

NISA VILLERS, NÉE LEMOINE (1774-1821)

BY

MARGARET A. OPPENHEIMER

MARIE-DENISE, called Nisa, Villers was rediscovered by modern art-historical scholarship at the exhibition *Women Artists: 1550-1950*, which opened in Los Angeles in 1976¹. Little was then known about this student of Girodet, whose career was investigated further in an exhibition and catalog of works by women artists held at the Donjon Lacataye (Mont-de-Marsan) in 1981-82². Both shows exhibited the same painting by the artist, the *Étude de femme d'après nature*, also called *Portrait de Madame Soustras* (fig. 1)³. Original in its choice of subject – a woman tying her slipper – which lies somewhere between portraiture and genre, the work is also distinctive in style. The arabesque curve of the slightly elongated back recalls the elegant contours of her master Girodet, while the moss greens of the landscape, the profile pose, and the precision with which the accessories are painted have parallels in the production of Nisa Villers' cousin, the portrait and genre painter Jeanne-Élisabeth Chaudet (fig. 3). Praised by the critics when it was exhibited at the Salon of 1802, the *Étude de femme* was not the only painting by Villers thus honored. In fact, two of her paintings (figs. 2 and 11) were so highly regarded at a later date that they were misattributed to Jacques-Louis David. It is to return these works to their true author, in the context of a more detailed exploration of Villers' career and biography, that I have undertaken this article.

Marie-Denise Villers was born in Paris in 1774⁴, the daughter of Charles Lemoine and

Marie-Anne Rousselle⁵. Nothing is known of her parents' origins. Her father was fifty-four at the time of her birth, and as his signature does not appear on her marriage contract twenty years later, he may have been an invalid unable to attend the ceremony. He died six years later at the age of eighty on August 11, 1800⁶. Perhaps he



FIG. 1. – Marie-Denise VILLERS. *Étude de femme d'après nature*, called *Portrait de Madame Soustras*, Salon of 1802. Paris, Louvre. Photo R.M.N.



FIG. 2. — Here attributed to Marie-Denise VILLERS. *Portrait of a Young Artist*, called *Portrait of Mlle Charlotte du Val d'Ognes*, Salon of 1801. New York, The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Mr and Mrs Isaac D. Fletcher Collection. Photo museum.

had worked in one of the artistic professions, because a talent for the fine arts ran in the Lemoine family. Nisa's eldest sister, Marie-Victoire Lemoine (1754 - December 2, 1820)⁷, was a portrait and genre painter who exhibited sporadically from 1779 to 1814⁸. Her fine self-portrait with palette, dating from the 1780s, is in the collection of the Musée des Beaux-Arts d'Orléans, her *Interior of the Atelier of a Woman Painter* (before 1796) is at the Metropolitan Museum of Art, and her *Venus and Cupid* of 1792 in the Hermitage Museum (St. Petersburg)⁹.

Another Lemoine sister, Marie-Élisabeth, was also an artist. A portrait painter, she is sometimes confused with an Élisabeth Le Moine, née Boquet or Bouchet, who was an engraver and draftsman¹⁰. Although Marie-Élisabeth's precise dates of birth and death are unknown, she was evidently some years older than Nisa because she was married to a Jean-Frédéric Gabiou before April 14,

1793¹¹. With her sister Marie-Victoire she exhibited at the Salon de la Correspondance of 1785, and her known paintings all date from the 1780s, suggesting that her artistic activity ceased with her marriage¹². She died, leaving three children, at some point between 1811 and 1814¹³. She must have been close to Marie-Victoire because the latter lived with the Gabious from at least 1808 until her death in 1820, remaining a part of her brother-in-law's household even after his wife (her sister's) decease¹⁴.

Yet another artist-relative of Nisa Villers was the painter Jeanne-Élisabeth Chaudet, née Gabiou, who was connected to Nisa by marriage since her brother Jean-Frédéric was the husband of Nisa's sister Marie-Élisabeth. Madame Chaudet, who had a very active and successful career spanning the period from the Revolution to the Restoration¹⁵, apparently was also Nisa's first cousin. Her mother was a Marie-Élisabeth Lemoine, most probably the sister of Charles Lemoine, Nisa's father¹⁶. Nisa's sister Marie-Élisabeth thus married her first cousin when she espoused Jean-Frédéric Gabiou. She may well have been named for her Lemoine aunt.

To return to Nisa's immediate family, she had a third sister, who was probably the closest to her in age. This was Marie-Geneviève Lemoine, who married a François-Nicolas-Prosper Deluchy on 29 Brumaire an VI (November 19, 1797)¹⁷. Her dates are unknown, but she survived her sister, as she is cited in an August 30, 1821 inventory drawn up for the settlement of Nisa's estate¹⁸. There is no indication that she was active as an artist.

Nisa seems to have spent her childhood in Paris. In the 1780s the Lemoine family was living in the Hôtel des Treize Cantons at 72, rue Traversière-Saint-Honoré, where they probably rented furnished lodgings¹⁹. At the time of her marriage in 1794, they still inhabited the same street, near the turbulent crowds of the Palais Royal and a short walk from the new museum at the Louvre.

Nisa's future husband, Michel-Jean-Maximilien Villers, was an architecture student whose family came from Saint-Martin-du-Parc (Eure)²⁰. In the

year III (1794-95) he won a prize of 2000 francs in a competition to design a temple of Liberty for the gardens of the Folie Beaujon in Paris²¹. A marriage contract was drawn up between him and Marie-Denise Lemoine on 2 Vendémiaire an III (September 23, 1794)²². It informs us that the bridegroom had been living at the Louvre, where many artists and art students were lodged at this period. He must not have been able to install a family there, because Nisa's parents agreed to house and feed the young couple gratis during the first six months of the marriage. That support would have been welcome, as neither party brought substantial assets to the union – eight hundred *livres* on each side, plus furniture, personal effects and linen. In addition, Villers settled on his wife an income of 150 *livres*.

By the 21 Germinal an VI (April 10, 1798), they had settled in rue de la Place-Vendôme, slightly to the west of their original lodgings with Nisa's parents. The address is indicated on a contract for the sale of a house owned by the couple²³, the first record of many speculations in land and real estate engaged in by Maximilien Villers, jointly with his wife or separately, during the Consulat, First Empire, and Restoration²⁴.

