

# New Terracottas by Boizot and Julien

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Varro further praises Pasiteles, who said that modelling was the mother of chasing, statuary and sculpture, and who, though he excelled in all these arts, never executed any work without first making a clay model. . . . The admirable execution of these figures [effigies in clay], their artistic merits and their durability make them more worthy of honour than gold, and they are at any rate more innocent.

From *The Elder Pliny's Chapters on the History of Art*, trans. K. Jex-Blake (Chicago, 1968) p. 181

TERRACOTTA MODELS are among the chief glories of eighteenth-century French art. With the rise of Neoclassicism, they could only gain in interest, for modeling in clay is a fundamental activity of any classical sculptor, and so it had been long before the 1780s, the period considered here. While Clodion and Marin excelled with highly finished terracottas that were ends in themselves, other artists attained virtuoso levels with preliminary models for works to be executed in other materials. Then as now, both sorts were valued as significant expressions of personality, or works of art in their own right.

Of nine French terracottas recently acquired by the Metropolitan Museum, several are documents, pieces signed and dated by Vassé, Clodion, Lecomte, and Roland.<sup>1</sup> In addition, they display the wide range of use and surface in terracottas, from the rapid sketch to

the finished independent statuette. The two to be discussed here are by Boizot and Julien, prime shapers of the Louis XVI style in sculpture. Both have typically eighteenth-century amorous subject matter but they are atypical of their artists in terms of technique. The first is a rough preliminary sketch by an artist whose extant models are finely surfaced; the second is just the opposite, an almost obsessively finished presentation figure by an artist whose known models are more perfunctory.

Simon-Louis Boizot (1743–1809), a successful modeler for works in many media, is considered here chiefly in his role of artistic director of the sculpture ateliers at Sèvres between 1774 and 1800.<sup>2</sup> He succeeded Falconet and Jean-Jacques Bachelier in that very responsible position. From 1749, the Manufacture Royale de Sèvres produced small sculptures in biscuit, as unglazed por-

1. The nine were purchased in 1975 with funds given by the Josephine Bay Paul and C. Michael Paul Foundation, Inc., and the Charles Ulrick and Josephine Bay Foundation, Inc. At the time of their first exhibition at the Museum, all were published in a short catalogue by Olga Raggio, *The Fire and the Talent: A Presentation of French Terracottas* (Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1976). In addition to works by Jean-Baptiste Lemoyne, Louis-Claude Vassé, Clodion, Julien, Boizot, Lecomte, Marin, and Roland, the group includes a "rococo" Rodin bust of a bacchante.

2. There is no monograph on Boizot. See Emile Bourgeois, *Le Biscuit de Sèvres au XVIII<sup>e</sup> siècle* (Paris, 1909) I, pp. 113–199; Stanislas Lami, *Dictionnaire des sculpteurs de l'école française au XVIII<sup>e</sup> siècle* (Paris, 1910) I, pp. 85–92; Z. V. Zaretskaya on bronzes after Boizot in the Hermitage in *Zapadnoevropeiskoe Iskusstvo* (1970) pp. 171–175. I have not consulted Thérèse Picquenard, "Contribution à l'étude de l'oeuvre sculptée de L.-S. Boizot," unpublished thesis for the Ecole du Louvre, 1971.



FIGURE 1

Simon-Louis Boizot, sketch-model for a porcelain group, *Le Larcin de la rose*, 1788. Pale buff terracotta with traces of original coat of grayish white pigment. Height 12 inches (31 cm.). Purchase, funds given by the Josephine Bay Paul and C. Michael Paul Foundation, Inc., and the Charles Ulrick and Josephine Bay Foundation, Inc., 1975.312.2

celain is called.<sup>3</sup> By the end of the century, a great many tables must have been peopled with the little white figures; a modern catalogue illustrates 623 eighteenth-century compositions in biscuit still in production at the Manufacture Nationale de Sèvres,<sup>4</sup> and that can only be a fraction of the original number, since many of the molds were destroyed during the Revolution.

