Reconceiving childhood: women and children in French art, 1750-1814

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RECONCEIVING CHILDHOOD: WOMEN AND CHILDREN IN FRENCH ART, 1750-1814

by

Amanda Kristine Strasik

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Doctor of Philosophy degree in Art History in the Graduate College of The University of Iowa

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ABSTRACT

My dissertation examines visual representations of children and childhood in French art from the 1750s until the first decades of the nineteenth century. This period in France is distinct because of the sweeping social and political changes with which images of children and childhood were in dialogue, including the redefinition of bourgeois familial relationships, new medical discoveries that influenced how artists interpreted the human mind and body, the chaos of the French Revolution, and the rise of Napoleon and his codification of the laws of nature.

By 1750, Enlightenment thinkers and social reformers viewed the education, nurturing, and protection of innocent children as among the fundamental moral acts that defined humanity. Childhood, once considered insignificant, became a special period of human development that women were naturally suited to cultivate. Amidst the corruption of the Ancien régime, the violence of the French Revolution, and the instability of the state, children were unthreatening emblems of social regeneration and hope.

Throughout my dissertation, I explore how the complex written and visual language of nature informed artists’ conceptions of children and childhood during the long eighteenth century. Opposing themes of nature’s wildness, containment, wholesomeness, and mysteriousness in different forms paralleled discourses on children and child-rearing. Prominent eighteenth-century artists like Chardin, Boucher, Fragonard, Greuze, Vigée Lebrun, Marguerite Gérard, and others analyzed contemporary scientific, philosophical, artistic, and pedagogical movements to depict children naturally. Even when Romantic artists like Géricault or Prud’hon imagined nature as a dangerous or mystical entity, the emphasis on the unique truthfulness of a child’s character continued to be a subject of great interest, especially when the scientific
community recognized child psychology and pediatrics as their own fields of medical study in
the early nineteenth century.

Compared to studies that have broadly surveyed the ideologies of childhood as reflected
in art, my dissertation investigates the socio-historical contexts in which representations of
children were commissioned, produced, and displayed. Why did revolutionary events, artists, and
patrons appropriate images of the enlightened child? I propose that representations of children
from this period offer indisputable symbolic value: they functioned emblematically to advance
the morality of a woman’s reputation, or to philosophically communicate an idea about the state
of French society during key moments of social and political upheaval. Through a study of
images of pastoral children for Madame de Pompadour, representations of bourgeois children
with pets, portrayals of the royal children during the French Revolution, and Romantic
depictions of children in portraiture, my dissertation traces the socio-historical implications of
the representations of children and childhood to make way for new interpretations of artworks.
PUBLIC ABSTRACT

My dissertation examines visual representations of children and childhood in French art from the 1750s until the fall of the First Empire in 1814—a time of dramatic social, scientific, and political changes that affected the arts. By 1750, Enlightenment thinkers and social reformers viewed the education, nurturing, and protection of innocent children as among the fundamental moral acts that defined humanity. Childhood, once considered insignificant, became a special period of human development that women were naturally suited to cultivate. Amidst the corruption of the Ancien régime, the violence of the French Revolution, and the instability of the state, children were unthreatening emblems of social regeneration and hope.

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INTRODUCTION

As early as the seventeenth century in France, childhood became regarded as a unique phase of human development that was distinct from adulthood.\(^1\) Prior to this new conception of childhood, children were thought to be weak, irrational, and uncivilized miniature adults that required restraint to protect themselves (and others) from their innate animalistic tendencies. Writers such as John Locke and Jean-Jacques Rousseau emphasized the necessity of a moral education and the positive influence of a natural environment. In his scientific study on childhood in *Histoire naturelle* from 1749, the naturalist le comte de Buffon claimed that human children were more vulnerable than young animals, and he insisted that caring for children was the fundamental moral act that defined humanity.\(^2\) By mid-century, children were portrayed as exemplars of virtue and valued for their inherent goodness and innocence. French artists emphasized themes of play, imagination, and mimicry as part of a child’s intellectual, moral, and physical growth in genre paintings and portraiture. Jean-Baptiste-Siméon Chardin, for example, famously portrayed learning through imitation and concentration in his genre paintings of children from the 1730s and 1740s while Jean-Honoré Fragonard’s *A Boy as Pierrot* (Fig. A1) represented children’s predispositions for the world of make-believe. Buffon’s ideas still resonated in the 1770s when Fragonard painted a child who eagerly reaches from a windowsill out into the world; however, he will not survive unless someone is there to receive him (Fig. A2).

Contemporary philosophers, physicians, and artists adopted the rhetoric of nature to convey the new place of the child in popular novels, medical texts, moralizing domestic advice

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pamphlets, pedagogical literature, and in visual culture. Amidst the corruption of the Ancien régime, the violence of the French Revolution, and the instability of the state, children became powerful symbols of social regeneration and a hopeful future. However, inconsistencies in the meaning of nature in eighteenth-century discourse invested artistic representations of children with multiple interpretive meanings. My dissertation critically examines visual representations of children and childhood from the 1750s until the fall of the First French Empire in 1814. This period in France is distinct because of the dramatic social and political changes that affected the arts, including the redefinition of bourgeois familial relationships, new medical discoveries that influenced how artists interpreted the human mind and body, the collapse of the Bourbon Monarchy and the chaos of the French Revolution, and the rise of Napoleon and his codification of the laws of nature.

Throughout my dissertation, I demonstrate that the categorical meaning of what defines a child is not fixed; the definition of a child and the duration of childhood often depend on class, gender, place, and historical moments to suggest that representations of children can assume varied meanings to suit different purposes. However, ideals related to children, particularly innocence and vulnerability, remain constant and were expressed in different ways. I propose that images of children from this period offer indisputable symbolic value and functioned emblematically to define a woman’s reputation, or to philosophically communicate an idea about the state of French society during moments of social and political upheaval. Through a study of images of pastoral children for Madame de Pompadour, representations of bourgeois children with pets, portrayals of the royal children during the French Revolution, and Romantic depictions of children in portraiture, I trace the socio-historical implications of the

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representations of children and childhood in terms of new ideas about nature to make way for new interpretations of artworks.

Philippe Ariès’s groundbreaking research on the social history of childhood and the family argues that the modern idea of childhood as a distinct period of human life was discovered as early as the seventeenth century in France. As the notion of childhood evolved, this sentimental conception would be fully realized in the eighteenth century in France when families, especially mothers, dedicated themselves whole-heartedly to the present and future welfare of their children. During the medieval period, children were not forsaken or neglected, but parents did not seem to address their specific needs. The familial unit existed out of economic necessity and children were treated as adult members whose presence safeguarded the generational succession of property rights. Furthermore, infant mortality rates were so high that parents kept children at an emotional distance or acted indifferently toward them. Ariès claims that portraits of real children prior to the seventeenth century were rare, and his argument hinged on a lack of historical evidence that discusses affective bonds between parents and children.

Although Ariès pioneered the fundamental idea that the modern conception of childhood has changed over time, his reliance on French historical sources to make broad generalizations about the development of modern childhood in Western Europe and his argument about parents’ disinterest in children before the seventeenth century incited debate. Linda Pollock, for one, disagreed with Ariès on when the emergence of modern childhood occurred. Pollock believes that there is some continuity in the modern sentimental notion of childhood instead of a single

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4 Ariès, *Centuries of Childhood*, 33-49.

5 Ibid., 38-43.

moment of radical change, and her study of how parents discussed actual children in private
diaries, memoirs, and personal correspondences from 1500 to 1900 demonstrates that parental
affection toward children existed prior to Ariès’s seventeenth-century benchmark. For my study,
I believe that from 1750 to the first decades of the nineteenth century in France, society fully
understood and overtly embraced the special character of childhood. This recognition reached a
new level when philosophers, moralists, physicians, and artists emphasized the symbolic value of
children’s innocence to assert important moments of social and political change.

D.G. Charlton’s research on how French society from 1750 to 1800 interacted with the
natural world includes two chapters on the cultural history of women and the family.\(^7\) Charlton
accepts Ariès’s argument on when the emergence of modern childhood took place, but he limits
the geographical and historical periods of his research to understand the French attitude toward
nature more thoroughly. Charlton’s broad survey of the ideals of the nuclear family as the most
basic social unit, reforms in familial relations, philosophical discourses related to the special
needs of the child, and the meaning of womanhood in terms of nature have all informed my
dissertation. Charlton does include some discussion of the arts from this period, but he seems to
understand paintings as reflections of society instead of artistic constructs.

Ludmilla Jordanova’s essay on the history of children and childhood in the eighteenth
century argues that past and present historical discussions about children and childhood are
fraught with moral assumptions. The long-established language that refers to children in terms of
nature, pets, and plants is profoundly problematic because of the inconsistency of the meaning of

nature itself. For example, although cabbages (les choux) traditionally symbolized the uterus or female fecundity, it was in the mid eighteenth century that phrases like mon chou and mon petit chou became terms of endearment for small children. Even Dauphine Marie-Josèphe referred to the heir in these affectionate terms, which was uncharacteristic for a woman of her rank. By 1750, Enlightenment philosophical thought had begun to challenge Christian doctrine and understood children as naturally pure and innocent instead of sinful. Natural forms and fabrics that facilitated physical movement were favored, and physicians and moralists contested the use of swaddling bands and corsets to control children’s bodies. Children were metaphorically linked with new theories on the vulnerability of animals or the tender cultivation of plants. Advancements in children’s hygiene and nutrition contributed to a decrease in the formerly high child mortality rates, a factor that was largely thought to have been responsible for parents’ reluctance to emotionally invest their children. Jordanova also suggests that children could be admired as aesthetic objects because of their beauty and physical perfection; however, children could equally be feared for their spontaneously primal, instinctual, and bestial natures that required civility and moral discipline to overcome. I believe that Jordanova’s observations establish fundamental discrepancies in eighteenth-century conceptions of nature to suggest that images of children in terms of nature are complex. This dissertation demonstrates that images of children and childhood in French visual culture are in dialogue with a multitude of biological, psychological, literary, pedagogical, and artistic discourses on a profound level, and often at the same time. These discourses range from an exploration of children’s unique physiologies and


psychologies, to commentary on the conflated identities of women, children, and animals, to meditations on contemporary anxieties over children’s sexuality.

There is a substantial existing body of art historical scholarship that surveys representations of children in eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century French society. However, the socio-historical implications of how and why patrons and the political events of the French Revolution and into the Napoleonic era engaged with the varied metaphorical connections between children and nature in French art have been understudied. Many art historical sources on children and childhood are broad, introductory surveys of artworks from the Western canon or major museum collections with no geographical or period focus, and these texts appear to be for a wider, more general audience.¹¹ For example, Anita Schorsch states in her introduction that the first aim of her study is to convey to the “common reader” some fascinating information about the nature and nurture of children.¹² However, she does not explain the historical context in which she understands “nature.” Schorsch understands art as a mirror reflection of reality, and she uses images of children to illustrate her sweeping historical narrative of the changing perceptions of children in Europe and America from the Middle Ages to the nineteenth century. Erika Langmuir’s *Imagining Childhood* from 2006 is more rooted in scholarly research than Schorsch’s text, but it is a broad thematic survey of how adults have imagined children in Western visual and material culture from antiquity to the nineteenth century.¹³ In her analysis of

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representations of a child’s first steps, swaddling, game play, mourning, and other visual tropes in ancient amulets, votive objects, devotional prints, painting, and the decorative arts, she is interested in the origins, functions, significances, and effects of images of children and childhood across time periods, places, and cultures.¹⁴ Langmuir explains that her aim is not to uncover attitudes about childhood through visual evidence, but to “examine the imagery of childhood for what it tells us about the uses of images.”¹⁵ Langmuir understands that representations of children have varied meanings, but her conclusions are too generalized as a result of such a vast study with no historical focus.

Beyond general survey texts, more specialized and scholarly art historical sources do exist. Beginning in 1973, Carol Duncan’s seminal *Art Bulletin* article “Happy Mothers and Other New Ideas in Eighteenth-Century French Art” accepts Ariès’s timeline on the emergence of childhood and analyzed the impact of the Enlightenment’s reconception of the identity of the bourgeois family, the modern meaning of marriage, and rise of the cult of the happy mother on eighteenth-century French art and various literary works.¹⁶ Duncan argued that representations of the family as envisioned by Jean-Baptiste Greuze, Etienne Aubry, and Fragonard are not historical transcriptions of social realities. Rather, these French genre paintings display the emergence of new social and cultural ideals that privileged conjugal love and familial affection.¹⁷ Duncan includes some discussion of the developments and methods of childcare and education in her analysis of the representation of the new family ideal, but her selections of genre paintings

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¹⁴ Ibid., 2.

¹⁵ Ibid., 14.


¹⁷ Ibid.
that include children predominantly illustrate her cultural narrative that traces the representation of the new concept of the family that challenged prevailing attitudes and customs.

In 2003, Christine Kayser organized *L’enfant chéri au siècle des Lumières: après l’Émile*, an important exhibition that surveyed the representation of children in the second half of the eighteenth century in France. The exhibition focused on the shifts in representations of children in the context of the Enlightenment after Rousseau published his highly influential pedagogical novel, *Émile, ou de l’éducation*, in 1762. Although this exhibition displayed many paintings that recognized the value of children as subjects in their own rights, the book that accompanied the exhibition largely followed Duncan’s cultural narrative.

Since Duncan’s 1973 publication, art historians have engaged more critically with eighteenth-century representations of children and childhood in French art to enrich the scholarly narrative. Scholars have approached this subject from a variety of methodological perspectives and recognized the complex imagery within representations of children that construct multiple meanings to have far-reaching socio-historical implications. Dorothy Johnson suggests that genre paintings of children blowing soap bubbles and building card houses may be understood in the context of contemporary pedagogical philosophies in addition to their engagements with moralizing seventeenth-century Dutch *vanitas* iconographic traditions. For Johnson, Chardin demonstrates his interest in the cognitive and moral significance of childhood education in the first half of the eighteenth century. Instead of a boy who watches a spinning top as a symbol of the brevity of life or as an emblem of the potential hazards of youthful idleness, for example, this

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painting emphasizes the importance of concentration and observation as understood in the context of contemporary pedagogical literature for both subject and viewer (Fig. A3). In other words, Chardin’s genre images simultaneously function to educate the viewer while representing contemporary educational processes. In 2003, Katie Scott sidestepped the issue of pedagogy in her essay on the image of the child in Chardin’s œuvre; instead, she analyzed eighteenth-century debates about games as well as modern psychoanalytic theory to conclude that the interpretation of games, toys, and play in Chardin’s paintings are all “markers of a condition of liminality” and symbolize the dynamic period of self-discovery between absolute infant dependency and adult autonomy. Johnson and Scott’s alternative interpretations of traditional iconographic motifs revealed new ways of thinking about eighteenth-century genre paintings of children, and this approach has inspired much of my own methodology in this dissertation.

Art historian Mary Sheriff critically examined the pastoral iconography of nature and the seasons in her study of Fragonard’s “Detroit Panels” from the 1750s (Fig. A4). But, her conclusions were in terms of the progress of sexual love, the reproductive nature of women, and the overall phallocentric view of human and natural fertility in rococo art. For Sheriff, the representations of children in Fragonard’s panels are fixed emblems of female fertility. My study will carry Sheriff’s observations further to consider the implications of the complex emblematic meanings of the enlightened child in a context beyond the realm of female

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20 Ibid., 57-68.


23 Ibid., 111.

24 Ibid., 110-111.
reproduction. For example, why are pastoral children appropriate decorative motifs for Louis XIV’s titular mistress whose sexuality was a perceived threat to the stability and virility of France? Why are children powerful symbols of political reform in the 1790s, and how do images of the royal children figure into this symbolic ideology? Why does Prud’hon’s portrait of the King of Rome emphasize nature instead of the imperial identity of the newborn heir?

Marilyn Brown’s edited volume on the visual culture of children from the long nineteenth century in Europe includes eleven scholarly essays that collectively argue that seemingly timeless images of the Romantic child are products of the intersections of social, cultural, and psychological forces that contributed to the formation of bourgeois identity. Linda Pollock’s foreword to this text establishes the importance of the nineteenth century for the development of a social history of children, and she emphasizes this period’s shift in attitudes toward impoverished children, who were beginning to be seen as deserving of the same type of childhood experiences as children from middle and upper classes. Although an important subject for French artists in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, representations of children from poor families, foundlings and orphaned children, rural and urban child laborers, and street urchins are beyond the scope of this dissertation. Later, children and childhood from differing social classes were important subjects for the French Impressionists, but this period is also outside of my project’s time frame.


27 See Anna Green, French Paintings of Childhood and Adolescence, 1848-1886 (Burlington: Ashgate, 2007) and Greg M. Thomas, Impressionist Children: Childhood, Family, and Modern Identity in French Art (New Haven; London: Yale University Press, 2010). The conclusion of
In addition to the art historical scholarship on children and childhood in eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century French art, there are several notable studies on this subject matter in art from across the English Channel. For example, in Marcia Pointon’s research on various subjects in eighteenth-century British portraiture, she dedicates an entire chapter to a survey of child portraits by Sir Joshua Reynolds, George Romney, William Hogarth, and others. Pointon argues that because of the shift from a dynastic culture to one that emphasized bourgeois values, British portraits of children from this period have a different social function compared to those from the previous two centuries. Although Pointon’s idea may relate to the cultural and social shifts in contemporaneous French genre and portrait paintings of children, the study of British art is beyond the scope of my dissertation.

James Christen Steward’s *The New Child: British Art and the Origins of Modern Childhood 1730-1830* is a book-length publication that accompanied an exhibition on representations of children and family relationships in British art at the Berkeley Art Museum at the University of California in 1995. Steward surveys the emergence of modern childhood in British paintings, prints, and book illustrations from multiple perspectives, and his text includes a this dissertation includes analyses of some nineteenth-century artworks as potential subjects of future research.


Ibid., 177.

concise scholarly review of the important modern secondary sources on the history of childhood. Significantly, Steward highlights the scholarly debate between Ariès and Pollock, and in the context of British art, he observes that the debating parties are too broad in their understandings of the historical development of modern childhood. For Steward, the history of childhood is a history of attitudes and constructs throughout different historical periods as well as by different groups and individuals within the same historical moment. Steward emphasizes the difference between historical construct and reality, and this idea relates to my dissertation, which investigates the socio-historical significance of artistic visions of children and childhood for women patrons, artists, and important moments of cultural and political change. Nevertheless, my consideration of the works referenced in Steward’s study would require a deeper investigation into the historical circumstances in Georgian Britain compared to France, which exceeds the limits of my project.

Anne Higonnet’s 1998 cultural study on childhood emphasizes contemporary photographs of children, and she contends that the first major movement in the visual history of childhood innocence began with eighteenth-century British portraitists like Reynolds, Thomas Gainsborough, and Henry Raeburn. Higonnet claims that “these painters introduced a new vision of the child, a set of visual signals brilliantly embedded in individual pictures, and so basic that they could inform all future pictures.” The author does not neglect contemporaneous French art entirely, but she contrasts images of childhood innocence in British art to those from the French rococo era, which she understands as a period of artistic frivolity. Higonnet explains


34 Ibid., 9.
that in the eighteenth century, French artists produced “scores of darling pudgy babies gamoling in the waves and clouds, frolicking among flowers and ribbons, but their bodies were only one among many sensual invitations to adult rococo pleasures.” In this observation, Higonnet alludes to François Boucher’s œuvre, and dismisses the poetic value of children in his work. As I will demonstrate in this dissertation, eighteenth-century French art played a major role in the visual history of childhood innocence, particularly in Boucher’s work that emphasized the fragility and vulnerability of the child’s body, among other ideas.

My review of the important scholarly sources suggests that although there is a sea of literature that surveys the history of childhood and children in Western visual culture, there is no scholarly study that critically analyzes the socio-historical implications of images of children and childhood in eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century French art. During this period of unprecedented political and social changes, I believe that artists and patrons emphasized the symbolic relationship between children and nature under a variety of conditions to construct specific ideas about themselves or the state of French society. To support my thesis, I have divided my dissertation into four chapters. Chapter One examines the royal mistress Madame de Pompadour’s fondness for François Boucher’s *Enfants*: a series of pastoral children that mimic adult activities and were represented in decorative wall paintings, on luxury porcelain tea sets, printed engravings, furniture upholsteries, and as biscuit sculptures that all suited the marquise’s artistic preferences during the 1750s (Fig. A5). My analysis of Boucher’s *Enfants* through the historical and cultural context of the eighteenth century’s revision of the nature of children and childhood suggests that these subjects embodied innocence and participated in the Enlightenment’s advocacy of the significance of nature in the cultivation of moral virtue. From this perspective, Pompadour’s interest in pastoral children suggests the marquise’s construction

of herself as a paragon of virtuous femininity and a figure of Enlightened humanism. Because Pompadour’s long-term relationship with Louis XV represented a catastrophic breakdown of France’s political, social, and gender hierarchies, her dialogue with the ideologies of Boucher’s *Enfants* helped to offset rumors of her destructive reputation at court.

Chapter Two presents an alternative interpretation of Marguerite Gérard’s genre paintings. Gérard’s work emphasizes expressive depictions of women, children, and pets; however, scholars have narrowly assessed Marguerite Gérard’s paintings as only representations of ideal domesticity (Fig. A6). Paintings of children playfully interacting with domesticated animals abound in eighteenth-century French art; these works suggest the benefits of educative play, visual allusions to conventions in seventeenth-century Dutch art, and contemporary anxieties over premature sexual behavior through the symbolism of cats. It was also during this time that philosophical discourses on the vulnerability of pets emerged in France, and these aspects of pets’ personalities are analogous to the Enlightenment attitudes toward children. This chapter offers an entirely new interpretation of the various meanings of children and pets in Gérard’s genre paintings, which reveals new ideas about female sexuality and Gérard’s negotiation of her identity as a woman artist in late eighteenth-century French art.

In Chapter Three, I investigate representations of children as political emblems of the French Revolution’s emphases on social regeneration, fecundity, and purity. As the most visible and questionable embodiments of France’s future, however, images of the children of Louis XVI and Marie-Antoinette suggest a complicated intersection of issues related to the politics of queenship and the new family order. Unlike conventional royal portraiture, important commissioned portraits of the royal children from the 1780s emphasize the special status of all of the Bourbon children, which alludes to the virtuousness and progressiveness of the royal parents.
In 1785, Marie-Antoinette commissioned a publically displayed double pastoral portrait of her children by Elisabeth Vigée Lebrun (Fig. A7). While this painting may have signified the queen’s embrace of Rousseau’s social prescriptions from Émile, the minimization of Bourbon emblems and the emphasis on Marie-Antoinette’s relationship with her daughter were problematic for her royal identity as queen of France.

The fourth and final chapter of this dissertation investigates the significance of children’s psychology in different stages of development in Romantic portraits at the turn of the century. Both Girodet and Géricault explore children’s sense of self in portraiture at a time when child psychology as a field of study emerged (Figs. A8 and A9). In 1811, Prud’hon painted an idyllic genre portrait of the sleeping infant Napoleon II for Napoleon’s second wife, Empress Marie-Louise (Fig. A10). Due to the lack of obvious imperial references, Prud’hon’s painting contrasts with contemporary depictions of the heir that declare his future as the French emperor. On one level, the painting of Napoleon II can be understood according to Christian iconography or as an allegory of the new French order according to ancient Roman mythology. Also, Prud’hon’s representation of the imperial child peacefully asleep in a romanticized landscape engages with early nineteenth-century discourses on the psychological nature of children. My close readings of Romantic child portraits in this chapter allows me to offer new perspectives on children as powerful metaphors for freedom, natural innocence, and the important role of women during the post-Revolutionary era in France.
CHAPTER 1: ADOPTING VIRTUE: MADAME DE POMPADOUR AND FRANÇOIS BOUCHER’S ENFANTS

During the mid-eighteenth century in France, the image of the mother-child bond as one of the most powerful manifestations of sensibility, feeling, and even the embodiment of life itself fascinated Enlightenment philosophers and medical writers. The biological and emotional sensibilities of women and children were conflated to the extent that childhood, with its connections to weakness, innocence, and vulnerability, was linked to the contemporary ideals of virtuous femininity. Emma Barker has convincingly argued that Jean-Baptiste Greuze’s 1767 painting of a female child displays a Buffonian conception of childhood that shows the child as positively fragile, weak, and needy (Fig. A11). The girl’s figure is pushed against the picture plane and dominates the canvas to draw attention to her youthfulness. Her direct, wide-eyed gaze activates the imagination, allowing the viewer to assume the role of caretaker and nurturer. Barker suggests that the viewer’s relationship with this figure is complex, and the formal qualities of the painting create a palpable vulnerability of childhood that triggers the viewer’s own sense of humanity. Buffon wrote in his widely read and very influential Histoire naturelle from 1749 that caring for children is the fundamental moral act that defines what it means to be human. Barker also briefly mentions:

For the female spectator, [Child Playing with a Dog] offers the possibility of identification with [a] kind of nurturing relationship; this could have been part of its

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37 Ibid., 435-436.

38 Ibid., 434-436.

39 Ibid., 435.
appeal for its second owner, the childless Mme du Barry, who had a particular liking for paintings of children and adolescents.\textsuperscript{40}

Barker’s association of the last official mistress of Louis XV with eighteenth-century images of children is intriguing because of the implications of the utilization of images of children as substitutes for actual children. In other words, Du Barry’s virtuous femininity is heightened through her ownership of this painting of an innocent girl. In this chapter, I use Barker’s comment as a springboard into a more critical exploration of the display of images of children as decorative motifs, female patronage, and the construction of womanhood through visual representations beyond portraiture.\textsuperscript{41} Madame de Pompadour is a compelling case study because of her elaborate decorative programs that seemed to be personal expressions of her selfhood. Unlike Du Barry who had no children of her own except for a servant that she officially adopted (and who later assisted in her arrest and execution), Pompadour was a mother. Her daughter Alexandrine Le Normant d’Étoilles was born in 1744 and, as was typical for daughters of the French elite, she spent her short life as a student at the aristocratic Convent of the Assumption in Paris to groom her for society life. Upon her daughter’s untimely death in 1754, Pompadour mournfully declared that “all satisfaction for me died with my daughter.”\textsuperscript{42} It is not clear whether Pompadour’s remark referenced the lost social satisfaction that she would have attained from Alexandrine’s society début or her future deprivation of personal satisfaction from simply being

\textsuperscript{40} Ibid., 435. Barker also cites the well-known eighteenth-century literary salonnière Madame Geoffrin and Madame de Pompadour as women art collectors who had penchants for images of children.


a mother to her daughter as was advocated by Enlightenment thinkers with whom she identified and whom she supported. To date, scholars have not critically assessed Pompadour’s maternal identity, and I would argue that the marquise’s comment about her daughter warrants further consideration in terms of the construction of her femininity and morality in the visual arts.

Madame de Pompadour’s social ascension and unprecedented long-term reign as the titular mistress of Louis XV from 1745 until her death in 1764 symbolized a catastrophic breakdown of France’s class, political, and gender hierarchies. Court gossipers and political rivals endlessly attacked Pompadour’s bourgeois familial status and sexuality to discredit her, and the marquise’s enduring and influential presence at Versailles seemed to present a serious threat to the stability and virility of France. After all, it was rumored that each time Louis XV retreated into his private apartments at Versailles to meet Pompadour, he abandoned his monarchical identity and France suffered.

Art historians like Elise Goodman have long recognized that the emphasis on Pompadour’s profound intellect in her publically exhibited femme savante portraits may have functioned to associate the marquise with the Enlightenment philosophical movement, neutralize her depraved reputation, and legitimate her position at court once her sexual relationship with Louis XV ceased in 1750. I propose that Pompadour’s construction of her identity as a figure


44 Ibid., 1034-1035.

of the Enlightenment persists not only in her commanding portraits, but also in her documented fondness for François Boucher’s *Enfants* — a series of pastoral children that mimic adult activities and were represented in decorative wall paintings, on luxury porcelain objects, printed engravings, furniture upholsteries, and as biscuit sculptures that all suited the marquise’s artistic preferences during the 1750s. These rococo images of children include a myriad of allegorical allusions, personifications, and rich visual and literary puns that were all commonplace in Boucher’s pastoral genre. However, their references to conventional pastoral iconographies that poetically express childhood innocence are noteworthy.

My analysis of Boucher’s *Enfants* through the historical and cultural context of the Enlightenment’s revision of the nature of children and childhood suggests that these subjects were inherently innocent and non-threatening. In this chapter, I argue that Boucher’s representations of children combine long-established artistic and literary conventions with contemporary philosophies on children and their relationship to nature. Boucher’s images of pastoral children became popular prototypes for the ornamentation of luxury objects that were collected by prominent women like Madame de Pompadour. On the one hand, the pervasiveness of Boucher’s *Enfants* suggests that the imagery was a popular decorative motif that functioned to amuse and delight viewers. On the other hand, these images may also address various themes in contemporary intellectual discourse, including children as metaphors for Enlightened humanism, clarity and simplicity of sincere emotion, and familial sentimentality. From this perspective, I argue that Pompadour’s interest in Boucher’s pastoral children may indicate the marquise’s construction of herself as a paragon of virtuous femininity, a figure of Enlightened intellect and

culture, and as an inventive patron of the arts with a pure artistic vision. Along with her grand-scale *femme savante* portraits that declaratively asserted her Enlightenment identity to the French public, Pompadour’s engagement with the ideologies of Boucher’s *Enfants* in decorative media helped to further refute claims of her unscrupulous reputation at court.

When Louis XV named Madame Jeanne-Antoinette Poisson d’Étoilles his official royal mistress in 1745, the unconventionality of her bourgeois social background, together with her disreputable family history, incited a court scandal. Despite her father’s implication in a case of financial fraud in 1727 that led to his exile and Madame Poisson’s string of illicit affairs with wealthy men, Jeanne-Antoinette managed to become the favorite of the most sophisticated Parisian circles. Her social climb demonstrates the increasing industriousness, economic clout, and social mobility of the middle class that undermined the security and entitlement of the French aristocracy. Charles-François Lenormant de Tournehem, a wealthy *fermier-général* and Jeanne-Antoinette’s rumored biological father, financed Poisson’s fashionable education that included instruction in theater, music, and dance from the leading celebrities of the stage. Mademoiselle Poisson’s frequent attendance at Parisian literary salons introduced her to courtiers, artists, and key literary philosophers who would go on to contribute to the Enlightenment discourse that focused on the social progress of humanity.46 After the arrangement of her 1741 marriage followed by birth of her daughter Alexandrine in 1744, Jeanne-Antoinette hosted her own salons that attracted local nobility and men of letters like the literary figure Voltaire and the mathematician Maupertuis. It was in this intellectual space that

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the newly ennobled Madame d’Étoilles displayed her talent for performance and her enchanting personality, skillful wit, and overall cultural refinement to her guests.

During the summer of 1745, Voltaire and the abbé de Bernis visited Pompadour to prepare her for her official presentation at Versailles once she had caught the king’s eye. The rigidly structured lifestyle at court operated according to strict codes of courtly custom and etiquette, and any transgressions would have ruined Pompadour’s already precarious status as a bourgeois woman. Pompadour’s erudite accomplishments impressed Voltaire, who noted that she had “read more at her age than any old lady at [Versailles].” 47 The abbé de Bernis advised Pompadour to support writers and to invest herself in intellectual discourse since this kind of backing is what had made Louis XIV great. 48 Whether or not his recommendation stemmed from the abbé’s own self-interest, I argue that it demonstrates Pompadour’s personal stake in Enlightenment intellectual culture since her involvement in this humanist movement would secure for her an identity beyond the king’s bedmate.

By 1745, titled mistresses were a customary and visible presence at court and, following strict royal court hierarchies and etiquette practices, the king mostly named his maîtresse en titre from a short list of eligible aristocratic candidates. However, in spite of a woman’s engagement in an adulterous relationship, becoming a perpetual target of court intrigue and jealousies, and the unpredictability of the duration of a mistress’s ability to retain the king’s affections, scheming courtiers sought after this official rank because of its unmatched proximity to power and a family’s ability to grant and receive political favors through the king’s favorite. Once Louis XV officially recognized the newly titled Madame de Pompadour at court, gossiping courtiers doubted the longevity of her tenure because of the king’s reputed capriciousness,

47 Voltaire quoted in Jones, Madame de Pompadour, 38.

48 Abbé de Bernis quoted in Ibid., 39.
notorious womanizing, constant bouts of melancholy and boredom, and his alarming pursuit of a more private lifestyle that defied the politics of French absolutism.

Pompadour remained a significant fixture at court for nearly two decades, however, even after her five-year sexual affair with the king ended for reasons likely having to do with her fading health. Despite her seductive charm, proficiency in the art of conversation, and her famed beauty and intelligence that made her, according to one courtier’s description, “a woman any man would have wanted as his mistress,” Pompadour’s adversaries resented her for her introduction of bourgeois culture into the sacred space of the French court. Slanders against Pompadour intensified around 1748 when the conservative dévot party attacked her subversion of the “natural” order of rank, prerogative, and taste in her rise to such an exalted royal position. Humiliating rumors, poems, and caricatures circulated that mocked Pompadour’s fragile health, her “yellow and spotted skin, insipid eyes, stained teeth,” and popular verses went so far as to claim that the marquise was stricken with a vaginal discharge that resulted from certain venereal infections that were associated with prostitutes. The defamatory, dehumanizing remarks on the immodesty of the marquise’s femininity continued much to her chagrin as she complained to her brother and father that she would have left court if it were not for her love of the king. Furthermore, political enemies deplored Louis XV’s enthusiastic support of his mistress’s private and costly architectural projects and his eagerness to support exclusive theatrical performances starring Pompadour. Courtiers interpreted Louis XV’s public withdrawal and the neglect of his

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49 Anonymous courtier quoted in Ibid., 14.

monarchical duties as the marquise’s feminization and subsequent weakening of the majesty and strength of France, as personified in the body of Louis XV.  

The marquise ultimately redefined the status and role of the royal mistress and proved herself to be essential to Louis XV after 1750 as his close friend, political aide, and minister of culture through her patronage of the arts and sciences and her sponsorship of Enlightenment thinkers. Beyond employing art and architecture as a means of capturing the king’s attention, Pompadour recognized the power of art in the management of her own image post-1750 when the nature of her relationship with the king shifted. Pompadour’s commissioned femme savante portraits from the mid-1750s have become iconic in their expressions of the marquise as the king’s intelligent advisor, even though this construct subverted contemporary expectations of moral womanhood. Having the resources to commission lavish portraits not only demonstrated her affluence and a specific social status from the perspective of middle class art patrons, but Pompadour’s portraits functioned to project a specifically constructed image to Louis XV as well as to the marquise’s detractors.

Elise Goodman has carefully analyzed the cultural and iconographic significance of Maurice Quentin de La Tour’s monumental pastel portrait of Madame de Pompadour from 1755 (Fig. A12). This full-length portrait, an unusually large format for the pastel medium, was publically exhibited at the Salon that same year, and remained in the marquise’s collection until

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53 Goodman, *Portraits of Madame de Pompadour*, 16.

54 Ibid., 19-21, 118-137.
her death. Goodman asserts that Pompadour was exceptionally educated, and La Tour incorporated specific attributes of learning and referenced well-known visual conventions from the “intellectual portrait” genre, then popular in France, to fashion his patron as the embodiment of Enlightenment intellectual discourse and the generous supporter of French art and culture. In this portrait, Pompadour’s figure is massive as she sits enthroned in her study. The tactility and luminosity of the pastel medium invests Pompadour’s upper body with a brilliant radiance. A soft white light surrounds her head, the seat of thinking and reason, to assert her intellectual status and to draw attention to her contemplative expression as she turns away from her musical score in a quiet moment of scholarly reflection.

The ethereal glow around Pompadour’s head also functions like a halo to highlight not only her virtue and perhaps her recommitment to her spiritual life in the 1750s, but also her near divine status as the overseer of the advancement of Enlightenment discourse. To further demonstrate this role, Pompadour rests her left arm atop a thick volume to literally associate herself with learning while a globe, architectural plans, her personal drawing portfolio, and a guitar identify her with intellectual endeavors. An array of elaborately bound books with legible titles are displayed on her end table, including the fourth volume of the *Encyclopédie*, a major Enlightenment project first published in 1751 with the lofty aim to make knowledge accessible to all. Pompadour’s inclusion of the *Encyclopédie* as a symbol of the Enlightenment also suggests her personal connections to cultural heavyweights she hosted at Versailles. Men like Diderot, Jean-Baptiste Le Rond d’Alembert, the author Duclos, and Crébillon (her former teacher) moved in her courtly circles to the extent that Voltaire eulogized that Pompadour was “one of us” after her 1764 death.55 Furthermore, La Tour’s portrait includes Voltaire’s epic poem *La Henriade*, originally published in 1723. Pompadour owned a 1746 edition of this poem, and its foreword

urged readers to “cultivate learning and to use it for the benefit and happiness of humanity.”

Although Diderot blamed Pompadour’s supposed feminization of public life as the source of France’s political instability and economic crisis, he emphasized that her patronage benefitted France’s cultural development. Even if Pompadour personally “did not like the philosophes,” as d’Alembert noted upon her death, her ostensible adherence to and promotion of their ideals contributed to the deliberate formation of an image of artistic and cultural engagement.

Portraiture was certainly a significant and emphatic mode of self-expression in Pompadour’s aim to naturalize her place at court through her connection to the Enlightenment intelligensia. I contend, however, that her engagement with other modes of self-expression, particularly in the context of the pastoral tradition, suggests the marquise’s continuation of this ideological aim to link herself to Enlightenment culture. I observe that Pompadour’s engagement with the pastoral is apparent in La Tour’s portrait with the depiction of Battista Guarini’s *Il Pastor Fido* (published in 1590) that accompanies the *Encyclopédie* as a symbol of Pompadour’s status as a *philosophe* as well as a declaration of her powerful hand in the progression of Enlightenment discourse. It is well-known that Pompadour organized, directed, and starred in a series of theatrical pastoral performances for the king and private audiences at both Versailles and her private estate at Bellevue from 1745-1750, notably Rousseau’s pastoral operetta *Le Devin du village*. Goodman argues that the marquise likely identified with the female protagonist Amarillis from *Il Pastor Fido* since she personified beauty, erudition, and nobility.

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56 Goodman, *Portraits of Madame de Pompadour*, 133-134.

57 Diderot quoted in Jones, *Madame de Pompadour*, 152.

58 D’Alembert quoted in Ibid.

59 Goodman, *Portraits of Madame de Pompadour*, 133-134.
Furthermore, in a number of portraits from the 1750s, Pompadour adorns herself with flowers, mostly roses, that are traditional references to a woman’s beauty, symbols of love and sexuality, and serve as the emblem of the goddess Venus. For instance, in La Tour’s portrait, the marquise’s voluminous silk dress is lavishly embroidered with blooming roses and reflects the light to capture the viewer’s attention. Commissioned portraits of the marquise by François Boucher from 1758 and 1759 portray Madame de Pompadour as a beautiful blossom herself as she seeks solace in lush garden spaces (Figs. A13 and A14). Of course, Boucher’s famous 1756 portrait of Madame de Pompadour that expresses her devotion to music and poetry represents the marquise in a luxurious green gown that overtakes the composition (Fig. A15). Her silk dress is sumptuously embellished with roses, and the pink colors of the petals are echoed in her lips and her brightly rouged cheeks. Blooms also decorate Pompadour’s hair, appear atop stacked books, commingle with writing implements at her feet, and repeat in floral motifs in the patterned upholstery of the sofa cushions. Here, Pompadour shows herself devoted to French culture and Louis XV, by extension. She is showered in flowers to embody perfect beauty and grace, qualities that were made official when Louis XV recognized her as the supernumerary lady-in-waiting to the queen and made her position as one of the highest-ranking woman at court indisputable. Carle Van Loo’s portrait of Pompadour as la belle jardinière from 1754-1755 also engages with the coded language of flower symbolism (Fig. A16). Because Pompadour is simply dressed in the guise of a shepherdess, I believe that Van Loo displays her interest in horticulture and connection to pastoral ideology, a complex literary and artistic movement involving nature that I will explain more fully later in this chapter. Van Loo references past and present pastoral

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conventions as he presents Pompadour more naturalistically to show her embrace of new ideas about nature with a fuller face, minimal makeup, and a serious expression that meets the viewer’s gaze.\textsuperscript{61} In this portrait that was displayed only at the marquise’s private residence, nature is not a place of frivolous escape and play. Rather, it is a meaningful setting in which Madame de Pompadour and Louis XV together invested themselves in learning about the land and new ideas about the healthful benefits of nature.

In addition to portraiture, I believe that Pompadour included pastoral references in her elaborately curated decorative programs at her private garden retreats to reveal her interest in new scientific and cultural ideas on nature that were gaining momentum in the mid-eighteenth century. The study of science in the eighteenth century was readily accessible to a general audience of educated enthusiasts; this popular interest in science increased peoples’ awareness of the range and beauty of the phenomena of the natural world. The establishments of new sciences like geology, botany, biology, and zoology emerged from an emphasis on objective study and empirical knowledge.\textsuperscript{62} Madame de Pompadour and Louis XV shared a mutual interest in pastoral architecture and design as well as an enthusiasm for agricultural experimentation, animals, and land use. Reports in the 1755 \textit{Gazette de France}, for example, stated that the king, who owned and worked his own farming equipment, was studying new methods to prevent the contamination of wheat.\textsuperscript{63} Pompadour owned several volumes on agriculture in her personal library along with one volume on the improvement of the land that was dedicated to her. In addition to his own enthusiasm for buildings, however, the king’s interest in pastoral design and

\textsuperscript{61} Martin, “Hermitages of Madame de Pompadour,” 151-157.


\textsuperscript{63} \textit{The Gazette de France} quoted in Martin, “Hermitages of Madame de Pompadour,” 127.
ideology may have been attributed to the longstanding royal tradition of references to gardens and Arcadian imagery that promoted peace and prosperity in addition to the king’s role in the natural order. The marquise was especially committed to the new theories on the restorative properties of the countryside and health benefits from natural products like milk, and she spent considerable money and attention developing retreats with decorative programs and luxury *accoutrements* that demonstrated this interest.⁶⁴

Pompadour also cultivated Louis XV’s identity as the “gardener king” and his attachment to nature through her inclusion of the king in her passion for interior decor as she curated the vast decorative programs at her country retreats, namely at Crécy and Bellevue.⁶⁵ For Pompadour, pastoral retreats on the grounds of these private properties allowed her to enjoy the temporary occupation of a space away from the court’s judgmental glare while also implementing a program of personal care and development that centered on *la vie champêtre* and new ideas on the interconnectedness of nature, the body, and the mind.⁶⁶ Meredith Martin has extensively discussed Pompadour’s patronage of garden retreats in the mid-eighteenth century. Martin concludes that the salubrious imagining of nature that was represented in the pastoral mode allowed Pompadour to refute accusations of her “unnaturalness” and assert a more virtuous existence in the presentation of herself as wholesome, nurturing, and appropriately feminine.⁶⁷ To this end, I add that Pompadour’s investment in the pastoral mode as a means of self-

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⁶⁴ Ibid.

⁶⁵ Ibid. Martin labels Louis XV as the “gardener king” because of the monarch’s sponsorship of a number of agricultural projects in the 1750s that were probably the result of his sincere interests in new scientific theories of land use. I would also add that these sponsorships were may have been political maneuvers.

⁶⁶ Ibid., 114-157.

⁶⁷ Ibid., 118.
representation extends to Boucher’s pastoral children, which offer additional ideological links to moral femininity in their references to the Enlightenment redefinition of nature, children, and the role of women in caring for children.

During the mid-eighteenth century in France, concepts on the status of children in terms of nature and parents’ relationships to children were changing. The late seventeenth-century pedagogical texts by Locke and Fenélon remained popular in the first half of the eighteenth century in France, and their theories on the significance of education in the development of civilization influenced later texts popular amongst aristocratic and bourgeois readers alike. Before the 1762 publication of Jean-Jacques Rousseau’s important pedagogical novel Émile, ou de l’Éducation that instructed readers in childcare and insisted on the recognition of the child’s natural innocence, the nature of childhood and children’s role in the moral advancement of humanity was discussed in scientific and medical literature, namely the comte de Buffon’s popular Histoire naturelle from 1749. As a natural scientist and historian who stressed careful observation, Buffon devotes one volume in this massive study to the history of man, and there is a chapter dedicated entirely to infancy and childhood from which Rousseau later borrowed in Émile. Buffon emphasizes the physical and emotional delicacy of infants, particularly the fragility of the skin and skeletal structure and their sensitivity to pain. When he describes the infants’ cries that interrupt their sleep, Buffon cites the discomforting screams as a reaction to the painful “shackles” of the swaddling bands, a traditional mode of containment for children that imprisoned them to remain in one position for great lengths of time. Buffon writes:

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Buffon implores his readers to comfort the child, or if such disruption is an inconvenience, then caretakers ought to frequently change the child since its hygiene, personal happiness, and overall well-being are at the mercy of compassionate adults. As was common in literature on children during this period, Buffon condemns lazy, greedy, and neglectful wet nurses and holds maternal affection as the only source that is capable of providing the necessary vigilance and minute attention to these “helpless innocents.” For Buffon, caring for the fragile, vulnerable, and innocent child was a true mark of one’s integrity and defined what it meant to be morally human. I propose that Buffon’s theories would have appealed to Pompadour on two levels: as a scholar seriously committed to the advancement of Enlightenment humanism and also as a disparaged woman whose morality and femininity were subjects of intense public scrutiny. Buffon and Pompadour, furthermore, knew one another from Buffon’s attendance at the marquise’s salons, and she contributed funds to his natural history project. Their close personal connection is further demonstrated by the fact that Pompadour bequeathed her beloved dog, whom she often had depicted in her portraits as well as their own, to Buffon. In his analysis of the 1755 La Tour portrait, Philippe Le Leyzour notes that one of the book titles with which

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70 Ibid.

71 Emma Barker, “Imagining Childhood,” 435.
Pompadour pictures herself is a volume from Buffon’s *Histoire naturelle.*

While this title is not discernable in the painting, Le Leyzour’s observation is historically plausible given the relationship between the two and the popularity of the text, thereby further linking Pompadour’s self-fashioning to Buffon’s ideology.

Donald Posner’s pioneering 1990 article that examines the historical reach of Pompadour’s engagement with eighteenth-century art and artists concludes that Pompadour was only superficially educated to fulfill her ambitions at court. According to Posner, while Pompadour recognized the value of art to proclaim her status and to ornament her surroundings, the marquise was only stylish and lavish and not particularly imaginative or progressive. More recently, art historians have refined Posner’s historically narrow viewpoint on the extent of Pompadour’s artistic patronage. As Alden Gordon has suggested in his reassessment of Posner’s dismissal of Pompadour as a leading and deeply influential eighteenth-century art patron, Madame de Pompadour “used works of art to serve a modern notion of individual fulfillment and expression that the Enlightenment had made possible.” Gordon suggests that in her private spaces, Pompadour “embraced the Enlightenment submission to the humanity of the passions and was welcoming of sincere emotion as elevated through literature and the arts.” In other words, Madame de Pompadour’s private collections that display images of children are self-referential in that she incorporated her presence into her domestic spaces. Although the marquise was sensitive to the incessant rumors of her unnaturalness, the only audience that ultimately

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75 Ibid., 50-51.
mattered to her was the king. Unlike the *femme savante* portraits that were displayed briefly at the public Salon before returning to Pompadour’s private collection, the marquise’s decorative objects were only accessible to a privileged few. The vast effort and money spent to organize elaborate decorative programs, not to mention the marquise’s own pleasure and delight in interior decor, suggest to me that Pompadour’s decorative imagery includes strong degrees of personal expression that contribute to the construction of her image.

Upon a closer examination of the artworks that made up Pompadour’s enormous collection, I have observed that depictions of children as miniature adults are oft-repeated subjects. Children mimicking adult activities and behaviors, however, were not new subjects in visual representation. Such imagery of children has long existed to convey numerous allegorical or satirical ideals. For example, Watteau’s *Happy Age! Golden Age!* from 1719 (Fig. A17) shows a group of children who watch a boy dressed as the tragicomic stage clown Pierrot of the Comédie Italienne. The title of this work derives from a poem that accompanied an engraving of the painting, which idealized childhood as a “happy, golden age” free from misery. The satirical use of children to deride aristocratic vanity also exists in works like Charles-Antoine Coypel’s *The Amusements of Childhood, or Children’s Games at the Toilette* that Pompadour owned (Fig. A18). In this painting, children are dolled up and humorously enact the rituals of the toilette as they haphazardly apply beauty patches and play dress-up with oversized robes and mule slippers. One child even mistakenly wears an underskirt as a dress while another mischievous child has (intentionally?) forgotten her petticoats altogether and cheekily reveals her backside to the viewer. The idea suggested here is the infantile affectation of the toilette ceremony. Additionally, Boucher’s pair of decorative putti paintings from the 1740s called *Cupids in Conspiracy* and *Music and Dance* (Figs. A19 and A20) show groups of nude children that play outdoors in
fountains with elaborate architectural details. In *Music and Dance*, a child musician glares at the
mass of clumsy figures that join hands in dance, but fall over one another as they step out of
time. This comical interaction of stumbling children that attempt to perform like adults may be a
gentle mockery of the pretensions of the French aristocracy depicted in the *fête galante* genre, a
popular category of painting that emphasized the effortless grace of music, dancing, and the art
of conversation.

