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A Problematic Attraction: French Artists and the Primitive at the French Academy in Rome

From the start of the nineteenth century French artists had sought inspiration in the early Renaissance period - its art, literature and history. Their motivations included nostalgia for the past, the prospect of fresh and dramatic subject matter, and a desire to purify French art. As a young painter, Ingres was among those enthused by a period broadly described as 'gothic' or 'primitive' by contemporary commentators. Yet a resurgence of these interests among students at the Academy in Rome during the early 1830s would be problematic. This paper traces the development of the goût primitif in France and the challenges it presented for the Academy of Fine Arts.

In December 1834, in his last official report as director of the French Academy in Rome, Horace Vernet remarked on the interest young artists in his charge were taking in early Renaissance art, and their return to the 'primitive' taste of Giotto and Fra Angelico. Vernet was inclined to take a fairly positive view of this tendency: «Si elle n'est pas poussée jusqu'à l'imitation servile, cette tendance ne peut que garantir des erreurs qu'on reproche au romantisme»¹.

Some months later, in June 1835, Vernet's successor Ingres again remarked on the influence medieval art was having on the work of some artists. Though Ingres acknowledged that a study of masters from the Middle Ages might have some benefits, his tone overall was much more negative:

[...] j'ai remarqué avec une sorte de peine, la prédilection accordée par quelques uns de M.M. les Pensionnaires à une imitation que j'appellerai malentendue des plus vieux maîtres du Moyen Age. Certes, ce n'est pas moi qui m'éleverai contre l'étude de ces vieux maîtres, je sais tous le profit qu'on en peut viser et le respect qu'on doit à quelques uns de leurs enseignements. La naïveté de l'expression, la vérité du geste sont des mérites qu'on ne saurait leur contester, mais ils manquent souvent l'art; de cet art dont les Grecs et plutard [sic] Raphaël et Michel-Ange ont posé les limites. Cependant cette tendance à l'imitation des œuvres imparfaites de préférence à l'étude des maîtres de cette admirable Renaissance qui ont poussé l'art à

son apogée ne semblerait-elle point un pas en arrière, un manque de goût et de discernement et amener avec elle un danger qu'il serait utile de combattre et contre lequel les lumières et les conseils salutaires de l'Académie peuvent seuls prémunir les jeunes artistes dont les études sont confiées à la sagesse de sa haute direction? Telles sont les questions que je me suis faites et que l'intérêt de l'École me fait un devoir de soumettre à la solution de l'Académie².

Between them, Vernet and Ingres were signalling three key points in relation to students at the Academy in Rome between the late 1820s and early 1830s: first, that by exploring the art of the Middle Ages they were moving outside the expected parameters of their studies; second, that the study of medieval art might have a value for young artists, either for its own sake or in combatting more dangerous influences; third, that there were dangers in imitating works that were 'imperfect', which it extended beyond the individual artists concerned to the interests of the École.

This paper gives a brief introduction to the *goût primitif* in France, before considering its impact on the work of history painters in Rome and the extent to which it challenged values upheld by the Academy of Fine Arts in Paris.

Interest in the Middle Ages was hardly a novelty in 1834-5, when Vernet and Ingres made their reports to the Academy in Paris. The medieval revival could be traced back to the eighteenth century and by the early nineteenth century was a well-established phenomenon in European culture³. The *goût primitif* was remarkably broad in its chronological scope, encompassing a loosely defined period between the fall of the Roman Empire and the end of the fifteenth century, yet it is possible to identify distinct types of engagement with the medieval past, including the following:

- Christian: nostalgia for a time when the Christian faith was powerful and unchallenged, and when Christendom was united in a single church.
- Spiritual: the conviction that art before the High Renaissance presented qualities of pure spirituality that set it above the worldly art of the High Renaissance.
- Political and social: the Middle Ages (in contrast with the modern era's social and political uncertainties) as a period when social hierarchies were clear and unquestioned, the power of king and nobility both absolute and beneficent.

- Exemplar: the past as repository of lessons for the present – its people and governments.
- National identity: notably in Germany, where the medieval past was mythologized as a time of German unity, and Gothic was identified as a national style of architecture.
- Historical: a commitment to the recovery and accurate description of the past, whether in historical accounts or in art and literature.
- Stylistic: often overlapping with other strands of the *goût primitif*, involving attempts to revive aspects of medieval art in technique and appearance, to recapture the spirit of medieval Christian art.
- Dramatic: the Middle Ages as a source for heightened ‘romantic’ themes from history and literature.

In France the post-revolutionary period brought a renewed interest in the country’s past, and a search for its ‘roots’ in the twin certainties of monarchy and Christianity. This engagement with the nation’s heritage took on a particular urgency thanks to the campaign of destruction waged against the Church after the revolution. As early as 1790 a government commission had decided to find a safe haven for objects that might otherwise be lost forever, and appointed the artist Alexandre Lenoir to take charge of the project. The new Musée des Monuments Français, housed in a former convent on the left bank of the Seine (Les Petits Augustins), opened to the public in 1795⁴. Its collection included tomb monuments, sculpture, stained glass and other church decorations, but as important as the objects themselves was the mode of their presentation. The display was ordered chronologically, century by century, so that visitors to the museum could track the development of French art over time. Lenoir had in effect created an historical record of French art from the early Middle Ages to the seventeenth century, which he hoped would reawaken in visitors a sense of their nation’s past.

It is difficult to quantify the museum’s impact in changing attitudes to the Middle Ages. The historian Michelet recalled visiting the museum in his youth, and the inspiration he drew from the sight of so many church relics set out in the museum’s gloomy, atmospheric interiors: «What was I looking for? I hardly know – the life of the time, no doubt, and the spirit of the ages. I was not altogether certain that they were not alive, all those marble sleepers, stretched out on their tombs [...]»⁵. This sense of imminence, a feeling that celebrated figures from the past might rise from their tombs, achieved painted form in the work of the so-

called 'Troubadour' artists, who made a close study of the museum's collection and even used the museum itself as a stage for their work. Bouton's *Vue de la salle du XIVe siècle* (fig. 1), for example, incorporates a scene from the life of King Charles VI, who suffered from fits of madness, brooding at the tomb of his father Charles V while his sister in law, Valentine de Milan, tries to keep courtiers at a distance.

Bouton belonged to a group of young artists from David's studio, the so-called *partie aristocratique*, whose leading figures included Pierre Révoil and Fleury Richard. Their work gave expression to a profound nostalgia for the lost certainties of the Ancien Régime, and they were also in search of an alternative to academic history painting, with its vision of the Antique past as a timeless repository for models of heroism and virtue. Instead history might be presented as a drama, acted out by kings and emperors who were essentially human in their fears and desires, virtues and failings.

Ingres was one of those who enthusiastically engaged with the new trend. His interest in early art, already in place before the move to Rome in 1806, emerged both in his *envois* at the Villa Medici and in paintings produced after he completed his studies. Between 1812 and 1826 none of his significant works were inspired by the antique⁶. Ingres' *Troubadour* works were intimate in scale and precise in technique, designed to evoke the effect of a medieval miniature or precious relic. Ingres was not simply concerned with style, but also sought to evoke the spiritual and expressive qualities of early Renaissance art. An outstanding example is the *Paolo et Francesca* (fig. 2) of 1819, in which the artist seeks to convey the awakening desire of the adulterous lovers from Dante's *Inferno*. Here as elsewhere Ingres was not overly concerned with historical exactitude: the costumes and setting belong to the fifteenth rather than fourteenth century⁷. But the chiselled contours, meticulous finish, jewel-bright colouring, sinuous lines and enclosed, box-like space combine to create a disturbing sense of desire and entrapment. This is what Ingres meant when he wrote of the expressive potential of medieval art, and he would continue to explore its possibilities until the late 1820s, despite critics' complaints about the 'gothic', 'bizarre' and 'archaic' appearance of his work⁸.

