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Thomas Crow. *Emulation: Making Artists for Revolutionary France.* New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1995. 364 pp. $45.00, cloth, ISBN 978-0-300-06093-5.

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"What follows is a history of missing fathers, of sons left fatherless, and of the substitutes they sought" (p. 1). The opening line of Thomas Crow's latest volume on eighteenth-century painting announces in the plainest possible terms a tantalizing and somewhat surprising thesis about the nature of painting in revolutionary France. As the introduction goes on to explain, the book focuses on three artistic careers: that of Jacques-Louis David, undisputed doyen of revolutionary painting, pedagogy, and politics, and those of two of his students: Jean-Germain Drouais, whose untimely death at age twenty-four accounts both for his slight production and for the cult-like reverence reserved for him by contemporaries, and Anne-Louis Girodet-Trioson, whose ill-timed birth forced him to come of age in the shadows of the quickly mythologized Drouais, and of their common mentor, the domineering and prolific David.

Crow's choice of protagonists is motivated, as his opening indicates, by biographical coincidence; all three lost their fathers prematurely. And painting in France in the 1780s and 1790s owes its particular character to these accidents of biography, Crow argues. David and his pupils sought in the studio the familial bonds they lacked in life, and in painting a way of working through the psychic struggles induced by their loss. In a powerful convergence of private need and public demand, revolutionary politics supplied the ideal vehicle for the exorcism of this personal want. An increasingly gendered conception of Republican virtue, according to Crow, would give them license to pore over the male archetypes of antiquity for subtleties of interpretation that would do justice to an ostensible subject while satisfying an inner urge.

The surprising note in Crow's thesis is its grounding in accidents of filial symmetry. This seems to suggest a kind of biographical determinism in which the life story of the artist is considered capable of "explaining" the work of art, to the exclusion of other factors. Readers of Frank Sulloway's new ***Born to Rebel*** (New York, 1996) will note a methodological parallel, Sulloway looking to birth order to found a new theory of history in which sibling rank tells all (revolutions, in short, are led by later-borns). Sulloway notwithstanding, many art historians will balk at such a method, because it invests heavily in factors that are linked only with difficulty to the work of art itself. To be sure, Crow is not the first to think about fathers and fatherlessness in the context of revolutionary painting. For example, Carol Duncan in her study of patriarchal imagery in pre-revolutionary painting notes David's preoccupation with fathers, and with father-son relationships ("Fallen Fathers: Images of Authority in Pre-Revolutionary French Art," in her ***The Aesthetics of Power: Essays in Critical Art History*** [New York, 1993], 27-56). But Duncan frames David's interest in terms of larger social and polit-

ical patterns, and makes no reference to the biographical particulars that Crow deems decisive. David's and Girodet's early paternal losses are noted in Albert Boime's social history of revolutionary art (***Art in an Age of Revolution*** [Chicago, 1987], pp. 163, 447), where they are assigned a vague causal role in the painters' artistic formation. Crow, however, posits a far more explicit correlation between the life and the art.

The tantalizing aspect of Crow's construct is that it offers fresh insight into the fraternal imperative that came to dominate revolutionary iconography, and does so precisely by paying close attention to the agency of the artists themselves. In particular, Crow's theory holds the promise of extending arguments made a few years ago by historian Lynn Hunt in ***The Family Romance of the French Revolution*** (Berkeley, 1992), which explored the "collective unconscious images of the familial order that underlie revolutionary politics" (Hunt, p. xiii). By bringing the subjectivity of the artist-depictors into play, Crow is able to particularize the "collective unconscious" images that express "a kind of collective political unconsciousness" in Hunt's account (Hunt, p. xiii). For Crow, the Revolution's images are not collective, but highly individual transcriptions of the familial order.

The authors' respective discussions of David's "Death of Bara" (1794) illustrate the difference in approach. For Hunt, Joseph Bara, the child soldier who died in the line of Republican duty in 1794, is a generalized revolutionary type, the "child-hero" who stands at once for "the children of the republic" and "the internalized self-image of the revolutionaries as young, romantic heroes" (p. 78). In Hunt's view, the young martyr's fatherlessness made him an exquisitely apt emblem for a people who had lost its father and sought solidarity in brotherhood. In Crow's analysis, Bara's political meanings are as fully present; the dead child is meant to symbolize Robespierre's "violently paranoid drive for purity" (p. 175). But for Crow, that public meaning masks the strictly personal way in which David arrived at the representational specifics of his Bara. Reasoning from imaginative formal analysis that characterizes the entire book, Crow reads David's boy as an "emulation" of his pupil Girodet's "Sleep of Endymion" (1791), which was based upon the mythological infatuation of the moon goddess Selene for a mortal youth.

Girodet's painting, which features two nude boys--the supine Endymion and a cavorting young Eros--would have offered just the "inspired interplay of conceptual oppositions--of sex, of age, of temporality, of life and death" (p. 180) called for in the Bara project. The reversal of the usual flow of influence between teacher and student was a product, in Crow's view, of the uncommonly close family-like ties that bound the members of David's studio to one another. The "emulation" of his title refers as much to David's instructive example as to his projection of his students' achievements back onto his own canvases.

Crow's focus on the artist's biography and on the interpersonal dynamic of the studio works in the case of Bara, as elsewhere, to complement both Hunt's and Duncan's supra-individual studies of trends in revolutionary thematics as manifested in revolutionary political discourse and represented in pictorial images. In Hunt's view, the French could see themselves as "politically orphaned children" after the death of the king; Crow concretizes that metaphorically orphaned populace in the actually orphaned artists who were called upon to depict its ideals. His book, then, sets out to demonstrate exactly how that personal condition influenced the handling of public themes.