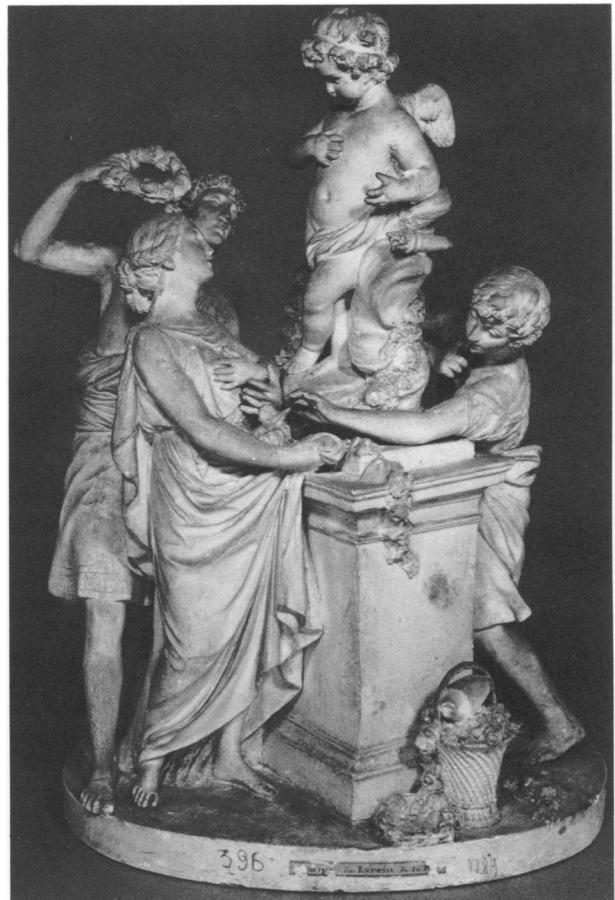
Sèvres statuettes of the earlier, Falconet-Bachelier period were pictorial creations largely influenced by the compositions of Boucher; characteristically, they represented languorous nudes or shepherds and shepherdesses in quasi-modern dress. With Boizot, there came a distinct shift. His statuettes had allegorical subjects and more serious airs generally, and they were robed in classical draperies and set in the grand circular compositions that were his specialty. To be sure, numerous other sculptors, established masters as well as the regular hands at Sèvres, produced models under Boizot's direction, but the production during his tenure and long afterward had a remarkably consistent and properly sculptural character. For example, Joseph Leriche, *chef* of the sculpture ateliers under Boizot and

charged with the "exécution de tous les modèles et de corriger les sculptures," was originally trained at Sèvres in Falconet's time, but his statuette of Marie-Antoinette as Minerva shows how easily and completely Leriche followed Boizot's style.<sup>5</sup> Boizot appears to have retired from the directorship in 1800 but to have continued to supply the Manufacture with models right up to his death in 1809.<sup>6</sup> Precise documentation concerning this important aspect of his career is sadly lacking. It is correspondingly difficult to say with certainty that a particular model is *by* Boizot, but his role was so dominant that one is assured at least of his supervision over a given composition at any time between the mid-seventies until the end of the century.

The group of figures at a pedestal surmounted by

FIGURE 2

Simon-Louis Boizot (after), plaster moulage of final group, *Le Larcin de la rose*, 1788. Manufacture Nationale de Sèvres (photo: Musées Nationaux)



3. We have it from Bachelier himself: "Jusqu'en 1749 la sculpture était luisante et colorée. . . . L'impossibilité d'approcher des figures de Saxe par l'égalité d'emploi des couleurs allait faire renoncer à cette partie, quand le sieur Bachelier proposa d'essayer la sculpture sans couverte, c'est-à-dire en biscuit." From his *Mémoire historique sur la manufacture nationale de France*, cited in Comte X. de Chavagnac and Marquis de Grollier, *Histoire des manufactures françaises de porcelaine* (Paris, 1906) p. 252.

4. Emile Bourgeois and Georges Lechevallier-Chevignard, *Le Biscuit de Sèvres. Recueil des modèles de la manufacture de Sèvres au XVIII<sup>e</sup> siècle* (Paris, n.d.). This invaluable compilation has not been used enough by students of sculpture.