Ingres' *Troubadour* experiments during his first period in Italy coincided with the rise of the *Lukasbund*, more popularly known as the Nazarenes. This was a small group of young, mostly German artists who in the early years of the nineteenth century acted on their dissatisfaction with the conventional training on offer at Vienna's Academy of Art. Four of the group moved to Rome in the summer of 1810, where they found a home in the deserted monastery of San Isidoro, not far from the Villa Medici. Here the Nazarenes set themselves the task of reviving

religious art, and in the process inaugurated the century's most sustained and influential engagement with the art of the Middle Ages and early Renaissance⁹. Their models included Fra Angelico, Cimabue, Masaccio, Uccello, Gentile da Fabriano and Fra Filippo Lippi – artists often dismissed as 'primitive' in comparison with High Renaissance masters like Raphael and Michelangelo. For the Nazarenes, Italian painting of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, which expressed in a clear and straightforward manner the spirit of medieval Catholicism, had qualities lacking in High Renaissance paintings based on the pagan art of Antiquity. In place of empty virtuosity, early Renaissance art – which sought nothing other than to convey its Christian message – was imbued with the values of simplicity and purity. The Nazarenes' ideas had a significant and lasting impact on the international art community in Rome, and from there would be disseminated throughout Europe.

It is unclear how closely Ingres can be connected with the *Lukasbund*, though the proximity of San Isidore to the Villa Medici, together with the celebrity of the murals executed at the Casa Bartholdi in 1815 and the Casino Massimo in 1817, make it extremely likely that Ingres at the very least took an interest in a group whose interests so closely paralleled his own¹⁰. Certainly he shared their concern to look beyond surface appearances in evaluating art of the early Renaissance period, as an entry from his journal of this period makes clear:

En parcourant Montfaucon, je suis convancu que l'ancienne histoire de France, du temps de saint Louis et autres, serait une mine nouvelle à exploiter; que les costumes en sont très beaux et que quelques-uns se rapprochent des choses grecques: que ceux mêmes qui paraissent bizarres ne le sont peut-être qu'à cause du peu d'art avec lequel ils nous ont été transmis [...] tout beaux qu'ils soient, Achille et Agamemnon tiennent moins à cœur que saint Louis, Philippe de Valois, Louis le Jeanne et tant d'autres. Il faut aussi avouer que l'amour de la religion, qui animait ces vieux temps guerriers, donnait aux tableaux un air mystique, simple et grand [...] J'en conclus qu'il me faut prendre cette route comme la bonne et me contenter d'explorer les Grecs, sans lesquels il n'y a pas de vrai salut, de les amalgamer pour ainsi dire à ce nouveau genre. C'est comme cela que je peux devenir un novateur spirituel, adroit, et donner à mes ouvrages ce beau caractère inconnu jusqu'ici et qui n'existe que dans les ouvrages de Raphaël. J'ai la conviction que, si Raphaël avait eu des tableaux grecs à peindre, il nous intéresserait beaucoup moins [...] Donc, peignons des tableaux français, des Duguesclin, des Bayard, et tant d'autres¹¹.

These comments anticipated some of the observations Ingres would later

make in his letter of June 1835, quoted above, to the permanent secretary of the Academy, Quatremère de Quincy. The tone, however, had changed dramatically. In 1835 he wrote as an academician and as the director at the Villa Medici, and his primary responsibility was to uphold the values of the Academy in his new post. Though he might still admire medieval art for its qualities of naïvety and truth, he saw dangers in young artists imitating works that lacked the perfect art for which the Greeks, Raphael and Michelangelo were the great exemplars. It was Ingres' responsibility to warn the Academy of this trend so that it might find a solution¹². At least one contemporary critic noted a shift in Ingres' position from his earlier advocacy of masters before 1500: a reviewer for *l'Artiste* reported on the new director being alarmed that young artists in Rome were drifting too far in the direction of 'primitive' art¹³.

The young painters in Rome to whom Ingres referred in his letter had won the Academy's most prestigious competition, the Prix de Rome. During the nineteenth century these artists were awarded scholarships, funded by the government, to complete their studies at the Académie de France à Rome, which since 1803 had been housed in the Villa Medici¹⁴. Each year's laureats joined a community of about twenty young artists, often referred to as pensioners, in a range of different disciplines: history and landscape painting, sculpture, architecture, music and engraving. Directors, who usually served a term of six years, were responsible for overseeing the pensioners' work and wellbeing. The young artists did not follow a formal curriculum, but they were required to submit examples of their work for each year of their scholarship. These *envois* were by far the most important gauge of pensioners' commitment and the overall direction of their work. They were exhibited in Rome each spring, then packed up and sent to Paris to be exhibited at the École des Beaux-Arts and evaluated by members of the Académie des Beaux-Arts. For history painters, who had five-year scholarships, the main obligations were figure studies (during each of the first three years), a copy and painted sketch (fourth year) and a large *tableau* (fifth year)¹⁵.

History painters at the Académie de France in Rome had a special importance for the nineteenth-century Academy in Paris, always on the defensive within the wider context of the French art scene. The whole institution of the Prix de Rome, including the competition itself and the work of laureats in Rome, was the one area over which the Academy had direct control, and it became a primary focus for the Academy's hopes – and fears – for the future. Those students who won the prize were those it thought most likely to sustain its vision, including a conviction that French art belonged within a classical tradition. An ongoing concern there-

fore was to guide students' relationship with that tradition – in terms of the type of art they studied and how they interpreted it in their own work.

For pensioners in Rome guidance came via the annual reports on their *envois*, and this is where Ingres, in his letter of June 1835, looked for a solution to their worrying level of interest in the art of the Middle Ages. Each year, small committees from the Academy took on the task of drafting these reports, which assessed the various *envois* and advised students on how they might be improved. The preliminary texts were edited, printed and presented at the annual public meeting of the Academy in September or October. A more detailed version of the text was then sent to the pensioners in Rome. Though not conceived as exercises in theory, the reports still said a great deal about the Academy's aspirations, not least its vision of what exactly modern painters in Rome should be learning from the art of the past. As expressions of a collective institutional view the reports were not unproblematic. For a start they were drafted by small groups of individuals, while another individual – the Academy's permanent secretary – compiled the final text, tidying up contradictions and doubts raised in the manuscript text in accordance with his own opinions. On the other hand academicians over the years did employ a set of well-established criteria for what was expected of the *envois*, and maintained a high level of consistency on certain key matters, including the status of high art and the classical tradition.

With regard to tradition, any deviation from study of Antiquity and the High Renaissance presented a threat to the Academy and its values. Its whole *raison d'être* was based on a conception of western art that had Antiquity as its source and the High Renaissance as its apex. Students in Paris and Rome were therefore expected to study and absorb the lessons these twin models presented in harmony and proportion, whether by making direct copies from the originals or by emulating them in figure studies and *tableaux*. In choosing subjects for his *envois*, the pensioner's only sure route to Academy approval was to stay within the traditional bounds of high art – i.e. to select themes from ancient mythology, history and the Bible.

It may seem surprising that most of the annual reports were vague and all-embracing in their references to classical and High Renaissance art. The Academy tended to cite 'the masters' and 'the antique' in general, without explaining which masters, which period of Antiquity. But this lack of precision was telling. It indicated a desire to present the western art tradition as unproblematic, universal and timeless. To define a thing too closely was to delimit it, or imply the possibil-

ity of alternative choices. A notable instance of this vagueness was the report of 1831, where the importance of Rome was defined in terms of the scope of its relevance, Rome providing the greatest number of the most perfect examples of art across the ages: «...c'est à Rome surtout, que vous allez trouver tous ces modèles de bon gout, du vrai beau dans les écoles immortelles de tous les âges»¹⁶. The reports, after all, had a rhetorical function, and it was in keeping with this role that the Academy preferred to avoid lengthy arguments for one type of art over another. With regard to Antiquity, the overriding concern was not to explain the importance of any one period, but rather to stress the symbolic importance of Antiquity in general as a force for good. The very occasional references to 'bad' masters were notably vague¹⁷. When referring to Italian art, the Academy sought to make its choices appear unproblematic. It defended its chosen canon of great masters by presenting them as if they should be taken for granted, their authority beyond question. The names of great artists like Raphael and Michelangelo were simply recited, their importance a given – again reflecting the rhetorical function of the reports.

A clear and simple message was particularly desirable during the 1820s and 1830s, when it seemed to many that the classical tradition, as manifested in the work of David and his followers within the Academy, was a lost cause. Many contemporaries, as the critic Auguste Jal observed, were tired of the old Greeks and Romans and wanted something up-to-date instead¹⁸. Most of what was exhibited at the Paris Salons had little to do with history, or at least sought to revitalise the past for a modern audience. Delaroche's historical dramas – *Les Enfants d'Édouard* (Salon 1831) or *Jane Gray* (Salon 1834) – fascinated the Salon public in a way inconceivable for an academic figure study or a scene from Roman history. Perhaps even more significant were the buying policies of the state, with successive administrations refusing to restrict themselves to academic history and religious painting, but instead spreading their patronage between artists of widely different affiliations – for example between Ingres and Delacroix.

