

OSKAR BAETSCHMANN

JACQUES-LOUIS DAVID'S PAINTINGS IN THE SALON OF 1789

1. *Three paintings*

In the Salon of 1789 after the first revolutionary events David intended to exhibit three of his last paintings. But when the doors of the *Salon Carré* opened as usual on the 25th of August, only one of his works hung on the walls. The *Livret* of the Salon listed two paintings by David under the Numbers 88 and 89 and gave for the missing n. 88 a short explication. I quote the whole entry because it gives the full original titles of the two works¹:

Par M. DAVID, Académicien.

88. J. Brutus, premier Consul, de retour en sa maison, après avoir condamné ses deux fils, qui s'étoient unis aux Tarquins & avoient conspiré contre la Liberté Romaine; des Licteurs rapportent leurs corps pour qu'on leur donne la sépulture.

Ce tableau, de 13 pieds sur 10, est pour le Roi; il ne paroitra que vers la fin de l'exposition.

89. Les Amours de Paris & d'Hélène.

5 pieds & 1/2 des long sur 4 pieds 1/2 de haut.

¹ *Explication des Peintures, Sculptures et Gravures des Messieurs de l'Académie Royale*, Paris: Imprimerie des Bâtimens du Roi, & de l'Académie Royale de Peinture, 1789, p. 21, Reprint New York, London 1977. For the display of David's paintings in the *Salon carré* du Louvre see the drawing by Charles de Wailly in Paris, Musée Carnavalet, Inv. D 2345, reproduced in: Edouard Pommier, *Le problème du musée à la veille de la Revolution*, Musée Girodet, Montargis 1989, fig. 6, pp. 16, 26.



1 Jacques-Louis David, *Paris and Helen*, 1788, Oil on Canvas, 147 x 180 cm, Paris, Louvre.

2 Jacques-Louis David, *Lictors Returning to Brutus the Bodies of his Sons*, 1789, Oil on Canvas, 323x422 cm, Paris, Louvre.



Until the 12th of September the Public had to content themselves with the beautiful painting of the famous Greek couple (Fig. 1), commissioned by the King's brother, the comte d'Artois – the future King Charles x. But the organizers of the salon did not publicize the name of its owner in order not to stir critical reactions against a well known *libertin* and diehard counter-revolutionary who had left France for the exile since July². The *Livret* announced a delay for the *Brutus* (Fig. 2) – a delay typical of David. So unusual an announcement in the *Livret* has a very interesting political background: for its exhibition had been questioned only fifteen days before the opening of the exhibition. The direction of the Salon, the superintendent of the royal buildings, Comte d'Angiviller and his commissioner, Ch.-E.-G. Cuvillier, thought with relief that David would not be able to finish the *Brutus* in time for the exhibition. Their hopes were instantly criticized as censorship by the *Observateur*. Cuvillier sent a tortuous defense, in which he was called himself a friend of David and pointed out that the *Académie Royale* had the exclusive competence of accepting and refusing works submitted for the salon³. His statement was not a lie but it concealed part of the truth⁴.

But the question that arises is why Cuvillier or d'Angiviller did feel so nervous. D'Angiviller hated David, and the painter challenged the superintendent whenever he could. His last challenge was to pretend that the *Brutus* was a commission from the king, while the official commission concerned a *Coriolanus* or a *Regulus*⁵.

David was a star and he let it be known to the academy and the authorities. In all probability the cause of the nervousness about the salon was David's sketch. In it, besides the corpses of Brutus' sons, were represented

² Albert Boime, *Art in an Age of Revolution 1750-1800 (A Social History of modern Art, vol. 1)*, Chicago and London 1987, pp. 416-417.

