

# Afterimage of the Eruption: An Archaeology of Chassériau's *Tepidarium* (1853)

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Exhibited at the Paris Salon of 1853, and again at the Universal Exposition of 1855 after its purchase by the French State, Théodore Chassériau's *Tepidarium* functioned in both years as a high profile calling card for the artist (plate 1).<sup>1</sup> On the occasion of its first public exhibition in 1853, the painting was heralded by critics for its reflection of Chassériau's 'natural abilities', a picture in which the artist therefore emerged as himself.<sup>2</sup> In his review of the Salon that year, Chassériau's primary supporter, poet, novelist, and art critic Théophile Gautier declared that viewing the work had had the same effect as witnessing the recovery of a friend on his deathbed. Gautier, who had penned an unfavourable assessment of Chassériau's paintings exhibited at the Salon of 1852, wrote that on looking at the *Tepidarium*, 'we experienced one of the greatest satisfactions of our life as a critic, a feeling akin to the one brought about by ... the return to health of a friend we had thought doomed.'<sup>3</sup>

For Gautier, the painted surface functioned as a window onto the artist's somatic health, and, by extension, it was understood to contain the traces of Chassériau's singular, embodied, artistic identity. Indeed, the work that served such a salutary role was included in the Salon pamphlet that year with an extended title that emphasized the painting's orientation toward bodily well-being: *The Tepidarium. The Room Where the Women of Pompeii Went to Dry Themselves and to Rest after Leaving the Bath* [*Tepidarium. Salle où les femmes de Pompéi venaient se reposer et se sécher en sortant du bain*]. The painting quickly came to be seen by Chassériau's contemporaries as an especially powerful articulation of his artistic identity. And in one obvious respect the painting sat comfortably within the artist's known oeuvre. Since his early exhibition of *Venus Anadyomene* and *Susanna and the Elders* at the Salon of 1839, the female nude had been a staple of Chassériau's publically exhibited paintings.<sup>4</sup> The *Tepidarium* took its place as the capstone of this aspect of Chassériau's interests, a painting that functioned as an ambitious demonstration of the artist's assertion of artistic distinction through its merging of antiquarian enthusiasms and the steamy sensuality of the female body.

Quite distinct from Chassériau's prior essays in the subject, the *Tepidarium* took the form of a careful, deliberate, project to reconstruct and reanimate Pompeian antiquity. Thirteen years in the making, the painting's genesis dated to 1840 when Chassériau visited the working archaeological site of Pompeii.<sup>5</sup> The artist's encounter with antiquity there provided the basis for what would become a complex pictorial undertaking, informed at once by memories of his visit to Rome and the Bay of Naples, by archaeological and antiquarian treatises, and by the competing spectres of Ingres, Delacroix, and Gérôme. Antiquity in its myriad guises—encountered in the dusty ruins

**Detail from Théodore Chassériau, *The Tepidarium*, 1853 (plate 1).**

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**I Théodore Chassériau, *The Tepidarium. The Room Where the Women of Pompeii Went to Dry Themselves and to Rest after Leaving the Bath*, 1853. Oil on canvas, 171 × 258 cm. Paris: Musée d'Orsay. Photo: Giraudon/The Bridgeman Art Library.**

of antique streets, homes, and baths; as the object of archaeological scrutiny; in the form of relics housed in museum vitrines in Naples; or, later, as reincarnated in a 'living antique' experienced by the artist in North Africa – was at the centre of a painting that stands at the heart of Chassériau's determination to chart his own course through the aesthetic debates of the middle decades of the nineteenth century.

With his strategic mid-century marriage of the antique and the female body, Chassériau might be seen to join the familiar ranks of nineteenth-century artists whose ambitions could be traced in their treatment of the nude. In Ingres's 1814 *Grande Odalisque*, in Manet's 1863 *Olympia*, and in many other paintings, scholars have come to recognize the female nude as a privileged vehicle for emulative contests.<sup>6</sup> But if it is true that art-historical analysis of the nude in nineteenth-century France has made a sound case for pairing the frequent coincidence of something we might describe as 'artistic ambition in the face of tradition' with a category of representation typically described as 'images of the female nude', then how might an archaeology of Chassériau's *Tepidarium* offer a different view of the operations of this pairing? The experiences and sources brought to bear by Chassériau in his long-term project of planning and painting the 1853 canvas engage this larger question, one of fundamental importance for the study of modern art.<sup>7</sup> In this essay I aim to reconsider this familiar trope in view of much less habitual interpretive positions for artist and art historian. It is my contention that the example of Chassériau's *Tepidarium* offers a productive case for rethinking the available models of theorizing the artist's relationship to the female nude.

As I shall argue, the painting opens the way to a productive alternative to two prevailing interpretive models: that of the presumption of male objectification of the female body on the one hand, and the model of the feminized painter-

beholder famously proposed by Michael Fried in his study of Courbet on the other. In his provocative formulation of 'Courbet's femininity', Fried described the male artist's phenomenological projection of self through 'quasi-identification' with feminine absorption, a process that concluded with the abolition of the differences between painter and female or feminized subject. Mary Roberts' assessment of Fried's argument draws attention to the problematic move by which Fried affects the 'displacement of the female subject and feminine desire'.<sup>8</sup> How might the art historian at once take off from Fried's body-centred, experiential approach without losing sight of what Roberts rightly draws attention to here: the steep challenge of unsettling familiar models of male spectatorhood? By insisting that female subjects and female experiences be taken seriously, Roberts provides a critical foundation for the following consideration of the stakes of Chassériau's representation of the female nude. My discussion of Chassériau's *Tepidarium* takes off from Roberts' critique, and aims to excavate a quite different relationship between male artist and imagined female subject. Beginning with Chassériau's encounter with the antique in representation and in lived experiences, I propose in what follows a reconsideration of how the artist might be unexpectedly interpolated in the *Tepidarium*: both in the painting's genesis and in its final, distinctive, form.

### **Pompeii's Archaeological Imagery**

As commentators in 1853 noted, the *Tepidarium* was rooted in Chassériau's knowledge of Pompeii, which since the mid-eighteenth century had been the starting point for a reconceptualization of art's historicism.<sup>9</sup> Thirteen years before these observations, in 1840, Chassériau had followed in the footsteps of grand tourists and luminary artist forefathers, travelling to Rome and quickly on to Naples and Pompeii.<sup>10</sup> Like Ingres, in whose studio Chassériau received his training, his artistic 'grand tour' mirrored eighteenth-century practices in that Naples (and specifically Herculaneum and Pompeii) functioned as the culmination of his Italian itinerary.<sup>11</sup> Chassériau's journey to Pompeii engaged with a new sense of how art could be understood both within history and to have a history, and, at the same time, registered the artist's place within a precise artistic genealogy.

By the time of Chassériau's travels, almost one hundred years after the discovery of Pompeii, the excavations at the site were well established and were continuing.<sup>12</sup> Far from being remote and arcane events, the discoveries that continued to be unveiled were the subject of highly acclaimed omnibus publications that served to keep audiences in Paris up to date on the news from Naples. The ongoing work of archaeologists and antiquarians was disseminated by way of publications like those of François Mazois, the French architect, supported by Napoleon Bonaparte's sister Caroline Murat of Naples, who tirelessly documented the excavations from 1809 until his death in 1826.<sup>13</sup> Mazois' four volume *Les Ruines de Pompéi* [*The Ruins of Pompeii*], published between 1812 and 1838, were announced to great acclaim to audiences in Paris at the Institut de France.<sup>14</sup> Others, notably the English archaeologist and topographer William Gell, joined in these efforts with his *Pompeiana; the Topography, Edifices and Ornaments of Pompeii excavations since 1819* (1832).<sup>15</sup> Chassériau was doubly connected to Mazois. His cousin Frédéric Chassériau (1802–96) worked on the Ruins, and in at least one case appears to have executed the final drawing which served as a model for one of the plates.<sup>16</sup> In addition, Chassériau was himself related to Mazois, who was his second cousin.<sup>17</sup>

Artists had long benefited from publications like those of Mazois and Gell, liberally incorporating compositions, figures, and themes from new archaeological discoveries

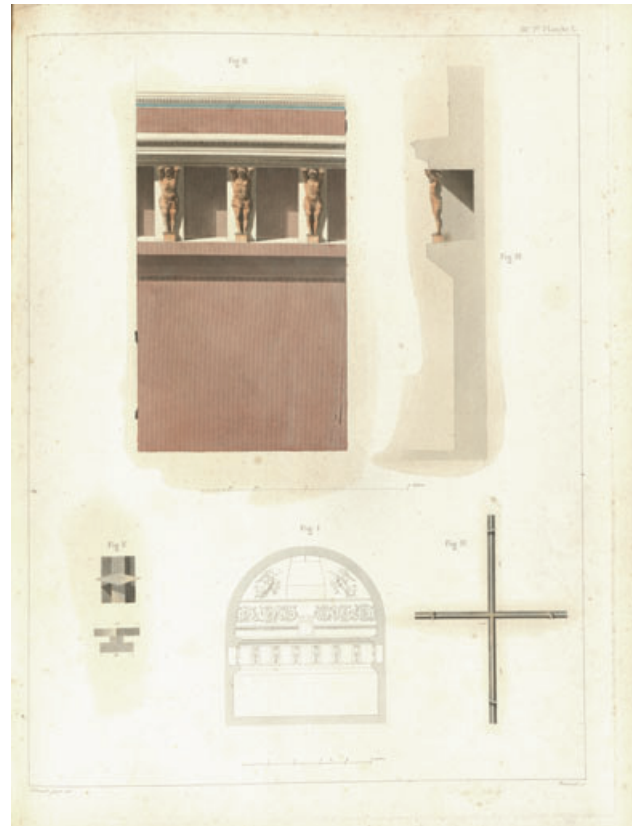
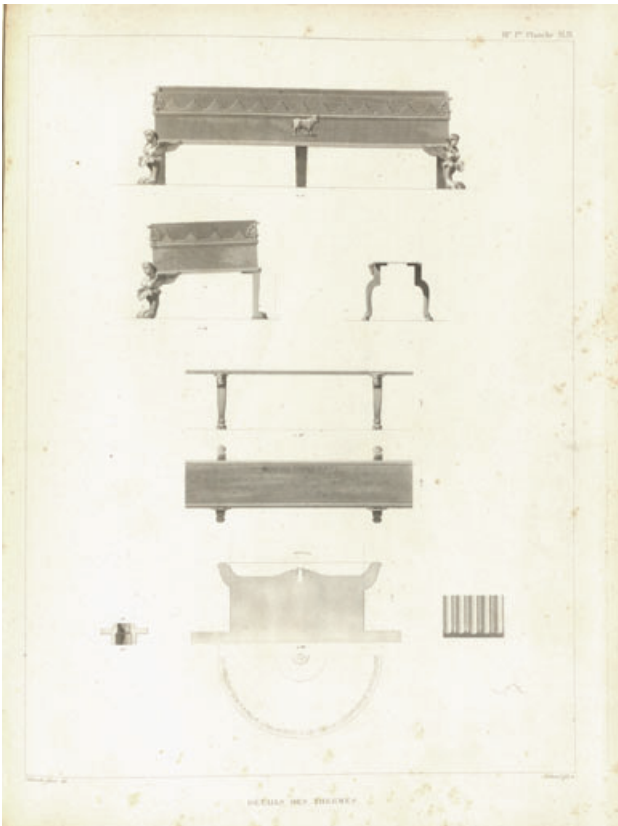


