Making Art History

A changing discipline and its institutions

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Chapter 13

Figuring the origins of the modern at the fin de siècle

The trope of the pathetic male

Anna C. Chave

> In the linkage between the male subject, the male image, and the social hierarchy, one of the key components of the political order of patriarchy may, perhaps, be found.
>
> Norman Bryson[1]

Premiere among exhibition sites in the world's modern art museums is the inaugural wall of the painting and sculpture galleries at New York's MoMA. With final preparations underway for the 2004 re-opening of MoMA, the *New York Times* investigated whether the work appointed to command that wall in the Yoshio Taniguchi building would remain as before: "For as long as anyone can remember, MoMA has opened the permanent collection of painting and sculpture with its most famous work by Cézanne, 'The Bather,' on a freestanding panel wall opposite the doorway," noted Arthur Lubow (who delivered the scoop that a Signac might take the key spot instead, however temporarily) (Figure 13.1). As head of the Modern's department of painting and sculpture, Kirk Varnedoe oversaw the installation that Lubow referred to only in the mid 1990s, however. Formerly, multiple paintings normally shared the inaugural wall, sometimes but not always including *The Bather*. Varnedoe's predecessor, William Rubin, who installed the 1984 Cesar Pelli renovation to the building, recalled *The Bather* as having been his own choice of inaugural painting (documentary evidence is scant and ambiguous); and Lubow called that choice a reaffirmation of the decision of the museum's legendary founding director, Alfred Barr.[2] But Barr's collection installation (mounted in 1964) opened instead with Rousseau. Varnedoe's decision to give Cézanne's *Bather* unprecedented prominence—such that it became practically a "poster boy" for the museum—followed in part from an architectural change: In response to criticism that the 1984 installation forced visitors on an unduly rigid route through the permanent collection, Varnedoe had an opening carved through the inaugural wall to allow the public another option, and the "freestanding panel," which accommodated only a single painting, made its debut.[3]

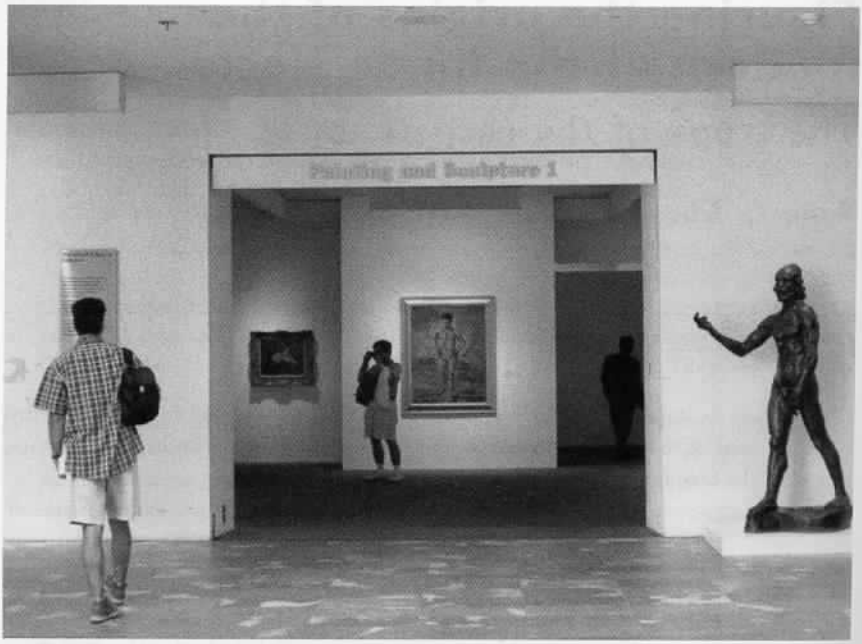

Figure 13.1 View of entry to permanent collection galleries in the Museum of Modern Art, New York. Photograph courtesy of Mary Anne Staniszewski.

The *New York Times* noted in 1999 the nearly "biblical authority" inscribed in the path of a visit to the Modern, whereby "you turned left at Cézanne's *Bather*"—Cézanne being a kind of "Old Testament" figure, among the "prophets of the coming Light"—and proceeded apace to Picasso's *Demoiselles d'Avignon*, "from which all else descended as from Adam's rib."[4] Just outside the portal to the inaugural gallery stood Rodin's *John the Baptist*, his raised hand gesturing toward the Way, the Truth —and toward Cézanne's *Bather*. According Cézanne this preeminent institutional site of origin for the modernist canon did make a received art-historical sense, of course. In 1951 Clement Greenberg declared Cézanne "the most copious source of what we know as modern art," just as Clive Bell had called him in 1914 "the Christopher Columbus of a new continent of form."[5]

Though granting the logic supporting Cézanne's inaugural status, many museum visitors may not immediately have recognized the 1885 *Bather as* a Cézanne. Large-scaled (50 × 38 1/8″), individual nudes are quite uncommon in Cézanne's production, and his Bather pictures generally depart from his deep commitment to art grounded in the observation of nature. "Only in . . . the long series of nude studies known collectively as Bathers, did he habitually work without having an

actual model before him." Often awkwardly drawn, the Bathers have been called "the least 'realized' "[6] as well as the "least 'natural' " of Cézanne's subjects.[7] Though MoMA's indeed difficult *Bather* is a foundational work of its collection (a 1931 bequest from one of the museum's founders, Lillie Bliss), Cézanne's Bather pictures were, as a rule, "added to museum collections only hesitantly and in most cases very late." Critical and scholarly attention newly shifted to the Bathers in the late 1980s and 1990s, moreover (belatedly following the affinity of numerous artists for these works).[8] I will argue that MoMA's emphatic positioning of *The Bather* toward the close of the century was as much a timely as a time-honored choice then, and that the painting served in some ways as an object of specifically contemporary interest.

