MARMONTEL’S BELISAIRE AND THE PRE-REVOLUTIONARY PROGRESSIVISM OF DAVID

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The Belisarius of 1781 is a key work in the understanding of David’s Pre-Revolutionary progressivism (plate 41). For this painting, David borrowed essential elements from Gravelot’s illustrations for Marmontel’s romantic novel of the same title, a highly controversial publication censured by the Sorbonne. David’s association with this work implied not just a thematic relationship but an intentional declaration of shared ideological aims. Thus Belisarius is a turning point in David’s career not simply for its formal dependence on seventeenth-century models like Poussin, but because it is a significant demonstration of his early political position.²

David’s progressivism, however, is inseparable from his sense of alienation from the Academic Establishment and a certain ‘opportunism’. By opportunism I do not mean to imply a sacrifice of principle for the sake of expediency, but I use it in its original sense having to do with a wind blowing towards a port, i.e., favourable at a given moment.³ David quite naturally shared the ambitions of the middle-class artisans and professionals who felt blocked by a system which awarded positions on the basis of birth rather than merit and whose aspirations were increasingly favoured by the turn of historical events. Academies of all kinds represented bastions of privilege, and like the universities of our own time became the target of protest for progressively-minded intellectuals. Many future leaders of the Revolution (both Jacobins and Girondins) gathered around Mesmer for the very reason that the Academies of Science and Medicine humiliated him – a person who, like them, tried to democratize scientific ideas and professional practices monopolized by proponents of the ancien régime.⁴ Marat struggled for years to enter the Academy of Sciences and its persistent rejection of his contributions politicized his thought.⁵ Brissot also felt himself barred by the Académie Française from becoming a philosophe, and threw himself into a revolutionary career which opened up for him in 1789.⁶ In the case of David, the Académie Royale des Beaux-Arts became the focus of his resentment and
much of his revolutionary career was dedicated to its reform and eventual overthrow in 1793.

While David applied for, and was granted, membership of the Academy, he accomplished it through familiarity with bureaucratic procedure and recognition of where the main levers of power lay. Certainly David’s talent was a critical determinant of his progress, but it was precisely the gap between talent and opportunity that became the real issue in the years preceding the outbreak of the Revolution. David, moreover, nurtured a profound bitterness over the many times he was passed over in the Prix de Rome contests and the lack of power possessed by the majority of the membership.7 His entrance into the Academy depended upon contacts with the affluent bourgeoisie and enlightened nobility. His ultimate radicalism was not the result of an overnight conversion, but of a consistent alignment of interests with those of the rising middle class. He ingratiated himself with precisely those members of the middle class and government officials who urged reform. Thus he was square in the middle of events at the time of the Revolution, and while the moderates with whom he earlier identified like Marmontel, Vien, Lavoisier, Trudaine, and d’Angiviller turned conservative after 1789 he became increasingly radical until Thermidor and the fall of Robespierre.

It is the Belisarius which puts into proper perspective David’s combination of opportunism and progressivism. The picture created a sensation at the 1781 Salon and evoked this marvellous response from Diderot: ‘Tous les jours je le vois et crois toujours le voir pour la première fois.’8 David’s choice of theme and time of presentation were calculated to arouse this response. Belisarius had been his submission for entrance into the Academy just prior to the opening of the Salon when he became agréé.9 Indeed, he left Rome the previous year for the express purpose of entering the Academy with his St Roch, but when he learned that only a painting done at Paris could be accepted for agrément he promptly began the execution of his Belisarius.10 David completed his tableau in time to be received as an agréé on 24 August and show it, along with several other works, in the Salon which opened the following day. This timing explains the fact that his entries were published at the last moment in the form of a ‘supplement’ to the Agréé section. David’s return to Paris, his acceptance into the Academy and his Salon debut were part of a well orchestrated time-table.

His choice of subject was no less calculated to achieve success. Belisarius, whose life is recorded mainly in the histories of Procopius and Tzetzes, was then a favourite antique model for the social and religious stands of liberals, moderate conservatives and conservatives masquerading as moderates.11 Belisarius was a general who served loyally under Justinian and won major victories all over the ancient world, but envious courtiers enveloped Belisarius in conspiratorial intrigues and brought about his fall. Justinian, deeply concerned with the popular enthusiasm his general roused, sustained the accusations and had him punished and disgraced. Belisarius appeared already in French literature in seventeenth-century plays by Rotrou (1643), Desfontaines (1641), and G. de Chatonnière (1678); but the attributes of unswerving
loyalty and patriotism assigned to him and the lesson of royal ingratitude exemplified by his career made him an ideal vehicle of social and political propaganda in the second half of the eighteenth century. Both Montesquieu and Gibbon contributed to the popularity of the Byzantine hero by celebrating his military genius and devotion to an undeserving Emperor. But he attained the highest degree of renown as the deist hero of Marmontel’s moralizing novel published in 1767.12 Marmontel’s fanciful reconstruction retained one significant feature recorded by Tzetzes, though hotly disputed by modern historians, that of the blinding of Belisarius. Here he spoke for all of his contemporaries who accepted it as integral to their understanding of the historical events: ‘L’idée de Bélisaire aveugle et mendiant est devenue si familière qu’on ne peut guère penser à lui, sans le voir comme je l’ai peint.’13

After the publication of Marmontel’s novel Belisarius is transformed from a competent general to a cult hero of the philosophes - the direct result of Marmontel’s exploitation of material drawn from antiquity for the propagation of his own ideas and convictions. Marmontel’s hero is hardly plausible as history and barely resembles the general of Procopius from whom he borrowed most of his facts. Belisarius becomes an almost emasculated type of honnête homme in the novel, not at all the warrior chief who would unhesitatingly burn a traitor alive or horrifyingly mutilate him as an example.14 Instead, we find him as a greatly wronged philosopher in the mode of Socrates who expresses attributes of humaneness, consideration, and leniency toward his enemies. Marmontel fabricated an image of a persecuted innocent man which was very appealing to the sentimental bourgeois audience of his time, one already prepared by the author’s popular contes moraux.15

Yet the change of character and the critique of the Emperor was deliberately designed to evoke parallels with the contemporary historical situation. Marmontel wrote his novel in the aftermath of the Seven Years’ War, when France’s bitter humiliation - as expressed through the reactionary parlements or regional law courts at the apex of the French judicial system - led to the vicious use of scapegoats, and all kinds of civil and religious intolerance. The advice offered by Belisarius to Justinian and his son Tiberius actually applied to Louis XV and the Dauphin (the future Louis XVI) and was deliberately propagandistic in intent. The novel opens on the waning years of Justinian’s reign, when the state revealed ‘every symptom of decline’, when administration was weak in all departments, the masses unfairly carried the burden of taxation, and the public monies served the interests of private enterprise. Fatigued by a series of wars, the Emperor was reduced to purchase peace by surrendering his coveted territories. Marmontel, who noted that Belisarius was meant to be considered more as ‘popular opinion’ than as ‘historical truth’, created his own version of the character who would echo his thoughts on society, government, and religion.16 This was recognized even in his own time, and in this sense Belisarius is true while nevertheless anachronistic - true in terms of the progressive views of the middle classes in the second half of the eighteenth century.17

David chose a motif - the discovery of Belisarius in straitened circumstances by a former officer - which pervades Marmontel’s novel.18 Every one of the first seven
chapters contains a scene of encounter and recognition of the old general’s descent from a once glorious height. Chapter I has Belisarius revealing himself to a company of boasting army officers after chiding them for their lack of devotion to the patrie. All react in astonishment when they learn that the blind old beggar is the great general who has been ‘barbarously deprived of the organs of sight.’ In chapter II, Belisarius, still guided by a child, hikes to a small village begging alms. There he is eventually recognized by Gelimer, the ex-King of the Vandals who had been brought to Constantinople after his defeat by Belisarius and reduced to a humble station. Gelimer reacts with the melodramatic start we find in the David: ‘Que dites-vous? Que Bélisaire? ... O juste ciel, s’écrioit Gélimer, éperdu & hors de lui-même, Bélisaire dans sa vieillesse, Bélisaire aveugle et abandonné!’ This meeting is matched in intensity only by the first interview of Justinian (who hides his identity) with Belisarius in chapter VII where the Emperor is convulsed with pangs of remorse and shame. David’s choice of moment, like that in the Oath of the Horatii, paraphrases the literary source instead of depending exclusively upon it. But, as repeated throughout the novel, the motif stresses the injustice of the punishment and its outrageous application to an unselfish, patriotic and humane servant.