Because of the conflation of the bodies and minds of women and children in eighteenth-
century France, the idea of women having retained “child-like” sensibilities was often viewed
negatively because of the implication of undeveloped and irrational mental faculties. In this
context, Boucher’s allegorical images of nude children that engage in adult activities and
intellectual endeavors may seem foolishly simple-minded. However, the representation of
children acting like grown men and women became an important eighteenth-century motif that
participated in the Enlightenment’s new stance on education, the origin of artistic imagination,
and the integrity of natural emotions. Portrayals of childhood naiveté became part of a dialogue
that favored the idea of the innocence of childhood as a means of opposing the artificiality of the
corrupt adult world and the general depravity of French society during the *Ancien régime*.

According to this philosophical context, imagery that displays children as adults may
suggest a kind of uncorrupted truth and purity of vision and intention. For instance, paintings of
“infant academies” show children engrossed in various artistic pursuits like painting and
sculpting. Works with children pretending to be professional artists show an amusing

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76 Gordon, “The Art Patronage of the Marquise de Pompadour,” 47. Also see Angela Rosenthal,
“Infant Academies and the Childhood of Art: Vigée Lebrun’s *Julie with a Mirror*,” *Eighteenth-
Century Studies* 37, no. 4. (Summer 2004): 605-628.

discrepancy between naïve immaturity and purity of vision.\textsuperscript{78} Angela Rosenthal has written extensively about Boucher’s popular representations of children performing adult tasks, and she suggests that Boucher’s \textit{Geniuses of the Arts} (Fig. A21) is a satirical commentary on the seriousness of artistic proficiency.\textsuperscript{79} In this monumental oil cartoon that was later transformed into a woven tapestry for Madame de Pompadour, winged and wingless children concentrate on drawing, painting, architecture, and music in a grandiose outdoor space. While this subject certainly infantilizes conventional artistic practices, it also evokes the idea of a sincere, unencumbered artistic vision.

With the exception of the Goncourt brothers’ nineteenth-century declaration of Pompadour as the queen of rococo art, I believe that eighteenth-century critics and modern scholars have downplayed the inventiveness of Madame de Pompadour’s collection and the seriousness of her artistic vision. For example, the marquise’s eighteenth-century detractors complained that as a prominent patron of the visual arts, Pompadour’s apparent preference for building and decorating her private chateaux added little value to the greatness of France. By contrast, in his historical study of Pompadour’s patronage, Posner acknowledges the marquise’s significant contributions to the French art world including her important commissions and direct involvement in establishing the powerhouse porcelain factory in Sèvres. Pompadour also secured the appointment of her brother as the Surintendant des Bâtiments du roi, which had significant art historical implications.\textsuperscript{80}


\textsuperscript{79} Ibid., 612.

\textsuperscript{80} Posner, “Madame de Pompadour as a Patron,” 74-76.
As mentioned earlier, Posner and others have ultimately concluded that Pompadour was stylishly lavish and uninventive; Pompadour bought indiscriminately and was more of an extravagant accumulator of the highest quality of objects because of her access to unlimited wealth.\(^{81}\) In their study of eighteenth-century female patronage, however, Melissa Hyde and Jennifer Milam explain the active role of art patrons in the intellectual processes that defined the making of art as a liberal and humanistic endeavor.\(^{82}\) As I have emphasized, Pompadour was acutely aware of the ability of the visual arts to assert her identity. Pompadour’s vision of herself extends not only to her portraiture, but it is evident in her carefully managed decorative schemes and coordinated collections. According to this ideological framework, Pompadour’s display of images of children is not necessarily a faddish decorative motif that is divorced from intellectual discourse. These images can be closely linked to her identity as an Enlightenment intellectual operating within the bounds of the proper codes of femininity.

Between 1752-1753, Madame de Pompadour commissioned Carle Van Loo to paint a suite of paintings for her Salon de Compagnie on the ground floor at her private estate at Bellevue, a space that, for a short time, functioned as a “temple to her glorification.”\(^{83}\) Van Loo’s *Allegories of the Arts: Painting, Sculpture, Architecture, and Music* represent children who personify the fine and performing arts (Figs. A22-25). I would argue that this series allegorically references Pompadour’s relationship with the king and functions as a commentary on her

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\(^{83}\) Jones, *Madame de Pompadour*, 94.
cultivation of French art. For example, in *Sculpture*, a boy dressed in a knotted kerchief and an artist’s smock sits atop a wooden block as he carefully puts the finishing touches on a sculpted marble bust of Louis XV. The child’s makeshift studio is rudimentary with its stacked wooden crates as a tabletop for the king’s bust, but the soaring column and enormous antique vase behind the child suggest a grand space that ennobles his lofty undertaking. To further emphasize the prestige of sculpting the king’s likeness and the benevolence of the Bourbon monarchy more generally, the famous sculpted head of Alexander the Great rests on the floor beside the child and appears to look up at the scene in awe. In *Architecture*, two boys dressed in elaborate Renaissance costumes present the elevation of Pompadour’s beloved Bellevue to their colleague, who gestures toward the drawing while two children in simple work clothing proceed with construction in the background.

It is significant to notice that Van Loo uses adult mannerisms and interactions to imagine these young children as seasoned artistic professionals. Instead of humorously stumbling through a mature scenario as we saw in Coypel’s satirical representation of the toilette, Van Loo styles the children as gracefully composed courtiers from another historical era. The child architectural consultant in blue, for example, knows how to direct a crew and lift his robe like a miniature Louis XIV to reveal his mastery of an aristocratic, ballet-like pose. Others know how to work marble, mix paint on an artist’s palette, and play instruments in an ensemble. Two important factors that suggest their statuses as children, however, are their scaled-down tools and the naturalistic appearances of their bodies. Notice how the sculptor’s feet do not reach the floor as he sits before his masterpiece, and his chubby hand grasps a miniature hammer. In fact, the hands of the pianist and painter show ample baby fat, and the children’s protruding cheeks are round, red, and full. Eighteenth-century publications on children’s health like Jacques
Ballexserd’s *Dissertation sur l’éducation physique des enfants* discussed children’s physical characteristics and emphasized the shape of a healthy child’s head and its prodigious size compared to the rest of the body.⁸⁴ Ballexserd continues with additional descriptions of the physical features of the child’s head: the ears are raised, the nose is flat, and the cheeks and mouth are prominent.⁸⁵ Furthermore, the child’s chest is narrow, the arms are stronger than the legs, and the skin is redder because of its delicacy; the child’s forms remain round and soft from birth until age seven.⁸⁶ An eighteenth-century engraving of the child’s skeleton (Fig. A26) shows the emphasis on the large size of the child’s head compared to the volume of its other body parts. Indeed, in *Painting*, the child model’s body has the disproportionately large head, delicate facial features, flushed skin, soft limbs, and paunchy belly that Ballexserd outlined.

When these paintings were publically displayed at the Salon of 1753, they mostly received positive critical attention and went on to be reproduced in printed engravings, in miniature painted formats on enameled plaques, on snuffboxes, and on porcelain wares for the popular market. The critic Estève remarked:

> Geniuses [are] in action representing what they want to express. We can only praise M. Van Loo for having rejected the allegorical figures that traditionally have almost always been employed in these subjects . . . We might only have wished for a little more variety in the physiognomies of these small figures.⁸⁷

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⁸⁵ Ibid.

⁸⁶ Ibid.

Estève’s critiques make clear that contemporary viewers understood and appreciated Van Loo’s naturalistic depictions of children to express artistic genius. The study of physiognomy sought to relate individual character traits to fixed facial features; it was a branch of early modern science rooted in empirical observation to help decipher nature’s involuntary language of physical appearance.88 Physiognomy informed intellectual and artistic life in eighteenth-century Europe, and the craze for uncovering the inner reality of people through their bodily features culminated with the publication of Johann Caspar Lavater’s Physiognomische Fragmente between 1775 and 1778, a text that examined features of the head and scientifically demonstrated the neo-Socratic link between physical beauty and moral virtue. Given the popularity of physiognomy, it is unsurprising that critics from the 1753 Salon expressed a desire for more identifiable physiognomic traits in Van Loo’s series, perhaps to know for sure if the children are ennobling or slandering the arts since they are unlike traditional allegories used for this subject matter. Estève’s observation accords with contemporary discourses on the increasing awareness of the unique identity of children and their ability to express themselves without restraint.

Meanwhile, the ultra-conservative critic La Font de Saint-Yenne stands apart in his unapologetic attack of Van Loo’s suite of paintings. He candidly wrote:

These arts are represented by children who are too dressed up, making them appear a little heavy and stuffed, even though their costumes are elegant and clever. Their physical features are not sufficiently varied and seem to have come from the same model. It is moreover unlikely that five- and six-year-old brats could seriously practice the arts; that their small and weak hands could hold sledgehammers and chisels to work the marble; that they would paint from nature, and similar occupations that are apt to give a more childlike character to the arts rather than dignity and respect. This reflection was prompted by the bad joke made by several people who upon seeing these paintings

remarked “that the arts in our country have regressed to infancy,” a ridiculous criticism and far from the truth.  

La Font’s verbal lashing of Van Loo’s Allelogies must be understood in terms of his moralist political agenda and his desire to uphold the academic conventions of French history painting as the most honorable and worthwhile artistic endeavor. I believe, however, that La Font’s remarks offer several important points that provide a further context for my interpretation of children that are depicted as adults. La Font views Van Loo’s children in the context of the new ideas on the weakness, neediness, and extreme sensitivity of childhood, albeit negatively. As “five- and six-year-old brats,” La Font finds Van Loo’s children as troublesome, spoiled hindrances and intellectually and physically incapable of producing high art. For La Font, the children-artists’ untrained ways of seeing was to the horrifying detriment of French art.

Additionally, the critic concludes that upon seeing the paintings, viewers snidely commented that “the arts in [France] have regressed to infancy.” I contend that this disparaging remark is twofold. First, to represent children as professionally trained artists under the watchful gaze of the king, as represented in “Sculpture,” mocks the integrity of French artistic advancement and suggests a kind of intellectual and moral degeneration that Louis XV supports. However, since Pompadour commissioned this suite of paintings for her private residence as a potential reference to the purity of her artistic vision with Louis XV at her side, this comment indirectly references Pompadour’s intellect as childishly undeveloped and vapid. In this context, La Font’s comment might be understood to obliquely reference Pompadour herself as the spoiled “brat” who had severely mishandled the virtuous integrity of French art and culture. My point here is that references to and representations of “infancy,” particularly in terms of intellectual development, had both positive and negative connotations that indeed affected Pompadour’s

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89 La Font de Saint-Yenne quoted in Ibid., 305.
reputation. Images of children as adults in this context are ambiguous since they may advance positive ideas of innocence, but they may also suggest a degree of immaturity that could be harmful to the marquise’s intellectual authority, the value of her artistic endeavors, and ultimately her superior position at court.

Although Pompadour amassed a significant art collection from the leading artists of her time, she especially enjoyed a long, professional relationship (and perhaps friendship) with François Boucher. Boucher was received in the French Royal Academy of Painting and Sculpture in 1734 as a history painter. While he produced large-scale mythological paintings for various royal patrons including Pompadour, Boucher became one of the most prolific French painters of his time working in virtually every medium and attained great commercial success. Even though he was not known as a portraitist, Boucher painted at least eight idealized portraits of Pompadour, despite the marquise having told her brother that her portraits from Boucher never resembled her likeness. Boucher also served as Pompadour’s artistic instructor, and she produced a series of etchings based on Boucher’s own drawings of children. She also collected luxury objects that featured adapted depictions of Boucher’s pastoral children. Given the pervasive presence of children in his œuvre, how do Boucher’s representations of children engage with the Enlightenment’s revision of the nature of children and childhood, and why did Pompadour engrave and collect these representations specifically? I believe that Boucher’s Enfants can be interpreted according to the latest social and philosophical ideals on childhood. After all, the artist moved in Enlightenment circles, and he considered himself (as did others) an intellectual and a poet. Boucher was also a progressive and highly inventive artist, as Diderot’s scathing comments about the audacity of his pastoral scenes suggest.
Apart from Edith Standen’s and Alaister Laing’s short essays on the provenance of Boucher’s Enfants in decorative media, few art historians have critically analyzed the socio-historical significance of representations of children in Boucher’s œuvre. One notable exception is Jennifer Milam, who discusses Boucher’s Sleeping Children as an image of pastoral children that recognizes the idea of child sexuality as something latent but harmless. Moreover, Boucher’s emotive and naturalistically rendered representations of cherubs as children that depart from prevailing artistic conventions have been ignored. The fourth edition of the Dictionnaire de l’Académie française (1762) defines chérubin (“cherub”) as an angel and, according to its proverbial meaning, a man with a ruddy face. Customarily in art, depictions of cherubs (also called putti, amours, and cupids and seemingly reference the same beings) have a longstanding literary and visual tradition that stretches back to antiquity when sprightly figures evoked the infant Bacchoi on Roman sarcophagi. Renaissance artistic invention under Donatello arguably redefined the identity of the putto-cherub as a nude, winged, and expressive embodiment of liveliness and innocent tenderness. This otherworldly being embodied the uncontrollable sensations and irrational physical and mental changes that instinctively occur in the body as triggered by a sudden rush of fear, the rhapsodic effects of the arts, sexual arousal, and love.

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In eighteenth-century French art, cherubs were commonly depicted as young children, most often boys, in reference to the classical and Renaissance putti traditions, and these figures often functioned as playful meddlers in matters of love.\textsuperscript{94} Even Cupid (or Eros, in Greek), the god of love himself, was sometimes depicted as a nude, winged child. In the early nineteenth century, the sixth edition of the \textit{Dictionnaire de l’Académie française} (1835) revised its former definition of \textit{chérubin} to specifically mention this figure’s childlike features in painting and sculpture.\textsuperscript{95} I believe that Boucher’s cherubs and other naturalistic depictions of children in diverse guises reveal the artist’s awareness of the significance of the child in contemporary French society. To this end, the artist’s emphasis on the symbolic value of childhood innocence attracted collectors like Pompadour, who used art to manage her identity.

Boucher alludes to changes in the status of the child within the family in his genre painting \textit{Le Déjeuner} from 1739 (Fig. A27). In this bourgeois interior space at breakfast time, a seated woman with her back to the viewer feeds a quiet, well-behaved corseted infant who sits on her lap. Her coffee remains untouched as she puts her needs aside to care for the child. Another well-dressed female figure turns away from preparing her morning coffee to address the little girl who looks up to her. With her arms full of frilly toys and her face turned away from the viewer, the child may indeed be a fanciful object on display as an accessory of familial life.\textsuperscript{96} But the girl’s presence momentarily captures the attention of the second woman as well as the


\textsuperscript{95} \textit{Dictionnaire de l’Académie française}, Sixth Edition, 1835. In the late nineteenth century, the definition of \textit{chérubin} expanded to acknowledge the word as a term of endearment for a young child; this definition persists today.

\textsuperscript{96} Johnson, “Picturing Pedagogy,” 54-55.
servant who looks to her with curiosity as he pours the coffee. Although the girl’s identity is anonymous and her toys and elaborate dress immobilize her, the girl is the focus of the painting because the adult figures pause to address her needs, and this is the tender, familial moment that Boucher depicts.

In addition to his familial genre paintings, Boucher famously reinvented the French pastoral genre, which included varied representations of children. The pastoral genre has a long history in literature, poetry, and art, particularly in terms of subject matter that imagined the freedom and simplicity of life in the tranquility of nature. In seventeenth-century Dutch art, the Utrecht School’s paintings of shepherds and shepherdesses in landscapes evoked a series of overlapping links between artistic conventions that embodied the contemplation of and pleasures in nature’s bounty, bawdy popular love songs, and the sentimental pastoral poetry, romance, and drama genres. Pastoral subjects were associated with elite collectors since the number of complex references in a single canvas appealed to those learned viewers with profound international and humanist interests. Abraham Bloemaert’s Shepherdess from 1628 (Fig. A28), for example, references conventions of courtesan portraiture, imagery related to the senses, and allusions to abundance and the times of the year. The shepherdess’s forms are sensuous and slip


99 Kettering, Dutch Arcadia, 44-48.
into the realm of the erotic, but pastoral attributes linked to the care of flocks and the bounties of nature help to temper any potential lewdness.\(^{100}\)

Such Northern European examples inspired Boucher’s early pastoral paintings called *bambochades* from the 1730s, which represent rosy-cheeked peasant figures in austere domestic interiors or provincial outdoor settings, as seen in works like *The Beautiful Country Woman* (Fig. A29) and the large-scale *The Vegetable Vendor* (Fig. A30). Salon critics like Denis Diderot criticized the intellectual emptiness of Boucher’s pastorals because of their seeming lack of a meaningful narrative. However, these rococo images include standard rustic motifs like rakes and other gardening tools, birdcages, blossoming flowers, and harvested fruits and vegetables that Boucher transformed into densely-coded emblems to add layers of meaning to the subjects. Although the paintings’ subjects did not strictly follow the rules of traditional academic narratives, their numerous metaphorical associations demanded intellectual involvement from their viewers in their references to past and present visual conventions in contemporary French and seventeenth-century Dutch art.\(^{101}\)

For example, the curvaceous forms of the sizable woman who tends to her three young children in *The Beautiful Country Woman* implicitly references fecundity and fertility through the still life of copper cooking vessels, hearty root vegetables, and a robust leafy cabbage at the woman’s foot in the composition’s foreground. A variation of this rustic still life is represented in Boucher’s *The Vegetable Vendor*, only now the flushed peasant woman holds a cabbage on

\(^{100}\) Ibid., 60-61.

her lap while her ruddy-faced male suitor offers up his carrot as a coy sexual pun. Colin Bailey has outlined the number of emblematic meanings of the cabbage that extend beyond an erotic subtext: cabbages can stand for the earthly elements, a metaphor for the female uterus, reproduction and the cultivation of children, and a readily available dietary option for peasant types because of its modest cost and gastronomical unsophistication. I believe that what is important here is Boucher’s emphasis on the various emblematic and allegorical allusions that create overlapping themes within a single composition. Paintings are invested with nuanced meanings that call on viewers’ wit and intellectual awareness to understand them more completely. Seen from this perspective, Boucher composed his *bambochades* as both “a painter and a poet”— an identity that his contemporaries celebrated. The fluidity of the narrative strategies of his pastorals allowed viewers greater freedom to fashion meanings according to their own knowledge and experiences instead of a singular literary narrative that controlled the work.

Pastoral imagery was well underway in France when Boucher produced his *bambochades*, and many pastoral paintings were linked to mainstream literary pastorals such as the aforementioned Guarini’s *Il Pastor Fido* displayed in Madame de Pompadour’s 1755 portrait, Ariosto’s *Orlando Furioso*, and *Astrée* by Honoré d’Urfé. Watteau’s *fête galante* imagery from the first quarter of the eighteenth century shows themes of lovers outdoors and various aristocratic pursuits of pleasure. While this imagery has stylistic and iconographic

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102 Bailey, “‘Details that Surreptitiously Explain,’” 46-54.


precedents in northern Baroque examples, Watteau created his *fête galante* subjects through a synthesis of contemporary literary and theatrical sources as well as from his awareness of aristocratic codes of etiquette and bodily comportment. “Pastoral” soon came to be defined in eighteenth-century France as idealized representations of hedonistic shepherds and shepherdesses and their amorous pursuits in picturesque rural landscapes; critics like the abbé Le Blanc credited Boucher as the artist who popularized of this specific type in French rococo art. Just as Dutch pastorals appealed to sophisticated urbane collectors, French pastoral imagery attracted aristocratic patrons. For his renovation of Hôtel de Soubise in Paris during the late 1730s, the duc de Rohan commissioned Boucher to paint a series of overdoors to decorate his *salle d’audience*. A pair of paintings, *Pastorale à la guirlande* and *Pastorale à la cage*, stand out for their novelty as two of Boucher’s earliest works in his reinvented pastoral idiom (Figs. A31 and 32); engraved copies of these paintings point to the popularity of the subject matter. By mid-century, decorative artists adapted Boucher’s painted pastorals, either in their entirety or through the use of specific details, to adorn luxury decorative objects that were purchased by elite patrons.

Compared to the earthy palettes and rural emphasis of Boucher’s *bambochades*, the pastel colors and beribboned silk costumes of porcelain-skinned shepherds and shepherdesses in *Pastorale à la guirlande* and *Pastorale à la cage* convey themes of gallantry and love-making in imagined outdoor spaces. With neatly powdered coiffures, pristine clothes, and flawless white

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skin, the harsh realities of impoverished peasantry are completely effaced, which is new considering Boucher’s earlier bambochades retained remnants of the Northern tradition that somewhat alluded to peasants at work. What remains, however, is the multitude of visual references and literary puns that necessitate the viewer’s intellectual engagement. While these referential elements derive from the Netherlandish tradition, they are better understood in terms of contemporary French literary and artistic traditions.107 For example, in Pastorale à la cage, the shepherd steps forward to present his companion with an open birdcage. As her garment slips from her shoulder to reveal a glimpse of her breast, the blushing shepherdess delicately coaxes her pet bird into her beloved’s cage while the two lock eyes.

The emblematic meaning of birdcage imagery was a longstanding convention in both French and Netherlandish genre painting, typically alluding to some dimension of spiritual or carnal love.108 But while certain Netherlandish paintings like Gabriel Metsu’s The Poultry Seller (Fig. A33) may be more overt in their erotic references, French rococo avian imagery deemphasizes the physical act of love-making to represent mannered acts of courtship and seduction that privilege prevailing attitudes of politesse and galanterie among the eighteenth-century elite.109 The loss of virginity is implicit in birdcage imagery, but the pastel colors and soft lighting of French rococo pastorals invest the moment with romantic and poetic overtones. These imagined pastoral landscapes are bucolic refuges that offer warmth and comfort to the


figures and viewers. Compared to the ominous setting of Metsu’s *The Poultry Seller* with the bare tree that creeps toward the center of the composition to advance an unsettling sense of the young woman’s vulnerability as the older man inappropriately propositions her, Boucher’s representation of an idyllic setting in *Pastorale à la cage* appears safe and serene as the lovers reveal their intentions to one another. Moreover, Elise Goodman finds the disheveled man’s thrusting of the cock toward the woman in Metsu’s painting threatening and indeed a confirmation of the Netherlandish emphasis on crude sexual content in avian imagery. While the aggressiveness of the male’s thrusting gesture is rather ambiguous, I contend that the species and large size of his bird reveals his intentions more explicitly than his body language, which appears subdued. The cockerel in Metsu’s genre scene was an animal generally linked to lasciviousness and womanizing. “Vogelen” in seventeenth-century Dutch meant bird catching, and its derivatives were also common euphemisms for copulation and the phallus; a “vogelaer” signaled a bird catcher as well as a lover.\(^\text{110}\) From this perspective, the man’s indecorous presentation of the cock to the woman suggests a certain degree of vulgarity in his sexual advance. By contrast, it is Boucher’s shepherdess who carefully handles her pet bird as she willingly guides it into her lover’s open cage that is beautifully adorned with flowers. This sensual gesture suggests the maiden’s trusting surrender of her virtue, and Boucher follows his Netherlandish predecessor in that he employs a degree of wit in his inclusion of erotic details in an ostensibly innocent scene. But the tone of Boucher’s avian imagery emphasizes a more courtly and lyrical portrayal of sexual love than the bawdiness of the Netherlandish example that utilizes similar visual conventions and themes. When André Laurent published Boucher’s *Pastorale à la cage* as an engraving under the title *Le pasteur complaisant* in 1742 (Fig. A34), the printmaker added a

child who naively reaches to catch the bird as the woman places it inside of the open cage, thereby further incorporating the idea of sweet innocence into the scene.

Eighteenth-century critics generally lauded Boucher’s creativity and cleverness, having written that “no one possessed a higher degree of poetic invention than he.”\cite{111} Apart from Diderot and the moralizing lens through which he analyzed Boucher’s pastorals, admirers praised Boucher for his love of literature and his refined abilities to think with great sophistication. His obituary in the September 1770 issue of the *Mercure de France* spoke of his enjoyment in being surrounded by leading literary figures.\cite{112} Because audiences recognized Boucher for his literary cultivation and cultural erudition, I believe that his pastorals ought to be understood in terms of a broader context of Enlightenment intellectual culture and philosophical discussion. In addition to diverse historical allusions, Boucher’s poetic reinvention of the genre stems from his portrayals of modernized pastoral themes that directly engage with contemporary theater, poetry and literature, as well as Enlightenment discourses on the nature of sexuality, gender roles, love, courtship rituals, and the restorative benefits of recreational visits to the country.

For example, abbé Le Blanc’s recognition of Boucher’s pastoral innovations in the rococo idiom derives, in part, from the artist’s take on a new kind of mannered sentimentality that dramatist Charles-Simon Favart emphasized in his *opéras comiques* during this period. Alaister Laing has documented Boucher’s relationship with Favart through a series of letters

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\cite{111} Jean-Bernard Restout, *Galerie française: ou, Portraits des hommes et des femme célèbres qu\ ont paru en France* (Paris: Hérissant le fils, 1771); as quoted in Bailey, “‘Details that Surreptitiously Explain,’” 53.
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\cite{112} Jean-Auguste Julien Desboulmiers, “Eloge de M. Boucher,” *Mercure de France*, September 1770, 181-89; as quoted in Bailey, “‘Details that Surreptitiously Explain,’” 53.
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from the 1740s.113 Laing suggests that one can detect Favart’s influence upon Boucher’s work since much of the correspondence between the artist and the playwright involves the theater, particularly the discussions about Boucher’s supply of frontispiece designs for *Cythère assiégée* from 1748, as well as *Le caprice amoureux ou Ninette à la court* and *La Bohémienne*, published in 1754 and 1755 respectively.114 Furthermore, Laing asserts that Boucher’s pastorals quite literally drew from Favart’s refined version of the Théâtre de la Foire that centered on the innocent emotions of simple country peasants instead of the continuation of crass performances that had made the Théâtre a popular form of lowbrow theater at public fairs in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries.115 While the male shepherd offers his love a sprig of wildflowers in the foreground of *Pastorale à la guirlande*, for example, a peeping tom spies on the couple with great interest from behind the fountain on the right side of the composition. The secret presence of this male voyeur invests the scene with a narrative element comparable to the dramatic love triangles in a number of Favart’s plays.116 In his spirited attack on Boucher’s pastoral imagery at the Salon of 1765, Diderot identifies an anonymous shepherdess as Catinon,


116 Laing argues that this evidence suggests an initial link between the works of Boucher and Favart at the outset of the artist’s intervention in the pastoral genre. When Boucher became established in the pastoral genre later in his career, his name was constantly linked to the literary works of Fontenelle from the late seventeenth century. See Laing, “Boucher: The Search for an Idiom,” 69; Charles-Simon Favart, *Theatre de m. Favart, ou recueil des opéra-comiques & parodies qu’il a données depuis quelques années, avec les airs, rondes & vaudevilles graves* (Paris, Prault, n.d).
an illustrious contemporary actress known for her performance in Favart’s *Supplément de la soirée des boulevards*. Although Diderot references a stage actress as a way to denigrate and call attention to the insincerity and irrationality of Boucher’s pastoral subjects, his reference to the imagery in the context of the theater, albeit negative, suggests the paintings’ connections to Favart and the stage in the minds of contemporary viewers. Furthermore, the *Dictionnaire des théâtres de Paris* from 1756 and the memoirs of Favart’s grandson agree that a number of Boucher’s pastoral subjects can be traced to Favart’s stage productions, particularly the *Vallée de Montmorency*, or from its original redaction as *Les vendanges de Tempé*. However, as Laing rightly points out, these sources fail to consider to what effect Boucher’s work may have had on Favart’s pieces, especially since Favart’s productions began as pantomimes, and the artist and the playwright were friends. Moreover, in the spirit of the double entendres and mischief-inducing ambiguities that entertained the high society for whom Boucher painted, the interchangeability of the male and female figures in Boucher’s pastorals further supports the artist’s connection to themes of cross-dressing that were popular in Favart’s performances.

Just as the theater provided audiences with a respite from reality, the visual and sensual pleasures of painted pastoral landscapes may also have engaged with the French aristocracy’s fantasies of escapism that resulted from the precarious social conditions that threatened the

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117 Diderot, *Diderot on Art*, 26-27.


preeminent status and privilege of the nobility during the mid-eighteenth century. In addition to the envisioning of the pastoral environment as a retreat from harsh social realities, the highly embellished imagining of the unspoiled countryside suggests a link to contemporary discussions of the various rejuvenative properties of nature that attracted urbanites who suffered from unsafe health conditions in the city. Since the time of the Renaissance, cities were regarded as utopic centers of civilization, wealth, cultural refinement, and education. In terms of the medicalization of French society in the eighteenth century, city dwellers were more open to accepting medical advice of physicians, who wrote about the countryside as an untamed domain ruled by animality, custom, and ignorance, particularly when criticizing the practices of rural wet nurses and children’s hygiene. However, increasing numbers of eighteenth-century physicians recognized filthy city conditions as likely sources of physical and moral corruption, and these doctors used medical arguments to bolster the growing trend of prescribing countryside visits as remedies for urban illnesses. Access to open, fresh air was a recurring theme among medical writers since impure air was blamed for most maladies. For example, Ballexserd claimed that breathing clean air was necessary for the advancement of the human species. Compared to polluted, stale city air, these medical treatises lauded the cleanliness of pure country air and deemed it essential in the raising of healthy children who were more sensitive to contaminated air than adults.

Children’s exposure to freshly circulating morning air was developmentally critical and


discussed in terms of strength and vitality, with one contemporary source claiming that such air imbues children with “a life principle that is absolutely lacking for those who never inhale anything but the air in rooms.” Other descriptions believed deep breaths of fresh morning air to be the “balm of the senses,” a source of “natural medicine,” and the “purest food.” Clearly, the therapeutic consumption of the rich natural elements like freshly circulating air offered indispensible health benefits not available to city inhabitants. Descriptions of the restorative character of nature and rustic peasants as embodiments of nature itself stood in stark contrast to the notion of the city as a festering hub of disease, lethargy, and excess.

Boucher’s incorporation of children into a vast number of his pastoral paintings engages with the variety of historical meanings and contemporary discourses that I have just outlined. At times these youthful figures simply function as conventional attributes of abundance and female fertility and sexuality. Also, their expressive forms and playful, age-appropriate actions suggest Boucher’s engagement with new ideas on the nature of children and childhood. For example, Boucher’s Dance of the Little Dog (Fig. A35) depicts a peasant mother and her child, who teaches a dog to stand on its hind legs as a reference to both traditional Dutch iconographies of children instructing animals as well as contemporary theories on a mother’s primacy in the education of her children. Of course, to emphasize her fertility, sexuality, and maternal virtue, an infant is loosely swaddled against her breast and another child peacefully sleeps at her hip.

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123 S.A. Tissot, Essai sur les maladies des gens du monde (Lausanne, 1770), 25-26; quoted in Morel, “City and Country,” 64.


125 I will discuss children’s interactions with animals in terms of pedagogy and play in greater detail in Chapter Two of this dissertation.
Boucher’s large-scale decorative panel *The Fisherman* is another pastoral representation that includes layers of fluctuating meaning. The artist casts pastoral children in the role of putti to assist the adult lovers and invests the scene with references to growing up and the sweet innocence of childhood play (Fig. A36). This painting shows a group of sumptuously dressed women and a male shepherd who are fishing at the banks of a river in a picturesque landscape. Beneath a nest of watchful turtledoves, symbols of love, is a human love nest where a seduction ritual takes place. As a thinly veiled erotic gesture, the shepherd holds his erect fishing pole between his bare legs and offers his stiff catch to his beloved while her companion pauses from collecting grapes to observe the outcome of the couple’s flirtation. The object of the shepherd’s affection reaches to touch his fish to affirm her acceptance of his amorous advance while a young boy settles into the comfort of the woman’s bosom. This pastoral child reclines between the new couple and snacks on grapes, appearing satisfied with perhaps having assisted in the lovers’ union. Significantly, Dorothy Johnson has interpreted representations of children with grapes as traditional iconographic references to autumn and the harvest, but such imagery, in the context of the mid-eighteenth-century reconception of the child, also evokes the idea of a child’s survival to maturity under the watchful care of nurturing mothers.\(^{126}\) As the woman lightly brushes her finger against the child’s head, her gesture may suggest that the boy will grow up to be like the shepherd.

While this boy’s placement may symbolize the woman’s fertility and future maternal virtue, Boucher includes a pair of children who attempt fishing on the right side of the composition. In a preparatory drawing of children fishing, the figures wear loose clothing and

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appear as a mass of fleshy limbs as one child stumbles to support his reclining companion’s outreached arm. In the finished painting, these children are placed directly across from the adults on the riverbank, who are oblivious to their actions. The children mimic the activities of the fishing adults to show that they, too, will grow up to be like the shepherd; however, they clumsily use a toy fishing pole to catch trapped fish that swim in a barrel. Their actions are playfully innocent, non-threatening, and even comical since the blond child cannot handle his tiny pole and struggles to reel in his own catch. In the context of these fishing attributes as allusions to sex, the children’s mishandlings amusingly emphasize their naiveté. In this painting, Boucher includes the children as expressions of innocence on one side of the composition to neutralize the adult seduction scene on the left.

As mentioned earlier, Diderot denounced Boucher’s pastorals for their lack of significant meaning and truthfulness, which stood in contrast to the moralizing principles of French academic painting. In the introduction to his evaluations of Boucher’s pastorals, Diderot makes a point to discuss Boucher’s representations of children in his compositions at the Salon of 1765, generally asserting:

> when [Boucher] does children he groups them well, but they are best left to frolic on their clouds. In the whole of this numberless family you will not find a single one capable of the real activities of life, of studying his lesson, of reading, writing, or scutching hemp; they are fictive, ideal creatures, little bastards of Bacchus and Silenus. Such children are perfectly suited to sculptural treatment around antique vases; they’re chubby, fleshy, plump.

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128 “Quand il fait des enfans, il les groupe bien; mais qu’ils restent à folâtrer sur des nuages. Dans toute cette innombrable famille, vous n’en trouverez pas un à employer aux actions réelles de la vie, à étudier sa leçon, à lire, à écrire, à tiller du chanvre. Ce sont des natures romanesques, idéales, de petits bâtards de Bacchus et de Silène. Ces enfans-là, la sculpture s’en accommoderait assez sur le tour d’un vase antique. Ils sont gras, joufflus, potelés.” Denis Diderot, *Diderot*
Although Diderot goes on to describe the chubby nude and winged figures in Boucher’s *Angelica and Medoro* on display at the same Salon as mischievous *amours* (meaning “loves,” or cherub-putto-cupid figures), he uses the word *enfants* (children) here to describe Boucher’s grouping of small figures that resemble one another, thereby evoking a variety of meanings about the significance of Boucher’s representations of children. The fourth edition of the *Dictionnaire de l’Académie française* from 1762 includes various meanings of *enfants* in terms of blood relations, royal titles, age, expressions of affection, and the physical size of the body. *Enfant* derives from the Latin *infans*, meaning “one who does not speak,” and has a specifically familial connotation in its reference to a son or daughter as related to a father and mother. *Enfant* generally signifies a young girl or boy from birth until the age of ten or twelve when puberty begins. *Enfant* was also used diminutively during this period to express familiarity, flattery, or inferiority.

Jaucourt’s entry on *enfant* from the *Encyclopédie* describes children’s moral obligations to their parents and distinguishes three states of children to better explain their nature. The first state is when children are completely dependent upon adults since they lack discernment. The

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130 Medical specialists divide the period of childhood into further sub-phases based on the child’s physical and psychological developments. I will address the sub-phases of childhood in greater detail in Chapter Four.

second state is when children’s judgments have matured, but they must remain under parental control. The third state refers to when children reach puberty and become eligible for marriage. The ability to reason, therefore, largely determines the meaning of “child” in this period. Based on this definition, Diderot distinguishes Boucher’s mass of mischievous cherub figures from how he understands the child in reality, as one capable of serious and productive learning.

Nevertheless, Diderot comments on the idealized forms of the children’s bodies as being “chubby, fleshy, and plump” and best left to frolic frivolously in the heavens or as decorative motifs in sculpted friezes around ancient vases. According to Diderot’s essay on painting that accompanied his commentary of the Salon of 1765, childhood is a caricature.\(^\text{132}\) He continues to say that “the child is a shapeless, fluid mass striving to develop,” and this age does not give the artist the opportunity to “submit to a purity and rigorous precision of line.”\(^\text{133}\) But what Diderot does not recognize is that the fleshy, freely moving forms of Boucher’s children relate to how the figures appear in nature without the restrictive devices that were used to manipulate children’s bodies.

In her assessment of Boucher’s allegorical children, Jo Hedley concluded:

Unlike Chardin’s visions of children rooted in observed reality, or the increasingly moralistic images of Greuze which parallel and reflect the new educational theories of Rousseau, Boucher’s flying babies belong to an earlier aesthetic which appreciated such subjects for their poetic allusions to the birth of wit or genius and for their ability to surprise and delight the eye.\(^\text{134}\)

With their unclad bodies and seemingly naïve handling of adult activities and emotions, Hedley frames her assessment of Boucher’s allegorical representations of children in terms of former


\(^{133}\) Ibid.

conventions of putti that allude to unaffected imagination. As I have discussed, however, physicians and Enlightenment philosophers discussed children’s spontaneity and naïveté in literature about childhood in the mid-eighteenth century. From this perspective, I believe that Boucher’s allegories of children at once reference earlier traditions while they reflect contemporary discourses on the integrity of children’s primary emotions. And while Boucher certainly repeats a wide-eyed, curly-haired blond enfant type in his mythological, genre, and pastoral compositions, I would argue that the forms of Boucher’s children are lively and naturalistically depicted in terms of their childlike movements, expressions, and physical traits.

In the context of the eighteenth century’s emphasis on a detailed observation of nature and scientific study, Boucher’s manner of representation suggests an awareness of the evolving perceptions of children. For example, a drawing from 1740 of an amour (Fig. A37) shows a winged child dressed in loose clothing in a crawling pose that expressively turns to look back at the viewer for reassurance. Once thought to be an inhuman posture, movements like crawling became encouraged as understandings of children’s bodies and minds changed.

Drawings of children that may have functioned as preliminary studies but also as finished works for the commercial market show careful attention to the child’s expressive eyes that are sensitive to external stimuli and also the child’s movements during sleep that emphasize a sense of vulnerability (Figs. A38 and 39). Buffon, for one, had stressed the enormous importance of children’s sight as the sense by which they receive their first impressions.\footnote{Buffon, De l’homme, 31-32.} A drawing of two reclining cherubs (Fig. A40) shows a tangle of figures that appear to have collided. One cherub looks as if he is trapped under his playmate without the physical strength to move on his own while the other reaches out with his mouth open in distress, as if he is calling for the viewer’s
help. According to this viewpoint, I believe that Boucher’s cherubs show the artist’s awareness of the ways in which children were being cared for and perceived as inherently dependent during the mid-eighteenth century. A drawing entitled Two Children (Fig. A41) also shows two nude children whose unrestrained chubby limbs, full cheeks, rounded bellies, and rolls of skin signal a healthy character according to those Enlightenment physicians and naturalists that stressed reforms in infant care and hygiene practices. One scholar has suggested that two of the three children that make up the central grouping of cherubs that personify “Painting” in Boucher’s Geniuses of the Arts derive from Two Children.\textsuperscript{136} Whether or not this drawing served as the painting’s source, Edith Standen has generally remarked that the decade of the 1750s through the first half of the 1760s served as the peak of the fashion for children in art and decoration in France.\textsuperscript{137} Boucher’s drawings of children were in great commercial demand throughout the 1750s, and his finished drawings of children were not necessarily studies for larger painted compositions but specifically created to be reproduced in other media.

In his appraisal of Boucher’s perception of children, Papillon de la Ferté claimed that “no other artist had ever given more finesse and spirit to the characters of children and Amours.”\textsuperscript{138} Drawings like Sleeping Children and Seated Child (Figs. A42 and A43) were published as printed engravings and entitled The Sleep and The Savoyard to make explicit themes of vulnerability and the plight of the uncared for child.\textsuperscript{139} The Sleep, in particular, shows a

\textsuperscript{136} Guy Stair Sainty and Alan P. Wintemute, François Boucher: His Circle and Influence (New York: Stair Sainty Matthiesen, 1987), 34.

\textsuperscript{137} Standen, “Country Children,” 127.

\textsuperscript{138} Papillon de la Ferté quoted in Hedley, François Boucher, 45.

\textsuperscript{139} The Savoyard references itinerants from the impoverished region of Savoy near the Western Alps who roamed France looking for odd jobs. Poor Savoyard children frequently left home to go to the city where they worked precarious jobs, like street performing, for little pay. Savoyard
peacefully sleeping cat that is curled alongside one of the children to suggest ideas related to
domestic comfort (Fig. A44). I will further illuminate Standen’s observation to suggest that
children were at the height of fashion in French art during the middle of the eighteenth century
because of the convergence of various artistic and intellectual ideologies as a result of the
Enlightenment reconception of the child that prioritized innocence and the morality inherent in
the care of children.

I propose that the physical characteristics of Boucher’s representations of children reveal
that, instead of using models from pre-existing artworks, the artist observed the bodies and
studied spontaneous movements of actual children from life and then recast them as cherubs or
other stock characters in mythological and genre paintings and drawings. The freedom of the
figures’ bodies recalls conventional cherub-putti iconographies that had once placed these beings
in an ethereal realm. However, Boucher’s depiction of flailing limbs and an apparent
consciousness of children’s sensitivity also relates to new theories on children’s physiologies and
psychologies. A correlation between Boucher’s emphases on the uninhibited forms and sensitive
natures of children’s minds and bodies and the circulation of new ideas on children’s special
identities in philosophical and scientific texts exists. Medical literature published during the
middle of the century centered on the uniqueness of the child’s body and the special care it
required for optimal survival. Child mortality was a serious problem throughout the eighteenth
century due to poor sanitation in crowded urban areas, the perpetuation of misinformation and
superstition in health care, malnutrition, and various problems associated with the practice of wet

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children famously symbolized familial devotion because they gave their earnings to their
families, from whom they were separated but dedicated. See Barker, “Imagining Childhood,”
437-439.
nursing. Social reformers, physicians, and Enlightenment moralists attributed, in part, child mortality to the depopulation crisis that threatened the stability and future of France. Writers of domestic advice manuals written specifically for wives and mothers employed the rhetoric of nature, medicine, and aesthetics to instruct women to embrace their moral destinies and devote themselves to their children.

Prior to the Enlightenment’s reevaluation of the identity of the child, former conceptions of childhood in the seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries derived from Christian thought. Born of Original Sin, Children were incompletely formed and innately weak, savage, and ignorant. Beginning in infancy, the significance of constructing children’s bodies through swaddling bands, leading strings, and whalebone corsets indicated a pre-Enlightenment effort to physically and psychologically distinguish children from the inferiority of animals. Children were indeed vulnerable since any hope of their survival depended on adults, but seventeenth-century descriptions of children described infants’ neediness as a kind of parasitism or natural greed.

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141 One important example is Jacques Ballexserd, who references Buffon outright in his discussion of the sensitivity of children’s bodies and appropriate clothing for newborns. See Ballexserd, *Dissertation sur l’éducation physique des enfants*, 51.


created subhuman images of children as frightening, gluttonous animals that were capable of familial ruin through the infliction of bodily harm and emotional stress upon their mothers. As physicians proposed lists of fundamental parental responsibilities that included feeding the child, keeping it warm, cleaning it, dressing it, allowing it sufficient and proper sleep, and providing comfort, they aligned with depopulation concerns in warning that the neglect of any of these basic duties would result in the death of the child. But the combination of these details would “take a mother out of herself and make her the slave of her nursling.”

Swaddling customs were widely practiced throughout France and aided, in part, in the alleviation of early fears of infantile avarice. Until Enlightenment physicians and moralists condemned the swaddling bands as abusive and inhumane torture devices, swaddling had several practical physical and ideological functions. Since Nature, doctors imagined, gave infants no strength to control their bodies, art forms must assist them. From approximately birth until twelve months of age, babies’ limbs were fully extended and pressed against their torsos with their heads in a fixed position. Then, the swaddling bands were tightly wrapped around the body and head so that only their faces were exposed. With bodies bound in this compact form for long periods of time, caretakers could resume daily routines without having to devote much attention to an infant that was effectively immobilized. Swaddling also promoted health and safety in that it protected infants from freezing temperatures and hazardous conditions inside of the home while properly shaping arms and legs to avoid unattractive postures and physical deformities.

144 Ibid.


The emphasis upon the immediate cultivation of a straight, upright form of the child’s body points to deeper ideological considerations of the hastening of a child’s humanity as expressed through a physical appearance. Because a child’s lack of rationality and inability to stand resembled an animalistic nature, caretakers used swaddling to discourage crawling and to control spontaneous physical or behavioral outbursts that would distance children from their humanity. Achieving a particular aesthetic ideal through the art of bodily constraint prevented misshapen bodies and also facilitated a straight posture that signaled good breeding and visually distinguished social rank.

Although defenders of swaddling viewed the practice as a moral necessity in the advancement of a child’s humanity, the customary advantages of the swaddling bands in the development of the child’s erect body turned dangerous despite swaddling’s claims to protect children from their animalistic impulses. Swaddled children’s chronic immobility horrified physicians and moralists who accused parents or nurses of inhumane cruelty and neglect as they swaddled children in an effort to avoid tending to them. As medical science advanced, opponents of swaddling saw the tight, filthy bands as a threat to proper circulation, physical health, and development. For one, blistering skin sores and rashes plagued children who were left bound and overheated in their own excrement for long periods of time. Eighteenth-century doctors warned that perspiration and bodily filth would seep back into the child’s body as a form of poison, and medical pamphlets recommended regular changings and cold-water baths to attain good health.

By the mid-eighteenth century, Enlightenment philosophical thought viewed children as naturally pure and innocent instead of sinful and dangerous. Natural forms and fabrics that facilitated physical movement, breathing, and circulation were increasingly favored. Doctors and moralists recommended the discontinuation of restrictive bodily devices of respect for nature and
to facilitate more unfettered and therefore harmonious physical and psychological developments in children. Physicians and moralists valued the natural beauty of the child’s body instead of the artificial beauty that resulted from the constraints of the swaddling bands or the whalebone corset that was worn mostly by urbane girls and boys to construct an aesthetic of elongated elegance.

To perhaps emphasize the child’s unique innocence, Boucher began to feature young children as protagonists in numerous pastoral scenes around 1750 in which they imitate the activities of their grown-up models from existing pastoral paintings. In *The Flute Lesson, or The Young Shepherds* (Fig. A45), for example, young children assume the roles of the amorous couple from Boucher’s *The Enjoyable Lesson* from 1748 (Fig. A46). Melissa Hyde has discussed the visual and linguistic double meanings in *The Enjoyable Lesson*, a pastoral painting that Boucher adapted from a scene in *Les vendages de Tempé* in which the Little Shepherd teaches Lisette to play the flageolet. In the painting, erotic meaning is hardly disguised as the shepherd reaches around his lover to finger her flute while she gently blows into the instrument. In *The Flute Lesson, or The Young Shepherds*, the little girl pauses from tending to her flock of slumbering sheep while the little shepherd teaches her to play his flute in the same way.

Additionally, *The Little Shepherdess* (Fig. A47), an oil on canvas painting from Boucher’s studio that probably served as a model for furniture tapestries, depicts a lone slumbering young girl along with the conventional pastoral attributes. The corseted costume, dreamlike pose, her sheep, and even the placement of her straw hat on her lap recall the elegant adult shepherdess from Boucher’s *The Interrupted Sleep* that was on display at Madame de Pompadour’s estate at Bellevue (Fig. A48). However, the pastoral child is isolated without any hints of eroticism. Her innocence, as suggested by the vulnerability of her sleep, is the emphasis of the painting.

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Hedley has written about Pompadour’s “immediate attraction” to Boucher’s pastoral children because the playfulness of their subjects alluded to her own deliberate playfulness and sentimentality that she employed, as the duc de Croÿ remembered in his journal, to seduce the king.148 Hedley concludes:

Boucher’s *Children* were depicted in a growing variety of occupations which, while reflecting the contemporary interest in education, were never allowed to become didactic but were primarily intended to charm.149

I believe that this interpretation of Boucher’s *Enfants* devalues the artist’s serious engagement with the artistic, literary, and cultural developments of his time. Furthermore, it reinforces the long-established understanding of Pompadour as an uninformed collector and her engagement with the decorative arts, the category in which this imagery is most often found, as intellectually vacant. Instead, when children mimic adults in the pastoral mode, the meanings of the images transform and effectively neutralize erotic undertones. I propose that the pastoral images that feature children combine conventional pastoral iconographies with new intellectual ideologies on the nature of children and childhood to convey contemporary ideas associated with the education of children and concepts of simplicity and innocence—ideas best expressed through the inherently non-threatening image of the natural child instead of amorous adolescents and sensual pleasure.