³ The *procès-verbaux* of the French Academy don't mention any discussion on David's painting. A discussion was held, if any, not in a *séance* of the Academy, but between the members of this exhibition *comité*, on the 12th of August. See: Anatole de Montaiglon, *Procès-verbaux de l'Académie Royale de Peinture et de Sculpture 1648-1793*, t. x, 1789-1792, Paris 1892, pp. 16, 20, 24 - For the documents see Philippe Bordes, *Le Serment du Jeu de Paume de Jacques-Louis David. Le peintre, le milieu et son temps de 1789 à 1792 (Notes et documents des musées de France, vol. 8)*, Paris 1983, pp. 27-28, 134-138; Robert L. Herbert, *David, Voltaire, «Brutus» and the French revolution: an Essay in Art and Politics (Art in Context)*, New York 1972, pp. 55-58, 124-125; Daniel & Guy Wildenstein, *Documents complémentaires au catalogue de l'oeuvre de Louis David*, Paris 1973, n. 212, p. 28. The two letters from Cuvillier to Vien (10th and 12th of August) are printed in: *Nouvelles Archives de l'art français*, 1906, pp. 264, 266. The second letter confirms the «*nilhil obstat*» against the exhibition of *Pâris et Hélène*.

⁴ In the *séance* of 27th June, Vien, the director of the Academy, read a letter he had received from the Comte d'Angiviller. The *Directeur général des Bâtiments de Sa Majesté* announced: «*qu'il a pris les ordres du Roy pour l'exposition des ouvrages des MM. de l'Académie de Peinture et Sculpture, qui aura lieu cette année à la manière accoutumée*. See: Montaiglon, *Procès-verbaux* (see n. 3), t. x, p. 16, and n. 4 above.

⁵ Jacques-Louis David 1748-1825. *Catalogue of the Exhibition in Paris 1989*, Paris 1989, n. 85-91, pp. 194-206.

their heads, stuck on spears⁶. This detail could not but remind the visitors of the recent events in Paris and of the fate on 14 July of the governor of the Bastillon or the leader of the merchants. In the final painting that detail does not appear. Neither does the examination of the underlying outline show any trace of it. Since David needed about twelve months to complete a large painting, it is impossible to interpret this alteration as evidence that David avoided any allusion to the events of the summer, or as the effect of censorship. Cuvillier felt probably some relief, when he thought that a painting showing a very cruel motif of the Paris mob was too late for the Salon. However, the Salon did not exclude works depicting events from the revolution, for example Hubert Robert's *Démolition de la Bastille*⁷.

But the real victim of censorship was the third painting David thought of exhibiting, the wonderful *Portrait of Antoine-Laurent Lavoisier and his wife Marie-Anne-Pierrette Paulze* (Fig. 3). Disturbances were feared, because of a recent incident where Lavoisier had nearly lost his life. As a *commissaire* in the department of armament since 1775 where he was responsible for the production and storage of gunpowder, Lavoisier had ordered in August to exchange the old gunpowder. That measure had been misinterpreted as disloyalty to the revolutionaries. Lavoisier was nearly put to death, although he was known to belong to the revolutionary circle of Mirabeau, Brissot, Sieyès and Bailly⁸.

2. Brutus, misunderstood

About this painting he wrote some years later:

Ce tableau est peut-être le plus profondément et le plus philosophiquement pensé. Il [David] a eu l'art de mêler le terrible et l'agréable dans l'attitude de Brutus, dans la douleur concentrée et la sensibilité de la mère et de ses jeunes petites filles qui viennent se réfugier dans son sein, et qui ne peuvent supporter l'horreur qu'elles éprouvent à l'aspect du corps de leurs frères morts

⁶ Unknown author, *Notice sur la vie et les ouvrages de M. J. L. David*, Paris 1824, p. 35: «Dans la première composition, il [David] avait présenté les têtes séparées du corps, et portées par des licteurs. Les événements affreux de 1789 le décidèrent à les cacher, telles qu'on les voit aujourd'hui». See also the sketch of the head of the gouverneur of the Bastille on the spear, in: Bordes, *Serment* (see n. 3), fig. 8.

⁷ Explication, 1789 (see n. 1), n. 36, pp. 11-12: «Deux Esquisses faites d'après nature; [...], & l'autre représente la Bastille dans les premiers jours de sa démolition». - Herbert, David (see n. 3), pp. 63-65. For the salons during the revolution see Jean-François Heim, Claire Béraud, Philippe Heim, *Les Salons de Peinture de la Révolution française 1789-1799*, Paris 1989. See also: *1789: French Art During the Revolution*, Catalogue of the exhibition at Colnaghi, New York 1989, by Alan Wintermute, New York 1989.