Nisa Villers' first appearance on the Parisian art scene was at the Salon of the year VII (1799), where she exhibited as a pupil of "Giraudet"²⁵. The "citoyenne femme Villers" submitted three works: "TABLEAUX / 344. La Peinture. / 345. Une Bacchante endormie. / 346. Un portrait". The register of admission of works to the Salon, preserved in the Archives des Musées nationaux, cites only the portrait, which attracted the attention of the critics²⁶. Noting like his colleagues that it recorded the artist's own features, the writer of the *Journal de Paris* reproached her for representing herself as less pretty than she was: "La fraîcheur & la vivacité de son teint sont faiblement rendues dans ce tableau: les traits de l'original sont doux & animés; ceux de la copie ont peu d'expression. La Cne. Villers a craint peut-être de flatter son portrait? Elle seule ignore que c'est une chose impossible"²⁷.

However, he praised her style and her "*heureuses dispositions*" for painting which must have been evident to her contemporaries. When the *Journal des Arts, de Littérature et de Commerce* of 10 Brumaire an VIII (October 31, 1799) published a list of *encouragements* won by artists for paintings exhibited at the 1799 Salon, Nisa Villers was among the thirty-five prize winners²⁸. She received a 1500 francs *encouragement* of the fifth class for *Un portrait, Femme peignant*²⁹. This must be the self-portrait shown at the Salon, as neither of her other entries garnered the least critical mention.

While that painting is lost, there does exist a portrait of Villers at this period painted by her sister Marie-Victoire Lemoine, and exhibited at the same Salon under the number 208 (figs. 4 and 5). Nisa's features are regular, her eyes wideset beneath a low forehead. Her dark hair is cut short in the fashionable style called "*à la Titus*". A reviewer was lukewarm about the image: "*Il ne nous a pas paru ressemblant. Nous aurions désiré y retrouver la beauté, la grâce et la douce expres-*



FIG. 3. – Jeanne-Elisabeth CHAUDET. *Petite fille mangeant des cerises*, c. 1812. Paris, musée Marmottan. Photo museum.

sion du modèle: ce tableau néanmoins annonce du talent"³⁰.

It would be interesting to compare this painting to François Gérard's portrait of Nisa Villers, also painted in or around 1799³¹. In the Villers family until 1839, its present location is unknown.

Nisa appeared again on the Parisian art scene at the Salon of 1801, where the *livret* listed her name in a slightly garbled form, as "M^{me} Villers, née Nisa". The *livret* also gives her address, which sounds like a furnished lodging: the "maison Arthur", at no. 222 rue Louis-le-Grand. As Louis-le-Grand was a variant name for the rue de la Place-Vendôme³², the couple was living in the same street where we found them in 1798. Three entries are listed under Nisa's name: 364. *Étude d'une jeune femme assise sur une fenêtre*. 365. *Étude d'une femme à sa toilette*. 366. *Un portrait*.

Also, it is possible that the Villers should be identified with a "N.V. M^{me}", who exhibited



FIG. 4. — Marie-Victoire LEMOINE. *Portrait of Marie-Denise Villers*, shown at the Salon of 1799 as *Une jeune femme appuyée sur le bord d'une croisée*.



FIG. 5. — Marie-Victoire LEMOINE. *Portrait of Marie-Denise Villers* (detail).

"Plusieurs portraits peints, sous le même numéro" under the number 338³³. Artists occasionally appear twice or more in a *livret*, sometimes with variant versions of their name, probably because they delivered their works to the Louvre piecemeal rather than in a single group. The register of objects delivered to the exhibition does not list a Mme N.V., so if these were additional works by Nisa, we have no clues to their dimensions and subjects. However, the register does cite two of the paintings she submitted under numbers 364 to 366, described as "1 Portrait de femme", and "1 Portrait d'enfant"³⁴. Happily, we can identify the first of these works, which was noted by no fewer than eight journalists. A signed painting by Villers, on the art market at Versailles in 1961, matches the reviewers' description of a young woman seated in front of a garden with a flower in her hand (fig. 6)³⁵. Dated "an 9" (1800-1801), the painting is also reproduced, without identification of authorship, in an engraved view of the Salon of 1801 by Monsaldy and Devisme (fig. 7). The report of the critic of the *Moniteur* is typical of the contemporary judgements of the work: "*Mon Dieu, la jolie femme! assise sur une fenêtre, elle tourne le dos au jardin, et cause... avec qui? avec*



FIG. 6. – Marie-Denise VILLERS. *Étude d'une jeune femme assise sur une fenêtre*. Salon of 1801. Present location unknown.

moi, avec vous si vous la regardez. – Sa figure est dans la demi-teinte. C'est dommage: – Non: la demi-teinte est favorable à la beauté. – Mais elle est si blanche! – Cette blancheur n'en est pas moins sensible pour être en grande partie voilée; voyez comme la lumière joue sur les contours de ce charmant visage.... / Vous n'avez donc aucun reproche à faire à ce portrait? – Je ne dis pas cela: je serais tenté de trouver la cuisse gauche trop longue: j'aurais désiré un peu plus de légèreté et de transparence dans le ciel et dans les arbres qui composent le fond. / Mais, après avoir reconnu ces légers défauts, il est juste de louer l'auteur sur le choix de cette pose facile et agréable dont l'effet est si piquant, et sur l'ensemble harmonieux et flatteur de cette jolie production.... / Quoi? Ce portrait n'est point de Girodet? Non; si vous y reconnaissez la manière du maître, vous conviendrez qu'il n'a point sa touche vigoureuse; mais il fait honneur à son élève, madame Villers".³⁶

The writer's reference to Girodet is well-chosen. The reflected light illuminating the contours of the arm is a device favored by the master at this period (for example, the *Portrait of Mlle*

Lange as Danaë, shown at the Salon of 1799, and now at the Minneapolis Institute of Art), as is the backlighting illuminating the hair on the right side of the face. The comments about the whiteness of the flesh and the use of half-tones relate the color scheme to those favored around 1800 by Girodet, under the influence of the Primitifs (see Girodet's *L'Apothéose des Héros français morts pour la patrie pendant la guerre de la Liberté*, commissioned in 1800, shown at the Salon of 1802, and today at the Musée National du Château de Malmaison)³⁷.

Stylistically the painting has much in common with Villers' 1802 *Étude de femme d'après nature*. In both pictures the figure's upper body is small in proportion to the head, the left thigh is elongated, and the arabesque line of the back is intersected by the high waist of the dress. The color scheme of the Louvre painting is bolder (black dress and veil, red shoulder strap), but by 1802 the pale palette of the Primitifs had become one



FIG. 7. – G. DEVISME, after a drawing by Antoine-Maxime MONSALDY. *The Salon of 1801* (detail). New York, The Metropolitan Museum of Art, The Elisha Whittelsey Collection. Photo museum.



FIG. 8. — G. DEVISME, after a drawing by Antoine-Maxime MONSALDY. *The Salon of 1801* (detail). New York, The Metropolitan Museum of Art, The Elisha Whittelsey Collection. Photo museum.

stylistic option among many and the prevailing trend at the Salon was toward stronger chromatic harmonies.

