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Darcy Grimaldo Grigsby

*Mamelukes in Paris:
Fashionable Trophies of Failed Napoleonic Conquest*



University of California, Berkeley
1996

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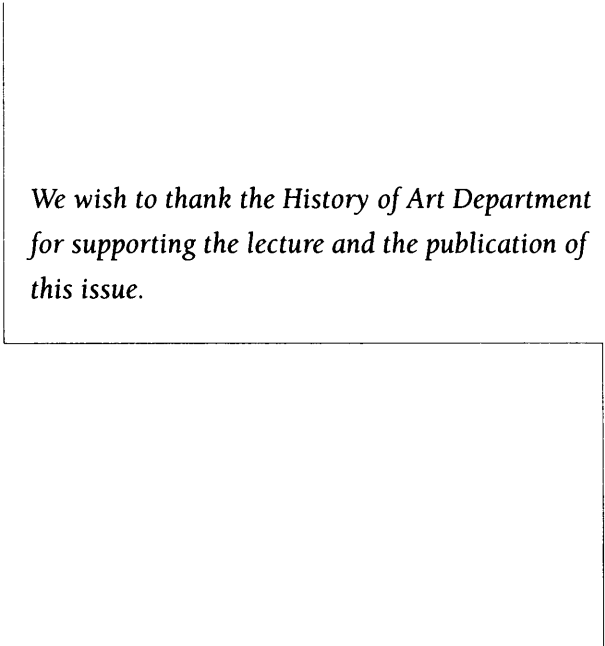
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PREFACE

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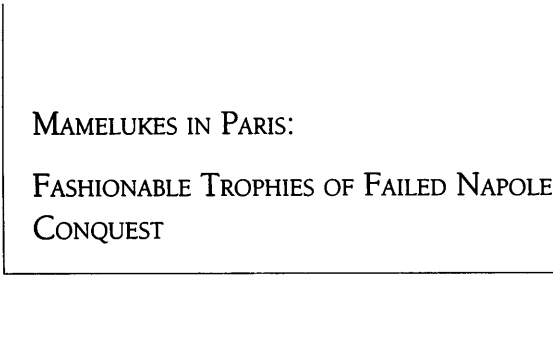
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Editorial Board



MAMELUKES IN PARIS:

FASHIONABLE TROPHIES OF FAILED NAPOLEONIC
CONQUEST



Mamelukes in Egypt

When Napoleon and his French army invaded Egypt in 1798, a proclamation explained their motives to the inhabitants. Napoleon's army had come to protect French merchants from harrassment and to liberate Egyptians from the yoke of Mameluke tyranny.¹ The statement clarified that Mamelukes, not the Egyptian peoples, were the enemies of France (Figure 1):


For a somewhat long time, the [Mameluke] beys that governed Egypt insulted the French nation and covered its merchants with affronts; the hour of their punishment has arrived. For a very long time, this pack of slaves, bought in Georgia and the Caucasus has tyrannised the most beautiful part of the world, but God, upon whom all depends, has ordered that their empire end... Is there a beautiful land? it belongs to the Mamelukes; is there a beautiful slave, a beautiful horse, a beautiful house? these belong to the Mamelukes.²

Mamelukes, the proclamation reveals, were peculiarly contradictory kinds of persons. They were slaves who governed; bought men who exerted tyrannical power; foreigners who owned Egypt's most valuable possessions; slaves who owned slaves.³ Napoleon was right: as the term Mameluke itself signifies, Mamelukes were indeed "bought men," but they were also a feudal power that dominated Egypt for over five centuries beginning around 1230.⁴ The military equestrian order originated in the thirteenth century when a sultan bought some 12,000 boys from the Caucasus mountains, mostly Georgians and Circassians, to serve as an elite corps of his army. Within thirty years, the Mamelukes had killed the reigning Sultan and established their own rule. Although the Ottoman Empire ended



Figure 1. After Dutertre, Mameluke, *Description of Egypt*, 1809-1826.

the Mameluke sultanate in the sixteenth century, the Ottoman pashas wielded only titular control and the Mameluke beys, acting as feudal lords, remained the dominant power. By the eighteenth century, the situation had become increasingly anarchic as Mameluke beys and their bands of Mameluke warriors incessantly fought among



themselves for the region's land and wealth.

While centuries of rule imply a dynastic lineage, Mamelukes did not maintain power through patrilineal succession. Instead, they relied on the acquisition of purchased or abducted slaves like themselves to replenish their ranks. During the Napoleonic period, French commentators were fascinated by the incapacity of Mamelukes to perpetuate themselves biologically. French accounts consistently refer to the mysterious death of their children at an early age:⁵


Of Circassian, Georgian or Muscovite origins, [Mamelukes] cannot reproduce themselves in Egypt, their children all die at three or four years of age. Therefore they buy others at eight or nine years of age who after five or six years of exercise soon become admirable horsemen. Their leaders owe their elevation to their beauty, intelligence, their handling of horses, and above all their personal courage.⁶

Women were, it seems, of little use in the perpetuation of Mameluke power. Rather men bought boys who were initiated into the feudal military order, and if Christian, circumcised and converted to Islam. Boys served masters as slaves until they obtained a military command; they were then freed, appointed personal servants, and expected to maintain feudal allegiance to their Mameluke lord. While possessors of harems, Mamelukes apparently enjoyed the sexual favors of their young male purchases. The Mameluke taste for sodomy was notorious among the French. In the eighteenth century, Volney commented upon this propensity, and memoirs of the Egyptian campaign are riddled with horrified references to the Mameluke and Bedouin practice of raping vanquished French soldiers.⁷ Although primarily from the Caucasus mountain region, Mamelukes included men of many different ethnic ori-

gins, including Greeks, Arabs, Germans, Russians, and Africans. As depictions of Mamelukes attest, racial identity was not a distinguishing feature of Mamelukes. Instead, as the aforementioned French memoir attests, they were defined by their powerful military function, their costume, and the superior characteristics that earned them membership in such an elite: Mamelukes, we are told repeatedly, were courageous, beautiful, opulent, aggressive, loyal, libidinous, brutal, and fierce.

Expert horsemen, Mamelukes demonstrated extraordinary bravery and aggression during combat. They were daunting opponents, but the French army enjoyed an important advantage: if the Mamelukes were fiercely independent warriors who hurled themselves without hesitation against their enemies, the French corps were rational, organized, and disciplined. The differences between their respective military strategies were starkly visible. The French army organized its soldiers into *carrés*, squares, against which Mamelukes threw themselves as if “against granite.”⁸ For example, Louis-François Lejeune’s painting of the Mamelukes’ suicidal retreat into the sea juxtaposes the tight ranks of the French regiments with the anarchic desperation of the fleeing horsemen (1806).⁹ Disorderly, brutal, accustomed to raping and decapitating their defeated enemies, Mamelukes were often derided for their irrational barbarity by the French: “Thus costumed, without formation or discipline, their gathering is a mob; their march a crush; their combats are duels and their wars a brigandage.”¹⁰

Of course, the undisciplined character of Mameluke battle could also offer a mesmerizing picturesque and romantic counterpoint to the rational strategies of Enlightenment warfare epitomized by the *carrés*. Contemporary journals and memoirs by French soldiers sometimes interrupt their description of desperate and frightening com-



bat to offer reveries on the beauties of their proud and independent, sumptuous Mameluke enemies. Similarly, Lejeune, despite his allegiance as a military man to the orderly and effective conduct of the French troops, privileges the pictorial variety and interest offered by the outsized Mamelukes, so animate and individualized relative to the majority of the diminutive French soldiers, reduced in large part to the tedious replication of red spots, white lines, and beige daubs.