⁸ David, *Catalogue*, 1989, n. 84, pp. 192-194; *De David à Delacroix. La peinture française de 1774 à 1830*. Catalogue of the exhibition in Paris, Grand Palais 1974/75, Paris 1974, n. 33, pp. 368-369. E. Grimaux, *Lavoisier 1743-1794 d'après sa correspondance, ses manuscrits, ses papiers de famille et d'autres documents inédits*, Paris 1888.



3 Jacques-Louis David, *Portrait of Lavoisier and his Wife*, Oil on Canvas, 286x224 cm, New York, Metropolitan Museum of Art.

et que les lecteurs rapportent sur leurs épaules.

This comment about the *Brutus* is written by David in his short autobiography (1793⁹). David – then at the apex of his revolutionary career – denied any political intention, as well as the interpretation of his painting as alluding to King Louis XIV, surrounded by traitors. He also supposed, that this misunderstanding prompted Cuvillier's (or d'Angivillier's) attempt to censorize. In fact, in spite of the fears expressed by Cuvillier, the *Brutus* did not foster any political interpretation. Instead critics focused on questions of style, of light and shadow, and discussed the composition on account of its lack of unity¹⁰.

There is no evidence that in 1789 the *Brutus* triggered this political sensation, as the brothers Goncourt had believed it. They describe the painting as a *coup d'Etat* and believed they could still hear the mark of admiration: the *tolle* created around the painting and the painter:

... c'est un cri d'admiration dans le public de l'art, dans le publique de la politique. Les âmes prennent feu à ce tableau qui est un coup d'Etat; l'enthousiasme proclame David un précurseur de la liberté...¹¹.

The political reception of David's *Brutus* took place more than one year after the Salon, the 19th of November 1790, following up the second performance of Voltaire's tragedy of the same in the *Théâtre de la Nation*. The performance ended with the glamorous presentation of David's painting as a «living picture», as a *tableau vivant*.

The actor Vanhove, having taken on the posture of Brutus in the painting, was sitting in an arm-chair, while the lictors were carrying in the corpse of one of his sons.

The audience recognized the imitation of the painting. This evening marks the beginning of the celebration by the revolutionary, of Brutus as

⁹ The ms of David's autobiography is in the Ecole des Beaux-Arts in Paris, ms 323, d. 3, and it is printed by Bordes, *Serment* (see n. 3), pp. 174-175.

¹⁰ Miette de Villars, *Mémoires de David peintre et député à la convention*, Paris 1850, pp. 100-101, reports a critic by the *premier peintre*, Pierre, the first who saw David's painting: «Allons, monsieur, continuez. Vous nous avez fait dans vos *Horaces* trois personnages sur la même ligne, ce qui ne s'était jamais vu! Ici, vous mettez le principal acteur dans l'ombre! C'est comme chez Nicolet, de plus fort en plus fort! Au reste, vous avez raison, le public trouve cela beau; il n'y a rien à dire. Mais où avez-vous vu, par exemple, que l'on pût faire une composition qui eût le sens commun, sans employer la ligne pyramidale». For the published critics see Herbert, *David* (see n. 3), pp. 51-52, 126-131; Helena Zmijewska, *La Critique des Salons en France du temps de Diderot (1759-1789)*, Warsaw 1980. About the missing unity see Thomas Puttfarcken, «David's 'Brutus' and theories of pictorial unity in France», in *Art History*, 4, 1981, pp. 291-304.

¹¹ E. and J. Goncourt, *Histoire de la Société Française pendant la Révolution*, Paris 1854, nouv. éd. Paris 1880, pp. 40-52, esp. p. 44. See for example Walter Friedländer, *Hauptströmungen der französischen Malerei von David bis Delacroix*, Bielefeld und Leipzig 1930, neue Ausgabe: Köln 1977, p. 33.

one of the martyrs of freedom¹². The pro-revolutionary interpretation of David's *Brutus* was prepared by the art-political activities of the artist since autumn 1790, by his project to commemorate the oath of the *tiers état* in the *Jeu de Paume* of Versailles (20th June 1789) with the largest history painting in modern times; and David seemed to support the causes of the revolution with his anti-courtly subjects, with the austerity of his style, a blow against rococo. From the summer 1790 onwards David became the leader of the revolution of the artists against the *Académie royale de Peinture et de Sculpture*, he was the head of the oppositional *Commune des Arts* and he probably started the *Serment du Jeu de Paume* already in spring¹³. As a member of the Convention Nationale David supported the elevation of the Roman consul Brutus to one of the heroic idols of the revolution. In the project for a new curtain at the opera, 1793-94, Brutus ranked with the *martyrs de la liberté* together with Marat, Lepelletier and William Tell, all following the triumphal car of the people who overturns monarchy, feudalism and theocracy. In the second version, the people had to leave their place to Napoleon Bonaparte¹⁴.