The same Cézanne who believed fervently in working from nature loathed nude models, so he based the MoMA *Bather* on a stock photograph of a male model, while substituting a head reminiscent of his then thirteen-year-old son, and adapting from another of his own paintings the illogical, disproportionate, oddly generalized landscape. Cézanne contrived *The Bather* by recycling his own and other images, blending firsthand and cribbed experience into a fresh image without troubling to render the synthesis seamless. He contrived an overt pastiche, in short, a category that would happen to have special appeal to postmodern sensibilities . *The Bather*'s 'seams' emerge in its peculiar disjunctions. Barr pointed to the "fumbl[ing]" of "naturalistic scale," for one, which makes The Bather seem to rise "like a colossus who has just bestrode mountains and rivers"[9]—though the outsized figure who dominates both picture plane and landscape is, contradictorily, almost boyish in his internal proportions, and pathetic or defenseless-looking in posture and mien.

Considered in terms of exhibition design, *The Bather*'s suitability for its conspicuous location seems apparent: just as Rodin's pointing, striding, life-sized *John the Baptist* looked the part of a greeter poised at the threshold of the collection galleries, so could Cézanne's frontal *Bather* serve as a potential figure of identification for the arriving spectator. If the prospect of a fellow body is potentially orienting to visitors, however, there could also have been an instant of disorientation, for the inaugural figure museum-goers might have expected to encounter—the paradigmatic "display nude" of the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries—was not male, but female. The consigning of women to object status—whereas the central or authorizing subject of modernist practice has been, from the outset, a specifically or tacitly masculine subject—has served in recent decades as a topic for feminist analysis. In 1989, in a mischievous reading of MoMA's collection installation, Carol Duncan discerned a misogynist subtext in the placement of some notorious female icons, such as *Les Demoiselles d'Avignon* and de Kooning's *Woman I*.[10]

As feminist discourses evolved over the course of the 1970s and 1980s, increasing attention was paid to how men and women are differently socialized with regard to how they look, the dominant paradigm being that men may gaze at will whereas

women are habituated to being looked at (and so to being enjoined to look appealing). A libidinal economy long accepted as so natural to modern visual culture as to be beneath comment—one in which the viewed figurative objects would be mostly female, the intended viewers, or voyeurs, heterosexual males (only females have "figures," after all)—was gradually denaturalized by activist critics. Once the privileged position of the voyeur became a target of critical inquiry, once the scrutinizer was vulnerable to scrutiny, his prerogatives were thereby undermined. In some feminist sectors, moreover, the call went out for an embargo against the depicted female body, and in some circles a strategy of turn-about as fair play emerged, as with Sylvia Sleigh's male odalisque paintings of the 1970s.

The decision to foreground a male nude as the first word in the late-century version of the Modern's master narrative bears examination, I think, against this expanding critical field. Varnedoe's showcasing of *The Bather* might possibly be construed, in part, as a sop to activist sensitivities about chronic exploitation of the female nude and the scarcity of comparable male objects—except that Cézanne hardly calculated his forlorn protagonist with a view to the erotic imagination of a female viewership. The morose-looking figure (his genitals sheltered by soft, pale briefs) was less fit as a compensatory object of desire for a late-twentieth-century feminist constituency than as a figure of identification for a pained or beset masculine one—beset in part by said feminists' interrogation of once-gratifying habits of looking, an interrogation linked to demands for gender parity, and so for ever greater social change.

Among the beset, early in his association with MoMA, was Varnedoe himself. A scion of privilege who became a very model of the efficacy of the storied "old boy's network," Varnedoe enjoyed a meteoric career, thanks to a series of powerful mentors—or would have been able to enjoy it freely had it not occurred at a moment when such cronyism was liable to feminist attack. Charges of paternalism were levied at (and within) the museum following Rubin's peremptory designation of the relatively inexperienced Varnedoe as his successor. The 1984 "'Primitivism'" show that Varnedoe worked on under Rubin's authority, and his first major show as department head, the 1990 "High and Low: Modern Art and Popular Culture" exhibition, both met with unusually scathing, and unusually high caliber, criticism. Unusual too, however, was the level of press attention to Varnedoe's person, to his "broodingly handsome" physique. In objectifying treatment more typically accorded attractive women, glamorizing photographs of the curator soon became routine in art world coverage. But a full-page celebrity ad of him modeling an expensive suit for Barneys' department store in 1988, just when MoMA announced his appointment, caused voluble consternation ("And the heavens opened," Varnedoe recalled) (Figure 13.2). On occasion, he was framed as one of a hyper-masculine pair with motorcycle buff Thomas Krens, a fellow Williams College alumnus who was anointed (in his case as Guggenheim Museum director) around