The *Étude d'une jeune femme assise sur une fenêtre* remained in the Villers' family for some ten years, as part of an extensive art collection formed by Nisa's husband Maximilien. When he placed the collection on the auction block on March 30, 1812, the painting, carefully described, appeared as lot 118 of the catalogue³⁸. It was acquired by the famous dealer Jean-Baptiste-Pierre Le Brun for 540 francs, a good price for a contemporary French painting at this period³⁹. Two other works by Nisa Villers were offered at the sale. Lot 119, purchased by Didot-Firmin⁴⁰ for 400 francs, was almost certainly the *Étude d'une femme à sa toilette* exhibited as number 365 at the Salon of 1801. Measuring 108 × 81 cm., it was listed in the sale catalogue as portraying a "jeune Femme brune, vue par le dos, assise, et vêtue de blanc, occupée à passer son schall devant un écran à glace, dans lequel elle est vue de face; elle est en pied, de petite proportion, assise sur un ployant, recouvert d'une draperie jaune"⁴¹.

The third Villers painting offered for sale, lot 120, measured 64.8 × 51.3 cm. The subject was

a "petite Fille blonde, tenant une corbeille de jonc remplie de fleurs, figure de grandeur naturelle, à mi-corps; elle est vêtue d'une robe rouge, sur fond de paysage"⁴². It is possible that this painting, purchased for 80 francs by a certain Chatenet, may be the artist's Salon of 1801 number 366, which was identified in the Salon register as a portrait of a child⁴³.

Nisa Villers may have been the author of yet another canvas known to have been exhibited at the Salon of 1801. The work in question, presently unattributed, has long been a popular favorite at the Metropolitan Museum of Art, where it entered the collection in 1917, ascribed to Jacques-Louis David (fig. 2). Titled *Portrait of Mlle Charlotte du Val d'Ognes*⁴⁴, it portrays a young woman artist seated in a spare interior, looking soberly at the viewer. Her golden hair is backlit by light from a cracked window, and the tiny figures of a man and woman are visible through the fractured pane of glass.

The painting, which bears striking similarities to works by Nisa Villers that we have already examined, appeared in the Davidian literature only in 1897, when it was shown at the Exposition des Portraits de Femmes et d'Enfants in Paris. The owner, Commandant Hardouin de Grosville, citing family tradition, indicated that the sitter, his grandmother, had been a pupil of David, and that the master had painted this portrait of her in 1803⁴⁵.

Nevertheless, questions were soon raised over the authorship of the painting, most notably by Otto Benesch around 1944 and by Gaston Brière in 1946⁴⁶. In 1951, Charles Sterling definitively refuted the attribution to David on stylistic grounds, and pointed out that the work had appeared in Monsaldy and Devisme's view of the Salon of 1801 (fig. 8). He suggested that the painting might be the work of Constance Charpentier, a French portrait and genre painter active during the period of the Revolution and First Empire⁴⁷. However, as Charpentier's oeuvre was explored, it became clear that the painting has little in common with her works. The figure in her best-known canvas, *La Mélancolie* (Musée d'Amiens),

is heavier and less graceful than that of the supposed Mlle du Val d'Ognes.

But the New York painting, which currently languishes without attribution beyond "French Painter, Unknown (about 1800)", does relate closely to the oeuvre of Nisa Villers. The pose of the young woman drawing is similar to that of the figure in Villers' *Étude d'une femme assise sur une fenêtre* (fig. 6), shown at the same Salon, and the blond coloring and very pale skin tones are consistent with those described by the reviewers of the latter painting. Moreover, in an album of counter-proofs of pencil sketches by Monsaldy, which were used to prepare the etched view of the Salon of 1801 published by him and Devisme⁴⁸, the *croquis* for the Metropolitan's portrait and the *Étude d'une jeune femme assise sur une fenêtre* are pasted side-by-side, suggesting that the compiler may have known the paintings to be by a single hand⁴⁹. There is the same use of reflected light on the arm and backlit hair in the two works, and the proportions of the body in the Metropolitan's picture are those found in Villers' other paintings. In addition, the heart-shaped face with the low forehead and widely set eyes is a precursor of that found in her 1802 *Étude de femme d'après nature* at the Louvre (fig. 1). These features are not unlike Nisa's own, as represented in her sister's portrait of her (fig. 5). A commentator at the Salon of 1802 noted the resemblance, in reference to the *Étude de femme d'après nature*: "Ce dernier ouvrage est d'une grande vigueur, et s'il n'offre pas précisément un portrait, on croit reconnaître néanmoins que madame Villers s'est prise pour modèle; quoiqu'elle ait évité de donner sa ressemblance, elle a été inspirée par les traits gracieux et réguliers que la glace a refléchis"⁵⁰.

It is tempting to speculate whether the Metropolitan's painting could be the self-portrait Villers exhibited at the Salon of 1799. While that work was described as a woman painting by the prize committee which awarded her an *encouragement*, the jurors, who had studied dozens of pictures, could have misremembered a chalk-holder as a brush. The pale, shadowed face would match the

description of the 1799 work given by the *Journal de Paris* critic (see p. 5 above); the backlit hair would explain a comment that another reviewer made about the same picture: "*Je parie que la citoyenne Villers est élève de Girodet; les cheveux de son tableau tendent à me le persuader*"⁵¹. The window and building seen in the background of the Metropolitan's painting closely relate to those found in a portrait by François Gérard begun in January, 1799 (*Comtesse de Morel-Vindé and her Daughter*, Salon of 1800, fig. 9)⁵², which was probably accessible to Nisa to copy from in that year⁵³. It would not have been unprecedented if the Villers self-portrait reappeared at the Salon of 1801 after being shown in 1799; artists often re-exhibited popular paintings. For example, Nisa's cousin Jeanne-Élisabeth Chaudet sent her portrait of François Gérard's wife to the Salons of 1798 and 1802⁵⁴.



FIG. 9. — François GÉRARD. *Portrait of the Comtesse de Morel-Vindé and her Daughter*, Salon of 1800. San Francisco, The Fine Arts Museums, Mildred Anna Williams Collection. Photo museum.