Two caveats should be made about this juxtaposition of Hunt and Crow. First, Crow's commitment to the fatherless son interpretive frame is uneven: it is powerfully applied in the first half of the book, which treats the 1780s and the early Revolution, and falls away rather precipitously in the post-Thermidor chapters. Here the author

takes a number of interpretive turns to match the aesthetic indecision of the time, and to mirror the political shifts of the late Revolution.

Second, despite the striking commonality of themes between the two books, Crow does not refer to Hunt's ***Family Romance***, although it predates ***Emulation*** by several years. This may simply be an artifact of ***Emulation's*** gestation; a number of its chapters draw from specialized studies published separately by the author in the last few years. Hunt's earlier study of revolutionary political culture (***Politics, Culture, and Class in the French Revolution*** [Berkeley, 1984]), in which she discussed the ascendancy of male imagery after 1792, is mentioned in a footnote. But given that it deals with the period when David was in charge of revolutionary ceremonial and centers on the very issue of the gendering of political allegory, the reader might expect a more direct engagement with its arguments. In fact, this laconism is consistent throughout the book. While incorporating and building upon the existing scholarship on his figures (for example, George Levitine on Girodet and Philippe Bordes and Regis Michel on all three), and exploiting his own erudite command of classics and literary historiography, Crow tends to allow the reader to locate his arguments within the larger critical and theoretical field.

Relying on careful readings of published primary sources, and bringing to light a recently discovered ***post facto*** studio memoir by critic P.-A. Coupin, Crow shows how interactions in the studio patterned themselves closely on domestic familial ones, and how that set of relations produced a daisy-chain of inter-referential paintings, each working out its specific brief in terms of its predecessors. Teacher David, reproducing his own uncle's behavior toward him, assumed the role of father, with all of its conflicting implications of burdensome expectation crossed with pride and protection. The intimacy of the near-filial bond would manifest itself in painting after painting, where Crow shows the students struggling to garner David's approval while defining themselves against his oppressive example--seeking to absorb his lessons without sacrificing their own creative impulses and expressive aims.

If David was father to the young Drouais and Girodet (and to Francois Gerard and others, who are also discussed in the book), then it follows that the young artists were virtual brothers, exhibiting all of the rivalries that such a tie might incite. Girodet's success at the Roman Academy, for example, was compromised from the start by the lustrous reputation of his "elder sibling" Drouais. Girodet's later paintings are thus presented as conscious responses to earlier works by the spectacularly talented renegade and clear father-favorite who preceded him to Rome.

Crow's argument for the relevance of fatherlessness to the shape of painting in the revolutionary era is not limited to the compelling patterns of emulation among father-figures, sons, and brothers. Combining hand-analysis and new documentary evidence, Crow lays out the unusual collaborative process by which David's "Lictors Returning to Brutus the Bodies of his Sons" (1787) may have been made. Following an "innovatively egalitarian" (p. 102) distribution of studio labor, David seems to have allocated the painting task not by temporal stage but by canvas segment. Instead of being responsible for the early and lower profile stages of the process and for the completion only of minor figures, individual students were assigned zones of the canvas, dedicated to primary figures, for which they were solely responsible--from under-painting to final finishing.

This method necessarily led to breaks in expression and technique, which David "matched to an equally disruptive approach to narrative" (p. 104), allowing the discontinuities of individual interpretation to express the ambiguous personal and political message of "a father whose rigor had driven his sons to their deaths" (p. 108). David's willingness to cede authorial control over the painting process, and the open-ended "both/and"

rather than "either/or" meanings thereby produced, resonate comfortably with a post-modern appreciation of ambiguity and fragmentation. Some might worry, then, that Crow is projecting a contemporary sensibility onto the past by reading David in this way. Historical documentation for this atypical practice thus bears a heavy burden of proof. Perhaps recognizing this, the author prefaces his conclusions about the unexpected studio practice with the proviso "if Coupin's account is correct (and it is the best there is)... " (p. 108).

The second half of the book, devoted largely to Girodet's efforts to stay afloat in the later 1790s while Francois Gerard's star rose, charts the effect on painting of the power vacuum and ideological uncertainty of the Directorial era. In architecture, the half-decade interregnum between Robespierre and Napoleon (1794-99) gave rise to a realignment of architectural priorities, one with consequences for design values in the following century. Lacking the resources to build anew, but mandated to accommodate a host of newly defined institutions, architects resorted to converting old regime shells, reconfiguring their plans according to the new functional programs set by government.

This intensive focus on planning can be tied to the emergence of the Beaux-arts design system in the nineteenth century. Crow shows, as others have, that painters' efforts were redirected as private patronage moved in to fill the gap left by the demise of the monarchy and Republican government in turn. With the artistic language of "republican classicism" (p. 273) tainted by Jacobin associations that were anathema in the nervous Directorial climate, androgynous Endymion-like reveries began to capture the imagination of patrons. As a consequence of this shift, the languid male portrayed in the late work of the Davidian school was often the virtual antithesis of his early revolutionary brethren. It would have been interesting, but perhaps beyond Crow's scope, to consider the relevance of his earlier biographical themes to the ambiguous but abundant sexuality of these images, which presage the eroticized women and boys analyzed in Susan Siegfried's new study of the Napoleonic painter Boilly (***The Art of Louis-Leopold Boilly: Modern Life in Napoleonic Paris*** [New Haven, 1995]).

A few words should be said in closing of the book's very attractive format and organization. It is copiously illustrated, with generous use of color plates and of close-up details that support Crow's close formal analyses. Figures are consistently keyed to the text and appear in close proximity to the text's discussion of them. These features, and the elegant prose style already evident in Crow's earlier ***Painters and Public Life in Eighteenth-Century Paris*** (New Haven, 1985), make for a very readable book. Crow's economical argumentation demands close reading, but repays it with richly nuanced and original insights.

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