

“Douce Mélancolie” à la Scena per Angolo. The Sublime Melancholy of Hubert Robert – Detached from Roman Models

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The Rise of the Douce mélancolie

More than 10 years after the Second World War, Susan Sontag was in Munich. Not until June 1958, did she make a note: “The poetry of ruins”.¹ In this way, she happened to express a view that was born almost exactly 200 years earlier, in the midst of the Enlightenment, when the melancholy of ruins raised its broken head in Europe. “*La poétique des ruines* was born.”²

In this paper, I trace how melancholy and paintings of ruins are connected in Hubert Robert’s (1733–1808) images and how we can use some other concepts linked closely to melancholy in order to understand his

images.³ Moreover, there has not been a great deal of serious discussion of what implications Denis Diderot’s characterization of Robert’s ruin paintings as *douce mélancolie* would have. In this sense the question is how we can see, feel or grasp a certain kind of melancholy in the painted scenes and dominant visual elements of Robert’s works. Or how can we sense melancholy in some kind of tension between dominant visual elements and the details surrounding them. When Rea Radisich offers an analysis of Robert’s peculiar late painting *Young Women Dancing Around an Obelisk* (1798) she asserts, after having said that it failed to sell:

“Who would buy and put on display such a stark and profoundly melancholy painting”?⁴ It is unclear what kind of melancholy she is referring to. In fact, Radisich’s statement shows how strongly and dangerously Robert’s ruin paintings strike our anachronistic mentality!

While the Renaissance excluded sadness from its view of melancholy, the 18th century left cosmology out of its concept of melancholy.⁵ In France and England at the time the physical view and a more humanist outlook were the two opposing forces in the discourse of melancholy – to such an extent that they left their marks in the pages of the famous *Encyclopédie* of the Enlightenment.⁶

In his article on melancholy in *Encyclopédie* Denis Diderot’s definition of this “disease” is as brief as the article itself, and not without a certain ambiguity. According to Diderot, melancholy is a certain kind of deficiency. Very often it is “the result of the weakness (*la faiblesse*) of a soul and organs.” However, there is a certain kind of sentiment of sweetness which can calm melancholy. This “sentiment doux” saves a person from slavery to too powerful sensations. Diderot goes on to refer to two paintings: *Melancholy* by Domenico



Fetti (c. 1620) and *La douce mélancolie* by Joseph-Marie Vien (1756).⁷ Here indeed, the concept of *douce mélancolie* takes form as a by-product – although it seems that it was in the air. We only have to remember Jean de La Fontaine’s (1621–1695) phrase “les sombres plaisirs d’un cœur mélancholique”.⁸ After Diderot’s article, Etienne-Maurice Falconet made a sculpture called *La douce mélancolie* (1761–1765), which was purely neo-classical and simply lacked the friction needed for the melancholy frisson – in spite of the title. We could view Diderot’s article as an example of the *medicine douce*, “soft medicine” of the age.

The taste for a religious melancholy was in fact waning in Hubert Robert’s day. In this sense the emergence of the poetics of ruins was only by nature sacral in some curious profane way. In the 1770s when Jacques-Henri Bernardin de Saint-Pierre wrote *Études de la nature* which contains a chapter in which he connects *le sentiment de l’infini* to *le sentiment de la mélancolie*, the idea of *douce mélancolie* had already gained a largely positive resonance.⁹ This was a key term in French whose emphasis differed from German views of melancholy

despite the strong influences from that area. When Mme de Stäel later adopted her view of melancholy, it came from German romanticism (Northerness, limitlessness) The idea of Northerness did not play such a role in France as it did in Germany.¹⁰

So, a new kind of pleasure in melancholy, the melancholy of ruins, had found a suitable French concept: “*la poetique des ruines*” – thanks to Denis Diderot and Saint-Pierre. Towards the end of the 18th century the views on melancholy were far removed from the Aristotelian concept. It is quite clear that *la douce mélancolie* differs from its more medieval counterpart,¹¹ and also from the Renaissance concept of inspired melancholy.¹² Madame Roland’s *De la mélancolie* (1771), in particular, defended the idea of the sweet melancholy: “*La douce mélancolie que je defends n’est jamais triste*”.¹³ This was followed by a lively discussion on melancholy in France: both Louis-Sébastien Mercier’s *Mon Bonnet de Nuit* I-II (1784) and Gabriel-Marie Legouvés’s *La Mélancolie* (1797) were published. Finally, at the end of the 18th century, the melancholic reverie associated with ruins became a commonplace¹⁴ – sometimes creating a moral dilemma for spectators.¹⁵

Also new undertones of the concept of individuality could be seen in the 18th century – free from religious melancholy. According to Peter Gay, secularization mainly benefited the intellectual and the bourgeois class in Enlightenment culture.¹⁶ The emerging bourgeoisie defined itself in new ways – the modes in which criticism amalgamated to nostalgia. Lázló Földenyi has remarked: “The development of individuality as it is now understood, has meant freedom from metaphysical constraints, supposed liberation from powers ‘behind man’”.¹⁷ It seems that religious preconceptions could no longer keep melancholy under a cosmic-religious control. This was a fresh chance for a certain kind of secular melancholy. Földényi has asserted: “[the] Modern individual becomes increasingly free and infinite”.¹⁸ This can be seen also in Jacques-Henri Bernardin de Saint-Pierre’s *Études de la nature*.

Melancholy, Sensibility and Ruins

Jean Starobinski gives us an initial definition of the ruin painting: “The painting of ruins constituted a *well-defined genre between architectural painting and landscape*. While Canaletto painted palaces and towns, Pani-



ni and Hubert Robert turned to the poetic vestiges of the great buildings of ancient Rome”.¹⁹

A ruin is the shadow of what was once the new building. The depicted ruin always implies the other imagined sign system: it is under the traces of the paint. Sometimes Hubert Robert’s paintings seem like painted drawings by Giovanni Battista Piranesi – without the details but the added stabilizing megalomania with a semi-rococo touch.