Nevertheless, in Marie-Victoire Lemoine's portrait of Nisa, the artist is shown with dark hair, and the woman in the Metropolitan painting is blond. This discrepancy, added to the fact that the subject is a woman drawing rather than painting, argues against identifying the Metropolitan's painting with the the 1799 self-portrait. But the picture's undeniable resemblance to works by Nisa Villers provides enough evidence to assert

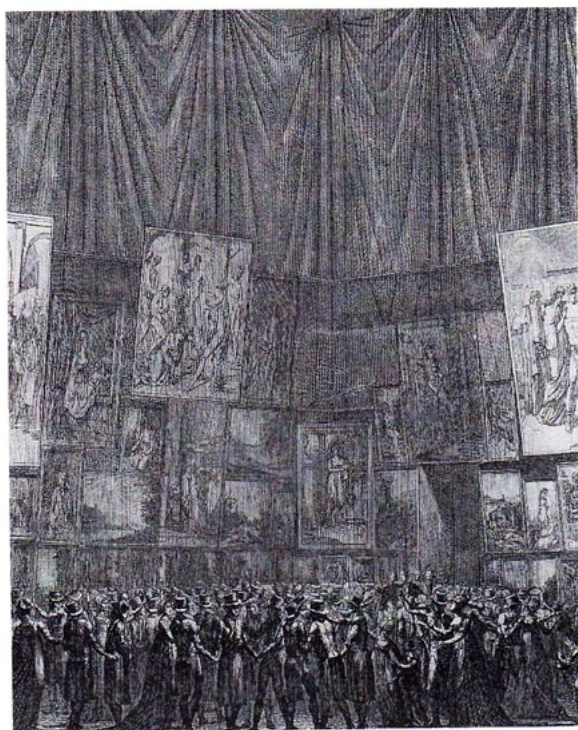


FIG. 10. — G. DEVISME, after a drawing by Antoine-Maxime MONSALDY, *The Salon of 1800* (detail). New York, The Metropolitan Museum of Art, The Elisha Whittelsey Collection. Photo museum.

that it came from her hand. As to its absence from the *livret*, it might have been one of the "*plusieurs portraits*" credited to Mme N.V. at the Salon of 1801, or simply a late submission which was not included in the catalogue. The significance of the cracked window and the figures behind it is elusive, but is typical of Nisa's tendency to add narrative details to her portraits without creating a

specific story — in 1802, the lady tying her shoe, in 1801, the young woman offering a flower. This feature of Nisa's work is probably what a journalist had in mind when he described the latter painting as an "*étude [...] traitée dans le genre historique*"⁵⁵.

We are indebted to Monsaldy and Devisme for an indication of yet another painting by Nisa Villers. In their engraved view of the Salon of 1800 they illustrated a three-quarter-length portrait of a girl with a dog, identified on the print with the catalogue number 366 (fig. 10). This tiny engraved portrait exactly matches a painting sold at the Galerie George Petit (Paris) in 1918 as a work by Jacques Louis David (fig. 11)⁵⁶. However, the picture is clearly not from his hand, and if we consult the *livret* for the Salon of 1800, the number 366 is found under the letter "V". It is assigned to an anonymous "V. N.", who exhibited "*Plusieurs portraits, sous le même numéro*"⁵⁷. As the artists were listed alphabetically by last name in the *livrets*, these initials, in normal word order, are "N.V." — a rather unusual combination of letters which, as noted above, fit only two artists who exhibited at the Salons of this era: Nanine Vallain and Nisa Villers.

An examination of the reproduction of the painting (fig. 11) strongly suggests that we have located yet another work by Nisa. The sitter, shown in three-quarters' view, holds a bouquet of flowers in one hand and caresses her dog with the other. She appears to be seated on the same stone bench as the woman in the signed Villers painting of 1801, the *Étude d'une jeune femme assise sur une fenêtre* (fig. 6). Her right leg is posed in the same fashion, and the right wrist and hand are articulated in a similar manner. The long thighs and the relative proportions of head and upper body are those characteristic of Villers' work, and the face has the same gravity seen in the Metropolitan's painting.

The work is much less close to the style of Nanine Vallain, as represented in the latter's best-known painting, *La Liberté*, 1793-94 (fig. 12). Vallain depicts a slightly fuller figure type and renders anatomy more exactly, delineating the



FIG. 11. — Here attributed to Marie-Denise VILLERS. *Jeune fille au chien*. Salon of 1800. Present location unknown.

Adam's apple and the hollow at the base of the throat, features which Villers ignores.

Moreover, Vallain is not known to have exhibited anonymously on other occasions, while as we have seen, Villers seems to have submitted some works anonymously to the Salon of 1801. She also exhibited a portrait at the Salon of 1814⁵⁸ without her name appearing in the *livret*, nor even in the handwritten register of works delivered to the exhibition⁵⁹. Perhaps she chose anonymity in 1800 because she was in mourning; her father Charles Lemoine died on August 11 of that year⁶⁰, less than a month before the Salon opened.

Nisa's submissions to the Salon of 1802 are less problematic than those of 1800 and 1801. She exhibited two works: number 310, *Un enfant dans son berceau, entraîné par les eaux de l'inondation du mois de nivôse an X*, and number 311, the *Étude de femme d'après nature* (fig. 1), with which we are already familiar. The first work, which was praised for its agreeable execution and touching subject matter, showed a child in its cradle floating on flood waters, a faithful dog swimming behind it ready to push the cradle towards shore⁶¹. The painting was so popular that the artist made a reduced copy for the Russian

aristocrat Prince Yusupov in 1810⁶² and the original was engraved under the title *La Fidélité* by Jean Godefroy (fig. 13)⁶³. Godefroy was even inspired to paint and engrave a pendant to it, titled *La Reconnaissance*. In the latter engraving, exhibited along with *La Fidélité* at the Salon of 1808, the baby in Villers' painting is represented grown to young boyhood, showing proper gratitude to the faithful pet who saved his life (fig. 14).

The *Étude de femme d'après nature* was also welcomed by reviewers. Charles-Paul Landon praised Villers' developing talent: "*Cette aimable artiste a fait des progrès rapides, et amélioré sa manière. On lui reprochait un peu de sécheresse dans les contours: son pinceau est maintenant très-moëlleux; son coloris est fin et brillant*"⁶⁴. A friend of Nisa's, a Madame Soustras, modeled for the hands of the figure, but not the face⁶⁵.



FIG. 12. Nanine VALLAIN. *La Liberté*, 1793-94. Vizille, Musée de la Révolution Française, on deposit from the musée du Louvre. Photo museum.

Jacques-Louis-David visited Nisa's studio during the sitting, working a little on the painting himself⁶⁶.

Nisa must have been a recognized figure in the Parisian artistic community by this period, because an English tourist left us a record of a visit he and his artist-son paid to her studio in early 1803, describing the two paintings familiar to us from the Salon of 1802: "We went directly after breakfast to Maria Cosway⁶⁷ who attended us to several Artists. First Mad^{me} Villers a very pretty woman wife to an architect. They are nicely lodged [sic] and her painting room is very good. The pictures we saw of hers were female figures or children, quite in the french [sic] style of colouring, but with taste and fancy. A picture of herself in black with a transparent veil covering half her face and tying on her shoe is very clever, but her best is a child sleeping in a cradle carried away by an inundation, and a dog swimming to bring it ashore"⁶⁸.