5. Bourgeois and Lechevallier-Chevignard, p. 20, n. 432. A fine example was recently bought by the National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa.

6. Chavagnac and Grollier, p. 259.



FIGURE 3

Simon-Louis Boizot, finished terracotta for a porcelain group, *L'Offrande à l'Hymen*, 1776. Musée National de Céramique de Sèvres, no. 7969 (photo: Musées Nationaux)

Cupid (Figure 1) is a Boizot sketch, worked up very quickly at the inception of the compositional idea. The eventual project was a group in *biscuit de Sèvres*, discovered thanks to the Bourgeois catalogue.<sup>7</sup> The semi-allegorical subject, *Le Larcin de la rose*, is a maiden pouring out her heart to a figure of Cupid and laying flowers at his feet, when a youth suddenly reaches out to pluck a rose from her offering. Bourgeois further attributed the group to Boizot and dated it 1788.<sup>8</sup>

The Manufacture Nationale de Sèvres conserves the plaster *moulage* of the final group of *Le Larcin de la rose* (Figure 2). Obvious variants between the sketch and the plaster are the addition of a third figure about to crown the maiden with a wreath and the change from a round to a rectangular pedestal. The plaster has the smooth contours and low-keyed emotional volume typical of Boizot's statuettes. Certain of his finished models in terracotta, but unhappily not the one for this group, survive in the Musée National de Sèvres. Most are in bad shape, but even in fragmentary form they show the same high facility for the shaping of groups. Their sense of harmony is further enhanced by the pale blond colors of the clay.

7. Bourgeois and Lechevallier-Chevignard, pl. 35, no. 382, h. 39 cm. The only *biscuit* example I have seen is in the Museo de Artes Decorativas, Madrid, no. 5235.

8. The date of facture is presumably inferred from the date 1789, when the first example was sold by the Manufacture. Chavagnac and Grolier, pp. 275, 290. Bourgeois (*Le Biscuit de Sèvres au XVIII<sup>e</sup> siècle*) I, p. 197, says that the group was "exécuté à la fin de 1788" and adds the pretty description: "... *le Larcin de la rose*, allusion plutôt légère, voilée par la grâce des acteurs auxquels l'artiste a su donner, avec le costume grec de rigueur, l'élégance et l'esprit. . . ." He erroneously reproduces what looks to be the plaster of the *Larcin* group as the terracotta for the earlier *Offrande à l'Hymen* (I, pl. opp. p. 136; II, p. 47).



FIGURE 4

Simon-Louis Boizot, fragment of a terracotta model, seen from the back, for a porcelain group, *Le Génie de la sculpture*, about 1780. Musée National de Céramique de Sèvres, no. 8877 (photo: Musées Nationaux)

The surviving model for *L'Offrande à l'Hymen* (Figure 3), an early Boizot group (1776),<sup>9</sup> has the general composition of *Le Larcin de la rose* in embryo, but the *Larcin* has a more stately neo-antique air and its circular rhythms are more closely coordinated. A fragment of a model executed between these two, *Le Génie de la sculpture* (Figure 4),<sup>10</sup> provides a nearer look at Boizot's measured handling of checks and balances in a spiral composition. The shapes peculiar to babies make them ideal carriers of Boizot's delicate compositional principles. The assisting infant in *Le Génie de la sculpture* is a studio model with the perfection of a Duquesnoy, and is part of a conscious reference to the proper foundation of sculpture, based equally on nature (the "live" infant) and the antique (a bust and the Belvedere torso).

It is evident that the Metropolitan's maquette has a more vivacious facture than any of the models at Sèvres. An especially bravura passage is the pair of billing doves, brilliantly tossed off at the rear of the pedestal (Figure 5). One would hardly have expected that a rough and fiery personal attack would lie beneath the cool and composed official Sèvres manner. Preliminary maquettes for Sèvres have otherwise not survived;<sup>11</sup> at least this is the first of its sort to be identified, all the models remaining at Sèvres being of the complete, final stage furnished for the *répasseur*. It is an open question whether Boizot himself pursued his models beyond the

initial sketch phase, or whether he left their finishing to assistants.