In this sense works by Hubert Robert prove that the French ruin painting, compared to history painting, is not only “facile and decorative”,²⁰ but also something which raises the question of an ambiguous nostalgia for antiquity – melancholic in manner: ruins have been depicted as huge but nobody depicted nearby shows any interest. It is somewhat strange that ruin paintings by Hubert Robert have not been adequately studied as examples of premodern melancholy – despite the early testimony of Denis Diderot – apart from some brief references in the research literature.²¹

A new concept was also introduced during the 18th century. It was the notion (and practice) of sensibility, which spread along with

Samuel Richardson’s novels (Pamela, 1740, and Clarissa 1748). Pamela received a good reception in France and it was soon translated into French. Denis Diderot adopted the concept after reading Richardson circa 1761.²² He admired Richardson’s novel unreservedly. The sensibility-mentality was the inevitable result of the growing status of the bourgeoisie. As Raymond Williams states: “Sensibility includes taste, cultivation and discrimination, ability to feel, and sense what the other person has to feel. Sentiment, sentimental, sensibility. It is conscious openness to feelings, conscious consumption of feelings”²³ Terry Eagleton asserts: “A new kind of human subject – sensitive, passionate, individualist – poses an ideological challenge to the ruling order elaborating new dimensions of feeling beyond its narrow scope”.²⁴ It meant that rationalism and sentimentalism could meet each other under this concept. Eagleton continues: “Sensibility, then, would seem unequivocally on the side of the progressive middle class, as the aesthetic foundation of a new form of polity.”²⁵ It was a kind of mental over-heatedness, “the mixture of *nerveux-bilieus* and sweet melancholy”.²⁶ Sensibility also meant that one is “full-blood-

ed and fragile” at the same time. It also had a moral emphasis, in the sense that one can put oneself in the place of others, but was also connected to a new idea of nerves, studied by George Cheyne.²⁷

Sensibility meant also a new attitude to virtues. Adam Smith taught that a virtue is a human product, it is an individual quality with no transcendent source.²⁸ Moral maxims adopted from the nobility were replaced by moral stances which were part of the individual’s self-formation or sensitive self-command.²⁹ In this way classical virtues were altered to be perceived as authentic feelings. Authenticity was very soon seen as value *per se*, such as a virtue used to be in the classical age of the 18th century, just as genius, taste, authenticity and naturalness stimulated each other in the theater of changing concepts.³⁰

Melancholic individuals belonged, *par excellence*, to the group of hyper-sensitive people – this was a common preconception of the time. The tendency is also clearly visible in the long article on “Mélancolie” in the *Éncyclopédie* (1751) where the emphasis was mainly medical.³¹

Important channels and a new playground for sensitivity and sensibility were, of course,



the *Salons*. Here the nobility and upper bourgeoisie met and familiarized themselves with their counterpart's views. A challenge naturally came from the bourgeoisie: the new art of the novel and the tendency against the superstitious came from this class, dating from Pierre Bayle (*Dictionnaire*, 1697) and Diderot (*Encyclopédie*) onwards. In fact, Bayle taught a whole generation to become representatives of Enlightenment with his *Dictionnaire*.³² Both Diderot and Hubert Robert attended the Salon of Mme. Geoffrin (1699–1777) – and she was clearly associated with the encyclopedists.³³ Madame Necker's salon also opened its doors to Enlightenment figures, such as Baron von Grimm. *Salons* indicated the change in the intellectual atmosphere. Hubert Robert's social status was at the intersection of the nobility and the *tiers état* and in that way his interests were quite ambiguous.³⁴ His role was to make pictures for the nobility and bourgeoisie alike, religious clients as well as secular patrons. There are also interpretations which try to seek explanations for some of his late painting from the ideas of Freemasonry and there is some evidence that Robert belonged to a Freemasons's lodge.³⁵ This is in line with the

seeming universalism of the Enlightenment – and really proves that Robert was highly engaged in the ideas of the time.³⁶ The melancholy of the Enlightenment is a kind of “*enthusiasmus naturalis*”.³⁷ In that sense, it is a little unclear that we can sense the taste for ruins as mere opposition to progress.³⁸

It is obvious that Hubert Robert was in some way in contact with these new tendencies of the emerging bourgeoisie and the new sensitivity. Robert's cultural ambivalence is almost as large as his oeuvre: he is in-between rococo's *goût de jour*³⁹ and neoclassicism, meaning in-between Fragonard (colours) and a more rigid archaeological view of antiquities,⁴⁰ in-between descriptions of rare and impressive galleries of ruins and the display of everyday prosaic habits of common people. When the revolution begins, Robert's ideological stance became more and more ambiguous.⁴¹ Even in his impressive painting *The Bastille in the First Days of Demolition* (1789), it seems that his interest was in creating an “imposing ruin” rather than depicting the last days of the icon of despotism.⁴²

A novel attitude about and to sensibility also opened a new door for the sensitivity to ruins, sensibility to the genuine, to rare ob-

jects, to authenticity. Sensibility is hypersensitivity to things promoted by idleness and the two made an easy match. What, then, about melancholy? We can quote Diderot in his article *Éloge de Richardson*: “He (Richardson) has left me with a *feeling of melancholy, both pleasing and enduring*.”⁴³ It was Richardson, on the whole, who introduced the idea of sensibility to French audiences – mainly via Diderot. It is not easy to define melancholy in this new situation, and Robert's melancholy in particular. One can begin with a psychoanalytic definition: a person has experienced a loss which he/she cannot know, remember or trace. Therefore, one does not know that he/she has lost something.⁴⁴ Vincent McCarthy has emphatically stated:

“We have to understand what kind of emotion melancholy is: For melancholy is a reflexive emotion. Emotions are generally directed outwards, toward some object (as in love, hate, etc.). But melancholy has no object, in two senses. First, it has no object because the Absolute is an impossible object for human longing (understood in the external sense). Second, it has no object because the ‘object’ which is ultimately the solution is the Self grounded in a relationship to the Absolute which is its Constituting Power (cf. *Sickness unto Death*). Properly speaking, the Self is not an object for oneself. Melancholy is an emotion which is “about” the Self and which *seeks the incorporation of the life of the Absolute into the personality which already participates nascently in it*.”⁴⁵



During the Renaissance the diabolic nature of melancholy was often stressed, especially in Michelangelo's oeuvre. Even after the 17th century melancholy was seen as a



Figure 1. Hubert Robert, *Gallery of the Term*, 1780s. Oil on canvas. 77.5 x 68,5 cm. Private Collection. Source: Nina Dubin, *Futures & Ruins. Eighteenth Century Paris and the Art of Hubert Robert*. Los Angeles: J. Paul Getty Trust, 2010, 154.

state which consisted of tensions of opposite psychic forces. These strains can be seen as tensions of meanings in, for example, pictorial activity. I have to emphasize that my task here is not to prove that Hubert Robert suffered from melancholy in the depressive sense: rather, my arguments are intended to show and describe how many of his paintings can be defined as symptoms of inspired melancholy. This includes *douce melancholy* and aspects of the melancholic friction which function in a painted narrative scene – and how they coincide with ruin poetics or ruin melancholy.

