THE BARBUS
EARLY NINETEENTH CENTURY PRIMITIVES
A BIBLIOGRAPHICAL ESSAY

Thesis for the Degree of M. A.
MICHIGAN STATE UNIVERSITY
KATHARINE E. CONTRENI

ABSTRACT

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By

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At the end of the eighteenth century, neoclassical artists abandoned Roman models for recently discovered Greek ones. David's *Rape of the Sabine Women* of 1799 was a manifesto of the new Greek inspired neoclassicism. Some students in David's own studio, however, wished to base art only on the most primitive and archaic sources, chiefly "Etruscan" vase paintings. This group, the *Barbus* (also known as *Primitifs*, *Penseurs*, or *Méditateurs*), soon ousted from David's studio and joined by other avant-garde writers and poets, evolved into a spiritual brotherhood concerned with philosophical meditation and the regeneration of society.

The *Barbus* left no extant paintings. A consideration of the literary sources which discuss the sect is thus fundamental to an assessment of their role in early

nineteenth century art. The purpose of the present study is to examine and evaluate the literary sources and to suggest new avenues for research on the Barbus. Etienne Delécluze's 1832 essay on the Barbus has long been considered the definitive interpretation of the sect. Most scholars since that time have simply summarized Delécluze's essay and have concluded with him that the Barbus were an impotent artistic sect whose adolescent activities obliterated the original value of their primitivistic thinking. No comprehensive study of the group has yet been undertaken.

Charles Nodier, a member of the Barbus and a friend of their leader, Maurice Quaï, also wrote an essay on the Barbus stressing the essentially spiritual and philosophic character of the group. This essay has been either neglected in the scholarship on the Barbus or dismissed as the romantic exaggerations of an eccentric. Nodier's essay, nevertheless, provides the key, I believe, to a more profound understanding of the group and its significance for early nineteenth century art. The artistic and spiritual tenets of the Barbus were adopted later in the century by the Nazarenes in Germany and by the Pre-Raphaelites in England. The Barbus professed an abstract linearism that was perfected by Flaxman and by Ingres and which became an international style in Europe. The Romanticism of the 1830's was foreshadowed by the dress and bohemian

behavior of the Barbus. Nodier's neglected essay should be seriously examined as a prime source for the role of the Barbus in these nineteenth century art historical developments.

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A THESIS

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Katharine E. Contreni
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INTRODUCTION

If the study of Art History is not to be merely a catalogue of stylistic variations, it must probe the cultural and historical milieux which generated particular artistic phenomena. It is probably too much to propose a cause and effect relationship between intellectual, social, economic, or psychological factors and the creation of a work of art. These factors, nevertheless, in different degrees at different times, have a role to play in determining the nature of a work of art. A work of art, in other words, is not created in a vacuum; the artist does not create isolated from his civilization or from his times. The aesthetic enjoyment of a work of art is enriched by an understanding of the cultural and historical ambiance in which the work was created. In other cases, quite apart from an aesthetic interest, a work may be historically important in the development of a movement or of an artist.

The purpose of this essay is to study a small group of artists that flourished in Paris at the end of the eighteenth century and the beginning of the nineteenth century. This group, the Barbus, is worthy of study, I believe, not only because of its intrinsic interest as an early dissatisfaction with the classicism of David, but

also because of its connections with later well known artists, Flaxman and Ingres, and with abstract linearism and Romanticism. A study of the Barbus is valuable as a step toward illuminating the prismatic character of classicism and toward understanding the germination of future artistic movements. This essay will do no more than lay the basis for a more comprehensive and profound appraisal of the Barbus.

The first chapter of the present study will present an historical sketch of the group. The second chapter will describe the primary sources available for a study of the Barbus. The third chapter will discuss the bibliography on the Barbus. Finally, the concluding chapter will offer some proposals for future research on the Barbus.

Because, to my knowledge, no extant painting by any member of the Barbus remains,[1] no such illustration can be included in this essay. I will attempt, however, to reproduce as many works as possible by artists peripheral to and influenced by the ideas of the Barbus. I hope that in this way the cumulative effect of the illustrations will give some conception of the vision of the Barbus.

CHAPTER ONE

THE BARBUS

Jacques Louis David exhibited The Rape of the Sabine Women (Pl. 1) in 1799 to proclaim the new direction in neoclassic painting. Explorations of Greek ruins and engravings in various archeological source books had increased artists' acquaintance with Greek art.[1] David was determined to purify his art by rejecting his former Roman models and by drawing his inspiration from the more antique Greek works. A group of David's students, however, were dissatisfied with his efforts and denounced the Sabine Women which David had declared exemplified the new Greek approach to art. This group, known variously as Méditateurs, Primitifs, Penseurs, or Barbus, wished to model art on archaic works, particularly "Etruscan" vase paintings (Pl. 2).[2] For them, David's Sabine Women was not pure enough, was not Greek enough. His "Greek" painting paralleled the artistic decadence of the Rococo age.[3]

Only the most primitive artistic sources were acceptable to the Barbus. They felt that with few exceptions, notably the Doric temples of Sicily and Paestum, all art after the archaic period could be destroyed without great

loss.[4] The Barbus wished to work in a linear, abstract manner similar to that of the archaic vase paintings they admired so greatly. Thus, paintings would combine simplicity with the power to evoke emotion.

The lack of extant paintings by the Barbus seriously limits our knowledge of their artistic practice. Etienne Delécluze, a member of David's studio at the time the Barbus were formed and a friend of the leader of the Barbus, Maurice Quaï, mentioned the linear quality and the absence of chiaroscuro in Maurice's work, Patroclus Sending Briseis Back to Agamemnon. This work was very large, 30 feet long, with figures six feet tall.[5] John Flaxman's drawing of Briseis Leaving the Tent of Achilles (Pl. 3) for the Iliad was perhaps one of Quaï's sources for his painting and at least gives us some notion of his stylistic preferences.[6] Flaxman had visited Paris in 1802[7] and had probably brought his drawings for the Iliad with him. It is very possible then that, like David and Ingres, Maurice Quaï knew John Flaxman's work.[8] A painting of an Ossianic subject by Paul Duqueylar (Pl. 4),[9] an artist on the fringes of the Barbus, gives us an indication of the type of painting to which the group was willing to attach its name. This work, exhibited in the Salon of 1800, was criticized as primitive and like a bas-relief. Although not claimed as a manifesto, the work was enthusiastically greeted by the Barbus as at least a partial illustration of their archaistic doctrine.[10]