The "painting room" referred to was at the Villers' new home at number 269, rue de l'Université, where they had moved between 1801 and 1802, migrating across the Seine to the heart of the old aristocratic quarter. The forthcoming move

may have placed a strain on the family finances, because on the 15 Ventôse an X (March 6, 1802) Nisa wrote the following letter to the Minister of the Interior: "Au Citoyen Ministre / de l'Intérieur; / La Citoyenne Villers, rue de la place Vendôme n° 222. / Citoyen Ministre, / J'ai obtenu en l'an 8 un prix d'encouragement⁶⁹, et je me suis occupée du tableau que je dois faire pour recevoir ce prix. J'ai appelé le C.^{en} Renou, surveillant secrétaire des Ecoles de peinture &c. lequel a vu l'ébauche de ce tableau, et je joins ici son certificat"⁷⁰.

La Richesse est rarement compagne des beaux arts; une portion du prix d'encouragement me serait fort utile. Je vous prie, Citoyen Ministre, d'en faire ordonner le payement. / Salut et Respect. / femme Villers"⁷¹.

The request was reasonable, as artists were generally given the first third of their prize after sketching out the work. However, the current Minister must have become annoyed at the number of artists who unreasonably delayed the completion of their *travaux d'encouragement*. Scrawled on Villers' letter is a note in his hand: "Je vais mettre la decision generale [sic], que les tableaux ou prix ne seront acquittés que sur les fonds de



FIG. 13. — Jean GODEFROY, after Marie-Denise VILLERS. *La Fidélité*, Salon of 1808, after the original painting shown at the Salon of 1802. Paris, Bibliothèque nationale. Photo B.N.

l'année ou ils ont été commandés ou accordés". That meant that an artist, to be paid, had to compose and complete a work of art within a year of receiving an award. Although a bureaucrat in the Ministry filed a protest, complaining that the new system would result in poorly executed works⁷², the Minister declined to reverse his decision, and it seems that Villers never received her prize money⁷³.

In spite of this disappointment, she appeared at the Salon of 1802, but did not exhibit again until 1814. Her submission in the latter year, not listed in the *livret*, was a bust-length portrait of the Duchess of Angoulême, considered "*le plus agréable et le plus ressemblant de ceux pour lesquels S.A.R. a bien voulu accorder des séances*"⁷⁴.

Perhaps Villers' lack of visibility during the period of the First Empire was dictated by political reasons. Her architect-husband seems never to have solicited government commissions during Napoleon's reign⁷⁵, and was employed afterwards by the Duchess of Angoulême, suggesting, if not royalist tendencies, at least a lack of sympathy for the Emperor. It may not be merely coincidence that Nisa's sister, Marie-Victoire Lemoine, was

herself absent from the Paris Salons from 1806 through 1812. The Villers household remained settled in Paris during this period⁷⁶. The couple never had children. Various real-estate investments are recorded during these years, of which the largest seems to have been their sale of a house at 87, rue du Bac to the Count and Countess de Salm for 115,000 francs⁷⁷. The sale of Maximilien Villers' art collection in 1812 suggests financial need, but several very valuable works were withdrawn from sale when reserve prices weren't met, intimating that the owner wasn't desperate to sell at all costs⁷⁸.

No artistic production is recorded by Nisa after 1814. The household moved once more before her death in 1821, to number 25, rue d'Enfer, a house leased from a widow Rabouin. It was in this home that Marie-Denise Villers died at the age of forty-seven on August 19, 1821⁷⁹. The inventory drawn up after her decease⁸⁰, which details the contents of the house and the assets of the couple, describes Maximilien Villers' study but does not mention an atelier for his wife. Nor were any of the other rooms furnished with painting equipment, suggesting that Nisa's artistic activity had ceased some time before her death. The couple's



FIG. 14. – Jean GODEFROY. *La Reconnaissance*, Salon of 1808. Paris, Bibliothèque nationale. Photo B.N.

books were the standard French classics, with a few antique authors thrown in, and nothing to suggest a particular interest in art or architecture except two volumes by Peyronnet on hydraulic architecture and bridges, and a volume on fortifications. They owned few artworks: two Locatellis, a farm interior by Teniers the Elder⁸¹, a copy after Tintoretto of *Jesus Before Pilate*, two engraved landscapes by Claude Lorrain, and an unidentified English print.

Nevertheless, the inventory suggests that the Villers lived stylishly. Their house was comfortably furnished, and the couple had a cook, a chambermaid, and a companion for Nisa, a Madame Richardson. A list of farmers leasing land from them indicates that they were earning slightly over 10,000 francs a year in rent. In spite of these assets, they may not always have had ready cash on hand, because the inventory lists a debt to François Villers, a relative of Maximilien, who loaned the latter money to pay for funeral expenses and the doctor's bill for Nisa's last illness.

There is only one further first-hand reference to paintings by Nisa, maddeningly unspecific. This is found in an inventory drawn up after the death of Maximilien Villers in 1839⁸², which describes the contents of the home he shared with his second wife and their daughter. Hanging in the salon were four female portraits on canvas painted by Nisa, in frames of gilded wood, and the portrait of her by François Gérard. The Louvre's *Étude de femme d'après nature* (fig. 1)

hung in the bedroom of the second Madame Villers. Probably reflecting the lack of interest in Napoleonic-era painting in 1839, it was valued at twenty francs, and the four other female portraits together at thirty.

It has proven impossible to trace the works. Perhaps they included the painting of the young draftsman at the Metropolitan Museum or the portrait of the girl with her dog sold at the Galerie George Petit. The lack of information about these pictures is all the more frustrating in that they must have represented a significant portion of the artist's relatively small oeuvre. But if Marie-Denise Villers produced little, painting primarily for her own pleasure, the quality of her pictures won the admiration of her contemporaries. A poetically-minded admirer was not far off when he proclaimed that under her paint brush, "*un portrait devient un tableau/ dont la beauté fournit l'histoire*"⁸³. Certainly her graceful figures are more than simple likenesses. At her best, she endowed them with a psychological component which continues to beguile the viewer. It is this which accounts for the sustained appeal of the painting at the Metropolitan Museum, in spite of anatomical inexactitudes. Offering Nisa's only extant image of a female artist, it shows us a woman of about her own age, looking out at us from a room almost two centuries away, still drawing, still holding our gaze.

M.O.