Boizot's subject is fairly conventional, belonging to a long line of girls sacrificing to Love,<sup>12</sup> and his approach to it is perhaps ambiguous. The coronation of the maiden was not originally necessary to the story; the addition of the third figure to the final group makes it visually richer but clouds our perception of what is happening. As further evidence of the infinite possibilities for combining these erotic motifs, there is a related biscuit relief, possibly also by Boizot, in which the thief is an adolescent Cupid who steals a rose from an altar

12. For example, the Greuze *Jeune fille qui fait sa prière à l'amour* of 1769 in the Wallace Collection. Anita Brooker, *Greuze: The Rise and Fall of an Eighteenth-Century Phenomenon* (London–New York, 1972) pl. 47 and pp. 112–113 for a list of related subjects.

FIGURE 5

Back view of *Le Larcin de la rose*, sketch-model



9. For the date of sale of the first biscuit, Chavagnac and Grollier, p. 273.

10. Chavagnac and Grollier, p. 288, give 1780 as the "date du moule en magasin," but Bourgeois and Lechevallier-Chevignard, pl. 23, no. 324, date it 1773. The model formed a pair with a *Génie de l'architecture* (Bourgeois and Lechevallier-Chevignard, pl. 23, no. 323). My photograph of the fragmentary model shows it from the rear; the front when whole, as illustrated by Bourgeois, was occupied by a winged figure chiseling a bust. I am greatly indebted to Antoinette Hallé, Conservateur of the Musée National de Céramique de Sèvres, and to Tamara Préaud, Directeur des Archives et de la Bibliothèque de la Manufacture de Sèvres, for assisting my study of the models at Sèvres.

11. A terracotta group inscribed *L'Amour allumant son flambeau*, attributed to Boizot in the Marius Paulme sale (Galerie Georges Petit, Paris, May 15, 1929, no. 272, h. 20 cm.), while generically similar to a biscuit group illustrated by Bourgeois (pl. 37, no. 17, *Amour allumant son flambeau au Miroir de la Beauté*, attributed to Boizot with the date 1788, h. 12 cm.), has too many differences to qualify as a maquette. One cannot see an evolution of the biscuit from it. The Paulme sale also included Boizot's elegant, quite finished model for the mausoleum of a poet, signed and dated 1790 (sold again Galerie Charpentier, Paris, December 19, 1949, no. 103).





FIGURES 6, 7

Pierre Julien, *L'Amour silencieux*, 1785. Pale yellowish terracotta. Height 15  $\frac{1}{4}$  inches (38.7 cm.). Purchase, funds given by the Josephine Bay Paul and C. Michael Paul Foundation, Inc., and the Charles Ulrick and Josephine Bay Foundation, Inc., 1975. 312.1

beside the pedestal.<sup>13</sup> Boizot's themes are thus largely allegorical and evocative, à la Fragonard, rather than narrative.<sup>14</sup>

If Boizot is vague in imagery, his smooth, classically draped figures have firmness, clarity, and logically developed movements. The new model shows the seriousness of his effort in arriving at a clear, open composition. Knowing his work, one could not agree that he was "untouched by classical currents."<sup>15</sup> In all, he was the most important official sculptor working on a small scale in the subdued classical-natural strain that is fundamentally the Louis XVI style. He is thus a perfect equivalent to such painters as Lépicié and Lagrenée. Like theirs, his classicism was so well learned that it was absorbed without a ripple in an overall naturalistic system.