Justinian, who does not reveal himself to Belisarius until the end of the novel, employs his former general to advise him and his son Tiberius in the proper affairs of state, and it is in Belisarius’s role as counsellor that Marmontel voices his views to Louis XV and the Dauphin. Belisarius attacks civil intolerance, privilege, favouritism, luxury, and a parasitical nobility as detrimental to the state. ‘Nobility is not proof of merit under any circumstances,’ he repeats in various forms and places, and warns against the danger of a ruler shielded from the real problems of society by a conniving aristocracy who exert pressure on him to preserve their privileges. This is especially true in the case of taxation – the root cause of poverty and despair among the lower classes. The nobility know that any attempt to equalize the burden of taxation makes them the biggest losers and they continually intrigue to hinder reform and insulate the monarch from obtaining knowledge of the actual state of the nation. Belisarius-Marmontel advances ideas gleaned from his contact with the Physiocrats and their disciples, including new ways of raising taxes, the elimination of arbitrary taxation and venal offices, and special consideration for the agricultural labourer and farmer.

While the parts on taxation addressed one of the most urgent problems of the nation following the exhaustion of its finances in the Seven Years’ War, the most controversial section of the novel was chapter XV with its heretical views on religion. Belisarius stresses the need for religious tolerance and preaches a doctrine close in philosophical spirit to deism, the rational system of the philosophes. The central theme of the chapter concerns the salvation of virtuous pagans and pagan heroes: Belisarius declares that Heaven is open to all persons of virtue, whether pagan or Christian, and mentions as examples Titus, Trajan, and the Antoninuses, together with their kindred spirits of all times and places.

It is hard to believe that the subject of virtuous pagans was still in 1767 a relevant
theological issue. But Marmontel’s preachings gravely offended the traditional piety and religious attitudes of the Catholic Church, and many French clerics accused him of sedition as well. It is clear that the high-placed clergy, stemming from the nobility, were threatened by the suggested reforms in taxation and probably cloaked their anxieties in the religious argument. As a result of the hopeless contradictions in the position of the Sorbonne, the Faculty of Theology suffered a devastating loss of credibility. Even the Court shied away from the censure when it appeared that the Sorbonne espoused a policy of religious intolerance.

The clergy claimed that Marmontel’s views conflicted with the fundamental doctrine of a corrupt human nature which required for its rehabilitation and salvation the assistance of God through Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit. Orthodoxy thus affected a scandalized tone and compared the novel to Rousseau’s *Emile* which it censured five years earlier. Around 15 February 1767 the abbé Ambroise Riballier, syndic of the Sorbonne, complained officially that *Bélisaire*, of which 2,000 copies were already in the hands of the public, was flagrantly unworthy of its approbation and royal privilege. Speaking for the Faculty of Theology, he understood the XVth chapter as an unpremeditated attack on established religion. In April Riballier’s scribe, Coger, published his *Examen de Bélisaire*, and in May and June the *Indiculus*—the Sorbonne’s index for the censure—appeared with 37 heretical propositions extracted from the novel. Finally, at the end of June the Sorbonne formulated the definitive form of the censure which condemned 19 propositions of the notorious chapter. The position of the Sorbonne was clearly untenable and the Court forced them to modify the censure’s findings on civil intolerance. Belisarius’s plea for religious and civil tolerance rendered the whole affair somewhat ludicrous, for clearly it pertained to contemporary persecution of Protestants and probably of Jews.

During the *affaire de Bélisaire*, both the Sorbonne and the philosophes (who rushed to Marmontel’s defence) conducted their campaigns openly to secure public approval. Both parties realized that they were conducting a test of strength on the subject of intolerance, and that the final verdict depended largely on public opinion. Voltaire, who defended several victims of religious and civil intolerance in this period, took a special interest in the cause of Marmontel who also happened to be one of his favourite protégés. In addition to his numerous satirical attacks on the Sorbonne especially deriding Riballier and Coger (he caused an uproar labelling the *Indiculus* ‘the Ridiculous’), a voluminous correspondence exists between Voltaire and Marmontel on the subject. The *affaire de Bélisaire* rapidly became not so much the defence of Marmontel, but the pretext for a showdown between the philosophes and the Church. While the published polemics lasted little over a year, the controversy would stand as one of the most complex and intriguing battles to be fought for toleration in the second half of the eighteenth century. It further ensured that Marmontel would be remembered, along with his fellow Encyclopédistes, as one of the champions of religious freedom and tolerance.

Marmontel’s novel inspired at least four painted versions in France; three
appeared at almost regular intervals at the Salon before David’s rendition: Jollain (1767), Durameau (1775), Vincent (1777), and Peyron (1779). Peyron’s work, while exhibited at the Salon much later, was well known to David; commissioned by the Cardinal de Bernis, French ambassador to Rome where it did exhibit, it was enthusiastically received and acclaimed by Vien.\(^{27}\) If Marmontel supplied the ideological hints, it was a print of a painting attributed to Van Dyck in the collection of the Duke of Devonshire which provided the formal base for most of these pictures (plate 42).\(^{28}\) A catalogue description, entitled *Date Obulum Belisario*, has Belisarius represented as deprived of his sight, and sitting by the wayside with a staff in one hand, and the other extended to receive the donation of a charitable female. On the opposite side are two other females, apparently influenced by similar feelings of kindness; and nearer the front stands a youthful soldier, viewing with emotions of sympathy the humiliating state of the persecuted warrior.\(^{29}\)

Dependence on the first source almost necessarily implied dependence on the second, since Marmontel himself received his initial impulse from a print of Van Dyck’s painting by Scotin: ‘On m’avait fait présent d’une estampe de Bélisaire, d’après le tableau de van Dyck; elle attirait souvent mes regards, et je m’étonnois que les poètes n’eussent rien tiré d’un sujet si moral, si intéressant. Il me prit envie de le traiter moi-même en prose. . . .'\(^{30}\)

Durameau’s painting, depicting the moment in chapter VI when Belisarius returns home to his outraged family after his long exile, was owned by d’Angiviller.\(^{31}\) Vincent’s painting brings the spectator up close to the figures and has the most in common with the so-called Van Dyck: the soldier who gives alms expresses sympathy but not shock – an expression clearly more conservative than Marmontel’s which accepts the general’s fate while musing on the caprices of mortal existence (plate 43).\(^{32}\) Peyron’s work (a sketch of which was requested by d’Angiviller), showing the scene in chapter IV when the father of one of Belisarius’s ex-soldiers invites him into his household, centres on an impotent old man in a domestic ambiance surrounded by children like a department store Santa Claus (plate 44).\(^{33}\) As in the Vincent, the injustice and ingratitude of the ruler is played down in favour of an image emphasizing the adjustment of the victim and his society to the barbarous punishment.

The two works that approximate most directly the intent of Marmontel are those by Jollain and David, and their affinity to the common source ensured their own resemblance. While we know Jollain’s painting only from Diderot’s description, the similarities are striking:

A droite, presque au centre de la toile, Bélisaire assis . . . A gauche, sur le fond, un jeune homme qui demande l’aumône dans le casque du général aveugle.