Boucher’s “country children,” as they have been described by Edith Standen, originated with the artist, but soon pastoral images of little girls and boys as miniature shepherdesses and shepherds became popular decorative motifs that embellished various luxury objects such as Gobelins furniture upholsteries, fire screens, Sèvres porcelain tea sets and vases, and stand-alone

148 Hedley, *François Boucher*, 122-123.

149 Ibid., 124.
biscuit figurines that decorated table settings. Engravings based on Boucher’s children also proliferated and further attest to the popularity of the subject matter, and poems accompanied the images that emphasize the simple pleasures of childhood. In his essay on Boucher’s *Enfants* that I mentioned at the beginning of this chapter, Alastair Laing argues that Boucher’s production of pastoral children was well underway prior to Madame de Pompadour’s interest in the subject matter.\(^{150}\) Pompadour did not invent the subject matter, but her interest in Boucher’s *Enfants* seemed to make the imagery more popular. Furthermore, the inventory of Pompadour’s massive collection suggests that pastoral subjects (both with and without child shepherds) pleased the marquise since she continued to commission pastoral subjects and adapted the imagery for decorative objects. The inventory of Pompadour’s collection reveals that in the early 1760s, for example, the marquise owned fifty Sèvres figures inspired by Boucher’s series of children.\(^{151}\) To further demonstrate Pompadour’s investment in Boucher’s *Enfants*, in 1752, a series of letters exchanged between Madame de Pompadour’s brother, the Surintendant des Bâtiments at the time, and the Gobelins Manufactory reveal that Pompadour wished for Jacques Neilson, the primary weaver, to discontinue his furniture tapestries that were inspired by Boucher’s drawings of children after he completed her order.\(^{152}\) This request suggests Pompadour’s strong identification with the subject matter, to the extent that she alone wanted to be recognized with it.

In the early 1750s upon a visit to Pompadour’s château at Crécy, the duchesse de Luynes admired “Boucher’s pink and blue children representing the Arts’ in one of Madame de

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\(^{150}\) Laing, “Madame de Pompadour et ‘les Enfants de Boucher,’” 42-49.

\(^{151}\) Hedley, *François Boucher*, 185. For the complete inventory of Pompadour’s collection after her death, see Jean Cordey, *Inventaire des biens de Madame de Pompadour, rédigé après son décès* (Paris: Société des Bibliophiles Français, 1939).

Pompadour’s boudoirs.” The duchesse’s passing comment may be a reference to the series of eight decorative panels called *The Arts and Sciences*, now at The Frick Collection in New York City (Figs. A5; A49-A55). The large-scale vertical panels are a creamy blue-gray with pink, vermillion, and gold accents; a blue camaïeu landscape in a cartouche separates the individual scenes while garlands of roses, poppies, forget-me-nots, hollyhocks, scabiosa, veronica, and nigella frame the imagery. Each panel contains two scenes that show children engaged in various artistic, literary, scientific, and pastoral pursuits.

In the last twenty years, art historians have carefully analyzed the paintings’ stylistic elements and have extensively debated whether or not to attribute these panels to Boucher or even to his studio. What is more, experts have researched the ambiguous provenance of the paintings and have seriously challenged Pompadour’s commissioning and ownership of them. Mostly due to a lack of commissioning records, vague historical references, and modern connoisseurial examinations, scholars have suggested that these panels were probably not part of Pompadour’s collection, but the images of children have their source in the various projects that Boucher executed for the marquise. Because of the oval and rectangular shapes of the paired images on each panel, Laing and other experts have suggested that a team of anonymous decorative painters used Boucher’s *Enfants* as the models for these panels that may have

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153 The duchesse de Luynes quoted in Hedley, *François Boucher*, 123.


155 For a detailed discussion of the ambiguous provenance and artistic attribution of these panels that is beyond the scope of this dissertation, see Laing, “Madame de Pompadour et ‘les Enfants de Boucher,’” 41-49.
originated as preparatory oil cartoons for tapestries woven as chair and seat backs. It is not known how the panels were originally arranged or if the set of eight panels on display at The Frick Collection is complete. While certain subjects and iconographic motifs may allude to traditional personifications of the earthly elements, the four seasons, the temperaments, and the five senses, each series of this type remains fragmentary. Because of this partial completeness, it seems that the suite of paintings does prioritize an allegorical function specifically, so its meanings can be adapted more broadly.

Although this issue of the panels’ artistic attribution and provenance is significant in the clarification of a more precise history of the paintings, I want to instead consider these images and their implications in the larger cultural context of Enlightenment discourse on children and pastoral imagery in mid-eighteenth-century France. The panels that represent *Fishing and Hunting* (A53) and *Fowling and Horticulture* (A5) are particularly noteworthy because these subjects are the most frequently adapted, reinterpreted, and sometimes even directly copied onto Sèvres porcelain wares such as tea cups and saucers, covered bowls and trays, and flower vases. In *Fishing*, a curly-haired blond boy offers his catch to a little girl who daintily holds her fishing pole in a pond with a tub of trapped fish at her side. In this provincial landscape, the girl is idealized with a gleaming white complexion, rouged cheeks, and unsoiled, chubby feet. Although she wears a kerchief around her head to convey her rustic identity, her corseted dress gives her the feminine shape to evoke the status of a cultured adult bourgeois woman.

Versions of this rustic girl appear throughout the series of paintings. For example, in the scene called *Hunting* that is paired with *Fishing* on the same panel, the girl helps a boy reload his

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156 See a letter dated 4 March 1985 from Alistair Laing to The Frick Collection in the curatorial files of the museum. While Laing’s idea is certainly plausible, it is still contested. Another possibility, according to Laing, is that these panels were once formatted as a decorative screen instead of a mural.
rifle as he misfires at the squawking duck on the right side of the composition. *Fowling* features the little shepherdess as she attempts to catch birds. Set in a pastoral landscape, the girl holds a flying decoy bird on a string in an effort to attract birds to fill her empty birdcage. Pastoral accoutrements such as a staff and a wide-brimmed straw hat are present, and, as is common in Boucher’s pastorals, the sheep are represented rather expressively as they watch the scene unfold with amusement. In the lower register of this panel is a representation of *Horticulture*. Here, a young boy offers the recurring shepherdess a sprig of flowers and grapes from his basket of harvested fruits in a secluded country landscape, thereby recalling the gesture and subject matter from Boucher’s *Pastorale à la guirlande*.

Although not part of The Frick’s *Arts and Sciences* series, Le Prince’s engraved prints entitled *Fishing* and *The Hunt* feature more themes of fishing and bird catching based on Boucher’s prototypes (Figs. A56 and A57). While Boucher’s drawing for *Fishing* is lost, his drawing for *The Hunt* exists (Fig. A58). This composition shows a shepherd boy who puts down his staff and drinking flask to help a young girl trap the birds that playfully swing from a flowered perch. In this drawing, the girl retains her childish features; her pudgy hands and round cheeks appear fuller despite her corseted costume that is meant to shape her body. The imagery from Le Prince’s *Fishing* is similar to the painting version in that a little boy appears behind a young shepherdess who sits beneath a suspended fishing net. The boy reaches around her body to present his fish and the figures’ eyes meet. However, instead of nonchalantly continuing to fish with a minimal awareness of the boy’s offer, the girl leans back as if to rebuff the boy’s advances and raises her right hand in a gesture of surprise. Variations of the imagery from *Fishing* and *The
Hunt appear in painted Sèvres porcelain during this period and demonstrate the continued pervasiveness of Boucher’s pastoral children at mid-century (A59-A61).\textsuperscript{157}

In 1755, the *Mercure de France* reported that Boucher’s genre of children depicted as adults was so fashionable that the artist publically complained that the engraver Claude Duflos had bribed his students to secretly hand over unauthorized copies of their teacher’s famous subjects.\textsuperscript{158} Boucher provided drawings of pastoral children to the Gobelins Tapestry Factory and also the porcelain factory at Vincennes (and later the major factory at Sèvres that Pompadour helped to found). *The Little Girl with a Cage, The Little Bird Catcher, The Little Gardener* and *The Little Fisherman* are oil cartoons that may have been executed by Boucher’s studio after the artist’s drawings (Figs. A62-A65). Here again, I emphasize the prevalence and popularity of painted pastoral children shown with bird and fishing imagery; once more, little girls are shown in various stages of trapping birds in *The Little Girl with a Cage* and *The Little Bird Catcher. The Little Farm Girl*, (Fig. A66) represents a rustic child who tenderly feeds a rooster, a hen, and a group of chicks to assert her virtue in her attentive “mothering” of this bird family, despite the surrounding barnyard chaos of copulating chickens and a predatory cat about to pounce on a nesting bird. In his rather sentimentalized engraving of the same subject, Duflos omits bawdy details and emphasizes the mothering scene in the foreground (Fig. A67).

While Favart’s pastoral productions did inspire Boucher’s paintings insofar as the little girl represented in *The Little Girl with a Cage* and *The Little Bird Catcher* may be, respectively, Babet and Lisette from *La vallée de Montmorency*, I contend that the artist also incorporates new ideas about the nature of childhood that would have appealed to collectors like Pompadour. As I


\textsuperscript{158} Quoted in Laing, “Madame de Pompadour et ‘les Enfants de Boucher,’” 44.
have discussed, girls shown caring for birds do not necessarily portray erotic allusions, but point to ideas associated with innocence. For example, François Guérin depicts Pompadour and her daughter with bird imagery in two works on paper. In the drawing, Guérin presents mother and daughter more intimately (Fig. A68). The marquise lies on a chaise lounge and wears an informal gown that appears to blend into the drapery that cascades from the ceiling of a grand space. Her treasured pet dog appears next to her, as was common in several of her portraits throughout the 1750s. A young girl believed to be Alexandrine appears at Pompadour’s feet. She is also elegantly dressed and holds an open birdcage on her lap with her pet perched on her finger. Putti swirl above the scene, decorating the space with swags of floral garlands to perhaps indicate that the work was commissioned in memory of Alexandrine. Guérin’s print of Pompadour and Alexandrine shows the mother and daughter more formally dressed (Fig. A69). In this image, the marquise sits on a canapé with one hand on a book in her lap and the other on her pet dog. Portfolios, rolled parchments, and writing implements are strewn throughout the rich interior space as attributes of Pompadour’s status as a learned, cultured woman. Pompadour’s other beloved pet dog looks at the viewer as it offers its paw to Alexandrine, who is sumptuously dressed and, once again, holds an open birdcage on her lap while its inhabitant is perched on her finger.

A young girl with bird imagery is again featured in a portrait attributed to François Boucher that portrays a beautiful girl, no more than seven years old, with porcelain skin, lightly rouged cheeks, and long, curled blonde hair that gently tumbles down her back (Fig. A70). This presumed half-length portrait of Pompadour’s daughter recalls her image from Guérin’s print of the marquise with Alexandrine. In this painting, Alexandrine wears a turquoise gown as if she were a miniature Pompadour, anticipating the marquise’s own magnificent green gown in her
1756 portrait that celebrates the culmination of Pompadour’s social accession. Here, Alexandrine is shown with a birdcage, but she is neither weeping over her bird’s lifeless body to symbolize lost innocence nor allowing it to rest on her finger. Instead, she opens her birdcage and carefully feeds her pet bird. During this period, pet birds were fashionable accessories, and the ownership of a domesticated animal implied an elevated social status and demonstrated the necessary conspicuous consumption that was indicative of wealth.\textsuperscript{159} Furthermore, birds were emblematic of air, which was a critical element for a child’s healthy development and well-being, as I have already explained. In this portrait, Alexandrine is effectively caring for and nurturing her pet to suggest her innocence and affection. These moral, feminine traits are indicative of a virtuous future wife and mother in the context of Enlightenment France. Because of Alexandrine’s complicated familial history, it may have been strategic for Pompadour to emphasize these qualities, even if they were ultimately irrelevant in arranged unions, as she sought to negotiate her daughter’s socially brilliant marriage that would solidify her own nobility.

As I mentioned earlier, Alexandrine’s death in 1754 cut short Pompadour’s plan to consolidate her position at court through her daughter’s marriage. But it was in the 1750s that Pompadour adoption of Boucher’s \textit{Enfants} into her decorative programs increased. Boucher’s oft-repeated images of pastoral children that capture birds and fish to suggest themes of love and sentimentality may have appealed to Pompadour’s own adherence to proper codes of femininity, maternity, and innocence. Along with her displays of cultural refinement and her enthusiastic “mothering” of Enlightenment intellectual developments, I believe that Pompadour further proved herself at court as an unthreatening, yet indispensable, companion to Louis XV through the demonstration of her virtue in her connection to the Enlightenment’s reconception of children.

and childhood. Through his rich visual inventions, Boucher’s *Enfants* are more than charming representations of children at play. These images evoke numerous meanings about love, the freedom of nature, sentimentality, and innocence that are heightened when conflated with the new ideas on the sensitivity and vulnerability of children and the role of women in their care. By adopting the ideals that are represented in Boucher’s *Enfants*, collectors like Pompadour were able to demonstrate their humanity in a non-threatening way.

In the next chapter, I will continue this exploration of how images of young girls with pets may shape the identities of women actively engaged in public life. I argue that it was during the second half of the eighteenth century in France that philosophical discourses on the vulnerability and sensitivity of pets emerged, and these aspects of pets’ personalities are analogous to the new attitudes toward children. Specifically, I will demonstrate that a more critical assessment of the various meanings of children alongside pets in Marguerite Gérard’s domestic genre paintings can reveal new ideas about childhood and female sexuality in late eighteenth-century French art.
CHAPTER 2: MARGUERITE GÉRARD, CHILDREN, AND PETS

In his 1808 assessment of women in the arts, Salon commentator J. Le Breton wrote that in 1789, Mesdames Adélaide Labille-Guiard, Elisabeth Vigée Lebrun, Anne Vallyer-Coster, and Mademoiselle Marguerite Gérard were the only widely respected women artists. While Labille-Guiard, Vigée Lebrun, and Vallyer-Coster were members of the French Royal Academy and permitted to display their works in annual Salon exhibitions, the Royal Academy’s 1770 resolution to restrict female membership to a total of four prevented Gérard from attaining official recognition and state privileges. Despite this exclusion from the Academy, Gérard’s prolific, lucrative, and overall successful career as a leading genre painter enabled her to be grouped, in the eyes of contemporary critics, in the same realm as her esteemed academic colleagues. Once the Academy dissolved in 1793 and Salon exhibitions were briefly opened to all artists, Gérard publically exhibited her works from 1799-1824 and maintained a favorable reputation among genre painting enthusiasts and the expanding art market.

Gérard’s genre scenes from the 1780s such as The First Step (Fig. A71), The Beloved Child (Fig. A72) and her 1799 Salon portrait of a mother and her child (Fig. A6) indeed address the complicated social and political status of women in late eighteenth-century France along with the importance of female sociability and camaraderie. As is well-known, Gérard’s familial relationship to Jean-Honoré Fragonard quite literally afforded her the necessary exposure and professional connections to the late eighteenth-century Parisian art scene. In 1775, Gérard joined her sister and her sister’s husband, Fragonard, in their apartments at the Louvre in Paris. Under her brother-in-law’s instruction that followed the conventional mentor-student studio practices of

the time, Gérard became renowned for her small-scale paintings that featured fashionable themes of ideal domesticity that depicted women and children with animal companions.

In spite of her professional accomplishments outside of the French Royal Academy of Art, until fairly recently, Marguerite Gérard had been cast to the margins of the modern art historical narrative; but this has been rapidly changing. Sally Wells-Robertson’s pioneering 1978 doctoral dissertation and catalogue raisonné on Marguerite Gérard were one of the first attempts to liberate Gérard from Fragonard’s shadow.¹⁶¹ For several decades, art historians across all fields and time periods have begun to ask new questions about the agency of women artists and the representation of femininity in Western visual culture.¹⁶² The groundbreaking art historical studies by Mary Sheriff, Melissa Hyde, and Laura Aurrichio encourage scholars and students to widen the historical approaches and methodological lenses through which eighteenth-century French art history is studied.¹⁶³ Most recently, their 2012 exhibition “Royalists to Romantics” at

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the National Museum of Women in the Arts demonstrated that while certainly a minority in terms of the official business of the Academy, women have been active agents in the French art world as mothers, wives, teachers, patrons, consumers of art, and artists all along. The scholarship of French art historian Carole Blumenfeld, in her organizations of a series of French exhibitions on Marguerite Gérard and French genre painting during the revolutionary period, has taken an important step in the re-examination of Gérard’s artistic identity. Recent publications on female sociability and modern motherhood have contributed to the expanding scholarship on Gérard and women’s involvement in the Parisian art world during the late eighteenth century.

In this chapter I will focus on one aspect of Gérard’s genre paintings and portraits that has not been critically analyzed in art historical scholarship. I will consider the artist’s representations of felines in the contexts of the neo-Dutch movement in late eighteenth-century France and contemporary discourses on the redefined status of children and animals in French society. This chapter offers an entirely new interpretation of the various meanings of children

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and pets in Gérard’s genre paintings, which reveal new ideas about the social implications of female sexuality and contributes to the growing scholarship on Gérard’s negotiation of her identity as a proficient woman artist in late eighteenth-century French art.

Returning to Gérard’s 1799 genre portrait of a mother and her daughter, the seated figure of the mother is monumental as her body serves as the foundation upon which her child stands. This stance represents the primacy of the virtuous mother as the principal source after which her daughter will model herself. Gérard’s figural arrangement is not particularly innovative since the pose of the woman with her child on her lap evokes Virgin and Child iconography that artists utilized to portray ideal motherhood.\(^\text{167}\) In a 2003 French exhibition on eighteenth-century representations of children, curators discussed Gérard’s 1799 portrait in terms of an important category of portraiture that emphasized ideal motherhood as a fashionable social category, and it relates to commissioned portraits of upper-class society women with their children such as Joshua Reynolds’s *Portrait of the Countess Spencer with her Daughter* from 1759 (Fig. A73) and Elisabeth Vigée Lebrun’s 1789 *Portrait of Madame Rousseau and her Daughter* (Fig. A74).\(^\text{168}\) But instead of a close mother-daughter relationship expressed through gesture and touch, as these earlier works suggest, Gérard’s mother has a placid stare and resigned pose that contradict ideas associated with domestic bliss and the pleasures of motherhood. Since child mortality rates remained high, parents sometimes commissioned posthumous portraits to honor and remember their deceased children; the woman’s grief over the loss of the represented child may explain her forlorn expression. Also, in accordance with the implicit Virgin and Child


\(^{168}\) Christine Kayser and Xavier Salmon, *L’enfant chéri au siècle des Lumières: après l’Émile* (Louveciennes: Musée-Promenade de Marly-le-Roi, 2003), 52.
iconography in this painting, the mother’s somber expression as she reflects upon her young daughter’s tragic future may relate to Renaissance and Baroque representations of Mary’s sorrow as she contemplates the fate of the Christ Child. Does Gérard’s mother, however, grieve the physical loss of her child, or the loss of something less tangible? Notably, the girl sets aside her doll and holds a cat, a conventional emblem of female sexuality, which is poised to jump onto the ample lap of the melancholy mother.

Paintings of children interacting with cats, dogs, and birds abound in eighteenth-century French art to indicate the fashionability of this subject matter, at the very least. These images, however, are multi-layered in their meanings as they simultaneously suggest the benefits of eductive play, the purity of childlike naiveté and creativity, important visual allusions to conventions in Dutch art, and contemporary anxieties over premature sexual behavior through avian and feline iconographic customs. François-Hubert Drouais’s Young Girl Playing with Cat for Madame de Pompadour (Fig. A75), Boy with Cat (Fig. A76), and Mademoiselle d’Angot Playing with her Cat (Fig. A77) all show children playing with cats as if they were baby dolls. Children investing their pets with human qualities are a featured sub-genre of Fragonard’s œuvre as seen in works like Children Playing with a Dog (Fig. A78) and Education Does it All (Fig. A79). The Swaddled Cat (Fig. A80) shows a girl in the center of the composition with a swaddled cat in her arms. She bends her head toward the cat and appears to nuzzle her baby, who is about to fall asleep instead of resisting the clutches of its mother. This work has been discussed as “one of those childish fantasies beloved by Fragonard,” but this description neglects Fragonard’s profound intellectual engagements with contemporary Enlightenment ideas on the family, sexuality, and childhood with which he continuously grapples in his genre paintings.169

169 I read this description in the unpublished documents in the Musée du Louvre’s curatorial files on Jean-Honoré Fragonard’s The Swaddled Cat.
As is well-known, Jean-Baptiste Greuze’s *Girl Weeping over a Dead Bird* (Fig. A81) alludes to lost virginity because of the emblem traditions of birds and cages that often symbolize human anatomy and carnal desire. As I discussed in Chapter One, Emma Barker suggested that Greuze’s 1769 painting of a female child with a dog (Fig. A11) creates a palpable vulnerability of childhood, which is heightened by the juxtaposition of the girl with a puppy and compels viewers to care for and protect the fragile and helplessly innocent.\(^{170}\) Also during this period, emerging philosophical discourses on the vulnerability and sensitivity of pets were two qualities that became analogous with ideal bourgeois femininity. Due to the eighteenth-century conflation of the bodies and minds of women and children, these aspects of pets’ personalities can also relate to new attitudes toward children.

However, as I will demonstrate, cats have long served as potent symbols of unruliness and the dangers of female sexuality. Unlike dogs, cats were neither physically nor psychologically malleable, and they were controlled by their innate curiosities. I believe that Gérard’s *Portrait of a Mother and her Child* extends beyond a portrayal of an ideal bourgeois mother-daughter relationship and explores the implications of female sexuality at the turn of the century. In addition to the influence of French iconographic precedents of small animals as symbols of sexual desire, Gérard was immersed in the neo-Dutch art movement in France circa 1800 and was likely aware of the popular seventeenth-century emblem traditions of animals that invested Dutch genre paintings with layers of erotic meaning. In this context of the neo-Dutch art trend in France, Gérard’s turn of the century genre paintings are laden with references to the power of the feminine in a society that emphasized patriarchal dominance and control.

During the eighteenth century in France, the meaning of “genre painting” was elusive in terms of its categorization within the official ranking of subject matter as codified by the French Royal Academy of Painting and Sculpture. The ambiguity of what subjects were expected to be grouped together under the rubric of genre painting especially frustrated some critics and consequently affected the identity of the artist. According to the academic doctrines of the Royal Academy, art was the product of the painter’s imagination and aimed, through themes having to do with ancient mythology and classical and biblical history, to morally instruct and inspire the viewer.\textsuperscript{171} Scenes of everyday life that depicted daily routines of anonymous bourgeoisie, the servant classes, or the intrigues of the aristocracy failed to reach the lofty goals of history painting simply because their subject matters were deemed to be of a lower order.\textsuperscript{172}

Pedagogically, because the French Royal Academy privileged history painting, academic artists focused their training on the representation of the human body. Students began their academic training by copying the forms of existing works and plaster casts, eventually working up to the observation of the live nude model. Critics who subscribed to the ideals of the Royal Academy considered those artists that depicted subjects outside of history painting to be inferior; the genre painter’s art was not inventive and seemed to be a reflection of reality. Women’s modesty precluded them from the official study of the nude male model, and they were excluded


\textsuperscript{172} Rand, “Evolution of Genre Painting,” 4.
from the ranks of history painting due to the limitations imposed upon their artistic educations.\textsuperscript{173} Women artists were thought to be naturally suited for genre painting since the subject matter was most accessible to them; thus, genre painting was further disparaged because of its perceived link to femininity.

While critics praised some genre painters for their efforts, they noted that the category required less demand. In Diderot’s glowing assessment of the truthfulness and harmony of Chardin’s still lifes at the Salon of 1765, he digressed from his critique and wrote that genre painting required “only study and patience, no verve, little genius, scarcely any poetry, much technique and truth, and that’s all.”\textsuperscript{174} André Félibien, the art theorist who consolidated the Academy’s hierarchy of genres, wrote in the beginning of the eighteenth century that genre paintings, especially the Le Nain brothers’ works, could be enjoyed for their visual qualities and even considered a type of history painting in their own right.\textsuperscript{175} However, these paintings were still perceived as unable to fully elevate the viewers’ minds and souls, as Abbé du Bos wrote in his reflections on painting and poetry in 1719:

The imitation therefore of those objects [country feasts and guardhouses] may possibly amuse us for some moments, may even draw from us an applause of the artist’s abilities in imitating, but can never raise any emotion or concern.\textsuperscript{176}

Du Bos’s critique demonstrates that while genre painting existed in public exhibitions and was increasingly popular among contemporary collectors, genre painters were often viewed as those

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\textsuperscript{173} Nochlin, “Why Have There Been No Great Women Artists?,” 145-178.
\textsuperscript{175} André Félibien quoted in Rand, “Evolution of Genre Painting,” 5.
\textsuperscript{176} Du Bos quoted in Ibid.
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who did not have the capacities or ambition to become full-fledged history painters. Later
eighteenth-century critics like Melchior Grimm noted:

It is not the object itself that one wishes to see, but the truest and most felicitous imitation
of it . . . in a work of art we look for the skillful, the fine, delicate lie that establishes
between us and the imitation a secret exchange of feelings and ideas.\textsuperscript{177}

Grimm’s sentiments convey that there was an emerging dialogue in eighteenth-century critical
timeory that debated the practice and purpose of art. Specifically, theorists questioned what
determined the value of a work of art: its status according to the Academy’s hierarchy or its
pictorial properties regardless of the painting’s classification. Diderot regarded Chardin as the
finest colorist of the 1765 Salon and praised him for his superb handling of paint, and he noted
that despite his work in an undemanding genre, Chardin still managed to excel.\textsuperscript{178} At the same
Salon, Diderot named Greuze, an Academic genre painter, as the “first who has set out to give art
some morals,” which suggests that even conservative critics saw value in this category.\textsuperscript{179}
Diderot evaluated Greuze’s sketches for \textit{The Beloved Mother}, \textit{The Ungrateful Son}, and \textit{The Bad
Son Punished} as if they were history paintings, and he applauded them for their moral content,
the clarity of their narratives, and the artist’s thoughtful consideration to the works’ accessories
as the core of his subjects.\textsuperscript{180}

Outside of the officialdom of the Royal Academy, genre paintings proved to be popular
on the commercial market. The art market was an important counterweight to the academic
system since private patrons and art dealers offered artists greater economic opportunities with

\textsuperscript{177} Grimm quoted in Ibid.

\textsuperscript{178} Diderot, \textit{Diderot on Art}, 64.

\textsuperscript{179} Ibid., 96.

\textsuperscript{180} Ibid., 104-109.
which the Academy could not financially compete. Less expensive and laborious for artists to produce, the sale of genre paintings turned quicker profits since buyers sought small-scale works to decorate their private spaces. Because genre scenes drew subjects from everyday life, genre paintings were generally more familiar and could be more easily evaluated by ordinary viewers who were not educated in the nuances of classical subject matter and the academic principles of painting.¹⁸¹

To understand Marguerite Gérard as a professional artist in an environment that debated the validity of genre painting and the role of women artists, we need to consider the influence of Fragonard’s progressive artistic identity within the context of the neo-Dutch movement and rococo emblematic play in eighteenth-century French painting. Since eighteenth-century French art history has been interpreted according to a model that has favored the Academy’s aesthetic standards and governmental patronage, Fragonard’s œuvre has been defined negatively.¹⁸² Until his retirement around 1800, Fragonard enjoyed a long, productive public career, but from outside the bounds of the Academy’s official public. When Gérard joined her sister and Fragonard in Paris in the mid-1770s, Fragonard had abandoned the official status of an academician in favor of private painting commissions. In 1765, critics championed Fragonard’s monumental morceau d’agrément, Corésus and Callirhoé, (Fig. A82) as the work that would launch his illustrious career as a history painter because of its moralizing content and neo-baroque style. At the next Salon in 1767, Fragonard’s submission entitled A Group of Children in the Sky (A Swarm of Loves) was a critical disaster (Fig. A83); subsequently, it would be his last Salon piece. Group of


Children is a small-scale painting that was likely an oil cartoon for a ceiling decoration, and Denis Diderot described it as having the appearance of an “omelet,” and that “when a man has made a name for himself, he should have a little more self-respect.”

The meaning of Diderot’s comment is complex, but it suggests that grand manner history painting according to the French School’s academic conventions was thought to have been (or should have been) the ultimate goal of every aspiring professional artist.

Although A Group of Children in the Sky (A Swarm of Loves) departs from the conventional representations of academic virtue, grandeur, and a clear narrative in its subject matter, the painting demonstrates Fragonard’s technical talent in his painterly brushwork and his expertise in the variation of light and shadow. The subject of the painting features clusters of plump and wildly gesticulating nude babies that blend into the billowing clouds. Diderot disapproved of “Fragonard’s mishmash of angels [that] is a mimicry of Boucher,” and accused him of having neglected his studies of the Italian school when he traveled to Rome.

Indeed, the forms of the winged and wingless children’s bodies recall Boucher’s fleshy babies and may suggest Fragonard’s awareness of not only his former teacher’s representations of children, but also contemporary discourses on the reconceptualization of children’s bodies and how they naturally move in space.

I would argue that Fragonard’s experimentations with content and style and his success in the art market had a profound effect on the early development of his sister-in-law’s professional

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184 Diderot quoted in Melissa Hyde, Making Up the Rococo (Los Angeles: The Getty Research Institute, 2006), 16.
identity. *The First Step*, one of the earliest paintings from the 1780s associated with Gérard, depicts the delights of motherhood and the indispensable presence of women in shaping childhood milestones. The elegantly dressed young mother eagerly opens her arms to receive her toddling son, and an enthusiastic female servant along with an attentive elderly woman eagerly watch the scene unfold. A cat regards the episode from the foreground as an older child, relegated to the shadows, observes her brother’s triumphant moment. The representation of the ideal Rousseauian woman who finds personal fulfillment through her interaction with her children was thought to be a natural subject choice for the woman artist who sought to reconcile her dubious public identity with a more respectable sense of self.\(^{185}\) In his 1758 *Lettre à M. D’Alembert*, Rousseau warned against the social corruption that resulted from immodest women like female artists who pursued pleasure from outside their natural realm of the household.\(^{186}\) Rousseau wrote:

> There are no good morals for women outside of a withdrawn and domestic life; if I saw that the peaceful care of the family and the home are their lot, that the dignity of their Sex consists in modesty, that shame and chasteness are inseparable from decency for them, that when they seek for men’s looks they are already letting themselves be corrupted by them, and that any woman who shows herself off disgraces herself.\(^{187}\)

With strong allusions to the act of prostitution, Rousseau’s commentaries complicated the identity of the woman artist and her place in society. His critique of the public woman relates to

\(^{185}\) In her study of Elisabeth Vigée Lebrun, Mary Sheriff discusses the reconciliation of the public and private identities of female artists. See Sheriff, *The Exceptional Woman*, 39-71.

\(^{186}\) Ibid., 108-113.

the professional woman artist who sought to make connections with potential clients and publically displayed and sold her work—an extension of herself.

While the emphasis on ideal femininity in The First Step may initially appear as an appropriate subject choice for an unmarried woman artist attempting to sidestep a scandalous reputation, a preparatory drawing for the painting attributed to Fragonard calls into question the extent of Marguerite Gérard’s involvement in the painting’s conception (Fig. A84). Ideal motherhood and images of domesticity were fashionable subjects for artists during this period, and Fragonard was certainly no exception. At the very least, Fragonard’s preliminary study undermines the traditional claim that Gérard’s subject matter was a “natural” function of her status as a woman artist. The finished painting shows the important addition of the elderly woman who leans over the crib to suggest a theme that focuses upon the progress of life. Old and young are juxtaposed, and the diversity of gestures and expressions range from encouragement to apprehension to demonstrate the dynamic interactions of three generations of women. Beyond the superficial portrayal of Rousseauian femininity, the relationships between women are emphasized to show the significance of female camaraderie throughout the stages of life.

Scholars have debated if the final version of The First Step was a joint effort between Fragonard and Gérard. To support this notion of a professional partnership, scholars cite a later engraving of the painting by Géraud Vidal and N-F Regnault that attributed the painting to “Monsieur Fragonard and Mademoiselle Gérard.” In her seminal monographic study on Marguerite Gérard, Wells-Robertson emphatically argued against the use of this engraving as

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188 Rand, Intimate Encounters, 182-183.

189 Ibid., 184.
decisive historical evidence to prove artistic collaboration. Instead, it is plausible that to enhance
the salability of their own engravings of The First Step, Vidal and Regnault may have
strategically added Fragonard’s famous name as a marketing ploy or even to discredit Gérard.
While it is to be expected that certain motifs and compositional arrangements naturally reflect
the directions of her teacher, the style of the painting is exclusive to Gérard’s technique
throughout the entire composition.\textsuperscript{190} For example, Gérard’s emphases on the tactility of the
folds of the mother’s satin dress that contrast with her smooth skin and lightly curled hair are
regularly represented elements in Gérard’s genre paintings—even leading up to and after
Fragonard’s death in 1806. I would argue that Gérard’s apparent fixation with surface texture
originated from her exposure to Dutch genre scenes that were accessible to her at the Louvre
galleries. In 1799, for example, an exhibition at the Louvre displayed works from Northern
painters. The exhibition pamphlet features three genre paintings of music lessons by Caspar
Netscher, \textit{A Young Woman at her Toilette} and others by Gerard Terborch, and numerous works
by Gabriel Metsu, Jan Steen, and their contemporaries.\textsuperscript{191} Other ways that I believe Gérard
would have studied Dutch art include printed reproductions available in art and biographical
publications and in private collections and galleries in Paris that exhibited seventeenth-century
Dutch art as well as eighteenth-century French genre painting in the neo-Dutch manner. Even
Fragonard’s \textit{The Bolt} from 1778 (Fig. A85) reveals that Gérard’s teacher himself experimented
with his own version of neo-Dutch formal elements in his portrayal of light on rumpled silk,

\textsuperscript{190} Wells-Robertson, “Marguerite Gérard: 1761-1837,” 54-60. Wells-Robertson contends that
the canvas would have been too small for two painters to work at once. X-ray analysis of the
painting suggests that only one hand was at work throughout the composition’s entirety.

\textsuperscript{191} Collection Deloynes, Tome 20 (1798-99). Notice des Tableaux des écoles française et
flamande dans la grande galerie du Musée central des Arts don’t l’ouverture a eu lieu le 18
germinal an VII. Paris, de l’Imprimerie des Sciences et Arts, an VII de la République.
likely to satisfy the increasingly popular demand for the Golden Age of Dutch genre painting among enthusiastic French collectors.

Significantly during this period in France, seventeenth-century Dutch landscape paintings, still lifes, and genre scenes were fashionable because, unlike the expensive and large-scale grand manner history paintings, these quotidian subjects were more accessible to French artists and audiences alike. In 1753, J.B. Descamps published a multi-volume study on the lives of a select group of seventeenth-century Netherlandish painters in French that praised artists like Frans van Mieris and Caspar Netscher for their scrupulous attention to details, and Descamps declared Gabriel Metsu as “one of the greatest Painters of his Country.”\(^{192}\) These artists’ emphases on hyper-realistic visual description and the materiality of objects during the Dutch Golden Age reveal contemporary interests in empirical knowledge, new lens technologies, and scientific discoveries.\(^{193}\) Key seventeenth-century art theorists such as Karl Van Mander wrote about Dutch art without much consideration of the religious or allegorical allusions; rather, Van Mander’s emphasis was on art as representational craft and the manual dexterity of the artist.

Gérard’s scientific replication of contrasting surface textures, her attention to the effects of light and reflection, and the representation of luxury items attest to her interests in forms and themes that go beyond the usual moralizing interpretations of blissful domesticity that are conveyed in her works. Scholars have long recognized that the forms and symbolic content of Gérard’s genre paintings from the late eighteenth century, such as *The Reader* (Fig. A86), are indebted to the subjects and formal qualities of seventeenth-century Dutch genre scenes by


Gerard Ter Borch and Gabriel Metsu. In Metsu’s Young Woman Composing Music (Fig. A87), for example, the glossy facture of the painted surface and the sumptuous display of luxury objects contribute to the intellectual and technical elevation of the genre scene. In the center of the composition, a woman is writing at her desk and wears a red “jack,” a popular luxury garment from the 1660s that was made of velvet and lined with fur. The contrasting textures of plush velvet, soft fur, and the lustrous sheen of the woman’s yellow dress signify the artist’s careful observations of light on different fabrics. The characteristically shiny and reflective surface of the brass chandelier further demonstrates Metsu’s interest in the depiction of light. The highly polished execution of the painted surfaces indicates the Dutch emphasis on what Svetlana Alpers has called the “attentive eye.” In his 1678 treatise on the status of Dutch painting that addressed artistic scrutiny and the “attentive eye,” artist and writer Samuel van Hoogstraten equated painting with scientific examination and as a mode of learning through direct observation. He stated that “the art of painting is a science for representing all the ideas or notions which the whole of visible nature is able to produce and for deceiving the eye with drawing and color.”

These fundamental aspects of Dutch painting are evident in and repeated throughout Gérard’s genre scenes and demonstrate her involvement in this important artistic movement in late eighteenth-century French art.

I believe that Gérard sought to claim a degree of her professional agency through a conspicuous connection to the neo-Dutch movement. Gérard’s assertion of her identity in her

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194 Bianca M. du Mortier, the curator of costumes at the Rijksmuseum, uses the term “jack” to describe women’s jackets that are lined and trimmed with fur and appear in Metsu’s paintings from the 1660s. See “Costumes in Gabriel Metsu’s Paintings: Mode and Manners in the Mid-Seventeenth Century,” in Gabriel Metsu, ed. Adriaan Waiboer (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2010), 130-36.

195 Hoogstraten quoted in Alpers, Art of Describing, 77.
paintings came at a time when women artists were a small but important presence at work in the public realm, in spite of moralists’ ongoing discussions of the unnaturalness of women who sought a life beyond the home. The Angora Cat from the late 1780s (Fig. A88) and the 1804 pendant paintings Good News and Bad News (Figs. A89 and A90) contain deliberate visual references to seventeenth-century Dutch genre scenes that explicitly refer to the proficiency of the artist. Significantly, the reflection of Gérard at her easel in the mirrored sphere in The Angora Cat is a repeated motif in a number of Gérard’s paintings. The Interested Student (Fig. A91), a painting thought to be the product of a collaboration between Gérard and Fragonard from 1786, again includes the mirrored sphere at the bottom of the composition and shows a representation of Gérard at work. Gérard’s artistic presence becomes an important element in artworks attributed to Fragonard and Gérard and signifies Gérard’s awareness of art historical precedents and claim to an identity as an artist in her own right. Although it is plausible that Fragonard’s role as teacher and his own artistic inventiveness had a natural effect on Gérard’s paintings from the 1780s, Gérard’s professional artistic identity is distinctly defined by her neo-Dutch technical virtuosity and her depictions of women, children, and animals that address the role of femininity in contemporary French society.

In The Angora Cat, the woman’s outmoded yellow dress, with its tightly bound corset and ruffled collar, captures the shimmering effects of light on silk. The costume displays the contrasting textures of fabrics instead of remaining true to contemporaneous fashion trends that had abandoned the corset in favor of looser-fitting muslin garments that draped more naturally on the curves of the female body. In the woman’s left hand, she holds a fan at her side as an attribute of her femininity or social standing. This object has a distinctive serrated contour and

196 Melissa Hyde discusses the high visibility of women artists at the turn of the century outside of the Academy. See Hyde, “Women and the Visual Arts, 74-93.”
reappears in some of Gérard’s later paintings like *The Childhood of Paul and Virginia* (Fig. A92) that emphasizes ideal motherhood in a utopic setting; the fan turns up in another genre scene that depicts a bourgeois mother in the role of the supportive educator as she oversees her daughter’s piano lesson (Fig. A93). Significantly in *The Angora Cat*, the woman rests her right hand on a mirrored sphere as she watches the Angora cat amuse itself with its reflection. The mirrored sphere also includes the reflection of a seated female figure at an easel. This young woman, likely Gérard, is shown in the act of painting while the other two figures, thought to be Fragonard and his wife Marie-Anne, watch her at work. Also, as seen in Dutch genre painting, a Turkish rug is draped over the table as an allusion to luxury; an old woman opens a door to peer at the scene from the shadows—a borrowed motif from the Northern tradition that juxtaposes old and young to indicate the passage of time. At the very least, all of these references allude to the venerated tradition of Netherlandish painting.

As with nearly all of Gérard’s works that exist before Fragonard’s death in 1806, scholars have suggested that *The Angora Cat* was a joint effort between Fragonard and Gérard. In a 2009 exhibition of Marguerite Gérard’s small-scale portraits and genre paintings at the Musée Cognac-Jay in Paris, Carole Blumenfeld suggested that Gérard, due her status as a student in Fragonard’s studio, would have only painted the eastern carpet and the silks in the composition.¹⁹⁷ Gérard’s production of the fabrics in this composition does indeed reference her pupil status while symbolically linking her to the neo-Dutch movement. However, I believe the inclusion of Gérard’s portrait of herself at her easel in this composition functions to assert her identity as a professional artist independently from Fragonard.

The representation of a reflection of the artist at work within a painting as a form of signature is not unique to Gérard’s work; similar details can be found in Dutch still life painting. For example, Pieter Claesz’s *Still Life with Violin* from 1628 (Fig. A94) features a large mirrored sphere that reflects the painter at work and directs the message of the painting towards himself; the viewer is to meditate on the passage of time as related to the artist’s life and experience in the studio.  

Clara Peeters represents herself with her palette on the convex surfaces of a goblet in her still life *Wunderkammer* from 1612 (Fig. A95). Seen here, Peeters literally associates herself with the representational act of painting and calls attention to her manual dexterity and imitative skill. In other words, Peeters’s identity is inextricably bound to her art, and she includes herself in a prestigious artistic lineage that extends back to Jan Van Eyck. Although Peeters’s self-representation within her still life can be interpreted as a pictorial device that alludes to the deceptive and unreliable nature of vision, her reflection also demonstrates her knowledge of perspective and the laws of optics. I believe the artist’s miniature self-portrait is also a form of discreet signature: the artist inserts her own image into her painting to suggest her self-importance. Likewise, I believe that Gérard’s painting indicates her detailed understanding of the science of optics and a personal fascination with the effects of light and touch, whether through the reflective surfaces of the mirrored sphere that contains her signatory self-portrait or the tactile folds of the varying painted fabrics.

In addition to Gérard’s hyper-sensitive focus upon varying surface textures, her portrayals of physiological and psychological reactions elevate her genre scenes to a scientific


realm that contemporary critics recognized. Exhibited at the Salon of 1804 and likely displayed as the pendant to *The Good News*, Gérard won a gold medal for *The Bad News*. This official recognition demonstrates her public success as a woman artist who specialized in genre painting in the neo-Dutch style. Here, the narrative is divided between two canvases and shows an upper-class woman’s physical and emotional responses to good and bad news that presumably has to do with her absent lover who is present through the letter’s content. In his review of the artworks exhibited at the 1804 Salon, an anonymous critic commented that “everyone voluntarily paused in front of *The Bad News* to inspect it,” having further noted that “there is debate about whether the woman has died or has fainted; but regardless of the subject that [Marguerite Gérard] wanted to represent, she has interested the viewer, and this is what matters.” I believe this critic’s perspective on Gérard’s genre scene is significant because he disregards the narrative entirely to focus on the manner in which the fainting, or possibly dying, woman is represented.

Gérard conveys the narrative through her masterful ability to activate the viewers’ senses of optical perception, touch, and even smell since the woman holds a solution beneath her unconscious companion’s nose to revive her. Instead of a depiction of eroticized female intimacy, this genre painting should be understood as a physiological exploration of female sensibility. The whiteness of the blonde woman’s costume and that of her companion highlight the corpse-like pallor of the skin. An ethereal radiance emanates from the pale skin of the swooned woman and creates an aura of spirituality that envelops her hair and gown. Her almost supernatural presence in the painting may even point to Gérard’s investigation of the state of unconsciousness, death, and the sublime—ideas that pervaded both neoclassical and romantic tendencies at the turn of the century. The folds of the luminous silk dress in the center of the

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composition heighten the effects of light while the mirrored sphere, a known studio prop of Gérard’s, is confined to the background and is reflected in the mirror to the viewer’s left. Upon closer examination of the mirrored sphere, the silhouette of a figure stands out against an illuminated window. While the identity of this figure is largely ambiguous, especially when compared to the legibility of the figures reflected in the spheres in *The Interested Student* and *The Angora Cat*, the window hints at another representation of Gérard’s presence in the scene that she has imagined. This engagement with the Dutch artistic tradition in terms of technical virtuosity and emblematic play in addition to her paintings’ broader dialogues with the status of women, children, animals in France all contributed to the formation of Gérard’s own professional identity.

As a recognized neo-Dutch artist at the turn of the century, Gérard was associated with the *Exposition de la Jeunesse* that was held at the private gallery of J.B.P. Lebrun as an alternative to the academic Salon. Lebrun was one of the most important dealers and proponents of Northern paintings in France during the late eighteenth century, and his gallery was a hub for artists and collectors who were interested in the neo-Dutch movement. Like Descamps, Lebrun published a three-volume scholarly reference text on a group of Northern artists in 1792, but Lebrun’s widely circulated publication classified artists stylistically instead of chronologically and, most significantly, included engraved illustrations.\(^201\) Lebrun admired Northern artists’ stylistic precision and clarity of detail, which stood in direct contrast to the lofty, moralizing ideals and didacticism of French academic history painting.\(^202\) By definition, neo-Dutch artists were not revivalists who created pastiches of seventeenth-century northern masters; rather, this

\(^{201}\) Eisel, “Genre Painting During the Revolution,” 49.

\(^{202}\) Ibid., 48.
movement in French art is more complex in terms of the appropriation of styles and content from numerous sources. Neo-Dutch artists combined various elements of art and culture from seventeenth-century Dutch art with techniques and ideals from contemporary French art and culture to create a unique genre with layers of stylistic allusions and symbolic references. Of course, such layering of meaning in a single composition was a highly intellectual endeavor that facilitated a dialogue with viewers for which French rococo artists like Fragonard were known. Lebrun actively supported neo-Dutch artists like Louis Léopold Boilly who audiences recognized for his meticulous facture as well as his appropriation of the Dutch tendency to imbue genre scenes with symbolic content while referencing, at the same time, contemporary French social, political, and philosophical subjects.

Boilly’s *Portrait of Gabrielle Arnault as a Child* (Fig. A96), for instance, shows an interest in contrasting painted textures while the cat in the girl’s lap is invested with various meanings that relate to themes of domesticity and aspects of femininity and childhood in France. Boilly emphasizes the abundantly round, unmistakably childish shape Gabrielle Arnault’s head, which is demurely covered with a simple white bonnet. He places Gabrielle against a dark neutral background and her full, rosy cheeks stand out to indicate her youthfulness. Also, Boilly visually rhymes the wide, round eyes of the girl with those of her pet, who glances warily at its young owner. Attitudes toward animals evolved during this period in France; contemporary philosophers cited a sensitive principle in animals that controlled their behaviors. At the same time, pets were cherished as eternal children that were just as controllable as their human counterparts—if not more. Consequently, a tension exists as the iconographic tradition of feline imagery collides with contemporary social discourses on childhood innocence and animals.

\[203\] Ibid.
Boilly’s portrait becomes ambiguous since we cannot determine whether the girl innately resembles the pet cat, or if the cat has acquired the characteristics of the innocent child.

In Chapter One, I demonstrated the intellectual value of emblematic play in Boucher’s pastoral subjects; this thoughtful layering of ideas, poetic references, and visual puns persisted in French rococo art throughout the eighteenth century, particularly in Fragonard’s œuvre. Beyond the rococo context, French neo-Dutch artists incorporated or at least referenced well-known iconographic customs from the seventeenth-century because of the prevalence of emblematic motifs in Dutch art that inspired them. Eddy de Jongh first pointed out in his pioneering research on themes in seventeenth-century Dutch painting that the acceptance of Dutch realism at face value is problematic. De Jongh maintains that Dutch paintings were intended to instruct and delight viewers with their didactic and moralizing messages. The materiality of the paintings functioned to draw the viewer into the realism of the scene to uncover concealed, symbolic content that related to the paintings’ contexts. Importantly, De Jongh asserted that symbols, enigmas, and double entendres were common in the literary and visual language of the seventeenth century. Dutch viewers would have been familiar with such symbolic imagery through Christ’s parables in the Bible and, significantly, the widely popular emblem books that may have informed Dutch painting. Furthermore, the sisterhood of word and image prevailed during the Golden Age of Dutch art; artists linked themselves to the literary tradition to align themselves with poets, who were high ranking and respected members of society. Metsu, in particular, presented erotic themes both explicitly and discreetly to meet the seventeenth-century demands of ambiguity that would have appealed to educated viewers, as seen in his witty use of bird imagery as a phallic symbol in the aforementioned The Poultry Seller from 1662 (Fig.
Although De Jongh’s emphasis on the Dutch emblem tradition is critical in the interpretation of Dutch art from this period, it is a narrow methodological approach that neglects a critical analysis of Dutch hyperrealism and de-emphasizes the broader contemporary social, political, scientific and economic contexts. Since the 1980s, Dutch art scholars have put aside the “form and style” versus “content” debate to broaden the socio-historical scope of investigation to demonstrate the complexities of seventeenth-century Dutch genre painting that go beyond decoding symbolic content.