Although never a Barbu, David's young student, Jean Auguste Dominique Ingres, sympathized with the group's artistic aspirations, so much so, in fact, that he became estranged from the master.[11] Ingres admired Greek vase paintings in Toulouse before coming to Paris and copied a number of them. Ingres' first works were conscious, practical applications of the theories proposed by the Barbus. A series of preliminary studies preserved at the Museum of Montauban is ample evidence of Ingres' archaistic predelictions. Among these works are the Judgment of Paris and Alexander and Apelles.[12] One of Ingres first major works, Achilles Receives the Ambassadors of Agamemnon (1802), incorporated some of the innovations of Maurice (Pl. 5).[13] Venus Wounded by Diomedes (ca. 1803) affirmed even more clearly the severe archaism and linear abstraction for which the Barbus strove (Pl. 6).[14] In illustrating the Iliad, John Flaxman chose a scene, Iris Bringing Venus to Mars (Pl. 7), immediately preceding this one selected by Ingres. It is quite clear that here Ingres is indebted to Flaxman for his composition.[15] Several later drawings, Oedipus and the Sphinx of 1808 (Pl. 8), and some portraits of the period, for example, that of Mme. Devauçay, are a visual equivalent of Maurice's advice to "faire des ombres claires, afin que la transition trop brusque de la lumière ne detruisit pas l'harmonie des formes. . . ."[16] In addition to these works, there exists a sketch plan of Ingres at work on a canvas placed diagonally in his studio,

an arrangement favored by Maurice Quaï.[17]

In these early works, as we have seen, Ingres was influenced by John Flaxman's illustrations of Homer as well as by the Barbus. Flaxman became for Ingres a fruitful model in his search for linear abstraction based on primitive sources. Thus, although the Barbus themselves did not achieve artistic fame, the works of Flaxman and Ingres gave witness to the viability of the group's theories.[18]

Meanwhile, in David's studio, tensions were exacerbated and Maurice and his group were disrupting work. The Barbus left the studio sometime in 1800 and were soon joined by avant-garde poets and writers. The sect then numbered about sixty members. From this time, the focal point of the group was a spiritual brotherhood rather than an artistic revolution. The same desire for purity and regeneration gave the group its impetus but paintings were now done only for economic reasons. Although the members still frequented the studios and visited museums, they did not produce art works to illustrate their ideas.[19]

The Barbus' enthusiasm for the primitive and the pure was also manifest in their way of living. They decried the decadence of their times and adopted a strict moral code.[20] Their leader, Maurice Quaï, and one of the female members, Lucille Franque, were known for their chastity.[21] The Barbus intended that their lives be an example for the society around them. Many of them lived

and worked together united by the bonds of love, poetry, and philosophy and by a common conception of what they held to be good and beautiful.[22] For the Barbus, then, artistic and moral life at the turn of the century was devoid of primary and natural bases and had become artificial and decadent. By returning to the primitive and archaic, they hoped to revitalize art, regenerate humanity, and renew society.

As a community, the Barbus shared certain somewhat vague but ardent quasi-religious, philosophic ideas. They believed in the genius of creation and had a strong desire for immortality. An exterior and interior spirituality pervaded each member's existence. For the Barbus, nature was grand and sublime, a model to be followed in order to purify their souls.[23] The Bible, Homer, and Ossian were revered by the group as the sources of all necessary knowledge and spiritual guidance (Pl. 9).[24] Together the Barbus contemplated poetry, philosophy, religion, and nature.

The Barbus often met at the monastery of Sainte-Marie in Paris near the Palais de Chaillot where the peace and quiet of the surroundings aided their meditations. They dressed in white tunics in imitation of the costume of the ancient Greeks and allowed their hair and beards to grow.[25] Since beards were most unusual at the time, this aspect of their appearance gave rise to their name. Their costumes and beards also made them conspicuous in

the streets of Paris.

The group also congregated at the house of one of the members, Peniez. They sat on the floor, smoking, eating dried fruit, and reading Ecclesiastes and the Apocalypse.[26] The leader of the Barbus, Maurice Quaï, conducted the meetings. The beauty and eloquence of the twenty-four year old youth had a powerful appeal for the members of the group.

> Maurice s'est levé, il a déployé son grand manteau de pourpre, et il a parlé une langue si eloquente et si magnifique que je croyais lire encore la Bible. Il me serait difficile de te donner quelque idée de Maurice Quaï, si je n'employais pas de comparaison: mais, cherche à unir, dans le même homme, le génie d'Ossian, de Job et d'Homère, sous les formes du Jupiter de Myron, et tu commenceras à concevoir le grand effort de la nature. Sa voix est comme un parfum délicieux qui flatte doucement les sens et que pénètre toutes les facultés. Comme peintre il a effrayé David; —comme poëte, il n'aurait pas de rivaux; et il a vingt-quatre ans; je te le montrerais et je te dirais: Voilà Apelle, ou Pythagore, à ton choix.[27]
>
> . . . . . .
>
> ... mais Maurice Quaï! celui-là il porte en lui un caractère si grand, si sublime, si terrassant, que tu n'oserais presque pas l'aimer; il faudrait qu'il t'apprît à l'aimer auparavant. Si tu savais comme il efface Chateaubriand! C'est Job, c'est Isaie, c'est Klopstock, et juge quel homme ce doit être que celui qui joint à tout ce que le génie des hommes a de plus distingué, le pinceau du Poussin, les moeurs de Pythagore, et la physionomie de Jupiter Hammon. Ajoute à tout cela les formes sublimes de l'antique, et ces accessoires romanesques de turban, de manteau de pourpre, de brodequins et de parfums ... tu verras que cet homme est une féerie, un demi-dieu![22]

The Barbus discerned in their leader the combined qualities of Agamemnon, Mohammed, and Jesus Christ.[29] Quaï's simplicity and humility were such, however, that they called him only Maurice.[30] Maurice died in 1804

and "la société des méditateurs descendit inconnue dans le tombeau de Maurice inconnu."[31]

CHAPTER TWO

THE *BARBUS*: SOURCES

The study of the *Barbus* suffers from several limitations. First, there are no known sources contemporary with the *Barbus*' formation in the studio of David, that is, prior to 1800. The first mention of the *Barbus* occurs in a few passages in the Salon miscellanea of 1800. Some remarks in his letters and an essay by Charles Nodier, a member of the *Barbus*, complete the stock of contemporary source material. Scholars depend for most of their information, then, on two essays in Etienne Delécluze's book, *Louis David, son école et son temps. Souvenir*. The two essays, "Les Barbus d'à présent et les Barbus de 1800," by Delécluze and "Les Barbus" by Charles Nodier were both written in 1832, about thirty years after the existence of the group. Delécluze included some additional facts in the body of his book on David, published in 1860. What little attention the *Barbus* have received in more recent studies of nineteenth century art has almost invariably been brief and derived from the highlights of the 1832 essays of Delécluze and, less frequently, Nodier. There has been no thorough exploration of the activities or the significance of this group.