*Autour de ce jeune homme, des passagers, un soldat les bras étendus et le visage étonné, une femme qui délie sa bourse. . . . A gauche, un vestibule qui conduit à des batimens. A droite et sur le fond, des murs, une architecture; d’où l’on*
conjecture que la scène se passe dans la cour d'un château, et que cette composition, qui ne vaut pas les estampes de Gravelot, a été faite d'après une situation de l'ouvrage de Marmontel. Diderot also noted (although in a disparaging context) that Jollain’s work carried the inscription ‘Date obulum Belisario’ – confirming also the link to van Dyck with whom the critic compared Jollain unfavourably.

Diderot's pejorative view of the Jollain in contrast with Gravelot alludes to the illustrator's designs for the first edition of Marmontel's novel. Diderot, a close friend of the author who may even have suggested the idea of the novel, defended him against the attacks of the Sorbonne. In putting down Jollain he derided him for having the look of 'un cousin de Coger ou de Riballier' – the latter, as it may be recalled, was syndic of the Sorbonne and the former his scribe who wrote the condemnatory *Examen* and came directly under the fire of Voltaire. As Diderot concluded: 'Bélisaire, le pauvre Bélisaire, après avoir été proscrit par la Sorbonne, il ne lui manquait plus pour dernière disgrace que d’être peint par Jollain.'

Ironically, when Diderot viewed David's work fourteen years later, he responded affirmatively despite the fact that David employed almost all the same devices as Jollain including the histrionic gesture of the soldier, the child holding up the helmet and begging for alms, the metropolitan setting and the inscription from van Dyck. David did strip down his composition to a few key characters who are united to the architectural motif, and this tightening up of the design appealed to Diderot. He could also afford to be generous with the young protégé of Vien and d'Angiviller who realized the revolution in painting advocated by Diderot. Having bridged the stylistic shift from rococo to neoclassic, he now found in David the Spartan principle he advocated. Yet it is clear that David derived his basic pictorial strategies from Jollain and Jollain's models, van Dyck and Gravelot.

Gravelot is the pivotal figure here. One of the most underestimated artists of the period, his illustrations were systematically pillaged by painters – fine and popular – during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. He had a major impact on the neoclassical movement, providing motifs for Benjamin West, Nathaniel Dance, and Baron Gros as well as for David, and was a favourite among the philosophes. In addition to illustrating the works of Voltaire, Rousseau and Marmontel, he was an intimate of several English artists and writers like Hogarth and Fielding whose novel *Tom Jones* he also illustrated. His popular *Iconologie par figures* – an updated French version of Ripa – served painters as a source-book for allegorical personifications right through the nineteenth century. The introduction of this work cites Marmontel as an 'homme de goûû' who has mastered the use of allegory, and the author goes on to write:

Dans la poésie, dans la peinture, dans tous les arts qui parlent à l'imagination, & dont le but est d'instruire & de plaire, c'est toujours sous le voile de l'allégorie que la morale present aux hommes des vérités consolantes, des préceptes utiles,
& l’histoire emprunte souvent le même langage pour conserver la mémoire d’un événement, consacre un fait héroïque, immortalise une action généreuse.  

Diderot’s praise of Gravelot indicates to what extent he appealed to the enlightenment mentality, and David’s use of Gravelot embodies the highest ideals of the progressive faction at the time. The main source for David is the engraving opposite page 50 (plate 45), depicting the moment when Justinian sees Belisarius for the first time since the punishment and recoils in horror at the sight: ‘L’Empereur, en voyant ce vieillard vénérable dans l’état où il l’avait mis, fut pénétré de honte & de remords. Il jeta un cri de douleur, & s’appuyant sur Tibère, il se couvrit les yeux avec ses mains, comme indigne de voir le jour que Bélisaire ne voyoit plus.’  

Still uninformed on the identity of Tiberius and his father, Belisarius stretches out his arms in a gesture of compassion. David has taken over this scene almost in its entirety substituting for the Emperor the ex-officer. Equally significant, David has borrowed the motif of the walking stick leaning against the cubic rock in one corner. The reversal of Gravelot’s engraving in the English edition of 1767 gives an even clearer view of David’s quotations (plate 46).  

David quoted other features of the illustrations for Marmontel’s novel, including the paved court and architectural motif from the encounter scene, and the youth’s costume – short-sleeved tunic and kilt-like skirt – from the frontispiece (plate 47). Above all, David modelled his composition essentially on the typical format of Gravelot with a cropped architectural motif framing the action and narrowing in its imposing presence toward the horizon. This is clearly seen in the illustration opposite page 188 where Justinian introduces Belisarius at his court and warns his courtiers and ministers against slandering him (plate 48). The columnar façade is located above eye-level as it diminishes in perspective and is segmented at the top so that the sculptural base is emphasized. While David’s final composition differs in its open and extended view of the landscape and in its square proportions, the preliminary sketch points even more directly to Gravelot (plate 49). Here the format is vertical as in the illustration and the space is confined by a wall akin to Gravelot’s use of the hedge to close off the composition.  

David’s borrowings were well known to his audience and attest to his conscious identification with the novel. While it is true that the original controversy had long since subsided, both the religious and political message were still relevant for Louis XVI. The problem of toleration marked the beginning of the new regime, centring around the Sacre. Turgot, the King’s Controller-General, wanted to transfer the Coronation ceremony from Rheims to Paris to cut expenses, to divest the new regime of outworn medieval associations, and purge it from the sanction of intolerance given in the king’s vows to exterminate heretics. But the higher clergy wished to take advantage of the occasion to impress upon the monarch and the nation the claims of the church; they hoped that lavish ceremonies and pomp would supply an antidote to the impieties of the last reign. Many of the prelates were determined to abolish heresy and tried to stimulate the government to launch an attack on Protestant communities.
The power of the clergy was decisive, and the ceremony was conducted on the old lines at Rheims on 15 June 1775. The King took the oath to exterminate all heretics condemned by the Church – although it is said that he was plainly embarrassed and delivered these passages in an almost inaudible tone.\(^46\) Shortly after the Coronation, the reactionary clergy submitted to the King the following exhortation: ‘Nous vous en conjurons, Sire, ne différez pas d’ôter à l’erreur l’espoir d’avoir parmi nous des temples et des autels; achevez l’ouvrage que Louis le Grand avait entrepris, et que Louis le Bien Aimé a continué. Il vous est réservé de porter ce dernier coup au calvinisme dans vos Etats. Ordonnez qu’on dissipe les assemblées schismatiques des protestants: excluez les sectaires, sans distinction, de toutes les branches de l’administration publique. Votre Majesté assurera ainsi parmi ses sujets l’unité du culte catholique.’\(^47\) Turgot then addressed to the King a mémoire ‘Sur la Tolérance’, encouraging him to treat the oath as a dead letter and advising him not to interfere with the beliefs of his subjects.\(^48\) The public responsibility of individuals should be kept separate from their private concerns, and to the extent that they fulfil their obligations to the state they should be free to pursue the dictates of their conscience. Turgot’s main argument for toleration were stated elsewhere: he had collected statistics to demonstrate the disastrous economic consequences of the revocation of the Edict of Nantes. Throughout his tenure (1774–1776) Turgot spoke frequently for toleration (he worked hard to vindicate the reputation of Calas) but achieved no positive results in face of the opposition of the Assembly of Clergy. Voltaire supported him with his Diatribe à l’auteur des Ephemerides du Citoyen published in August 1775 which denounced religious intolerance and accused the priests of having fomented sedition.\(^49\) Another work denouncing the clerical involvement in colonial policies, the abbé Raynal’s Histoire philosophique des deux Indes, had been well received by the public but was cited for special condemnation by the Faculty of the Sorbonne.\(^50\)