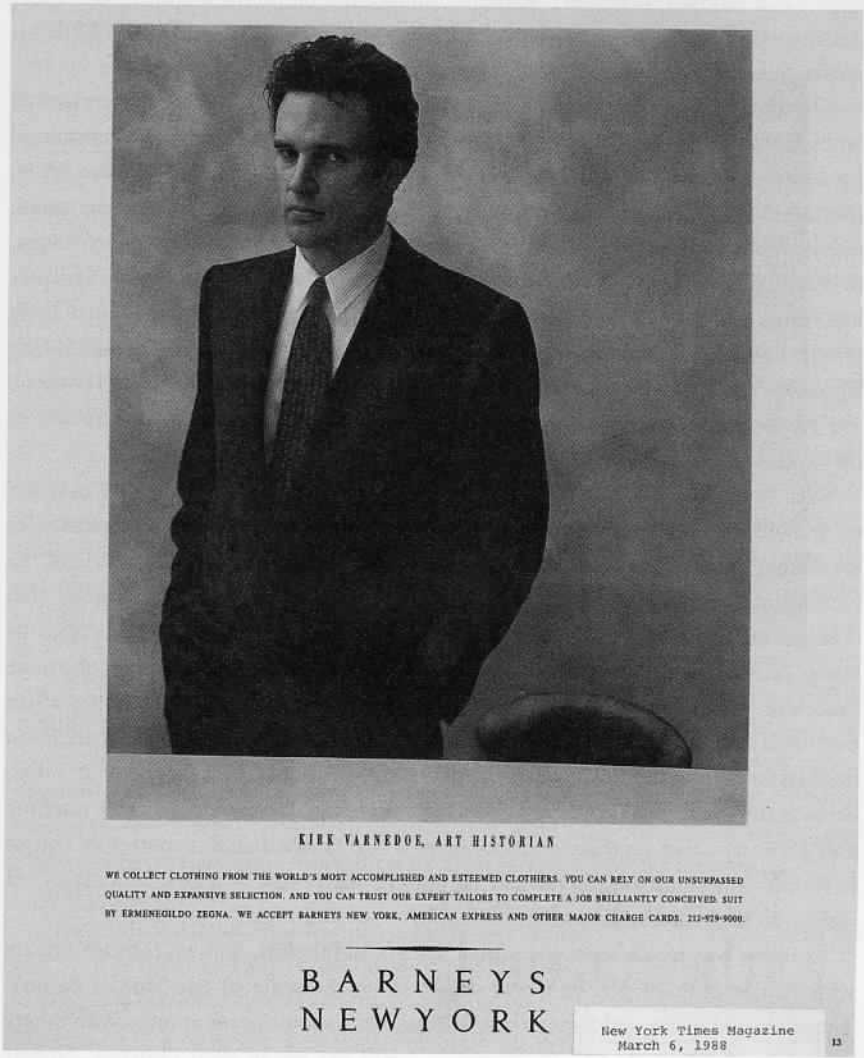

Figure 13.2 Ad for Barneys New York, 1988. Courtesy of Barneys New York.

the same time as Varnedoe. Yet the *Times* dubbing Varnedoe "MoMA's Boy" might imply some latent doubts on this score; and indeed there was the bias against the art world as an effeminate (read: homosexual) province to overcome. Calvin Tomkins related how displays of athleticism by Varnedoe's college professors had helped to "take the curse of effeminacy off art history" for the young jock.[11] The mature Varnedoe's résumé would reportedly make it "difficult to know where art

begins and football leaves off," listing a monograph he published on modern art, titled with a phrase drawn from rugby history ("A Fine Disregard"), alongside his rugby club memberships.[12]

The ideal of the male body in France during the late (nineteenth) century period when Cézanne produced the MoMA *Bather* was "ultra-virile," as a nation consumed by anxiety about emasculation, following defeat in the Franco–Prussian War, mustered a compensatory emphasis on physical exercise and masculine camaraderie.[13] An arms-akimbo posture conventionally signifies authority, defensiveness, or brashness, by bracing and broadening the span of the torso. Yet Cézanne's lonesome, glum figure seems nearly inert and almost torn; though his upper body is braced, his lower body seems to be in motion, and a slight torsion caused by the lag on his right side tugs against his (otherwise) full frontality and centered-ness. *The Bather* "stares tensely down at his feet, like a tightrope walker unsure where the next step will take him," Holland Cotter aptly observed.[14]

Kaja Silverman has pointed to war as one among other forces that may act to annihilate "the positivities of the masculine 'self'." By her (psychoanalytic) reasoning, delusion is a very condition of masculine existence: the delusion of the identity of the penis and the phallus, a delusion of mastery.[15] Maintaining that delusion necessitates the veiling of the phallus, whose very power derives from its being "imagined with symbolic proportions."[16] (*The Bather*'s genitals were of course hidden in conformity with the era's prohibition of full frontal male nudity, a ban that lifted significantly only under pressure from feminist and gay constituencies in the final decades of the twentieth century—a moment when men, such as Varnedoe, became subject to new kinds of public objectification.) The exigencies of wartime may serve to inflict on male consciousness a reality familiar as a matter of course to female consciousness, Silverman suggested: the reality of a lack of mastery, of castration in the Lacanian sense.