By the 1820s academic art was just one of several options for state purchase, without any particular claim on official patronage, a reality that the Academy could not face openly. The threat to its state-funded existence and vision for French art was inadmissible. In a letter to his father in December 1827, the painter Charles-Philippe de Larivière referred to that year's Salon and Delacroix's *Mort de Sardanapale*: «la peinture se trouve dans ce moment dans une crise terrible; est-ce la manière du grand Delacroix ou celle du froid David que l'on doit suivre? Faut-il faire extravagant ou seulement grand, noble, beau?»¹⁹ Contrast this direct

question with the equivocation of the Academy's reports, which never referred openly to Delacroix and his works: this would expose too plainly the Academy's sense of its own fragility, and turn a potential source of anxiety into a real and imminent threat. Instead the Academy sought out works by students that embodied its ideals, above all its vision of the classical tradition. In 1827 the counter-example to Delacroix and the Romantics was Joseph-Désiré Court's fifth-year *tableau Marc-Antoine* (fig. 3), showing the aftermath of Caesar's assassination, with Brutus and his accomplices making their escape as Mark Antony called on the people of Rome to take vengeance. For the Academy, Court's painting demonstrated in a direct and forceful manner how episodes from the classical past might offer timeless examples in human behaviour and moral values. It met – or even exceeded – the Academy's expectations of students in Rome, and the scene presented was «bien romaine» in its nobility, discipline and clarity; such a work would surely confound detractors of serious study and reanimate among young artists a love of good models and the ambition to create great paintings²⁰.

These assertions about nobility, discipline and good models reflected fears that pensioners might take another direction, that they might seek the fast route to fame and patronage by adapting their work to match the latest trends at the Salon. The Academy envisaged its pensioners as secluded from worldly pressures within the walls of the Villa Medici, but the realities were otherwise. The Academy knew well enough that its pensioners often saw themselves as losing out to contemporaries who had not won the Prix de Rome, but who seemed to be achieving lucrative rewards more quickly in Paris²¹. Pierre-Narcisse Guérin, director between 1823 and 1829, was particularly concerned about the threat: «[...] tous pour éviter la voie étroite des concours se jeteront dans celle des expositions, qui leur est ouverte et où les attendent de faciles succès, de nombreuses et précoces récompenses. C'est encore ici que l'Académie en usant de ses droits, peut et doit rechercher les moyens de fermer de dangereux issues à la foule envahissante»²².

Young artists in Rome knew that after their five years were up they would have to return to France and establish careers for themselves. They therefore stayed in close touch with developments on the Paris art scene, and whenever possible sent work to the Salon²³. The aim, apart from the immediate one of attracting private or state patronage, was to make an impact on the Paris art scene, to ensure that their names were not forgotten. Little as they might have enjoyed reading what critics had to say about their work, pensioners were keenly aware of the importance of publicity²⁴. When they submitted works to the Salon, painters chose those most likely to appeal to public taste. It is notable, for example, that after the

1820s male figure studies were rarely shown at the Salon, unless the nude figure featured as part of a narrative painting²⁵. Students at the Villa Medici often prepared the way for their return to France by breaking or at least adapting the *envoi* rules, producing works calculated to draw public and critical attention.

In planning his fifth-year *tableau* for 1830, Larivière was absolutely clear that his target audience was the Salon public. The painting, *Peste de Rome sous Nicolas V* (fig. 4) depicted a fifteenth-century Pope, Nicholas V, praying that Rome's inhabitants be granted relief from an outbreak of the plague. Here was a break from the heroes of Antiquity, and the painting's historical material was also more anecdotal, more 'humanised' than in compositions like Court's *Marc-Antoine*. The figures in the foreground, notably the mother/child grouping in the bottom right, would have been legible and appealing to contemporary viewers in whatever guise they appeared – whether as accessories to an historical drama or as peasants praying to a Madonna in an Italian genre painting. At the same time the pyramidal structure and clarity of the composition, with the figures of Pope and prelates set above and apart from the ordinary people, gave the scene a gravity appropriate in such a subject. Larivière himself was aiming for a compromise between classical nobility and human drama: «Je ne voudrais pas abandonner la route du style et cependant je voudrais plaire au public, il faut que je trouve un juste milieu, un sujet qui ne soit ni grec ni romain et qui puisse être susceptible d'une certaine dignité»²⁶.

To create maximum impact Larivière decided to keep his subject secret until the last minute. He anticipated that the Academy would dislike his work, but the main thing was to catch the attention of the public²⁷. Contemporary critics did indeed remark on the work's novelty, both in terms of its fifteenth-century subject and in its execution - the bringing together of firm draughtsmanship with 'true' (as opposed to academic and conventional) colour and light. Reviews made comparison between the *Peste* and works by the Venetians, Géricault and Guercino²⁸, and one critic, Étienne Delécluze, linked Larivière's unconventional style with that of the director in Rome, Horace Vernet²⁹. Vernet, who had arrived in Rome one year before Larivière submitted his *tableau*, was being signalled as a kind of conduit via which contemporary trends in Paris found their way to the Villa Medici.

During the period when Larivière was working on his *Peste de Rome*, he could have referred to two of Vernet's recent works: *Le pape Jules II ordonnant les travaux du Vatican et de Saint-Pierre à Bramante, Michel-Ange et Raphaël* (1827, Louvre) and *Le pape Pie VIII porté dans la basilique de Saint-Pierre* (1829, Château de Versailles). But the painting by Vernet with which we, from today's perspective, might be

inclined to compare the *Peste*, was not in fact exhibited until the Salon of 1833³⁰. This was the *Raphaël au Vatican* (fig. 5), dated 1832, showing an encounter between Raphael and Michelangelo. The general lines of Vernet's composition are far more complex than the more conventional pyramid structure of Larivière's painting. Even so, the two works have much in common, with figures grouped along sets of rising and crossing diagonals, and several distinct centres of interest. In both there is a great sense of movement: figures pointing, turning and looking over their shoulders. And there are other shared features, including the stairways leading back from centre foregrounds and arcaded backdrops (a courtyard of the Vatican in Vernet's picture; a section of the Colosseum in the Larivière). Perhaps the same dark-haired model served for the women in the bottom right hand corners of the two paintings, while the position of legs and feet in Vernet's work repeats that of the young girl in *Peste à Rome* and serves the same function of leading the viewer's eye to the centre of the composition³¹.

Larivière's *tableau* heralded a remarkable period of experimentation on the part of the Academy's pensioners, at least in their choice of subject-matter. During the first three decades of the nineteenth century, history painters had limited themselves to a fairly predictable range of religious or classical subjects for their *envois*³². Things changed dramatically during the early 1830s, when the Villa Medici saw something close to a romantic rebellion, with artists turning their backs on the standard antique heroes, gods, bathers, fauns and shepherds to experiment instead with a wide variety of literary and historical themes of a dramatic character. As director between 1829 and 1834, Vernet must surely bear some of the responsibility, both through the example of his own work and in his encouragement of greater independence and individuality in that of pensioners: «Je pense que l'École de Rome n'est point institutée pour former des imitateurs purs et simples des grands maîtres qui nous ont précédés, mais que messieurs les pensionnaires y sont placés pour apprendre à représenter de la manière la plus noble et la plus élevée les passions de la nature humaine»³³. Apart from Larivière's *Peste de Rome*, *envoi* subjects between 1830 and 1834 included Émile Signol's scenes from the July Revolution of 1830, *Une scène du 27 juillet* (1831) and *La Liberté* (1832); Jean-Louis Bézard's *Ganganelli and Carlino* (1832), depicting an anecdote from the childhood of an eighteenth-century pope³⁴; Signol's *Virginie. Les femmes malabares se disposant à laver son corps retiré des eaux après son naufrage* (1832), illustrating the eighteenth-century novel *Paul et Virginie* by Bernardin de St-Pierre; Bézard's scene from a drama by Alfred de Musset, *La sorcière accroupie et murmurant tout bas des paroles de sang, lave, pour le sabat, la jeune fille nue* (1833); and a sixteenth-century historical episode from Schopin in 1834, signant l'ordre

de massacre de St Barthélémy³⁵.