Wayne Franits’s study of Dutch genre paintings has refocused much of the scholarly literature in an effort to temper the “style-content” polarity. In his 1993 study on images of representations of domestic virtue, Franits asserts that by only focusing upon emblematic content, viewers lose sense of how images are represented, which was a critical factor to Dutch artists. His study emphasizes the cultural context and the important contemporary connection between art and literature, especially Petrarchan love poetry, Dutch ekphrastic poetry and the importance of careful description, and the dialogue between images of domesticity and Jacob Cats’s 1625 household treatise entitled *Marriage*. Jan Baptist Bedaux studies seventeenth-

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century Dutch genre portraits of children and animals from a historical perspective, thus emphasizing contemporary theories on child-rearing and educational psychology and their dialogues with pedagogical writings from Antiquity. My analysis of seventeenth-century Dutch art draws from all of these key methodologies to understand more comprehensively the Dutch genre subjects that influenced Marguerite Gérard. Gérard and her neo-Dutch contemporaries seemed to analyze various aspects of the forms and content of Dutch art to create profoundly complex compositions with significant contemporary and historical references to French and Dutch art and culture.

I believe that the widespread presence of children interacting with animals in seventeenth-century Dutch paintings signifies the importance of this motif in relation to developing ideas on the education of children, concerns over latent female sexuality, and the heavy responsibility of parents to protect their daughters’ chastity. Animals with children in seventeenth-century Dutch art have positive and negative associations. Themes related to contemporary educational practices and the importance of pedagogy in the home under the careful supervision of the virtuous mother often prevail, as can be seen in De Hooch’s *Woman Nursing an Infant with a Child Feeding a Dog* (Fig. A97, 1658–60). Alongside her mother who nurses an infant, a little girl gently feeds the family dog at the hearth. Such an imitative act at the symbolic center of the home foreshadows the girl’s future maternal identity, which she will be able to fully execute since she learned from the best model—her nurturing mother who is literally at her side.

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Other paintings of children playing with animals may not function entirely as images of mischief, innocent amusement, or pedagogical instruction; they may symbolize contemporary anxieties over frivolity and sexual corruption as real threats to virtuous maidenhood and the sanctity of the Dutch home. The iconography of cats in religious and secular art is extensive and extends at least back to late medieval art with the cat as a symbol of wickedness and the cunningness of Eve in the Garden of Eden.208 My analysis in this dissertation, however, will emphasize feline imagery in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, when the unruly cat was an attribute of a childish nature, and, as is well-known, became synonymous with love and female sensuality. In La Fontaine’s fable The Cat Metamorphosed into a Woman, for example, a woman rediscovers her villainous feline instincts when she sees a mouse and lunges toward it. The fable’s theme cautions readers of the power of one’s true nature that will always emerge and further signifies the long-standing association between females and felines. As one of the most influential naturalists in eighteenth-century France, Buffon claimed to have personally studied cats’ behaviors and bodily forms and movements; he concluded that cats’ shifty eyes revealed their deceptive nature. Buffon’s rather hostile description of cats in Histoire naturelle goes on to identify the animal as wild, furtive, and duplicitous with an insatiable sexual appetite, and he suggested that animals can resemble some qualities of human nature.209 This iconic

208 Cats are also present in imagery from Ancient Egypt and the Far East. For an overview on the iconography of cats in religious and secular imagery, see Élisabeth Foucart-Walter, “The Iconography of the Cat,” in The Painted Cat: The Cat in Western Painting from the Fifteenth to the Twentieth Century, ed. Élisabeth Foucart-Walter and Pierre Rosenberg (New York: Rizzoli, 1988), 7-31.

characterization endowed cats with feminine qualities that artists and audiences frequently appropriated to represent women’s uncontrolled sexualities.\textsuperscript{210}

With its sharp claws and quick reflexes, the playful cat was a proverbial animal used to express trouble under the guise of play. According to these various feline associations, Dirk Hals’s \textit{Two Girls with a Cat} (Fig. A98), can certainly be understood as a sentimental moment between two girls. But, as the cat viciously glares at the younger girl’s naïve advances, the image becomes a metaphor for growing up and the dangers of love that threaten the innocent, thereby reminding viewers that what brings pleasure inevitably brings sorrow, regret, and shame.

I must emphasize that not all Dutch scenes of children interacting with animals are moralizing warnings that denote the consequences of unruliness or sexual dissipation. While contemporary emblem books might be appropriate sources to interpret feline iconographies, these moralizing materials neglect a wider socio-historical understanding of contemporary images of children and the family since they reduce themes in Dutch art to single literary transcriptions.\textsuperscript{211} More broadly, many images of children interacting with obedient animals signify the cultivated docility of children that resulted from a good education. Cats and dogs that appear obedient may suggest the overcoming of one’s animalistic instincts and allude to the reining in of passions, a major contemporary concern of Dutch parents, particularly mothers, who supervised their children’s moral and spiritual training in the home.\textsuperscript{212} Negligent mothering and immoral domestic environments were often blamed for children’s shortcomings. A portrait

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{210} Kathleen Kete, \textit{The Beast and the Boudoir: Petkeeping in Nineteenth-Century Paris} (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994), 117-120.
\item \textsuperscript{212} Franits, \textit{Paragons of Virtue}, 148-160.
\end{itemize}
of a four-year-old girl with a cat and fish by Jacob Gerritsz Cuyp from 1647 (Fig. A99) can be understood in terms of contemporary child-rearing discourses that emphasized the importance of instilling self-discipline in children in an early age when children were most impressionable. In his popular medical guide that explained how to raise children under the age of seven, Dutch physician Johan van Beverwyck advised that “human perfection can only be achieved through moderation of the carnal appetite, as moderation is the instrument which subordinates passion to reason.”

Although girls were thought to require less discipline than boys because their innate sense of shame supposedly regulated their passions, they were still susceptible to lust. The iconography of Cuyp’s portrait celebrates the girl’s good training and her seemingly natural suppression of sexual desire as she calmly prevents the belligerent cat at her side from reaching the fish in her right hand. This portrait of effortless composure, in other words, is just as much about paying tribute to good parenting as it is about honoring the well-bred identity of the sitter in her own right.

The significance of seventeenth-century Dutch representations of children demonstrates an established visual convention that utilizes canine and feline imagery to express various, and at times contradictory, concerns over the sexual aspects of children’s upbringing in the early modern period. Although the materiality and stylistic tradition of neo-Dutch painting appealed to fashionable French collectors, Gérard’s genre scenes were not meant to be viewed as pastiches of seventeenth-century Dutch paintings. While they presented Dutch visual references that an informed collector would have delighted in having recognized, the paintings are inherently French with layers of conflated meaning. The imagery alludes to important contemporary social

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issues on the status of children, the education of girls, female sexuality, and the role of women in the family and how these themes relate to Gérard’s artistic identity.

Along with her *Portrait of a Mother with her Child* with its self-referential overtones, Marguerite Gérard exhibited two more genre scenes at the Salon of 1799 that showed a young man offering a bouquet of flowers to his beloved and a young lady gathering “marguerites,” or daisies—another possible self-referential element in her work. Critics generally deemed Gérard’s submissions as successful without substantial critical discussion, having written that the citoyenne Gérard exhibited several agreeable paintings.\(^{214}\) However, as was often the case in contemporary discussions of paintings by women artists, Salon commentators questioned the extent of Gérard’s hand in her compositions because of conflicting stylistic aspects. One critic wrote that in some instances, Gérard’s genre portraits appeared cold with a dry execution while she rendered other pictorial details with a soft and sweet brush.\(^{215}\) Another observer questioned outright whether or not all of the exhibited paintings were to be exclusively attributed to Gérard herself or if the artist intentionally varied her style so that her genre portraits included “a little dryness.”\(^{216}\) Traces of this skepticism about the degree of Gérard’s involvement in works assigned to her persist in some modern analyses of Gérard’s paintings.


\(^{216}\) “Ou ne expirait pas qu’ils fassent tous les meme main, si l’ou ne pensait que cette artiste a pu varier sa maniere les portraits 145 [Portrait de une femme assise, tenant une jeune fille sur ses genoux] and 147 [portrait anonyme] ont un peu de secheresse.” Collection Deloynes, Tome 20
Although the issue of attribution remains important in cataloguing Gérard’s œuvre, my analysis focuses upon the significance of representations of women, children, and animals in terms of Gérard’s identity as a professional woman artist. In her catalogue raisonné of Gérard’s paintings mentioned earlier, Wells-Robertson observes that household pets are significant and expressive components in the artist’s genre scenes to the extent that the generically named “Raton” and “Minette” become signatory elements within Gérard’s paintings from the late 1780s onward.217 These pets are often depicted interacting anthropomorphically with their mistresses or children. For example, a painting attributed to Gérard called The Triumph of Minette (Fig. A100) shows a woman lovingly cradling an Angora cat against her breast as if it were an infant. Although staring indifferently at the viewer, the large cat has won over the woman’s affections, not the yappy lapdog that barks furiously at the figures. The presences of these pets certainly evoke conventional art historical emblematic meanings, but they also participate in contemporary discussions on the training of one’s animalistic nature as well as the special bond between humans and animals.

Women artists’ explorations of the relationships between girls and pets proved to be a compelling theme at the 1799 Salon that captured critics’ attention. Jeanne-Élisabeth Chaudet, an almost exact contemporary of Marguerite Gérard’s, exhibited with great success at the Salon from 1798-1817. Like Gérard, Chaudet was known for her genre representations of girls, children, and animals. Until now, art historians have not examined the significance of Chaudet’s paintings, which I believe emphasize the psychological bond between child and animal, among other important themes that I will explain. I believe that a deeper analysis of Chaudet’s genre

(1798-99). Examen de cette exposition, tiré du Journal des Arts, 1799 [Ce journal a paru pour la première fois le 5 thermidor an VII, 23 juillet, 1799].

paintings will enable a broader context in which to understand Gérard’s paintings of similar subjects.

In 1799, Chaudet became widely recognized on the Parisian art scene after the critical success of her Salon painting _A Little Girl Teaching her Dog to Read_, which François Godefroy later engraved (Fig. A101). In this much-discussed painting that conflates contemporary issues of girls’ education with childhood innocence and sexuality, Chaudet depicts a little girl with luminous skin in profile as she teaches her lapdog to read. With light streaming in from the open window to illuminate the girl’s unblemished skin, the girl guides her pug’s paw towards the letters of the open alphabet book in her hand while her pet inquisitively looks up at its teacher. In contrast to the pug that was a luxury item and a signifier of conspicuous consumption at the time, as evinced by its gold collar with red ruffles, the girl is simply dressed in a white chemise and plain bonnet. Her bourgeois social standing, however, is evident because of her engagement with the act of reading. Although the represented setting is ambiguous and undecorated, Chaudet displays her talent for still life in her portrayal of a tall basket at the girl’s feet that contains an apple and a bunch of grapes that spill over the basket’s edge. As the only décor object in this austere room, this basket of fruit heightens the painting’s themes of youth and maturation through the depiction of a bunch of grapes.

Chaudet’s painting delighted critics of the 1799 Salon; at least four commentators wrote extensively about Chaudet’s polished technique as well as the meaning of its subject matter.218

As the Salon title of this painting indicates, Chaudet’s figure is a prepubescent little girl and not

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an adolescent. Despite references to the image’s virtue and moral edification through allusions to La Fontaine’s fables, the critics’ remarks echo ongoing contemporary concerns for young girls who relinquished their childhood innocence too soon in the hasty discovery of their “passions” from reading novels, which excited the imagination. Of course, a proper education in the home with the mother at the helm was deemed the most important way to remedy or even to prevent this premature sexual awakening. In his analysis of the Salon exhibition, one observer suddenly interrupted himself to exclaim:

I forgot to mention the pretty painting by la citoyenne Chaudet. Ah! Please look at this innocent little girl who wants to read the ABCs to her pug: it is as charming as one of La Fontaine’s fables, it has been said. What a happy age of simple pleasures! Why are you running so fast!219

For this commentator, Chaudet’s painting emphasizes the ideals of childhood innocence, and the girl who recites the alphabet to her pug evokes La Fontaine’s moralizing tales because of the naïveté of this act. As a didactic literary genre, fables instructed readers on how best to live, but lessons were often deliberately ambiguous to provoke thoughtful discussions about various aspects of human nature and certain realities of life that children would have not yet experienced.220 In the preface to his first collection of published fables in 1668, La Fontaine, the great writer of animal tales, explained the educational value of his stories for children specifically, and his incorporation of gaieté invested his fables with a “certain charm, an


attractive air that [was] given to all kinds of subjects, even the most serious.” In his reference to the charms of La Fontaine’s fables in his discussion of Chaudet’s painting, the Salon commentator suggests the painting’s amusing, light-hearted subject matter offsets its engagement with more serious contemporary social issues about the tempering of girls’ passions through moral educations.

Although the critic recognizes childhood as a special state of being filled with simple pleasures that are tied to the purity of the child’s uncorrupted condition, his tone becomes cautionary when he notices tension between childhood innocence and maturation in the painting. In his final remark, the critic directly addresses the girl to ask why she is fleeing from the happy age of childhood so fast. In other words, why is she so eager to eschew her innocence? In spite of the childish interaction between the figure and her canine pupil, the girl’s childhood has already begun to fade. To demonstrate this shift toward maturation, the girl’s slip dress dips erotically to reveal her neck and bare shoulder, and her skirt is raised above her knee to expose her leg. The apple at the girl’s feet, a well-known emblem of temptation, emphasizes the girl’s accelerated passage from childhood to an object of sexual desire.

This tension between childhood innocence and sexual experience in a single image recalls Greuze’s *Child Playing with a Dog* from 1769 that I introduced in Chapter One (Fig. A11). In her extensive analysis of this painting, Emma Barker discusses how Greuze’s work has an element of eroticism since two critics described the young girl’s figure as “half-naked.” Indeed, this child also wears a plain white nightdress and bonnet, but her stocking has slipped.

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221 La Fontaine quoted in Betts, “Introduction,” *Jean de la Fontaine*, xviii. In the preface to his second large publication of fables in 1677-78 (which included a re-publication of the first set of fables from 1668) La Fontaine made no claims that the educational value of his fables was intended for children only; the subject matter now aimed at an adult audience.

222 Emma Barker, “Imagining Childhood,” 426.
down to only reveal her large bare knee as she sits on a chair, hunches over to embrace the expressive puppy, and looks directly at the viewer. To reiterate my discussion of the child’s body from Chapter One, children’s oversized heads, paunchy bellies, and knobby knees signified pleasing forms. The pronounced knee, moreover, was a usual distinguishing feature of the child’s body and one that Greuze emphasized to signal the girl’s charm and grace during childhood—a period of human development when physical imperfections were accepted since the body was still in formation.\textsuperscript{223} In terms of the possible erotic subtext of the girl’s availability to the libertine male viewer, Barker argues that Greuze’s little girl unleashed erotic fantasies of immoral indulgence to those who found sexual gratification in violating children’s innocence or paying for the virginity of child prostitutes in France during the mid-eighteenth century.\textsuperscript{224}

Even more so than Greuze’s girl shown in her underclothes as a possible way to satisfy a spectator’s taste for the libertine violation of girlhood innocence, the partially unclad body of Chaudet’s girl is on display as an object of sexual intrigue. In Chaudet’s painting, the little girl is pictured in profile as she demurely sits on a small bench and reads to her dog. While the pug looks to its mistress, the girl appears poised and still as she concentrates on her reading booklet. The result of this hushed pose subsequently draws attention to the girl’s uncovered shoulder, neck, and leg. Similarly to the critic of Greuze’s 1769 painting, one 1799 Salon critic affirmed the erotic potential in Chaudet’s figure in his description of the “half-naked young child.”\textsuperscript{225} The tension in this painting between the girl’s childhood naiveté and her blossoming sexuality,

\textsuperscript{223} Ibid., 432-433.

\textsuperscript{224} Ibid., 436-438.

\textsuperscript{225} “A moitié nue, ainsi que le doit l’être une jeune fille . . .” Collection Deloynes, Tome 21 (1799-1800). Exposition des ouvrages de peinture, sculpture, architecture, gravures, dessins, modèles composés par les artistes vivans et exposés dans le Salon du Musée central des Arts, insérée dans le Journal de la Décade, par le. C. Chaussard, 1799.
however, are moderated through mimicry, role playing, and games—all pedagogical practices advocated by the leading writers, professional educators, and philosophical thinkers of the time. The girl’s sincere effort in the “education” of her pet suggests the mitigation of her innate animalistic tendencies as signaled through the obedience of the trained dog in her lap.

Another critic opens his long critique of the 1799 Salon with his assessment of Chaudet’s painting of the girl and her pug, thereby demonstrating the contemporary interest in and importance of this subject matter. He celebrates the artist’s graceful handling of the brush and charming execution, and he, too, notes how the painting is reminiscent of La Fontaine’s fables. But this critic finds fault in Chaudet’s rendering of the girl’s head that conflicts with ideals of childhood innocence. Upon closer examination of the child’s physiognomic features that include noticeably flushed cheeks, he alludes to lost innocence in his observation that she “no longer recognizes the games of this beautiful age.” He continues that despite the naïveté of her pose and childlike attitude, the girl only finds seriousness in the age of passions. But “since this child has charms and since she looks absorbed [in her activity], by looking at her traits, one cannot help but to smile.” This observer finds comfort in the last vestiges of child’s fading innocence.

A third critic wrote a lengthy assessment of Chaudet’s painting that generally reflects on the painting’s subject and praises the artist for her march toward perfection through a much-admired painting that seduced the Salon crowd. But he remarked that the attentive pug in the girl’s lap is at once doll and victim, and there is an element of humor for the experienced adult to


227 “Mais comme cet enfant a des charmes, comme il est interessé en examinant ses traits, on ne peut s’empecher de sourire.” Collection Deloynes, Tome 21 (1799-1800). Exposition de tableaux au Salon du Louvre, Journal d’indications, 1799.
observe the girl’s naïveté as she assumes serious adult mannerisms and very intently teaches her pet to read. He observes:

The girl said to her pug in the very serious tone of a tutor, ‘do you want to read, please?’ What delightful naïveté! Such are the ways of childhood.²²⁸

Significantly, this critic’s description of the pet as both a “doll and victim” suggests several aspects of the girl’s character and future role in the new French society: her openness to learning through games and role play, the girl’s future place in the family as her children’s primary educator, and the social significance of morally educating girls in an effort to abate inherent wild and immodest behaviors that social reformers blamed for the disorderliness of French society.

I have already explained that it was during the eighteenth century in France that there was a growing scientific interest in the developing bodies and malleable minds of children. Jean-Jacques Rousseau most famously emphasized the necessity of a moral education and the positive influence of a natural environment in his enormously influential Émile from 1762. This period also witnessed a great interest in the strength of the mother-child bond as a powerful force of nature and the embodiment of life itself.²²⁹ For example, I believe that the affectionate subject and swirling, energetic forms of Fragonard’s The Maternal Kisses engage with the psychological and physical intensity of the mother-child relationship (Fig. A102, c. 1777). In this painting, a mother and her two children lovingly embrace; their figures are pushed against the picture plane to draw the viewer into the heightened intimacy of this special moment. Fragonard’s vigorous


²²⁹ Johnson, David to Delacroix, 164-169.
application of painterly brushstrokes fuses the mother and her children together to suggest their unbreakable bond.

The mother-child connection stemmed from the reproductive function of the female body and was reinforced through the habitual act of maternal breastfeeding and the wholesome properties of mother’s milk that nurslings absorbed. Furthermore, the soft, warm, and impressionable psychologies and physiologies of women and children were conflated since they were each thought to possess an overabundance of emotions that caused spastic outbursts. Just as women were thought to have retained childlike sensibilities, the eighteenth-century conception of childhood was feminized with its references to sensitivity, weakness, and vulnerability. Enlightenment theorists, philosophers, and physicians like Pierre Roussel were fascinated by what they perceived to be the mysterious and unpredictable emotional nature of women and how biological impulses such as uterine furors could corrupt women’s mental and physical states. Unlike young animals that can survive on their own, the extreme fragility of human children required adult assistance. Because of their natural physiological delicacy and psychological closeness to children, women alone were thought to be able to provide the best parental care. Social reformers instructed women to embrace their natural roles as devoted wives and affectionate mothers of future French citizens to secure personal health and happiness. The encouragement of this domestic lifestyle was also politically motivated since the alleviation of women’s excessive passions and sexual appetites through marriage and motherhood would promote the stability of the new French society, as some social reformers believed. As the unifying element of the modern harmonious family unit, the nurturing mother organized her life

around her children’s needs, which now included the early education of her sons (up to a certain age) and especially her daughters.\textsuperscript{231} Above all other attitudes, actions, and temperaments that a mother-mentor was expected to assume to properly execute her duties, pedagogues like Fénélon and his eighteenth-century followers emphasized a virtuous mother’s instruction through gentle example.

In late eighteenth-century discourses on appropriate pedagogical practices for girls, however, a tension existed between maintaining strict control over the self and the freedom of imagination.\textsuperscript{232} The art of mothering, as Rousseau described it, was to demonstrate to children the utility of everything in an effort to prevent boredom, a task that was all the more effective with girls’ instruction since their brains were more vulnerable.\textsuperscript{233} The cultivation of children’s spontaneous imaginations was important for healthy mental development, but since children’s (especially girls’) minds were highly susceptible to outside stimuli, too much exposure to fantasy, pleasure, and invention from novels and the fine and performing arts could lead to wildness and immodesty. To avoid this irreversible moral damage from exposure to excessive or unsuitable information, pedagogues instructed mothers to teach their daughters only the skills they would require as future wives and mothers; too much knowledge, insatiable curiosities, or engagements with lessons deemed inappropriate to their gender might corrupt girls’ innocence. Like the pedagogues before him, Rousseau advised mothers to diversify their instructional


\textsuperscript{232} Jennifer Milam, \textit{Fragonard’s Playful Paintings: Visual Games in Rococo Art} (Manchester, UK; New York: Manchester University Press; New York: Distributed in the USA by Palgrave, 2006), 95-98.

methods since ignorance and idleness were some of the most dangerous and incurable traps for girls’ development. He wrote:

Dissipation, frivolity, and inconstancy are defects that easily arise from the corruption and indulgence of their first tastes. To prevent this abuse, teach [girls] above all to conquer themselves. 234

Educational reformists thus emphasized private home education with dutiful mothers assuming the all-important responsibility of raising moral children. Rousseau explained that girls who did not enjoy being with their mothers more than anyone else in the world faced “not turning out well.” 235

Another such advocate of the primacy of the mother-daughter bond in the development of girls’ moral and social educations was Madame d’Epinay. In her 1774 publication on the methods of educating her granddaughter Émilie, d’Epinay wrote enthusiastically about the unique pleasure she derived from her relationship with Émilie, thereby placing the highest importance on an intimate (grand) mother-(grand) daughter relationship. D’Epinay advised mothers to exclusively supervise their daughters’ educations through an emphasis on hands-on experience and direct observation. 236 D’Epinay’s ideas on girls’ education through the careful observation and mimicry of their mothers, however, likely derived from Rousseau’s emphatic promotion of mothers as the best suited examples for their daughters as well as the authoritative seventeenth-century pedagogical writings of Fénelon and John Locke that remained popular in France throughout the eighteenth century.

234 Ibid.

235 Ibid.

To further demonstrate the lasting influence of Fénelon’s *De l’éducation des filles* from 1687 that attributed the deplorable state of girls’ education to outmoded French customs and maternal negligence and indifference, Nadine Bérenguier wrote that even a century after Fénelon’s publication, his treatise was reprinted seven additional times between 1719 and 1776. Many educational thinkers like Madame d’Epinay and the famous Madame de Genlis continued to echo or adapt Fénelon’s criticisms and demand reform. In her vast body of pedagogical literature, Madame de Genlis emphasized the healthful benefits of physical activity on children’s bodies and the necessity of impressing the senses to establish learning. The combination of exercise with mental lessons accompanied by interactive visual aids, role play, and games would promote strong minds, memories, and critical thinking skills. Just as Locke and Fénelon had once stressed that young children best acquired knowledge through sensation and observation, Madame de Genlis, too, emphasized that sensory experience was inextricably tied to effective learning. Similarly to her contemporaries, Madame de Genlis advocated home education for the betterment of children’s learning and women’s sense of purpose and personal fulfillment. When a mother embraced her role as her child’s first teacher, the child would have a more solid intellectual and moral foundation, and the woman, consequently, would have a happier and more meaningful life.

Jean-Baptiste-Siméon Chardin, for example, repeatedly portrayed learning through imitation in his genre paintings of children from the 1730s and 1740s. Despite possible moralizing references to vanity through the well-known seventeenth-century Dutch emblem tradition of the mirror in *The Morning Toilette* (Fig. A103, 1741), the subject of the mother and her daughter dressing for church can be understood in terms of progressive pedagogical

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developments and the importance of mimicry in the learning process for young girls.\textsuperscript{238} In this painting, the pyramidal forms of the woman and the young girl echo one another to suggest the mother as the single, most perfect model for her daughter’s development. As the mother carefully adjusts her daughter’s bonnet, the girl looks into the mirror while a single candle burns on the dressing table. Chardin’s representations of mothers and children engage with many of Fénelon’s educational prescriptions, including the idea of the mother as the prudent guiding force behind her children’s development. Since children’s natural innocence inclined them to imitate everything, virtuous mothers were the best examples for children to mimic. According to Fénelon’s treatise on girls’ education:

> children naturally turned towards whatever good is shown to them. Often, without saying a word to them, [one] has only to let them see in someone else what you want them to do.\textsuperscript{239}

As the young girl patiently gazes at her reflection to watch herself transform into a miniature version of her mother, Chardin’s painting engages with more than just the significance of mimicry as an effective contemporary educational methods for girls. While the painting’s overall reverential tone suggests the sincerity of the learning process that unfolds before the viewer, I believe the solemnity of the scene emphasizes the special value of the mother-daughter bond in this moment.

Additionally, mimicry extended to individual and group games as a form of instruction. In particular, doll play functioned to teach young girls about motherhood and to prepare them for the serious demands of domestic womanhood, which included an emphasis on the early


instruction of their male and female children. When the Salon critic viewed the pug from Chaudet’s portrait as a living doll, the girl transforms into a miniature mother-tutor who, through pedagogical role play, enthusiastically practices how to nurture and instruct her future children. Until the last quarter of the nineteenth century in France, many dolls were made to look like miniature versions of elegant adult women to propagate this specific ideal of proper, modern bourgeois femininity.\textsuperscript{240} For instance, in Boucher’s genre painting \textit{The Luncheon} (Fig. A27) that I have already analyzed in terms of the important place of the child in the family, the little girl reaches toward her rather large doll that stands at her side. Like the human figures in the painting, the doll is fashionably dressed as if it were an actual eighteenth-century French lady that the little girl will grow up to emulate. The doll wears a miniature version of an elegant contemporary gown, complete with \textit{panniers} to accentuate the hips, a corseted bodice, and a bow choker around the neck.

Although dolls were prized for their educative capacities, critics cautioned that girls’ interactions with dolls did not always promote exemplary moral lessons. Moralist writers like Rousseau identified the potential dangers lurking behind the girlish cult of the doll. In the fifth book of \textit{Émile} that discusses the ideal woman and effective child-rearing techniques, Rousseau writes about the doll as an object of special entertainment for girls only.\textsuperscript{241} By learning to dress and adorn their dolls, which functioned as extensions of themselves, girls risked becoming lost in the narcissistic world of nonsensical frippery and the coquetry of immodest, “dolled up” women.


\textsuperscript{241} Rousseau, \textit{Emile, or On Education}, 367-367.
Of course, it was the responsibility of parents, particularly mothers, to regulate and monitor their daughters’ doll play. Parental surveillance of girls’ interactions with dolls also played a significant role in tracking the progress of their educations. Pedagogues further recognized that parents’ observations of their children’s imaginative engagements with dolls were ways to verify the degree and effectiveness of children’s moral training. For example, in her pedagogical novel *Adèle et Théodore*, Madame de Genlis writes about how she sees Adelaide teaching her doll the very lessons she had just learned herself.242 By observing the child actively instruct her doll, Madame de Genlis is able to assess Adelaide’s aptitude and moral standing.

French artists emphasized themes of play, imagination, and mimicry as part of a child’s intellectual, emotional, and physical growth in portraiture and genre paintings. Fragonard’s genre paintings often feature dolls and puppets that are not small-scale models of adults, but fanciful objects that initiate the learning process in a creative way that emphasizes the special status of a child’s imagination. In Fragonard’s *Monsieur FanFan* (Fig. A104, c. 1778), a precocious child runs across the foreground with a *polchinelle* (a kind of Italian clown puppet) draped over his arm while a large doll in a corseted dress slips from his grasp. Two lapdogs chase the child and tug at the doll’s coiffure to further pull the corseted doll away from the child. The *polchinelle* is slumped when at rest and only becomes upright and alive when the child activates it. In this scene, the dogs attack the doll that functions as a mimetic model and forgo the fantastical toy that prioritizes the child’s mind and imagination.

Painted depictions of young children (mostly girls) that play with their pets like baby dolls are not uncommon in French art, particularly in the genre paintings and portraits of Fragonard and his contemporaries. Play with swaddled cats and costumed lapdogs stimulate the child’s cognitive and emotional development, which allows for imaginative processes to occur at

elevated, more engaging levels. Although dolls possess various whimsical characteristics that depend entirely upon the child’s imagination to enliven them, the objects are inanimate. Domesticated creatures are alive, responsive, and aware of feeling, and they are trained to submit to the whims of their human owners. The renowned eighteenth-century painter of children, François-Hubert Drouais, was characterized for his particularly animated depictions of boys and girls with pets to suggest the significance of the child-animal bond and the importance of girls’ education to temper their wild impulses. For example, his *Little Girl Playing with a Cat* from the 1763 Salon shows a half-length portrait of a well-dressed girl who cradles her swaddled her cat in her arms (Fig. A75). Despite his distaste for the unnaturally polished, artificially chalky complexions of Drouais’s children, Diderot found the artist’s paintings of children lively and well-mannered as they appeared to look at the viewer and smile.  

Diderot praised the 1763 genre portrait for the girl’s care of the cat wrapped in her velvet cloak; the Gobelins factory reproduced this painting for tapestries, and a variation of this subject reappeared in 1767 (Fig. A105). In 1765, a painting of an elegantly dressed boy plays with a cat as if it were a human infant (Fig. A76). The cat lies comfortably in an ornately carved cradle adorned with feathers and pink ribbons. However, the cat reveals its animal nature as it playfully nips at the little boy’s fingers. Drouais revisited this subject of children with humanized pets another time before his death in 1775, thereby suggesting the continued popularity and significance of this subject matter. His *Portrait of Mademoiselle Angot with her Cat* (Fig. 77, 1772) shows the lavishly dressed sitter who performs a make-believe toilette ceremony for her kitten. In this painting, the girl looks directly at the viewer as she wraps a kerchief around her cat’s head and gestures towards its reflection in a propped-up mirror. The subjects of Drouais’s paintings all engage with

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243 Diderot quoted in Barker, “Imagining Childhood,” 431.
contemporary themes of doll play and mimicry to facilitate a type of education that taught self-restraint as well as ideals related to virtuous femininity and growing up.

Similarly to her contemporaries, Chaudet’s depictions of girls with animals include anecdotal elements that consider the emotional bond between pet and child. For example, *The Sleeping Child in a Crib under the Watch of a Courageous Guard Dog* from the Salon of 1801 was emotionally engaging because of its dramatic subject.\(^{244}\) This popular subject recalls Michel-Honoré Bounieu’s *Portrait of a Child Guarded by a Dog* that portrays an alert guard dog who rests its head on the same pillow upon which an infant sleeps. In his engraving of this popular 1769 Salon painting, Nicolas Ponce retitled the subject as *Innocence Guarded by Fidelity*, which not only suggests the emblematic meaning of the child and dog, but the oval format of the print emphasizes the touching intimacy between the sleeping infant and his faithful pet. In Chaudet’s *Young Girl Mourning the Death of her Pigeon* from the Salon of 1808 (Fig. A106), the artist constructs a geometrically ordered composition and uses the symmetry of soaring architectural elements to frame the young girl to emphasize her emotional anguish over the loss of her beloved pet. A Salon critic remarked that “[the figure of the girl] is so gentle and her expression is so touching that one feels encouraged to share her suffering.”\(^{245}\) Chaudet’s genre painting explores the emotional reaction to death in the tearful contemplation of the girl’s gaze as she mourns her feathery pet, but imagery of this type relates to the emblematic tradition of lost virginity.

Images of “pet pedagogy” may certainly allude to didactic moralizing emblems from the Dutch and French rococo traditions as I have discussed, but the subjects indeed engage more


\(^{245}\) *L’Observateur au Museum* quoted in Ibid.
broadly with progressive educational methods for girls as outlined by Enlightenment social reformers.\textsuperscript{246} Significantly, I believe that Fragonard prioritizes the child’s unique imagination and emphasizes the pedagogical value of game play as part of children’s training. Animals assume a meaningful anecdotal role in Fragonard’s representations of this special learning process. For example, Fragonard’s \textit{Education Does it All} (Fig. A79, c. 1775-80) shows a girl’s predisposition for the world of make-believe as well as the educative benefits of pastoral pet play in the representation of children enthusiastically learning lessons from their interactions with animals. Represented with her back to the viewer, a young girl squats in front of a small stage and raises her arms to command the attention of two lapdogs outfitted in pastoral costumes that include a wide-brimmed hat, an oversized red cape, and a scepter made from a stalk of corn. The animals, further anthropomorphized as they stand on their hind legs, look blankly to their female director as they obediently perform for a small crowd of rustically dressed girls and boys of various ages. Each figure focuses on the stage with wide, open eyes to suggest fascination with the performance; some open their mouths in wonder while others gesture to suggest excitement.

Jennifer Milam argues that Fragonard’s representations of playing children address adult viewers who seek to reclaim the pure imaginative impulses and creative sensations that were unique to childhood through the visual experiences of art. In her assessment of \textit{Education}, Milam suggests that the pastoral dogs are dressed as miniature soldiers or even courtiers in a kind of satirical play on the political state of France.\textsuperscript{247} This interpretation does not critically explore the implications of the girl who has command over this imaginary brigade instead of the young boys, who are the future soldiers of France. Emma Barker has also analyzed this painting according to

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\textsuperscript{247} Milam, \textit{Fragonard’s Playful Paintings}, 77-80.
\end{footnotesize}
her interpretations of Fragonard’s depictions of domesticity as light-hearted subversions of enlightened visions of bourgeois family life for his aristocratic clientele. Barker understands Fragonard’s portrayal of the pastoral lapdogs on their hind legs as a satirical representation of current pedagogical discourses that emphasize moral training and control. I believe that Fragonard’s emphasis on the girl’s play that captivates her audience indeed goes against contemporary educational theories that caution against the freedoms of girls’ imaginations. With an emphasis on the girl’s command of the performing dogs, this subject suggests the special possibilities of the female imagination as this young girl entertains as well as teaches her interested friends from within her made-up world.

Nevertheless, representations of young girls and aristocratic women controlling pets have a long history in art that is unrelated to ideas of education, imaginative creativity to further intellectual development, and instructional games. Popular romantic writings dating back to the Renaissance (and earlier) discussed small animals in terms of lust and sex as well as love and fidelity. The rich imagery described in amatory literature like Petrarchan love sonnets influenced Western European culture and likely informed seventeenth-century Dutch paintings of courtship where beautiful women were sources of unrequited love. Frans van Mieris’s Teasing the Pet (Fig. A107, 1660) shows a young woman with her hand protectively around a small spaniel that is curled in her lap. A man playfully tugs at the dog’s floppy ear to attract his beloved’s attention, but the woman pushes away her eager suitor and declines his flirtatious advances. Beyond antique poetry and its close relationship with seventeenth-century Dutch art, this kind of subject


249 Ibid. 136-139.

250 Franits, Paragons of Virtue, 36-37.
matter also engaged with themes of contemporary Dutch courtship rituals and may have functioned as warnings about the dangers of a domineering woman’s impulses. In Van Mieris’s *Lady at her Toilette* (Fig. A108, 1659-60), a little dog balances on its hind legs and delights its mistress who towers in front of her dressing table. As this woman pauses her toilette ritual to take pleasure in her dog’s dance, the pet functions as an obedient toy in her bedroom and is at the mercy of her amusement. In this moralizing context, the pet reveals itself as a substitute for a future lover who will visit this private chamber and find himself controlled by the vain woman’s whims.\(^{251}\)

Artists continue to represent spoiled pets as objects of female affection in French genre paintings a century later. Male suitors are frequently excluded from these compositions and are instead implied as voyeuristic viewers. For instance, Fragonard’s *Young Girl with Little Dogs* (Fig. A109, c. 1770) at first glance is an image of ideal womanhood. A young girl cradles two sleeping puppies to her breasts as if she is about to nurse them. Although portrayed as vulnerable and as needy as human infants, these dogs cannot be nursed at the human breast. The woman’s bare breasts, therefore, are on full display for the viewer’s pleasure, and this image slips into the realm of the erotic. Boudoir paintings of women with small animals as enthusiastic playthings allowed male viewers to imagine how women spontaneously behaved when they were alone. Fragonard’s eroticized painting *Young Girl in Bed Making her Dog Dance* (Fig. A110, c. 1770) famously shows a young girl on a rumpled bed with her lap dog’s tail resting suggestively between her legs. Here, the little dog is associated with sexual excitement, carnal desire, and conspicuous luxury. Its close physical proximity to its owner in the bedroom poses a threat to the

\(^{251}\) Durantini, *Child in Dutch Painting*, 268-287.
primacy of the woman’s male lover who faced limited entry into such a privileged space.\textsuperscript{252} This painting was repeatedly copied and reinterpreted in paintings and engravings, which attests to the popularity of the subject matter. Other versions are more erotically explicit, such as \textit{The Ring Biscuits} (Fig. A111, c. 1772) that shows a girl playfully offering a biscuit to a little black dog that is balanced on her elevated feet. Once again, the girl reclines in a pile of tangled bed sheets, but her body is on display with her breasts exposed. Her nightgown conveniently slips down as she raises her legs to play with her pet, allowing the viewer to catch a glimpse of her buttocks and thus asserting this image’s sexual message.

Fragonard frequently includes cats and dogs in his paintings to assert meaning on a variety of intellectual levels, including specific art historical allusions and references to contemporary social discourses on female sexuality and control. Emblematic cats and dogs are a part of Fragonard’s intellectual “play” in which layers of potential meanings overlap to delight viewers in their own cleverness as they derive multiple meanings in their imaginations. The imagery also shows off the wit and erudition of Fragonard as he references and then reinvents established visual conventions in the French rococo mode.\textsuperscript{253} Just as we saw in the visual conventions of seventeenth-century Dutch genre painting, feline imagery and its association with the feminine became a familiar motif in eighteenth-century French painting. For example, a playful cat smiles at the viewer as it rests literally in-between the woman’s legs in François Boucher’s \textit{Lady Fastening her Garter (La Toilette)} (Fig. A112, 1742). “La chatte,” French for female cat, indeed carries the same double meaning as the English slang “pussy.” As Buffon insisted in his assessment of the nature of cats, their implicit domesticity was a farce. Although


appearing gentle, cats possessed an “innate malice, a falseness of character, a perverse nature, which age augments and education can only mask.”

An Angora cat that caresses a woman’s neck contributes to the eroticism of Fragonard’s *The Good Mother* (Fig. A113, c. 1773). This small-scale painting depicts a young, rosy-cheeked bourgeois mother surrounded by her small children in a blossoming garden to emphasize the woman’s fertility and reproductive purpose. The curved forms of the child’s cradle mimic the curvaceous forms of the woman herself to bring attention to her natural role as mother. The oval shape of the painting further reiterates the curves of the female form and the overall familial intimacy of the setting. But with its tail erect, the nuzzling cat helps to facilitate the tension between sexual freedom and domesticity with which this woman struggles. The Angora cat’s presence is key because it suggests the mother’s contemplation of the power of her own wild sexuality that had been tempered, at least in theory, through marriage and put to good use through the production of the children at her side.

Because of the multitude of iconographic meanings of animals in art along with the cultural history of the changing perceptions of how people understood and related to domesticated dogs and cats in late eighteenth-century France, attitudes toward animals and

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children relate to ideas of control and appropriate training as outlined by Enlightenment social reformers. In Chaudet’s painting, the description of the lapdog as a “victim” of the girl’s game of make-believe indicates the pug’s ability to think and feel. The animal is invested with human qualities, and the viewer is meant to sympathize for the dog as it learns the alphabet, which is beyond its comprehension. This description demonstrates the changing status of animals during this period in France that challenged the well-known Cartesian theoretical model from the seventeenth century, which described animals as soulless creatures incapable of human feelings and emotional reactions.

Although owning pets was once a privilege of the aristocracy, pet keeping transitioned to more of a bourgeois domestic amusement in the eighteenth century. Much like the minds of young children, pets were special family members that expressed their emotions more simply as owners transformed their wild natures into conduct that mimicked civilized human behaviors. Parisian pets were thus infantilized; dogs were “eternal children” or “living dolls” and uniquely malleable and controllable.257 Clothed and humanized pets further represent a kind of deanimalization, denaturing, and rational control over beastly behavior.258 Once again, Fragonard plays with new and traditional understandings of small pet dogs in his Portrait of a Woman with a Dog from 1769 that links a lapdog to ideals of femininity (Fig. A114). The sitter of this portrait wears an old-fashioned theatrical costume that contemporaries described as à l’espagnole and alludes to the famous royal court dress of Marie de Médicis in Rubens’s series of seventeenth-century allegorical portraits of the French queen. The woman’s costume is richly embellished and her turquoise cloak is lined with ermine fur as a sign of aristocratic wealth.

257 Kete, Beast in the Boudoir, 82.

258 Ibid, 77-85.
Oversized pearls adorn her neck and décolleté, ears, and the soft curls of her hair. The woman holds a fancifully beribboned white papillon in front of her as she looks at the viewer. An elaborate turquoise ribbon cascades from the dog’s neck and blends into the woman’s costume to unite the two figures. To further emphasize the bond between the woman and her fashionable pet, the neatly trimmed wisps of the dog’s curled tail mirror the neat gray ringlets of the woman’s coiffure. Clearly, this dog’s entitlement and polished appearance emphasizes the woman’s imagined luxury, but the visual parallels in this portrait also suggest the feminization of this domesticated animal.

Jean Jacques Bachelier blurs the boundaries of humanity and animality in his portraits of dogs in human postures that are invested with human emotions. A pampered white Havanese poodle in a luxurious setting is the subject of a 1768 portrait (Fig. A115). The dog has become a living toy that its affluent owner has fashionably styled to appear as a worthy member of the upper class. With freshly groomed fur, a tuft of hair atop its head that is fixed with a pink ribbon, and newly manicured nails, the dog stiffly poses on its hind legs and seemingly purses its lips as it looks away with exasperation. A piece of unfurled ribbon obscures the dog’s genitalia to emphasize its unnatural existence as a gender-neutral doll that submits to its master’s caprices.

Artists during this period began to emphasize children’s humanization of their pets, but this subject matter goes beyond moralizing lessons of naughty children teasing vulnerable animals. The subject of treating the cat as a baby doll appears in a genre painting by British artist Joseph Wright of Derby (Fig. A116). In this dramatically illuminated painting, two little girls are dressing a kitten with the clothes of their doll left abandoned on the table. As one girl steadies the kitten on its hind legs to fasten its bonnet while the other gleefully assists, the kitten looks

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directly at the viewer and grimaces. The figures’ cheerful expressions and the kitten’s pitiful glare suggest that the little girls find pleasure in this type of play. In his enormously popular seventeenth-century educational treatise, English philosopher John Locke warned parents: “they who delight in the suffering and destruction of inferior creatures, will not be apt to be very compassionate or [benign] to those of their own kind.”260 Although this kitten’s suffering is not as extreme as the animals that young boys torture in William Hogarth’s *Four Stages of Cruelty* (Fig. A117, 1751), its scowl suggests discontent. The girls’ unawareness in their mistreatment of the kitten also alludes to poor parenting since the spoiled children have not been taught compassion. If the girls are indeed playing a game, the game is meaningless and even morally destructive it because does not relate to the development of useful habits.

Although another emblematic theme of Wright’s painting relates to morality in that the children have discarded their girlhood toy, a model of feminine propriety, for riskier and less innocent games, this work also relates to the status of animals and the inevitable suppression of animal instinct. Recalling Bachelier’s emasculated poodle from the same period, this kitten’s tail sinks between its legs to suggest its humiliation in its denaturalization; yet, it does not resist the transformative process. A correlation between children and animals thus exists: the new treatment and understanding of household pets directly relates to children who were also meant to be gently (but still firmly) controlled to advance their intellectual, moral, and physical developments.

By recognizing the abundance of artistic conventions known to genre painters like Gérard along with the myriad of developing social and cultural discourses on female sexuality, the social role of women as educators, the reconceptualization of childhood, and animal welfare, we can

begin to understand that Gérard’s *Portrait of a Mother and her Child* has layers of meanings that do not simply represent virtuous bourgeois domesticity or ideal motherhood. The girl ignores her doll in favor of the cat, and her engagement with such a popular household pet could certainly allude to her future identity as an affectionate mother herself. On the one hand, the cat appears harmless in the girl’s tiny arms, and such an image of domesticity safely obscures any overt sexual references that might have threatened Marguerite Gérard’s reputation as a proper bourgeois woman as she pursued a public career as a professional artist. On the other hand, the cat suggests a dialogue with more sensitive subjects, including an exploration of the girl’s inevitable sexual awakening, or perhaps the child’s primal temperament that could only be controlled through attentive parenting, which her melancholy mother appears to lack.

Gérard reveals her profoundly intellectual approach to painting in additional details that allude to female sexuality that is being contained. Fruit has a long-established connection to human fertility, and children were the product of a fruitful marriage that required proper cultivation to grow. Cherries, in particular, were a common element in Dutch portraits of children dating at least back to the sixteenth century with references to youthfulness. In Gérard’s painting, the bowl of ripened stacked cherries in the background remains untouched, and the neatly pruned forms of the potted rosebush echo the embroidery on the mother’s dress, thereby contributing to the painting’s shifting moral and sexual themes while referencing specific Dutch visual conventions like fruit and flowers.

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This chapter sought to bring attention to new ways of understanding representations of children and pets in the context of Marguerite Gérard’s late eighteenth-century œuvre, particularly in her 1799 *Portrait of a Mother and her Child*. Through a deeper analysis of the numerous artistic traditions and a closer examination of the varying contemporary discourses on children, the education of girls and the role of the virtuous mother as the gentle, yet imposing, mentor, anxieties about female sexuality, and animals in late eighteenth-century France, I believe that Gérard’s portrait represents more than just domesticity as a fashionable social category. Expressive cats continue to have a powerful presence in Gérard’s nineteenth-century paintings like *La Toilette de Mintette* (Fig. A118) and *The Cat’s Lunch* (Fig. A119) to suggest the authority of this subject matter as the young women muse over and pay homage to the oversized felines that appear to control them. Gérard’s imagery subtly shifts between moralizing and erotic themes to shield the artist from outright public scandal in her allusions to the presence of female sexuality while poetically appealing to viewers on a variety of different levels.

Chapter Three will continue this exploration of the symbolic value of children, but in the political context of the collapsing Bourbon monarchy and the vilification of Marie-Antoinette during the French Revolution. After the 1789 storming of the Bastille, Republican political ideologies combined with new understandings of childhood to display children as powerful emblems of social regeneration and hope. Contemporary emphases on the purity and innocence of children during this period of great disorder and instability reached the royal court at Versailles, where Marie-Antoinette adopted some of Rousseau’s philosophies on nature, children, and childcare to assert her femininity and maternal virtue. Numerous representations of

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1600 Until the Present (Amsterdam: Gallery P. de Boer, 1982); Paul Taylor, *Dutch Flower Painting, 1600-1720* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1995).
the royal children from the 1780s and 1790s suggest the special status of all of the Bourbon children through an emphasis on affective familial bonds between parents and children as well as siblings. These themes subvert the conventions of *Ancien régime* royal portraiture and indicate the Royal Family’s embrace of some important bourgeois social ideologies on the value of children. My analysis of Marie-Antoinette’s vehement self-identification as a mother during her reign will demonstrate the queen’s engagement in contemporary theories on mother-child relationships as inherent displays of virtue.
CHAPTER 3: REVOLUTIONIZING INNOCENCE: WOMEN, CHILDREN, AND LA PATRIE

The new ideologies associated with children and childhood as discussed in Chapters One and Two advanced the image of children as effective emblems of the French Revolution’s emphases on regeneration, fecundity, and purity during the 1780s and 1790s. Revolutionary print culture, popular festivals, the significance of milk and the maternal breast as political motifs, and the hyperbolized military report of a fallen child soldier all contributed to a powerful rhetoric of children as symbols of a new era of virtue in France.