The first known mention of the Barbus appears in a pamphlet published in 1800, Le petit Arlequin au Museum ou les tableaux d'Italie en vaudevilles.[1] The author introduced the Barbus, or Méditateurs, as he called them, to the public by describing their costumes and their conduct in the museums.

> Les habitués de musée connaissent les méditateurs, mais le public ne les connait pas encore, je vais donc le mettre dans la confidence.
>
> Les méditateurs ou élèves par excellence, sont quelques jeunes gens à peine échappés du collège, qui prétendent former une secte.
>
> Il est facile de les reconnaître, voici leur costume.
>
> Les cheveux courts et jamais lavés
> En vain vous ouvrez de grands yeux
> Devant les Poussins, les Carraches;
> Et de tous ces peintres fameux,
> Vous n'avez pris que les moustaches.
>
> Ils auraient, cependant, bien besoin qu'on leur lavât la tête, ils laissent pousser leur barbe ou portent des moustaches, point de cravate, un gilet rouge fermé par derrière, une espèce de veste bleue en forme de chals, un pantalon blanc, ou pour mieux dire, sale, des pantoufles jaunes, et un morceau de drap jetté sur les épaules; ils se mettent quelquefois des chiffons autour de la tête, en forme de turban.
>
> Ils ne travaillent point, parlent peu, méditent beaucoup et restent longtemps devant un tableau, dans une extase qui tient de la bêtise.
>
> Les voilà trait pour trait, je les ai peut-être un peu flattés.[2]

In discussing this passage, George Levitine noted that the author conveyed a picture of the Barbus less glamorous than that of both Delécluze and Nodier. Certain details of their bohemian dress point the way to the attire of the Romantics of the 1830's and to later revolutionary artistic groups.[3]

Paul Duqueylar's painting of an Ossianic subject, mentioned previously in connection with the art works of the

Barbus, was directly associated with the Barbus by a critic of the Salon of 1800. The critic is concerned with the dangerous aesthetics of the sect, here called Penseurs.

> On a vu cette année au salon, un ouvrage qui, dit-on, représente une scène de la vie d'Ossian; production très ambitieuse et très ridicule, qui n'offre qu'une image grossière de l'enfance de l'art, et qui, paraissant tout à coup au milieu du treisième siècle, n'aurait pas même merité les éloges que reçurent justement les premiers essais de Giotto et de Cimabue. Car dans ces restes informes que la curiosité reconnaissante des artistes va visiter au Campo Santo de Pise, la bella Vergognosa rappelle du moins l'idée de la peinture ornée des graces naives de l'enfance: et l'on n'y voit point comme parmi ces figures imputées aux compagnons d'Ossian un chien qu'on est tenté de prendre pour un tronc d'arbre. On assure que les protecteurs de cette toile bizarre (car je ne dois pas humilier la peinture, au point d'appeler cet ouvrage un tableau) prennent le titre de "Penseurs." J'avoue moi que parmi les peintres qui prennent ce titre glorieux, je suis assez content du Poussin et j'ai de la peine à croire que les novateurs fassent mieux que lui. Il n'est pas vraisemblable que malgré le bel enthousiasme de ses partisans, que cet ouvrage ait eu beaucoup d'imitateurs. Mais il peut être utile de répéter aux jeunes artistes justement prévenus contre le genre faux qui dominait il y a quarante ans, qu'on ne doit pas le remplacer par un autre système qui, quoique très opposé, n'en est pas moins vicieux; que pour éviter d'être lâches, mous et maniérés, il ne faut pas devenir froids, durs et grossiers; que la simplicité la plus pure et la plus sévère a des bornes, et que les tableaux ne sont pas des bas-reliefs.[4]

Duqueylar's painting did not receive much notice in the Salon of 1800; however, the deviation from neoclassical principles did not go entirely unnoticed. This passage, moreover, verifies the Barbus' continued interest in their archaistic artistic theories despite their own lack of productivity.

Another critic disliked the painting of Duqueylar because it had "ni dessin, ni effet, ni couleur."[5] The critic then reported that David found the work "un phénomène

en peinture" but suggested that David's praise was not entirely sincere but rather designed to create confusion and jealousy among other artists.[6] Certainly, given the nature of Duqueylar's painting as well as David's previous reaction to the Barbus' theories, it would be inappropriate to find David contradicting his strict neoclassical principles by praising a work associated with the Barbus. Whatever the reason for David's remarks on the painting, it is interesting to note that he did not divorce himself entirely from the sect formed in his studio.

Perhaps two or three years later, Charles Nodier arrived in Paris and joined the Barbus. In the letters he wrote home to his friend, Charles Weiss, in Besançon, Nodier extolled the virtues and beauty of Maurice Quaï and described the group's meetings. The three letters in which Nodier wrote of the Barbus are valuable for their insights into the personal magnetism of Maurice. We also gain from the letters some idea of the atmosphere and ritual of the Barbus' gatherings.[7] In 1804, upon the death of Maurice Quaï and Lucille Franque, Nodier wrote a eulogy, "Deux beaux types de la plus parfaite organisation humaine," in Essais d'un jeune barde.[8] In addition to a characterization of Maurice similar to that in Nodier's letters, we find an exaltation of his female counterpart, Lucille Franque. This essay contains the only consideration of any length of a member of the Barbus other than Maurice. Since Nodier concentrated on Lucille's personal qualities rather

than on her contributions to the Barbus, perhaps the space allotted to her reflects Nodier's admiration for her and not her prominence in the society. It is clear, in any case, that the young Nodier idolized Maurice and Lucille.