Some hints allow us to think that David supported the prorevolutionary interpretation of his early paintings. The motif of the *Oath of the Horatii*, dating already 1784, was placed in 1790 on the Altar of the Fatherland; in December of the same year a catalogue was published, advertising the sale of prints after David's *Death of Socrates* from 1787 and the *Oath of the Horatii*. The catalogue-text praises both pictures as masterpieces and presents the depiction of the Horatii as an example of patriotic zeal and of the oath of citizens. Probably David can be considered as the author of this text¹⁵. If he gave retrospectively this way a political role to his history-paintings why did he not include the *Brutus*, not even when the cult of Brutus reached a climax.

3. Women roles

Obviously, the public and the critics in the Salon of 1789 had no chance to understand the problem which was demonstrated by all three paintings

¹² See G. A. van Halem, *Paris en 1790*, translated by A. Chuquet, Paris 1896, pp. 305-312; D. L. Dowd «Art and Theatre during the French Revolution the Role of Louis David», in: *The Art Quarterly*, 1960, 23, p. 5.

¹³ Enrico Castelnuovo «Arti e rivoluzione. Ideologie e politiche artistiche nella Francia rivoluzionaria», in *Ricerche di Storia dell'Arte*, 13-14, 1981, pp. 5-20; Philippe Bordes, «J. L. David's 'Serment du Jeu de Paume': Propaganda without a cause?», in *Oxford Art Journal*, 3, 1980, n. 2, pp. 19-25; Bordes, *Serment* (see n. 3); Wolfgang Kemp, «Das Revolutionstheater des Jacques-Louis David. Eine neue Interpretation des 'Schwurs im Ballhaus'», in *Marburger Jahrbuch für Kunstwissenschaft*, 1986, 21 pp. 165-184.

¹⁴ For the cult of Brutus see: Dowd, «*Art and Theatre*» (see n. 12), pp. 3-22; Herbert, David (see n. 3), pp. 67-121.

¹⁵ Bordes, *Serment* (see n. 3), pp. 31-32.

David intended to exhibit. For two weeks and a half they could see only the famous couple of lovers, the naked Pâris on his seat, the beautiful Hélène dressed in a classical *peplos* and leaning on his shoulder, a basin filled with cool water, a luxurios bed designed *à l'antique* and in the background the famous caryatids of the Louvre, the pseudo-antique piece designed by Jean Goujon in the 16th century. The conventional roles of man and woman are reversed, the effeminate Pâris is sitting, while Hélène stands like a statue¹⁶.

The painting shows some kind of sophisticated luxury and cool voluptuousness, an ice-tempered sexuality which seems to have been very erotic. The colors are adequately selected for a very delicate *goût*, in accordance to the commissioner's social role. Antoine Thomé's biography of David, which appeared one year after the artist's death, pays due attention to this correspondence. He writes on the comte d'Artois: «Ce prince était alors le cavalier le plus galant de la cour», and he preferred to commission paintings with love themes. On the other side the painter met the requirements of his client:

Celui-ci [David] voulut que cette composition fût rendue digne du prince qui passait en France pour le modèle de la chevalerie. Il y réussit; aucun peintre avant lui n'avait traité l'amour avec autant d'élévation que dans ce tableau¹⁷.

When Thomé's statement was printed, the comte d'Artois had become King Charles x. In 1789 the critics were not unfavourable to the painting although the lack of *expression* was criticized.

The critics wanted to see in David above all the well-known painter of moral historical subjects, but they did not criticize the pseudo-antique style or the decadent character of the subject. David' vision of Greek antiquity seemed to be similar to the vision of the ancient Greek colony Sybaris which was in the age of the enlightenment strongly disapproved for its effeminacy, voluptuousness and luxury.