Turgot’s struggle to overcome fanaticism and repatriate the protestant merchants and industrialists politicized the religious issue in this period and united the clergy with the parlements – the natural’ enemies of any reforming minister. The Controller-General aroused their enmity through his proposals to abolish unnecessary venal offices which raised the costs of the food trade, to abolish the jurandes, the restrictive guilds which controlled admission to many industries, and to suppress the corvée and raise funds necessary for the upkeep of roads by a general tax payable by all proprietors of land. Turgot’s Six Edicts attacked privilege by reforming the tax structure and were eventually rescinded by the parlement of Paris. Turgot himself was dismissed in May 1776 and all the work of his ministry was rapidly undone. His views threatened the clergy, the nobility and the magistrature, despite the fact that the King himself said, ‘Il n’y a que M. Turgot et moi qui aimions le peuple.’\(^51\) The problems that Turgot isolated and tried to resolve were inherited by those who came after him, notably Necker and Calonne, and ultimately were responsible for the outbreak of the Revolution.

During the years 1779–80, there was a recrudescence of the exclusivistic practices of the nobility who pressed forward in an aggressive attempt to expand privileges and

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obtain exemptions. The higher clergy also agitated against reform of the existing tax structure; the General Assembly of the clergy took place on 29 May 1780 and reaffirmed their position of 1775. This renewed activity on the part of the reactionaries was prompted by the moderate reforms attempted by Necker in these years. In addition, Necker was a Protestant and this undoubtedly exacerbated the Church's views on heresy. The clergy could declare in 1780: 'La diversité des cultes a toujours été un redoutable foyer de dissentiments. . . . C'est ainsi que seraient en danger l'autel et le trône, si l'hérésie parvenait enfin à rompre ses chaînes.'52 David in the Belisarius restated the claims made by Marmontel in 1767 and probably he hoped thereby to enlist the support of enlightened conservatives and liberals. As a Jacobin he rejected the Church, but even his pre-Revolutionary religious works show his ambivalence on the subject.53 His St. Roch Interceding for the Plague-Stricken, exhibited with the Belisarius in 1781, stood out for the furious and disgusted expression of the victim in the foreground whose striking presence overshadowed the main protagonists. The Virgin and Child engage in playful exchange and seem to be utterly indifferent to the tormented below and mock the attempt of the Saint to obtain celestial dispensation. Diderot warned the spectator: 'Tâchez de regarder longtemps, si vous pouvez, ce jeune malade qui a perdu la tête et qui semble être devenu furieux, vous fûrez ce tableau d'horreur. . . .'54 Belisarius, with its identification with the virtuous pagan and call for recognition of Protestant civil rights, offset any implication that the Saint Roch might have had about David's religious convictions. One curious feature demonstrates this: David signed and dated the work in Latin and the inscription bears the word 'LUTETIAE' — the ancient name for Paris. This is unique since elsewhere he used the more modern rendition of 'PARISIUS';55 he clearly used the old name to conjure up the pagan society of ancient Gaul.

Turgot's economic ideas reflected in good measure the philosophy of the physiocrats, or économistes as they were known in the eighteenth century.56 They represented the most advanced economic thought of the period and were attacked by the clergy and the nobility for their reformist notions. They believed that value and consequently wealth, which is the total stock of valued goods, originate with the products obtained from the land and the water. Only the primary activities of agriculture, fishing, and in some instances mineral extraction are truly productive activities. The physiocratic class system consisted of farm workers; then artisans and tradesmen who transport, refashion, and exchange the products raised by the first class; and finally, the landowning class, including the Church and the King himself. They postulated a single tax on the net product paid to the landlord who had to bear the main burden of taxation. Turgot's secretary, Dupont de Nemours, had been allied with Quesnay, the founder of the theory, and did most to circulate its ideas in the later period. While Turgot himself did not follow the single-tax theory, he did try to do away with many forms of indirect taxation which fell upon the lower classes. Dupont de Nemours was close to Lavoisier and his son, Irénée, studied chemistry under him for several years. The most advanced economic thought of the day

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emanated from the physiocratic circle and in one form or another affected the various ministers of Louis XVI seeking to reform the inequitable tax structure. While David's contact with Lavoisier and his wife (who became his student for a time) occurred later, he must have been in sympathy with the économistes since they represented the most progressive views in the pre-Revolutionary years and provided the basis for the reforms put forward by Turgot's successors.57

David's use of the Belisarius theme is inseparable from his well-calculated plans for success. Both he and Marmontel are case studies of the bourgeoisie on the make. The latter's Mémoires constitute a manual of social-climbing and document the ingenious strategems he and his friends employ to advance themselves at court or in society. A string of anecdotes stress the flattering remark or timely favour that won a coveted appointment. Marmontel details the kinds of strategies he devised to get his Belisarius past the censor and before a sympathetic audience to forestall the controversy he anticipated. Over and over again he tells us how he enlisted the help of influential women to gain support from those in key positions. He even tried to bluff his way past the whole censorship problem by offering to dedicate the novel to Louis XV as an example of his good faith and to head off any royal sanction of persecution. Marmontel's frankness in all this demonstrates that such strategies were applauded by his peers and represented the kind of acceptable hustling exemplified by the career of Beaumarchais. Privilege and protection still governed the society of the intellectuals as in the larger social context, and locating the levers of power was essential to survival in the patronage system.58

Marmontel, however, was well integrated into the milieu of the reigning class, while David never had the chance of gaining this exalted situation. Nevertheless, his early career reflects the same kind of understanding of the patronage system and attests to his ability to manipulate it for his advancement. His later posturing, his manipulation of aristocratic friends to promote his Salon exhibits, his cultivation of the Parisian public, are extensions of his steady drive and self-assurance analogous to the progress of Marmontel.59 Above all, he depended upon the support of the single most powerful voice in matters concerning the fine arts, the Comte d'Angiviller.60 As the Directeur & Ordonnateur-Général des Bâtiments, d'Angiviller affected every area of the Beaux-Arts, including the royal commissions, Salons, Academies, choice of faculty and administrators, the private collectors, and the designation of the Premier peintre du roi. D'Angiviller's name appeared on the title page of the Salon catalogues as organizer, and it was he who commissioned the painter's Oath of the Horatii.

The Comte d'Angiviller occupied his position from 1774 to 1791—the period when history painting received its greatest support in the eighteenth century. He was less a fashionable liberal like Marmontel than an intelligent conservative—a staunch royalist who understood the need to give his king the look of enlightened absolutism. He took the initiative in using art to grant concessions to the ideals of the middle class and encouraged the emphasis on civic virtue and heroism in scenes from both ancient and French history. He recognized the propaganda value of history painting and wished not only to convey a concern for the political and moral virtues extolled by the
rising bourgeoisie but to restore the nationalistic sentiment so badly damaged in the
wake of the Seven Years War. In this sense, d’Angiviller tried to do in painting what
Marmontel accomplished in the Belisarius, a book he knew very well. Indeed,
Marmontel and d’Angiviller were close friends from around the mid 1760s through
the outbreak of the Revolution. D’Angiviller became dependent on Marmontel for
many of his ideas on art and literature, and it was through Marmontel that
d’Angiviller established contact with the Encyclopédistes. Marmontel wrote several
articles for Diderot’s massive project and lived in the house of Mme Geoffrin where
the philosophes regularly met. The close association of the two men is shown in the way
d’Angiviller appointed Marmontel to the exceptionally prestigious position of
Historiographer of France – a post once occupied by Voltaire. Later, d’Angiviller
wrote an extensive commentary on the Mémoires of Marmontel which touched upon
so many facets of his own career.