From 1789 to 1790, for instance, a group of boys in Lille between seven and twelve years old organized into a battalion called la compagnie de l’Espérance, or the “company of Hope,” that resembled la Garde nationale. The children petitioned for permission to swear patriotic oaths in emulation of their elders, and the miniature battalion declared “we live for [France] and our last breath will be for her” while carrying banners that displayed their motto “l’espérance de la Patrie.” While such actions could be construed as naïve mimicry, the inherent purity and natural integrity of children make their commitment to the revolutionary cause a powerful contribution to political propaganda. Prints of boys and girls playing with revolutionary icons like the Bastille, parading, and waving the tricolor flag suggest children as important participants in revolutionary culture. To heighten the political value of thirteen-year-old Joseph Bara’s murder on the battlefield, Maximilien Robespierre requested engravings of Jacques-Louis David’s painting of the martyred revolutionary hero to be prepared at the government’s expense.

and displayed in all primary schools, thereby demonstrating, on one level, the pedagogical relevance of this portrait as a model of ideal republican glory, honor, and sacrifice for the rising generations.\textsuperscript{264}

Additionally, republican political ideologies combined with new philosophical and medical theories to create unique visual vocabularies that provoked the viewer’s emotional engagement with depictions of children. Contemporary publications on the health and redefined status of children continuously quote, pay homage to, and, at times, plagiarize Rousseauian discourse that most famously advocated the freedom of bodily movement, fresh country air and outdoor exercise, and the restorative capability of maternal breast milk. Such treatises approach the study of children’s minds and bodies from a scientific viewpoint, which seems to add credibility to their recommendations.\textsuperscript{265} Physicians wrote directly to mothers and implored them to find the courage to look after and teach their own children for the sake of their own health, their children’s development and survival, and the advancement of a moral society. In his essay on David’s representations of children in the 1790s, Simon Schama argued that David incorporated Enlightenment discourse related to the nature of the new family model into his


\textsuperscript{265} Some examples of these publications include \textit{Etablissement propret à l’éducation physique et morale des enfants, Depuis la fin de leur Alaitement, jusqu’à leur septième année.} (Paris: Chez Vincent, 1772); Jacques Balexserd, \textit{Dissertation sur l’éducation physique des enfants, depuis leur naissance jusque à l’age de puberté} (Paris: Chez la Veuve Vallat-La-Chapelle, 1762); Jean-Louis Fourcroy, \textit{Lettres sur l’éducation physique des enfants} (Amiens: Chez la Veuve Godart, 1772); Vital-Louis Joyeaux, \textit{Considérations directes et indirectes sur quelques points de l’éducation physique des enfant} (Montpellier, 1798); Ribaillier, \textit{De l’éducation physique et morale des enfants des deux sexes} (Paris, 1785); Marc-Antoine Lautaret, \textit{Quelques considérations générales sur l’éducation physique des enfant} (Montpellier: 1802).
history paintings to strengthen the efficacy of their messages.\footnote{Schama, “David et les enfants de la patrie,” 739-757.} Dorothy Johnson’s analysis of 
_The Sabine Women_ (Fig. A120, 1799) according to David’s exploration of maternal love also goes beyond an interpretation of the painting as a political allegory.\footnote{Dorothy Johnson, _David to Delacroix: The Rise of Romantic Mythology_ (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2011), 169-172; Johnson, _Jacques-Louis David: Art in Metamorphosis_ (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993), 121-136.}

This chapter will examine representations of the children of Louis XVI and Marie-Antoinette against the backdrop of the French Revolution, from the long-awaited birth of the couple’s first child Marie-Thérèse-Charlotte of France (given the title “Madame Royale” as the king’s eldest daughter) in December 1778 through the family’s revolutionary imprisonment in Paris in the 1790s. My argument begins by situating the image of the child as a dynamic metaphor for social regeneration and hope in the larger historical context of revolutionary rhetoric. Visual culture from this period reveals the social and political value of children’s minds and bodies in furthering the aims of France’s First Republic. Once this framework is established, my analysis will explore representations of royalty and Marie-Antoinette’s own involvement in the symbolic value of children as emblems of natural virtue and innocence. As the most visible and arguably controversial icons of France’s future, images of the royal children seem to have been transformed to symbolize the ideals of the new French society. Representations of the royal children from the 1780s and into the early 1790s minimize conventional attributes of the French monarchy to emphasize instead the special place of the child according to the new family model, which ultimately points to the virtuosity and progressiveness of the royal parents. The body of the dauphin, in particular, stood for innocence and monarchical depravity at once, and concern for his neglect and abuse in the Temple prison demonstrates this paradox.
Although Marie-Antoinette’s own associations with nature became problematic for her identity as queen and mother, the queen continued to have herself and her children represented more casually and outdoors with references to her beloved Petit Trianon in both public and private commissions throughout the 1780s. As is well-known, Salon portraits of the royal children with Marie-Antoinette from 1785 and 1787 caused public outrage when they were thought to have displayed visions of the monarchy that followed Marie-Antoinette’s private whims instead of French court customs and etiquette. In what would become the final representation of the queen with her children, François Dumont’s miniature from 1790 features an informally dressed Marie-Antoinette resting at the foot of a large tree in an idealized country setting (Fig. A121). Although the dauphin (now Louis Charles after his elder brother’s untimely 1789 death) sweetly embraces his mother from behind, Marie-Antoinette interacts most directly with her daughter. But, this image transcends the traditional royal representation of a queen and her daughter and instead portrays a more bourgeois mother-daughter relationship, a precious familial bond that was redefined in this period, as I explained in Chapter Two. While the queen clasps Madame Royale’s left hand, she gently supports her daughter’s other hand as Madame gracefully carves “soyez à tous leur mère” into the towering trunk of the tree that shelters the trio, thereby metaphorically altering her family tree. In this miniature, Madame Royale elicits change and asserts her importance; the daughter is not merely an attribute of her mother’s

268 For a survey of Marie-Antoinette and the artists that represented her see, Marguerite Jallut, Marie-Antoinette and her Painters (Paris: Noyer, 1955).

femininity or a burden to her family. My analysis of Marie-Antoinette as the mother of France from the symbolic context of childhood innocence suggests the queen’s engagement in contemporary theories on mother-child relationships as inherent displays of personal virtue.

Representations of children had an important role in the revolutionary imagination as political leaders emphasized the purification and rebirth of a new French society from the moral decay of the Ancien régime. After the 1789 destruction of the Bastille and the collapse of absolutism, the revolutionaries sought to legitimize their position, rally popular support, educate the population, and attain unity through national festivals throughout France. Festivals began as spontaneous, loosely organized gatherings, but to appeal to the impoverished illiterate masses, a small group of political leaders, including David, staged propagandistic festivals on a grand scale with manifestations of liberty, equality, and fraternity.\(^{270}\) From the perspective of the revolutionaries, these festivals were spectacular, highly symbolic demonstrations of the triumph of the people over tyrannical oppression. The liberty bonnet, the tricolor, statues of liberty, and the table of the Rights of Man all became emblems of the revolutionary cult. Representations of the Bastille signified victory and became a universal symbol of the French Revolution itself. The fallen prison at the hands of the Parisian populace demonstrated the successful transition from the despotism of the aristocracy under the Old Regime to a new era of freedom.\(^{271}\) Beyond recognizable political symbolism, organizers of official festivals appealed to the populace through dramatic parades and dazzling processions, music, art and architecture, slogans, impassioned speeches, and theatrical performances. They also encouraged mass participation in


ceremonies to publically display one’s loyalty to the new order. Each activity functioned as a means of social control and to influence public opinion.272

In this context of pageantry, children became living emblems of continuing generations and the promise of a hopeful future based on the harmony of the new family unit. Soon, nurslings, children dressed in military uniforms, and even the fetuses of parading pregnant women were some of the celebrated heroes of the revolutionary festivals.273 Rituals and ceremonies frequently emphasized the symbolism of the ages to suggest social progression and the transmission of values, and the meaning of “childhood” appeared in different forms, depending on the event. For example, the Festival of the Law generally grouped “enfants” during processions without any distinctions while the 1798 Festival of the Roman Republic had fourteen separate age groups lined up in orderly succession; processions began with newborns and ended with “the white-haired.”274 These festivals emphasized the child at the center of the family as a morally and politically pure being, and the notion of regeneration was promoted through childhood.

An important type that revolutionaries featured at festivals was the child-soldier, or l’homme de ligne en miniature. Battalions of marching children were present at most festivals, singing and sometimes engaging in mock battles. The presence and evident devotion of these groups to La Patrie raised much excitement and became highpoints of the ceremonies, reminding adult observers that children raised in such a context are key to the regeneration of humanity.275

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272 Dowd, Pageant-Master, 125-142.


274 Ibid., 210.

275 Ibid., 212.
These child-soldiers also became symbols of the renewed military strength of the Republic; *l’enfant armé* would often parade alongside veterans, thereby making the generational contrast strikingly visible. The production of printed images that feature bands of boy cadets further attest to the Revolution’s promotion of regeneration. *The March of the Little Patriots* (Fig. A122) and *The Item of Honor* (Fig. A123) reveal the promise of children as the future heroes of France. These genre prints feature young boys who dutifully march and wrestle one another in preparation to fight for their country while honoring the tricolor flag, which assumes a prominent place in each image.

Joseph Bara is arguably one of the most important child-soldiers of this era because the National Convention spun the details of his 1793 death to symbolize the polarizing ideals of the Terror. A few weeks after Bara became the high-profile victim of the enemy brigades of the Vendée, the adolescent Agricol Viala was also killed in action and joined his fallen compatriot as a highly symbolic figure that represented the impenetrable unity of the Republic. Through the lens of childhood innocence, Robespierre seized Bara’s murder as an opportunity to create a national legend that would undeniably stand for sacrifice and courage. In December 1793, General J-B Desmarres reported to the Convention after the French army’s efforts to suppress the royalist revolt in the Vendée. Desmarres mentioned young Bara’s rather unremarkable death so that the child’s family might receive monetary compensation for his military service. On Bara’s death, he wrote:

> Too young to join the troops of the Republic, but burning to serve her, this child accompanied me all last year mounted and equipped as a hussar. The whole army has seen with astonishment a child of thirteen years meet every danger, charge each time at

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the forefront of the cavalry . . . This generous child, surrounded yesterday by Brigands, preferred to die than give himself up and hand over two horses he was leading . . . 277

The Convention agreed to support the Bara family after Desmarres’s eulogistic appeal, but weeks later, Robespierre addressed the group with a revised version of Bara’s death to better serve the nation’s interest, complete with an imagined defiant battle cry that would become iconic in its ability to instruct and inspire the masses. According to Robespierre:

Surrounded by brigands who on one side presented [Bara] with death, and on the other demanded that he cry “Long live the King!” , he died shouting “Long live the Republic!” It is not possible to select a finer example, a more perfect model for arousing in young hearts the love of Glory, of La Patrie, and of Virtue, and to make ready the prodigies which the rising generation will perform . . . 278

Robespierre’s embellished story catapulted Bara from an anonymous child soldier to a national symbol of political innocence and republican morality. From a political perspective, Bara was an ideal revolutionary martyr, especially when compared to his famous adult contemporaries Lepelletier and Marat, who had controversial political baggage. As an anonymous child, Bara had no political past and was free from any embroilments that had the potential to fragment the Republic. 279 Robespierre commissioned David to create a memorial painting of Bara (Fig. A124, 1793-94) for a national festival at which Bara would receive honors at the Panthéon alongside other revolutionary heroes interred at this monument. Because of its votive-like utility in this festival for the masses, David probably did not conceive The Death of Bara as a refined easel

painting for Salon audiences. Festival participants were to carry the painting on a banner draped with red fabric during a ceremonial procession.

However, Bara’s festival never happened; Robespierre fell from power and was guillotined the day before the event took place, and David was soon imprisoned. The artist kept the supposedly unfinished painting in his studio, where critic Etienne Delécluze eventually observed “a charming draft of a nude child, pressing the tricolor cockade to his heart while dying; it was the young Viala” that hung on the wall. Of course, Delécluze’s description is actually of The Death of Bara because he accurately identifies Bara as the sitter in another part of the same text, and no records of a comparable painting of Viala exist. Delécluze’s confusion was to be expected; Bara and Viala were frequently conflated in popular memory because they had been so closely tied together as symbols of innocence and patriotism in the 1790s. Robespierre himself linked Bara and Viala as deserving of the highest funerary honors at the Panthéon during his speech on the Supreme Being before the Convention in May 1794. Popular prints of major revolutionary martyrs include individual, miniature portraits of Lepelletier, Marat, and Chalier with distinct facial features and clothing appropriate to their ranks (Fig. A125, 1793-94). The portraits of Bara and Viala share the same segment within the image, and they appear identical except for slight variations in their uniforms. With no portrait features to distinguish the boys, Bara and Viala hold attributes associated with their deaths as if they are religious martyrs for viewers to worship, but in the secular realm. For instance, Bara holds his drum since he was sometimes called “the little drummer boy of the Vendée.”

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282 Sloane, “David, Robespierre, and ‘The Death of Bara,’” 151-152.
Robespierre’s legend of Bara gained momentum, the boy was said to have been a drummer to explain his presence in the army and perhaps to heighten his youthful innocence to arouse feelings of patriotic devotion. Ultimately, this idealized, impersonal representation of Bara and Viala further distances the boys from their individual identities. Instead, they are aligned with the ideals of the revolutionary cult, thereby making the child heroes interchangeable.

David’s *Death of Bara* is not a historical portrait; instead, it suggests the tenacity and immortal spirit of revolutionary youth and innocence. The artist certainly conceived of this painting in the political context of republican propaganda for the popular festival, but the idealization and softness of Bara’s androgynous nude figure and the ambiguous setting could be understood more broadly as an abstract representation of childhood innocence. In this painting, Bara stretches across the length of the blank composition. He throws his head back in agony while his long brown locks cascade to one side to reveal his youthful face with heavily idealized features. Bara writhes on the ground as he struggles to take his last breath through barely parted lips; his wide hips are twisted to hide his genitals. In a final gesture of love for La Patrie, the young hero grasps a tricolor cockade to his heart. Bara also clutches a letter to his chest, but the writing is illegible. In his analysis of this painting, Régis Michel questioned David’s early biographer who first interpreted this letter as a reference to Bara’s military orders. The existing historical documents include no mention of the boy’s military orders, perhaps because his age disqualified him from active duty. Instead, the letter may be a correspondence between mother and child after Bara left home to act the part of a soldier as he tagged alongside Desmarres. According to the deep bonds between republican mother and her child that were

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284 Ibid.
discussed at the time, Michel’s suggestion advances the notion of the painting as a highly
corporal visualization of innocence.

The ambiguous setting of David’s *Bara* contains visible, hurried brushstrokes that seem
to form the slightest outlines of rocks and foliage. The palette of the majority of the painting is
nude, and Bara’s figure merges with the faint landscape to further unite his childhood innocence
with the purity of nature. The painting’s rough facture went against the conventions of the
French academic style and may have caused viewers to interpret the painting as “unfinished;” an
idea confirmed when the festival for which *Bara* was intended never took place. But, as Michel
rightly points out, the popular function of *Bara* may have liberated David from the constraints of
the classical style. The simplified aesthetic aligns with the ideals of the masses.285

The left edge of David’s composition is severely cropped, and viewers can only see
hands that hold a flag in a fog of haze. Michel cites an anonymous version of *The Death of Bara*
after David’s painting (Fig. A126, c.1794) that has more discernable details on the left side of the
canvas. In this painting, there is a horse with a flag bearing solider as possible allusions to the
historical circumstances of Bara’s death. *Bara* was exhibited at the Panthéon, and it was copied
by a student to serve as a banner to rally French youth.286 It is tempting to conclude that David’s
painting was cut after this copy was made, but there is little evidence to support this thought.
With so few anecdotal motifs, David’s painting is not a history painting or even a military genre
scene. Moreover, David had never met Bara and had no description of his features from which to
work; this painting is not a traditional portrait in terms of capturing the sitter’s likeness. Instead, I
believe that *The Death of Bara* represents the philosophical idea of childhood as the purest, most


Dorothy Johnson (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 2006), 130.
undeniable form of virtue to inspire viewers. Bara’s vulnerability is underscored to provoke the viewer’s emotional engagement.

Much scholarly debate remains about the enigmatic meaning and style of *The Death of Bara*. Michel believes that there has been too much emphasis on the painting as an unrealized project for Bara’s funerary honors at the Panthéon. Because no evidence exists to prove that David abandoned *Bara* upon the festival’s cancellation, it might be more effective to interpret the painting’s apparent “incompleteness” as part of its aesthetic. Michel understands *Bara* as the pinnacle of the allegorical process of the martyrdom of revolutionary heroes in art. For Michel, David captured the idea of combat in the overall atmospheric quality of the brushwork, and the lack of anecdotal details further purifies this aim. Additionally, David conveys youthful energy and the idea of living history through his dynamic brushwork. In his historical biography on Jacques-Louis David, Warren Roberts emphasizes Bara’s stylized androgyny and the composition’s absence of pictorial references to politics as representative of the timelessness of Bara’s spirit instead of a historical illustration.

Bara’s nudity has also been a subject of much speculation; why did David depict Bara as an androgynous nude instead of a heroic solider? David’s early biographers interpreted Bara’s nudity as evidence of the painting’s unfinished state or as a preliminary study of a nude; others wrote of Bara’s murderers having stolen the boy’s hussar uniform upon his death. But, Bara is only on the brink of death in David’s painting, and his perfect skin includes no signs of the

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290 Sloane, “David, Robespierre, and ‘The Death of Bara,’” 154-156.
stabbing wounds that caused his death. Winckelmann’s aesthetic principles of classical antiquity may best explain Bara’s nudity and idealized forms. Bara’s tragic expression, the delicacy of his pose as he squirms on the ground, and the gracefulness of his body figuratively express the naïve nature of children. Furthermore, when viewed from the perspective of Rousseau’s theory on the radical pursuit from the corruption of civilization to the purity of nature, a nude, sexless Bara embedded in the landscape suggests an abstract return to the childhood of humanity, regardless of gender. In other words, Bara symbolizes the regeneration of society, but in philosophical terms. Indeed, *The Death of Bara* portrays an ideal instead of recording the details of a historical moment, which was ultimately imagined and exaggerated to suit Robespierre’s revolutionary cause. David’s conception of Bara’s boyish faith in the French Republic demonstrates children as the epitome of innocence and hope.

David continued to work in this philosophical and psychological context after his release from prison, specifically in his representation of the boys in *The Sabine Women*. Dorothy Johnson has written about this monumental painting in terms of the rather savage lengths mothers are willing to go to achieve familial unification. David represents a moment of suspense as the mothers offer their children as sacrifices unless the battle between the Romans and Sabines stops. The nude children in the foreground directly confront the viewer during this dramatic intervention. Two nude boys wrestle as if miniature Roman-Sabine warriors; the blond boy growls ferociously and pins his playmate, who reaches for help. Another crawling child looks terrified as he finds himself alone amidst the chaos. A loosely swaddled infant thoughtfully

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292 Ibid.

293 Ibid.

places his finger to his mouth as he contemplates the viewer, unfazed by the dangerous commotion that surrounds him. His enlightened gesture alludes to the great potential of his rational mind if properly developed in the context of a stable family. This grouping of children certainly has anecdotal significance in terms of the painting’s historical narrative, but their physiognomic expressions and gestures suggest that David also understood the philosophical value of children and childhood as powerful emblems of a hopeful future. Here, too, the children’s nudity may refer to their purity in terms of Rousseau’s ideas on the natural child as the key to social regeneration.295

Images of the innocent child as nearly perfect symbols of political and moral purity became important pedagogical tools as revolutionaries sought to provide a civic education to the masses. In particular, engravings functioned as a means to communicate contemporary events, political opinions, and popular ideas to sans-culottes of all ages. To advance the new spirit of civic morality, leaders inserted contemporary events into general educational publications for children.296 An image of the child-hero Bara served as one publication’s frontispiece while a text that explained Bara’s sacrifice and the meanings of the Declaration of the Rights of Man and the Constitution offset lessons on reading, writing, and arithmetic. In particular, the double emphasis on Bara’s heroism suggests the importance of reinforcing themes of glory and honor to shape school children. Another popular print of Bara dramatically imagines the moment of his death and is dedicated to the youth of France (Fig. A127, 1793-94). Significantly, I have discovered an important series of engravings of children that are invested with symbolic political value; these images have never before been analyzed in art historical scholarship. I believe the political

295 Johnson, Jacques-Louis David, 126-127.

virtues of little girls and boys in a contemporary revolutionary context were qualities emphasized in a series of six engravings by Louis-Marin Bonnet after painter Jean-Baptiste Huet for the art market (Figs. A128-A133, c. 1789). Bonnet produced another series of prints after Huet that represents the sweet pleasures of childhood, but these images have more conventional pastoral iconographies with no references to current events. The engravings allude to innocence and fragility through soap bubbles and houses of cards (Figs. A134-A139, c.mid-1700s).

In Bonnet’s revolutionary engravings, I believe the subjects draw from contemporary history to emphasize not only the significance of children’s imaginations, but to educate the viewer about the political importance of the child as an emblem of virtue in revolutionary culture. The engravings seem non-sequential, although each image contains a narrative. Every scene features a bourgeois girl, a boy in a military uniform with a red and blue revolutionary cockade tucked into his hat, and sometimes a pet dog. The children play in a picturesque garden with major revolutionary icons like a miniature Bastille and conduct military drills with rifles and flags to the beat of a toy snare drum. Moralizing authors recommended enclosed gardens as ideal places for play and fitness because the seclusion allowed children to wander freely and safely along large and beautiful pathways with planted trees; outdoor air refreshed children’s senses and stimulated their curious spirits.297 Throughout the series, somewhat disorderly details of the engravings’ settings suggest that Bonnet’s children have been especially active in the outdoor air. The viewer spots forgotten toys and overturned potted plants as the children become carried away with their imaginative games.

The reproduction and adaptation of Bonnet’s prints into various formats under different titles affirms their popularity. *The National Flag* and *The National Drum*, for example, are reproduced in smaller medallion formats, but now include the supervision of female chaperones as the children play (Figs. A140 and A141). Such figures may have been added to reinvest the scenes with morality as the girl in Bonnet’s series is depicted unattended and at attention with a gun and beating on a drum—activities usually reserved for boys.

I believe that *The Little Attack (The Little Bastille)* and *The Destroyed Bastille (The Little Victory)* are two significant engravings in this series because of their depictions of the girl, boy, and pet dog playing with a small-scale model of the Bastille. While there is no evidence of a continuous narrative that links the six engravings, the narratives in these two prints do suggest some continuity. In *The Little Attack*, the tiny Bastille stands intact on a table, but not for long. The little soldier reaches with determination to fire his toy cannon at the iconic prison while his canine comrade stands on his hind legs to “hold” the weapon in position with his front paws. Before the cannon can blast the Bastille into pieces, the girl bursts into the scene and commands the viewers’ attention at the center of the composition. Her left arm blocks her playmate while she points to the Bastille with her right. Looking at one another, the boy reassures his friend and continues his duty. After all, the unscathed Bastille stands for corruption and oppression; militaristic strategy and resulting violence are necessary to initiate a new era of freedom and hope.

In what I believe to be the next scene, *The Destroyed Bastille (The Little Victory)*, the Bastille has literally fallen, but not at the hands of the children since the cannon has vanished. The table has toppled and the toy Bastille has shattered, perhaps because of the unruly dog that has barged into the garden as a metaphor for animal instinct. This dog storms the rubble of the
Bastille, taking a piece of the ruins into his mouth while another fragment is crushed under the weight of his tensed body. The little dog, excited by the action, pounces onto the back of the intruder. Meanwhile, the children celebrate the animals’ victorious destruction of the Bastille. The girl approvingly watches the brawl while she waves a laurel wreath. In her other hand, a white flag billows in the wind over the pretend battlefield. The little soldier patriotically beats his drum and stares reverently at the laurel wreath as a reminder of victory.

As a whole, this series of engravings is another example of the importance of mental and physical development through imaginative games and suggests children as icons of a regenerated France on a highly symbolic level. James Leith has studied ephemera from the French Revolution, and argues that games functioned to communicate the meaning of the Revolution to the masses, especially children, to create a *nouvel homme* for the new society. Rousseau and his followers were notable advocates of games to promote education as pleasurable instead of an onerous chore. Before the Revolution, Rousseau once asked, “How then can one move hearts and arouse love for the fatherland and its laws? Dare I say it? By children’s games.” Leith cites traditional board and dice games that were modified in the 1790s to include revolutionary principles. I believe that games of make-believe that emerged from a contemporary context bolstered children’s cognitive development while subjecting them to the key values of revolutionary ideology. Just as in Chapter One we saw children pretending to be artists and mimicking adults, children’s revolutionary role play displays their innocence and optimistically reminds the adult viewer about virtuous children as the aspiring future of France.

Other prints from this era feature children as miniature revolutionary actors, but under maternal guidance. A tender genre portrait called *L’institutrice républicaine* (Fig. A142, c. 1792)

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emphasizes the special place of the revolutionary mother. While too young to be a full-fledged soldier, a young child dons his *bonnet rouge* to identify his commitment to revolutionary principles. He sits attentively with his mother and points curiously to the new words as they read the Rights of Man together. The *Altar of French Liberty* (Fig. A143, c. 1789) alludes to the hopeful futures of the home-disciplined soldiers in an allegorical context as pagan references became more commonplace in revolutionary imagery. The engraving includes four verses beneath the title:

"Your young children’s exercises and games // In your amiable, patriotic, and sage maternal heart // Recall the glorious exploits of the French // Who by breaking their chains astounded the world"

The imagery and accompanying poem reveal the important presence of the virtuous mother who personally instills her young sons with republican values. Three armed boys in military dress arrange themselves in a line before their bourgeois mother, who raises her sword in command as if she were the general of this imaginary brigade. Another well-dressed bourgeois women sits attentively at the side of the spectacle with her fan folded in her lap. Her presence and seeming approval of the pretend army suggest her own republican spirit through her support of her companion’s patriotic undertaking. While these women are confined to the domestic sphere, they assert their political value and public virtue through the nurturing of children’s values. As I have emphasized, educational specialists praised instruction through games as particularly effective pedagogical methods. The little soldiers obey their mother under the watchful gaze of an enthroned Minerva in the background. The goddess rests her arm atop a shield that shows the siege of the Bastille; in her hand is a single palm branch to reinforce the idea of victory. A genie sits on Minerva’s lap and lifts an illuminated Phrygian cap skyward to indicate liberty. Although these prints approach the theme of the devoted republican mother from two contrasting visual
vocabularies, they each communicate the essential presence of the devoted mother and her crucial role in actively preparing children to regenerate the nation.

In the 1790s, increasingly fervent revolutionary sentiment, an eruption of religious strife over the Assemblée’s Civil Constitution of the Clergy, and the failed escape of the Royal Family contributed to the rise of Greek and Roman pagan symbolism in revolutionary festivals and beyond.\textsuperscript{300} Prints circulated of Liberty crowning Bara with a laurel wreath in front of the Panthéon; she wears the iconic Phrygian cap, and her left breast is exposed (Fig. A144, 1794). The cult of the maternal breast continued but with political connotations, as did milk and its supposed ability to cleanse, restore, and now transmit patriotic sentiments.\textsuperscript{301}

The French government appropriated maternal nursing and the breast as legislative tools in 1793 when a decree granted federal aid to indigent women who nursed their own children. An anonymous engraving (Fig. A145, 1793) shows a mother cradling her infant at her breast. In this tender scene, the child reaches toward the mother’s heart while she looks lovingly at her baby. The mother’s oversized bonnet casts her face in shadow, and the child’s face is turned away from the viewer. The figures are anonymous, but the Republican cockade prominently pinned onto the child’s bonnet reveals their political identity. Republican festivals in 1793 and 1794 also emphasized the political ideology of the maternal breast to signify nursing as a means to regenerate society, visualizing Rousseauian discourse that famously declared:

But let mothers deign to nurse their children, morals will reform themselves, nature’s sentiments will be awakened in every heart, the state will be repeopled . . . Thus, from the

\textsuperscript{300} Dowd, \textit{Pageant-Master}, 46.

correction of this single abuse would soon result a general reform; nature would soon have reclaimed all its rights.\textsuperscript{302}

As a manifestation of this philosophy during the Festival of Unity in August 1793, a colossal, bare-breasted mother goddess presides over the crowd from her throne atop a grand pedestal over the ruins of the Bastille. A sacred liquid pours from her lactating breasts as a symbolic offering that male citizens and the members of the Convention eagerly collect and drink. A contemporary print (Fig. A146) demonstrates the goddess’s presence and her role in the libation ritual captivated the audience’s attention; some gatherers even raise their arms toward the statue in reverence. David was involved with the organization of this festival, and he wrote about the “Fountain of Regeneration” and the leaders’ consumption of the “pure and salutary liquid of regeneration” that flowed from the goddess’s breasts.\textsuperscript{303} The next year, at Robespierre’s Rousseauian-inspired Festival of the Supreme Being, mothers paraded with their children at their breasts to publically celebrate notions of fecundity and abundance. It was through the consumption of maternal milk, as the president of the Convention announced to mothers in the audiences of these festivals, that “military and generous virtues could flow into the heart of all the nurslings in France.”\textsuperscript{304}

The political significance of the maternal breast, the regenerative properties of milk, and the act of nursing are favored subjects in late eighteenth-century genre imagery and portraiture. The Salons during the 1780s exhibited a high volume of genre scenes that featured children at their mothers’ breasts, but the paintings on display from 1789 and 1814 saw a sharp increase in


\textsuperscript{303} David quoted in Ibid.

\textsuperscript{304} Ibid.
this subject matter, which suggests a connection between the emphasis on the maternal breast and the socio-political ideology of revolutionary propaganda.\textsuperscript{305} Returning to the image of the republican mother and child reading The Rights of Man, the mother’s bare breast is on display with no allusions to eroticism. The image’s oval format strengthens its message of intimacy, and the figures are pushed up against the picture plane to become part of the viewer’s space. The woman’s idealized breast, along with her pearl-drop earrings and veil, enhance her virtue as she holds one of the most valued political documents of the Revolution in her hand with a strand of pearls wrapped around her wrist. In this image, I believe the mother uses her mind and body to transfer republican political values to her child. The early development of a child’s healthy body and strong mind begins at the maternal breast, and this action was said to be the best legacy a mother can leave to her children.\textsuperscript{306} Another unattributed print from the revolutionary decade that I have uncovered is called The Last Effort of Nature, and it shows female prisoners’ commitments to breastfeeding moments before their executions (Fig. A147). En route from the Conciergerie to the scaffold, the condemned women bare their breasts and reach for their children for the final time, likely to convince the public of their virtue in this most natural display of tenderness and devotion.

The ladies of the French aristocracy, once having viewed Rousseauian recommendations as voguish trends at the end of the Ancien régime, actively adopted and adapted the bourgeois emphases on domesticity and the maternal breast in child development as a response to the

\textsuperscript{305} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{306} Joyeaux, Considérations directes et indirectes, iv.
political and social changes of the Revolution. Margaret Darrow attributes the experience of the French Revolution and the redefinition of the family as having dramatically and permanently ruptured the traditional identity of noblewomen. Prior to this break, noblewomen aimed to be perfect courtiers to garner influence; women suppressed their private desires to focus on the political and dynastic interests of the family to assure the orderly transmission of property and to protect the status of future generations. Once the Revolution reformed the meaning of family life and altered the social hierarchy, noblewomen appropriated bourgeois domesticity for moral reasons and personal fulfillment, but also to contribute to the well-being of France and rehabilitate the reputation of their class.

I believe that these new familial values reached the highest level of French society as Marie-Antoinette identified as a modern, Rousseauian-inspired woman in her care of and devotion to children. For instance, the queen openly supported maternal breastfeeding: to the couples that participated in a mass wedding ceremony in the early 1780s, Marie-Antoinette promised to give 15 livres per month from her private funds to brides that nursed their own children, compared to the 10 livres for brides that hired wet nurses. Joseph Weber notes Marie-Antoinette’s establishment of an asylum at Versailles to care for poor mothers and

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309 Ibid., 53.

children in his personal memoirs. Weber was the son of Marie-Antoinette’s wet nurse at the Hapsburg court in Vienna, and the children were nourished with milk from the same breast, thereby linking their values and reiterating the transmissive properties of breast milk. As Marie-Antoinette’s “milk brother” and a self-identified historian, Weber emphasizes his personal connection to the queen and begins his account by honoring the “pure morals” and “unspotted character” of his own mother, qualities that Marie-Antoinette supposedly imbibed at her breast in the respectable environment in which she was raised. In 1776, Marie-Antoinette met an elderly woman with her grandchildren during a stroll in St. Michel, and the queen offered to care for one of the boys at Versailles under her supervision while paying for the education of the other children. These anecdotes reveal the queen’s dedication to the protection of children as a maternal figure.

In fact, Marie-Antoinette is shown caring for a group of girls in her first public appearance as the Queen of France at the French Salon in 1777. The King’s Household commissioned Hubert Robert’s Salon painting View of the Gardens at Versailles, at the Time of the Clearing of the Trees, Winter 1774-1775, Entrance to the Tapis-Vert as a propagandistic gesture to restore waning public opinion (Fig. A148, 1775). Louis XIV originally planted the formal gardens of Versailles, and its ordered design emphasized structure, the subjugation of

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311 Joseph Weber, Charles Dallas Robert, R. May Ievers, and Trophime-Gérard Lally-Tolendal, Memoirs of Maria Antoinetta, Archduchess of Austria, Queen of France and Navarre: including several important periods of the French Revolution, from its origin to the 16th of October, 1793, the day of Her Majesty's martyrdom, with a narrative of the trial and martyrdom of Madame Elizabeth, the poisoning of Louis XVII in the temple, the liberation of Madame Royale, daughter of Louis XVI, and various subsequent events (London: Printed by C. Rickaby and sold by the author, 1805), 1-5.

312 Ibid., 1-2.

313 Jallut, Marie-Antoinette, 20.
nature to the commands of the monarch, and the significance of Versailles as a spectacle of the
king: a place to see and be seen. By the mid-1770s, the symbolic gardens had fallen into
disrepair. Robert’s monumental painting represented the stripped garden awaiting replantation as
a symbol of the revival of la gloire when Louis XVI ascended to the throne in 1774.\(^{314}\) Marie-
Antoinette appears in the foreground with a group of young girls without the usual trappings of
queenship the French public had come to expect. Separated from the peasant laborers gathered in
the shadows to offset her own royal status, the queen appropriately demonstrates her feminine
virtue as she does not stray from the watchful gaze of her husband. While Louis XVI is engaged
in conversation with a courtier, Marie-Antoinette tends to a pair of young girls who reach to
embrace their queen.

While the left half of Robert’s canvas is dark with dead plants to show the decay of the
kingdom before Louis XVI’s accession, the right side is bright and lively to accentuate the
substantial public support and affection the royal couple enjoyed in the early part of their reign;
the only living tree in the composition flourishes with leaves and towers over the couple. Dense
with foliage, the tree alludes to the hope of future abundance during the new couple’s regime, in
terms of France’s economic expansion and the growth of the Bourbon family through the birth of
an heir. The queen’s attentiveness toward the girls is particularly revealing because it anticipates
Marie-Antoinette’s engagement with all of her children, not just the dauphin.

Traditionally, the queen was scarcely involved in the upbringing of her children because
they belonged to France, the king’s metaphorical spouse according to the medieval political

\(^{314}\) Paula Rea Radisich, “The King Prunes his Garden: Hubert Robert’s Pictures of the King’s
Garden in 1775,” *Eighteenth-Century Studies* 21 (Summer 1988): 454-471; Susan Taylor-Leduc,
“Louis XVI’s Public Gardens: The Replantation of Versailles in the Eighteenth Century,”
theory of the king’s “two bodies.” As is well-known, French absolutism was articulated through the belief in the duality of the king’s person: the king’s corporeal body, subject to the ravages of time, was fused to an imaginary body that possessed the immortal spirit of the French nation. While the king’s material body eventually succumbed to death, the divine body of the monarchy lived forever through the transmission of royal blood from father to first-born son. According to the politics of queenship, when represented as the mother of the heir, the queen’s body visualized the stability of Bourbon rule. With an emphasis upon the next body to inhabit the majesty of the throne, queen-dauphin portraits had little, if anything, to do with figuring the sentimental bonds between mother and son. For example, Alexis Simon Belle’s Marie Leszcinska and the Dauphin depicts the wife of Louis XV with their son, Louis Ferdinand (Fig. A149, 1730). Because of Louis the Dauphin’s birth, Marie Leszczinska finally secured her role as queen, even though she had already given birth to three older children—all daughters of France. Consequently, her presence at court became superfluous as the children were placed under the care of their own households.

I propose that Maurice Quentin de La Tour’s large-scale pastel portrait of Louis XVI’s mother, Dauphine Marie-Josèphe of Saxony and her eldest son, the Duke of Burgundy (Fig. A150, 1761) is one of the first royal paintings that shifts away from the formal conventions of queen-dauphin portraiture. The presence of the Duke of Burgundy’s younger siblings allude to Marie-Josèphe’s maternal identity at court, but their relegation to the background reveals the rigidity of the hierarchical system at Versailles. The Duke firmly plants his foot forward at his mother’s side to claim his place among his as ancestors as the successor to the throne. Although

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most likely meant for public exhibition because of its scale and formal imagery, the portrait of the future queen, which includes some unfinished details, was thought to have been abandoned after the sudden death of the Duke of Burgundy in 1761 or possibly because of the death of the Louis the Dauphin in 1765. It is telling that there is no mention of the painting’s commission in the historical accounts of the Bâtiments du roi; I suspect that the absence of official records suggests that La Tour’s portrait was likely to have been privately ordered by the dauphine instead of the state. The mystery surrounding the commission is especially noteworthy because the state most often commissioned the full-length representations of the king or members of his family to formulaically display the power of the monarchy to the public.

On the left side of the composition, an open door leads viewers to a hazy outdoor terrace where a group of ladies fuss over a richly dressed child with the cordon bleu sash of the Order of the Holy Spirit. This child is presumably Louis Auguste (the future Louis XVI), and the infant Marie-Clothilde (the oldest daughter of the couple, born in 1759) is likely in the arms of her wet nurse. Their presence in this painting suggests Marie-Josèphe sentimentally envisioned herself as a mother with an identity that was distinct from her dynastic role. However, only the heir is allowed to inhabit the imagined chamber of Bourbon succession, and royal custom removes the younger children from this space and confines them to the background. To protect the virtue of the group of women and children wandering outside of the patriarchal realm of the palace, as well as the sanctity of the interior space, a Swiss guard stands discreetly in the shadowy doorway to supervise.

While the La Tour portrait suggests Marie-Josèphe may have initiated a departure from the conventions of royal maternity at Versailles, I believe that Marie-Antoinette broke more openly from royal customs in her appropriation of modern Enlightenment discourses on child-
rearing. The highly anticipated birth of Madame Royale in 1778 frustrated royal expectations since a girl did not secure the succession of the Bourbon dynasty under French Salic Law. This fundamental statute was unique to France and said to have derived from nature itself, thereby prohibiting the queen and her female descendants from inheriting the throne or any monarchical properties.316 But upon learning of the sex of her firstborn child after a traumatically grueling public labor, Marie-Antoinette reportedly said that while a son would have belonged to the nation, a daughter could be exclusively hers.317 This remark signifies the queen’s investment in her relationship with her daughter, a familial connection that was customarily off-limits to the queen since she was present at court to function as the vessel though which power was transferred from king to male heir. Although daughters of France had potential political value in arranged marriages, they were often insignificant or financially burdensome, as evinced by the presence of Louis XV’s spinster daughters that remained at Versailles for their entire lives. Compared to a son, a daughter allowed Marie-Antoinette more freedom in raising and caring for the child herself without any significant breaches in royal protocol.

The decade-long written correspondence between Marie-Antoinette and her mother, the Hapsburg Empress Marie-Thérèse, reveals that the queen deviated from her mother’s somewhat traditional advice on childcare, especially on breastfeeding. Six months before the birth of her child, Marie-Thérèse advised the expectant mother:

And with children, especially the first year, everything depends on the care they are given: I mean reasonable and natural care: not to swaddle them tightly, not to keep them

316 Salic Law was actually issued in the fourteenth century under Philippe V to settle succession disputes. For an overview of French Salic Law and its effect on portraits of the queen, see Mary Sheriff, “The Portrait of the Queen,” 149-157.

317 Weber, Queen of Fashion, 141.
too warm . . . and most important to find a good healthy wet nurse, which is not so easily done in Paris . . . 318

The queen responded to the Empress with knowledge in new methods on child-rearing; she even had a copy of Rousseau’s Émile in her library. 319 Marie-Antoinette replied:

My dear Mama is very kind to worry about the future little child: I can assure her I will take great care of it. The way they are brought up now, they are less hampered; they are not swaddled, they are always in a crib or held in the nurse’s arms, and as soon as they can be outdoors they are accustomed to it little by little until they are almost always out. I think this is the best and healthiest way to raise them. 320

Prior to her delivery, Marie-Antoinette had clearly thought about childcare and resolved to have a more active presence in her child’s life, regardless of the baby’s sex. As an advocate of maternal breastfeeding, Marie-Antoinette reportedly attempted to nurse Madame Royale for eighteen days. 321 Despite the queen’s good intentions, the act troubled her mother once the news reached Vienna:

I hear that you expect to breastfeed your child; that should depend on the King and your doctor; in their place I must tell you that I wouldn’t let you, but it is very good of you to offer. 322

The Empress likely warned Marie-Antoinette against breastfeeding since nursing was thought to be an effective contraceptive, and it was critical for the queen to become pregnant as quickly as possible to produce an heir. Furthermore, breastfeeding may have disrupted Marie-Antoinette’s

319 Weber, Queen of Fashion, 132.
321 Nagel, Marie-Thérèse, 24-25.
demanding social schedule, so Madame Royale and her future siblings were entrusted to the care of a wet nurse. Although unable to care for her children in this most tender way, the queen was still involved in the process, as demonstrated in representations of the royal children with their caretakers in contemporary prints. For example, an anonymous print shows one of the royal children at his (her) nurse’s breast (Fig. A151, c.1778). Marie-Antoinette sits beside the infant’s nurse and watches with interest, and the two women appear to bond over this touching display of femininity.

I discovered another presumed portrait of Marie-Antoinette that shows the queen uncovering the infant dauphin and presenting him to the viewer (Fig. A152, c. 1781). The woman’s left breast is fully exposed to suggest its utility rather than erotic value when shown in proximity to the infant. Because Marie-Antoinette could not breastfeed herself, I believe that this image is instead a representation of the royal wet nurse, a highly ranked and coveted position at court that was traditionally reserved for nobility. The woman’s fanciful court dress and elaborate pouf hairstyle have obviously derived from Marie-Antoinette’s trademark fashion trends, which had become a means for the queen to assert her value at court.  

The nurse’s adoption of the queen’s signature look metaphorically enables Marie-Antoinette to breastfeed her child without cause for scandal.

Marie-Antoinette’s letters to her mother also recognize her awareness of the physical and psychological benefits of *la vie champêtre*. Time spent outdoors at the Petit Trianon and the Queen’s Hameau would remain paramount for the health and welfare of Marie-Antoinette and her children. For instance, when Marie-Antoinette caught the measles in the spring of 1779, she

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wrote about her consumption of milk and the Petit Trianon’s fresh air as effective remedies. Later that year, she informed her mother: “My health is good, and the milk suited me very well. I was heated and had a little cough, but without any chest pains; the milk took care of all that.” Here, milk is associated with personal healing, along with virtue, fertility, and other feminine ideals emphasized in modern discourses on the benefits of rural living.

Meredith Martin has carefully analyzed the historical and cultural significance of milk at Marie-Antoinette’s Hameau, a hamlet at which the rustic aesthetic reached its height. Richard Mique built the Hameau for Marie-Antoinette in 1783, and the complex consisted of eleven hatched cottages arranged around an artificial pond. In this contrived setting that included a working farm, Marie-Antoinette spent time with her children and privately entertained her guests. Pleasure dairies were not unique to Marie-Antoinette’s lifestyle; these pastoral structures date back to at least sixteenth-century France under Catherine de Medici and, by the eighteenth century, had become expressive forms of cultural sophistication and elite identity.

In addition to an association with the artful leisure of her royal predecessors in her management of this space, Marie-Antoinette’s engagement with milk products, farming, and her outward

324 Marie-Antoinette resided at Trianon “for a change of air” to aid her recovery, but also to prevent the spread of her disease at court. See Marie-Antoinette to Marie-Thérèse, April 1779, in Secrets of Marie-Antoinette, ed. Olivier Bernier (Garden City, NY: Doubleday and Company, 1985), 272.


328 Martin, Dairy Queens, 163.
support of animal husbandry may have been a way for the queen to display herself as fertile and maternal at a time when courtiers questioned her legitimacy. Marie-Antoinette began the construction of her dairies after 1785, a time when the queen emphasized her maternal identity more so than she had in the past. During this period, the queen’s brother, Emperor Joseph II, complained about Marie-Antoinette having squandered her political potential as the queen of France because she spent too much time on motherhood. Unable to personally participate in the massive eighteenth-century breastfeeding movement, the queen could still help regenerate society through her distribution of healthful milk to her subjects, the “children” of Louis XVI.

Not far from her hamlet, the Petit Trianon had quickly become one of the queen’s favored retreats. Marie-Antoinette’s enemies criticized the Petit Trianon’s extravagance as representative of the queen’s frivolity and disregard for her royal duties. But this space can also be understood in terms of Marie-Antoinette’s attempts to cultivate an image of feminine virtue through an emphasis on the cult of Rousseau and the natural. Prior to Louis XVI’s presentation of the Petit Trianon to Marie-Antoinette in 1774, Louis XV had commissioned it for Madame de Pompadour in 1761. Long associated with the king’s private pleasures, the space had gained an unfavorable reputation of secrecy and personal vice. Pompadour died before the building was finished, and after Louis XV entertained Madame du Barry at Trianon for a brief period, the building and its grounds fell into disrepair. Upon her renovation of the site, Marie-Antoinette transformed the neglected Petit Trianon into a stylish English garden with simple interior aesthetics that emphasized pastoral motifs like flowers, birds, and a pastel color palette. From 1774 to 1783, the

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329 Ibid., 208-209.

330 Nagel, Marie-Thérèse, 37. Joseph II also informed Marie-Antoinette that her trendy poufs were “too light to support a crown,” thereby implying that the queen’s engagements with fashion were frivolous and distracted her from her royal responsibilities. See Weber, Queen of Fashion, 117-118.
queen worked with leading architect Mique, artist Hubert Robert, and gardeners to construct masses of greenery, hillocks, and water features to achieve a “natural” landscape that emphasized picturesque views from a distance.

In his discussion of the English picturesque garden style, Roy Strong has argued that picturesque garden landscape became a stimulant to delight the imagination or to indulge the senses. Winding pathways led the viewer to surprising views that placed an emphasis upon an individual, emotional response that contributed to a more personal viewing experience. A casual promenade through the English-style, picturesque garden became a largely private experience between the individual and Nature. Even though the basis for Strong’s argument is England and not France, the gardens of the Petit Trianon were fashioned after the trendy English picturesque style with the experience of the individual, and not the state, in mind.

Whereas the grounds of Versailles were open to the public at large, Marie-Antoinette’s Petit Trianon was an exclusive space open only to guests of the queen’s choosing. Even Louis XVI visited the Petit Trianon by invitation, and he returned to the palace at night. Compared to the ceremonial spectacle of Versailles, the Petit Trianon and its gardens became an unaffected space that was vital to the experience of a natural self. Marie-Antoinette did not uphold court etiquette, and she told her guests to continue with conversation and to remain seated when she entered a room. Upon receiving the Princess Louise von Hesse-Darmstadt at Trianon, the queen requested for her friend to not wear formal court attire, but rather to visit in “country wear,” which meant straw hats and fashionable white dresses made from the finest muslin. Marie-

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Antoinette reportedly confessed to the comtesse Jules de Polignac, her friend and the first Governess to the children of France, that she was free to be herself at the Petit Trianon.\footnote{136}

Although appearing natural to suggest the queen’s sentimental vision of domesticity and feminine virtue, the Petit Trianon remained outrageously luxurious in its attempt to achieve an understated vision of idyllic living. This kind of constructed rusticity gave rise to an anxiety that the world of the Petit Trianon was not completely naturalistic, but rather the expensive outcome of another degenerative, superficial female fad. However imagined, the foregrounding of Rousseauian simplicity at Marie-Antoinette’s Petit Trianon did foster a relaxed environment to which the queen retreated with her nursemaids and selected female friends and relatives. Madame Royale inhabited the attic story, which offered the most beautiful views of Trianon’s gardens, which were punctuated with architectural follies and ornamental pavilions like the Temple of Love to heighten the picturesque aesthetic. View of the Château de Trianon (Fig. A153, c.1788) shows the presence of strolling women and children, thereby casting Trianon in a more nurturing light, especially when considering the space from the perspective of the health benefits of gardens and fresh air.

Fashioned to communicate the queen’s own tastes that reflected her sense of self as a private woman and mother, the Petit Trianon had impressed King Gustave III of Sweden during his trip to France in 1784. The king commissioned Adolf Ulrik Wertmüller, a fellow Swede acting as First Painter en survivance, to paint a portrait of Marie-Antoinette in her realm, and the queen promised to do everything in her power to make the painting a success (Fig. A154, 1785). This action suggests the queen’s investment in the construction of her own image for display, unlike most formal portraits made for dignitaries abroad that were copied from existing painted portraits.

\footnote{Weber, Queen of Fashion, 136.}
Wertmüller represents Marie-Antoinette with Madame Royale and the dauphin as they stroll along the meandering pathways of the gardens of the Petit Trianon, perhaps having just visited the Temple of Love that is visible in the background. As I previously demonstrated, traditional portraits of the queen as mother were hardly private expressions of maternal involvement and contentment. Most portraits of queen and child were strictly public and specifically represented the dauphin as the privileged emblem of the kingdom and the visualization of his mother’s fulfillment of royal duty. Additional children, especially daughters, were almost never displayed with the queen because they were ineligible to inherit the throne.