With the very strong and cruel *Brutus*, the representation of the unhappy first consul of the Roman Republic, David presented a very difficult conflict between public responsibilities and human emotions. This

¹⁶ For the relationship between David's painting and Christoph Willibald Glucks Opera *Paride ed Elena*, see Edgar Wind «The Sources of David's Horaces» (1941), in *Wind, Hume and the Heroic Portrait. Studies in Eighteenth-Century Imagery*, ed. by Jaynie Anderson, Oxford 1986, pp. 105-119, esp. pp. 16-119.

¹⁷ [Antoine Thomé], *Vie de David par M. A. Th.****, Paris: chez les marchands de nouveautés, 1826, pp. 30-31. One year later, P. A. Coupin was much more severe about this painting: P. A. Coupin, *Essai sur J. L. David, peintre d'histoire*, Paris 1827, pp. 21-22. - See: David, *Catalogue* (see n. 5), n. 79-83, pp. 184-191. In the eighties it was fashionable to interpret David's paintings, executed in the eighties, as pro or protorevolutionary contributions, the last of all concerned *Paris and Helen*: Yvonne Korshak, «Paris and Helen by Jacques-Louis David: Choice and Judgment on the Eve of the French Revolution», in: *The Art Bulletin*, 1987, 69, pp. 102-116, and 70, 1988, pp. 504-520.

extraordinary kind of history painting could not be understood. Even in 1827, when the co-editor of the *Revue Encyclopédique* and of the *Kunstblatt*, P. A. Coupin, analysed David as *peintre d'histoire*, he criticized the painting: there was not one, but two centres of focus in the composition¹⁸. First of all, I do not believe that David's painting belongs to the series of *exempla virtutis*, with which the historical picture was to be renewed in France after 1748¹⁹. In 1750 Jean-Jacques Rousseau contrasted the virtue of the early periods of history to the radical decline of morality in later periods, especially in his own. In 1754 the most important critic, La Font de Saint-Yenne, praised indiscriminately the act of Brutus as an example of the highest virtue which should be represented by the art of painting: «Un Brutus qui condamne ses deux fils à périr pour avoir appuyé la tyrannie de leurs Rois, & les immole à la liberté de sa patrie²⁰». To recommend Brutus as an example of the highest virtue is rather naive, one should not overlook the problematic which, following Plutarch and Vergil, was also discussed by more recent historians such as the Italian Lodovico Dolce, the French Pierre Bayle and the author of the popular *Histoire Romaine*, Charles Rollin.

Vergil had discussed Brutus' action more critically than Livy and Plutarch. In the 16th century, and in his book on the Roman Consuls, Lodovico Dolce had called Brutus simply an infanticide who would be even worse than the fratricide Romulus. And Pierre Bayle detested Brutus for his bitter and cruel virtue, but praised him for his final abolition of the human sacrifice to the Penates. Rollin draws the conclusion that Brutus condemned his sons to death because of political considerations, in other words to strengthen the Republic by means of this act of horror²¹.

Voltaire's tragedy *Brutus* was performed only once in Paris on the 25th January 1786 and the enthusiasm of Vittorio Alfieri's mistress challenged the poet to start on his own version.

The *Bruto primo* was finished in Paris on the 31st December 1788 and published the following year by Didot in Paris with a remarkable dedica-

¹⁸ Coupin, *Essai* (see n. 17), pp. 22-23.

¹⁹ Jean Locquin, *La Peinture d'histoire en France de 1747 à 1785. Etude sur l'évolution des idées artistiques dans la seconde moitié du XVIII^e siècle*, Paris 1912, Reprint Paris 1978, p. 251; Robert Rosenblum, *Transformations in Late Eighteenth Century Art*, Princeton, N.J. 1967.

²⁰ La Font de Saint-Yenne, *Sentimens sur quelques ouvrages de Peinture, Sculpture et Gravure. Ecrit à un particuleir en Province*, Paris 1754, pp. 92-93; Reprint Slatkine, Genf 1970. See André Fontaine, *Les Doctrines d'Art en France. Peintre, amateurs, critiques de Poussin à Diderot*, Paris 1909, Reprint Slatkine, Genf 1970; Thomas E. Crow, *Painters and Public Life in Eighteenth - Century Paris*, New Haven 1985.