Following Louis XVI’s succession in 1774, the King appointed d’Angiviller to his
powerful office and together they charted the course of the fine arts under the new
regime. On 3 December of that year d’Angiviller announced the royal plan for history
paintings from outstanding French artists, a declaration confirmed the following
month in a letter to Pierre, d’Angiviller’s choice for Premier peintre du roi. D’Angiviller and Pierre enjoyed the close friendship of Vien who exerted an
enormous influence on their thought. Vien’s own success in this period and the
spread of his ideas are directly tied to these contacts. Vien was an adroit politician who
manipulated both d’Angiviller and Pierre in the interests of his powerful patron, the
Comte de Caylus. Caylus, who wrote the Recueil d’Antiquités, based his prestige and
power on his collections and made his protégés serve this interest. Vien demonstrated
Caylus’s researches on ancient drawing on marble and encaustic techniques, and
illustrated his books. Caylus even arranged Vien’s marriage and got him started in his
career by putting him in touch with the philosophes at the Salon of Mme Geoffrin.
D’Angiviller appointed Vien Director of the French Academy at Rome in 1775, just
one year after he himself took office. At Rome both David and Peyron were among
Vien’s disciples, and in 1789 Vien replaced Pierre as Premier peintre.

It cannot be fortuitous that all the painters of the Belisarius theme emanated
from the schools of Pierre and Vien. Jollain and Durameau were disciples of Pierre,
and it may be recalled that d’Angiviller owned the version by Durameau. Durameau
was in fact a favourite of d’Angiviller who commissioned him in 1775 to execute a
series of models for the Gobelins representing ‘traits célèbres et des actions vertueuses
de notre histoire’. Durameau received one choice appointment after another,
including Peintre du Cabinet du Roi in 1778 and professor at the Academy in 1781.
Vincent was a student of Vien and executed his Belisarius after returning from Rome in
1776. While Peyron had studied at Paris under Lagrenée the elder, he executed his
Belisarius at Rome in 1779 when he worked under Vien. Vien’s protection brought
him to the attention of the Directeur-Général des Bâtiments, who wrote to Vien in
1779 regarding Peyron’s Belisarius that the artist ‘is one of those on whom I am
counting to re-establish our painting'. The year before d'Angiviller requested a sketch of the Belisarius and thereafter became his benefactor.

The person who actually commissioned Peyron's picture was the Cardinal de Bernis, then French ambassador to Rome. He was a close associate of both Marmontel and d'Angiviller whom he first met at the court of Louis XV. Marmontel described him as a foppish cleric and courtier who wrote poetry and without 'any other merit than this... got himself appointed Cardinal and ambassador at the Court of Rome'.69 Marmontel did a number of favours for Bernis to advance himself at Court and Bernis - the 'purpled fool' - exploited him in turn. Bernis threw all his personal energies and material resources into making his ambassadorship a memorable one and the French embassy the glittering Mecca of Roman society to which introduction were eagerly sought after by royalty, nobility and intelligentsia visiting the Eternal City. David himself paid court to Bernis on his various trips to Rome.70 Bernis is mentioned repeatedly in the correspondence of the Directors of the Academy at Rome, and his involvement in the whole network of fine arts attests to his understanding of art as an ideological tool in projecting the king as a benevolent despot and as a means to dazzle visiting heads of state or their representatives. His palazzo was well known for its masterpieces as for its gargantuan feasts. The scale of the Cardinal's hospitality in commemoration of the Coronation of Louis XVI was considered an event in Roman history until eclipsed by the celebration of the birth of the Dauphin. Inside the Embassy, a square room was specially designed for the occasion whose walls were lined with looking glasses divided by painted bas-reliefs bearing emblems alluding to France's prosperity under the King.71 Bernis also paraded himself as a moderate conservative after his participation in the suppression of the Society of Jesus two years earlier, although this was tied to Choiseul's foreign policy and alliances and the attempt to wrest the mercantile influence from the trading companies operated by the Jesuits in the colonies. Peyron's emasculated image of Belisarius fit well the taste of a conservative who could rail against 'fanaticism' and tacitly accept the notorious chapter XV.72

David was in Rome to witness the development of Peyron's picture and executed a small painting of Belisarius and the child in half-length as well as the highly finished drawing upon which he based his definitive work before embarking for France in July 1780. Having learned towards the end of the year that only a painting done in Paris could be accepted as submission for membership in the Academy, David produced the Belisarius which he successfully presented on 24 August 1781. While this work eventually entered the collection of the Duke Albert of Saxe-Teschen, David executed a replica of the painting (with the collaboration of his student Fabre) for d'Angiviller which was exhibited with the Oath of the Horatii in 1785.73 There can be little doubt that the original was done to ingratiate himself with d'Angiviller and his circle; Vien had already primed David for d'Angiviller's protection and it was the Directeur-Général & Ordonnateur des Bâtiments who presided over the Academy when the artist was agréé. David wrote his mother on 27 August 1781 that his acceptance by the Academy
was unusual in its unanimity, that he had been ‘reçu tout blanc, c’est-à-dire sans aucune fève noire’. He observed further that at the Academy d’Angiviller had given him every encouragement, and then he reminded his mother: ‘Vous savez que le Comte d’Angiviller est le Ministre et le Surintendant Général des Bâtiments.’ David also boasted about the crowds of Salon visitors pressing him after the opening on 25 August and in closing stated: ‘Je ne suis encore riche que de gloire, mais d’espèces bien moins encore, mais j’espère bien que cela ne tardera pas. . . .’

Certainly David tries to impress his mother, but at the same time he clearly delights in the support of the powerful minister he has cultivated, in the public response, and in his potential realization of material success. The patron who purchased the original version of the Belisarius, the Duke Albert de Saxe-Teschen, was a cousin of Louis XVI and the son of Augustus III, King of Poland and the type of benevolent despot that Marmontel addressed in his novel.75 As in the case of Marmontel, David appeals to the rich and powerful for patronage through themes of a liberal stamp. David’s Portrait of Count Potocki in shirtsleeves, also exhibited in the Salon of 1781, again addresses itself to enlightened authority, but elicited this comment from the critic for the Mercure de France: ‘Peindre destiné à l’immortalité, ne vous laissez pas séduire par l’appât du gain! La gloire vous attend, & les jouissances qu’elle procure sont bien supérieures à celles que l’on obtient avec de l’or.’76 The Polish nobleman who commissioned this work belonged to a family which possessed a million acres in the Ukraine.77 David’s aggrandizement of the aristocrat, however, is countered by the fact that he signed his name on the collar of the Dalmatian hound who barks at the feet of the prancing horse and retards its action.78 David pokes fun at himself as a lackey who simultaneously projects his potential to impede the forces of reaction and privilege. Thus his progressivism and his opportunism are inseparable in the historical context: the material conditions create the opportunities for the individual to advance both in the personal and political sense, and this advancement reinforces his/her commitment to change.

David’s identification with the liberalism of Marmontel’s Belisarius is bound up with his perception of the chain of relationships which ultimately guaranteed his rise. The only evidence directly linking David and Marmontel dates from 1790 when the latter, in his capacity as secrétaire perpétuel of the Academie Francaise, gave the artist permission to borrow portraits of some of the illustrious members to copy for the King of Poland.79 Marmontel’s influence is felt on the picture none the less: the sentimentalizing theme and histrionic gesture of the old officer retain the flavour of the contes moraux even while pointing to the new attitudes reflected in the sparseness of the composition and the severe architectonic unity.