To sum up thus far: Mamelukes were astonishingly fluid signs, neither circumscribed by race nor by national origins nor even by allegiance. For Napoleonic France, they were beautiful Oriental warriors, but the Orient was signified not by attributes of birth but by adopted practices: costume, religion, and military skills. Slaves turned tyrants—Christians turned Muslims—the rapists of men—the owners of harems—virile but incapable of generation—the Mamelukes confounded categories in perplexing ways, but they also stood for much that would interest a post-Revolutionary French army with imperial ambitions. Mamelukes were, after all, foreign-soldiers who dominated Egypt for centuries. They were a ruling elite defined not by bloodlines but by supreme contracts of allegiance among its members. They also represented a masculine military caste capable of perpetuating its power independently of women. Here was a fraternity that in fantastic ways bypassed the problem of women's exclusion or marginalization from military society. The model was not, of course, practicable (although Napoleon was quick to purchase slaves to replenish his dwindling military forces), but it was as intriguing as it was alien and threatening.¹¹

Mamelukes in Paris

Mamelukes were in the end too fascinating to pass up. As early as October 1799, Napoleon decided to incorporate Mamelukes into his army.¹² Upheavals of war and the defeat of their leaders had left Mamelukes roaming the region. Many willingly transferred their loyalties to Sultan Kebir, as Bonaparte was called by Egyptians. Indeed, there was such an abundance of Mamelukes that Napoleon assigned ten to each General and six to generals of the brigade.¹³ Many of these Mamelukes accompanied their French officers when they retreated in defeat to Paris between 1799 and 1801. Napoleon was accompanied by Roustam, a young Mameluke of Georgian and Christian origins whom he had received as a diplomatic gift (Figure 2). Abducted as a child while travelling by sea with his mother and sisters, Roustam had been circumcised, converted, and trained as a warrior. By the age of fifteen, his life had been typically chaotic, having suffered the poisoning of one master and the betrayal of another. Upon his first night as Napoleon's Mameluke, he was told to sleep outside the General's door. He would continue to do so, even during military campaigns, until the Empire fell in 1814.¹⁴

Mamelukes were formally incorporated within the Napoleonic army in 1801 when Bonaparte created an official regiment of Mamelukes. The desire to include them in the army was apparently sufficiently compelling to outweigh their many disadvantages. Because Mamelukes were defined by their splendor, they were costly to maintain. Reports in police bulletins of grumblings among ill-paid troops suggest there could have been resentment of these opulently attired foreigners.¹⁵ Nor was the transplant of aggressive warriors to France free of violent incident.¹⁶ Heckling by a crowd at a market in Paris led one well-



Figure 2. After Vivant Denon, *Roustam*, c. 1802.

respected Mameluke commander to open fire; two “strong” Parisian workers were killed and Napoleon was forced to explain to the arrested Mameluke that rules of conduct were different in Paris.¹⁷ Another police report mentions Mamelukes wielding swords and sabres at a lemonade stand; fortunately, in this case, the warriors fled and left only broken bottles.¹⁸

However, despite this evidence of cultural misunderstandings and hostility, Napoleon chose to identify his re-

gime prominently with the Mamelukes. Not only did the government decide to support the expensive Mameluke corps as a highly visible showpiece, often at the head of other regiments in parades and military entries, but Napoleon privileged his Mameluke Roustam as one of his most intimate servants and guards.¹⁹ Bonaparte's reasons for continually displaying Mamelukes are not difficult to surmise. Most simply, Mamelukes in Paris were trophies of conquest. The vicious and powerful enemy had been brought home and transformed into domesticated servant, luxuriant ornament, and obedient guard dog. Almost always by his side, Roustam stood as Napoleon's six-foot booty from Egypt.²⁰ Mamelukes in Paris defined Napoleonic France as an empire.

Not surprisingly, despite the hostility of some soldiers and lemonade vendors, Mamelukes became a fad in Paris. Marching at the head of the parading troops, they offered the French public a dazzling Oriental spectacle. Savvy entrepreneurs made Mamelukes the subject of vaudevilles and novels; their clothes were celebrated in fashion.²¹ Thanks to the arts administrator and Egyptophile Vivant Denon, Napoleon and his guests could lift their espresso cups to see the portrait of a Mameluke, even Roustam himself, in their saucers (Figure 3). Or the consumption of an apple tart might reveal the picturesque beauty of Mameluke warfare on a dessert plate.²² Joseph Lavallée's *Lettres d'un Mameluck* of 1803 ridiculed the exploitation of Mamelukes in fashion and theater, even as he took advantage of the same lucrative marketing strategy. His protagonist writes to his friend:

The eve of my arrival, [French women] were all dressed as one was 3,000 years ago [that is, in antique fashions]. I arrive: suddenly they are à la mameluck, and the librairies no longer have enough of Norden or of Volney. But as



Figure 3. Manufacture de Sèvres, *Napoleon's Egyptian Cabaret*, 1809-1810.


these women never had seen Mameluke women, and I was the doll that served as the patron saint of this new madness, voilà, all without thinking of it, dressed as men.²³

While Lavallée is misleading when he implies that feminine Orientalizing fashion entailed the cross-dressing of women as men, he aptly describes the feminization of Mameluke attire. Parisian women, not men, appropriated sartorial details *à la mameluck* as ornaments and accessories: within the circles of high fashion, turbans and vaguely orientalizing flowing overgowns and puffed sleeves became the rage.²⁴ Paris couture thereby feminized the dress of a virile warrior caste, but it also infantilized it (Figure 4).



Figure 4. Fashion plate, *Parisian Costumes*, c. 1802.

As this fashion plate reveals, fashionable mothers enjoyed the piquancy of dressing their children in full Mameluke regalia. Children were thereby disturbingly likened to Mamelukes—the *mere à la mode* promenaded with her diminutive pre-pubescent substitute for a virile Oriental warrior-slave.²⁵ The fad of dressing children as Mamelukes lasted throughout the Empire: one of the many hallucina-



tory details of Napoleonic history is the entourage of thirty children dressed *à la Mameluck* who greeted Napoleon when he was crossing the Pyrenees in 1808.²⁶

When the Mamelukes first came to France, Egypt was still occupied by the French army. But as our crowd of children in the Pyrenees reveals, the mania for things and persons Mameluke survived the ultimate loss of Egypt to the British army in the summer of 1801. Mamelukes therefore served as an ongoing reminder of the regime's imperial aspirations despite the fact that the Egyptian campaign had been disastrous; Napoleon's hasty abandonment of his troops when he returned to Paris in 1799 was only the climax of a series of ambiguous losses and retreats. Rumors and scandals about the army's disorganization, mistreatment of soldiers, abhorrent massacres, excessive brutality, and loss of control proliferated both in Egypt and France—promoted, of course, by English anti-Bonapartist propaganda.²⁷

The Egyptian campaign had been a debacle but it was known only second-hand in France. The job for the Napoleonic regime was to control its representation: this did not mean simply rewriting the failed conquest but marshalling the scandal in service of Napoleon's government. The regime needed to shape the expedition's violence and horror into some manageable form, making failure into a titillating kind of glamor. Elsewhere, I have argued that Gros's depiction of the agonies of orientalized, plague-stricken Frenchmen in 1804 offered one such orchestration of instability on behalf of the regime.²⁸ Bringing Mamelukes to Paris, lining them up, and making a parade of them, constituted another far less subtle but similarly unstable representation of the Egyptian campaign in France. After all, the very glamor of the Mamelukes resided in their association with excessive violence, tyranny, and illicit sexuality.

When Roustam stood (or reclined) at Napoleon's side as in Charles Meynier's *Emperor's Return to the Island of Lobau after the Battle of Essling* (1812) and Roehn's *Bivouac of the Emperor on the Battlefield of Wagram* (1810), he functioned as the ruler's splendid ornament but also as his enigmatic shadow (Figure 5).²⁹ If servitude in Napoleon's court was registered by a phlegmatic reticence and refusal of expressive legibility, how was one to read Roustam's deadpan countenance—decorous conduct was all too easily conflated with Oriental inscrutability. What secrets did Napoleon's intimate servant hide? One early biographer evoked the sense of mystery attending the pairing of Napoleon and Roustam: "Particular and very important but still unknown services earned him General Bonaparte's limitless confidence and most intimate attachment."³⁰ Public display might establish a measured and formal distance between ruler and servant, between France and the Orient, but the Mameluke's power and popularity resided in his evocation of libidinal excesses. An intimate pairing of Frenchman and Mameluke could not but elicit curiosity. Napoleon exploited the Mameluke's allure but attempted to control its scandalous associations: while one memoir refers to Napoleon's preference for Roustam's forceful massage during his baths, the emperor consistently avoided physical contact with his Oriental servant in public.³¹ In public presentations and pictures like Ducis's portrait of Napoleon with his nieces and nephews, the relation between Napoleon and Roustam was characterized by a consistently maintained interval.³²

Nevertheless, behind official self-presentations lurked a question: what services did slave provide master when hidden from public scrutiny? Anti-Bonapartists exploited the mystery surrounding Bonaparte's relationship to his Mamelukes and repeatedly depicted the imported warriors as the Corsican tyrant's henchmen. According to these op-



Figure 5. Charles Meynier, *Emperor's Return to the Island of Lobau after the Battle of Essling*, 1812.

positional textual and visual accounts, Mamelukes were responsible for the assassination of numerous Royalist martyrs, including the Duc d'Enghien and Pichegru, who died within weeks of each other in the spring of 1804, the year of Bonaparte's coronation as emperor (Figure 6).³³ If the Napoleonic government asserted that the Republican General turned Royalist had strangled himself in his prison cell, anti-Bonapartist caricatures ridiculed the claim and depicted the brutal violence of Mamelukes behind closed doors. The Mamelukes who murdered Pichegru were purportedly shot in turn to insure silence. Here, these prints suggest, is the truth about Mamelukes in Paris: tyranny depends upon barbarism and barbarism begets further