Cézanne was by all accounts a man uneasy in his skin, and even more uneasy with female flesh (which he never depicted on the scale of the MoMA *Bather*). Though he did marry and father a son, the painter's agonies over contact with others were legend: "Nobody will touch me . . . will get me in their clutches. Never! Never!" the aging artist screamed to Émile Bernard.[17] In his younger years, until the early 1870s, Cézanne repeatedly conjured fantastic, sexually violent imagery (which, like the Bathers, came newly to critical attention at the twentieth century's close), "scenes whose abiding themes and actions are structured by barely hidden equivalencies: murder and sex, stabbing and intercourse, the woman killed and the woman fucked."[18] The mature artist's fantasy life assumed other, sublimated guises: "I paint still-lifes," Cézanne told Renoir; "Women models frighten me. The sluts are always watching to catch you off your guard. You've got to be on the defensive all the time and the motif vanishes."[19]

Despite this piteous, visceral terror of human and sexual contact, in the summer of 1885, the year the MoMA *Bather* is believed to have been painted, in a possibly unique episode, Cézanne was overcome by desire for a particular, unidentified woman: "I saw you and you permitted me to embrace you; from that moment on a profound emotion has not ceased tormenting me," went the partial draft of a love letter inscribed on the back of a drawing. "You must excuse the liberty that a friend, tortured by anxiety, takes in writing to you . . . Why, I asked myself, should I suppress the cause of my agony?"[20] Cézanne's horror of women did not completely quell his yearning for them, then; and in that awful dilemma—of being "unable to look or to look away,"[21] of fearing the object of his longing—he might be understood as an embodiment (however extreme) of a contemporary masculine predicament.

Cézanne's late (nineteenth) century bathers and nudes resonated with late (twentieth) century ideological struggles over the sexed body, then. And as the opening word in MoMA's narrative of the modern canon, the *Bather* might be read as an utterance, if oblique, on a state of male dolor and oppression, on a hidden threat of female aggression. (The pairing of the Cézanne with the Rodin indirectly reinforced this thematic, inasmuch as *John the Baptist* would suffer decapitation for spurning Salome's advances.) In this light, the Modern's first word correlates tellingly with that of another late-century narrative of modernism, the one framed by T.J. Clark, whose "candidate for the beginning of modernism is *25 vendémiaire Year 2* (October 16, 1793, as it came to be known). That was the day a hastily completed painting by Jacques-Louis David, of Marat, the martyred hero of the Revolution . . . was released into the public realm"[22] (Figure 13.3). In rough outline uncannily like MoMA's inaugural image—though drawn from a prior historical juncture—the image Clark designated also depicts a slumped male bather, one whose pathetic state can (more directly than in the Cézanne) be associated with female predatoriness.

Practically speaking, MoMA must appoint specific objects to initiate its modernist narrative, whereas no such onus bears on the historian. By isolating a single object as inaugural of modernism, Clark made a willful, peremptory, and paternal gesture: marking Clark's locus of origin for Clark's modernism. "As a discourse, 'modernism' has, in part, a disciplinary function" and an "authorizing power," feminist historians have noted.[23] Fixed sites of origin were commonplaces of formerly prevalent "totalizing models of periodization," though trenchant critiques of such models had long since been mounted by the time of Clark's writing.[24] Regardless, Clark heralded the *Death of Marat* for its first-ness, on the grounds that it attests to the "impossibility of transcendence" and to the fact that "contingency rules," by bearing witness to "the accident and tendentiousness of politics in its picture of the world." By Clark's account, David's practice is animated by a tension between his "all-or-nothing sense of the real" and his determination to signify, to make of Marat both the symbolic embodiment of the Revolution and a Christlike