Before any detailed discussion, the difference between melancholy (as such) and the inherent meaning of the ruin must be clarified. 1) In ruins we can see some signs which indicate what has been there in the very “beginning”, before the process that led to ruination. So, it gives a metonymical hint of the lost greatness. 2) When there is a loss to be seen (in ruins), it is not a personal one, and some traces of this loss can only partly be present. Therefore, some residual signs are present, and a part of the absence is visible. All we can say about the connection of these two concepts is that for a melancholic person

memory and association form a labyrinth and ruins might be offering some small escape. Moreover, a uniting link between ruin and melancholy is the loss of ideal beauty, and a seeming rupture of the ideal contact to the lost love object.

First, we can say that Hubert Robert depicts this loss of beauty on a colossal scale – one that not even Rome could ever reach. Robert painted a great many pictures of ruins which differ significantly from their historical correlatives. His paintings of the ancient Roman vaulted galleries, in particular, look artificial, far from accurate documents.⁴⁶ In addition, he also painted a form of pseudo-repetitions of his own – historically inaccurate – creations. We can say that history in his paintings is “extended” as much as in his galleries – starting from the lost *Grand Galerie antique* which Diderot mentions in his *Salons*.⁴⁷ It is perhaps even possible that the same can be applied to the history of the interpretations of his works.

Why melancholy and Robert's pictures? First, we have to blame Denis Diderot and his observations about Robert's ruin paintings in his *Salon* in 1767. Diderot mentions melancholy at least four times – and its





Figure 2. Hubert Robert, *The Grand Gallery of the Louvre Imagined in Ruins*, 1796. 115 x 145 cm. Louvre, Paris. Source: Nina Dubin, *Futures & Ruins*, 153.

derivatives even more frequently in his descriptions of Robert's ruin scenes. This is the most famous exclamation:

"The ideas ruins evoke in me are grand. Everything comes to nothing [a rather poor translation by John Goodman: *tout s'anéantit*], ev-

erything perishes; everything passes, only the world remains, only time endures. How old is the world! I walk between two eternities."⁴⁸

Earlier he has stated: "The effect of these compositions, good or bad, is to leave you in

a state of *sweet melancholy* (*douce mélancolie*)."⁴⁹ And he then proclaims: "If the site of a ruin seems perilous, I shudder." And when he starts describing a painting with the name of *Large Gallery Lit from Its Far End* (which is now lost; fig. 1 is a picture of the same type) he makes his famous exclamation: "What beautiful, sublime ruins!"⁵⁰ And: "What grandeur! What nobility!"⁵¹ Finally, not without reason did Diderot declare: "You (Robert) have the technique, but you lack the ideal."⁵² The ideal, Diderot seems to think repeatedly, must come via depiction of the deeds of the people around. Diderot did not like Robert's way of mixing real and imaginary people in his pictorial scenes.⁵³ It also is symptomatic for Diderot that the perception of Robert's ruin evokes a feeling that he is "more myself, closer to myself (*plus à moi, plus près de moi*").⁵⁴ As Alain Schapp states, "[F]or Diderot, Robert's art of ruins is an existential experience."⁵⁵ To what extent this is valid also for Robert's own thoughts and emotions, remains an enigma; to be "visionary" does not mean that one has an existential surplus value in his vision. Namely, the surplus problem lays in the depiction of common people around huge fictive ruins. There



is no dramatic link between huge vaults and people absorbed in their daily work. They have been portrayed without any feeling of transcendence.

Douce capricci

As I said, Diderot mentions melancholy four times in his descriptions. They are, unfortunately, as tedious as the longest tunnel-like gallery Robert painted. Diderot gives himself over to his own melancholy. According to Michel Makarius, in Diderot's descriptions contemplation of the space changes into meditation on time.⁵⁶

In Robert's painted oeuvre there appears a strange connection between sensibility, *capriccio* and the sublime – and, as we can later see, alienation. These might be spiritual building blocks for Hubert Robert's *douce mélancolie*.

First *capriccio*. In Robert's paintings of ruins *capricci* (meaning: there is no historical accuracy) are colossal, euphoric, "eternal" and in that sense, full of melancholic charge. I try to trace where in the structure of his paintings this "sweet melancholy" lies, e.g. how we sense the melancholy meaning of his excessive views.

Robert's view of the colossal Rome was strangely universalized, alienated – and finally focused on "future losses", as in his painting *Grand Galerie in Ruins* (1796; fig. 2). Probably for this reason his paintings strike deep into our anachronistic mentality. Indeed, this feeling for agelessness must prepare us to be careful in our interpretation.

David Mayernik defines: "The *capriccio*, by definition a scene that does not in fact exist, strives mightily to seem 'real', or at least credible." He takes an unexpected example: "Rome was itself highly capricious, juxtaposing ruins and new buildings in dramatic surprising ways; this is the landscape Piranesi re-presents exaggerated in scale but evocative at the same time." And this is the landscape Robert appropriates in his paintings. Mayernik continues: "The *capriccio* was also a game. It was a game to be played seriously by those who came equipped with knowledge and connoisseurship to understand the painter's intent. More than often *capricci* contained recognizable fragments of notable works of architecture; the part of the fun was finding them in unfamiliar locations."⁵⁷ Indeed, here the word unfamiliar is a key expression. In fact, Mayernik takes as an

example one of Robert's drawings: his "sanguine drawing of the column of Trajan shows behind it a dome of Soufflot's S. Genevieve (the Pantheon) in Paris (The Smithe Museum of Art, University of Notre Dame): a knowing reference to the fact that the domed church of Ss. Nome di Maria was designed by the French architect Antoine Derizet, and so in Robert's view Paris and Rome are elided to suggest the rivalry and interdependence of the two cities".⁵⁸

There are two ways to make *capricci*: 1) either to play a game in terms of details around one and the same building, or 2) to place separated (sometimes "real") buildings in close contact. Robert used both strategies extensively. A typical example is his painting *The Port of Rome* (1767, oil on canvas, 102 x 146 cm, *École Nationale Supérieure des Beaux-Arts*, Paris) in which he has located the Pantheon from the Roman Imperial era, and Palazzo Nuovo from Campidoglio in a new place: the harbor of Porto di Ripetta in Rome.⁵⁹

In Robert *capriccio* is linked to sublime in a way Piranesi seldom adopted. In Piranesi, if we can use Edmund Burke's utterance, "sublime of magnitude" contains a huge ar-



senal of exact fragments but in Robert it is a question of fuzzy details, even though the overall painterly view dominates. The overall sentimentalism of Panini is also absent from Robert. Unlike Panini, who often populated his *capricci* with scenes from the Bible or ancient history, Robert did not use his “architectural fantasies as backdrops for storytelling”.⁶⁰ His figures are simply ordinary people going about their business, very much at home in their monumental surroundings – doing only minor things. In this sense *capricci* seek to distinguish themselves from truthful historical narrative through *ars combinatoria*. *Capriccio* favors conflicts or a sense of the apparent incompatibility of the architectural elements of the same style and in this way creates tensions of meaning.