2 Tepidarium of the Forum Baths, Pompeii. Photo: Courtesy of Maurie McInnis.

into their works of art. Ingres was one such artist, and his personal library included all four volumes of Mazois, with whom he travelled to Naples. Ingres's friendships with an international cluster of archaeologists in Rome between 1806 and 1820 no doubt advanced his knowledge of the many archaeological publications on which he drew heavily for inspiration.<sup>18</sup> We can see the fruits of this study in his ideas for painting subjects, compositions, and poses for figures.<sup>19</sup> In addition to the case of the portrait of Inès Moitessier (1856), Ingres's depiction of Stratonice (in his painting *Antiochus and Stratonice*) famously made use of the pose of a wall painting of Penelope that had been unearthed

between 1818 and 1822 from the Macellum in Pompeii. Not incidentally, Ingres was at last nearing completion of his *Antiochus and Stratonice* at the Villa Medici at the time of Chassériau's visits to Rome in 1840.<sup>20</sup>

Despite the often emphasized fact that by the time of Chassériau's *Tepidarium* the artist had renounced his master's orientation toward the past, Chassériau's manifesto painting of 1853 nevertheless engaged antiquarian impulses familiar from Ingres's work, and to that end, like Ingres before him, Chassériau explicitly relied upon archaeological publications.<sup>21</sup> In the *Tepidarium*, Chassériau drew upon a single specific and identifiable Pompeian interior: the tepidarium of the Forum Baths (plate 2). These baths had been comparatively recently discovered at the time of Chassériau's visit: first unearthed in 1824 the excavations were completed in 1828. Mazois' third volume, published by Gau, was the first to provide an account of the baths, its text



**3 Details of the Baths, plate 49 from François Mazois and Charles François Gau, *Les Ruines de Pompéi dessinées et mesurées pendant les années 1809, 1810, 1811*, Paris, 1829, tome III. Photo: Courtesy of Dartmouth College Library.**

**4 Details of the Baths, plate 50 from François Mazois and Charles François Gau, *Les Ruines de Pompéi dessinées et mesurées pendant les années 1809, 1810, 1811*, Paris, 1829, tome III. Photo: Courtesy of Dartmouth College Library.**

**5 Terracotta Atlases, Tepidarium of the Forum Baths, Pompeii. Photo: Courtesy of Maurie McInnis.**

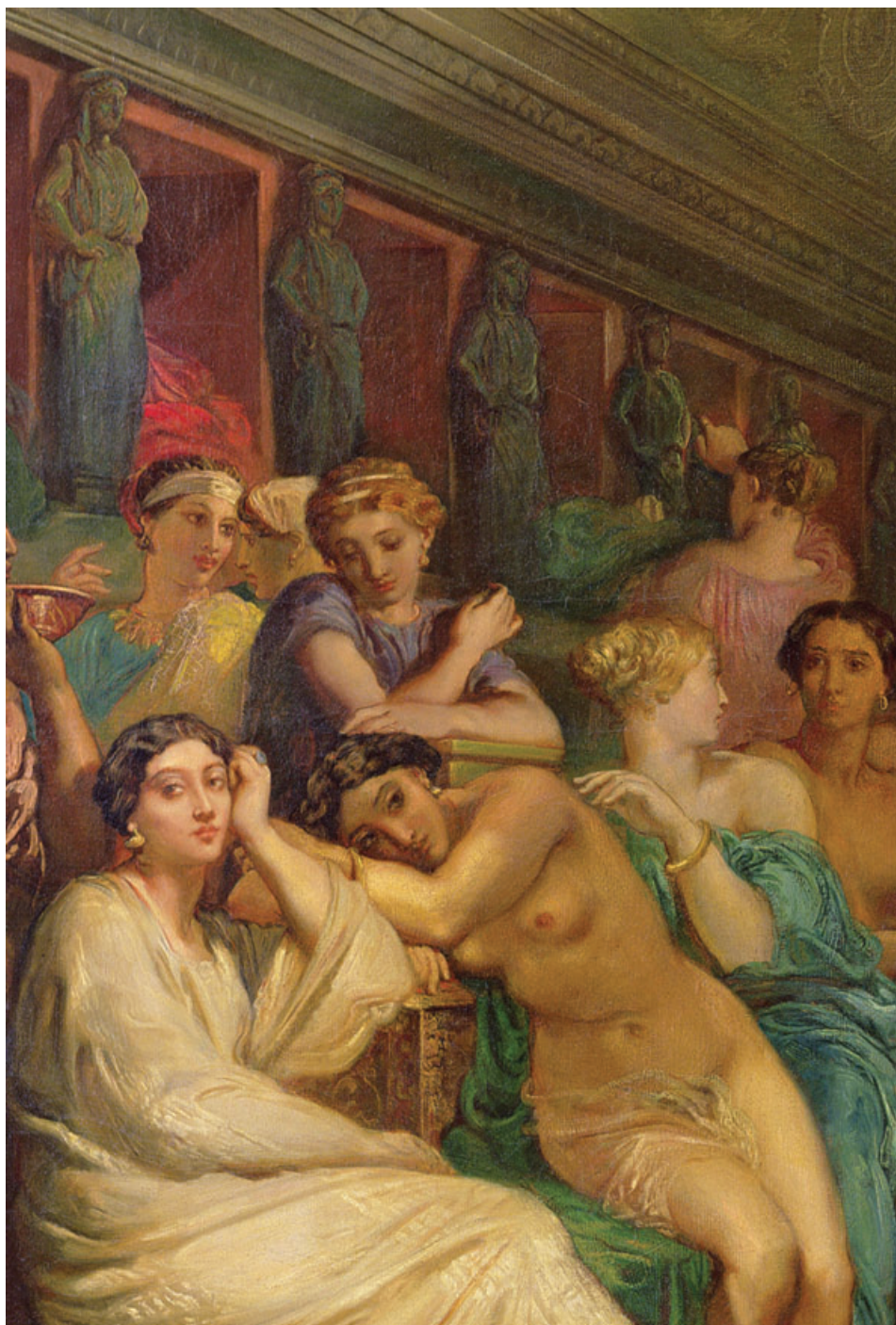
accompanied by four plates.<sup>22</sup> Orienting readers to the site, Mazois' plan identified the tepidarium or moderately warm (or tepid) room located between the caldarium, or hot bath, and the frigidarium, or cold bath. Two additional plates oriented readers to essential elements of the Tepidarium's interior decorative programme. One illustrated the bronze brazier and banquettes, both of which were decorated with cow feet and heads (which both Mazois and Gell noted functioned as clever references to the inscribed donor's name, 'Marcus Nigidius Vaccula', or 'heifer') (plate 3).<sup>23</sup> The last of the sequence included a cross-section of the tepidarium along with multiple depictions of the distinctive terra cotta figures that lined its walls (plate 4).

It has long been assumed that Chassériau's painting depended upon the work of Mazois, despite the fact that the setting has frequently been misidentified in the art-historical literature as the Stabian Baths or the Baths of Vénus Génétrix, this latter the result of an annotation made by Chassériau on another study of what may well have been a different interior at Pompeii or in its vicinity.<sup>24</sup> Chassériau's location in the Forum Baths is nevertheless clear. Indeed, many of the key details depicted by Gau and Mazois are recalled in Chassériau's painting: the back wall of the tepidarium with its distinctive decorative elements, the brazier, and the banquettes. But alongside such scrupulously recorded details, noteworthy modification emerges: the terra cotta figures called variously Telamons, Hercules and Atlases in the nineteenth-century literature (plate 5) are transformed into female figures (plate 6) reminiscent of the Acropolis Erechtheion maidens, or caryatids (421–405), a model in circulation from 1762 thanks to James Stuart and Nicholas Revett's *Antiquities of Athens* (plate 7).<sup>25</sup>

Chassériau knew this particular interior not only through his likely knowledge of the work of Mazois, but also thanks to his firsthand observation on site (plate 8).<sup>26</sup> Despite its very impressionistic quality, a watercolour study executed by Chassériau at the Forum Baths provides a rudimentary sense of the interior space, and notes the key details of the brazier and benches. While Chassériau included these particularities in the final painting, there is a great distance between the degree of detail recorded in the study and that included in the final painting, a disconnection that suggests the likelihood that Chassériau's painting depended, not only upon his familiarity with the site, but upon Mazois' work. But having surveyed other early publications on the



6 Detail of Chassériau, *The Tepidarium*. Photo: Giraudon/ The Bridgeman Art Library.



Forum Baths, I propose another potential reference here, found in the 1832 volume of Gell's *Pompeiana*.<sup>27</sup> When we juxtapose Chassériau's painting with the view of the tepidarium reproduced by Gell, Chassériau's crisp, perspectively correct composition would seem to have a clear pictorial source (*plate 9*). Gell's text singles this plate out in order to attribute it to Wilhelm Zahn, the author of several volumes on the wall paintings at Herculaneum and Pompeii, whom Gell identified for readers as an 'architectural painter to the Elector of Hesse Cassel'. Gell reported that Zahn used a camera lucida, as did Gell himself, to approximate the relative scale and perspective of the interior as accurately as possible.<sup>28</sup> Chassériau appears to have replicated Zahn's



7 A View of the West End of the Temple of Minerva Polias, plate XIX from James Stuart and Nicholas Revett, *The Antiquities of Athens*, London, 1825, tome II. Photo: Special Collections, University of Virginia Library.

depiction as reproduced by Gell with the utmost care. If he did rely upon Gell's text, Chassériau drew upon the work of the most painstaking of topographers, whose practice was especially invested in exactitude: a trait evidenced, as Andrew Wallace-Hadrill has noted, by his use of the camera lucida and by his struggles with his publishers to retain the absolute correctness of his studies made in situ, even at the expense of picturesque convention.<sup>29</sup>

Like Gell and unlike Mazois, Chassériau's painting imagines the Tepidarium populated.<sup>30</sup> But this animation of the space brings us to a crucial difference between Gell and Chassériau's conception of this interior. Unlike Mazois, who concluded that women and men shared these spaces sequentially, Gell insisted that this tepidarium was an exclusively male space quite distinct from a contiguous sequence of rooms that he identified as the women's baths.<sup>31</sup> Gell dispenses with the need to describe this as a male space in his text (which he nevertheless takes pains to do) by reproducing Zahn's plate, which features a semi-clothed male bather.