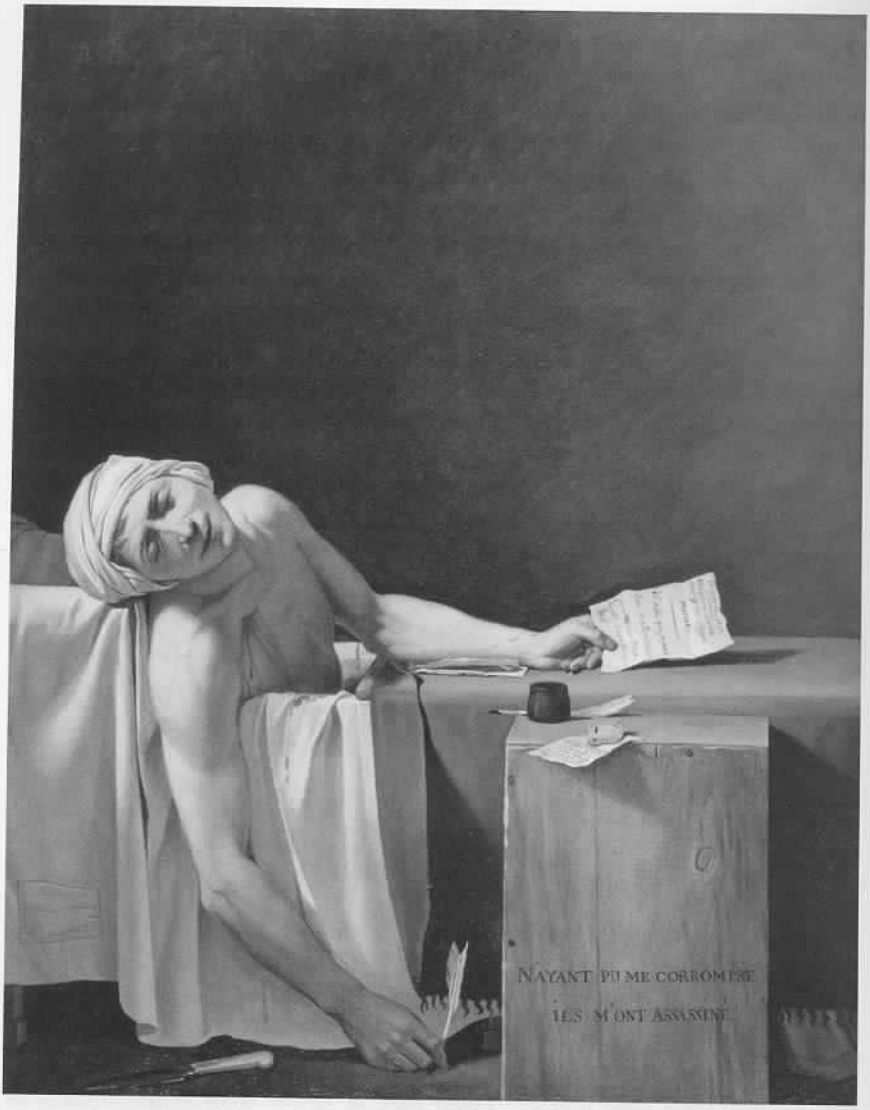

Figure 13.3 Jacques-Louis David, *Death of Marat*, 1793. Louvre Museum. Photo courtesy of Art Resource.

martyr. Formally, Clark's arguments for the modernity of Marat pivot on its hauntingly vacant top half—the loose rendering of which he finds tantamount to "automatic writing"—and on the subtleties of David's images of writing. Indeed, it is specifically the missive rendered by Marat's hand—a missive that Clark deduces

"the picture wants us to believe, is not writing at all—not like Charlotte Corday's patient establishment of every grammatical coordinate"—that Clark pinpoints as the picture's purest kernel of modernism, a locus of origin within the locus of origin.[25] Corday's "letter establishes truth and falsehood as what the picture mainly turns on . . . Corday's words are all true," Clark contends, before adding sinisterly: "It is what is in them, or behind them, that has to be rooted out—what may be hiding in their shadow. If you do not root it out soon enough you die."[26]

Since it is past time for warning Marat against his assassin, to whom does the "you" in Clark's imperative and terrorized sentence refer? In employing the present tense, Clark histrionically impels his (implicitly male?) readers to an act of identification with Marat—impels them to extirpate (feminine) treacheries lurking in the shadows on peril of their very lives. "What matters to the historical imagination, at least in the first instance, is how the actors . . . saw things," Clark believes; and so he would make historic matters vivid in the present day.[27] But the past is ineluctably constructed from a present perspective, in any case. And in the present, a renowned, adulated, at times reviled writer, long self-identified as a radical—that is, Clark—spins his readers a cautionary and sorrowful tale about another adulated and reviled radical writer, Marat, who met a grisly fate at the hands of a dissimulating, presumptuous, exceedingly willful woman. Presumptuous and willful women were of pressing concern in the Paris of 1793—indeed, "The climax of women's political influence was reached during six months of 1793 when women formed a radical group exclusively for women"[28]—but they were positively legion and unstoppable two centuries later, at a time when the women's movement was reaping the fruits of three decades of struggle.

Clark's singling out, as uniquely representative, an image from 1793 of a man outfoxed and undone by a woman might be said to occlude an opposite moment to that year, however, as a date when the French government, decreeing all women's clubs and associations illegal, categorically prohibited women "from active *and* passive participation in the political sphere": a date when men as a class acted to undo women as a class.[29] In the revolutionary credo, "liberty, equality, fraternity," the final term meant "exactly what it says—'brotherhood.' . . . In modern 'fraternal' discourse, like the specifically patriarchal ones that precede it, women are treated as the objects or recipients of policy decisions rather than full participants in them," observe Rosemary Pringle and Sophie Watson. It follows that, "What feminists are confronted with is not a state that represents 'men's interests' as against women's, but government conducted as if men's interests are the only ones that exist."[30] The same year that Corday was executed, 1793, so too was the pioneering feminist Olympe de Gouges. Feminist scholars generally point to a fundamentally conflictive relation between feminism and republicanism, whereby the Republic was effectively "constructed against women, not just without them," in Joan Landes's phrase. She observed:

> Despite the public silencing of women during the Revolution, however, it was then that feminism acquired its modern shape and consciousness, 'as a reply to the refusal of both liberals and republicans to resolve the problem of women's civil and political subordination, and as an effort by women of diverse social backgrounds to participate in and to claim for their own the literary and political institutions of the revolutionary bourgeois public sphere.'[31]

Without reckoning with feminist perspectives on the revolutionary period, or with feminist critiques of extant theories of modernism; without referencing feminist readings of the *Death of Marat*, much less articulating his differences with them, Clark repairs to an endnote to adjudge the "reading[s] of the Marat in terms of Jacobin gender politics . . . I have come across" in peculiarly vituperative terms as "insufferably smug and schematic."[32] Clark effects a blanket erasure of feminist interventions in his topic area then—a gesture in a way parallel to David's erasure of Corday. Clark does mention (in the same protracted endnote) gender politics as entailed in Marat's death, while offhandedly universalizing what might be called a formulaically masculinist response to the case: "It hardly needs saying that the basic facts of Marat's assassination stir up all kinds of oedipal fears and wishes in those trying to represent them," Clark avers, while crediting a passage penned by the Marquis de Sade for "get[ting] that right."[33] "Soft and timid sex," read the pamphlet by "Citizen Sade":