It is important to note the thirty year time span between the earliest mentions of the Barbus and the two fuller accounts in Delécluze's and Nodier's essays. A close examination of the two essays reveals that they are concerned with different points in time during the existence of the Barbus and, consequently, present different points of view. Etienne Delécluze was a student in the studio of David with Maurice Quaï and the initial members of the Barbus. Delécluze was a friend of Maurice's before Maurice assumed leadership of the Barbus and was an occasional visitor to Maurice's studio. The conservative Delécluze apparently terminated the relationship when Maurice became leader of the Barbus. Delécluze seems to have viewed subsequent events in David's studio from the sidelines and the group's activities after leaving the studio not at all. In his writings on the Barbus, then, Delécluze saw them as an artistic group and judged them as such. Charles Nodier, on the other hand, did not arrive in Paris and join the Barbus until after the group had left David's studio. As mentioned previously, the Barbus by this time were less of an art group and more of a spiritual brotherhood intent on the regeneration of humanity and the reform of society. Nodier's essay reflected this shift in emphasis.

In more specific terms, Delécluze in his essay stressed the externals of the society. He first described David's new artistic aspirations for the Sabine Women and the violent reaction to it by a small group within his own school. This group formed the Barbus and as outlined above admired the things of pre-Periclean Greece. A considerable portion of the essay is then devoted to a portrait of the leader of the sect, Agamemnon, that is, Maurice Quaï. Included in some detail are "Agamemnon's" looks and dress, his efforts on his thirty foot painting, his passion for Homer (and his ability to recite parts of it in Greek), the Bible, and Ossian, his intense dislike for any art that was not primitif (particularly David's Sabine Women), and his personal attraction for other young artists in David's studio. Although he outlined the Barbus' plans to return to archaic Greek vase painting in their work, Delécluze directed greater attention to the beards and the Greek dress of the group. He described the various peculiarities of Maurice's character at length but chronologically did not proceed to discuss the group as a whole after its formation. The tone of the article suggests some mockery and ridicule. Delécluze concluded that the Barbus signified nothing.

> Chose bien commune! qu'il est triste mais utile de dire: de tant d'efforts d'imagination, de ces conversations bizarres, originales même, qu'en est-il resté? Rien; pas un ouvrage de peinture, pas même une notice historique, une lettre du temps qui prouve que je ne conte pas ici une histoire faite à plaisir![9]

At the close of his essay, Delécluze compared the Barbus

of 1800 with those of the 1830's in terms of their hirsute qualities and manner of dress. For him, the Barbus' beards worn when everyone else was shaven were a symbol of the Barbus' impotent artistic revolution. What little consideration Delécluze gave to the spiritual elements of the group's thought and way of living was termed their folly and downfall.

Charles Nodier's essay is a lyric and moving account of the Barbus and an elegy for Maurice. The most salient feature of his essay is his portrayal of the Barbus as an essentially quasi-religious group, that is, as a group concerned with things of the spirit rather than a strictly artistic sect. Nodier suggested that it would be impossible to comprehend the significance of the group without viewing it in a spiritual light. Accordingly, Nodier focussed on the philosophical tenets of the Barbus, the high moral code by which they lived, their idea of nature, and their desire to renew mankind and society.[10] Nodier admitted, moreover, that the creation of works of art to exemplify their philosophical and artistic beliefs was not an overriding concern of the Barbus. Maurice was the axis around which the ideas and activities of the sect revolved and when he died in 1804, the Barbus collapsed.

In his book on David, Delécluze devoted a chapter to David's students. He included the Barbus as a group, Maurice, and several other students associated with the Barbus. The general discussion of the beliefs and interests

of the Barbus and of Maurice is largely a repetition of the earlier article. In the book, however, he outlined the extent of the Barbus' influence on several students. He noted that several students lost opportunities in their careers because of their attachment to primitive ideas. Paul Duqueylar was impressed by Maurice's championship of Ossian and painted bizarre works of Ossianic subjects. The paintings were not well received and Duqueylar soon left for Rome. Another student, Paillot de Montabert, was more of a theoretician of art than a painter. Although he was one of the first to ridicule the extravagant forms that Maurice's doctrine took, de Montabert also recognized Maurice's persuasiveness and the power of his ideas. From 1799 to 1826 he wrote a nine volume work, Traité complet de la peinture, which in part presented the Barbus' doctrine in a clear and ordered way.[11] Adolphe Lullin's study of the Greek language and of archaeology aligned him with the Barbus' archaistic doctrine. He refrained, nevertheless, from adopting the beard and dress of a full Barbu.

The sources contemporary with the Barbus, the two essays thirty years later, and the section of a book published in 1860 provide a disjointed and poorly balanced picture of the group. The material, particularly that of Delécluze, discloses the artistic elements of the sect to the near exclusion of the spiritual. An artistic group the Barbus certainly were, at least at first, but, if Nodier is correct, they were animated by primitivistic and

puristic ideas and it is here that the coherence and the significance of the group in its entirety must be sought.

CHAPTER THREE

THE *BARBUS*: BIBLIOGRAPHY

Scholars in recent years who have studied the *Barbus* can be divided into two groups. The first are art historians who view the *Barbus* as an artistic sect and therefore base their remarks largely on Delécluze's account. The second are Charles Nodier's biographers for whom Nodier's affiliation with the *Barbus* was but one incident in his eventful life. These biographers utilize Nodier's correspondence almost exclusively. Both groups of scholars, however, neglect Nodier's essay of 1832. The art historians consider his essay the exaggerated ramblings of a young Romantic while the biographers are interested not in the *Barbus* themselves but in Nodier's relations with them. It is clear, then, that a comprehensive study of the *Barbus* based on all the sources with a view to understanding the group in all its aspects has not yet been undertaken. Before outlining the possible avenues such a study might take, however, it would be wise to examine the recent literature concerning the *Barbus*.

Art historians' remarks on the *Barbus* have almost always been included briefly in a survey of nineteenth century art. The authors generally give a resumé of the

formation of the Barbus in David's studio, their artistic credo, their exotic dress and beards and conclude that the Barbus were an interesting but impotent artistic sect. Walter Friedländer gives the most comprehensive account of the Barbus in David to Delacroix.[1] For Friedländer, the Barbus themselves were an unproductive artistic sect but, in a larger context, they were "symptomatic of a movement which entirely altered the character of France's classicism."[2] The group was one of the earliest expressions of a pan-European tendency toward an anti-classical, linear abstraction. The Barbus were thus related in spirit to the Nazarenes in Germany, to the "gothic revival" and the primitives in England, and to Flaxman and Blake.[3] A good bibliography accompanies Robert Rosenblum's comments on the group in Transformations in Late Eighteenth Century Art.[4] Both Friedländer and Rosenblum consider the Barbus' effect on the young Ingres. These two scholars afford us a tantalizing glimpse of the activities of the Barbus at the turn of the century. Friedländer's insights concerning the nature and the significance of the Barbus as a movement could well be the key to a better understanding of the shifting artistic character at the beginning of the nineteenth century.