With her children at her side, the queen looks toward the viewer while she gestures toward her daughter and rests her bejeweled hand on the dauphin’s arm. Medical experts at the time prescribed close proximity between mothers and children to promote women’s health. For example, Beauchène, the physician to Marie-Antoinette’s sister-in-law, recommended for “children to stick close to their mother: her affection for them will soon become the most intense of all her affections; such a pure feeling will never cause migraines, vapors, or melancholia.”

Madame Royale and the dauphin are represented directly beside their mother, thereby ensuring the queen’s physical well-being.

The body language between Marie-Antoinette and her son is far less courtly and more gentle when compared to the severely formal dress and gestures between queen and dauphin in Charles Beaubrun’s Portrait of Maria-Theresa of Spain, Queen of France, and the Dauphin (Fig. A155, 1663). Here, mother and son are ceremoniously dressed in matching masquerade ball costumes encrusted with jewels to signify of their status. Even though the queen appears ahead of the dauphin, the three-year-old boy is invested with an unusual degree of control for such a

333 Beauchène quoted in Martin, Dairy Queens, 174.
young child. He stiffly holds his mother’s limp hand and commandingly looks at the viewer to proclaim his right to the throne as the pair walks along a terrace.

Although tradition posits the children of France as living symbols of Marie-Antoinette’s duty and the affirmation of the political alliance between France and Austria, I believe that the interactions between the queen and her children in Wertmüller’s portrait betray a definition of motherhood in political terms and suggest a more emotional connection. Unlike the stoicism of Maria-Theresa of Spain and her son, Marie-Antoinette and her oldest son share a moment of tenderness. Although Louis Joseph retains the trappings of his rank to communicate his official identity as future king, he appears as a small boy in need of his mother’s guidance as he walks alongside the queen. Nearly three years old at the time of the commission, the dauphin’s representation reflects his youthful vulnerability quite truthfully. Contemporary moralists argued against restrictive clothing for children that would impede health and development. The dauphin is informally dressed in a garment that reveals his small frame with subtle monarchical attributes, unlike his seventeenth-century counterpart who is cloaked in heavy fabrics. He appears in motion as he throws his weight forward and boyishly clutches onto his mother’s dress for balance. In turn, Marie-Antoinette rests her hand on top of his small arm to reassure him of her presence. The gesture tellingly conveys a more Rousseauian conception of the queen’s role as conscientious mother, especially when compared to the representation of Maria Theresa, who is passively frozen in the presence of the future king.

Marie-Antoinette’s gesture toward her daughter is also affectionate because she recognizes Madame Royale’s presence. The queen’s palm faces outward, and she slightly motions toward her daughter to encourage the viewer to behold Madame Royale instead of the dauphin, and

334 Weber, Queen of Fashion, 173.
therefore removes the family from the realm of royalty that only privileged the heir’s existence. Marie-Antoinette doted upon her daughter as if she was a doll since her birth: the queen nicknamed her daughter “Mousseline” (Muslin), and she dressed Madame Royale in chemises to coordinate with her own country wardrobe.\textsuperscript{335} This coordinating mother-daughter act speaks to Marie-Antoinette’s desire to facilitate a deeper bond with her daughter, well beyond that required of a queen.

In a letter to her mother from March 1780, Marie-Antoinette interrupted her discussion of European politics to report with pleasure that Madame Royale recognized her for the first time in a group of women, ending with an apology for having rambled on at length about her personal delight:

I must confide to my dear mother’s tender heart a happy moment I had four days ago. There were several persons in my daughter’s room; I had someone ask her where her mother was. That sweet child, although no one had said a word, smiled and came to be with her arms open. This is the first time she has shown she knows me; I must admit it gave me great joy . . . But I realize I am speaking at length; my dear Mama’s kindness and indulgence \textsuperscript{336}

The letter demonstrates Marie-Antoinette’s enthusiasm for motherhood, to the extent of feeling obliged to apologize to the Empress for having momentarily shed her queenly identity.

Marie-Antoinette was invested in her daughter’s academic and moral development, and the king and queen decided that Madame Royale should receive as rigorous a secular and religious education as any son.\textsuperscript{337} Madame Elisabeth, the King’s sister, was charged with the

\textsuperscript{335} Ibid., 141.


\textsuperscript{337} Nagel, Marie-Thérèse, 29.
princess’s moral and religious education, and she became like a second mother to the princess. Madame Royale (and her siblings) also had a governess of Marie-Antoinette’s choosing, who the queen had plucked directly from her Trianon clique. Jealous courtiers called into question the duchesse de Polignac’s qualifications since high-ranking nobility traditionally inherited this prestigious court position that fell under the authority of the king. Once again, the queen was accused of flouting French custom in her appointment of a friend, especially one that would not impede her maternal aspirations. Some courtiers accused Marie-Antoinette of child endangerment for having placed her daughter and especially the dauphin in the care of an unhealthy and lazy social climber. The children of France were living embodiments of France’s future, and Marie-Antoinette’s interventions in the affairs royal nursery were interpreted as a betrayal of French custom.

In spite of the scandal, the queen oversaw her children’s tutors and personally instructed her daughter in needlework and other feminine accomplishment arts that had domestic utility. Marie-Antoinette also saw to it that Madame Royale developed a sense of morality and compassion toward others. Elisabeth Vigée Lebrun reminisces about her relationship with Marie-

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Antoinette in her memoirs, and she wrote about the queen as Madame Royale’s most influential teacher. Vigée Lebrun remembers:

The Queen was most assiduous in teaching her children those sweet ways which made her so dear to all who knew her. I have seen her showing her daughter, then aged about six, how to dine properly; her companion was a local country girl whom she was taking care of; the Queen insisted that the latter be served first, saying to her daughter, “It is you who ought to serve her.”

Eschewing court etiquette that emphasized royal privilege, Marie-Antoinette insisted that her daughter put the needs of others before herself. Vigée Lebrun’s observation reveals that Marie-Antoinette continued to care for children after the birth of her own, and the queen personally served as a model of virtue from whom her daughter might learn. The queen also served as an example for her daughter at court. An anonymous print of Marie-Antoinette and her daughter (Fig. A156, c. 1788) shows the queen in ceremonial court costume with Madame Royale at her side. Madame Royale is not as formally dressed as the queen, but she reverently looks to her mother as her own garment blends into Marie-Antoinette’s skirts, thus visually uniting the two figures.

In this context of the queen’s facilitation of a modern mother-daughter relationship, I argue that Wertmüller represents Madame Royale more naturalistically as a little girl instead of a refined miniature adult of the court as she folds the fabrics of her lévite to contain a loose bouquet of roses that spill out of her make-shift basket. Symbolically associated with Marie-Antoinette and the House of Hapsburg, the roses suggest the queen’s fertility and marital responsibility to bear children for France. Yet, Madame Royale lovingly handles a single rose to identify the special bond between mother and daughter. Through touch, gesture, and exchanged glances, I believe that Wertmüller shows the figures enjoying a private moment of familial

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intimacy in which the royal children stand for their mother’s maternal virtue and modern values instead of conventional emblems of monarchical succession.

The 1785 Salon also featured Vigée Lebrun’s double pastoral portrait of Madame Royale and Dauphin Louis Joseph, who died four years after this painting’s exhibition (Fig. A7). This portrait has received scant critical analysis in art historical scholarship, despite its important engagement with contemporary themes on childcare, Vigée Lebrun’s contributions to the pastoral tradition in the visual arts, and Marie-Antoinette’s personal stake in Rousseauian ideology. I believe that the painting’s emphases on nature, childhood innocence, and the importance of Madame Royale’s presence reflect Marie-Antoinette’s identity as a mother, thereby making it likely that the queen commissioned this portrait herself. To support my claim, Joseph Baillio notes that this painting was in the queen’s collection in 1786 when it was engraved as a pendant for a print of François-Hubert Drouais’s 1762 painting of the younger siblings of Louis XVI, Charles-Philippe de France (called the comte d’Artois) and Madame Clothilde (Fig. A157).

Vigée Lebrun’s composition is in clear dialogue with Drouais’s portrait, which was ordered for the sitters’ mother, Dauphine Marie-Josèphe of Saxony, and paid for by the state. The six-year-old comte d’Artois and his younger sister are pictured as aristocratic children in a pastoral landscape, a portrait genre that Drouais popularized during the mid-eighteenth century.


343 Baillio, Elisabeth Louise Vigée Le Brun, 13-14.
Drouais’s mode of representing royal children notably deviated from the highly formalized portraits of his predecessors Alexis-Simon Belle and Jean-Marc Nattier, whose works merely emphasized dynastic continuity through the painted presence of the child (Fig. A158). Marie Clothilde smiles at the viewer while she holds a basket of ripened fruit to suggest the hopeful promise of the child’s growth and maturation; indeed, Marie-Clothilde lived to become the Queen of Sardinia. Appearing as a miniature court lady in both dress and pose, she sits sidesaddle upon a well-groomed white goat with silken hair and a pink ribbon tied around its neck. Goats served as traditional attributes of childhood; numerous eighteenth-century paintings feature children with goats as central compositional elements, including François Boucher’s *Fountain of Love* from 1748, Bachelier’s oil cartoon for a tapestry series called *The Amusements of Childhood* for Madame de Pompadour’s brother (Fig. A159), and the aforementioned *Sweet Pleasures of Childhood* suite of six prints by Bonnet that includes two engravings of children with goats.

Supporting the two-year-old princess perched upon the goat, the young comte d’Artois wraps his arm around Madame Clothilde’s shoulder and becomes her protector. Also dressed as miniature courtier, the comte d’Artois wears the blue sash of the Order of the Holy Spirit. This iconic accessory makes the children’s royal status indisputable, an important detail because Drouais includes no recognizable portrait features. Rather, this double portrait alludes to themes of childhood innocence that contemporary moralists had begun to emphasize, but in a royal context. This royal commission was deemed to be one of the best works at the 1763 Salon, likely because it retained some pictorial conventions of how royal children should appear in public in addition to the iconographies of innocence that viewers recognized. Critics like Diderot admired
Drouais for his ability to capture the essence of childhood, particularly in children’s eyes. A copy of the painting for Madame Adelaide, the children’s aunt, confirms the painting’s success among members of the royal family as well as the Salon public.

Having become a favored painter of aristocratic children, Drouais also represented the older children of Marie-Josèphe and Louis the Dauphin, including a double portrait of Louis XVI and his younger brother the comte de Provence (Fig. A160, 1757). Once again, the royal children are depicted in a formal outdoor setting with ripened fruits and a small dog as conventional emblems of innocence and fidelity. Their costumes are indicative of their rank without much concern for individuality or the emotional bond between the brothers.

Although clearly inspired by the conventions of Drouais’s double portraits, I observe that Vigée Lebrun downplays court references in the 1785 portrait for Marie-Antoinette. Instead, Madame Royale and the dauphin are more integrated into the natural environment, and the figures’ naturalistic appearances, gazes, and gestures suggest the innocence of the children of France and the embrace of modern discourses on childhood and childcare according to nature. Instead of posed to fully face the viewer, the children’s bodies are angled toward one another to portray a tender moment between brother and sister. Rank and the promise of orderly succession through traditional iconographies are not emphasized, which I believe suggests the subject of this portrait is childhood innocence in a more contemporary context. Madame Royale protectively wraps her arm around her brother in a gesture of maternity, and gazes at her younger brother with affection. The dauphin grasps a chirping baby bird from a nest that rests on his sister’s lap and looks directly at the viewer with a wide-eyed, innocent expression. As I discussed in Chapter One, birds have a special meaning when pictured with children. In this painting, the nestlings are at the center of the composition to emphasize the children’s fragility and vulnerability, especially

344 *Diderot et la critique de Salon, 1759-1781* (Musée du Breuil de Saint Germain, 1984), 61.
in the hands of the dauphin who was plagued with poor health during his short lifetime; his survival mattered for the future of the monarchy. Freshly hatched, these delicate birds require parental attention to survive. This image of extreme helplessness becomes a poetic metaphor for the development of the royal children under Marie-Antoinette’s care.

Madame Royale and the dauphin are richly outfitted in pastoral costumes, perhaps indicative of their time spent at Trianon, where straw hats and loose fitting clothing were favored. Like their parents, the royal children were on display at the court of Versailles and expected to behave according to the nobility of their ranks in the adult world of unrelenting formality. But when on the grounds of Trianon, those who observed the children in their natural, private moments acknowledged that Madame Royale and the dauphin flourished in their freedom and innocence. Vigée Lebrun painted Madame Royale and her brother in delicate silk garments, which allude to the fragility of their small frames. The dauphin wears the medal and iconic blue sash of the royal Order of the Holy Spirit, but his arm obstructs a full view of his royal attributes when he reaches across his body to tend to the nest of chirping hatchlings. I believe that the dauphin’s gesture de-emphasizes his royal identity and instead encourages the viewer to contemplate his boyhood innocence. Salon critics praised the Vigée Lebrun’s pastoral portrait of the royal children for its naturalism, grace, and for the artist’s tender portrayal of the siblings’ bond. Unlike earlier depictions of royal siblings, this portrait presents the value of their identity as children in its emphasis on their innocence and personalities.

At the children’s feet, a small bouquet of roses peek from beneath a woman’s straw hat to suggest Marie-Antoinette’s presence in the portrait. As I have discussed at length, roses have a long visual tradition in art and are associated with various feminine virtues; they are also representative of Marie-Antoinette, the House of Hapsburg, and her royal duty. Of course, the

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345 Nagel, Marie-Thérèse, 45-47.
pastoral straw hat was a sartorial staple of the Petit Trianon, the space where the queen spent time with her children and admittedly felt most herself. The inclusion of this symbolic still-life at the feet of Madame Royale and the dauphin reminds the viewer of Marie-Antoinette’s devotion to her children and her conflicting role as dutiful queen and affectionate mother. But, Marie-Antoinette is symbolically present in a portrait that emphasizes the vulnerability of the child according to the new understandings of childhood innocence. Symbolic references to Louis XVI’s presence are nearly absent, thereby pointing to Marie-Antoinette as her children’s primary nurturer.

An etching of the view of the 1785 Salon reveals that Vigée Lebrun’s portrait of the royal children hung beneath Wertmüller’s portrait (Fig. A161). This placement suggests an attempt to mend the queen’s reputation, which had recently suffered a disastrous setback because of her false implication in the Diamond Necklace Affair, a scandal of mistaken identity that occurred in the Versailles gardens.\textsuperscript{346} Together, I argue that these two paintings emphasize the symbolic value of the royal children in terms of nature and childhood innocence. Such portrayals indicate the feminine virtue of the queen as a Rousseauian mother who had dedicated herself to the protection and development of her children. When Wertmüller’s portrait debuted publically, critics found the image of the dowdy queen gamboling through the English gardens at the Petit Trianon with the children of France troubling in its lack of majesty and decorum. Wertmüller should have, as one critic remarked:

\textit{[represented] the queen showing her children to the nation thus calling all eyes and hearts and tightening more strongly than ever the union between France and Austria.}\textsuperscript{347}


\textsuperscript{347} Anonymous critic quoted from Arizzoli-Clémentel and Salmon, \textit{Marie-Antoinette}, 310.
In the public context of the Salon, Marie-Antoinette and the royal children were not meant to possess an identity beyond their significance as political emblems. Instead, Wertmüller’s painting alluded to the provocative atmosphere of the Trianon, and viewers were appalled to see Marie-Antoinette leading her children through the gardens that exposed the highly emblematic children of France to the environment that facilitated their mother’s deviation from French tradition. For Wertmüller’s portrait to have been a success, it needed to traditionally represent the queen as the sovereign mother of the children of France.\(^{348}\) I believe critics applauded Vigée Lebrun’s pastoral portrait of the royal children with minimal monarchical attributes because Marie-Antoinette’s presence remained symbolic.

At the Salon of 1787, Vigée Lebrun’s state-commissioned portrait of Marie-Antoinette and her children caused much confusion as critics questioned the intent of the artist and her patron, the queen (Fig. A162). The monumental portrait was said to have been deliberately designed to construct a state-approved public image of Marie-Antoinette herself, an unprecedented function of state portraits of the queen.\(^{349}\) The painting includes some familiar characteristics from traditional public representations of queen-mothers, but also incorporates moralistic elements of contemporary motherhood to call attention to Marie-Antoinette’s feminine virtue. The naturalism of the children’s poses and expressions, from Madame Royale’s loving embrace at her mother’s side to the squirming infant Louis Charles, reveals a healthy, nurturing

\(^{348}\) Critics, as well as Marie-Antoinette herself, also found the painting’s lack of beauty to be troubling. For a discussion of this painting in terms of Wertmüller’s aesthetic and stylistic failures, see Ibid., 310.

\(^{349}\) For in-depth discussions of this painting, see Baillio, *Elisabeth Louise Vigée Le Brun*, 78-81; Schama, “The Domestication of Majesty,” 155-183. Mary Sheriff proposes an alternative interpretation, arguing that painting’s equivocation is the result of contradictory discourses on eighteenth-century gender politics and the politics of queenship. See Sheriff, “The Cradle is Empty,” 164-187.
familial environment that places emphasis on the unique value of all children, not just the heir. However, contemporary viewers were unable to reconcile the naturalism of the royal children’s behaviors with Marie-Antoinette’s aloof bearing. The children certainly have a symbolic presence, but the contradictory aspects of Marie-Antoinette as both mother and queen caused critical confusion; the painting’s lack of clear intention led to the portrait’s public downfall.

I have demonstrated that Marie-Antoinette sincerely identified with some of the fundamental principles of Rousseauian ideology and modern child-rearing, despite the social constraints of her position as queen under the rigid conditions of the absolutist Bourbon monarchy. As revolutionary stirrings grew louder in the 1780s, the production of slanderous materials that denigrated the queen’s body, sexuality, and maternity dramatically increased and spread throughout France to create a kind of fictional, yet powerful, “paper queen” with her own identity and evil agenda that violated revolutionary ideals. Themes of defamatory book-length texts, short stories, caricatures, satires and songs cast Marie-Antoinette as a perverse villain with masculine ambitions, even though she had visibly adopted key elements of feminine virtue. Compared to pamphlets’ descriptions of the father-king and his “pure, sincere love which [Marie-Antoinette] so often and cruelly abused,” the queen was proof of the degeneracy that resulted when allegedly immoral femininity polluted the public sphere. To reinforce this image of the queen as a “bad mother,” *Essai historique* accused Marie-Antoinette of poisoning the first

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dauphin Louis Joseph, the embodiment of innocence as well as France’s future, to cause his death in early 1789. Eventually, in 1790, riotous mobs forcibly removed the Royal Family from Versailles, and they became essentially incarcerated in the Tuileries Palace in Paris as the revolutionaries moved to establish a constitutional monarchy.

During this period of political upheaval, a January 1790 entry from miniaturist François Dumont’s ledger references a private commission for Marie-Antoinette in 1789. Miniature portraits are small-scale works that could be worn or easily transported, often given to close friends or set into jewel boxes with locks of hair or precious stones. Because they were reserved for a private audience, miniatures typically conveyed a more intimately rendered portrait of the subject. The queen paid 200 louis for a miniature group portrait on ivory of herself with her children depicted outdoors with no references to the monarchy, as mentioned earlier (Fig. A121). This miniature has been critically neglected in art historical scholarship, having only been briefly discussed as a catalogue entry in a major art exhibition of Marie-Antoinette in 2008. However, I believe that this miniature is one of the most important representations of Marie-Antoinette and the royal children because it is the culmination of the queen’s identity as the nurturing mother of France in a Rousseauian context.

Significantly in this group portrait, Madame Royale carves “soyez à tous leur mère” into the trunk of the sheltering tree with her mother’s literal support, which implies the queen’s enthusiasm for this empowering declaration. Mother and daughter hold hands to show their unity in this command. For the eighteenth-century moralist Rabailler, a mother honored nature, her family, her country, and humanity through an outward show of maternal devotion.

352 Arizzoli-Clémentel and Salmon, Marie-Antoinette, 320.

353 Rabailler, De l’Éducation physique et morale des enfants des deux sexes (Paris: Chez Nyon l’aîné, 1785), 80-87.
citing John Locke and Rousseau in his writings on the physical and moral development of children, Rabailler appealed to women to open themselves up to motherhood as a way to display strength and courage. During the mounting political tensions of the 1790s, Marie-Antoinette would eventually claim such virtues when she vehemently self-identified as a mother when the survival of her family grew more uncertain.

I have already discussed the presence of the dauphin as a conventional symbol of the queen’s fulfillment of her duty to the kingdom. However, Dumont bestows this honor to Madame Royale in the princess’s explicit reference to the queen as mother through her inscription. As the figure that makes Marie-Antoinette’s maternal identity known, Madame Royale metaphorically transforms her family tree and claims value in this new familial structure. Furthermore, the inscription recasts Marie-Antoinette as the deservedly “good mother” instead of La France, the metaphorical mother of the royal children in the Old Regime that displaced Marie-Antoinette, or the allegorical maternal figures of the French Republic. The miniature’s emphasis on feminine virtues gained through maternal care reveals Marie-Antoinette’s capacity to effectively nurture all of her “children” (both biological and in terms of the French people). Through this connection to her children, I believe the queen imagines herself as the exclusive mother of France, even if this role would never be her reality under the new political order.

In the first years of the Revolution in Paris, the Royal Family utilized revolutionary symbolism to appeal to the masses and outwardly suppress any skepticism about the monarchy’s reluctance to participate in the political change. To celebrate the first anniversary of the Bastille’s destruction on July 14, 1790, the Fête de la Fédération took place on the Champs-de-Mars. Here, participants pledged their devotion to the nation as Louis XVI swore to uphold the newly formed Constitution with the Royal Family at his side. In this important public
appearance, the queen fashioned herself, quite literally, as a good mother. Marie-Antoinette, clad in a simple white dress along with a tricolor sash and headpiece, coordinated with the five-year-old dauphin, who wore the tricolor uniform of the National Guard. The patriotic values of mother and son appeared to match, much to the delight of the cheering crowd. Such strategic mother-son sartorial coordination points to, on one level, Marie-Antoinette’s hand in the education of her children. To reiterate, revolutionary discourses emphasized the political role of women as good mothers who devoted themselves to their children so that they could regenerate the nation. On another level, Marie-Antoinette admitted herself that her presence at the festival was a necessary, albeit dreaded, performance to convince volatile mobs of the royal family’s good intentions. By adopting an outfit that matched the dauphin’s outward patriotism, Marie-Antoinette demonstrates her knowledge of her son as a powerful symbol of France’s future.

A drawing by Claude-Louis Desrais from 1790 (Fig. A163) further attests to the Royal Family’s early cooperation with the revolutionaries through an image of the young heir’s innocent attempt at diplomacy. This genre scene represents an episode that reportedly occurred during one of the royal family’s frequent strolls in the Tuileries garden. The Tuileries palace is in the background of the drawing to identify the precise setting, and the figures occupy the foreground as if actors on a stage. Tall, bare trees frame the main scene to feature the dauphin, who kindly interacts with a child soldier with the support of his parents, especially his mother who lovingly encourages her son toward his new friend while the king looks on with pride. The uniformed child was reportedly exercising in the Tuileries garden when those around him, including the royal family, paused to admire his good grace. The child, dressed in full military regalia, presented the dauphin with his weapon and Louis Charles remarked: “Ah, my dear, here

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354 Weber, Queen of Fashion, 221-222.
is a good young patriot,” to which the little soldier responded enthusiastically: “My Prince, we are all born with patriotic spirit.” The drawing indeed suggests that the Royal Family still inspired respect in 1790, but I believe it also demonstrates the inherent symbolism of children as the embodiments of hope and harmony during the early period of the Revolution. Although Louis XVI occupies the center of the composition, all of the figures focus on the exchange between the dauphin and the soldier. While the dauphin approves of the boy’s patriotism, the boy reminds him that he, too, can partake in such sentiments despite his royal lineage.

The dauphin did indeed participate in republican patriotism, which inspired other boys to follow suit. While in residence at the Tuileries Palace, the dauphin sought to emulate the armed soldiers of the National Guard who escorted him to play in his private garden near the Seine. The dauphin soon requested a military uniform of his own, and the Abbot Antheaume asked for the king’s permission to form an official troop called the “Regiment of the Dauphin,” where boys would dress up to emulate the dauphin’s public spirit. With Louis Charles as their hero, Antheaume’s cadets dressed up like soldiers, performed military drills, and occasionally lined up for inspections in the Tuileries. Once again, the dauphin’s appearance as a little patriot had significant republican value.

After Louis XVI officially accepted the Constitution in 1791, the king and his son were to be represented in a painting to commemorate the founding of the constitutional monarchy. For this commission, deputies asked Louis XVI to present the state with a painting for the National Assembly’s meeting hall that depicted the moment when the king showed his son the dauphin the Constitution. A collection of six preparatory sketches from 1791 reveals that David had

355 Arizzoli-Clémentel and Salmon, Marie-Antoinette, 346.

356 Nagel, Marie-Thérèse, 93-94.
begun to work out several ideas for this project even though Louis XVI dragged his feet to respond to the National Assembly’s request until March 1792. David’s drawings of Louis XVI and the dauphin suggest the finished painting’s political function. The juxtaposition of the Bourbon crown and the Constitution verify that the king’s power derives not from divine right, but from the Constitution. After all, the first of the sketches includes an annotation above the figures that reads: “put table in a good position; place the scepter and crown on it and make it known that he can reign only by observing religiously the duties it imposes on him.” Below David’s notes, the king steps forward and presents the Constitution to the dauphin at his side (Fig. A164).

Although the king continues to present royal and republican attributes to the dauphin, I would argue that the next three drawings in this sequence emphasize the affectionate bond between father and son as Louis XVI instructs the dauphin in a more intimate way. Once again, David’s work moves beyond political propaganda and can also be understood in terms of modern philosophical discourses on bourgeois familial values, which the royal family clearly appropriated. In the second drawing (Fig. A165), the dauphin stands on a footstool to reach the tabletop upon which the crown and Constitution are displayed. The king leans over his son protectively, and they examine the objects together. David’s third drawing shows the dauphin has solemnly approached the display table to listen to his father, who appears unintimidating despite his status (Fig. A166). Instead of towering over his son to explain unfamiliar concepts, Louis XVI sits casually on the edge of his chair to be at the boy’s level while he points to the


crown and the Constitution at once. David retains the king’s casually seated pose in the fourth sketch, but now the dauphin occupies his father’s lap (Fig. A167). David crops the table and moves the figures nearer to the picture plane so that they can interact more closely with the viewer. The king holds his son close and becomes the benevolent, patient father who lovingly educates his son. I believe that the affectionate poses and gestures of the king and the dauphin demonstrate David’s conception of this painting in terms of the social emphasis on the family with the child’s well-being as a primary concern. In this context of bourgeois familial virtue, the dauphin signifies a hopeful, stable future, and becomes an effective emblem of revolutionary propaganda.

Nevertheless, David scrapped the father-son ideology in his final three sketches, which are allegorical and do not include the dauphin or direct allusions to the constitutional monarchy (Figs. A168-A170). Instead, the artist represents personifications of the French People and the Genius of Liberty and Victory, who holds a Phrygian cap on a pike. It is unclear if these sketches are for secondary details within the larger king-dauphin compositions, or if David was taking the commission in an entirely different direction. Ultimately, the sequence of drawings that exist today is not complete, and the missing pages preclude a firm understanding of David’s true intentions.\(^{359}\) As David explored different ideas for the painting, the radical press attacked the artist for having accepted a project from Louis XVI himself. The painting’s subject and commission had been controversial from the start, and David soon abandoned the project altogether and began preparations for the Châteauvieux Festival that took place in April 1792; the painting of Louis XVI instructing the dauphin never moved beyond the artist’s sketchbook. Anonymous contemporary prints, however, do portray the king as his children’s teacher, but not from the nurturing perspective that David envisioned. One print shows the king explaining the

Rights of Man to an interested dauphin (Fig. A171, c. 1791). Louis XVI does not appear troubled that the tablet on which the Rights of Man are defined dwarfs the boy, and Louis Charles seems to gesture with alarm. David’s preparatory sketches reveal the symbolic importance of the king as personally devoted to the development of his son’s political identity through the gestures and proximities of the figures. Additionally, I believe that David imagines this political commission through the lens of the dauphin’s boyhood education, an important contemporary concern in terms of the regeneration of French society. As the most important boy in France at the time, a representation of the dauphin’s education in a nurturing environment signified the royal family’s cooperation in establishing a new political and social system.

The devotion of the royal couple to their children’s education and well-being in Paris continued to be represented in popular print culture. For example, a print from the early 1790s portrays the royal family’s visit to a foundling hospital in Paris (Fig. A172). Since her arrival in France as a teenager, Marie-Antoinette had shown concern for children in her donations to orphans in the provinces, and the king joined her cause when he became a father. After the birth of Madame Royale, the king announced a new edict on behalf of all orphans in France whose fathers could not look after or protect them. The legislation required local charities to oversee the safe transportation of abandoned children to foundling hospitals. In the print, the royal couple demonstrates a continued presence in children’s lives, and they have clearly served as positive models for their own children. The dauphin is at the head of the group and has respectfully removed his hat. He pulls his mother along to greet the orphaned infants in rows of anonymous cribs. Madame Royale reaches with both arms to meet the unfortunate children, and the viewer

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360 For representations of the Royal Family in Paris, see the exhibition catalogue La Famille royale à Paris: de l'histoire à la légende (Paris: Musée Carnavalet, 1993).

361 Nagel, Marie-Thérèse, 26-27.
catches another glimpse of her maternal instinct, a behavior that she learned from her own mother.

In September 1792, the French monarchy collapsed after increasingly radical political movements against moderate royal authority. The deposed king was charged with betraying the French Republic, and Louis XVI was executed on January 21, 1793. Royalists immediately named Louis Charles “Louis XVII,” even though the boy had been placed in solitary confinement since August 1792, where he was malnourished, abused, and forced to speak against his family, particularly his mother. Later that year, the Revolutionary Tribune found Marie-Antoinette guilty of treason, and “the Widow Capet” followed her husband to the guillotine on October 16. During her trial, the queen emphasized her maternal devotion to her children, but the accusations against her culminated with her alleged molestation and rape of the dauphin, whose body continued to represent innocence and the future of France. The morning of her execution, Marie-Antoinette left a tear-stained letter for Madame Elisabeth that expressed her only regret was the abandonment of her children.\textsuperscript{362} She pleaded for her sister-in-law to forgive Louis Charles for his part in her death, and to instead understand his innocence of which the revolutionaries took advantage.\textsuperscript{363}

After their parents’ deaths, Marie-Thérèse and Louis Charles remained confined to their individual cells in the filthy conditions of the Temple. Their existences proved highly symbolic, but now in terms of the uncertainty of France’s future. As non-royals, the continued imprisonments of Marie-Thérèse and Louis Charles under such harsh living conditions suggested the cruelty of the French Republic under which the now-orphaned children were innocent

\textsuperscript{362} Marie-Antoinette. \textit{L’Ultime billet à ses enfants} (Paris: Devriès, 1793).

\textsuperscript{363} The revolutionaries convinced Louis Charles to sign paperwork that confirmed charges of sexual molestation against his mother.
victims. Before Marie-Antoinette’s execution, Germaine de Staël, a writer and salon intellectual residing in Paris during the Revolution, implored the French government to spare the lives of the queen and her children once the king was beheaded. In particular, Madame de Staël referred to the royal children as “unfortunate victims,” and claimed that a country that barbarically treated innocent children did not deserve liberty.\textsuperscript{364}

However, as former embodiments of France’s monarchy, Marie-Thérèse and especially Louis Charles continued to be dangerous reminders of the corruption of the Old Regime and living possibilities of a royal resurgence. In her private memoirs of her life in the Temple from 1792 to 1795, Marie-Thérèse wrote about her brother’s inhumane treatment in 1794, just before Robespierre’s fall and the end of the “Reign of Terror:”

My brother still pined in solitude and filth. His keepers never went near him but to give him meals. They had no compassion for this unhappy child. There was one of the guards, whose gentle manners encouraged me to recommend my brother to his attention: this man ventured to complain of the severity with which the boy was treated, but he was dismissed the next day.\textsuperscript{365}

Marie-Thérèse’s remark indicates the paradoxical situation of the royal children, particularly the former dauphin who was only nine years old in 1794. As an innocent young boy, Louis Charles served as a hopeful emblem of France’s regeneration under the Republic; however, the royal blood that pumped through his veins embodied the depravity of the former monarchy. Even as a fragile child, Louis Charles’s physical existence remained a political threat, to the extent that the prison attendants were expected to mistreat the mind and body of Louis Charles to display their patriotic devotion. On June 9, 1795, the boy died from tuberculosis, and Marie-Thérèse was exiled to Vienna six months later. Despite their associations with the cult of the natural child, I

\textsuperscript{364} De Staël quoted in Nagel, \textit{Marie-Thérèse}, 142.

believe the former royal children remained suspect in terms of their roles in the regeneration of French society.

This chapter sought to bring attention to new ways of understanding representations of the royal children in the context of the symbolic value of children as emblems of social regeneration and hope during the French Revolution. Marie-Thérèse’s active presence in prints and portraits with her mother and siblings suggests her important role within her family. Although the dauphin conventionally embodied France’s monarchical future, Louis XVI and Marie-Antoinette recognized the special value of their sons as vulnerable children in need of tender care and parental guidance. As I have demonstrated in my analysis, the queen fashioned her image after Rousseauian discourses on femininity and motherhood to demonstrate her virtue. But her position as the Queen of France was rigidly fixed according to the codes of royal etiquette under French absolutism, which made her appropriation of modern bourgeois values nearly impossible for the public to embrace. Once the overthrow of the Bourbon monarchy effectively dethroned the king and his successors, the symbolic value of the former royal children became ambiguous; the dauphin’s innocence, well-being, and existence as an embodiment of France’s future threatened the revolutionaries and La Patrie. Just as their mother eventually failed in her contradictory attempt to publically maintain a private identity, Marie-Thérèse and the dauphin threateningly represented both innocence and corruption at once.

The fourth and final chapter of this dissertation will complete my analysis of the symbolic value of children and childhood during the post-Revolutionary era when the laws of nature that structured the family order became actual legislation in France. As a military and political leader, Napoleon believed that cooperation with Nature was essential to create a stable
political system and improve the quality of life for individuals and society as a whole. The Emperor recognized that children were important to the growth of the French Empire, and the women who produced healthy, capable children to advance imperial ideals were invaluable to the state. Once again, children symbolized political and social stability, and motherhood continued to be a highly elevated position.

Portraits of individual boys and girls from the first decades of the nineteenth century demonstrate the special place of the child within the nuclear family and society through an emphasis on children’s inherent closeness to nature. Portraits of children from this period explore the significance of child’s psychological development through the lens of Romanticism, a pan-European philosophical movement that emphasized individuality, states of consciousness, and the mysteries of nature. Artists’ emphases on children’s unique psychological states suggest that children remained fundamentally linked to the integrity of nature, which set them apart from the mannered adult world. Artists like Anne-Louis Girodet and Théodore Géricault investigate the profound nature of children in several psychologically complex portraits of girls and boys at different phases of development in childhood. These themes reach the imperial family in Pierre-Paul Prud’hon’s *Portrait of the Sleeping King of Rome*, a painting that reveals a degree of tension between the ideals of allegory and portraiture in the artist’s Romantic portrayal of Napoleon II for the Empress Marie-Louise in 1811. Compared to the representations of the French heir that conform to allegorical conventions, Prud’hon’s transformation of conventional allegorical iconographies suggests the significance of Marie-Louise’s maternal identity in the context of the nineteenth-century family and the symbolic significance of the sleeping child in a

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366 June K. Burton, *Napoleon and the Woman Question, Discourses of the Other Sex in French Education, Medicine, and Medical Law 1799-1815* (Lubbock, TX: Texas Tech University Press, 2007), 24-25.
romanticized landscape. My close readings of Romantic portraits of children in Chapter Four will allow me to offer new perspectives on children as powerful metaphors for freedom, natural innocence, and the important role of women during the post-Revolutionary era in France.
CHAPTER 4: MINDING THE ROMANTIC CHILD: THE PSYCHOLOGY OF CHILDHOOD IN POST-REVOLUTIONARY FRENCH PORTRAITURE

Amidst the radical chaos, violence of The Terror, and eventual overturning of the First French Republic in 1795, General Napoleon Bonaparte had already begun his steady climb to political power through a series of impressive military victories in France and abroad. A celebrated military hero and the epitome of the self-made Frenchman, Bonaparte embodied one of the key revolutionary ideals of having achieved personal success and status through talent instead of birthright. On 18 Brumaire, Year VIII of the Republican calendar, Bonaparte organized a coup d’état to overthrow the Directory and assumed control of the newly formed French Consulate. Three years later, the general named himself the First Consul of France for life and ruled that he had the exclusive right to choose his successor. Soon, in 1804, Napoleon declared himself emperor of France, which secured the continuation of his empire and legacy through hereditary inheritance.

Early in his political career, Napoleon sought to overhaul France’s political, administrative, and social systems; his concern for the protection of children informed his plans for these enlightened projects and eventually became part of his legend. Along with the centralization of government services and the reorganization of the educational system to be modeled on military training, he created and implemented the new Civil Code (also called the Napoleonic Code) in 1804. This set of laws, according to one of the members of the drafting committee, was “intended to govern and define the relations of sociability, family, and interest

367 For a succinct synopsis of Napoleon Bonaparte’s military and political career, see Bernard Chevallier, Napoleon (Memphis: Lithograph Publishing, 1993), 21-40.

368 June K. Burton, Napoleon and the Woman Question: Discourses of the Other Sex in French Education, Medicine, and Medical Law 1799-1815 (Lubbock, TX: Texas Tech University, 2007), 4.
existing among men who belong to the same political system." This legislation attests to the
triumph of the ideals of the bourgeois Revolution, particularly in terms of its emphasis on the
paternal authority in the family unit and the absolute right to property. Although the Civil
Code granted individual liberties and claimed to hold all men equal before the law, the
legislation largely restricted the legal rights of women compared to the newfound freedoms of
men.

Significantly, the Napoleonic Code legalized the family unit as a deeply patriarchal, state-
protected institution with few legal options for wives and children to challenge the family order
or to dissolve familial bonds. Napoleon emphasized women’s biological function as machines
for producing loyal citizen-soldiers. Beyond reproduction, women served the loftier aim of
connecting individuals to the state through familial devotion. The ideal Napoleonic woman
was a dedicated wife and affectionate mother while an ideal Napoleonic man served the French
state. Fidelity to the proper gender roles created a stable family unit that became the foundation
for social and political order.

In this political and social context, Marguerite Gérard’s genre paintings exhibited at the
early nineteenth-century Salons suggest the natural act of maternal breastfeeding as a symbol of

369 Anonymous drafting committee member quoted from Chevallier, Napoleon, 32.

370 Chevallier, Napoleon, 30-32.

371 Albert Boime, Art in the Age of Bonapartism, 1800-1815 (Chicago: University of Chicago

372 The Napoleonic Code did preserve a woman’s right to divorce her husband, but only when
infidelity occurred in the married couple’s home. See Jennifer Heuer, The Family and the
Nation: Gender and Citizenship in Revolutionary France, 1789-1830 (Ithaca: Cornell University
Press, 2005), 123-130; Claire Goldberg Moses, French Feminism in the Nineteenth Century

373 Denise Z. Davidson, France after Revolution: Urban Life, Gender, and the New Social Order
domestic tranquility and, by extension, political stability under Napoleonic rule. A mother’s milk continued to transmit moral qualities to her children, and the representation of a nursing mother in an interior setting emphasized a woman’s restriction to the domestic sphere under the Napoleonic patriarchal system. Gérard’s representation of domestic bliss in genre paintings like *Motherhood* (Fig. A173) from the early nineteenth century suggests the happiness of husbands and wives when they embrace their proper gender roles. Here, Gérard portrays ideal bourgeois types instead of individuals inside of a home. The fashionable yet modest wife sits at the center of the composition, and the looseness of her bodice suggests having just breastfed her child. The woman exchanges a tender glance with her husband who dutifully stands at her side with one arm placed adoringly around her shoulder while the other rests on a cradle to discreetly remind viewers of the reach of his patriarchal control. Rumpled sheets suggest the infant’s recent occupation of the cradle, but the baby, satiated after his meal, now peacefully sleeps on the woman’s lap in a gauzy cocoon. This figural arrangement is a traditional allusion to Virgin and Child imagery that Gérard has incorporated into her other works, most notably her 1799 Salon genre portrait of a mother and her daughter that I analyzed in Chapter Two. The placement of a translucent cloth on a sleeping newborn also has a precedent in representations of the Madonna and Christ Child from the sixteenth century. Gérard secularizes Renaissance iconography as she depicts the mother gently lifting the sheer blanket to reveal the miraculousness of the child to her husband and the viewer. The inherent innocence of the sleeping baby at the center of the painting heightens the overall virtuousness of this family unit. Because of her position next to the empty

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cradle, this woman functions as both the literal and figurative cradle of the family, a role that she does not seem to resist.

Given the codification of strict gender roles that were said to have derived from nature itself, how did artists portray the identities of particular children in paintings beyond idealized genre representations? How did the language of nature, now codified into law, influence the understanding of children during this period? The final chapter of my dissertation examines portraits of specific children from the post-Revolutionary era that explore the primal nature of childhood through representations of children’s unique mental states and attitudes. Artists’ emphases on the psychological characters of children in portraiture demonstrate a continuation of the idea of children as the closest beings to the vitality of Nature— an authoritative entity that was said to have contributed to post-Revolutionary social and political stability and promoted individual happiness. For example, artist Anne-Louis Girodet de Roussy-Trioson emphasized the uncertainty of the child’s future in his psychologically complex portrayal of his adoptive father’s son Benoît Agnès Trioson (Fig. A8, 1800). Although conventional attributes of learning surround the young boy to suggest the importance of education, the boy turns away from his Latin grammar book, and his violin is broken. Instead of an intensely disciplined, focused student that Chardin represented decades earlier, Girodet’s subject is a wistful, contemplative dreamer. Girodet represented his young sitter in three separate portraits having to do with learning from 1791 to 1803, and the paintings investigate Benoît’s psychological state at distinct phases of his education during transitional moments in childhood.

Themes of psychological darkness, uneasiness, and rebellion persist in Théodore Géricault’s series of private portrait commissions that also explore the emotional identity of children in early nineteenth-century French society. Painted in the late 1810s after Napoleon’s
exile and the restoration of the Bourbon monarchy, Géricault’s portraits of the Dedreux children reveal the artist’s consideration of his sitters’ personalities in the context of childhood as a period of uninhibited freedoms; his double portrait of Alfred and Elisabeth Dedreux shows a further examination of the emotional bond between siblings. Géricault’s mysterious *Portrait of Louise Vernet* depicts a young girl posed suggestively in an ominous outdoor setting with her arm around a large cat, who acts as her pet, protector, and as an emblematic allusion to her selfhood (Fig. A9). The position of Louise’s partially exposed body and especially her tilted head suggest impish mischief, or perhaps something free spirited about the girl’s inner nature in her refusal to conform to the polite image of proper manners and adult domesticity—an idea to which I will return when I discuss this painting later in the chapter. The romanticized representations of the psychological nature of children from Girodet and Géricault reveal an interest in the centrality of the child in the post-Revolutionary family and the cultivation of their unique personalities, despite being subjected to absolute paternal control within the codified familial hierarchy.

This Romantic exploration of children’s psyches and the extent of their natural instincts reached the imperial family in a privately commissioned portrait of the long-awaited heir himself. Pierre-Paul Prud’hon’s *The Sleeping King of Rome* depicts Napoleon II in terms of nature instead of emphatically calling attention to his imperial status (Fig. A10). Prud’hon painted this representation of the infant Napoleon II for Napoleon’s second wife, the Austria-born Empress Marie-Louise, in 1811. Because of the lack of conventional imperial attributes and the absence of the physical presences of Napoleon and his wife, the portrait stands apart from other depictions of the heir that emphasize his future as the ruler of the French Empire. On one level, Prud’hon’s representation of Napoleon’s heir can be understood in terms of Christian iconography or as an allegorical portrayal of the new French order according to the mythological
story of Romulus.\textsuperscript{375} Due, in part, to Marie-Louise’s youthful clumsiness and the public
sympathy felt for Josephine when Napoleon divorced her in 1809, the reputation of the new
empress wavered; sympathy for Josephine gave women and men who opposed the Napoleonic
regime further reason to attack the Emperor and his character.\textsuperscript{376}

I believe that we can understand \textit{The Sleeping King of Rome} according to the broader
context of contemporary interests in children as powerful symbols of nature’s virtue. Prud’hon’s
romanticized representation of the imperial child peacefully asleep in a wild landscape engages
with early nineteenth-century discourses on children and the psychological and physiological
significance of sleep. Also, Prud’hon’s poetic use of allegory to portray Napoleon II furthers the
mystical unity between child and nature; although this painting is an allegorical portrait, the
infant’s imperial status is conveyed through plant life and not mythological figures. Art critic
Jules Renouvier commented that Prud’hon’s “feeling for nature [in his allegories] . . . was
distilled in an abstract and moral concept that he was able to depict in a clear and natural manner,
at once political and picturesque.”\textsuperscript{377} Beyond the Romantic representation of the imperial sitter,
however, the tranquility and innocence of the sleeping baby demonstrates a vision of its patron
Marie-Louise as an ideal Napoleonic woman and mother in the context of the growing
importance of the nuclear family in the early nineteenth century. While Marie-Louise and
Napoleon are personally absent from Prud’hon’s canvas, they are iconographically represented
through the flora and fauna that shelters Napoleon II. Given this painting’s formal connections
\textsuperscript{375} Lindsay Meehan Dunn, “A Revolutionary Empress in the Age of Napoleon: Marie-Louise,
Archduchess of Austria, Empress of the French, and Duchess of Parma, Piacenza, and Guastalla
(1791-1847),” (Ph.D. dissertation, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, 2014), 142-148;
Sylvain Laveissière, \textit{Pierre-Paul Prud’hon} (New York: The Metropolitan Museum of Art,
1998), 208-209.

\textsuperscript{376} Davidson, \textit{France after Revolution}, 30-25.

to Girodet’s *Endymion* (Fig. A174, 1791), perhaps Marie-Louise further asserts her presence through the light beams that nurture her son’s sleeping figure. This chapter seeks to demonstrate that individual portraits of children circa 1800 explore the psychology of young sitters to uncover the deep, often mysterious, connection between children and nature, which suggests the Romantic exploration of the subjective self through the body and mind of the child.

Compared to the emphasis on reason and rationality that prevailed during the French Enlightenment and contributed, in part, to the collapse of the Old Regime, the rise of the pan-European Romantic movement during the 1790s and the first decades of the nineteenth century looked to explore individuality and the freedom of nature over social conformity and cultural constraint. In his 1979 study of Romanticism, Hugh Honour demonstrates how a precise definition of Romanticism is elusive, but a general understanding of this new way of thinking will provide a new lens through which we can understand portraits of children from the early nineteenth century. William Vaughan suggests that the term “Romantic” derived from poetry that, since the Renaissance, had come to describe “all that was wild or fantastic . . . that imagination which is most free.” In the visual arts circa 1800, Romantic artworks tend to explore the depths of the human psyche, what constitutes an individual sense of self, and the darker side of the human experience. In particular, the savage violence of the Reign of Terror during the Revolution had prompted people to reflect upon the irrationality of humanity and the extreme emotions of which humans were capable under duress. Themes that emphasize the

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power of the human imagination, reverie, the mysteries of nature and the supernatural, and
dreams inspired artists during the early Romantic age.

Additionally, British, German, and French writers and artists sought to make sense of the
beauty within threatening expressions of nature like storms on land and at sea and the darkness
of the night.\textsuperscript{381} They also explored the possibility of psychological harmony between the
savagery of nature and one’s inner experiences.\textsuperscript{382} Since wild nature has the power to overwhelm
because it cannot be controlled, followers of the Romantic movement accepted nature’s ultimate
power and intensified their appreciation of it through words and imagery. Some poets, like
Goethe and Dante, even felt strengthened by their understanding of this relationship and looked
to tap into the power of nature’s energies for their own artistic creativity.\textsuperscript{383} Romantic
explorations and visions of nature were abetted by new discoveries in the science of psychology,
comparative anatomy and the profound effects of emotions on the body, and even Newton’s
analysis of the spectrum with his investigation of the physiological and psychological effects of
light.\textsuperscript{384} The theoretical shift from an understanding of nature as a mechanistic order to an
unpredictable, active power that began in eighteenth-century scientific discourse continued to

\textsuperscript{381} D.G. Charlton, \textit{New Images of the Natural in France: A Study in European Cultural History

\textsuperscript{382} Ibid., 48.

\textsuperscript{383} Ibid., 58-62.