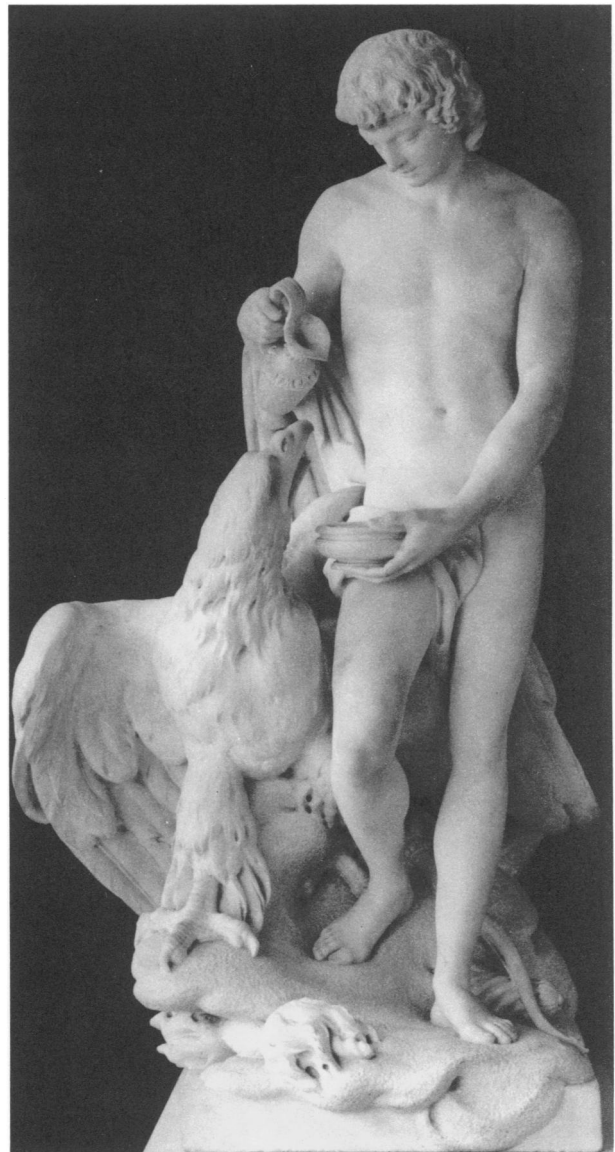
Pierre Julien (1731–1804)<sup>16</sup> was older than Boizot but matured as an artist somewhat later, and all his most important works were made during Louis XVI's reign. By common assent, the masterpiece of the period is Julien's *Jeune fille à la chèvre*, made for Rambouillet,<sup>17</sup> where, even if one were put off by a certain remoteness of expression, one would be more than reassured by the total brilliance of execution. Julien was celebrated for the naturalness of his models and for his scrupulous finish of marble surfaces. The "Peintre anglais au Salon de Peintures" in 1785, for example, found Julien's *Ganymede* "d'une beauté ravissante, le rendu et l'exécu-

tion superbes, ses formes tiennent beaucoup de l'antique. Enfin c'est la nature dans son beau."<sup>18</sup>

The marble *Ganymede* in the Louvre was Julien's planned *morceau de réception* for the Academy in 1776, but it was refused and, slightly modified, it was shown with success in the Salon of 1785.<sup>19</sup> In the same Salon he exhibited the marble of *La Fontaine*, also in the Louvre, the most extreme of his works in terms of textural differentiation, and "*L'amour silencieux. Esquisse, terre cuite.*"<sup>20</sup> This last is the stealthy Cupid bought for the Metropolitan Museum (Figures 6, 7). The small features,

FIGURE 8

Pierre Julien, *Ganymede*, marble of 1776–85. Musée National du Louvre (photo: Musées Nationaux)



13. Bourgeois and Lechevallier-Chevignard, pl. 41, no. 381 unattributed.

14. Another Boizot subject, *La Rose enflammée* (dated 1781 by Chavagnac and Grollier, p. 293, and 1787 by Bourgeois and Lechevallier-Chevignard, pl. 29, no. 539), is directly related to a Fragonard composition, *Le Sacrifice de la rose*. See Georges Wildenstein, *The Paintings of Fragonard* (New York, 1960) p. 115, also nos. 497–499 and p. 28, note 3, for thematically related paintings in the Salons of the 1770s and 80s.