NOTES

The research for this article began in a seminar at the Institute of Fine Arts, under the direction of Professor Robert Rosenblum. I would like to express my gratitude to him for encouraging me to pursue the subject, and to thank both him and Joseph Baillio for their generous help in reading and editing the resulting manuscript.

1. Ann SUTHERLAND and Linda NOCHLIN, cat. d'expo. "Women Artists: 1550-1950", Los Angeles County Museum of Art, 1976, p. 217.

2. Cat. d'expo. "La femme artiste d'Élisabeth Vigée-Lebrun à Rosa Bonheur", Mont-de-Marsan, musée Despiau-Wlerick (donjon Lacataye), Nov. 1981-Feb. 1982, pp. 32-35.

3. 146 × 145 cm., signed and dated *N.^a Villers / an 10.*, musée du Louvre, Inv. no. R.F.173.

4. Her act of birth is not preserved at the Archives of Paris (hereafter abbreviated as "A.P."), but her age is given in her death certificate found there (V.2E 11331).

5. Although Nisa Villers has been identified with the Denise Lemoine baptized at Saint-Germain l'Auxerrois June 1, 1772, daughter of François Lemoine, shoemaker (see Mont-de-Marsan, musée Despiau-Wlerick, *cat. cit.*, p. 32), this hypothesis must be discarded, as her parents' names appear on her marriage contract (Archives nationales [hereafter abbreviated as "A.N."], Minutier central, ET XIV, 530). Her mother's name appears in official documents spelled in two ways, Rousselle and Rousselle; in signing, she herself consistently used Rousselle.

6. A.P., V.2E 10794 (death certificate).

7. A.P., V.2E 11306 (death certificate).

8. Because of the difference in surnames between Marie-Denise Lemoine, who exhibited under her married name of Villers, and Marie-Victoire Lemoine, who remained single, the relationship between the two artists has not been recognized until now. However, Bénézit was on the right track in suggesting that "Mme Villers née Lemoine" was "perhaps identical to a Marie-Victoire Lemoine".

9. See the article by Joseph BAILLIO in this issue of the *Gazette des Beaux-Arts* for a more complete catalogue of Marie-Victoire's work.

10. Charles LE BLANC (*Manuel de l'amateur d'estampes*, vol. 2, Paris, 1854-90, p. 531) cites 5 prints by Élisabeth Le Moine, of which four after Lancret. Also, a mezzotint of C. Venitiano's *Judith* is inscribed "Gravé par Elizab. Bouchet".

11. On that date she and her husband signed the marriage contract of Gabiou's sister, the artist Jeanne-Élisabeth Gabiou, who became the wife of sculptor Antoine-Denis Chaudet.

12. For their dates and descriptions, see the article by Joseph Baillio cited above.

13. The date of her death should be placed between May 11, 1811, when her name appears on a contract in which she, her husband, and her sister Marie-Victoire jointly borrowed a sum of money, and April 30, 1814, when her husband is listed as a widower on a document concerning a mortgage (A.N., Minutier central, ET XIX, 938 and ET XIX, 944). Moreover, she probably died before March 23, 1812, because her signature is not on a contract of that date for Jeanne-Élisabeth Gabiou's second marriage (A.N., Minutier central, ET XLVI, 702), although her husband was present.

14. Jean-Frédéric Gabiou, Marie-Élisabeth Lemoine, and her sister Marie-Victoire Lemoine seem to have pooled their financial resources, as contracts exist for various real estate and financial speculations entered into jointly (and with the Gabiou children after Marie-Élisabeth's death) between 1808 and 1814 (A.N., Minutier central, ET XIX, 932; 938, 940, 943, 944).

15. The known paintings by Jeanne-Élisabeth Chaudet in public collections are the *Petite fille mangeant des cerises* (Paris, musée Marmottan; fig. 3), an *Enfant au panier de cerises*, drawing, 1816 (Arras, musée des Beaux-Arts), *Une jeune fille pleure un pigeon qu'elle chérissait et qui est mort*, Salon of 1808 (Arras, musée des Beaux-Arts), *Marie-Laetitia-Joseph Murat, Comtesse Pepoli*, c. 1806 (musée national du

Château de Fontainebleau), an identical portrait of the same sitter at the musée Fesch in Ajaccio, c. 1806 (the sitter in these two portraits as been identified as Élis-Napoléone Baciocchi, but the subject matter matches journalists' descriptions of Chaudet's portrait of Marie-Laetitia, exhibited at the Salon of 1806), *Une jeune fille donnant à manger à des poulets*, Salon of 1802 (Arenenberg, Napoleonmuseum), and *Un enfant endormi dans un berceau, sous la garde d'un chien courageux qui vient de tuer, près de lui, une énorme vipère*, Salon of 1801 (musée de Rochefort).

16. In a commentary on the Salon of 1799 treating Villers, Marie-Victoire Lemoine, and Chaudet a contemporary critic noted: "On apprendra avec intérêt que les trois citoyennes artistes que nous venons de citer sont soeurs et cousines" (suite de l'examen du SALON [de l'an VII], *Journal des Arts, de Littérature et de Commerce*, No. 14, 10 Vendémiaire an VIII, p. 2). Although this is the only specific reference to the family relationship between Madame Chaudet, née Gabiou, and the Lemoine sisters, the close connections and the intermarriage between the two families strongly suggest that Charles Lemoine and Marie-Élisabeth Gabiou, née Lemoine were siblings. The byzantine network of relationships created between the Lemoines and the Gabious is entirely typical of the family structure of the Parisian bourgeois and artisan classes in the 18th century.

17. A.P., V.10 E 8.

18. A.N., Minutier central, ET XLVI, 773.

19. This street, which no longer exists, ran diagonally from the rue de Richelieu to the rue Saint-Honoré. Honoré de BALZAC described it in 1833, in his *Ferragus, Chef des Dévorants*: "*La rue Traversière-Saint-Honoré n'est-elle pas une rue infâme? Il y a là de méchantes petites maisons à deux croisées, où, d'étage en étage, se trouvent des vices, des crimes, de la misère*" (*Histoire des Treize, Ferragus - La Duchesse de Langeais - La Fille aux yeux d'or*, Paris, 1992, p. 34). There is no indication that during the Revolution the street had a reputation of this character.

20. Ch. BAUCHAL, *Nouveau Dictionnaire Biographique et Critique des Architectes Français*, Paris, 1887, p. 731. He should not be confused with the architect Jacques-Louis François, called Villers (Paris, 1791 - Angers, 1870), who worked primarily in Angers, nor with the miniaturist Villers, who worked in Paris.