We might consider Chassériau's painting to be operating as a kind of perverse foil to Gell in the sense that it monumentalizes just the aspect of bath culture in Pompeii that most troubled Gell: women bathers and the threat of sensual pleasures. While Gell's chapter on the male spaces of the Forum Baths proceeds

untroubled by concerns over questions of propriety, his chapter on the women's baths is framed by anxious bookends. The chapter opens with the dramatic *précis*:

The abuses of promiscuous bathing had become so flagrant, that Spartianus says Hadrian ordered the separation of the sexes, which had, however, been done ineffectually before. Eunuchs were appointed to attend in the women's baths, as Lampridius observes; and a Roman law makes the offence of forcibly entering the women's baths by a man capital.<sup>32</sup>

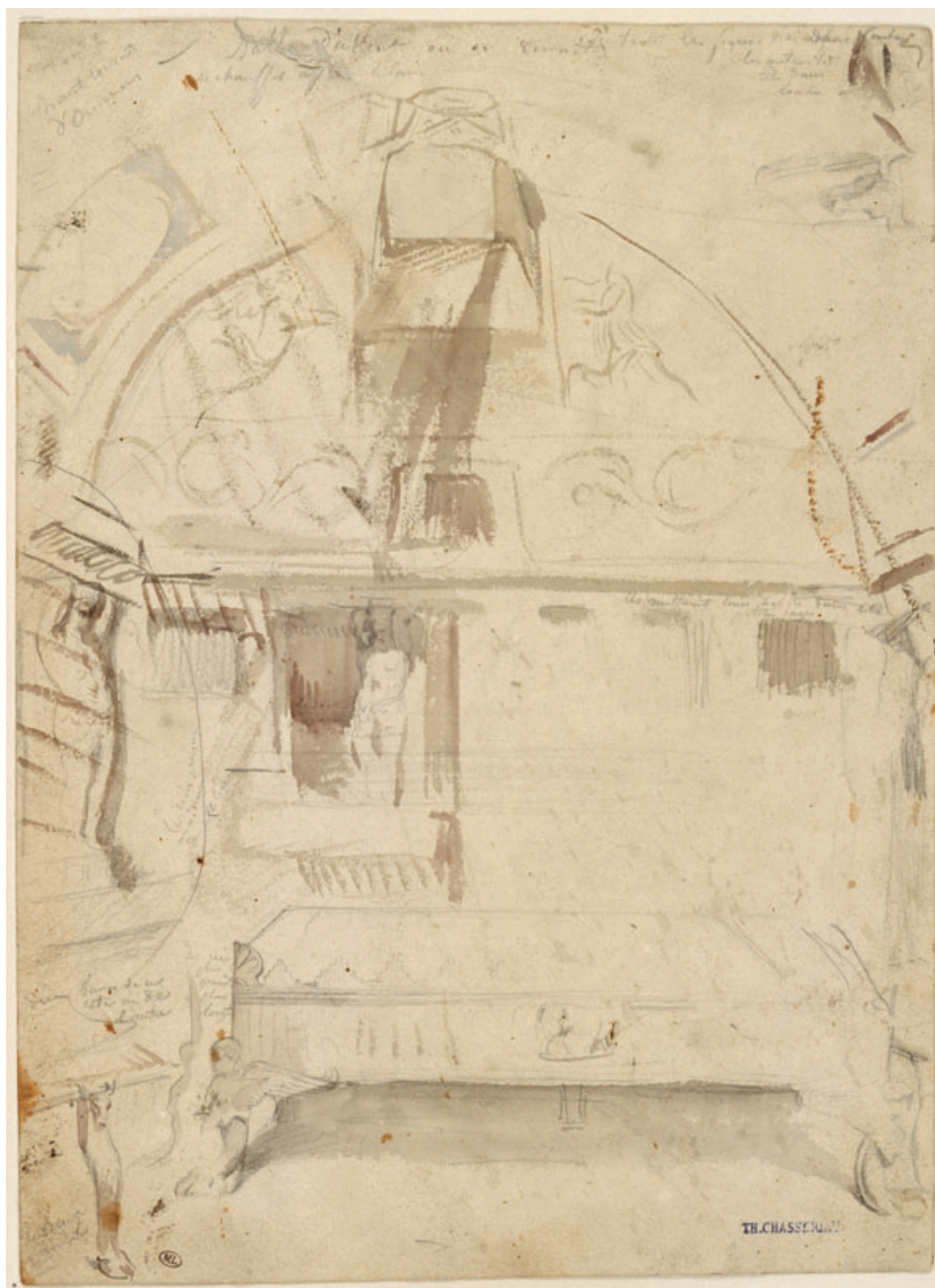
Toward its conclusion the chapter circles back to the troublesome question of bathers' morality:

It is probable that the *thermae* often became the favourite resort of the vicious and the profligate, and, as such, liable to the animadversions and reprehensions of the fathers of the church, whence the name of *bagnio* has become synonymous with brothel in our own language.<sup>33</sup>

Gell's work in his account of the Forum Baths to manage the problem of the erotics of the baths in Pompeii suggests that the sexual practices of antiquity were an important aspect of what was being revealed (or perhaps rather worked through) in the archaeological record. Indeed, that Gell has in these passages left aside his otherwise painstaking historicism in order to conjure the chronologically later reference to



8 Théodore Chassériau,  
*Tepidarium at Pompeii*, 1840.  
Graphite with watercolor  
highlights on paper, 31.6 × 23  
cm. Paris: Musée du Louvre.  
Photo: Réunion des Musées  
Nationaux/Art Resource, NY.



Hadrian (and to the church fathers) should be understood as a symptom of his anxious desire to defend his moral ground.

Chassériau's painting certainly mirrored Gell's scrupulous attention to archaeological detail, and the structural and spatial scaffolding of the work suggests the explanatory goals of projects like Mazois' and Gell's. This is emphasized in the full title given by Chassériau for the painting: *The Tepidarium. The Room Where the Women of Pompeii Went to Rest and to Dry Themselves after Leaving the Bath* – a sort of learned floor plan in words. However, Chassériau distinctively and, I want to propose, strategically, embeds this architectural space within a dense stratigraphy of women's bodies. If the *Tepidarium* is the artist's love letter to antiquity, the Pompeian antique conjured up here takes unambiguously, emphatically, female form.



9 *Tepidarium*, engraving after Wilhelm Zahn, plate 29 from William Gell, *Pompeiana: The Topography, Edifices and Ornaments of Pompeii, the Result of the Excavations since 1819*, London, 1832, tome I. Photo: Author.

### Pompeii as Woman

This was surely not new in 1852, as Chassériau began work toward the final painting. At the Salon of 1850–51, Jean-Léon Gérôme had exhibited his *Greek Interior*. The *Gynaeceum* [*Intérieur grec. Le Gynécée*], a painting in which the antique setting of the title served as erudite scenography for the provocative display of female bodies in the foreground (plate 10).<sup>34</sup> Gérôme's polychromed *Greek Interior* includes a visual rollcall of such famed antique discoveries as the bronze tripod with satyrs of the right foreground (the figures here relieved by Gérôme of their phalluses and their apotropaic gestures).<sup>35</sup> But perhaps the most distinctive conceit of the painting was Gérôme's use of the historical setting as an alibi for the unambiguous depiction of a brothel. In this sense, the artist's antiquarian labours might be understood to suggest a degree of intellectual control that stood in contradistinction to the scene of unleashed sensuality unfolding within the picture's spatial confines. Gérôme's *Greek Interior* thereby demonstrates why an antiquarian orientation, associated with the term *curiosité*, began to be anxiously regarded at mid-century as evidence of a type of inappropriate or indiscriminate attention that flew in the face of 'timeless values'.<sup>36</sup> Here, the subject is unabashedly salacious: while women stretch languidly in the foreground, a procuress points a potential customer in their direction. A final gloss on the nature of the exchange is offered by a pair of intertwined figures partially obscured by a curtain in the left background. In 1853, the link was made between Gérôme's *Greek Interior* and Chassériau's *Tepidarium* on explicitly formal (and implicitly thematic) grounds; one of the rare criticisms of Chassériau's painting objected to the artist's too obvious borrowing from Gérôme in the pose of the central standing figure.<sup>37</sup>

In 1852, the year following the exhibition of Gérôme's canvas, Théophile Gautier published a short story in the *Revue de Paris* that powerfully asserted the centrality of the female body in the imaginary of Pompeii. In *Arria Marcella. Souvenir de Pompeii*, Gautier's fictional distillation of Pompeii hinged upon an ideal female form, commemorated in the ash of the eruption, and brought to life by the protagonist's desire. Octavian, Gautier's young protagonist and a visitor to Naples and Pompeii, is struck by the beauty of the impression of a woman's breast he sees preserved in volcanic ash in a museum vitrine.<sup>38</sup> The same night at Pompeii, the breast, along with rest of the beautiful body attached to it, appears to Octavian in the form of the Pompeian woman Arria Marcella. At the end of the night, Gautier's 'antique' woman reveals herself to be a spectre, crumbling to dust with the light of day. The fantasy broken at dawn, Pompeii as woman is here ghostly, truly embodied only by way of carbonized remains. Chassériau was perhaps struck by Gautier's text, as he too had experienced Pompeii and had found himself in close proximity to the traces of the past.

We already have a sense of the visual evidence of Chassériau's trip in the form of the watercolour study that shows the artist responding to Pompeian architecture and interior decoration. In addition to such watercolours and drawings, Chassériau's Italian sketchbooks include occasional annotations made by the artist on site. One such study provides a remarkable account of the artist's response to the charred remains of a group of women etched on a wall at the Villa of Diomedes (plate 11). Written along the top right hand edge of the sheet and continuing along the middle bottom register, a passage reveals the artist overcome by the visual traces he encountered and records his effort to translate the experience into a picture of his own:

10 Jean-Leon Gérôme, *Greek Interior. The Gynaecium*, 1850. Oil on canvas, 64.5 × 89 cm. Private Collection. Photo: Courtesy of Sotheby's.



11 Théodore Chassériau, *A Room with a Staircase. A Trace on the Wall* [Sketch from the *House of Diomedes, Pompeii*], 1840. Graphite on paper, 17.2 × 20.8 cm. Paris: Musée du Louvre. Photo: Réunion des Musées Nationaux/Art Resource, NY.



All the women were along the wall terrified; the outline engraved on the wall of the wife of Diomedes was the one in the middle surrounded by the entire family – the father arrives and everything must have been touched by the cinders – there a lone small corner of a terrified figure who was carrying a torch and keys – in order to make the impression of all the women squeezed along the wall the painting must be audaciously oriented lengthwise – the breast mark conserved in the museum shows thus that that which remained on the wall was strongly [imprinted] . . . the composition is absolutely ripe for painting – I kissed these sorrowful and incredible traces – the walls in white stucco and the ground of earth – it was the lower level – the cinders entered everywhere – it was above all them that suffocated and afterwards the lava came – the family of Diomedes.<sup>39</sup>

In this remarkable passage merging historical summary with ‘poetic reverie’,<sup>40</sup> Chassériau remembers, presumably in response to the site, a fragment of a woman’s torso that he has seen in Naples and which had been identified as having come from the Villa of Diomedes (‘the breast mark conserved in the museum’ / ‘la marque du sein conservée au musée’). Chassériau’s efforts to anchor the ‘breast mark’ in the evidence before him takes the form of a line drawn on the sketch page between the text and the approximate location of the breast on the figure imprinted on the wall. Chassériau was not alone in singling out this bit of ash for particular interest; it was this very same fragment that later inspired Gautier, along with so many other real and fictional visitors to the site.