In Robert’s *oeuvre* there is a special relationship between caprice and repetition (fig. 1). Without caprice there is no repetition and vice versa. In many cases there are no significant permutations between depicted galleries. The main type of caprice is the elongation of the gallery-hall in a lateral perspective. In Robert’s case, repetition is connected to the principle of sublime via megalomania. Repetition is one symptom of

melancholy, a kind of obsessive return to the same themes and motifs, his substitutes for unforgotten love objects.

Jean Starobinski states that in Piranesi’s ruin-pictures “human gesture fall away into insignificance.”⁶¹ The same goes for Hubert Robert, but without architectural details, and in this way in contrast to Piranesi. Wide townscape views also disappear. The only thing which remains is a huge vaulted gallery which can be seen from *scena dell’angolo*. A landscape and the ruined space of an edifice fuse! In this way a landscape fulfils itself from within, inside the edifice, so that ruin captures landscape under its vaults. Exactly here we find the signs of urban melancholy: The colossal landscape has been represented inside the gallery, interior landscape takes a mournful command! A sky is only seen through holes in the vault. In this sense, the entity we used to call *Ruinenlust* (Georg Simmel: “positive negativity”)⁶² in Robert means the compound of caprices, but also a new kind of modern insolence: to sense ruins as monuments which are the outcome of major imaginative transformations.⁶³ Nevertheless, we must not forget Robert’s documentation of the vandalism of the royal crypt in St.

Denis church.⁶⁴ As a rule, three concepts: Sublime, repetition and *capriccio* fuse in the name of alienated scenes.

Curiously enough, it is somewhat hard to find signs of transcendence in Robert’s ruin paintings apart from the feeling for the immense, almost inhuman, length of colonnades. People depicted in the scenes are commonplace in character. They seem to fall into self-oblivion. In some comic *mise en scene* especially, like in the painting *Antique Capriccio with the Statue of Marcus Aurelius* (1787, a detail; fig. 3),⁶⁵ we can infer that all feeling of transcendence has run dry. We can see clearly that figures depicted around these huge galleries are unbeknown to the subject of the story and are in that sense absorbed in their practical activities. This view might be close to Diderot’s visions, which have sometimes been described in almost the same way.⁶⁶ The question of cosmic *infinity* which was so important for earlier views of melancholy is changed into the feeling of dull glory. Guillaume Faroult emphasises that the prosaic function of the scene is contrary to the majestic antiquity and in this way mixes the simple life and old monuments. He also states that there is a certain kind of irony





Figure 3. Hubert Robert, *Antique Capriccio with the Statue of Marcus Aurelius*, 1784. A detail. Oil on canvas, 183 x 140 cm. Louvre, Paris. Picture: Louvre, Paris.

in his homage to Piranesi in the engraving of the Arch of the Marcus Aurelius which was demolished (Cf. Piranesi's *Il Campo Marzio dell'Antica Roma*).⁶⁷ Of course, he also mixes and changes architectural objects – if the arch has anything to do with the etching *Arco dell'imperatore Marco Aurelio* in Piranesi's opus called *Campo Marzio dell'Antico*

Roma (1762). In fact, irony is a new “hilarious” modality, and it really springs from the atmosphere of the Enlightenment. In the old melancholy there was no irony, only “acid” attitudes – as in Michelangelo. In this sense we can see a new flavor in Robert's ruin melancholy. What has often puzzled me is that in his painting *Triumphal Arch and Amphitheater*

at Orange (1784) Robert chooses a point of view which leaves the arches he loved so much in shadow – almost so that we cannot discern them as arches on first glance. This might be the point at which self-irony is disclosed.

In these curious ways the feeling for “greatness, magnitude and infinity” which Edmund Burke underlines when speaking about buildings⁶⁸ plays an inquisitorial role in Robert's pictures. It is in balance with the feeling of loss and with a lack of remembrance of history. Sometimes all sublime feelings seem to become ridiculous (fig. 3). We can see here *il bel disordine* which characterizes the feeling for melancholy.⁶⁹ The sense of the sublime meets the trivial. Laundry is hanging to dry between the equestrian statue and the corner of the triumphal arch in the painting *Antique Capriccio with the Statue of Marcus Aurelius*. There is also a strange hole on the ground from which people emerge – and the same happens in many of his paintings. here we probably encounter the sensibility which Diderot so much admired in Samuel Richardson's novels. It has, moreover, often been said that a certain kind of disorder and depersonalization shape the temperament



of melancholy.⁷⁰ But, as Michel Foucault states, “melancholy never attains frenzy. It is a madness always at the limits of its own impotence”.⁷¹ Of course, this is a major change compared to Michelangelo’s time, when all coevals admired his *furor poeticus* or *furore* as a basic ingredient of melancholy.⁷²

Therefore, in Robert’s pictures most of the sublimity is filtered through *capriccio* and in the feeling for sensibility of Diderot’s type – and absorption on a small scale when people were depicted. This means that we have to take into account – and tolerate – some minor deviations. These three concepts (*capriccio* – alienation of the place and exactitude; sensibility – small people, grand scale; sublime – grand vaults) are assembled to give Robert’s pictures a touch of melancholy which is authentic in a certain ridiculous way. In Robert’s wash drawing *Shepherds and Cattle in Front of Colonnades* (fig. 4)⁷³ the huge vault of the colonnade is totally disrupted: a cow steps in and there are some boards high on the beams, from which a lamp is hanging low. On closer examination the whole compound – with its rare central perspective – seems to be fairly ridiculous or touching. Great facility⁷⁴ is committed to a playful design.