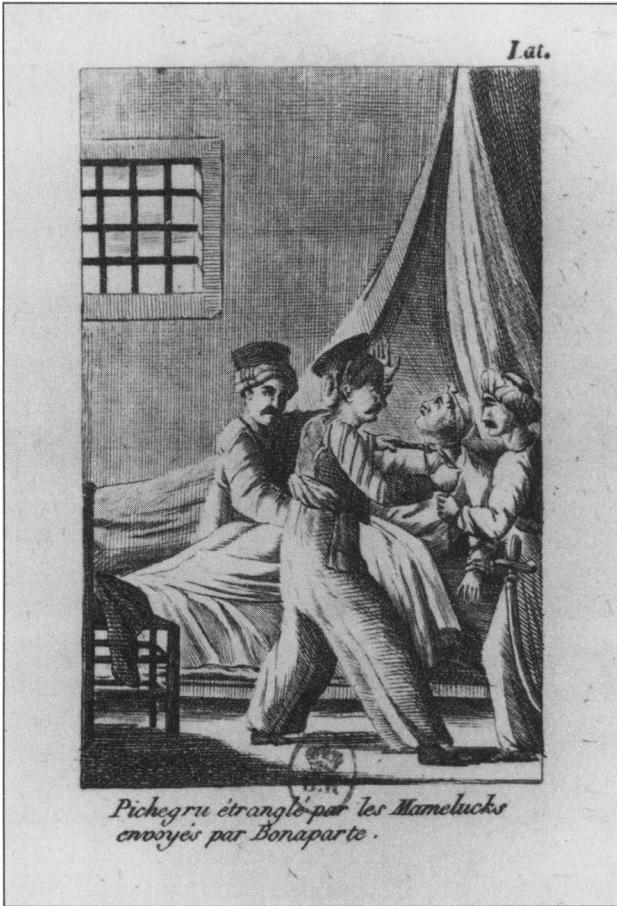


Figure 6. Anonymous print, *Pichégru Strangled by Mamelukes sent by Bonaparte*, 1814-5.

barbarism. Here, too, is the consequence of contact between Frenchman and Oriental warrior. Behind public display lurks the clandestine violence and death required to maintain despotic rule.

Napoleon as Foreigner

Napoleon had invited such conflation of his regime and the Mamelukes. If Roustam partly functioned as a foil to Napoleon, he also served as the ruler's attribute. Contrasts, of course, constitute intimate pairings; foils risk becoming resemblances. Did the figuration of the East within Napoleonic iconography secure the Empire's identity as the West or invite identification between the two? The question posed by colonial encounter is always the direction of influence. Did Napoleon bring the Revolutionary tricolor to the Orient or did the Orient transform the then Republican General into a pasha (Figure 7)?³⁴ And, wasn't it true that Napoleon, in fact, resembled Roustam? During the Egyptian campaign, Bonaparte had, of course, flirted with such ambiguities, opportunistically presenting himself as a supporter of Islam. Indeed, Sultan Kebir did not stop short of suggesting that the entire French army might convert to Islam. Long and serious, if insincere, negotiations were conducted: could French soldiers be exempted from circumcision and the prohibition of their beloved wine?³⁵


That Napoleon's willingness to behave like a chameleon rendered him vulnerable to attack is suggested by anti-Bonapartist prints as well as pamphlet literature. One British satirical tract of 1803 called *Bonaparte's Will* underscored Napoleon's hybrid nature and linked it directly to Roustam: in its first lines, "Brutus Ali Napoleon Bonaparte" is described as a sacrilegious and mongrel opportunist, part Jacobin classicizing secularist, hence "Brutus," part Muslim, hence "Ali," part Christian, who readily sacrificed Christian church and monarchy to his beloved Mameluke Roustam:

In the name of my trinity, the Goddess of Reason, Mahomet the Prophet, and Pius the Pope;
We the most great, most magnanimous, and
most puissant *Brutus Aly Napoleon Bonaparte*...do declare...



Figure 7. Anonymous print, *Untitled*, 1814-5.

To our most beloved and dearest *Ibrahim Rostan*, Mameluke, we give and bequeath after our decease, the crown of Henry IV, the sceptre of Saint Louis, and the throne of France and Navarre, the sovereignty and sovereign disposal of the lives and fortunes of thirty millions of Frenchmen, of six millions of Italians, of seven millions of Spaniards, of two millions of Helvetians, and of three mil-



lions of Batavians, (except as is hereafter excepted) and we enjoin and charge all the world to acknowledge, adore, and respect this Mameluke, *Ibrahim Rostan*, the African, as the natural and legal successor of us, *Brutus Aly Napoleon Bonaparte*, the Corsican.³⁶

For this author, one aberration matched another; the Corsican tyrant was like a Mameluke, and Europe was sacrificed to a succession of monsters.

It has become clear thus far that Mamelukes were as extraordinarily complicated in Paris as they had been in Egypt. On the one hand, they were trophies of conquest: ferocity domesticated and made orderly and subservient. On the other hand, the barbarism, brutality, and illicit sexuality that constituted the basis of the Mamelukes' allure continually threatened to exceed the regime's control. The dance between Napoleon and the Mamelukes was a delicate one to sustain: how could the Oriental enemy simultaneously be empowered and disempowered? Bonaparte relied on the potential danger posed by the Mamelukes in order to demonstrate his own control over it. To that end, it was necessary through salon paintings, even dessert plates, to remind Parisian society of the Mamelukes' authority in the Orient. If the Mamelukes had become entirely domesticated, infantilized, costumed dummies, they would no longer have enhanced the regime and France would have seemed a place where the warrior became soft, not disciplined. At the same time, and here is the delicacy of the dance, Napoleon needed to set limits: to control their power, irrationality and volatility and to distance himself from their illicit sexuality. It would not do to have Mamelukes shooting Parisian workers, nor to have them become the object of scandalous erotic desires.

Girodet's *Revolt of Cairo* (1810)

Mamelukes circulated in the streets, theaters, salons and palaces of Paris, but they also inhabited the space of the studio. French women might append the signs of the Mameluke to their own bodies, but French men could appropriate them in other ways, whether as elite cavalry within their military maneuvers, as protagonists of their novels and dessert plates, or as splendid accessories within their paintings. The painter Girodet was a passionate collector of these men. If a late nineteenth-century French illustrator enjoyed imagining a Mameluke sporting his umbrella against inclement Parisian weather and knocking upon Girodet's door, the painter's biographer and student informs us that Mamelukes would be better portrayed on the other side of that threshold. During the painting of the *Revolt of Cairo* of 1810, Mamelukes, Coupin tells us, quite literally inhabited Girodet's studio:

Girodet made no other painting with such verve, speed and confidence; his humor was gay; he was surrounded by Mamelukes who, as it were, resided with him, and whose beauty electrified him.³⁷

While Girodet had previously made portraits and sketches of exotic men, the government's commission of the *Revolt of Cairo* represented an all together surprising and unprecedented opportunity for the embittered Royalist artist to paint a large scale history painting that not only featured Mamelukes as protagonists but as insurgents (Figure 8).³⁸ The extent to which this would delight Girodet is attested by [an unpublished] letter he wrote in exasperation to an intimate confidante: "We [artists] are all regimented although we don't wear a uniform. Brush to the right, pencil to the left, advance march and we march."³⁹ The letter not only registers the painter's frustrations and anger regarding the regime's disciplined con-



Figure 8. Anne Louis Girodet, *Revolt of Cairo*, 1810


trol over the visual arts but equates authoritarian coercion with military regimentation and its uniforms.

Napoleon's arts administrator, Vivant Denon, had rightly mistrusted the subject of colonial revolt from its very inception.⁴⁰ An eyewitness to the rebellion, Denon found the uprising fundamentally ill-suited to pictorial composition. Revolt was far too disorderly and fragmented: it did not offer pictorial masses; in overdetermined ways, it did not lend itself to organization. Perhaps for these reasons, Denon failed to provide Girodet with the detailed program that normatively prescribed the subject, even the composition, of the final work. The government was, therefore, atypically careless: it accorded an artist with oppositional Royalist sympathies an unsupervised commission to represent a colonial uprising. While many of Girodet's Napoleonic commissions attest to his boredom and lack of commitment, his immense tableau of 1810, the *Revolt*

of *Cairo*, stands as an exception. He prepared dozens and dozens of sketches for the work. Of these, only a couple were devoted to the French soldiers.⁴¹

Girodet's answer to the pictorial challenges posed by revolt was to adapt the simple opposition of Romulus and Tatius in his master David's *Intervention of the Sabines* of 1799. Like David, Girodet focuses upon two oversized figure groups placed at either side of a shallow foreground space. By doing so, he placed Mameluke and Frenchman on level ground in hand to hand combat, unlike the far more characteristic hierarchical arrangement of Frenchmen and "Orientals" in Gros's *Battle of the Pyramids* of 1810.