Discovered in December 1763 and quickly put on exhibition – first at the Portici museum and subsequently at the National Archaeological Museum in Naples – the imprint of a female torso in ash quickly became one of the most remarked upon of the city’s many discoveries. As Eric Moorman has shown, visitors embraced the fragment as quintessential trace and emblem of the city from the time of its discovery until well into the mid-nineteenth century.<sup>41</sup> Like Chateaubriand, who in 1804 had written of the impression that ‘death, like a sculptor, moulded its victim’, Chassériau too linked art and death over the sign of the female body at Pompeii.<sup>42</sup> But even as



12 Théodore Chassériau, *Bath in a Seraglio*, 1849. Oil on wood, 50 × 32 cm. Paris: Musée du Louvre. Photo: Giraudon/The Bridgeman Art Library.

he seems overcome by the struggle to transform the disastrous remnant – what Victor Burgin has termed the ‘catastrophographic image’ – into Art, into the re-presented and intelligible, into the narrativized, something remarkable happens. Chassériau reaches out to make a connection with the women ‘squeezed along the wall’, writing, ‘I kissed these sorrowful and incredible traces.’<sup>43</sup> In this sense, Chassériau’s sketchbook notes suggest a powerful continuity with Gautier’s later writing, wherein viscerally conjured female bodies, commingled with eroticism and death, define this lost and found city. But if morbidity seems the inescapable leitmotif, Chassériau’s ‘Pompeii’ nevertheless ultimately parts ways with that of Gautier. Whereas Arria Marcella can only be a spectral trace of a beautiful woman, Chassériau’s notes indicate that his plans for representing Pompeii took a quite different shape. On the margins of an early study for the *Tepidarium* likely to have been made in Pompeii, Chassériau, after describing his idea for a scene of women after the bath, wrote ‘Faire vivre’: ‘Make it come alive.’<sup>44</sup>

Chassériau’s project, like Gautier’s, took off from the revivification of Pompeii as effected through the female body. But what is most obvious and most distinctive about Chassériau’s fantastic bringing to life is that it does not propose a narrative in which Pompeii, as woman, is viewed, and inevitably lost, by the male lover/artist. Instead, ‘Pompeii’ emerges in the *Tepidarium* as woman endowed with the warmth of living flesh,

sensuality, and ‘her’ own desire. Like Gautier’s *Arria Marcella*, Chassériau’s *Tepidarium* is riddled with mystery. But it is not the mystery of the ghost story, of the lost trace, the dream.<sup>45</sup> It is instead the mystery of women’s sensual self-sufficiency: Chassériau’s Pompeii-as-woman is defined by embodied desire, female desire, directed in its literal hothouse (or rather warm house) setting toward other women. And thus even the potentially disruptive heterosexuality of the baths is excised to be replaced by rows of framing female figures.

### **Tepidarium as Harem**

It is remarkable, given Chassériau’s creation of a vision of Pompeii that privileged the affective and sensual bonds between women, how often the art-critical response in 1853 finessed this aspect of the painting, creating from it a work that was exclusively understood as addressing an absent male artist/viewer. Writing in the year of its first exhibition, the critic Henry de la Madeleine noted that the *Tepidarium* ‘gave [Chassériau] a pretext for exhibiting all kinds of women: blondes, brunettes, redheads, Greeks, Romans, Africans, and Gauls. There is something for everyone.’<sup>46</sup> In this description, the painting serves up the goods for any potential male viewer qua brothel-goer. Here, de la Madeleine’s commentary suggests that Chassériau’s citations of Gell and Mazois offered an archaeological alibi for the depiction of an array of tantalizing female figures in various stages of undress, glimpsed enjoying decidedly sensual pleasures.<sup>47</sup> In a somewhat different version of de la Madeleine’s



13 Théodore Chassériau, study for *The Tepidarium*, 1852. Graphite on gray-rose paper, 23.6 × 34.6 cm. Paris: Musée du Louvre. Photo: Réunion des Musées Nationaux/Art Resource, NY.

Thus, the male ‘customer’ carefully included by Gérôme is created in the critical record as the organizing, indeed determining, subject of the painting, albeit off-screen. In the critical literature of 1853, Chassériau’s *Tepidarium* was often, in short, a harem.<sup>49</sup>

By 1853, Chassériau had himself begun the first of three canvases devoted to this subject: his *Bath in a Seraglio* (1849) was followed by his *Oriental Interior* and *Moorish Woman Leaving the Bath in the Seraglio* (both 1854) (plate 12).<sup>50</sup> These paintings share with the *Tepidarium* the compositional centrality of the female nude (or semi-nude) figure, and a thematic preoccupation with the stages of dress and undress associated with bathing. A final commonality is fundamental: all four paintings attest to the artist’s interest in a wide range of skin tones. The earliest of these pictures, the 1849 *Bath in a Seraglio*, is the most emphatic in this respect: allocating to its three figures hues that range from ebony to alabaster.

While Chassériau’s earlier female nudes bore the traces of his distinctive interest in exoticizing features, it is clear that the artist’s travel to North Africa in the summer of 1846 played a vital role in this aspect of his developing aesthetic project. Sketches and notes from the period confirm the artist’s engagement with the visual language of ethnography and physical anthropology as it unfolded in the colonial context. As Peter Benson Miller has argued, Chassériau’s sketchbooks attest to the artist’s efforts to represent variations between North African subjects, whether Jewish, Arab, or Kabyle, identities made legible in art not only by an attention to physiognomy, but also by the study of the subtle variations of skin pigmentation.<sup>51</sup> Painted in the years following Chassériau’s visit to North Africa, the *Tepidarium*’s inclusion of varied physiognomies and subtle variations in the women’s skin tones – from the gleaming white of the central figure to the decidedly darker hues of women carrying perfume burners (on the left) and water (on the right) – coalesce to demonstrate the artist’s enduring ‘anthropological consciousness’.<sup>52</sup>

Chassériau’s visit to North Africa was certainly essential to the development of what Rachel Lindheim has described as Chassériau’s ‘alternative genealogy of classicism’. Chassériau celebrated his discovery of a ‘living antiquity’ there,

impulse, that same year Gautier filled in what was for him the obvious missing piece of the visual and narrative puzzle, writing that ‘These figures have a doleful serenity and a haughty passivity that recall the beautiful Greek slaves held captive at the court of some barbarian king who adores them, but whom they scorn, all the while enduring his love.’<sup>48</sup> These two critics thus make Chassériau’s painting over into Gérôme’s by filling in the presumed absent subject.



14 Théodore Chassériau, *Apollo and Daphne*, 1845. Oil on canvas, 53 × 35 cm. Paris: Musée du Louvre. Photo: Giraudon/The Bridgeman Art Library.

Egyptian.<sup>56</sup> Set against this backdrop, Chassériau's scrupulous reconstruction of Pompeii's Forum Baths worked hand in glove with the rhythmic deployment of beautiful bodies of different hues as an architectural and figural demonstration of a heterogeneous antiquity.

Of course, those female figures were more than a visual argument for Chassériau's vision of antiquity. Indeed, the body and its senses are at centre stage in the *Tepidarium*. As we follow the arc of women from left to right, we discover the

famously declaring, 'one sees Arabs and Jews as they were on their first day.'<sup>53</sup> The *Tepidarium* bears the traces of the North African experience in another sense; Chassériau quite literally imported studies of female figures made on site there in the case of the two 'carrying' figures mentioned above (the perfume carrier would go on to a final reincarnation in Chassériau's 1854 harem painting, *Moorish Woman Leaving the Bath in the Seraglio*).<sup>54</sup> But if the *Tepidarium* reflects Chassériau's embrace of an expanded sense of Mediterranean antiquity in part shaped by his visit to North Africa, Lindheim emphasizes the important role played by Pompeii in 'alter[ing] the very concept of the classical'.<sup>55</sup> After its discovery in the eighteenth century, and thanks to the revelations provided by ongoing excavation, Pompeii took on special importance in the theorization of an expanded antique whose past was understood to bring together the disparate histories of the Greco-Roman and

strategic deployment of sight and touch, sound and smell within the canvas. On the far left side of the composition, a water carrier and a perfume carrier suggest the ablutions of the bath and the application of fragrant oils. Two women who appear deep in murmured conversation further along the wall invoke sound. One standing and one seated woman around the semi-naked woman in the left foreground suggest touch and almost-touch as they caress her glossy hair and smooth back. Finally, sight frames the left side of the composition, as it does on the right, in the figure of the raven-haired bather who stares out to meet the spectator's look. And if we follow the horseshoe of women to the right, we discover a similar cluster of languid animation. As the brazier pours heat into the room, casting the glow of fire, light, and shadow onto the assembled figures, so too do Chassériau's subtle rhythms of the senses – and particularly touch and almost-touch – likewise emphasize the life and warmth of the subjects depicted.

The culmination of this thematics appears in the centre foreground of the composition, in the figure group that is in my view the key to the painting. Much rests upon this central pair of women, the last aspect of the composition to be worked out, as is attested to by a late study for the composition (plate 13). As Chassériau no doubt recognized, the addition of the seated figure fundamentally transformed how the picture worked; with the focus of the image newly centred upon the physical proximity and visual exchange of the women, the frisson of the picture came to rest upon the psychological and compositional tension that defines their relationship.

Our work to unpack the nature of their interaction is aided by Chassériau's invocation of thematic and compositional prototypes for the central pair. The relationship of the two figures, their postures and affects, are strikingly reminiscent of Chassériau's *Apollo and Daphne* of 1845 (plate 14).<sup>57</sup> A study for the 1845 canvas provides a particularly strong point of comparison for the *Tepidarium*: as

Daphne lifts her arms upwards, the seated Apollo kneels at her feet, left arm lowered and right arm extended toward the object of his desire (plate 15). The 1845 painting dramatizes the climax to Ovid's tale of Apollo's pursuit of the nymph Daphne, the moment when she is transformed into a laurel tree rather than succumb to the god's ardour. But quite unlike the beautiful yet ultimately inaccessible figure of Daphne, Chassériau has taken pains to craft the *Tepidarium*'s standing figure in such a way that her role as seductress is unavoidable. It has been asserted that Chassériau modelled the figure's torso on that of the *Venus de Milo*, a model of feminine ideality to which Chassériau was particularly attached (we know that he kept a full scale cast of it in his studio in Paris).<sup>58</sup> On close examination, Chassériau's figure bears more than a passing resemblance to the muscular ideal of the *Venus*, despite significant modifications of the pose. If the standing figure's body can in any case be understood as an image of seduction, the figure's expression further underscores the charged nature of the exchange between women.

The erotic charge of the pair is further suggested, though perhaps more subtly, by what I propose is

**15** Théodore Chassériau, study for *Apollo and Daphne*, 1845. Graphite and stump on paper, 25 × 33 cm. Paris: Musée du Louvre. Photo: Réunion des Musées Nationaux.







16 Louis Jean François Lagrenée, *Pygmalion and Galatea*, 1781. Oil on canvas, 59.4 × 48.9 cm. Detroit: Detroit Institute of Arts (Founders Society Purchase, Mr & Mrs Benjamin Long Fund, and City of Detroit Insurance Recovery Fund). Photo: The Bridgeman Art Library.

by Venus, and his ideal sculpture exchanges its marmoreal form for ‘her’ living flesh.<sup>60</sup> But if Lagrenée gives us a possible compositional echo for Chassériau’s painting, Girodet’s famed 1819 painting of the subject is a more significant pictorial touchstone.