Tensions of Forgotten Greatness

A ruin is an irregular substitute for the complete building it represents (it gives many hints of a lost fullness, of a lost unbroken totality, of a lost beauty). In this sense the sign

process of a ruin is close to the process of condensation, if we think of the mechanism of the visual narrative in Freudian terms. We can apply a special concept to the representation of a building: *Verdichtung*⁷⁵ is a pro-

Figure 4. Hubert Robert, *The Finding of Laocoon*, 1773. Oil on canvas. 119,4 x 162,5 cm Virginia Museum of Fine Arts Source: Rea Radisich, *Hubert Robert: Painted Spaces of the Enlightenment*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998, 134.



cess which persuades us to see some traces of the complete building as “condensed” in ruins – meaning, in a metonymic way. However, there is something more in Robert’s ruins. We can say that a ruin in Robert is not a kind of allegory in the way Walter Benjamin thought.⁷⁶ On the contrary, a ruin can be sensed as an opaque symbol whose references might be fuzzy or atmospheric. In that sense Robert’s ruins are close to the “auratic symbols” with vague references – the way Theodor Adorno thought of the concept of “the romantic” symbol.⁷⁷ Indeed, a certain kind of anonymity and opacity characterizes Robert’s ruin paintings, even when a painting depicts an event which could have a clear and known setting, as in *The Finding of Laocoon* from 1773 (fig. 4). The tunnel-like quality of the colonnade does not refer to any known colonnade – despite some contrary suggestions.⁷⁸

The Old Bridge (1760; fig. 5) opens an even more gigantic view: Lilliputian figures are climbing the steps of the huge staircase. The size of the bridge and a view in which the stairs seem to continue all the way to the horizon gives us a feeling of an infinite spectacle. It has been said that Piranesi’s



Figure 5. Hubert Robert, *The Old Bridge*, 1760-61. Oil on canvas. 76,2 x 100,3 cm. Yale University Art Gallery. Source: Nina Dubin, *Futures of Ruins*, 141.

Carceri-etching Grand Piazza (1749/50) offered a clear model for Robert.⁷⁹ This is true. We can also mention some other bridge views by Piranesi. However, there are two things in which Robert’s differs from Pira-

nesi’s views. Firstly, this view is as an event much more illogical than Piranesi’s panoramas; secondly, Robert’s painting opens a view which is even more alienated than Piranesi could ever offer: people climb like



anonymous ants a staircase which is too vast and infinite to have any function at all, *except for vain effort*. There is even more to it: the huge staircase and the bridge above do not make any sensible whole. The historical scene turns out to be pure fancy and offers some hints of megalomania, typical in a certain kind of melancholic state which gives space to almighty surrogates of the lost love object. In this painting *euphoria meets dysphoria* on the same stairway! The question is of a kind of recuperation of the lost object – which has increased to an enormous dimension containing *Masse und Macht* – and in this way remains helplessly anonymous. In its fuzziness the view is beyond any definite conception of allegory.

Ulrich Breuer has proposed the relationship between a journey and melancholy. The idea dates back to Marsilio Ficino's conception of a melancholic as a traveler of the soul. This notion fits in well with Hubert Robert's relation to his former experiences in Rome, where he spent eleven years (1754–1765). He never went back to Rome again. In that sense we can speak of "Melancholie als Seelenreise".⁸⁰ Over the years after his stay in Rome his attitude towards history changed. The colossal

structure of his scenes becomes more and more fictive. The exact reference to history becomes loose and even fuzzy. Rome is no longer "an objective correlative" (to use the concept of T. S. Eliot)⁸¹ – it changes and allows room for fictive expansions. We can even speak of the melancholic extensions of the buildings depicted. And finally, there is also a melancholically objective correlative: Robert's ruins are much bigger and indistinct than the ruins he had seen a thousand times in Rome in his younger days. The exact picture of Rome drifts far away in his paintings – in fact throughout his oeuvre. Fancy takes over historically exact references – and repetition rolls over the variation, and finally, utopic visions make anachronisms possible. The greatness of Rome is an anonymous greatness of fancy which blurs the sense of time. The length of vaulted galleries grows and makes an impression of melancholic endlessness. Certainly, we must remember that even Burke spoke about "colonnades of a moderate length", not endless galleries.⁸² It is also interesting that Montesquieu liked panoramic visions in which a spectator remained only distantly involved with the objects of his gaze.⁸³

The colossal is a keyword here. Something which has been lost must be replaced with a colossal view: this is how Robert's melancholy works. The melancholic does not know what he has lost (he does not even know that he has lost something). Ruins as a correlative for a loss provide, of course, hints. In Freudian terms the mechanism is condensation, *Verdichtung*: in every ruin there is an allusion to the original flawlessness. However, in this case *der Raum*, the space, meets the concept of time, the sense of remoteness. Instead of *Verdichtung* we should speak of *Aufspannung*, *Streckung* or probably even *Verrenkung*. In his *Salons* (from 1767) Diderot characterizes Robert's paintings with the word "surabondance", abundance.⁸⁴ *Surabondance* here is but one quality of the category of psychic *Aufspannung*. Buildings stretch into huge dimensions; colonnades seem to reach the horizon, stretching at the same time our view of Antiquity so wide that it seems to be a dull dream. In 1767 in his *Salons* Diderot is already characterizing Robert's views as *arcades obscures!*⁸⁵

The question is of *forgotten* greatness. When a melancholic person wants to control the flow of time, he enlarges the space.



A ruin must be oversized. The sensibility of Robert's colossal ruins offers a picture of *the disparate sensibility*. It produces a strange tension between banal surprise (presence) and eternity and, indeed, it produces those scarcely discernible outcomes which mainly create the effects of "stretching". Some of his paintings of ruins are appropriate examples of the beautiful and the sublime (as the one in the *Grand Galerie* of Louvre, 1796, **fig. 2**). Sometimes he is not travelling back to Rome, but rather into the future.

Melancholy shows up as a desire which has no clear object. We can say that referents seem to lose their power when they begin to arise and tend to be well-adjusted when reflected melancholically. Although fuzzy references in Robert's paintings to Antiquity indicate a "greatness of the Ancient Rome", in the architectural paintings of his late oeuvre "Rome" is an unidentified or anonymous utopia. Fragments from different real buildings are merged into a unity which gives an impression of Rome as the utopia it never was – and still those fragments seem to be truthful as fragments. Melancholy consumes "Rome" and the feeling which remains is a kind of "passive *gôut* of the ruins" – as Ber-

nardin Saint-Pierre named it in the end of 18th century⁸⁶ And finally, during the French Revolution, the playfulness of Robert's paintings increases along with the decreasing megalomania.

Ergo: We don't know Hubert Robert's intentions, we only know that the melancholy structure of his paintings knows them! His ruins open up the scene to the futile future. That is why we can quote the future John Keats's *Ode on Melancholy*:

"Ay, in the very temple of Delight
Veil'd Melancholy has her sovran shrine."

This poem renders the odd melody of Melancholy and still it opens the way to understanding Hubert Robert's melancholy – and the melancholy of the next century.