In their otherwise conventional remarks on the Barbus, some scholars occasionally interject provocative thoughts concerning the sect. Robert Rey, in his book on French painting at the end of the eighteenth century,

remarked, almost in passing, that the Barbus were not without effect on the Nazarenes, particularly on Overbeck and Cornelius.[5] Rey gives no indication how this transmission of ideas and artistic creed might have occurred or to what extent the Barbus influenced the Nazarenes. In his work on neoclassical art, Louis Bertrand linked the vague religiosity of the Barbus to the spiritual trends of the time which would soon see the triumph of Chateaubriand.[6] Again, Bertrand did not substantiate or amplify his observation.

Jules Momméja includes the Barbus among the forces at work on Ingres in the studio of David. Some of Ingres' early drawings and paintings show signs of his preoccupation with the theories of the Barbus and of Flaxman.[7] In addition, Momméja criticized the superficiality of Delécluze's treatment of the Barbus. Delécluze, blinded by his admiration for David, did not recognize the serious elements in the Barbus' doctrines. Rather, he mocked the admittedly adolescent manifestations of the group's theories without realizing that the theories themselves were essentially profound. According to Momméja, Delécluze did not see that these theories were the beginnings of the ideas which would eventually lead to the collapse of David's principles.[8]

George Levitine viewed the Barbus as a manifestation of the experimentation and originality carried on in the so-called stronghold of neoclassicism, David's atélier. Like Momméja, he suggested that the group provides evidence of the early stirrings against neoclassicism and was possibly

a harbinger of Romanticism. As we have discussed above, Professor Levitine cited passages from the Salon miscellanea of 1800 concerning the dress of the Barbus and an Ossianic painting by Paul Duqueylar to support his contentions. Levitine is the first to use these sources. He concludes that the Barbus and their significance in the artistic milieu of the early nineteenth century merit further study.[9]

The primitivism expounded by the Barbus was prevalent enough in the early years of the nineteenth century to provoke comment by the Institut des Beaux-Arts. François Benôit records that in 1808 the secretary of the Institut in a report on the work of the fourth class noticed dangerous trends based on a primitive system. Another report later in the year proclaimed the danger past. In 1812, the report was more specific as to the nature of the disturbing trends which, in fact, had not disappeared. Artists were pretending to a certain naivété and were employing simple mechanical means. The artists' efforts to draw inspiration from early Renaissance masters and from antique works were praiseworthy but unproductive. The 1815 report decried the lack of elevation and style in painting and requested young artists to submit only noble and ideal classical works.[10] This uneasiness in the Institut des Beaux-Arts occurred some time after the Barbus had collapsed and did not refer specifically to the group. It is evident, nevertheless, that the archaism of the Barbus was not an isolated phenomenon.

Benôit lists several artists who practiced the doctrines of the Barbus. Broc, who received an honorable mention in 1801, is known for the dryness of his contours and the aridity of his execution. Ingres' early drawings and paintings, as Momméja observed later, give strong evidence of the Barbus' influence. Benôit mentions particularly Ingres' Italian sketchbooks as well as his studies in Paris, 1794-1804. Granger's (1799-1840) paintings of 1808 and 1811 were criticized for their shocking oppositions of too black shadows and clear yellow lights (Pl. 10). Heim (1787-1865) incurred unfavorable notices for a similar excessive vivacity in the use of light and shade (Pl. 11 and 12).[11] Benôit mentioned two theoreticians who defended the theories of the Barbus. One of them, Paillot de Montabert, was cited by Delécluze while Artaud, conservator of the museum of Lyon, wrote Considérations sur l'état de la peinture en Italie avant Raphael.[12] Again, unfortunately, Benôit did not offer any details on the transmission of the Barbus' theories.

In an unpublished paper, The Pure and the Bold, Joshua Taylor considers the relationship between art and life. Taylor stands alone among art historians in attempting to probe the more profound implications of the Barbus' artistic creed and related way of living. The Barbus, he contends, attempted to live their dream of purity instead of simply painting it. They failed to observe the basic neoclassic principle of pure art that it must not be

entangled with the ordinary aspects of life. The Barbus insisted on confusing life with art and thus destroyed for themselves both art and life. They were the first of many groups to blur the distinction between art and life.[13]

The letters of Charles Nodier to Charles Weiss provide the material for Nodier's biographers' comments on the Barbus. These letters, as previously discussed, described the beauty and eloquence of Maurice Quaï and relate the events of two of the Barbus' meetings. Many of Nodier's biographers do not mention Nodier's affiliation with the Barbus since this youthful episode was apparently insignificant compared with his later patronage of the Romantics. Those scholars who consider Nodier's youth frequently link the Barbus with a group to which Nodier belonged in Besançon, the Philadelphes. This literary and pseudo-political brotherhood prepared Nodier, according to the biographers, to embrace the creed of the Barbus. The scholars also concentrate on Nodier's emulation of Maurice as revealed in Nodier's letters. Two scholars give particular emphasis to the Philadelphes and draw heavily on Nodier's letters.[14] As did the art historians, Nodier's biographers occasionally insert an illuminating remark regarding the Barbus. Emile Montégut, in Nos morts contemporains, claims that the Barbus were similar to the contemporary society of Parnassians or to the club of Hatchichins.[15] He did not elaborate on the nature of either group or on their connection with the Barbus.

Following the usual recital of the Barbus' beliefs and activities, A. R. Oliver, in Charles Nodier: Pilot of Romanticism, discussed Nodier's interest in mysticism that went back to his childhood. As a child, he listened to the tales of the illuminist, Jacques Cazotte, as an adolescent he became a member of the Philadelphes, and in Paris he was introduced to German illuminist doctrine by the Bavarian mystic Dr. Freimuth Sayffert and by Nicholas Bonneville. Dr. Sayffert believed in material reincarnation and Bonneville in the adoration of nature. Neither belief is very far removed from the Barbus' creed. Oliver also contrasted Delécluze's opinion of Maurice Quaï with Nodier's and concluded that Nodier's picture of Maurice as a calm, philosophic leader was an illustration of the distortions which Nodier was willing to make in his admiration of contemporaries.[16] Delécluze's report, then, according to Oliver, was more accurate.