Alongside these themes from literature, history and revolution, three *envois* during Vernet's directorate engaged with the medieval period. Two of these were fifth-year *tableaux*: Norblin's *Ugolin* of 1831 (fig. 6), and Féron's *Pisani délivré de prison* of 1832; the third was a fourth-year sketch, Bézard's *Les crimes des hommes chassant la justice divine* of 1834 (fig. 7).

The first of the *tableaux*, Norblin's *Ugolin* represented a real change of direction on the painter's part. Winner of the Prix de Rome in 1825, Norblin submitted a sequence of unimpeachably classical *envois* during his first four years at the Villa Medici. They included *Un Cyparisse* in 1827, *Une baigneuse* in 1828 and *Une fuite de Marius* in 1829. But for his final *tableau* he decided to illustrate one of the most notorious episodes from Dante's *Inferno* – the description of the fate of Count Ugolino della Gherardesca of Pisa, who was accused of treachery, imprisoned with his sons and grandsons and left to die by starvation. In choosing such a subject, Norblin was proclaiming an interest in the Early Renaissance 'primitives', since contemporaries associated Dante with both the Nazarenes and a general predisposition towards archaism³⁶. Yet there was nothing in the least medieval or 'Gothic' about the style of Norblin's painting. In its composition, *Ugolin* referred to Guérin's *Le retour de Marcus Sextus* of 1799, and Norblin made no attempt to evoke a fourteenth-century context through dress and setting; instead he deployed a group of male nudes very similar to those he and other pensioners had been painting in the late 1820s³⁷.

The Paris critics were unimpressed by the unlikely combination of medieval narrative and classical form. Specifically, they found the nudity of the figures in such a context absurd; these were characters from thirteenth-century Pisa, not ancient Greeks: «c'est au-dessous de toute critique [...]»³⁸, said one, while another pointed out that Norblin's nudes looked much too fat to be victims of starvation³⁹. The Academy's report was rather more positive, observing that in general the painting demonstrated Norblin's progress during his time in Rome. It praised the arrangement of the figures, particularly those in the foreground, as being expressive and dramatic, and noted that the work was strong in terms of drawing, execution and effect. Nonetheless the painting was judged incoherent, because Norblin had applied the visual language of classical art to a medieval subject: «On regrette que le désir de peindre du nud, lui ait fait totalement négligé la coutume du temps, qui ne se retrouve nulle part, ce qui nuit à l'intelligence du sujet»⁴⁰.

A year later, in 1832, Éloi Féron submitted a scene from fourteenth-century Venice: *Pisani délivré de prison par le peuple à Venise*. The central figure here was another victim of state power, Admiral Vettor Pisani, who had been thrown into prison after defeat at the Battle of Pola in 1379. Acclaimed as a hero on account of his earlier victories over the Genoese, Pisani was released by popular demand later the same year, when Venice was once again under threat of attack. Féron's work is untraced, but descriptions in contemporary reviews and the Academy's report strongly indicate that this was a costume drama much in the manner of historical paintings by Horace Vernet and others at the Salon, designed to bring the past to colourful life for a modern audience. One reviewer of the time disparaged Féron's work as being a weak imitation of the Nazarene school in the medieval style⁴¹. The Academy was also critical, observing that Féron had veered from traditionally sanctioned 'timeless' themes from ancient mythology and the Bible. Its report for 1832 recalled the artist to his obligations as a student in Rome:

[...] les élèves, sont-ils envoyés à Rome pour peindre des simarres, des pantalons mi-parties rouge jaune etc. etc. [sic] L'académie pense au contraire qu'ils doivent y traiter des sujets qui comportent le développement du grand style historique, l'étude du nu, la connaissance de la mythologie, des poètes et des auteurs de l'antiquité [...] un jeune artiste dans ses études doit traiter des sujets dans le genre le plus difficile, c'est à dire le plus élevés⁴².

One further painter during Vernet's directorate sought to exploit the dramatic possibilities of medieval history: Jean-Louis Bézard, with his fourth-year sketch of 1834, *Les crimes des hommes chassant la justice divine* (fig. 7). In this work the various figures, dressed up in sixteenth-century costume, act out their roles within a semi-religious, semi-allegorical drama. To the left Bézard presents references to the arts of Antiquity and the Early Renaissance in an unlikely juxtaposition, a headless statue standing against a wall next to an altarpiece of the Madonna and Child; while the Castel Sant'Angelo forms a backdrop. In the foreground a group of the rich and powerful turn their backs on these symbols of order and faith, just as they ignore the pleas of those who are beset by war and famine. Above them an angel of divine justice flees the scene. Bézard was clearly ambitious for his *envoi*: at 180 x 227.5cm it was much larger than the norm for a fourth-year sketch, and he would later exhibit it as a finished painting, despite negative reactions to the sketch in 1834.⁴³ As with Féron in 1832, the Academy expressed its displeasure at Bézard's choice of subject: «On pourrait regretter de voir un beau talent se livré à la poursuite d'une idée incomplète et trop vague. Combien il eût obtenir de succès, s'il se fut exercé sur un sujet historique faisant autorité!»⁴⁴

Two pensioners sought to look beyond the purely dramatic possibilities of medieval subject-matter. These were Émile Signol, winner of the Prix de Rome in 1830, and Hippolyte Flandrin, winner for 1832. Of all the history painters of this period, Signol was the one most directly linked with medieval revivalism⁴⁵. Wanting more than the pathos and anecdotalism of medieval narratives, he sought to develop a new approach to Christian art. During his first few years as a pensioner he had experimented with romantic revolutionary and literary subjects, before turning in his third year towards themes of a heightened religiosity, inspired by Late Medieval and Early Renaissance art⁴⁶.

Signol's third-year *envoi*, *Le Christ au tombeau* (1834), showed the dead Christ being watched over by a figure of Religion. The painting itself has been lost, but an idea of its appearance can be gleaned from contemporary descriptions: the lower half of the picture showed Christ in the tomb, while the upper half was occupied by a kneeling angel, surrounded by a multitude of cherubs and surmounted by a Gothic arch⁴⁷. The Academy in its report warned Signol against «des réminiscences prises dans l'enfance de l'art»⁴⁸, and other reviewers also criticised the work for its archaism. Elder, in *L'Artiste*, noted that Signol had followed the example of 'naïve' painters not so much in his sentiment as in his stylistic approach, imitating in particular «l'ordonnance bizarre et mystique des leurs toiles». The critic was particularly unhappy with the greenish tone used for the body of Christ, suggestive of decomposition and quite unfitting for the Son of God. Ultimately this painting, which seemed to express thirteenth-century beliefs, was no more than a bizarre curiosity in the modern epoch, and Elder advised Signol to be true to his own time: «Que l'auteur renonce à ses sujets étrangers à notre temps, qu'il se fasse observateur de nos mœurs et de notre nature contemporaine, et peut-être sera-t-il un peintre»⁴⁹.

Signol ignored the advice. In his fourth year, together with a copy after Andrea del Sarto, he submitted a painting, *Réveil du juste - réveil du méchant*, which showed the welcoming of a 'good' soul into paradise and the damnation of a 'bad' soul by two angels of Heaven and Hell at the Last Judgement (fig. 8). For Signol's critics, the influence behind the work was obvious: he had looked back to artists of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, in particular to the works of Fra Angelico and Orcagna⁵⁰. The Academy agreed, pointing out that such emulation of artists who had 'prepared' the way for the Renaissance was a serious error which threatened to harm an otherwise promising young talent; Signol should have heeded its warning of the previous year⁵¹. Signol left Rome early, in November 1835, fearing the possibility of a cholera epidemic and consequent travel restric-

tions, so his final *envoi*, *La religion chrétienne vient au secours des affligés et leur donne la résignation* (fig. 9), was left at the *ébauche* stage and not mentioned in the Academy's report for 1836⁵². It represents final confirmation of Signol's commitment to religious art and his belief that the painters of the Early Renaissance were the most appropriate models for him to follow in his pursuit of true Christian art. In this he was falling into line with the many writers and artists who had since the start of the century asserted the dichotomy between the worldly High Renaissance (based on the pagan art of Antiquity) and the more purely spiritual early Renaissance (focussed on Christian ideals)⁵³.