15. Michael Levey, *Art and Architecture of the Eighteenth Century in France* (Harmondsworth, 1972) p. 166. The author further demonstrates his insensitivity to the subject by noting that "it was probably hard to distinguish these [Boizot's terracottas] from Clodion's."

16. For Julien, see the short monograph by l'Abbé André Pascal, *Pierre Julien sculpteur, sa vie et son oeuvre* (Paris, 1904) and Lami, *Dictionnaire* II, pp. 11–16.

17. Now in the Louvre. See Pascal, pl. opp. p. 53 and pp. 47–70. For the *laiterie* at Rambouillet, see Michael Benisovitch, *The Burlington Magazine* 79 (1941) pp. 42–44, and Paul Guth, *Connaissance des arts* 75 (May 1958) pp. 74–81.

18. Quoted by Pascal, p. 41.

19. Pascal, pp. 25, 36–42.

20. *Livret* of the Salon of 1785, no. 224.



FIGURE 9  
Pierre Julien, terracotta statuette, *Le Messager d'amour*, about 1780–90. Paris, collection of Jean Cailleux

mellow and compressed, and the bobbed hair, something like a helmet, give the *Amour silencieux* a direct family resemblance to the marble *Ganymede* (Figure 8). It has the same fluid movement and also the same bloated clouds. Julien's characteristic drapery is here, too, elegantly framing movement and gesture, as in his

*Jeune fille à la chèvre* made in the following years (1786–87).

The *Amour silencieux* has a surface refinement and wealth of textures rarely seen in clay. Stippled and scraped all over, it has the richest possible surface (there are also imprints of cloth on the clouds left by the wet wrapping that covered the piece between sessions). No surviving terracotta by Julien has its wealth of textures, and indeed it would hardly be considered an *esquisse* in today's terminology. A somewhat related two-figure composition in the Cailleux collection, called *Le Messager d'amour* (Figure 9), in which a seated youth consigns a letter to Cupid with a conspiratorial finger to lips, exemplifies the rapid touch usually found in Julien's models.<sup>21</sup> Since that touch imparts a streamlining effect, the models are generally more fully Neoclassical in appearance than the finished works or the *Amour silencieux*.<sup>22</sup>

Of course, infants winged and unwinged perform every conceivable task in French eighteenth-century art. Julien's Cupid is cautionary, flying through the night with a torch and raising a finger to his lips, urging discretion in love. Evaluation of Julien's subject and sources allows a fair glimpse of the working habits and preferences of the Louis XVI naturalist classicists, hybrids adapting each other's works as well as the antique, as need arose.

The ultimate source is an image of the ancient Alexandrian deity, Harpocrates. He is usually depicted as a naked child, making a hushing gesture with his finger to his lips.<sup>23</sup> The most famous use of the gesture is Falconet's seated *Amour menaçant*, which was in turn very

21. Galerie Cailleux, Paris, "Author du néoclassicisme," March 1973, cat. no. 75. The principal holdings of Julien sketch-models are in the Louvre, the museum at Le Puy-en-Velay, and the private collection of Jean Cailleux. A terracotta of the "Tête de femme coiffée d'un voile et couronnée de fleurs, comme les jeunes filles dotées par le Pape et le Sacré Collège, à l'église de la Minerve, à Rome," shown in the Salon of 1779, is very smoothly finished (formerly W. R. Hearst collection, recently acquired by the Metropolitan Museum; ill. Michael Benisovitch, *The Art Quarterly* 12 [1949] pp. 370–372).

22. In this sense, one can appreciate that the material itself could decisively affect style. The terracottas of Joseph Chinard are a wonderful case in point, where the long, schematic lines of a model are developed on a larger scale to become a perfect sculptural expression of advanced Neoclassicism.

