



# Chains: David, Canova, and the Fall of the Public Hero in Postrevolutionary France

*Satish Padiyar*

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One of Jacques-Louis David's most ambitious and darkly enigmatic paintings, *Leonidas at the Pass of Thermopylae*, hangs today in the Louvre, largely ignored. Focusing on this painting, *Chains* embarks on a discourse about the perception of the body, sexuality, and subjectivity in early nineteenth-century European art.

In addition to David, *Chains* explores the sculptural oeuvre of David's contemporary and rival, Italian sculptor Antonio Canova. Padiyar argues that, like David's postrevolutionary work, Canova's innovative sculptures embodied a new, distinctively modern type of subjectivity. The book aims to take a fresh view of the status of the male body in the work of these two late neoclassical artists by linking them in novel, sometimes unexpected ways with key figures of the late Enlightenment. In postrevolutionary Europe, philosophical and literary figures such as Immanuel Kant and the Marquis de Sade pushed the language of neoclassicism to its limits. *Chains* argues that such innovations produced a new, distinctively sexed, politicized, and aestheticized heroic male body that emerged as an incidental aftereffect of the French Revolution.



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