²¹ Lodovico Dolce, *Della dignità de Consoli et de' Fatti de' Romani*, Venice 1560, pp. 120-122; Pierre Bayle, *Dictionnaire historique et critique*, 3^eme Edition, revue, corrigée et augmentée par l'Auteur, Rotterdam 1720, Vol. 1. pp. 676-677; Charles Rollin, *Histoire Romaine, depuis la Fondation de Rome jusqu'à la Bataille D'Actium: c'est à dire jusqu'à la fin de la République*, Paris 1793, Vol. 1, pp. 347-360.

tion to George Washington, the *liberatore dell'America*²². In the same year 1788 two other painters besides David began paintings with Brutus as their subject: David's friend Jean-Baptiste Wicar, then in Florence, and Guillaume-Guillon Lethière, a pensioner of the French Academy in Rome. Voltaire and Alfieri attempted to justify the merciless attitude of the father against his sons by means of political or historical-philosophical arguments. Wicar and Lethière confronted the consul with the execution of his sons in a public place.

In contrast to these tragedies and to the projects by Wicar and Lethière, David treated from the first sketch the conflict between the isolated Brutus and the lamenting women in his private house. In a single drawing, the painter considered a public scene. He consulted the illustrated edition of Voltaire's works and first he tried to use Moreau's illustration of Irène chased by spirits for his figure of the wife of Brutus. It was not until the oil-sketch of Stockholm, that is the last study before the final painting, he rejected the pose of Irène in favour of one after Niobe (Fig. 4). The «procession» with the corpses of the sons is a genuine invention by David.

David chose the private house of Brutus as the scene of an insoluble conflict between family and public life. As in the 18th century town houses, the dividing line between the two domains runs through the middle of the building. In the private rooms are the women, while in the public part, Brutus sits beneath a statue of the *Dea Roma*, painted after the famous Roman fresco in the Palazzo Barberini. Not only are the two domains separated by a pillar and a curtain, but they are also divided in a hostile manner by the empty chair, and by a sharp contrast of light and shadow. But the body of one of the dead sons appears on the left behind Brutus and the *Dea Roma* in the light, and the mother's plaintive gesture points over beyond the line of separation towards him. The light thus creates a horizontal context over and above the opposition, and this context is occupied by family feelings. The shaded area of the *Dea Roma* and of Brutus is excluded from it²³.

In his own house, Brutus tries to subordinate himself again to the interests of the state and to justify his public action vis-à-vis the realm of the family. His attempt to legitimize his action fails: Brutus and the goddess are excluded from light and family emotions. The goddess Roma, together

²² Voltaire, «Brutus», in *Oeuvres complètes*, Paris 1877, vol. 2, pp. 301-309; Vittorio Alfieri, *Bruto primo, Tragedia*, in *Opere. Tragedie*, ed. by A. Fabrizi, vol. 25, Asti 1975.

²³ For the *Dea Roma* in the Palazzo Barberini in Rome, first copied for Cassiano dal Pozzo's Museo Cartaceo, see: Francesco Solinas, «Percorsi puteani: note naturalistiche ed inediti appunti antiquari», in Cassiano dal Pozzo, *Atti del Seminario Internazionale di Studi*, ed. by Francesco Solinas, Rome 1989, pp. 95-129, fig. 13, p. 115. See for further details about visual references of the *Brutus* my essay «Das Historienbild als 'Tableau' des Konflikts: Jacques-Louis Davids 'Brutus' von 1789», in *Wiener Jahrbuch für Kunstgeschichte*, vol. 39, 1986, pp. 145-162.



4 *Niobid mother*, Etching, in Angelo Fabroni, *Dissertazione sulle statue appartenenti alla favola di Niobe*, Florence, 1779, 9, tav. 11.

5 Jacques-Louis David, *Sabines*, 1799, Oil on Canvas, 385x522 cm, Paris, Louvre.



with the corpses of his sons, forms the reverse of a figure of *Pietà*. The subordination of Brutus to the goddess is partly balanced by his thoughtful gesture. In his left hand, Brutus holds the proof of the betrayal of his sons and thereby the proof of the legality of his action under the principles of the state and of the law. The horizontal context of light and of human emotions does not put in question the legitimacy, but the morality of the action.