CHAPTER FOUR

CONCLUSION

The foregoing bibliographical review discloses the overall inadequacy of the contemporary studies of the Barbus. The art historians address themselves to the Barbus as an art group and consequently rely chiefly on Delécluze's essay of 1832. Charles Nodier's biographers, on the other hand, are concerned with his immediate reaction to the sect and, thus, use only his letters. Nodier's 1832 essay is largely ignored by both groups. Despite scholars' lack of a complete analysis of the available source material, however, their studies reveal numerous topics which, if investigated, might shed light on the Barbus and on their milieu. More significantly, there are indications that both abstract linearism and Romanticism had their roots, in part at least, in the doctrines and activities of the Barbus.

The rationale for the Barbus' revolt against the classicism of David was possibly a prelude to an abstract linearism that would reach its French culmination in Ingres. The Barbus' artistic creed was also indicative of the abstract linearism that began to pervade Europe at this time. The eccentric dress and manner of living with which the Barbus embellished their artistic tenets foreshadowed

the Romantics of the 1830's. Within the scope of the present essay, it is only possible to outline topics for future research and to pose some questions as a springboard for a more profound assessment of the significance of the Barbus.

A fuller analysis of the Barbus must, I think, begin with a more serious consideration of Charles Nodier's essay of 1832. In his youthful enthusiasm and idealism, Charles Nodier was probably not an atypical member of the Barbus. Hence, his essay could well be considered an index to the intensity of the beliefs and emotions of the sect. Charles Nodier's assertion that the Barbus were essentially a religious group, therefore, must not be minimized. Some scholars have already suggested that the Barbus fed on the revival of religious feeling that would soon lead to the great popularity of Chateaubriand. A century of rationalism and skepticism and ten years of revolution produced at the turn of the century a revival of Catholicism that included a return both to sentiment and faith and to authority and tradition. A study of this phenomenon and its links to the formation of the Barbus and to the development of the creed of brotherhood and communal living would be enlightening.

Like the Barbus, the Nazarenes in Germany and the Pre-Raphaelites in England were spiritually motivated, practiced a linear style, and formed themselves into brotherhoods. The similarities among these three sects

have often been noted. Only occasionally has a scholar suggested that the Barbus exercised any direct influence on the Nazarenes. No claims at all in the form of influence are made on behalf of the Pre-Raphaelites. Nevertheless, there is room for speculation that, in lieu of direct influence, all three groups were products of a religious renewal that best translated itself in art by a return to primitive sources and a utilization of pure line. In addition, united by a common artistic and spiritual feeling, the members of each sect pledged to live as brothers. With these three groups, we are confronted with numerous points of contact that are significant for the history of art in the nineteenth century. The relationships of the Barbus, the Nazarenes, and the Pre-Raphaelites with the religious revival of the first half of the nineteenth century, the proliferation of abstract linearism in Europe, and the growth of artistic brotherhoods should be further explored.

Although the Barbus exercised little, if any direct influence on the Nazarenes or the Pre-Raphaelites, it does seem likely that considerable criss-crossing of influence occurred among the Barbus, John Flaxman, and Ingres. Elizabeth G. Holt, in From the Classicists to the Impressionists: Art and Architecture in the Nineteenth Century,[1] noted that John Flaxman's drawings formed part of the study material of the Barbus. In fact, it is possible that Flaxman's Odyssey was published in Paris in 1793. This work

was certainly available to the Barbus by 1804.[2] What needs to be determined now is the nature and extent of Flaxman's influence on the Barbus. Ingres, an exquisite linearist, was later in the century the leader of classicism and a bitter opponent of Delacroix and Romantic art. Both the Barbus and Flaxman were among the formative factors in Ingres' career. This trio, the Barbus, Flaxman, and Ingres, and the criss-crossing of influences among them would profit by further elucidation.

Ingres was the most notable artist associated with the Barbus. Delécluze, in his book on David, mentioned other minor figures affiliated with the sect. An examination of the careers of these men might yield additional details on the formation of the Barbus in David's studio and their activities before their dismissal. Benôit listed several artists whose work reflected the tenets of the Barbus. The artistic development of these artists would be a particularly interesting study. Were any of these artists associated with the Barbus during their youth? Research on the deviation from classical methods discerned in some works submitted to the Institut des Beaux-Arts and among David's own students would contribute to an understanding of classicism that takes into consideration its complexity and variety.

Theoreticians of art as well as artists took up the banner of the Barbus. Paillot de Montabert and Artaud defined the doctrines of the Barbus. One scholar went so

far as to suggest that Montabert was the Ruskin of the Barbus.[3] In order to justify this claim, Montabert's treatise deserves greater study. How precisely did the treatise promulgate and define the doctrines of the Barbus? Was it recognized as the literary justification of the Barbus? How widely was it circulated? Again, was Montabert's treatise instrumental in the propagation of abstract linearism? Artaud's relationship with the Barbus and role of his treatise in the delineation of their creed is at present very obscure.

Charles Nodier's 1832 essay in defense of the Barbus has been criticized as the romantic and sentimental memories of an eccentric man. In fact, in 1832, Nodier was the librarian of the Arsenal (he was named to this post in 1824) and was holding soirées which included Victor Hugo, Lamartine, Sainte-Beuve, Alfred de Vigny, Alfred de Musset, Balzac, Eugene Delacroix, and Liszt. With his admiration for Goethe (especially Werther) and Shakespeare plus his love of the fantastic, Nodier played a distinct role in the development of the Romantic school in the 1820's and early 1930's.[4] The links between the Barbus and the Romantics, as we have noted, are sufficient to suggest that Charles Nodier acted as a transmitter of ideas and activities between the two groups. Charles Nodier's temperament was such that he was very likely drawn to the Barbus and later to the Romantics by similarities within the groups. This hypothesis lends weight to

the proposition that the Barbus were an early manifestation of Romantic feeling. Charles Nodier's role as a transmitter of Romantic thought and feeling would be a fascinating topic to study.

The romantic overtones of Nodier's essay on the Barbus should not be dismissed as excessive, then, but should rather be examined for possible insights into the germination of Romanticism. The essay should be probed not only as source material for the hitherto unexplored spiritual aspects of the Barbus but also as a revelation of the early symptoms of Romanticism under the guise of a more severe archaism.