> how can it be that delicate hands like yours have seized the dagger whetted by sedition? . . . Marat's barbarous assassin, like one of those hybrid creatures to whom the very terms male and female are not applicable, vomited from the jaws of hell to the despair of both sexes, belongs directly to neither . . . O too credulous artists—break this monster in pieces, trample her underfoot, disfigure her features . . . [34]

Thus did Sade hyperbolize a plaint heard elsewhere at the time, that in taking the law and the destiny of the state into her own hands, Corday had violated the natural order of the sexes. Herself impenetrable (she was posthumously determined to have been a virgin), she had brutally penetrated a man—one who indeed lacked some unmentionable body parts (owing to the virulent skin disease that would soon have killed him), and one who appears fairly emasculated in David's cosmeticized depiction.[35] Rather than "disfigure" Corday, David figured her strictly through the traces of her visit: the letter that gained her entry, the knife that inflicted the lethal cut, the slotlike stab wound trickling blood. Scholars often remark on David's distinctive act of erasure, but generally without pointing to a viewing subject position it opened up, notably for female viewers: that of Corday's place at the crime scene. What the art-historical patriarch, Clark, anxiously Freudianizes as an

Oedipal scenario holds other valences from a feminist vantage point, for contrary to that scenario, it is not a son, but a daughter who fells a vicious, tyrannical father.

Whereas David's tableau implicitly pits a female monster against a male saint, scholars have lately insisted that Corday's public identity, in her day and since, has seesawed between monster and saint just as has Marat's identity (with far more to recommend the former construction of his role).[36] And Tom Gretton observed that Corday's "premeditated and principled act" of murder conformed with certain of Marat's own "values: the exaltation of political violence, the personalisation of political conflict . . ."[37] The terms in which Corday was reviled in her day, moreover, might render her less alien than familiar, even sympathetic to a contemporary feminist public. An attack circulated by Assembly members charged, for instance, that

> Charlotte Corday was 25 years old, which is, according to our customs, almost an old maid, the more so with her mannish carriage and tomboyish stature . . . she had no fortune and lived a paltry existence with an old aunt; her head was full of books of every sort; . . . she avowed with an affectation which approached the ridiculous, that she had read everything, from *Tacitus* to *Portier de Chartreux*; a worthy *philosophiste*, she was without shame and modesty . . . sentimental love and its soft emotions no longer approach the heart of the woman who has the pretention to knowledge, to wit, to free-thought, to the politics of nations, who has a philosophic mania and who is eager to show it.[38]

If the *Death of Marat* inadvertently opens a position for feminist viewers, the *femme assassin* or *femme fatale* remains, nevertheless, a mixed proposition as a figure of identification for feminists. In an essay on "female sadists" (that examines the nineteenth-century novels of Rachilde), Rita Felski inquired rhetorically: "Given the vehemence of this identification with a principle of masculine power, it may be asked if there is anything liberating in the fantasy image of the cruel woman." Felski responds by pointing to an

> expansion of the symbolic field to acknowledge women's potential status as insurrectionary subjects through a usurpation of a traditionally masculine realm of intense and violent eroticism. As such, [female sadists] challenge one of our most persistent cultural taboos by exploring women's anger, violence, and desire for revenge.[39]

I have linked Clark's late twentieth-century singling out of David's late-eighteenth-century *Death of Marat* with MoMA's contemporaneous singling out of Cézanne's late-nineteenth-century *Bather* on the basis that these choices foregrounded a pathetic or vulnerable male as the very site of origin for modernism at

moments when masculine privilege faced some degree of challenge or eclipse. Fins de siècle tend to be characterized as periods of particular social anxiety—all the more so that coinciding with the millennium. Parallels between successive (nineteenth and twentieth) fins de siècle have occurred to others beside myself; and some have pointed explicitly to the late nineteenth century as the locus of a crucial crisis in masculinity.[40] That any one historical moment was significantly more crisis-ridden than others for modern male subjects has rightly been questioned, however, by Abigail Solomon-Godeau: "judging from the range of periods that scholars and theorists have proposed for their particular masculine crises, it would seem that these crises . . . are closer to the rule than to the exception and are, in fact, recurring psychosocial phenomena." By this account, the spectacle of a dephallicized male "need not signal any breach in the actual workings of male power"; rather, as "Tania Modleski has argued, '. . . we need to consider the extent to which male power is actually consolidated through cycles of crisis and resolution, whereby men ultimately deal with the threat of female power by incorporating it.'"[41]