Notes

1 Susan Sontag, *Reborn Susan Sontag. Early Diaries 1947-1963*. (London: Penguin Books, 2008), 203. In nearly the same way, Jacques-Henri Bernardin de Saint-Pierre noted the fresh ruins of the bombing of Dresden almost two hundred years earlier, in 1765. His reactions mixed together melancholy, pleasure, sublime and "*sentiment de notre misère*". Saint-Pierre also could connect the concept of picturesque to the new ruins of Dresden. (« les grandes destructions

offrent des effets pittoresques nouveaux »). Also he spoke about *le plaisir de la ruine, le goût de la ruine* and *le goût passif de la ruine*. Jacques-Henri Bernardin de Saint-Pierre, *Études de la nature. Oeuvres complètes de Jacques-Henri Bernardin de Saint Pierre*. Tome troisième. Ed. L. Aimé-Martin. (Paris: Méquignon-Marvis 1818), 80–83.

2 Sabrina Ferri has stated: "The pleasure of ruins is associated with the 18th century aesthetic experience of the landscape that blends art and nature, history and subjective experience." Sabrina Ferri, *Ruins Past. Modernity in Italy 1744–1836*. (Oxford: Voltaire Foundation, 2015), 120, footnote 5.

3 I have written two long articles dealing with Hubert Robert's ruin melancholy – in Finnish. The first concentrates on Diderot's concepts, especially when he describes Robert's ruin paintings. The second deals mainly with Robert's ruin paintings during the revolutionary period. See: Kuusamo, Altti, "Rauniomelankolia, Diderot ja Hubert Robert. Modernin melankolian dynamiikka III,1". *Synteesi* 35, 1–2 (2017), 27–49, and Kuusamo, Altti, "Hubert Robertin myöhäinen rauniomelankolia. Modernin melankolian dynamiikka III,2" *Synteesi* 35, No. 3 (2017), 2–20.

4 Rea Radisich, *Hubert Robert: Painted Spaces of the Enlightenment*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 135.

5 See Sabrina Ferri, *Ruins Past. Modernity in Italy 1744–1836*, 120–122 Cf. Raymond Klibanski, Erwin Panofsky & Fritz Saxl, *Saturn and Melancholy, Studies in the History of Natural Philosophy, Religion and Art* (New York, 1964), 237.

6 Denis Diderot, *Oeuvres complètes X*. Ed. J. Assézat & M. Tourneux (Paris: Garnier frères, 1876), 307–309.

7 Denis Diderot, *Oeuvres complètes X*, 307–309.

8 Patrick Dandrey, *Les tréteaux de Saturne. Scènes de la mélancholie à l'époque baroque*. (Paris: Klincksieck, 2003), 19.

9 Bernardin de Saint-Pierre, *Études de la nature*, 77–79.



- 10 Herold, Christopher, "Aikakautensa valtiatar. Rouva de Stäelin elämäkerta, (Helsinki: Otava 1959), 237, 243, 255, 263.
- 11 William Hauptman, *The Persistence of Melancholy in the Nineteenth Century Art. The Iconography of the Motif*. (Michigan: Ann Arbor, 1975), 142.
- 12 Cf. Kuusamo, Altti, "Michelangelo ja melankolian pitkä vieteri. Melankolian efektiit ja affektiit Michelangelo-diskurssissa." *Synteesi* 25, No. 4 (2006), 19–41.
- 13 William Hauptman, *The Persistence of Melancholy in the Nineteenth Century Art*, 143.
- 14 Tara Zanardi 2009. "From Melancholy Pleasure to National Mourning: *Ruin* de Zaragoza and the Invention of the Modern Ruin," *Zeitschrift für Kunstgeschichte* 72, 2009, 527.
- 15 Ibid., 543.
- 16 Gay, Peter, *The Enlightenment. The Rise of Modern Paganism*. (New York & London: W. W. Norton & Company, 1977), 338–341. Cf. *ibid.*, 141.
- 17 László Földényi, *Melancholy. Melankólia*. Transl. T. Wilkinson. (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2016), 195.
- 18 Ibid.
- 19 Jean Starobinski, *The Invention of Liberty 1700-1789*, Transl. B. Swift. (New York: Skira Rizzoli, 1987 [1964]), 183.
- 20 John D. Bandiera, "Form and Meaning in Hubert Robert's Ruin Caprices: Four Paintings of Fictive Ruins for the Château de Méréville," *Museum Studies. The Art Institute of Chicago*, vol. 15, no. 1 (1989), 24. There has been a certain lack of new or bold interpretations of Robert's work. Although a new catalogue for the major Robert exhibition in 2016 opened some new views on Robert's art, it didn't speak about his melancholy. On the contrary, even some interesting interpretations from 70s were forgotten in the edition. Look: Margaret Grasselli, Morgan & Yuriko Jakall (ed.), *Hubert Robert – A Visionary Painter*. (Washington: National Gallery of Art, in association with Lund Humphries, 2016).
- 21 See: Philippe Junod, *Ruines anticipées ou l'histoire au futur antérieur*. (Lausanne: Payo, 1982), 31. Not even Annie Dion-Clément in her work *Hubert Robert et 'Jeunes filles dansait autour d'un obélisque'. La Brèche au croisement de la Philosophie des Franc-Maçons ey des Lumières*. (Montreal: Université du Québec à Montreal, 2010) is interested on the concept of melancholy when analyzing late works of Robert.
- 22 Karin Johannisson, *Melankoliska rum. Om ångest, leda och sårbarhet i förfluten tid och nutid* (Stockholm: Bonnier pocket, 2010), 96–99.
- 23 Raymond Williams, *Keywords* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1982), 281.
- 24 Terry Eagleton, *The Ideology of the Aesthetic*. (Cambridge: Basil Blackwell, 1990), 25.
- 25 Ibid., 26. Still there was a strong tendency for wits as a counterpart of serious metaphysics (see Peter Gay, *The Enlightenment. The Rise of Modern Paganism*, 7, 132–133). See also Jan Blomstedt, *Shame and Guilt. Diderot's Moral Rhetoric*. (Jyväskylä Studies in the Arts 62. (Jyväskylä: University of Jyväskylä 1998), 59: "Passion and Cunning are two important themes of Diderot." Cf. how Gay defines discrepancies of the age, 133: "Enlightenment was not an Age of Reason but a Revolt against Rationalism" (*The Enlightenment. The Rise of Modern Paganism*, 133). Indeed, rationalism flourished in the 17th century and the 18th century was the age of criticism.
- 26 Henning Mehnert, *Melancholie und Inspiration. Begriffs- und wissenschaftsgeschichtliche Untersuchungen zur poetische "Psychologie" Baudelaires, Flauberts und Mallarmes*. (Heidelberg: Carl Winter, 1978), 29.
- 27 Johannisson, *Melankoliska rum. Om ångest, leda och sårbarhet i förfluten tid och nutid*, 97.
- 28 Jerrold Seigel, *The Idea of the Self. Thought and Experience in Western Europe Since the Seventeenth Century*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 161–162. Cf. Eagleton, Terry, *Culture and the Death of God* (New Haven & London: Yale University Press, 2014), s. 13, 25.
- 29 Ibid., 352–353. In the same way as the system of the liberal arts (*artes liberales*) collapsed at the beginning of 18th century, (as Kristeller has it), there was an effect on the system of Christian virtues, which started to float towards the bourgeois virtues during the Enlightenment.
- 30 Cf. Abrams, M.H., *The Mirror and the Lamp. Romantic Theory and the Critical Tradition*. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1971), 198–200. Cf. Williams 1982, 281.
- 31 Cf. Jeremy Schmidt, *Melancholy and the Care of the Soul. Religion, Moral Philosophy and Madness in Early Modern England*. (Aldershot: Ashgate 2007), 154–155. See also Mehnert 1978, 29–33, 62, 219; Hans-Jürgen Schings, *Melancholie und Aufklärung. Melancholiker und Ihre Kritiker in Erfahrungsseelenkunde und Literatur des 18. Jahrhunderts*, (Stuttgart: J.B. Metzlerche Verlag 1977), 7, 73.
- 32 Pieter Gay, , *The Enlightenment. The Rise of Modern Paganism*, 190–194.
- 33 Rea Radisich, *Hubert Robert: Painted Spaces of the Enlightenment*, 20.
- 34 See Christophe Leribault, "Hubert Robert et Paris, "Hubert Robert 1733-1808, Un peintre visionnaire. Ed. Guillaume Faroult & Catherine Voiriot, (Paris: Musée du Louvre, 2016), 368–370.
- 35 Annie Dion-Clément, *Hubert Robert et 'Jeunes filles dansait autour d'un obélisque'. La Brèche au croisement de la Philosophie des Franc-Maçons ey des Lumières*, 56, 89, 113.
- 36 Nina Dubin, *Futures & Ruins, Eighteenth Century Paris and the Art of Hubert Robert* (Los Angeles: J. Paul Getty Trust, 2010), *passim*.
- 37 Hans-Jürgen Schings, *Melancholie und Aufklärung. Melancholiker und Ihre Kritiker in Erfahrungsseelenkunde und Literatur des 18. Jahrhunderts*, 163.
- 38 Paul-Laurent Assoun, «Un monument pour la