However, in contrast to David's painting, which features two naked men, Girodet differentiates the excessively ornamented, paper-thin French hussar at left from the masterfully rendered, emphatically modelled male nude, the ferocious and imposing Mameluke warrior who clutches a sword with one hand and a swooning Mameluke bey with the other. Compared to the complicated, entangled system of bodies at right, the French soldier offers a fully visible and discrete silhouette. He is a solitary figure. The only Frenchman to occupy the foreground, he is distinguished in costume and placement from the helmeted dragoons at the painting's center. Although Mamelukes characteristically hurled themselves individually against the unified *carré* of the French regiment, Girodet has inverted this opposition. Instead, the French hussar attempts to penetrate the dense and agitated wedge of figures that rises up and over the immovable naked Mameluke warrior. While it would be possible to interpret positively such an isolated figure as a sign of autonomy and individual self-sufficiency, the hussar garners neither authority nor sympathy. Rather than accruing romantic qualities of independent heroism, the French protagonist spins like a pinwheel.



Reversing the relative importance of the bold French officer and the partly visible Oriental servant in François Gérard's portrait of Joachim Murat, Girodet prominently displays the Mamelukes and eclipses the French hussar's face by a cast shadow (Figure 9). Despite his tight fitting clothing, Girodet's French protagonist remains a flattened pattern of rotating limbs. The problem is partly due, as even one of Girodet's most vociferous supporters felt compelled to admit, to the out-sized scale of the uniformed figure. In contrast to the nude Mameluke whose giant proportions only render him more imposing, the exaggerated scale of the French soldier awkwardly strikes us as an aggregation of discrete and gigantic pieces of clothing. Boots, pants, jacket, cape, we dress him like a paper doll.


By contrast, the naked Mameluke warrior is irresistibly charismatic, the very center of a series of homosocial dramas of loyalty, violent aggression, and self-sacrifice. Here for Girodet and viewer alike, the plot becomes fascinating. Referring to the antique sculptures known as the suicidal Gaul, as well as the Menelaos and Patroclus figure group, the virile warrior stands fully unclothed fiercely protecting the opulently costumed collapsing Mameluke bey, whose small knife wound at the neck remains all but invisible.⁴² In Girodet's painting of colonial warfare, it is the insurgents, not the French colonizers, who are aligned with the classical narratives of passion, loyalty, and courage so revered within the French tradition.

Girodet renders the naked Mameluke's body with a convincing volumetric substantiality despite the fact that it is almost split down its middle, half occluded by the fully dressed bey. Indeed, one critic's description of this figure group as a hydra with many heads is apt even if "orientalist". Together naked Mameluke, black man, and expiring Mameluke bey function as a composite being, one moreover that enacts a temporal unfolding of erotic



Figure 9. François Gerard, *Joachim Murat*, 1801.

plot. The central Mameluke warrior is provided attributes by the contrasting men whose bodies are interlocked with his own. And the sexual narrative is laughably explicit: at left, closest to the attacking French troops, the wholly phallic aggression of the ferocious black man, who in one hand holds a decapitated Frenchman's head and in the other a broad hooked dagger that springs up and out from the standing naked warrior's groin; at center the bronze




nude who rises up, erect, concentrated, his uppermost appendage about to explode in a violent upward thrust; at right, the post-ejaculatory collapse of the passive effeminate Mameluke bey, whose falling hand and slender sword limply descend from the elaborately and ambiguously masked genitals of his protector. The erotic fantasy circulating around the beautiful undressed Mameluke is unremitting, moreover, in its phallic obsessiveness: no less than four swords spiral out from the gleaming and rippling muscular torso, compensating in a frenzied overstatement for his hidden genitals.

The progression of skin color among these three men is far from arbitrary: black man as crouching enactment of the lower body's mindless aggression; standing bronze Mameluke as handsome dignified warrior of stature; the pale-skinned swooning bey, like the woman in Girodet's earlier *Deluge*, as beautiful effeminate foil to the sublimity of his defender. Likened by one critic to a tiger viciously protective of its bloody prey, the naked black man bears the burden of embodying the pejorative aspects of barbaric savagery. Significantly, while blacks were sometimes Mamelukes, in Girodet's tableau, the black man is distinguished from the other two figures by his squatting animal-like position as well as his role as the perpetrator of decapitation. As in most depictions of the Egyptian campaign, which subordinated naked black slaves to the virile heroic actions of the Mamelukes, Girodet distinguishes roles according to the markers of race. The repugnant violence of the black man is differentiated from the defensive and courageous posture of the central Mameluke protagonist, and this despite the fact that decapitation of enemies in Egypt was particularly associated with Mamelukes, not with slaves.

Contrast this image of a ferocious and brutish black aggressor with the artist's 1797 portrait of the dignified Deputy Belley from Saint-Domingue, whose heroic speech

to the National Assembly led to the abolition of slavery in France. To compare the two works is to traverse the distance in twenty years between the utopian egalitarian vision of the Revolution and the reactionary politics of the Napoleonic Empire, between Girodet's youth and middle age.⁴³ By 1803 the Napoleonic government had reinstated slavery, and violent colonial uprisings in Saint-Domingue had led to the denunciation of the blacks who cut white colonizers' throats and whose bloodiness was understood to surpass even that of Robespierre.⁴⁴ That Royalists repeatedly compared insubordinate blacks with Jacobins during the Napoleonic Empire is certainly relevant here: in the *Revolt of Cairo*, decapitation is undoubtedly associated with savagery and irrational, one might say mob, violence.

The accounts of horrific and animal-like fighting in Saint-Domingue constituted Girodet's materials in a painting of colonial insubordination. Those revolts had occurred in 1803, the Revolt of Cairo a full five years earlier. However, to see the tableau as condemnatory would be to miss entirely the pleasures Girodet derives from such violence, as well as the ways insubordination offered an oppositional painter the means to express his own resistance to the Napoleonic regime. Girodet's picture celebrates erotic contact between men even as it depicts its costs—decapitation, defeat, and death. Unlike Gros's meditation on the threatening dissolution of difference in the shadowy recesses of the Orient in the *Plague-Stricken of Jaffa*, Girodet's painting does not conjure the horrors of loss of identity, the loss of difference. Rather he delights in the intermingling, the interlocking of things and peoples who remain discrete—the thrill is born of the contact between such disparate entities. Compressed, clotted, airless, strangely indifferent to gravity and the weight of things, the curling wave of turmoil in *The Revolt of Cairo* is constituted by the




interlocking of heterogeneous materials, but it does not describe their melting away or their metamorphosis. Girodet is flirting with illegibility but not dissolution here—instead revolt is depicted as the clatter of polished fragments, as an excessive intersection of parts, the havoc of metonymic propulsion, resting nowhere, part always leading to other parts. Violent colonial encounter permits contact between disparate kinds: metal and cloth, leopard and gleaming gold, spheres and hooks, nipples and phallic weapons, fur and silk, pistols and swords, dark skin and light skin, shoulders and armpits, elbows and knees. So many arbitrary conjoinings: the pale shoulder of one race and the uplifted arm of another as awkwardly, but magically kissing black and white wings, or enemies holding hands, one small and pale, the other gloved and tense. The picture's peculiarity partly results from Girodet's obsessive drive to description, his celebration of polished edges, and love of emphatic contours.

Among the kissing intersection of discrete and disparate polished fragments, none is more stunning than the intersection of decapitated pale golden-haired head, black arm and bronze Mameluke leg. Here is the tableau's most sustained site of contact between Frenchman and insurgent warriors of the Orient. The beautiful severed head and the dying ornamented Mameluke bey offer mirror images of unconsciousness, passivity, and I would argue, a form of pleasure.⁴⁵ Naked black man and naked Mameluke, both aggressive warriors with mirroring uplifted arms and phallic swords, each bear their passive, fair and lovely partners. But the elegant swooning head is serene and content as it caresses the leg of the Mameluke. Like Goethe's description of the Medusa Rondanini as "a state between death and life, pain and pleasure," Girodet's depiction of the decapitated French soldier's head, replete with softly twisting tendrils, reveals a fascination with in-

commensurate experience: the pleasures of touch on the part of the unfeeling; the gentle caress enjoyed by the violently dismembered.⁴⁶ The head, Girodet tells us, succumbed to the black man's savage assault but also achieved a form of intimacy with the Mameluke.