Signol was no doubt the primary culprit on Ingres' mind when he warned the Academy about errors of taste and discernment among pensioners attracted to the Middle Ages in his letter of June 1835. But he must also have been concerned about Hippolyte Flandrin, winner of the Prix de Rome in 1832 and his favourite student. Flandrin's first two figure studies, *Polytés* (1834) and *Jeune berger assis* (1835) were perfectly conventional, but Flandrin also submitted in 1835 a *tableau* entitled *Dante conduit par Virgile* (fig. 10). Like so many of his fellow pensioners, Flandrin had an eye on the Salon, and his letters clearly indicate his practical motives for exhibiting compositions like *Dante* at the Salon. The work was in fact well reviewed at the Salon of 1836 and Flandrin hoped it might find a buyer⁵⁴. By June 1836, with no offers in the pipeline, he began to fear that he might have been over-optimistic, as he indicated in a letter to his friend Ambroise Thomas: «Quant à la vente, je t'avouerai que tout le monde s'était tellement appliqué à me fourrer ça dans la tête, que j'avais fini par l'espérer»⁵⁵. Flandrin was not only motivated by the immediate financial rewards of their work; he was also concerned about reputation - what the public and critics thought of his work. Thus, while discouraged by the slow progress being made to sell *Dante*, Flandrin could at least comfort himself with the knowledge that the painting had drawn a great deal of public attention: «Ma peinture a été plus remarquée que je ne l'espérais»⁵⁶. His friends, meanwhile, sought to allay any anxieties he might have about his prospects. Guillaume Bodinier reported that Flandrin's near contemporary in Rome, Émile Signol, had won lucrative commissions since returning to Paris, and the critical acclaim for *Dante* would certainly be a help: «[...] vous reviendrez à Paris dans une belle, très belle position, très bien apprécié et très recherché»⁵⁷.

As with Norblin's fifth-year *tableau* of 1831, the choice of Dante as a source of inspiration was a clear sign of Flandrin's interest in an early, 'primitive' period. But Ingres' concern was not simply that his student had erred in line with other pensioners of the time. In Flandrin's case Ingres focussed on the matter of allegiance

– had the young artist stayed loyal to his master's teaching or had he fallen under the influence of Friedrich Overbeck, the leading Nazarene artist still working in Rome during the 1830s⁵⁸? This anxiety is reflected in Ingres' response to Dante. Before arriving in Rome, Ingres expressed doubts over the direction being taken by his pupil, warning him specifically against the influence of Nazarene artists⁵⁹. Flandrin himself was apprehensive about his master's possible reaction to the envoi: «je crains bien que M. Ingres ne l'approuve pas [...]»⁶⁰. All was well once Ingres saw Flandrin's painting for himself. It probably helped that Flandrin had made clear references to works by Ingres in the composition and figures of his *Dante*, notably in citing the landscape background to Ingres' envoi of 1808, *Oedipe et le sphinx* (fig. 11). This and other details served as a proclamation of continuing loyalty to his master. On Ingres' arrival in Rome the doubts and anxieties came to an end: he gave *Dante conduit par Virgile* his unqualified approbation and welcomed Flandrin back into the fold⁶¹.

Flandrin, in common with Signol, and unlike other pensioners of the time, was looking for more than picturesque drama. First of all in his choice of subject: where other artists might choose a subject from the *Inferno*, or a medieval battlefield, or a popular insurrection, Flandrin took an episode from the *Purgatorio* showing Dante and Virgil offering consolation to those who in life have been envious of others. He then applied a formal language calculated to enhance the seriousness of his subject. His colours were sombre – only the red of Dante's robe standing out against the general gloom – while in his linear design Flandrin stressed the relationships between his figures – their poses tending to reflect and develop each other: the viewer's eye moving from the upright Virgil, to the inclining figure of Dante, to the crouching figures of the inhabitants of Purgatory; a progression from straight line, to shallow curve, to semi-circle.

Remarkably, the Academy's report on Flandrin's envoi made no reference to the themes of archaism and Early Renaissance art. Instead it expressed general satisfaction with the painting, noting that while its tonality was too dark and lacking in transparency, the overall effect was good, the figures true and expressive⁶². The Academy took a similar line with Flandrin's later envois: these included a *St Clair 1er évêque de Nantes, guérissant des aveugles* (1836) and the fifth-year *tableau, Jésus-Christ et les petits enfants* (1838) – despite the fact that this last work, with its two kneeling figures in the foreground, made clear reference to Giotto's *Raising of Lazarus* from the Arena Chapel. By the late 1830s, the Academy had a new concern – and that was the director himself. The 1838 report deplored «l'aspect général» of the envois, their monotonous colour and dark tonality, and signalled

Flandrin as a key culprit⁶³. Again in 1839, over a year after Flandrin had completed his pension, the Academy once again rebuked what it saw as a «couleur générale» among painted *envois*. Similar remarks followed in 1840 and 1841⁶⁴.

Ingres saw the Academy's criticism as a clear attack on his directorate. His world was divided between those who were with him, his 'family' of pupils and pensioners in Rome, and those who sought to undermine him, a group that included critics, some former pupils who had betrayed his principles and fellow members of the Academy⁶⁵. This siege mentality emerges quite plainly from accounts left by other contemporaries in Rome – including pensioners. The painter Eugène Roger described Ingres' fury on learning the contents of the 1838 report, before its arrival in Rome, from details given in a journal. He was particularly enraged by the suggestion that the paintings for 1838 were dull and monotonous in colour, a fault attributable to «une influence étrangère». This anger even extended to Flandrin, for not having written to warn him of the report: «Il voulait tout d'abord donner sa démission et se retirer en pays étranger. Rien que cela! Depuis il s'est un peu calmé, mais je crois qu'il sera difficile de l'empêcher de faire une scène à l'Institut par une lettre»⁶⁶.

Flandrin and Signol were exceptional among history painters in Rome in their sustained engagement with Medieval and Early Renaissance religious art. Their efforts paid off in the long term; both went on to win major commissions for church decoration after returning to Paris. For other pensioners also (notably Larivière, Schopin and Féron), experimentation with historical subjects in Rome served as preparation for state patronage⁶⁷. After the 1830s the taste for medieval history and literature faded from the scene⁶⁸. But pensioners in Rome continued to seek ways of appealing to contemporary taste, often pushing against the Academy's expectations in the process. During the 1840s, 50s and 60s female nudes, genre scenes and Orientalist subjects influenced by the Spanish art tradition all featured among the *envois* submitted for the Academy's inspection. Ultimately its vision of the Villa Medici as a sanctuary, isolated from external influences and guided by the timeless values of high art, proved empty and futile. The experiments with early Renaissance art during the early 1830s were just one expression of this larger truth.