21. M.J. GUILLAUME, ed., *Procès-Verbaux du Comité d'Instruction Publique de la Convention Nationale*, IV, Paris, 1901, p. 259. The amount of the prize is usually mistated as 6000 francs (e.g. Bauchal, *op. cit.*).

22. A.N., Minutier central, ET XIV 530.

23. A.N., Minutier central, XVIII, 963.

24. Maximilien Villers' speculations in real estate may explain his apparent lack of activity as an architect. He seems to have worked primarily in garden design, becoming architect to the Duchess of Angoulême after the Restoration (see Gabet for what little is known of his career).

25. Girodet's name was frequently misspelled in this fashion by his contemporaries.

26. Archives des Musées nationaux, X Salon, 1799. While the Salon registers are sometimes helpful in giving dimensions for works exhibited, they are far from complete. Often works submitted late are omitted, others are listed which we know to have been refused by the jury, and yet others weren't recorded at all.

27. "Exposition au Salon", *Journal de Paris*, no. 353, 23 Fructidor an VII-no. 31, 1er Brumaire an VIII, p. 1592.

28. *Journal des Arts, de Littérature et de Commerce*, no. 20, 10 Brumaire an VIII, pp. 7-10. These *encouragements* were monetary awards designed to allow an artist to create a new painting or sculpture. Usually the artist would receive the first third of the prize money on submitting a sketch for the work, the second third when a painting had been sketched out on the canvas or a sculpture roughed out in the marble, and the final payment when the finished creation was delivered to the Louvre. In some years (but not in 1799) the *encouragements* were simply monetary prizes which didn't necessitate the production of a new artwork.

29. There were five classes of *encouragements* in that year (the first class being the most prestigious), and as was typical, portraits and genre paintings tended to receive less remunerative *encouragements* than history paintings. Three other women were among the prize winners in 1799: Constance Charpentier and Marguerite Gérard, who won *encouragements* of the fifth class, and Adélaïde Labille-Guiard, who won a fourth-class prize.

30. "Suite de l'examen du SALON [de l'an VII]", *Journal des Arts, de Littérature et de Commerce*, no. 14, 10 Vendémiaire an VIII, p. 2.

31. Henri GÉRARD dated the portrait of Mme Villers to 1799 in an alphabetical list of all the painted or drawn portraits of François Gérard (see [H.G.], *Œuvre du Baron François Gérard*, III, Paris, 1857, n.p.). The author indicated that some of the dates which he assigned to paintings in the list were approximate, without specifying which ones.

32. Officially, the rue Louis-le-Grand was called rue des Piques from 1793 to 1798, and rue de la Place-Vendôme from 1799 to 1814, and then returned to its original appellation (Jacques HILLAIRET, *Dictionnaire historique des rues de Paris*, Paris, 1985, p. 54).

33. The only other female artist who had the initials "N.V." at this time was Nanine Piètre, née Vallain, who generally exhibited under her maiden name, or as "Nanine Vallain, femme Piètre". She is not known to have exhibited at the Salon of 1801.

34. Archives des Musées nationaux, X Salon, 1801.

35. *Portrait de jeune fille au camélia*, 141 x 99 cm., signed and dated *Nisa f. Villers, an 9*, Versailles, Hôtel des Chevaux-Légers, December 3, 1961, no. 8, illus. pl. II. See the descriptions of the painting in *Arlequin de Retour au Muséum*, no. IV, Paris, An X-1801, in *Collection Deloynes*, vol.

26, pièce 688, p. 302, and in the review from the *Gazette nationale* quoted below.

36. "Salon de l'an IX", *Gazette nationale ou le Moniteur universel*, no. 356, 26 Fructidor an IX, p. 1471.

37. The Primitifs were a group of young artists formed in the studio of David who have been ably described and studied by George LEVITINE ("L'École d'Apelle de Jean Broc: un 'primitif' au Salon de l'an VIII", *Gazette des Beaux-Arts*, Nov. 1972, pp. 285-94; and *The Dawn of Bohemianism; The Barbu Rebellion and Primitivism in Neoclassical France*, University Park and London, 1978).

38. *Catalogue d'une collection capitale provenant du cabinet de M. Villers, architecte, composée de tableaux des trois écoles....*, par J.B.P. LE BRUN, Paris, 1812; an annotated copy is in the Frick Art Reference Library, New York.

39. This painting reappeared at Le Brun's in a sale of May 23, 1814 as lot 169, where it sold for 181 francs.

40. Doubtless a member of the publishing family, perhaps Pierre-Nicolas-Firmin Didot, called Didot jeune.

41. *Catalogue d'une collection capitale provenant du cabinet de M. Villers....*, *op. cit.*, lot 119.

42. *Ibid.*, lot 120.

43. This painting reappeared at the Le Brun sale of May 23, 1814, as lot 170, where it sold for 32 francs to Laneuville, and at the sale of Philibert Rivière de l'Isle of June 13, 1816, as lot 47.

44. 161 x 128.6 cm., bequest of Isaac D. Fletcher, Inv. no. 17.120.204.

45. New York, Metropolitan Museum of Art, *A Catalogue of French Paintings XV-XVIII Centuries*, cat. by Charles STERLING, Cambridge, 1955, pp. 198-99.

46. Charles STERLING, "A Fine 'David' Reattributed", *The Metropolitan Museum of Art Bulletin*, IX, no. 5, 1951, pp. 125-26.

47. *Ibid.*, pp. 121-32.

48. Paris, Bibliothèque nationale, Cabinet des Estampes, Ad 89a (Rés), *Contre-épreuves des croquis de R. Monsaldy pour les Salons de l'an VIII, de l'an IX et de l'an XII*.

49. The counterproof of the Metropolitan's painting is reproduced in STERLING, 1951, *op. cit.*, p. 127.

50. *Nouvelles des Arts, Peinture, Sculpture et Gravure*, II, An XI-1802, p. 10.

51. *La Revue du Muséum*, p. 27, in the *Collection Deloynes*, vol. 21, pièce 562.

52. Fine Arts Museum of San Francisco, Inv. 1979.8. The San Francisco catalogue errs in indicating that the *Comtesse de Morel-Vindé and her Daughter* was shown at the Salon of 1799, where Gérard exhibited "Tableaux, portraits, sous le même numéro", under the number 716 (see Pierre ROSENBERG and Marion C. STEWART, *French Paintings 1500-1825*, 1987, p. 174). It actually appeared at the following year's exhibition, as contemporary reviews of the two Salons make clear, although Gérard's name did not appear in the 1800 *livret*. Moreover, the painting was illustrated in Monsaldy and Devisme's view of the Salon of 1800 (Paris, Bibliothèque nationale). I

am indebted to Dr. Carrie Hamilton for bringing this painting to my notice.