23. There were numerous local options in antiquity for the attributes of Harpocrates. Sources that Julien could have used, had he wished to: Gisbert Cuper, *Harpocrates, sive Explicatio imagunculæ*



widespread.<sup>24</sup> Apart from a slightly malicious look in the face, however, there is hardly a trace in Julien's statuette of Falconet's figure, nor does it owe much to the numerous other Harpocrates derivatives of the eighteenth century.<sup>25</sup> The motif of the gesture was usually applied to figures seated or standing stock-still, with alternatively virtuous or erotic meanings. Julien's twist on the tradition is to activate the model: His Cupid thus executes his errands silently and swiftly. For the pose between running and flying, he may have had in mind Boizot's *Amour menaçant* for Sèvres.<sup>26</sup> But Julien's model has greater urgency and thrust than Boizot's. The superb elevation of the little figure, best seen in profile (Figure 6), is directly founded on the ancient running *Atalanta* in the Louvre, which Julien had borrowed some years earlier in order to copy it in marble.<sup>27</sup> In sum, the antique inspiration of his statuette was greatly modified for the sake of "period" amorous conceits, which prevent our thinking of it as Neoclassical, but it is as strong as any of its sources and has the lift and presence of a fine Hellenistic bronze.

The artistic course of the eighteenth century in France was the evolution of a national style in which the antique and the great masters were so well studied that they could merge comfortably with observed naturalism, without obvious recourse to specific models. Present-day vogues for the Baroque and Neoclassic have produced a reaction against the softer, more remote Louis XVI rhetoric. Too often, the matter has been further politicized: Just as a full-blown Neoclassicism, austere and honest, is seen to have been the logical companion of rigorous revolutionary thought, so artists of the *ancien régime*, however competent, are sometimes believed to have been infected with an "insipidity and uncertainty of style"<sup>28</sup> that was the natural associate of social malaise. The presumption would be difficult to challenge if certain works of the Louis XVI period did not have vigor as well as charm sufficient to place them beyond criticism. Julien's *Amour silencieux* is a case in point, a minor masterpiece showing sculpture alive and well in the closing years of Louis XVI's reign.

*argenteae perantiquae* . . . (Utrecht, 1687) pp. 1–180; Bernard de Montfaucon, *L'Antiquité expliquée et représentée en figures* (Paris, 1719–24) II, pp. 300–305, pls. 123–125.

24. Marble of 1757 in the Louvre. See George Levitine, *The Sculpture of Falconet* (Greenwich, Conn., 1972) figs. 16, 19, and pp. 30–31.

25. Pigalle executed an adolescent Harpocrates, titled *Le Silence*, for the hôtel of Comte d'Argenson at Neuilly, where it was paired with a sketch of *Fidélité*. The standing figure is lost but known through a sketch by Saint-Aubin in a 1779 sale catalogue. See Louis Réau, *J.-B. Pigalle* (Paris, 1950) pp. 38–39, and in *La Revue de l'art ancien et moderne* 43 (1923) p. 387. Pigalle's disciple Louis-Philippe Mouchy executed a seated adolescent *Harpocrate, dieu de Silence*, between 1782 and 1789 (*Archives de l'art français* 14 [1925–26] p. 232, pl. xi); Auguste-Félix Fortin exhibited a figure of the same name in the Salon of 1819. The subject was popular in porce-

lains. Perhaps the earliest was a 1771 *Amour silencieux* first sold by Sèvres in 1771 (Chavagnac and Grollier, p. 273), which does not appear to survive. Boizot's *Amour discret*, dated 1773 by Bourgeois (pl. 23, no. 32) is a standing adolescent Harpocrates-Eros. Bourgeois dates a standing draped Boizot figure of *Le Silence* 1772 (pl. 15, no. 562), but it has a Neoclassical appearance of a slightly later Boizot-Leriche sort. Charles-Gabriel Sauvage, called Lemire, modeled an *Amour silencieux* for the Niederviller manufactory (*Lami, Dictionnaire* II, p. 55).

26. Bourgeois, pl. 18, no. 43, dated 1777; Boizot's statuette is in turn based equally on Bernini's *David* and on his own marble of a more adult Cupid, 1772, now in the Louvre (Levey, *Art and Architecture*, pl. 66).

27. Pascal, pp. 29–30 (Julien's copy at Saint-Bonnet-les-Oules illustrated).

28. Levey, *Art and Architecture*, p. 154.