### The Pygmalian Sublime

Finally exhibited, after seven years of labour, in the year of Chassériau’s birth at the Salon of 1819, Girodet’s *Pygmalion* was conceived by the artist as his last potentially career-redeeming, reputation-making painting.<sup>61</sup> Monumental in scale, it was the painting of the 1819 salon, after which it continued to be available for viewing in Paris in the gallery of Count Sommariva until the collection’s liquidation in 1839. Indeed, on the eve of Chassériau’s departure for Italy, Girodet’s painting was once again under consideration in the art press. That year, a writer for *L’Artiste* described a visit to Sommariva’s galleries, pausing for special consideration of Girodet’s last large painting: ‘Here is Girodet’s Galatea; but someone needs to light a stove for this woman; she is trembling, she is cold, she is green. It is not blood animating marble that becomes flesh, it is flesh becoming marble.’<sup>62</sup>

another potent art-historical reference: the myth of Pygmalion. I want to argue that Chassériau’s addition of a seated, and apparently overwhelmed, admirer at the feet of the central figure offered a compelling nod to the familiar model of Pygmalion and Galatea, a subject popularized in French painting by the likes of Lagrenée (1781) and Girodet (1813–19) (plates 16 and 17). Lagrenée’s 1781 canvas offers a compositional prototype for what I am reading as Chassériau’s invocation of the Ovidian tale of generative metamorphosis: a distinctive narrative in the *Metamorphoses* in which an inanimate object comes alive.<sup>59</sup> Here the sculptor kneels before the beautiful object of his creation at the moment in which his deepest (indeed unarticulated) wish has been granted

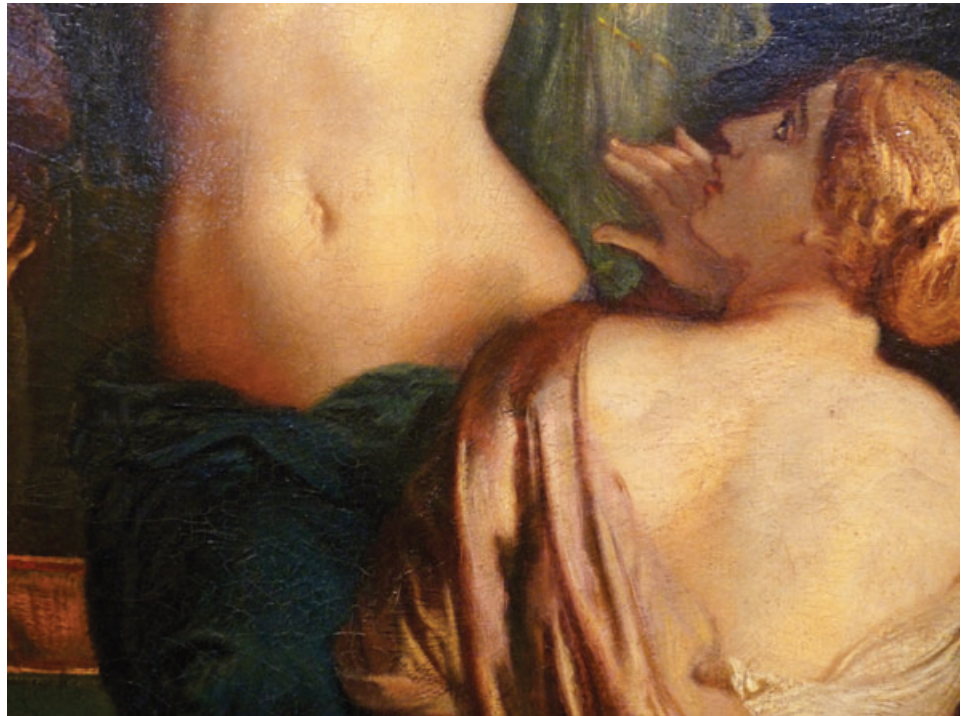
17 Anne-Louis Girodet-Trioson, *Pygmalion and Galatea*, 1813–1819. Oil on canvas, 253 × 202 cm. Paris: Musée du Louvre. Photo: Eric Lessing/Art Resource, NY.



The stress here is upon Pygmalion's failure – note the insistence upon the un-ideality of the body here invoked as a cadaver at the morgue – and by extension Girodet's failure. What this reviewer would certainly have appreciated was that, by representing the Pygmalion narrative, Girodet was intervening into a long tradition of serious aesthetic debate on the limits of painting and its relationship not only to sculpture but to poetry: the *paragone*. And the philosophical reflections on offer might be extended since, as J. L. Carr has shown, by the second half of the eighteenth century, the Pygmalion narrative had emerged as particularly apt for post-Lockean empiricist and epistemological concerns: the statue's coming to life providing a ripe opportunity for reflections on sensation in the absence of innate ideas.<sup>63</sup>

It would be easy to quickly dispense with Girodet's canvas as a kind of shorthand of artistic aspiration, and to see it as simply an exemplary scene which must figure on the short list of heroic artistic narratives, an allegory of creation which stresses the godlike abilities of the artist and the instrumental role played by 'his' desire. As J. Hillis Miller has observed, the Pygmalion narrative 'embodies a male fantasy whereby

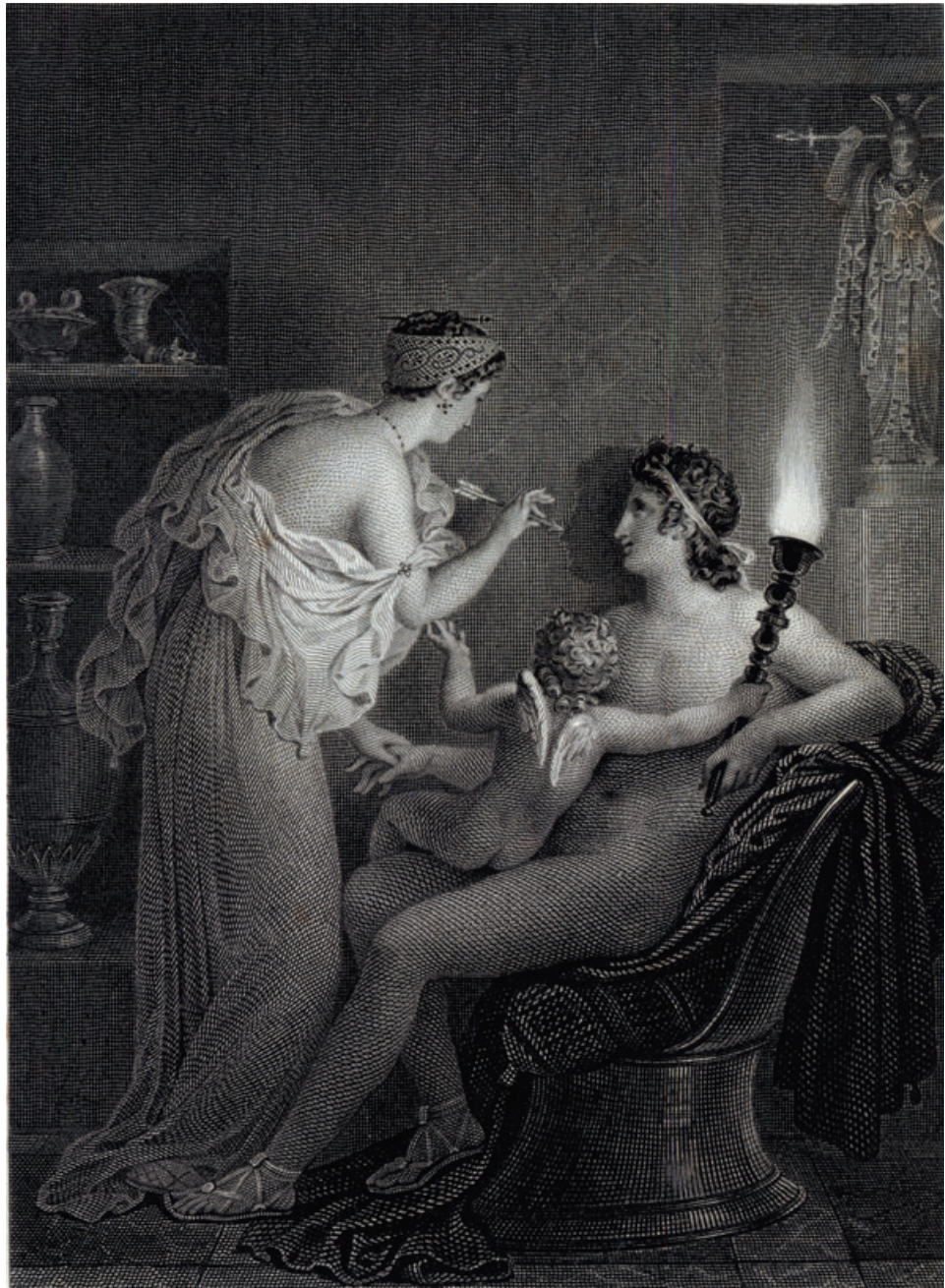
18 Detail of Chassériau, *The Tepidarium*. Photo: Author.



a woman cannot be the object of sexual desire and cannot desire in return unless she has been made so by male effort'.<sup>64</sup> In fact, as James H. Rubin has demonstrated, Girodet called upon a more contemporary interlocutor than Ovid as he worked on the canvas: Rousseau, whose 'Pygmalion, scène lyrique' was published in 1762 and performed to great acclaim at the Paris Opera beginning in 1772. Almost without exception, reviewers of Girodet's painting in 1819 noted its relationship to Rousseau's Pygmalion.<sup>65</sup> Thus we need to pause to consider what Carr has observed was Rousseau's new departure in his treatment of Pygmalion, the author's altogether novel focus on *experience* in which 'the almost religious delirium of the sculptor's passion sets the stamp upon an internal drama vastly different' from what had come before.<sup>66</sup> And to this stress on an 'internal drama' of authorial experience we should add Paul de Man's argument, that perhaps the most distinctive aspect of Rousseau's version of the Pygmalion tale is its thematization of a sublime crisis of selfhood.

Calling attention to the remarkable passages in which Pygmalion vacillates between the desire for Galatea and the desire *to be* Galatea, de Man understands Rousseau's lyric scene to be an anxious reflection on the self. On the one hand, the artist's identification with the object of his masterful creation carries with it the potential for a complete identification, or self-immolation: 'Ah! let Pygmalion die in order to relive in Galathea!' On the other, he is brought up short by the absolute otherness of the goddess before him. The complexity of this situation is beautifully articulated by Rousseau's Pygmalion: 'Ah! let Pygmalion die in order to relive in Galathea! ... Heavens! What am I saying! If I were she, I would not see her, I would not be the one who loves her. No, let my Galathea live, and let me not be she. Ah! Let me always be another so that I may always wish to be she, to see her, to love her, to be loved by her.'<sup>67</sup> This complex circuitry is crucial in de Man's reading, for it reveals Pygmalion in a state evocative of the Kantian sublime. Here, the encounter with Galatea triggers a sublime circuitry wherein 'the awesome element in the work of art is that something so familiar and intimate could also be free to be so radically

19 H. Dupont, *Dibutades*, after Anne-Louis Girodet-Trioson, in P.A. Coupin, *Oeuvres posthumes de Girodet-Trioson*, Paris, 1829. Photo: Author.



different.’<sup>68</sup> Dichotomies of subject and object are dissolved, replaced instead by the work of art that suggests the permeability of self and other.