\textsuperscript{384} Vaughan, \textit{Romanticism and Art}, 44. Also see Dorothy Johnson’s discussion of the great
interest on the impact of passions on the body at the turn of the century in \textit{David to Delacroix:
develop in the early nineteenth century; new ideas on the dynamism of and creative energy within nature influenced both scientists and artists.\textsuperscript{385}

This interest in the exploration of one’s cerebral processes that could lead to the uncovering of the individual soul can be most effectively explored in Romantic portraiture when artists aimed to capture the inner character of their sitters. A portrait indeed functions to represent the physical likeness or to preserve the memory of the sitter, but it also constructs a certain idea of the self through a visual language of historical allusions as well as contemporary clothing and attributes; even the portrait’s setting can contribute to the exploration of the sitter’s bodily and psychological presence.\textsuperscript{386} In her analysis of the new visual vocabularies of revolutionary portraits, Amy Freund emphasizes the importance of the production of portraiture as a negotiation between the artist, the commissioner, and the sitter of the painting to uncover the new meaning of selfhood in post-1789 France.\textsuperscript{387} All three parties must agree on how to best represent the physical likeness, personality, and social status to generate a successful finished product for which the artist will be paid.\textsuperscript{388} But, what happens to this commercial transaction when the sitter of the painting is a dependent child who cannot (or is not permitted to) contribute to the construction of their image?

The portrayal of an individual child is thus defined by the artist’s perspective and the varied ambitions of the parental commissioners. The cult of Romanticism in early nineteenth-

\textsuperscript{385} Charlton, \textit{New Images of the Natural}, 76-79.

\textsuperscript{386} Amy Freund, \textit{Portraiture and Politics in Revolutionary France} (University Park: Pennsylvania State University, 2014), 2-5. For a discussion of portraiture as a way for artists to assert their identities as practioners of a liberal art, see Tony Halliday, \textit{Facing the Public: Portraiture in the Aftermath of the French Revolution} (Manchester: Manchester University Press).

\textsuperscript{387} Freund, \textit{Portraiture and Politics}, 4-5.

\textsuperscript{388} Ibid.
century Europe, expanding interests in children’s psychological, physiological, educational, and moral developments, and the social circumstances of paintings’ productions also invest children’s portraits with significant meanings. Significantly, Romantic artists freely used well-known symbolic imagery in both familiar and new ways to align with and break away from tradition at the same time. Conventional iconographic and allegorical references were invested with personalized significance and surpassed the one-to-one exchange between a symbol and its expected meaning in an emblem book.389

Anne-Louis Girodet’s series of three portraits of Benoît Agnès Trioson, the son of his adoptive father, demonstrate the artist’s Romantic reconstruction of familiar symbols to investigate the psychological states of his temperamental sitter during important phases of the boy’s intellectual development. The paintings were produced during a six-year period when the artist lived with the Trioson family in France following his sojourn in Italy as a recipient of the Prix de Rome. The first portrait from 1797 shows Benoît unenthusiastically paging through a Biblical lesson; his melancholic expression silently pleads with the viewer to rescue him from this seemingly tortuous sedentary activity (Fig. A175). The aforementioned enigmatic portrait from 1800 represents Benoît as a thoughtful dreamer among various formal emblems of learning and thinking that he has eschewed for his own reflection. The series culminates with Girodet’s 1803 portrait of Benoît, but now the artist has introduced the boy’s father into the composition. In this double portrait, Dr. Benoît François Trioson and thirteen-year-old Benoît study a globe under the watchful bust of Hippocrates (Fig. A176).

It has not been determined if this series grew out of Girodet’s personal fondness for the boy, or if Dr. Trioson commissioned the portraits to bring attention his son’s educational development and his role in the process. A major exhibition on Girodet’s œuvre from 2006 has

rightly argued that the artist makes pedagogy the central theme of the portrait trio by having traced Benoît’s psychological evolution during his formative years. But, curator Sylvain Bellenger asserts that the portraits also reflect the painter’s own childhood recollections from when Dr. Trioson supervised the unruly young Girodet’s education and social grooming in Paris during the 1770s. Bellenger’s assertion alludes to the idea that without Dr. Trioson’s intervention, Benoît (and Girodet), would be at a social disadvantage. Bellenger’s idea suggests that the portraits are just as much about Dr. Trioson’s role as a mentor as they are about the psychological exploration of Benoît’s emotional development during his education.

In my analysis of this portrait series, I recognize Girodet’s emphasis on Benoît’s intellectual development at certain stages during his formative years; after all, scholars have noted that Girodet was one of the first artists to observe and paint the complexity of childhood psychology. Raised in a learned environment at a time when medicine was at the forefront of modern thinking, Girodet had a vested interest in the science of the mind and the representation of the soul—themes that the artist most famously explored in his mythological paintings like *The Sleep of Endymion*. I build upon this point in the context of Girodet’s portraits of Benoît to consider how each painting portrays a different moment in the same narrative. I believe that Girodet has reinterpreted conventional emblems of learning in the context of Romanticism to suggest that Benoît’s natural rebelliousness contributed to his intellectual success, which Girodet celebrates at the end of the series when father and son come together in Dr. Trioson’s study.

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Girodet’s first portrait of his young sitter called _Benoît Agnès Trioson Studying Figures in a Book_ (1797) was painted in three-quarter view when Benoît was seven years old. To begin the portrait series, I believe that Girodet hints at Benoît’s romantic and free-thinking tendencies in the boy’s somewhat disheveled appearance, despairing expression, and the accessories that surround him; Girodet goes on to fully realize these aspects of Benoît’s selfhood in his 1800 portrait. In this painting, Benoît slouches over a thick open folio that explains figures of the Bible, but he appears mostly bored with or simply uninterested in the material presented in the oversized, heavy book. Instead of concentrating upon the moralizing story of Tobias that extols a son’s devotion to his elderly father, Benoît ignores the text and attempts to skip pages when he looks up to see that the viewer has stumbled into his private space.  

Two notable scholars have speculated about the meaning of Benoît’s expression in this portrait. Tony Halliday, for example, argues that Girodet has represented a surprise encounter between the viewer and the young sitter. For Halliday, Benoît is a miniature scholar who has discarded his playthings so that he may focus on his studies. This unforeseen encounter between diligent student and disruptive spectator, however, is the cause for Benoît’s cold expression; his slightly raised eyebrows communicate his exasperation at the unfamiliar intruder’s sudden interruption. Bellenger, by contrast, understands Benoît’s expression as fundamentally sad due to his scholarly confinement, likely enforced by Dr. Trioson’s zeal for his son’s early academic promise. Benoît’s melancholic composure is the real subject of Girodet’s painting since the child seems to relinquish his

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392 This story may have biographical significance for Benoît since Dr. Trioson was sixty years older than his young son. See Hélène Toussaint, _French Painting: The Revolutionary Decades, 1760-1830_, ed. Virginia Spate (Sydney: Australian Gallery Directors Council, 1980), 119-120.

393 Halliday, _Facing the Public_, 98-99.

394 Ibid.
boyhood playthings to fulfill “grown-up” educational obligations. Bellenger proceeds to analyze the portrait according to Girodet’s reinterpretation of a late eighteenth-century theme of the tedium of study during boyhood as represented most prominently by Greuze and his paintings of boys asleep or downcast and bored in front of their books (Fig. A177).

My interpretations of Benoît Agnès Trioson Studying Figures in a Book will advance two new ways to understand this painting in terms of the psychological development of the male child. I will first demonstrate how Girodet’s portrait engages with contemporary pedagogical methodologies of Rousseau, who was said to have initiated the Romantic cult of childhood when he published Émile in 1762. Then I will briefly consider the portrait as a nostalgic portrayal of Benoît as he reluctantly sheds his ungendered childhood identity and begins his new responsibilities as a seven-year-old, the age at which boys were typically distinguished from girls and embarked on learning in the context of their gendered social roles.

In the portrait, Benoît looks up from his lesson and silently implores the viewer with wide, sad eyes to free him from his miserable chore. Playing cards in an open desk drawer and a cup-and-ball toy that falls from Benoît’s pocket onto his seat suggest that the boy would rather be playing games, or, more significantly, learning through different methods and tools. Scholars have long recognized that the iconography from Jean-Baptiste-Siméon Chardin’s paintings of children inspired Girodet’s 1797 portrait, particularly The House of Cards that represents a neatly dressed young boy who deeply focuses on constructing a house of cards (Fig. A178, 1737). Each painting has unused playing cards in an open desk drawer that projects into


the viewer’s space. Halliday interprets Chardin’s painting in terms of *vanitas* imagery; the fragility of a house of cards symbolizes the futility of human endeavor and the fleetingness of life, and the boy’s total absorption in his activity compels the viewer to meditate on his symbolic actions. Bellenger alludes to Girodet’s appropriation of seventeenth-century *vanitas* iconography in his portrait of Benoît, stating that “[Benoît’s] sadness is fundamentally different from the childish gravity of Chardin’s *The House of Cards.*” While Chardin’s boy is naively oblivious to the emblematic gravitas of his actions, Girodet includes playing cards that evoke sadness from his sitter, but for reasons beyond moralizing *vanitas* symbolism that I will now discuss.

As I have explained elsewhere in this dissertation, Chardin’s paintings of children from the 1730s and 40s are invested in the psychology and moral significance of learning through observation, individual concentration, and personal reflection. For instance, a child’s contemplation of a spinning top in Chardin’s painting from 1737 may indeed reference the passage of time and the ephemerality of human life, meanings that derive from seventeenth-century Dutch *vanitas* conventions. Chardin was known to have studied Dutch art, and the captions that accompanied widely distributed printed reproductions of his paintings of children included moralizing poems that popularized the *vanitas* iconographic connection. In terms of the cultural and philosophical discourses on early childhood education in the first half of the eighteenth century, the boy’s solemn and interested expression suggests that he regards the toy top as an instrument of science to study the physics of movement, just like the books and writing

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397 Halliday, *Facing the Public*, 98.

398 Bellenger, *Girodet*, 375.

implements on his desk that function, albeit more traditionally, as pedagogical tools. In fact, this boy chooses to learn from the toy; his books are closed and pushed to the side of the tabletop to make room for the spinning top, and his writing instruments remain in the inkwell and drawer. Similarly, the boy in *The House of Cards* builds his structure to not only convey the moralizing message about the fragility of life to the viewer, but to show himself in the process of understanding the effects of engineering and architecture through alternative objects of learning.

George Levitine, in his study on the iconography of Girodet’s portrait series, suggests that the artist included objects that have *vanitas* references, but they also refer to game play that promotes learning.\(^{400}\) I have already discussed at length the eighteenth century’s emphasis on games and imaginative play as effective measures to further children’s cognitive and moral development. In terms of children’s physical health, play was thought to be just as important as exercise in the prevention of melancholia and hypochondria.\(^{401}\) Jean-Jacques Rousseau was one of the most resounding supporters of a natural education that freed children from the potential ruin of acting as miniature adults too early in their development. Instead, Rousseau emphasized the distinctiveness of children’s youthful qualities and urged his readers only to allow children to partake in activities appropriate to their ages. Rousseau’s theories on education continued to resonate in early nineteenth-century France, particularly with Girodet who was an avid reader of the philosopher’s ideas. The artist reportedly brought the twenty-seven volumes of Rousseau’s collected works with him to Italy.\(^{402}\)

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\(^{401}\) Burton, *Napoleon*, 71.

\(^{402}\) Bellenger, *Girodet*, 375.
Additionally, in written correspondences from the 1790s between Girodet and the Trioson family, the artist frequently inquired about the family’s health; he stated that the children’s physical and moral development inspired his interest, and after three years in Italy, he was curious to know how they had grown.\textsuperscript{403} Another letter reveals Girodet’s attachment to Rousseauian discourse and the inherent pleasures of children’s natural instincts when he advised Madame Trioson not to worry about her children’s passions for the top that distracts them from reading, having added that “isn’t such behavior typical for this stage?”\textsuperscript{404} As a Rousseauian disciple, Girodet believed that parents ought to encourage their children’s imaginations and natural instincts to optimize their psychological and physical developments.

In this context of the emphasis on game play as an important part of the educational process, Rousseau’s advocacy of permitting children to act according to their natural feelings and the effectiveness of learning from different methods and through different tools, we can begin to better understand Benoît’s melancholic expression in the 1797 portrait. His distressed look not only conveys that he would rather be playing with the cup-and-ball that tumbles from his pocket, but that the rigid method of study before him, as represented by the enormous tome, will not properly engage his mind at this early stage and may lead to an outright aversion for education as he becomes older. Furthermore, the cup-and-ball may be an enjoyable divertissement, but it can

\textsuperscript{403} Girodet wrote to Dr. Trioson: “Je suis charmé, mon bon ami, d’apprendre que vous, Madame Trioson, et votre petite famille êtes en bonne santé. Je trouverai vos chers enfants encore plus charmans. S’il est possible, à mon retour: trois années de development dans leurs facultés physiques et morales augmenteront sans doute beaucoup l’intérêt qu’ils m’inspirent déjà.” Anne-Louis Girodet-Trioson and P. A. Coupin, \textit{Œuvres posthumes de Girodet-Trioson, peintre d'histoire; suivies de sa correspondance} (Paris: J. Renouard, 1829), Tome II, Lettre XXXIX.

certainly function to teach the boy about coordination and even the scientific effects of gravity in an engaging way. In his departure from traditional pedagogical practices, Rousseau considered the act of reading that was thrust upon students to be the “blight of childhood.” Without pressure from his tutor, Rousseau’s Emile learned to read and reason when he alone felt ready; he discovered books on his own at the ripe age of twelve and was thus enthusiastic, as opposed to being apathetic, about reading and logic.

Additionally, Girodet sympathizes with Benoît’s educational plight by making his sadness apparent not only through his facial expression, but through his overall appearance. Compared once again to Chardin’s neatly coiffed young gentlemen, Benoît’s long, curly brown hair spills down around his shoulders and is parted down the middle to frame his face, thereby calling even more attention to his troubled expression. The unruliness of his thick hair suggests that although his mind may be buzzing with unlimited potential, the constraints of a traditional, formal education inhibit his own exploration of self. In addition to an unkempt hairstyle, the collar of Benoît’s white shirt beneath his frock is unbuttoned, and the child’s sleeves are rolled up to the elbows as if he has undertaken a physically demanding task with the book at his desk. In the eighteenth century, as Bellenger suggests, a disheveled look in children’s dress was associated with boyish vitality and, I would add, alludes to future masculine virility.406

I believe that Benoît’s messy appearance, combined with his somber expression, also reveal that the seven-year-old is not comfortable in this new stage of childhood when boys were placed with tutors or their fathers and began to prepare for their adult social roles, which were strictly gendered. In French medicine at the turn of the century, most doctors still understood

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405 Rousseau quoted from Bellenger, Girodet, 375.

406 Ibid.
human life cycles according to the ancient Hippocratic tradition of the Seven Ages of Man, and social constructs corresponded to this division of ages. For instance, there were two sub-phases in the category of childhood: “la première enfance” lasted from birth until seven. Boys and girls alike wore skirts and corsets and remained in the home to learn basic moral principles from their mothers without much attention to gender differentiation. Once children turned seven or eight, “la seconde enfance” began. Typically, girls stayed beside their mothers to learn the arts of domesticity and continued to don the corset, now seen as symbolic of their burgeoning femininity instead of a device to train their developing bodies to sit upright. Meanwhile, boys wore pants to signal their entrance into the public sphere and learned from their fathers or a tutor instead of their mothers.

In addition to its pedagogical themes, this portrait can also be interpreted as a commemoration of Benoît’s entrée into the world of men as he is expected to abandon some of his childish habits to study the Bible in solitude. At age seven, however, Benoît straddles the two sub-phases of childhood, which contributes to a degree of the ambiguity in the representation of his identity. Benoît’s distraught expression and messy appearance convey his hesitancy to embark on this new stage in life. To demonstrate his reluctance, Benoît continues to wear his gender-neutral frock instead of pants, his long hair is undone, and the viewer spies the cup-and-ball that he has smuggled into this mature scholarly space. These details indicate a longing for


408 As medicine advanced in the early nineteenth-century, medical treatises on children’s hygiene and development discuss more nuanced sub-phases within childhood. But the Hippocratic system remained the most popular envisioning of the Ages of Man in this period and is the framework for the understanding of age in this dissertation. For a detailed breakdown of the sub-phases within childhood in the context of medicine, see Marc-Antoine Lautaret, Quelques considérations générales sur l’éducation physique des enfant (Montpellier: 1802).
the return to the carefreeness of the first stage of childhood of which Benoît has not fully let go. But since he is under his father’s control, Benoît must comply despite his inner struggle. From the varying contexts I have discussed, Girodet’s painting indeed captures a moment of conflict in the child’s psyche, a subject that captivated the artist.

Three years later in 1800, Girodet represents Benoît in the second portrait of the series entitled Young Child Studying His Lessons in which the sitter’s solemn rebellion is even more apparent (Fig. A8). Now ten years old and firmly rooted in the second phase of childhood, Benoît has physically matured: his curly hair is cropped and styled, and his face has lost its childlike fullness. Benoît’s attitude has also grown, but not in the expected direction of an obedient young gentleman. The boy’s clothing remains casually unbuttoned to suggest his carefree nature as well as his indifference toward social expectations. Girodet emphasizes Benoît’s overtly somber expression to portray his continued resistance to formal, structured modes of study for a boy his age. Benoît stands alone at the center of the composition and leans against the back of a yellow upholstered armchair. While he turns away from the viewer, Benoît places his left hand against his head, which remains in partial darkness to suggest his emotive, conflicted state. Traditionally in the visual arts, this pose evokes melancholia, but it could also indicate the sitter’s reverie or a visual cue that directs the viewer to question Benoît’s own thought process. Heightened by the psychological symbolism of light and dark that surrounds his head, Benoît’s pose urges viewers to consider the ongoing struggle inside of the boy’s mind as he stares thoughtfully into the light that illuminates his face.

Meanwhile, Benoît’s right hand hangs nonchalantly over the back of the armchair, and his Latin grammar book slips from his light grip. An assortment of objects that conventionally signify a gentleman’s education occupies the armchair’s seat, but they are all in various states of
disorder with some having been defaced to the point of ruin. Bellenger observes that at this point in Girodet’s career, the accessories in his paintings are brimming with meanings to the point of saturation.\textsuperscript{409} More specifically, Dorothy Johnson explains that Girodet was fond of symbolism and allegory, and every object in this portrait of Benoît references study; however, they are also part of a traditional language in art history that suggest a different meaning.\textsuperscript{410} In his detailed analysis of this portrait, Levitine rightly asserts that Girodet indicates Benoît’s brooding sensitivity more dramatically in this painting, but he suggests that it is difficult to relate the child’s mood to the strange accumulation of unrelated accessories displayed on the armchair.\textsuperscript{411} I contend that in \textit{Young Child Studying his Lessons}, Girodet continues to subvert \textit{vanitas} iconography to emphasize Benoît’s internal struggle to find value in traditional pedagogical methods. The shifting emblematic meanings of the objects mimic the uncertainty of Benoît’s future as he eschews his formal intellectual training and becomes quietly engrossed in his private thoughts. For instance, a violin is propped up against the chair’s arm, but a walnut shell serves as the instrument’s bridge. As if walking on a miniature tightrope, a beetle crawls along one of the strings toward a cluster of broken strings that curl around the violin’s scroll. On the one hand, this violin is in a state of disrepair and will no longer play music. Its fallen state serves as a metaphor for Benoît’s troubled mind that cannot seem to function reasonably. On the other hand, the violin, walnut shell, and beetle are all well-known \textit{vanitas} emblems from the tradition of seventeenth-century Dutch still life paintings, such as Pieter Claesz’s \textit{Still Life with Violin} (Fig. A94). Referring most generally to ephemerality and the fleetingness of life, these objects allude to the passage of time and the inevitability of death. I recognize that scholars of seventeenth-

\textsuperscript{409} Bellenger, \textit{Girodet}, 376.

\textsuperscript{410} Johnson, “Engaging Identity,” 104-108.

\textsuperscript{411} Levitine, \textit{Girodet-Trioson}, 326-329.
century Dutch still life paintings have demonstrated that the emblematic meanings of still life objects are not strictly limited to *vanitas* interpretations; objects are highly complex and frequently ambiguous, and their meanings shift based on differing contexts.\textsuperscript{412} For my discussion of Girodet’s *Young Child Studying his Lessons*, however, I will proceed with ideas related to *vanitas* imagery to suggest that Girodet transformed traditional iconographies within contemporary French philosophical and cultural contexts to explore the Romantic selfhood of the child.

Once more, Girodet appropriates the Dutch *vanitas* tradition in his representation of Benoît’s wandering thoughts. For example, Benoît ignores a butterfly that is fixed to the back of the chair as if it were an entomological specimen awaiting examination. In the visual arts, the fluttering butterfly is a well-known emblem of the soul, but in this painting the insect is dead and pinned back with its wings spread open. Girodet conflates the butterfly’s symbolic meanings to create a deeper commentary on the significance of the freedom of Benoît’s thinking, emphasizing again that formal learning unnaturally restricts the child’s imagination and stifles the healthy development of the soul; the child’s personality cannot take flight when brought up in such repressive conditions. Girodet emphasizes this point with another powerful layer of visual metaphors: a thread, symbolic of one’s life according to the ancient mythology of The Fates, winds haphazardly around a writing implement stuck in a chunk of stale bread and connects the butterfly and the beetle. Here, Girodet literally joins the idea of the restricted soul to the breakdown of one’s life and reinforces the cause of Benoît’s sad reflection.

Although Benoît holds his Latin book, he does not study from it, as Girodet’s title of this painting suggests. Before he lets the book heedlessly fall into the pile of discarded educational tools, the spectator sees the open page with a verb conjugation that ironically reads “I am glad.” Perhaps as a display of defiance, Benoît has vandalized his textbook with a crude drawing of a soldier with a sword, figuratively attacking the idea of being joyful in an environment that suppresses his imagination and contributes to his rebellious nature. Girodet includes another inscription in the portrait, but it remains in partial shadow to suggest its connection with irrational thinking. A sheet of scrap paper on the edge of the chair’s seat contains meaningless gibberish to signify the outcome of having studied the degraded educational objects, or perhaps the scribble alludes to Benoît’s stream of consciousness as he works out his own thoughts.

In 1800, Girodet exhibited this portrait at the Salon; its public display suggests that Girodet sought to invest his painting with meanings that went beyond the private familial domain. Indeed the painting is filled with layers of complex meanings that relate to Benoît’s individuality and his relationship to educational practices at age ten, a period when the awakening of curiosities or rebellion against social and parental authority may lead to personal withdrawal. The Salon critic Chaussard understood Girodet’s portrait in terms of childhood mischievousness, and accused Benoît of being “an enthusiastic practitioner of schoolboy pranks that Girodet has caught red-handedly.” Although the critic recognized the painting as an

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415 Ibid.

“authentic portrait of a daydreamer,” Chaussard did not understand the seriousness of portraiture in terms of its investigation into the psychology of the child. The painting’s symbolic use of chiaroscuro, Benoît’s expression and pose, and the juxtaposition of equivocal objects that undercut traditional visual vocabularies in art history all contribute to an unsettling sense of uncertainty that dominates the mood of this painting. This pictorial uncertainty is a metaphor for Benoît’s precarious future and the melancholy gravity that is specific to the unpredictable nature of childhood.

Girodet’s final portrait of the series is from 1803 when Benoît was thirteen and on the brink of adolescence, the phase from ages fourteen to eighteen that follows childhood and proceeds adulthood. Called The Geography Lesson, the painting is a double portrait of Benoît and his father (Fig. A176). Together, the two figures are illuminated and dominate the composition as they closely examine the globe in Dr. Trioson’s library. Unlike the previous two ambiguous settings that have isolated the subject, Girodet places Benoît in a more formal adult space that has successfully fostered his father’s own learning and discovery. The figures’ heads are brought together to emphasize thinking and study as well as to convey the intimacy of the father-son bond in this scholarly realm that is reserved for gentlema.n. No longer a sloppy, rebellious child, Benoît is maturely dressed in the presence of his father-teacher. His collar is neatly buttoned and precisely tied to suggest his readiness for adult life. As his instructor, Dr. Trioson steadies the globe and points to Roman Africa where Caesar defeated Pompey, the

\[417\] Ibid.

\[418\] For a close analysis of the cultural and scientific meanings of this space, see Sidonie Lemeux-Fraitot and Richard Dagorne, *Anne-Louis Girodet-Trioson, "La leçon de géographie* (Montargis: Musée Girodet, 2005), 10-13.
As Dr. Trioson directs Benoît’s attention to this region, he patiently monitors his son to see if he understands the lesson. Once again, Benoît is deep in his own thoughts, but not because of his daydreams or apathy; his focused expression shows genuine curiosity as he points to where his father indicates. To further demonstrate the sincerity of his academic effort, Benoît’s left hand rests gently on a volume of Caesar’s Commentaries, and the book does not appear to intimidate, frustrate, or cause weariness in the mind of the young gentleman. Instead, Benoît studies the globe to supplement his understanding of the text, and the disciplines of history and geography come together in a profound and stimulating way. Adjacent to the book on the table is a bunch of ripened green grapes, which further allude to Benoît having finally reached maturity.

Dr. Trioson’s appearance as an attentive teacher in the final portrait of the series suggests that the father’s presence as a skilled mentor may have rescued his son from a rebellious temperament that could have led to his educative and social ruin. An authoritative father’s presence also provides the structure necessary for young boys to mature and succeed. After all, Girodet’s biological father asked Dr. Trioson to facilitate the young artist’s social and scholarly education to help him enter into advantageous social circles that were not open to him by birth. From this perspective, the final portrait honors Dr. Trioson and, more broadly, the role of the father as an indispensable advisor.

I would argue that the overall pedagogical narrative in Girodet’s series indeed culminates to honor the significance of the father-teacher in the 1803 portrait, but it also recognizes that the boyhood period of social and familial rebellion, free thinking, and reverie adds to the child’s maturation. In other words, when the timing was right, Benoît’s inner reflections naturally led him to approach study seriously, and the trajectory of his education suggests a Rousseauian

Bellenger, Girodet, 380.
success story. Although Dr. Trioson is carefully supervising his son’s comprehension, his expression also suggests admiration at the boy’s inner resolve to learn. As a whole, Girodet’s portraits of Benoît Agnès Trioson reveal the special value of the child’s unique mind, particularly when unrestrained development enables the child to explore his own thoughts and mature at his own pace. I believe that the artist advanced a Romantic vision of the child in his exploration of Benoît’s temperamental psychology in the context of his boyhood “coming of age” during his intellectual development.

Théodore Géricault, one of the icons of French Romanticism, also produced a series of powerful psychological portrayals of the children of his friends and colleagues, most notably Alfred and Elisabeth Dedreux and Louise Vernet. Painted between 1817 and 1820, Géricault’s portraits demonstrate that the psychology of children, their status as unique individuals, and the mysteriousness of their thoughts continued to be worthy subjects for the visual arts in France. Nina Athanassoglou-Kallmyer observes that Géricault’s emphasis on shadowy, deserted landscapes, sinister skies, and strange accessories in his portraits of children generate an ominous tone that defies the sitters’ youthful ages. In other words, the dark visual aspects of these portraits suggest that the Dedreux siblings and Louise Vernet are not so innocent. Régis Michel goes so far as to describe Géricault’s subjects as inhuman; instead, they are “unusual creatures,” who, “with their massive bodies, oversized heads, and grave expressions, appear as monsters.” Bruno Chenique expands on Michel’s remark and asserts that childhood, according to Géricault, is “truly demonic and calls our attention to a world [of innocence] that is forever lost.”

422 Chenique, “Enfance rebelle,” 112.
Chenique understands the foreboding pictorial elements as visual metaphors for Géricault’s Romantic vision of childhood that portrays a complicated interiority of the child’s mind in which no adult can fully enter. While I believe that the penetrating stares and disturbing moods of the paintings advance the notion of the complexity of children’s minds, my analyses of Géricault’s Romantic paintings of children suggest that the artist emphasizes children’s rebellious nature as metaphors for the significance of individuality and freedom from the constraints of society’s oppressive structures.

Géricault painted two expressive bust-length portraits of young boys, one of an anonymous sitter and the other presumed to be seven-year-old Alfred Dedreux, the nephew of Géricault’s friend, the painter Pierre-Joseph Dedreux-Dorcy (Figs. A179 and A180). Géricault portrays Alfred with wide, piercing eyes that directly confront the viewer while the left side of his face is masked in darkness in a manner that appears menacing. Athanassoglou-Kallmyer argues that Géricault clearly has no sentimental vision of childhood, which he unconventionally “describes in all its raw, unchecked cruelty and governed by primitive, visceral dark forces.” I believe that as an artist who advocated for the value of the individual and personal freedoms, Géricault emphasizes the significance of the child’s defiance, which results not from inherent depravity, but from having to cope with the strict, maddening rules of a burgeoning adult life. In other words, the child occupies a special place in the social order, and Géricault honors the children of his friends as powerful embodiments of freedom.

Géricault would go on to represent Alfred in two additional portraits during this period: a full-length portrait that explores the boy’s selfhood and a double portrait that reveals his bond

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424 Athanassoglou-Kallmyer, Théodore Géricault, 90.
with his younger sister Elisabeth, who was two years his junior. In Portrait of Alfred Dedreux in the Countryside (Fig. A181), Géricault represents Alfred fashionably dressed in a deserted landscape where the sun shines through a band of gray clouds. Stephan Germer has suggested that in this portrait, Géricault references the British tradition of representing the landed aristocracy in a country setting, which conveys the sophisticated cultivation of the sitter. Indeed, Alfred reclines on a moss-covered rock and stares directly at the viewer, but there is a disturbing degree of unnaturalness in the boy’s slanted pose and vacant expression.

Géricault heightens this feeling of discomfort and intensity in his double portrait of the Dedreux siblings, where viewers are made to feel like unwelcome intruders (Fig. A182). In this painting, Géricault represents Alfred similarly to his individual portrait, but there are significant alterations in his appearance, body language, and expression. Alfred remains dressed in his stylish tan overcoat as he reclines on a rocky ledge, but now the garment is closed and tightly wrapped around his figure; his body is no longer on display. Alfred’s arm extends around Elisabeth’s waist, and she stands disturbingly motionless beside her older brother. The little girl also places her arm around her brother’s neck, but their gestures are not warm and affectionate. Instead, their actions seem defensive and territorial, as if coming together to block the viewers from invading their space. For example, Alfred’s outstretched leg extends in front of his sister’s body and acts like a protective barrier. Alfred inclines his head toward his sister and glares at the viewer while Elisabeth stares blankly into space. What is more, Géricault uses dramatic contrast in the painting to amplify the dark mood: the gradation of blues in the sky suggest impending nightfall, and deep shadows fall on the children’s heads, especially on their faces and around their eyes, symbolize their disquieting, mysterious thoughts.

Géricault produced a study for this double portrait of the siblings that reveals how he initially interpreted the psychological dynamics of the siblings’ relationship (Fig A183). In the drawing, Alfred remains on the rocky ledge, but his figure is much larger and more fancifully dressed. Alfred sits on the rocky ledge and twists toward the viewer so that his body is more open and inviting. Elisabeth sits dutifully alongside her brother; she places one hand on Alfred’s knee and the other around his waist as she looks questioningly up at him. Alfred is portrayed as the protective older brother as he skeptically regards the viewer.

The finished painting has significant compositional and conceptual changes, particularly in terms of Elisabeth’s placement and Alfred’s more hostile expression. Instead of appearing passively at her brother’s side, Elisabeth stands confidently above her seated brother, who continues to make an effort to protect her. Deep shadows around Alfred’s eyes highlight his aggressive scowl, which seems just as threatening as the dark landscape. I believe that Géricault’s changes demonstrate the depths of the children’s bond as they instinctively protect one another and challenge those who attempt to enter their private world.

During this same period in the late 1810s, Géricault painted an enigmatic portrait of artist Horace Vernet’s young daughter, Louise, who was four or five years old when the painting was completed (Fig. A9). Art historians have generally recognized the ambiguous qualities of this portrait, and there is some discussion as to whether or not the girl’s coy expression and sultry pose suggest a premature awakening of her sexuality. In this portrait, dark shadows abound as Louise leans back on a rocky ledge in a stormy, desolate landscape. The threatening sky intensifies the viewer’s anxiety about Louise’s safety; she is alone and unprotected in a dangerous space. Instead of appearing frightened or vulnerable to her surroundings, Louise assertively inclines her head to one side to express her curiosity about the viewer, or perhaps to

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426 Athanassoglou-Kallmyer, Théodore Géricault, 89-90.
solicit the viewer’s gaze. Géricault uses deep shadows to emphasize the elusiveness of the girl’s thoughts; the left side of the Louise’s face is in total darkness as she suspiciously, yet fearlessly, regards the viewer from the corner of her eye. Once again, Géricault’s dramatic use of contrast alludes to the complex psychology of his sitter, whose turbulent mind compares to the portrait’s tempestuous setting.

Because of Géricault’s stormy landscape and psychological use of light and dark, Louise’s bright blue dress stands out of the shadowy composition to call attention to the little girl’s radiant body. The dress’s sleeve slips to reveal her neck and shoulder, and her skirt is hiked up with her bare leg outstretched. The position of Louise’s body, the tilt of her head, and the suggestive arrangement of her clothing all suggest her precociousness, or perhaps something inherently rebellious or free-spirited about her being that is beyond the adult viewer’s comprehension and control. From this perspective, Géricault emphasizes the psychological harmony between Louise and the forces of nature that surround her. The conflation of the girl’s uninhibited psychological nature with the wildness of the portrait’s landscape demonstrates the powerful primal instincts of young children, especially girls, who were viewed to be naturally unruly.

Significantly, Louise’s arm is around an enormous gray cat that only partially fits into her tiny lap; its oddly large size may function to demonstrate Louise’s smallness. Here, Géricault’s emphasis on contrasting sizes indicates the child’s perception of the adult world and allows the viewer to depart into the mysterious world of a child’s scale to better understand Louise’s close proximity to the energies of nature.\footnote{Robert Rosenblum, \textit{The Romantic Child: From Runge to Sendak} (London: Thames and Hudson, 1988), 32-34.} However, I would argue that the cat’s unusually big head invests the animal with an imposing, unsettling presence that heightens the portrait’s sense of
danger at which Louise is unmoved. The huge cat is alarmingly still, and it stares at action that
takes places beyond the canvas. Géricault thus invests the portrait with a degree of suspense,
causing viewers to brace themselves for the moment when (or if) the cat will suddenly erupt with
emotion. In fact, the cat’s wide stare mirrors Louise’s defiant gaze to suggest that the viewer
cannot entirely control, impose rules upon, or dominate the girl or her feline counterpart.
Athanassoglou-Kallmyer also sees a connection between the gazes of Louise and her cat, but she
concludes that the girl’s controlling look resembles the predatory expression of her lurking
pet.428 In both cases, the imagery suggests that Louise does not submit to the established rules of
polite adult society.

The second chapter of my dissertation analyzed the complex symbolism of girls with cats
in much detail; the visual language of felines has a rich history, and meanings overlap, shift, and
are subverted in various historical and cultural contexts. We have seen eighteenth-century French
representations of girls with cats that suggest ideals of domesticity, motherhood, independence,
uncontrolled behavior, and latent sexuality. In his Romantic exploration of girlhood psychology,
I believe Géricault appropriates the well-known emblem of the cat to advance this painting as an
abstract visualization of Louise’s unpredictable nature at this phase of her life. Géricault’s
imagined cat is not “predatory” or “lurking,” and it does not appear outwardly aggressive.
Rather, it is perched on the lap of its young owner as a metaphorical extension of Louise’s inner
wildness. With no clear references to civilized adult society in this painting, Louise’s portrait is
not necessarily a historical likeness. Rather, it stands as a dream-like metaphor to explore the
inner-workings of a female child’s sense of self when removed from social constraints and
expectations.

428 Athanassoglou-Kallmyer, Théodore Géricault, 90.
Artists’ transformation of allegory, metaphor, and symbolism to represent children’s selfhood at the beginning of the nineteenth century is not unique to Géricault or Girodet. As mentioned earlier, in 1811, Pierre-Paul Prud’hon painted an allegorical portrait of the infant Napoleon II for Empress Marie-Louise, the child’s mother (Fig. A10). When Marie-Louise fled Paris after her husband’s abdication and exile in 1814, the Empress entrusted the portrait to her physician Jean-Nichols Corvisart, and it stayed with him until his death in 1821. The following year, Marie-Louise, now the Duchess of Parma, reclaimed the portrait, and it remained in her collection until her around her death in 1847. The protection of Prud’hon’s portrait during the collapse of the First Empire and its return to Marie-Louise demonstrates the importance of this painting to the former Empress.

If it were not for Prud’hon’s title, however, few details in the painting would specifically indicate the sitter’s imperial identity. Alternatively, the portrait could be interpreted as a representation of the Christ Child, Cupid, or Romulus. I have already noted that contemporaries understood allegorical references to the Ancient Roman story of Romulus in Prud’hon’s Portrait of the Sleeping King of Rome. This connection is logical since Napoleon referenced the Holy Roman Empire and Ancient Rome to legitimize his right to the throne, and his son received the title of “the King of Rome” at birth. Prud’hon represents the nude sleeping heir as the mythical founder of Rome in an imagined landscape similar to where the infant Romulus’s mother is said to have abandoned him. Rather than including prevailing allegorical attributes of the Napoleonic regime, Prud’hon emphasizes the allegorical significance of nature to depict the child’s imperial identity. In his 1824 historical study of Prud’hon’s œuvre, Jacques-Philippe Voïart observed that

429 The portrait’s provenance at the end of Marie-Louise’s life is unclear. Laveissière writes that the Duchess may have given Prud’hon’s portrait to the painter Papety in 1846, but this information comes from an untrustworthy anecdote. For a list of the painting’s provenance, see Laveissière, Pierre-Paul Prud’hon, 208.
“[Prud’hon] painted the royal child sleeping under palm and laurel trees; he is illuminated by the radiance of Glory; two imperial flowers joined above his head seem to be protecting his sleep.”

This period in France witnessed a craze for the amateur study of botany, and new discoveries in the natural sciences and innovations in the painting of flowers captured artists’ imaginations. Artists utilized the symbolic language of flowers during the Empire to represent the abundant riches of France that Napoleon cultivated through political stability and military prowess. Indeed, the King of Rome is covered with an imperial crimson cloth embroidered with gold trim, and laurels abound as ancient symbols of victory that Napoleon incorporated into his imperial iconographic program to evoke the glory of the French Empire. Yellow flowers grow near where the baby rests his head to suggest that France will flourish under the King of Rome’s mindset. Additionally, two prominent red imperial fritillaries protectively lean over the heir as he sleeps. The shapes of these flowers’ blossoms are reminiscent of an emperor’s crown and were associated with the French Empire, but they also had a historical connection to the Austrian Empire. Prud’hon’s painting quietly reveals the infant as the imperial heir, but his emphasis on the symbolic value of the child in a Romanticized landscape suggests other ideals at work within this painting.

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430 Voïart quoted in Laveissière, Pierre-Paul Prud’hon, 208.


433 Laveissière, Pierre-Paul Prud’hon, 208. Also see Sébastian Allard, Portraits publics, portraits privés, 1770-1830 (Paris: Réunion des Musées nationaux, 2006), 149-150.
Meanwhile, upon the birth of the King of Rome, other artists emphasized the conflated identities of the infant prince and Romulus in representations of the French heir, but their mythological and Napoleonic implications were less ambiguous; even Prud’hon himself worked within this more direct allegorical visual language. In the same year that Prud’hon painted his portrait of the heir, the artist produced a drawing of the bust of the King of Rome in a classical medallion format (Fig. A184). In this portrait, Prud’hon modifies the baby’s facial features to resemble his father more clearly; his prominent chin undeniably proclaims the newborn as Napoleon’s heir. Beneath the boy’s profile is a representation of Romulus and his twin brother Remus nursing from the she-wolf that adopted them. This important juxtaposition reinforces Napoleon II’s ancient lineage as the legitimate heir to the French Empire, and points to his future as a natural leader.

To honor the highly anticipated birth of an heir, the city of Paris gifted Marie-Louise with a luxurious cradle for Napoleon II that brimmed with allegorical expressions of Napoleonic power (Fig. A185). The Empire style emphasized classical visual vocabularies to distance itself from the artifice of the delicate ornamentation of the last decades of the Bourbon monarchy. Artists under Napoleon invested ornamentation with the power to enliven the ancient past so that the Empire’s direct ancestral link to Rome was undeniably visible. Objects consistently repeated identifiable themes from Greco-Roman sources that conveyed well-known cultural messages about political authority and moral and civic virtue. Prud’hon conceived of the designs for Napoleon II’s cradle, and his studies include gilded Napoleonic bees in the crib’s balusters, an

434 Allard, Portraits publics, 150.

eaglet at the cradle’s foot with its wings open that gazes toward the sun, and bas relief panels depicting personifications of the Tiber and Seine Rivers on each side.\footnote{Laveissière, \textit{Pierre-Paul Prud’hon}, 206. The bee and the eagle became official emblems of the Napoleonic Empire in 1804 when the new regime had to make a visual statement of its power at Napoleon’s coronation. See “The Creation of Napoleonic Symbolism and Its Spread Throughout the Decorative Arts in the Imperial Era,” in \textit{Symbols of Power: Napoleon and the Art of the Empire Style, 1800-1815}, ed. Odile Nouvel-Kammerer and Anne Dion-Tenenbaum (New York: American Federation of the Arts, 2007), 52-61.} While the Seine represents the child’s birthplace, the Tiber alludes to Napoleon II’s metaphorical home in Italy.\footnote{For a detailed analysis of the iconography of Prud’hon’s preparatory drawings for the imperial cradle, see Elizabeth E. Guffey, \textit{Drawing an Elusive Line: The Art of Pierre-Paul Prud’hon} (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 2001), 154-165.} Prud’hon positions the river god Tiber alongside Romulus and Remus, once associating the heir to Roman history, power, and prestige. The imperial cradle and its significance as a throne will become an important motif in allegorical and official representations of the King of Rome.

That same year, the court painter Jean-Baptiste Isabey (who also served as Marie-Louise’s art instructor) allegorically represented the infant prince, who he observed from life just three weeks after the child’s birth (Fig. A186). Isabey’s aquarelle is entitled \textit{The First Portrait of the King of Rome}, and the portrait includes an inscription in the artist’s own hand that explains the circumstances of the commission. It reads “fifteen days after the birth of the King of Rome, the Emperor gave me the order to make this portrait.”\footnote{Jean de Bourgoing, “Le fils de Napoleon devant l’art de son temps,” in \textit{Souvenirs du Roi de Rome: exposition organisée à l’occasion du centenaire de sa mort}, ed. Musée de l’Orangerie (Paris: Musées nationaux, 1932), v.} Isabey depicts Napoleon II at the foot of a statue of Victory as a miniature Mars, the Roman god of war and the father of Romulus. The baby is dressed in a simple white gown and reclines on a diagonal with a sword at his side; his tiny, fragile head lies inside Mars’s battle helmet, which provides a kind of fatherly protection. The red sash of the Legion of Honor and a crown in the child’s hand both indicate his imperial
rank. The French and Austrian flags are draped around the infant to represent the King of Rome’s embodiment of the political alliance between the two countries, even though France and Austria remained at odds during the First Empire. Isabey’s allegorical depiction of the infant prince reveals that Napoleon expected his son to be seen as a future military and political leader, and Isabey used a conventional visual language to express this identity. Variants of this portrait exist, which suggests Napoleon’s approval of this manner of representation.

Another aquarelle drawing by Isabey portrays the infant King of Rome seated in majesty on a miniature throne (Fig. A187). Napoleon II is frontally posed and directly faces the viewer with a stern expression discordant with his youthful age. Painterly blotches of color on either side of the child’s throne suggest billowing clouds, as if the heir has been deified and rules from the heavens. This portrait recalls Jean-Auguste-Dominique Ingres’s controversial Portrait of Napoleon I on his Imperial Throne from 1806 where Napoleon appears like Jupiter or God the Father (Fig. A188). Unlike Ingres’s portrait that emphasizes Napoleon’s imperial majesty through material attributes and exaggerated regalia, Isabey’s portrait of Napoleon II deemphasizes conventional emblematic references to call attention to the child himself—a living emblem of the future of the Napoleonic Empire. To signify his status, the King of Rome only wears the red sash of the Legion of Honor over his modest white garment. I believe Isabey references Ingres’s portrait to demonstrate that Napoleon’s heir will continue his father’s omnipotent presence and power; however, Isabey adapts the seated majesty pose to appear less shocking and more appropriate for a portrait of an infant. Although Napoleon II has a somber expression to convey the seriousness of his future duty, Isabey emphasizes the naturalism of the infant’s fleshy body to convey his youthful innocence.
Alexandre Remy’s little known allegorical portrait of the infant King of Rome from 1812 shows the heir asleep in his majestic cradle that ascends through the clouds into a heavenly realm (Fig. A189). Personifications of Virtue, Wisdom, and Justice hover above the cradle to watch the sleeping child, as if they are simultaneously protecting him and investing him with their values. Not only does Remy portray the King of Rome in his imperial cradle that reminds the viewer of Napoleonic power, but this painting demonstrates artists’ interests in portraying the heir as he sleeps. In Chapter One, I briefly discussed sleeping children as a metaphor for vulnerability and innocence. Eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century treatises on childcare discussed the healthful benefits of sleep. Long periods of sleep during infancy allow the child’s delicate body to repair itself, grow, and promote the development of fibers in the brain. Numerous paintings of the King of Rome portray the infant as he sleeps or allude to his slumber through the representation of his imperial cradle-throne. I believe that this manner of representation symbolically emphasizes the child’s physical and psychological well-being under the care of the Empire and, by extension, Napoleon himself.

Because of its emphasis on dynastic continuity and the omniscient presence of Napoleon, François Gérard’s portrait of Marie-Louise and the King of Rome from 1813 is a conventional full-length representation of a female consort with the heir (Fig. A190). Marie-Louise stands in a grand setting before the viewer while she balances her son who is perched atop his allegorical crib instead of cradled in his mother’s lap. The figures’ poses, however, depart from visual conventions of traditional queen-dauphin imagery that appropriated Renaissance iconography of the Madonna and Child enthroned. To reiterate, artists from the Ancien régime usually appropriated Christian iconography and portrayed royal mothers as the Virgin with their

enthroned heirs as the Christ child on their laps. Instead, Gérard foreshortens an imagined
version of the prince’s opulent allegorical cradle so that it projects into the center of the
composition. From this perspective, the viewer detects a relief carving of a mighty eagle at the
cradle’s foot, which symbolizes the presence of the Emperor. Gérard represents Napoleon II,
often called the “Eaglet of France” directly above his father’s emblem that becomes the
foundation upon which his sons stands and demonstrates the boy’s destiny as France’s next
leader. According to the portrait’s dynastic context, the cradle allegorically signifies the Empire
as the nurturing entity and functions as the child’s metaphorical throne instead of the Empress’s
lap.

Additionally, Gérard includes traditional Napoleonic iconography to emphasize the
child’s relation to the Emperor. For example, the King of Rome wears the sash of the Legion of
Honor and he holds a golden orb that is crowned with an imperial eagle as a symbol of
sovereignty instead of a cross. Gérard’s representation of the King of Rome derives from the
artist’s individual portrait of the boy from 1812 that evokes a degree of tension between the
formality of his sitter’s rank and the playfulness of an infant (Fig. A191). Here, the child reclines
against a green cushion and looks at the viewer with striking blue eyes. Gérard represents his
sitter with imperial attributes in both hands, but the infant holds them as if they were rattles to
convey his childish nature. In the large-scale portrait, however, Gérard formalizes the King of
Rome’s image to emphasize his imperial identity.

Joseph Franque’s 1812 state portrait of Marie-Louise and the heir excludes the allegorical
cradle altogether to focus upon the Empress who thoughtfully regards her son who sleeps
alongside her on the sofa. As Marie-Louise gently lifts a translucent cloth to reveal the sleeping
infant, she holds a miniature portrait of her husband against her heart (Fig. A192). I believe that
Franque’s portrait features important iconographic references to royalty and the Virgin and Child, but the artist also alludes to contemporary ideals of bourgeois feminine virtue and familial harmony, just translated into an imperial pictorial language appropriate for a public representation of the Empress and her son. Furthermore, the Empress’s unveiling of her slumbering child engages with imagery and themes from Marguerite Gérard’s genre painting of bourgeois motherhood that I discussed at the beginning of this chapter. This dialogue suggests that the infant remains at the center of the imperial family as an emblem of hope, innocence, and Marie-Louise’s virtue as a mother.

According to royal portrait conventions of female consorts with their first-born sons, Franque’s portrait features many traditional visual elements that symbolize dynastic continuity and the glory of the Napoleonic Empire, including the portrait’s palatial setting with lush fabrics, the imperial crown atop a plush pillow embroidered with Napoleonic bees, the Empress’s lavish ceremonial court dress, and the emblematic presence of the heir to the throne. However, this portrait is unusual in its portrayal of the queen consort interacting with a sleeping heir, and art historians have observed that this manner of representation is common in images of the Virgin and Child. The image of the veil was typical in Renaissance representations of the Virgin and Child because it recalls how Mary lovingly wrapped the veil from her head around the infant Christ after his birth. For example, Raphael’s Madone de Lorette (Fig. A193, 1509-10) represents a tender moment among the Holy Family as the Christ child reaches from his bed toward his mother as she covers him with her translucent veil while Joseph watches solemnly. Lindsey Meehan Dunn concludes that Franque depicts Marie-Louise as she draws the translucent

440 Allard, Portraits publics, 50; Meehan Dunn, A Revolutionary Empress, 142-148.

441 Meehan Dunn, A Revolutionary Empress, 147.
veil over her sleeping child to show the Empress and the heir as a “secularized Virgin and Child” and “champions of Catholicism, just like their Hapsburg relatives;” the King of Rome is the figurative savior of the Bonaparte dynasty.\textsuperscript{442}

While Franque certainly borrowed Christian iconography to represent the Empress and the imperial infant, I believe that this painting can also be understood according to contemporary genre paintings of mothers and infants that appropriated Christian iconography to portray the wondrous nature of the child as a special figure in the nineteenth-century nuclear family. As I discussed at the beginning of this chapter, Marguerite Gérard’s \textit{Motherhood} shows a woman uncovering the infant on her lap to bring attention to its inherent innocence that, by extension, reveals her own value within her family and society at large. I believe these ideals relate to Marie-Louise in the context of Napoleon’s views on nature and of the social value of women and the growing importance of the nuclear family and the place of the child in early nineteenth-century France.