We are still very far from the Horatii and the Brutus, but the Belisarius does share the progressivism of several international adaptations of Marmontel’s drama. William Philips’s Belisarius (London, 1768), de Moissy’s Bélisaire (Paris, 1769), and Margareta V. Faugeres (New York, 1795) reflect the ideas summed up in the translator’s preface to an American version of the novel published in 1796 which claims it as a work ‘calculated for kings, ministers, and the people in general’.80 The
late American versions imply the relationship of Marmontel's views with the American Revolution. Only during the Empire does the novel come in for criticism: the Comtesse de Genlis's Belisarius is meant simply to 'amuse' as opposed to Marmontel's strictly 'political' intention.\(^{81}\)

David's Belisarius and its theme of royal injustice took on a special meaning in the light of actual events. While we have discussed the general context of religious and political issues which brought Marmontel's novel up to date, there were even more specific cases bridging the two works. Marmontel's novel was motivated in part by the religious intolerance manifested in the Calas and Sirven affairs, but it must also reflect the outrage of the philosophes against the unfairly tried case of Lally-Tolendal who was executed for treason in May 1766. A hero at the Battle of Fontenoy, Lally had been appointed Commander in Chief of a military expedition to India to protect French interests against the British at the outset of the Seven Years' War. Eventually, however, his caprices and incompetence led to his defeat and he was sent to London as a prisoner. The loss of French colonial prospects in India in the wake of capitulation in Canada created a climate of hysteria at Paris. Both military and civilian officers involved cast blame on Lally for the loss of Pondichery and the thirst for a scapegoat facilitated their hopes. He was accused of sedition and conspiring against the interests of the King, of the state and of the India Company (his Irish ancestry also prejudiced his case). He was first imprisoned at Versailles and later at the Bastille and subjected to all forms of illegal abuses. His years of devoted service were ignored and he was condemned to the executioner's axe on 9 May 1766, a few months before the publication of Marmontel's novel.\(^{82}\)

Following the execution a more sober appraisal of events took place, and while it emerged that Lally was involved in all sorts of improprieties, the main charges of public extortion and sedition were unfounded.\(^{83}\) Lally-Tolendal's son worked in the ensuing years to vindicate his father's name and he enlisted the aid of Voltaire - who had come out early against the verdict - to systematically take up the cause in 1773.\(^{84}\) The younger Lally referred often to Voltaire's support and invoked the name of Calas as a parallel case of legal injustice and intolerance.\(^{85}\) One clue to the atmosphere in which Marmontel wrote the novel are the 'secret memoirs' of Bachaumont whose entries of 1766-7 refer to the case of Lally, Voltaire's defence of Calas and Barre, and the trials and tribulations of Marmontel's Belisarius.\(^{86}\) Voltaire's championing of causes relating to dissent, intolerance, and legal injustice pervades intellectual discussion of the period, and the fact that he was Marmontel's protector and defender insured that the Belisarius reflected his viewpoint. Marmontel informed Voltaire of the progress of the novel, and in the end it was Voltaire who came to its defence. Lally's case is referred to in the secret memoirs on 29 April, the condemned is executed on 9 May and two weeks later Marmontel reads his first draft of the novel before the Académie Française. Lally's name almost immediately conjured up historical analogies in antiquity: a poem published the following year identified him with Gaius Manilius, a Roman tribune who vested in Pompey unlimited authority to wage war against Mithridates and Tigranes in Asia Minor, but who was condemned
for treason by Pompey’s enemies. Both he and Pompey were destroyed by an ‘ungrateful’ Rome. Young Lally himself made frequent comparisons of his father with such classical heroes as Cato, Coriolanus and Socrates.

The combined actions of Voltaire and young Lally-Tolendal proved effective in the changed political climate of the 1770s when the government’s attempt at a more equitable taxation forced a confrontation with the aristocratic parlements. In 1778 the Conseil d’état du Roi quashed the arrêt of 6 May 1766 and the case was referred first to the parlement of Rouen and later to that of Dijon for retrial. Although the parlements ruled against Lally, the Conseil du Roi quashed their verdict in 1786 and restored the reputation of Lally. But it was especially during the years 1779–81 when the flurry of pamphlets, the defence of Lally by the philosophes, and the widespread sympathy for the dashing son made the trial a cause célèbre of the period. Two of Lally-Tolendal’s most significant memoirs on the affair were published in 1779 and the main debates came out in the subsequent years. D’Eprémesnil, prosecuting attorney for the parlement of Rouen, was a hostile adversary: he stood for the interests of the law court against the King and his family was involved with the Compagnie des Indes and the administration of Pondichéry which the elder Lally accused of conspiracy and corruption. He was a brilliant orator who polarized the public for a time but the son’s position eventually captivated public opinion. Marmontel himself had great admiration for young Lally whom he surely knew; and he must have known the elder Lally as well since the general had been a favourite of Pompadour and received his commission in India through her influence.

Significantly, the condemnation and rehabilitation of Lally bracket the publication of the novel and the exhibition of David’s picture. David’s special affection for Voltaire and knowledge of his relationship with Marmontel would have made a theme dealing with Lally–Belisarius particularly appealing. Louis XVI’s administrators naturally favoured revision, and this embraces the circle of Marmontel and d’Angiviller. D’Angiviller had been decorated at Fontenoy where the general distinguished himself and received a promotion from Louis XV himself. The commander of the French armies at Fontenoy was Maurice de Saxe, son of Augustus II of Poland and great uncle of Albert de Saxe-Teschen who bought David’s original Belisarius. Maurice de Saxe and Marmontel moved in the same social circles. David’s replica, first owned by d’Angiviller, later entered the collection of the Maréchal de Noailles who shared command of the French army with Maréchal de Saxe at Fontenoy. Still another close friend of Marmontel, the abbé Raynal, contributed to the growing controversy over Lally-Tolendal. Raynal’s ground-breaking and very popular Histoire philosophique et politique des établissements et du commerce des Européens dans les deux Indes, which exposed and condemned the colonial policies of the ancien régime including the slave trade, exerted an enormous influence on radical thought of the 1770s. Raynal, forced to publish in Holland and Switzerland, came under the censorship of the Sorbonne for his attacks on superstition and the tyranny of the Church. Raynal’s essential point of view was that the various conquests of the East by the West were not glorious enterprises conducted
by dauntless heroes, but mere money-grubbing schemes exploited by unscrupulous financiers supported by the state and carried out by ruthless brigands. His work went through several editions starting in 1770, but the lavish ten-volume edition of 1780 published at Geneva, created a furore, and had for years a deep influence on progressive individuals. Among his various accounts is a strong indictment of the trial and execution of Lally. Thus at the moment David conceived his picture Lally, whose rehabilitation was taken up by the enlightened individuals who supported his history painting, was then a major topic of discussion, and it may not be mere coincidence that a posthumous portrait of Lally in prison was once attributed to David.

Among those at the Court of Louis XVI who early backed the son’s attempt to retry the case was Turgot; on his advice the King awarded young Lally a sum of 134,000 francs. Ironically, Turgot, an ardent exponent of reform and an exemplar of dedication to the state, became himself a notorious victim of royal ingratitude. We may recall that Turgot’s attempt to reform the inequitable tax structure inevitably surrounded him with powerful enemies in the King’s own entourage. While the King recognized Turgot’s impartiality, he nevertheless dismissed him under pressure in 1776—a decision that has ever since been a matter of debate by historians who seek in it one of the causes of the Revolution. Bitter over this outcome, Voltaire coupled the name of Turgot with Lally in an attack on the Paris parlement in 1776. Turgot was an intimate friend of d’Angiviller whose own appointment was influenced by the Contrôleur-Général des Finances. Turgot and d’Angiviller examined together the state of finances in the department of the Bâtiments and frequently consulted one another on matters of public policy. Turgot used his influence to advance d’Angiviller for the duration of his term. He developed many of his economic policies from contact with the physiocrats, notably Quesnay and Dupont de Nemours who served the minister loyally as secretary and later as biographer and editor of his works. While Marmontel, who derived inspiration for his views on taxation from the physiocrats, treated Quesnay somewhat lightly, d’Angiviller defended him and expressed his admiration for the physician of Mme de Pompadour. D’Angiviller, in general, was highly sympathetic to the physiocrats.