Finally Frenchman and Mameluke touch—the formal distance between Napoleon and Roustam collapses. Girodet exploits the tension engendered by their proximity, and resolves the transgressive and electrified eroticism between Frenchman and Mameluke in the orgiastic bliss of death. If Girodet relies upon a racial hierarchy to enact his drama of violation and ecstasy, it would be wrong to pry apart his three-man composite as though we were describing actual men: Girodet did not bestialize the black man in order to secure the heroism and desirability of his Mameluke love object. Rather the object of Girodet's "feverish" desire, the Mameluke, was most effectively given form by accumulating its disparate aspects, its discrepant potentialities: violator—sodomite—sodomized—masculine aggressor—feminine object—hard body—soft cloth—metal weapons—master—slave—death—ecstasy. Black skin, brown skin, white skin, only all three men together adequately evoked the contradictory, volatile, fluid, and potent character of the signifier Mameluke.

In the *Revolt of Cairo*, Girodet revelled in the license afforded by a colonial uprising; violence and mayhem offered him the means to represent a frenzied, but sustained contact between men. If the intersections between different kinds of men was premised upon their accidental and fleeting character, the tableau locks them immovably into a highly organized and choreographed studio performance. Above all, the *Revolt of Cairo* is a studio piece, an extravagant compilation of laborious and loving studies of props and men. It is a demonstration of Girodet's power to manipulate and pose Mamelukes, but it is also a triumphant



challenge to the Napoleonic regime's shabby and anemic iconography of the Orient. Here, the painting spits out, is the Mameluke, and against him the French soldier in full military uniform spins like an ineffectual doll. Here is the body hidden behind boots and buttons. Here is a true warrior and here is the eloquent homoeroticism of man to man violence. These truths are enacted behind the closed doors of the studio, but the painter, unlike the Emperor, moves such truths into the public space of the salon exhibition.

Napoleon had incorporated the Mamelukes within his imperial iconography, but he had attempted to distance himself from their brutal and transgressive associations. Girodet's painting refused such trivialization of the Oriental warrior. However, if Girodet's painting transgressed the government's own self-representation, this is not to say he was able to metamorphose the Mamelukes into an oppositional term. Rather, the tableau demonstrated that the imperialist militaristic state was underpinned by such unacceptable excesses. Despite Girodet's own love affair with these compelling, purportedly Oriental bodies, Mamelukes were inextricably tied to Napoleon's regime. After the empire fell in 1814-15, Royalists harshly attacked Mamelukes, and even, ironically and tragically, blacks because they were understood to be representative of Napoleon's interests. In Marseilles, where many Mamelukes and Egyptian refugees had settled, bloody massacres took place. Some Mamelukes were deported while others fled. Dark skinned persons wore signs on their backs to protect themselves against the onslaught. In those bloody months, the population of Mamelukes was reduced by two-thirds.

At the fall of the Empire, anti-Bonapartist tracts attacked Napoleon for many sins, including homosexuality and a taste for perpetual violence against the French people.

A British polemicist named Lewis Goldsmith explicitly accused Napoleon of sharing Socrates' vice. Goldsmith associated the Emperor not only with the well-known sodomitical practices of his arch-chancellor, Cambacérès, but also with Mamelukes:

He had two tastes rarely united in the same man; he was dissolute with women and he was prone [?] to the vice of which Socrates was falsely accused. His Arch-Chancellor Cambacérès marvellously followed him in this shameful penchant! I would not be astonished if in order to imitate Nero in everything, he did not one day marry one of his pages and one of his Mamelukes.⁴⁷

Another tract by Goldsmith described Roustam as “the wife of Napoleon, the husband of Josephine.”⁴⁸

Several caricatures underscored that homosexuality and carnage were the defining characteristics of the Napoleonic regime (Figure 10). Typically, the two vices were linked in representations that featured Cambacérès and Napoleon. As these prints explicitly warned their viewers, the vices of homosexuality and perpetual violence were dangerous in themselves but they became fatal in tandem; indeed they led to the end of the world, “la fin du monde.” Royalists thereby described the Napoleonic government as both destructive and incapable of procreation. In one print, the busts of Cambacérès and Napoleon rest upon a pedestal that features both a naked man cleaving a many-breasted statue of nature, and a tangle of weapons. Similarly, in another caricature, the Corsican tyrant wields weapons and scythe as he marches over the bodies of dead men, while Cambacérès refuses to procreate and turns his back on a group of grieving women. Characteristically, a sword juts out from his buttocks to underscore his preferred sexual activity; the cannons below Bonaparte's legs



Figure 10. Anonymous print, *La Fin du Monde*, 1814-5.

repeat this trajectory, twice firing at the fleeing soldier's lower body while obfuscating it in smoke.

Like Girodet's painting, the caricature suggests that Napoleon's exclusively masculine society entailed the repeated violation of men's bodies. The *Revolt of Cairo* had also represented total annihilation, the very end of the world. The difference, of course, lies in the evaluation of such imminent and complete violation. The caricature, despite its humor, is a less complicated image. Massacre is perpetrated by aggressors against victims; homosexuality is the taste of homely and gluttonous fools. In contrast to the *Revolt*, the caricature does not celebrate the electrified beauty of exclusively masculine societies. Instead, the emphasis of the print is that a society premised upon carnage and homosexuality threatens the world with ex-

tion. The Mameluke fraternity among warrior-men incapable of procreation was not tenable. To rape and murder men and neglect women was to fail to repopulate the world. The First Empire had proven the Mameluke, as well as the imaginary Revolutionary fraternal order, perverse and short-sighted.

While France's population was not, in fact, on the verge of annihilation, Mamelukes were threatened by extinction even before the counter-Revolutionary massacres of 1814-15.⁴⁹ In 1802, Turkey had forbidden the exportation of slaves from the Balkans.⁵⁰ In 1811, the last Egyptian Mamelukes were slaughtered in circumstances very much like the revolt depicted by Girodet the previous year. Mohammed Ali, known as the father of modern Egypt, had gathered the Mamelukes in the citadel of Cairo and murdered them one and all.⁵¹ In France, continuous war had taken its toll and the bellicose Mameluke corps had suffered, particularly—and here is another tragic irony—during the campaigns fought against the Spaniards who valiantly resisted Napoleonic domination, attested by Goya's painting of *May 2, 1808*, which depicts Spaniards pitted against Mamelukes.

Astonishingly, we have a photographic record from the 1860s of one of the last members of Napoleon's Mameluke corps (Figure 11).⁵² The Second Empire collected the detritus of the earlier glorious epoch: septagenarian veterans of Napoleonic wars were found, shuffled out to a photographer's studio and dressed up in their military costumes, now adapted to accommodate bodies either broadened or desiccated by old age. Jauntily, feebly, this Mameluke peers out from under the teetering weight of his ostentatious and shabbily theatrical regalia. Unlike Girodet's frozen spectacle of the annihilation of beautiful young men, this Mameluke offers the haunting spectre of the aged imperial warrior. His name is François

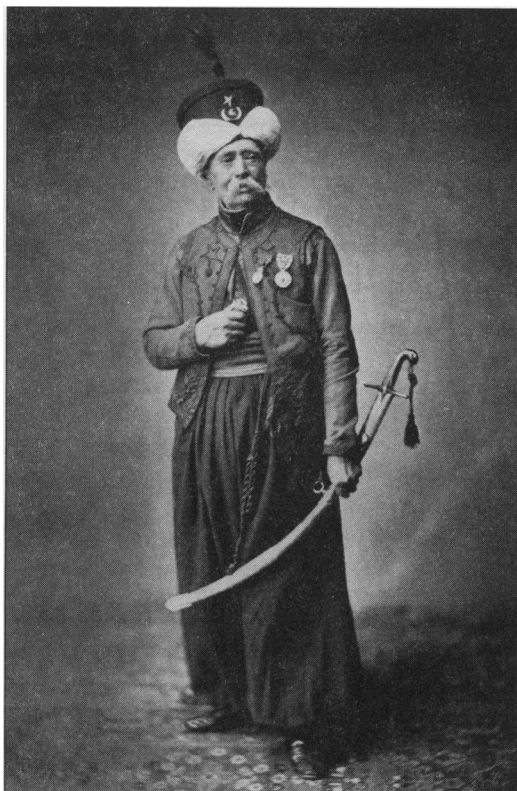


Figure 11. Anonymous photograph, Mameluke (François Ducler), *Second Empire*, c. 1860.