- 1 5 December 1834, Archives de l'Académie des Beaux-Arts, Institut de France, Paris (hereafter referred to as ABA), 5 E 24. This was Vernet's last letter as director to Quatremère de Quincy, the permanent secretary of the Académie des Beaux-Arts in Paris.
- 2 Letter to Quatremère de Quincy, 20 June 1835, ABA, 5 E 24.
- 3 See V. ORTENBERG, *In search of the Holy Grail: The Quest for the Middle Ages*, London 2006, pp. 6-25. For the widespread interest in Europe's medieval past during the early nineteenth century see *L'invention du passé, Histoires de cœur et d'épée en Europe, 1802-1850 (Tome II)*, exhibition catalogue (Lyon, Musée des Beaux-Arts, 2014), eds S. Bann and S. Paccoud, Paris 2014.
- 4 For a recent overview of the museum see B. DE CHANCEL-BARDELOT, *Le musée des Monuments français, une source d'inspiration pour les artistes "troubadour"*, in *L'invention du passé: Gothique, mon amour 1802-1830 (Tome I)*, exhibition catalogue (Bourg-en-Bresse, monastère royal de Brou, 2014), ed. M. Briat- Philippe, Paris 2014, pp. 13-29. Also A. McCLELLAN, *Inventing the Louvre: Art, Politics and the Origins of the Modern Museum in Eighteenth-Century Paris*, Cambridge 1994, pp. 155-197.
- 5 *Histoire de la Révolution française*, quoted in F. HASKELL, *History and Its Images: Art and the Interpretation of the Past*, London and New Haven 1993, p. 252.
- 6 For this period of Ingres' career, see *Ingres, 1780-1867*, exhibition catalogue (Paris, Musée du Louvre 2006), eds V. Pomarède et al., Paris 2016, pp. 115-128, 214-223.
- 7 Francesca's dress can be linked to a drawing Ingres made from Leonardo's *La Belle Ferronnière*, an example of female fashion at Milan's ducal court during the 1490s, while the setting refers to a work by Masolino, see G. VIGNE, *Ingres*, Paris 1995, p. 125; R. ROSENBLUM, *Ingres*, London 1990, p. 90.
- 8 See for example Auguste JAL: «M.Ingres semble n'être pas de son siècle; il nous parle la langue de Ronsard, et il s'étonne que nous ne le comprenions pas [...]», *L'artiste et le philosophe. Entretiens critiques sur le Salon de 1824*, Paris 1824, p. 355.
- 9 For a recent account of the Nazarene group, see the essay by Antonella BELLIN in this volume and L. GOSSMAN, *Unwilling Moderns: The Nazarene Painters of the 19th Century*, «Nineteenth-Century Art Worldwide», 2:3, Autumn 2003: < <http://www.19thc-artworldwide.org/autumn03/73-autumn03/autumn03article/273-unwilling-moderns-the-nazarene-painters-of-the-nineteenth-century> > (7/9/2017).
- 10 On Ingres' possible connection with the Nazarenes see POMARÈDE, *Ingres, 1780-1867*, p. 153; also VIGNE, *Ingres*, pp. 119-122.
- 11 *Journal inédit d'Ingres*, in *Ingres d'après une correspondance inédite*, ed. A. Boyer d'Agen, Paris 1909, pp. 485-486; also S. SIEGFRIED, *Ingres: Painting Reimagined*, New Haven 2009, pp. 439-40, notes 53-54.
- 12 See above, note 2.
- 13 The critic claimed that Ingres was issuing warnings to the pensioner Émile Signol and his own student Henri Lehmann, see ANON, *École des Beaux-Arts. Exposition des grand prix, «L'Artiste»*, XII, 1836, p. 121. This point is contradicted by other evidence that Ingres continued to admire early Renaissance art and advised his pupils to study it, see D. TERNOIS, *Le Préraphaélitisme français*, in E.-E. AMAURY-DUVAL, *L'atelier d'Ingres*, édition critique de l'ouvrage publié à Paris en 1878, Paris 1993, pp. 391-392.
- 14 On the history of the Academy in Rome, see H. LAPAUZE, *Histoire de l'Académie de France à*

Rome, 2 vols, Paris 1924.

- 15 *Règlements pour les jeunes artistes, pensionnaires du roi*, in *Institut de France, Académie Royale des Beaux-Arts*, Paris 1822; *Règlements pour les travaux des pensionnaires à l'Académie de France, à Rome*, in *Académie des Beaux-Arts*, Paris 1835; *Règlements pour les pensionnaires de l'Académie de France à Rome*, Paris 1846. See also K.A. McLAUHLAN, *French Artists in Rome, 1815-1863*, Ph.D. thesis, Courtauld Institute, London 2001, pp. 375-376.
- 16 *Rapport sur les ouvrages des pensionnaires à l'école royale de France à Rome lu à la séance publique de l'Académie Royale des Beaux-Arts [...]* (hereafter cited as RA), 1831, p. 17.
- 17 See for example the report on Joseph-Désiré Court's *Jeune nymphe qu'entraîne au bain un jeune faune* of 1824, which the Academy found to be in «le gout manière d'une École [18th-century Rococo] dont nous sommes heureusement fort loin», ABA, 5 E 15.
- 18 A. JAL, *Salon de 1833. Causeries du Louvre*, Paris 1833, pp. 95-96; also STENDHAL, *Salon de 1824*, in *Mélanges d'art et de littérature*, Paris 1932, pp. 21-22.
- 19 *Maestà di Roma da Napoleone all'unità d'Italia: D'Ingres à Degas, Les artistes français à Rome*, exhibition catalogue (Rome, Académie de France à Rome, 2003), ed. O. Bonfait, Milan, 2003, p. 113.
- 20 ABA 5 E 17. Other critics of the time acknowledged the importance of Court's painting: «La Coutume des grands tableaux se perpétue à Rome; M. Court les a mis en vogue», ANON, «Le Constitutionnel, journal du commerce, politique et littéraire», 291, 18 October 1830, s.n.p.; also A. BÉRAUD, *Annales de l'école française des beaux-arts*, Paris 1827, p. 3. In later years the Academy would continue to refer to Court's work, expressing the wish that others follow his example.
- 21 RA, 1818, pp. 27-28.
- 22 Letter to Antoine Quatremère de Quincy, 15 March 1829, ABA, 5 E 19; also letter to Quatremère de Quincy, 1 July 1826: «[...] le mot Étude semble blesser leur amour-propre, et, telle est d'ailleurs la direction actuelle des idées qu'il faut avant tout produire de l'effet. C'est le but unique» in LAPAUZE, *Histoire de l'Académie*, p.170. Finally, at the end of his directorate, Guérin professed near despair at his failure to instil a love of work for its own sake among pensioners: «J'avais espéré [...] ranimer dans l'École de Rome l'amour de l'art, le zèle au travail, et par suite la considération que en est la juste récompense. Tout cela n'était qu'une brillante illusion. Ainsi a fini pour moi un rêve de six années pendant lesquelles m'ont frappé de pénibles et ruineuses réalités. Mais la coupe est vidée, je l'espère; j'en suis à la lie.» Letter to Quatremère de Quincy, 7 June 1828, ABA, 5 E 8.
- 23 Pensioners sent an average of between two and three paintings per Salon in the period 1815-1865.
- 24 See for example Eugène Roger's letter to Flandrin, 6 October 1835, thanking him for transcribing an article on one of his works at that year's Salon: «Je savais que les journaux nous avaient bien traités [...] Si peu que l'on tienne à l'opinion des journaux, tant des gens les lisent, qu'on aime toujours mieux en être bien traités [sic...], M.-M. AUBRUN, *Eugène Roger à Hippolyte Flandrin: à travers leurs relations épistolaires, la vie d'un pensionnaire de la Villa Médicis, Correspondance d'artistes des XVIIIe et XIXe siècles*, «Archives de l'Art Français», XXVIII, 1986, pp. 269-290: 272. Also see the comments of Paul Baudry: «...c'est Paris! Paris qui juge, qui a l'esprit, l'instinct, le goût; c'est lui qui donne le coup de pied ou l'accolade...», in C. EPHRUSSI, *Paul Baudry, sa vie et son œuvre*, Paris 1887.
- 25 Pensioners also sent works to the Salon other than their *envois*, mostly portraits and genre