It has always been recognized that David's double portrait of Lavoisier and his wife and *Les amours de Pâris et d'Hélène*, painted in the same year 1788, were counterparts or parodies in the musical sense of the word, as Edgar Wind pointed out²⁴. Marie-Anne-Pierrette Paulze leans over her husband's shoulder as his Muse, while he is sitting at the table and looks upward to her, interrupting his work denoted by pens, papers and lab instruments. Lavoisier's wife is in the centre of the composition, but her work is relegated to the left background. Interpreting her as a decorative adjunct of the scientific world of her husband, Albert Boime reproached David for having falsified her actual social role²⁵. But the visual prominence in the composition makes Lavoisier's wife more than a decorative adjunct to her husband with some kind of hobby like drawing under the instructions of the painter David. Certainly she has still to take on the role of the Muse and inspiration for the sitting husband, but he is not in the centre of the composition. Moreover, in contrast to the sitting husband with his non-active leg, she seems to be in a position which allows motion and social contact²⁶. She looks toward the beholder's world, while he looks up to her. This differentiation points to a unusual combination of the public and the private role in this couple of equal partners. There is also a striking contrast to the shameful pseudo-Roman matron Hélène. But we have also to consider the third counterpart in this series of models of the different relationships between men and women. The united couple of equal partners is the exact counterpart to the divided couple in the *Brutus*, particularly as the gesture of the men is similar. Compared with the women in the *Oath of the Horatii*, who are only entitled to a helpless mourning, the Niobidmother accusing her husband and his idol is closer to Marie-Anne-Pierrette Paulze, who participated actively in the political discussions of the Trudaine circle. In the *Brutus* only the maid is kept in the silent agony. But the Niobe accuses the goddess and her husband of being inhuman under the pretext of abiding the law of the re-

²⁴ Wind, «David's Horaces» (see n. 16), p. 117.

²⁵ Boime, *Art in an Age of Revolution* (see n. 2), p. 404. For the 'patterns' see J. Gaus, «Ingenium und Ars - das Ehepaarbildnis Lavoisier von David und die Ikonographie der Museinterpretation», in *Wallraf-Richartz-Jahrbuch*, 1974, 36, pp. 199-288.

²⁶ It seems that Lavoisier's wife was the commissioner of the portrait, and the painter took the enormous sum of 7000 livres for his work, see the commentary by Antoine Schnapper in David. *Catalogue* (see n. 5), n. 84, pp. 192-194.

public. The shadow where the consul and his idol sit, designs, a «not-enlightened position», the opposition to the *siècle de lumières* was already called in 1771. The expression of the roman consul may be that of a fool.

But the time was over for equality, tenderness and protest. Brutus became a hero again, one of the bloody *martyrs de la liberté*. Not before 1795, following his political fall and his release from prison, David returned to the role of the women and the affliction which lies in the conflicts of the men. In his reconciliation-and-peace painting *Intervention of the Sabine Women* (Fig. 5) children and women led by the Sabine Hersilia, intervene between Tatius and Romulus about to start a fatal fighting. With this painting of a woman who takes action before bringing an accusation, David continued his work on a new notion of history and of the role of women which had been interrupted in 1789. As well as in the case of *Brutus*, it did not last long²⁷. Between 1799 and 1805 David did open his atelier for the public for six hours daily, and his new painting was accessible. About 50000 visitors were interested and payed the entrance fee. David made a fortune²⁸. However, towards the end of 1803, David became the court painter of the new male hero, Napoleon Bonaparte, a man who despised the *Intervention of the Sabine Women*.

I am grateful to Peter Johannes Schneemann, MA, for the help to translate the text, and to Dr. Pascal Griener, University of Oxford, for the discussion of many difficult questions and for help in the research and the bibliography.

²⁷ David, *Catalogue* (see n. 5) , n. 146-156, pp. 338-353.

²⁸ See for the very interesting history of the *exposition payante*. Jon Whiteley, «Exhibitions of contemporary painting in London and Paris 1760-1860», *Atti del XXIV Congresso Internazionale di Storia dell'Arte 1979*, Bologna, pp. 69-87, and the introduction by Antoine Schnapper in David, *Catalogue* (see n. 5), pp. 328-338.