Graces
(Musée Royal des Beaux-Arts, Brussels)



Plate LXXIV. A. J. Gros, Mars Crowned by Victory (Room of Egyptian Antiquities, Musée du Louvre, Paris)



APPENDIX
ADDITIONAL DATA RELATIVE TO PLATES

| PLATE | |
|----------|---------------------------|
| I. | 1779; 2" x 3" |
| II. | 1763 |
| III. | 1665; 156" H |
| IV. | 1793 |
| V. | 1794-5; 26" x 38"* |
| VI. | 1795-9; 151" x 205 1/2" |
| VII. | 1790; 24" x 36"* |
| VIII. | 1795; 24" x 36"* |
| IX. | 1795; 24" x 36"* |
| X. | 1794 |
| XI. | 1796; 28 1/2" x 23 1/4" |
| XII. | 1796; 51" x 37" |
| XIII. | 1796; 6 1/2" x 5 3/4" |
| XIV. | 1796; 5" x 4" |
| XV. | 1510 |
| XVI. | 1798; 9 1/4" x 6 7/8" |
| XVII. | 1795; 3" x 4"* |
| XVIII. | 1789; 127 1/4" x 166 1/4" |
| XIX. | 1801; 48" x 39 1/3" |
| XX. | 1801; 54" x 78" |
| XXI. | 1791; 78" x 103" |
| XXII. | 1801; 70" x 49 1/2" |
| XXIII. | 1798; 73 1/4" x 52" |
| XXIV. | 1801; 20" x 33 7/8" |
| XXV. | 1517-20 |
| XXVI. | 1786; 24" x 34" |
| XXVII. | 1786; 24" x 34" |
| XXVIII. | 1812; 137 1/2" x 104 1/2" |
| XXIX. | 1804; 206" x 281" |
| XXX. | 1804; 19 1/2" x 26 3/4" |
| XXXI. | 1804; 29" x 36 1/4" |
| XXXII. | 1803 |
| XXXIII. | 1802; 5" x 6 1/4" |
| XXXIV. | 1590 |
| XXXV. | 1684 |
| XXXVI. | 1420 |
| XXXVII. | 1799 |
| XXXVIII. | 1815 |
| XXXIX. | 1796 |
| XL. | 1800 |
| XLI. | 1855; 141 1/4" x 235 1/2" |
| XLII. | 1817-19; 193 1/4" x 282" |
| XLIII. | 1814; 105" x 135 1/2" |
| XLIV. | 1773; 20" x 24 1/2" |
| XLV. | 1804 |

| | |
|---------|---------------------------|
| XLVI. | 1803; 12 1/2 " x 9 1/4" |
| XLVII. | 1813; 11 1/2" x 8 3/4" |
| XLVIII. | 1780; 96" x 72" |
| XLIX. | 1804; 5" x 19" |
| L. | 1784; 130" x 167 1/4" |
| LI. | 1804; 46 1/4" x 65 3/4" |
| LII. | 1806; 187" x 285"* |
| LIII. | 1804 |
| LIV. | 1802; 6 1/2" x 19" |
| LV. | 1796; 23 1/2" x 50 1/2" |
| LVI. | 1805-6; 34 3/4" x 54 1/2" |
| LVII. | 1807; 41 1/4" x 57 1/8" |
| LVIII. | 1807; 36 1/2" x 58" |
| LIX. | 1808; 41 1/4" x 56 3/4" |
| LX. | 1810; 84" x 127"* |
| LXI. | 1810; 104" x 136"* |
| LXII. | 1814; 105" x 135 1/2" |
| LXIII. | 1634-5; 121" x 144" |
| LXIV. | 1803; 8" x 12"* |
| LXV. | 1812; 25 1/2" x 32" |
| LXVI. | 1816-17; 135" x 235"* |
| LXVIII. | 1817; 135" x 235"* |
| LXIX. | 1822-3 |
| LXX. | 1822; 35 3/4" x 41 1/2" |
| LXXI. | 1833; 28" x 23" |
| LXXII. | 1835; 167 1/2" x 127 1/4" |
| LXXIII. | 1822-24; 118" x 103" |
| LXXIV. | 1827 |

* Indicates approximate dimensions