- subjects. For these, and a full list of *envois* exhibited between 1817 and 1865, see McLAU-CHLAN, *French Artists in Rome*, Appendix 7, pp. 389-399. See also the letters of Dominique Papety, winner of the Grand Prix in 1836: «...il me semble toujours bien difficile d'arranger une figure toute nue de manière à ce qu'on vous l'achète, c'est ce qui fait le tourment de tous les pensionnaires», Papety to his parents, 22 May 1837, in F.-X. AMPRIMOZ, *Lettres de Dominique Papety à ses parents et ses amis, Rome, 1837-42*, «Archives de l'Art Français», XXVIII, 1986, pp. 201-267: 209.
- 26 M. KORCHANE, *L'Académie de France à Rome, 1815-1830: un Romantisme impossible*, in BONFAIT, *Maestà di Roma*, p. 114.
- 27 *Ibid.* A reasonable anxiety on Larivière's part. But despite his and Vernet's predictions, the Academy gave Larivière's painting a favourable report in 1830. The upper part of the painting, with the group of prelates, was suitably dignified and grave, while the scene as a whole was «grande et pathétique»; academicians also admired the touch of human drama in the foreground: «L'épisode d'un religieux enlevant un enfant qui vient de rendre le dernier soupir sur les genoux de sa mère expirante, est du plus touchant intérêt [...]», *RA*, 1830, p. 6; cf. the Academy's response to Schopin's *Charles X signant l'ordre de massacre du St Barthélemy* in 1834. This *envoi* was submitted a year after the exhibition of Robert-Fleury's *Scène de la Saint-Barthélemy* acquired by the State from the 1833 Salon. The Academy expressed its dislike for a subject which betrayed the influence of fashionable taste, and reminded Schopin that elaborate narrative paintings of this sort were not part of his obligations, *RA*, 1834, AF, C46.
- 28 «Larivière montre qu'on peut allier le dessin sévère de David et la couleur soi-disant vénitienne, c'est-à-dire la couleur vraie [...]», ANON, *Exposition des ouvrages envoyés par les pensionnaires de l'école de Rome*, «Journal des Artistes», XV, vol. 2e, 10 October 1830, pp. 273-275: 273; C. FARCY, *Peinture et sculpture, Salon de 1831*, «Journal des Artistes», XIX, n.19, 8 May 1831, pp. 343-353: 349.
- 29 Delécluze warned Larivière against the vice of imitation: «[...] l'imitation de la manière de M. H. Vernet y est frappante, et nous avouerons sincèrement que, bien que le maître dont les ouvrages séduisant M. Larivière, soit, [...] un très habile homme, ce n'est pas une raison suffisante pour l'imiter, parce qu'un artiste, quand il veut mériter le nom, ne doit copier personne [...]», E.-J. DELÉCLUZE, *Beaux-Arts. Salon de 1831*, «Journal des Débats», 9 May 1831, p. 3.
- 30 Larivière had clearly decided on his subject by May 1829: «En 1447 ou environ il y eut une peste terrible à Rome, pendant laquelle le pape faisait [sic] faire des processions pour apaiser la colère divine, voilà mon sujet: le pape s'arrête pour bénir un groupe [sic] de pestiférés. Les costumes comme tu peux le penser sont très beaux, j'aurais peu de nuds, autant cependant que se je faisais des romains antiques couverts de la toge», Larivière to his father 9 May 1829, quoted in KORCHANE *L'Académie*, p. 114. According to Larivière, the director gave him the use of a studio and made regular visits to encourage him in his work – so it seems quite possible that Vernet's work was inspired at least in part by Larivière's.
- 31 Contemporaries speculated about what Vernet might have learned during his time in Rome; that he was trying to elevate and purify his style in response to what he saw around him: E.-J. DELÉCLUZE, *Exposition du Luxembourg: M. H. Vernet*, «L'Artiste», I, 1831, pp. 21-24: 21-2; P. MANTZ, *Galerie du XIXe siècle, Horace Vernet*, «L'Artiste», II, 22 November 1857, pp. 177-182: 179; also Y. TARALON & J.-M. PUIPIER, *Horace Vernet, 1789-1863*, exhibition catalogue (Rome, Académie de France, 1980), Rome 1980, pp. 79-80.

- 32 For example, in 1816 *La Mort d'Abel* by Drölling, *Un Prométhée* by Pallière, *Un Mercure* by Pallière, *Anacréon et l'Amour* by Forestier and *Psyché* by Picot; in 1819 *Ajax* and *Jésus-Christ conduit au Calvaire* by Vinchon, *Fleuve Scamandre* by Alaux, *Guerrier grec mort* by Thomas and *Caïn et Abel* by Cogniet; in 1823 *Othriades blessé à mort* by Hesse, *Daphnis et Chloé* by Dubois, *Mort de Thémistocle* by Dubois, *Érésichton frappant de la brèche* by Coutan, *Arion sauvé par un dauphin* by Coutan, *Aristomène et ses compagnons* by Coutan, and *Une scène du Déluge* by Court.
- 33 Vernet to Gérard, 19 April 1929, in LAPAUZE, *Histoire de l'Académie*, II, 1924, p. 188.
- 34 Bézard's work illustrates an anecdote from the life of Pope Clement XIV, who as a boy was reportedly saved from drowning by the young Carlo Bertinazzi, who would later win fame as an actor of the *commedia dell'arte*. The source was probably L.A. de CARACCIOLI, *La Vie du pape Clément XIV*, Paris 1775.
- 35 Details of *envois* for each year are from the lists sent by the directors in Rome, Rome, Académie de France (hereafter cited as AF), C13-66.
- 36 TERNOIS, *Le Préraphaélitisme français*, p. 385; M. LAMY, *Dante, guide des romantiques français en Italie*, «Revue de l'Art Ancien et Moderne», XLVI, 1924, pp. 379-386.
- 37 See for example in 1827: Norblin, *Cyparisse expirant sur le cerf qu'il a tué par mégarde*; Larrivière, *Aristée déplorant la perte de ses abeilles*. Also compare Norblin's *tableau* with Giuseppe Diotti's more thorough-going costume drama: *Il conte Ugolino* 1832, 185 x 212 cm, Brescia, Civici Musei d'Arte e Storia.
- 38 ANON, «Nouvelles», «L'Artiste», II, 1831, pp. 35-36: 36.
- 39 «...ils sont gras et boursouflés et voilà tout», G. LAVIRON AND B. GALBACIO, *Le Salon de 1833*, quoted in *Le temps des passions, collections romantiques des Musées d'Orléans*, exhibition catalogue (Orléans, Musée des beaux-arts, 1997-98), eds É. Moinet, V. Pomarède, B. Chenique, Orléans 1997, p. 301.
- 40 RA, 1831; ABA, 5 E 21.
- 41 «Style du moyen âge, timide, craint la critique de l'Institut, et se fait bâtarde par peur, tapage de couleurs assez discordantes...; manque absolu d'air et de dégradation de ton;...bruit de peuple que ne s'entend pas....Le tableau de M. Féron ressemble à la moderne peinture allemande. Il ne valait pas la peine d'aller en Italie pour imiter les Allemands de ce temps-là», ANON, *Beaux-Arts*, «Le Constitutionnel», 246, 2 September 1832, p. 1.
- 42 RA 1832; ABA 5 E 22.
- 43 ANON, *Beaux-Arts. Exposition des envois de Rome à l'École Royale*, «Le Constitutionnel», 284, 11 October 1834, n.p. Bézard sent his painting to the 1837 Salon.
- 44 AF, C46.
- 45 M. CAFFORT, *De la séduction nazaréenne ou note sur Ingres et Signol (Rome, 1835)*, in «Bulletin du Musée Ingres», LI-LII, 1985, p. 53-76.
- 46 *Ibid.*
- 47 See M. CAFFORT, *Un français 'nazaréen'*, «Revue de l'Art», LXXIV, 1986, pp. 47-54: 48.
- 48 RA, 1834; AF, C46.
- 49 M. ELDER, *Exposition des ouvrages envoyés par les élèves de l'École de Rome*, «L'Artiste», VIII, 1834, pp. 117-118. Also see Eugène Roger's letter to Flandrin, 6 October 1835: «Si peu que l'on tienne à l'opinion des journaux, tant des gens les lisent, qu'on aime toujours mieux être