The disconsolate man has been from the first a stock figure of the modern period then. For his part, Clark adopts a disconsolate posture throughout his wistfully titled *Farewell to an Idea* (the 1999 book wherein he republished his 1994 essay on the *Marat*). Clark's goodbyes are directed not only at the best dreams of modernism, but also at those of Marxism, which turned into "a grisly secular messianism in the twentieth century." Nonetheless, "capitalism remains my Satan," the disenchanted Marxist theatrically avows.[42] Satan, hell, Armageddon, holocaust, horror, agony, monsters: this is the hyperbolic vocabulary Clark deploys in introducing his "Episodes from a History of Modernism." While he insists that his modernism is characterized by contingency rather than immanence or transcendence, the biblical, fire and brimstone locutions of Clark's Introduction and the defensively masterful rhetoric of the book as a whole reveal an author haunted by what one reviewer called his "loss of faith in any comprehensive explanatory paradigm,"[43] by the eclipse of master narratives. Clark emerges from his account of modernism as both raging patriarch and suffering son. "[T]he Oedipus complex is a son complex," Klaus Theweleit observed; ". . . And Oedipus is a suffering son (as is Jesus, or Siegfried). Strange how often a suffering son stands at the center of patriarchal religions, myths, art works, or scientific constructs."[44]

Some feminists suggest that pronounced displays of masculine suffering may be the lynchpin of a masculinist strategem; that "the appearance of weakness may be another ruse of power."[45] Barbara Johnson cannily observed that:

> Far from being the opposite of authority, victimhood would seem to be the most effective *model* for authority, particularly literary and cultural authority. It is not that the victim always gets to speak—far from it—but that the most highly valued speaker gets to claim victimhood.

What provokes resistance to feminism, by this account, is that in "substitut[ing] women's speech for women's silence . . . it interferes with the official structures of self-pity that keep patriarchal power in place . . ."[46]

Not to deny the realities of men's sufferings, of course. But white Western men especially—the more so those of affluence, riding high at the top of their professions, as is Clark, and was the late Varnedoe—have as a class enjoyed incredible power and privilege in the modern era (as in those prior). The representation of displays of masculine suffering as holding a pre-eminent truth content where modernism is concerned might be seen as diminishing other truths then—notably those concerning masculine privilege—and as occluding modernist art's countervailing role as an instrument of pleasure, often tailored for a masculine public. (To Matisse, for example, Clark devotes but a few, tortured phrases in an endnote: "I am not saying here that Matisse's paintings do not successfully give pleasure . . .," he hedges before proceeding to ventriloquize Matisse as musing, "'Can't possibly have *pleasure* in the twentieth century, now can we?'")[47] In the end, the disappointed view of modernism limned in the dismal picture of the modern era framed by Clark looks notably distorted to this white Western woman then. Not that I imagine that modernism did deliver on its best promises—promises which were hardly shaped with women's interests centrally in mind, in any case; nor that I am blind to the atrocities of the era. Rather, for women—as for people of color, formerly colonized peoples, and numerous other long secondarized constituencies—the modern era has not been one unending saga of worthy dreams denied, but a period when a modicum of dreams, even some wildly hopeful dreams, met with an increment of fulfillment. Some among us, far from being horribly disenchanted, after Clark's example, persist in a hard-won sense of agency then, and in heartened modes of thinking. Such thinking impelled so much of modernist art practice, after all—if not the woeful images Clark and Varnedoe vaunted as marking modernism's genesis.

Acknowledgement

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Notes

1 Norman Bryson, "Géricault and 'Masculinity'," in Bryson, Michael Ann Holly, Keith Moxey,eds., *Visual Culture* (Hanover, N.H.: University Press of New England, 1994) p. 258.

2 Arthur Lubow, "Re-Moderning," *New York Times Magazine* (October 3, 2004): 62, 121.

3 John Elderfield, "Introduction," *Painting and Sculpture at the Museum of Modern Art: 1880 to the Present* (New York: Museum of Modern Art, 2004) pp. 47, 48, 51, 53.

4 Roberta Smith, "Art Every Which Way but Straight Ahead," *New York Times* (November 21, 1999) sect. 2, p. 1. "[A]n air of tension and solemnity, often with suggestions of

the Christian ritual of baptism," is discerned in the Cézanne *Bathers* by Mary Louise Krumrine, *Paul Cézanne: The Bathers* (Museum of Fine Arts [Offentliche Kunstsammlung], Basel/Eidolon, 1989) p. 33.

5 Cited in *Cézanne in Perspective*, ed. Judith Wechsler (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1975) pp. 131, 80.

6 Gerstle Mack, *Paul Cézanne* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1936) p. 314.

7 Meyer Schapiro, cited in Wechsler, ed., *Cézanne in Perspective*, p. 136.

8 Krumrine, *Paul Cézanne*, pp. 278, 280.

9 Barr, cited in Sam Hunter *et al.*, *The Museum of Modern Art, New York* (New York: Harry N. Abrams, 1984) p. 46.

10 Carol Duncan, "The MoMA's Hot Mamas," reprinted in *The Aesthetics of Power* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1993) pp. 189–207.

11 Calvin Tomkins, "The Modernist," *New Yorker*, November 5, 2001, pp. 79, 76, and passim.

12 William Grimes, "MoMA's Boy," *New York Times Magazine*, (March 11, 1990) p. 62.

13 Tamar Garb, "Masculinity, Muscularity and Modernity in Caillebotte's Male Figures," in Terry Smith, ed., *In Visible Touch* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1997) pp. 60, 61, 70.

14 Holland Cotter, "Housewarming Time For Good Old Friends," *New York Times* (November 19, 2004) E36.

15 Kaja Silverman, *Male Subjectivity at the Margins* (New York: Routledge, 1992) pp. 64–65, and Ch. 1 passim.

16 Mary Kelly, in Kelly and Terry Smith, "*Glora Patri*: A Conversation about Power, Sexuality, and War," in Smith, ed., *In Visible Touch*, p. 240.