By invoking de Man’s reading of Rousseau’s *Pygmalion*, I hope to suggest a somewhat different understanding of how Chassériau’s invocation of Pygmalion might function in the *Tepidarium*, as at once inside and outside the canvas. Having ‘kissed sorrowful and incredible traces’ in Pompeii, Chassériau’s self-appointed task was, as we have noted, nothing short of Pygmalian in nature: ‘Make it come alive.’ And so we might say that in the *Tepidarium* the artist appears as a Rousseauian Pygmalion, and thus also as if a woman: locked in the heat of sight, smell, and almost-touch.

As we examine the care with which Chassériau has rendered the encounter between the kneeling figure and the object of her attention, yet another myth of artistic origin might be seen to be cast, by way of a shadow, over the painting.

The shadow projected by the seated woman's hand and head onto the torso of the standing figure, together with the apparent instrumentality of her raised hand (plate 18), suggests that Pliny's tale of the origin of drawing might indeed lurk at the centre of the picture. The representational history of Pliny's account of the origin of drawing, found in the daughter of Dibutades' shadow trace of her lover, likewise conflates cast shadow with desire and artistic inspiration (plate 19). As in Pliny's origin of drawing, so too in Pygmalion: the Pygmalion narrative mirrored that of Pliny's tale, insofar as for Pliny, 'love was the inventor of drawing,' as Rousseau was the first to note.<sup>69</sup> Only here, the 'artist' is at once lover and shadow-caster and 'her' reflection is cast not on a wall, but instead on the female body at the canvas's heart. And thus the female admirer as Pygmalion/Dibutades, like the viewer, confronts the superb torso of the standing figure, just as Chassériau had earlier confronted the remarkable remnant at Pompeii that bore the imprint of life – and literally, of antique beauty – lost. 'Faire Vivre.' 'Make it come alive' was not only Chassériau's direction for a representation aimed at resurrecting the lost women of Pompeii, but it was also a deeply felt artistic identification.

The *Tepidarium* thus works at once as a reflection on artistic identity and on the practice of history. It is a painting, that is, in which Chassériau faced the spectres of the antique and past and present masters in the Pompeian time-space of art's history. Indeed we might go so far as to say that Chassériau here conjures particular artist ghosts by way of what we have discovered were his *ingrisme* antiquarian and archaeological investments on the one hand, and his chosen scene on the other, Pompeii before the eruption, prior to the imminent sublime of a destruction worthy of Sardanapalus.<sup>70</sup> Inasmuch as this makes the *Tepidarium* a staging ground or mirror for the artist's Oedipal self-fashioning, the painting positions the female figure in a crucial, if perhaps unfamiliar, role. Chassériau's privileging of the female nude could be all too easily accommodated into a well-known narrative of art history in which charged encounters with artist forefathers take shape by way of the female nude. But as I have argued, the female body was instrumental in this instance not only as a means of confronting history and invoking myths of origin but also as a site of artistic identification. By proposing this reconfiguration of the relationship between male artist and female painting subject I have attempted to offer an alternative reading of Chassériau's painting and to open a new interpretative space for reconsidering gendered spectatorship in representations of the female nude. Neither simply objectifying nor a wholesale absorption of the feminine, Chassériau's painting is instead caught in the Pygmalion sublime, forever located at the crossroads of identification and desire.

The *Tepidarium* took shape through Chassériau's particular experience of history, one developed out of embodied artistic encounters in which the past was made vivid by the artist's contact with female traces. The painting's remarkable combination of experiential female identification and insistence on female self-sufficient otherness offers a different model, a Rousseauian model as read through de Man, for understanding the artist's relationship to the female nude. Rather than a pictorial and experiential displacement of the female subject and 'her' desire, this painting about antiquity and artistic origins depicts the Pygmalion sublime of selfhood, a circuit of identification and alterity, an archaeology of the self – but with a difference.

## Notes

**This article has benefitted from the expertise and critical insights of many friends and colleagues, especially my colleagues in the McIntire Department of Art at the University of Virginia, Liz Prettejohn, John House, André Dombrowski, and Claude Peining. I am grateful to have had the opportunity to present an early version of this material as part of the 'Ruins and Reconstructions: Pompeii in the Popular Imagination' conference at the University of Bristol. I am indebted to the two anonymous readers for *Art History*, who provided invaluable suggestions for further refinement, and to Sheila Crane, a constant companion on this journey to Pompeii. I gratefully acknowledge the support provided for images in this article by the Dean of the College of Arts and Sciences and the Vice President for Research and Graduate Studies at the University of Virginia. Except where otherwise indicated, all translations are my own.**

- 1 Salon of 1853, no. 228; 1855 Universal Exposition, no. 2689. The painting was purchased by the State in 1853 for 7,000 francs. Archives Nationales F21/70 dossier 13. Stéphane Guégan, Vincent Pomarède, and Louis-Antoine Prat, eds, *Chassériau: The Unknown Romantic*, New Haven and London, 2002, 366–9. Bruno Chenique has discovered that the purchase of the canvas in fact dated from 1854; the date of 1853 and the document attesting to the painting's commission were doctored after the fact. Guégan et al., *Chassériau: The Unknown Romantic*, 394–6.
- 2 Delécluze, 'Exposition de 1853', in *Journal des débats* [25 June 1853] cited in Guégan et al., *Chassériau: The Unknown Romantic*, 369.
- 3 Théophile Gautier, 'Salon de 1853', *La Presse*, Paris, 23 June 1853. trans. in Guégan et al., *Chassériau: The Unknown Romantic*, 369.
- 4 These include: *Venus Anadyomene*, Salon of 1839; *Andromeda Chained to the Rock by the Nereids*, Salon of 1841; *The Toilette of Esther*, Salon of 1841; and *Bather Sleeping near a Spring*, Salon of 1850–51.
- 5 Chassériau's sustained work on the painting is attested to by ample preliminary studies; over fifty sketches for the composition are now held in the Louvre. Louis-Antoine Prat, *Inventaire Général des Dessins. École Française. Dessins de Théodore Chassériau (1819–1856) Tome 1*, Paris, 1988, 625–76.
- 6 The foundational model for the analysis of emulation in the studio context remains Thomas Crow, *Emulation: Making Artists in Revolutionary France*, New Haven and London, 1995.
- 7 The literature on the representation of the female nude in the nineteenth century is vast. To gesture only to the two critical nodes I have signalled above, on the *Grand Odalisque*, see Norman Bryson, *Tradition and Desire: From David to Delacroix*, Cambridge, 1984, and Susan Siegfried, *Ingres: Painting Reimagined*, New Haven and London, 2009; on Manet's *Olympia* and works in its immediate chronological vicinity, see T. J. Clark, 'Preliminaries to a possible treatment of "Olympia" in 1865', *Screen*, 21: 1, Spring 1980, 18–34, reprinted in Francis Frascina and Charles Harrison, eds, *Modern Art and Modernism: A Critical Anthology*, London, 1982, 105–20; T. J. Clark, *The Painting of Modern Life: Paris in the Art of Manet and his Followers*, New York, 1985; Carol Armstrong, *Manet/Manette*, New Haven and London, 2002; and Jennifer Shaw, 'The figure of Venus: Rhetoric of the ideal and the Salon of 1863', *Art History*, 14: 4, 1991, reprinted in Caroline Arsiccotti and Katie Scott, eds, *Manifestations of Venus: Art and Sexuality*, Manchester, 2001, 90–108. Shaw here demonstrates the historical aptness (in the 1860s) of what Lynda Nead has posited more expansively: that 'the representation of the female body within the forms and frames of high art is a metaphor for the significance of art generally.' Lynda Nead, *The Female Nude: Art, Obscenity, and Sexuality*, London, 1992, 2.
- 8 Mary Roberts, 'Difference and deferral: The sexual economy of Courbet's "femininity"', in Jill Beaulieu, Mary Roberts, and Toni Ross, eds, *Refracting Vision: Essays on the Writings of Michael Fried*, Sydney, 2000, 211–45. In her superb consideration of Fried's project, Roberts concludes, 'while Fried's reading of Courbet's "femininity" constitutes a significant challenge to phallogentrism, in particular through its attempts to disrupt a dominant reading of male spectatorhood, his model is premised on a displacement of the female subject and feminine desire.' Roberts, 'Difference and deferral', 236. I thank Howard Singerman for directing me to Roberts' very important essay.
- 9 The painting's close relationship to the archaeological site was widely commented upon that year. Claude Vignon remarked that 'devant le tableau de M. Chassériau ... on se retrouve un instant au milieu de Pompeii'; Claude Vignon, *Salon de 1853*, Paris, 1853, 8–9. Gautier took the opportunity to compare the painting favourably to his impressions, formed in 1850 on the site of 'ce palimpseste de la civilisation antique', and to his own scrupulous description of the tepidarium of the Forum Baths; Théophile Gautier, 'Salon de 1853. Premier article', *La Presse*, 24 June 1853. Among other critics who noted Chassériau's firsthand study of the Pompeian bath and the immersive archaeological aspect of the work were: A. J. Du Pays, 'Salon de 1853', *L'Illustration*, 18 June 1853, 392; Henri de Lacretelle, 'Salon de 1853. 2e article', *La Lumière*, 4 June 1853, 89–90; and Comte Horace de Viel-Castel, 'Salon de 1853', *L'Athenaeum Français*, 11 June 1853, 558.
- 10 For a thorough account of Chassériau's Italian itinerary between July 1840 and January 1841 (during which Chassériau appears likely to have spent a week in Pompeii), see Louis-Antoine Prat, 'Théodore Chassériau: un séjour italien (1840–1841)', in Olivier Bonfait, ed., *Maestri di Roma. Da Napoleone all'unità d'Italia. D'Ingres à Degas. Les artistes français à Rome*, Milan, 2003, 117–25.
- 11 After Ingres's Paris studio closed in 1834, Chassériau did not compete for Prix de Rome as he had anticipated. Unable to make the trip until 1840 due to his family's financial straits, Chassériau's Italian journey of 1840–41 should be viewed as a belated, self-sponsored Prix de Rome voyage.
- 12 Pompeii continued to be the focus of sustained archaeological work during the period preceding Chassériau's visit, as indeed throughout Chassériau's lifetime and beyond. As Pedar W. Foss has recently emphasized, while perhaps the least studied of all eras of archaeological work at Pompeii, the period of the excavations supervised by Francesco Avellino (1839–50) and S. Spinelli (1850–63) resulted in the clearing of roughly one-third of the total urban area of the ancient city. Pedar W. Foss, 'Rediscovery and resurrection', in John J. Dobbins and Pedar W. Foss, eds, *The World of Pompeii*, London and New York, 2007, 28–42.
- 13 For an account of Mazois' career, see the biographical notice by Chevalier Artaud in *Les Ruines de Pompéi*, vol. IV, Paris, 1838, I–VI and A. Lance, *Dictionnaire des architectes français*, Paris, 1872, II, 125–8. See also Domenico Esposito, 'The significance and the importance of the work of Mazois', published as part of the online project, 'The Image Database of Les Ruines de Pompéi' by the Center for Research on Pictorial Cultural Resources, University of Tokyo.
- 14 The first two volumes of Mazois' *Ruines de Pompéi* appeared in 1812 and 1824. After Mazois' death in 1826, the project was taken up by architect François Chrétien Gau, who brought out the third and fourth volumes of the *Ruines* in 1829 and 1838. The importance of Pompeii and Herculaneum for Parisian academic audiences in the period in which Ingres's studio was beginning to flourish is suggested by the procès-verbaux of the Institut *séances* in which interest in these sites is ubiquitous. Beginning in July 1825 (at the *séance* in which Ingres's election to the Académie was read), François Mazois introduced his study of Pompeii to the assembled *académiciens*. 'Académie des Beaux-Arts, Procès-verbaux de ses séances', SE16, 1825, 16 July 1825. Archives des Beaux-Arts, Paris.
- 15 William Gell's first volume of *Pompeiana* was published with J. P. Gandy in 1817–19, with new editions appearing in 1824 and 1852. The second series covered the excavations undertaken between 1819 and 1832, was authored by Gell alone, and appeared in two volumes in 1832 (with new additions in 1835 and 1837).
- 16 Joan R. Mertens, 'A drawing by Chassériau', *Metropolitan Museum Journal*, 15, 1981, 153–6. The illustration in question is from vol. II, plate xxxviii.
- 17 Chassériau's cousin married Emma Duval (Eugène-Pineau Amaury, Duval's sister), herself a cousin (by marriage) of Mazois, whose wife was Jenny-Malvina Pineau-Duval. Amaury-Duval, *L'Atelier d'Ingres: Édition critique de l'ouvrage publié à Paris en 1878*, ed. Daniel Ternois, Paris, 1993, 13, 407, and note 8, 59.
- 18 Pascale Picard-Cajan, *Ingres & l'antique: L'illusion grecque*. [Exposition] 15 juin–15 septembre 2006 à Montauban, Musée Ingres, 2 octobre 2006–2 janvier 2007 à Arles, musée de l'Arles et de la Provence antiques.
- 19 Agnes Mongan, 'Ingres and the antique', *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institute*, 10, 1947, 1–13. Mongan's important study is amplified by a letter from Ingres's student Victor Mottez. In a letter of 1862, Mottez