- mélancolie: L'écriture des décombres de Volney à Freud.« *Que faire avec les ruines? Poétique et politique des vestiges*. (Rennes: Presses Universitaires de Rennes, 2015), 151.
- 39 See Rémy Saisselin, *Taste in Eighteenth Century France. Critical Reflections on the Origins of Aesthetics on an Apology for Amateurs*. (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press 1965), 110.
- 40 About archaeological exactitude: Victor Carlson, "A Roman Masterpiece by Hubert Robert: A Hermit Praying in the Ruins of the Roman Temple." *The Paul Getty Museum Journal*, Vol. 15 (1987), 123. See also Guillaume Faroult, "L'anticomanie et ses caprices," *Hubert Robert 1733-1808, Un peintre visionnaire*. Ed. Guillaume Faroult & Catherine Voiriot, (Paris: Musée du Louvre, 2016), 222–223.
- 41 Radisich, *Hubert Robert: Painted Spaces of the Enlightenment*, 131,136.
- 42 Joseph Baillio, "The Bastille in the First Days of Demolition 1789." *Hubert Robert – A Visionary Painter*. Ed. Grasselli, Margaret Morgan & Jakall, Yuriko (Washington: National Gallery of Art, in association with Lund Humphries, 2016), 248–249.
- 43 Denis Diderot, *Oeuvres complètes V*. Ed. J. Assézat & M Tourneux (Paris: Garnier frères, 1875), 216.
- 44 Sigmund Freud, "Mourning and Melancholia." *The Pelican Freud Library, Volume 11: On Metapsychology: The theory of Psychoanalysis*. (London: Penguin1984), 254–255, 258–260.
- 45 Vincent A. McCarthy, "Melancholy" and "Religious Melancholy in Kierkegaard." *Kierkegaardiana*, 10, (1977), 163.
- 46 Cf. Hubert Burda, *Die Ruine in den Bildern Hubert Roberts*, (München: Wilhelm Fink Verlag, 1967), 43,89–90. Burda is rightly speaking of Robert's dualism in this sense.
- 47 Denis Diderot, *Salons III, Ruines et paysages*, 336, also note, page 336 in which there is a reference to Burda, *Die Ruine in den Bildern Hubert Roberts*, 97, fig. 131.
- 48 Denis Diderot, *Diderot on Art II*. Ed. and transl. John Goodman (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1995), 198.
- 49 *Ibid.*, 196.
- 50 *Ibid.*, 197.
- 51 *Ibid.*,199.
- 52 *Ibid.*, 198.
- 53 Jean Seznec, *Diderot and Historical Painting. Aspect of the Eighteenth Century*. Ed. Earl R. Wasserman. (Baltimore, The John Hopkins Press, 1965), 137. Cf. Burda, *Die Ruine in den Bildern Hubert Roberts*, 89–90.
- 54 Denis Diderot, , *Salons III, Ruines et paysages*, 339.
- 55 Alain Schnapp, "'Robert des ruines', Le peintre face aux monuments antiques," *Hubert Robert 1733–1808, Un peintre visionnaire*. Ed. Guillaume Faroult & Catherine Voiriot, (Paris: Musée du Louvre, 2016), 88.
- 56 Michel Makarius, *Ruines, Représentations dans l'art de la Renaissance à nos jours*. (Paris: Flammarion, 2011), 122.
- 57 David Mayernik, "Meaning and Purpose of Capriccio." *The Architectural Capriccio. Memory, Fantasi and Invention*. Ed. Lucien Steil (Farnham: Ashgate, 2014), 5–16.
- 58 David Mayernik, "Meaning and Purpose of Capriccio", 5.
- 59 E.g. Oy-Marra, "Ipsa ruine docet": Die Ruine als Bildfigur der Ertinnerung und kritischer Reflexion bei Hubert Robert, *Mittleilungen des Kunsthistorischen Intitutes in Florenz*, vol. 52 (2008), 101. Cf. Marianne Roland Michel, "Light and Ruins. Fragonard and Hubert Robert in Rome," *Master Drawings* vol. 29, 4, (1991), 430-434. See also: Hubert Burda, *Die Ruine in den Bildern Hubert Roberts* (München: Wilhelm Fink Verlag, 1967), 91.
- 60 E.g. Margaret Graselli, "A palace with a Triumphal Bridge, 1761," *Hubert Robert – A Visionary Painter*. Ed. Grasselli, Margaret Morgan & Jakall, Yuriko (Washington: National Gallery of Art, in association with Lund Humphries, 2016), 211.
- 61 Starobinski, *The Invention of Liberty 1700–1789*, 180.
- 62 Georg Simmel, "Die Ruine", *Jenseits der Schönheit, Schriften zur Ästhetik und Kunstphilosophie*. ed. Ingo Meyer, Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 2008, 36–37.
- 63 Look: Alain Schnapp, "Robert des ruines", *Le peintre face aux monuments antiques, Hubert Robert 1733–1808, Un peintre visionnaire*. Ed. Guillaume Faroult & Catherine Voiriot, (Paris: Musée du Louvre, 2016), 91.
- 64 Jean-Marie Bruson, "Des ruines et des prisons," *Hubert Robert, 1733–1808, Un peintre visionnaire*. Ed. Guillaume Faroult & Catherine Voiriot, (Paris: Musée du Louvre, 2016), 398.
- 65 See Faroult, Guillaume, "L'Ancien Portique de l'empereur Marc Aurèle, 1784. In *Hubert Robert, 1733–1808., Un peintre visionnaire*. 2016., 242. Faroult does not refer to the obvious discrepancies of meaning in the painting.
- 66 Martin Jay, *Downcast Eyes. The Denigration of Vision in Twentieth-Century French Thought* (Berkeley & Los Angeles: University of California Press,1993),103.
- 67 Faroult, Guillaume, "L'Ancien Portique de l'empereur Marc Aurèle", *Hubert Robert 1733–1808, Un peintre visionnaire*. Ed. Guillaume Faroult & Catherine Voiriot, (Paris: Musée du Louvre, 2016), 242–243.
- 68 Edmund Burke, *Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of Our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful*. Ed. Adam Phillips (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990). 69–71.
- 69 Jean Starobinski, *L'encre de la mélancolie*. (Paris: Éditions de Seuil, 2012), 465. Cf. Renzo Negri, *Gusto e Poesia delle rovine in Italia fra il Sette e l'ottocento*. (Milano: Casa editrice Ceschina, 1965), 32.
- 70 Look: Fölnényi, *Melancholy*, 301–304.
- 71 Michel Foucault, *History of Madness*. Transl. J. Murphy and J. Khalfa. (London & New York 2009), 266.