17 Krumrine, *Paul Cézanne*, p. 257 note 75.

18 Robert Simon, "Cézanne and the Subject of Violence," *Art in America* 79(5) (May 1991): 135.

19 Cited in Meyer Schapiro, *Modern Art: Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries* (New York: George Braziller, 1978) p. 30.

20 John Rewald, *Cézanne: A Biography* (New York: Harry N. Abrams, 1986) pp. 156–157.

21 Simon, "Cézanne," p. 135.

22 T.J. Clark, "Painting in the Year II," *Representations* 47 (summer 1994): 13.

23 Bridget Elliott and Jo-Ann Wallace, *Women Artists and Writers: Modernist (Im)Positionings* (London: Routledge, 1994) p. 15.

24 Rita Felski, *The Gender of Modernity* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1995) p. 26.

25 Clark, "Painting in the Year II" (a slightly revised version of the 1994 essay, cited above) in *Farewell to an Idea: Episodes from a History of Modernism* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1999) pp. 22, 18, 38, 34, 45, 43–44. Clark's formal arguments are of such an extreme fineness (as he admits, ibid., p. 46) that they beg to be made in front of the painting; I will not attempt to engage them here.

26 Ibid., p. 40. For contrary, and feminist readings of the painted letters in question, see Helen Weston, "The Corday-Marat Affair: No Place for a Woman," in William Vaughan and Weston, eds, *Jacques-Louis David's "Marat"* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000) pp. 138–139, and Erica Rand, "Depoliticizing Women: Female Agency, the French Revolution, and the Art of Boucher and David," in Norma Broude and Mary D. Garrard, eds., *Reclaiming Female Agency: Feminist History After Postmodernism* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2005) pp. 143–157.

27 Clark, *Farewell*, p. 28.

28 Joan B. Landes, *Women and the Public Sphere in the Age of the French Revolution* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1988) p. 140.
29 Ibid., p. 147. Clark mentions this act of suppression, only to downplay it ("an obligatory trope in histories of the Revolution . . .") *Farewell*, p. 410 n. 9.
30 Rosemary Pringle and Sophie Watson (citing Carole Pateman), "Women's Interests and the Post-Structuralist State," in Michèle Barrett and Anne Phillips, eds., *Destabilizing Theory: Contemporary Feminist Debates* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1992) pp. 56–57.
31 Landes, *Women*, pp. 94, 171, 169. Further, "the exclusion of women from the bourgeois public was not incidental but central to its incarnation," ibid., p. 7. And, "From the standpoint of women and their interests, enlightenment looks suspiciously like counterenlightenment, and revolution like counterrevolution," ibid., p. 204.
32 Clark, "Painting in the Year Two," p. 57 note 9. (In *Farewell*, Clark curbed his judgment to "smug and schematic," p. 410 note 9.)
33 Ibid.
34 Ibid., p. 18. The "idea of woman-man as monster came to dominate much of the thinking by male revolutionaries about women in the public sphere," observed Lynn Hunt, *The Family Romance of the French Revolution* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1992) p. 91.
35 Clark proffers an oddly rapturous description of Marat's visage, "Miniaturized, and robbed of the normal signs of masculinity. Fragile as an eggshell, but of course invulnerable. How touching the wisps of hair on the forehead! How heavy the eyelids and delicate the mouth! How accidental your kindest kiss." (Whose kindest kiss?), Clark, *Farewell*, pp. 36–37.
36 William Vaughan and Helen Weston, "Introduction," in *David's "Marat,"* p. 18. As the most fervid spokesman of the Jacobin revolutionary faction, and a friend of Robespierre, Marat was a supporter of the Reign of Terror, endorsing mob violence as a force for social change and espousing liberal use of the death penalty. "Marat could not be made to embody the revolution because no one agreed about what the revolution was, least of all about whether Marat was its Jesus or its Lucifer. David's picture—this is what makes it inaugural of modernism—tries to ingest this disagreement, and make it part of a new cult object," Clark, *Farewell*, p. 38.
37 Tom Gretton, "*Marat, l'Ami du Peuple*, David: Love and Discipline in the Summer of '93," in Vaughan and Weston, eds., *David's "Marat,"* pp. 50–51.
38 Michael Marrinan, "Images and Ideas of Charlotte Corday: Texts and Contexts of an Assassination," *Arts* 54(8) (April 1980): 160–161.
39 Felski, *Gender*, pp. 192–193.
40 See, for example, Elaine Showalter, *Sexual Anarchy: Gender and Culture at the Fin de Siècle* (New York: Viking, 1990).
41 Abigail Solomon-Godeau, *Male Trouble: A Crisis in Representation* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1997) pp. 35, 38.
42 Clark, "Introduction," *Farewell*, pp. 7, 8.
43 David Joselit, "Contingency Plan," *Artforum* 37(9) (May 1999): 31.
44 Klaus Theweleit, *Male Fantasies*, vol. 1, trans. Stephen Conway (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 1987) p. 299.
45 Solomon-Godeau, *Male Trouble*, p. 135.
46 Barbara Johnson, *The Feminist Difference* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1998) p. 153 (emphasis in original).
47 Clark, *Farewell*, p. 413 note 70 (emphasis in original).