NOTES

INTRODUCTION

1 There is a painting of a small head of a youth attributed to Maurice Quaï in the Musée Granet, Aix-en-Provence. Robert Rosenblum in Transformations in Late Eighteenth Century Art, Princeton, 1967, 184, n. 145, contends that the style does not correspond to the radical expectations provided by literary accounts of Quaï.

NOTES

CHAPTER ONE

1 David Irwin, English Neoclassical Art: Studies in Inspiration and Taste, London, 1966, 21-30. Particularly influential were William Hamilton's engraved reproductions of his collection of Greek vases, at that time still thought to be Etruscan. The four folios in color of Hamilton's first collection were published in 1766-1767 with text in both English and French, Collection of Etruscan, Greek and Roman Antiquities from the Cabinet of the Hon. W. Hamilton, described by D'Hancarville, Naples. This edition was reprinted in Paris in 1785-1788 and in Florence in 1801-1808. Hamilton's second collection of vases was published by W. Tischbein in 1791-1795, Collection of Engravings from Ancient Vases of Greek Workmanship discovered in sepulchres in the Kingdom of the Two Sicilies . . . during . . . the years 1789 and 1790 now in the possession of Sir Wm. Hamilton, 4 vols., Naples. This collection was likewise reprinted several times.

2 The vase paintings were called Etruscan because they were found in Etruria. They did not belong to the pre-Roman Etruscan civilization. The reproductions of W.

Hamilton's two collections of Greek vases were probably available to the Barbus. Certainly, the first was.

3 Etienne Delécluze, "Les Barbus d'à présent et les Barbus de 1800," in E. J. Delécluze, Louis David, son école et son temps. Souvenirs, Paris, 1860, 421. This essay was first published in Livre des Cent-Un, 7, 1832.

4 Ibid., 424-425, 436.

5 Ibid., 424.

6 Rosenblum, Transformations, 185.

7 Walter Friedländer, David to Delacroix, tr. Robert Goldwater, Cambridge, Mass., 1963, 70.

8 Rosenblum, Transformations, 185, n. 148.

9 The drawing of Duqueylar's painting is in the upper right corner. It is a counterproof and shows a mirror image of the final composition.

10 Mercure de France, 1er Nivôse, IX, 33. In "The 'Primitifs' and their Critics in the Year 1800," Studies in Romanticism, I, 1962, 212-219, George Levitine explores the significance of this painting in terms of a departure from the established neoclassic tradition. The painting is now in the Museum of Aix-en-Provence.

11 Friedländer, David to Delacroix, 69.

12 Jules Momméja, "La jeunesse d'Ingres," Gazette des beaux-arts, sér. 3, XX, 1898, 200.

13 Norman Schlenoff, Ingres: ses sources littéraires, Paris, 1956, 64.

14 Ibid.

15 Friedländer, David to Delacroix, 70.

16 Schlenoff, Ingres, 65. Delécluze, Louis David, 70.

17 Schlenoff, Ingres, 64.

18 Momméja, "La jeunesse d'Ingres," 201.

19 Charles Nodier, "Les Barbus," in E. J. Delécluze, Louis David, 442. This essay was first published October 5, 1832 in Les Temps.

20 Ibid., 441-442.

21 Charles Nodier, Essais d'un jeune barde, Paris, 1804, 91-92.

22 Nodier, "Les Barbus," 446.

23 Ibid., 442-443.

24 Delécluze, "Les Barbus," 425. In addition to Duqueylar and Ingres, Girodet (Apotheosis of French Heroes) and Gérard (The Bard Ossian Evoking Ghosts on the Shores of the Lora) painted scenes from Ossian.

25 Charles Nodier, Correspondance inédite, ed. A. Estignard, Paris, 1876, 22, letter 11.

26 Ibid., 25, letter 12. At one meeting there were five members present: Peniez, Maurice Quaï, Alexandre Hue, Grault, and Nodier. In his book, Delécluze mentions other students associated with the sect: Colson, Augustin D., Huyot, and S . . . , Louis David, 92-93.

27 Ibid., 25-26, letter 12.

28 Ibid., 28-29, letter 13.

29 Delécluze, "Les Barbus," 423.

30 Charles Nodier, "Les Barbus," 443.

31 Ibid., 446.

NOTES

CHAPTER TWO

1 Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale, Collection Deloynes, xxii, no. 610.

2 Ibid., 83-85.

3 Levitine, "The 'Primitifs'," 212.

4 Mercure de France, 1er Nivôse, IX, 33.

5 Le verre cassé de Boilly, et les croûtiers en déroute, Paris, IX, 11.

6 Ibid.

7 Nodier, Correspondance inédite, 20-29, letters 11-13. See above, 8-9.

8 Nodier, 89-95.

9 Delécluze, "Les Barbus," 429.

10 See 6-7 for a fuller explication of the spiritual aspects of the Barbus.

11 There is a summary of Paillot's ideas in "Dissertation sur les peintures du moyen âge, et sur celles qu'on a appelées Gothiques," Magasin encyclopédique, 1812, 53-90 and 1812, 339-358. This was not available to me.

NOTES

CHAPTER THREE

1 Friedländer, 46–50, 69–72. He also discussed the Barbus, in somewhat greater detail, in "Eine Sekte der 'Primitiven' um 1800 in Frankreich und die Wandlung des Klassizimus bei Ingres," Kunst und Künstler, 28, 1930, 281–286, 320–326.

2 Ibid., 47.

3 Ibid., 49–50.

4 Rosenblum, Transformations, 129, 183–187. Robert Baschet in a chapter on "L'atélier de Louis David," in E.-J. Delécluze: Témoin de son temps, 1781–1863, Paris, 1942, 25–26 and Louis Gillet in a chapter on "Maurice" in Le trésor des musées de province, le Midi: Avignon, Carpentras, Arles, Marseille, Montpellier, Nîmes, Aix-en-Provence, Paris, 1934, 97–99, also give brief, conventional summaries of the Barbus.