Ducler, and he was born in the year of the Revolution in the provinces of France. He represents one of the so-called second Mamelukes, enlisted by Napoleon in 1813, three years after the painting of the *Revolt of Cairo*, when the first Mamelukes from Egypt were dying out. Even as his Empire crumbled, Napoleon insisted upon maintaining his corps of Oriental warriors; if Girodet's painting refuses to brook any possibility that identity is malleable—that difference between men can dissolve—Napoleon was far



Figure 12. Anonymous print, *Le Nec plus ultra du cannibalisme*, 1814-5.

more pragmatic. At the end of the Empire, Mamelukes could be Frenchmen, but of course, this means that Frenchmen, or rather Corsicans, might also prove themselves to be Mamelukes (Figure 12).

Footnotes

1. This paper was first presented as a Morrison Lecture at U.C. Berkeley on March 13, 1996. It represents part of a longer book-length study provisionally entitled *Extremities in Paint. Representing Empire in Post-Revolutionary France, 1789-1830*.

2. “Depuis assez longtemps les beys qui gouvernent l’Égypte insultent à la nation française et couvrent ses négociants d’avanies: l’heure de leur châtement est arrivée. Depuis très longtemps, ce ramassis d’esclaves, achetés dans la Géorgie et le Caucase tyrannise la plus belle partie du monde, mais Dieu, de qui dépend tout, a ordonné que leur empire finît....Y a-t-il une belle terre, elle appartient aux mameluks; y a-t-il une belle esclave, un beau cheval, une belle maison, cela appartient aux mameluks....” The proclamation was issued on July 2, 1798. Cited in Marseille, Archives départementales, *L’Orient des provençaux dans l’histoire* (Marseille: Archives départementales, 1982), pp. 340-1.

3. Concerning Mamelukes, see Jean Savant, *Les Mamelouks de Napoléon* (Paris: Calmann-Lévy, 1949); Raoul and Jean Brunon, *Les Mameluks d’Égypte. Les Mameluks de la Garde Impériale* (Marseille: Collection Raoul and Jean Brunon, 1963); and Jean-Joël Brégeon, “Le Crépuscule des Mamelouks,” in his *L’Égypte française au jour le jour 1798-1801* (Paris, 1991), pp. 342-369; Béatrice Kasbarian-Bricout, *L’Odyssée Mamelouke à l’Ombre des Armées Napoléoniennes* (Paris, 1988); Gabriel Guemard, *Aventuriers mameluks d’Égypte* (Toulouse, 1928); J. Christopher Herold, *Bonaparte in Egypt* (London, 1962), pp. 6-10; 230-1; and Henry Laurens, *L’Expédition d’Égypte 1798-1801* (Paris, 1989), pp. 46-7.

4. C. François, *Journal du capitaine François* (Paris, 1903) I, p. 214: “Mamelouck, dit-il, signifie esclave militaire, milice d’esclaves devenus despotes, achetés par Saladin, qui, depuis plusieurs siècles, décida du sort de l’Égypte. Ces mameloucks, sous la puissance de vingt-quatre beys, n’ont pour règle de conduite que la violence d’un soldatesque effrénée et grossière.”

5. See, for example, *La Description de l’Égypte*: “Il est prouvé qu’en Égypte, les indigènes seuls ont le privilège de se perpétuer par la génération. La nature du climat semble rejeter avec une sorte d’opiniâtreté les germes d’une race étrangère.” Cited in R. and J. Brunon, *Les Mameluks d’Égypte*, p. 12. See also *Journal du capitaine François*, I, p. 214: “Depuis 550 ans qu’ils existent, pas un n’a donné de lignée; tous leurs enfant périssent dans le premier âge; ils ont toujours pris pour femmes des esclaves de la Géorgie, de l’Abssynie, etc., où elles

sont réputées pour leur beauté.”

6. Albert Dufourcq, ed., *Mémoires du Général Baron Desvernois* (Paris: Librairie Plon, 1898), p. 113: “D’origine circassienne, géorgienne ou moscovite, ils ne peuvent se reproduire en Egypte, leurs enfants meurent tous à trois ou quatre ans. Aussi en achètent-ils d’autres à huit ou neuf ans qui deviennent bientôt, après cinq ou six ans d’exercice, d’admirables cavaliers. Leurs chefs doivent élévation à leur beauté, à leur intelligence, à leur adresse à manier le cheval, et surtout à leur bravoure personnelle.”

7. C.-F. Volney, *Travels through Syria and Egypt* (London, 1787), I, p. 184; Herold, *Bonaparte in Egypt*, p. 230. See also *Journal du capitaine François I*, p. 220-21: “...Ils furent pris en partie et les paysans et les Arabes après les avoir sodomisés, leur coupèrent aux uns le nez, les oreilles, les bras, les jambes, etc., jusqu’aux parties même. Ceux échappés à la mort après ces opérations, furent forcés de chauffer les fours qu’il avaient établis, et furent mis dedans par ces cannibales. A notre arrivée, j’ai vu ces malheureuses victimes rôtir dans un four. Notre vengeance se borner à brûler les hameaux où avaient été sacrifiés plus de quatre-vingt employés, bouchers, sapeurs, maçons, etc. Lon peut juger d’après de telles horreurs, à quelles natures barbares nous avions affaire.” See also my “Rumor, Contagion and Colonization in Gros’s *Plague-Stricken of Jaffa* (1804),” *Representations* 51 (Summer 1995), pp. 1-46.

8. “Les Mameluks qui chargent en fourrageurs viennent se briser sur les pelotons fermes comme du granit.” Dufourcq, *Mémoires du Général Baron Desvernois*, p. 115.

9. Lejeune, *La Bataille des Pyramides*, 1806, Musée de Versailles.

10. *Journal du capitaine François I*, pp. 215-6: “Ainsi costumés, sans formation ni discipline, leur réunion est un attroupement, leur marche une cohue; leurs combats sont des duels et leurs guerres un brigandage... Dès qu’un Mamelouk tombe, il est perdu; ses valets, toujours présents, le relèvent; s’il n’y a point de témoins, ils l’assomment, lui prennent sa ceinture qu’il porte le jour du combat, ainsi que ses beaux vêtements.”

11. Concerning Bonaparte’s purchase of slaves to replenish the army during the Egyptian campaign, see Herold, *Bonaparte in Egypt*, p. 212.

12. On October 19, 1799, Kléber ordered that beginning November 6 “toutes les ordonnances à cheval des officiers généraux rentreraient à leur corps et seraient remplacées par des Mamelouks.” Savant, *Les Mamelouks de Napoléon*, p. 59.

13. *Ibid.*

14. See Claude-François de Méneval, *Mémoires du Baron de Méneval* (Paris, 1894) I, p. 399: "Il accompagna Napoléon dans toutes ses campagnes et dans ses voyages faisant auprès de lui l'office de piqueur et, dans l'occasion, celui de valet de chambre. Il était devenu l'inséparable de son maître, et la peinture n'a jamais représenté Napoléon sans placer la silhouette de son mameluck derrière l'image de l'Empereur. Roustan entra tout à fait dans les moeurs françaises; il épousa la fille d'un huissier de l'Impératrice et en eut plusieurs enfants. A l'époque de l'abdication de 1814, Roustan ne put soutenir l'épreuve de l'adversité. Il disparut de Fontainebleau." Concerning Roustam, see his own memoirs, Paul Cottin, ed., *Souvenirs de Roustam. Mamelouck de Napoléon Ier* (Paris, 1911), as well as Hector Fleischmann, *Roustam, Mameluck de Napoléon* (Paris, 1910); Gualtiero Guatteri, *Roustam. Il Mammalucco di Napoleone* (Naples, 1935); Savant, *Les Mamelouks de Napoléon*, pp. 324-338. For a brief description of the depiction of Roustam in Napoleonic painting, see Charles Otto Zieseniss, "Considérations sur l'iconographie du mamelouk Roustam," *Bulletin de la Société de l'Histoire de l'Art français. Année 1988* (1989), pp. 169-173.

15. See the Rapport de la Préfecture de Police du 24 Messidor (July 12, 1802): "On rapporte que les officiers du 1er régiment de cavalerie, en garnison à Versailles, se plaignent de la dépense qu'il disent qu'on leur fait faire dans ce moment, en les forçant d'acheter un casque et une cuirasse qui leur reviennent fort cher, que cela les gêne d'autant plus que la plupart entre eux n'ont d'autre revenu que leur paie.—Le corps des Mameluks, qui doit paraître demain à la revue, a traversé hier tous les boulevards du Nord avec ses bagages. Le costume de ces militaires a attiré beaucoup de monde sur leur passage et a paru généralement faire plaisir. On rapporte que l'arrivée des Mameluks occasionne des murmures parmi la troupe et notamment parmi la gendarmerie d'élite." Cited in A. Aulard, *Paris sous le Consulat. Recueil de documents pour l'histoire de l'esprit public à Paris* (Paris, 1906), III, p. 150.