Turgot had also been close to Marmontel in the 1760s, although the latter noticed a cooling off of the friendship in the subsequent decade. Marmontel wrote a memoir on Vincent de Gournay, one of Turgot’s early masters in economic doctrine, and for this Turgot supplied him with notes and reminiscences. The following year Turgot was appointed Intendant of the généralité of Limoges which embraced Marmontel’s home province of Limousin. It was here that he first applied his reformist policies which gained him the reputation that brought him to the attention of the Court. Turgot was long an exponent of civil and religious tolerance, and his views on taxation were definitively formulated in the 1760s. It is certain that Marmontel borrowed many of his own ideas on these issues from Turgot and the physiocrats—especially his remarks on agricultural labour in chapter XII of the Belisarius. Not surprisingly, Turgot was one of the staunchest defenders of the novel when it came under attack by the
Sorbonne. A competent theologian himself, he wrote a devastating rebuttal of its censure. He set up in his pamphlet two opposite and parallel columns, in one of which he listed the thirty-seven propositions of the novel condemned by the Sorbonne, and in the other thirty-seven contradictory propositions. Laying down the notion that of two contradictory propositions one is false and the other true, he observed that the Faculty's rejection of the one implied its profession of the other. Now among the latter there was not a single statement which was not either totally outrageous or hopelessly absurd. Turgot's ingenious and satirical formulation utterly devastated the position of the Sorbonne. Marmontel recognized Turgot's contribution to the success of his novel and remained grateful: when the Contrôleur-Général des Finances was dismissed in 1776 Marmontel fell into a state of depression and lamented that the nation had now fallen into the hands of a 'troupe de brigands'. Turgot's death on 20 March 1781 sparked a revival of interest in his career — at the very moment when David was conceiving the Belisarius.

David's conception of the Belisarius and its reception demonstrate his involvement in the ideological process which linked the views of the rising bourgeoisie to those of the Court whose material interests they shared or who felt constrained to masquerade as moderates. His taut composition and highly energized formulation of ruling class injustice — dramatically posed by the contrast of military ranks — emerges from the relationship of the social dynamic to its expression in Marmontel's novel and the public perception of analogies in real life. It is not surprising that it approaches most closely Jollain's composition — the earliest in the series — since this work was conceived at the height of the polemics surrounding the original publication. David's manipulation of the various individuals who had a stake in these polemics is a reflection of his alertness and recognition of the historical process. It is altogether consistent with his development that he exhibited a replica of this work with the Horatii in 1785, and that he joined the Horatii to his drawing of the Oath of the Tennis Court in 1791.

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NOTES


5 Ibid., pp. 93–4.

6 Ibid., pp. 86, 88, 91–2.

7 Hautecoeur, op. cit.


9 Ibid., p. 351.
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13 Ibid., p. i.

14 Monty, op. cit., p. 129.


17 L. Petit de Bachaumont: Mémoirs secrets pour servir à l'histoire de la république des lettres en France, depuis M. DCC. LXII jusqu'à nos jours, 36 Vols, London, 1780-9, III, 292. An epigram of the day went thus:

Si Marmontel eût été Bélisaire,
Il eût bien mieux parlé du trône & de l'autel.
Si Bélisaire eût été Marmontel,
Il eût pris sagement le parti de se taire.

See Renwick, op. cit., pp. 35 ff. for bourgeois attitudes in the conte moral. Marmontel's main characters were predominantly bourgeois and he celebrated the qualities and virtues of the bourgeoisie.

18 The full title of David's original was Bélisaire, reconnu par un soldat qui avait servi sous lui, au moment qu'une femme lui fit l'auréome. Explication des peintures, sculptures et gravures, Paris, 1781, no. 311.

19 Marmontel: Bélisaire, op. cit., p. 18.

20 Bachaumont: op. cit., pp. 150, 166-7; Renwick: op. cit., pp. 113 ff.

21 Bachaumont: op. cit., p. 144; Renwick: op. cit., p. 158.

22 F.-M. Coger: Examen du Bélisaire de M. Marmontel, Paris, 1767; Indicius propositus exceptarum ex libro qui titulus Belisaeire, Paris, 1767; Bachaumont: op. cit., pp. 195-6; Renwick: op. cit., p. 237. The Indicius was never meant to be made public, but copies fell into the hands of the philosophes who then had them circulated. See Renwick, op. cit., pp. 239-40. Censure de la faculté de théologie de Paris contre le livre qui a pour titre, Bélisaire, Paris, 1767 (reprinted in Marmontel, Oeuvres complètes, Paris, 1819, 7, pp. 185 ff.)


24 Among the victims he defended were Calas and Lally-Tolendal. For Voltaire's protection of Marmontel, see Marmontel: Mémoires, ed. J. Renwick, 2 Vols, Clermont-Ferrand, 1972, I, 55 ff., 63-4, 66-7, 242; Renwick: op. cit., pp. 190 ff., 210-11.

25 Marmontel: Mémoires, loc. cit.: S. Lene;


29 Ibid., p. 80.


33 Ibid., pp. 563-4.


35 Marmontel: Bélisaire, op. cit., frontispiece, pp. 50, 188.

36 Seznec and Adhémar, op. cit., 286.

37 Ibid.


40 A. Boime: 'The Second Republic's Contest for the Figure of the Republic', Art Bulletin, March 1971, pp. 74-5, 77.


42 Marmontel: Bélisaire, op. cit., p. 50.

43 In the London edition of the same year the composition is reversed (app. p. 59).

44 G. Pinet: Collection de trente dessins de maîtres du XVIIIe siècle, Fragomard, Hubert Robert, N.
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Cochin, Lefranc, Després, Perignon, Carle Vernet, etc., conservés à l'Ecole Polytechnique, Paris, 1910, pp. 22-4, pl. VII.

46 Ibid., p. 218.
48 Ibid., p. c, II, 492 ff. Turgot’s concern for religious tolerance was manifested as early as 1753; see ibid., II, 675 ff.
49 Ibid., I, xcix. The bishops systematically ganged up on Turgot in this period, calling him an atheist and circulating the notion that he aimed at the destruction of their religion. See Bachaumont, op. cit., VIII, 36.
50 Bachaumont, op. cit., p. 141.
51 Turgot: op. cit., p. ciii.
54 Serznec and Adhémar: op. cit., p. 377.
55 For example in the portrait of Lavoisier and his wife (1788). I am grateful to Robert Boime for pointing out the significance of ‘Lutetiae’.
59 Crow, op. cit., p. 455.
60 Hautecoeur: op. cit., p. 59. A contemporary critic noted about the relationship: ‘Heureux d'avoir du talent quand on a d'Angiviller.’
64 Bobé: op. cit., pp. 7 ff.
65 Locquin: op. cit., p. 49.
66 Ibid., p. 47; Silvestre de Sacy, op. cit., pp. 105-6.
68 Correspondance des directeurs, loc. cit.
70 D. and G. Wildenstein: Documents

71 Cheke, op. cit., pp. 236 ff.
74 Wildenstein: op. cit., no. 87.
75 Hautecoeur: op. cit., p. 60; M. Furcy-Raynaud: 'Notes sur les tableaux de Bélysaires par David', Bulletin de la société de l'histoire de l'art français, 1915-17, p. 116. Marmontel in fact sent copies of his book to several chiefs of state including Catherine II of Russia and Stanislaus II of Poland. The Prince Albert of Saxe was one of those entertained royally by the Cardinal de Bernis: see Correspondance des directeurs, op. cit., XIII, 195.
78 Ironically, a graphic satire influenced by Voltaire's attack on Riballeri's shortsightedness in the affaire de Bélysaires shows the sindic of the Sorbonne dependent on a seeing-eye dog who wears a collar with the following inscription:

Passants, lisez sur mon collier
Ma décadence et ma misère;
J'étais le chien de Bélysaires,
Je suis le chien de Riballeri.