Recent biographies of Marie-Louise tend to provide an overly sentimentalized account of the Empress’s life, particularly in terms of how the Empress’s arranged marriage to the “Corsican scoundrel named Bonaparte” was an extraordinary instance of love at first sight upon the couple’s impromptu roadside meeting—even though the sexually sheltered and religious Archduchess had been raised at the Hapsburgian court to detest the French and their policies.\textsuperscript{443} I contend that it is important to emphasize that Francis II of Austria and Napoleon agreed to

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\textsuperscript{442} Ibid., 148.  
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Marie-Louise’s nuptials out of political necessity for both parties, and the Archduchess had no option but to remain dutifully submissive to her father and, once married, her husband.

Marie-Louise arrived in France after her marriage to Napoleon by proxy in April 1810 and quickly became pregnant, giving birth to the King of Rome in March 1811 after a frightening delivery with complications that threatened the lives of mother and child. After her recovery, Marie-Louise wrote to her father about the King of Rome, expressing how her love for Napoleon had grown since the birth of her son, who closely resembled the Emperor. I believe the Empress’s correspondence reveals that she emphasized her wifely obedience to please Napoleon’s expectations about the familial and social roles of women, especially since gossiping courtiers recognized her stiff public demeanor that compared unfavorably to Josephine’s natural charm. In his conceptualization of femininity and gender, Napoleon believed in the authority of Nature that separated the sexes and privileged male supremacy that contributed to social order in the Post-Revolutionary era. For Napoleon, women were members of “the other sex,” and they had a special and useful biological role in the population expansion of the Empire. Because the increase in population remained at that forefront of Napoleonic politics, children had a special place in the Empire, and women’s cooperation with nature to produce children made them indispensable to the perpetuation of the Empire. In other words, Napoleon valued women in society, but from a biological standpoint. The Emperor blamed Josephine for the couple’s infertility that impeded Napoleon’s dynastic agenda; later, he recognized Marie-Louise’s great strength with which nature had equipped her in the difficult delivery of the heir. Once the Empire

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collapsed and the couple separated, Napoleon was able to overlook Marie-Louise’s infidelity because she had delivered his son as nature intended. 446

As I explained in my discussion of the conventional role of female consorts at court in Chapter Three, once Marie-Louise produced an heir, she fulfilled her duty to her husband and the French state, and the Empress had no significant role in the child’s upbringing. Her physical separation and emotional distance from Napoleon II was not unlike the Empress’s own childhood experience at court where she only interacted with her parents during official occasions. Still, the Empress reportedly grew jealous of the close bond between the King of Rome and Napoleon, who ignored court protocol by playing with his son, dressing him in miniature military costumes, and holding the child on his knee while planning military campaigns in his private study. 447 Although Marie-Louise had met her imperial duty, her exalted position at court prevented her from completing her natural role as a mother in the care of her infant son.

From this perspective, Franque’s portrait of Marie-Louise and the heir alludes to a contemporary understanding of maternal virtue and the significance of the child, but through the prevailing visual vocabularies of royal and Christian representations. Prud’hon, however, omits the official emblems of the Empire’s protection of the heir to instead focus on Napoleon II’s inherent connection to nature and, by extension, his mother. I believe that Prud’hon’s allegorical portrait of the sleeping King of Rome suggests a vision of Marie-Louise as a nurturing mother through the artist’s emphasis on the peacefully sleeping child and the Romantic effects of light in an enchanted landscape. By suggesting the mother’s virtue through the symbolic value of the

446 Ibid., 14-15.
447 Turnbull, Napoleon’s Second Empress, 87-93; 160.
innocent child, the portrait demonstrates Marie-Louise’s embrace of the laws of Nature, which her husband had codified.

To suggest Marie-Louise’s tender care of the infant without radically overstepping the conventions of royal etiquette and portraiture, Prud’hon alludes to Marie-Louise’s presence through emblems of nature with which women were associated. Plant life symbolizes the imperial family to suggest that familial structure and harmony is based on the principles of nature. For example, as two imperial fritillary reach over the sleeping child, Marie-Louise symbolically guards the King of Rome with her husband at her side. Analogies between the physical and psychological characteristics of plants and human beings had existed in French scientific and philosophical discourses since the publications of texts by Linnaeus and Julien Offray de la Mettrie in the mid-eighteenth century, and these comparisons informed artists working in different genres. Prud’hon’s botanically accurate depictions of imperial fritillaries resemble an engraving of the same flower by Redouté, who was famous for investing his blooms with a tangible presence and human liveliness. Prud’hon’s appropriation of Redouté’s vision of flowers makes Marie-Louise’s symbolic presence all the more vivid.

A dramatic beam of light streams from the left side of the composition to illuminate the child. In the context of religious iconography, Sébastian Allard observes that Prud’hon may have used light sacredly to associate the King of Rome with Christ to signify the miraculous arrival of the French heir as the savior of the Empire. Also, I would argue that Prud’hon interpreted this ray of light through a Romantic lens to suggest Marie-Louise’s symbolic caress of her child’s figure. As I mentioned earlier, this symbolic use of light to suggest a woman’s loving touch

448 Johnson, “Botany and the Painting of Flowers,” 143.

449 Ibid., 137-139.

450 Allard, Portraits publics, 150.
recalls Girodet’s *The Sleep of Endymion*. The artist used a beam of ethereal light to signify the moon goddess Diana’s mystical union with her beloved Endymion, a beautiful mortal shepherd who sleeps eternally. Girodet’s painting explored the psychological effects of light in the context of dreams and erotic love, and I believe that Prud’hon borrowed this pictorial device to explore the primal bond between mother, child, and nature. From this perspective, Marie-Louise symbolically nurtures her son and demonstrates her devotion to his well-being.

While sleep, dreams, and the mysteries of the subconscious were significant themes to the Romanticists and their exploration of the inner workings of the self, contemporary physicians published treatises on childcare for women that discussed the physiological benefits of sleep for infants. For instance, sleep in the first stages of infancy was nearly continuous, and doctors discouraged women from rocking children. This back-and-forth motion was liable to stun young children since the infant’s brain was too soft and would slosh around the skull to cause much damage. In his portrait, the King of Rome reclines atop a white pillow on the ground instead of in or near his imperial cradle. This placement not only visualizes the child’s physical closeness to nature, but the omission of the allegorical cradle altogether symbolically deemphasizes the role of the French state in the care of the infant’s physical development. In Prud’hon’s portrait, I believe that Nature and Marie-Louise, by extension, nurture and protect the infant prince. This observation becomes even more apparent when Prud’hon’s portrait is compared to an engraving of the King of Rome dedicated to the comte de Montesquiou, the Grand Chamberlain of France and one of Napoleon’s aides (Fig. A194, 1812). The print translates the Romantic elements of Prud’hon’s portrait into an imperial language that emphasizes dynastic continuity and the glory of Napoleon. For example, the partially nude child...

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reclines in his allegorical crib atop imperial robes; his alert posture and expression of authority belie his status as an infant. Light streams into the space to illuminate the child, but instead of protecting or nurturing him, the beam inspires him as he thoughtfully gazes upon the Parisian landscape though the open curtain. Compared to Prud’hon’s portrait that emphasizes the primacy of the child’s connection to nature, this print suggests that Napoleon II was born a miniature emperor with no indication of the heir’s childhood.

Additionally, Prud’hon emphasizes the supremacy of nature even more decidedly in his attention to the King of Rome’s portrait features. The artist made a study of the sleeping newborn from life just days after his birth (Fig. A195). Unlike his allegorical drawing of the King of Rome in medallion format, Prud’hon does not seem to embellish the child’s resemblance to Napoleon in the finished portrait. The emphasis remains on the symbolic value of the innocence of a sleeping child in nature instead of the imperial hierarchy.

The final chapter of this dissertation sought to demonstrate the symbolic value of children in Romantic portraiture during the Post-Revolutionary era. The Napoleonic Code of 1804 defined clear gender roles, and, as I have demonstrated, the child remained a cherished presence at the center of the family despite its strict paternal hierarchy. Girodet and Géricault celebrated children’s freedoms and the uniqueness of their psychologies and approaches to learning. As beings who remained closest to the purity of nature, children occupied a mysterious realm that was restricted and, at times, incomprehensible to adults. The artists discussed in this chapter overturned conventional iconographies and innovated within established genres to suggest new ways of interpreting young sitters’ psychologies. The expressiveness of wild nature became a critical element to communicate the figures’ emotions in Romantic portraiture, a category of
painting that grew in its psychological complexity around 1800 as artists reinterpreted this genre to uncover the sitter’s sense of self.\textsuperscript{452}

Beyond its mythological and quasi-religious significance, Prud’hon’s \textit{Portrait of the Sleeping King of Rome} engages with Romantic themes in his allegorical portrait of the imperial heir. The artist deemphasizes conventional Napoleonic attributes to suggest the symbolic value of the sleeping infant’s innocence in the context of Nature—the almighty entity that justified Napoleon’s social structure. As the commissioner of Prud’hon’s portrait, Marie-Louise’s Romantic representation of her son alludes to the Empress as a nurturer, which conforms to the French state’s expectation of women to willingly submit to the authority of nature as obedient wives and caring mothers.

CONCLUSION

This dissertation sought to demonstrate that during an era of major social and political changes in France during the second half of the eighteenth century and the first decades of the 1800s, new ideals on children and childhood that emphasized innocence, truthfulness, and vulnerability remained constant. Depictions of children in this ideological context were symbolically powerful in their capacities to represent a woman’s virtue, to assert the future of France at the onset of a new political order, and to establish the significance of a child’s psychological development and physical health as a way to harmonize the nuclear family. The written and visual language of nature played an important role in the conception of children in the eighteenth century; opposing themes of the wildness, control, wholesomeness, mysteriousness, and cultivation of nature in different forms paralleled discourses on children and child-rearing.

As I have demonstrated, however, contradictory perceptions of nature opened up images of children to new interpretations. Prominent eighteenth-century artists like Chardin, Boucher, Fragonard, Greuze, Vigée Lebrun, Marguerite Gérard and others studied contemporary scientific, philosophical, artistic, and pedagogical movements to naturally represent children in ways that preserved or heightened a child’s innocence to suggest one’s own morality. Even when Romantic artists like Géricault or Prud’hon imagined nature as a dangerous or mystical entity, the emphasis on the unique truthfulness of a child’s character continued to be a subject of special interest, especially when the scientific community recognized child psychology and pediatrics as their own fields of medical study in the early nineteenth century.

The conflation of the behaviors of women, children, and animals was a significant theme in this dissertation; connections can be made across chapters to show how artists reinterpreted
this subject matter according to their perceptions of the meaning of truth in childhood. Pet dogs, bids, and cats were important presences in paintings of children and allude to a myriad of artistic conventions and contemporary discourses, including domesticity and control, learning and game play, and anxieties about latent sexuality. The expressive portrayals of pets in genre paintings and portraits evoke the idea of children as embodiments of truth, but, as I have discussed, artists have approached this idea from different perspectives. Wresting dogs storm the toy Bastille as symbols of animalistic instinct as bourgeois children celebrate their victory in Louis-Marin’s series of revolutionary prints that show children as make-believe soldiers who are the future of France. Layers of emblematic meaning in the representation of cats in art history complicate how we understand the child as an embodiment of truth and natural innocence. In Louis Léopold Boilly’s Portrait of Gabrielle Arnault from 1815 (Fig. A96), for example, the artist exaggerates Gabrielle’s round eyes that visually rhyme with those of her cat, who has settled into her lap. Because Boilly emphasizes a wide-eyed expression of innocence and the placement of the cat (a well-known arrangement from Virgin-Child iconography that conveys virtuous motherhood), he seems to allude to Gabrielle’s inherent virtue that will advance her future as a caring wife and mother.

Around the same time, Géricault takes up the subject of the young girl with a cat in his Portrait of Louise Vernet (Fig. A9). The dark visual aspects of the portrait complicate the idea of girlhood innocence; however, as I have demonstrated, Géricault’s exploration of child psychology in a Romantic context suggests Louise as an embodiment of uninhibited truth in the representation of her rebelliousness. The large, ominous cat perched alongside Louise acts as her protector and, like Gabrielle’s pet, an emblem of her selfhood.
Additionally, in Chapter One I discussed François Boucher’s innovations in the pastoral genre and the layers of historical and contemporary pictorial and literary references that demand viewers’ intellectual engagement. Boucher’s naturalistic representations of children in outdoor landscapes are in dialogue with contemporary discourses on child-rearing. From this perspective, Madame de Pompadour’s interest in Boucher’s Enfants as a collector and engraver seem to suggest the marquise’s vision of herself as a virtuous woman of Enlightened humanism.

Elisabeth Vigée Lebrun’s double portrait of the royal children (Fig. A7) not only suggests the artist’s pastoral innovations, but also Marie-Antoinette’s personal stake in Rousseau’s ideas on the natural child. Compared to Drouais’s 1762 painting of the younger siblings of Louis XVI that served as Vigée Lebrun’s prototype (Fig. A157), the children of Louis XVI and Marie Antoinette are more fully integrated into the natural environment and their tender gestures and gazes emphasize their affectionate bond. Instead of drawing attention to attributes of royalty, Vigée Lebrun’s portrayal of extreme innocence and vulnerability becomes a poetic metaphor for the nurturing of the royal children under Marie-Antoinette’s care.

Representations of childhood innocence and vulnerability, children as embodiments of the France’s future, and explorations of psychological aspects of children’s selfhood in genre painting and portraiture extend well into the nineteenth century. Images of children as decorative motifs persist in private objets d’art, such as David d’Angers’s Christening Cup that the sculptor produced to commemorate his son’s baptism around 1835 (Fig. A196). The study for this object reveals allegorical drawings of the Four Ages of Childhood and includes conventional emblems like goats and grapes (Fig. A197). The final view shows a group of children huddled around a statue of Patrie that welcomes them with open arms. The iconography on David d’Anger’s personal object not only represents a father’s optimism for his son’s maturation, but it refers to
the revolutionary ideology of children as political emblems of a new era of virtue as established by the July Monarchy. Emerson Bowyer understands this imagery from different perspective, arguing that the iconography shows “the intimate relationship between children and their families” as well as “the process of learning citizenship itself” with children as members of the “national family.” Despite subtle variations in interpretation, my point here is that children continue to adorn objects as powerful icons of national hope amidst civic unrest and political change.

Rousseauian themes on the significance of nature as a child’s primary educator also continued to influence artists, particularly Gustave Courbet and his monumental The Painter’s Studio (Fig. A198): an enigmatic and quasi-autobiographical painting that Courbet exhibited at his private Pavilion of Realism in opposition to the official 1855 Universal Exposition in Paris. In this painting, a young boy watches in awe as Courbet paints a landscape while another child draws his own picture on the floor. Because children embody a kind of truthfulness and artistic authenticity that Courbet advocated in his Realist Manifesto, the presences of these children represent Courbet’s ideological approach to art. In particular, the child learning from Courbet’s landscape recalls Rousseau’s pedagogical theories on the benefits of a natural education that is free from the constraints of convention, one of Courbet’s key artistic philosophies.

As I mentioned in my introduction, compared to the eighteenth century, there was an increasing social awareness in the nineteenth century of impoverished, laboring children to have

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an experience of childhood comparable to children from the middle and upper classes who did not have to work.\textsuperscript{455} Leading artists from the avant-garde Realist movement like Courbet, Daumier, and Manet aimed to truthfully represent the daily lives of the lower classes to bring attention to the conditions and plights of the rural and urban poor and the endless cycle of poverty among generations. For example, in Courbet’s \textit{The Stonebreakers}, a young boy in filthy, tattered clothes helps an anonymous man break stones to build a road in the French countryside (Fig. A199). Known for his socialist political agenda, Courbet juxtaposes old and young to suggest that the boy will not be able to escape a lifetime of brutally backbreaking labor in such a rigidly structured social system.\textsuperscript{456}

Daumier’s \textit{The Laundress} suggests a similar social commentary, but in terms of working women in Paris during the Second Empire (Fig. A200). This painting represents an anonymous woman returning from the banks of the Seine with her daughter in tow. The woman’s body is large and heavy to show that she has the required strength and endurance to take on such a physically demanding job. The laundress appears to effortlessly carry her heavy bundle of wet laundry under one arm so that her attention is on her daughter who climbs the stairs alongside her mother. Here, the girl literally follows in her mother’s footsteps, and she holds a laundry beater in her small hand to suggest the inevitability of her future as a laundress. Like the boy from Courbet’s painting, the younger generation of urban poor is destined to remain in their


parent’s social class, and the cycle of poverty continues.\textsuperscript{457} Once again, images of children assume a socio-political function in their ability to powerfully communicate the hopeless conditions of the working classes in Paris. The plight of the child and her unfortunate circumstances are the subjects of this painting, not simply the laundress.

Children are also an important presence in Edouard Manet’s paintings of contemporary life from the 1860s. \textit{The Old Musician} from 1862, for example, features a young gypsy girl with her infant and orphaned street urchins who have joined other misfits on the outskirts of Paris as likely victims of Haussmannization (Fig. A201).\textsuperscript{458} With no apparent family to care for them, one boy places his arm around the other to suggest their future together as social outsiders on the streets. Additionally, Nancy Locke argues that Charles Baudelaire’s 1864 fictional prose poem “The Rope” (dedicated to Manet) contains passages that parallel incidents from the artist’s life, including the horrifying suicide of a child model from Manet’s studio, that give psychological depth to the artist’s work.\textsuperscript{459}

Meanwhile, representations of bourgeois family life and the domestic interior became important sites of modernity for the Impressionists, especially women artists who faced mobility issues in the public sphere because of their gender and social status.\textsuperscript{460} During her career in Paris,

\footnotesize\textsuperscript{457} For an assessment of Daumier’s \textit{œuvre} that goes beyond a study of his political caricatures, see John Berger and T.J. Clark, \textit{Daumier: Visions of Paris} (London: Royal Academy of Arts, 2013).


\footnotesize\textsuperscript{460} Compared to their male colleagues who were free to roam the city to observe contemporary life, women artists were more restricted in the places they could visit without a chaperone. See
the American expatriate Mary Cassatt became famous for her depictions of mothers and children. Images of mothers holding children on their laps and embracing them evoke Renaissance Virgin-Child iconography that I have discussed throughout this dissertation, but Cassatt invents from within this artistic tradition. In *Mother and Child* from 1889 (Fig. A202), Cassatt emphasizes a private moment between a mother and her child; the woman gently embraces the child, and the child reaches up to caress his (her) mother’s face. Flattened forms and compressed space emphasize the vertical outlines of the child’s leg, which lead the viewer up the length of the composition to focus on the tender gesture between mother and child.

Cassatt’s representations of the bond between mothers and their children are not only in dialogue with Christian iconography, but also with imagery from the eighteenth-century rococo tradition. The Goncourt Brother’s important publication on eighteenth-century French rococo painters that began as a series of articles from 1856 to 1876 and Empress Eugénie’s interest in Marie-Antoinette sparked the nineteenth-century revival of this artistic movement. *A Goodnight Hug* (Fig. A203, 1880) recalls Fragonard’s *Maternal Kisses*, which I analyzed as the embodiment of unbreakable mother-child bond in Chapter Two (Fig. A102, c. 1780). Similarly,

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Cassatt captures the special moment of the mother-child embrace, but her interest in modernist formal experimentation intensifies the scene. Cassatt crops her composition and hides the figures’ faces so that the viewer can meditate more deeply on the meaning of this loving gesture.

Cassatt’s *A Little Girl in a Blue Armchair*, *Mary Ellen Cassatt in a White Coat*, and *Child in a Straw Hat* (Figs. A204-A206) all consider the truthful and natural behavior of children, mostly girls, from deeply psychological viewpoint heightened by new pictorial techniques. In a formal dialogue with Degas’s interest in new perspectives to show how viewers engage with the real world, Cassatt positions her viewers from below to suggest how the child experiences the adult world. Instead of posing as if she were a miniature lady, Cassatt’s model from *Little Girl in a Blue Armchair* slouches down in an oversized armchair out of boredom or discomfort as her dress rides up to her waist. The presence of a sleeping puppy that is curled up on an armchair next to the girl seems to function as an emblem of innocence and vulnerability and foils any allusions to the girl’s latent sexuality. Compared to Auguste Renoir’s *Girl with a Watering Can* (Fig. A207), who is a living doll on display to represent the bourgeois status of her parents (the painting’s actual subject), Cassatt’s *Mary Ellen Cassatt in a White Coat* and *Child in a Straw Hat* assert the status of the child through an exploration of the girls’ emotions. Although Mary Ellen’s luxurious white coat alludes to her parents’ status, the child’s tight grip on the eighteenth-century armchair, rigidly upright feet, and stern sideways glance from beneath her oversized bonnet suggest a tension between the freedom of the child and the restrictive disciplines of class and the costumes of bourgeois femininity.463

As my brief survey of nineteenth-century French art indicates, the innocence and truthfulness of children remained popular subjects amidst the evolution of modern artistic techniques and social changes that resulted from the Haussmannization of Paris and

industrialization. As art historical research on depictions of children and childhood develops, it is my hope that images of children and childhood from the later part of the long eighteenth century will be understood as distinctly modern in their abilities to symbolically engage with a number of discourses that helped to shape women’s identities and the formation of modern society.
Figure A2. Jean-Honoré Fragonard, *Young Child Standing on the Windowsill*, c. 1775, oil on canvas, Private Collection, New York.
Figure A3. Jean-Baptiste-Siméon Chardin, *Boy with a Top*, 1741, oil on canvas, Musée du Louvre, Paris.
Figure A4. Jean-Honoré Fragonard, *The Grape Gatherer*, 1754-55, oil on canvas, Detroit Institute of Art, Detroit.
Figure A5. François Boucher, *Fowling and Horticulture*, from *The Arts and Sciences* series, 1750-52, oil on canvas, The Frick Collection, New York City.
Figure A6. Marguerite Gérard, *Portrait of a Mother and her Child*, 1799, oil on canvas, Musée des Beaux-Arts, Dijon.
Figure A7. Elisabeth Vigée Lebrun, *Madame Royale and the Dauphin with a Bird’s Nest*, 1785, oil on canvas, Musée national des châteaux de Versailles et Trianon, Versailles.
Figure A8. Anne-Louis Girodet, *Young Child Studying his Lessons (Benoît Agnès Trioson Studying his Lessons)*, 1800, oil on canvas, Musée du Louvre, Paris.
Figure A9. Théodore Géricault, *Portrait of Louise Vernet*, c.1817, oil on canvas, Musée du Louvre, Paris.
Figure A10. Pierre-Paul Prud’hon, *The King of Rome Sleeping*, 1811, oil on canvas, Musée du Louvre, Paris.
Figure A11. Jean-Baptiste Greuze, Child Playing with a Dog, 1767, oil on canvas, Private Collection.
Figure A12. Maurice Quentin de la Tour, *Full-Length Portrait of Madame de Pompadour*, 1755, pastel on gray-blue paper, Musée du Louvre, Paris.
Figure A13. François Boucher, *Portrait of Madame de Pompadour*, 1758, oil on canvas, Victoria and Albert Museum, London.
Figure A14. François Boucher, *Portrait of Madame de Pompadour*, 1759, oil on canvas, The Wallace Collection, London.
Figure A15. François Boucher, Portrait of Madame de Pompadour, 1756, oil on canvas, Alte Pinakothek, Munich.
Figure A16. Carle Van Loo, *Madame de Pompadour en la belle jardinière*, 1754-55, oil on canvas, Musée national des châteaux de Versailles et Trianon, Versailles.
Figure A17. Antoine Watteau, *Happy Age! Golden Age!*, 1719, oil on panel, Kimbell Art Museum, Fort Worth.
Figure A18. Charles-Antoine Coypel, *The Amusements of Childhood, or Children’s Games at the Toilette*, c. 1728, oil on canvas, Private Collection, Malibu.
Figure A19. François Boucher, *Cupids in Conspiracy*, c. 1740s, oil on canvas, Cleveland Museum of Art, Cleveland.
Figure A20. François Boucher, *Music and Dance*, c. 1740s, oil on canvas, Cleveland Museum of Art, Cleveland.
Figure A21. François Boucher, *Geniuses of the Arts*, c.1750, oil on canvas, Musée des Beaux-Arts, Angers.
Figure A22. Carle Van Loo, *Painting*, from *Allegories of the Arts*, 1752-1753, oil on canvas, Legion of Honor, Fine Arts Museums of San Francisco.
Figure A23. Carle Van Loo, *Sculpture*, from *Allegories of the Arts*, 1752-1753, oil on canvas, Legion of Honor, Fine Arts Museums of San Francisco.
Figure A24. Carle Van Loo, *Architecture*, from *Allegories of the Arts*, 1752-1753, oil on canvas, Legion of Honor, Fine Arts Museums of San Francisco.
Figure A25. Carle Van Loo, *Music*, from *Allegories of the Arts*, 1752-1753, oil on canvas, Legion of Honor, Fine Arts Museums of San Francisco.
Figure A26. Jacques Gamelin, “Skeleton of a Child,” engraving from *Nouveau recueil d’ostéologie et de myologie,”* 1779.
Figure A27. François Boucher, *The Luncheon*, 1739, oil on canvas, Musée du Louvre, Paris.
Figure A28. Abraham Bloemaert, *Shepherdess*, 1628, oil on canvas, Staatliche Kunsthalle, Karlsruhe.
Figure A29. François Boucher, *Beautiful Country Woman*, 1732, oil on canvas, Norton Simon Museum, Pasadena.
Figure A30. François Boucher, *The Vegetable Vendor*, c.1735, Chrysler Museum of Art, Norfolk.
Figure A31. François Boucher, *Pastorale à la guirlande*, c. 1738-39, Salon de la Princesse, Hôtel de Soubise (present-day National Archives), Paris.
Figure A32. François Boucher, *Pastorale à la cage*, c. 1738-39, Salon de la Princesse, Hôtel de Soubise (present-day National Archives), Paris.
Figure A33. Gabriel Metsu, *The Poultry Seller*, 1632, oil on panel, Gemäldegalerie, Dresden.
Figure A34. A. Laurent after François Boucher, *Le pasteur complaisant*, 1742, engraving, location unknown.
Figure A35. François Boucher, *The Dance of the Little Dog*, c. 1758, oil on canvas, Le Petit Palais, Paris.
Figure A36. François Boucher, *The Fisherman*, 1759, oil on canvas, location unknown.
Figure A37. François Boucher, drawing of an amour lying on his stomach, 1740, Private Collection, Besançon.
Figure A38. François Boucher, *Head of a Child*, c. 1750, graphite with white highlights on gray paper, Private Collection.
Figure A39. François Boucher, *Head of a Sleeping Child*, c. 1750, pencil with white highlights on gray paper, Private Collection.
Figure A40. François Boucher, *Two Reclining Cherubs*, c. 1750, pencil drawing, Private Collection, Paris.
Figure A41. François Boucher, *Two Children*, c. 1750, red chalk on two pieces of joined paper, Private Collection, New York.
Figure A42. François Boucher, *Sleeping Children*, c. 1750, pencil and red chalk on paper, Nationalmuseum, Stockholm.
Figure A43. François Boucher, *Seated Child*, c. 1750, black and red chalk on yellowish paper, Nationalmuseum, Stockholm.
Figure A44. After François Boucher, *The Sleep*, c. 1750, engraving, département Estampes et photographie, Bibliothèque nationale de France, Paris.
Figure A45. François Boucher, *The Flute Lesson, or The Young Shepherds*, c. 1751, Sotheby’s, London.
Figure A46. François Boucher, *The Enjoyable Lesson*, 1748, oil on canvas, National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne.
Figure A47. After François Boucher, *The Little Shepherdess*, c. 1754, oil on canvas, Private Collection, Paris.
Figure A48. François Boucher, *The Interrupted Sleep*, 1750, oil on canvas, The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York City.
Figure A49. After François Boucher, *Poetry and Music*, from *The Arts and Sciences*, c. 1750s, oil on canvas, The Frick Collection, New York City.
Figure A50. After François Boucher, *Astronomy and Hydraulics*, from *The Arts and Sciences*, c. 1750s, oil on canvas, The Frick Collection, New York City.
Figure A51. After François Boucher, *Comedy and Tragedy*, from *The Arts and Sciences*, c. 1750s, oil on canvas, The Frick Collection, New York City.
Figure A52. After François Boucher, *Architecture and Chemistry*, from *The Arts and Sciences*, c. 1750s, oil on canvas, The Frick Collection, New York City.
Figure A53. After François Boucher, *Fishing and Hunting*, from *The Arts and Sciences*, c. 1750s, oil on canvas, The Frick Collection, New York City.
Figure A54. After François Boucher, *Painting and Sculpture*, from *The Arts and Sciences*, c. 1750s, oil on canvas, The Frick Collection, New York City.
Figure A55. After François Boucher, *Singing and Dancing*, from *The Arts and Sciences*, c. 1750s, oil on canvas, The Frick Collection, New York City.
Figure A56. Le Prince, after François Boucher, *Fishing*, c. 1750s, engraving, location unknown.
Figure A57. Le Prince, after François Boucher, *The Hunt*, c. 1750s, engraving, location unknown.
Figure A58. François Boucher, *The Hunt*, c. 1750s, drawing, Victoria and Albert Museum, London.
Figure A59. Sèvres cup and saucer, 1761, porcelain, The Wallace Collection, London.
Figure A60. Sèvres Flower Vase, 1757, porcelain, The Walters Art Museum, Baltimore.
Figure A61. Sèvres Flower Vase, c.1760s, porcelain, Victoria and Albert Museum, London.
Figure A62. After François Boucher, *The Little Girl with a Cage*, 1751, oil on canvas, Mobilier national, Paris.
Figure A63. After François Boucher, *The Little Bird Catcher*, 1751, oil on canvas, Mobilier national, Paris.
Figure A64. After François Boucher, *The Little Gardener*, 1751, oil on canvas, Mobilier national, Paris.
Figure A65. After François Boucher, *The Little Fisherman*, 1751, oil on canvas, Mobilier national, Paris.
Figure A66. François Boucher, *The Little Farm Girl*, 1751-52, oil on canvas, Gabriel Cognacq Collection.
Figure A67. Claude Augustin Duflos le jeune, after François Boucher, *The Little Farm Girl*, 1751, etching and engraving, The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York City.
Figure A68. François Guérin, *Madame de Pompadour and her Daughter*, c. 1750, black and white chalk on blue paper, E.B. Crocker Museum, Sacramento.
Figure A69. François Guérin, *Madame de Pompadour and her Daughter*, c. 1750, engraving, Private Collection.
Figure A70. Attributed to François Boucher, (presumed) *Portrait of Alexandrine Le Normant d’Étoilles*, c. 1750, oil on canvas, location unknown.
Figure A71. Marguerite Gérard (and Jean-Honoré Fragonard), *The First Step*, c. 1780-85, oil on canvas, Fogg Art Museum, Harvard University, Cambridge.
Figure A72. Marguerite Gérard (and Jean-Honoré Fragonard), *The Beloved Child*, c. 1780-85, oil on canvas, Fogg Art Museum, Harvard University, Cambridge.
Figure A73. Joshua Reynolds, *Portrait of the Countess Spencer with her Daughter*, 1759, oil on canvas, Althorp House, England.
Figure A74. Elisabeth Vigée Lebrun, *Portrait of Madame Rousseau and her Daughter*, 1789, oil on canvas, Musée du Louvre, Paris.
Figure A75. François-Hubert Drouais, *Young Girl Playing with Cat*, 1763, oil on canvas, Private Collection.
Figure A76. François-Hubert Drouais, *Boy with Cat*, 1765, oil on canvas, location unknown.
Figure A77. François-Hubert Drouais, *Mademoiselle d'Angot Playing with her Cat*, 1772, oil on canvas, location unknown.
Figure A78. Jean-Honoré Fragonard, *Children Playing with a Dog*, 1765-1770, black and white chalk on paper, Musée du Louvre, Paris.
Figure A79. Jean-Honoré Fragonard. *Education Does it All*, c. 1775-80, oil on canvas, São Paulo Museum of Art, São Paulo.
Figure A80. Jean-Honoré Fragonard, *The Swaddled Cat*, c. 1777, brown wash drawing with traces of graphite, Musée du Louvre, Paris.
Figure A81. Jean-Baptiste Greuze, *Girl Weeping over a Dead Bird*, 1765, oil on canvas, National Gallery of Scotland, Edinburgh.
Figure A82. Jean-Honoré Fragonard, *The High Priest Corésus Sacrificing Himself to Save Callirhoé*, 1765, oil on canvas, Musée du Louvre, Paris.
Figure A83. Jean-Honoré Fragonard, *A Group of Children in the Sky (A Swarm of Loves)*, 1767, oil on canvas, Musée du Louvre, Paris.
Figure A84. Jean-Honoré Fragonard, Study for *The First Step*, c. 1780-85, black and white chalk on lightly faded blue antique laid paper, Fogg Art Museum, Harvard University, Cambridge.
Figure A85. Jean-Honoré Fragonard, *The Bolt*, 1778, oil on canvas, Musée du Louvre, Paris.
Figure A86. Marguerite Gérard (and Jean-Honoré Fragonard), *The Reader*, c. 1780s, oil on canvas, The Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge, UK.
Figure A87. Gabriel Metsu, *A Young Woman Composing Music*, c. 1662-1663, oil on canvas, The Royal Cabinet of Paintings, Mauritshuis, The Hague.
Figure A88. Marguerite Gérard (and Jean-Honoré Fragonard), *The Angora Cat*, c. 1788, oil on canvas, Gallery Konrad O. Bernheimer, London and Munich.
Figure A89. Marguerite Gérard, *The Good News*, 1804, oil on canvas, Private Collection.
Figure A90. Marguerite Gérard, *The Bad News*, 1804, oil on canvas, Musée du Louvre, Paris.
Figure A91. Marguerite Gérard (and Jean-Honoré Fragonard), *The Interested Student*, 1786, Private Collection.
Figure A92. Marguerite Gérard (and Jean-Honoré Fragonard), *The Childhood of Paul and Virginia*, c. 1790-95, oil on canvas, Private Collection.
Figure A93. Marguerite Gérard, *The Piano Lesson*, c. 1780s, oil on canvas, location unknown.
Figure A94. Pieter Claesz, *Still Life with Violin*, 1628, oil on panel, Germanisches Nationalmuseum, Nuremberg.
Figure A95. Clara Peeters, *Wunderkammer*, 1612, oil on oak, Staatliche Kunsthalle, Karlsruhe.
Figure A96. Louis Léopold Boilly, *Portrait of Gabrielle Arnault as a Child*, 1815, oil on canvas, Musée du Louvre, Paris.
Figure A97. Pieter de Hooch, *Woman Nursing an Infant with a Child Feeding a Dog*, 1658-60, oil on canvas, Legion of Honor, Fine Arts Museums of San Francisco.
Figure A98. Dirk Hals, *Two Girls with a Cat*, 1631, oil on canvas, Sterling and Francine Clark Art Institute, Williamstown.
Figure A99. Jacob Gerritsz Cuyp, *Portrait of a Four-Year-Old Girl with a Cat and Fish*, 1647, oil on canvas, Private Collection, Netherlands.
Figure A100. Gérard Vidal (after Marguerite Gérard), *The Triumph of Minette*, 1786, color engraving, Legion of Honor, Fine Arts Museums of San Francisco.
Figure A101. Jeanne-Élisaebth Chaudet, *A Little Girl Teaching her Dog to Read*, 1799, oil on panel, location unknown.
Figure A102. Jean-Honoré Fragonard, *The Maternal Kisses*, c. 1770, oil on canvas, Private Collection, Switzerland.
Figure A103. Jean-Baptiste-Siméon Chardin, *The Morning Toilette*, 1741, oil on canvas, Nationalmuseum, Stockholm.
Figure A105. François-Hubert Drouais, *Girl with a Cat*, 1767, oil on canvas, location unknown.
Figure A106. Jeanne-Élisabeth Chaudet, *Young Girl Mourning the Death of her Pigeon*, 1808, oil on canvas, Musée des Beaux-Arts, Arras.
Figure A107. Frans van Mieris, *Teasing the Pet*, 1660, oil on panel, The Royal Cabinet of Paintings, Mauritshuis, The Hague.
Figure A108. Frans van Mieris, *Lady at her Toilette*, 1659-60, oil on canvas, location unknown.
Figure A109. Jean-Honoré Fragonard, *Young Girl with Little Dogs*, c. 1770, oil on canvas, Private Collection.
Figure A110. Jean-Honoré Fragonard, *Young Girl in Bed Making her Dog Dance*, c. 1768, oil on canvas, Alte Pinakothek, Munich.
Figure A111. Jean-Honoré Fragonard, *The Ring Biscuits*, c. 1775, oil on canvas, Private Collection, Paris.
Figure A112. François Boucher, *Lady Fastening her Garter (La Toilette)*, 1742, oil on canvas, Fundación Colección Thyssen-Bornemisza, Madrid.
Figure A113. Jean-Honoré Fragonard, *The Good Mother*, c. 1773, oil on canvas, Museum of Fine Arts, Boston.
Figure A114. Jean-Honoré Fragonard, *Portrait of a Woman with a Dog*, 1769, oil on canvas, The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York City.
Figure A115. Jean-Jacques Bachelier, *A Dog of the Havanese Breed*, 1768, oil on canvas, Bowes Museum, Durham.
Figure A116. Joseph Wright of Derby, *Dressing the Kitten*, 1768-70, oil on canvas, Kenwood House, London.
Figure A117. William Hogarth, *The First Stage of Cruelty: Children Torturing Animals*, 1751, line engraving on paper, Yale Center for British Art, New Haven.
Figure A118. Marguerite Gérard, *La Toilette de Minette*, c. 1801, oil on canvas, Private Collection, Paris.
Figure A119. Marguerite Gérard, *The Cat’s Lunch*, c. 1801, oil on canvas, Musée Fragonard, Grasse.
Figure A120. Jacques-Louis David, *The Sabine Women*, 1799, oil on canvas, Musée du Louvre, Paris.
Figure A121. François Dumont, Marie-Antoinette and her Children, Madame Royale and Dauphin Louis Charles, at the Foot of a Tree, 1790, miniature on ivory, Musée du Louvre, Paris.
Figure A122. Brouwer and Béricourt, *The March of the Little Patriots*, c. 1789, engraving, département Estampes et photographie, Bibliothèque nationale de France, Paris.
Figure A123. Brouwer and Béricourt, *The Item of Honor*, c. 1789, engraving, dépôt Estampes et photographie, Bibliothèque nationale de France, Paris.
Figure A124. Jacques-Louis David, *The Death of Bara*, 1793-94, oil on canvas, Musée Calvet, Avignon.
Figure A126. After Jacques-Louis David, *The Death of Bara*, c. 1794, oil on canvas, Musée des Beaux-Arts, Lille.
Figure A127. Debucort, *Heroic Death of Bara Dedicated to French Youth*, 1793-94, engraving, département Estampes et photographie, Bibliothèque nationale de France, Paris.
Figure A128. Louis-Marin Bonnet, after Jean-Baptiste Huet, *Departure for the Siege of the Bastille*, c. 1789, colored engraving, département Estampes et photographie, Bibliothèque nationale de France, Paris.
Figure A129. Louis-Marin Bonnet, after Jean-Baptiste Huet, *The National Flag*, c. 1789, colored engraving, département Estampes et photographie, Bibliothèque nationale de France, Paris.
Figure A130. Louis-Marin Bonnet, after Jean-Baptiste Huet, *The National Drum*, c. 1789, colored engraving, département Estampes et photographie, Bibliothèque nationale de France, Paris.
Figure A131. Louis-Marin Bonnet, after Jean-Baptiste Huet, *The Point of Honor, or The Little Duel*, c. 1789, colored engraving, département Estampes et photographie, Bibliothèque nationale de France, Paris.
Figure A132. Louis-Marin Bonnet, after Jean-Baptiste Huet, *The Little Attack, or The Little Bastille*, c. 1789, colored engraving, département Estampes et photographie, Bibliothèque nationale de France, Paris.
Figure A133. Louis-Marin Bonnet, after Jean-Baptiste Huet, *The Destroyed Bastille, or The Little Victory*, c. 1789, colored engraving, département Estampes et photographie, Bibliothèque nationale de France, Paris.
Figure A134. Louis-Marin Bonnet, after Jean-Baptiste Huet, *The Good Dog*, c. mid-1700s, colored engraving, Musée du Louvre, Paris.
Figure A135. Louis-Marin Bonnet, after Jean-Baptiste Huet, *The Cat’s Porridge*, c. mid-1700s, colored engraving, Musée du Louvre, Paris.
Figure A136. Louis-Marin Bonnet, after Jean-Baptiste Huet, *The Beloved Goat*, c. mid-1700s, colored engraving, Musée du Louvre, Paris.
Figure A137. Louis-Marin Bonnet, after Jean-Baptiste Huet, *The Little Gourmands*, c. mid-1700s, colored engraving, Musée du Louvre, Paris.
Figure A138. Louis-Marin Bonnet, after Jean-Baptiste Huet, *The Little House of Cards*, c. mid-1700s, colored engraving, Musée du Louvre, Paris.
Figure A139. Louis-Marin Bonnet, after Jean-Baptiste Huet, *Soap Bubbles*, c. mid-1700s, colored engraving, Musée du Louvre, Paris.
Figure A140. After Louis-Marin Bonnet and Jean-Baptiste Huet, *The National Flag*, c. 1789, engraving, département Estampes et photographie, Bibliothèque nationale de France, Paris.
Figure A141. After Louis-Marin Bonnet and Jean-Baptiste Huet, *The National Exercise* (after *The National Drum*), c. 1789, engraving, département Estampes et photographie, Bibliothèque nationale de France, Paris.
Figure A142. Unattributed, *L’institutrice républicaine*, c. 1792, engraving, déparrtement Estampes et photographie, Bibliothèque nationale de France, Paris.
Figure A143. Unattributed, *The Altar of French Liberty*, c. 1789, engraving, département Estampes et photographie, Bibliothèque nationale de France, Paris.
Figure A144. Unattributed, Bara Crowned by Liberty, 1794, engraving, département Estampes et photographie, Bibliothèque nationale de France, Paris.
Figure A145. Unattributed, *Republican Mother and her Child*, c. 1793, engraving, département Estampes et photographie, Bibliothèque nationale de France, Paris.
Figure A146. Helman after Charles Monnet, “Fountain of Regeneration” over the ruins of the Bastille at the Festival of Unity, August 1793, département Estampes et photographie, Bibliothèque nationale de France, Paris.
Figure A147. Unattributed, *Nature’s Last Effort*, 1790s, engraving, département Estampes et photographie, Bibliothèque nationale de France, Paris.
Figure A148. Hubert Robert, *View of the Gardens at Versailles, at the Time of the Clearing of the Trees, Winter 1774-1775, Entrance to the Tapis-Vert, 1775*, oil on canvas, Musée national des châteaux de Versailles et Trianon, Versailles.
Figure 149. Alexis Simon Belle, *Marie Leszczinska and the Dauphin*, 1730, oil on canvas, Musée national des châteaux de Versailles et Trianon, Versailles.
Figure A150. Maurice Quentin de La Tour, *Portrait of Dauphine Marie-Josèphe of Saxony and her Son*, 1761, pastel on paper, Musée Antoine Lecuyer, Saint-Quentin.
Figure A151. Unattributed, *The Queen with Madame Première while she Breastfeeds*, c. 1778, engraving, département Estampes et photographie, Bibliothèque nationale de France, Paris.
Figure A152. (presumed) *Portrait of Marie-Antoinette and the Dauphin*, c. 1780, engraving, département Estampes et photographie, Bibliothèque nationale de France, Paris.
Figure A153. Louis Nicolas de Lesinsasse, *View of the Château de Trianon*, c. 1788, engraving, Musée national des châteaux de Versailles et Trianon, Versailles.
Figure A154. Adolf Ulrik Wertmüller, *Marie-Antoinette, Madame Royale, and the Dauphin in the Gardens of Trianon*, 1785, oil on canvas, Nationalmuseum, Stockholm.
Figure A155. Charles Beaubrun, *Portrait of Maria-Theresa of Spain, Queen of France, and the Grand Dauphin*, 1663, oil on canvas, Prado Museum, Madrid.
Figure A156. Unattributed, *Marie-Antoinette and Madame Royale*, c. 1788, engraving, département Estampes et photographie, Bibliothèque nationale de France, Paris.
Figure A157. François-Hubert Drouais, Portrait of Charles-Philippe de France (le comte d’Artois) and his sister Madame Clothilde, 1762, oil on canvas, Musée du Louvre, Paris.
Figure A158. Jean-Marc Nattier, *Portrait of the Louis-Joseph-Xavier, the Duke of Burgundy*, 1754, oil on canvas, Musée national des châteaux de Versailles et Trianon, Versailles.
Figure A159. Jean-Jacques Bachelier, *The Amusements of Childhood*, 1761, oil on canvas, Musée de Picardie, Amiens.
Figure A160. François-Hubert Drouais, *Portrait of the Future Louis XVI and his Brother Louis-Stanislas-Xavier, the comte de Provence*, 1757, oil on canvas, São Paulo Museum of Art, São Paulo.
Figure A161. Pietro Antonio Martini, *View of the Arrangement of Paintings at the Salon 1785*, 1785, etching, The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York City.
Figure A162. Elisabeth Vigée Lebrun, *Marie-Antoinette and her Children*, 1787, oil on canvas, Musée national des châteaux de Versailles et Trianon, Versailles.
Figure A163. Claude-Louis Desrais, *Promenade of the Royal Family in the Tuileries Garden*, 1790-91, ink and brown wash drawing with traces of white gouache and black chalk on paper, Musée du Louvre, Paris.
Figure A164. Jacques-Louis David, First study for the Portrait of Louis XVI Presenting the Dauphin with the Constitution, 1791-92, drawing, Musée du Louvre, Paris.
Figure A165. Jacques-Louis David, Second study for the Portrait of Louis XVI Presenting the Dauphin with the Constitution, 1791-92, drawing, Musée du Louvre, Paris.
Figure A166. Jacques-Louis David, Third study for the Portrait of Louis XVI Presenting the Dauphin with the Constitution, 1791-92, drawing, Musée du Louvre, Paris.
Figure A167. David, Fourth study for the Portrait of Louis XVI Presenting the Dauphin with the Constitution, 1791-92, drawing, Musée du Louvre, Paris.
Figure A168. Jacques-Louis David, Fifth study for the Portrait of Louis XVI Presenting the Dauphin with the Constitution, 1791-92, drawing, Musée du Louvre, Paris.
Figure A169. Jacques-Louis David, Sixth study for the Portrait of Louis XVI Presenting the Dauphin with the Constitution, 1791-92, drawing, Musée du Louvre, Paris.
Figure A170. Jacques-Louis David, Seventh study for the *Portrait of Louis XVI Presenting the Dauphin with the Constitution*, 1791-92, drawing, Musée du Louvre, Paris.
Figure A171. Unattributed, *Louis XVI presenting the Rights of Man to the Dauphin*, 1791, engraving, département Estampes et photographie, Bibliothèque nationale de France, Paris.
Figure A172. Anonymous, *The Royal Family Visits a Foundling Hospital in Paris*, c. 1790, engraving, Musée Carnavalet, Paris.
Figure A173. Marguerite Gérard, *Motherhood*, c. 1800, oil on canvas, Musée des-Beaux-Arts, Lyons.
Figure A174. Anne-Louis Girodet, *The Sleep of Endymion*, 1791, oil on canvas, Musée du Louvre, Paris.
Figure A175. Anne-Louis Girodet, *Benoît Agnès Trioson Studying Figures in a Book*, 1797, oil on canvas, Musée Girodet, Montargis.
Figure A176. Anne-Louis Girodet, *The Geography Lesson*, 1803, oil on canvas, Musée Girodet, Montargis.
Figure A177. Jean-Baptiste Greuze, *A Student Studying his Lesson*, 1757, oil on canvas, National Gallery of Scotland, Edinburgh.
Figure A178. Jean-Baptiste-Siméon Chardin, *The House of Cards*, 1737, oil in canvas, National Gallery of Art, Washington.
Figure A179. Théodore Géricault, *Portrait of a Boy (Olivier Bro?)*, 1817-1820, oil on canvas, Musée de Tessé, Le Mans.
Figure A180. Théodore Géricault, *Portrait of Alfred Dedreux*, 1817-1820, Private Collection.
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