16. While Roustam proved a devoted, even complacent servant, another Mameluke whom Napoleon gave to Josephine was apparently less acceptable: his "bad character" led to his replacement by a Frenchman from Versailles. Dressed à la Mameluck, Saint-Denis served the Empress under the name of his predecessor Ali until he followed Napoleon loyally into exile. See Savant, *Les Mamelouks de Napoléon*, pp. 319-323; Brunon and Brunon, *Les Mameluks d'Egypte*, p. 69.

17. Jacques Jourquin, ed., *Souvenirs du Commandant Parquin* (Paris, 1979), pp. 294-5: "Le capitaine Ibrahim Bey était le commandant de

la compagnie de mamelouks qui était venue en France après la campagne d’Égypte. A son arrivée à Paris, il s’égara un jour dans la capitale. Le costume oriental qu’il portait étonna les Parisiens, et la curiosité ameuta autour de lui une foule de monde. Comme le hasard le conduisit dans le quartier de la Halle au blé, il trouva là des habitants qui le huèrent, le sifflèrent, lui jetèrent même de la boue, prétendant que ce n’était pas le temps du carnaval pour s’habiller en Turc. Le capitaine Ibrahim Bey, qui n’entendait pas le français, et encore moins la raillerie, saisit ses pistolets, et à l’instant il étendit morst à ses peids deux forts de la halle. Il se préparait à continuer le combat, armé de son damas et de son poignard, lorsqu’une patrouille du guet de Paris survint et s’empara de lui, non sans peine.

Le bruit de l’événement s’étant répandu aux Tuileries, le Premier Consul se fit conduire le capitaine Ibrahim Bey, qui, dans l’interrogatoire qu’il subit, répondit qu’il avait agi de la même façon dont on usait dans son pays pour punir la populace quand elle s’ameutait sur le passage des mamelouks.

Tu n’es pas ici pour faire une pareille police, lui fit dire en langue arabe, par l’organe de son mamelouk, le Premier consul; tu vas partir demain pour Marseille. C’est un climat chaud; tu vivras avec ta solde de six mille francs, que je te défends, mais dont deux mille francs te seront prélevés pour la pension aux deux veuves que tu as faites. On est habitué dans cette ville à ton costume; toutefois je te défends de te servir de tes armes, et même de les porter.”

18. See *Police Bulletin* of October 26, 1803: “Hier, plusieurs mameluks se sont portés à des voies de fait chez un limonadier de la rue d’Argenteuil; ils ont tiré le sabre et le poignard, brisé les boccoux et les vitres. A l’arrivée de la force armée, ils ont pris la fuite; un seul a pu être arrêté; il a été trouvé nanti d’une bouteille d’anisette qu’il avait volée; il a été reconduit à l’Etat-Major de la garde des Consuls...” Cited in Aulard, *Paris sous le Consulat*, IV, p. 453.

19. See *Journal des Débats* of July 14, 1802: “26 Messidor—La grande parade de ce jour a été la plus brillante qu’on ait encore vue, tant par le concours extraordinaire d’étrangers et de citoyens, que par le nombre non moins extraordinaire et surtout la superbe tenue des troupes de toutes armes qui étaient réunies sur l’immense place du Carrousel. Les Mameluks n’ont pas moins excité les regards du public par la nouveauté du spectacle que présentaient leur costume et leur tenue singulière. Ils étaient au nombre de cent, et tous à cheval...” Cited in Aulard, *Paris sous le Consulat*, III, p. 154.

20. In his memoirs, Général de Marbot described his fascination

with the French soldiers returned from the Egyptian campaign; nonetheless, it was Roustam who proved most mesmerizing: “Durant ce temps, les généraux et officiers venus d’Egypte avec le général Bonaparte causaient avec nous dans le salon. Je ne pouvais me lasser de considérer leur air martial, leurs figures bronzées par le soleil d’Orient, leurs costumes bizarres et leurs sabres turcs suspendus par des cordons. J’écoutais avec attention leurs récits sur les campagnes d’Egypte et les combats qui s’y étaient livrés. Je me complaisais à entendre répéter ces noms célèbres: Pyramides, Nil, Grand-Caire, Alexandrie, Saint Jean-d’Acre, le désert, etc. Mais ce qui me charmait le plus était la vue du jeune mamelouk Roustan. Il était resté dans l’antichambre, où j’allai plusieurs fois pour admirer son costume qu’il me montrait avec complaisance. Il parlait déjà passablement français, et je ne me lassai pas de le questionner.” Jacques Garnier, ed., *Mémoires du Général Baron de Marbot* (Paris: Mercure de France, 1983), I, pp. 58-9.

21. P.N. Rougeron, *Viscellina ou le mamelouk français* (Paris, 1801); Joseph Lavallée, *Lettres d’un mameluck, ou tableau moral et critique de quelques parties de mœurs de Paris* (Paris, 1803). See Savant, *Les Mamelouks de Napoléon*: p. 59-66. Concerning “soirées égyptiennes,” see Gilbert Stenger, *La Société française pendant le Consulat. La Renaissance de la France*, (Paris, 1903), pp. 416-7.

22. Paris, Musée du Louvre, *Egyptomania: Egypt in Western Art 1730-1930* (Paris, Editions de la Réunion des Musées Nationaux, 1994).

23. Lavallée, *Lettres d’un mameluck*.

24. See Savant, *Les Mamelouks de Napoléon*, p. 62.

25. The tactic of infantilization is hardly surprising: miniaturization effectively deprived the Mamelukes of martial power and adult status, but given that Mamelukes were often abducted or purchased white Christian children initiated into a masculine military Muslim order, the pairing of Parisian mother and Mameluke child was particularly perverse. By definition, Mamelukes were disassociated from mothers, although not from women as sexual partners. Mother and Mameluke child were therefore an aberrant and incestual pair, even as the fashion simultaneously desexualized the Mameluke into a presexual being.

26. Fleischmann, *Roustam, Mameluck de Napoléon*, p. 140.

27. See my “Rumor, Contagion and Colonization.”

28. *Ibid.*

29. Roehn, *Bivouac de S.M. l’Empereur, sur le champ de bataille de Wagram, dans la nuit du 5 au 6, 1810*.

30. “Des services particuliers et très importants mais qui ne sont

point connus, lui méritèrent de la part du général Buonaparte, une confiance sans bornes et l'attachement le plus intime." "C.C." concerning Roustam in *Biographie des hommes vivants* (Paris, 1819) V, p. 255.

31. Méneval, *Mémoires du Baron de Méneval*, p. 37 "Napoléon était recherché dans ses soins de propreté. Il se baignait fréquemment... Son valet de chambre achevait de lui frotter très rudement le dos et les épaules, mais il empruntait souvent la main plus vigoureuse de Roustan."

32. Ducis, S.M. *l'Empereur sur la terrasse du château de Saint-Cloud, entouré, après son déjeuner, des jeunes princes et princesses de sa famille*, 1810, Musée de Versailles.

33. Lewis Goldsmith, *Histoire secrète du cabinet de Napoléon Buonaparté et de la cour de Saint Cloud*. (London, 1814), I, p. 128: "Pichegru était gardé par deux gendarmes; mais comme la police ne se souciait pas d'avoir des gendarmes dans la maison où le meurtre devait se commettre, on les éloigna sous prétexte qu'il y avait beaucoup de mécontentement dans la gendarmerie, et qu'on ne pouvait pas compter sur eux, (ce qui par parenthèse était vrai). En conséquence, des Mamelouks et des Albanais furent chargés de faire le service au temple, et l'exécution fut confiée à des Mamelouks. Quatre hommes l'étranglèrent, et ces quatre hommes furent ensuite fusillés pour quelque crime supposé: le fait est que le gouvernement avait peur qu'un jour ou l'autre ils ne parlissent." See also Frédéric Barbey, *La Mort de Pichegru pendant le Consulat. Aristocrates et Républicains* (Paris, 1904), p. 151.