79 J. L. Jules David: Le peintre Louis David, 1748-1825, Paris, 1880, p. 90. This was the same Stanislaus II to whom Marmontel sent a copy of his Belisarius. David is thus perceived in the same light as the author as late as 1790—as a friend of benevolent despots.
81 S. F. Bruilart de Sillery: Belisarius; a Historical Romance, Baltimore, 1810, p. xiv.
82 The fullest contemporary account is in
MARMONTEL'S BÉLISIAIRE AND THE PRE-REVOLUTIONARY PROGRESSIVISM OF DAVID


87 Ibid., pp. 215–6.

88 Lally-Tollendal: Mémoire, I, 29, 276; Plaidoyer ... contre M. Duval d’Épremesnil, ... 7–8, 76.

89 Ibid., XV, 14, 166, 193, 209, 224–5, 258–9, 280–1; XVII, 331, 335–6; Chassaigne: op. cit., p. 325; Carré: op. cit.; pp. 2, 18 ff.

90 Lally-Tollendal: Mémoire produit au conseil d’État du Roi ... dans l’instance en cassation de l’arrêt du 6 mai 1766, qui a condamné à mort le feu comte de Lally son père ... 3 Vols, Rouen, 1779–83; Réclamation faite à l’audience du 19 Avril 1780 ... contre M. Duval d’Épremesnil, Rouen, 1780; Réponse du Comte de Lally-Tollendal au dernier libelle du S. Duval d’Épremesnil, Rouen, 1781. See also Bibliothèque Nationale, Catalogue des factums, 1894, III, 76–7.

91 J.-J. Duval d’Épremesnil, Premier plaidoyer contre Le Sr. de Lally-Tollendal, Rouen, 1780; Second plaidoyer, Rouen, 1780. D’Épremesnil is one of the fascinating characters of the period: he assumed the air of a liberal by staunchly opposing the monarchy and defending the parlement, and many historians regard him as the leader of the aristocratic revolt of 1787–8 that precipitated the Revolution. In fact, the monarchy was more liberal in its proposals for tax reform than the parlement who naturally saw every attempt at reform an attack on their privileges. D’Épremesnil’s position on the Lally affair certainly is related to the King’s support for revision. See H. Carré: ‘Un précurseur inconscient de la Révolution: le conseiller Duval d’Épremesnil (1787–1788),’ La révolution française, Vol. 33, 1897, pp. 355–6; R. Darnton: Mesmerism and the End of the Enlightenment in France, Cambridge, Mass., 1968, pp. 65, 79, 104–5, 163, 166.


95 Marmontel: Mémoires, op. cit., I, pp. 95 ff.

96 Locquin, loc. cit. Mme de Noailles had commissioned the Christ en croix for which David reportedly took as model one of the soldiers in the army of Noailles: see Hauteceur, op. cit., p. 63.


100 Chassaigne, op. cit., frontispiece.

101 Ibid., p. 318.


107 [A. R. J. Turgot], Les XXXVII vérités opposées aux XXXVII impiétés de Bélisaire. Par un bachelier ubiqûiste, Paris, 1767. The pamphlet was published anonymously.


1 San Pedro in Jaca (Aragon), the west portal tympanum (from Georges Gaillard, *Les débuts de la sculpture romane espagnole*).

2 San Pedro in Jaca, west portal (from J. Gudiel Ricart and J. A. Gaya Nuño, *Ars Hispaniae. V. Arquitectura y escultura románicas*).

3 San Pedro in Jaca, detail of west portal tympanum. The Lion of Judah standing over the sinner (from J. Gudiel Ricart and J. A. Gaya Nuño, *Ars Hispaniae. V. Arquitectura y escultura románicas*).
4 Hermitage of San Martín (Navarre), south portal (from L.-M. de Lojendo, *Navarre romane*)

5 Santa María in Santa Cruz de la Serós (Aragon) tympanum of the west portal (from Georges Gaillard, *Les débuts de la sculpture romane espagnole*)

6 Santa María de Quintanilla de la Viñas (Burgos), sculpted impost block of the triumphal arch before the apse. Sol (photo: Hirmer)
7 (above, left) Attributed to Colantonio: Portrait of a Man. Cleveland Museum of Art, The Holden Collection

8 (above, right) X-ray photograph of plate 7. Cleveland Museum of Art

9 Infra-red photograph of plate 7. Cleveland Museum of Art


18 (below, right) Portrait of a man (infra-red photograph). National Gallery, London
19 Antonello da Messina: *Portrait of a man.* Staatliche Museen Preussischer Kulturbesitz, Berlin

20 Infra-red photograph of plate 19. Staatliche Museen Preussischer Kulturbesitz, Berlin

21 X-ray photograph of plate 19. Staatliche Museen Preussischer Kulturbesitz, Berlin

22 Master of the Aix Annunciation: Detail of the *Prophet Jeremiah* (x-ray photograph). Musées Royaux des Beaux Arts, Brussels. Copyright A.C.L. Bruxelles
23 (above, left) Domenichino, Palazzo Lancellotti, Rome. Door

24 (above, right) Domenichino, S. Pietro in Montorio, Rome. Tomb of Girlamo Agucchi

25 Domenichino, design for a tomb. Royal Library, Windsor Castle
26 Andrea Sacchi, S. Maria sopra Minerva, Rome. Room of St Catherine of Siena

27 Andrea Sacchi, design for an altar, Royal Library, Windsor Castle

28 G. B. Soria, S. Maria della Vittoria, Rome. Façade

29 G. B. Soria, S. Carlo ai Catinari, Rome. Façade
30 G. B. Soria, S. Gregorio Magno, Rome. Façade

31 G. B. Soria, S. Caterina da Siena, Rome. Drawing, Uffizi

32 SS. Domenico e Sisto, Rome. Façade

33 Bernini, S. Bibiana, Rome. Façade
34 (above, left) Domine Quo Vadis? Rome. Façade

35 (above, right) Francesco Ferrari, S. Agnata dei Goti. Façade

36 S. Anastasia, Rome. Façade
37a and b (above) Vincenzo della Greca. Page from manuscript of his lectures

38a and b (left) Vincenzo della Greca. Page from manuscript of his lectures

39 (below, left) G. A. de' Rossi, Palazzo Altieri, Rome

40 (below, right) Carlo Lambardi, S. Francesca Romana. Façade
41 (above, left) Jacques-Louis David, Belisarius, 1781. Lille, Musée des Beaux-Arts

42 (above, right) Engraving by G. Scotin after Van Dyck, Date Obolum Belisario, Brussels, Bibliothèque Royale

43 François-André Vincent, Belisarius, 1776. Montpellier, Musée Fabre

44 Jean-François-Pierre Peyron, Belisarius, 1779. Toulouse, Musée des Augustins
45 Hubert-François Gravelot, illustration for Marmontel's Belisaire, 1767, p. 50

46 Hubert-François Gravelot, illustration (reversed) for Marmontel's Belisarius, London, 1767, p. 59

47 Hubert-François Gravelot, illustration for Marmontel's Belisaire, frontispiece

48 Hubert-François Gravelot, illustration for Marmontel's Belisaire, p. 188

49 Jacques-Louis David, Belisarius, pen and wash drawing highlighted with white, 1779. Paris, École Polytechnique