- describes Ingres, 'éminemment pillard quoique original au premier degré', and lists a series of antique references for famed canvases such as *Oedipus and the Sphinx*, the *Grande Odalisque*, *Stratonice*, and others. Mottez letter to Fockeday, Paris, 6 July 1862, in René Giard, Victor Mottez, *d'après sa correspondance*, Lille, 1934, 202–3. For the case of Ingres's use of a Herculaneum prototype copied by Mottez and others of Ingres's students, see Sarah Betzer, 'Ingres's second *Madame Moitessier*': "Le Brevet du Peintre d'Histoire"', *Art History*, 23: 5, December 2000, 681–705.
- 20 Based on a subject first explored by Ingres decades earlier, the painting was finally achieved in July 1840; Chassériau was in Rome for six days in early July 1840. Daniel Ternois, *Lettres d'Ingres à Marcotte d'Argenteuil*. Dictionnaire. Archives de l'art français, new per., 36, 2001, 219. Chassériau mentions the *Stratonice* in a letter of 9 September 1840, cited in Prat, 'Théodore Chassériau', 121. The pose of *Stratonice* (and *Penelope*) was once again unearthed for Ingres's 1845 portrait of the Comtesse d'Haussonville. D'Haussonville had seen the *Stratonice* canvas under way in Rome in 1840 and had written in her unpublished account of the journey that 'the composition recalls the paintings of Herculaneum'. Louise d'Haussonville, *Voyage à Rome en 1840*, n.p., quoted in Edgar Munhall, *Ingres and the Comtesse d'Haussonville*, New York, 1985, 74.
  - 21 The break between Chassériau and Ingres was reported in a letter written after Chassériau's return to Rome from Naples. Théodore Chassériau to Frédéric Chassériau, 9 September 1840, published in Valbert Chevillard, *Un Peintre romantique: Théodore Chassériau*, Paris, 1893, 44–5, and Léonce Bénédite, *Théodore Chassériau, sa vie et son oeuvre* vol. 1, Paris, 1931, 137–8. As Prat has noted, the letter itself is a curious document, opening as it does by passing on Ingres's greetings to Chassériau's brother and a newsy account of Ingres's happiness about the reception of his *Stratonice*, only to return after an interruption to conclude with the apparently categorical rejection of Ingres's utter lack of comprehension of 'des idées et des changements qui se sont faits dans les arts à notre époque'. Despite the apparently unequivocal tone of this final passage, the supposed estrangement of artist and master seems to me to be worthy of probing, not only in light of what I am positing here was a continued thematic dialogue between the two, but also thanks to the fact that we know that Ingres and Chassériau continued to have contact in Rome and that Chassériau's *Arab Horsemen at a Fountain in Constantine*, executed in 1851 – ten years after their supposed definitive break – belonged to Ingres. See Prat, 'Théodore Chassériau', 121–2 and Guégan et al., *Chassériau: The Unknown Romantic*, cat. 186, 313.
  - 22 First discovered in 1824 according to Gell's account, the third volume of Mazois' *Ruines* reported that the Forum Baths excavations were completed in 1828.
  - 23 Gell, *Pompeiana*, 1832, I, 107.
  - 24 Christine Peltre follows Prat (who cites Bénédite) in incorrectly describing Chassériau's watercolor made in the Forum Baths as depicting the Stabian baths. Christine Peltre, *Théodore Chassériau*, Paris, 2001, 195, and Louis-Antoine Prat, *Inventaire Général*, Tome 1, 1988, no. 629, 290. Geneviève Lacambre correctly cites the Mazois plates (see below), but incorrectly locates the baths near the Porta di Stabia in *The Second Empire, 1852–1870: Art in France under Napoleon III*, exh. cat., Philadelphia Museum of Art, 1978, 269.
  - 25 James Stuart and Nicholas Revett, *The Antiquities of Athens*, London, 1762, vol. II, chapter II. If the Erechtheion caryatids are indeed referenced here, it is worth noting that under Mehmed II, Athens' first sultan, the Acropolis was used as a Turkish military base. Furthermore, as Mary Beard has noted, 'with a wry sense of humour (or as a gross insult to local sensibilities, depending on how you see it), the Turks converted the small temple known as the Erechtheion, which had also had a long history as a church, into a harem: the famous porch with its line-up of caryatids now doing duty as an advertisement for the delights that lay inside.' Mary Beard, *The Parthenon*, London, 2002, 70. Warm thanks are due to Tyler Jo Smith for conversations about these figures.
  - 26 For Chassériau's Italian sketchbooks from 1840–41, see Louis-Antoine Prat, *Inventaire Général*, Tome 1, 1988 1092–1572.
  - 27 Chassériau may well have discovered Gell through Mazois, as the 1829 Mazois volume entry on the Forum Baths made reference to Gell. François Mazois and François Chrétien Gau, *Les Ruines de Pompéi*, t. 3, Paris, 1829, 68.
  - 28 Gell, *Pompeiana*, 1832, I, 109. Wilhelm Zahn (1800–71) published with Otto Jahn, *Die schönsten Ornamente und merkwürdigsten Gemälde aus Pompeji, Herculaneum und Stabiae*, Berlin, 1828–1859. Zahn also published *Ornamente aller klassischen Kunstepochen*, Berlin, 1843. On Gell's use of the camera lucida, see Andrew Wallace-Hadrill, 'Roman topography and the prism of Sir William Gell', *Imaging Ancient Rome. Documentation – Visualization – Imagination*, Lothar Haselberger and John Humphrey, eds, Portsmouth, Rhode Island, *Journal of Roman Archaeology*, 2006, 285–96.
  - 29 Wallace-Hadrill, 'Roman topography', especially 293–5. I thank Andrew Wallace-Hadrill and Mary Beard for their discussions about the circulation and impact of Gell's text.
  - 30 I am tempted to compare the relationship and poses of the two female figures at the rear of Gell's plate entitled *Frigidarium and Piscina*, in the *Women's Baths*, to those of the central pair in Chassériau's painting. William Gell, *Pompeiana*, I, 1832, plate 33.
  - 31 While the space that Gell identified as the women's baths replicated the general layout of the men's baths, they were smaller, much less ornamented, and utterly spatially distinct from those of the men. Lawrence Richardson has more recently proposed that the urban plan suggests that the women's baths were added later. L. Richardson, Jr., *Pompeii: An Architectural History*, Baltimore and London, 1988, 147–53.
  - 32 Gell, *Pompeiana*, 1832, I, 131–2.
  - 33 Gell, *Pompeiana*, 1832, I, 139.
  - 34 After being exhibited at the Salon of 1850, Gérôme's painting was purchased by Prince Napoléon. Gerald M. Ackerman, *Jean-Léon Gérôme. Monographie revisee. Catalogue raisonné mis à jour*, Paris, 2000, no. 20, 216. The painting was reproduced as a photogravure later copied by Cézanne. Adrien Chapuis, 'Cézanne dessinateur: copies et illustrations', *Gazette des Beaux-Arts*, 6 sér, t. 66, November 1965, 293–308.
  - 35 In addition to the common antique form of bronze lamp and lampstand, Gérôme seems to invoke the celebrated tripod with ithyphallic satyrs from the *Praedia of Julia Felix* at Pompeii. This tripod was discovered and made famous in the eighteenth century by its reproduction by Jean-Claude-Richard de Saint-Non in the *Voyage Pittoresque ou Description des Royaumes de Naples et de Sicile*, vol. 2, Paris, 1781–1786, by Jean-Nicolas-Louis Durand in the *Recueil et parallèle des edifices*, Paris, 1799–1801, (plate 75), and in the *Count de Caylus' Recueil d'antiquités égyptiennes, étrusques et romaines*, (1759). Formerly in the Portici museum, the tripod is now in the collections of the National Archeological Museum in Naples (inv. 27874). Ackerman suggests that Gérôme was aided in his rendition of the interior by a Néo-Grec architect, an approach he used in other similarly 'archaeological' compositions of the 1850s. Gerald M. Ackerman, 'The Néo-Grecs: A chink in the wall of neoclassicism', in June Hargrove, ed., *The French Academy: Classicism and its Antagonists*, Newark, DE, 1990, 183.
  - 36 John House, 'Curiosité', in Richard Hobbs, ed., *Impressions of French Modernity*, Manchester, 1998, 33–57; John House, 'History without values? Gérôme's history paintings', *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes*, LXXI, December 2008, 261–76; and Göran Blix, *From Paris to Pompeii: French Romanticism and the Cultural Politics of Archaeology*, Philadelphia, PA, 2009.
  - 37 For two such critiques, see Guégan et al., *Chassériau: The Unknown Romantic*, note 7, 369.
  - 38 'Ce qu'il examinait avec tant d'attention, c'était un morceau de cendre noire coagulée portant une empreinte creuse: on eût dit un fragment du moule de statue, brisé par la fonte; l'oeil exercé d'un artiste y eût aisément reconnu la coupe d'un sein admirable et d'un flanc aussi pur de style que celui d'une statue grecque. L'on sait, et le moindre guide du voyageur vous l'indique, que cette lave, refroidie autour du corps d'une femme, en a gardé le contour charmant.' ... 'Ce cachet de beauté, posé par le hasard sur la scorie d'un volcan, ne s'est pas effacé.' Théophile Gautier, 'Arria Marcella. Souvenir de Pompéi' [1852], *Théophile Gautier. Romans, contes et nouvelles*, II, Paris, 2002, 287.
  - 39 'toutes les femmes étaient le long du mur toutes effrayées c'est le trait gravé sur le mur la femme de Diomède est celle du milieu entouré de toute sa famille le père arrive et tout doit être touché par les cendres là un seul petit coin de figure effrayant avec un esclave qui porte une torche et des clefs toutes les femmes serrées le long du mur pour rendre l'impression il faut que le tableau soit hardiment en longueur – la marque du sein conservée au musée montre ainsi que ce qui reste au mur qu'elle était forte les ... ayant été trouvé par terre la composition est tout à fait à peindre (?) – J'ai baisé ces traces douloureuses et inouïes – les murs en stuc blanc et le terrain en terre – c'était la cave – la cendre