34. Bonaparte apparently shocked the chairman of the divan, sheik Abdullah el-Charkawi, by suggesting that he wear a tricolor shawl; the General subsequently rescinded the command, instead requiring that sheiks were tricolor cockades. At one point, Bonaparte donned "Turkish" garb to shame the sheiks into wearing tricolor cockades, but Tallien talked him out of it. According to Bourrienne: "[The General] cut such a poor figure in his turban and caftan; he looked so gauche and self-conscious in that unfamiliar garb, that he soon left the room to take it off and never felt tempted to repeat this masquerade." Bourrienne, cited in Herold, *Bonaparte in Egypt*, p. 153

35. Herold, *Bonaparte in Egypt*, pp. 183-5. In 1798 Bonaparte wrote the sheik El-Messiri of his intention "to establish a uniform goverment, based on the principles of the Koran, which alone are true and capable of bringing happiness to men." *Ibid.*, p. 145. In 1799 Napoleon managed to convince the ulemas of El Azhar to issue a declaration stating that the Sultan Kebir "loved the Moslems, cherished

the Prophet, instructed himself by reading the Koran every day, and desired to build a mosque unrivalled in splendour and to embrace the Moslem faith." *Ibid.*, p. 185. Napoleon would later claim that he had been asked to convert to Islam by the Sheiks (after asking for the Mosque El Azhar to order the people to make an oath of obedience), *Ibid.*, pp.184-5.

36. John Ashton, *English Caricature and Satire* (New York, 1884) I, p. 217.

37. Coupin Manuscript. Archives de Versailles. On the *Revolt of Cairo*, see James Henry Rubin, "Aesthetic Subversion of Politics in Girodet's *Revolt of Cairo*," *The Consortium on Revolutionary Europe Proceedings* 2 (1980), pp. 95-105; Stephanie Brown, "Girodet: A Contradictory Career," Doctoral Dissertation, University of London, 1980, pp. 270-6; Michael Marrinan, "Literal, Literary, 'Lexie': History, Text and Authority in Napoleonic Painting," *Word and Image* 7, no. 3 (July-September 1991), pp. 177-200 and Thomas Crow, *Emulation. Making Painters for Revolutionary France* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1995), pp. 259-61.

38. Concerning Girodet's Royalism, see my dissertation "Classicism, Nationalism and History: The Prix Décennaux of 1810 and the Politics of Art under Post-Revolutionary Empire," University of Michigan, 1995, pp. 396-414; see also Brown, "Girodet: A Contradictory Career," p. 232.

39. Letter to Julie Candeille, Bibliothèque Durzy, Montargis, France.

40. See Vivant Denon's letter to Daru, the Intendant Général de la Maison de l'Empereur, on February 17, 1809: "Quant au tableau du Caire, j'aurais bien voulu, Monsieur l'Intendant Général que Sa Majesté eût déterminé le moment qu'elle préfère que l'on représente, une révolte n'étant composée que de scènes détachées....Témoin oculaire de cette rébellion, je n'ai cependant rien vu qui offrit un tableau d'effet et qui peut produire de belles masses." O2 843, Archives Nationales, Paris.

41. Brown, "Girodet: A Contradictory Career," pp. 271-2; 440, notes 9-10.

42. Concerning the critical fortune of these antique sculptures, see Francis Haskell and Nicholas Penny, *Taste and the Antique: the Lure of Classical Sculpture, 1500-1900* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1981), pp. 282, 296.

43. Concerning Belley, see Brown "Girodet: A Contradictory Career," pp. 146-151 and Crow, *Emulation*, pp. 225-229.

44. Warfare in Saint-Domingue was savage; massacres were perpetrated by both sides; hundreds of insurgents were shot by French

soldiers and accounts refer to hundreds of warm white bodies with their throats cut; see Paul Fregosi, *Dreams of Empire*, p. 208. During the final days of fighting in Saint-Domingue, General Kerverseau wrote: "This is no longer war, it is a fight between wild beasts. One has to be in a transport of fury to keep it up....I have to keep on telling the troops: it is no longer courage I want from you but rage. But one cannot stay in a rage indefinitely, and our common humanity makes us weep sometimes." Cited in *ibid.*, p. 216.

45. For an account of the possibility of pleasurable associations, particularly by homosexual men, with the Medusa figure (as a figure for male-male desire), see Richard Dellamora, *Masculine Desire. The Sexual Politics of Victorian Aestheticism* (Chapel Hill, 1990). "...What Freud fails to understand from Pater's reading, indeed what Freud suppresses, is the suggestion that Medusa and other images by Leonardo may be a figure of the passage from the conventional male state of 'being-woman' that is both problematic and attractive and that may have implications both for those who enjoy sex with other men and for men who enjoy having sex with women....Pater's image suggests the possibility of a new life that lies on the other side of the death to self that the entry into sexual desire and activity portends...Signs of male sexual vigor, however, rise here not as in Freud through the male gaze at the female genitalia but by acceding to enter...a liminal state that is both 'masculine' and 'feminine.'" pp. 137-140.

Girodet's visual and literary works attest to his interest in decapitation; see his drawings of the severed heads of Delaunay and Foulon from the Revolutionary period; according to Brun-Neergard, in his discussion of the Salon of 1801, Girodet had also painted a Judith and Holofernes. His biographer Coupin also listed among his drawings an allegorical scene, *Des fantômes présentent à un septembriseur leurs têtes qu'il a fait couper*, see P.A.Coupin, ed., *Oeuvres posthumes de Girodet-Trioson, peintre d'histoire* (Paris, 1829), p.lxxxij. In his epic poem, *Les Veillées*, Girodet offers an ecstatic response to Medusa: "Sur sa lèvre est empreinte une pâleur mortelle;/ Un feu sombre rougit sa livide prunelle./ Tel luit un météore au sein d'une vapeur./ Frémissant de plaisir et frappé de stupeur./ Je tremble et je jouis; je veux fuir, je m'arrête./ J'admire...et mes cheveux se dressent sur ma tête."

46. Quoted in Dellamora, *Masculine Desire*, p. 139.

47. "On a prétendu que ce grand homme d'état, ce grand capitaine, ce grand philosophe, était ennemi de la débauche, exempt même des faiblesses qu'on peut reprocher à quelques grands hommes. Il a deux goûts qui se trouvent rarement réunis dans le même homme; il est dissolu avec les femmes, et il s'est montré adonné au vice dont a

faussement accusé Socrate. Son archi-chancelier Cambacérès le seconde merveilleusement dans ce penchant honteux! Je ne serais pas étonné que pour imiter Néron en tout, il n'épousât un jour un de ses pages et un des ses Mameloucks. Sans respect pour la décence, l'inceste même ne paraît pas devoir être déguisé" Lewis Goldsmith, *Histoire secrète du cabinet de Napoléon Buonaparté et de la cour de Saint Cloud*. (London, 1814), pp. 85-86.

48. *Ibid.*, I, p. 151: "La liste de ses amants est assez nombreuse...le mamelouk Rustan, qui est aussi le cher ami de Sa Majesté Napoléon. Les railleurs de Paris disent que 'Rustan est l'Epouse de l'Empereur, et l'Epoux de l'Impératrice!!!"

49. There were violent persecutions of Mamelukes and Egyptian refugees in Marseilles after the fall of the Empire. Marseilles had become anti-Bonapartist because the continental blockade of England led to economic stagnation; when Louis XVIII proclaimed April 4, 1814, there were violent anti-Bonapartist demonstrations, including the destruction of a statue of the Emperor. When Napoleon returned during the Hundred Days, there was a triumphal march in which prominently figured Egyptian refugees. The *Journal de l'Empire* announced on May 7, 1815: "On réorganise à Versailles le corps des Mamelouks." After the second Restoration, the white terror targeted dark-skinned persons associated with Bonaparte. On June 26, 1815, "le bruit se répandit que la réaction prétendue royaliste se proposait d'assommer tous les noirs parce que à ses yeux, ils étaient tous bonapartistes." Many Mamelukes were deported to the île de Sainte-Marguerite; others were imprisoned in Fort Saint-Nicolas at Marseilles as well as in Toulon and Rochefort. The Mameluke population was devastated by two thirds. On June 23, 1817, fifty Mameluke refugees left France only to be executed by Turks. By 1826, the second generation of Egyptian refugees did not speak Arabic. See *L'Orient des provençaux dans l'histoire*, pp. 352-3; Méry, *L'Assassinat. Scènes méridionales de 1815* (Paris, 1832), pp. 34-44 and Léon Gozlan, "Les Réfugiés Egyptiens à Marseille," *La Revue Contemporaine* (January 1866), pp. 41-47.

50. See *L'Orient des provençaux dans l'histoire*, p. 348; Herold, *Bonaparte in Egypt*, p. 391.

51. Herold, *Bonaparte in Egypt*, pp. 391-2.

52. François Ducel was born in 1789 in Touches (Saône-et-Loire); he joined the second Mameluke corps on March 7, 1813 and participated in the campaigns of 1813 and 1814. See Brunon and Brunon, *Les Mameluks d'Egypte* and Henry Lachouque, *The Anatomy of Glory. Napoleon and His Guard, A study in Leadership* (London, 1961), plate 171.

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