72 Cf. Noel Brann, Noel, *The Debate over the Origin of Genius during the Italian Renaissance. The Theories of Supernatural Frenzy and Natural Melancholy in Accord and in Conflict on the Threshold of Scientific Revolution*. (Leiden, Boston, Köln: Brill, 2002), 90–93, 102, 112. Cf. Altti Kuusamo, "Michelangelo ja melankolian pitkä vieteri," 20.

73 Helen Moulin-Stanislas, "Promenades Romaines – catalogue des oeuvres," *Hubert Robert, Promenades au XVIIIe siècle* (Avignon: Musée Agladon, 2010), 38. Moulin-Stanislas does not see the strange "overtones" of the drawing which is not "au pied du Palatin" – although she admits that it has been created from imagination.

74 E.g. Guillaume Faroult, "Les rêves d'un homme d'esprit", *Hubert Robert 1733–1808, Un peintre visionnaire*. Ed. Guillaume Faroult & Catherine Voiriot, (Paris: Musée du Louvre, 2016), 49. Robert is quite often seen as a painter of "la facilité excessive". Ibid.

75 Sigmund Freud, *Die Traumdeutung. Dritte vermehrte Auflage* (Leipzig: Franz Deuticke, 1911), 220–222.

76 See Altti Kuusamo, "Allegoria, melankolia, raunio. Modernin melankolian dynamiikkaa II." *Synteesi* 1–2/2016, 109–110.

77 E.g. Theodor Adorno, *Über Walter Benjamin*. Ed. Rolf Tiedemann (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp Verlag, 1970), 127. The book consists solely of letter of Benjamin and Adorno.

78 Cf. André Corboz, *Peinture militante et architecture révolutionnaire: A propos du thème du tunnel chez Hubert Robert* (Basel & Stuttgart: Birkhäuser Verlag, 1978), 8–15. Corboz suggests that there is a parallelism between Robert's and Étienne-Louis Boullée's arcades. However, Boullée's structures are from a later date. His reference to Raphael's School of Athens is a more relevant one. Ibid., 5. See also: Yuriko Jackall, "La découverte du Laocoon," *Hubert Robert 1733–1808, Un peintre visionnaire*. Ed. Guillaume Faroult & Catherine Voiriot, (Paris: Musée du Louvre, 2016), 234. Cf. Dietmar Lüdke, *Hubert*

Robert, 1733–1808, und die Brücken von Paris (Karlsruhe: Staatliche Kunsthalle, 1991), 65.

79 Nina Dubin, *Futures & Ruins. Eighteenth Century Paris and the Art of Hubert Robert*, 139. Cf. Jackall, Yuriko, "Le Vieux Pont." *Hubert Robert 1733–1808, Un peintre visionnaire*. Ed. Guillaume Faroult & Catherine Voiriot, (Paris: Musée du Louvre, 2016), 294. Cf. also Guillaume Faroult, "L'architecture visionnaire," *Hubert Robert 1733–1808, Un peintre visionnaire*. Ed. Guillaume Faroult & Catherine Voiriot, (Paris: Musée du Louvre, 2016), 291. Faroult states that this painting reveals Robert's aesthetics (sic) – and shows how he continues the dialogue with Piranesi after his stay in Rome. However, I think that it is this particular painting which still needs more analysis.

80 Ulrich Breuer, *Melancholie und Reise. Studien zur Archäologie des Individuellen im deutschen Roman des 16. – 18. Jahrhunderts* (Hamburg: Lit Verlag Münster, 1994), 78–79.

81 T.S. Eliot, "Hamlet". *Selected Essays* (London: Faber Faber, 1932), 142–144.

82 Burke, *A Philosophical Enquiry*, 70.

83 Jay, *The Downcast Eyes*, 90.

84 Denis Diderot, *Salons III. Ruines et paysages. Salons de 1767*. Ed. Else Marie Bukdahl, Michel Delon, Annette Lorenceau (Paris: Hermann, 1995 [1767]), 326.

85 Diderot, *Salons III*, 339.

86 Bernardin de Saint-Pierre, *Études de la nature*, 81: [L]e goût passif de la ruine est universel à tous les hommes».

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