- bien traités [sic]. Il paraît que ce pauvre Signol [*Christ au tombeau*] ne l'a pas été et que l'on a trouvé sa peinture trop gothique [...], AUBRUN, *Eugène Roger à Hippolyte Flandrin*, p. 272.
- 50 See CAFFORT, *Un français 'nazaréen'*, p. 49.
- 51 RA, 1835; AF, C46. No mention of these concerns was made in the published reports for 1834 and 1835.
- 52 It was completed in Paris, exhibited at the Salon in 1837 (1676); and bought by the State 16 October 1837.
- 53 A vision expressed e.g. by Chateaubriand in *Le Génie du Christianisme*, 1802, and applied by the Nazarenes in their work. See A. CHASTEL, *Le Goût des préraphaélites en France*, in *De Giotto à Bellini*, exhibition catalogue (Paris 1956), under the direction of M. Laclotte, Paris 1956, pp. VII-XXI. Dominique Papety, winner of the Prix de Rome in 1836, referred to the transition in Raphael's work from genuinely religious art (i.e. the *Disputa*), in which there was a perfect alliance between form and idea, to the worldly paintings he produced under Michelangelo's influence. The latter, Papety thought, were not suitable for church decoration, and it was unfortunate that Raphael's later work had been emulated by other artists, so that religious art became nothing more than a pleasing diversion for tourists. By removing all traces of materialism from his religious paintings Papety hoped to return church art to its proper purpose, which was to be a source of spiritual inspiration. Papety to Aubert, 25 September 1839, AMPRIMOZ, *Lettres de Dominique Papety*, p. 253. With regard to Raphael's work Papety was expressing views increasingly prevalent from the early nineteenth century: see J.-P. CUZEN & D. CORDELLIER, *Raphaël et l'art français*, exhibition catalogue (Galeries nationales du Grand Palais, Paris 1983), eds J.-P. Cuzin & D. Cordellier, Paris 1983, pp. 28-29; also M. ROSENBERG, *Raphael and France: the artist as paradigm and symbol*, Pennsylvania 1995, pp. 139-140, 175-176; M.P. DRISKEL, *Representing belief: religion, art and society in 19th-century France*, Pennsylvania, 1992, pp. 75-79.
- 54 See Thomas to Flandrin, 22 May 1836: «[...] tu as obtenu un succès unanime [...] témoin, je n'entends parler que de toi partout où il est question de peinture», M.-M. AUBRUN, *Une correspondance d'Ambroise Thomas à Hippolyte Flandrin*, «Bulletin du Musée Ingres», no. LXI-LXII, 1990, pp. 7-58: 30; also Bodinier to Flandrin (quoting from favourable reviews), 21 March 1836, in G. BODINIER, *Un ami angevin d'Hippolyte et de Paul Flandrin: correspondance de Victor Bodinier avec Hippolyte et Paul Flandrin (1832-1839)*, Angers 1912, p. 86. On the sale negotiations, handled through Flandrin's friend Bodinier, see *ibid.*, pp. 81, 86.
- 55 14 June 1836, H. DELABORDE, *Lettres et pensées d'Hippolyte Flandrin*, Paris, 1864, p. 250; also Flandrin to Bodinier, 3 June 1836, BODINIER, *Un ami angevin*, p. 103. The painting was in fact bought by the State for 3,500 francs (well above Flandrin's earlier low price limit of 1,500 francs) and sent to Lyon's museum in 1837, see *Hippolyte, Auguste et Paul Flandrin: Une fraternité picturale au XIXe siècle*, exhibition catalogue (Paris, Musée du Luxembourg, 1984; Lyon, Musée des beaux-arts), eds J. Foucart & B. Foucart, Paris 1984, p. 64; also DELABORDE, as above, p. 259. Flandrin would again submit a painting in addition to his figure study, *Saint Clair...guérissant les aveugles*, a commission from Nantes Cathedral, AUBRUN, *Eugène Roger à Hippolyte Flandrin*, p. 279.
- 56 Flandrin to Thomas, 14 June 1836, DELABORDE, 1864, *Lettres et pensées*, p. 213.
- 57 Bodinier to Flandrin, 18 May 1836, BODINIER, *Un ami angevin*, p. 98; Bodinier to Flandrin, 2 November 1837, *ibid.*, p. 128; also Bodinier to Flandrin, 21 March 1836, *ibid.*, p. 85. «Le Constitutionnel, journal du commerce, politique et littéraire», 291, 18 October 1830,

s.n.p.;

- 58 H. DORRA, *Dante et Virgile par Hippolyte Flandrin au Musée des Beaux-Arts*, «Bulletin des Musées et Monuments Lyonnais», I, no. 1, 1976, pp. 391-402; also D. TERNOIS, 'Florence en 1858: une lettre d'Ingres à Edouard Gatteaux', «Il se rendit en Italie», études offertes à André Chastel, ed. M. Laclotte et al., Rome, 1987, p. 635.
- 59 DORRA, *Dante et Virgile*, p. 396
- 60 H. Flandrin to A. Flandrin, 28 October 1834, DELABORDE, 1864, *Lettres et pensées*, pp. 227-228; also TERNOIS, 1993, *Le Préréphaélitisme français*, pp. 396-397. Soon after arriving in Rome, Flandrin had sought to reassure Ingres of his loyalty: «Dis bien à M. Ingres que lui, Raphaël et Phidias, voilà les seuls hommes avec lesquels je cause peinture», Flandrin to his brothers, 25 February 1833, DELABORDE, as above, p. 197.
- 61 Lapauze tells the story of Ingres visiting Flandrin's studio and embracing both him and his brother Paul: «Vous êtes bien les enfants de mon cœur», LAPAUZE, *Histoire de l'Académie*, p. 240; also DORRA, *Dante et Virgile*, pp. 396-397.
- 62 «Ce tableau a un bon aspect, une grand force de ton; le groupe de ces malheureux est bien entendu, les têtes ont de l'expression; elles sont peintes d'une manière large. La figure du Dante est dans une attitude vraie, son ajustement simple est d'un ton fort et harmonieux. [...] La teinte générale tire sur le noir et semble manquer de transparence; on y trouve, cependant, une riche conduit de ton et un heureux ensemble d'effet», AF, C46. The published text reiterated these comments, while further expressing satisfaction that Flandrin's figure of Dante was modelled on Raphael's depiction of the poet in his *Parnassus*, RA, 1835, p. 17.
- 63 AF, F 37.
- 64 RA, 1839, p. 2; AF, C 37; RA, 1841, p. 47.
- 65 H. DELABORDE, *Ingres: sa vie, ses travaux, sa doctrine, d'après les notes manuscrites et les lettres du maître*, Paris, 1870, p. 103.
- 66 Roger to Flandrin, 10 December 1838, in AUBRUN, *Eugène Roger à Hippolyte Flandrin*, pp. 287-288.
- 67 Note for example the number of ex-pensioners from the time of Vernet's directorate involved in decorations for the Château de Versailles during the reign of Louis-Philippe: Larivière (paintings in the Galerie des Batailles), Henri Schopin (Galerie des Batailles and Salle des Croisade; Féron (Galerie des Batailles) and Bézard (historical portraits, Versailles).
- 68 Roger's *Charles le Téméraire* in 1837 was the last *envoi* with a medieval subject.



Fig. 1: CHARLES-MARIE BOUTON, *La Folie de Charles VI; Vue de la salle du XIVe siècle au musée des Monuments français*, 1817, oil on canvas, 114 x 146 cm, Bourg-en-Bresse, musée du Monastère royal de Brou.



Fig. 2: JEAN-AUGUSTE-DOMINIQUE INGRES, *Paolo et Francesca*, 1819, oil on canvas, 50 x 41 cm, Angers, musée des Beaux-Arts.



Fig. 3: JOSEPH-DÉSIRÉ COURT, *Marc Antoine montrant au peuple romain la tunique et le corps sanglant du César assassiné dans le Sénat*, 1827, oil on canvas, 430 x 522 cm, Arras, musée des Beaux-Arts.



Fig. 4: CHARLES-PHILIPPE DE LARIVIÈRE, *Peste de Rome sous Nicolas V*, 1830, oil on canvas, 455 x 375 cm, Paris, musée du Louvre.



Fig. 5: HORACE VERNET, *Raphaël au Vatican*, 1832, oil on canvas, 392 x 300 cm, Paris, musée du Louvre.



Fig. 6: SÉBASTIEN-LOUIS-GUILLAUME NORBLIN, *Ugolin*, 1831, oil on canvas, 326 x 416 cm, Orléans.



Fig. 7: JEAN-LOUIS BÉZARD, *Les crimes des hommes chassant la justice divine*, 1834, 180 x 285.5 cm, Poitiers, musée Sainte-Croix.



Fig. 8: ÉMILE SIGNOL, *Réveil du juste – réveil du méchant*, 1835, oil on canvas, 205 x 270 cm, Angers, musée des Beaux-Arts.



Fig. 9: ÉMILE SIGNOL, *La religion chrétienne*, 1836, oil on canvas, 352 x 456 cm, Église de Lubersac en Corrèze.

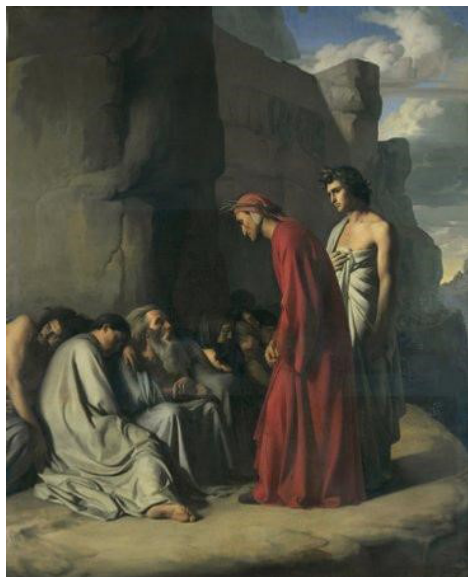


Fig. 10: HIPPOLYTE FLANDRIN *Dante conduit par Virgile*, 1835, oil on canvas, 295 x 245 cm, Nantes, musée des Beaux-Arts.



Fig. 11: JEAN-AUGUSTE-DOMINIQUE INGRES, *Oedipe et le sphinx*, 1808, 189 x 144 cm, Paris, musée du Louvre.