53. Gérard's portrait of Nisa is said to date from 1799 (see p. 10), so she would have had access to his studio at the period.

54. The portrait was not cited in the *livret* in 1802, but was listed in the register of works delivered to the Salon (Archives des Musées nationaux, X Salon, 1802), and mentioned by a sharp-eyed journalist (St. L...t., "Peinture. Considération sur cet art cultivé par les femmes", *Le Petit Magasin des Dames* I, An XI-1803, p. 169).

55. P. CH[AUSSARD]D, *Journal des Arts, des Sciences et de Littérature*, nos. 157-74, 5 Vendémiaire an X- 30 Frimaire an X, p. 55.

56. Paris, Galerie Georges Petit, Collection du Vicomte de Curel, Nov. 25, 1918, lot 29. The work, measuring 99 x 80 cm., was also exhibited at the Galerie Charpentier, Paris (June 20, 1957, no. 142).

57. "V.N." also exhibited a *Portrait en miniature de M^{me} J.M.* under the number 367, but no visual record of this artwork has survived.

58. *Mercure de France*, February 11, 1815, p. 306.

59. Archives des Musées nationaux, X Salon, 1814.

60. A.P., V.2E 10794 (death certificate).

61. *Nouvelles des Arts, Peinture, Sculpture et Gravure* II, An XI-1802, pp. 10-11. The painting was in the collection of the Pourtalès family until recently (see Mont-de-Marsan, musée Despiau-Wlerick, *op. cit.*, p. 32). The subject matter of a faithful dog may have been suggested to Villers by the success of a painting her cousin Jeanne-Élisabeth Chaudet exhibited at the Salon of 1801: *Un enfant endormi dans un berceau, sous la garde d'un chien courageux qui vient de tuer, près de lui, une énorme vipère* (musée de Rochefort).

62. The copy, 23 x 32 cm., is still preserved at the Arkhangelskoyé Museum-Estate near Moscow, which formerly belonged to the Yusupov family (S. ERNST, *Yusupovskaya Galerya-Frantsuskaya Skola*, Leningrad, 1924, p. 236).

63. Jean Godefroy executed several reproductive prints after works by François Gérard, and made two engravings after paintings by Villers' cousin Jeanne-Élisabeth Chaudet.

64. *Nouvelles des Arts, Peinture, Sculpture et Gravure*, *op. cit.*

65. See Mont-de-Marsan, musée Despiau-Wlerick, *op. cit.*, p. 33; and Archives des Musées nationaux, P⁸1876, letter from M. Soustras to M. Davin, Dec. 9, 1840.

66. *Ibid.*

67. Cosway (1759-1838) was an English artist living in Paris who often guided British visitors around noteworthy artistic sites of the capital.

68. Bertie GREATHED, *An Englishman in Paris: 1803*, ed. by J.P.T. Bury and J.C. Barry, London, 1953, pp. 72-73, entry for Sunday, February 27, 1803.

69. The encouragements for the Salon of 1799 (the year VII), were awarded in the year VIII.

70. Unfortunately Renou's certificate, which would have described the subject matter of the painting, is missing.

71. A.N., F²¹527.

72. A.N., F²¹527, report dated 9 Germinal an X (March 30, 1802).

73. There is no further correspondence concerning her and no payments to her are listed in the accounts of the Ministry, which I have examined through the end of 1805. This policy regarding encouragements was very irregularly enforced, with many exceptions approved, and seems to have been waived completely by 1804, in favor of a return to the prior system of paying the awards by thirds without a time limit. Artists' distaste for the policy is evidenced by an anonymous letter received at the ministry the 20 Floréal an X (May 10, 1802), whose author made "*des observations sur le découragement qu'éprouvent les artistes par la réduction ou le non paiement du prix qu'ils ont obtenu dans les concours* (A.N., F 334)".

74. *Mercure de France*, February 11, 1815, p. 306.

75. He is not included on a lengthy list of architects employed by the Ministry of the Interior, dating from around 1810 (A.N., F^{1b}42²).

76. During the latter half of the Empire, their address is given in contracts and other documents as 31 rather than 269 rue de l'Université, but it is difficult to say whether this reflects a move or simply the re-numbering of the Paris streets which took place in 1806. By 1815, they had moved again, as their address is given in that year's *Almanach du Commerce* as rue Jacob, 16.

77. A.N., Minutier central, ET V, 940, sale of April 29, 1809. The purchasers were Joseph-François-Marie-Antoine-Hubert-Ignace de Salm-Dyck, member of the Corps Législatif, chancellor of the Fourth Cohort of the Legion of Honor and Count of the Empire, and his wife, née Constance-Marie de Theis.

78. These included a David Teniers scene of a kitchen interior, withdrawn without bid at 15,000 francs (*Catalogue d'une collection capitale provenant du cabinet du M. Villers...*, *op. cit.*). The collection in general was of remarkably high quality. If the twenty paintings of the Italian school mostly sold too cheaply to be authentic Old Masters, several Panninis and Romanellis brought respectable prices. There were many paintings of high quality from the Northern school, including eighteen Flemish paintings and a large group of Dutch and German works (52 lots). Of the French school, the most noteworthy work was a Claude Lorrain seascape which brought 1460 francs, but Villers also owned the painted sketch for David's *Brutus* and a bronze *Belisarius* by Antoine-Denis Chaudet (the first husband of Nisa's cousin Jeanne-Élisabeth Chaudet).

79. A.P., V.2E 11331 (death certificate).

80. A.N., Minutier central, ET XLVI, 773, inventory of Aug. 30, 1821.

81. Possibly the Teniers that failed to sell at the 1812 auction of Maximilien's collection. It was valued at only 200 francs in the inventory, suggesting that it was of doubtful authenticity.

82. A.N., Minutier central, ET XLVI, 907, inventory of January 21, 1839.

83. *L'Observateur au Museum, ou la Critique des Tableaux, en Vaudeville*, Paris, s.d., in *Collection Deloynes*, vol. 26, pièce 690, p. 325.

RÉSUMÉ. — *Nisa Villers, née Lemoine (1774-1821)*.

Cet article étudie la carrière et l'œuvre de Marie-Denise Villers, dite Nisa (1774-1821). Deux tableaux, autrefois donnés à Jacques-Louis David, lui sont ici attribués ; l'un d'entre eux est le *Portrait de Mlle Charlotte du Val d'Ognes*, au Metropolitan Museum. Marie-Denise Villers reçut un prix d'encouragement au Salon de 1799. Elle avait pour soeurs Marie-Victoire et Marie-Élisabeth Lemoine, portraitistes, et était la cousine germaine du peintre de genre Jeanne-Élisabeth Chaudet.