5 Rey, La peinture française à la fin du XIX siècle: la renaissance du sentiment classique, Paris, 1931, 20.

6 Bertrand, La fin du classicisme et le retour à l'antique, Paris, 1897, 317.

7 Momméja, "La jeunesse d'Ingres," 200–201.

8 Ibid., 197.

9 Levitine, "The 'Primitifs'," 209-219.

10 Benôit, L'art français sous la Révolution et l'Empire: les doctrines, les idées, les genres, Paris, 1897, 315.

11 Ibid., 315-318.

12 Ibid., 318.

13 Taylor, 7. I would like to thank Mrs. Elizabeth G. Holt for communicating Professor Taylor's paper to me.

14 Léonce Pingaud, La jeunesse de Charles Nodier: les Philadelphes, Bescançon, 1914, 76-77; Michel Salomon, Charles Nodier et le groupe romantique d'après des documents inédits, Paris, 1908, 41-43. Pierre-Georges Castex' notes to Charles Nodier's Contes, Paris, 1961, 3-9, include the same material as well as a good biographical summary of Nodier.

15 Montégut, Nos morts contemporains (Béranger. Ch. Nodier. Alfred de Musset. Alfred de Vigny), Paris, 1883, 109-112.

16 Oliver, Syracuse, 1964, 29-31.

NOTES

CHAPTER FOUR

1 Holt, Garden City, New York, 1966, III, 22.

2 The Odyssey of Homer engraved by Thomas Piroli according to the drawings of John Flaxman was possibly published in Paris in 1793. Oeuvres de Flaxman was published in Paris in 1804 by Nitot-Dufresne. Catalogue Général des livres imprimés de la Bibliothèque Nationale. Auteurs, Paris, 1913, III (Fischer-Fomopoulos), 461.

3 Benôit, L'Art français sous la révolution, 318.

4 La Grande Encyclopédie: inventaire raisonné des sciences, des lettres et des arts, Paris, XXIV, 1164-1165.

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PLATE 1

PLATE 2

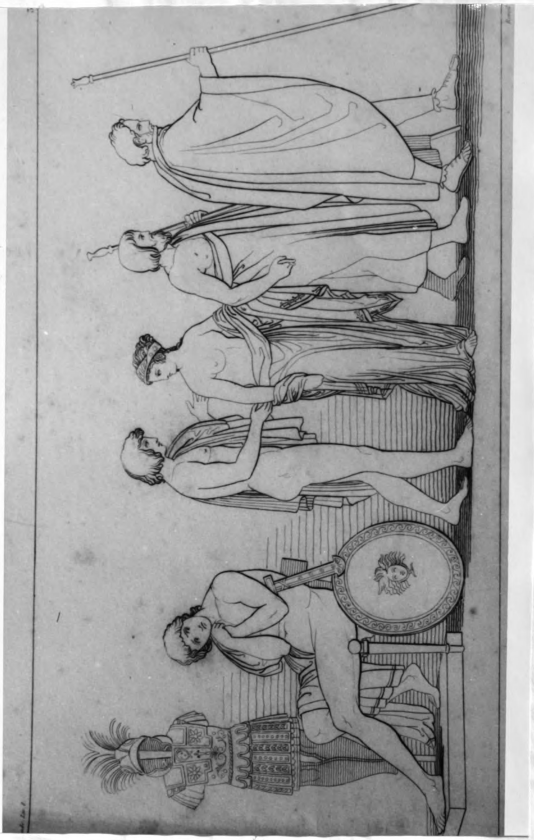

PLATE 3

PLATE 4

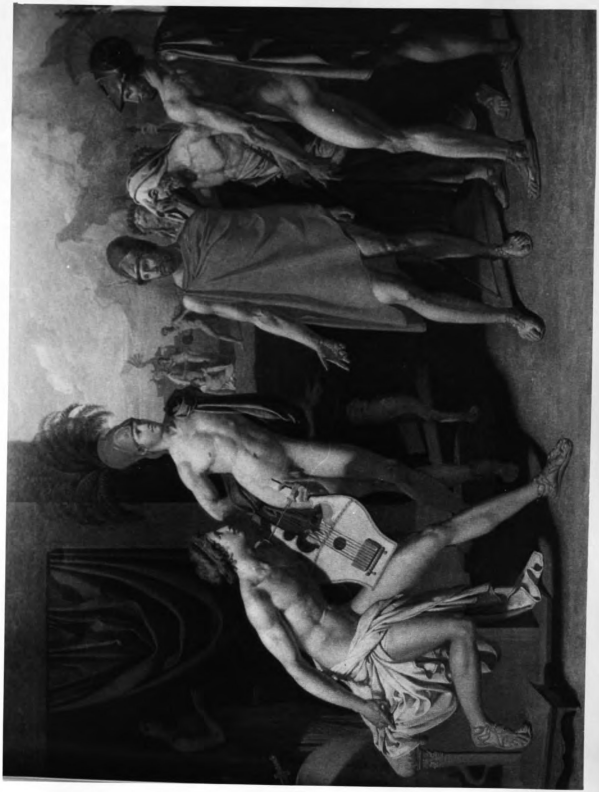

PLATE 5

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PLATE 7

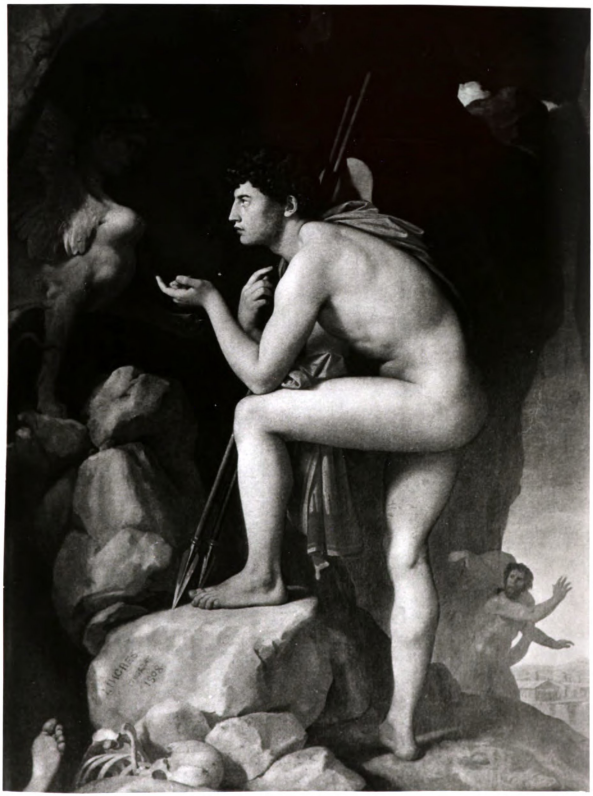

PLATE 8

PLATE 9

PLATE 10

PLATE 11

PLATE 12