- entrait partout c'est d'abord ce qui les a étouffés ensuite est venue la lave – la famille de Diomède.' Louis-Antoine Prat, *Inventaire Général*, Tome 1, number 1487 (RF 25.209), 543–5.
- 40 Prat, 'Théodore Chassériau', 119.
- 41 I rely here upon Moorman's exhaustive study: Eric M. Moorman, 'Literary evocations of ancient Pompeii', in P. G. Guzzo, ed., *Storie da un'eruzione. Pompei Ercolano Oplontis*, Milano, 2003, 15–33. The imprint was published after its discovery in 1763 in *Pompeianorum Antiquitatum Historia*, I, 268–9, and was first part of the collection of the Portici museum, then in the National Archeological Museum in Naples.
- 42 René de Chateaubriand, *Voyage en Italie*, Paris, 1824, in *Oeuvres romanesques et voyages*, II, Paris, 1969 1474, cited in Moorman, 'Literary evocations of ancient Pompeii', 25. See also *Pompéi* [Exhibition Catalogue], Paris, 1981, 48 and 212, and S. J. Hales, 'Re-casting antiquity: Pompeii and the Crystal Palace', *Arion* 14: 1, Spring/Summer 2006, 106.
- 43 Victor Burgin, 'The shadow and the ruin' (paper presented at the Pompeii in the Popular Imagination Conference, Bristol, UK, 17 July 2007). Chassériau's text appears as part of an extended annotation on a sketch made at Pompeii (plate 11). See Louis-Antoine Prat, *Inventaire Général*, Tome 1, number 1487 (RF 25.209), 543–5.
- 44 Chassériau, *Women at the Tepidarium*, RF 26.442.
- 45 Moorman notes that several of the luminary figures of gothic ghost-novel genre traveled to Pompeii, among them Mary Wollstonecraft Shelley. Moorman, 'Literary evocations of ancient Pompeii', 19.
- 46 Henri de la Madeleine, 'Le Salon de 1853', in *L'Éclair* 3, 1853, 280 cited in Guégan et al., *Chassériau: The Unknown Romantic*, 367. Paul de Saint-Victor likewise noted the painting's encyclopedic array of female types, approving of the 'mélange charmant et superbe de femmes de toute race et de tout climat'. Paul de Saint-Victor, 'Paris-Guide', *L'Artiste*, cited in Chevillard, *Un peintre romantique: Théodore Chassériau*, 175.
- 47 Chassériau's archaeological alibi would appear to be born out by Mazois' distinction between Greek and Roman bath culture: 'Greek baths only served to reestablish the strength spent by exercises, in Roman baths on the contrary, the baths had as the principal object luxury and languor.' Mazois and Gau, *Les Ruines de Pompéi*, III, 1829, 70.
- 48 Théophile Gautier, 'Salon de 1853', *La Presse*, Paris, 23 June 1853. Translated in Guégan et al., *Chassériau: The Unknown Romantic*, 369. The orientalist inflection of this analysis immediately takes centre stage in Gautier's text, in which he draws a parallel between the women in Chassériau's painting and 'Myrrha in the palace of Sardanapalus'.
- 49 For an excellent analysis of the painting's critical reception, including the critics' tendency to juxtapose the sculptural sobriety of the female figures with the idea of their sexual depravity, see Rachel A. Lindheim, *Re-Presenting Sappho: The Classical Tradition in Nineteenth-Century French Painting*, PhD diss., University of Chicago, 2005, 242–60.
- 50 Guégan et al., *Chassériau: The Unknown Romantic*, 304–9.
- 51 Peter Benson Miller, *Théodore Chassériau and the French Colonial Project in Algeria*, PhD diss., New York University, 2003, 116–92.
- 52 Miller, *Théodore Chassériau*, 65. This aspect of the painting was not overlooked in 1853. Henri de Lacretelle noted no fewer than four 'races': 'la Nubienne à côté de la Bretonne, la Juive auprès de l'Ibérienne...'; Henri de Lacretelle, 'Salon de 1853. 2e article', *La Lumière*, 4 June 1853, 89.
- 53 Prat, 'Théodore Chassériau', 120; 'J'ai vu bien des choses curieuses, primitives et éblouissantes, touchantes et singulières. Dans Constantine qui est élevée sur des montagnes énormes on voit la race arabe et la race juive, comme elles étaient à leur premier jour.' Théodore Chassériau to Frédéric Chassériau, 13 June 1846 in Léonce Bénédict, *Théodore Chassériau, sa vie et son oeuvre*, Paris, 1931, 271.
- 54 Louis-Antoine Prat, *Inventaire Général*, Tome 1, 1988, nos 663 and 664, 300–1.
- 55 Lindheim, *Re-Presenting Sappho*, 253.
- 56 Lindheim makes the compelling argument that in his depiction of Pompeii in the *Tepidarium*, Chassériau 'deliberately calls to mind this alternative genealogy of classicism to sanction the fusion of West and East that subtends his ambitious aesthetic project.' Lindheim, *Re-Presenting Sappho*, 253, 165–73.
- 57 Guégan has noted the echoes between the central pair and 'the well-known iconography of religious ("Noli me tangere") and mythological (Apollo and Daphne) subjects, whose meaning it reverses. Everything here suggests – and leads to – blasphemous touching and forbidden embraces.' Guégan et al., *Chassériau: The Unknown Romantic*, 369. While I agree with Guégan's iconographic observations, I propose here a quite different interpretation of these references, as will become clear.
- 58 Guégan et al., *Chassériau: The Unknown Romantic*, note 11, 369. Based on posthumous sales, Chassériau reportedly owned a 'large model', likely in plaster. Paris, Hôtel Drouot, 16–17 March 1857, no. 104. Prat has dated the artist's studies of the Venus de Milo to 1840. Louis-Antoine Prat in *D'après l'antique*, Paris, Musée du Louvre, 16 October 2000–15 January 2001, 443.
- 59 A likely source for Chassériau's seated, twisted central figure comes from the antique bas-relief, the so-called 'Bed of Polyclitus', available for Chassériau in Rome by way of its iconographical echo in the seated figure of Hebe that decorates one of the spandrels of Raphael's Villa Farnesina frescos. Erwin Panofsky, *Problems in Titian, Mostly Iconographic*, New York, 1969, 151. This fresco programme would have had particular meaning for Ingres's circle in Rome as he had painted a copy of Raphael's figure of Mercury from this site as an envoi while himself a pensionnaire at the French Academy in Rome. Warm thanks are due to Lawrence Goedde and Malcolm Bell for the reference to the Bed of Polyclitus and its later incarnations.
- 60 Quite germane for our analysis of the *Tepidarium* is the fact that the story of Pygmalion, which appears in book ten of Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, is set within a broader narrative structure which depends upon a backdrop of female prostitution. In the prior narrative, Venus punished the Propoetides, women who refused to acknowledge her divinity, by making them prostitutes. It is as a result of Pygmalion's disgust for these 'hardened', 'flinty' women that he eschews their company for that of an ivory woman of his own creation. See J. Hillis Miller, *Versions of Pygmalion*, Cambridge, MA, 1990, 3.
- 61 Long recognized as his final (bid for) great painting, Girodet's *Pygmalion* was exhibited to great interest at the Paris Salon of 1819 and was subsequently reproduced in an engraving Sylvain Bellenger, Marc Fumaroli, and Bruno Chenique. *Girodet, 1767–1824*, Paris, 2005, 464.
- 62 *L'Artiste*, 2eme série, 1839, 185. Cited in Alexandra Wettlaufer's excellent *Pen vs. Paintbrush: Girodet, Balzac, and the Myth of Pygmalion in Post-Revolutionary France*, New York, 2001, 134.
- 63 J. L. Carr, 'Pygmalion and the Philosophes: The animated statue in eighteenth-century France', *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes*, 23: 3/4, July–December 1960, 253.
- 64 J. Hillis Miller, *Versions of Pygmalion*, 7. Hillis Miller has observed that Ovid's narrative places particular stress on the autoerotic nature of Pygmalion's encounter with Galatea, with a resulting emphasis on the 'bodily, tactile, and affective'. J. Hillis Miller, *Versions of Pygmalion*, 6.
- 65 James H. Rubin, 'Pygmalion and Galatea: Girodet and Rousseau', *The Burlington Magazine*, 127: 989, August 1985, 517–20. The title alone might have signalled Girodet's debt to Rousseau as Rousseau's *Pygmalion* inaugurates the tradition by which the statue comes to be named 'Galatea'. J. L. Carr, 'Pygmalion and the Philosophes', 242.
- 66 Carr, 'Pygmalion and the Philosophes', 243.
- 67 Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Oeuvres complètes*, ed. Bernard Gagnebin and Marcel Raymond, Paris, 1959, 1:1228. Cited by Paul de Man, *Allegories of Reading: Figural Language in Rousseau, Nietzsche, Rilke, and Proust*, New Haven, 1979, 185.
- 68 De Man, *Allegories of Reading*, 177. For Kant's 'Analytic of the Sublime', see Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Judgment*, trans. Werner S. Pluhar, Indianapolis, IN, 1987, 97–140.
- 69 Victor I. Stoichita, *A Short History of the Shadow*, Anne-Marie Glasheen, trans., London, 1997, 153. I thank Francesca Fiorani for this reference. And I am grateful for David Summers' provocative observation that the care with which Chassériau has rendered this shadow – and its reliance upon a secondary, off-screen light source – almost suggests that painting as a whole was created solely in order to cast this shadow.
- 70 I thank Douglas Fordham for this insight. Norman Bryson's interpretation of Ingres's *Grande Odalisque* (1814) as a sort of allegory of the senses likewise merits remarking here. Bryson, *Tradition and Desire: From David to Delacroix*, Cambridge, 1984, 137. I regret that full analysis of the emulative relations invoked by the painting is not possible in the context of this essay.